

Debate No. 26 of 24.07.2007

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

SCHOOL TEACHERS – ALLEGED AGGRESSIONS - JANUARY 2005 TO JULY 2007

(No. B/808) Mr S. Naidu (Third Member for Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether, in regard to alleged cases of aggressions on school teachers, whilst on duty, since January 2005 to date, he will, for benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to –

- (a) the number of reported cases, and
- (b) the remedial measures which are envisaged.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that since January 2005 to date, 18 cases of assaults on school teachers have been reported to the Police.

Of these cases, 16 cases involved primary school teachers and 2 secondary school teachers. 14 cases occurred whilst the teachers were on duty and 4 cases occurred whilst they were off duty.

11 cases are still pending enquiry, in 1 case the victim moved for no further action, 3 cases have been filed, 2 cases are pending before Court and in 1 case the accused has been sentenced.

As regards part (b) of the question, I am informed that policing arrangements are made daily at all schools throughout the island including Rodrigues, both in the morning from 0730 hrs to 0900 hrs and in the afternoon from 1430 hrs to 1600 hrs respectively. At each school, one constable or corporal is provided to ensure the safety and security as well as to regulate traffic and help children crossing the road.

In addition, mobile patrols are carried out by the Emergency Response Service (ERS) and the local CID. Special arrangements are also made at bus stands and drop of points for school buses. Police officers in charge of stations liaise with the heads of schools on a regular basis and provide any assistance needed to enhance safety and security at schools.

I am also informed that the Ministry of Education and Human Resources issued a circular in year 2003 restricting access to school premises and another circular has been issued on 01 March 2007 drawing attention to measures spelt out in the previous circular and for stricter compliances.

However, shortcomings still exist with regard to security on school premises. Therefore, the Ministry of Education and Human Resources has constituted a team to look into the matter of security in schools and to revisit the existing arrangements, make recommendations thereof and to set up a system of grievance handling, after taking on board the suggestions of different stakeholders. Members of the public will be given the opportunity to submit their submissions to the team.

POLICE DEPARTMENT – VEHICLES – PURCHASE

(No. B/809) 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 purchase of vehicles for the police department since July 2005 to date, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to –

- (a) the number thereof;
- (b) the names of the suppliers;
- (c) the cost of each vehicle, and
- (d) the units/branches to which each vehicle is attached.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that since July 2005 to date, 167 vehicles have been

purchased. With regard to parts (b), (c) and (d) of the question, I am tabling the information requested for by the hon. Member.

I must point out, Mr Speaker, Sir, that despite tight budgetary constraints, we have spared no efforts to provide the Police Department with additional vehicles with a view to ensuring its operational efficiency. The Commissioner of Police has also conducted an assessment of the state of existing vehicles at the Police post with a view to upgrading the fleet of vehicles.

Accordingly, a 5-year Vehicle Procurement Plan has been prepared by the Police Department to improve the fleet management system.

Mr Lauthan: May I impress upon the hon. Prime Minister to see to it that strategic and sensitive points of ADSU, for example, the port, the airport and Plaine Verte - we raised the problem – these units be better equipped for more prompt response to the solicitations?

The Prime Minister : I have already informed the Commissioner since then.

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EXPATRIATES – RESIDENCE PERMITS

(No. B/810) Mrs S. Hanoomanjee (Second Member for Savanne and Black River) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether, in regard to expatriates, he will give the number thereof who have –

- (a) applied for permanent residence in Mauritius since July 2005 to date, and
- (b) obtained such a permit during the same period.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, there are three schemes, namely the Permanent Resident Scheme, the Scheme to Attract Professionals in Emerging Sectors (SAPES) and the Integrated Resort Scheme established under the Investment Promotion Act 2000 as amended, and which provide for the issue of Permanent Resident Status to non-

citizens. Since July 2005 to date, 110 applications have been received and 104 of these applications have been granted Permanent Resident Status as well as to their dependents.

However, it is to be noted that two schemes, namely the Permanent Resident Scheme and SAPES Scheme no longer exist as they have been repealed with the coming into operation of the Business Facilitation (Miscellaneous) Act 2006 on 01 October 2006.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Mr Speaker, Sir, as permanent residence is sometimes linked to work permits also, can the hon. Prime Minister confirm whether there are several cases of expatriates who have been granted permanent residence, but are still working without an appropriate work permit?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, as I said, the new Business Facilitation Act 2006, which came into operation on 01 October, provides for the grant of an application of permanent residence for 10 years. This includes the grant of a work permit and residence permit.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: My question is: whether besides those who fall under these schemes, there are people who have been granted permanent residence, but are working without a work permit?

The Prime Minister: I am not aware, but I'll have to ask the Ministry of Labour, Industrial Relations & Employment which will be able to give details about the issue.

FAST TRACK COMMITTEE - PROJECTS

(No. B/811) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether, in regard to the Fast Track Committee chaired by him, he will give a list of the projects submitted thereto as at to date, indicating –

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

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, let me say first of all that the Fast Track Committee was constituted under my chairmanship as part of the strategy adopted by my Government to give a new and badly needed impetus to the ailing economy that we inherited from the previous Government. The idea was to give a momentum to investment promotion and to address the problems that were causing undue delay and to address policy issues that might crop up. I am satisfied that this objective has been achieved.

Through a host of measures, we have significantly improved the investment climate and thanks to the contribution of the Fast Track Committee, Foreign Direct Investment has now gathered momentum. In fact, FDI inflows in the financial year 2006-2007 are estimated to be around Rs10 billion.

I should also add that these investments are more diversified, flowing in most key sectors such as tourism, financial services, ICT, manufacturing, logistics and distribution, IRS and seafood.

Mr Speaker, Sir, now that FDI has increased significantly and the BOI is ensuring the necessary follow up, I shall re-convene the Fast Track Committee whenever we feel that there is need to give additional momentum again.

In fact, Mr Speaker, Sir, I should add that after my State visit to China, I might have to chair a meeting of the Fast Track Committee again because there are more investors now who are submitting projects.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as regards part (a) of the question, the Fast Track Committee has, as at date, considered a total number of seventeen projects in the following sectors -

Hospitality and Property Development Sector - 11 projects

Energy & Environment Sector - 2 projects

Manufacturing - 1 project

Health - 1 project

Knowledge	- 1 project
Logistic & Distribution	- 1 project

Mr Speaker, Sir, as regards part (b) of the question, I am informed by the Board of Investment that out of the seventeen projects considered, eleven are already under implementation or are due for implementation during the second semester of this year.

Three others are awaiting statutory permits and clearances, while the remaining three are awaiting policy decisions.

Mr Bhagwan: Can the hon. Prime Minister later on circulate the list of projects that have been approved together with all the details?

The Prime Minister: Yes, I can do that, Mr Speaker, Sir.

CENTRALE THERMIQUE DU SUD PROJECT – INTER-MINISTERIAL COMMITTEE

(No. B/812) 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 project for the construction of the *Centrale Thermique du Sud (CTDS)* at St Aubin, he will state if he will consider the advisability of setting up a Commission of Inquiry to find out if there has been any irregularities in the project?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker Sir, indeed, there have been repeated allegations of irregularities in the way the *Centrale Thermique du Sud* power project was conceived, entertained and implemented. I had myself, in my capacity as then Leader of the Opposition, asked, by way of a PNQ, a number of questions on this project, particularly on the unsolicited proposals made initially by the Company. Unfortunately the replies were hazy and evasive.

Controversial views and comments on the project still persist.

Consequently, my Government has entrusted to an inter-ministerial Committee the task of examining the different aspects and components of the project, the procedures followed and the motivations behind each step taken and thereafter establishing whether the principles of good governance have been adhered to or not in the whole process.

I must say that there are numerous technical, economical and financial implications in this project which is using solely coal to the detriment of bagasse.

In the light of the preliminary findings of the inter-ministerial Committee, I shall consider the advisability of setting up a full Commission of Inquiry so as to get to the bottom of the matter.

Mr Guimbeau: M. le président, je voudrais féliciter le Premier ministre qui, dans un esprit de transparence, a décidé d'instituer une commission d'enquête afin de dissiper le flou qui persiste sur la Centrale Thermique du Sud.

Can the Prime Minister confirm whether he is going to set up a Commission of Inquiry?

Mr Speaker: The hon. Prime Minister has answered that the report of the inter-ministerial committee is being awaited to see whether a Commission of Inquiry should be appointed. The Prime Minister has already answered; he is waiting for the report of the inter-ministerial Committee.

**RODRIGUES REGIONAL ASSEMBLY – LEGAL ADVISER –
YEARS 2002-2005**

(No. B/813) Dr. R. Hawoldar (Second Member for La Caverne and Phoenix) 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 legal adviser to the Rodrigues Regional Assembly since 2002 to 2005, he will (a) give the name of the incumbent, indicating the amount of retainer fee or other fee to which he was entitled and (b) state if his services were retained as legal adviser to other institutions and, if so, give a list thereof, indicating the amount of retainer fees or other fees to which he was entitled in each case.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker Sir, with regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed by the Rodrigues Regional Assembly that Mr Vedasingam Baloomoody, former Member of the National Assembly was employed on a part time basis as follows -

- 01 April 2003 to 31 March 2004, and
- 01 April 2004 to 06 November 2005 (extension of his contract being on a month to month basis).

The total amount of retainer fee for the period 01 April 2003 to 06 November 2005 was Rs651,525. As regards the other fees for attending Court cases for the year 2005, the total amount paid was Rs60,375. He also attended outstanding Court cases from April 2006 to April 2007 and fees paid to him amounted to Rs80,500. He was therefore paid a total amount of Rs792,400.

As for part (b) of the question, we have been informed by the Ministry of Social Security, National Solidarity and Senior Citizens Welfare & Reform Institutions that Mr Vedasingam Baloomoody was employed as Legal Adviser of the Sugar Industry Labour Welfare Fund during period 01 July 2002 to 01 July 2005. The amount of retainer fees paid to him was Rs360,000 and that...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

The Prime Minister: ... of attending cases was Rs246,950 for that period, making a total amount of Rs606,950.

We have also been informed by the Ministry of Local Government that the services of Mr Vedasingam Baloomoody as Legal Adviser was

retained by the Municipality of Curepipe during the year 2001 to 2006. The amount of retainer fees paid was Rs140,000 and that for attending cases was Rs251,550 for that period, making a total amount of Rs391,550.

Furthermore, Mr Speaker, Sir, the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development has indicated that the services of Mr Vedasingam Baloomoody were enlisted by the following institutions falling under its aegis -

State Investment Corporation Ltd;
Edition de l'Océan Indien, and
SIC Management Services.

The amount of retainer fee paid to him was Rs495,000 and other fees amounted to Rs522,957. The total amount paid to him was Rs1,017,957.

Thus, a grand total of Rs2,808,857 was paid to Mr V. Baloomoody during the period 2002 - 2005 by the Rodrigues Regional Assembly and other institutions.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Hon. Bhagwan, you address the Chair and you put the question!

(Interruptions)

Order! Order! Let the hon. Member put the question! Members are losing the time of the House.

(Interruptions)

Mr Bhagwan: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Prime Minister to look into the file and see whether Mr Baloomoody has written to any of these organisations to seek employment?

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! Order!

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I hardly think that Mr Baloomoody got the employment just by ...

(Interruptions)

Mr Bhagwan: The Prime Minister has not replied to my question.

Mr Speaker: The Prime Minister has given an answer. I cannot force him to answer in the way the hon. Member wants.

Mr Bhagwan: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I know from the Prime Minister whether there is any written solicitation from Mr Baloomoody....

(Interruptions)

Let the Prime Minister reply! Is the hon. Minister the Prime Minister? Never will he be Prime Minister!

Mr Speaker: Order!

(Interruptions)

Order! Hon. Dr. Ramloll, you started it; you should keep quiet!

Mr Bhagwan: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am asking the Prime Minister to look into the file and see whether there is any written solicitation from Mr Baloomoody to be employed as Legal Adviser .

(Interruptions)

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, what I am saying is that he obtained Rs2,808,857 as Legal Adviser from different institutions. It cannot have happened by itself.

Mr Speaker: Next question, hon. Varma!

PLAINE MAGNIEN - DRUG CASES

(No. B/814) 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 drug related cases in Plaine Magnien, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to if there has been an increase in the number thereof and, if so, the additional measures that have been or will be taken.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that of late there has been a slight increase in the number of drug cases reported in the region of Plaine Magnien.

Conscious of the fact that there is a problem of drug in the region, the Commissioner of Police has reinforced his efforts in the fight against the drug scourge. He has deployed a 37-member ADSU team in Southern Division. He has also increased the number of crack down operations in the region with the support of the Local Police and other operational units such as the Divisional Support Unit, Emergency Response Service, Special Support Unit, CID and ADSU.

Furthermore, a surveillance team was tasked to initiate an in-depth targeted enquiry on a list of persons suspected to be involved in drug trafficking. A joint investigation with the Malagasy and Reunion authorities was also initiated. As a result of this joint collaboration, the Malagasy authorities have on the 23 June 2007 arrested four Mauritian nationals, three Malagasy nationals and two Kenyans having been found to be in possession of 850 grams of heroin and 2900 US dollars.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with a view to dismantling the existence of any drug trafficking network between Mauritius and Madagascar, a team of ADSU is being despatched to Madagascar. This shows the Government determination to combat the drug trafficking problem.

PLAINE MAGNIEN – LARCENY CASES

(No. B/815) 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 cases of larceny in Plaine Magnien, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to if there has been an increase in the number thereof and, if so, the additional measures that have been or will be taken.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that the number of cases of larceny in the region of Plaine Magnien has not actually increased all the way in the middle of the year for we have to look at the figures at the end.

I am also informed that the following preventive measures are being implemented by the Police to maintain this downward trend -

- (i) Police presence on ground is maintained through various joint patrol schemes including CID personnel in crime prone areas;
- (ii) vehicle checkpoint and stop and search operations are being carried out at strategic places;
- (iii) habitual criminals are being monitored, and
- (iv) Police Public Partnership meetings are being held regularly with a view to sensitising members of the society on the need to collaborate with the law enforcement authorities for combating crime in all its ramifications.

EXCESS SPEED DRIVING – CONTRAVENTIONS – JUNE 2007

(No. B/816) 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 excess speed driving at night, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of

Police, information as to the number of contraventions booked during the month of June 2007.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that for the month of June 2007, 135 contraventions for exceeding speed limit at night have been established all throughout the Island.

Mr Speaker, Sir, according to an analysis carried out by the Traffic Management and Road Safety Unit of the Ministry of Public Infrastructure and Land Transport & Shipping, 49% of fatal accidents involving motor vehicles during the past four years occurred at night between 18 00 hrs to 06 00 hrs in the morning. To track down speed limit offenders, the Traffic Management and Road Safety Unit is presently launching tenders for the purchase of two 'Mobile Speed Detection cameras' and one dummy Speed camera. The Speed Camera Units have the capacity to measure the speed and range of the vehicles as well as capturing the image of the target vehicle. Enforcement will be carried out by the Police in speed zones and in accident prone areas.

Moreover, the Driving Licence Regulations are being amended to include, amongst others, the introduction of penalty point system which is a system consisting of penalty points penalising drivers committing road traffic offences, including excess in speed. The draft Regulations is presently being examined by the State Law Office.

In addition, regular sensitisation campaigns on speeding, drink driving are being jointly carried out by the Police and the Traffic Management and Road Safety Unit.

WORLD DRUG REPORT (2007)

(No. B/817) Mr M. Dowarkasing (Third Member for Curepipe and Midlands) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether he will state if he has taken cognizance of the World Drug Report 2007, published by the United Nations Office for

Drugs and Crimes and, if so, will he consider the advisability of setting up a select committee to address the issue.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, the World Drug Report which is prepared by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime presents statistical view of the global illicit drug situation annually. In this year's edition of the Report, mention is made of Mauritius in two statistical tables on the annual prevalence of abuse of opiates and cannabis as percentage of the population aged between 15 and 64.

I should say, Mr Speaker, Sir, that the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime in Vienna has confirmed that the figures on the statistical sheets on the abuse of opiates and cannabis in respect of Mauritius are the same that appeared in the 2006 World Drug Report. In fact, we have been told that the figures for opiates and cannabis mentioned in the 2007 World Drug Report are those for the years 2003 and 2004 respectively. It is, therefore, clear that the figures contained in the 2007 World Drug Report in respect of Mauritius do not reflect the current drug situation necessarily in the country.

The fight against drug abuse and drug trafficking is a continuous process, Mr Speaker, Sir, that requires our determined efforts all along. My Government is fully committed to tackle the drug problem in the country and is sparing no efforts to that effect. We are reinforcing the capacity of the existing institutions and agencies involved in the fight against drug abuse and drug trafficking. Existing plans and operations are constantly reviewed and new strategies are put in place to take into account the changing circumstances.

I should like to point out that a major case of drug trafficking has been dismantled very recently. ADSU made a large seizure of Subutex at Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam International Airport. A French national arriving

from Paris was arrested with a total of 51,863 tablets of Subutex having a market value of Rs41 m. Since January this year, some 4 kg of heroin, 14 Kg of cannabis and 80,266 tablets of dangerous drugs, including Subutex, have been seized by the Police. The number of persons arrested in drug-related cases for the period 2005 to date is as follows –

<u>Year</u>	<u>No. of persons</u>
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2005	-	1973
2006	-	2038
2007 (to date)	-	1340

This bears testimony to the positive results that the Police are getting, Mr Speaker, Sir.

We are taking a multi-pronged approach to combat the drug problem, namely, on the supply and demand reduction, education, treatment and rehabilitation fronts. The following measures are being taken –

- The Dangerous Drugs Act is being amended to provide for tougher penalties in relation to trafficking and illegal possession of Subutex.
- Law enforcement agencies will continue to track down drug traffickers through the systematic surveillance system that we have and the optimal use of advanced technology.
- Training of Police personnel is being stepped up on new methods and techniques of investigation.
- Intensive collaboration is being maintained among agencies, such as the Customs Department, the Postal Services and other departments.
- The infrastructure at the Immigration and Customs Halls at the Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam International Airport will be improved to allow for a more effective profiling of drug traffickers.
- An Advance Passenger Information System will be implemented to allow Customs and other law enforcement agencies to receive details on all passengers prior to arrival in Mauritius and an automated means of processing this information against risks criteria in targeting drug smugglers.

- Sniffer dogs are being trained to enhance the capabilities in detecting drugs at the Port and the Airport.
- Four small X-Ray scanners capable of detecting drugs are being acquired and will soon be installed at the Airport arrivals, Post Office and Courier Services.
- The World Customs Organisation National Intelligence Database System is being implemented to facilitate collection and analysis of intelligence information on drugs.
- Regional cooperation and information sharing on drug trafficking is being enhanced to allow fast tracking and movement of traffickers.
- And on the preventive side, information, education, sensitization and awareness campaigns are being reinforced by NATReSA and its nine Treatment and Rehabilitation Centres as well as by the NGOs.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I believe that we are taking the necessary steps to fight the drug abuse and drug trafficking in the country. In order to effectively address the drug problem, we will continue to take additional measures as and when required. Therefore, I do not consider it appropriate to set up a Select Committee of the House.

Mr Dowarkasing: Mr Speaker, Sir, I thank the hon. Prime Minister for his answer. May I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether he has confirmed that the figures that have been mentioned in the report, that is, 2% of the active population consume opiates is correct?

The Prime Minister: In fact, we have a letter from Dr. Thomas Pietschmann of the Research, Analysis & Statistics of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime who has confirmed that the figures of the statistical sheets on opiates and cannabis are the same that appeared in 2006 World Report and the figures are based on a survey undertaken in 2003 for opiates and those for cannabis are based on a survey undertaken in 2004.

Mr Dowarkasing: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Prime Minister has spoken of a multi-pronged approach and a result-oriented strategy. Does that form part of an Action Plan that he has put place since the last report or are they just different loose actions leading to the fight against drug trafficking?

The Prime Minister: It forms part of the whole Action Plan, Mr Speaker, Sir.

RRA – PUBLIC GATHERING – INQUIRY

(No. B/818) 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 public gathering which was held in front of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly on Friday 08 June 2007, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to if the inquiry thereinto has been completed, indicating if –

- (a) the instigators thereof have been identified, and
- (b) any arrest effected.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, further to the reply I made to PQ No. B/639 on 19 June 2007, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that five persons were arrested for taking part in an unlawful assembly on 08 June 2007.

The five persons were arrested on 20 July 2007, but denied the charge. They were bailed out on the same day after having furnished a surety of Rs5000 plus costs. Furthermore, the Commissioner of Police has also informed that the inquiry will be completed shortly and the relevant dossier will be forwarded to the Director of Public Prosecutions.

Mr Spéville: Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister why is it that it's only on 20 July that arrest has been made? Furthermore, in a PQ which I put last time, the hon. Prime Minister referred to a crowd of 50 persons gathered in front of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly. How is it that the Police had identified only five persons from the 50 persons?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, that's precisely the point. They have to make an inquiry to get evidence and they have to prove, that is why 5 persons have been arrested.

Mr Spéville: Mr Speaker, Sir, from the picture that I have here, it is not difficult for the Police to identify who were those instigators. Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether he is aware that two Commissioners from the Rodrigues Regional Assembly and one Adviser were among the instigators of this gathering?

Mr Speaker: I do not have the Standing Orders of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly. Can the hon. Member impute motives on Members of the Regional Assembly of Rodrigues?

Mr Spéville: Mr Speaker, Sir, I don't think I am imputing motives. I am talking about facts from pictures taken on that day where two Commissioners and an Adviser were among the demonstrators.

Mr Speaker: If they were among the demonstrators, that is a different matter.

The Prime Minister: It is for the Police to establish if they were there and why.

Mr Léopold: Mr Speaker, Sir, from information gathered, the supposed instigators were behind the security barriers placed by the Police next to the entrance of the public toilet...

Mr Speaker: Is the hon. Member making a statement or is he asking a question to the hon. Prime Minister?

(Interruptions)

Mr Léopold: I am coming to the question. Does the hon. Prime Minister find it fair that, on the basis of the photos taken in these circumstances, people are ‘pick and choose’ to be arrested?

The Prime Minister: That is why the Police is saying that they are still doing an inquiry. If the Police had put a barrier and had asked people not to step beyond the barrier, that also has to be looked into.

Mr Spéville: The hon. Prime Minister has said that the gathering was outside the compound of the RRA. Article 6 of the Public Gathering Act says - ‘Public gathering being held without permission’. That is the main issue. The gathering was held without Police permission, whether or not it was in the compound of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly, but still it is a public gathering.

The Prime Minister: It all depends, Mr Speaker, Sir. I did not say that the protests were being held inside or outside the compound. The Police will have to decide whether they put the barriers, or gave permission, that is why the inquiry is still going on.

Mr Léopold: May I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether the photos on which the Police is basing itself...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: That is vibrant democracy!

Mr Léopold: ... for arrests have been taken by Police Officers or were kindly supplied by someone else?

(Interruptions)

The Prime Minister: I will let the Police do the inquiry, Mr Speaker, Sir.

POLICE OFFICERS – BSc DEGREE - SCHEME

(No. B/ 819) 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 implementation of the proposed scheme for Police officers having completed a BSc degree in Police studies, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to –

- (a) if the appropriate clearances from the relevant authorities have been obtained, and
- (b) the number of Police officers, rank-wise, who are concerned with the scheme.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to refer the hon. Member to the reply I made to PQ No. B/350 on 15 May last. I had indicated then that the Commissioner of Police has proposed a scheme for Police Officers who have successfully completed a BSc degree course in Police Studies.

In brief, the proposed scheme provides for -

- (a) Police Constables and Police Sergeants with more than ten years of service to be promoted to the rank of Inspector of Police;
- (b) Inspectors of Police with more than four years of service in the rank to be promoted to the rank of Chief Inspector of Police;
- (c) Chief Inspectors of Police with more than four years of service in the rank to be promoted to the rank of Assistant Superintendent of Police;
- (d) Assistant Superintendents of Police with more than three years of service in the rank to be promoted to the rank of Superintendent of Police, and
- (e) Superintendents of Police and above will continue to be promoted on the basis of merit and seniority in accordance with the established practice.

I am now informed by the Commissioner of Police that the draft new proposed schemes of service for the grades of Inspector of Police, Chief Inspector of Police, Assistant Superintendent of Police and Superintendent

of Police are being worked out and will thereafter be referred to the Ministry of Civil Service and Administrative Reforms and the Disciplined Forces Service Commission for approval. Once the schemes of service of the relevant posts are prescribed, action will be initiated by the Commissioner of Police for filling of the posts.

As regards part (b) of the question, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that 191 Police Officers who have successfully completed their BSc degree in Police Studies are concerned with the proposed scheme. These include officers from different ranks, I do not know whether the hon. Member wants me to list the ranks, but I can do so if he wants.

Mr Spéville: I thank the hon. Prime Minister. Concerning the scheme which was launched in 1999 – I think last year or this year, the first batch has been completed – can I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether Government intends to revamp the scheme so that the new comers can join the scheme of BSc in Police studies?

The Prime Minister: I thank the hon. Member for reminding us that the scheme was launched by my previous Government in 1999 and I will assure him

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: The Table has been advised that PQ No. B/826 addressed to the hon. Prime Minister will be replied by the hon. Minister of Social Security, time permitting. I am also advised that PQ Nos. B/846, B/847, B/866, B/869, B/871, B/874 and B/881 have been withdrawn. Questions addressed to hon. Ministers!

PQ Nos. B/820 – B/823 – See Written Answers to Questions

PUBLIC OFFICERS - INTERDICTION

(No. B/824) Mr P. Jhugroo (Third Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and

Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether, in regard to public officers who are currently under interdiction, he will state the number thereof.

(Withdrawn)

**MBC – HEAD OF NEWS – CONDITIONS OF EMPLOYMENT,
SALARY ETC.**

(No. B/825) Mr P. Jhugroo (Third Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether, in regard to the Head of News of the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Corporation, information as to –

- (a) his terms and conditions of employment;
- (b) the salary, allowances and other fringe benefits to which he is entitled;
- (c) the number of overseas missions undertaken by him since his appointment, indicating the countries visited, and
- (d) if any car is placed at his disposal, indicating its make and model.

(Withdrawn)

PQ No. B/826 – See after PQ No. B/881

PQ Nos. B/827 – B/831 – See Written Answers To Questions

RENAL TRANSPLANT, HIP & KNEE REPLACEMENT - CASES

(No. B/832) Mr S. Naidu (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Health & Quality of Life whether, in regard

to renal transplant, total hip replacement and total knee replacement, he will state the respective number thereof carried out since 2005, indicating the success rate in each category.

Mr Faugoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that from January 2005 to 15 July 2007, 46 renal transplants, 157 total hip replacements and 119 total knee replacements have been performed in the Government hospitals.

The highly successful renal transplant programme is based at J. Nehru Hospital. Forty-two out of the 46 patients are alive and well and the remaining four have died from known complications after operation (rejection, infection and pulmonary embolus). One patient has restarted dialysis because of rejection.

Total hip and total knee replacements are carried out in all five regional hospitals by all Orthopaedic surgeons who are trained for these procedures. The success rate is very high, as after operation since 2005, only nine cases developed complications, i.e. dislocation or infection.

Mr Naidu: Mr Speaker, Sir, can the Minister advise on the measures in place to address the failure cases, especially concerning the total hip replacement?

Mr Faugoo: The cases have to be followed by the doctors. It is a technical matter on which I cannot pronounce, Mr Speaker, Sir.

MRA – TAX ARREARS - PROCEDURES

(No. B/833) Mrs S. Hanoomanjee (Second Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to claims for outstanding tax

arrears, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Revenue Authority, information as to the procedures being presently adopted.

The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development (Mr R. Sithanen): Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Mauritius Revenue Authority that the standard procedures adopted for recovery of tax are as follows -

- (i) there is first an issue of claims to a debtor, showing separately the tax amount and the penalty/interest, requesting him/her to settle his/her liability within a given delay, usually 15 days;
- (ii) debtors are also informed that action to recover the tax in accordance with the law will be taken in case the tax is not paid within the specified delay;
- (iii) where debtors do not comply, enforcement action is taken on a case to case basis;
- (iv) if the taxpayer is the owner of an immovable property, an inscription of privilege is taken for any debt exceeding Rs200,000. Other enforcement tools provided in law are –
 - Attachment Order
 - Distress Warrant
 - *Contrainte*
 - Temporary closure of business

Mr Speaker, Sir, notwithstanding these provisions, total tax arrears has been increasing over the years and as at 30 June 2007, it has reached a staggering amount of Rs1.442 billion, of which Rs965.1 m. are under income tax and Rs341 m. under Value Added Tax.

Mr Speaker, Sir, it is in this context that I announced in the Budget Speech the introduction of an incentive scheme with a view to mopping up outstanding tax arrears. This scheme, named the Tax Arrears Payment Incentive Scheme, or TAPIS for short, will run for only six months to 31 December 2007, and offers a waiver of 75 % of the penalty/interest accrued on the tax remaining unpaid. Taxpayers joining the scheme will have to pay interest at the rate of only 0.5 % per month instead of 24 % per annum on the tax amount due.

Debtors who are issued a statement of claim will have one month to apply for the concession. No request for the waiving of interest will be entertained after the expiry of the incentive period. Enforcement action in accordance with law, with full interest and penalty will be taken against those who do not turn up for the concession within the time allowed.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Mr Speaker, Sir, is the hon. Minister aware that at the level of the MRA, when all clearances have been obtained for claiming a certain amount of arrears, those figures are not subject to any modification?

Mr Sithanen: I think it depends, Mr Speaker, Sir, because very often discussions take place - if my understanding is correct - on cases that have been the basis of negotiations in the past and which are outstanding. There should not be, in my humble submission, any modification to that figure.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Can the hon. Minister say whether he is aware of the case of a specific company where, after obtention of all clearances for claims, there have been modifications in the outstanding amount claimed?

Mr Sithanen: If the hon. lady can give me the facts and figures, I will raise the case with the MRA.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Can I ask the hon. Minister to inquire and then report on this matter?

Mr Sithanen: The hon. lady must give me the facts and figures.

PHOENIX SSS (BOYS) – FOOTBALL PITCH - CONSTRUCTION

(No. B/834) Mr S. Dayal (Second Member for Quartier Militaire & Moka) asked the Minister of Education & Human Resources whether, in regard to the project for the construction of a football pitch next to the Phoenix State Secondary School (Boys), he will state –

(a) when works

(i) started, and

(ii) are likely to be completed, and

(b) the cost thereof.

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

The contract for the construction of the football pitch was awarded to the DWC on 24 May 2005. The construction works started on 20 June 2005 and the contractual period was for six months. However, progress was slow and the site was taken over from the contractor 17 months later, on 24 November 2006, after the closure of the DWC.

As regards the completion of the outstanding works, tender documents have been sent to the CTB and the tender will be launched on receipt of CTB's approval expected by this week and works are expected to be completed within a period of three months after the award of the contract.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as regards part (b) of the question, the actual cost of the project can only be determined on completion of the outstanding works, but the initial contract value was Rs12.6 m.

SECONDARY SCHOOLS – ÉCOLE DE FOOT

(No. B/835) Mr S. Dayal (Second Member for Quartier Militaire and Moka) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether he will consider the advisability of setting up in each of the secondary schools in Mauritius, *une école de foot*, to be operational, especially after school hours or during weekends.

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, Physical Education is an integral part of the school curriculum and sports have always had a place of pride in the school curriculum, at both primary and secondary levels. The new primary curriculum has linked Health Education with Physical Education and primary schools are being encouraged to organize co-curricular and extra-curricular activities related to sports.

The need for engagement in sports is dealt with across the curriculum wherein opportunities are provided to the learner into reflecting over the importance of sports for “wellness”.

As regards the specific issue of having an *école de foot* in each secondary school, I understand that the Ministry of Youth & Sports already has a National Program and is funding the operation of some 60 *écoles de foot* across the island under the aegis of the Mauritius Football Association. The *écoles de foot* are run thrice weekly at football grounds available in the region. They are open to children aged between 12 and 15 years, including students. The main objective of these *écoles de foot* is the development and promotion of football island-wide in order to identify talented and gifted players to be channelled to the Regional Football Training Centre and, consequently, to the National Football teams . Students form part of this project.

It is not proposed to set up and run an *école de foot* in all our secondary schools in order not to duplicate the National Program of the Ministry of Youth & Sports. In a spirit of co-operation, my Ministry may recommend the opening of additional *écoles de foot* on existing terms and conditions regarding the use of school sports infrastructure.

However, my Ministry would have no objection to set up football clubs involving both pupils and staff after school hours, to promote football in our secondary schools. A MoU already exists between my Ministry and the Ministry of Youth & Sports for the development of a sports culture among our citizens and this proposal will be addressed.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: May I ask the hon. Minister whether there are physical instructors in primary schools throughout the island?

Mr Gokhool: Yes, there are! They are not adequate and the hon. Lady knows that we have to improve on that.

MINISTRY OF SOCIAL SECURITY – MEDICAL UNIT
– ALLEGED FRAUD & EMBEZZLEMENT

(No. B/836) **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 she is aware of alleged cases of fraud and/or embezzlement at the Medical Unit of her Ministry which have recently been discovered and, if so, will she state the number thereof, indicating in each case the nature and the magnitude thereof.

Mrs Bappoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I am replying to both PQs Nos. B/836 and B/851 together.

I wish, first of all, to enlighten the House on the provision of the law regarding the grant of the Basic Invalidity Pension. According to section 8 of the National Pension Act, a person is qualified for the grant of a Basic Invalidity Pension, if he has a percentage of disablement of 60% or above and is likely to be so disabled for a period of at least 12 months.

Mr Speaker, Sir, a number of representations have recently been made to my office relating to alleged cases of abuse regarding officers employed by my Ministry, who appear to be enjoying a sound health and who are benefiting from a Basic Invalidity Pension. As a responsible Minister, as soon as I took cognizance of these cases, I immediately requested that needful be done to investigate in these allegations. To my surprise, while the procedures were underway for enquiry, I was also informed that a number of similar cases exist in other Ministries and parastatal bodies. We have gone further and have extracted a list of persons employed in both the private and public sectors from our record and who are all benefiting from the Basic Invalidity Pension.

Following discussions with the State Law Office on the course of action to be taken, in line with the provisions of the law, in order to determine the genuineness of payment in BIP cases, my Ministry has been advised to refer all the doubtful cases only to the Medical Appeal Tribunal.

The exercise will start soon, but until and unless the outcome of the cases reported to the Medical Appeal Tribunal is communicated, we cannot, at this stage, talk of forgery, fraud or embezzlement.

I wish to inform the House that it is not the intention of Government to simply penalise genuine beneficiaries of the Basic Invalidity Pension. As I just mentioned, appeals will be lodged against these doubtful cases only. Actually a sorting out exercise will be carried out with the assistance of the medical practitioners from the Ministry of Health on the basis of records available and as soon as this exercise is completed, the Medical Appeal Tribunal sessions will be scheduled.

Mr Lauthan: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister mentioned that over 2,000 cases will be suspended. Is that true?

Mrs Bappoo: There is no suspension of any cases. The list given by the Ministry covers both public and private sectors and there seems to have 2,000 cases, but we have to do a sort out of these cases to differentiate between a temporary invalidity and an invalidity on a permanent basis.

Mr Lauthan: For the sake of transparency, if that is proved to be true, would the hon. Minister contemplate referring the cases of officers who are involved in such sort of fraud, to the Police instead of asking officers to inquire on officers?

Mrs Bappoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, there is need for a medical assessment to prove whether there has been any sort of malpractices. For the medical assessment, it is better to go to the Medical Tribunal and not to the doctors who have assessed these people at the level of the medical unit. The Medical Tribunal is different. It is a Medical Tribunal with two specialists doctors from the Ministry of Health and one Judge from the Judiciary.

Mr Lauthan: Is the hon. Minister aware that there have been allegations that those people preparing the files might be of connivance with these doctors at the level of the Medical Unit? It is not a question of assessment alone.

(Interruptions)

I immediately referred any doubtful cases to the Police.

Mrs Bappoo: Let us wait, Mr Speaker, Sir, the outcome of the first medical assessment and then we will see what will be the proper action to be taken, whether there is any need to refer the cases to the Police.

Mr Dowarkasing: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister whether, from the information collected, there is any employee of the Ministry of Social Security who is benefiting from BIP?

Mrs Bappoo: As I have said, the information that was first received concerns the employees of the Ministry of Social Security. Further investigation has revealed that there are officers from various other Ministries, departments and even parastatal bodies.

Ms Deerpalsing: Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Minister confirm that the Medical Board usually sits every three months, but prior to the general election in July 2005, the Medical Board was sitting much more regularly and why?

Mrs Bappoo: I will have to seek for further information which I can then communicate to the House, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mrs Perrier: Can the hon. Minister confirm if, to be eligible for the BIP, one has to be 60% handicapped?

Mrs Bappoo: I said that at the very beginning of my reply, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Dowarkasing: Mr Speaker, Sir, I just want to ask the hon. Minister whether she has received representations to have the inquiry conducted by an independent body and not by the officers of her Ministry and, if so, does she intend to accede to the request?

Mrs Bappoo: As I have just said, Mr Speaker, Sir, I prefer to wait for the outcome of the medical assessment first and then we will see what action will be taken further on.

At 1.05 p.m. the sitting was suspended.

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

EX-SERVICEMEN – MEDICAL DOMICILIARY VISITS

(No. B/837) 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 doctors employed by her Ministry since July 2005 to date, she will give –

- (a) a list thereof, indicating
 - (i) the number of domiciliary visits effected by them to ex-servicemen, and
 - (ii) the amount of money paid to them, and
- (b) the number of domiciliary visits effected by the Director of the Medical Unit to the ex-servicemen, indicating the amount of money paid to her.

Mrs Bappoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, the Mauritius Ex-services Trust Fund operates under the aegis of the Ministry of Finance. The policy decision to allow the Medical Unit of the Ministry of Social Security to make arrangements for domiciliary visits to ex-servicemen was taken in March 2004. The hon. Member of the Opposition, who was the former Minister of Social Security, is well aware of that decision.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, the reply to parts (a) and (b) of the question is being tabled.

Mr Lauthan: Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Minister inform the House about the total sum earmarked for such domiciliary visits to disabled ex-servicemen?

Mrs Bappoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, the answers are being tabled as far as the amount that has been disbursed for the payment of DVs.

NON-SUGAR SECTOR – PRODUCTION PLAN

(No. B/838) Mrs S. Hanoomanjee (Second Member for Savanne and Black River) asked the Minister of Agro Industry and Fisheries whether, in regard to the non-sugar sector, he will state –

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

Dr. Boolell: Mr Speaker Sir, since the reply is long and comprehensive, I will circulate it. **(Appendix I)**

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Mr Speaker, Sir, we will see what is in the paper. But can the hon. Minister say how he proposes to deal with the issue of transfer of technology in order to see to it that the non-sugar sector is viable?

Dr. Boolell: Mr Speaker, Sir, I inform the House that a Strategic Comprehensive Plan is being prepared. All these will be taken on board. It will be submitted at the end of August and then we will hold a High-Powered Committee at the University of Mauritius where all the stakeholders will be invited. Under the present circumstances, Mr Speaker, Sir, we are looking at the whole, what I would call, supply chain in the agricultural sector from pre-harvest, harvest, post-harvest to marketing. Let me also inform Members of the Assembly that, as announced in the Government Programme, we have set model schools throughout the country. We are coming up with a Farmers Training School Centre; we are looking at quality seed production which is going to be undertaken by private entrepreneurs; we have released more than 800 acres of land to applicants for vegetable, fruit, agro and livestock activities. Of course, there is the Technology Introductory Diffusion Scheme which many planters are taking advantage of with the help and monitoring of the Agricultural Research Extension Unit. Over and above legislation which is going to be introduced to ensure that there is proper plant protection, there is a new Bill, the Plant Breeders Bill, which is near finalisation. I can also highlight what the main feature of this report would be: to re-equilibriate the roles of agriculture with focusing on good stability and security while still giving due importance to the multi-functional role of agriculture. Everything will be clearly spelt out. We will invite all the stakeholders; there will be wide debates on all the wide

ranging issues and that is the reason why I intend to hold a High-Powered Committee at the University of Mauritius.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Mr Speaker, Sir, has the hon. Minister fixed any time frame for the preparation and publication of such plan?

Dr. Boolell: Mr Speaker, Sir, as I have stated, the Comprehensive Strategic Plan will be released at the end of August and I hope that within two weeks, we will be able to hold the High-Powered Committee at the University of Mauritius.

CESS – KPMG - REPORT

(No. B/839) Mrs S. Hanoomanjee (Second Member for Savanne and Black River) asked the Minister of Agro Industry and Fisheries whether, in regard to the study commissioned to address the issue of Cess, he will state if the report has now been submitted, indicating if a copy thereof will be laid on the Table of the National Assembly.

Dr. Boolell: Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I shall reply to PQ Nos B/839 and B/858 together.

KPMG has submitted a draft final report which has been circulated to all Service Providing Institutions for their views.

KPMG has been invited to make a formal presentation of the report to the Service Providing Institutions followed by discussions on 04 August 2007. Based on the outcome of that meeting, KPMG will then submit its final report and recommendations. And I see no reason then why the report should not be circulated.

ISLETS & ISLANDS - LEASE

(No. B/840) Mr E. Guimbeau (First Member for Curepipe and Midlands) asked the Minister of Housing and Lands whether, in regard to the islets and the islands around Mauritius, he will state if any of them has been leased to private promoters and, if so, will he state, in each case –

- (a) the names of the beneficiaries;
- (b) the annual rental;
- (c) the terms and conditions attached thereto, and
- (d) the procedures and criteria used for the selection of the beneficiaries.

Mr Dulull: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am advised that the requested pieces of information are being compiled and once the exercise is completed, they will be placed in the library of the National Assembly.

Mr Guimbeau: M. le président, est-ce que le ministre peut confirmer s'il y a eu appel d'offres en ce qui concerne l'allocation de l'île Plate et Ilot Gabriel ?

Mr Dulull: If the hon. Member comes with a substantive question, I will look into it

ASSEMBLEE DE DIEU - ST PIERRE – CLOSING ORDER

(No. B/841) Mr E. Guimbeau (First Member for Curepipe and Midlands) asked the Minister of Local Government whether he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Moka/Flacq District Council, information as to if a notice for a closing order with immediate effect has been issued to the Assemblée de Dieu situated at Royal Road, Circonstance St Pierre and, if so, the reasons therefor.

The Minister of Health and Quality of Life (Mr S. Faugoo): Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that a “Closing Order Notice” dated 21 June 2007 was served upon the “*Assemblée de Dieu*”, at Circonstance, St. Pierre by the Moka/Flacq District Council in view of the fact that it was not in possession of a Building and Land Use Permit.

I am further informed that before the issue of the “Closing Order Notice”, a “Notice to Stop Development” dated 05 June 2007 was issued to the congregation in the first instance. As the religious body did not comply with this first notice, the council had no alternative than to issue the “Closing Order Notice” in accordance with sections 109 and 110 of the Local Government Act 2003.

The District Council has also informed that the representative of the “*Assemblée de Dieu*” called at the Council’s office and indicated that he would comply with the “Closing Order Notice” and would move to another building. In fact, on 13 July 2007, the congregation informed the Council in writing that they were stopping all activities and were also handing over the building to its owner.

STATE LAND – ALLOCATION - BENEFICIARIES

(No. B/842) Mr E. Guimbeau (First Member for Curepipe and Midlands) asked the Minister of Housing and Lands whether, in regard to the allocation of State land since November 2006, he will table a list of the beneficiaries, indicating in each case –

- (a) the extent of the land;
- (b) the purpose of the lease;
- (c) the annual rental, and
- (d) the other conditions attached thereto.

Mr Dulull: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am advised that the compilation of the requested pieces of information has started and once the exercise is completed the information will be placed in the Library of the National Assembly.

ERNEST FLORENT GOVERNMENT SCHOOL – LAND LEASE, ETC.

(No. B/843) Mr L. Bundhoo (Second Member for Montagne Blanche and GRSE) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether, in regard to the Ernest Florent Government School, he will state if he is aware of –

- (a) representations made regarding the deplorable state of the compound wall, and
- (b) requests made for
 - (i) the landscaping of the school yard;
 - (ii) the setting up of a children’s playground, and
 - (iii) the construction of three additional classrooms and, if so, where matters stand in each case.

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have been made aware of the bad state of the boundary block wall. In fact, a request was received from the Head Teacher on 13 July 2007 for the upgrading of the block wall. Following a site visit effected by the technical team of my Ministry on 20 July 2007, it has been observed that though the wall is relatively old, it is generally in a good structural condition. However, a stretch of around 10 m of the wall has been affected by a '*badamier*' tree located near the wall.

The Zonal Directorate of my Ministry is presently making arrangements for the felling of the tree. It is expected that it would be removed around mid August 2007. I am advised that the immediate danger to the stability of the wall lies in the presence of the roots of the '*badamier*' tree. Hence, the felling down of the tree will remove the immediate problem to the structure of the wall. Subsequently, MPI will carry out rehabilitation works over a stretch of around 20 m of the wall during this financial year.

With regard to part (b) of the question for the upgrading of the school yard and provision of recreational facilities for the pupils, owing to the rocky nature of a major part of the school yard, my Ministry has requested the MPI to carry out comprehensive upgrading of the yard. In the meantime, my Ministry has written to the Ministry of Environment and National Development Unit for landscaping works at the school. These works will not only embellish the school environment, but will also enhance safety of the pupils in the yard.

Concerning the setting up of a children's playground at the school, this can only be effected after MPI has carried out the major upgrading of the school yard I mentioned earlier. The Pre-School Trust Fund has been requested to do the needful.

As concerns the additional classrooms, my Ministry did receive a request on 05 May 2006 for the construction of three classrooms which is a one-stream school, with some 237 pupils and a pupil-teacher ratio of around 1:35. However, owing to more urgent priorities in the Zone, the request could not be satisfied up to now. It will be entertained during this financial year.

Mr Bundhoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister what has been the reply from the Ministry of Environment?

Mr Gokhool: I have to say to the hon. Member that it takes some time. I am myself concerned about it and I'll see to it that matters are expedited.

Mr Bundhoo: May I also ask the hon. Minister what has been the outcome, if any, of any visit from the technicians of the MPI?

Mr Gokhool: Normally, the first visits are carried out by the technical section of my Ministry, which has been done. If there is need for a joint visit between technicians of my Ministry and MPI, this can be looked into.

Mr Bundhoo: May I, Mr Speaker, Sir, ask the hon. Minister to explain why there is no need for three additional classrooms? I cannot understand that properly.

Mr Gokhool: We have to establish the need in terms of whether the classrooms are overcrowded. I said that the pupil-teacher ratio is 1:35 and the norm is 1:40. This is the situation at present.

Mr Bundhoo: May I ask the hon. Minister if he will consider the possibility of having a meeting at the school with the PTA and other stakeholders at the Ernest Florent Government School?

Mr Gokhool: I have in mind to visit schools in that constituency. I had informed earlier I will include the visit to the school in the plan of visit for the constituency.

Mr Guinness: Can I know from the Minister if two weeks ago there was a strike at the school and the reasons thereof? Could the Minister enlighten me?

Mr Gokhool: It depends on what you mean by strike. I have not heard of any strike at the school.

Mr Guinness: I think my good friend, hon. Bundhoo, can confirm that there was a strike at the school. I see it very strange that the Minister does not know that there was a strike at the school.

Mr Gokhool: In Mauritius, if a couple of parents comes in front of the school, it is also qualified as a strike.

Mr Guinness: Can I know from the Minister since when the criteria of a pupil teacher ratio 1:40 exist in our schools?

Mr Gokhool: It has been there for quite a long time. In effect, we will have to move towards a lower pupil-teacher ratio. But this has been there during the last Government. It is not something new that I had created.

Mr Guinness: It has been there, but it is not official. The hon. Minister said officially it has to be 1:40.

Mr Gokhool: This is the norm which is used.

TOBACCO PRODUCERS – MECHANISATION AND INPUTS SCHEME - LOANS

(No. B/844) Mr L. Bundhoo (Second Member for Montagne Blanche and GRSE) asked the Minister of Agro Industry and Fisheries whether, in regard to loans granted to tobacco producers under the Mechanisation and Inputs Scheme, he will, for the period January 2005 to date, state –

- (a) the criteria and procedures relating to the grant of such loans, and
- (b) if the loan agreements are registered and, if so, the reasons therefor.

Dr. Boolell: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Tobacco Board that as regards the criteria and procedures for the grant of loans under the Mechanisation and Inputs scheme which was set in 1997 and restyled as the Mechanisation Fund in 2004, the scheme is still in force. I am tabling a paper on the Mechanisation Fund of the Tobacco Board.

As regards part (b), all loan agreements for Capital items have to be registered so as to enable the Tobacco Board to recover outstanding amounts in case of default. Consequently, prior to disbursement, the loan agreement has to be signed and registered with the Registrar General's Department. The loan is interest free and refundable in a maximum of 10 instalments

spread over 2 years. A one-off service charge of 2% is payable to the Tobacco Board to cover administrative expenses.

As regards loans for chemicals and fertilizers, the applicant only has to give an undertaking to refund. The amount approved depends on the area to be planted and the recommended rates of inputs per arpent. The amount of credit facilities provided are recouped from the tobacco proceeds of the beneficiary from the same crop for which the facilities were granted.

For both categories, the amount sanctioned is paid directly to the supplier of the goods purchased. Officers of the Tobacco Board have the duty to ensure, through inspections and site visits, that equipment, spare-parts or materials mentioned in the application form have, in fact, been purchased.

Mr Bundhoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to the second part of the question concerning the registration of loan agreements, may I, with your permission, Mr Speaker, Sir, inform the hon. Minister that, in accordance to the Tobacco Production and Marketing Act it is stated that the Board shall be exempted from all stamp duties and registration fee on all documents executed by it or on its behalf. May I, therefore, ask the hon. Minister if he can use this clause in order to exempt all tobacco growers from the registration fee of Rs1100, especially due to the fact that these people are presently facing lots of difficulties?

Dr. Boolell: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am not going to say that the law is an ass, but the law has to be enforced and we will see to it that it is enforced.

BASIC INVALIDITY PENSION – BENEFICIARIES - EMPLOYMENT

(No. B/845) Mrs F. Labelle (Third Member for Vacoas and Floreal) asked the Minister of Social Security, National Solidarity and Senior Citizens Welfare & Reform Institutions whether in regard to the Basic Invalidity Pension, she will state if it is proposed to amend section 8 of the National Pensions Act, with a view to excluding beneficiaries thereof who are civil servants or officers of parastatal and statutory bodies.

Mrs Bappoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, Government never intended to amend Section 8 of the National Pensions Act to prevent beneficiaries of invalid's pension from taking up employment in both the public and private sectors. This benefit will remain universal.

Mrs Labelle: May I ask the hon. Minister whether her Ministry is contemplating sending those who are benefiting from this BIP before the Medical Board?

Mrs Bappoo: I did reply in the previous question, Mr Speaker, Sir. All the doubtful cases will be submitted for appeal at the level of the Medical Tribunal.

Mrs Labelle: May I, Mr Speaker, Sir, ask the hon. Minister whether she can give to the House an indication about the doubtful cases?

Mrs Bappoo: It will only be after the inquiry is over.

MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND NDU - ADVISERS

(No. B/846) Mr Y. Varma (First Member for Mahebourg and Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Environment and National Development Unit whether, in regard to Advisers attached to his Ministry since 2000 and 2005, he will give a list thereof, indicating –

- (a) their respective duties, and
- (b) the amount of money paid in terms of fees and other allowances to them.

(Withdrawn)

BEACH AUTHORITY – AUDIT SQUAD - REPORT

(No. B/847) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Local Government whether, in regard to the Beach Authority, he will –

- (a) state if the Audit Squad of his Ministry has submitted a report in December 2006 on shortcomings and mismanagement thereof and, if so, will he –
 - (i) give details thereof, and
 - (ii) state if he has discussed the matter with the Chairperson and the General Manager of the Authority, and
- (b) for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Authority, information as to if any remedial action has been initiated following the report.

(Withdrawn)

MAURITIUS SPORTS COUNCIL – CHAIRPERSON – REMUNERATION, OFFICIAL CAR, ETC.

(No. B/848) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Youth and Sports whether, in regard to the Chairperson of the Mauritius Sports Council, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Council, information as to if –

- (a) its Board has received a request for the increase in his remuneration and other expenses, including petrol allowance and overtime payment for his driver;
- (b) he is entitled to the use of a car and, if so, the conditions of its use, and

- (c) the amount of overtime paid to his driver for the last six months.

Mr Tang Wah Hing: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that the Board of the Mauritius Sports Council has received no request for increase in the remuneration of its Chairman. However, the Chairman has made a request for exclusive use of an official car as his responsibilities at the Sports Council have increased since he took office in December 2005. He has indicated to the Board that he has to –

- (i) effect regular site visits on more than 30 sports infrastructure across the island managed by the Council to ensure their proper management, and
- (ii) attend various functions organized by the Council, my Ministry, the Mauritius National Olympic Committee, Sports Federations and Local Authorities.

He has also requested for payment of a petrol allowance of Rs10,000 monthly and a fixed allowance of Rs5,000 to the driver responsible for the car.

Taking into consideration these factors, the Board agreed, in principle, to the Chairman being provided exclusive use of an official car to attend sports activities and official functions which most of the time take place at staggered hours and during weekends.

As regards part (c) of the question, I am informed that for the first six months of the year, the Council has paid a total amount of Rs35,700 in terms of overtime to the driver, that is, an average of Rs5,950 monthly.

Mr Bhagwan: Can we know from the hon. Minister whether such practices like using the car of the Sports Council on a 24-hr basis was the case before?

Mr Tang Wah Hing: I can assure the hon. Member that it is not the case.

Mr Bhagwan: Can we know from the hon. Minister whether he or his Ministry has given authority to the Chairperson of the Mauritius Sports Council to use a blue colour Nissan car on a 24-hr basis? Does the hon. Minister find it normal that the car is kept at the residence of the Chairperson?

Mr Tang Wah Hing: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am not aware.

Mr Bhagwan: Will the hon. Minister enquire and report to the House as this is public money and ...

(Interruptions)

.... at a time when we are asking our sportsmen to *serre ceinture*? Can the hon. Minister, at least, have an enquiry at the level of the Mauritius Sports Council to see whether there is any irregularity concerning the use of vehicles and other facilities at the Council?

Mr Tang Wah Hing: Mr Speaker, Sir, I think this is nonsense. I can assure the hon. Member that this is not the practice

(Interruptions)

Dr. Hawoldar: May I ask the hon. Minister whether the former Chairman of the Mauritius Sports Council had benefited the exclusive use of a car and payment of petrol allowance between 2003 and 2005?

Mr Tang Wah Hing: Mr Speaker, Sir, in the wake of the Indian Ocean Islands Games in 2003, Government agreed to an official car being exceptionally put at the disposal of the Chairman until the end of the games. One of the conditions under which the Chairman was allowed to make exclusive use of the car was that a monthly petrol allowance of Rs2,820 would be paid to him. However, at a meeting held on 12 August 2003, the Council approved the exclusive use of the car by the Chairman after the IOIG 2003 with the cost of petrol and repairs to be met by the Mauritius Sports Council.

The IOIG 2003 ended on 07 September 2003. When the audit was done in May 2005, the Chairman was still using the official car. The decision taken by the MSC Board to allow exclusive use of the car by the Chairman.....

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! Order!

Mr Tang Wah Hing: after IOIG in 2003 is in contradiction with Government's decision to provide such facility until the end of the games only.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! Next Question!

NATIONAL ICT STRATEGIC PLAN - TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

(No. B/849) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Information Technology and Telecommunications whether, in regard to the implementation of the Information Technology Action Plan, he will state if any committee has been set up for its monitoring and, if so, will he state –

- (a) its composition;
- (b) the number of times it has met as at to date, and
- (c) if its report will be made public.

Mr Sinatambou: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am assuming that the hon. Member is making reference to the National ICT Strategic Plan (NICTSP), which is currently being formulated and I thank the hon. Member for giving me an opportunity to clear any misunderstanding regarding the matter.

The decision to elaborate a 5-year National ICT Strategic Plan was approved by Cabinet on 10 February 2006. This project is being funded jointly by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Government of Mauritius. In this context, a project document between the two parties was signed on 20 April 2006 and the contract for provision of consultancy services for the elaboration of the National ICT Strategic Plan was awarded to Price Waterhouse Coopers of India on 05 October 2006 following an open tender exercise.

I am advised, Mr Speaker, Sir, that the monitoring is being done by a Technical Advisory Committee chaired by Mr Newraj Burton, Chairman of the National Computer Board and comprising of 17 representatives from both public and private sectors as follows –

- Mr Ramsamy, Chairman of the ICT Advisory Council
- Mr Ramalingum, the then President of the ACT (Association regrouping BPO and Call Centre Operators)
- Mr Lollbeharry, Acting Director of the Central Informatics Bureau, who has been replaced in February 2007 by Mr Sukhoo, Ag. Deputy Director of that Bureau
- Dr. Mohadeb, Ag. Executive Director, Tertiary Education Commission
- Mr Mohee, Executive Director, National Computer Board
- Mr Boodhun, Manager, Central Information System Division
- Mr Pierre Yves Harel, Director, FRCI
- Mr Mauree, Manager, Planning, Research and Development, National Computer Board
- Mr Thomas Buffard, Director, Pro-Contact Ltd.
- Ms M. Wan, Representative of the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development

- Ms Su Lin Ong, Member, MITIA
- Mr Ramgoolam, Project Manager, Central Informatics Bureau
- Mrs Awotar, Project Manager, IT Security Unit, Ministry of IT and Telecommunications
- Dr. Oollun, Executive Director of the ICT Authority.
- Mr Dabeesing, IT Manager, ICT Authority.
- Mr Oozeer, Senior State Council, State Law Office.

As regards part (b) of the question, Mr Speaker, Sir, the House may be pleased to know that a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) has met on no less than 16 occasions.

In addition to the Technical Advisory Committee, Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that a Review Team has been set up since March 2007 to monitor the quality of the deliverables submitted by the consultants and ensure that additional information required by the consultants are made available in a timely manner. The Review Team has met 22 times to date.

With regard to part (c), the National ICT Strategic Cum-Action Plan will be made public after its presentation and approval by the Cabinet.

Mr Bhagwan: Mr Speaker, Sir, how does the hon. Minister reconcile what he has just said and the public statement made by no less than the Adviser of the hon. Prime Minister? I won't mention the name, but everybody knows who he is.

At least, we, Members of the House, would like to know which is which? The Adviser of the hon. Prime Minister has made public comments on this issue, that nothing is being done and things are done *à pas de tortue*. Can the hon. Minister, at least, inform the House and the public at large, how he reconciles that statement with what he just said?

Mr Sinatambou: Mr Speaker, Sir, I suppose the answer speaks for itself. The decision was taken by Cabinet in February, the project document was signed in April 2006 and the consultant was awarded the consultancy in October 2006. I think we are well in time and I presume it might be opportune here, Mr Speaker, Sir, to compare, because I do recall having read in the debates on the Second Reading of the Appropriation (2001-2002) Bill of 15 June 2001 where the then Minister was stating ...

(Interruptions)

Maybe, the hon. Member has not heard, that is why I am stating it.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: The hon. Minister should address the Chair. He must not answer to the comments which are being made. If they obstruct him, then I will take care of them.

Mr Sinatambou: Thank you, Sir. In the course of those debates, the then Minister was stating that the then Government was going to come with an IT Strategic Plan which we have never seen in the four and a half years of their mandate. They should not be worried now.

Mr Bhagwan: Mr Speaker, Sir, the population wants to know whether, following that statement of the Adviser of the Prime Minister, he has discussed the issue with the Prime Minister.

Mr Sinatambou: Mr Speaker, Sir, I suggest that the hon. Member writes a letter asking the advice and the assent.

Mr Bhagwan: Mr Speaker, Sir, the Adviser of the Prime Minister has made a public statement which is known by everybody. We are elected Members...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! The hon. Member should look at me.

(Interruptions)

Order! I have told the hon. Member not to answer to comments. Let me make a statement to the House. There are many hon. Members who are withdrawing their questions. I suspect that their questions will not be answered as Question Time will be over. Members are taking so much time to put questions. It is not fair to other hon. Members of this House.

Mr Bhagwan: I am not at fault, I am being harassed, Sir.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Mr Bhagwan: Mr Speaker, Sir, we are elected Members...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! Let me listen to the question and then I will rule on it.

Mr Bhagwan: Mr Speaker, Sir, we are elected Members, we are paid from public funds and public funds are at stake. What I am asking the hon. Minister....

(Interruptions)

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

(Interruptions)

Hon. Bhagwan, if you continue, I will ask you to sit down.

(Interruptions)

Put your question!

Mr Bhagwan: Can the Minister inform the House whether it is not his duty to discuss the matter with the Prime Minister? He is paid from public funds...

Mr Speaker: There is no need for these remarks.

Mr Sinatambou: Mr Speaker, Sir, I presume the hon. Member is not aware of the vibrant democracy which prevails on this side of the House.

(Interruptions)

BUS FARE – INCREASE - REQUEST

(No. B/850) Mr M. Dowarkasing (Third Member for Curepipe and Midlands) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping whether he will state if it is proposed to increase the bus fare and, if so, by how much.

The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping (Dr. R. Beebeejaun): Mr Speaker, Sir, on 05 May 2007, the Association of Bus Operators, which groups the five bus companies and the Mauritius Bus Owners' Cooperative, has made a request for a 25% increase in bus fares.

The request is being examined by the National Transport Authority.

Mr Dowarkasing: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I know from the hon. Deputy Prime Minister whether the National Transport Authority is also working on the impact this measure will have on the free transport scheme?

Dr. Beebeejaun: They are working on several parts, including that one.

BIP – ALLEGED FRAUD AND FORGERY

(No. B/851) Mr M. Dowarkasing (Third Member for Curepipe and Midlands) asked the Minister of Social Security, National Solidarity and Senior Citizens Welfare & Reform Institutions whether she is aware of any alleged case of fraud or forgery regarding the payment of Basic Invalidity Pension and, if so, will she give details thereof.

(Vide reply to PQ No. B/836)

INDIAN OCEAN TUNA COMMISSION – UNITED NATIONS - MEMBERSHIP

(No. B/852) Mr M. Dowarkasing (Third Member for Curepipe and Midlands) asked the Minister of Agro Industry and Fisheries whether he will state Government stand in regard to the membership of the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission within the United Nations.

Dr. Boolell: Mr Speaker Sir, the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC) is a regional fisheries management organisation with twenty-six members and its secretariat is based in the Seychelles. It is a statutory body set up under Article XIV of the Food Agricultural Organisation (FAO) which functions under the aegis of the United Nations.

At the 11th Session of the IOTC held in Grand' Baie in May 2007, IOTC members were called upon to consider a proposal for a change in the status of the IOTC with regard to the FAO with the view of making the IOTC a more effective and efficient organisation.

During the meeting, Mauritius informed the IOTC that it was advisable for the IOTC to remain within the FAO framework while a solution be found for making the Commission more effective and efficient through a side letter or a side agreement.

Although there was unanimous agreement on desirability of creating a more efficient and effective Commission, consensus could not be reached on the steps and procedures to be followed towards achieving this goal. The Commission agreed to issue a "Statement Concerning Actions Being Taken to Achieve a More Effective and Efficient Commission" inviting the FAO to take immediate action on the draft amendments to the IOTC Agreement in preparation for their further consideration at the 12th session. The Members thus called upon the Director-General to circulate the draft amendments in advance of its 12th session to be held in May 2008.

We have been advised that the FAO Council at its 132nd session held in Rome in June, 2007 endorsed the recommendation of the Committee on Constitutional and Legal matters (CCLM) of the FAO for the setting up of an informal group of legal experts of all IOTC members, the Committee on Constitutional and Legal Matters members and relevant organisations of the

UN to examine the proposal for the change in the status of the IOTC. The FAO Council has agreed that the FAO Secretariat holds consultations with members of the IOTC with the aim of including in the operations of the IOTC any fishing entity catching a substantial quantity of tuna in the region.

Mr Dowarkasing: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I know from the hon. Minister whether Taiwan has expressed its wish to join the IOTC?

Dr. Boolell: Let me say that Taiwan is a province of the People's Republic of China and this proposed change in the status of IOTC would allow Taiwan as a fishing entity to become a cooperating non-contracting party, and as such - Taiwan's fishing vessels which go fishing in the Indian Ocean for Tuna are deemed to engage in illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing under the IOTC regulations - would operate in a regulated manner.

Mr Dowarkasing: Therefore, I understand that there is this possibility of Taiwan being a member. So, has this agreement been conveyed to the private operators in the seafood sector?

Dr. Boolell: They are fully on board.

INDIAN OCEAN ISLANDS GAMES – RODRIGUAN ATHELETES

(No. B/853) Mr J. R. Spéville (Second Member for Rodrigues) asked the Minister of Youth and Sports whether in regard to the forthcoming Indian Ocean Islands Games, he will state –

- (a) the number of athletes from Rodrigues by disciplines who have been selected to join the national team, indicating –
 - (i) the number thereof who are already in Mauritius, and
 - (ii) the facilities placed at their disposal, and
- (b) the names of the officials who have received accreditation from his Ministry to form part of the national team, indicating their areas of responsibility.

Mr Tang Wah Hing: Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to inform the House that the selection of the national team for the forthcoming Indian Ocean Islands Games has been finalised.

32 athletes from Rodrigues have been included in the national team. They are in the following sports disciplines: athletics 10, boxing 4, judo 8 and wrestling 10. Moreover, two coaches and one referee from Rodrigues will also form part of the team.

With regard to part (b) of the question, 18 Rodriguan athletes selected for the Indian Ocean Islands Games are already in Mauritius as follows –

(i)	Athletics	-	6
(ii)	Judo	-	8
(iii)	Boxing	-	4

10 athletes in Wrestling will be in Mauritius as from 30 July and the remaining athletes in Athletics will be in Mauritius on 27 July.

My Ministry is providing food and lodging, transport facilities and medical follow-up to the Rodriguan athletes.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as regards part (c) of the question, I must point out that the Mauritius National Olympic Committee is responsible for providing accreditation to athletes and officials for the games.

Accordingly, I am informed that the Olympic Committee is making arrangements for accreditation in respect of six officials recommended by Rodrigues Regional Assembly.

It will be noted that these 6 persons are making their own arrangements to attend the games. They are as follows –

- (i) Hon. Nicolas Von Mally;
- (ii) Mr Jean Christian Agathe;
- (iii) Mr Jean Thomas Genave;
- (iv) Mrs Jacqueline Prosper;
- (v) Mr D. Laval Guillaume, and
- (vi) Mr Jean Mario Baptiste.

Mr Spéville: Apart from the six officials mentioned by the hon. Minister, may I ask him whether there has been a request from the Commission of Sports from Rodrigues for other officials to join the team?

Mr Tang Wah Hing: It is based only on the accreditation of the Mauritius Olympic Committee, that is, they can have more, but it is the CNOM which decides on the accreditation.

Mr Spéville: I have been made aware that, apart from the six officials mentioned by the hon. Minister, some federations have identified officials from Rodrigues in the disciplines which the hon. Minister mentioned. Can I know from the hon. Minister who is incurring the cost of their trip to Madagascar?

Mr Tang Wah Hing: As I have already said, 32 athletes are included in the national team, one referee and two coaches from Rodrigues. All the costs will be met by my Ministry.

HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATION - JULY 2005 - JUNE 2007

(No. B/854) Mr S. Soodhun (Fifth Member for La Caverne and Phoenix) asked the Attorney-General, Minister of Justice & Human Rights whether, in regard to cases of alleged human rights violation since July 2005 to date, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the National Human Rights Commission, information as to –

- (a) the number of cases
 - (i) Reported;
 - (ii) referred to his Ministry for action, and
 - (iii) referred to the Director of Public Prosecutions, and
- (b) the outcome in each case.

Mr Valayden: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the National Human Rights Commission that –

- (a) 505 cases have been reported to the Commission since July 2005, 133 of which have been reported to the Sex Discrimination Division of the Commission;

- (b) 51 of these cases have been referred to my Ministry and 27 cases (including 2 cases reported to the Sex Discrimination Division) have been referred to the Director of Public Prosecutions so far.

Most of those cases are still under consideration. The recommendations of the Commission in cases in which the Police inquiry is not yet over have been referred to the DPP and the Commissioner of Police for appropriate action.

The hon. Member will surely understand that informing the House as to the outcome in each case will entail looking into each file and this will require more time.

Accordingly, the detailed information as to the outcome in each case referred to my Ministry and to the DPP's Office will be tabled shortly.

CHILDREN - COMMERCIAL SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

(No. B/855) Mr S. Soodhun (Fifth Member for La Caverne and Phoenix) asked the Minister of Women's Rights, Child Development, Family Welfare & Consumer Protection whether she will state if cases of alleged commercial sexual exploitation of children have been reported to her Ministry over the past two years and, if so, will she state –

- (a) the number thereof;
- (b) the actions taken, if any, to address the issue, and
- (c) if it is proposed to carry out a survey on the extent and the causes of such exploitation.

Mrs Seebun: Mr Speaker, Sir, for the past two years, from July 2005 to date, 5 cases of commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC) have been reported at the level of my Ministry.

As regards part (b) of the question, my Ministry has taken a number of actions to address the issue, namely –

- (i) Information, Education and Communication Campaigns in public and private secondary schools, children's clubs and associations are carried on an ongoing basis to sensitise children, parents and teachers on the risks and implications of CSEC. For the period July 2005 to date, approximately 9500 children, 1200 parents and 300 teachers have been sensitised on this specific subject.
- (ii) I had several meetings with the Commissioner of Police and his Deputy to ensure that the "*Brigade pour la Protection des Mineurs*" intensifies its actions by introducing more vehicles and trained officers for constant patrol in public places where children are at risk such as *discothèques* and others. The last meeting dates 09 July, when I was informed that 6 new vehicles have been acquired for more effective operations by trained Police Officers.
- (iii) A National Parental Empowerment Programme, which was launched on 30 May this year, will ensure that parents are empowered to deal, *inter alia*, with the sexuality of their children and the societal ills children are exposed to. Several workshops with parents and other stakeholders are being carried out by my Ministry and a training manual is being finalised.
- (iv) My Ministry intends to launch in August, a Community Child Protection Programme under which the participation of people at the community level will be sought to ensure early detection of children at risk and quick referral actions. 22 Community Leaders and Social Workers have been trained from April 2005 to March 2006 so as to equip them with the necessary skills and knowledge to better identify children at risks and handle cases of CSEC properly.

Mr Speaker, Sir, these measures aim at enhancing the prevention of CSEC. Moreover, actions have to be taken to address the difficulties and trauma of victims.

At the level of the Family Support Bureaux of my Ministry, immediate psycho-social support is given to victims by officers and

psychologists of my Ministry prior to referring such cases to the Police Department and to Regional Hospitals for medical treatment.

Moreover, specialised services are provided to victims who call on their own at the Drop-in-Centre at Bell Village, for their rehabilitation and reinsertion in the mainstream of society. For period June 2005 to date 37 cases of CSEC have been dealt with at the Drop-in-Centre.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (c) of the question, as the House is already aware, two studies were carried out in 1997 and 2001 which led to a National Plan of Action for period 2003–2004 to combat and eliminate CSEC. The Ministry, in collaboration with all stakeholders, has so far implemented the existing Action Plan. An evaluation report is being prepared and in the light of this report, a new Plan of Action will be prepared for the period 2007-2009.

Mr Soodhun: Mr Speaker, Sir, especially concerning the school girls, can I ask the hon. Minister whether she is aware of the Report of US Department of State, Country Report on Human Rights Practices? With your permission, Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to quote one paragraph so that the hon. Minister can inform the House what action will be taken, especially for the school girls. I quote –

“Mauritius is a source country for female children, traffic within the country for the purpose of commercial sexual exploitation. This commercial sexual exploitation of children largely consists of school girls engaged in the practice, often with the encouragement and support of their family members. Taxi drivers are known to provide transportation and introduction to those girls and their parents.”

I would like to know from the hon. Minister what is being done, at least, to remedy the situation? I hope that the hon. Minister is not going to say *nou pa besoin apprenne avec l'Amérique*.

Mrs Seebun: We are aware of this problem, Mr Speaker, Sir. This is the reason why in December 2005, we came with stiffened law regarding child trafficking. We are also aware of all the ways and means that unscrupulous people use to drag young girls into undesirable activity. This is the reason why we reinforce the number of vehicles so that patrol can be done in a more aggressive manner. We cannot only depend on the Police

Department or institutions. We are handling this problem at home level. This is why we are coming up with our parental programme. The responsible behaviour of an adolescent is not only a matter for the different institutions to deal with, but also 'home'. We are trying to address this issue from different angles so that our adolescents behave in a more responsible manner.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: May I ask the hon. Minister whether any programme carried out at the level of schools includes information and awareness, i.e. of making students aware of dangers that might come across their way?

Mrs Seebun: Our National Children Council is especially responsible for carrying talks in school and we certainly make girls aware of how they can become very easy prey to such unscrupulous people.

Mrs Labelle: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister has mentioned stiffer laws, but we are all aware that laws are not enough. She has mentioned sensitisation campaigns. May I ask the hon. Minister whether it is an ongoing process and, if so, at what path are we having these campaigns both at primary and secondary schools?

Mrs Seebun: It's an ongoing programme and we are doing it at different schools. Maybe at a later stage, I can table the information regarding in which schools currently it is being done.

Mrs Perrier: Mr Speaker, Sir, maybe the hon. Minister is aware that most of the nightclubs and restaurants are allowing minors in their vicinity to consume alcohol. The law is there, but it is not enforced. Can we ask the hon. Minister to press on the authority concerned - maybe the Prime Minister and the Police - to really use all ways and means to enforce the law and penalise these tenants, because it's unacceptable that minors can attend these places?

Mrs Seebun: I wish to ensure the hon. Member that the needful will be done. We need to do some reinforcement.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Can I ask the hon. Minister whether the awareness and sensitisation campaign being carried out in schools are being done by professionals and, if so, which types of people are dealing with the

children at school? Who are those people who are informing these students of the dangers?

Mrs Seebun: They are officers from the National Children Council and we have got Child Welfare Officers, psychologists and all trained officers.

Mrs Navarre-Marie: Mr Speaker, Sir, the Minister has spoken about campaigns being carried out around the island. May I ask the Minister whether a study will be carried out to assess the efficiency of these campaigns?

Mrs Seebun: Mr Speaker, Sir, this can be envisaged.

10th EDF - FUNDS

(No. B/856) Ms R.K. Deerpalsing (Third Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to funds which will be made available to Mauritius under the 10th EDF, he will state –

- (a) the amount earmarked for Mauritius under the current programming, and
- (b) in view of the fact that a significant portion of these funds will go through General Budget Support, whether it is proposed to present the 10th EDF programming to the House for a debate.

The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development (Mr R. Sithanen): Mr Speaker, Sir, as hon. Members are aware, our economic reform programme focuses on four main pillars, namely -

- (i) fiscal consolidation and improving public sector efficiency;
- (ii) improving trade competitiveness;
- (iii) improving investment climate, and
- (iv) democratising the economy through participation, social inclusion and sustainability.

In line with the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness, we have requested the World Bank, the European Union, the African Development Bank and the Agence Francaise de Développement to work together to harmonise their response strategy to help us implement our economic reform programme.

The European Union is, by far, our biggest Donor in terms of grant resources. In June 2006, we were informed by the Delegation of the European Commission that the indicative programmable resources under the 10th EDF, i.e. the A Envelope, for Mauritius amounted to euro 39.6 m. This sum excluded a possible topping up of EDF resources, the incentive tranche, which is calculated on the basis of current performance in terms of governance and the credibility of future commitments to governance reforms.

Last week, we were informed that the quantum of this incentive tranche could be an amount of euro 11.4 m. This represents an increase of 29% of our initial programmable resources. Mauritius is among the few ACP countries expected to benefit from this sizable increase.

Mr Speaker, Sir, this topping-up, indeed sends a strong signal of the confidence of the EU in the quality of our reform agenda and their assessment that we have the political will to drive forward the challenging reforms required to bring the economy to a higher growth path.

With this incentive tranche, the total programmable resources of Envelope A under 10th EDF for Mauritius will amount to euro 51 m. as compared to the initial allocation of euro 33 m. under the 9th EDF.

Based on EC guidelines, we have requested that 85% of the programmable resources indicated in our Country Strategy Paper (CSP)/National Indicative Programme (NIP), to be frontloaded and channeled in the form of General Budget Support, as the cost of the reform programme, are to be borne in the initial years while the benefits would accrue in the medium to long-term period.

Mr Speaker Sir, the House may wish to note that the Country Strategy Paper (CSP)/National Indicative Programme (NIP) outlines the country's medium term objectives and strategies over the 6-year duration of the 10th EDF, starting as from 2008. These were developed around the economic reform programme announced in the 2006/07 Budget.

The CSP/NIP is already posted on my Ministry's website. With the additional programmable resources under the incentive tranche, we have updated the CSP/NIP document which will be posted on the Ministry's website once the concurrence of EU is obtained.

So far as the remaining 15% of the programmable resources is concerned, euro 5.5 m. will be allocated for Non State Actors in the fight against poverty and euro 2 m. for a Technical Cooperation Facility to finance studies, workshops and seminars.

Furthermore, insofar as Envelope B of the 10th EDF is concerned, this relates to availability of resources to cater for emergency and unforeseen needs. In this respect, we have been informed that Mauritius may be entitled to an amount of up to euro 12.4 m. Under Envelope B of the 9th EDF, the amount was only euro 1.6 m.

Mr Speaker Sir, as the House may be aware, the EDF resources are not extra-budgetary resources and as such they are meant to finance Government's programme over the 10th EDF programme period. In respect of expenditure, these resources have already been appropriated insofar as the activities which are to be financed. As I have stated earlier, these expenditures are meant to support our reform programme and hon. Members have had the opportunity of expressing their opinion during the budget discussions.

Furthermore, I wish to inform the House that disbursement of resources under the 10th EDF will be linked to a number of performance indicators to be agreed upon and reflected in the respective financing agreement.

It is therefore crucial for us to stay the course of reform. Success will secure us additional resources under performance bonus while failure will jeopardise disbursement of the grant resources earmarked under the 10th EDF.

Miss Deerpalsing: Mr Speaker, Sir, will the hon. Minister agree that it would add to the vibrancy of our democracy if Parliamentarians would be given a chance to debate about the programming. I know that we have a chance to talk on the Appropriation Bill when the time comes. I would like to ask the hon. Minister whether he is aware that Commissioner Michel at the last JPA meeting insisted, as well as all the MEPs of the Member States,

that Parliamentarians should be involved in the shaping up of the programming part of the 10th EDF.

Mr Sithanen: Mr Speaker, Sir, the programme has already been communicated to the EU and, in fact, I am sure my hon. friend would be aware that with respect to governance issues, we worked together with my good friend, the Attorney-General and the Prime Minister's Office. And, in fact, Mauritius is one of the few countries that scored maximum marks as far as governance is concerned. We have been rewarded for good governance, the maximum amount that can be obtained under the incentive tranche is 30% and we got 29%. It has already been approved, Mr Speaker, Sir, and I take the suggestion of the hon. Member. If we are still in Parliament, next time in 2013, we'll do it.

Miss Deerpalsing: Mr Speaker, Sir, I agree that the hon. Minister spoke about governance and that we are being watched about the governance indicators. Is he aware that, in fact, in the future, both the Commission and the JPA, especially the MEPs are going to have a checklist of all the countries in which the programming has been put *à l'ordre du jour du parlement*.

Mr Sithanen: Mr Speaker, Sir, there has been wide consultation on what needs to be included in the programme. In fact, this has been discussed with various stakeholders. Obviously, it has not been formally presented to Parliament, but as I stated in my initial response, it is a general Budget support; we have included all the expenditures in the Appropriation Bill and Members have had the opportunity to discuss them, but it is done now and, hopefully, for the 11th EDF programme which will start in 2014, we'll have probably a chance to present it to the Assembly.

Dr. Mungur: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I draw the attention of the hon. Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance to the fact that the majority of women are poor and the majority of the poor are women. Can I ask the hon. Minister how this particular programme will be gender related so that much support can come to the women section?

Mr Sithanen: Mr Speaker, Sir, that's why we've decided to break down the allocation in two parts. 85% will go through Budget support and part of it will go in the Empowerment Programme. I am sure the hon. Member will realise that it is the first time, probably, in the history of the

country that a specific amount has been earmarked for alleviation of poverty that basically touches women. On top of that, there is also a huge substantial amount for training and re-skilling of women who have, unfortunately, lost a job both in the sugar sector and in the EPZ. In addition to the 85% that will go through the general Budget support, 15% will go through the DCP and one of its components in the alleviation of poverty is basically to focus on women, either in terms of re-skilling or in terms of providing them with the opportunities to become small and medium entrepreneurs.

WOMEN – MARITAL SEPARATION – LOANS

(No. B/857) Miss K. R. Deerpalsing (Third Member for Belle Rose and Quatre Bornes) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether he is aware that women who are in situation of marital separation or whose divorce proceedings are underway are unable to obtain loans from the Development Bank of Mauritius Ltd and, if so, will he, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Bank, information as to whether remedial measures will be taken in connection therewith.

The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development (Mr R. Sithanen): Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed as follows by the Development Bank of Mauritius Ltd.

The DBM normally takes a general floating charge against a borrower by way of the simplest security for loans where no other security is requested.

Where the borrower is married under the system of legal community of goods, the loan will have to be subscribed by both spouses. Under the Civil Code, deeds in respect of loans made to people married under the system of legal community of goods have to be signed by both spouses to enable the creation of a valid fixed or floating charge. Unless both spouses intervene in the deed to give their consent, the deed is null and void as regards security.

These legal provisions may effectively create a problem for both men and women who are in a situation of marital separation or whose divorce proceedings are under way and who want to take a loan. This applies not only for DBM loans, but to all loans taken from any bank and any lending

institution in Mauritius. This is a matter that raises fundamental property rights issues and has unfortunately, Mr Speaker, Sir, no easy general answer.

However, in the case of the DBM, an alternative financing instrument has been introduced last year, namely the Quasi-Financing Scheme, that may help such persons obtain financing for their projects. Under the Scheme, the DBM Venture Capital Fund may invest into a company in the form of Redeemable Preference Shares which do not require a security. Of course, the quality of the project and the financial structure of the company has to be assessed.

In addition, Mr Speaker, Sir, Government, in consultation with DBM, is looking into other possible instruments to address the specific case of small entrepreneurs that cannot provide a fixed or floating charge due to their marital problems. These are currently being examined by the DBM.

CESS FUNDED INSTITUTIONS – KPMG REPORT

(No. B/858) Mr G. Guinness (Third Member for Montagne Blanche and GRSE) asked the Minister of Agro Industry and Fisheries whether he will state if the KPMG has now submitted its report on the cess funded institutions and, if so, will he state its main recommendations.

(Vide reply to PQ No.B/839)

MANGALORE REFINERY – PETROLEUM PRODUCTS – REFERENCE PRICE

(No. B/859) Mr G. Guinness (Third Member for Montagne Blanche and GRSE) asked the Minister of Industry, Small & Medium Enterprises, Commerce and Co-operatives whether, in regard to the contract for the supply of petroleum products for the period August 2006 to July 2007, signed between the State Trading Corporation and the Mangalore Refinery of India, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Corporation, information as to if the reference price for the various petroleum products to be supplied was Singapore based or Arabian based.

Dr. Jeetah: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that the reference prices for petroleum products imported for the account of STC have remained the same since May 1986 and, therefore, no change has occurred after STC decided to purchase petroleum products from MRPL for year 2006/2007.

The House may wish to note that, since 1986, the reference prices for the various products imported on account of STC are quoted under the FOB Mediteranean Italy for mogas and FOB Arabian Gulf for gas oil, jet fuel and fuel oil catalytic cracked.

The House may also wish to note that since August 2004, and, at the request of CEB, the then Government agreed to move the reference price for fuel oil imported by STC for the account of CEB from FOB Arabian Gulf to Singapore.

The two products imported on account of CEB are fuel oil 180 straight run and fuel oil 380 straight run.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that comments made in the press in relation to the issue....

Mr Speaker: The hon. Minister cannot bring in what the press has said in his answer.

Dr. Jeetah: Yes, Sir. Well, I'll end my answer here if you wish, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Guinness: Can I know from the hon. Minister whether he is now prepared to lay all documents concerning the purchase of petroleum products from Mangalore Refinery and Petrochemicals Limited of India in a spirit of transparency because people are in the dark?

Dr. Jeetah: Mr Speaker, Sir, there have been allegations and, as I have mentioned, STC has initiated legal proceedings against the newspapers concerned. I can say that there is a case coming Pro Forma before the Intermediate Court on the 27 August 2007. I would like to reassure the hon. Member that, because of this deal, in the first year, we made a saving of Rs350 m. and over the next three-year period the country would save an extra Rs1 billion.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Dr. Jeetah: Consumers would make a saving of Rs1 billion.

Mr Guinness: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I know from the hon. Minister whether he is prepared to lay all the documents on the Table of the Assembly so that we can see how the profits arise?

Mr Speaker: If I understand the hon. Minister correctly, the matter is *sub judice*.

Mr Guinness: I don't think it is *sub judice*, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker: The way the hon. Minister answered the question, the only inference that can be drawn is that the matter is *sub judice*.

Mr Guinness: Mr Speaker, Sir, from what I understand, even in India, we have three companies which can supply petrol. Can we know from the hon. Minister what mechanism was chosen to select Mangalore Refinery and Petrochemicals Limited of India?

Dr. Jeetah: Mr Speaker, Sir, MRPL is a subsidiary of ONGC and ONGC happens to have a turnover of Rs1 trillion, not Rs1 billion. We looked at its capability to supply in terms of security of supply.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order, please!

Dr. Jeetah: We looked at the price, at the quality and, besides, this deal was done through the good offices of the Government of India. There were Minister Kamal Nath and Minister Mourli Deora whose supports were sought.

Mr Ganoo: The hon. Minister has, in the past, very often talked about the profits of Rs350 m. and he is now saying that....

Dr. Jeetah: I mentioned savings, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Ganoo: Can the hon. Minister lay on the Table of the House a copy of the breakdown of how this saving of Rs350 m is reached?

Dr. Jeetah: Mr Speaker, Sir, I did lay on the Table of the Assembly a chart which showed the premium element. The hon. Member needs to have a look at my previous answers where I have provided this information.

Mr Guinness: The Minister keeps on saying a saving of Rs350 m, but the consumers are not benefiting from that? What use is being made with that saving?

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

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Let the Minister answer! Hon. Members should stop interrupting him!

Dr. Jeetah: I have replied to this question in the past, but I'll say it again. If we had to pay Rs350 m. extra, the whole of Mauritius would have had to find this amount. It is just a question of not having to pay that extra amount of Rs350 m. for the first year and an extra of Rs1 billion over the next three years.

Mr Ganoo: Does the hon. Minister agree that the saving of Rs350 m. has been reached on the basis of an hypothetical price, of a phantom price of a phantom supplier?

Dr. Jeetah: Mr Speaker, Sir, as I have mentioned so many times, I did lay on the Table of the Assembly charts showing the magnitude and the exact figures. The hon. Member needs to have a look at the chart laid in the Library of the National Assembly.

MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT & NDU – LEGAL ADVISER

(No. B/860) **Mrs B. Juggoo (First Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue)** asked the Minister of Environment and National Development Unit whether, in regard to the legal adviser attached to his Ministry from 2002 to 2005, he will state –

- (a) the name of the incumbent;
- (b) his terms and conditions of appointment, and
- (c) the amount of retainer or any other fee to which he was entitled.

The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport & Shipping (Dr. R. Beebeejaun): Mr Speaker, Sir, Mr Lockraj C. Nuckchady was appointed to the Ministry of Environment & NDU on a part-time basis as adviser on legal matters from October 2002 to July 2005. His terms and conditions of appointment and his salary are as follows –

Conditions of Service	Salary
1 year contract renewable	October 2002 – June 2003 Rs30,000
	July 2003 – June 2004 Rs37,825
	July 2004 – June 2005 Rs40,960
	July 2005 Rs42,201

Mr Bhagwan: May I take this opportunity, at least, to thank Mr Nuckchady for what he has done when I was Minister. Can I ask the Deputy Prime Minister whether in his file, there is any written solicitation...

(Interruptions)

I am asking my question.

Mr Speaker: Order! The hon. Member should put his question. He should address me and he should listen to what Members are saying.

Mr Bhagwan: I don't like people shouting at me! I am not referring to you, Mr Speaker. Can the Deputy Prime Minister inform the House whether Mr Nuckchady wrote a letter to the Permanent Secretary or to me, as Minister then, to be employed as legal adviser? Is there any such document? Has this been the case? Whether...

Mr Speaker: The Deputy Prime Minister has understood the question, I suppose.

Dr. Beebeejaun: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have no such record in the file, but it could be a *note verbale*.

(Interruptions)

Mr Bhagwan: There was no verbal note.

Mr Speaker: The hon. Member should not make a statement.

Mr Bhagwan: I am not making a statement. I am asking another question, Mr Speaker, Sir. Can the Deputy Prime Minister inform the House that if Mr Nuckchady has not acted against the ethic ...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: That is a question of opinion.

STATE PROPERTY DEVELOPMENT COMPANY – LEGAL ADVISER

(No. B/861) Mrs B. Juggoo (First Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to the legal adviser attached to the State Property Development Company Ltd from 2000 to 2006, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the company, information as to –

- (a) the name of the incumbent;
- (b) his terms and conditions of appointment,
- (c) the amount of retainer or any other fee to which he was entitled.

The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance & Economic Development (Mr R. Sithanen): Mr Speaker, Sir, concerning that question, I know my good friend, hon. Bhagwan, will still ask supplementary questions. There is nothing I can do, because this is the answer that was given to me. It is the same gentleman, Mr Speaker, Sir, who goes by the name of Mr Nuckchady. From March 2003 to December 2006, a retainer fee of Rs10,000 per month plus VAT and a sum of Rs456,550 for others. The terms and conditions of contract were routine legal services against a monthly retainer fee and specific fees for disciplinary proceedings, litigations, negotiations on issues regarding minor relations.

Mrs Juggoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, can the Minister confirm whether the same Mr Nuckchady was the legal adviser of the Mauritius Shopping Paradise and was on the list of barristers to be appointed for the CEB and CWA at the same time?

Mr Sithanen: Mr Speaker, Sir, I don't have the specific answer to the questions put by the hon. lady. But with the certainty that she is making the assertion, it would appear that she is right.

Mr Gunness: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I know from the hon. Minister whether Mr Nuckchady wrote a letter in the following terms to get the job?
I quote -

“Hon. Minister, I would be grateful if you could kindly consider appointing me as legal adviser on a monthly retainer basis to one of the institutions falling under your Ministry”

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Mr Sithanen: Mr Speaker, Sir, based on the number of such appointments made and the huge amount of money, I think he could be dispensed with writing such letter.

Mrs Juggoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, was Mr Nuckchady an active member and is still an active member of any political party?

(Interruptions)

Mr Sithanen: Mr Speaker, Sir, hon. Bhagwan has replied to the question.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! Don't interrupt!

Mr Guinness: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have two questions. Firstly, can I know from the hon. Minister when was the contract of Mr Nuckchady terminated?

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Mr Sithanen: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am very flabbergasted by the fact that people who live in glasshouses throw stones, and then they are hurt when we answer. Mr Speaker, Sir, if the hon. Member had cared to listen very carefully, I did state that it lasted from March 2003 to December 2006.

Mr Guinness: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I know from the hon. Minister who is actually the legal adviser of the ...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: That does not arise from this question! The hon. Member may come with a substantive question.

DOMAINE LES PAILLES – LEGAL ADVISER

(No. B/862) Mrs B. Juggoo (First Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to the legal adviser attached to the Domaine Les Pailles, from 2000 to 2005, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Company, information as to –

- (a) the name of the incumbent;
- (b) his terms and conditions of appointment, and
- (c) the amount of retainer or any other fee to which he was entitled.

The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance & Economic Development (Mr R. Sithanen): Mr Speaker, Sir, in a gesture of understanding and not to rub the salt in the wound, I am circulating the answer. (Appendix II)

CEB – PROFIT/LOSS – YEARS 2004 – JUNE 2007

(No. B/863) 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 Electricity Board, information as to its net profit/loss for each of the years from 2004 to 2006 and for the period January to June 2007.

Dr. Kasenally: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! There is no need to make any comment! I am asking hon. Members to keep quiet! Hon. Gunness, no crosstalking, let the hon. Minister answer!

Dr. Kasenally: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the CEB that, for the financial year ended December 2004, the CEB made a profit of Rs82.7 m. Thereafter, the situation deteriorated with losses of Rs322.1 m. in 2005 and Rs1,147 m. in 2006. For the half year to June 2007, the CEB has made a loss of approximately Rs207 m.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the operating losses of the CEB for the period under review has arisen mainly on account of the sharp increase in the price of heavy fuel oil coupled with the continued appreciation of foreign currencies vis-à-vis the Mauritian rupee as well as the rise in both domestic and international interest rates. Fuel oil accounts for about 73% of production costs. Over the period 2004 to 2006, prices of fuel oil have risen by as much as 75%.

Mr Ganoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, how does the hon. Minister contemplate to remedy this situation?

Dr. Kasenally: Mr Speaker, Sir, I must point out that since we came to power, we have increased the price only once in January 2006 to the tune of 10% compared to an average of 41% to 24% in the year 2000 to 2004.

There was an increase which was due in April 2005, but which was not carried out because of the reason we know. This Government is very conscious about the price of electricity and the prices have been going up. Taking all these into consideration, this is what has led to those tremendous losses. We intend to gradually increase and we have to increase in a very humane, painlessly or very little pain, with *douceur*, without any colic or spasm to the people of this country, and the hon. Prime Minister who always care for the poor people has been very, very careful and he is very conscious of that. We are going to see the best ways and means of calculating the rise. We have to recoup it, but seeing the situation that is prevailing and with the economic upturn, we will gradually ensure that the CEB recuperates this deficit and comes to a better and healthy financial situation.

CWA – IT POLICIES

(No. B/864) Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun (Third Member for La Caverne and Phoenix) asked the Minister of Public Utilities whether he will, for the benefit of the House obtain from the Central Water Authority, information as to if the employees of the Authority are being asked to sign an agreement imposing the Information Technology policies as a material condition for their continued employment by the Authority.

Dr. Kasenally: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that, in line with the policy of Government to promote an Information Technology (IT) culture, the Central Water Authority has, on 15 February 2006, adopted a formal IT policy. This policy had been cleared by the legal adviser of the CWA on 10 January 2006 prior to approval by the Board.

This policy is an essential component of the IT set-up as it safeguards the integrity of the systems. All officers of the Central Water Authority are provided with IT facilities and have access to the computerised information system of the Authority. In accordance with the provisions of the approved policy, the officers are required to sign an Information Technology Resources Agreement which guarantees their compliance with the IT Resources Usage policy. This has been made as a material condition for their continued employment. I am informed that all officers concerned have signed the agreement except for one. However, we have had so many problems with that officer that even to bend over backwards and try to please him, the specific clause has been removed, but that officer is still refusing to sign the agreement.

It is also to be pointed out that in the absence of such a policy, officers have, in the past, tampered with the computerised information system thereby causing substantial prejudice to the Authority. Such a policy not only provides a safeguard to the IT systems of the Central Water Authority, but also safeguards the interest of staff members who access the system on a daily basis.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Can I ask the hon. Minister whether he is aware that the officer in question had asked for the Labour Inspectors to look into the matter and that the Ministry of Labour and Industrial Relations had asked the Central Water Authority to review the form that was presented, because it would go against the initial contract of employment of that officer? After that, they even submitted to the officer an amended agreement form on the 16 July, after which the Authority came back and reviewed its policy and asked the officer to sign the first form, failing which, he would be dismissed.

Dr. Kasenally: I am given to understand that it was a new form made specially for that gentleman and he was asked to sign it, yet he refused. Mr Speaker, Sir, we are living in a modern world unless we want to use pebbles to count, in which case, I think, probably, we will have to put him in a garage. But this officer has been the root of a lot of problems and I have already answered a question in Parliament about him. He has even sued the CWA and has been sanctioned by the Supreme Court on one count, and on another count, they said that the CWA was making '*dominère*', but the Supreme Court, on the other side, said that there was no *maldonne*. It was half half. People must move. Mauritius is on the move; the world is on the move; unless we sit down and let the caravan pass and we will be leaving behind. But, again, we are bending over backwards and I am going to make sure that this gentleman is not left out. We will have to be very humane, but there is a limit to everything in this world. The whole organization cannot be taken to ransom by one individual.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: May I inform the hon. Minister that the officer is already computer literate and does work on the IT programme. He has no problem with the new policy except for the fact that his contract of employment is being put into question. Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister whether he is aware of the letter dated 18 July 2007 whereby the officer is informed, if I may, with your permission, quote –

“Should you fail to comply, it would be construed that you are flouting the Authority’s instruction and are, therefore, putting an end to your contract of employment at your own initiative.”

I think, Mr Speaker, Sir, this is quite unfair.

Dr. Kasenally: Mr Speaker, Sir, in fact, I have got two copies; one in the file and one has been handed to me. I find it a bit hard. This officer is in the late 50’s. I am proposing to meet him personally and bend over backwards to see in what way I can help him. But there is a limit to my bending over backwards; I cannot break my back. But we are going to ensure that we would deal with him in a very humane way.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister....

Mr Speaker: No. I have given enough latitude to the hon. Member. One person cannot take the time of the House with so many questions, especially when the matter has been fully ventilated.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: One last question, Mr Speaker, Sir, it is an important issue. Can the hon. Minister confirm that whatever had happened earlier would not be used as an issue in that particular case where there are no links at all?

Dr. Kasenally: I can assure the hon. Member that as long as I am Minister of Public Utilities, I will not allow anybody to do any ‘*dominère*’ with any officer.

**CASINOS OF MAURITIUS LTD – HEAD OF SURVEILLANCE
DEPARTMENT**

(No. B/865) Mr P. Jhugroo (Third Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to the post of Head of the Surveillance Department at the Casinos of Mauritius Ltd, he will –

- (a) for the benefit of the House, obtain from the company, information as to if one Mr B. D. has been appointed thereto and, if so –
 - (i) his qualifications;
 - (ii) the salary, allowances and other fringe benefits to which he is entitled, and
- (b) state if he is aware of the existence of adverse reports against him.

The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development (Mr R. Sithanen): Mr Speaker, Sir, it would not be proper to disclose information relating to an individual staff of a particular company. However, I would like to inform the hon. Member that the Management Company of the Casinos of Mauritius has told me that the post of “Head of Surveillance Department” does not exist.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

(Interruptions)

I said order! The Minister has given his answer. If the hon. Member has any other question, he can come with a substantive question next time.

NATIONAL ENVIRONMENT FUND - PROJECTS

(No. B/866) Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun (Third Member for La Caverne and Phoenix) asked the Minister of Environment and National Development Unit whether, in regard to the projects funded by the National Environment Fund since July 2005 to date, he will give a list thereof.

(Withdrawn)

CENTRAL FLACQ – MARKET FAIR

(No. B/867) Dr R. Mungur (Second Member for Flacq and Bon Accueil) asked the Minister of Local Government whether, in regard to the project for the construction of a new market fair at Central Flacq, he will state where matters now stand.

The Minister of Health and Quality of Life (Mr S. Faugoo): Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that the Moka/Flacq District Council envisages to construct a new market on the site where the open market fair is presently being held. Given that the site is vested in the Ministry of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping, action has been initiated for same to be vested in the District Council, for the implementation of this project.

With regard to the funding aspect, I am given to understand that the project may be part financed by Government.

SUGAR REFORMS - COMPLEMENTARY FINANCING AGREEMENT

(No. B/868) Dr R. Mungur (Second Member for Flacq and Bon Accueil) asked the Minister of Agro Industry and Fisheries whether, in regard to the Complementary Financing Agreement for sugar accompanying measures, he will state –

- (a) the performance indicators that need to be satisfied by Mauritius, and
- (b) when the grant is expected to be disbursed to the different stakeholders.

Dr. Boolell: Mr Speaker Sir, in regard to part (a), in reply to the Private Notice Question on 22 June 2007, I tabled a copy of the Complementary Financing Agreement on Accompanying Measures from the 9th EDF Reliquat. This Agreement relates to a sum of €4.557 m. made available as a variable *tranche* to be paid against performance on a set of four indicators. The details including the disbursement calendar are elaborated in that document and were also provided in the reply to the above PNQ.

As regards part (b) of the question, the disbursement is envisaged for the second semester of year 2007. Since the money will be provided through general Budget support, it is expected that on fulfillment of performance indicators, the relevant amounts will be paid to the Ministry of Finance through the agreed channels.

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CITIZENS ADVICE BUREAUS – OPERATION

(No. B/869) Dr R. Mungur (Second Member for Flacq and Bon Accueil) asked the Minister of Environment and National Development Unit whether he will state if it is proposed to review the functioning of the Citizens Advice Bureaus with a view to enabling the citizens to have better access to Government information and administrative services and, if so, when.

(Withdrawn)

HOTEL PROJECTS – NUMBER & SITES

(No. B/871) Mr S. Soodhun (Fifth Member for La Caverne and Phoenix) asked Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism, Leisure and External Communications whether, in regard to new hotel projects, he will state the number thereof which will be implemented in the coming years, indicating the sites which have been identified.

(Withdrawn)

CASE NOYALE /PETITE RIVIERE NOIRE – BRIDGE - UPGRADING

(B/872) Mrs D. Perrier (Fourth Member for Savanne and Black River) asked the Minister of Environment and National Development Unit whether he is aware that the bridge between Case Noyale village and Petite Rivière Noire represents a danger for users and especially children attending the Case Noyale RCA primary school and, if so, will he state the measures that will be taken for its upgrading and the installation of footpath and handrails with a view to avoiding fatal accidents.

The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport & Shipping (Dr. R. Beebeejaun): Mr Speaker, Sir, I am advised that the bridge referred to by the hon. Member is, in fact, a causeway found on a classified road between Case Noyale and Petite Rivière Noire. It is a fact that the causeway localized at approximately 200 mts from the Case Noyale Primary RCA School is subject to flooding following heavy rainfall, giving rise to obstruction and constituting a traffic risk.

The RDA is making provision in this financial year for a culvert and appropriate upgrading of the road.

I have also requested the RDA and the TMRSU to revisit the site and bring about necessary improvement and enhance the road safety along that part of the road. This survey will include the provision of footpaths and handrailings.

MONKEYS – REARING AND EXPORT

(No. B/873) Mr S. Soodhun (Fifth Member for La Caverne and Phoenix) Minister of Agro Industry and Fisheries whether, in regard to the rearing and export of monkeys for the years 2005-2006 and 2006-2007, he will state –

- (a) the number of permits granted, and
- (b) the total earnings therefrom.

Dr. Boolell: The information, Sir, will be tabled.

Mr Speaker: I am now being informed that PQs Nos. B/875, B/876, B/877, B/878, B/879 and B/880 have been withdrawn.

ROCHE BOIS TRANSFER STATION – ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEMS

(No. B/874) Mr G. Lesjongard (Second Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Environment and National Development Unit whether, in regard to the Roche Bois Transfer Station, he will state if he has received complaints from the inhabitants of Roche Bois in relation to environmental problems prevailing in the region and, if so, the remedial measures that will be taken.

(Withdrawn)

HOSPITALS– LAUNDERING SERVICES

(No. B/875) Mr G. Lesjongard (Second Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether, in regard to the laundering services for hospitals clothings, he will state if there is any provision for subcontracting in the new contract.

(Withdrawn)

CUREPIPE – MARKET - CONSTRUCTION

(No. B/876) Mrs M. Martin (Second Member for Curepipe and Midlands) Minister of Local Government whether, in regard to the project for the construction of a new market in Curepipe, he will state where matters stand.

(Withdrawn)

WOMEN - TRAINING – CONSTRUCTION SECTOR

(No. B/877) Mrs M. Martin (Second Member for Curepipe and Midlands) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, following the announcement in the Budget Speech 2007-2008 that 1000 women would be given training in the construction sector, he will state where matters stand.

(Withdrawn)

TEACHERS –VIOLENCE AGAINST – COMMITTEE

(No. B/878) Mrs M. Martin (Second Member for Curepipe and Midlands) Minister of Education and Human Resources whether, in regard to cases of violence against teachers, he will state if a committee has been set up to examine the issue and, if so –

- (a) when, and
- (b) its composition.

(Withdrawn)

MALINGA-CREVE COEUR LINK ROAD - CONSTRUCTION

(No.B/879) Mrs S. Grenade (Second Member for GRNW and Port Louis West) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping whether, in regard to the project for the construction of the Malinga-Crève Coeur link road, he will state where matters stand.

(Withdrawn)

STUDENTS – HIV AND AIDS CASES

(No. B/880) Mrs S. Grenade (Second Member for GRNW and Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether he is aware of cases of HIV and AIDS amongst students and, if so, will he state the measures that will be taken to monitor and prevent their propagation in the educational institutions.

(Withdrawn)

KYOTO CONVENTION – BALI

(No. B/881) Mr S. Dayal (Second Member for Quartier Militaire and Moka) asked the Minister of Environment and National Development Unit whether he will state if a meeting of the parties to the Kyoto Convention, has been convened in Bali for December 2007 and, if so, will he state –

- (a) the purpose of the meeting
- (b) if the committee will
 - (i) formulate a roadmap for the long term co-operation on the implementation of the convention, and
 - (ii) engage in further negotiations on the comprehensive measures required to ensure continuity beyond the protocol's first commitment period, and
- (c) the strategy, if any, to be adopted by Mauritius in that meeting.

(Withdrawn)

Mr Speaker: Question No. B/826 addressed to the hon. Prime Minister will now be answered by the Minister of Social Security, National Solidarity and Senior Citizens Welfare & Reform Institutions.

PRB - PUBLIC & POLICE OFFICERS - RETIREMENT AGE

(No. B/826) Mrs D. Dookun-Luchoomun (Third Member for La Caverne and Phoenix) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether, following the increase of the retirement age beyond 60 years as from 2008, he will state the number of years of service required by public officers and Police officers to retire from the service with a full pension.

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

I am informed that the Pay Research Bureau (PRB) is currently working out the details of the new pension scheme for the Public Sector for inclusion in the next report which would, in principle, be effective as from 01 July 2008.

The new scheme would take into account the number of years of service that would be required for public officers, including Police officers, to retire with full pension.