

Debate No. 33 of 20. 11.2007

Mr Speaker: The Table has been advised that PQ No. B/1108 has been withdrawn.

SENIOR CHIEF EXECUTIVE, PERMANENT SECRETARY AND PRINCIPAL ASSISTANT SECRETARY – VACANCIES

(No. B/1095) 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 the grades of Senior Chief Executive, Permanent Secretary and Principal Assistant Secretary, he will state the number of vacancies in each case as at to date, indicating when they will be filled.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, there are at present four vacancies in the grade of Senior Chief Executive and three in the grade of Permanent Secretary. No vacancy exists in the grade of Principal Assistant Secretary.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the PRB report of 2003 created three additional grades in the Administrative Cadre, that is, the grade of Senior Chief Executive, the grade of Senior Executive and the grade of Senior Assistant Secretary. These additional layers in the Administrative Cadres have turned out to be very, very cumbersome. Furthermore, whilst the post of Senior Chief Executive was meant to be filled by Officers of the Administrative Cadre as well as those of Technical and Professional Cadres, these posts have systematically been filled by Officers of the Administrative Cadre only. This has caused frustration among the Technical and Professional Cadres and I have received several representations in this connection. Furthermore, the grade of Senior Executive has never been filled nor even the scheme of service for the post prescribed, although it was in the PRB Report of 2003. On the other hand the grade of Senior Assistant Secretary has turned out to be superfluous.

Therefore, Mr Speaker, Sir, in the circumstances and given that this Government has reduced the number of Ministers from 24 to 19, I have caused the Human Resource needs of the Administrative Cadre to be reassessed. This exercise is about to be finalised.

Accordingly, appropriate recommendations will be made to the Public Service Commission for the filling of the vacancies, on a needs basis only.

Mr Lauthan: Mr Speaker, Sir, I thank the hon. Prime Minister for the answer, but being given that these categories are high profile posts and at a time when we are talking about productivity, these officers should be prime movers on whom depend the productivity of their sectors. I would ask the hon. Prime Minister to expedite matters so that these posts be filled as soon as possible.

The Prime Minister: As I explained, Mr Speaker, Sir, the problem arose in the PRB Report of 2003. This has caused a lot of confusion, as I explained in my answer. They have created multilayers in the Administration which has turned out to be superfluous, as I said, for some of them. For example, the grade of Senior Assistant Secretary was created. It is meant to be between the posts of an Assistant Secretary and a Principal Assistant Secretary. It is impossible to define the duties and responsibilities. They cannot be demarcated. There is a lot of overlapping. How would you define what is between the grade of Senior Assistant Secretary and the post of Principal Assistant Secretary? That is one of the problems.

The other problem, as I said, is that the grade of Senior Chief Executive, which was there in 2002, was never filled. I suppose – I can't say for sure because I was not in Government – that they found the same kind of difficulty here. This is why I have called the human resource needs of the Administrative Cadre to be reassessed and then we will ensure that this will be done. But it must be reassessed first.

SOREZE – PAILLES POLICE STATION – JURISDICTION

(No. B/1096) 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 the Sorèze region, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to whether consideration will be given to the advisability of placing this region under the jurisdiction of the Pailles Police Station, in view of its proximity thereto.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that while Sorèze is presently under the jurisdiction of Moka Police Station, action has already been initiated, after consultation with the authorities concerned, to include Sorèze in the Pailles Police Station.

I am informed that all relevant procedures are expected to be completed by early next month.

SACHS COMMISSION – POLITICAL PARTIES – PUBLIC FUNDING

(No. B/1097) Mr E. Guimbeau (First 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 Constitutional and Legislative amendments to be introduced for the implementation of the recommendation of the Sachs Commission on Constitutional and Electoral Reforms in relation to the public funding of political parties, he will state where matters now stand.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, as the House is aware, the Sachs Commission has made numerous other recommendations on our electoral and voting systems, apart from the one on the public funding of political parties.

Insofar as the implementation of those recommendations is concerned, I have already stated in my replies to previous PQs on this matter, that we are going to adopt a holistic approach and not a piecemeal implementation of the recommendations.

The question of public funding of political parties will therefore be addressed along with the other recommendations of the Sachs Commission. Although no time frame has yet been established, I'm hopeful that next year we shall start talking about these reforms.

Mr Bérenger: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I remind the hon. Prime Minister that more than two years ago, very soon after the last general election, he said in Parliament that there was need not to lose time as far as electoral reform is concerned and that, therefore, he would chair a High-Powered Committee himself to activate matters. Why has this not happened and why now this so-called holistic approach? Won't the hon. Prime Minister agree with me that putting all together, electoral reform plus public funding and so on, will make it even more difficult to reach consensus? Why not isolate one issue, one by one, and deal with it?

The Prime Minister: I did say all the time in my answers that I don't want a piecemeal approach. Even when I was Leader of the Opposition, I was saying that, Mr Speaker, Sir, but what I want to say is that I am pretty confident that all the parties concerned can agree with a lot of things. There is something which we all see, for example, the use of plastics and base. I am sure everybody tends to agree. I want to put all this out of the way and then look at it. I did say that I would chair the High-Powered Committee, but we have other priorities. What is important is two things, Mr Speaker, Sir. We can never probably agree on everything. Total consensus with the whole gamut of political parties is probably impossible, but we need to have broad consensus. And also it cannot be done as there was...

(Interruptions)

I think probably the then Prime Minister decided not to go forward, not only because there was disagreement between the parties of the Alliance, but also the election was too near. It would have been a great mistake to do

it on the eve of an election. That is why, I think, next year will be proper time.

(Interruptions)

I remind the Opposition that we haven't even reached half-term! I notice that a lot of journalists say half-term.

VICTORIA HOSPITAL – DR. C. M. – ALLEGED ASSAULT

(No. B/1098) Mr G. Gunness (Third Member for Montagne Blanche and GRSE) 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 alleged case of assault on one Dr. C. M. whilst being on duty at the Victoria Hospital, on or about 03 November 2007, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to whether an inquiry has been carried out thereinto and the outcome thereof.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that an enquiry has been carried out into the case and one W.D. has been arrested on a provisional charge of “Assaulting Public Functionary”.

The accused appeared in Court on 06 November 2007 and was released on bail after furnishing a surety of Rs2,500 and a recognizance for the sum of Rs25,000. His next appearance in Court is on 31 March 2008.

INDEPENDENT COMPLAINTS INVESTIGATION BUREAU – SETTING UP

(No. B/1099) 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 the proposed setting up of the Independent Complaints Investigation Bureau, he will state where matters stand.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, in my reply to the PNQ of 29 June 2007, I informed the House that Government proposes to set up an independent body with statutory powers to investigate complaints in respect of offences and misconduct allegedly committed by the members of the Police Force. The main objective is to introduce a new, clear and transparent complaints system to ensure that complaints against the Police are investigated and dealt with effectively on the same lines as the Independent Police Complaints Commission of the UK. This would avoid what has all the time been the complaint, that the investigating of complaints are by the Police against their own peers, that is, they are judge and party at the same time, at least, the perception is there.

The proposed mechanism will also ensure that policing in our country takes place within a human rights ethic and that those Police officers who do not uphold the rule of law are held accountable for their actions.

A delegation led by the Chairperson of the National Human Rights Commission and comprising representatives of the Attorney-General's Office, the Police Department and my own Office visited the Independent Complaints Directorate of South Africa which is responsible to investigate complaints against the Police in South Africa and they visited there from 03 to 05 July 2007. The purpose of the visit was to learn from their experience and to adopt best practices.

The draft Bill which had already been prepared had to be amended. The amended draft legislation for the establishment of such a body is in the final stage of preparation at the level of the State Law Office and will be introduced into the National Assembly as soon it is finalised.

Mr Speaker, Sir, this will be a further ingredient which is vital for the recovery of public confidence in the Police and the way in which complaints against them are investigated and dealt with.

Concurrently, with the support of UNDP, a consultant is at present carrying out an assessment and revision of the current Police Officers' Training Curriculum with a view to strengthening the Human Rights dimension in the training programme.

MEDIA – LEGISLATION

(No. B/1100) Mr A. Ganoo (First Member for Savanne and Black River) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether he will state if Government proposes to introduce legislation with a view to regulating the media, and, in particular, the private radios.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, let me reassure this House that it is certainly not the intention of Government to regulate the media. In the question, it is said “regulate”.

Freedom of expression constitutes one of the essential foundations of any democracy and is guaranteed under our Constitution. But it must also be emphasised that freedom of expression, like other fundamental freedoms entrenched in our Constitution, is not an absolute one.

Indeed, section 12 of our Constitution itself provides for derogation where a law makes provision “for the purpose of protecting the reputations, rights and freedom of other persons”. It would therefore be totally in order for legislation to be introduced with a view to strengthening existing provisions aimed at preventing abuse of freedom of the press amounting to unwarranted intrusion into the privacy of citizens and scurrilous and defamatory, if not untrue, allegations against citizens of our country.

Further we live in a country with a delicate communal equilibrium. It is based on tolerance and broad-mindedness. We should not therefore allow publication or broadcasting of irresponsible material that might create ill-will and animosity in the community.

Mr Speaker, Sir, amendments to our existing law, in line with the Constitution, which will strike a balance between freedom of expression and the legitimate rights of citizens to protect their reputations are therefore being envisaged.

As I always say, all rights entail responsibilities.

Mr Bérenger: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Prime Minister acknowledges that there is existing legislation to protect the people of this country, as far as private life is concerned - *diffamation, sédition, incitation au communalisme*. If I understood him correctly, he said that he feels that this has to be tightened. Of course, due regard should be paid to the rights of individuals. But, is the hon. Prime Minister aware that the trend in the UK, USA and France is in the opposite direction? More and more freedom is given to the press, with a minimum legal framework to work within.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am surprised that the Leader of the Opposition says that to me. When he was Prime Minister, he had the same attitude. He even threatened the private radios and the MBC...

(Interruptions)

I have got it here!

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

The Prime Minister: No, the legislation was passed by my Government! When the Leader of the Opposition, then Prime Minister, had trouble with Mr Ashok Radhakisson, who was at the head of the IBA – I am just reminding him, because I know what it is like when you are in Government and in the Opposition – he set up a *comité special* with hon. Ivan Collendavelloo at that time, *chargé de revoir la loi régissant les radios privées*. The latter said: *‘Le Premier ministre a raison. Il y a des dérapages et des excès. Il y en a certainement eu. Si personne ne veut s’en occuper, au moins le gouvernement s’en préoccupe.’*

(Interruptions)

I know what was the issue, and I have the details. Two things seem to have been the issue. One is that, in the private radios, they were saying all sorts of things against members of the Government.

(Interruptions)

The second issue may be of interest to hon. Bhagwan. The papers responded back to this, and I quote what was written in ‘5-plus’ by Michaëla Seblin –

‘Toutefois, nous n’avons pas attendu M. Paul Bérenger qui, lui, a des intérêts politiques dans l’affaire, pour estimer qu’il fallait une lessive à grande eau au sein de la rédaction de la MBC TV. Combien de fois n’avons-nous pas dénoncé les journaux télévisés à l’emporte-pièce, souvent riches uniquement d’activités ministérielles où on ne peut voir

que des déclarations de Rajesh Bhagwan, pour prendre un exemple, dans le même journal télévisé, à plusieurs reprises.'

(Interruptions)

I have many examples! The then Prime Minister even threatened to close one of the private radios. I have this here! He even sent Tonton Macoutes at 'l'Hebdo'. He physically threatened journalists at 'l'Hebdo'.

(Interruptions)

No! I have the details! And what did l'Hebdo' say? L'Hebdo stands up to the Tonton Macoutes, sent by the person who asked the question today. Let's be fair! The then Prime Minister was annoyed and, maybe, rightly so – I am not going into the merits of the case. There are abuses. I'll give you a recent example, Mr Speaker, Sir. The Commissioner of Police has drawn my attention to it. He rang me and said that he is bound to take some action, because this cannot go on. 'Week-End' newspaper published a small note '*ça va se savoir*'. This is a cover for a lot of untrue allegations. They said that around Rs4.3 m. have been found in the *coffre-fort* of an ex-policeman who has passed away. We know who it is. There has been a landing and there is an inquiry. Then, the next day, apparently, one of the private radios took it up all day long, and even yesterday, as one Member is telling me. The Commissioner of Police told me that there is *aucun fondement là-dessus*. Where did this news originate? How was it propagated? All these untrue allegations on somebody who has passed away! Can we accept this?

(Interruptions)

As the Leader of the Opposition knows, the law is not correct. Everyday, there are people making defamation in this country, and we say that we are a modern State! No! In fact, I should say that I was glad that this interview was given by the person who was in charge of the Press Council, Sir Louis Blom-Cooper. He gave an interview in 'l'Express' of 20 September when he was here with lawyers from the Middle Temple. He says he agrees that there are some things that have to be done. Somebody like him is saying that! I must reassure the House also. It's not that we are going to decide to muzzle X, Y or Z.

(Interruptions)

Of course! But, the Constitution says that you have rights and responsibilities. You cannot say that you have power but no responsibilities. That is why, last time, I used the expression, which has created a lot of reverb. I said: Power without responsibility, as Stanley Baldwin said, is the prerogative of the harlot throughout the ages. We cannot have power and no responsibility. That is why we want to do it.

RODRIGUES REGIONAL ASSEMBLY – DELEGATION TO TRINIDAD & TOBAGO

(No. B/1101) Mr J. R. Spéville (Second Member for Rodrigues) 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 recent mission to Trinidad and Tobago undertaken by a delegation of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly, he will state if his prior approval was sought and obtained and, if so, indicate –

- (a) its composition;
- (b) its purpose, and
- (c) a breakdown of the expenses incurred by Government and the organisers, if any, in respect of each member of the delegation.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, approval was obtained for a delegation headed by Mr Johnson Roussety, Chief Commissioner of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly and comprising Mr J.C.L. Lamvohee, Chairperson, Mr F.A. Grandcourt, Commissioner for Public Infrastructure, hon. L.J. Von-Mally, Member of the National Assembly and Mr J.C. Pierre Louis, Island Chief Executive, to visit Trinidad and Tobago from 22 September to 01 October 2007.

The objective of the mission was to obtain first-hand information on the workings of the Tobago House of Assembly which operates under a similar decentralised system as the Rodrigues Regional Assembly. The law governing the Rodrigues Regional Assembly was adapted from the Tobago House of Assembly Act 1996. The delegation took stock of the lessons

learnt by them, with a view to adapting measures introduced by the Tobago House of Assembly to the Rodriguan context in the furtherance of the functions of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly.

In fact, Mr Speaker, Sir, the project was submitted by the Rodrigues Regional Assembly to the Head of the delegation of the European Commission under the Decentralized Co-operation Programme, and it was agreed that the European Union would meet the costs for three delegates, namely Messrs. J. Roussety, J.C.L. Lamvohee and J.C. Pierre Louis. The Ministry of Finance had given clearance for the expenses in respect of hon. L.J. Von-Mally and Grandcourt to be met by the Rodrigues Regional Assembly.

As regards part (c) of the question, all expenses incurred by the Government have been made in accordance with existing policy. However, I wish to inform the House that out of the total expenses in connection with the mission, which amounted to Rs926,425, the European Commission will be reimbursing a sum of Rs408,932 under the Decentralized Co-operation Programme.

Mr Spéville: Mr Speaker, Sir, considering that this delegation was financed by the European Commission, was it not fair to include in the delegation Members of the Minority from Rodrigues?

The Prime Minister: I think this is a new party which has come into Government. As far as I know - the hon. Member can correct me if I am wrong - when they were in Government none of them went, the hon. Member didn't think it fair then.

Mr Spéville: I am talking of Trinidad and Tobago visit; this was the concern of all Members of the Regional Assembly.

The Prime Minister: The hon. Member has to be fair when he is in Government and when he is in the Opposition as well. Was it fair when they were in the Opposition, they were not asked to go?

FLACQ HOSPITAL – INCIDENT – 05 NOVEMBER 2007

(No. B/1102) **Mr G. Gunness (Third Member for Montagne Blanche and GRSE)** 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 incident which occurred at Flacq Hospital, on or about 05 November 2007, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to if an inquiry has been carried out thereinto, indicating the persons involved and the outcome of the inquiry.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, following the incident which occurred on 05 November 2007, Mr A. R. was arrested on 06 November 2007 and a provisional charge of “Assaulting Police” was lodged against him before Flacq District Court. He was released on bail on the same day upon furnishing a surety of Rs3,000.

The Police has so far taken the statements of five persons in the case and on completion of the enquiry, the matter will be referred to the Director of Public Prosecutions for advice.

Mr Gunness: Can I know from the Prime Minister whether a Police officer was aggressed on that particular day and whether a vehicle was seriously damaged in the yard of the hospital?

The Prime Minister: First of all, when the disturbance started at the Casualty Ward, there was a Police Constable who was present there, who tried to cool the person down, but he grew vexed and dealt the Police Constable a fisticuffs blow at his face and ran towards the gate. So, the Policeman was hit. At the same time, there was a taxi car driven – I don’t want to mention the name of the driver – which was then entering the premises of the hospital with a sick passenger; it stopped just in front of the said person who was running away. In a moment of anger, it seems the said person dealt a blow at the front windscreen of the car which got smashed. He then entered another car which drove him away.

Mr Gunness: Can the Prime Minister inform the House what were the circumstances which led that person to act in this manner in the yard of the hospital?

The Prime Minister: I am not the investigating Police Officer. Once an incident occurs, the Police inquires and, as I say, all the inquiries are being completed and will be sent to the DPP.

Mr Guinness: Is the Prime Minister aware that, at first instance, the Police was hesitant to take the statement of the victims because this person was supposedly to be well protected politically? Is the hon. Prime Minister aware of that?

The Prime Minister: The proof of the pudding is in the eating. If he was well protected, why are we suing him? Why is the case being sent to the DPP? Why statements are being recorded? It does not make sense what the hon. Member is saying.

Mr Jugnauth: Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether this person was already on bail for other offences?

The Prime Minister: Apparently, no.

CHAGOS ARCHIPELAGO – LEASE AGREEMENT

(No. B/1103) Mr N. Bodha (First Member for Vacoas and Floreal) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether, in regard to the lease agreement between the United Kingdom and the United States on the Chagos Archipelago, he will state –

- (a) the duration of the lease, and
- (b) the territory covered.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, as regards part (a) of the question, the Agreement signed on 30 December 1966 between the United States and the United Kingdom provides as follows –

“The United States Government and the United Kingdom Government contemplate that the islands shall remain available to meet the possible defense needs of the two Governments for an indefinitely long period. Accordingly, after an initial period of 50 years, this Agreement shall continue for a further period of twenty years, unless,

not more than two years before the end of the initial period, either Government shall have given notice of termination to the other, in which case this Agreement shall terminate two years from the date of such notice”.

That is what the Agreement says.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in other words, the lease on the Chagos Archipelago which was finalized in December 1966, is set for 50 years, ending in 2016, and renewable for a period of 20 years unless either the British or the US Government gives notice of an intention to terminate the lease two years ahead.

As regards part (b) of the question, the Agreement referred to the Island of Diego Garcia, the remainder of the Chagos Archipelago, and the islands of Aldabra, Farquhar and Desroches.

Mr Speaker, Sir, Government maintains, as successive Governments have done since independence, that the excision of the Chagos Archipelago from Mauritius by the United Kingdom was unlawful and that the United Kingdom therefore had no right to enter into a lease with the United States with respect to the Chagos Archipelago. Likewise, no Government has recognized the “British Indian Ocean Territory” and maintains that the Chagos Archipelago is and always has been part of Mauritius.

Mr Bodha: Mr Speaker, Sir, as the hon. Prime Minister said that the Agreement goes for 50 years, that is, 2016, and it can be renewed 10 years before, that is 2006, may I ask the hon. Prime Minister what is being done to prevent *qu’il y ait un renouvellement du traité derrière le dos de l’île Maurice, comme cela a été le cas pour le premier traité?*

The Prime Minister: All I want to say is to make it more clear. The Agreement is furnished for a period of 50 years and shall continue for a further period of 20 years - not 10 years - unless not more than two years before the end of the initial period as the Government shall have given notice.

To answer the second part of the question, that is, what will happen if the Agreement is being renewed behind our back. I talked to the Rt. hon. Prime Minister of UK, Gordon Brown, and I am hoping that we can also

start some movement with the United States later on, because there is going to be election. I hope that we can clarify the issue, otherwise, we will have to look for other options.

Mr Bodha: Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether he agrees that, in fact, the drafting of the treaty is a very tricky one? It is a bit like what we have for Gibraltar and that, in the Agreement, the exchange of notes dated 25 February 1976 refers to the Agreement - which the hon. Prime Minister mentioned - made on 30 December 1966 concerning the duration and termination, paragraph 22 reads as follows –

“This Agreement shall continue in force for as long as the BIOT Agreement (that is, the Agreement we have agreed upon) continues in force or until such time as no part of Diego Garcia is any longer required for the purposes of the facility whichever occurs first”

Will the Prime Minister agree that 20 years after 2016, that is, in 2036, this clause still applies?

The Prime Minister: I don't want to comment on that at this point Mr Speaker, Sir. We would rather work through the diplomatic channels and see what results we can get.

Mr Bérenger: Will the hon. Prime Minister confirm whereas London is perfectly aware of our claim and of the dispute between the UK and us on Chagos Archipelago - but we are now talking of the lease between two Governments, the UK and the United States - whether the United States are made at more or less regular intervals, aware of our sovereignty dispute with the UK?

The Prime Minister: In fact, I mentioned last time that it was not done officially because I had no official mission with the Government of the United States, but I did meet the Secretary of the United States, Ms Condoleezza Rice this year and last year also. Last year, I spoke lengthily with her about the situation. I reminded her of this last time and I am hoping that we will be able to take that at a higher level at some point.

Mr Bérenger: In reference to part (b), ‘the territory covered’, I heard the hon. Prime Minister list the Chagos Archipelago as a whole, but also three islands that were detached in 1965 from the Seychelles, brought into

the BIOT, but which were handed back to Seychelles on the occasion of their independence in the early seventies. Could I request the hon. Prime Minister to check whether the lease Agreement between the UK and the US was amended in the light of that return of those islands?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I will doubly check it but, as far as I am aware, they have not amended it, but I wonder whether we have all the information.

Mr Bodha: Mr Speaker, Sir, for the sake of transparency and for the general knowledge of all the hon. Members, may I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether he can table the exchange of notes for the first Agreement on 30 December 1976 and the exchange of notes dated 25 February 1976?

The Prime Minister: I have no problem about that, Mr Speaker, Sir.

CHAGOS ARCHIPELAGO - FISHING ACTIVITIES

(No. B/1104) Mr N. Bodha (First Member for Vacoas and Floreal) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether, in regard to the Chagos Archipelago, he will state if fishing activities are being operated thereat and, if so, give names of the holders of the fishing rights.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, according to our Constitution and the provisions of our fisheries laws, Mauritius has sovereign rights over the territorial waters and EEZ surrounding the Chagos Archipelago and should regulate fishing activities therein. However, for obvious reasons, Mauritius is not currently in a position to exercise control over, or to regulate fishing activities in those waters.

It would be appropriate, Mr Speaker, Sir, to remind this House that, on 27 January 1994, the then Minister of External Affairs signed a Joint Statement on the Conservation of Fisheries with his British counterpart, Mr Douglas Hurd, for the setting-up of the British Mauritian Fisheries Commission.

The British Mauritian Fisheries Commission was established with the objective to promote, facilitate and coordinate conservation and scientific research in the maritime area around the Chagos Archipelago. The Joint Statement issued after the establishment of the British Mauritian Fisheries Commission totally excluded the issue of sovereignty over the Chagos Archipelago.

The BMFC has met on five occasions since then.

At the fifth meeting of the BMFC in December 1999, the Mauritian delegation had proposed that joint consideration should be given to the number of licences issued and that Mauritius should be able to participate in the issue of fishing licences. The British delegation had replied that it could not accept the reasons advanced for the proposal and indicated that they believed that current practice on licensing should continue. The British delegation had also reiterated its position outlined during the fourth meeting of the BMFC that it was not in a position to consider sharing of licence fees.

In December 2000, the then Government had intended to discontinue with the British Mauritian Fisheries Commission. However, no final decision was taken.

My Government, however, intends to again initiate consultations with the British Government with a view to making interim arrangements for the licensing of fishing activities in the waters surrounding the Chagos Archipelago. But this, as I said, the Government must be again, and we will stress on it, without prejudice to the cause of sovereignty.

Mr Bodha: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether he is aware that the licensing of commercial fishing provides an annual income of about US\$2 m. for the BIOT?

The Prime Minister: In fact, we have also licensed vessels to go there and they have been arrested.

Mr Bérenger: After the historical judgement of the London Court in 2000 which struck down the 1971 Ordinance and therefore allowed the *Chagossiens* to come and go in the islands, except Diégo Garcia for security reasons where they would have to seek authority, we were informed then by London and, especially by the then Secretary of State, that our fishing vessels also could come and go in all the islands, except Diégo Garcia and,

in the case of Diégo Garcia, they would have to, for security reasons, request authority. Can I know what is the position now?

The Prime Minister: It seems that there has been a change in that position. That is why I think the then Government decided in 2000 to discontinue with the BMFC. I don't have the details as to why the decision was taken. In fact, no decision was taken at the end, but this was the intention from what I have gathered from the documents that we have. This was probably because there has been a change in the position. When we were last in Government, they have said that they would not change the licensing practice and they will not agree on the position that we had taken. That was in 1999. That is why I want to retake the matter with them.

Mr Bérenger: It is a completely different thing. This Commission - which I was always against and after 2000, when were in Government, we stopped - is completely different from the issue of our fishing vessels being allowed as from 2000 to come and go in all the islands. As the hon. Prime Minister knows, later on, what the then Secretary of State had decided, was overturned by someone in Government and two Orders in Council were passed, which have been struck out, to re-establish the prohibition from coming and going by the *Chagossiens* in any of the islands. Since the coming into force of these two so-called Orders in Council that have been struck down by British Courts, have we been informed that our fishing vessels cannot come and go freely in all the islands except Diego Garcia?

The Prime Minister: I have not been informed, but I have been told that fishing vessels of ours have been asked to go back because probably they have not realised that these Orders in Council have been struck down, although they appealed. These are the matters that I want to take up with the Rt. hon. Prime Minister.

Mr Speaker: Questions adressed to hon. Ministers. I have been informed that Parliamentary Questions Nos. 1150, 1151, 1152 and 1153 have been withdrawn. Hon. Bhagwan!

MAURITIUS TELECOM & CELLPLUS – BRAND NAME

(No. B/1117) **Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière)** asked the Minister of Information Technology and Telecommunications whether he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to whether the branding of the Mauritius Telecom and that of Cellplus will be changed to that of Orange and, if so –

- (a) the conditions of the deal, and
- (b) the cost to be incurred and the benefits to be derived by the Mauritius Telecom in connection therewith

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

I am informed that Mauritius Telecom has not entered into any branding agreement to change its name to Orange.

However, a brand licence agreement has been entered into by Cellplus for the use of ‘Orange’ as a commercial brand. The agreement concerns only products and not the company’s corporate name. The corporate name of Cellplus, that is, Cellplus Mobile Communications Limited, will remain unchanged.

Cellplus, a private limited company, is governed by the Companies Act and operates in a fully liberalised and competitive environment.

The conditions of the agreement entered into by Cellplus are commercially highly sensitive and the competitiveness of the company may be affected if such terms and conditions were to be made public.

I am further informed that the comparative costs and benefits of the agreement have been examined and found to be to the advantage of Cellplus.

Mr Bérenger: Can I ask the hon. Minister - although I don’t know who he is replacing, whether it is the Minister of Finance – when shares of Mauritius Telecom were sold to France Telecom in the past, we saw to it in the agreement for sale of shares that so long as Mauritius would keep over 30% of the shares, it would be in control of the Board and appoint the Chief Executive of Mauritius Telecom. This was a solid guarantee, but then

Cellplus was set up separately under the Companies Act without such an agreement and we all know today where is the money: the money is not in fixed line telephony, the money is in portable telephony. Is Government going to be very, very careful that through the backdoor, France Telecom will not take control of Cellplus with Orange to hide behind and, therefore, defeat the whole purpose of the agreement that was reached with France Telecom in the past?

Dr. Bunwaree: I take the point of the Leader of the Opposition. I can assure the House that everything has been done and the benefits that Cellplus will get from this outweigh significantly the costs and so on. But we will look into this point and I am going to transmit it to my colleague.

Mr Bérenger: May I point out to the hon. Minister if he can look into the fact that some staff of Mauritius Telecom/Cellplus are acting on behalf of Orange, choosing candidates, calling for candidates, recommending employment of people and so on. It is a very, very delicate situation that has been created and we can lose a lot of money. I would request Government to be very careful on that.

Dr. Bunwaree: I will look into that.

Mr Bhagwan: From the reply which the hon. Minister has given us - he is not agreeable to give figures - would he be surprised to know that 3% of the whole turnover of Mauritius Telecom is involved as cost for this branding?

Dr. Bunwaree: I don't know whether the figure is correct, but it should not be far from that.

At 1.00 p.m. the sitting was suspended.

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

TECHNICAL COMMITTEE – FUEL - RECOMMENDATIONS

(No. B/1118) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Environment and National Development Unit whether, in regard to the Technical Committee on the quality of fuel, chaired by Dr. K. E. of the University of Mauritius, he will state -

- (a) when was the Committee set up;
- (b) if a report has been submitted to his Ministry and, if so, indicate
 - (i) when;
 - (ii) the main recommendations thereof, including the targeted year for the quality of fuel used in Mauritius to meet the European Union standard, and
 - (iii) the schedule for the implementation of the recommendations.

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, the committee was set up in November 2004. A report was submitted in October 2005 with the following main recommendations -

- (i) to switch to better quality fuel as per specifications employed by the European Union, provided conditions of cost, storage and availability are satisfied;
- (ii) to consider the importation of either a single grade or two grades of diesel for the inland and maritime sectors;
- (iii) to invest in storage capacity, enhance operational and strategic energy reserves, and finalise the construction of a dedicated fuel jetty in order to use vessels of larger capacity;
- (iv) to review the fuel pricing structure with consideration of a storage fee, and
- (v) to harmonise the system of monitoring of fuel quality inland with a clear definition of the responsibility of different parties.

The TAC had also recommended that -

- (i) imported unleaded motor gasoline meet EURO III fuel specifications by 2006/2007 and EURO IV fuel specifications by 2009/2010;
- (ii) imported diesel meet EURO III fuel specifications by 2007/2008 and EURO IV fuel specifications by 2010/2011, together with the importation of marine diesel.

It is to be noted that the recommendation to switch to better fuel quality was made subject to conditions of cost, storage and availability being satisfied.

As the implementation of the recommendations will have considerable technical, financial and logistic implications, my Ministry has had several meetings with stakeholders and is still engaged in consultations with a view to reaching a consensus. A decision will be taken by Government soon.

Mr Bérenger: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Minister whether what he has just said means that none of the recommendations has been implemented?

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, we have not even submitted the proposals to the Government because discussions are still ongoing with different stakeholders, for example, with the Directorate of Shipping, the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development and the Ministry of Industry, Small & Medium Enterprises, Commerce & Cooperatives. I hope that in the weeks to come we will be able to reach to certain conclusions.

Mr Bérenger: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Minister whether, at least, the quality of petroleum products being imported in Mauritius - especially, since we have stopped tendering out, we have *de gré à gré* agreement - has been monitored?

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I can assure the House that it is being monitored. Our main problem in this issue concerns the PPM, we have 2500 PPM and we have to bring it down to 500 PPM. That is the crux of the matter and I do hope that we will be able to solve it out.

Mr Bhagwan: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have one supplementary question. We all know that the sulphur content in diesel is one cause of concern. From the medical point of view, it is a cause for cancer. The hon. Minister made a statement some time back to reduce further the sulphur content in diesel. May I ask him whether this recommendation is being implemented as a matter of health concern?

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, in fact, this is one of the issues which is being taken up that we have to bring down the sulphur content. And here also we have a problem definitely with the STC and the Directorate of Shipping.

Mr Bhagwan: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I know from the hon. Minister if the views of the Ministry of Health have been sought, especially as to the damage which sulphur can cause to children?

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I don't have the information with me.

MINISTRY OF SOCIAL SECURITY – PRINTERS - PURCHASE

(No. B/1119) Mr S. Lauthan (Third Member for Port Louis Maritime and Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Social Security, National Solidarity and Senior Citizens Welfare & Reform Institutions whether, in regard to the recent purchase of printers by her Ministry, she will state –

- (a) the number thereof;
- (b) the amount paid in respect of each printer, indicating the make and model;
- (c) the name of the supplier, and
- (d) a list of the units or sections to which the printers have been allocated.

Mrs Bappoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, the information is being tabled.

Mr Lauthan: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Minister to mention in the information which is being tabled as to when the printers were ordered and whether they were not adaptable to the existing IT equipment?

Mrs Bappoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have given the reasons for the change in the type of printers to be purchased by my Ministry. I have given all the detailed information in the reply that I have tabled.

Mr Lauthan: Mr Speaker, Sir, can we know as at to date whether all these printers have been allocated in the various offices?

Mrs Bappoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, mostly all of them, because 37 regional offices have got their printers and 11 of the different units of the Ministry.

Mr Lauthan: Mr Speaker, Sir, can we have the number of printers which have not been allocated yet?

Mrs Bappoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, we are still working on the software implementation and most of ...

(Interruptions)

If the hon. Member wants to know the answer, I am giving it.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Can I ask the hon. Minister to address the Chair, please!

Mrs Bappoo: Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir. Most of the sections and departments of the Ministry have got the new equipment fixed and mostly all the local offices, that is, 37 out of 40.

ENTERPRISE MAURITIUS - CHAIRPERSON

(No. B/1120) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Industry, Small & Medium Enterprises, Commerce and Co-operatives whether, in regard to Enterprise Mauritius, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, information as to if its Chairperson, Mr A.D., has stepped down and, if so –

- (a) since when, and
- (b) the reasons therefor.

Dr. Jeetah: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that Mr A. D. has not stepped down. He is the Chairperson of the Board of EM.

As regards part (b), the question does not arise.

Mr Speaker: The Chairman has not stepped down; the second part of the question does not arise.

Mr Bhagwan: Mr Speaker, Sir, as far as Enterprise Mauritius is concerned, this problem between the Chairperson and the Chief Executive is to the public knowledge. Can the hon. Minister inform the House what is happening, in fact, at this institution because everyday in the press we read letters from the Chairperson, press conference is being held by the Executive Director?

Dr. Jeetah: Mr Speaker, Sir, I do not go by the press, but I can assure the hon. Member that today the largest manufacturing sector in Mauritius, that is, the Textile and Clothing Sector is going to achieve record sales. The output of the EPZ is going to reach beyond Rs43 billions if the trend continues. So, it is the result that counts, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Bhagwan: Mr Speaker, Sir, can we know from the hon. Minister how he reconciles the statement made by the Chairperson that he has stepped down and he has given the reasons as to why he has done so with the reply he has just given. Can he verify the information?

Dr. Jeetah: Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to repeat my answer. The answer I have got is: I am informed that Mr A.D. has not stepped down. Therefore, he is the Chairperson of the Board of Enterprise Mauritius.

DBM – DEBTS – WRITTEN OFF

(No. B/1121) Mr A. Jugnauth (First Member for Quartier Militaire and Moka) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Development Bank of Mauritius Ltd, information as to whether the Bank has written off bad and doubtful debts for the financial year 2005-2006, and if so –

- (a) indicate the total amount thereof, and
- (b) give a list of the persons whose debts have been written off, indicating the amount in each case.

The Minister of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment (Dr. V. Bunwaree): Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that for financial year 2005-2006, the Development Bank of Mauritius (DBM) Ltd passed an entry for Rs14.072 m. under the item ‘Charge for Bad and Doubtful Debts’, as evidenced in the Bank’s Audited Accounts and its Annual Report. I am also informed that provision for credit losses is made by the DBM Ltd in accordance with the requirements of the International Accounting Standards (IAS) 39. Mr Speaker, Sir, out of the said amount of Rs14.072 m., an amount of Rs13.5 m. relates to additional provision for capital, Rs398,906 for interest regarding impaired accounts where recovery has become doubtful and Rs172,638 relates to bad debts written off.

As regards the second part of the question, as is the practice, it would not be ethical to provide the list of persons whose debts have been written off. This would be in breach of secrecy and confidentiality principle that binds the bank with its customers. However, I can inform the House that there are 4 persons whose debts have been written off in 2005/2006 and a number of accounts where the balances were less than Rs36 have been closed. I wish to stress that loan write-off takes place only after the Bank has exhausted all avenues of recovery.

DBM – INDUSTRIAL ESTATES – RE-EVALUATION EXERCISE

(No. B/1122) **Mr A. Jugnauth (First Member for Quartier Militaire and Moka)** asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Development Bank of Mauritius Ltd, information as to whether the Bank has caused a re-evaluation exercise of some of its industrial estates to be carried out and, if so –

- (a) the reasons therefor, and
- (b) if such an exercise has previously been carried out, indicating when.

The Minister of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment (Dr. V. Bunwaree): Mr Speaker, Sir. I am informed that the Development Bank of Mauritius (DBM) Ltd has caused a re-evaluation exercise of its industrial estates (investment in properties) and office buildings in October 2006. Such valuation exercise is carried out on a regular basis in accordance with the Accounting Policy of the Bank which is in compliance with the requirements of the International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS).

Furthermore, the Companies Act 2001 requires the Bank to prepare financial statements in accordance with the International Accounting Standards and IFRS.

I wish to inform the House that the Annual Report of the DBM Ltd for financial year ending 30 June 2006 has been filed with the Registrar of Companies and tabled in the National Assembly. DBM Ltd is still working on its Annual Report for financial year ending 30 June 2007.

As regards the second part of the question, I wish to inform the House that the valuation exercise was previously carried out in 1992, 1996 and 2003.

The accounting policy for revaluing industrial estates has been consistently applied.

Mr Jugnauth: Mr Speaker, Sir, I can understand if all the industrial estates were revalued, but, in this case, I understand that only some of them have been revalued. May I know why?

Dr. Bunwaree: I am not aware of this. I have to look into the matter. There must be some reasons. My colleague will be informed and will give the necessary explanations.

Mr Jugnauth: Can I ask the hon. Minister whether all these were not done with a view to show that Development Bank of Mauritius Ltd has made a profit instead of a loss?

Dr. Bunwaree: I cannot answer offhand, but I can tell the hon. Member that lands and buildings are revalued for rentals, capital appreciation or both. There must be some important exercise, but everything is done according to the standards I have mentioned.

QUATRE BORNES MARKET – STALLS - ALLOCATION

(No. B/1123) Mr A. Jugnauth (First Member for Quartier Militaire and Moka) asked the Minister of Local Government whether, in regard to the recent exercise carried out for the allocation of stalls at the Quatre Bornes Market, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Municipal Council of Quatre Bornes, information as to –

- (a) the eligibility criteria laid down, and
- (b) if all the beneficiaries thereof satisfied the criteria and, if not, give a list of those beneficiaries who did not satisfy same.

Dr. David: Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I shall reply to both questions B/1123 and B/1124 concurrently.

With regard to part (a) of the question B/1123, I am informed by the Municipality of Quatre Bornes that the eligibility criteria laid down for registration to trade at the Quatre Bornes Haberdashery fair on Tuesdays and Fridays are as follows –

- (i) submission of documents such as NID, birth and marriage certificates, proofs of residence and unemployment, rent book, or lease agreement (wherever applicable), and
- (ii) swearing of an Affidavit certifying that the applicant is unemployed, resident of the town of Quatre Bornes and does not occupy any stall/space at the Quatre Bornes fair.

As regards part (b) of the question, I am informed that all the beneficiaries have submitted the required documents such as NID, birth certificate, proof of residence and unemployment, etc. In view of the fact that the swearing of the affidavit would have involved a financial burden on the applicants, the Council decided not to enforce that criterion.

As far as question B/1124 is concerned, I am informed that the Independent Commission Against Corruption is conducting an inquiry on the allocation of stalls by the Council. Appropriate measures will be taken in the light of the outcome of the inquiry.

The House may wish to note that this is not the first time that such an inquiry is being carried out. In fact, in the recent past, the Independent Commission Against Corruption had conducted a similar inquiry concerning the Central Market which led to the arrest of an ex-Lord Mayor under the previous Municipal Administration. The case is coming pro forma on 03 December 2007.

Mr Jugnauth: May I know from the Minister when ICAC is conducting an inquiry, whether the Municipal Council, which falls under his Ministry, cannot conduct a parallel inquiry, particularly, in cases where the beneficiaries have not satisfied the criteria and whether it is not proper and fair to have the whole exercise cancel and restart a new exercise? Because we know who are the people who have obtained the stalls, not by paying for the affidavit, but by paying a high sum to get the stalls.

Dr. David: Mr Speaker, Sir, first of all, I forgot to lay on the Table of the Assembly the charges laid against the ex-Lord Mayor and who going to appear in Court.

Secondly, Mr Speaker, Sir...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! Address the Chair, hon. Minister!

Dr. David: The hon. Member must be the last person to ask questions about criteria and eligibility ...

Mr Speaker: Address the Chair! Order!

Dr. David: We know what happened in hospitals about criteria and eligibility ...

Mr Speaker: Order!

Dr. David: We prefer to wait. There is an inquiry going on, as I said, this is the proper exercise.

Mr Speaker: Yes, that would be the proper way to answer.

QUATRE BORNES MARKET – STALLS - ALLOCATION

(No. B/1124) Mr A. Jugnauth (First Member for Quartier Militaire and Moka) asked the Minister of Local Government whether, in regard to the recent exercise carried out for the allocation of stalls at the Quatre Bornes Market, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Municipal Council of Quatre Bornes, information as to whether he will consider the advisability of canceling the whole exercise and carrying out a fresh one in view of the allegations of malpractice.

(Vide reply to PQ No. B/1123)

COW BREEDERS – CLUSTERS

(No B/1125) Mr S. Dayal (Second Member for Quartier Militaire and Moka) asked the Minister of Agro Industry and Fisheries whether, in regard to the production of milk and of its by-products, he will state if Government is proposing to create clusters of cow breeders, region-wise, in order to benefit from the economies of scale and, if so, will Government consider the advisability of –

- (a) providing to the clusters of cow breeders -
 - (i) fodders against payment of a fee, and
 - (ii) the necessary infrastructure and equipment, including those for cow milking, and
- (b) arranging for the bulk collection of milk and the storage thereof.

Dr. Boolell: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I would first like to thank the hon. Member for raising the issue of production of milk and its by-products.

As a matter of fact, my Ministry has been encouraging the creation of clusters of cow breeders to benefit from economies of scale. But the strategy adopted is not too different to the ones mentioned by the hon. Member.

More specifically with regard to -

- (a) my Ministry is not providing fodder but cattle feed instead, (cow feed and cotton seed cake) region-wise, at a price which is highly subsidized.; and leasing State lands for breeding purposes, which include fodder production;
- (b) the Government does not have a policy of providing the necessary infrastructure and equipment, although the breeders may have recourse to the Empowerment Programme. My technical agencies, (FARC, AREU, Agricultural Services), however, offer technical advice for putting up of the infrastructure and acquisition of the appropriate equipment, and
- (c) my Ministry, through the AMB, has been arranging for the bulk collection of milk, its storage and processing, but this facility is being reconsidered now. I will detail of this in my answer to PQ B/1129.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I would seize this opportunity to make a comprehensive statement on action taken by the Ministry in dairy sector development, which will shed more light on the strategy adopted.

It was by September 2005 that my Ministry with the input of FARC undertook a strategic overview of the Mauritian Dairy Supply chain and conceptualization of the “*Village Laitier*” project which was mentioned in our Government Programme.

This was followed by an Action Plan specifically for one cluster, namely the Nouvelle Découverte Cow Breeders Co-operative Society Ltd. In May 2006, with the appreciated support of the French Government, Mr F. Vaucoret fielded a technical mission in Mauritius and through a report confirmed the strategy adopted and the operationalisation of the “*Village Laitier*” project.

Several meetings were held under my chairmanship and also that of the Food and Agricultural Research Council (FARC) with breeders and other stakeholders, to follow up closely on the development and revitalization of the dairy sector. These were also dealt with at the level of workshops. The latest one being the National Workshop on Strategic Options for the Crop & Livestock Sector (2007-2015), held at the Rajiv Gandhi Science Centre on 21 August 2007.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the general approach is for the Ministry, as the lead agency of the State, to coordinate and deliver selected measures, schemes and action, which are designed to act as a catalyst to the efforts that have primarily to be made by the breeders and other stakeholders themselves in the first place.

This mission is being implemented through the following strategies –

(1) In the short to medium term, to stop urgently the further decline of the milk sector by consolidating existing clusters of breeders to convert them into “*Village Laitier*”. We are dealing with two categories here –

(a) Livestock Co-operatives already operating on State lands, where there is a need for monitoring and upgrading.

The examples are : La Brasserie Cooperative Society (comprising 14 members), and Nouvelle Découverte Cow Breeders Co-operative Society Ltd. (comprising 11 members), which were allocated 70 arpents and 86 arpents of State lands, respectively, by myself as Minister in 1998/99.

We have taken following action steps here -

- (i) detailed Action Plan has been defined for Nouvelle Découverte Cow Breeders Co-operative Society Ltd.;
- (ii) water and electricity facilities and road access have been upgraded;

- (iii) project submitted to Decentralised Co-operation Programme (DCP) of EU has been approved; grant of Rs3 m. is available to further upgrade infrastructural facilities, such as road access and water system, and
- (iv) 22 cows have been made available from the Palmar Station at subsidized prices.

(b) Other clusters/co-operatives already operating, but in the traditional household backyards, where there is a need for relocation to appropriate sites.

The examples are most of the Livestock Co-operatives & Individual Breeders.

The following action steps have been taken -

- (i) the Northern Livestock Cooperative Society Ltd. (consisting of 15 members) has been allocated 12 arpents of State land at Nouvelle Découverte. Lease Agreement signed on 07 June 2007, and
- (ii) the Ministry of Industry & Co-operatives has made available Rs1 m. for the setting-up of a model cowshed at Nouvelle Découverte.

(2) In the medium to long term, to encourage the establishment of new dairy projects on State lands -

- (a) Medium to larger scale projects.

Several project proposals have been submitted to my Ministry where the single major request is for land, which ranges between 50 and 250 arpents per unit.

Planning, financial arrangements and establishment would be the exclusive responsibility of the private promoter(s), with the State only involved in State land allocation if where and when available and suitable; in regulatory oversight and technical support if requested.

Examples of State land allocations are –

- (i) Krish Cow and Dairy Products Ltd., and
 - (ii) Food & Allied Industries Ltd. (FAIL)
- (b) Small scale dairy projects: similar requests for State lands have also been made by small breeders, existing and prospective.

State lands have been identified for these activities and the beneficiaries have already received the letter of intent and expected to sign the lease agreements by next week.

A Committee chaired by the Director of AREU is monitoring the matter.

I am tabling the list of the beneficiaries for dairy projects so far.

- (c) The Mauritius Prisons Services

My Ministry has donated 21 cows and 19 heifers for the breeding purposes on 20 August 2007, which is expected to make the Prisons Department self-sufficient in milk production.

Moreover, the Prisons Services has been allocated 16 hectares of land at Mon Bois for livestock breeding activities including fodder production.

- (d) Rodrigues Regional Assembly

My Ministry has given special attention to Rodrigues by supplying 64 animals, comprising among others, 5 bulls, 5 young heifers, 5 breeding heifers and 10 cows on 03 October 2007.

(3) Other Strategies

(a) We are presently working on identification of such belts, i.e. the land & site identification and allocation for breeding and fodder production around the island, which will consist mainly of private lands. This will take account of our sugar-cane/agricultural diversification strategy and environmental requirements; incentives package that may be needed to encourage private landowners to convert land to livestock/fodder production activities, and sensitization/training programmes.

(b) Milk Price Policy

Since April 2007, fresh milk price has been increased to Rs12 per litre by AMB to give an added incentive to cow keepers.

(c) Synergies between breeders and small breeders.

Large players to catalyse small scale sector development in terms of new management practices and technologies and feeding systems, animal supply; and marketing and processing of fresh milk. Both Krish Cow and FAIL that have been allocated State land are willing to interact positively with small breeders.

(d) Synergies between small scale breeders.

Bona fide breeders who benefit from one-off sale of livestock from Palmar Livestock Production Unit to supply prospective breeders with breeding stock.

(e) Import of heifers.

Encouraging strategic alliances between livestock importers and breeders in the import of breeding animals.

(f) Technical support

I have already highlighted it and as to the incentives which have already been highlighted and which I am not going to list.

Mr Gunness: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Minister if the Salazie Livestock is closed since two or three years? I understand that it was given to an Indian company, but nothing is being done there. Can the hon. Minister enlighten the House as to what will be done there?

Dr. Boolell: In fact, they showed a keen interest. They entered into a strategic alliance with a South African partner, but they pulled out, because they said that the project is not feasible and that there would be no return on their investment.

Mr Gunness: Can I know whether there is any plan to lease Salazie Livestock to any other firm which has shown interest in the project?

Dr. Boolell: In fact, several groups have shown interest, namely Food and Allied Industries, which have been allocated land in Richelieu; Krish Cows and Dairy Products which has been allocated 100 arpents, and also SURAT who has gone into a strategic alliance with a South African group. This company has expressed interest to invest into cow breeding and dairy farm.

Mr Dayal: Mr Speaker, Sir, in the same way as tourist villages are being created by Government, will the hon. Minister state whether Government will create clusters and provide all necessary facilities to small cow breeders to promote milk production in Mauritius.

Dr. Boolell: I have highlighted a host of incentives and facilities. Of course, I understand the point canvassed by my good friend, as to whether we need to do more, over and above the facilities we extended to them through the Empowerment Programme. There are also other facilities in respect of the SME Facility Fund which are being extended to them. We

wish we could do more. Government is leasing land at a very reasonable rate.

All technical facilities and capacity-building are being dispensed and through the Empowerment Programme, SME Facility Fund they can have access to financial support. There is also the Ministry of Co-operatives which gives a grant of Rs40,000 to the breeder. We have already set up a 'Village laitiers' which is going to be a showcase for other breeders.

Mr Dayal: Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Minister inform the House whether his Ministry has looked into whether the production of milk locally will be more competitive than the import price and also in the context of food security?

Dr. Boolell: In fact, there is a readily available market for the sale of fresh milk. Some of the breeders are selling milk at Rs25 to Rs35 per litre. Hence, there has been a growing interest. Many people are submitting applications and the reason as to why there has been a committee chaired by FARC in respect of allocation of land and to give the technical support and backup. My good friend can rest assured, we are coming with a new package of incentives and facilities to ensure that there is new emergence of this sector.

Mr Guinness: Mr Speaker, Sir, it seems that animals have been transferred from Palmar Livestock Station to other stations. Can I know from the hon. Minister whether it is the intention of Government to close that particular centre, and, if so, for what purpose will it be used?

Dr. Boolell: Mr Speaker, Sir, I recall earlier I stated that there was a ceremony held on 22 September where there has been allocation of animals to existing *bona fide* farmers and upcoming farmers. The object of this exercise is to close Palmar Livestock Station Experimental Livestock and to convert it for other remunerative purposes because there is a growing investment in the tourism sector. Land is a scarce commodity and we need to release this land for more remunerative purposes.

Mr Guinness: Can I know from the hon. Minister whether land has been earmarked for any potential investor?

Dr. Boolell: No, there have been several expressions of interest. Projects have been submitted to BOI, but, as of now, except for one particular company, land is yet to be allocated to the others which have submitted their applications.

**RIVIERE BAPTISTE, ST. PIERRE/LA LAURA – ROAD –
UPGRADING AND RESURFACING**

(No. B/1126) Mr S. Dayal (Second Member for Quartier Militaire and Moka) asked the Minister of Environment & National Development Unit whether he will consider the advisability of upgrading and resurfacing the road leading from Rivière Baptiste, St. Pierre to La Laura.

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have been advised that part of the road passes through private property. It will not be possible for improvement of the road as there has been neither proper survey nor is the road wide enough for tarring.

PETIT VERGER, ST. PIERRE BRANCH ROAD – RESURFACING

(No. B/1127) Mr S. Dayal (Second Member for Quartier Militaire and Moka) asked the Minister of Environment & National Development Unit whether in regard to the project for the resurfacing of the Petit Verger, St. Pierre Branch Road, he will state when works are likely to start.

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, in view of water accumulation, a works order has been issued for a drain system for the dispersion of water run off. After the completion of the drain project, consideration will be given for the improvement of Petit Verger, St. Pierre Branch Road.

Mr Dayal: Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Minister state to the House when the construction of the drain project will start?

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, works order has already been issued. Either it has already started or in the days to come work will start.

ST. JULIEN D'HOTMAN ROAD - RESURFACING

(No. B/1128) Mr S. Dayal (Second Member for Quartier Militaire and Moka) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping whether in regard to the project for the resurfacing of the St. Julien d'Hotman Road, he will state when works are likely to start.

The Minister of Environment & National Development Unit (Mr A. Bachoo): Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that the resurfacing of St. Julien d'Hotman Road known as Higginson Road B24 is in the programme of works of Road Development Authority for next financial year.

COW BREEDERS – MILK - SALE

(No. B/1129) Mr S. Soodhun (Fifth Member for La Caverne and Phoenix) asked the Minister of Agro Industry and Fisheries whether he will state if Government has decided to stop the collection of milk from the cow breeders and the distribution thereof and, if so, indicate if any alternative support is being proposed to the cow breeders.

Dr. Boolell: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am advised by the Agricultural Marketing Board (AMB) that the current Milk Marketing Scheme, which is in operation since 1985, will run until May 2008. The scheme, which is not viable presently, will be reviewed after that date. In this regard, the AMB has organised a series of meetings with the cow-breeders to inform them of the AMB's decision and to allow them to make alternative arrangements to sell their milk.

I wish to assure the House that my Ministry will assist interested entrepreneurs and milk cooperatives through the Empowerment Programme and other institutions to set up business in milk marketing so that they can be equipped with mini pasteurisation units including packing facilities for pasteurised milk to be sold to the public and hotels at large. The Nouvelle Découverte Cow-Breeders' Cooperative Society is being guided in this direction along with the *Mouvement pour l'Autosuffisance Alimentaire*.

Furthermore, large players in dairy activities namely Krish Cow Farm, Food and Allied Industries Ltd., Surat & Co. Ltd. and Dairy Products have expressed their intention to set up their own marketing system for pasteurised milk. They propose to buy the fresh milk from small operators as well.

Under the Milk Marketing Scheme, milk collected island-wide from cow-breeders is pasteurised by Best Dairy Company Ltd. for which the latter charges a fee to the AMB. After the pasteurisation process, milk is packed and distributed for sale by AMB.

It has been noted that the delivery of the pasteurised milk by Best Dairy Company Ltd. is not being effected as per the requirements of the Food Act. Various shortcomings have been noted by the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life and the company has been requested, on various occasions, to take remedial actions.

For the Milk Marketing Scheme to be financially viable, the AMB needs at least 3,500 litres daily. It presently collects less than 1,000 litre daily compared to an average of 4,000 litres each day ten years back.

The AMB started making losses as from year 2000 mainly because there has been a drastic decrease in the supply of milk. Cow-breeders are not interested to sell their milk to AMB because they are fetching higher prices on the market, prices vary from Rs25 to Rs35 per litre compared to AMB's price of Rs12 per litre and that has been increased from Rs9 to Rs12. The AMB is contemplating an increase in the price of fresh milk to provide further incentive to cow-breeders.

PLANTERS (SMALL) – LAND - DEROCKING

(No. B/1130) Mr S. Soodhun (Fifth Member for La Caverne and Phoenix) asked the Minister of Agro Industry and Fisheries whether, in regard to the derocking of the 2000 arpents of land of the small planters, he will state –

- (a) if this exercise has been completed;
- (b) who was awarded the contract, and
- (c) the fees paid to the contractors.

Dr. Boolell: Mr Speaker, Sir, the scheme for the derocking of 2000 *arpents* of land of small planters was mentioned in the Road Map for the Mauritius Sugar Industry. This scheme has not been implemented because we are doing much better. Instead, we are implementing the project entitled “Field Operations and Regrouping of Planters” which also includes derocking of land. This project provides for the preparation of 20,000 ha of land belonging to planters holding up to 25 ha over a period of ten years. Out of this, 12,000 ha will be prepared for semi or full mechanisation. For the remaining 8,000 ha which are in difficult areas, minimum tillage practices will be undertaken.

I would like to remind the House that this Government has disbursed Rs500 m. in order to start the implementation of this project.

The first phase of the project covering 1,000 *arpents* (340 ha) belonging to 245 planters has been completed during the period July 2006 to April 2007. The works have been undertaken by the SMEs and the Sugar Planters Mechanical Pool Corporation (SPMPC). Assistance and collaboration from the millers have been free of charge. The second phase concerning some 3,100 *arpents* (1,300 ha) is being implemented and is expected to be completed by June 2008.

With regard to parts (b) and (c), I have already tabled the information in reply to PQ B/654. I am tabling the information again.

Mr Jhugroo: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Minister whether he has any plan for derocking land belonging to small planters in the region of Hollyrood and Henrietta?

Dr. Boolell: Mr Speaker, Sir, this is an ongoing exercise. The Farmers Service Corporation together with the Milling Growing Company of the region interact with the planters. Then, once an agreement is reached, they have to sign a lease with the Project Implementation Committee under the supervision of the MSA, but this is an ongoing exercise.

As to the exact date, I can supply my good friend with the relevant information.

AGRICULTURAL MARKETING BOARD – FINANCIAL SITUATION

(No. B/1131) Mr S. Soodhun (Fifth Member for La Caverne and Phoenix) asked the Minister of Agro Industry & Fisheries whether, in regard to the Agricultural Marketing Board, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Board, information as to its present financial situation.

Dr. Boolell: Mr Speaker Sir, I am advised by the Agricultural Marketing Board (AMB) that it is projecting a loss of Rs50 m. for 2007.

The main reason for this projected deficit is the sale of imported onions on the local market at the fixed price of Rs12,700 per ton compared to an average purchase price of Rs28,000 per ton on the international market.

In order to prevent the AMB from making further losses, Government has approved a recommendation of AMB to liberalise the selling price of onions on the local market. This decision is effective as from 01 November 2007. Government has also agreed to the liberalisation of imports of onions as from 01 January 2009 to stimulate competition for that commodity.

I would invite the hon. Member to refer to the reply which I made to PQ B/134 wherein greater details have been given regarding the causes that have led the AMB to this very difficult financial situation.

Mr Soodhun: Mr Speaker, Sir, the Minister has just said that there is an overdraft of Rs50 m. Can he confirm whether up to December we will not have any scarcity of potatoes and onions on the market?

Dr. Boolell: I don't think the question is relevant, Mr Speaker, Sir, but the hon. Member can rest assured that there will be supply of onions and potatoes on the market. In fact, since we have agreed to liberalise the price of onions, the planters feel contented and, in fact, these are the new varieties that are being introduced. I expect an increase in production.

Mr Bérenger: Can I ask the hon. Minister whether he has the figure for the number of onion growers at present and with this total liberalisation of this importation and of the price of onions, how does he expect the situation to evolve? Does he expect a lot of onion growers to be out of business?

Dr. Boolell: Mr Speaker, Sir, in fact, our onion growers will have a floor price, which is being offered to them by the Agricultural Marketing Board. The AMB can always act as a regulator and importer of last resort. With the new varieties which are being released, we expect an increase in production. At the same time, whether we like it or not, with the increase in consumption in India and other parts of Asia, we expect prices of onions to constantly grow up. It's an opportunity for our growers to grasp and, hence, the reason as to why we are providing them with these incentives.

Mr Soodhun: Mr Speaker, Sir, will the hon. Minister agree with me that this situation is going on and on due to the mismanagement of the AMB and is he ready to set up a committee to look into the debt which is nearly Rs50 m. now?

Dr. Boolell: Mr Speaker, Sir, let me remind my good friend that the financial situation started deteriorating as from year 2003. I have a list of causes as to why there has been such a huge deficit. In fact, it was due to capital expenditure incurred for the construction of cold rooms at Moka in 2002 and 2003, while the AMB already had sufficient storage facilities at Cluny. I am not going to talk about depreciation of the rupee and of the increase in the cost of import. The AMB, of course, has its own problems which are being dealt with; and I am happy the way the Board is being run. Of course, if there are any shortcomings, corrective measures will be taken.

MOKA - NHDC HOUSING PROJECT

(No. B/1132) Mr S. Soodhun (Fifth Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Minister of Housing & Lands whether, in regard to the housing project being undertaken in the region of Moka, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the National Housing Development Company Ltd, information as to –

- (a) the location of the project;
- (b) the number of units being constructed;
- (c) the cost per unit, and
- (d) the names of the beneficiaries.

Mr Dulull: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am advised that there is no housing project which is being undertaken by the NHDC in the region of Moka.

**SLABS (CASTING) – BENEFICIARIES – JULY 2005-NOVEMBER
2007**

(No. B/1133) Mr E. Guimbeau (First Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the Minister of Housing & Lands whether, in regard to the scheme for the casting of slabs, he will state the names and addresses of the beneficiaries thereof, constituency-wise, since July 2005 to date, indicating the amount spent in each constituency.

Mr Dulull: Mr Speaker, Sir, from July 2005 to date, a total of Rs440,734,220 has been disbursed for all constituencies, including Rodrigues, that is, for a period of two years and three months.

To remind the House, the scheme for casting of slabs was initiated in 1997, under the primeministership of Dr. the hon. Navin Ramgoolam, to assist our less fortunate citizens, to encourage efforts on their part, and as *'une mesure d'encadrement et d'accompagnement'*, with a view to empowering them.

Indeed, our policy *'un toit pour toi'* is a dynamic one to provide...

Mr Speaker: Can I ask the hon. Minister to be pertinent to the question which has been put?

Mr Dulull: Mr Speaker, Sir, it is in line with our policy.

Mr Speaker: I must inform the House that question time is at the heart of parliamentary democracy, and the time is limited. So, Ministers must answer questions which have been put and not bring in extraneous matters.

Mr Dulull: Mr Speaker, Sir, regarding the names and addresses of some 9,000 beneficiaries, I am sure that the hon. Member will appreciate that it will take some time to compile a list constituency-wise. Once the compilation and verification exercise has been completed, the list constituency-wise will be placed in the Library.

**MINISTERS – OVERSEAS MISSIONS – EXPENDITURE
INCURRED**

(No. B/1134) Mr E. Guimbeau (First Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance & Economic Development whether, in regard to the overseas missions undertaken by the hon. Ministers since May 2007 to date, he will, in each case, state the total number thereof, indicating –

- (a) the dates, the countries and the purpose of each mission;
- (b) the names of the accompanying delegates, and
- (c) the total amount of money paid in terms of *per diem*, air fares and other allowances.

The Minister of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment (Dr. V. Bunwaree): Mr Speaker, Sir, the information regarding parts (a) and (b) is being compiled and will be submitted in due course.

As regards part (c) of the question, concerning *per diem*, etc, everything is done in accordance with existing policy and established procedures. The House may wish to note that the *per diem* rates payable are fixed both for Ministers and public officers, and the quantum which is aligned on UN rates depends on the country in which the mission takes place.

Mr Guimbeau: Mr Speaker, Sir, part (c) is with regard to the total amount of money paid in terms of *per diem*.

Dr. Bunwaree: Mr Speaker, Sir, I said that it is according to existing policy.

Mr Guimbeau: Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to know from the hon. Minister whether information sought by hon. Jhugroo in his Parliamentary Question has been tabled. It is with regard to period July 2005–April 2007.

Dr. Bunwaree: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am not aware of this question, because I am replacing the substantive Minister. But, I can remind the hon. Member, who was a PPS in the 2000-2005 Government, of what hon. Cuttaree who, by coincidence, is on mission and not present today, replied to a question put by hon. Dr. Jeetah –

“Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Member will agree that it is a time consuming exercise for officers of the Ministry to compile the information”.

Do you know what the then Speaker said, when hon. Dr. Jeetah insisted?

“Hon. Jeetah, what supplementary question you can put on this question, when the Minister replied that the information is being compiled?”

Mr Jhugroo: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Minister whether there is any time limit? Because very often the answer is not being tabled.

Dr. Bunwaree: Mr Speaker, Sir, let me remind the hon. Member of something that happened again in 2004. With regard to a question put by hon. Dr. Jeetah to the then Prime Minister in November 2004, the Prime Minister said –

“The total number of overseas missions undertaken by Government Ministers since September 2000 to date – that is, November 2004 – as well as those undertaken during the same period 1995 and 2000 is being compiled”.

Then, hon. Jeetah insisted –

“Mr Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether he is aware that hon. Dr. David asked a similar question on 18 December 2001 and he is still waiting for an answer.”

The then Prime Minister said –

“He will have to wait further”.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Mr Guimbeau: Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to ask the hon. Minister how long are we going to wait before having the answers to those questions?

Dr. Bunwaree: Mr Speaker, Sir, I hope the reply will be given in slightly less time than what was said by hon. Bérenger.

MFDC – MR R. B. - CONTRACT

(No. B/1135) **Mr G. Guinness (Third Member for Montagne Blanche & GRSE)** asked the Minister of Industry, Small & Medium Enterprises, Commerce & Co-operatives whether, in regard to Mr R. B., he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Film Development Corporation, information as to whether his contract has been renewed and, if so, the terms and conditions of the new contract.

Dr. Jeetah: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the MFDC that Mr R. B. has not applied for the renewal of his contract upon its expiry on 14 November 2007.

Mr Guinness: Mr Speaker, Sir, the gentleman had to ensure that, at least, 100 Indian crews would come to Mauritius for film shooting. Has this been done?

Dr. Jeetah: Mr Speaker, Sir, Mr R. B. had recommended that MFDC should invest in new equipment, which was needed to attract film crews from India. The MFDC could not invest in the recommended equipment because of budgetary constraints. However, the recommendations will be considered in the forthcoming Budget. But, I would like to mention that, for the period 15 October 2006 to September 2007, the MFDC provided its services to 62 crews, of which 15 were from India.

Mr Guinness: Mr Speaker, Sir, the gentleman was to ensure also that, at least, two advertising films are shot monthly in Mauritius, which means 24 films. Has this been done over the past year?

Dr. Jeetah: Mr Speaker, Sir, the only information I have is that we had 62 crews, of which 15 were from India. I don't have any further details. But, if the hon. Member puts a substantive question, I will gladly reply.

Mr Guinness: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I know from the hon. Minister whether, at least, the five TV serials were shot annually in Mauritius?

Dr. Jeetah: Mr Speaker, Sir, that's the only information I have.

Mr Guinness: Mr Speaker, Sir, I think that the hon. Minister answered a question in the past and he submitted the duties of that gentleman. What I am asking is whether that gentleman respected the eight duties assigned to him.

Dr. Jeetah: Mr Speaker, Sir, I did mention that these duties were formulated by the MFDC. That was made so that we get some results. But, then, the gentleman suggested that we had to invest massively. Out of their doing, out of the economic situation, we could not invest. Today, the economy is doing better. Hopefully, this year, we will get 5.8% growth. We will be able to invest and then, hopefully, we will be able to have more of these projects done in Mauritius.

Mr Guinness: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Minister whether MHDC has invest in equipment, when it is said that the gentleman is supposed to promote Mauritius as a prime destination for Bhojpuri film shooting? I don't think that MHDC had to invest in equipment, he has to promote Mauritius. Has this been done?

Dr. Jeetah: Mr Speaker, Sir, I don't know if the hon. Member is aware, today if somebody was to shoot a film in London, he is paid a certain amount of money to be present there. We are not competitive at all in terms of attracting people in this field. We have to give certain facilities to have crew members coming to Mauritius and if you can't afford, it just does not happen.

Mr Guinness: Can I finally ask the hon. Minister whether he is satisfied with the performance of the gentleman with whom we signed a contract? We spent a lot of money which, in my opinion, is a wastage. Is the hon. Minister satisfied?

Dr. Jeetah: Mr Speaker, Sir, I would not agree with the comments of the hon. Member. We couldn't invest the amount of money we had to invest to attract film crews, but we are doing with whatever facilities we have and, as I said, we managed to get 62 crews coming to Mauritius over that period.

CAMP BAILLE, BEAU VALLON – LANES RESURFACING

(No. B/1136) Mr Y. Varma (First Member for Mahebourg and Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Environment and National Development Unit whether, in regard to the resurfacing of the lanes in Camp Baille, Beau Vallon in the Constituency of Plaine Magnien and Mahebourg, he will state where matters stand.

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, work order has already been issued

**PETIT BEL AIR, MAHEBOURG – VILLAGE HALL –
CONSTRUCTION**

(No. B/1137) Mr Y. Varma (First Member for Mahebourg and Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Local Government whether, in regard to the construction of a new village hall in Petit Bel Air, Mahebourg, he will state where matters.

Dr. David: Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to refer the hon. Member to the reply I made to Parliamentary Question IB/407 on this issue in October 2005 and to inform the House that both the Ministry of Environment and National Development Unit and the Ministry of Housing and Lands had since been approached with regard to issues namely funding and compulsory acquisition of land for the project.

I am informed by the Ministry of Housing and Lands that procedures for the acquisition of a plot of private land at Petit Bel Air for implementation of this project have already been completed and the deed of sale is at the Notary public for finalization.

CARREAU ACCACIA – VOLLEYBALL PITCH – REPAIRS

(No. B/1138) Mr Y. Varma (First Member for Mahebourg and Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Local Government whether, in regard to the fencing and the upgrading of the volleyball pitch in Carreau Accacia in the Constituency of Plaine Magnien and Mahebourg, he will state where matters stand.

Dr. David: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Grand Port/Savanne District Council that the fencing of the volleyball pitch in Carreau Accacia which has been damaged will be repaired in one month's time.

CPE ENGLISH PAPER 2007 – “ERROR FREE CERTIFICATE”

(No. B/1139) Mrs F. Labelle (Third Member for Vacoas and Floreal) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether, in regard to the CPE English Paper 2007, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Examinations Syndicate, information as to it –

- (a) the setter or the chief examiner has submitted an “error proof certificate”, and
- (b) a blueprint for the said examination paper had been duly submitted.

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Director of the Mauritius Examinations Syndicate that for each Question Paper examined at the CPE Examination, the Paper Setter and the Moderator are required to submit an “Error Free Certificate” before the papers are sent for printing. For the English Language Paper 2007, this was submitted on 05 July 2007.

As regards the “blueprint” referred to in part (b) of the question, I am informed by MES that every Paper Setter is provided by the Syndicate with a series of documents including a design for each question paper as well as a grid or template to guide the Paper Setter for the preparation of a blueprint in the first instance and the question paper itself subsequently.

The blueprint is a personal plan to ensure that there is a well-balanced approach to paper setting. As such, the blueprint constitutes the basis upon which the question paper will be set and is not a formal document which is required to be submitted by the Paper Setter to the MES. In the case under reference, i.e., the CPE 2007 English Paper no blueprint was therefore submitted by the Paper Setter.

I am informed by the MES that it is satisfied that requirements of the paper setting and moderation have been complied with.

Mrs Labelle: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister whether he has received some explanation from the MES regarding the main discrepancy in the technicalities of paper setting? If the hon. Minister wants, I can give several examples of these discrepancies, but I am sure MES must be aware of these discrepancies.

Mr Gokhool: I think the question is related to “Error Free Certificate” and the blueprint. As regards the problem relating to technicalities, I am sure that MES must have received representations and MES will deal with those representations.

Mrs Labelle: Mr Speaker, Sir, these discrepancies resulted in many problems regarding this paper and this shows that either the blueprint was not submitted or was not abided by. Regarding the “Error Free Certificate”, how can we account for the several errors in this paper?

Mr Gokhool: The hon. lady is making assumptions that there have been discrepancies and errors. This is an assumption about which I am not aware. If there has been a formal representation made to the MES, then, the MES will deal with those representations.

Mrs Labelle: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister has referred to assumptions. For example, regarding Question 1, there is a total imbalance of items to be tested in this question. Out of 20 items to be tested, Mr Speaker, Sir, six are text verb, three are vocabulary, three are grammar and this resulted that preposition, comparison and so on have been left out; this is a discrepancy, and I can go on. These are not assumptions, these are just facts.

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, I need to know the source of this information. If the MES has received a formal representation to which the hon. Member is referring, then the MES will have to look into it and make a reply to the person or the organisation which has made the representation. In any case, concerning the discrepancies to which reference is being made, this is a matter of appreciation. I am not competent to pronounce on the imbalancing...

(Interruptions)

Why is MES there for? Just shut up!

Mr Speaker: Order! Order!

Mr Gokhool: I don't interfere with the work of MES. It is for the MES to look into the matter...

Mr Speaker: I think the best course of action would be for the hon. Member to lay down on the Table of the Assembly all the documents that she has in her possession and the hon. Minister will look into them and make a statement, if need be.

Mrs Labelle: Mr Speaker, Sir, I know that the hon. Minister does not have the information. That's why in my question, I asked the hon. Minister to seek the information from the MES. Regarding the source of information, it is the Question Paper. If we go through the question paper, we are going to see it. I can lay a copy on the Table of the Assembly.

Mr Speaker: Please lay it on the Table of the Assembly. The hon. Minister will look into it and ask the MES for information. Perhaps he can make a statement thereafter.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: May I ask the hon. Minister whether there is a delegation from the MES which regularly goes to England to check whether papers are being set according to the norms, papers are being printed before they come back for the exams?

Mr Gokhool: I think there are standard arrangements for the MES to ensure that the set of procedures which are laid out are complied with.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Is there any report from these people when they come back to state whether they go according to norms or not?

Mr Gokhool: At this stage, I can't answer this question. If the hon. Member comes with a substantive question, I will certainly answer it.

JEAN ALLY EMILIEN – KICKBOXER – DEATH

(No. B/1140) **Mr J. R. Spéville (Second Member for Rodrigues)** asked the Minister of Youth and Sports whether, in regard to the death of the kickboxer, J. A. E. during a competition in Mauritius, he will state if his Ministry has conducted an inquiry thereinto and the outcome thereof.

The Minister of Housing & Lands (Mr A. Dulull): Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I shall reply to this question. May I take this opportunity to once again express my personal sympathy, that of the Government and the entire sporting community for the death of the kickboxer, Jean Ally Emilien, in the course of a competition organised in August this year by the Kick Boxing Federation.

I am advised that the Ministry of Youth and Sports had carried out an inquiry into the cause of death of Mr Jean Ally Emilien following his participation into the kickboxing competition. The post mortem examination carried out at Victoria Hospital attributed the cause of death to a heart attack.

With your permission, Sir, I am tabling a report on the circumstances which led to the passing away of Mr Jean Ally Emilien, which was a very sad event.

Mr de Spéville: Can I ask the hon. Minister whether the Ministry of Youth and Sports intends or proposes to introduce a *carnet de santé* for each and every sportswoman and sportsman of this country as regard to what happened to Jean Ally Emilien?

Mr Dulull: The Ministry of Youth and Sports has already taken measures to ensure that each athlete, especially those involved in *sport de combat* be vested with a *carnet de santé*.

Mr Spéville: Can I ask the hon. Minister whether the *Centre Médical Sportif* at Vacoas is operational?

Mr Dulull: For the time being, I don't have the required information, but I am sure that the substantive Minister will look into it.

Mrs Martin: Mr Speaker, Sir, in regard to the inquiry, may I ask the Minister whether at the time when the young athlete fell sick and fell down, there was any emergency assistance present on the spot to help him?

Mr Dulull: Based on the information that was made available to me, it seems that first aid was given to the athlete and then all measures were taken to carry him to the hospital.

Mr Jugroo: Puis-je demander au ministre s'il y a une compensation qui est donnée à la famille ou aux enfants de l'athlète qui trouve la mort lors d'une compétition?

Mr Dulull: Based on humanitarian ground and to express our solidarity to the sporting community, a sum of Rs25,000 was given to the bereaved family.

Mrs Martin: In view of the tragic incident that occurred, may I ask the Minister if it is possible where there are competitors involving high rated athletes, to have, at least, one team present on the spot to intervene whenever there is a problem.

Mr Dulull: I am sure that the Minister of Youth and Sports will explore this possibility.

Mr Spéville: As regards the international and national athletes, does the Minister propose a measure of insurance to insure this kind of incident/accident which may happen? My colleague has asked about compensation but, as from now will the hon. Minister put forward a kind of insurance for high level athletes?

Mr Dulull: I am sure my colleague, the substantive Minister, will look into the revised policy.

Mr Lauthan: M. le président, je suis vraiment surpris et très peiné d'apprendre qu'à la mort d'un athlète de haut niveau, le gouvernement choisisse de remettre qu'une somme de R25,000 à la famille tandis que, dans le passé, les athlètes qui avaient brillé au niveau regional et international avaient reçu comme prime la somme de R100,000. Je fais une demande pour qu'on revise, sur le plan humanitaire, cette somme à la hausse.

Mr Dulull: As I said, to express our solidarity, the Ministry of Youth and Sports has given this amount and the substantive Minister will see what will be the further course of action.

Mr Jugroo: M. le president, ces athlètes défendent nos couleurs. Je ne sais pas s'il y a une assurance mais, je crois qu'à l'avenir, il faudrait que chaque athlète soit couvert par une assurance.

Mr Speaker: That supplementary question has already been put and answered.

Mr Barbier: May I ask the hon. Minister whether it is not a condition for organising such activities to have a doctor in attendance?

Mr Dulull : Normally, all necessary precautions are taken so that a team of first aid is present. Should there be any need to improve the medical support, we will certainly do it in the best interest of the athletes.

Mrs Labelle: With your permission, Mr Speaker, Sir, may I be allowed to withdraw parliamentary Question No. B/1141?

Mr Speaker: Permission is granted. Hon. Lesjongard!

CITÉ DOOL, TERRE ROUGE – WASTEWATER TREATMENT PROBLEM

(No. B/1142) Mr G. Lesjongard (Second Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Public Utilities whether he is aware of a serious wastewater treatment problem at Cité Dool, Terre Rouge and, if so, will he, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Wastewater Management Authority, information as to the remedial measures that are being envisaged.

Dr. Kasenally: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am aware of a wastewater problem at Cité Dool, which was drawn to my attention by the hon. lady Member who organised a meeting with the Wastewater Management Authority.

I am informed by the Wastewater Management Authority that there is no wastewater treatment facility as such at Cité Dool, Terre Rouge, but there is a pumping station which receives wastewater flows from the sewer network serving 296 housing units at Cité Dool. The wastewater from Cité Dool is pumped to the Bois Marchand Wastewater Treatment Plant.

The pumping station at Cité Dool was commissioned in 1996. A contract for the refurbishment of the pumping station was awarded by the WMA in February 2007. The contract comprised the upgrading of site conditions, the provision of new pumps and of higher pumping capacity and efficiency as well as associated electrical refurbishment and civil works. However, the selected contractor failed to execute the contract and the WMA forfeited his tender bond in June 2007.

Subsequently, a fresh tendering exercise was initiated in July 2007 and the contract was awarded in October 2007, that is, last month. The works are now scheduled to be completed by the end of March 2008.

There was, however, an incident on the 19 of October 2007. The rising mains was damaged by a contractor executing works on behalf of the DBM at a location about one kilometre from the pumping station. The repairs were carried out by the contractor. However, the pump at Cité Dool had to be stopped when the repair works were executed. Again, on 14 November 2007, another damage was caused by the same contractor to the rising mains at another location, at about 1.5 kilometres from the pumping

station on the same construction site. The repairs were undertaken and completed within twenty-four hours by a local company at the request of WMA. On both occasions, necessary corrective actions were taken by the WMA to prevent overflow problems. Tankers were mobilised to effect pumping and minimise environmental problems which could have been caused by wastewater spilling.

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Speaker, Sir, I thank the hon. Minister for his reply. The Minister must be aware that that pumping station is situated within a residential zone. He, himself, said that the problem was some one kilometre away, but the people living around that pumping station suffered from that. *Je dois dire que c'est une situation des plus déplorables.* May I ask the hon. Minister whether, for that pumping station, there is only one pump or do we have a spare pump also?

Dr. Kasenally: Mr Speaker, Sir, there are so many stations surrounding Mauritius that it is difficult for me to know exactly how many pumps there are but, as a matter of precaution, it is always necessary to have two pumps. I cannot be sure. I will have to check and give the information to the House.

Mr Lesjongard: If we had this problem, Mr Speaker, Sir, it is because we have only one pump which had stopped during the problem and that there was an overflow. I believe it is time to have a spare pump, that is, a second pump, so that in case we have any problem in that region, we can use it.

Dr. Kasenally: Mr Speaker, Sir, the problem, at that particular time, was not with the pump, but in the rising mains into which the sewer was being pumped. It got broken and, therefore, in order to repair that rising mains, you had to stop the pump. In the meantime, the Wastewater Management Authority managed to get tankers. It is unfortunate that we had this problem, and I can understand it is most uncomfortable when sewer system does not work in any *cité* whatsoever. Unfortunately, hardly a couple of weeks afterwards, the same incident happened. I hope that the contractor does not go on breaking all the sewer pumps every month or so.

Mr Bérenger: Mr Speaker, Sir, I listened to the hon. Minister, and it seems that that contractor went on and on with certain malpractices which the neighbourhood paid for. Can I know what action has been taken concerning the contractor?

Dr. Kasenally: I have directed the WMA to make sure that contractors take double precaution before attempting to work near our sewerage system because any damage to it, as we have seen, can cause very serious inconvenience to the population.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, I seek your guidance. PQ B/1143 was to be answered by the Prime Minister. If I have to answer the question, I will do it.

Mr Speaker: I must inform the House that the Prime Minister was going to answer the two questions which have been put by hon. Lesjongord and hon. Mrs Juggoo together with the question put to him, unfortunately, we could not reach the question as time was over. I am sure replies will be contained in the 'Written Answers to Questions' which the hon. Prime Minister will give.

CLUB MED ALBION – TAXI LICENCES

(No. B/1144) Mr M. Allet (Second Member for Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping whether, in regard to the invitation for the application to be issued with Public Service Vehicle Licences to operate at the Club Med Albion by the National Transport Authority, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Authority, information as to –

- (a) the number of Public Service Vehicle Licences required, and
- (b) if priority will be given to the applicants who reside in the vicinity of Albion, Petite Rivière, Canot, Cros Cailloux and Mont Roches.

The Minister of Environment & National Development Unit (Mr A. Bachoo): Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the National Transport Authority that it is proposing to grant 20 Public Service Vehicle (Taxi) Licences to operate from Club Med Albion.

In this connection, applications were invited on 02 October 2007 from holders of taxi licences operating for more than three years from 42 localities falling within a catchment area of 7 kilometres radius from Club Med Albion. The advertisement included Albion, Petite Rivière, Gros Cailloux and Mont Roches. As at present there is no taxi car based at Canot, this locality was not included in the advertisement.

It is not the policy of the National Transport Authority to give priority of consideration to applicant residing in any specific locality. All the eligible applicants stand on an equal footing for the grant of taxi licences.

Mr Allet: M. le président, est-ce que le ministre pourrait nous dire si le commissaire de la *National Transport Authority* a reçu une lettre de six propriétaires de taxi à Albion, travaillant depuis le 01 juillet à l'hôtel Club Med et, en même temps, une lettre d'attestation pour dire que la direction est satisfaite du travail de ces propriétaires de taxi? Ils n'ont pas servi trois ans. Est-ce qu'il envisage de faire une dérogation?

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, legally, this cannot be considered because according to the principles of policy set out, one taxi must have served, at least, three years in a particular area. This is the policy of the NTA.

Mr Allet: M. le président, d'après les renseignements que j'ai eus, je crois que dans le passé il y a eu une dérogation. Est-ce que le ministre peut expliquer cela?

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, there was a policy of either two or three years but, in this particular case, it spelt out that it is three years. I would request the hon. Member to await the return of the substantive Minister to take up the matter with him.

Mr Bhagwan: Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Minister request the NTA not to take any decision until the return of the Deputy Prime Minister

and Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport & Shipping? Because from what we have read in the application, it has been tailor-made for certain people who do not reside in the vicinity.

Mr Speaker: I am sorry, the hon. Member is imputing motives. I don't know who has framed the policy, but ...

(Interruptions)

Even on the Authority! The hon. Member cannot impute motives!

Mr Bhagwan: Mr Speaker, Sir, I will just ask the hon. Minister to request the NTA not to take any decision, but to wait for the return of the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport & Shipping. The people are going to Court.

Mr Speaker: That is a different matter.

Mr Bachoo: The procedures have already started and I can give the assurance to the House and to the hon. Member that there won't be interference of any kind.

Mrs Perrier: M. le président, le ministre, dans sa réponse, vient de dire que le principe n'est pas de restreindre les *applicants* par rapport à leur lieu d'habitation. Est-ce que ce n'est pas *unfair* qu'un développement se fasse dans un endroit et que ce soit des habitants d'ailleurs qui profitent de ces développements? Est-ce que le ministre ne peut pas revoir cette décision afin d'assurer que les développements soient au bénéfice des personnes qui habitent la localité ?

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, we have mentioned that we have got a catchment area of 7 kilometres radius from Club Med. All those inhabiting the 7 kilometres radius will be entitled to apply. The question was: whether those living in Albion, Petite Rivière, Gros Cailloux and Mont Roches be given priority. Priority of consideration cannot be given to any particular area, but rather we can consider the 7 kilometres radius. This is what I have answered.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: No repetition, please!

Mr Bhagwan: The hotel Club Med is in Albion. The people have obtained permit to operate in Albion for the first time since two years. How can they meet the criteria when they have been granted taxi permit for two years? Now they are asking for three years. The hon. Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Tourism knows that these people are actually working ...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: The hon. Member has asked the hon. Minister to review the criteria and the latter has said that when the substantive Minister will come, he will look into the matter. I think it is the end of the matter. One cannot go on repeating the same question. Next question, hon. Rucktooa!

FOND DU SAC CREMATION GROUND – UPGRADING

(No. B/1145) Mr D. Rucktooa (Second Member for Grand' Baie and Poudre D'Or) asked the Minister of Environment and National Development Unit whether he is aware of the bad state of the Fond du Sac cremation ground and, if so, will he state the remedial measures that are being envisaged.

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, once approval of the Central Tender Board (CTB) is received, tender will be awarded for upgrading of Fond du Sac cremation ground.

Mr Rucktooa: Mr Speaker, Sir, has the hon. Minister ever visited the site and, if yes, when?

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have visited the crematorium site once and we had problems of access. Since that land belongs to the private sector, it was difficult for us to acquire it. But despite it, we have already launched the tenders. As I have just mentioned, once the CTB gives clearances, the award will be made.

CENTRAL FLACQ - BUS STOPS

(No. B/1146) Dr. R. Mungur (Second Member for Flacq and Bon Accueil) asked the Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping whether he will consider the advisability of putting up covered bus stops in Central Flacq in the vicinity of the Mahatma Gandhi State Secondary School and Cité Argy, adjacent to the Starknitwear Textile Factory.

The Minister of Environment & National Development Unit (Mr A. Bachoo): Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the National Transport Authority that at present there is no bus stop in the close vicinity of Mahatma Gandhi State Secondary School. Buses conveying students are alighting and embarking their passengers at a layby accommodated within the school compound. The National Transport Authority is proposing to carry out a joint site visit with the Traffic Management & Road Safety Unit to examine the possibility of siting a bus stop and a bus shelter there.

As regards the question of bus stop at Cité Argy, I am informed that a pair of bus stops already exists adjacent to the Starknitwear Textile Factory. However, the NTA is proposing in consultation with Traffic Management & Road Safety Unit to shift the bus stop in the direction of Belle Mare to an existing layby just in front of the factory. The possibility of constructing a bus shelter at the site will also be examined.

CENTRAL FLACQ - MARKET FAIR

(No. B/1147) Dr. R. Mungur (Second Member for Flacq and Bon Accueil) asked the Minister of Local Government whether, in regard to the construction of a new market fair at Central Flacq, he will state where matters now stand.

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

A plot of land of an approximate extent of 5000 m² located along side of the River of the locality of Flacq was already earmarked for the Flacq Market Scheme. In view of the unforeseen circumstances the tender exercise could not be finalised.

Another plot of land of an approximate extent of 6000 m² has already been vested with the District Council since September 2007.

Funds have been made available for the Market Scheme. I chaired a meeting on Wednesday 07 November 2007 with all the stakeholders concerned. The Ministry of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport & Shipping had been requested to update this plan and a visit will be scheduled soon.

IQBAL ROAD, GRAND' BAIE – WATER PIPES

(No. B/1148) Mr R. Guttee (Third Member for Grand' Baie and Poudre D'Or) asked the Minister of Public Utilities whether, in regard to the supply of drinking water at Iqbal Road, Grand' Baie, he will state if he is aware of the difficulties being faced by the inhabitants thereof, arising out of the existence of old supply pipes of small diameter and, if so, will he, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Central Water Authority, information as to the remedial measures that are being envisaged.

Dr. Kasenally: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the CWA that Iqbal road in Grand' Baie is supplied from Terre Rouge reservoir which in turn is fed from Forbach and Mon Choisy boreholes. The water production is around 6500 m³/d.

During the normal season, water is supplied on a 24-hour basis. Presently, in the dry season, water is supplied for around 20 hours daily.

The existing 600 metre long galvanized pipe is old, sclerose, in a poor state and is vulnerable to leaks and low pressure. Consequently, the renewal of the pipeline has been considered. It is estimated to cost Rs1.2 m., and has been included on the CWA's list of minor works, and will be implemented by the end of 2008.

PETIT RAFFRAY, RAILWAY ROAD – ELECTRICITY SUPPLY

(No. B/1149) Mr R. Guttee (Third Member for Grand’Baie and Poudre d’Or) asked the Minister of Public Utilities whether he is aware that the inhabitants of Railway Road, Petit Raffray are not supplied with electricity since years and, if so, will he, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Central Electricity Board, information as to the remedial measures that are being envisaged.

Dr. Kasenally: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the CEB that generally in cases where the applicant’s premises are located away from CEB Low Voltage network, supply of electricity necessitates extension of the network up to the applicant’s premises. Such applicants were, until March this year, asked to contribute partly or fully towards the costs to be incurred.

As the House may be aware, Government has set up a scheme for facilitating the supply of electricity to such applicants who fall in the low-income groups.

As regards the case of Railway Road, Petit Raffray, I am informed by the CEB, that between January and August 2007, five applications for electricity supply were received.

Bases on the locations of the premises of the five applicants, technically the network must first be extended to one of the applicants before electricity can be supplied to the others. The CEB has estimated the value of works for that applicant at Rs75,545. The latter has been informed of the cost estimate and the extent of assistance to which he is entitled.

The CEB is liaising with the applicants to find a proper *modus operandi*. My Ministry is closely monitoring the situation.

I wish to inform the House that up to date the total value of approved projects under the Low Voltage Network extension assistance Scheme amounts to Rs8,559,750.

FLACQ HOSPITAL – FOOD POISONING - CASES

(No. B/1150) Mr L. Bundhoo (Second Member for Montagne and GRSE) asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether he is aware of the recent reported cases of food poisoning in Flacq, of persons who had consumed kebab and, if so, will he state –

- (a) if an inquiry has been carried out thereinto and the outcome thereof, and
- (b) the measures he proposes to avoid any such recurrence.

Mr Faugoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, on Sunday 04 November 2007, Flacq Hospital reported cases of food poisoning following consumption of foodstuffs from a mobile victualler at the Traffic Centre, Central Flacq.

On the same day, the Flacq Health Office investigated into the matter and identified the victualler, who resides at Mont Ida. The foodstuffs included bread, chicken kebabs, chicken tikka, mayonnaise and spice. At 10 30 hrs on 04 November, a Prohibition Order was issued upon the victualler and samples of foodstuffs on sale on that day were taken for microbiological examinations. However, as at 14 30 hrs, on the same day, it was observed that he had not complied with the Prohibition Order; a contravention was accordingly established against him. In addition, the licensee was contravened for employing persons without food handler's certificate.

Laboratory results have revealed the presence of Salmonella 04 in the chicken tikka.

Furthermore, an inspection was carried out at the licensee's residence. A Prohibition Order was served to stop the preparation of food item in the kitchen until further notice and all those involved in the preparation and sale of foodstuffs were requested to undergo medical examination, including stool exam. In addition, 10 kg of poultry meat were seized and a sample thereof was sent to the laboratory for microbiological and chemical analysis. The rest of the meat was destroyed in accordance with section 4(d) (ii) of the Food Act. Microbiological results revealed that Salmonella was not isolated

from samples of raw meat and results of chemical analysis revealed no chemical contamination.

The primary source of supply of the poultry meat has also been traced out and samples of the raw meat were sent to the laboratory for microbiological and chemical analysis. Again, microbiological results revealed that Salmonella was not isolated from samples of raw meat and results of chemical analysis revealed no chemical contamination.

As at 10 November, 2007, a total of 530 cases had attended Flacq Hospital out of which 82 cases were admitted. Furthermore, during the same period, ten patients, having consumed the same incriminated foodstuffs, had attended the Sir S. Ramgoolam National Hospital. Eight of them, including two children were admitted. Results of laboratory tests revealed the presence of Salmonella 04 in the stools of many patients. This confirmed that the outbreak was microbial in nature and that the cause of the food poisoning was contamination of the chicken tikka. As at 13 November 2007, all the patients have been discharged.

The presence of Salmonella in the chicken tikka could be explained by the fact that contamination could have occurred during the preparation of the foodstuffs, either by the food handlers themselves or could have resulted due to inadequate cooking.

My Ministry will maintain a Prohibition Order until the food handlers would have been medically cleared, that is, free of Salmonella.

With regard to part (b), the inspectorate division of my Ministry has been instructed to ensure proper food safety surveillance in relation to street vendors to minimize incidence of food borne illnesses. Sampling of such foodstuffs will be carried out throughout the island more regularly to detect any microbiological and chemical contamination.

Furthermore, health education of food handlers and the general public on food hygiene and food safety is being reinforced. During the last three months, as at date, 61 health education talks on food hygiene have been delivered, targeting adult population in Social Welfare Centres throughout the island. During this week, a two-minute daily programme on food hygiene and safety is being broadcast on radio, both in Creole and Bhojpuri. In addition, 33 food handlers training sessions have been undertaken.

Mr Bundhoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister whether he is aware of similar cases which have been reported in the past in other regions and whether his Ministry is seeing to it that the two sections of the Food Act 1998, which stipulate food to be kept away from unsanitary environment and perishable food be kept at adequate temperature, are being implemented fully?

Mr Faugoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, as far as the first limb of the question is concerned, I am not aware of any other case reported in any region, apart from a single case in Flacq.

On the second limb, as I said, we have put a surveillance team which is checking regularly all the regions to see to it that people involved in the business comply with the Food Act.

Mr Bérenger: Does the Minister have information for how long has this operator been operating in that area and if the Minister has the date of his permit?

Mr Faugoo: I do not have this relevant information, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Bérenger: I heard the hon. Minister say that there is a Prohibition Order on that operator. Does that mean that he is not dealing in providing food at all to the public?

Mr Faugoo: This is exactly what it means, Mr Speaker, Sir. When we issue the Prohibition Order, he has stopped working at the place of the business and the place where the food is being prepared has been closed down temporarily until clearance is given after the health authority is satisfied.

Mr Bérenger: There is a Prohibition Order and what next? Can I ask the Minister, in case, he is found guilty of gross negligence, does the law provide for revocation of his licence?

Mr Faugoo: I am not aware of this. I have to look into the law, but I am sure there are provisions to deal sufficiently with such cases.

ST GERAN HOTEL – EXPATRIATES - EMPLOYMENT

(No. B/1151) **Mrs F. Labelle (Third Member for Vacoas and Floreal)** asked the Minister of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment whether he will state the number of work permits issued to expatriates for employment at the St Géran Hotel, indicating the post occupied in each case.

Dr. Bunwaree: Mr Speaker, Sir, as at 15 November 2007, there was only one expatriate holding a work permit issued by my Ministry for employment at the Saint Géran hotel, now known as the One & Only Le Saint Géran Hotel. He is occupying the post of Restaurant Director.

To be fair to the hon. lady, I must say that there could be more expatriates working there, then, they would have gone through the occupational permit which is not issued by my Ministry. I think there are about a dozen.

Mr Guinness: According to my information, there are 27 expatriates who are actually in employment and positions which were previously held by Mauritians are now held by expatriates. Can the hon. Minister check this information?

Dr. Bunwaree: I have answered more that what was put to me. One has got a work permit issued by my Ministry. I said, to be fair to the hon. lady, there are about a dozen, according to the information that I have, holding occupational permits. The point raised by the hon. Member is a serious one and we will take that into consideration.

Mr Bérenger: Can I ask the hon. Minister whether he will care to explain the difference between the work permit that his Ministry issues and the occupational permit that another Ministry issues? I would like to know which Ministry and why this split system?

Dr. Bunwaree: It was a budget proposal. The occupational permit is given in three days by the Prime Minister's Office. It is the responsibility of the Passport and Immigration Office which combines residence and work permits at the same time. The work permit is given at the level of the Ministry while the residence permit has to be sought at the level of the Prime

Minister's Office. There is also the question of wages that are earned by the potential worker who is applying for the permit. If it is above Rs30,000, he qualifies for the occupational permit. If it is below, he applies for the work permit at the level of my Ministry. This was canvassed here at Budget time.

Mrs Labelle: Is the hon. Minister aware that with such a policy many jobs, particularly in the hotel industry, are now being occupied by foreigners instead of Mauritians? These jobs were done by Mauritians. Is the Ministry looking into this situation?

Dr. Bunwaree: We are already looking into it. I am not sure whether this is correct because, according to my information, Mauritians are replacing the expatriates little by little.

Mr Bundhoo: May I ask the hon. Minister to kindly look into the situation as a matter of urgency to find out whether this particular establishment is employing more foreigners than it is entitled to?

Dr. Bunwaree: For hotels, we do not go according to quotas as it is the case for EPZ. There are many criteria that have to be taken into consideration but, of course, we are very sensitive to the idea of getting Mauritians more and more enrolled in posts of responsibility in hotels.

Mr Bundhoo: May I, therefore, ask the hon. Minister whether under the Empowerment Programme, he will reconsider this specific section within the hotel industry?

Mr Speaker: This is a matter of policy.

Mr Gunness: Can I ask the hon. Minister how often his officers visit that hotel and when was the last time they had a visit there?

Dr. Bunwaree: I can't reply offhand, but they visit the hotels very often and other places of work also, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Jhugroo: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister how many days are required for a foreigner to obtain, first, an occupational permit, and, secondly, a residential permit?

Dr. Bunwaree: I said it before. For an occupational permit, it is three days. As for the question of residential permit, this question should be addressed to the hon. Prime Minister.

Mrs Labelle: May I ask the hon. Minister whether he will look into this industry, because presently even posts of receptionist are being occupied by foreigners?

Dr. Bunwaree: This surprises me, but there are so many other criteria that have to be looked into. Of course, as I said, we are very sensitive to the points that have been raised and we have not waited for today to start looking at the problem seriously.

**FISHING VESSELS (FOREIGN)
– MARITIUS MARITIME ZONE – NUMBER, CATCH, ETC.**

(No. B/1152) Mr J. C. Barbier (Third Member for GRNW and Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Agro Industry and Fisheries whether, in regard to foreign fishing vessels operating within our territorial zone, he will state –

- (a) the number thereof;
- (b) their annual catch, and
- (c) the total amount of money collected by the Mauritian authorities from these operators.

Dr. Boolell: Mr Speaker, Sir, the number of licences issued to foreign fishing vessels for fishing in the Mauritius Maritime Zone are as follows –

- (a) Year 2005: 229
Year 2006: 231
Year 2007 to date: 117
- (b) Annual catches reported are as follows –
2005: 7832 tonnes
2006: 8147 tonnes
2007 to date is being processed.
- (d) Total amount of money collected –

Year 2005 : Rs37,893,196
Year 2006: Rs45,151,145
Year 2007 to date: Rs36,191,579

Mr Bérenger: May I ask the hon. Minister whether he has a breakdown of the number of foreign vessels country-wise?

Dr. Boolell: I will get the information and circulate it later on.

Mr Barbier: Can the hon. Minister inform the House about the commercial value of the catch of foreign vessels?

Dr. Boolell: I have given the annual catches reported and I have highlighted the amount of money. If the hon. Member comes with a specific question, I will certainly give a reply.

PETROLEUM PRODUCTS – INCREASE

(No. B/1153) Mr G. Gunness (Third Member for Montagne Blanche and GRSE) asked the Minister of Industry, Small & Medium Enterprises, Commerce and Co-operatives whether, in regard to the last increase in the price of petroleum products on the local market, he will give a breakdown of the different components, which were taken into consideration before reaching the final price.

Dr. Jeetah: Mr Speaker, Sir, I refer the hon. Member to the reply I made to PQ No. B/114 on 10 April 2007. Since then, no change has been made in the different components which are taken into consideration for fixing the price of petroleum products.

Mr Gunness: Can I ask the hon. Minister whether for the last revision of 03 October 2007, there has again been an increase in the item expenses incurred by the Corporation in connection with the importation of petroleum products, that is, mogas and gas oil?

Dr. Jeetah: This is a specific question that is being asked. Last time I gave all the details. Should the hon. Member require further information ...

Mr Speaker: The hon. Minister did say he needs notice of the question.

Dr. Jeetah: Yes, Sir.

Mr Guinness: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am referring to the same question, that is, the different components which were taken into consideration before reaching the retail price. One of the components is: expenses incurred by the Corporation in connection with the importation of petroleum products. I would like to know whether, on this component, there has been an increase in the last revision?

Mr Speaker: The Minister has answered and said he needs notice of the question.

Mr Guinness: Mr Speaker, Sir, concerning mogas, before October 2006, there has never been an increase under item expenses incurred by the Corporation. In January 2007, there has been Rs1 increase, which is a tenfold increase. In April 2007, there has been an increase of 47 cents for mogas. In October 2007, there was an increase of 25 cents for mogas. For gas oil, it is the same situation...

Mr Speaker: What is the question of the hon. Member?

Mr Guinness: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am laying emphasis on the figures, then, I'll put my question. In October 2006, there was no change for gas oil. In January 2007, there is a tenfold increase, that is, Rs1. In April 2007, there was an increase of 52 cents, and in October, an increase of 25 cents. May we know why there is this increase after each revision?

Dr. Jeetah: I have replied, Mr Speaker, Sir. The question refers to different components. All this information has already been given.

Mr Speaker: The question which has just been put by the hon. Member relates to previous similar exercises. Was it answered by the hon. Minister?

Dr. Jeetah: Mr Speaker, Sir, I think there was a question by hon. Bérenger. I gave the price structure. The information has been provided.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Hon. Guinness, if you feel that this question has not been answered, you can come with a specific question on this particular item.

(Interruptions)

Mr Guinness: Can the Minister, in clear terms, tell us what use is made with that money?

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

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Dr. Jeetah: If the hon. Member wishes to get specific answers on figures, I am prepared to give them. He has to put the right question.

Mr Speaker: The Minister is prepared to give the information. The hon. Member should give him the benefit of the doubt and give notice of the specific questions.

CWA – WATER SUPPLY

(No. B/1154) Mr A. Ganoo (First Member for Savanne and Black River) asked the Minister of Public Utilities whether he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Central Water Authority, information as to the measures being envisaged to ensure an adequate supply of water, in view of the present stock of water in our reservoirs and aquifers.

Dr. Kasenally: Mr Speaker, I am informed by the Central Water Authority that appropriate measures have been taken to ensure an adequate supply of water during the dry season.

As is the practice, the Water Resources Monitoring Committee of my Ministry, meets regularly during the dry season to assess the available surface and ground water resources and advises on their proper management. At its last meeting held on 12 November 2007, the Committee was informed by the Meteorological Services that the cumulative rainfall over the summer period November 2007/April 2008 would be near normal, but slightly on the lower side with an average of 1200 mm over Mauritius, as compared to 1350 mm.

The Meteorological Services has also forecast a weak to moderate La Nina phenomenon up to March 08. The La Nina phenomenon is due to a form of global warming that leads to a rise in temperature and, therefore, leads to all sorts of currents in the Atlantic, going down to Africa and coming through the Indian Ocean.

I am informed that the average storage level in the reservoirs as at 19 November 2007 was 55%, and, in general, the groundwater level in the different aquifers is below average for the dry season by 10% to 20%. Based on the availability of resources, the hours of supply may be further adjusted islandwide. The CWA will provide tanker services in the most affected areas.

The Water Resources Monitoring Committee will next meet around mid December, unless the situation warrants otherwise, to review the water supply situation and take other measures to ensure sustainability of water supply until the rainy season.

Mr Bérenger: Mr Speaker, Sir, since we are talking about ensuring an adequate supply of water and we know that nearly half of the water coming from the reservoirs and so on is lost, can I ask the hon. Minister whether he is satisfied with the progress made to reduce leakage of water through our systems?

Dr. Kasenally: Mr Speaker, Sir, this has been a long-standing problem and attempts have been made to remedy the situation. Now we have got a non-revenue water project whereby we have got an expert from France and this is being funded by the European Investment Bank (EIB). Progress has been slow. I, myself, am not satisfied. That's why I am monitoring the situation. I am having all the officers involved in the project

to be personally accountable. There are problems. There have been obstructive elements in the CWA who have been causing problems, but, fortunately, I have removed all of them and we'll take drastic action to ensure that we reduce our non-revenue water.

Mr Bérenger: Since the hon. Minister himself has made reference - and it is a very courageous one - to the European Investment Bank, I am sure he is aware of the very tough comments which the European Investment Bank has made concerning precisely the very, very slow progress in combating this leakage problem at the CWA.

Dr. Kasenally: Mr Speaker, Sir, I met the European Investment Bank delegation only last week. They have told me that they have noticed a significant improvement over the last two months. Of course, they were not particularly happy before that, but I think I have to use my scalpel a bit more wisely.

Mr Ganoo: Can the hon. Minister, in fact, confirm whether the EIB has stated that they are reviewing their position in terms of the loan that they had put at the disposal of the CWA for this unaccounted water project? Unfortunately, no money has been disbursed for such a long time.

Dr. Kasenally: They came back a month ago and we have had discussions. I think it is on track and they are going to disburse all the sums, provided we go at the pace we are getting on, but I think we will go a bit faster in order to ensure that this precious element is kept within our reticulation. Non-revenue water not only means water lost through leakage of pipes, but also people who are making illegal connection. That's why we are having a Task Force going around and finding out all these people who are stealing water from the reticular system of the CWA and make sure that they pay back for whatever they have taken illegally.

Mr Ganoo: Can I come back to this question of shortage of water, Mr Speaker, Sir? Can the hon. Minister confirm, in fact, that it is in the Mare-aux-Vacoas catchment area that the situation is more difficult and will be more difficult in the coming weeks?

Dr. Kasenally: Actually, rainfall in the region of Mare-aux-Vacoas has been not very good towards the end of summer, but latterly we have had an amount of rainfall which hasn't caused by itself a rise in the level of the

reservoirs, but it has helped in the way that we have not used that much water for irrigation and that amount of water in the reservoir has been the same, but we are rationing it and we are making sure that people get the amount of water during the period of time that they need it. We are also impressing upon people to save water.

Mr Bhagwan: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister has been very helpful on many occasions where there have been unavailability of water to attend to emergencies. May we know whether he is satisfied with the CWA? Whenever there is a request made by MPs, at least, there is a procedure for them to attend to emergencies. *Nous sommes dans la saison des mariages. Bien souvent, il y a des problèmes pratiques*, they have to produce their wedding cards and that is a special service, we do not have to disturb our good friend who has been responding positively. Can he insist with the CWA to put up a system so that we can, at least, have satisfaction?

Dr. Kasenally: Mr Speaker, Sir, whatever system we put, there seems to be always some failures...

Mr Speaker: The hon. Minister means to beat the system.

Dr. Kasenally: But I, as Minister, have to try to beat the system and, very often, over the weekends, I get calls and, fortunately, I have got some dedicated officers who have been doing their job properly, especially we had unexpected problems during the Divali festival, but we did take appropriate action. There are some good officers - I am glad to say - but these are officers who are going to be promoted and I am going to weed out all those neferious elements who are obstructive.

Mrs Perrier: I would like to make an appeal to the Minister again, as I did last year, to ensure that there is water supply during the day, in the morning or afternoon, instead of providing it at night, to help the workers and the people who cannot afford for a water tank in their home.

Dr. Kasenally: Mr Speaker, Sir, I take the point of the hon. lady. There is a problem. Why do we release water overnight? The pressure goes up and people can have their tanks full overnight so that they can have water early in the morning and when they come back from work. But, unfortunately, there are some people who do not have a reserve tank and we cater for them so that they can get the water, especially, in the morning, just

before breakfast, or late afternoon, when they are coming back from work when they are going to prepare their food.

Mr Jhugroo: Can I ask the hon. Minister whether he is satisfied with the supply of water in the region of Chittrakoot? If not, what measures does he intend to take to remedy the situation?

Dr. Kasenally: I think there is a fair amount of problems in Chittrakoot, not only water but others. But as far as water is concerned, I have given special attention to the problem which has been drawn by the hon. lady who keeps phoning me regularly. We have been having a bypass from Calebasse to Priest Peak which helps the lower Valley des Prêtres, but the upper Valley des Prêtres is being fed by a stream further up the road. You would agree at this particular moment in time, the stream is running a bit dry. However, we are making sure that the water supply is supplemented by the tanker service. In fact, the CWA has ordered four more tankers which are going to be in service within the next week and this will also help. But, unfortunately, there are some people who, though they don't have water, refuse to take water from the tanker. But you would agree, Mr Speaker, Sir, that sometimes it is not possible to put that amount of water in the reticular service. I'll impress upon my colleagues to inform the inhabitants that it is safe to take the water from the tanker, especially when they are the new ones.

CEMENT – PRICE

(No. B/1155) Mr A. Ganoo (First Member for Savanne and Black River) asked the Minister of Industry, Small & Medium Enterprises, Commerce and Co-operatives whether in regard to cement, he will state if Government is in presence of a request for an increase in the price thereof.

Dr. Jeetah: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that there has been no request to date for an increase in the price of cement.

Mr Ganoo: Can the hon. Minister give a guarantee to the nation at large that there will be no increase in the price of cement in the coming months?

Dr. Jeetah: The hon. Member ought to know that any Minister cannot make any such affirmation. It is a very sensitive piece of information.

**POINTE AUX SABLES MARKET FAIR – STALLS –
BENEFICIARIES**

(No. B/1156) Mrs A. Navarre-Marie (First Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Local Government whether, in regard to the exercise for the allocation of stalls at the new Pointe aux Sables market fair, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Municipal Council of Port Louis, a list of the beneficiaries thereof, indicating the criteria used for their selection.

Dr. David: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Municipality of Port Louis that, in view of the fact that the Pointe aux Sables market was handed over to it on 08 June 2007, and taking into consideration that additional works such as construction of ramps for disabled persons, water discharge from table tops, installation of metal gates and provision of screen type structure to toilet have just been completed, the Council is now finalising the criteria for the allocation of the stalls.

Mrs Navarre-Marie: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I be allowed to withdraw PQ B/1157? Because the appellation has been misspelt? It should read Financial Reporting Council instead of Financial Regulatory Council.

**FINANCIAL REGULATORY COUNCIL – CHIEF EXECUTIVE
OFFICER**

(No. B/1157) Mrs A. Navarre-Marie (First Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance & Economic Development whether, in regard to the Chief Executive Officer of the Financial Regulatory Council, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Council, information as to –

- (a) the name of the incumbent, indicating –
 - (i) his qualifications;
 - (ii) the date of his appointment, and
 - (iii) his terms and conditions of employment
- (b) when was the post advertised, and
- (c) the number of applications received, indicating the qualifications of each applicant.

(Withdrawn)

NHDC LTD – TRANSFER OF LEASE

(No. B/1158) Mrs D. Perrier (Fourth Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Minister of Housing & Lands whether he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the NHDC Ltd, information as to whether a building site lease has recently been transferred from the NHDC Ltd to the beneficiaries of the NHDC housing, of Firinga type and, if so, the terms and conditions of the lease.

Mr Dulull: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am advised that the building together with the leasehold rights held by the NHDC over State lands are transferred to the respective beneficiaries through a deed of sale.

Thereafter, my Ministry draws up a lease agreement to witness the said transfer of lease in the name of the respective purchaser. On 26 June 2007, letters of intent have been issued to the beneficiaries of Firinga housing project at Grand Bois – La Flora.

Regarding the terms and conditions of the lease of the land, I am informed that these are standard ones, except for the annual rental which is based on the monthly family income. A copy of the terms and conditions is being placed in the Library.

Mrs Perrier: Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Minister confirm that this is a Firinga type housing estate?

Mr Dulull: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have been informed about the beneficiaries of the Firinga housing project at Grand Bois - La Flora.

Mrs Perrier: Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Minister confirm that, to obtain a Firinga type house, someone must not earn more than Rs4,500 per month?

Mr Dulull: Mr Speaker, Sir, the Firinga type houses are destined for households earning up to Rs8,500 a month.

Mrs Perrier: Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Minister confirm if the price of the lease has been drastically increased?

Mr Dulull: Mr Speaker, Sir, I reckon the hon. Member is referring to the yearly rental of the lease. The yearly rental is based on the annual family

income. It ranges from Rs150 for those earning up to Rs3,000 to Rs1,000 for those earning above Rs6,600 monthly.

RIAMBEL FOOTBALL GROUND - LIGHTING

(No. B/1159) Mrs D. Perrier (Fourth Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Minister of Environment and National Development Unit whether, in regard to the lighting of the football ground at Riambel, Surinam, he will state where matters stand.

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, lighting of Surinam football ground was completed in January 2005. The project has already been handed over to the Grand Port/Savanne District Council. In view of financial constraint, the District Council is experiencing difficulties to meet the current electricity charge. The matter has been taken up with the Ministry of Local Government.

Mr Ganoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Minister use his good offices vis-à-vis the District Council or his colleague, the Minister responsible for Local Government, to see to it that this football ground is lit as early as possible? Because it's two years now that the lighting has been fixed.

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, before implementation of the project, the District Council had given its commitment in writing. I will try to take it up with my colleague, the Minister of Local Government.

CT POWER LTD (MAURITIUS) – EIA LICENCE

(No. B/1160) Mrs S. Grenade (Second Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Public Utilities whether, in regard to the CT Power Ltd (Mauritius), he will state if the EIA licence from the department of Environment has been obtained, as required in the letter of intent.

(Withdrawn)

CT POWER PROJECT – MONTAGNE JACQUOT – JETTY

(No. B/1161) Mrs S. Grenade (Second Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Public Utilities whether, in regard to the CT Power project, he will state if the relevant clearances, as required by the letter of intent, have been obtained for the setting up of a jetty facility at Montagne Jacquot.

(Withdrawn)

CT POWER PROJECT –CONSULTANT - MISSIONS

(No. B/1162) Mrs S. Grenade (Second Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Public Utilities whether, in regard to the CT Power project, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the CEB, information as to the outcome of the missions held by the consultant *Electricité de France* to assess the cost reasonableness and the technological issues.

(Withdrawn)

POINTE AUX SABLES HEALTH CARE CENTRE - EXTENSION

(No. B/1163) Mrs S. Grenade (Second Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Health & Quality of Life whether he will state if there is a project for the extension of the Pointe aux Sables Health Care Centre and, if so, where matters stand.

(Withdrawn)

SC EXAMINATIONS 2007 - FASHION & FABRIC PRACTICAL PAPER

(No. B/1164) Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun (Third Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Minister of Education & Human Resources whether, in regard to the Cambridge School Certificate Examinations, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Examinations Syndicate, information as to whether, on 04 October 2007, students taking the Fashion and Fabric Paper were made to sit twice for the practical paper on the same day and, if so, the reasons therefor.

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

- (i) for the Fashion and Fabric subject there are two question papers. The first question paper, which is theoretical in nature, is of two hours duration. It tests concepts, knowledge, understanding and recall, whereas the second paper is a practical one which tests practical skills and the quality and accuracy of students in their ability to construct a garment, and
- (ii) the candidates taking part in the Fashion and Fabric practical examinations sat for the paper only once, except for those who took the paper at the Examination Centre at Muslim Girls' College.

In fact, I am informed by the Director of the Mauritius Examinations Syndicate that six students who sat for the Cambridge School Certificate Fashion and Fabric Paper at Muslim Girls' College Examination Centre on 04 October 2007 were made to take the paper twice.

There were two examination sessions at Muslim Girls' College Centre, one from 9.00 to 11.30 hrs for a group of six candidates, and a second one from 12.30 to 15.00 hrs for another group of five candidates. Unfortunately, the first group of candidates was provided with examination materials and patterns for making garments, but without the question papers which remained inadvertently in the custody of the Supervisor of that examination centre.

Since both groups take the examination and since the second group starts at 12.30, when the first examination session was over at 11.30, the six candidates who took part therein were kept under close custody by MES in a room, to avoid contact with the next group of candidates who were to take the same examination at 12.30 hours. In practice, it is only when the second group is inside the examination room that the earlier group is released. It was at around 12.15 hours that the Supervisor found out that she had not distributed the question papers to the first group of six candidates.

In the light thereof, the Chief Organiser called at the Examination Centre and had a meeting with the candidates concerned, where he explained to them the problem which occurred. It is to be noted that, at no point in time, did any of the six candidates make any representation or protest regarding the non-circulation of the question papers. In the light of the meeting of the Chief Organiser with the candidates of the first group, it was decided to give the following options to them -

- (i) to be given an additional half an hour to take cognizance of the question paper and respond to same, or
- (ii) resit the paper altogether at the end of the second session at 15.00 hours.

All the six candidates agreed to resit the paper and did so after 15.00 hours when the second session was over. In the meantime, they were kept under close custody.

Although, as I have stated previously while replying to a PQ on MES, it is not my concept of ministerial responsibility to interfere in the functioning of the MES. The House will agree that this is a most serious matter, and that all the checks and balances have apparently not worked out. This has been conveyed to the MES. I am informed, at this stage, that the MES is handling the matter internally with the University of Cambridge International Examinations, but it is clear that the MES has already established that the Supervisor was at fault, and her attention has been drawn thereto. The supervisory services have come to an end.

I am also informed that the CIE has been apprised of the incident on the same day and that CIE has confirmed that it will have no consequence on the performance of the candidates.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Can I ask the hon. Minister whether he considers it to be sound to have students being in an examination centre from 9.30 in the morning to 15.00 hrs in the afternoon and to be kept in custody before an examination that they have to sit for?

Mr Gokhool: As I am responsible for this authority, I have given all the factual information and it is unfortunate that this happened. It is a failure and I have drawn the attention of the MES to this issue.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: May I ask the hon. Minister whether it is normal for a Supervisor not to be in presence of question papers, because I cannot understand how this may happen? May I ask the hon. Minister how can a Supervisor be in an examination centre and not provide examination papers to the students?

Mr Gokhool: The Supervisor was in presence of the examination papers which were in an envelope, but it is a practical paper. There are two sets of envelopes. There is one set of envelope which refers to the materials and the garment which has to be given to the students and the other one is the examination paper proper. When the Supervisor distributed the practical paper, the materials and the garment were given to the students, but not the examination paper. I need to add that for fashion and fabric - it is not that I am removing whatever blame is there - at times, the examinations are conducted where materials and the fabric are given and the students are allowed to exercise a creativity. This was not the case. They should have been given the examination paper and that was not done.

Mr Bérenger: This is the second mess at the Mauritius Examinations Syndicate over a short period of time. Last time, I don't know how many young students were given wrong results, some left the education stream, then they were regraded and now we have this mess. Can I ask the hon. Minister what is going to be done to sort out things at the MES?

Mr Gokhool: I am as concerned as the hon. Leader of the Opposition. Mr Speaker, Sir, this is not a perfect world, you always have mistakes, but we want zero defect at the level of the MES and I am impressing upon them to take action where action has to be taken and action has been taken in this case. They are taking other measures to ensure that such things do not occur at the MES.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: I just heard the hon. Minister say that Cambridge has given its assurance that this will have no impact on the students. I fail to understand how keeping students for so many hours before a paper will have no impact on the performance of the students.

Mr Gokhool: I think the hon. lady is a teacher and she knows when there is a mistake, the benefit of doubt always goes to the students. This is the principle observed by any examination body and the CIE will have to take that into account.

At 4.35 p.m. the sitting was suspended.