

Debate No. 25 of 17.07.2007

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

POLICE STATIONS – WOMEN CONSTABLES

(No. B/749) Mr S. Lauthan (Third Member for Port Louis Maritime and Port Louis East) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether, in regard to women and children who are victims of domestic violence or sexual assault, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from Commissioner of Police, information as to the arrangements that have been or will be made for the presence of women constables on a 24 hour basis in each police station to attend to them.

The Ag Prime Minister (Dr. R. Beebeejaun, Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport & Shipping): Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that in almost all Police Stations there is at least one Woman Police Constable who is physically present as from 0715 hours up to 2300 hours.

After 2300 hours Women Police Constables are on call to attend such cases as and when required. In the four Police Stations where no Woman Police Constable is posted on a full-time basis, arrangements are made at the level of the Division to provide the services of a Woman Police Constable to attend such cases.

With the forthcoming recruitment of some 100 female Police Officers, arrangement will be made for their posting to every station so that a better and more customer orientated service could be provided.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I also wish to inform the House that in accordance with the Protocol of Assistance to Victims of Sexual Assaults of April 2006, in cases of sexual assault involving female adults and children, a Woman Police Officer from the Police Station of the locality or on call or from the hospital takes the preliminary statement of the victim.

In the case of a child victim, the Protocol requires the presence of a Family Welfare and Protection Officer of the Child Development Unit, who

is trained in child interviewing techniques. The Ministry of Women's Rights, Child Development, Family Welfare & Consumer Protection is having discussions with the different stakeholders, including the Police to review the Protocol to make it more effective.

Police Officers whilst dealing with cases of sexual assaults, have been requested to act with diligence in ensuring that victims are medically examined by the Police Medical Officer and other necessary actions are taken both for the successful investigation of such cases whilst ensuring the welfare of victims.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am also informed that the Ombudsperson for Children's Office in collaboration with the UNDP and the University of Mauritius is organizing a two-day workshop on violence against children on 23 and 24 July 2007. The objectives of the workshop are to discuss the issue of violence against children in the family, at school and in the community and to make recommendations for an Action Plan. Participants will include representatives from the public sector, the private sector, NGOs and the civil society.

Mr Lauthan: Mr Speaker, Sir, I thank the Ag. Prime Minister for his answer. As he is talking about reviewing the Protocol, there has been complainant that women or young girls who are sexually or physically aggressed are very embarrassed when male Police Officers are hearing what is being said in the presence of the women Police Officer. Can the Ag. Prime Minister see with the Commissioner of Police that necessary conditions exist so that these victims are free to voice out their feelings?

The Ag. Prime Minister: I will make sure to transmit to the CP that confidentiality will be respected and that people who are not involved are away from the hearing.

Mrs Jeewa-Daureeawoo: May I know from the Ag. Prime Minister whether the women Constable and the staff attached to each Police station have adequate training to deal with the complaints of women and children?

The Ag. Prime Minister: Yes, they are trained, but I take the point that there is need for more training as we go along and with experience this will build up.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Can the Ag. Prime Minister state whether there are arrangements within the vicinity of Police stations for examination of victims of sexual assaults?

The Ag. Prime Minister: Victims are not examined at the Police station. They are taken to hospital.

Mr Ganoo: There is another missing link in the chain. Can I ask the Ag. Prime Minister to see to it that when these child victims go to depone in Courts to testify that they have been assaulted sexually, that they are accompanied by either a Woman Constable or Probation Officer or Child Welfare Officer to help them when they go for the first time in this new atmosphere of a Court house?

The Ag. Prime Minister: I am given to understand that this is the case actually, but if there are any weaknesses, I will see to it that the needful is done.

CIVIL SERVICE - PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL SYSTEM - INTRODUCTION

(No. B/750) Mrs S. Hanoomanjee (Second Member for Savanne and Black River) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether he will state when the Performance Appraisal System will be introduced in the Civil Service.

The Ag. Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that the Performance Management System (PMS), of which the Performance Appraisal System (PAS) is a major component, is being implemented in the service since last year in several departments. The first Department to implement the system on a pilot basis was the Central Statistical Office followed by the Meteorological Office and Services and the Valuation Department. As from this year, 12 additional Ministries/Departments are implementing the system.

The implementation of the PMS is in line with the PRB Report 2003 which has recommended that each public service organisation should adopt a performance management system. The PMS is a major reform initiative

meant to transform the Civil Service by improving performance at organisational, division, and individual levels within an agreed framework of goals, objectives and standards.

The PRB Report 2003 was approved by the then Government and accepted by all Public Officers who signed the option form which is binding. A Task Force was set up in 2004 at the Ministry of Civil Service and Administrative Reforms to help implement the PMS/PAS, such as devising of appropriate Performance Appraisal Forms and Guidelines. Subsequently, the Unions were consulted.

In a context of the implementation of the PMS, wide consultations with all stakeholders, including unions of Public Officers, were held in May 2005 onwards. Circular Letters and appropriate guidelines were also issued to Ministries/ Departments to sensitize all officers on the PMS/PAS and to seek their collaboration.

Intensive training has also been provided to some 400 officers from mid to top management levels to make them knowledgeable and conversant with the technicalities involved in the process. In addition, sensitization and training are being systematically carried out for all officers in organisations where the PMS is being implemented.

I wish to add that the Programme Based Budgeting, which has been introduced as from this financial year in the context of the Medium Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF), complements the implementation of the PMS. Both these reform strategies are meant to render the public service more responsive, accountable and efficient.

Hon. Members may recall that in a statement which the hon. Prime Minister made in this House in January last in the context of the closing down of the DWC, he said -

“Our vision of modern Public Sector Management is geared towards performance and results. As part of the public sector reforms programme underway, the PMS which is a central component of this strategy, has been introduced in the public sector since last year and will be fully operational by the end of 2008”.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: With regard to those at the highest level of the hierarchy, can the Ag. Prime Minister state what would be the criteria for the performance appraisal and whether it is linked to productivity and how is this going to be determined?

The Ag. Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, this question, I think, implies a very narrow view of the PMS. It must be viewed as a whole project. It does not account only for productivity. It is to my mind to help the civil service to move forward, to improve this service as a whole. It is not an appraisal system only, though the appraisal system is a major component. It is a management system as a whole to communicate to all those working in any department the vision of Government, the objective of the particular department and how to achieve this vision.

I am given to understand that each Ministry which has introduced the system has had wide consultations. I, myself, in my Ministry, had addressed the department that was taking part and, at the end of it, they were all happy. We have replaced the whole system of confidential report into a more proactive continuing process where the officer reported upon, is encouraged to come forward to give his vision, of how he contributes to where he is this working and help him to achieve it. This is the main criterion: to help him to achieve it. Productivity comes in as a sideline; it is not the main issue.

Mr Ganoo: Did the Ag. Prime Minister say that the whole system will start to be implemented gradually in certain specific departments of the Ministries?

The Ag. Prime Minister: It has started as a pilot project and it is interesting that the Central Statistical Office volunteered because they said they were ready for it; they started it and they have been followed by others.

Mr Gunness: Is there any time-frame for all Ministries to be under this appraisal system?

The Ag. Prime Minister: I have already mentioned in my answer that it would be in 2008.

ST SACRÉMENT CHURCH, CASSIS – BURGLARY

(No. B/751) Mrs A. Navarre-Marie (First Member for GRNW and Port Louis West) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether he is aware that the Church of St Sacrement at Cassis has recently been, on several occasions, subject to burglary and, if so, will he, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to if an inquiry has been carried thereinto and the outcome thereof.

The Ag. Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that on 06 May 2007, a case of theft of Rs2000 from a cupboard inside the Saint Sacrément Church at Cassis was reported. Another case of attempt to commit larceny was reported on 16 June 2007.

Both cases are still being investigated by Port Louis (South) CID. Mr Speaker, Sir, with a view to dissuading thefts at the St. Sacrément Church, patrols by various Units of the Police Force have been stepped up in the region.

Moreover, the Inspector-in-Charge of the region has developed close working relationship with the “*force vives*” of the region in keeping in line with the Police/Public Partnership concept. In this context, several meetings have been organized with the Parish of Cassis and the President of the “*forces vives*” with a view to developing strategies to fight cases of larceny.

Mrs Navarre-Marie: Mr Speaker, Sir, the situation is very serious in Cassis, the Church itself and the vicinity. Last time, I spoke of the plundering of tombs in the cemetery which is near the church in Cassis. Will the hon. Ag. Prime Minister impress upon the Commissioner of Police to see to it that the staff at the Police Station be beefed up, because it would seem that there is not enough Police Officers there and that - as the Ag. Prime Minister said - regular patrols are carried out there?

The Ag. Prime Minister: As I mentioned in my reply, regular patrols are being carried out. I have already done the necessary. Yesterday, I spoke with the Commissioner of Police on the line that the hon. Member is referring to. I realized that in the region there have been problems and a lot of anxiety about what is going on.

POLICE FORCE – HANDWRITING UNIT & PHOTOGRAPHIC SECTION

(No. B/752) Mr M. Dowarkasing (Third Member for Curepipe and Midlands) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether, in regard to the handwriting section and the photographic section of the Police Force, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to whether

they have been transferred to the Police Forensic Science Laboratory and, if not, why not.

The Ag. Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that following recommendations made by Lord Mackay and Mr John Horswell of the Forensic Services of the Australian Federal Police, the Forensic Science Laboratory was detached from the Police and made to operate as an autonomous Department under the Prime Minister's Office with effect from July 2000.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am also informed by the Commissioner of Police that officers in the Photographic Section, Handwriting Unit, Crime Record Office, Fingerprint Department, Draughtsman Office and the Scene of Crime Office are an integral part of the Police Investigation Team and cannot, therefore, be dissociated from each other or detached from the Police Force. Therefore, the transfer of the Handwriting Unit and Photographic Section to the Forensic Science Laboratory does not arise.

Moreover, it is to be noted that neither the Mackay Report nor the Report of Commissioner Joel Sere and Colonel Jean Pierre Vanoye, French Consultants, who recently carried out an overall assessment of the Mauritius Police Force, made any recommendation regarding the transfer of the Photographic Section and the Handwriting Unit to the Forensic Science Laboratory.

Mr Dowarkasing: Mr Speaker, Sir, if the hon. Ag. Prime Minister has the answer, I would like to ask him whether he does not consider these two sections as being specialized Units of the Police Force and should, eventually, work in very close collaboration with the Forensic Science Lab?

The Ag. Prime Minister: I am given to understand from the Commissioner of Police. I understand that they are specialized, but not that specialized that they should be detached.

Mr Dowarkasing: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Ag. Prime Minister whether he is aware that officers working in those sections are being penalized with respect to promotion and other facilities, and that outsiders are being given scholarships in terms of

Mr Speaker: Can I ask the hon. Member how this question is related to the main question? We are talking about the Photographic Section of the Police Force which has been transferred and now the hon. Member is talking of promotion and victimization in the service.

Mr Dowarkasing: Mr Speaker, Sir, the question involves Police officers working in that section.

Mr Speaker: No! I rule out the question. The hon. Member should come with a substantive question.

POLICEMEN – RECRUITMENT – NOVEMBER 2004

(No. B/753) Mr M. Dowarkasing (Third Member for Curepipe and Midlands) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to whether some 700 Policemen were recruited in November 2004 and, if so, if they have been confirmed in their posts and, if not, why not.

The Ag. Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that on 17 November 2004, a batch of 702 Trainee Police Constables (594 male and 108 female) was enlisted in the Police Department to undergo theoretical and practical training for a period of at least two years.

On successful completion of the two-year training programme and, subject to their being favourably reported upon, Trainee Police Constables are eligible for consideration for appointment to the grade of Police Constable or Woman Police Constable, as and when vacancies occur.

Out of the 702 Trainee Police Constables recruited in November 2004, there were 48 drop-outs and 654 are still in post.

In April and May this year, out of the 654 Trainee Police Constables in post, 646 were appointed in a substantive capacity and placed on a 12 months' probation.

The remaining 8 Trainee Police Constables have not yet been appointed in a substantive capacity for the following reasons –

- two are under interdiction;
- four are on unauthorized absence, and
- two are abroad.

The Police Constables will be confirmed in their appointment after satisfactory completion of their probationary period.

PRISON OFFICERS – INTERDICTION

(No. B/754) Mr Y. Varma (First Member for Mahebourg and Plaine Magnien) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether, in regard to prison officers who are currently under interdiction, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Prisons, information as to the number thereof.

The Ag. Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Commissioner of Prisons that there are currently 33 officers on the establishment of the Mauritius Prisons Service who are under interdiction in accordance with the Disciplined Forces Service Commission Regulations.

The position in regard to cases relating to these 33 officers is as follows -

- (i) criminal proceedings have been instituted against 20 officers. The cases of 16 officers are before the Courts and the Police has sought the advice of the Director of Public Prosecutions in the cases of 4 officers;
- (ii) disciplinary proceedings have been instituted by the Commissioner of Prisons against 10 officers under the Disciplined Forces Service Commission Regulations, and
- (iii) the cases of 3 Police officers have been referred by the Disciplined Forces Service Commission to Committees of Inquiry set up under the Disciplined Forces Commission Regulations and the reports are being awaited.

Mr Varma: Could the hon. Ag. Prime Minister confirm whether the cases which are pending before the Courts are long-standing cases?

The Ag. Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, the earliest case that I have is in 1999 and we are waiting for the case to be heard before the Curepipe Court; it will be on 10 December 2007.

FAST TRACK COMMITTEE – PROJECTS

(No. B/755) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether, in regard to the Fast Track Committee chaired by him, he will give a list of the projects submitted thereto as at to date, indicating –

- (a) the details thereof, and
- (b) where matters stand in each case.

(Withdrawn)

CITÉ VALLIJEE FLYOVER – SECURITY

(No. B/756) Mrs A. Navarre-Marie (First Member for GRNW and Port Louis West) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether he is aware that aggressions and thefts regularly take place along the flyover at Cité Vallijee and, if so, will he state the measures that will be taken to ensure the security of the users thereof.

The Ag. Prime Minister : Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that no case of aggression or theft along the flyover of Cité Vallijee has been reported to Police.

With a view to ensuring the security of the users, one Police officer performs fixed point duty daily from 0700 hours to 1000 hours and from

1500 hours to 1800 hours near the flyover. A special patrol is also carried out daily from 1000 hours to 1500 hours and from 1800 hours to 0700 hours. Apart from the local Police, the Divisional Support Unit, the Emergency Response Service and the *Police du Transport* maintain regular patrols in the vicinity of the flyover.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am also informed by the Commissioner of Police that the situation is being monitored by the local Police and policing arrangements will be reinforced in the vicinity of the flyover should the need arise.

Mrs Navarre-Marie: Mr Speaker, Sir, this is yet another problem which is causing annoyance to the public in the region, especially to old people and women coming back from work. Will the hon. Ag. Prime Minister see to it that there is at least a Police officer who is posted there, especially in the evening at peak hours?

The Ag. Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, there is a Police officer posted between 1500 hours and 1800 hours. I will make sure that this is actually maintained.

MR J. C. R. AND MR J. S. R. – BATTERIE CASSÉE – ALLEGED POLICE BRUTALITY

(No. B/757) **Mr G. Lesjongard (Second Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue)** asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to whether, on or about 09 July 2007, one Mr J. C. R. and one Mr J. S. R., residing at Batterie Cassée, have been arrested and, if so, if there has been any complaint of Police brutality on these persons.

The Ag. Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that on 09 July 2007, following information received that one Mr J.C.R. was dealing in drug, the personnel of Harbour ADSU proceeded to Batterie Cassée for investigation.

On reaching the spot, the ADSU officers were vociferously insulted by the suspect and were assaulted by three persons, Mr L.J.M., Mr D.O.L. and Mr J.S.R.

As the crowd which gathered there became more hostile, the ADSU officers withdrew. A reinforced team came later and searched the premises of the offenders. No drug was found.

Mr D.O.L. and Mr J.S.R. were arrested in connection with the incident. Mr J.C.R. surrendered himself on 10 July 2007 and was accompanied by his lawyer. On the same day, the three offenders appeared before Port Louis Division II Court on a provisional charge of 'Assaulting Agent of Civil Authority causing effusion of blood'. They were released on bail after furnishing a surety of Rs3,000 each.

On 12 July 2007, Mr L.J.M. surrendered himself and was accompanied by his lawyer. He was released on bail after furnishing a surety of Rs6,000 plus a recognizance of Rs15,000.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am also informed by the Commissioner of Police that three complaints of Police brutality related to the incident have been reported at Harbour ADSU and Abercrombie Police Station.

Enquiry into all the cases is still underway.

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Speaker, Sir, I thank the Ag. Prime Minister for his reply. May I ask him whether later during that day, the residence of one Mrs Bernadette Perrine Ravina, a top athlete of this country, a gold medalist of the African Games, was searched and whether the Police officers had a search warrant, Mr Speaker, Sir?

The Ag. Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have no such information, but I know the person whom the hon. Member mentioned. I'll look into it.

POLICE OFFICERS – CRIMINAL CASES – JULY 2005 TO DATE

(No. B/758) Mrs S. Grenade (Second Member for GRNW and Port Louis West) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the number and the nature of the criminal cases reported against serving and retired Police Officers since July 2005 to date.

The Ag. Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that for period July 2005 to date there are 748 criminal cases reported against serving Police Officers. The nature of the criminal cases is simple assault, verbal abuse and involuntary wounds and blows by imprudence following road accidents.

As regards the number of cases reported against retired Police Officers there is no record kept to that effect, as these cases are being dealt with alike the general public.

Mr Speaker Sir, the Mauritius Police Force has the duty and responsibility to uphold the law firmly and impartially with due regards to human rights.

The Commissioner of Police is continuously sensitising Police personnel to perform their duty through professionalism and exemplary conduct.

Mrs Grenade: Can the Ag. Prime Minister table a list of these cases?

The Ag. Prime Minister: Would it serve any interest to have 748 names mentioned as to whether it is assault. I don't think it is right.

SCHOOLS (PRIMARY) – TEACHERS – ALLEGED CASES OF AGGRESSIONS AND/OR ASSAULTS

(No. B/759) Mrs F. Jeewa-Daureeawoo (Third Member for Stanley and Rose Hill) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether, in regard to alleged cases of aggressions and/or assaults on primary school teachers, whilst on duty, since January 2007 to date, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to –

- (a) the number of reported cases, and
- (b) where matters stand in each case.

The Ag. Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that since January 2007 to date, 10 cases of assault on primary school teachers, including 3 cases involving primary school students, have been reported to the Police. 9 of these cases are still under enquiry while one case is pending Court judgment.

I am also informed by the Supervising Officer, Ministry of Education and Human Resources that in 2003 following an increasing number of instances whereby members of the public have verbally or physically assaulted teachers or pupils, a circular was issued to all Directors requesting them to introduce security measures and to control access of members of the public to the school compound. In March this year, another circular was forwarded to Heads of Primary as well as secondary schools, stressing on the need to exercise adequate control to access on school premises.

However, there are still shortcomings with regard to security on school premises. The Ministry of Education and Human Resources has constituted a team to look into the matter and to revisit the existing arrangements and to make recommendations as regards security and access to schools by members of the public during school hours. The team will also set up a system of grievance handling, after taking on board the suggestions of the different stakeholders. Members of the public will be given the opportunity to submit their suggestions to the team.

Mrs Jeewa-Daureeawoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, does the Ag. Prime Minister not think that there is a need to have a Police Constable posted at each school during school hours for security reasons?

The Ag. Prime Minister: I'll look into the matter, but I don't think this will solve the problem. The problem is much wider and we have to look at it globally.

Mrs Martin: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the Ag. Prime Minister since when the team from the Ministry of Education has been set up and when is it expected to give its recommendations?

The Ag. Prime Minister: I understand it is only recently, about three weeks ago. This has not been set up, but this new circular was issued, I gather, in April or May of this year to remind that there was a circular in 2003 and to reinforce the measures that were mentioned in the previous circular.

VEHICLES (STOLEN) – REPORTED CASES - 2005, 2006 AND 2007

(No. B/760) Mrs F. Jeewa-Daureeawoo (Third Member for Stanley and Rose Hill) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether, in regard to the reported cases of stolen vehicles for each of the years 2005, 2006 and 2007 to date, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the number thereof, indicating where matters stand in each case.

The Ag. Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that 784 cases of stolen vehicles have been reported in 2005, out of which 80 cases have been prosecuted, 657 cases have been classified and 47 cases are still under enquiry. 128 vehicles have been recovered.

In 2006, 788 cases have been reported. 57 cases have been prosecuted, 463 have been classified and 268 are still under enquiry. 103 vehicles have been recovered.

From January 2007 to date, 392 cases have been reported, out of which 20 have been prosecuted, 65 have been classified and 307 are under enquiry. 37 vehicles have been recovered.

Mr Speaker Sir, I am further informed that the Police is taking the following measures with a view to reducing the number of thefts of vehicles

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- (i) particulars of reported cases of stolen vehicles are immediately sent by the Police Headquarters to alert mobile and static units on ground throughout the island and the National Transport Authority (NTA);
- (ii) stop and search exercises are carried out to check vehicles so as to ascertain whether they have been reported stolen, and
- (iii) information campaigns are organised with a view to sensitising the public on measures to be taken to prevent thefts of vehicles.

I am also informed that since September 2006, the NTA has informed members of the public by way of Communiqué that it will no longer register or licence any vehicle where the chassis number has been either tampered with or erased. Whenever the Commissioner of Police notifies the NTA about a stolen vehicle, an “objection to transfer” note is inserted in the registration database to freeze all transactions relating to that stolen vehicle. In case any person turns up for the transfer of ownership of any vehicle reported to have been stolen, the NTA secures the original registration book and copies of the sale documents, obtains the identity of the new owner and refers the matter to the Police for enquiry.

Mrs Jeewa-Daureeawoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, is the Ag. Prime Minister in presence of any information to the effect that Police officers too are involved in stolen vehicles and whether an inquiry is on?

The Ag. Prime Minister: We have been informed of this matter and Police inquiry is ongoing. I will also say that we are looking at the National Transport Authority very closely because we suspect that, there also, there is a need for investigation.

Mrs Jeewa-Daureeawoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I have the number of Police officers who are involved?

The Ag. Prime Minister: I don't have the information, but I can communicate it later.

TOURISTS – ASSAULTS AND AGGRESSIONS – 2005 AND 2006

(No. B/761) Mrs F. Jeewa-Daureeawoo (Third Member for Stanley and Rose Hill) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether in regard to alleged cases of assaults and aggressions on tourists for the year 2005 and for the period January to October 2006, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to –

- (a) the number of reported cases, and
- (b) where matters stand in each case.

(Withdrawn)

MBC – CHAIRMAN – TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF EMPLOYMENT, SALARY, ETC.

(No. B/762) Mr P. Jhugroo (Third Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether, in regard to the Chairman of the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Corporation, information as to –

- (a) his terms and conditions of employment;
- (b) the salary, allowances and other fringe benefits drawn, and
- (c) the make and model of car put at his disposal.

The Ag. Prime Minister: Mr Speaker Sir, with your permission, I am tabling the information asked for by the hon. Member.

**MBC – DIRECTOR GENERAL – TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF
EMPLOYMENT, SALARY, ETC.**

(No. B/763) Mr P. Jhugroo (Third Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether, in regard to the Director General of the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Corporation, information as to –

- (a) his terms and conditions of employment;
- (b) the salary, allowances and other fringe benefits drawn, and
- (c) the make and model of car put at his disposal.

The Ag. Prime Minister: With your permission, Mr Speaker, Sir, I am tabling the information asked for by the hon. Member.

Mr Speaker: Questions addressed to hon. Ministers. The Table has been informed that Parliamentary Questions B/764, B/766, B/779, B/793 and B/804 have been withdrawn.

FRUITS AND VEGETABLES - PRODUCTION

(No. B/764) Mrs S. Hanoomanjee (Second Member for Savanne and Black River) asked the Minister of Agro Industry and Fisheries whether in regard to the non-sugar sector, he will state –

- (a) the short term plan for enhancing the production of fruits and vegetables, and
- (b) the long term plan to render this sector more viable, in view of the number of planters shifting from sugar cane to fruit and vegetable plantation.

(Withdrawn)

UNESCO OFFICE - PARIS – EXPENDITURE

(No. B/765) Mrs S. Hanoomanjee (Second Member for Savanne and Black River) asked the Minister of Foreign Affairs, International Trade and Co-operation whether in regard to the UNESCO Office of Mauritius in Paris, he will state the total expenditure incurred since its opening to date.

The Minister of Information Technology & Telecommunications (Mr E. Sinatambou): Mr Speaker, Sir, the House may wish to know that this Government took a policy decision in March 2006 to open a permanent delegation of the Republic of Mauritius to UNESCO in Paris.

Permanent delegate was appointed in March 2006 and assumed duty in Paris on 14 April 2006. The need to open a permanent delegation for Mauritius at UNESCO was strongly felt by Government in view of the strategic importance of UNESCO and the benefits which Mauritius tends to derive from its assistance and support.

The decision was taken at an opportune moment, particularly, when Government was to embark on a strong lobbying campaign at the level of UNESCO for the inscription of the Aapravasi Ghat and Le Morne site on the World Heritage List. UNESCO supported the decision of Government and the office of a permanent delegation has been instrumental in the inscription of the Aapravasi Ghat on the World Heritage List in July 2006.

I am informed, Mr Speaker, Sir, that the permanent delegation is vigorously pursuing its lobbying actions in favour of the nomination *dossier* for the Le Morne Cultural Landscape to be examined by the World Heritage Committee scheduled for July 2008.

(Interruptions)

I can assure the House that the permanent delegation has been instrumental. I also wish to highlight that on 19 June 2007, subsequent to lobbying by the permanent delegation, Mauritius has been elected with 42 votes on a total of 56 to one of the five seats allocated to Africa on the 24-Member Inter-

Governmental Committee for the protection and promotion of a diversity of cultural expressions of UNESCO for a full term of four years. The election of Mauritius to the Committee will bring added value, we believe, to the request made by Mauritius for the inscription of Le Morne Cultural Landscape on the World Heritage List

The House may also wish to know that there are 50 States, including countries of the region like the Comoros and Madagascar, having a permanent delegation to UNESCO separate from the Embassies accredited to the Republic of France. Since its opening to date, Mr Speaker, Sir, I am advised that as per records total expenditure amounting to about Rs16,781,590 has been incurred in respect of the office of the permanent delegation of Mauritius to UNESCO in Paris.

I would like to end my reply, Mr Speaker, Sir, by stating that I believe that this is money very well spent.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Minister say whether he is, in fact, stating that officials of the Mauritius Embassy in Paris do not have the competence to deal with it and this is why there was need to have another office in Paris equivalent to the one that we have now?

Mr Sinatambou: That is certainly not what I have said. The hon. Lady should listen more carefully, perhaps.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: At this particular juncture, when savings need to be done by Government, can I ask the hon. Minister whether the UNESCO office will still be maintained in Paris for quite some time or whether, after the two projects have gone through, this office will be dismantled?

Mr Sinatambou: Mr Speaker, Sir, that is a question of policy which will be taken. I am only the Acting Minister. Probably, it would be better to wait for the substantive Minister to reply.

(Interruptions)

Mr Cuttaree: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am not talking about the policy, I am talking about something more concrete. When we were discussing the Budget recently on the estimates, there was a sum of some Rs9 m., if I am not mistaken, which was voted for rent. Can I ask the hon. Minister whether

he is aware that the permanent representative has only one person as staff. They could have been easily accommodated in the Embassy, but the Government decided to have a special office for two people at the cost of Rs9 m.? Does the hon. Minister find that normal?

Mr Sinatambou: Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to stress that we should not be pennywise and pound-foolish.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Mr Sinatambou: If the hon. Members on the other side of the House would care to listen! Mr Speaker, Sir, if we just take the site of Le Morne, if that were to become a World Heritage Site...

(Interruptions)

We are to understand that the price of property on a particular World Heritage Site would not be worth, let us say 25%...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order, please! Order!

(Interruptions)

Has the hon. Minister finished with the reply?

Mr Sinatambou: I did not finish my reply, Sir.

Mr Speaker: Address the Chair, please!

(Interruptions)

Order! Order!

Mr Sinatambou: I will insist, Mr Speaker, Sir, this is money very well spent for this country.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: May I ask the hon. Minister whether he can confirm that the permanent representative is entitled to a residence allowance, an entertainment allowance, allowances for clothing, allowances for her husband and children? Can he confirm this?

Mr Sinatambou: My information, Sir, is that all the payments are as per standard conditions of service in line with the PRB report of 2003 and local legislation in force in France.

Mr Dowarkasing: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask one supplementary question? Can I ask the hon. Minister if he has the figures to state to the House what amount is being given as allocation for warm clothes allowance?

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Mr Sinatambou: I do not know whether those types of allocations used to be given under their Government, but I see no such thing here, Mr Speaker, Sir.

CESS – STUDY

(No. B/766) Mrs S. Hanoomanjee (Second Member for Savanne and Black River) asked the Minister of Agro Industry and Fisheries whether, in regard to the study commissioned to address the issue of Cess, he will state if the report has now been submitted, indicating if a copy thereof will be laid on the Table of the National Assembly.

(Withdrawn)

SMALL ENTERPRISES - WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS - GRANT

(No. B/767) Mrs F. Labelle (Third Member for Vacoas and Floreal) asked the Minister of Women's Rights, Child Development, Family Welfare & Consumer Protection whether, in regard to the grant of Rs50,000 for the setting up of small enterprises, she will, for the financial year 2006-2007, state –

- (a) the number of women who have benefited therefrom;
- (b) the amount disbursed, indicating in each case, the date of disbursement, and
- (c) the line of business concerned.

The Minister of Industry, Small & Medium Enterprises, Commerce & Cooperatives (Dr. R. Jeetah): Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I shall reply to this question. I am informed that –

- (a) 36 out of a total number of 83 entrepreneurs benefited from the grant of Rs50,000 under the Start-Up Scheme for the financial year 2006-2007;
- (b) the amount disbursed was Rs1,369,101 and the disbursement have been effected mainly during the month June/July 2007, and
- (c) the lines of business were Agro-Industry/Food processing, Textile & Handicrafts and Services sector.

Furthermore, 17 Women Cooperative Societies have benefited a total sum of Rs340,000 under the Grant Scheme for Cooperative Agricultural Activities. Under the Grant Scheme for Youth and Women Cooperatives, 19 Women Cooperative Societies have benefited, during financial year 2006/2006, a total sum of Rs190,000. 5 projects from Women Cooperative Societies involved in agro processing in Rodrigues have also been approved. Under these schemes, Mr Speaker, Sir, run by the cooperatives, 828 women entrepreneurs have benefited.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the House will note that during period 2000 to 2005, no woman entrepreneur benefited from such schemes.

PHOENIX - HANDICAPPED CHILDREN – ABANDONMENT

(No. B/768) Mrs F. Labelle (Third Member for Vacoas and Floreal) asked the Minister of Women's Rights, Child Development, Family Welfare & Consumer Protection whether she will state if her Ministry has been apprised of the case of two handicapped children who were recently abandoned by their mother in Phoenix and, if so, will she state if any inquiry was initiated thereinto and, if not, why not and, if so, the outcome thereof.

The Minister of Social Security, National Solidarity and Senior Citizens Welfare & Reform Institutions (Mrs S. Bappoo): Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I shall reply to this question.

The case of two handicapped children aged 11 and 12 years who were recently abandoned by their mother in Phoenix was referred to the Child Protection Unit of Phoenix on 12 June 2007 by the Phoenix Police Station as a case of child abandonment.

It was reported that the biological mother of the children living at Phoenix, abandoned the two children on 11 June 2007 around 18.00 hrs at the place of a woman living in the vicinity.

In the morning of 12 June 2007, the neighbour took the two children to the Phoenix Police Station to report the matter. Thereafter, the Police Officers took the children to the Child Protection Unit at Phoenix.

Information received from the lady reveals that the minors' father passed away recently. It was also reported that the two minors were attending the APEIM school.

In view of the fact that the mother was untraceable, arrangements were made by the officers of the Child Development Unit for the children to be taken care of by a relative residing at Hollyrood, Vacoas.

A pre-measure statement was recorded to that effect at the Phoenix Police Station and the children were handed over to the relative.

I am also informed by the Commissioner of Police that the mother was arrested on 13 June 2007. She appeared before Court on 14 June 2007 and was released on bail on the same day after furnishing a surety of Rs1500 and recognizance of Rs25,000. After her release, she lived for some time at the place of that relative who was found to be, in fact, a family friend.

Officers of the Child Development Unit have effected a visit on Friday 13 July 2007 at APEIM school and the children were found well dressed and even looked tidy.

The children informed that they were living together with their mother at the place of another relative at Camp Caval, Curepipe. I am also being informed that the person is, in fact, the mother's partner.

Mrs Labelle: May I ask the hon. Minister whether, in these type of cases there is a follow-up mechanism, that is, if regular visits are scheduled to monitor these children and their mothers respectively?

Mrs Bappoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, maybe the substantive Minister can later give more details, but I am informed that there are regular monitoring and visits by the officers of the Child Development Unit.

Mrs Perrier: Sir, can the Minister inform the House whether the mother is followed by a psychologist?

Mrs Bappoo: I am also being informed that she is being followed by a psychologist.

BASIC INVALIDITY PENSION/CARER'S ALLOWANCE - APPLICATIONS

(No. B/769) Mrs F. Labelle (Third Member for Vacoas & Floreal) asked the Minister of Social Security, National Solidarity and Senior Citizens Welfare & Reform Institutions whether, in regard to the Basic Invalidity Pension, she will state if there are cases in which that pension has been disallowed following an application made by the beneficiary thereof for a carer's allowance and, if so, the number of such cases.

Mrs Bappoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, there have been regularly cases where payment of Basic Invalidity Pension has been discontinued following an application of carer's allowance. This has been so in a limited number of cases since the implementation of the National Pension Scheme. In fact, over the past seven years, the number of cases which had been disallowed were as follows –

Year	No. of Cases
2000	54
2001	46
2002	66
2003	56
2004	51
2005	34
2006	40

For the cases mentioned, at the time of assessment for Carer's Allowance, these persons were found to be less than 60% disabled. They, therefore, did not meet the criteria both for the BIP as well as for the Carer's Allowance. This is mainly due to the fact that the applicants' states of health had improved in relation to their states of health at the time they were initially assessed for the BIP.

I would like, however, to point out that any applicant whose pension has been disallowed is given the opportunity to appeal against such a decision within one month of the disallowance notice.

Moreover, if ever that person has not done so, he may still reapply for a BIP if he feels that his state of health has aggravated.

Mrs Labelle: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I have confirmation from the hon. Minister whether it is a new policy to assess the invalidity following a request for carer's allowance? A beneficiary has been declared invalid for a period of two years and after some months this person submits an application for a carer's allowance and this person is being asked to appear before the Board for a whole assessment.

Mrs Bappoo: The same policy is in force as far as 1976 when the National Pensions Act was passed. The same policy is still in force. If at the time the person received the Basic Invalidity Pension there was no request for carer's allowance, but a few months later, he wants to make a request, the law stipulates that he should go back to the Medical Board and it all depends on the medical assessment made.

At 1.00 p.m. the sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 2.40 p.m. with Mr Speaker in the Chair

CAUDAN ROUNDABOUT – TRAFFIC LIGHTS

(No. B/770) Mrs F. Labelle (Third Member for Vacoas and Floreal) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping whether, in regard to the Caudan roundabout, he will state if there is any project for the installation of traffic lights thereat and, if so, the details thereof.

The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping (Dr. R. Beebeejaun): Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I am replying to PQ Nos B/770 and B/782 together as they are related.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in 2002, the feasibility study was carried out for the conversion of Caudan round about into a signalised junction. This study was carried out by the French Consultant BCEOM and was financed from a

grant by the French Government. The project was approved in the Capital Expenditure 2006/2007, with a provision of Rs35 m.

With regard to part (a) of PQ No. B/782, the same firm carried out the detailed engineering in 2006 and the project also included a coordination of traffic lights between Caudan and Trou Fanfaron and the feasibility study of a bus lane along M1. The study was partly financed by a grant from the French Government.

The new junction will provide three additional lanes in each direction thus allowing a proper segregation of right-turning, left-turning and through traffic along the approaches. The junction will operate with traffic lights which will be coordinated with the traffic lights at Sookdeo Bissoondoyal Square, Immigration Square and Trou Fanfaron junction.

As regards part (b), according to the RDA, the consultancy was not subcontracted to another firm.

Concerning part (c), the Consultant recommended to proceed with the conversion of the Caudan roundabout into a signalised junction and to provide a coordination system with the other traffic lights at Place d'Armes, Louis Pasteur and Trou Fanfaron.

According to the Consultant, the new system will offer the following

—

- (i) some benefits during the peak period which may not be perceived ;
- (ii) an improved traffic flow during off peak periods along the motorway between Quay D and Caudan;
- (iii) improved accessibility to the inner Central Business District of Port Louis and the Caudan Waterfront area ;
- (iv) assist in the implementation of a bus lane along the motorway, and
- (v) allow for the system to be extended to the other streets in Port Louis in the future.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I want to emphasise that the Consultant has advised that the project will not by itself solve the congestion problem. Other accompanying measures, for example, Port Louis bypass or harbour bridge

or elevated highway or mass transit system have to be considered in conjunction.

Mrs Labelle: May I ask the hon. Minister whether a contract has been awarded for the implementation of this project, that is, the installation of lights at Caudan?

The Ag. Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, the tender for civil works at Caudan junction and the installation and harmonisation of traffic lights were launched in April 2007. The contract was awarded to A. J. Maurel for civil works and to Sobany & Sons for traffic lights on 21 May 2007 after approval of CTB. However, no notice for start of works has been issued as there may be developments in the public infrastructure sector following the fruitful discussions that the hon. Prime Minister had with the Chinese Government in Beijing.

Mrs Labelle: Mr Speaker, Sir, in his answer, the Ag. Prime Minister mentioned that this project will not solve the problem by itself and there are accompanying measures. May I ask the Ag. Prime Minister when these other measures will be implemented?

The Ag. Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I emphasized on many occasions that the other projects will cost billions of rupees. We are looking at them. When the Prime Minister comes back, I'll know more about them.

Mr Dowarkasing: Mr Speaker, Sir, the Ag. Prime Minister stated in his reply that the feasibility study was financed by a grant from the French Government. May I get some precision as to whether it is a grant from the French Government or is it the savings that were made on the Verdun/Terre Rouge link road?

The Ag. Prime Minister: There was a grant from the French Government and they recommended that we use the reliquat, that is, about 100,000 Euros, which were left for that purpose. We have the recommendations on that account.

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the Ag. Prime Minister whether, in regard to the installation of signalisation of the Caudan roundabout, the contract was subcontracted to a company called Luxconsult (Mtius) Ltd.?

The Ag. Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, this was raised previously. I asked the hon. Member to let me have the information that he holds. I haven't had any reply from him. As I have said, I have no information. If the hon. Member has any, I welcome it. But I would say that this firm has been in Mauritius since 1983/84. They have been here for twenty years and have done several projects. Personally, I don't see why they should subcontract, but if the hon. Member has an information to the contrary, I do welcome it.

Mr Lesjongard : May I, Mr Speaker, Sir, table copy of the subcontract agreement between the BCEOM and the Luxconsult (Mtius) Ltd. for an amount, as it has been mentioned during the debates on the Budget, of Rs207,500. May I know from the Ag. Prime Minister for what amount that consultancy study was awarded to BCEOM?

The Ag. Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, it came to 100,000 euros grant financed by the French Government, 85, 925 euros financed by RDA.

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Speaker, Sir, in terms of rupees, it is about Rs7.9 m. May I ask the hon. Ag. Prime Minister whether he finds it proper that the consultancy contract has been awarded to a French Company for Rs7.9 m. and that it was subcontracted at a price of Rs207,500?

The Ag. Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am not aware of what the subcontract entails. Luxconsult is being mentioned, but it was the road at Malinga/Crève Coeur which is another project. I remind the House that in reply to a question I said that the contract of Malinga/Crève Coeur road was shifted from Luxconsult to BCEOM afterwards. I am not aware of what the hon. Member is talking about. But having said this, I am not talking only about Luxconsult and BCEOM, but I am talking generally. I would not be surprised, if they want some information which is available locally, that they should pay a small sum for whatever is being asked.

Mr Dowarkasing: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I know from the hon. Ag. Prime Minister whether there was any tender exercise that was carried out for the feasibility study?

The Ag. Prime Minister: As I said, they were already on the project in 2002. It started then and it is an ongoing project. The previous Government had already embarked on the study.

Mr Dowarkasing: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Ag. Prime Minister whether paying Rs7.5 m. for consultancy is not on the high side which represents more than 10% ...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: That is a question of opinion!

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Speaker, Sir, since we have voted an amount of Rs48 m. with regard to the installation of traffic lights at the Caudan roundabout, may I ask the Ag. Prime Minister whether we have clear recommendations with regard to improvement in traffic flow at the level of Caudan roundabout?

The Ag. Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have already answered that part. There are some questions about traffic peak flow but it will improve, as I said, three other components of the traffic.

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Speaker, Sir, can the Ag. Prime Minister confirm that in the report submitted by the consultant, it is clearly stated that the solution that is envisaged, that is, the installation of traffic lights at the Caudan roundabout, is not a viable solution and that we shall be wasting Rs48 m. for the removal of the Caudan roundabout and putting traffic lights?

The Ag. Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have read this report many times. I have never seen what the hon. Member mentioned.

FLOUR – SUBSIDY

(No. B/771) Mr M. Dowarkasing (Third Member for Curepipe and Midlands) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether he will state if there is any subsidy on flour and, if so, will he state -

- (a) the amount thereof, and
- (b) how it is funded

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

Mr Speaker, Sir, with the international tender price of flour for the year 2007, the retail price of flour should have been Rs7.50 per ½ kg as from January 2007. Consumers are actually paying Rs5.30 per ½ kg.

As a result, the STC has been incurring a loss on this product to the tune of Rs194.9 m. over the period July 2006 to June 2007. The STC has been able to maintain the price of flour without any direct subsidy from Government. All the loss incurred has been offset by the overall surplus of the STC made over the same period.

Mr Dowarkasing: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I know from the hon. Minister whether there is cross-subsidisation, therefore, on this item?

Dr. Bunwaree: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have just explained, there is surplus and then losses offset from the surplus. I believe the Member is not saying that it would have been better off for us to allow the price of flour to have gone up.

Mr Dowarkasing: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I know from the hon. Minister what amount of money is being spent on cross-subsidy of flour?

Dr. Bunwaree: Well, I have just mentioned that Rs194.9 m...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: I will ask hon. Members to listen to the answers which are being given. The hon. Minister gave the figure for one year.

Mr Gunness: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I know from the hon. Minister whether the cross-subsidisation is from the money which was received under the item expenses in connection with the importation of petroleum products which have been increased at three different occasions?

Dr. Bunwaree: This question has to be put to my colleague, the Minister of Industry.

LAND TRANSPORT AUTHORITY – SETTING UP

(No. B/772) **Mr M. Dowarkasing (Third Member for Curepipe and Midlands)** asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping whether he will state if it is proposed to set up a Land Transport Authority and, if so, the reasons therefor.

The Ag. Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, Government has approved the setting up of a Land Transport Authority in line with a recommendation of Dr. Jonathan Richmond, Transport Consultant whose services were enlisted to work out a Transport Action Plan for the short, medium and long term. The Action Plan was discussed and agreed upon unanimously by the various stakeholders of the transport sector, that is, bus operators, transport employees unions, the private sector and concerned Government agencies. It has also been endorsed by the World Bank.

Currently, there are three distinct institutions namely, the National Transport Authority, the Road Development Authority and the Traffic Management & Road Safety Unit which are responsible for making policies and taking actions in the field of land transport. This fragmentation inhibits an overall planning of the land transport system for achieving desirable outcomes.

The new authority will handle all transport functions of the existing institutions which will be dissolved. It will have the mandate of planning, executing approved projects and managing transport resources effectively according to the Government programme. The Authority would also be responsible for integrating transport policy with the goals of other Government agencies and, in particular, for considering the needs of land use and transport integration. Focus would be placed on streamlining, removing duplication and reducing bureaucracy to cut back the costs of operations per unit of output as compared to those of the current existing organisations. To help us in the setting up of this new institution, my Ministry is having recourse to the services of a consultancy firm with proven experience in such projects. Tender documents in this respect will be finalised in consultation with the Ministry of Finance & Economic Development and the World Bank and will be submitted for approval to the Central Tender Board. Invitation for request for proposals will be launched

thereafter. The selected consultancy firm will, *inter alia*, hold necessary consultations with all stakeholders including the Trade Unions.

A copy of the Transport Action Plan is being placed in the Library.

CEB – LEGAL ADVISERS - APPOINTMENT

(No. B/773) Mrs D. Perrier (Fourth Member for Savanne and Black River) asked the Minister of Public Utilities whether, in regard to the appointment of legal advisers at the Central Electricity Board, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Board, information as to –

- (a) the names of the incumbents;
- (b) their terms and conditions of contract, and
- (c) the amount of retainer fee or any other fee to which they are entitled.

Dr. Kasenally: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the CEB that the latter retains the professional services of a number of legal advisers to provide assistance in legal matters. Some are employed on a regular basis while others provide their services on an *ad hoc* basis. In this regard, I am placing in the Library of the National Assembly a list of legal advisers currently working for the CEB and the terms and conditions on which their services are retained.

ICT AUTHORITY – LEGAL ADVISERS - APPOINTMENT

(No. B/774) Mrs D. Perrier (Fourth Member for Savanne and Black River) asked the Minister of Information Technology and Telecommunications whether, in regard to the appointment of legal advisers at the Information and Communication Technologies Authority, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Authority, information as to –

- (a) the names of the incumbents;
- (b) their terms and conditions of contract, and
- (c) the amount of retainer fee or any other fee to which they are entitled.

Mr Sinatambou: Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to refer the hon. Member to the Parliamentary Question B/1541 of 28 November 2006. Answers to parts (a) and (c) of the current Parliamentary Question are already filed in the Library of the House.

However, for part (b) of the question regarding the terms and conditions of contract of legal advisers whose services are enlisted by the Authority, I am advised that since its establishment in July 2002, the ICT Authority has availed itself of the services of lawyers on the following three terms –

- (i) a retainer basis;
- (ii) for cases before the ICT Appeal Tribunal and the Courts, and
- (iii) for other legal matters.

I am also informed that, following information obtained by the ICT Authority from the Solicitor General's Office, the Mauritius Telecom and some other private operators, fees payable to lawyers dealing with cases in the Telecom and ICT matters may vary between Rs50,000 and Rs200,000 with fees going up to Rs500,000 and even up to Rs1 m. depending on the intricacy of the particular cases. Well, this is what used to be the case under the previous Government.

I am, however, informed by the ICT Authority that regarding cases before the ICT Appeal Tribunal and the Courts, the Authority pays such fees as it considers reasonable and justified in relation to the complexity of the cases subject, now, to a maximum of Rs150,000 per case.

IRON BARS – MURRAY & ROBERTS – LOCAL PRODUCTION

(No. B/775) Mr E. Guimbeau (First Member for Curepipe and Midlands) asked the Minister of Industry, Small & Medium Enterprises, Commerce and Co-operatives whether, in regard to iron bars, he will state when Murray and Roberts will start the production thereof locally.

Dr. Jeetah: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that Murray and Roberts intends to start production of iron bars within the next 60 days.

Mr Guimbeau: Mr Speaker, Sir, is the Minister aware that since the closure of Desbro, there have been a drastic price increase, shortages and black market of iron bars on the local market?

Dr. Jeetah: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed from the Consumer Protection Unit that falls under the purview of my colleague, hon. Seebun, Minister in charge of Consumer Protection, that as at date the stock stands at 1,295 metric tons. Joonas will import 1,825 metric tons by end of July. MISCO will import 10,300 metric tons by end of July and Samlo is currently purchasing about 80 metric tons per day.

Mr Guimbeau: Mr Speaker, Sir, l'ACIM made a survey stating what I have just said. Can the Minister confirm what l'ACIM has said?

Dr. Jeetah: The matter remains with l'ACIM. What I can explain to the hon. Member is that since Desbro closed its shop, it used to hold about 60% to 70% share of the market, it would have been a disservice to the market.

Mr Bhagwan: M le président, il y a un problème de pénurie de barres de fer ces jours-ci. Les gens pauvres qui construisent leurs maisons rencontrent beaucoup de problèmes. What does the Minister intend to do to help people who have taken loans and are paying interests to banks and other financial institutions to construct their houses? I think there is a serious case of mismanagement of the dossier or the hon. Minister is protecting somebody else.

Mr Speaker: I am sorry. I will ask the hon. Member to withdraw the words "the hon. Minister is protecting somebody else".

Mr Bhagwan: The hon. Minister is not...

Mr Speaker: I have asked purely and simply the hon. Member to withdraw these words.

Mr Bhagwan: I withdraw. But can I qualify what I am saying?

Mr Speaker: There is no way that you can qualify. You have imputed motives to the Minister; will you please withdraw the words?

Mr Bhagwan: I withdraw. But can I add something?

Mr Speaker: No, it is an unqualified withdrawal! Hon. Minister, there is a question concerning shortage.

(Interruptions)

Order, I said!

Dr. Jeetah: Could the hon. Member repeat his question, please?

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: I have said order!

Mr Guimbeau: Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Minister confirm if the company MISCO (Mauritius Island Seal Company Ltd) is the local shareholder of Murray and Roberts?

Dr. Jeetah: I understand that they do have a partnership, but I do not have any details with regard as to how much is owned by one or the other.

Mr Ganoo: Is the hon. Minister aware that in some cases the price of iron bars has gone up by 100% when you compare the price which was obtaining before the liberalization took place?

Dr. Jeetah: Mr Speaker, Sir, I did mention that there has been some disturbance in the market.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Listen to the answer!

Dr. Jeetah: I do not have any information with regard to the price. The price has been liberalised and my Ministry does not control the price any more.

Mr Jhugroo: M. le président, est-ce que le ministre ..

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! Can the hon. Member give way, please? I request hon. Members not to repeat questions which have already been answered.

Mr Jhugroo: Est-ce que le ministre peut nous confirmer qu'il y a une pénurie qui dure plus de deux mois ?

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: The hon. Member is repeating the question.

Mr Jhugroo: M. le président, il y a une pénurie qui dure plus de deux mois et il n'y a toujours pas de solution. Que fait le ministre pour résoudre le problème ?

Mr Speaker: Can I ask the Minister to speak louder so that I can hear properly?

Dr. Jeetah: Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir. Concerning the orders of the companies dealing with this commodity, I did mention that I am informed by the CPU that there are 1295 metric tons. Joonas will provide 1,825 metric tons by end of July. MISCO will import 10,300 metric tons by end of July. Samlo is currently producing 80 metric tons per day.

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister whether Government has met the association of small contractors and whether one of the main issues raised by the association was the shortage of iron bars on the market?

Dr. Jeetah: From my recollection, I have met the stakeholders. I do not know whether BASECA was there, but I have been talking to BASECA and all stakeholders.

Mrs Perrier: The Minister says that there is no shortage on the market, but is he aware that consumers have to pay in advance to get iron bars?

Mr Speaker: How can the Minister answer that consumers have to pay in advance to get iron bars? It is a matter between the trader and the client.

Mr Ganoo: Can the hon. Minister tell us what is the problem with Murray and Roberts? Why is it taking so much time for Murray and Roberts to start operating?

Dr. Jeetah: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Member needs to ask it to Murray and Roberts. I do not have any control over Murray and Roberts.

(Interruptions)

This is a private concern and they have decided to take over Desbro and the hon. Member has to ask them.

(Interruptions)

Mr Cuttaree: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister says that he has no control over Murray and Roberts. Can I ask the hon. Minister then why did he inform the House that Murray and Roberts was going to start production at a specific date?

Dr. Jeetah: That is the problem, Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Member has asked a question on a private company. I could have come here and said: that this is none of my concern. I asked the Permanent Secretary ...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker, Sir, I did ask my Permanent Secretary to write to Murray and Roberts and to seek information.

Mr Speaker: Last question, hon. Bhagwan!

Mr Bhagwan: Can I ask the hon. Minister whether he has met recently representatives of Murray and Roberts in Mauritius or outside Mauritius?

Dr. Jeetah: I have met representatives of Murray and Roberts in Mauritius, but not outside Mauritius. The hon. Member is making allegations as he did in the past!

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Mr Guimbeau: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I know from the hon. Minister whether Murray and Roberts has taken any commitments to when it will start local production.

Dr. Jeetah: I have answered the question, Mr Speaker, Sir. I will read part of the information. They are in the process of recruiting a Production Manager as at 01 September. This is a private concern. I do not control this commodity any more. This is a private company and I can only ask for information.

Mr Bhagwan: Can we know from the hon. Minister whether he has met representatives of Murray and Roberts with his Adviser, Mr Ah-Fat, recently?

Mr Speaker: The Minister has said that he has already met representatives of Murray and Roberts.

]

(Interruptions)

Order, please! Hon. Bhagwan, you have put your question, keep quiet now.

(Interruptions)

Order!

CUREPIPE & MIDLANDS - LOW-COST HOUSING UNITS

(No. B/776) Mr E. Guimbeau (First Member for Curepipe and Midlands) asked the Minister of Housing and Lands whether, in regard to the construction of low-cost housing units in Curepipe, Midlands, he will state the number of sites which have been identified, indicating –

- (a) the number of units that will be constructed, and
- (b) when works are likely to start.

Mr Dulull: Mr Speaker, Sir, in regard to the construction of low-cost housing units in Curepipe and Midlands and to parts (a) and (b) of the question, I am advised by the NHDC that some 661 low-cost housing units have already been constructed in that region as follows -

Midlands 16 ^{eme} Mille	- 131 units
Curepipe, Malherbes and Atlee	- 430 units
Dubreuil	- 100units

The NHDC is presently implementing a low-cost housing project for the construction of 533 housing units over 6 sites, namely at Chebel, Henrietta, Bambous, Rose Belle, Rivière des Anguilles and Ville Noire. These units are expected to be completed by February 2008. Furthermore, my Ministry is in the process of identifying sites across the island to be considered for future housing projects. In this context, surveys are ongoing in regard to requests for housing facilities in other regions, including Curepipe/Midlands. A decision will be taken in the light of the findings of these surveys.

Mr Guimbeau: Mr Speaker, Sir, in reply to my PQ No. B/613 in May 2006, the hon. Minister stated that there was a demand for 2,850 housing units. May we know whether that is still the case?

Mr Dulull: As per the information given by the NHDC, the number of applicants for Curepipe is 2,696; Dubreuil: 122; Midlands: 45; which makes a total of 2,823.

Mr Guimbeau: Mr Speaker, Sir, in reply to another PQ B/1588, the hon. Minister stated that there was two existing sites at Malherbes and two at Atlee. Can the hon. Minister confirm whether this is the case?

Mr Dulull: Sir, 430 units have been constructed at Malherbes and Atlee.

Mr Guimbeau: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am not interested in the past. I want to know what is coming up in the future. Can the hon. Minister state why no action is being taken to have low-cost housing units constructed in Curepipe/Midlands?

Mr Dulull: We said that we are conducting a survey islandwide, based on the demand. Of course, we have to match the supply and the demand and a decision will be taken after an overall survey has been conducted.

Mr Guimbeau: Can the hon. Minister give me a timeframe of the survey?

Mr Dulull: A survey is an ongoing process and will be based on our housing strategy.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Next question!

**NOUVELLE FRANCE ROUNDABOUT/PLAISANCE –SODIUM
VAPOUR LIGHTING SYSTEM – BREAKDOWNS**

(No. B/777) **Mr E. Guimbeau (First Member for Curepipe and Midlands)** asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping whether he is aware that frequent breakdowns still occur on the sodium vapour lighting system along the highway from the Nouvelle France roundabout to Plaisance and, if so, will he state the remedial measures that will be taken.

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

I am informed by the Grand Port/Savanne District Council that frequent breakdowns no longer occur on the sodium vapour lighting system along the highway from the Nouvelle France roundabout to Plaisance. In fact, blackouts occurred during the nights of 24 and 26 April as well as 02 and 24 May 2007 along this network due to the tripping of the main solar switch. The technicians of the council, in close collaboration with the Central Electricity Board have already repaired the switch.

I am further informed that the Grand Port/Savanne District Council is maintaining the network on this highway on a regular basis.

Mr Guimbeau: Mr Speaker, Sir, this is my third PQ on this issue. I use this road every night and breakdowns still occur. Can the hon. Minister state what action he is going to take so as to avoid those breakdowns?

Dr. David: Mr Speaker, Sir, I don't know whether breakdowns still occur. From the answer which I received from the Grand/Port Savanne District Council, there are no more breakdowns, but, anyway, I'll check it. There is the collaboration between the CEB and the Grand/Port Savanne District Council and I'll see to it that this continues.

Mr Guimbeau: Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Minister inform the House if the guarantee period is over and the final commissioning has been effected?

Dr. David: I'll look into it, Mr Speaker, Sir.

LA CHARTREUSE/DUBREUIL VILLAGE – ROAD RESURFACING

(No. B/778) Mr E. Guimbeau (First Member for Curepipe and Midlands) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping whether, in regard to the road leading from La Chartreuse to the end of Dubreuil Village, he will state if there is any project for its resurfacing and, if so, when works are likely to start.

The Ag. Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, the road from La Chartreuse to the end of Dubreuil Village has a total length of 3.5 kms and the resurfacing work is estimated to cost Rs10 m.

The resurfacing of 2 kms. of the road which is mostly damaged will be undertaken during this financial year and the remaining length of the road will be maintained by the RDA direct labour and eventually resurfaced during the next financial year.

Mr Guimbeau: Mr Speaker, Sir, I refer to my PQ No. B/453. The hon. Minister stated that he will request the RDA to look into the possibility of resurfacing the road in the next financial year, which means 2006/2007; but, this is gone, Mr Speaker, Sir. Can I ask the hon. Ag. Prime Minister to make sure that this is done this year?

The Ag. Prime Minister: For sure, it will be done. Two kms of the road will be done this financial year; repairs will be done for the remaining and resurfacing the year after.

Mr Guimbeau: Can the hon. Ag. Prime Minister be more precise as to the time-frame, Mr Speaker, Sir?

The Ag. Prime Minister: I'll get the information and communicate it to the hon. Member.

PRIMATES – EXPORT

(No. B779) Mr Y. Varma (First Member for Mahebourg and Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Agro Industry and Fisheries whether, in regard to the export of primates, he will state –

- (a) the number of companies which have been issued with export permits to date;
- (b) if an application for an export permit has been received from Biosphere Ltd., and
- (c) Government policy in regard to vivisection.

(Withdrawn)

PLAINE MAGNIEN – TAXI STAND

(No. B/780) Mr Y. Varma (First Member for Mahebourg and Plaine Magnien) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping whether he will state if there is any project for the construction of a taxi stand at Plaine Magnien and, if so, when works are likely to start.

The Ag. Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir I am informed by the National Transport Authority that a joint site visit with the Traffic Management & Road Safety Unit of my Ministry was carried out on 16 December 2004 to examine the possibility of creating a taxi stand at Plaine Magnien. However, no suitable site was found in the village centre for creation of the stand.

I have requested that a fresh site visit be effected with all concerned parties with a view to identifying a suitable site for a taxi stand. The hon. Members of the Constituency No. 12 will be informed and invited accordingly.

MAHEBOURG AND PLAINE MAGNIEN – BUS SHELTER

(No. B/781) Mr Y. Varma (First Member for Mahebourg and Plaine Magnien) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping whether in regard to the project for the construction of a bus shelter in Des Places in Constituency No. 12, Mahebourg and Plaine Magnien, he will state where matters stand.

The Ag. Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that the National Transport Authority has approved the construction of a bus shelter at Des Places in the direction of Camp Esnouf.

As Des Places Road falls under the responsibility of the Grand Port/Savanne District Council, the later is being requested to undertake the construction of the bus shelter.

Mr Varma: Mr Speaker, Sir, could I ask the Ag. Prime Minister when was the request made to the District Council?

The Ag. Prime Minister: It is only a fortnight ago.

CAUDAN ROUNDABOUT/M1 BUS LANE -TRAFFIC LIGHT

(No. B/782) Mr G. Lesjongard (Second Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping whether, in regard to the study carried out for the proposed installation of a traffic light system at the Caudan roundabout and the M1 Bus Lane, he will state –

- (a) the name of the consultancy firm which carried out the study for the traffic lights;
- (b) if the consultancy was subcontracted to another consultancy firm and, if so, for what amount, and
- (c) the recommendation of the consultants in regard to the installation of the said traffic lights.

(Vide reply to PQ No. B/770)

APOLLO HOSPITAL – LAND LEASE

(No. B/783) Mr G. Lesjongard (Second Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Housing and Lands whether he will state if any lease has been granted to the Apollo Hospital and, if so, will he state –

- (a) the terms and conditions thereof, and
- (b) if the services of a Government Valuer were retained in connection therewith.

Mr Dulull: Mr Speaker, Sir, this Government is committed to attract high-tech medical services in Mauritius so that these services can be accessible to the population in the shortest span of time, avoiding delays due to overseas travel in search of high-tech medical treatment.

During the visit of the hon. Prime Minister in India in October 2005, the Apollo Hospital expressed its willingness to establish a high-tech medical Hospital in Mauritius. The hon. Prime Minister was agreeable with the idea as it is in line with the vision of this Government.

A plot of land of an extent of 12A86P at Réduit was identified for the furtherance of the project. A Letter of Intent, to be followed by a Lease Agreement, was issued on 07 July 2006. However, the site identified being deficient of public infrastructure, such as road network, water supply and electricity, the Apollo Hospital was thus requested to invest in the public infrastructure. The cost of the infrastructural work relating to public access was estimated at Rs80 m. by the Road Development Authority. An agreement was reached so that the Rs80 m. may be set off against a reduced annual rental for the first nineteen and a fraction of years as from date of signature of the lease. The annual rental was assessed by the Chief Government Valuer at the rate of Rs400,000 per arpent on the assumption that the cost of off-site infrastructure be borne by the Government.

In regard to part (b) of the question, unlike what was done in the Illovo deal where the previous Government decided to do away with ...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! Order!

Mr Dulull: I have to say it again. In regard to part (b) of the question, unlike what was done in the Illovo deal where the previous Government decided to do away with the State services and hire private counsel for advice, this Government, which operates in transparency...

Mr Speaker: I have so many times repeated in the House that answers must relate to the question which has been put.

Mr Dulull: Mr Speaker, Sir, this Government which operates in transparency, has retained the services of the Government Valuer as far as all leases of State land are concerned.

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister what is the rent that Apollo Hospital will have to pay for the land allocated on a yearly basis?

Mr Dulull: As I mentioned, Mr Speaker, Sir, the rent has been evaluated by the Government Valuer. Apollo Hospital will incur Rs80 m. in the cost of public infrastructure and this will be offset against the rental. We have fixed a nominal rental for the nineteen and a fraction of years at Rs100 yearly.

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister whether it is in order - since this is a private venture and we have a lot of other commercial leases – for a lessee to pay just a nominal fee of Rs100 per *arpent* for 12 *arpents* of prime land allocated?

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Mr Dulull: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Member is getting the concept totally wrong. Actually, what Apollo Hospital is doing is as if it is giving an advance to Government because public infrastructure should have been done by Government. What happened at Bel Ombre when Government decided

to realign the road? They invested Government money from the Tourism Fund which should have been used for social projects. It is not the case for this project. We are creating a mechanism for private promoters to invest in infrastructure. The same mechanism will be applied at Les Salines and it is by no means that Government is renting at Rs100. The hon. Member got the concept totally wrong. Technically, Rs80 m. have been advanced to the Government.

Mr Lesjongard: Do I get it from the hon. Minister that now we have a new policy that whenever Government land is requested for all future private ventures it will be just a nominal claim, Mr Speaker, Sir?

Mr Dulull: Mr Speaker, Sir, it is far from being a nominal claim. As I said, we have set up a mechanism where Government should invest in public infrastructure and if the private promoters decide to do it, then we will set off the advance investment on the rental. But it is not a general policy, it is on a case to case basis.

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the Minister whether the services of the State Law Office were required when Government took the decision to lease the land at a nominal fee of Rs100?

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Mr Dulull: As I mentioned, Mr Speaker, Sir, we are not leasing at Rs100; it is being done based on the recommendations of the Government Valuer. Government should have spent in advance, but we are trying to set off the advance aiming at over successive years.

Mrs Labelle: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister has just mentioned about hotels at Bel Ombre. May I know from him whether these hotels contributed in the Tourism Fund from which money was spent on roads?

(Interruptions)

Mr Dulull: It is not a tourist project.

Mrs Labelle: He mentioned it, that's why I asked the question.

Mr Speaker: The hon. Member cannot force the hon. Minister to answer if he does not want to answer.

(Interruptions)

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister whether Apollo Hospital paid a deposit, as it is the usual practice, when the Letter of Intent was issued?

Mr Dulull: A reservation fee of Rs2.5 m. is payable by the promoter and the letter will be sent once things are further materialised.

Mr Lesjongard: Since the hon. Minister has mentioned the amount, my question is whether Apollo Hospital has deposited the amount in Government coffers before it has been given a Letter of Intent?

Mr Dulull: We have already informed Apollo Hospital that they have to pay a reservation fee of Rs2.5 m. once things are materialised.

MEDICAL PRACTITIONERS (FOREIGN) – WORK PERMITS

(No. B/784) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment whether in regard to foreign medical practitioners, he will state

—

- (a) the number thereof whose application for the issue of a work permit for them to practice in Government hospitals and in private clinics, respectively, have been approved since July 2005 to date, and
- (b) if he has received representations from members of the medical profession in this connection and, if so, where matters stand.

Dr. Bunwaree: Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (a) of the question, I wish to inform the House that according to the Employment (Non-Citizens) (Restriction) Exemptions Regulations 1970, foreigners employed in any Ministry or Department of the Government of Mauritius

are exempted from the requirements of a work permit. For such category of foreigners, my Ministry issues a Certificate of Exemption to allow them to take up employment for the period of time specified in their contract of employment.

Consequently, Mr Speaker, Sir, since July 2005 to date, my Ministry has issued Certificates of Exemption to 110 medical practitioners to enable them to practise in Government hospitals. As for medical practitioners employed by private clinics, 55 work permits have been issued since July 2005.

As far as part (b) of the question is concerned, I am informed that in February 2006, my Ministry received a copy of a letter from the Orthopaedic Association of Mauritius which was addressed to the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life and in which the Association strongly objected to work permits being issued to foreign specialists to practise in the field of orthopaedic surgery.

The matter was referred to the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life as Ministry responsible to make recommendations on applications for work permit in the medical sector.

However, the House may wish to note that all work permits and Certificates of Exemption issued to foreigners to enable them to practise in the field of orthopaedic surgery have already expired and no new request for work permit or Certificate of Exemption for employment in this field has been received to date.

Mr Bhagwan: Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to know from the hon. Minister whether the Medical Practitioners had to go through the Medical Council before a work permit was issued to them?

Dr. Bunwaree: Mr Speaker, Sir, before they practise in Mauritius, they have to go through the Medical Council.

Mr Bhagwan: We have got 55 cases. Can the hon. Minister tell us whether those working in private clinics have got clearance from the Medical Council?

Dr. Bunwaree: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have to check this information, but according to the procedures, they cannot start practising if the Medical Council has not given its clearance.

FOREIGNERS – WORK PERMITS

(No. B/785) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment whether in regard to foreigners working in Mauritius to date, he will state the total number sector wise, indicating if all of them have been issued with a work permit.

Dr. Bunwaree: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am circulating information sector wise on the number of work permits issued to foreigners to date and which are still valid. **(Appendix)**

I wish to inform the House that not all foreigners who come to work in Mauritius require a work permit. The Employment (Non-Citizens) (Restriction) Exemptions Regulations 1970 allow for exemptions in specific cases.

For the better interpretation of the figures circulated, hon. Members may, however, wish to note that there are some holders of work permits who, for some reason or another, do not travel to Mauritius to take up employment. They have been given work permit, but they do not come. So, you may find that the figures do not tally.

Furthermore, Mr Speaker, Sir, there are also cases of foreigners attempting to work in Mauritius without going through established procedures. All such cases notified to my Ministry are investigated into and referred to the Commissioner of Police for appropriate action.

Mr Bhagwan: Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Minister give us the total figure of foreigners working actually?

Dr. Bunwaree: Mr Speaker, Sir, the total figure is in the document that I am circulating, and I was asked to give sector wise. The total figure is for male: 20,849; female:12,753; the total is 33,602.

Mr Bhagwan: I have two questions, Mr Speaker, Sir. As far as the construction sector is concerned, can the Minister give us the figure?

Dr. Bunwaree: The details are sector wise, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Bhagwan: How much is it for the construction sector?

Dr. Bunwaree: For the construction sector, it is 3,012.

Mr Bhagwan: Mr Speaker, Sir, can the Minister inform the House whether he has received representations concerning the treatment given to these workers? Is there a follow-up at the level of the Ministry concerning, particularly, the construction sector where we have been given to understand that they are not getting the treatment which they are supposed to get?

Dr. Bunwaree: Mr Speaker, Sir, I must say we are very strict, but if there are certain particular cases, the hon. Member can inform me and I will look into them. There are no specific representations made on paper, but we hear from time to time. At the level of the Ministry, there is a Department which goes and looks into the conditions of work. If the hon. Member wants to inform me of any problem, I will look into it.

Mr Bhagwan: I want to inform the hon. Minister that many workers are living in containers. I think it's not good for the reputation of Mauritius.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Next question, hon. Bhagwan!

(Interruptions)

Order! Keep quiet! Order!

PORT AREA - LEASE – BENEFICIARIES

(No. B/786) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism, Leisure and External Communications whether, in regard to land leased in

the Port Area since July 2005 to date, he will give a list of the beneficiaries, indicating, in each case –

- (a) the area of the land;
- (b) the terms and conditions, and
- (c) the purpose of the lease.

The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism, Leisure & External Communications (Mr X. L. Duval): Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I wish to refer the hon. Member to the reply I made in the House to Parliamentary Question No. B/694 which relates to the same issue. The required information for the period August 2005 to date has already been placed in the Library of the Assembly.

As regards the month of July 2005, I am informed by the Mauritius Ports Authority that a plot of land to the extent of 3,685.30 m² has been allocated to Total Mauritius Ltd. with effect from 01 July 2005. The lease agreement is valid for a period of 10 years against payment of an assessed rental of Rs324,000 per annum for the period July 2005 to June 2010 and Rs405,000 per annum for the period July 2010 to July 2015.

LAND SETTLEMENT SCHEME – LAND LEASE

(No. B/787) Mr S. Soodhun (Fifth Member for La Caverne and Phoenix) asked the Minister of Agro Industry and Fisheries whether, in regard to the Land Settlement Scheme, he will state the remedial measures that have been taken in relation to –

- (a) the absence of criteria for the number of plots to be leased to a tenant;
- (b) the consistency for extent of agricultural land given on lease, and
- (c) the occupation of agricultural land by tenants after the expiry of the lease.

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

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am advised that some 48 lease holders of State land in the Land Settlement Zone were allocated more than one plot.

With a view to democratising access to State land to allow a larger number of planters to engage in agricultural activities to enhance production and to obtain a living, the Ministry of Agro Industry has reviewed this policy in September 2006. According to the new policy, a planter may lease more than one plot of land, but the total extent should not exceed 4 *arpents*. The land so released is being allocated to new applicants. This measure, however, does not apply to cooperative societies or private companies which may require more than 4 *arpents* for their projects. Such applications are examined on a case to case basis.

Regarding part (c) leases are normally renewed after expiry. However, given the number of leases involved (around 1248), not all leases can be renewed at the same time. There are still cases where lessees are being allowed to continue to cultivate their land pending the renewal of the lease.

The hon. Member may note that an Agricultural State Land Monitoring Committee has been set up since March 2007 to monitor the situation. It is proposed to cancel leases in the following cases –

- (i) where payment is not effected in due time, and
- (ii) where the tenant has abandoned the land.

LAND USE DIVISION – LAND LEASE

(No. B/788) Mr S. Soodhun (Fifth Member for La Caverne and Phoenix) asked the Minister of Agro Industry and Fisheries whether, in regard to the land leased by the Land Use Division of his Ministry, he will state –

- (a) the number of cases in which the lease has expired but is still being occupied;
- (b) the amount of arrears due, if any, and
- (c) the number of cases in which the land is not being used for agricultural purposes

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

Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (a) of the question, there are 1089 cases where the lease has expired and the land is still being occupied. These leases will be renewed by September 2007 for a period of 7 years.

With regard to part (b), the amount of arrears due in respect of 1089 cases is Rs2,403,279.80. This amount is payable at the time of renewal of lease.

In respect to part (c), agricultural land under the control of the Ministry of Agro Industry and Fisheries is normally leased for agricultural purposes. There is no record that holders of the lease are carrying out non agricultural activities on these lands. However, requests are at times made to the Ministry for State agricultural land to be allocated for non-agricultural projects. In such cases, if the land can be released, the Ministry of Housing and Lands is informed of these applications for further processing. The hon. Member may also refer to the reply which has been made to Parliamentary Question No. B/656.

ROSE BELLE SUGAR ESTATE – HYDROPONICS – LAND LEASE

(No. B/789) Mr S. Soodhun (Fifth Member for La Caverne and Phoenix) asked the Minister of Agro Industry and Fisheries whether, in regard to the lands leased for hydroponics by the Rose Belle Sugar Estate, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Estate, a list of the beneficiaries thereof, indicating –

- (a) in each case, the extent of land allocated, and
- (b) the criteria used for the granting of the leases.

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

The hydroponics village at Cluny consists of the 'Rent and Build Model' concept and 31 plots of land of 990m² each have been earmarked by

the Rose Belle Sugar Estate for allocation to selected applicants. The 31 beneficiaries will have to construct their individual greenhouses and will be guided by AREU in the implementation of their projects.

A public call for Expression of Interest was made by Rose Belle Sugar Estate on 09 February 2006. 37 applications were received. A request was sent to these applicants for formal application through a pre-designed questionnaire and 34 of the applicants responded. All the 34 applicants underwent a further evaluation through interviews held on 29 June and 11 July 2006 and given that 31 plots were available, 31 applicants were finally selected.

With regard to part (a), each beneficiary is eligible for a plot of land of an extent of 990m² each. So far, 13 have already signed the lease agreement and a list is being tabled.

Regarding part (b), the selection criteria were as follows –

- (i) employment status;
- (ii) experience;
- (iii) training/qualifications;
- (iv) involvement in agriculture;
- (v) financial stability/security, and
- (vi) products and market.

Mr Soodhun: Mr Speaker, Sir, I know the hon. Minister is replacing the substantive Minister, but can he refer the matter to the Minister concerned for a copy of the list of planters who have been qualified to be tabled?

Mr Bachoo: I will do so, Sir.

BANARAS HINDU UNIVERSITY - SCHOLARSHIPS

(No. B/790) Mr G. Guinness (Third Member for Montagne Blanche and GRSE) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance & Economic Development whether, in regard to the recent award of scholarships for postgraduate studies at the Institute of Medical Sciences of the Banaras Hindu University, he will state if his Ministry has now been informed by the High Commission of India as to the circumstances in which two other candidates who were not eligible for scholarships have obtained seats thereat.

The Minister of Labour, Industrial Relations & Employment (Dr. V. Bunwaree): Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission I shall reply to questions Nos. B/790 and B/792 together as they relate to the same subject matter.

As the House is aware, since the name of only one candidate out of a list of five had been retained by the Indian authorities for the three scholarships offered, the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development, at the request of the Ministry of Health and Quality of life, inquired from the High Commission of India on 30 May 2007 about the outcome of the two other scholarships.

On the other hand, on receipt of a letter from the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life regarding representations in connection with the said scholarships, the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development, by letter dated 07 June 2007, requested the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Trade and Cooperation to take up the matter with the Indian High Commission. A reply is still being awaited.

Mr Guinness: The hon. Minister said that on 30 May, the Ministry Finance and Economic Development inquired from the High Commission. Can we know the outcome of the inquiry which was carried out by the Ministry?

Dr. Bunwaree: There was an inquiry. They inquired at the High Commission and, in the meantime, another representation was made by the unions, and a letter was sent. Because it was a Government to Government matter, it had to go to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

EMPOWERMENT PROGRAMME – COMPANIES - TRAINING PROJECTS

(No. B/791) Mr J. Cuttaree (Second Member for Stanley and Rose Hill) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance & Economic Development whether, in regard to companies which have benefited from the Empowerment Programme for training projects since it was set up, he will give a list thereof, indicating in each case the amount allocated.

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

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am laying on the Table of the National Assembly the lists of companies/institutions which have benefited from the Empowerment Programme for the placement with training of the unemployed.

In fact, I am informed that as to date, 38 companies and organisations are providing on-the-job training to unemployed graduates/diploma holders and the sum allocated amounts to Rs1.7 m. With regard to the other categories of unemployed, 41 companies and institutions are offering training and the amount involved is Rs4.3 m.

BANARAS HINDU UNIVERSITY - SCHOLARSHIPS

(No. B/792) Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun (Third Member for La Caverne and Phoenix) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance & Economic Development whether, in regard to the alleged irregularity in the award of scholarships for postgraduate studies in medicine at the Banaras Hindu University, he will state if he has received a letter from the Ministry of Health concerning discrepancies in the list of candidates and, if so, if an inquiry has been carried out thereinto and the outcome thereof.

(Vide reply to PQ No. B/790)

BANK INTEREST RATES - INCREASE

(No. B/793) Dr. R. Mungur (Second Member for Flacq and Bon Accueil) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance & Economic Development whether, in regard to the recent increase in the interest rate triggered by the Monetary Policy Committee of the Central Bank, he will state if it will have an impact on the cost of borrowing for consumers and businesses and, if so, the remedial measures that will be taken to mitigate inflationary pressures, if any.

(Withdrawn)

CLÉMENCIA/BEL AIR – ROAD WORKS – CONTRACT

(No. B/794) Mr L. Bundhoo (Second Member for Montagne Blanche and GRSE) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping whether, in regard to the project for the tarring of the road leading from Clémencia to Bel Air, he will state –

- (a) when the contract was awarded;
- (b) the name of the contractor, and
- (c) when works are likely to start and to be completed.

The Ag. Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, the Road Development Authority granted way-leave to the Central Water Authority for pipe laying works on a length of 1.5 km along the main road from Clémencia towards Bel Air last year. The CWA completed the works in February 2007 and a temporary reinstatement of the trenches was carried out. However, due to the very poor state of the road, the Road Development Authority decided to proceed with the resurfacing of the road over its full width with the provision of drains where necessary.

The works order was issued to the district contractor Best Luck (Mauritius) Ltd. on 19 April 2007. Several meetings were held with the contractor, but the latter has not given any indication when works would start. The RDA is now initiating necessary action to determine the contract and to entrust the works to another contractor after obtaining the approval of the Central Tender Board.

Mr Bundhoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, some time back, I did mention in the House that this road has been in a bad state for the last two and a half years. Can I ask the Ag. Prime Minister to see to it whether the RDA can take over the project and have it done?

The Ag. Prime Minister: As I said, we have to go to the CTB to determine the contract first and then take it over.

BEL AIR & ECROIGNARD – WATER SUPPLY

(No. B/795) Mr L. Bundhoo (Second Member for Montagne Blanche & GRSE) asked the Minister of Public Utilities whether he is aware of the severe water problems faced by the inhabitants of the regions of Bel Air and Ecroignard and, if so, will he state the remedial measures that will be taken.

Dr. Kasenally: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am aware of the difficulties being faced by the inhabitants of the upper regions of Bel Air and Ecroignard in respect of their water supply. I am informed that the problem is due to low pressure in the network.

In order to abate the extent of the problem, the inhabitants of upper region of Bel Air are supplied with water on a regular basis by a water tanker. As regards the inhabitants of Ecroignard, the Central Water Authority resorts to valve operation to improve the water pressure in the network during peak hours.

In reply to PQ No. B/67 on 27 March 2007 and PQ No. B/523 on 29 May 2007, I informed the House that the Central Water Authority is presently implementing a project in the east for the rationalisation, upgrading and extension of water distribution. The first phase of this project would be completed by the end of this year and it is expected that this would solve the water supply problem in this part of the country.

As announced during the budgetary debate, a sum of Rs33.8 m has been earmarked for all the projects to improve the district water supply systems of the country.

Mr Bundhoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I make an appeal to the hon. Minister to ensure that the distribution of water by water tank be done on a more regular basis, especially in the village of Bel Air?

Dr. Kasenally: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am ensuring that I am looking after that, day and night, and every day of the week, as the hon. Member must have noted, because he keeps phoning me about it. I know that he has the problems of his constituency so much at heart.

LES SALINES - MUNICIPAL SWIMMING POOL

(No. B/796) Mrs S. Grenade (Second Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Local Government whether, in regard to the municipal swimming pool at Les Salines, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Municipal Council of Port Louis, information as to if the pool has been fully operational since July 2006 to date and, if not, the reasons therefor.

Dr. David: Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the House that the swimming pool at Les Salines is normally closed for the winter break from July to September every year. This has been the case for years as the hon. Member should have known. While preparing for the season 2006/2007 in the last week of September 2006, the officers of the Council observed that water level in the swimming pool was subsiding at an alarming rate so much so that proper filtration of water could not be effected. Consequently, the swimming pool could not be opened.

The Municipal Council had sought the assistance of the Ministry of Youth & Sports which has indicated that there is a problem with the rubber lining. However, the Council is of the opinion that there may be other associated problems which are being probed into.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the House may wish to note that it is not the first time that the swimming pool of Les Salines is being closed. I am informed that during January 2002 to October 2003 this swimming pool was closed due to defective water reticulation system. The costs of repairs were around Rs700,000.

(Interruptions)

**MINISTRY OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT - FIELD SERVICES
UNIT - PROJECTS**

(No. 797) Mrs S. Grenade (Second Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Local Government whether, in regard to the projects carried out by the Field Services Unit of his Ministry, he will give a list thereof constituency-wise since July 2005 to date, indicating in each case the expenditure incurred.

Dr. David: Mr Speaker, Sir, the list of projects implemented by the Field Services Unit of my Ministry, constituency-wise, since July 2005 to date is being compiled and will subsequently be placed in the Library of the National Assembly.

BAMBOUS STATE SECONDARY SCHOOL – DRUG USE CASES

(No. B/798) Mrs D. Perrier (Fourth Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Minister of Education & Human Resources whether his Ministry has been apprised of cases of drug use and discipline related problems at the State Secondary School Bambous and, if so, will he state the remedial measures that will be taken.

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

The Ministry of Education has been apprised of a suspected case of use of drugs at the State Secondary School, Bambous, on 18 June 2007. Six students were caught by two Education Officers, teaching Physical Education, in the act of smoking suspected drug in the school compound.

The Rector of the school reported the matter to the Police, on the same day, and the responsible parties of the students were also informed.

The six students were arrested and brought to Court. They were subsequently released on parole and the case would be called on 20 September 2007. I understand that one of these students is currently on bail for another earlier incident pertaining to drug though not on the school compound.

Following a meeting the Rector had with the responsible parties of these students, they were allowed to return to school on 20 June 2007, except for one who resumed on 27 June 2007. The students and their parents are being provided with psychological assistance and counselling, but two parents did not turn up for these counseling sessions.

The social workers of the Ministry of Education will also be carrying out home visits during the school holidays to assess the social environment of these six students. The Rector is closely monitoring the situation and has sought assistance from NATReSA and ADSU to address and sensitise students on the ill effects of substance abuse, including smoking. The NATReSA and ADSU are being approached to carry out a massive sensitization campaign programme in all our secondary schools in this respect.

As regards the second part of the question relating to discipline, I am informed that there have been some acts of vandalism at the school. Items of furniture, sanitary equipment and window panes have been broken. Meetings have been held with the parents of these students.

The CTO of the Ministry of Education has been requested to constitute a team to look into the matter and revisit the existing arrangements and also make necessary recommendations. In the meantime, each Head of School is monitoring the situation at his /her level.

Mrs Perrier: Mr Speaker, Sir, can the Minister inform the House whether he is aware that a gang is operating in the vicinity of the school causing a lot of problems to the younger children, racketing the younger ones and frightening all the people in the school.

Dr. David: I am not aware, Mr Speaker, Sir, but if this is the case, it is very serious. I'll pass on the information to the Minister concerned.

**STATE PROPERTY DEVELOPMENT COMPANY LTD. –
LEGAL ADVISERS**

(No. B/799) Mr J.C. Barbier (Third Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance & Economic Development whether, in regard to the appointment of legal advisers at the State Property Development Company Ltd., he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Company, information as to –

- (a) the names of the incumbents;
- (b) their terms and conditions of contract, and
- (c) the amount of retainer fee or any other fee to which they are entitled.

The Minister of Labour, Industrial Relations & Employment (Dr. V. Bunwaree): Sir, I am tabling the information sought by the hon. Member.

SUGAR INSURANCE FUND BOARD – LEGAL ADVISERS

(No. B/800) Mr J.C. Barbier (Third Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance & Economic Development whether, in regard to the appointment of legal advisers at the Sugar Insurance Fund Board, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Board, information as to –

- (a) the names of the incumbents;
- (b) their terms and conditions of contract, and
- (c) the amount of retainer fee or any other fee to which they are entitled.

The Minister of Labour, Industrial Relations & Employment (Dr. V. Bunwaree): Sir, I am tabling the information sought by the hon. Member.

Mrs Perrier: Will the Minister give the name, at least, of the legal adviser?

Dr. Bunwaree: The legal adviser is Me André Robert and the State Law Office.

CASINOS OF MAURITIUS LTD – LEGAL ADVISERS

(No. B/801) Mr J.C. Barbier (Third Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance & Economic Development whether, in regard to the appointment of legal advisers at the Casinos of Mauritius Ltd., he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, information as to –

- (a) the names of the incumbents;
- (b) their terms and conditions of contract, and
- (c) the amount of retainer fee or any other fee to which they are entitled.

The Minister of Labour, Industrial Relations & Employment (Dr. V. Bunwaree): Sir, I am tabling the information sought by the hon. Member.

SEHDA – LEGAL ADVISERS

(No. B/802) Mr J.C. Barbier (Third Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Industry, Small & Medium Enterprises, Commerce & Co-operatives whether, in regard to the appointment of legal advisers at the Small Enterprises & Handicraft Development Authority, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Authority, information as to –

- (a) the names of the incumbents;
- (b) their terms and conditions of contract, and
- (c) the amount of retainer fee or any other fee to which they are entitled.

Dr. Jeetah: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that SEHDA has appointed Mr Bhaukaurally, Assistant Solicitor General at the State Law Office as Legal Adviser with effect from 01 September 2005. I am tabling the rest of the information.

Mrs Perrier: Can the hon. Minister inform the House if the increment is the same as those appointed to other Boards?

Dr. Jeetah: From the information I have, Mr Speaker, Sir, there was Mr K. Pertab who was consulted as and when required and there was Mr D. Erriah of Collendavelloo Chambers who was also consulted on an *ad hoc* basis.

HSC – LAUREATES – BOND FEE

(No. B/803) 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 laureates of the Higher School Certificate, he will state the number thereof who, for the past ten years, have been asked to refund the bond fee on account of failure to return to the country after completion of their studies.

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

Mr Speaker Sir, I am informed that for the period 1997 to 2000, 58 sureties whose wards have not returned to the country after completion of their studies have been requested to refund the bond fee of Rs500,000 in accordance with the provision of the bond which they have signed.

As regards the period 2001 onwards, figures are being compiled by the Ministry and will be circulated after the completion of the exercise.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: May I ask the hon. Minister what is the policy of Government regarding students who have obtained scholarships and who have not completed their courses?

Dr. David: I assume, Mr Speaker, Sir, that, by the end of three or four years, according to the length of the programme, they should have completed.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Speaker, Sir, my question refers to students who have obtained scholarships, but for one reason or the other could not complete the course for which they were given the scholarship.

Dr. David: Well, I'll look into the matter, Mr Speaker, Sir.

CESS FUNDED INSTITUTION – KPMG REPORT

(No. B/804) Mr G. Guinness (Third Member for Montagne Blanche and GRSE) asked the Minister of Agro Industry and Fisheries whether he will state if the KPMG has now submitted its report on the cess funded institutions and, if so, will he state its main recommendations.

(Withdrawn)

MOGAS & GAS OIL – PRICE INCREASE

(No. B/805) Mr G. Guinness (Third Member for Montagne Blanche and GRSE) asked the Minister of Industry, Small & Medium Enterprises, Commerce and Co-operatives whether he will state if, following the recent increase in the price of mogas and gas oil, there has been any increase in the operating and marketing expenses and the profit margin of the dealers and, if so, the reasons therefor.

Dr. Jeetah: Sir, the hon. Member would recall that in April 2007 when the prices of mogas and gasoil were reviewed, I tabled the then price structure at the National Assembly following PQ No. B/114.

The same issue was raised at a sitting on 10 July 2007 in PQ No. B/745.

A simple arithmetical calculation would have given the increase in the operating and marketing expenses and the profit margin of the dealers.

Mr Speaker, Sir, both the operators of filling stations and the oil companies have been reiterating their request for a revision in their respective profit margins since April 2006 APM exercise.

The retail dealers have also been asking for a fixed profit margin of 6% on the retail price of mogas and gasoil. I am advised that this system is not practical especially when the price of petroleum product is continuously increasing at international level.

In April 2004, when APM was introduced the percentage retail margin on retail price of mogas was 3.25% and for gasoil it was 4.81%. These percentages were eroded following increases in their costs and prices of petroleum products.

The pre-APM percentage profit margin have, therefore, been taken into consideration in our calculations which have been based on the running costs being incurred by the retailers such as –

- (i) labour costs due to compensation;
- (ii) security elements;
- (iii) increase in working capital due to increase in prices of petroleum product;
- (iv) interest to be paid on acceptance of plastic money;
- (v) higher interest on higher capital requirement;
- (vi) increase in maintenance and repair costs, and
- (vii) inability to seek finance to upgrade their respective retail networks.

Many of these costs are also applicable for oil companies. Thus, the increase in the companies operating expenses and retail margin would, therefore, allow both the operators of oil companies and filling stations to operate and maintain the critical infrastructure like the oil depots, pipelines, delivery trucks and proper distribution of petroleum product at filling stations.

Mr Guinness: Can I know from the hon. Minister how much is the increase in the operating and marketing expenses of mogas and gas oil?

Dr. Jeetah: I did explain, Mr Speaker, Sir, that it is a simple arithmetic calculation. I have provided all the information, but I would do it for the hon. Member for mogas only. For April, the operating expenses were R0.6505 per litre and for July 2007, it was R0.7505 per litre. There is a difference of ten cents. The hon. Member can surely make the calculations for the other figures that have already been submitted.

STC - PHARMACEUTICAL PRODUCTS

(No. B/806) Mr P. Jhugroo (Third Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Industry, Small & Medium Enterprises, Commerce and Co-operatives whether he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the State Trading Corporation, information as to whether the Corporation is proposing to import pharmaceutical products and, if so –

- (a) if the Corporation is the holder of a wholesale pharmacy licence, and
- (b) if these products have been registered with the Pharmacy Board of the Ministry of Health.

Dr. Jeetah: Sir, I am informed by the State Trading Corporation that no decision has been taken by the Board regarding the importation of pharmaceutical products. Therefore, as regards parts (a) and (b), the question does not arise.

SEHDA - DIRECTOR

(No. B/807) Mr P. Jhugroo (Third Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Industry, Small & Medium Enterprises, Commerce and Co-operatives whether, in regard to the Director of the Small Enterprises and Handicraft Development Authority (SEHDA), he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Authority, information as to –

- (a) his terms and conditions of employment;
- (b) the salary, allowances and other fringe benefits drawn, and
- (c) the make and model of car put at his disposal

Dr. Jeetah: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am tabling the information requested.