

POLICE WELFARE ASSOCIATION – FINANCIAL SITUATION

(No. B/485) **Dr. P. Ramloll (Third Member for Quartier Militaire and Moka)** 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 Police Welfare Association, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to –

- (a) its financial situation as at to date;
- (b) the amount spent during the year 2005-2006, and
- (c) the sum
 - (i) allocated for minor, intermediate and major categories of surgical treatment respectively, and
 - (ii) earmarked for high-tech medical investigations, including Ecography, CT Scan and MRI Scan.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, the Police Welfare Association (PWA) which was set up in 1986 is a benevolent association, registered with the Registrar of Associations. Membership thereto is voluntary and open to all serving members of the Force as well as retired officers.

There is an elected committee which manages the Fund of the Police Welfare Association and in accordance with Section 23 of the Registration of the Association Act, the audited account is filed at the Registrar of Association Office.

According to the audited and published accounts of the association dated 15 March of this year, the accumulated funds for the year 2005 were Rs391,876,982 and this has increased to Rs457,596,885 in the year 2006.

As regards part (b) of the question, I am informed that the amount spent during the year 2005 and 2006 are Rs19,360,138 and Rs21,934,806, respectively.

In reply to part (c) of the question, I am also informed by the Commissioner of Police that a sum of Rs2,327,742 was allocated for surgical expenses in 2005 and Rs2,420,283 for 2006.

Furthermore, I am informed that the Police Welfare Association does not provide for Hi-tech medical investigation. However, it subsidises surgical interventions to the tune of Rs2,000 for minor operation, Rs4,000 for intermediate intervention, Rs8,000 for major operation and a maximum of Rs50,000 for overseas treatment.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am given to understand that the Managing Committee of the Police Welfare Association is currently carrying out an in-depth study to examine the possibility of upgrading the functioning of the association to the same standard as the Mauritius Civil Service Mutual Aid Association Ltd so as to enhance the level and scope of services it can provide to its members.

Dr. Ramloll: I thank the Prime Minister for the answer. Mr Speaker, Sir, presently any major surgery is never less than Rs40,000 or Rs50,000. I will request the Prime Minister to see if the Commissioner of Police can raise this scale so that the Police officers can take full advantage of it.

The Prime Minister: I will certainly do that, Mr Speaker, Sir. In fact, I understand that they are looking at this possibility already.

POLICE FORCE – SPECIALISED UNITS

(No. B/486) Dr. P. Ramloll (Third Member for Quartier Militaire and Moka) 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 specialised units of the Police Force, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police –

- (a) details of the payment of the risk allowances in each case, and
- (b) information as to if the “death on duty” compensation has been revised.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that a risk allowance of Rs840, as recommended by the Pay Research Bureau is paid to 9 Air pilots posted at the Helicopter Unit and the National Coast Guard as well as to officers of the Anti Drug and Smuggling Unit and the “*Groupe D’intervention de la Police Mauricienne*”.

As regards part (b) of the question, the PRB Report of 2003 provides that, in cases of officers who sustain fatal injuries, a compensation of six years' salary at the rate of the deceased officer's last salary drawn before the accident, subject to a maximum Rs1.1 million be paid to the heirs over and above any gratuity payable under the Pension Regulations. Such compensation also applies in cases of a fatal occupational disease under conditions specified in Section 37 of the Workmen's Compensation Act and which is listed in the Second Schedule of the Act.

A revision of the compensation payable for "death on duty" will be considered by the next PRB report.

Besides, as I have indicated in reply to PQ B/485, the Police Welfare Association is examining the possibility of enhancing the level and scope of its activities. The payment of any additional compensation over and above what the present scheme provides, will be considered.

Dr. Ramloll: I have two questions, Mr Speaker, Sir. Firstly, when a Police officer joins duty under oath, it is said that he has to discharge any other such duties assigned to him and that may mean risk his own life as well. I would request the Prime Minister to see to it that the "death on duty" allowance be raised to such a level that the children's and the widow's benefits be safeguarded, I mean, education and health.

The Prime Minister: In fact, as I said in the answer to the previous PQ, Mr Speaker, Sir, they will look at the possibility of enhancing the level and the scope of the activities.

NATIONAL COAST GUARD – HUMAN RESOURCES AND EQUIPMENT

(No. B/487) 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 the National Coast Guard, he will for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to if it is provided with adequate human resources and equipment for life saving at sea.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that the present strength of the National Coast Guard Personnel is 729 as detailed hereunder -

- 9 Indian Defence Officers on deputation;
- 1 Superintendent of Police;

- 3 Assistant Superintendents of Police;
- 2 Deputy Assistant Superintendents of Police;
- 4 Chief Inspectors;
- 19 Inspectors;
- 4 Cadet Officers;
- 70 Police Sergeants;
- 7 Caporals;
- 40 Deputy Caporals;
- 532 Police Constables;
- 2 Woman Police Constables, and
- 36 Trainee Police Constables.

Presently, the assets of the National Coast Guard include 24 posts, an Air Squadron of 3 aircrafts, 5 ships and 58 crafts.

In addition, the National Coast Guard is equipped with an adequate number of lifejackets, lifebuoys, resuscitation kits, rescue buoys and life rafts. On its part, the Maritime Air Squadron is provided with air droppable lifesavers, aircrew vests, underseat life preservers, aircraft safety harnesses and search and rescue beacons.

However, in view of certain recent natural phenomena like we just had two and a half weeks ago, I have already given instructions to reinforce the National Coast Guard both in terms of human resources and additional equipment for them, and increase in the number of National Coast Guard posts especially in Rodrigues – the question was asked last time - so that they can face these new challenges.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Mr Speaker, Sir, is the hon. Prime Minister aware that some categories of National Coast Guard Officers work from 7.00 a.m. on a particular day to 2.00 p.m. on the following day, which means that they work for around 19 hours and that this may affect their alertness wherever they have to intervene?

The Prime Minister: That is a question of administration, Mr Speaker, Sir, but I can take it up with the Commissioner of Police.

Mr Bhagwan: I heard the Prime Minister mentioning Rodrigues. Can he inform the House, as the Coast Guard Department is concerned, whether in the months to come, consideration will be given for the purchase of additional equipment and manpower for St. Brandon and Agalega?

The Prime Minister: We are privatizing, Mr Speaker, Sir. We will look at the whole issue and then decide where to give additional help.

Mr Von-Mally: Mr Speaker, Sir, being given that life is invaluable and being given the unfortunate fate of those officers who have lost their lives at sea, is the hon. Prime Minister contemplating the possibility of having better equipment like bigger boats and even a helicopter posted in Rodrigues for rescue operation and also for surveillance of our EEZ?

The Prime Minister: As far as the bigger boat is concerned, Mr Speaker, Sir, in fact, I have spoken to the Commissioner of Police after the last question was asked last week. In fact, he is in the process of not buying a bigger boat, because, apparently, we have a very good boat which is in good order, but it is the motor which is giving trouble and he is going to change the motor, putting a very powerful one. That is what I am told. I will also look at the other issue that the hon. Member raised.

NCG OFFICERS – DEATH – COMPENSATION TO FAMILIES

(No. B/488) Mrs S. Hanoomanjee (Second Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether, in regard to the National Coast Guard Officers who have lost their life in a rescue operation following the recent sea swells, he will state if Government proposes to grant, on humanitarian grounds, any special support to their families.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, in accordance with section 16 of the Pensions Act, appropriate pensions and/or gratuity will be paid to the legal representatives of the public officers once the relevant formalities will be completed. I must say that, sometimes, the pensions and the gratuities are also paid; it is either or. Gratuity and other benefits that have accrued to PC Spéville and PC Philippe amount to Rs197,564.75 and Rs154,021.36 respectively.

Furthermore, in accordance with paragraph 15.16.10 (iv) of the PRB Report 2003, a compensation of six years' salary at the rate of the deceased officer's last salary drawn before the accident, subject to a maximum of Rs1.1 m. be paid to the heirs over and above any gratuity under the Pension Regulations. I am informed that the Commissioner of Police has, in fact, initiated action for that payment.

I am also informed by the Rodrigues Regional Assembly that the Commission for Social Security has, on 15 May, provided a financial assistance of Rs5,000 under the "Family in Distress Scheme" to each of the families of the two Police Constables of the National Coast Guard who have lost their life in the rescue operation.

The risk element is more prevalent, Mr Speaker, Sir, in jobs where officers are called upon to save lives in difficult situations. There have been cases where *ad hoc ex gratia* payments have been made to the heirs of officers who died whilst accomplishing their mission.

I would like to take the opportunity to pay tribute to these '*Soldats de la mer*' who have sacrificed their lives during an act of bravery. This cannot be evaluated in monetary terms. But, to further assist the distressed families, extra compensation will be given to them under the Prime Minister's Relief and Support Fund, as is the practice in such cases, once all the formalities are done.

Mr Lauthan: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I draw the attention of the hon. Prime Minister to the fact that, apart from these gratuities, pensions, and other dues according to law, there was an established practice, under the previous Government, whereby mostly in the lower income group or even the lower middle income group, if the main or sole breadwinner lost their life, the Ministry of Social Security and the National Solidarity Fund was issuing a cheque of Rs50,000 to the widow and heirs. Can I make an appeal to the hon. Prime Minister so as to continue this practice, on humanitarian grounds?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, as far as I know, the Ministry of Social Security is looking into that.

POLICE VEHICLES - NUMBER

(No. B/489) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether, in regard to Police vehicles, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to —

- (a) the total number thereof, and
- (b) the number thereof which are —
 - (i) out of order, and
 - (ii) awaiting repairs.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that the Police Department has at present a total fleet of 1,357 vehicles, including 195 vehicles for the SMF.

As regards part (b) of the question, I am informed that there are currently 101 vehicles which are out of order. Of these, 62 have already been examined by what they call a Board of Survey, and arrangements have been made to dispose them by auction sales while the remaining 39 vehicles will be examined by the next Board shortly and will be ultimately disposed of.

I am further informed that a total of 150 vehicles require repairs at the Police Mechanical Workshop, SMF Mechanical Workshop and at the local agents. Out of these 150 vehicles, 43 are currently undergoing repairs, 80 are awaiting spare parts, and 27 are awaiting major repairs at the workshops and the local agents.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I must point out that the present arrangements for repairs and maintenance of Police vehicles are being reviewed in the context of the closure of the Police Mechanical Workshop scheduled by the end of June this year. In fact, repairs and maintenance of Police vehicles will be contracted out except, as I have said in the past, for the SMF workshop for specialised vehicles and for emergencies. The aim is to ensure that repairs and maintenance of Police vehicles are carried out in a most cost-effective and expeditious manner.

Mr Speaker, Sir, despite the prevailing tight budgetary constraints, we have spared no efforts to provide the Police Department with additional vehicles to ensure its operational efficiency. In fact, during the current financial year, the Police Department has acquired 61 vehicles. 36 additional vehicles are expected to be delivered by the end of this month, which will be allocated to the different divisions of the Police Force.

Furthermore, the Commissioner of Police has prepared a 5-year plan for the renewal of the Police fleet of vehicles, which is at present subject of discussions with the office of the Ministry of Finance & Economic Development and my own office.

Mr Bhagwan: Mr Speaker, Sir, I come back to one question that I asked last week. Can I impress upon the hon. Prime Minister to see to it with the Commissioner of Police that, at least, each Police Station be provided with one vehicle? We all know about the question of repairs, procedures, etc, but this could be done, at least, for the security of the public and to attend to emergencies. There is still this acute problem, whereby Police Stations are not provided or have a problem of vehicles to attend to emergencies.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have already raised the matter with the Commissioner of Police.

Mr Lauthan: Mr Speaker, Sir, to add to what my colleague has said, I will just give one example. At the Plaine Verte Police Station, there was a jeep, No. 276...

Mr Speaker: The hon. Member must understand! The hon. Prime Minister said that he has taken up the issue with the Commissioner of Police. There is no need to repeat! Next question!

RICHE TERRE & TERRE ROUGE LAND SETTLEMENT

(No. B/490) Mr G. Gunness (Third Member for Montagne Blanche & GRSE) 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 recently met the planters of Riche Terre and Terre Rouge Land Settlement and, if so, will he state the outcome thereof.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I had a meeting with planters of the Riche Terre on Thursday 17 May 2007 at Clarisse House. I have explained to them the rationale of Government to make the land available to the Tianli Group for a major development project, in the context of the Tianli Economic and Trade Cooperation Zone, involving investment to the tune of 500 million US dollars of foreign direct investment, and the creation of 5000 direct jobs.

I have, during the meeting, informed the planters of Riche Terre that they would not be worse off, and I have made the following proposals to compensate them -

- (i) they would be paid an increase of 20% on the amount of compensation assessed by the Chief Government Valuer on the basis of actual acreage held by each planter. For example, a planter occupying 1 acre of land would receive Rs120,000 instead of Rs100,000 as originally proposed;
- (ii) the 51 active planters would be relocated to more fertile land at Arsenal and Bois Marchand, which are secure locations;
- (ii) their debts in respect of irrigation and electricity dues, amounting to Rs1.5 m., would be written-off;
- (iii) payment of their loan to the DBM would be rescheduled;
- (v) Tianli Enterprise would provide a space in the zone itself to the planters for the sale of their vegetables; and
- (vi) the Tianli project would offer employment opportunities to the inhabitants of the region.

I am informed by the Ministry of Agro-Industry & Fisheries that, following my meeting with the planters, the following action has been taken -

- (i) The 51 active planters were convened on Wednesday 23 May 2007, for the payment of their compensation and the relocation exercise at Bois Marchand and Arsenal (they are getting 1 arpent each), and
- (ii) the 69 planters who had abandoned their plots of land were convened on Thursday 24 May to receive their compensation.

I am advised that 66 lease holders have collected their cheques, and 31 planters have been allocated land at Arsenal and Bois Marchand following a drawing of lots. The lease agreements have been signed on the same day, that is, Wednesday 23 May 2007.

I am also informed that 16 planters have asked for a delay of two weeks to take a stand on the proposal made.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as far the planters of Terre Rouge Land Settlement, I am planning to meet them at a later date.

Mr Guinness: Mr Speaker, Sir, I heard the hon. Prime Minister saying that he will meet the planters of Terre Rouge Land Settlement. Can I ask him whether he will reconsider the position of giving them land at Côte d'Or? Because, for planters residing in the North to travel and go to Côte d'Or...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! Hon. Minister Gowressoo, do you want to put a question?

(Interruptions)

I heard you talking! Keep quiet! Both Ministers were talking!

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order, I said!

Mr Guinness: Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether he is prepared to reconsider the position of Government in offering land at Côte d'Or to these planters of Terre Rouge?

The Prime Minister: In fact, we have looked at the matter. I talked to the hon. Minister of Agro-Industry and Fisheries. The problem is the difficulty of getting land, but we are looking at the matter. As it has been pointed out, the lease is expiring in June of this year.

Mr Guinness: Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether, when he will officially meet the planters of Terre Rouge Land Settlement, representatives of planters will be present? Because the first time there was some difficulty for the representatives of planters to attend the meeting and it is only after they have protested that they were asked to attend. Can I get it from the hon. Prime Minister that this time the representatives of planters, right from the beginning of the meeting, are allowed to attend the meeting?

The Prime Minister: Just to correct this, Mr Speaker, Sir, in fact, I am sure the hon. Member does not know. When we met the planters from Riche Terre, it was only those concerned at Riche Terre, but some people put into their

heads that we were meeting everybody, so, they turned up. But as usual, I was generous and I allowed them to come in.

(Interruptions)

I did tell them that it was not a question of keeping them out, but it was a question of meeting the people who were concerned directly with that issue. So, definitely, they will be there.

PUBLIC SERVICE – RETIRING OFFICERS – “EXIT INTERVIEW”

(No. B/491) Dr. R. Mungur (Second Member for Flacq and Bon Accueil) 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 officers retiring from the public service, he will consider introducing the practice called “Exit Interview”.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am advised that an “Exit Interview” is considered as a Human Resource Management tool used to look at the effectiveness of employment practices in scarcity areas. This practice is meant to help the employer to find out the reasons why people leave the organisation. However, it does not apply in cases of normal retirement on grounds of age.

The Pay Research Bureau has in its 2003 Report recommended that this practice be initiated by way of an “Exit Interview” or “Exit Questionnaire” in the public service to monitor staff turn over and to help to formulate corrective actions. This recommendation was specifically made to cater for scarcity areas where there were recruitment and retention problems.

I am further advised that the Ministry of Civil Service and Administrative Reforms will consider introducing this practice for scarcity areas in line with administrative reforms underway, especially, with regard to the introduction of HR practices in the public service.

PORT LOUIS - SURVEILLANCE CAMERAS

(No. B/492) Mr R. Issack (Second Member for Port Louis South and Port Louis Central) 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 installation of surveillance cameras in Port Louis, he will state where matters stand, indicating the areas of the city which will be targeted.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, the question of installation of a Closed-Circuit Television (CCTV) street surveillance system in the central parts of Port Louis was mooted as far back as May 1999. In April 2000, the approval of my office, then Prime Minister, was conveyed to the Commissioner of Police for the introduction of the CCTV system in Port Louis.

In January 2001, a request was made for technical assistance from British Executive Services Overseas (BESO) in respect of the project for the installation of a CCTV Surveillance System.

In June 2001, BESO appointed Mr Anthony Clark, a British citizen, to undertake the assignment. Mr Clark submitted his report in August 2001. He recommended a CCTV system with cameras located at 31 specific locations and Control Centre at Line Barracks.

The technical specifications of the proposed system were prepared with the assistance of Mr Clark. In 2002, a tender exercise was launched. However, the tender exercise was eventually cancelled with the approval of the CTB as none of the tenderers met the technical specifications of the proposed system. The project was, therefore, not implemented. There was also a shift, I am told, in priorities, at the time.

In January 2005, the Police made a proposal for the introduction of the CCTV Surveillance Project in Port Louis to cover its important arteries, commercial areas and high-risk areas. The cost thereof was estimated at Rs75 m. in 2005. The project was expected to be extended to other regions in Mauritius in the light of the feedback obtained.

It is to be noted, Mr Speaker, Sir, that the Government Programme of 2005-2010 makes provision at paragraph 25 of CCTV Street Surveillance to be installed in Port Louis and other cities.

During my official visit to the Republic of China in November last, I discussed this project with the Chinese Premier who reaffirmed Chinese support for the provision of a CCTV network for Port Louis and other sensitive areas.

He announced that China would offer to Mauritius an interest-free loan of roughly about Rs135 m. to finance projects which would be mutually agreed upon.

In the course of his recent visit to the Republic of China, the hon. Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and Economic Development has confirmed with the Chinese side that the CCTV project is a priority for implementation during the next financial year. At the 7th Sino-Mauritian Joint Committee Meeting held on 22 and 23 May of this year in Mauritius, the Chinese side has also agreed to consider its participation of the CCTV surveillance system in the project.

It is proposed, in the first instance, to introduce the system to cover the important arteries, business, entertainment and commercial areas as well as crime prone areas in the City of Port Louis and thereafter it will be extended to other regions of the country.

Mr Dowarkasing: May I know from the hon. Prime Minister under which responsibility this whole network of CCTV camera will be placed? Will it be under the responsibility of the Police Force or the local Authorities?

The Prime Minister: It will have to be under the responsibility of the Police Force.

Mr Varma: Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister to inform the House whether it is being proposed to amend the law so that the films that get recorded in the CCTV are admissible in Court?

The Prime Minister: I will propose this one, Mr Speaker, Sir.

MINORS – ARREST – JANUARY 2007 TO MAY 2007

(No. B/493) Mrs M. Martin (Second 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 minors who have been arrested for offences during the period January 2007 to date, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the number thereof, indicating the nature of the offences in each case.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that since January 2007 to 22 May of this year, there were 87 cases where 116 minors have been involved.

The information relating to the nature of the offences is being tabled.

Mrs Martin: May I know from the hon. Prime Minister the number of minors who have been released on bail following these arrests?

The Prime Minister: Practically, all of them, but I will have to look into that and give the details.

Mr Dowarkasing: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Prime Minister, since these minors are being covered by the Convention of the Rights of the Child, whether proper counselling is extended to them?

The Prime Minister: As far as I remember, Mr Speaker, Sir, the counselling is done afterwards, but it is part of the programme.

Mrs Martin: May I know from the hon. Prime Minister whether, following the fact that those minors have been arrested and have a sentence to serve, any form of rehabilitation is given to them?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, this is what I meant in the previous question. In fact, there is a follow-up by the Ministry.

MR L. B – DEATH – COROMANDEL POLICE CELL

(No. B/494) **Mr A. Ganoo (First Member for Savanne and Black River)** asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether, in regard to one Mr P. B., a resident of Bassin, Quatre Bornes, recently found dead in the Police cell at the Coromandel Police Station, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to –

- (a) the reason for his detention;
- (b) the findings of the *post-mortem* examination carried out, and
- (c) if any injuries were detected on his body.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that on 14 May 2007 at about 14 00 hours, a Detective Police Constable and another Police Constable, while patrolling Edward VII Street in Rose Hill, saw one Mr L. B. - I take it that there is a mistake here; his name is L.B, not P.B. and I take it that it pertains to the same person - was found to be in possession of two plastic bags of coriander.

On being questioned, Mr L.B. could not give a plausible explanation as to how he came into possession of the two plastic bags. Consequently, he was arrested and brought to Rose Hill CID Office for enquiry. Eventually, he was detained at Coromandel Police Station pending his appearance before Court. The exhibit, valued at Rs2000, was secured.

On 15 May 2007, the detainee appeared before Rose Hill Court, where a provisional charge of “Larceny Praedial” was lodged against him. Police did not object to his release on bail and the Court allowed him bail upon furnishing a surety of Rs5000. However, as Mr L. B. was unable to furnish the required surety, he was remanded to Police cell up to 22 May 2007.

On 17 May 2007 at around 14 30 hours, one Corporal, Mr S., who was performing sentry duty over the cell, visited detainee L.B and found him to be asleep. At about 15 00 hours, whilst visiting the cell anew, he noticed that the detainee had hanged himself by the neck with a piece of mattress cover that was attached to the top part of the cell’s door.

The Corporal with the help of other Police Officers, immediately opened the cell door and brought the body down and applied first aid to him, but to no avail.

At about 15 30 hours the Assistant Commissioner of Police, the Detective Assistant Superintendent of Police and the Police Medical Officer called at the Police Station. After examining the detainee, the Police Medical Officer declared the detainee dead and instructed that the body be transferred to the Victoria Hospital mortuary for autopsy.

As regards parts (b) and (c) of the question, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that, the findings of the *post-mortem* examination revealed no injury and no fracture. In fact, the exercise established that death of the detainee was due to “asphyxia following hanging” and that nothing opposed the death to a suicidal cause.

The enquiry is still underway and upon completion the relevant dossier would be forwarded to the Director of Public Prosecutions for advice.

Mr Ganoo: Doesn’t the Prime Minister agree that the Police authorities must find a way in order to stop detainees from hanging themselves in prison? From time to time, we hear these cases. Police Officers are supposed to be patrolling and checking the cells and the detainees. How come that we still have such unfortunate cases? Is it possible to stop giving them bed covers and find some ways of not allowing these prisoners to use such materials which can be used to hang themselves in Police cells?

The Prime Minister: This has been an ongoing problem for a long time and it has also existed during the last five or seven years. If they are not given bed covers, then there will be a Parliamentary Question as to why bed covers are not provided. This is the problem that we have, because there is too much politics going into it, but we are looking into the matter. In fact, I rechecked whether – because I found it a very good policing - this is actually the case. They have checked at half past two, at three o'clock, he had already hanged himself, that is, within half an hour. In fact, this is a fair question and we are looking at what can be done exactly.

Mr Ganoo: There is always suspicion on the part of parents and relatives when such cases happen. Is it not possible to ask the Police to issue a post-mortem certificate to the parents once the post-mortem analysis is done so that the parents may know that there has been no foul play in cases of suicide in Police cells?

The Prime Minister: I can look into that with the Police Medical Doctor. I do not know the reason, but I think it is a good point.

Mr Speaker: May I inform the House that PQ Nos. B/497, B/501, B/533, B/535, B/536, B/538, B/542 and B/550 have been withdrawn.

‘EVENTS MAURITIUS’ – SETTING UP

(No. B/495) Dr P. Ramloll (Third Member for Quartier Militaire & Moka) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism, Leisure and External Communications whether he will state if an organisation named ‘Events Mauritius’ has been set up within his Ministry and, if so, will be give details of its composition, functions and objectives.

The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism, Leisure and External Communications (Mr X.L. Duval): Mr Speaker, Sir, Government has agreed to the setting up of a company for the purpose of identifying, organising and promoting national and international tourism related events. This arrangement would ensure that the services of persons who have very specialised skills in the field of event management are enlisted as and when required.

Mauritius is expected to derive these benefits from the organisation of such events by Events Mauritius Limited., namely -

- a) attracting additional tourists in the low season;
- b) enabling tourists to discover the cultural facets of the country;

- c) encouraging tourists to go out of their hotels, discover other parts of the country;
- d) creating additional visibility for Mauritius in overseas markets through coverage by TV and the written press;
- e) providing an opportunity for tourists to interact with locals;
- f) positioning Mauritius as an exciting and enjoyable tourist destination;
- g) creating a festive atmosphere for both locals and tourists, and
- h) providing leisure opportunities to the locals.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Board of Directors of the company will consist of four representatives from the private sector having experience in the tourism industry/event management as well as six representatives from the private sector.

Dr. Ramloll: Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to thank the hon. Minister for the answer and I thank him for the zeal with which he is running his Ministry. I would like to ask three supplementary questions. Being given there are about 100 of diving centres around the island, will the Minister agree that diving competition should be one of the events organised yearly to attract other countries to participate in our local waters?

Mr X. L. Duval: In fact, Mr Speaker, Sir, very recently, we organised the World Championship for diving photographers; and it was a success. Certainly, we can consider having more such events.

Dr. Ramloll: Can the Minister say whether cultural events will be organised in Mauritius like film fare awards, music and folk dances to bring all the countries together and to publicise Mauritius as a centre for cultural events?

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, various opportunities are coming up for the organisation of cultural activities. What we want, in fact, is for the tourists not just spend their holidays, but to bring back from Mauritius a better idea of our culture, a story to their country. We are obviously working on these, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Dowarkasing: Will the hon. Minister say whether “Events Maeritius” has benefited from a certain amount of money from the Tourism Fund?

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, the Tourism Fund is for Capital projects. This is not a Capital project.

Dr. Ramloll: The last question is whether the Minister would consider having collaboration with the MBC and NaSTA television to telecast all these events worldwide to sell Mauritius as a destination?

Mr X. L. Duval: I’ll certainly put the suggestion to the MTPA.

Mr Varma: Will the Minister kindly inform the House what is the annual budget of “Events Mauritius”?

Mr X.L. Duval: Sir, I am not sure there is an annual budget as such. I know that the seed capital would be around Rs10 m. This is used in collaboration with the private sector by getting sponsors, by getting visibility and, therefore, getting additional funds from the private sector and hopefully, eventually it can even be privatised completely and the private sector can take it over.

Mr Mohamed: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Tourism the following question? He has stated that “Events Mauritius” is a company that has been set up and one of the reasons is to encourage the tourists to leave the hotel to go outside. How does he reconcile that with the system that is being practised by hotels of having package deals that make tourists stay in the hotels and, thereby, all operators like restaurant owners and shop owners suffering. Will that not stand in conflict therefor?

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, I presume my friend is referring to the all inclusive package that hotels are offering which is an issue in itself; and we are talking to them to see how, in fact, the local population can have access and interface with the tourists as maybe a counter measure. If the tourists have paid for everything, then the hotel should encourage the tourists to leave the hotel because that would cost them less. So, it is not true to say that if it all inclusive, they will only stay in the hotel. It could be, in fact, the opposite.

INDIAN OCEAN ISLANDS GAMES - DELEGATION

(No. B/496) **Dr. P. Ramloll (Third Member for Quartier Militaire & Moka)** asked the Minister of Youth & Sports whether, in regard to the forthcoming Indian Ocean Islands Games, he will state the composition of the delegation which will be attending thereto.

Mr Tang Wah Hing: Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to reply to PQ Nos. B/496 and B/520 together as they are both related to the Indian Ocean Islands Games.

Mr Speaker, Sir, some 370 athletes and officials from the 15 Sports Federations concerned as well as from the Federation of Disabled Persons have been earmarked provisionally to participate in the forthcoming Indian Ocean Islands Games to be held in Madagascar in August this year.

The exact number will be known in early July when all the Sports Federations concerned will have completed their final selection exercise.

I propose to place in the Library of the National Assembly the final composition of the delegation as soon as it is ready.

Mr Speaker, Sir, for the last edition of the Indian Ocean Islands Games held in 2003, Mauritius obtained a total of 183 medals and I am arranging for the details regarding the number and type of medals obtained in respect of each sports discipline to be tabled in the National Assembly.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I must emphasise that every effort is being made by my Ministry to ensure that the relevant facilities in terms of medical support, equipment, training and transport are provided to the Sports Federations concerned to ensure that our athletes put up a good performance at the next Indian Ocean Islands Games to be held in Madagascar in August 2007.

However, Mr Speaker, Sir, the performance of the Mauritian team will finally rest on the Sports Federations concerned as well as on the athletes on the basis of the seriousness, regularity and effort put in for the preparations for the games, as is the case for the Mauritius Amateur Athletic Association and the Mauritius Boxing Federation.

Dr. Ramloll: I thank the Minister again for the answer. I would like to ask the hon. Minister whether he can ascertain that the ratio of the delegation to athletes does not become a problem in the future because it is always a contest that there are more delegates than players or athletes in a particular field sometimes.

Mr Tang Wah Hing: Certainly, I will take it into consideration.

Mr Bhagwan: M. le président, le ministre a dit que les résultats vont dépendre beaucoup des fédérations, des athlètes. Nous sommes tous d'accord. Est-ce que le ministre peut nous dire pourquoi le rassemblement qui était prévu ce *week-end* a été reporté. Cela a été dit officiellement '*zotte croire capave organise marriage sans dire papa*'. Nous sommes à deux mois des jeux, est-ce qu'on peut savoir du ministre ce qui se passe au niveau des fédérations? Le ministre n'est pas responsable. Est-ce que tout a été mis en oeuvre pour que l'île Maurice participe dans les meilleures conditions et que nous ne risquons pas de régresser comparativement à ce qui se fait par les équipes de Madagascar, Seychelles et de la Réunion?

Mr Tang Wah Hing: M. le président, je tiens à rassurer l'honorable membre. La décision d'organiser ce rassemblement ne m'a pas été communiqué, et en tant que ministre, j'en prend la responsabilité.

Mr Bhagwan: Le ministre vient de nous dire qu'il assume ses responsabilités, mais qu'en est-il des athlètes, M. le président? Les athlètes ont été informés des semaines en avance de la tenue de ce rassemblement qui est directement lié aux jeux des îles de l'océan indien, mais parce que le ministre n'était pas au courant, le rassemblement a été reporté. Il y a eu beaucoup de frustrations. Est-ce que le ministre peut nous dire s'il va situer les responsabilités pour qu'une telle chose ne se reproduise pas?

Mr Tang Wah Hing: M. le président, je dirai à l'honorable membre encore une fois que je prend la responsabilité de la décision prise. Je peux rassurer l'honorable membre que les athlètes n'ont pas été mis en cause et je peux dire qu'il y avait plusieurs manquements. Les athlètes de plusieurs fédérations n'étaient pas présents à Maurice et c'est la raison d'une telle décision.

Mr Bhagwan: Est-ce que l'honorable ministre peut nous dire quand il y aura le rassemblement de l'équipe de Maurice?

Mr Tang Wah Hing: J'invite l'honorable membre à avoir de la patience.

Mrs Martin: Can I ask the hon. Minister whether there has been a date limit that has been fixed for the submission of the names of members who will be forming part of the Mauritian delegation in the Indian Ocean Islands Games?

Mr Tang Wah Hing: I have already answered that question. The selection will be finalised after the different federations submit their final selection.

(Interruptions)

Mr Bhagwan: I will insist from the Minister. There are only two months before the games. May I know what has been scheduled for the preparation of the volleyball, basketball and other teams for training abroad?

Mr Mohamed: Mr Speaker, Sir, on a point of order, this supplementary question has got nothing to do with the main question, that is, the organisation of the delegations.

Mr Speaker: Do the three disciplines form part of Indian Ocean Islands Games? If it is so, the Minister will answer

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order !

Mr Tang Wah Hing: Mr Speaker, Sir, I can assure the hon. Member that as far as the volleyball team is concerned, we have already scheduled for a training camp in China.

Mr Bhagwan: When is it scheduled?

Mr Tang Wah Hing: It has been scheduled within the next ten days. The other one concerns football. We have had the visit of the Minister of Sports from Mozambique. He is agreeable for our national team to go for a training camp in Mozambique.

Mr Bhagwan: Can we know when, Sir?

Mr Speaker: I have said last question.

Mr Soodhun: Mr Speaker, Sir.....

Mr Speaker: Does the hon. Member has anything to raise?

Mr Soodhun: Yes, Sir.

Mr Speaker: I will ask the hon. Member to come and see me in my office. I suspend for one and a half hours.

At 1.00 p.m. the sitting was suspended.

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

LA CAVERNE AND PHOENIX - PROJECTS

(No. B/497) Mr S. Soodhun (Fifth Member for La Caverne and Phoenix) asked the Minister of Environment and National Development Unit whether, in regard to projects for the construction of new roads, drains and sports complexes in Constituency No. 15, La Caverne and Phoenix, he will give a list thereof –

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

(Withdrawn)

SMALL PLANTERS – LAND PREPARATION

(No. B/498) Mr S. Soodhun (Fifth Member for La Caverne and Phoenix) asked the Minister of Agro Industry and Fisheries whether, in regard to the small planters who have regrouped themselves and having over 2000 acres, he will state if the preparation of their land has been completed in December 2006, as stated in the Roadmap for the sugar industry, and, if not, will he give the reasons therefor.

Dr. Boolell: Mr Speaker, Sir, my understanding is that the hon. Minister is referring to paragraph 5(a)(ii) which states, I quote –

“It is planned to complete the land preparation for 2000 *arpents* in December 2006.”

Let me remind our friend that the project started in August 2006 and is expected to cover 12,000 hectares over a period of 10 years. As I have already indicated in several replies, the Farmers Service Corporation has identified 1,100 hectares for period 2007/2008 which will be examined by the Project Implementation Committee.

Mr Soodhun: Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to know from the hon. Minister how many acres till now have already been completed by now?

Dr. Boolell: As I have stated previously, Mr Speaker, Sir, almost 900 *arpents* have been completed, which means that in respect of the performance indicators established by the European Union, we have been able to honour this performance indicator.

Mr Dayal: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Minister whether he is going to state to whom the management of land of the planters who have regrouped themselves be entrusted, and how will the rate of the different works, that is, cutting, loading and transportation be calculated and by whom?

Dr. Boolell: Mr Speaker, Sir, as I have stated on several occasions, the planters themselves may set up small entrepreneur schemes which will entitle them to concessionary loans to acquire equipment. Secondly, there is what is known as *menu à la carte*, that is, they can opt for several facilities which are being provided to them. Thirdly, if they so wish, they can bind themselves to the Sugar Estate to which they convey their canes, and fourthly, the work can be entrusted specifically to a small medium entrepreneur. When it comes to costs, my information in respect of the cutting, loading and transport by the Sugar Estate, is that it does not amount to more than Rs200. But, when the planters hire those services provided to them, certainly the costs can be high. This is the

reason why once there is preparation of land, there is economies of scale. It is good that they set up the entrepreneurial scheme.

Mr Dayal: Mr Speaker, Sir, will the hon. Minister state to the House whether the land regrouped in one particular region will be scattered in different places, and if so, will he state how compensation payable by the SIFB computed, and how the sugar content will be determined?

Dr. Boolell: This is a highly technical question as to how it is going to be computed by SIFB. I better leave it to the experts to calculate. But you may recall that there was a Bill introduced to Parliament only last week, and this Bill should have been introduced in the year 2003, which means that it would have enabled planters to make a lot of savings. It is only now that the Bill has been introduced. Ranking has gone up to the advantage of planters. As to whether the lands will be scattered when there is regrouping, in fact, it is to the advantage of the planters, because they get a better premium and compensation would be much better.

Mr Dowarkasing: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister has just mentioned that nearly 900 *arpents* have been derocked. Can we have an idea about how many projects did that involve in terms of regrouping and how that has been scattered geographically around the island?

Dr. Boolell: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have the information as to where the sites are identified, as to where they are in the different parts of the island. Of course, once the planters agree to participate, then things become much easier. Initially, the identified sites were less difficult. Now, they are moving to sites which are rather more difficult. I can submit the list as to the sites identified.

HIGHLANDS – FOOTBALL GROUND

(No. B/499) Mr S. Soodhun (Fifth Member for La Caverne and Phoenix) asked the Minister of Local Government whether, in regard to the football grounds donated by the Highlands Sugar Estate following its closure, he will state their present condition, indicating if any upgrading projects are being envisaged.

Dr. David: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Municipality of Vacoas/Phoenix that the football playground situated at Highlands has neither been donated nor vested in the Council.

The House may wish to note that the Municipal Council was only authorised in April 2005 by the Highlands Sugar Estate to effect urgent upgrading work to the football playground. However, given that the football playground was not vested in the Council, the latter could not undertake any

major upgrading works except that the mowing of the playground was carried out on a regular basis.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister whether he could look into the matter and check with the State Land Development Corporation and the Mauritius Sugar Authority because, as far as I remember, there was a meeting during which it was decided that this land would be swapped from the land given in the Ilovo deal and that this land was supposed to be vested in the Vacoas/Phoenix Municipal Council? Can the hon. Minister look into the matter and see where matters stand because it would seem that no follow up has been done since then?

Dr. David: I will look into the matter, Mr Speaker, Sir. In fact, there was a meeting. This used to form part of the Ilovo deal, but since then, the beneficiaries have done absolutely nothing, but I will follow the matter.

GRSE – TRANSPORT DIFFICULTIES

(No. B/500) Mr L. Bundhoo (Second Member for Montagne Blanche and GRSE) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping whether, in regard to transport difficulties faced by the inhabitants of Grand River South East and the neighbouring villages, he will state if he has chaired any meeting/s in connection therewith and, if so, the outcome thereof.

The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping (Dr. R. Beebeejaun): Mr Speaker, Sir, following representations from Members of the National Assembly of the Constituency regarding bus transport problems in Grand River South East, I chaired a first meeting on 16 January 2007 and a second one on 05 February 2007 to discuss the issue.

The officials of the National Transport Authority, the National Transport Corporation and the hon. Members of the National Assembly of the Constituency were present at both meetings.

Inspections had revealed that the three individual bus operators licensed to operate on Route 56 were not providing services as per the approved timetable. Only two out of three buses were operating and there were no bus services during the day, weekends and public holidays.

As this situation has been causing undue hardship to the travelling public, specially students and old aged and disabled persons, I have approved that the National Transport Corporation will provide a regular service along Route 56. The National Transport Corporation is expected to start operations as from 01 June 2007.

Mr Bundhoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I thank the hon. Deputy Prime Ministry for kindly agreed to chair the meeting on behalf of the inhabitants of Grand River South East and the Members of Constituency No. 10. May I kindly request the hon. Deputy Prime Minister if he could kindly ask the Traffic Management and Road Safety Unit to look at this area and to ensure that there is proper bus stop and that CNT buses stop to pick up passengers along these lines?

Dr. Beebeejaun: I thank the hon. Member for drawing attention this problem, but it is a real issue in the sense that there are so many taxis operating there and the public is hardly using the buses or using the bus stops. But I will look into the problem again.

Mr Bundhoo: A last question, Mr Speaker, Sir. May I ask the Deputy Prime Minister if he can inform the House how many buses from the NTC will be serving this route?

Dr. Beebeejaun: There will be two buses with, at least, seventeen trips each. So, it will cover the need of the population.

SSS – BOOKS - PURCHASE

(No. B/501) Mr S. Lauthan (Third Member for Port Louis Maritime and Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether, in regard to the purchase of books by the libraries of the State Secondary Schools for the financial year 2006/2007, he will –

- (a) state the amount disbursed as at to date;
- (b) the number of books purchased, and
- (c) circulate a list of schools which have been provided with new books.

(Withdrawn)

PUBLIC SECTOR DEBT

(No. B/502) Miss K. R. Deerpalsing (Third Member for Belle Rose and Quatre Bornes) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to Public Debt as a percentage of Gross Domestic Product, he will –

- (a) state the percentage and absolute share held by parastatals, and
- (b) provide a detailed breakdown of this share for each parastatal.

The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development (Mr R. Sithanen): Mr Speaker, Sir, public debt refers to central government debt. When including debt of parastatal bodies, public sector enterprises and local authorities, this is usually referred to as public sector debt. Central government debt was 57.1 per cent of GDP as at end December 2006. Public sector debt was 69.7 per cent of GDP. Therefore, the share of parastatal bodies, local authorities and public sector enterprises debt as a percentage of total public sector debt was approximately 18 per cent.

The total public sector debt which was 78.8 billion rupees as at end June 2000 continued on an upward trend over the years to reach 128.5 billion rupees as at end June 2005, i.e. an increase of 63 per cent. The central government debt which was 56.8 billion rupees as at end June 2000, i.e. 49.8 per cent of GDP increased to 105.8 billion rupees as at end June 2005, i.e. 58.5 per cent of GDP representing an increase of 86 per cent.

Since July 2005, the central government debt as a percentage of GDP, Mr Speaker, Sir, has been on a downward path moving from 58.5 per cent of GDP to 57.1 per cent of GDP as at December 2006.

In line with the sustainable investment rule, it is expected that central government debt to GDP will decline further. The public sector debt is moving in a downward trend, from 71 per cent of GDP in June 2005 to 69.7 per cent of GDP in December 2006.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am circulating information that contains all the external and domestic debt of parastatal bodies, local authorities and public sector enterprises detailing it into guaranteed and non guaranteed as at end December 2006. (Appendix). The external and domestic debt of all the bodies together amounted to Rs25.74 billions and represented about 12.6 per cent of GDP.

Miss Deerpalsing: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance whether he would consider publishing these numbers on a quarterly basis on the web site of the Ministry of Finance so that the public can see which are the parastatals which are making efforts to contain their debt?

Mr Sithanen: It is a very good suggestion and I'll ask my officers to look into the possibility of doing that on a quarterly basis. I think they do it on a quarterly basis, but I'll make sure, Mr Speaker, Sir, whether they give the details as requested by the hon. Member. I am sure to reach the total, they must add the details. I will see if it is possible to give the information.

Mr Deerpalsing: Mr Speaker, Sir, I think it is important that there is an exercise of name and shame because there are some people at the parastatals – we see that at the PAC - who really think that this money is coming from the sky.

Mr Sithanen: I will not use the strong words that have been used by my friend, hon. Miss Deerpalsing, but I think she has got a point, Mr Speaker, Sir, when she speaks, and rightly so, about the abuse that exists in some parastatals bodies. I am in the middle of the budgetary exercise, it is a painful exercise and it is the last thing that we should do; just because it is not their money, it is public money, they want to do whatever they want and not get value for money. I kept telling people that, at the end of the day, if we do not make sure that we are using money in the best way – especially public money – obviously, this will have implications on taxes for the country.

GRNW – FLYOVER BRIDGE

(No. B/503) Mr M. Allet (Second Member for Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping whether he will state if it is proposed to construct a flyover bridge at Grand River North West for the safety of pedestrians.

The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping (Dr. R. Beebeejaun): Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Member may wish to know that the pedestrian passage under the bridge was indeed provided during the construction of the new Grand River North West bridge in 1983.

However, I am given to understand that the public is not using that passage for security reasons and I am requesting the Police to act accordingly.

Furthermore, following the request of the hon. Member, the RDA will be visiting the site tomorrow and I'll invite the Member to be with me so that we can discuss the problem anew on site.

VANDERMEERSCH STREET, BEAU BASSIN – TRAFFIC LIGHTS

(No. B/504) Mr M. Allet (Second Member for Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping whether, in regard to the pedestrian crossing on the Vandermeersch Street, near the Philippe Rivalland RCA School at Beau Bassin, he will consider the advisability of installing traffic lights thereat for the safety of the school children.

The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping (Dr. R. Beebeejaun): Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that the Traffic Management and Road Safety Unit will carry out a detailed study to assess the need for traffic lights at the location mentioned and is expected to submit a report by the end of the week.

The Police Department is also being requested to provide the services of a Police officer on a regular basis near the school to assist school children.

SME VILLAGES – SETTING UP

(No. B/505) Dr. R. Hawoldar (Second Member for La Caverne and Phoenix) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to the setting up of a Small and Medium Enterprise Village at Highlands, as announced in the 2006-2007 budget, he will state where matters stand.

The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development (Mr R. Sithanen): Mr Speaker Sir, the project for the construction of the three SME Villages at Terre Rouge, La Tour Koenig and Highlands has been entrusted to DBM. I am informed by the bank that the technical drawings and tender documents for all the three typical buildings have been completed. DBM Ltd will shortly be calling tenders from Building & Civil Engineering Contractors for the construction of the SME Villages at Terre Rouge and La Tour Koenig on plots of land that belongs to DBM.

So far as the site of the Highlands SME Village is concerned, I am informed that a plot of land was identified at Belle Rive Junction along Hermitage Road. Although the SIT had initially agreed to make available that portion of land, it subsequently informed the DBM of its inability to release the

same as the land was already leased to MSIRI for an experimental purpose prior to its purchase.

The Bank is now negotiating with the State Land Development Company to acquire a plot of land which the latter owns at Highlands for the construction of the SME Village.

Dr. Hawoldar: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance if he can see to it that the plot of land which is chosen is, at least, accessible to the inhabitants in the region at Bagatelle for they do not have transport facilities? Otherwise, we will have to invest in infrastructure. Could he just ensure himself that the plot of land chosen is accessible to buses, otherwise, it will be a problem to get people to go and settle there?

Mr Sithanen: I'll do my best, Mr Speaker, Sir, but I am sure the hon. Member will appreciate that it depends on where the land is available. The land that was initially earmarked to be given to DMB by SIT was an ideal one but, apparently, there was a mistake. They were given a land that had already been granted to MSIRI. So, we will do our best, but I am sure that the hon. Member knows that we need to physically find the plot of land where transport is available.

STATE AND PRIVATE SECONDARY SCHOOLS - PEDAGOGICAL INSPECTORS -

(No. B/506) Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun (Third Member for La Caverne and Phoenix) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether, in regard to the pedagogical inspectors attached to his Ministry, he will state –

- (a) the number thereof, and
- (b) the number of State and private secondary schools which they have visited since January 2006 to May 2007, indicating –
 - (i) the names of the schools and the classes visited, and
 - (ii) the date on which each of these visits was effected.

Mr Gokhool: Mr. Speaker Sir, as regards part (a) there are four Pedagogical Inspectors on the establishment of my Ministry at the moment.

As regards part (b), I am informed that the Pedagogical Inspectors have visited MEDCO Schools, some private secondary schools and 8 State Secondary Schools.

I am tabling the program of visits from January 2006 to May 2007.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: May I ask the hon. Minister whether he considers that four pedagogical inspectors would be sufficient to carry out inspection in all the secondary schools of the island?

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, I need to inform the House that the whole idea of inspectorate is an old one and even the previous Government tried to put up in place a National Inspectorate which did not work. The position of pedagogical inspectors existed at that time. The whole idea of national inspectorate is a little outdated, because when we talk about pedagogical inspection, it is associated with the idea of control, inspection and policing.

In the context of the reform in education sector, we are trying to move away from that concept to the concept of quality assurance and proposals in that respect are being studied at my Ministry. We are looking at how to set up a system of quality assurance which will provide for pedagogical improvement programmes.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: In view of the high ambition that the Ministry had set for itself by trying to provide world-class quality education to our students, may I ask the hon. Minister whether he does not think that some

form of quality assurance is required and whether we can wait for it to come later on? But right now, Mr Speaker, Sir, we have so many students in schools/colleges and we need to have some accompaniment so as to ensure that the teaching/learning process is adequate.

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. lady was part of the team that was in Parliament during the last mandate, and for five years nothing was done.

(Interruptions)

Of course! Because the inspectors who are based at PSSA were transferred to the Ministry without any scheme as to how they are going to operate.

(Interruptions)

In fact, for five years nothing was done! This is a fact!

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Speaker, Sir, no matter what was the aim of the former Government, my point of view is that we cannot put at stake...

Mr Speaker: Can the hon. put her question, please?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: May I ask the hon. Minister whether he thinks that we can put at stake the future of our students and the whole teaching learning process by just throwing the stone at the former Government? No matter what the former Government may have chosen to do, I am asking the hon. Minister what does he think he ought to do right now?

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am happy that the hon. lady recognizes that the previous Government failed.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Hon. Dowarkasing, do you want to go out? Order, I said!

Mr Gokhool: In fact, Mr Speaker, Sir, the previous Government was not able to put up the National Inspectorate. It is a fact. What we are doing is in terms of improving the quality of teaching and learning.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Mr Golhool: In fact, we have taken the steps already. I informed the House that we have carried out...

Mr Speaker: The hon. Minister should not respond to the hon. Member.

(Interruptions)

Order! Order, I said!

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, as I said, as part of improving the quality of teaching and learning, we have put to good use the inspectors who are at the Ministry. They have carried out a survey in terms of the optimal utilization of teaching resources in MEDCO schools and secondary schools and this has given results. We are clustering the various schools so that the administrators together with the inspectors carry out inspection as at now, but in the context of quality assurance we are going to come up with a new system, which will be very much in line with the reform programme of the Government.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun : May I ask the hon. Minister whether he intends to beef up the Inspectorate Division?

Mr Gokhool: As I said, Mr Speaker, Sir, proposals are under consideration to set up a quality assurance system, which is more in terms of involving the schools, the Heads of Departments, the teachers and even the parents, whereas at present it is like the inspector going out to school to inspect. This creates a lot of resistance and tensions and bad feelings. So, we are moving from the concept of traditional pedagogical inspection to quality assurance which we are going to put up in due course.

Mrs Labelle: May we know from the hon. Minister what are the objectives of these inspections for the time being? What are the inspectors inspecting? Is it the pedagogical side or the infrastructural side?

Mr Gokhool: I informed the House previously, but I am going to repeat. The inspectors have been given specific projects. For example, in terms of optimum utilization of teaching resources in the MEDCO schools and in the State Secondary Schools, they have carried out a project and this has given good results. Now, they are clustering the schools and working with the administrators to ensure the quality of teaching and learning in schools.

TOURISM INDUSTRY - CARBON LABEL

(No. B/507) Miss K. R. Deerpalsing (Third Member for Belle Rose and Quatre Bornes) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism, Leisure and External Communications whether he is aware that European consumers are showing an increasing interest for companies which disclose their carbon footprints as part of their corporate social audit and, if so, will he consider promoting the adoption of a “carbon label” within the Tourism Industry, in line with the United Kingdom’s Carbon Trust Guidelines.

The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism, Leisure and External Communications (Mr X. L. Duval): Mr Speaker, Sir, nowadays consumers are becoming very aware of the carbon footprints of products and services. In fact, a recent survey carried out by Carbon Trust in UK has revealed that 66% of British consumers want to know the carbon footprints of the products they buy, and 67% said they would be more likely to buy a product with a low carbon footprint.

As Members of the House are aware, Europe is our main tourist market. In order to remain competitive in that market, we need to adapt to the tastes and preferences of the European tourists. I, therefore, consider that it would be a very commendable initiative to promote the adoption of a carbon label within the tourism industry, in line with the UK’s Carbon Trust Guidelines.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am proposing to set up a meeting, comprising the stakeholders of the tourism and tourism related industry, including the travel trade, to look into how best Mauritius can avail itself of the benefits of adopting and promoting the UK’s Carbon Trust Guidelines.

I would welcome suggestions from Members of the House in this respect.

My Ministry has already taken a step forward in that direction by laying emphasis in its new Hotel Development Strategy on harmonious and eco-friendly development aimed at ensuring that the present growth momentum of the tourism industry is maintained.

Moreover, the tourism industry is presently working with the Mauritius Standards Bureau on standards to be followed to reduce noise pollution and use of low emission engines for pleasure crafts.

Similarly, during my last visit to Rodrigues, I have discussed with the Chief Island Commissioner on the increasing importance of environment friendly development for the sustainability of the tourism industry.

CEB/IPP – POWER PURCHASE AGREEMENTS

(No. B/508) Miss K. R. Deerpalsing (Third Member for Belle Rose and Quatre Bornes) asked the Minister of Public Utilities whether, in regard to the production of electricity, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Central Electricity Board, information as to –

- (a) the price paid by the Board for each KWh of power purchased from each existing Independent Power Producer;
- (b) the cost of production for each KWh at each Independent Power Producer, and
- (c) the price paid for each KWh by household consumers.

Dr. Kasenally: Mr Speaker, Sir, regarding parts (a) and (b) of the question, I am informed by the CEB that the Power Purchase Agreements entered into between the CEB and the Independent Power Producers contain a clause which stipulates that –

“Neither Party shall issue or cause the publication of any press release or other public announcement in relation to the Facility or this agreement without the prior approval of the other Party, such approval not to be unreasonably withheld or delayed.”

This being the case, I have caused the CEB to work out, on the basis of the pricing methodology prescribed in the PPAs, the average purchase price from IPPs. The average purchase price per unit was Rs2.59 for coal and Rs2.49 for bagasse in 2006. These figures may be worked out from information regularly published in the CEB Annual Reports, although it is not available as such. So, I have worked out and done some mathematics backward to get some information for the hon. Member.

Regarding the cost of production per unit, the IPPs have availed themselves of the confidentiality clause of the PPAs and have decided not to decline - this is the legal term they have used - the information, arguing that such information is highly commercially sensitive.

In fact, there is a sort of *levée de boucliers*. I have got all the papers from all of them, declining it and quoting the appropriate clauses.

As for part (c) of the question, I am placing a copy of a document in the Library giving the average selling price per kilowatt hour for each category of

customers, namely domestic, commercial, and industrial customers. Information regarding the weighted average selling price per KWh for 2004, 2005 and 2006 is also given in that document. But just to complete it, if the hon. Member means domestic when she refers to household consumers, the average price for this year is Rs3.66.

Miss Deerpalsing: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am rather surprised that the hon. Minister has said that there has been a *levée de boucliers* from the private sector. Since Mr de Navacelle himself has clamoured for transparency, I find that very surprising from the private sector IPPs. Since the people of the country have sent us here to defend public interest, can the hon. Minister inform the House whether this non-disclosure clause is in the interest of the people of Mauritius or is it in the interest of the private sector that the public does not know what is in these contracts so that they do not know how much they are being fleeced off?

Dr. Kasenally: I think the question is quite obvious, Mr Speaker, Sir. However, it has been the policy of this Government and I think the last Government also tried to renegotiate the Power Purchase Agreement which we know was heavily weighted against the consumer. However, we have tried and we are trying again in view of the fact that there are certain independent power producers who have to renegotiate their Power Purchase Agreement due to the fact that they are increasing their production. I will look into that and, certainly, I think it is in the interest of the country. We are speaking about transparency and governance, I think this is a good occasion to try to find out what exactly it costs.

Miss Deerpalsing: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Minister whether he can inform the House whether the European Commission considers this lack of transparency to be part and parcel, an aspect, of the coherent energy policy that they have requested?

Dr. Kasenally: Mr Speaker, Sir, I think we are due to have more discussion with the European Commission on our energy policy because what we provided so far was only an outline. We have worked out the term of reference of a coherent energy policy which should be ready in about six to seven months' time. At that time, probably, we will try to bring this matter up.

Mr Bhagwan: Can we know from the hon. Minister when the first contracts of Belle Vue and Beau Champ were signed?

Dr. Kasenally: Probably, I will have to check it, but as far as I can recall, the Belle Vue contract was signed in 1998 and Beau Champ came subsequently.

Miss Deerpalsing: Mr Speaker, Sir, according to my information, the equity for the private IPPs ranges from 22% to 30%. Can the hon. Minister inform the House whether there is anywhere in the world any company which is private which takes no risk and which the people guarantee? Is there any company in the world which takes no risk and gets a return on equity of 30%?

Mr Speaker: Can the Minister answer this question?

Dr. Kasenally: I think it may be difficult for me, but it looks a bit obvious that certain companies are making a killing. However, I dare say that last week I had repeatedly said that for any new Power Purchase Agreement, the interest of the consumer will prime first and foremost. That is the bottom line.

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Speaker, Sir, since the first Power Purchase Agreement was signed between CEB and Beau Champ SE, can the hon. Minister confirm whether this model was used for the other Power Purchase Agreements?

Dr. Kasenally: Mr Speaker, Sir, this model of PPA is so complex and there are so many clauses in it. You have to put a first draft PPA, they check it; you have to put a second draft and a third draft. I think it would be difficult for me, at this stage, for me to answer such a complex question, but, certainly, I will look up into the matter and try to satisfy the demand of the hon. Member.

Mr Ganoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am not too sure whether I understood the Minister properly when he was talking of transparency generally, but may I have the confirmation from him as to whether in both CTDS and CT Savannah, the PPAs were made public and, in fact, were tabled in this very House? But it was not the case for Belle Vue! Can the Minister see to it that in future, whenever a PPA is signed between CEB or BOI with any private promoter, that there is no such confidentiality clause as was mentioned by him in the PPA as in the case of Belle Vue so that the PPA can be tabled in the Assembly and is thus rendered public to promote transparency for future Power Purchase Agreements?

Dr. Kasenally: Mr Speaker, Sir, I must say that even CTDS responded. So, there is no question of Belle Vue only. To clarify any doubt that may be existing in the mind of certain people, I will just quote one paragraph from CTDS which says –

“We wish to draw your attention on the operative provision paragraph (c) of clause 12 (14) of the Power Purchase Agreement entered into by the Central Electricity Board and the *Compagnie Thermique du Sud*, on the other hand, the purpose of which is self-explanatory. In the light of above, we wish to place on record that we are not inclined to waive our

rights under the provision of paragraph (c) of clause 22 (14) of the said Power Purchase Agreement.”

Mr Boodhoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, the Mauritian public voted for change in the last general election, for transparency and for public interest. May I ask the hon. Minister to seek advice from the SLO as far as the confidentiality agreement, and to table the PPA in the House is concerned.

Dr. Kasenally: Mr Speaker, Sir, I think all these agreements are *en béton*, but, however, the SLO has looked into it and has not come up with any solution. We have enlisted the services of international lawyers, but these agreements are so solid. The only way you can reveal it is only if you are renegotiating the PPA.

MISSIONS OVERSEAS – CHAUFFEUR-DRIVEN CARS

(No. B/509) Mr M. Dowarkasing (Third Member for Curepipe and Midlands) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether in regard to the hire of chauffeur-driven cars during official missions abroad, he will state Government policy regarding eligibility thereto.

The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development (Mr R. Sithanen): Mr Speaker, Sir, as per established policy, our mission overseas are authorised, whenever the need arises, to hire a chauffeur-driven car for officials of the level of Minister and above, as well as for the Secretary to the Cabinet and Head of the Civil Service when undertaking an official mission abroad.

Mr Dowarkasing: May I know from the hon. Deputy Prime Minister whether we have departed from these standing policies in the recent past?

Mr Sithanen: I am not aware, Mr Speaker, Sir. If the hon. Member has any specific case he can inform me. Obviously, I asked that question and what I have been informed, Mr Speaker, Sir, is that it concerns officials of the level of Minister and above, including the Speaker of the National Assembly, the Chief Justice, the Deputy Prime Minister, the Vice President, the Prime Minister and the President.

Mr Dowarkasing: If you will allow me, I'll draw the attention of the hon. Minister to two situations in October 2005 and February 2006 where, eventually the office of the representative in New York has departed from that standing policy and that has been highlighted quite strongly in the Audit's Report of 2006.

Mr Sithanen: I will look into it, Mr Speaker, Sir. Let me make one remark about this issue. It is a very sensitive issue and we are trying to review it. I hope hon. Members on the other side, especially those who have been Ministers will appreciate that. In some cases, when Ministers travel to cities where we have embassies, if they have additional cars, it is easy. When they don't have additional cars or when Ministers or those who are eligible to travel to cities where there are no diplomatic representations, it becomes quite tricky. We are looking into it and probably there will be some change in this policy.

Mr Dowarkasing: Mr Speaker, Sir, I quite agree with the hon. Minister. But, let me draw his attention to the fact that there have been abuses also in terms of waiting time, where sums up to Rs500,000 have been paid for those chauffeur-driven taxis.

STC – GENERAL MANAGER – MISSION TO INDIA

(No. B/510) Mr M. Dowarkasing (Third Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the Minister of Industry, Small & Medium Enterprises, Commerce & Co-operatives whether, in regard to Mr R. S. of the State Trading Corporation, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Corporation, information as to if the latter has visited India during the month of May and, if so –

- (a) if the visit was related to the purchase of AMUL milk and, if not, the purpose thereof, and
- (b) the amount of money spent in connection with the visit.

Dr. Jeetah: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that the General Manager of the State Trading Corporation, Mr R. S., went on mission to India from 03 May to 06 May 2007. The visit was not related to the purchase of milk.

As regards part (b) of the question, I am tabling the requested information.

Mr Dowarkasing: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister has not answered my question pertaining to the purpose of that particular visit. If it was not for the purchase or negotiating the purchase of AMUL milk, may I ask him for what purpose Mr R. S. visited India?

Dr. Jeetah: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Member may wish to refer to the reply I gave to PQ No. B/35, wherein I clearly stated that the official trips of the General Manager are related to the business of the Corporation. The STC is responsible for the importation of strategic goods.

Mr Dowarkasing: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I know for what particular business Mr R. S. made that visit from 03 to 06 May?

Dr. Jeetah: Mr Speaker, Sir, I would wish to refer the hon. Member to the PQ I referred to.

Mr Dowarkasing: Mr Speaker, Sir, my question is clear. I don't know what the hon. Minister has to hide. For the sake of transparency, if he has the reply, can he give it to this House? I would like to know for what purpose Mr R. S. made a visit from 03 to 06 May, and whether that was related to the purchase of iron bars from India.

Dr. Jeetah: Mr Speaker, Sir, this is not true. I have mentioned that the STC is responsible for the importation of strategic goods. This is the reason why he was on a visit to India.

SOCIAL AID – AMOUNT PAID – F/Y 2005-2006

(No. B/511) Mr M. Dowarkasing (Third Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the Minister of Social Security, National Solidarity & Senior Citizens Welfare and Reform Institutions whether, in regard to the total amount of funds payable for social aid for the financial year 2005-2006, she is aware if any discrepancy has been noted between the figures available at the Ministry and those at the Accountant General's Department and, if so, will she give details thereof.

Mrs Bappoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am aware of the issue.

Following a review of the accounts and records of this Ministry by the National Audit Office for the year ending 30 June 2006, the Ministry's attention was drawn to the fact that there was a difference between the total amounts paid as social aid in the computerised system of my Ministry and that of the Accountant General's Division.

Mr Speaker: Can I ask the hon. Minister of Housing to keep quiet! This is the last time I am warning him!

Mrs Bapoo: In fact, the figure of the Accountant General's System was Rs278.5 m., while payments recorded in my Ministry's system was Rs221.7 m.

The difference of Rs56.8 m. is explained by the fact that some payments were effected manually, that is, outside the computerised system of the Ministry, but recorded subsequently in the Accountant General's System.

I wish to point out that, at times, my Ministry had to resort to manual payments owing to computer breakdowns in some Social Security offices, and theft of computers in some offices like Cassis, Bambous, Terre Rouge and

Plaine Verte. To avoid hardships to social aid clients, who are mostly needy, there was no other alternative than to have recourse to manual payments.

A report containing the Ministry's comments and observations on the Audit Report was sent to the Director of Audit on 16 October 2006, with copy to the Financial Secretary, and in the report of the Director of Audit for the year ended 30 June 2006, the explanations of the Ministry were taken note at pages 162 and 163.

Mr Dowarkasing: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Minister whether, due to the fact that things were done manually instead of being computerised, she has encountered any case of overpayment?

Mrs Bappoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, there has been no overpayment. The figures are exact. Due to the fact that, at times, the work has to be done manually, that causes a difference. But, everything has been clarified, and there is no overpayment.

MONTAGNE LONGUE RAILWAY TRACK – STATE LAND - LEASE

(No. B/512) Mr G. Lesjongard (Second Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Housing & Lands whether he will state if he has received a letter dated 25 September 2006 from the inhabitants of Railway Road, Montagne Longue, in connection with the purchase of the plot of land allocated to them for residential purposes and, if so, if any decision has been taken.

Mr Dulull: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am advised that my Ministry did in fact receive a letter dated 25 September 2006 from one Mr Doorgaparsad Seevrajsing on behalf of the inhabitants of Railway Road, Long Mountain, residing on State land over former Montagne Longue railway track.

The House may wish to be informed that it was in 2001 that the then Government decided that former railway track and all adjoining land should be preserved and cannot thus be leased on long term. Consequently, the sale or even long-term lease of such land cannot be entertained. However, new leases and renewal of expired leases could be considered on a case to case basis, and will be subject to no new permanent structure being constructed, and such leases being renewed only on a yearly basis, in the context of the decision taken regarding development of ex-railway land.

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to those leases, may I ask the hon. Minister their duration and when are they going to expire?

Mr Dulull: Mr Speaker, Sir, those leases are renewed on a year to year basis. There is a long list of leases, which expire on different dates.

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Speaker, Sir, since Government has taken the decision to sell land where are found CHA estates, may I ask the hon. Minister whether Government will give the same consideration to the land found on Railway Road, at Baillache Road, Montagne Longue?

Mr Dulull: Mr Speaker, Sir, as I mentioned, it is a decision of the former Government, of which the hon. Member formed part. The decision is that no land on the railway track should be leased for a long term period or to be put on sale. But, this is a policy decision, and we have to abide to it.

Mrs Labelle: Mr Speaker, Sir, since the hon. Minister is talking about a decision of the previous Government, may I ask him whether he thinks this decision is a good one and, if not, whether, since now he is governing, he will bring a change to it?

Mr Dulull: Mr Speaker, Sir, I suppose that, if this decision was taken by the previous Government, they had the presumption that it was a good decision. We are trying to rethink our transport network, and we might need the railway track. So, we will give consideration to our transport problem first.

M. P. D., MRS – STATE LAND - ALLOCATION

(No. B/513) Mr G. Lesjongard (Second Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Women's Rights, Child Development, Family Welfare & Consumer Protection whether she is aware that Mrs M. P. D. and her four children, of Roche Bois, have been living on the road side since November 2006 and, if so, will she state the measures, if any, that will be taken to alleviate their situation.

Mrs Seebun: Mr Speaker, Sir, the case of Mrs M. P. D. and her four children, actually living at Roche Bois, was reported to my Ministry in February by the Ombudsperson for Children's Office.

Officers of my Ministry effected a visit at Avenue Benitier, Roche Bois, where they met the lady and her four kids, living in a caravan donated by Caritas. The four children were found to be in good hygienic condition and were not at risk of harm or neglect.

The inquiry also revealed that the family was facing a housing problem. Mrs M. P. D. had applied for a plot of land at the Ministry of Housing & Lands.

I am informed that a plot of State land was allocated to her at Cité La Cure in December 2006. However, since there is a squatter on the site, another plot of land has been allocated to her at Baie du Tombeau, of an extent of four perches.

The Trust Fund for the Social Integration of Vulnerable Groups has been requested to help the lady to construct a house by the provision of building materials, and I am personally following it up.

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister when officers of her Ministry last visited that family?

Mrs Seebun: They have been visiting practically every day recently. Maybe lastly, it was yesterday.

Mr Speaker: Next Question, hon. Lesjongard!

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Speaker, Sir, I haven't finished. I have supplementary questions.

Mr Speaker: The supplementary questions are regulated by the discretion of the Speaker. Does the hon. Member have more questions to put?

Mr Lesjongard: I have many more supplementary questions.

Mr Speaker: According to the Standing Order, the discretion belongs to the Speaker.

(Interruptions)

The hon. Member can put his questions. How many questions does he have?

Mr Lesjongard: No, I don't have any supplementary questions, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker: Alright! Next question, hon. Lesjongard!

(Interruptions)

Mr Lesjongard: Ce n'est pas possible, M. le president!

Mr Speaker: What did the hon. Member say?

Mr Lesjongard: I am saying, Mr Speaker, Sir, that I have put a question; I have two or three supplementary questions and this concerns a very poor family living on the road side for one year.

Mr Speaker: Let me tell the hon. Member that I have never prevented him or any other Member from putting supplementary questions. I was looking at the hon. Minister when she was answering the question, she sat down and the hon. Member was not standing. So, I thought there were no further supplementary questions. I have never refused any question and I am asking the hon. Member to put his questions.

Mr Lesjongard: This is what you have done, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker: Can the hon. Member put the supplementary questions?

Mr Lesjongard: *Mo allé moi, mo pas pou reste là moi! Li pas possible ça!*

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

(Interruptions)

I have never prevented the hon. Member from putting questions!

(Interruptions)

At this stage hon. Lesjongard left the Chamber followed by Members of the MSM Opposition.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Varma, next question, please!

SUGAR - LOCAL CONSUMPTION - IMPORTATION

(No. B/516) Mr Y. Varma (First Member for Mahebourg and Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Industry, Small & Medium Enterprises, Commerce and Co-operatives whether, in regard to sugar for local consumption, he will state if it is imported and, if so, the quantity per year.

Dr. Jeetah: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Mauritius Sugar Syndicate that sugar is imported for local consumption since crop year 1995/1996 with the authorisation of Government.

An average of 40,000 metric tons of white sugar and 4,000 metric tons of raw sugar are imported on an annual basis.

For year 2006/2007, the volume to be imported is estimated to be about 37,995 metric tons of white sugar and 3,995 metric tons of raw sugar.

Mr Varma: Mr Speaker, Sir, could the hon. Minister kindly inform the House who actually imports...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Hon. Dayal, you want to go home?

(Interruptions)

Mr Varma: Mr Speaker, Sir, could the hon. Minister inform the House who imports this sugar for local consumption?

Dr. Jeetah: I am informed that it is the Mauritius Sugar Syndicate.

Mr Varma: Could the hon. Minister kindly inform the House the price at which the sugar is bought from the other countries?

Dr. Jeetah: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have the information with regard to sale and I am tabling the document. But with regard to the purchase, I don't have it on me for the moment.

Mr Varma: Can the hon. Minister kindly inform the House from which country precisely sugar is imported?

Dr. Jeetah: I have to look into the matter, Mr Speaker, Sir. I don't have the information. I suspect it might be from South Africa, but I will have to check.

Mr Varma: I have one last supplementary question, Mr Speaker, Sir. Could the hon. Minister kindly inform the House whether the price of sugar that is imported compares favourably with the cost of local production?

Dr. Jeetah: Mr Speaker, Sir, as I said, I don't have the information. If I get a substantive question, I will gladly reply.

Mr Varma: Can the hon. Minister kindly inform the House whether the price of sugar that is imported is subsidised by Government or by the Sugar Syndicate?

Dr. Jeetah: As I said, Mr Speaker, Sir, I am laying on the Table of the Assembly the sale price, but I don't have any further information about this matter.

Mr Speaker: Next Question!

PETROLEUM PRODUCTS - IMPORT EXCISE DUTY

(No. B/517) Mr Y. Varma (First Member for Mahebourg and Plaine Magnien) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to import excise duty on petroleum products, he will state if Government proposes to review its method of computation and, if so, the reasons therefor.

The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance & Economic Development (Mr R. Sithanen): Mr Speaker, Sir, petroleum products are subject to excise duty on a "specific basis", that is, a fixed amount of rupee per litre, since June 2002. The rate is Rs9.80 per litre of mogas and Rs3.00 per litre for gas oil, which is known as diesel.

There is no plan to change the method of taxation on petroleum products.

Mr Varma: Mr Speaker, Sir, is the hon. Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance aware that in 2005/2006, the then Customs and Excise Department carried out a Comprehensive Internal Audit into the procedures system and controls exercised over petroleum products?

Mr Sithanen: Yes, I am aware of this report, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Varma: Mr Speaker, Sir, is the hon. Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance aware that for the excise duty of the petroleum products, the computation is based now on temperature?

Mr Sithanen: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am not a specialist in this sector, but what I do understand is that one of the points that has been raised is with respect to evaporation. I don't know whether this is what the hon. Member has in mind, but if he would come with a specific question, I will look into it and revert to this Assembly, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Varma: Mr Speaker, Sir, is the hon. Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance aware that actually petroleum products expand with temperature and on that expansion, that is, the excess amount of petroleum, no excise duty is paid?

Mr Sithanen: I have heard it is the opposite, Mr Speaker, Sir, but, as I said, I will look into it if the hon. Member asks a specific question.

INDIAN OCEAN ISLAND GAMES - MAURITIAN ATHLETES - MEDALS

(No. B/520) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Youth and Sports whether, in regard to the last edition of the Indian Ocean Island Games, he will state the number of medals obtained by Mauritian athletes in each discipline.

(Vide to PQ No. B/496)

ISLETS - STRATEGIC PLAN

(No. B/521) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Agro Industry and Fisheries whether in regards to the islets, he will state –

- (a) if there is any management plan in relation thereto;
- (b) if Government proposes to set up an Islet Nature Park;
- (c) the number thereof given on lease since July 2005 todate, indicating –
 - (i) the names of the beneficiaries, and
 - (ii) the purpose of the lease, and
- (d) the measures that have been or will be taken to prevent their degradation.

Dr. Boolell: Mr Speaker, Sir, in reply to part (a) of the question, I wish to inform the House that a Strategic Plan was developed for sixteen islets known as the Islets National Park Strategic Plan in year 2004. Six of these islets have already been classified as Nature Reserves under the Forests and Reserves Act 1983. Further, eight islets have been proclaimed and declared as National Park under Section 11 of the Wildlife and National Parks Act.

You may wish to note that Management Plans for five islets around Mauritius have already been developed and approved. These are Ile d’Ambre, Ile aux Flammants and Pigeon Rock Islet which are National Parks, Gunner’s Quoin and Serpent Island which are Nature Reserves. Management plans for

four islets in Rodrigues have already been completed. They are Cocos Island, Sables Island, Crab Island and Gombrani Island.

The Draft Management Plan for Round Island is also ready.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: I don't know what is happening. Why the hon. Minister is laughing while answering the question?

(Interruptions)

Are we in an institution? Where are we?

Dr. Boolell: My apologies, Mr Speaker, Sir! My voice is a bit hoarse, Sir.

My Ministry has also called for consultancy services for the preparation of Management Plans for Flat Island, Gabriel Island, Ile aux Mariannes, Rocher des Oiseaux, Ile aux Fous, Ile aux Fourneaux and Ile aux Bénitiers.

In reply to part (b) of the question, I refer the hon. Member to my answer to part (a) and wish to state that in view thereof Government does not propose to set up an Islets Nature Park.

In relation to part (c) (i) of the question, since July 2005 to date, only Ilot Gabriel has been given on lease to Ocean Blue Island Co. Ltd. The purpose of the lease is for the maintenance and cleaning of the whole island and a part thereof for eco-tourism purposes, including the reinstatement and preservation of the natural environment of the islet.

As regards to part (d) of the question, I wish to inform the House that the Islets National Parks Strategic Plan is being examined and its recommendations are being implemented. The lease of Gabriel Island for eco-tourism purposes is in line with the recommendations of the Strategic Plan. Further, Government through the National Parks and Conservation Service (NPCS) and the Forestry Service are jointly implementing conservation activities with the Mauritian Wildlife Foundation (MWF) for conservation work on Round Island and Ile aux Aigrettes.

A permanent National Coast Guard (NCG) post has been set up on Flat Island and the National Coast Guard is acting as a privileged partner to prevent littering and overnight camping on the island.

Plant restoration activities on Flat and Gabriel Islands and Gunner's Quoin have been carried out while rodents have been eradicated completely since 1995.

Monitoring of reptiles including the small population of *Nactus Coindimerensis* and the rare orange tailed skink is ongoing on the island by National Parks and Conservation Service.

A Darwin funded project is underway to restore reptile communities which have disappeared on islets such as Ile aux Aigrettes, Gunners Quoin, Ilot Chat and Ile aux Fouquets.

Cleaning campaigns are to be organised by the NPCCS in collaboration with Non-Governmental Organisations and local communities on Ile aux Fouquets (Ile aux Phares), Ilot Marianne and Ilot Vacoas in the South East.

A training programme for National Coast Guard personnel has already been prepared so as to enlist their collaboration in the policing of islets and to create awareness on the various legislation governing islets.

Fact sheets on islets biodiversity are being prepared for primary and secondary students and the general public as part of our awareness and educational programmes.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Mr Bhagwan: Can we know from the hon. Minister to which company has Ilot Gabriel been leased?

Dr. Boolell: I stated it in my reply. I will read it again. In relation to part (c), since July 2005 to date, only Ilot Gabriel has been given on lease to Ocean Blue Island Co. Ltd. The purpose of the lease is for maintenance and cleaning of the whole island and a part thereof for eco-tourism purposes including the reinstatement and preservation of the natural environment of the islet.

Mr Bhagwan: Can we know from the hon. Minister whether his officers have visited Gabriel Island recently? The official complaint that I have received as Member of Parliament is that this island is in a complete mess and, in fact, this company is not taking care of the islet. Can we know from the hon. Minister whether he is agreeable to pay a visit personally at his convenience to see *de visu* what is happening at the said islet?

Dr. Boolell: The reason as to why we have entrusted this islet to that enterprise is precisely to upgrade the facilities and, at the same time, the recruitment of a consultant has been submitted to the Central Tender Board on 14 December 2006 to upgrade and renovate as the place has been downgraded since a very long time. This is the reason why we need to have a proper conservation management plan.

Mr Bhagwan: Can the Minister check whether the company is doing what it was supposed to do? Apart from Gabriel Island, will the Minister say whether there are regular site visits, a sort of audit squad, on our islets because the situation is very bad?

Dr. Boolell: In fact, I put the question again today to Mr Puttoo of the National Parks & Conservation Service and he reassured me that there is an audit trail done and everything is being closely monitored. However, I do grant you that there is a need for proper policy, the reason as to why the National Coast Guard has been posted on one of the islets. I grant you we have to work in close collaboration with Conservation Units like Mauritius Wildlife and other non-governmental organisations which show interest. I can reassure my friend, if he wants to set his mind at rest, I am willing to organise a site visit and we can certainly do the needful.

Mr Bhagwan: Can we know from the Minister whether his Ministry or his relevant department can work out a penalty and whether there is a safeguard in the legislation for those who cause damages to our islets, even tourists? They can be taken to task, even sending them to court or paying a fine. Is there such a legislation and can the Minister inform the House about the penalty?

Dr. Boolell: Sir, in the legislation of the Environment Protection Act, there are the necessary safeguards and I know there is a fine. Of course, the problem is not what exists in the provision of the legislation, it is the enforcement.

(At this stage the MSM Opposition Members resumed their seats)

RAINBOW INSURANCE CO. LTD. – FINANCIAL DIFFICULTIES

(No. B/522) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether he is aware that the Rainbow Insurance Company Ltd. is currently facing financial problems and, if so, will he, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Financial Services Commission, information as to -

- (a) if it is operating within the framework of the relevant legislation, and

- (b) the measures that will be taken to protect the interest of its policy holders and the clients.

The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development (Mr R. Sithanen): Mr Speaker Sir, I am informed that the Financial Services Commission issued a public communiqué on 01 March 2007, informing the public of the following -

- (a) The Financial Services Commission proposes pursuant to section 46(1) of the Insurance Act 1987, to suspend the registration of Rainbow Insurance Co. Ltd in relation to the whole of its business;
- (b) The Commission had given directions to the company in accordance with section 44(1)(b) of the Insurance Act 1987, not to issue or renew any insurance policy whether directly or through its agents or enter into any new contract of insurance for both general and long term insurance business.

I am further advised, Mr Speaker, Sir, that pursuant to provisions of the Insurance Act 1987, the company shall, notwithstanding the decisions mentioned above, continue carrying on business relating to contracts of insurance effected by the company prior to 01 March 2007. In accordance with section 48 of the Insurance Act 1987, the company has through the Commission, lodged a notice of review of the decisions of the Commission to me.

As regards the notice, I have requested the Commission to examine the grounds for the review.

CAMP DE MASQUE – WATER SUPPLY

(No. B/523) Mr L. Bundhoo (Second Member for Montagne Blanche & GRSE) asked the Minister of Public Utilities whether he is aware of the difficulties faced by the inhabitants of the village of Camp de Masque, regarding an inadequate supply of water and, if so, will he, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Central Water Authority, information as to the remedial measures that will be taken.

Dr. Kasenally: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am very much aware of the difficulties faced by the inhabitants of the village of Camp de Masque regarding an inadequate supply of water and I have taken corrective measures as a result of which there has been a significant improvement recently.

However, I am informed by the CWA that the Camp de Masque village is supplied with water from the Mont Ida service reservoir and that the water supply is on a 24-hour basis. However, the network from Mont Ida reservoir to Camp de Masque is made up of an asbestos cement/cast iron pipe.

The CWA has noted that the pressure in this network, drops from two bars during off peak hours to below one bar during peak demand. The CWA is presently carrying out an in-depth investigation with a view to improving the water pressure.

In reply to PQ No. B/67 on 27 March 2007, I informed the House that the Central Water Authority is presently implementing a major project on the rationalisation, upgrading and extension of the water distribution in the east. The first phase of the project is expected to be completed by the end of 2007. Under Phase II of the project, the pipeline supplying Camp de Masque will be replaced and this will, I hope, permanently resolve the problem of the inhabitants of Camp de Masque village.

NATIONAL PAY COUNCIL – WAGE COMPENSATION

(No. B/524) Mr G. Guinness (Third Member for Montagne Blanche & GRSE) asked the Minister of Labour, Industrial Relations & Employment whether, in regard to wage compensation for the year 2007-2008, he will state if the National Pay Council has finalised its proposal in relation thereto and, if so, will he state the factors that have been taken into consideration for the determination of the quantum thereof.

(Vide Reply to PNQ)

CAMP DE MASQUE SOCIAL SECURITY OFFICE - RELOCATION

(No. B/525) Mr L. Bundhoo (Second Member for Montagne Blanche & GRSE) asked the Minister of Social Security, National Solidarity and Senior Citizen Welfare and Reform Institutions whether, she will state if it is proposed to relocate the Social Security Office of Camp de Masque and, if so, will she state where, indicating the reasons for the choice of the new location.

Mrs Bappoo: Mr Speaker Sir, since the early 1970's, the Social Security Office of Medine Camp de Masque, which, at that time, was known as Public Assistance Office, was housed in a rental building located on the Royal Road. In view of the fact that over the years, the building was not properly maintained by the owner, officers who were accommodated there have started complaining of water leakage during heavy rainy seasons. In addition the number of staff occupying the building has increased over the years and no shelter and public toilets were available for the beneficiaries. Consequently, the decision was

taken to launch an open tender. In fact, tenders, Mr Speaker, Sir, have been launched four times, September 2005, January 2006, March 2006 and the last was in February 2007.

Two bids were received at the Ministry for one building located at Peeroo Lane, Medine Camp de Masque and the other at Royal Road, Mont Ida.

A technical evaluation committee comprising of Technical, as well as Administrative staff was constituted and a site visit was effected in respect of both buildings. According to the report of the team, the building located at Peeroo Lane, Medine Camp de Masque is more convenient for the following reasons –

- (i) it provides sufficient space to accommodate all the staff;
- (ii) it does not require any modification prior to occupation;
- (iii) it provides a convenient space to keep the stores;
- (iv) it offers sufficient parking facilities for both the officers and clients, and
- (v) it provides an easy access to the clients.

Moreover, it was the lower of the two bids. As regards the other building, located at Royal Road, Mont Ida, it was more of a hall type without any partitioning and the rental was very much higher. The report was submitted to the departmental tender committee which approved the recommendations of the technical committee and presently clearances are being sought in respect of the building at Peeroo Lane and once finalised, the contract will be awarded.

Mr Bundhoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister whether she has received a letter signed by the president of the Village Council of Médine dated around 11 May in connection with the exercise of relocation of the Social Security Office?

Mrs Bappoo: I have received the letter, but the issue is that there has been a tender procedure and I have to go according to the finding of the tender committee, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Bundhoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister whether her officers have had any meetings with the representatives of the Village Council or other *Forces Vives* in order to ensure that the proposed newly location is to the satisfaction of the inhabitants of this locality?

Mrs Bappoo: I will have to check, but I know that the officers have given sufficient explanation about easy accessibility to the said building at Peeroo Lane.

Mr Gunness: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Minister to check well, because she mentioned twice Peeroo Lane at Médine Camp de Masque. But I

think Peeroo Lane is not found at Médine Camp de Masque, but at Camp de Masque, which is three or four kilometres away from where it was.

Mrs Bappoo: The building is at Peeroo Lane, Camp de Masque. I think I said Médine. I will check it again.

Mr Bundhoo: May I add something to what my colleague has just said? In fact, he is right. It is located at l'Unité, Camp de Masque which is quite off the area which is highly inhabited. Therefore, I will ask the hon. Minister if she could kindly on humanitarian grounds try to reconsider the location of the Social Security Office.

Mrs Bappoo: I will certainly try to do so, Mr Speaker, Sir, but it has also been a very difficult task for the Ministry because it has been the fourth tender that has been launched. Maybe I will seek assistance from the MPs of the constituency for the identification of proper buildings.

Mr Bundhoo: The hon. Minister said in her reply that there are two offers. Could she negotiate with the second offer and try to see if she can match the lower tenderer in order...

(Interruptions)

I am only asking a question, because, in the first instance, l'Unité was not part of the area where it was advertised to house the Social Security Office, which means that the person who probably had bid for this contract, should not have it in the first place, because it was not included in the tender exercise.

Mrs Bappoo: I don't think so, Mr Speaker, Sir, but it is indeed very difficult for me to interfere with the tender committee. In fact, there has been a big difference between the two bids.

Mr Gunness: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Minister to check because at Peeroo Lane, there are very few pensioners. Most of the pensioners are from Mont Ida and Médine Camp de Masque. Therefore, I strongly feel that if we have to house a Social Security Office, it has to be at Mont Ida or Médine Camp de Masque.

Mrs Bappoo: Sir, I will certainly look into it.

Mr Gunness: Can I make a suggestion to the Minister? There is the Cooperatives building which is under the aegis of the Ministry of Cooperatives and is a brand new building. Probably they have not seen the advertisement, but if the hon. Minister can liaise with her colleague, it can shelter the Social Security Office and I am sure the rent also will be lower.

Mrs Bappoo: I do take note, Mr Speaker, Sir.

CAROLINE SOCIAL WELFARE CENTRE – UPGRADING WORKS

(No. B/526) **Mr L. Bundhoo (Second Member for Montagne Blanche and GRSE)** asked the Minister of Environment and National Development Unit whether he will state if there is any project for upgrading works to be carried out at the Caroline Social Welfare Centre and, if so, will he state where matters stand, indicating if provision has been made to include a children's playground and a family corner.

Mr Bachoo: Sir, my Ministry started the implementation of a project to upgrade the existing children garden, petanque space, block-wall, footpath, and entrance gate at Caroline Social Welfare Centre on 02 April 2007.

However, works were stopped as from 25 April, as the President of the Social Welfare Centre and the *Forces Vives* of Caroline Village, made a request to review the project so as to –

- (i) eliminate the *petanque* space;
- (ii) construct a shed in the yard to provide shelter to patients attending the Area Health Centre;
- (iii) set up a children playground cum family corner, and
- (iv) to provide for a proper main entrance, footpaths and lighting of the front yard.

The new design and scope of works is being finalised and it is expected that works will resume by the end of June 2007.

CAMP CAVAL, JOACHIM, WOOTON – COMMUNITY CENTRES

(No. B/527) **Mr E. Guimbeau (First Member for Curepipe and Midlands)** asked the Minister of Social Security, National Solidarity and Senior Citizens Welfare & Reform Institutions whether, in regard to the community centres at Camp Caval, Joachim and Wooton, she will state if they have been inaugurated and, if not, why not.

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

The schemes for the Community Centres of Cité Joachim, Camp Caval and Wooton form part of a major contract worth Rs162,550,740 awarded on 03 March 2004 to the then Development Works Corporation for the construction of 13 Community Centres in various localities. As the DWC was taken up with a number of projects in different parts of the country, there have been delays in the implementation of the schemes. Only two Community Centres namely Montréal (Coromandel) and Eau Coulée have been completed and handed over.

Following the closing down of the DWC, an appraisal of unfinished works in respect of Community Centres not yet completed has been carried out. Measures have been taken to contact the Ministry of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping to entrust to its District contractors outstanding works to the Community Centres including Wooton Community Centre.

Outstanding works at Cité Joachim and Camp Caval Community Centres consist of electrical components as well as structural works. The Energy Services Division and the Ministry of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping are extending assistance for preparing tender documents to float tenders.

Work at Wooton Community Centre is expected to be completed in about 3 months. In view of tendering procedures involved, the works at Cité Joachim and Camp Caval Community Centres will be completed in about 6 months.

As soon as finishing works in respect of the Community Centres will be completed, discussions will be held with the Ministry of Social Security, National Solidarity, Senior Citizens Welfare and Reform Institutions to take over the Centres, for their eventual inauguration to make them operational.

CUREPIPE AND MIDLANDS - PROJECTS

(No. B/528) Mr E. Guimbeau (First Member for Curepipe and Midlands) asked the Minister of Environment and National Development Unit whether, in regard to the projects of the National Development Unit in Constituency No. 17, Curepipe and Midlands, he will state –

- (a) the number of
 - (i) ongoing projects, giving details thereof, including the contract value in each case;
 - (ii) projects which are being considered to be implemented in the near future, and
- (b) the amount spent thereon since September 2005 to date.

Mr Bachoo: Sir, details of projects in Constituency No. 17 including ongoing projects, contract value, projects proposed for implementation as well as the amount spent since September are being compiled and will be deposited on the Table of the House as soon as they are ready.

Mr Guimbeau: *M. le président, tous les projets dans la circonscription de Curepipe/Midlands sont stagnants.* May I remind the hon. Minister that people living in Curepipe and Midlands are taxpayers and, therefore, deserve a minimum consideration?

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, as I have just mentioned, the list of works which are being undertaken will be definitely circulated and the hon. Member

will be pleased to note that there are over twenty five projects which are in the pipeline.

Mr Dowarkasing: May I know from the hon. Minister, while tabling that list, if he can enlighten us as to whether there have been any modifications in the original plan of the projects?

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, most of them are small and new projects, including the resurfacing of roads and the construction of new roads.

SUGAR CANE PLANTERS - PLANTATIONS

(No. B/529) Mr E. Guimbeau (First Member for Curepipe and Midlands) asked the Minister of Agro Industry and Fisheries whether, in regard to the 179 large sugar cane planters, he will table a list thereof, indicating the location and size of their plantations.

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

QUARTIER MILITAIRE – TRAFFIC LIGHTS

(No. B/530) Mr S. Dayal (Second Member for Quartier Militaire and Moka) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping whether he will consider the advisability of installing traffic lights and a pedestrian crossing at Quartier Militaire, in the vicinity of the Caltex Filling Station and the St Léon Church.

The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure (Dr. R. Beebeejaun): Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that, according to a detailed engineering survey carried out by the Traffic Management and Road Safety Unit on 25 May 2007, it is not considered advisable to provide traffic light and a pedestrian crossing at the location mentioned because of poor visibility due to the presence of a sharp bend, the downward road slope and the risks associated with a pedestrian crossing being too close to junctions.

However, with a view to improving road safety, a number of road safety measures have already been implemented, namely raised footpaths, pedestrian crossings and handrails, two bus stops with laybys and 50 km/hr speed limit signs at both ends of the village.

CIRCONSTANCE, ST. PIERRE – MUSLIM CEMETERY

(No. B/531) Mr S. Dayal (Second Member for Quartier Militaire and Moka) asked the Minister of Housing and Lands whether he is aware that there is space problem for burial at the Muslim cemetery at Circonstance, St Pierre and, if so, will he consider the advisability of allocating two arpents of land at

St Pierre or Côte d'Or, or in the vicinity thereof, for the construction of a new cemetery.

Mr Dulull: Mr Speaker, Sir, we are in the process of considering the request of allocating the two arpents at St. Pierre or Côte d'Or, or in the vicinity for the construction of a new cemetery.

Mr Dayal: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Minister if in the process, he can look into the possibility of allocating a small portion of land for the construction of a cremation ground in the same area.

Mr Dulull: Certainly, we will.

Mr Speaker: I have to inform the House that PQ Nos B/532 and B/554 have been withdrawn.

BELLE MARE – PRIMARY SCHOOL

(No. B/534) Dr. R. Mungur (Second Member for Flacq and Bon Accueil) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether he will state if it is proposed to construct a primary school at Belle Mare, indicating –

- (a) the number of school children residing at Belle Mare currently, attending school at Quatre Cocos and Mare La Chaux Government schools, and
- (b) if a school mapping exercise has been carried out in the region.

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker Sir, I am informed that the number of pupils residing at Belle Mare who are presently attending Quatre Cocos Government School and Mare La Chaux Government School is 149 and 73, respectively, a total of 222 pupils.

A new school there would, therefore, be one which would comprise only 6 classrooms, and only one stream, that is, one section for each of the six standards.

However, the establishment of such a one-stream school at this stage is not a priority for my Ministry, especially in the context, where we have to optimise the use of funds available to the Ministry.

Moreover, a new classroom block comprising six classrooms will be completed by the beginning of August 2007 at Quatre Cocos Government School. This additional infrastructural element will help to ease the problem of school access in the region.

Nonetheless, should there be need in the future for the construction of a primary school at Belle Mare and should additional funds be made available, my Ministry will review the situation.

With regard to the issue of school mapping exercise, I am advised that there has been no recent request for the construction of a primary school at Belle Mare. Consequently, no school mapping exercise has been carried out for the area. However, now that the hon. Member has kindly indicated the need for such an exercise in the Belle Mare region, my Ministry will carry out a school mapping exercise with regard to that region.

Dr. Mungur: Mr Speaker, Sir, we are talking of two things. One is education for all and quality education, and providing school services where the children are, probably, should be one of the priorities. Can the Minister tell us what are the priorities for these 222 children attending school properly in their village, and whether this is not a priority?

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, this is not the only area where we have pupils going to school in another area, but we have made arrangements for facilities to be available to these pupils. As regards construction of new schools, it is a comprehensive exercise which is done for the whole of the Republic and then a decision is taken. Secondly, we have to take into account the availability of land, demographic factors and also the availability of funds. It is a complex exercise, Mr Speaker, Sir, but as I said to the hon. Member, we will keep that request in view, if we are in a position to provide the funds and also include the school in the list of priorities.

Dr. Mungur: Mr Speaker, Sir, can we know when the school mapping exercise will be conducted?

Mr Gokhool: The school mapping exercise is an ongoing exercise. But for the region of Belle Mare, I will request my officers to carry out a school mapping exercise.

VALLEE DES PRETRES – INTERNET CONNECTION

(No. B/535) Mrs B. Juggoo (First Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Information Technology and Telecommunications whether he is aware that there is no proper connection of the internet or use of the Skypak at Vallée des Prêtres and, if so, will he state the remedial measures that will be taken.

(Withdrawn)

INTERNATIONAL TRADE FAIRS

(No. B/536) Mrs B. Juggoo (First Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of industry, Small & Medium Enterprises, Commerce and Co-operatives whether he is aware that international trade fairs are no longer held in Mauritius on a regular basis as was the case before and, if so, will he state the reasons therefor.

(Withdrawn)

SIFB – ACTUARIAL SURVEY

(No. B/537) Dr. R. Mungur (Second Member for Flacq and Bon Accueil) asked the Minister of Agro Industry and Fisheries whether, in regard to the Sugar Insurance Fund Board, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, information as to when the next actuarial survey will be carried out.

The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance & Economic Development (Mr R. Sithanen): Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I am replying to this question.

Mr Speaker Sir, Section 48 of the SIF Act No. 4 of 1974, as subsequently amended, provides for the SIF Board to appoint at least once every five years a consulting actuary to review the position of the Fund.

I wish to inform the House that the last actuarial review was carried in March 2006, and the next one will take place in accordance with the provision of the Act, or at such earlier time as the Board may decide.

FISHERS – SPOUSE - COMPENSATION

(No. B/538) Mrs B. Juggoo (First Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Agro Industry and Fisheries whether, in regard to the fishers who lose their life at sea, he will state if any compensation is payable to the surviving spouse and, if so, how and when.

(Withdrawn)

CONSUMER PROTECTION UNIT – HOT LINE

(No. B/539) Mrs M. Martin (Second Member for Curepipe and Midlands) asked the Minister of Women's Rights, Child Development, Family Welfare & Consumer Protection whether, in regard to the hot line telephone number of the Consumer Protection Unit, she will state if it has now been changed.

Mrs Seebun: Mr Speaker, Sir, the answer is yes. The hot line has been changed to a 3-digit number which is 185 and this has already been communicated to the public at large.

Mrs Martin: Mr Speaker, Sir, I thank the hon. Minister for her answer. May I know what are the means that she is using to communicate this number to the consumers?

Mrs Seebun: Mr Speaker, Sir, I did it through television and newspapers.

Mrs Martin: Mr Speaker, Sir, personally, I have not seen anything of that sort. But can I know from the hon. Minister whether the former number is still operational?

Mrs Seebun: Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir, it is still operational.

LE MORNE – ARCHAEOLOGICAL WORKS

(No. B/540) Mrs M. Martin (Second Member for Curepipe and Midlands) asked the Minister of Arts and Culture whether he will state if it is proposed to carry out any archaeological works at Le Morne and, if so, will he give details thereof.

Mr Gowressoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, archaeological works started at Le Morne in 2002-2003 when the University of Mauritius investigated the caves and mountain base of Le Morne in the context of the Maroon Slave Archaeological Investigation Project (MSAIP). The project leader was Mr Chowdhury, an Indian national.

In August 2004, for the preparation of the nomination dossier for the inscription of Le Morne on the World Heritage list, the University of Mauritius was entrusted with another project on the preparation of a statement of the archaeological significance of Le Morne. The assignment included fresh archaeological investigations to enable reinterpretation of the existing archaeological knowledge of the area.

Following the recommendations of Dr. F. Odendaal who prepared the nomination dossier of Le Morne, it is proposed to carry out further archaeological works. In this context, my Minister has submitted a request to the Government of Egypt for the services of a qualified and experienced archaeologist as in Mauritius there is only one freshly qualified archaeologist, Mrs Mungur-Mehdi. She is currently employed by Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund.

Mrs Martin: Mr Speaker, Sir, I thank the hon. Minister for his answer. Does he have any idea of the cost that these archaeological works will involve?

Mr Gowressoo: I don't have the information, Mr Speaker, Sir,

EASSY CABLE PROJECT

(No. B/541) Mr J. C. Barbier (Third Member for GRNW and Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Information Technology and Telecommunications whether, in regard to the EASSY Cable Project, he will state where matters stand.

Mr Sinatambou: Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to refer the House to my replies to PQ B/872 on 27 June 2006 and to PQ B/1544 on 28 November 2006. I had previously informed the House that Mauritius became, as from 20 November 2006 the tenth signatory member State of the protocol relating to the Policy and Regulatory Framework for the NEPAD ICT Broadband Infrastructure for Eastern and Southern Africa.

As at today, the protocol has been signed by twelve member States out of the twenty three member States of the region. The protocol will come into force only when seven out of the twelve signatory countries have ratified the protocol. Hence, the coming into force of this instrument is still pending.

However, Mr Speaker, Sir, the fundamental problem affecting implementation of the EASSy Project is and remains its funding aspect which, as the House may already be aware, is in excess for \$300 m.

In this respect, following the intervention of Mauritius at the level of the European Union as well as the Indian Ocean Commission, a detailed feasibility study to determine the commercial and financial implications of implementing an inter-island connectivity project linking Mauritius, Reunion, Seychelles, Madagascar and the Comoros to the EASSy cable has been commissioned and the experts will be in Mauritius within the next fortnight, that is, from 10 to 12 June 2007.

The House may also wish to know that there is a consortium of international private companies competing with the African Governments. At this stage, I will only say that it is felt by many that implementation of the EASSy project by this consortium may not be in the best interests of African countries.

Mr Barbier: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I know from the hon. Minister how many countries have signed the protocol up to now.

Mr Sinatambou: As I just stated, Mr Speaker, Sir, the number of countries which have signed the protocol by now is 12, and these are 12 member States out of the 23 member States of the region.

Mr Von Mally: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I know from the hon. Minister whether this EASSy cable will be made to connect Rodrigues as well, to keep the island abreast with development of IT technologies in Mauritius and to allow call centres to operate from there?

Mr Sinatambou: As a matter of fact, the Inter Island Connectivity Detailed Feasibility Study commissioned does englobe Rodrigues as part of the State of Mauritius.

Mr Barbier: Mr Speaker, Sir, may we know which are the 12 countries that have already signed the protocol?

Mr Sinatambou: Unfortunately, I don't have this information here. But I will certainly find out and communicate it to the hon. Member.

SMEs – DBM LTD – LOANS

(No. B/542) Mr J. C. Barbier (Third Member for GRNW and Port Louis West) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to Small and Medium Enterprises, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Development Bank of Mauritius Ltd., information as to (a) the total amount of loans disbursed to date and (b) the conditions for obtaining loans therefrom.

(Withdrawn)

Mr Barbier: On a point of personal explanation, Mr Speaker, Sir. I have asked to withdraw Question No. B/542. I have put two questions, but maybe for some reason, the Secretariat chose to separate these two questions. As the phrasing stands here, there may be some confusion. That is why I withdraw No. B/542 and maintain No. B/543. I'll come back, may be, next time.

Mr Sithanen: Mr Speaker, Sir, if you will allow me on a point of personal explanation also. I think it is very unfair, Mr Speaker, Sir, to get officers to work on Saturday and Sunday to prepare the answers and then, at the last minute, the hon. Member withdraws the question. This is most unfair!

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Whenever there are matters of this sort cropped up, hon. Members have to come and see me in my office. I must tell hon. Members, and even hon. Ministers, that this is a matter where I have no control. If the hon. Member wants to withdraw his question, I cannot prevent him.

(Interruptions)

Yes, but I can't help it!

Mr Sithanen: We have put up people to work on Sunday.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! I have given my ruling. Hon. Members have the right to withdraw their questions.

SMEs – EMPOWERMENT FUND - LOANS

(No. B/543) Mr J. C. Barbier (Third Member of GRNW and Port Louis West) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether in regard to Small and Medium Enterprises, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Empowerment Fund, information as to –

- (a) the total amount of loans disbursed to date, and
- (b) the conditions for obtaining loans therefrom.

The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development (Mr R Sithanen): Mr Speaker Sir, in order to avoid any confusion between the Empowerment Programme and the Empowerment Fund, the Empowerment Fund has been renamed as the SME Partnership Fund as from January 2007.

I wish to inform the House that the objective of the SME Partnership Fund (SPF) is not to provide loans, but to participate in the development of the SMEs by providing funds in terms of equity financing, i.e, participation in the

share capital of the company. The promoters of the SMEs have to contribute at least 51% in the share capital of the company.

So far, 25 projects have been approved for equity financing in the amount of Rs41.4 m., out of which Rs19.6 m. has already been disbursed. Furthermore, some 40 applications are being examined and letters of intent have been sent to 22 applicants. A letter of intent is a guarantee for the applicant to have access to further financial requirements from other commercial banks.

Moreover, as the SPF has already carried out the due diligence with regards to the viability of the projects, the commercial banks are now working in close collaboration with the SPF and thus ease the disbursement of funds to the SMEs.

Mr Speaker, Sir as regards to part (b) of the question, the aim of the SME Partnership Fund is to empower the SMEs and to assist them to become successful entrepreneurs; consequently, proper analysis on the viability of the projects is required before disbursing funds. To be eligible for equity financing, the SME should either be start-ups, undergoing expansion or restructuring or engaging into new lines of activities.

The applicants must invest at least 51% in the share capital, whereas the SME Partnership Fund participation in the share capital will be in range of Rs300,000 to Rs3 m. The share capital structure also provides for the Fund to exit within 5 years from investee company with redemption based on the investee's financial position. Redemption of shares by Fund will be calculated at an annual rate of 9% or at the Net Asset Value whichever is the higher.

Mr Dowarkasing: If I am right, may I gather from the hon. Deputy Prime Minister that the Empowerment Fund has been renamed now as SME Partnership Fund and what is the purpose of that?

Mr Sithanen: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have met so many people well-intentioned who continue to make the confusion between the Empowerment Fund and the Empowerment Programme and in order to avoid this confusion we have renamed the Empowerment Fund as the SME Partnership Fund.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: May I ask the hon. Deputy Prime Minister whether the initial idea of having an Empowerment Fund is to help people in need, people who want to set up their own businesses? For so many times we have been hearing in Parliament statements being made that such and such group will be helped through the Empowerment Fund. May I know whether this category of support provided by Government will also be renamed and they will all come under the umbrella of the SME Partnership Fund?

Mr Sithanen: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have explained very clearly. It is only the name that has changed to avoid this confusion because they are two separate things. The Empowerment Programme is a vast programme of economic empowerment. The Empowerment Fund is an equity fund that helps small entrepreneurs to get equity from that particular Fund in order to start a business. In fact, I stated that 25 projects have been approved where there has been an equity infusion by this Fund into the small enterprise and then they use this provision in order to secure additional fund from commercial banks. Nothing has changed as far as the objectives of the Fund are concerned. But to avoid confusion, we have changed the name so that people recognize what are the objectives of the Empowerment Programme and what are the objectives of what was called the Empowerment Fund.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: May I ask the hon. Deputy Prime Minister then how will the Empowerment Programme and the enterprises which would be set up following decisions made with the Empowerment Programme be funded?

Mr Sithanen: Mr Speaker, Sir, let me clarify the point. The Empowerment Programme has a seven pronged objectives. Only one of these objectives is to help the small and medium enterprise and one of the components of helping the small and medium enterprise is the Empowerment Fund which was confused with the Empowerment Programme, which now we have renamed SME Partnership Fund. In fact, this is to help small entrepreneurs. I stated in my reply very clearly that it is going to apply to start-ups, firms undergoing expansion and restructuring and in new lines of activities. It is a small component of the vast programme of Empowerment Programme.

Let me, for the sake of clarity, give one example so as to avoid any confusion. For instance, all the training that is being done to re-skill our women that have lost their jobs in the EPZ falls under the Empowerment Programme, but is not part of the Empowerment Fund.

ROAD DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY - CONTRACTS

(No. B/544) Mrs D. Perrier (Fourth Member for Savanne and Black River) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping whether, in regard to contracts awarded by the Road Development Authority since July 2005 to date, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Authority, a list thereof, indicating in each case -

- (a) the nature of the works,
- (b) the name of the successful contractor, and
- (c) the value of the contract.

The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land transport and Shipping (Dr. R. Beebeejaun): Mr Speaker, Sir, I am tabling the list of contracts awarded by the Road Development Authority since July 2005 to date with all the requested information.

Mrs Perrier: Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Minister inform the House if all successful contractors are listed as grade A in his Ministry?

Dr. Beebeejaun: Yes, Sir.

Mrs Perrier: Can we know as well, Mr Speaker, Sir, if these contractors are allowed to subcontract the work by lower grade contractors?

Dr. Beebeejaun: Unfortunately, it has been a practice that has been going on a long time and we are looking into it.

Mrs Perrier: How then can the hon. Deputy Prime Minister guarantee the quality of the work done by these subcontractors who are not grade A contractors?

Dr. Beebeejaun: This is an issue that has been addressed and it is being looked after. There is a quality control of the work being done. The hon. Member is right in pointing out that there are some subcontractors who are not performing according to standards and this is being monitored.

SITES & SERVICES LAND PROJECT - BENEFICIARIES

(No. B/545) Mrs D. Perrier (Fourth Member for Savanne and Black River) asked the Minister of Housing and Lands whether, in regard to building site leases under the Sites and Services Land Project, he will state the number of beneficiaries who have already obtained their lease agreement to date.

Mr Dulull: Mr Speaker, Sir, in regard to Sites and Services Project, I am advised that 299 plots of State land on which 5 sites namely: Camp Levieux, Piton, Bambous, St Pierre, and Bel Etang, have been provided with on-site infrastructure for lease to potential beneficiaries. I am advised that as at to date 206 lots have been allocated, out of which 148 beneficiaries have signed and obtained their lease agreements.

The second phase of the Site and Services project which comprises of 242 lots is also being implemented on three sites which have been identified as follows –

	<u>Sites</u>	<u>Number of lots</u>
(i)	Ville Noire	56
(ii)	Glen Park	63
(iii)	Souillac	123

The NHDC is awaiting the approval from the Central Tender Board for award of contract for infrastructure works to start.

Sir, I wish to assure the hon. Member that once the CTB clearance is obtained, I shall ensure the acceleration of the implementation of the second phase of the Site and Services Project.

Mrs Perrier: Je remercie le ministre pour sa réponse. Sur 206 bénéficiaires, seulement 140 ont eu leur *lease agreement*. Le ministre est-il au courant que le *rental* est demandé depuis 2005/2006 et 2006/2007 aux bénéficiaires des *Sites and Services Land Project*? Ce sont des personnes qui ne touchent pas plus de R 10,000. On leur demande de payer R 3,000 de loyer alors qu'ils n'ont pas encore leur *lease agreement* et, en même temps, ils sont obligés de payer le loyer de la maison dans laquelle ils habitent. Est-ce que je peux faire un appel au ministre pour que cette situation ne perdure pas et que ces personnes ont leur *lease agreement* le plus tôt possible pour leur permettre de construire leurs maisons ?

Mr Dulull : Mr Speaker, Sir, I think the hon. Member is not well-versed with this problem. Normally, it is a household with an income between Rs7,500 and Rs12,000 - not Rs10,000. The annual rental....

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! Let the hon. Minister answer!

Mr Dulull: The hon. Member should learn to listen first!

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! Order, I said! Let the hon. Minister answer!

Mr Dulull: The annual rental is Rs3,000 once the lease is signed. The question as to whether the delay is affecting the payment does not arise.

Mrs Perrier: M. le président, que ce soit R 10,000 ou R 12,000, je ne vois pas tellement la différence par rapport à la catégorie de personnes que cela concerne. Ces personnes ont payé R 1,857.53 pour l'année 2006/2007, avec

une pénalité de 8%, si ce n'est pas payé dans les délais prévus. Cette année c'est R 3,000 et toujours avec la même clause de pénalité de 8% si ce n'est pas payé.

Entretemps, ces personnes doivent continuer à louer des maisons et ne peuvent pas avoir la jouissance de ces terrains pour pouvoir construire leurs maisons. Est-ce que le ministre peut être aussi *caring* qu'il le dit et faire diligence pour que le *lease* soit enfin signé?

Mr Dulull: I reassure the hon. Member that we are a caring Government. Once the lease is signed, the rental becomes due and then it is up to the lessee to start construction. We cannot wait for the lessee. If the lessee decides not to start construction, does it mean that we are not going to request for the annual rental?

Mr Gunness: Can I know from the hon. Minister whether the Sites and Services Land Project of Bel Etang have already been allocated?

Mr Dulull: I mentioned that at Bel Etang we have 78 plots, out of which 30 have been allocated.

Mr Gunness: Is the hon. Minister prepared to table a copy of the lessees?

Mr Dulull: I will do so, Mr Speaker, Sir.

MAHATMA GANDHI AND RABINDRANATH TAGORE INSTITUTES – DIRECTORS

(No. B/546) Mrs D. Perrier (Fourth Member for Savanne and Black River) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether he will state if the Director of the Mahatma Gandhi Institute and of the Rabindranath Tagore Institute has been appointed and, if so, will he state the names of the incumbents.

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, as far as the MGI and RTI are concerned, there is a position of Director-General which is presently occupied.

Posts of Director, MGI, Director (Schooling) and Director, RTI are also provided in the legislation.

In line with the new strategy for MGI and RTI, the new Council set up in January 2006 examined the issue for the appointment of Director, MGI and was

of the view that there was a need for re-allocation of duties and responsibilities which would require amendment to the legislation, and this is being looked into.

Meanwhile, the senior most officers have been assigned duties of Officer-in-Charge to look after secondary schooling and tertiary education at MGI.

As regards the post of Director, RTI, I am informed by the Director-General, MGI, that procedures are under way for the recruitment of a Director, RTI. I am further informed that the Head, Department of Bhojpuri, Folklore and Oral Traditions at the MGI has been assigned the duties of Officer-in-Charge, RTI with effect from 21 November 2006 to ensure the smooth running of the Rabindranath Tagore Institute.

Mrs Perrier: Can the hon. Minister say whether the post has been advertised internally and nationwide?

Mr Gokhool: I have the information that the recruitment procedures are under way. I don't have further information on that issue.

Mrs Perrier: May we know from the hon. Minister when the interviews were held?

Mr Gokhool: No interviews were held. There is a recruitment process and it takes a number of steps to reach for the interview. I have to check about the advertisement, but this is the information I have and I am giving it to the House.

VEHICLES - ETHANOL/GASOLINE TEST

(No. B/549) Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun (Third Member for La Caverne and Phoenix) asked the Minister of Agro Industry and Fisheries whether, in regard to the use of a mix of petrol and ethanol in vehicles, he will state if –

- (a) some vehicles are using same on a test basis, and
- (b) a date has been earmarked to extend it nationwide.

The Minister of Public Utilities (Dr. R. Jeetah): Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I will reply to this question. I am informed that ethanol/gasoline mix (90% and 10% ethanol) was carried out by Total between 31 July 2006 and 31 October 2006 on 25 vehicles. The outcome of the field testing was positive and inferred that the distribution of this fuel could be increased by widening the zones of distribution in Mauritius.

No vehicle is currently using the mix on a test basis as the test period is now over.

With regard to part (b), I wish to inform the House that Total Mauritius Ltd. is working on the second phase of the project whereby the distribution of the mix will be available on six Total service-stations spread island wide. It is expected that the mix will be made available around August/September 2007.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Speaker, Sir, right now the price of gasoline is quite high. But then that of ethanol is even higher than that of gasoline, I would like to ask the hon. Minister whether Government intends to review the price structure of the fuel in order to have the ethanol/gasoline mix available at a price which is comparable to that of unleaded gasoline?

Dr. Jeetah: Mr Speaker, Sir, Government has set up a Biofuel Committee with all the stakeholders. We would have to look into all the details.

SC AND HSC 2007 – STUDENTS – NUMBER

(No. B/550) Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun (Third Member for La Caverne and Phoenix) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether, in regard to the School and Higher School Certificates, he will state the number of students –

- (a) enrolled in Form V and Upper VI classes in January 2007, and
- (b) who have entered for the examinations to be held in November/December 2007.

(Withdrawn)

UNIVERSITY OF MAURITIUS – UNDERGRADUATE COURSES – IT PROFICIENCY CERTIFICATE

(No. B/551) Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun (Third Member for La Caverne and Phoenix) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether, in regard to admission to the undergraduate courses at the University of Mauritius, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the University of Mauritius, information as to the criteria laid down regarding proficiency in Information Technology for the selection of students.

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, the advertisement by the University of Mauritius (UoM) for the enrolment of students on undergraduate programmes

for academic year 2007/2008 requires that all applicants should be holders of an IT Proficiency Certificate or an alternative equivalent acceptable to the UoM. A communiqué was issued on this matter by UoM.

Some students who have applied for a seat may not be holders of the certificate and they will not be penalised.

The UoM will be selecting/admitting students solely on the basis of their academic qualifications, that is, SC, HSC or equivalent only.

In case there are students qualifying under these criteria, but without an IC3 or equivalent qualifications at the time of selection, they will be admitted to the University with a proviso that they should complete their IT proficiency by the end of their first academic year, namely by July 2008.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister whether he is aware that students having an 'O' Level Certificate in IT and those having Advanced Level IT have applied at the University of Mauritius and were not given admission? In fact, they were asked to go and sit for the IC3 qualification.

Mr Speaker, Sir, when you go for the course in IC3, you just get an attendance certificate. My question is: why is it that students are being required to get this IC3 certificate when they already have an 'A' Level in Information Technology?

Mr Gokhool: When the IC3 programme was launched, Mr Speaker, Sir, it was understood that the university will admit students who have the IC3 and that is why the communiqué was issued way back in December. But, subsequently, the matter was raised because some students did not have it at the time of application. The university has taken the view that the students will not be penalized, but they will have to complete it by 2008. No student will be penalized for not having the IC3. It is a requirement and this will be fulfilled by July 2008?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: May I ask the hon. Minister what is the rationale behind it, since the 'A' Level IT is of a higher standard than IC3 and that the course itself costs around Rs750? Why are we forcing students to go and look for a qualification that is lower than what they already have?

Mr Gokhool: As I said, it is IC3 or equivalent and if the student can make a case that he has already followed an IT programme in 'O' Level or HSC level, this will be considered by the University Authorities. In any case, even if the student does not have the IC3, the student will not be penalized.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Speaker, Sir, the students will be required to go and sit for that course again and pay Rs750 for a course which will only provide them with an attendance certificate. I think this is a form of penalising students.

Mr Gokhool: This will not be the case, Mr Speaker, Sir, because I said IC3 or equivalent and if it is considered as an equivalence to IC3, the University will exempt the student.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Speaker, Sir, the Minister has just mentioned that students will not be penalised, they will be admitted, but they will be given until 2008 to acquire the IC3 certificate. That is what I gathered from the answer of the hon. Minister.

Mr Gokhool: I think the hon. lady should understand. What I am saying is that if students can show that they have IT qualification which is equivalent to IC3, they will be exempted. I mean, this is the procedure at the university.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Speaker, Sir, 'A' level is higher than IC3 qualification.

Mr Gokhool: What I am telling the hon. lady is that all students may not have 'O' level or 'A' level IT and for those students they will have to go for the IC3.

Mr Speaker: This is the problem. The question is: those who have got the 'O' level or the 'A' level, will they still have to go for that course? That is the question.

Mr Gokhool: As I said, Mr Speaker, Sir, there is the possibility of exemption. It is either IC3 or equivalent. If the student has got IT 'O' level or 'A' level, it is much higher. It can be considered for exemption.

Mrs Labelle: Mr Speaker, Sir, I think we need a clarification from the hon. Minister. The question is: whether students having an 'O' level or 'A' level in IT will be required to go for this particular course.

Mr Gokhool: Again, Mr Speaker, Sir, when a student applies to the university...

Mr Speaker: The question is so simple. If a student or an applicant has got an 'O' level or an 'A' level, will he still have to go for that examination?

Mr Gokhool: But the communiqué is very clear, Mr Speaker, Sir: IC3 or equivalent. An 'O' level or an 'A' level is much higher. So, it is logical that the university will not require IC3 certificate.

Mr Speaker: Alright! Next question!

COCO, BAIE DU CAP – VOLLEYBALL PITCH – LIGHTING

(No. B/552) Mr A. Ganoo (First Member for Savanne and Black River) asked the Minister of Environment and National Development Unit whether in regard to the volleyball pitch at Coco, Baie du Cap, he will consider the advisability of providing lighting thereat, with a view to enabling the youth of the locality to make better use of the pitch and, if not, why not.

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, my Ministry will establish a priority list of sports infrastructure to be provided with lighting facilities and the volleyball pitch at Coco, Baie du Cap will be considered in due course.

Mr Speaker: Time is over!