

**ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS****BLUE BAY POLICE STATION**

**(No. B/1188) Mr S. Lauthan (Third Member for Port Louis Maritime and Port Louis East)** asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Home Affairs whether, in regard to the conversion of the Blue Bay Police Post into a Police Station, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to where matters stand.

**The Prime Minister:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that the Blue Bay Police Post has already been converted into a fully-fledged Police station, and is now operating on a 24-hour basis.

For the time being, part of the building housing the Police station also accommodates the Fisheries Department. However, Police are planning to construct a new Police station. A plot of State land of an extent of 1,097 m<sup>2</sup> has already been vested with Police, and construction is scheduled to start during Financial Year 2009/2010.

A provision of Rs2 m. has been made in the Budget for preliminary works.

**Mr Lauthan:** Mr Speaker, Sir, in November 2006, the hon. Prime Minister rightly said that because of the opening of hotels and the marine park, the post needed to be upgraded. From the information which I got until yesterday there is only one motorcycle attached to the post for 20 policemen. Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister to see to it that regular vehicles are put at the disposal of the policemen?

**The Prime Minister:** As the hon. Member says, Mr Speaker, Sir, this was not a Police station, it was a Police post. In fact, it was done by the previous Government on request from citizens of Mahebourg. Following a petition, this was converted into a Police post and we have now converted it into a Police station. The vehicles have already been provided for, they are going to get them very soon.

**POLICE OFFICERS – ASSAULTS/AGGRESSIONS –  
NOVEMBER 2007 TO NOVEMBER 2008**

**(No. B/1189) Mr S. Lauthan (Third Member for Port Louis Maritime and Port Louis East)** asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Home Affairs whether, in regard to cases of assaults and/or aggressions committed on Police Officers, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the number thereof reported on a monthly basis, since November 2007 to date, indicating the number thereof in which offensive weapons were used.

**The Prime Minister:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that since November 2007 to date, 124 cases of assaults and/or aggressions on Police Officers have been reported. Out of these 124 cases, 14 have been committed with an offensive weapon.

As requested by the hon. Member, I am tabling the number of cases on a monthly basis.

I am further informed that in 10 cases the accused have already been convicted, in 24 cases enquiry has been completed and procedures are under way for prosecution, 89 cases are still being enquired into and 1 case has been filed.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to refer the hon. Member to the reply I made to PQ No. B/6 on 25 March 2008 where I informed the House that it is proposed to amend the Criminal Code Act with a view to toughening penalties in such cases. In this context, the Judicial Provisions Bill is being introduced in the National Assembly today at First Reading and it provides for tougher penalties in cases of assault against an agent of civil or military authorities.

I have stressed, Mr Speaker, Sir, on many occasions - and I am saying it again - Government will not tolerate assaults and aggressions on Police officers and those who do so will have to bear the full consequences of their acts.

**Mr Lauthan:** Mr Speaker, Sir, referring to the same PQ in March 2008 that the hon. Prime Minister mentioned, the trend is on the increase: 55 cases in 2006, 106 in 2007 and this year 124. What is alarming is that recently in a case where people had been aggressed, when the Police went in Barkly to arrest these people, the Police officers, including one ASP from the SSU has been aggressed. The Parliamentary Question that the Prime Minister mentioned referred to new vehicles and new equipment – sophisticated equipment, I understand. Has equipment been purchased to enable the policemen to better perform their duty?

**The Prime Minister:** If it is for the purchase of equipment, I understand it will be purchased, Mr Speaker, Sir.

**Mr Bodha:** Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether he agrees that 124 is a disturbing figure and that it has a very negative impact on the image and authority of the Police and something has to be done?

**The Prime Minister:** If the figure was one, it would have been unacceptable; we should not have any. But I have said, Mr Speaker, Sir, you will see in the Judicial Provisions Bill that is in front of the House, we have increased the penalties by quite a bit and, as I said, those who think they can assault a Police Officer will have to think twice because they will go to prison and pay the fine.

## **HINDUS/MUSLIMS/SINO-MAURITIANS/GENERAL POPULATION – APPELLATION - AMENDMENT**

**(No. B/1190) Mr E. Guimbeau (First Member for Curepipe and Midlands)** asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs whether he will state if Government proposes to bring amendments to the existing laws to replace the appellation of Hindus, Muslims, Sino-Mauritians and General Population by that of Mauritian Citizen wherever they appear and, if so, when.

*(Withdrawn)*

## **POLITICAL PARTIES - FUNDING**

**(No. B/1191) Mr E. Guimbeau (First Member for Curepipe and Midlands)** asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs whether, in regard to the funding of political parties, he will state where matters stand.

**The Prime Minister:** Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission I shall reply to this Question together with PQ Nos. B/1192 and B/1208 as they all relate to the same subject.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the House will recall that in my reply to a Private Notice Question on electoral reform in March this year, I stated that I would start consultations with the major political parties after the 01 May 2008.

The House will also recall that, during the discussions which followed the PNQ by the Leader of the Opposition, it was agreed that the consultative meetings were to be held under my chairmanship.

As promised, I subsequently met the Leader of the Opposition and the leader of the *Mouvement Socialiste Militant* separately and compared notes on the main aspects of the reform. I must say, Mr Speaker, Sir, these meetings revealed that there are some major differences of opinion among the main political parties on some aspects of the reform.

Mr Speaker Sir, I intend to resume discussions shortly and I also intend to consult, at a later stage, the leaders of the other political parties as well. I hope we shall be able to clear some further ground and move ahead on the fundamental aspects of the reform.

With regard to the issue of funding of political parties, I have already mentioned in my replies to previous PQs on the subject that this issue will be discussed along with the other recommendations of the Sachs Commission.

Mr Speaker Sir, we shall equally consider, at the same time, the observations and recommendations made by the Supreme Court in the case of Raj Ringadoo v/s Ashok Kumar Jugnauth, especially the one on the proposed Code of Conduct for Ministers, Civil Servants and others during the pre-election period. As the House is aware, these recommendations have been unanimously endorsed by the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council.

**Mr Guimbeau:** Mr Speaker, Sir, will the hon. Prime Minister say why the financing of political parties is not treated as a separate issue to the electoral reform? Why is it not treated as a different issue because if there is no reform, there will be no financing of political parties?

**The Prime Minister:** I did not quite understand the question. I think that the hon. Member wants me to treat it as two separate issues. In fact, I think that the hon. Leader of the Opposition said so at some point in another question and I also agreed that we have to do it in parallel. I do not think that it is the same issue, but it involves the electoral reform process.

**Mrs Martin:** May I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether he has already identified priority issues to be dealt with when he will shortly start the discussions again?

**The Prime Minister:** I have in mind some priority issues, but I do not want to impose on others as they also have their own priority issues. We will sit down and discuss.

**Mr Guimbeau:** Est-ce que le Premier ministre compte présenter un cadre légal afin de réglementer le financement des partis politiques ? Can we also know the reason why we do not treat it separately?

*(Interruptions)*

If there is no electoral reform there will be no financing of political parties and the election will be held next year, Sir.

**The Prime Minister:** Let me assure the hon. Member that the election will not be held next year. It is a wrong forecast. We have to act responsibly. I said it before and I say it again. I am not so sure that if we want to have total consensus, we will ever have total consensus. When the two main parties of the Opposition were in Government, they could not come to an agreement. That is why at one point I said to let the dust settle. They were in agreement and could not come to an agreement. Now they are

separate and I do not know how we will come to an agreement, but we will have to make an effort to try to at least come to an agreement on certain aspects. I am sure if we all have good intentions, we can come to an agreement. I said so to the Leader of the Opposition one day that I am sure we can come to an agreement. There are certain things that we have to change. There has been a judgment and there are suggestions that the Supreme Court might have made. We have to look at that, we cannot say that we will not do anything at all.

**Mr Guimbeau:** Can the Prime Minister name the political parties which are going to be involved in the consultation on the reforms?

**The Prime Minister:** I think I checked last time and said there were 64 registered political parties – I do not know whether it is the same today, it might well be more. If you expect to have an agreement from 64 political parties, it is going to be difficult. That is why I speak of broad consensus.

**Mr Guimbeau:** At least the parties which are represented in Parliament!

**Mr Speaker:** Did the hon. Member mean to say whether the Prime Minister will consult all parties which are represented in the House?

**Mr Guimbeau:** Yes.

**The Prime Minister:** Certainly, because the parties in Parliament are even more important in the sense that they are the ones who will be asked to vote. I am giving priorities to those parties, but naturally I have given priority to the MMM and the MSM because, I think, they are the bigger ones compared to that of the hon. Member. But I will call him!

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Ganoo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, my question is more linked to the electoral process and less to electoral procedures or the funding of political parties. How will the Prime Minister deal with it as he has already said that he will look at this question of the remarks that have been made in the judgment and so on. Will there be a draft law to the Representation of the People Act as to the question of *code de conduite* and so on? Will there be a suggestion from Government or a draft legislation? How will we go about amending the law regarding the electoral process, that is, the procedures concerning what happens when the election takes place in Mauritius, for

example, the code of conduct? Does the Prime Minister have an idea of how will Government initiate these reforms, these amendments to our legislation?

**The Prime Minister:** I think we can come to an agreement when we have the discussions. It is my feeling - and I would say this to members of the press as well - that very often I find a code of conduct, there is no teeth to make sure that it bites. We have to see whether we have to look at amending the laws and regulations. We will have to obviously involve the Electoral Commissioner and the Electoral Supervisory Commission.

**Mr Ganoo:** Will the political parties have their say in the proposed amendments?

**The Prime Minister:** Yes, of course! I do not want to impose upon them, of course, they will have their say!

**Mr Bérenger:** I want to try and clarify. Consultations have started and I heard that they are going to restart shortly on the electoral reform. But there are three different things: electoral reform, funding of political parties, reform of organisational matters. I heard the hon. Prime Minister say that consultations are on and will restart shortly on the first one. I think the question is: what is going to happen as far as the two others are concerned? Will there be other consultations between the Prime Minister and all the political parties or one can imagine a Select Committee of the House to look at funding of political parties and electoral procedures and changes advised by the Electoral Commission?

**The Prime Minister:** Maybe it was not clear, I was saying that, of course, the electoral reform is the major one, but we have to look also in parallel as well about funding of political parties, especially after the judgment of the Supreme Court and it would be good if we could implement something before the by-election. It is important that we do it together.

*(Interruptions)*

We will consult on all three, especially with a view that there is going to be a by-election.

**Mr Bodha:** Mr Speaker, Sir, as regards the two institutions, that is, the Electoral Commission and the Electoral Supervisory Commission, may I ask the hon. Prime Minister how he intends to proceed?

**The Prime Minister:** Well, I have to proceed very carefully because, as the hon. Member knows, they are independent institutions. I don't want to give the impression that I am telling them on this issue, that is why we will have to discuss and then I will consult them. They have already expressed certain views.

**Mrs Martin:** Mr Speaker, Sir, my question was about a definite calendar with regard to electoral reforms. I just heard the hon. Prime Minister say that we have to reach some sort of agreement before the by-election. Therefore, can I ask him whether he has some definite points on which he wants to stress and which he will bring before any election is due?

**The Prime Minister:** Yes, we do. Because, in fact, Mr Speaker, Sir, even in our Government Programme of 2005-2010 we do mention that it is considered that matters relating, for example, to political party funding, to the abuses of State machinery during electoral campaigns and acts which are tantamount to electoral bribery have to be addressed, even in the Government Programme before the judgment of the Supreme Court. This is already mentioned in the programme and this is why I said we should try to do it before there is a by-election.

**Mr Guimbeau:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to know from the hon. Prime Minister when is the next consultation going to be held?

**Mr Speaker:** This question is irrelevant!

## **ELECTORAL REFORM - CONSULTATIONS**

**(No. B/1192) Mr E. Guimbeau (First Member for Curepipe and Midlands)** asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Home Affairs whether, in regard to the electoral reform, he will state where matters stand, indicating when consultations with the different stakeholders will start.

*(Vide reply to PQ No. B/1191)*

## PAEDOPHILIA - PENALTIES

**(No. B/1193) Mr P. Jhugroo (Third Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue)** asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Home Affairs whether, in regard to cases of paedophilia, he will state if consideration will be given for the amendment of the law to provide for tougher penalties and, if so, when.

**The Prime Minister:** Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I will reply to Parliamentary Questions B/1193 and B/1201 together as they relate to the same issue.

Mr Speaker, Sir, paedophilia is not by itself defined in our laws, but this type of sexual offence is covered under our legislations namely -

- (a) The Criminal Code –
  - (i) Section 249(3) – Attempt upon chastity upon a child under the age of 12;
  - (ii) Section 249(4) – Sexual intercourse with a female under 16, and
  - (iii) Section 250(2) – Sodomy upon a minor
  
- (b) The Child Protection Act -
  - (i) Section 13A on child trafficking;
  - (ii) Section 14 on sexual offences, and
  - (iii) Section 15 on indecent photographs of children

The term paedophilia has been notoriously difficult to define as a term. As a medical diagnosis, it is defined as a psychological disorder in which an adult experiences a sexual preference for [prepubescent](#) children and may engage in [child sexual abuse](#). This type of deviant behaviour is also associated with transitional development and the changing fabric of our society.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Child Protection Act and the Criminal Code were last amended in 1998 during my first mandate with a view to reinforcing protection of children against abuse, and to provide more stringent penalties for offenders. Indeed, the legal and organisational framework for effective child protection, we feel, needs to be further consolidated.

I wish to inform the House that there is a concerted approach to criminalise paedophilia. The Ministry of Women's Rights, Child Development and Family Welfare on its part is working on the new Children's Bill, which will, amongst others, address this problem. Furthermore, the Judicial Provisions Bill which, again, as I said, is being introduced in the National Assembly today at First Reading, amends a number of enactments to provide for heavier penalties for certain offences, including sexual offences under the Child Protection Act, and the Criminal Code as well as increase the sentencing jurisdiction of the District Courts and the Intermediate Courts.

Consideration is also being given by the Police to adopt what is called the '*Méthode Mélanie*' which consists of video recording of children's statements to be used as evidence in court.

Mr Speaker, Sir, children should be protected against all forms of neglect and cruelty and assaults. Part of this responsibility devolves on the community and to this effect, in 2007 my Government has set up the Women's and Children's Solidarity Programme to fund projects involving NGOs and addressing the problem of violence and neglect of children.

The welfare and interest of our children are to be given paramount importance and all children are entitled to special protection, especially in their tender years.

**Mrs Jeewa-Daureeawoo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I thank the hon. Prime Minister for his answer. I have two questions. First, what measures Government envisages to take to ensure that the convict does not come into contact with the accused again? And second, does the hon. Prime Minister have in mind to introduce the system of tagging so as to monitor the free movement of paedophilia?

**The Prime Minister:** Concerning the first question, this is already being done as I said, but we are going to use videos as evidence. This is being looked at. Secondly, already from the Ministry of Women's Rights, Child Development and Family Welfare, for example, if a child is felt that he is going to be in danger in the house, they can now remove the child from that environment. This is already being taken care of, but we have to make sure that they do not come into contact with the person who has been aggrieved. I must tell the hon. Member that even for identification parade in the Line Barracks, we have put a special screen so that the person does not

have actually to go and touch the person and say that this is the person. This was the case before.

**Mrs Hanoomanjee:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I just heard the hon. Prime Minister say that some Bills are under preparation to afford better protection to children. Can the hon. Prime Minister say whether any research has been carried in view of the preparation of this Bill and, if not, whether in view of the present situation, before coming up with any Bill, he does not think that appropriate research on such a subject be carried out?

**The Prime Minister:** First of all, the Judicial Provisions Bill is already in front of the House. It is strengthening the penalties of certain offences that are already in the law. For example, in the criminal code penalties are already being strengthened here. As for the other Bill, that is, the new Children's Bill – I think I have mentioned it - research has been carried out. This is why I could say with some confidence about the deviant behaviour, psychological disorder and all this because research has shown this.

**Mr Bérenger:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Prime Minister said that we are bringing some amendments through the Judicial Provisions Bill that is before the House to some of the offences relating to sexual abuse of children. I have gone through the Bill - I will do it again - but I don't see a clause which would introduce what exists in the French law – *le refus de porter assistance à personne en danger*. In that case, it is at *enfants en danger*. I understand that in the recent case some teachers were aware that so and so was carrying out this and that misbehaviour and kept quiet and the result is those children are victims. Can't we provide in the law to make it a criminal offence for some adult who is not aware and who does not bring it to the attention of the authorities?

**The Prime Minister:** I was just checking with the Attorney-General. This law has already been passed generally, including children.

**Mr Ganoo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, as the hon. Prime Minister said, the question of sexual offences against minors and their protection is, in fact, being addressed to in different laws. As the hon. Prime Minister also rightly pointed out, our Child Protection Act dates back from 1994 and was amended in 1998. Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister that since this is done in all countries, every five or ten years, the law concerning protection of children is reviewed systematically, doesn't the hon. Prime Minister think

that we should look into an overall our child Protection Act, modernize it and before doing that, in fact, set up one multi-sectoral committee with psychologists, lawyers and so on and modernise the old law. As we can see the number of questions today concerning the child aggression and so on means that our society needs a new legislation. Would the hon. Prime Minister kindly look into the possibility of doing away with our old legislation, coming with a new modern piece of legislation which will address all the problems of our society today concerning the aggression, the assault and the protection of minors?

**The Prime Minister:** Mr Speaker, Sir, you will agree that we have also to look at the Criminal Code separately, but I must say that the Ministry of Women's Rights, Child Development and Family Welfare is already doing what the hon. Member is saying, but it is a good suggestion.

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** Mr Speaker, Sir, there were allegations made against two teachers. There were two reports made to the Ministry. I would like to know whether measures were taken to ensure that these teachers are not in contact with children right now in schools. Have these teachers been suspended or are they still there?

**The Prime Minister:** I think there is a question that has been addressed to the Minister of Education. He will be answering this afternoon and he will give the details.

**Mrs Hanoomanjee:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Prime Minister just said that research has been carried out. My first question is : can we know who has carried out the research? And my second question is that there are only few non-governmental institutions which are doing their best to afford a better protection to children victims of sexual abuse, but we know very well that they do not have the sufficient means to ensure proper rehabilitation, can the hon. Prime Minister see to it that they are being strengthened financial so that they can afford a better protection to these children?

**The Prime Minister:** We will certainly do that, Mr Speaker, Sir.

## CARS – THEFT - MEASURES

**(No. B/1194) Mr P. Jhugroo (Third Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue)** asked the hon. Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Home Affairs whether, in regard to the larceny of cars, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to –

- (a) the number thereof reported for the past two years, and
- (b) the additional preventive measures that will be taken.

**The Prime Minister:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that since November 2006 to date, a total of 199 larceny of cars has been reported out of which 101 cars have been recovered.

Police is taking the following additional measures with a view to reducing larceny of cars –

- (i) installation of CCTV surveillance system in the region of Flic en Flac, Port Louis and Grand’Baie with a view to fighting crime at the same time as monitoring traffic;
- (ii) reinforcing Police Divisions in front line policing even to the extent that more foot patrols would be carried out at the end of festivities thereby preventing cases of larcenies;
- (iii) acquisition shortly of additional 52 vans and 30 motorcycles to be allocated to Divisions to reinforce mobile patrols, and the procedure has already started;
- (iv) stop and search exercises and road blocks - I am sure you have noticed already - are being increased;
- (v) robbery squads have recently been set up at Divisional CID level to deal exclusively with larceny including stolen cars;
- (vi) Southern African Regional Police Chief Cooperation Organisation operations have recently been conducted with officers from South Africa, Zimbabwe and Tanzania, including Mauritius, in order to target stolen vehicles, and
- (vii) garages, second hand spare parts shops and scrap metal dealers’ yards are checked to detect larcenies or trafficking of cars.

I should further inform the House, Mr Speaker, Sir - I have been saying it for some time to the hon. Deputy Prime Minister when he was there - that the National Transport Authority, with a view to reducing the number of theft of vehicles, is examining the possibility of amending the Road Traffic (Construction and Use) Regulations to provide for new registration plates which will be yellow retro-reflective at the rear and white retro-reflective at the front. This measure will, first of all, allow you to see it from further and this measure will prevent the use of false registration plates - not prevent completely, I suppose, but it will be a long way towards this, because they disguise stolen vehicles in such a way. It will also prevent the concealment of true identity of vehicles used in criminal activity and the sale of stolen cars as legitimate cars.

The production of the new plates will be strictly controlled as the NTA will – we have not decided yet - either produce them themselves, but more likely it would license a certain number of registered suppliers. That is the line we take. The suppliers will be required to keep record of sales to purchasers who can show entitlement to a particular registration mark and make such record available for inspection by the Police or the NTA enforcement officers. This measure will introduce some sort of control over the supply of registration plates which is presently not really regulated as it should be.

Moreover, Mr Speaker, Sir, it is also being envisaged to make use of GPS system. We are looking at this because of the price, at the possibility of having electronic information on the plates which can be helpful in locating the whereabouts of stolen vehicles.

Insurance companies will also be requested to notify the National Transport Authority of damaged vehicles which they would sell by auction. A Vehicle Identity Check will be designed to enable the National Transport Authority to confirm the vehicles' identity after they have been repaired.

I must also say this to the House that we are also asking them to look at the fact that sometimes there is a vehicle which is completely written-off in a big accident and then they took it to some dealer, they try to repair the vehicle and the repair is not done according to the safety standards that it should be. For example, just putting parts together is not enough for the safety of the vehicles. We are looking into that whether we should actually stop that practice altogether.

**Mr Bérenger:** Mr Speaker, Sir, can I raise something which I raised in the past, but I did not hear the hon. Prime Minister mentioned that? He mentioned two expertise from South Africa, Zimbabwe and other mainland African countries, but our problem is totally different, there, cars are stolen and trafficked across borders. Our problem is different and I expected the Police who have carried out a survey, produced a report on ‘*cannibalisme*’ on cars, stealing cars and cutting them up, because there are a number of cars that have never been traced, probably, maybe because they have been cut up – *cannibaliser* – and sold as spare parts. Are the Police giving special attention to that and have they produced any kind of report?

**The Prime Minister:** In fact, we are well aware of this, Mr Speaker, Sir, I do not want to go into details, but maybe the hon. Leader of the Opposition knows, because he has been a former Prime Minister. In fact, the last quarter that we think, this would happen and has happened in the past. We are looking into that. I think the hon. Leader of the Opposition is right to say there are countries which are trafficking on a large scale, but here, unlikely, we have not seen any.

### PAEDOPHILIA - LEGISLATION

**(No. B/1201) Mrs F. Jeewa-Daureeawoo (Third Member for Stanley and Rose Hill)** asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Home Affairs whether, he will state if he proposes to introduce specific legislation to cater for the offence of paedophilia.

*(Vide reply to PQ No. B/1193)*

### ELECTORAL REFORM - DISCUSSIONS

**(No. B/1208) Mrs M. Martin (Second Member for Curepipe and Midlands)** asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Home Affairs whether, in regard to discussions on electoral reform, he will state if a definite calendar has now been set and, if so, give details thereof.

*(Vide reply to PQ No. B/1191)*

**Mr Speaker:** Time is over!

*At 1.00 p.m the sitting was suspended.*

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

**DR. JEETOO HOSPITAL - MRS B. A. H. – DEATH**

**(No. B/1209) Mr S. Lauthan (Third Member for Port Louis Maritime and Port Louis East)** asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether, in regard to one Mrs B. A. H. who passed away at the Dr. Jeetoo Hospital, on or about Sunday 31 August 2008, he will state if an inquiry has been initiated to look into the circumstances thereof and, if so, the outcome thereof.

**Dr. Jeetah:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that late Mrs B.A.H. was brought to the Accident & Emergency Department of Dr. A.G. Jeetoo Hospital by the Police on Sunday 31 August 2008 at around 10.00 o'clock. Unfortunately, she died at the hospital at around 13.45 hours.

Following the death of late Mrs B.A.H., a preliminary inquiry was carried out on 17 September 2008 at the level of the hospital under the chairmanship of the Regional Health Director to look into the circumstances leading to the death of the late patient.

In view of the observations made in the report of the preliminary inquiry, I have ordered that a full-fledged in-depth inquiry be carried out. Appropriate action will be taken in the light of the outcome of the inquiry.

**Mr Lauthan:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the information we have is that there might have been a wrong diagnosis. She had a foot injury and it was sought not to be serious and she was kept in the casualty room. In fact, it was more serious. From the autopsy report, the PMO said that there was a fracture at the level of the cervical spine. Can things be sort out during the investigation?

**Dr. Jeetah:** Sir, with due respect to the hon. Member, I cannot disclose the contents of the patient's record, but I can assure the hon. Member that there is going to be another in-depth inquiry and the necessary actions will be taken subsequent to the results thereof.

**Mr Lauthan:** Can we at least know for how long she has been kept waiting in the casualty room?

**Dr. Jeetah:** I did mention, Mr Speaker, Sir, that the patient arrived at 10.00 o'clock in the morning and she passed away at 13.45 hours.

**Mr Varma:** Mr Speaker, Sir, could the hon. Minister inform the House who is going to carry out the in-depth inquiry?

**Dr. Jeetah:** It would be the Director, Health Services, together with the Director of Nursing as well as the Assistant Secretary from my Ministry.

**MINISTRY OF FINANCE AND ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT –  
MR T.K. S. –APPOINTMENT**

**(No. B/1210) Mr P. Jhugroo (Third Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue)** asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Empowerment whether, in regard to one Mr T.K.S, he will state the capacity in which he is appointed at his Ministry, indicating –

- (a) his duties;
- (b) his salaries and other allowances drawn;
- (c) his terms and conditions of appointment, and
- (d) the Boards on which he sits, indicating the fees drawn in each case.

**The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Empowerment (Dr. R. Sithanen):** Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the House that Mr T. K. S. has been appointed as Adviser in my Ministry. Information relating to his duties and terms and conditions of his employment is being tabled.

Insofar as part (d) of the question is concerned, the House may wish to note that information relating to directors' remuneration is of public domain in as much as these are disclosed in Annual Reports of Companies as part of the statutory disclosure requirements under the Companies Act 2001. However, in spite of this, I am still tabling information relating to his directorship and remuneration.

**MAURITIUS PORTS AUTHORITY – MR B.N. - APPOINTMENT**

**(No. B/1211) Mr P. Jhugroo (Third Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue)** asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of

Tourism, Leisure and External Communications whether, in regard to one Mr B.N., he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Port Authority, information as to the capacity in which he is appointed thereat, indicating –

- (a) since when;
- (b) his duties;
- (c) his salaries, and
- (d) the other fringe benefits drawn.

**The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism, Leisure and External Communications (Mr X. L. Duval):** Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Mauritius Ports Authority that Mr B. N. was offered employment as Public Relations Assistant on contract for a period of 2 years with effect from 11 September 2006. He was paid a monthly salary of Rs12,000 during the first year of his contract and Rs16,000 a month during the second year.

His contract expired on 10 September this year and was not renewed thereafter.

With your permission, Mr Speaker, Sir, I am tabling a copy of the contract of employment of Mr B.N.

**Mr Jhugroo:** Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Vice-Prime Minister inform the House whether the same gentleman was involved in the Boskalis case?

**Mr X. L. Duval:** Mr Speaker, Sir, he was charged with the case and this is the reason why his contract was not renewed.

**SCHOOL INSPECTOR – MINORS  
- ALLEGED SEXUAL AGGRESSION**

**(No. B/1212) Mrs F. Labelle (Third Member for Vacoas and Floreal)** asked the Minister of Education, Culture and Human Resources whether, in regard to the recent alleged case of sexual aggression on minors by a school inspector, he will state if his Ministry has initiated an inquiry in relation to the reported previous alleged cases on minors by the school inspector, indicating the outcome thereof.

**Dr. Bunwaree:** Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I will reply to PQ Nos. B/1212 and B/1252 as they both relate to the same subject matter.

Regarding the alleged cases of sexual abuse by teachers on their pupils, I wish to inform the House that my Ministry is in the presence of seven cases since 2003.

I am informed that three officers have so far been interdicted in the light of the Police report.

The contract of one officer has been terminated immediately and two cases are still under enquiry at the Police Department.

One case is still *sub judice* before the District Court. Initially it was a case of “attempt upon chastity”. The Director of Public Prosecutions has, however, now advised prosecution against the teacher for “assault”.

As regards the case of sexual abuse on minors recently reported against a School Inspector, as mentioned in PQ No. B/1212, there is only one other reported case against that officer. I am advised that the Superintendent of Police, Plaines Wilhems/Black River had informed my Ministry on 23 September 1999 that the School Inspector, the then Deputy Head Teacher posted to H. Chooroomooney Government School, was on 05 August 1999 allegedly involved in a case of sexual abuse. However, my Ministry was informed on 15 November 2000 by the Commissioner of Police that the Director of Public Prosecutions had advised no further action into the case of sexual assault reported against the then Deputy Head Teacher.

I wish to draw the attention of the House to the fact that my Ministry has started to trace back any other alleged case of abuse during the previous

posting of that officer. However, the House will understand the practical and legal difficulties in such cases.

Mr Speaker, Sir, normally whenever any form of abuse is reported to my Ministry, in accordance with regulation 31(1) of the Public Service Commission Regulations, the responsible officer, may, where he is satisfied that the offence is serious enough to warrant interdiction, interdict an officer immediately from the exercise of the powers and functions of his office where criminal proceedings are being instituted against the officer.

Moreover, regulation 32(1) of the Public Service Commission Regulations provides that “where a preliminary investigation or disciplinary inquiry discloses that an offence against any law may have been committed by a public officer, the responsible officer shall forthwith refer the case to the Commissioner of Police for necessary action” while, at the same time, interdicting the officer.

However, it is only if, following Police enquiry, the Director of Public Prosecution does not advise prosecution that disciplinary proceedings may be instituted against a public officer in accordance with PSC Regulation 37 or 38. I must say that I am having a special look at this because it defeats its purpose.

I further wish to inform the House that any pupil who is victim of sexual abuse is, immediately after the happening, given all possible attention, psychological support and taken good care of by my Ministry.

As soon as the case is reported to the Police –

- (i) the Educational Psychologist of my Ministry provides counselling to the child and parents and makes appropriate recommendations to the Head of School;
- (ii) Educational Social Workers of the National Education Counselling Service of my Ministry conduct home visits to the family concerned, and
- (iii) a Clinical Psychologist of the Ministry of Women’s Rights, Child Development and Family Welfare provides psychotherapy to the pupil.

Moreover, Mr Speaker, Sir, with the recent cases of alleged abuse and paedophile, I have instituted a system for the monitoring of any alleged case, anonymous or otherwise, and a committee is presently working in close collaboration with stakeholders, especially the team of psychologists of my Ministry and of the Ministry of Women's Rights, Child Development and Family Welfare to set up a reliable system to deal with such matters, especially on the prevention aspect.

Furthermore, we are also working in collaboration with the Ombudsperson for Children to that regard.

**Mrs Labelle:** Mr Speaker, Sir, first of all, may I thank the hon. Minister for the other actions already initiated. May I ask the hon. Minister whether any particular actions have been initiated to vulgarise the Section 11 of the Child Protection Act, that is, the duty to report? Because, too often, the cases are not reported. What is being done for the personnel of the schools to be aware of the section of this Act?

**Dr. Bunwaree:** This is a very interesting point that has been raised. In fact, we are looking into that and that committee is working to find ways and means whereby all this can be taken care of.

**Mrs Navarre-Marie:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister spoke about 7 cases which have been reported to the Ministry. Regarding the 2 cases which are under inquiry and one *sub judice*, will the hon. Minister state what action has been taken so far? Have these persons been requested to step down pending inquiry and Court proceedings being completed?

**Dr. Bunwaree:** I don't know whether we are allowed to ask them to step down in the sense that the inquiry is still going on, but they are not working in the same place that they were supposed to work.

**Mr Varma:** As regards the school inspector, could the hon. Minister inform the House what is the provisional charge which has been lodged against this school inspector and the stage of the Police inquiry?

**Dr. Bunwaree:** The inquiry is still going on. The inspector is still not released on bail.

**Mr Varma:** May I know about the provisional charge?

**Dr. Bunwaree:** I have to look into that aspect and inform the House.

**Mrs Hanoomanjee:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister has mentioned the role of social workers. Can I ask him what is the ratio of social worker to children and does he consider that one social worker for student population of around 800 is sufficient and sometimes one for each zone?

**Dr. Bunwaree:** I don't have the figure to reply offhand, I'll look into this aspect. I am very much sensitive to what is being said, but I can inform the House that we are doing everything possible, especially to act on the preventive side, Mr Speaker, Sir.

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the Minister has just mentioned that the teachers who are normally accused are not allowed to work in the same school. But as he has just mentioned that he is placing emphasis on prevention, may I ask the hon. Minister whether he does not consider it quite risky to allow these teachers to remain in contact with students even though they are in other schools?

**Dr. Bunwaree:** This is, of course, another important aspect also, Mr Speaker, Sir, but when they are not working in another place, they are being followed, I must say, and the psychologist of the school is also taking that into consideration. In fact, we should not also forget that these people must have something wrong in their mind somewhere. We would better consider them as patients at some stage also, although the law is there to be followed, and whatever wrong has been done will have to be punished.

**Mrs Labelle:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister mentioned that children who have experienced such traumatic situations are referred to the educational psychologist and it is after that that they will meet a clinical psychologist. May I ask the hon. Minister whether he does not think it fit that these children must be referred to a clinical psychologist in the first instance instead of going to an educational psychologist because I don't think it is the job of educational psychologists to go for therapy?

**Dr. Bunwaree:** The hon. Member is right, Mr Speaker, Sir. I have already taken the matter in hand. We are, for the time being, asking the clinical psychologist who is in the Ministry of Women's Rights, Child Development and Family Welfare to step in right at the beginning and, in fact, I am reinforcing the psychologist team of my Ministry to include clinical psychologists.

**Mrs Hanoomanjee:** The hon. Minister has mentioned it and it is a pity that now teachers and inspectors are involved in such acts. But there is a majority of teachers who are there. Does not the hon. Minister think that a minimum training should be given to teachers to help them to detect cases of sexual abuse?

**Dr. Bunwaree:** A lot is being done at the level of the committee with the help of the psychologist, but the teachers also have to be involved in training.

### **FLOREAL HEALTH CENTRE – RENOVATION AND UPGRADING**

**(No. B/1213) Mrs F. Labelle (Third Member for Vacoas and Floreal)** asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether in regard to the Floreal Health Centre, he will state if his Ministry is proposing to have same renovated and upgraded.

**Dr. Jeetah:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the reply is in the affirmative. The proposed upgrading works include repairs of the roof and general painting.

**Mrs Labelle:** May I ask the hon. Minister whether there is a schedule and whether he can inform the House by what time this work will be completed?

**Dr. Jeetah:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the internal painting works and the replacement of 6 flush doors, I understand, will be undertaken by the hospital maintenance team within a period of two weeks. The external painting and the repairs to the roof will be carried out by the Ministry of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping around December 2008.

### **INFORMATION COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY AUTHORITY – SIM CARDS – AGENTS**

**(No. B/1214) Mrs S. Hanoomanjee (Second Member for Savanne and Black River)** asked the Minister of Information and Communication Technology whether in regard to the Information Communications Technology Authority, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Authority, information as to the –

- (a) number of registered agents for the sale of SIM cards, and
- (b) measures taken to ascertain that such agents comply with the regulations set down by the Authority.

**Mr Dulull:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I am advised by the Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) Authority that it has issued Public Land Mobile Network commonly referred as PLMN, Licences to Emtel Ltd, Cellplus Mobile Communications Ltd commonly referred as Cellplus and Mahanagar Telephone (Mauritius) Ltd which are the only mobile operators in Mauritius.

However, Cellplus and Emtel Ltd are the only PLMN licensees involved in the sale of SIM cards. These licensed operators have contractual agreements with their agents for the sale of SIM cards. As at 07 November 2008, the number of registered agents was 314 for Cellplus, and 849 for Emtel Ltd (out of which approximately 600 are normally active).

As regards part (b) of the question, the ICT Authority issued the Telecommunication Order 3 of 2006 (TO3 of 2006) on 19 May 2006 whereby any public operator/service provider, duly licensed under the ICT Act 2001 and engaged in providing an information and communication service, including telecommunication service, to the public, is required to keep records of details and particulars of all its customers.

My colleagues may wish to note that the ICT Authority does not licence or register agents for the sale of SIM cards. Thence, the ICT Authority may only enforce TO3 of 2006 vis-à-vis its licensees and not the agents.

I am further informed that the ICT Authority regularly monitors compliance to TO3 of 2006 and has, in the course of this monitoring, obtained confirmation from operators that appropriate measures have been taken at their end to ensure that no unregistered SIM card is activated.

**Mrs Hanoomanjee:** Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Minister say whether for security reasons, those who are responsible for the sale of SIM cards, ask an identity card from the person purchasing the SIM card?

**Mr Dulull:** I mentioned in my answer, Mr Speaker, Sir, that based on the Telecommunication Order 3 of 2006, the agents are required to keep records of details and particulars of all its customers, including identity.

**Mrs Hanoomanjee:** Yes, but for security reasons, are they asked to produce a photocopy of their identity card which is being kept by the agents?

**Mr Dulull:** The agents are required to do so under the Telecommunication Order 3.

**Mrs Hanoomanjee:** Can the Minister say, during the past three years, in cases of operators or agents who have not respected the regulations – the Minister mentioned TO3 of 2006, but there have been previous orders namely in 2003 – what action has been taken?

**Mr Dulull:** I cannot say whether we had the Telecommunication Orders before, but what I have been informed of is that we had a Telecommunication Order in 2006 and I have the information that many SIM cards have been deactivated due to lack of sufficient particulars and information of the user.

**Mrs Hanoomanjee:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I can tell the Minister that there was a Telecommunication Order 2003 before the Telecommunication Order 2006. Can the Minister say whether staff of ICTA regularly visits those operators and sees that the mechanism has, in fact, been put in place to ensure detection of anonymous calls?

**Mr Dulull:** Again, Mr Speaker, Sir, I mentioned in my answer that the ICT Authority regularly monitors compliance with the TO3 of 2006. But I have to make one thing clear. We have the operator and the agent. Only the operators are responsible to ICTA. The agents are responsible to the operators. ICTA cannot monitor the agent, it can monitor the operators but, through the operators, you can monitor the agents.

**Mrs Hanoomanjee:** Mr Speaker, Sir, that means that the agents are free to sell SIM cards to anybody! They do sell SIM cards, and that is known!

**Mr Dulull:** Mr Speaker, Sir, if the agents are not fulfilling their part of responsibility, it is for the operators to ensure that they are complying with TO3. As I said, ICTA can monitor the operators who, in turn, can monitor the agents.

**Mrs Martin:** Mr Speaker, Sir, since the hon. Minister says that only the operators are answerable to ICTA, can he consider extending that responsibility to the agents as well, so that a complete monitoring is taken out?

**Mr Dulull:** Mr Speaker, Sir, if we need to extend the legislation to make sure that the agents are complying, we will do it. But, as I mentioned, we are able to monitor the agents through the operators. Many SIM cards have been deactivated over the past months.

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister if he will be ready to review the licences given to operators in case the agents who are accountable to them do not respect the law?

**Mr Dulull:** Mr Speaker, Sir, in case of non-compliance, ICTA is enforcing the provision of the law. If we need to review the law, we will do it in the best interest of the users and the population at large.

### **BOI – STAFF – SALARIES – REVIEW**

**(No. B/1215) Mrs S. Hanoomanjee (Second Member for Savanne & Black River)** asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance & Economic Empowerment whether he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Board of Investment, information as to if any revision of the respective salaries of its staff has been carried out since the last Pay Research Bureau Report, if not, why not.

**The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance & Economic Empowerment (Dr. R. Sithanen):** Mr Speaker, Sir, as the House is aware, the Board of Investment (BOI) was established as a statutory body under the Investment Promotion Act 2000. Since its setting up, its pay and grading structure has been determined so as to enable it to have the flexibility to recruit and retain staff of a profile capable of achieving the organisation's objectives aligned with Government's investment promotion strategy.

It has consequently, with the consent of its employees, opted to remain outside the purview of the Pay Research Bureau award system and be governed instead by its own human resource pay and grading structure as determined by its Board. As such, the recommendations contained in the Pay Research Bureau Report 2008 are not applicable to the personnel of BOI.

I am, however, informed that in 2002 BOI appointed a Human Resource Commissioner to design an appropriate organisation and pay structure and conditions of service for the organisation, to provide for substantive positions on its establishment and to make recommendations accordingly.

Following the PRB report 2008, the Board has in September reviewed its employee remuneration policy with effect from July 2008. It is now based on a four-pronged structure which consists namely of -

- (i) a minimum monthly salary of Rs12,000 for any member of its staff on permanent establishment;
- (ii) an across the board salary increase of 9% representing an aggregate of the last three years Annual Labour Productivity Gains as published by the CSO;
- (iii) a salary rise based on the performance appraisal of each staff, which can go up to 20% of his monthly salary, and
- (iv) an additional bonus for exceptional performance, as recommended by the heads of Clusters and approved by the Board.

I am further informed, Mr Speaker, Sir, that based on these principles, every officer has been paid salary increases ranging between 9% and 29%.

**Mrs Hanoomanjee:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the whole idea of an institution being outside the purview of the PRB is either the salary of the staff is at par with PRB or better off, and not worse off. Can the hon. Minister state whether he is aware that, even with the percentage increase that has been given last July/August, the staff of the BOI is still worse off as compared to the salary structure in the PRB?

**Dr. Sithanen:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I don't necessarily agree with the remark made by the hon. Member, that is, everybody must be paid better salary. There are diversions. I am not aware of what the hon. lady is saying. Let me say very clearly that I don't interfere in the way the BOI remunerates or evaluates its staff. I will pass on the information. I think we should give them the independence to determine what, in their best judgement, they think should be the salaries and conditions of the employees. I don't want to enter into a debate of what are the conditions other than salaries compared to the PRB.

**Mrs Hanoomanjee:** Mr Speaker, Sir...

**Mr Speaker:** The hon. Minister has said that he cannot interfere insofar as salaries are concerned at the BOI.

**Mrs Hanoomanjee:** But the BOI still falls under the purview of the Ministry of Finance.

**Mr Speaker:** The hon. Minister says that, insofar as this question of employment and conditions of employment are concerned, he is not prepared to interfere. So, it's the end of the matter.

**Mr Bérenger:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister said he will forward information. The hon. Member has brought information to be forwarded.

**Mr Speaker:** If the hon. Member has information to give to the Minister to be forwarded to the BOI, it's alright.

**Mrs Hanoomanjee:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I just want to say that the exercise regarding salaries and conditions of service is not being met at the BOI, and that the salary structure is not done in utter transparency.

**Mr Speaker:** This question is not allowed.

#### **BOI – EMPLOYEES – RECRUITMENT, NUMBER, ETC**

**(No. B/1216) Mrs S. Hanoomanjee (Second Member for Savanne & Black River)** asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance & Economic Empowerment whether, in regard to the employees of the Board of Investment, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Board, information as to the number thereof who have, since July 2005 to date (a) been recruited (b) left and (c) been laid off.

**The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance & Economic Empowerment (Dr. R. Sithanen):** Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that, currently, the Board of Investment has 54 employees in its permanent establishment, and 19 are employed under contract.

Since July 2005, it has recruited seven officers on its permanent establishment and 22 on a contract basis.

With regard to part (b) of the question, 18 officers from the establishment and 11 who were recruited on contract left the organisation during that period.

On the other hand, one employee has been laid off, and he was paid compensation as appropriate.

**Mrs Hanoomanjee:** Mr Speaker, Sir, is the hon. Minister aware that, in November 2006, the appointment of both an office attendant-cum-driver and his wife who was working as typist/receptionist at the BOI was terminated without any reason whatsoever and even without the Board's approval, and that due to political pressure the wife was reinstated the next day?

**Dr. Sithanen:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I am not aware. Let me make it very clear. I don't get into the details of who is employed, who is sacked or not. There are people who are employed on contract, some who are on permanent establishment, some who leave because they get better jobs elsewhere, others who leave because they get married, others who migrate. I don't know what has happened in that case.

**Mr Varma:** Mr Speaker, Sir, could the hon. Vice-Prime Minister inform the House how many employees work in Mauritius and how many work abroad?

**Dr. Sithanen:** Mr Speaker, Sir, since their last decision to change their policy in Paris and London, I think that most of them, if not all, barring one in India – I think it is in Bombay – work in Mauritius. This is my understanding.

**Mrs Hanoomanjee:** Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Minister say whether the BOI receives funds only from Government or from other sources as well?

**Dr. Sithanen:** Mr Speaker, Sir, it depends. They do receive primarily from Government. But, often, BOI mounts campaigns jointly with the private sector and, at times, there is participation in funding these campaigns by the private sector.

## **BROWN SEQUARD HOSPITAL – SECURITY MEASURES**

**(No. B/1217) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière)** asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether, in regard to the recent case of aggression at the Brown Sequard Hospital, Beau Bassin, he will state the measures that have been taken, if any, to ensure the security of the patients, the medical staff and the public.

**Dr. Jeetah:** Mr Speaker, Sir, it is most unfortunate that this tragic incident has occurred. On hearing the sad news, I effected a visit at the High Security Ward on the same night.

I view this matter with serious concern and instructed that a High Level Team be constituted under the chairmanship of Director Health Services responsible for hospitals to carry out a departmental enquiry to look *inter alia* into the reinforcement of security at the level of the High Security Ward.

The Enquiry Team submitted its report and recommended along with other measures, that there was a pressing need for some security measures to be taken immediately. The following measures have already been implemented –

- (i) the reinforcement of the nursing and other staff in the High Security Ward;
- (ii) the reinforcement of security at the entrance and ensuring that any article destined for patients be remitted through the nursing staff;
- (iii) posting of trained security guards at the High Security Ward, and
- (iv) the upgrading of the High Security Ward in the old hospital to accommodate some patients presently in the New High Security Ward. This will help to decongest the existing ward.

Furthermore, action has been initiated for the following –

- (i) installation of an alarm system;
- (ii) the raising of the wall surrounding the High Security Ward and the fixing of barbed wire at the top.

Mr Speaker, Sir, a Standing Committee under the chairmanship of the Regional Health Director of Dr. A.G. Jeetoo Hospital has been set up to monitor the situation and to report to the Ministry at regular intervals

**Mr Bhagwan:** The hon. Minister has just stated the measures concerning the High Security Wards. Can the hon. Minister inform the House whether he is aware that there are certain recidivists who have been sentenced to prison and are sent there under pretext or protection that they are sick and they receive all favours? This is creating another problem of security because these recidivists receive the visit of high level recidivists within the premises of the Brown Sequard Hospital. Is the hon. Minister aware of this situation? What immediate action he intends to take in respect to all security problems at Brown Sequard Hospital?

**Dr. Jeetah:** In fact, Mr Speaker, Sir, since the hon. Member is asking the question, I have to give him the information. It appears that there has been interference. I have got a letter here from the Prime Minister's Office dated 04 June 2003. This patient that has been involved in some criminal activities was requested to be detained at the hospital. I can assure the hon. Member that I have requested the Regional Health Director to look into the matter to make sure that we take the appropriate measures.

**Mr Bhagwan:** These famous recidivists get first-class facilities such as TV, *réfrigérateurs*, which ordinary patients do not get. Will the hon. Minister look into it and that there is no *deux poids, deux mesures*?

**Dr. Jeetah:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I did mention that, it was on 14 June 2003 and I can assure the hon. Member that this is not currently the practice.

**Mr Varma:** Could the hon. Minister inform that was the House whether this precise case has been reported to the Police and if so when?

**Dr. Jeetah:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the person in question is currently remanded in jail.

**Mr Bhagwan:** Is the hon. Minister aware that there is a *va-et-vient* of modern cellular phones and the recidivists use all these items which can create a lot of problems? Can the hon. Minister say whether all these issues will be taken up in that committee which has been set up?

**Dr. Jeetah:** Yes, Sir.

**Mr Bhagwan:** Has the hon. Minister taken cognizance of a letter which has been forwarded to the Ministry by Mr Aza, president of ELAN, which has made some suggestions concerning the permanent evaluation of *l'état de santé des détenus, des suspects*? Can he say whether he has received representations from that association, if yes, whether action has been taken and whether they have been heard by that committee?

**Dr. Jeetah:** I am not in presence of this letter, but I will certainly look into it.

**Mr Bérenger:** I think I've heard the hon. Minister because he has changed place, the Ministry, microphone, but he still speaks in a way that is very difficult to catch. The style has changed for the better, but the sound remains the same. Did the hon. Minister said that he has received a report

and it is being implemented, and if yes, has that report been communicated to the trade unions representing the employees and have they reacted?

**Dr. Jeetah:** I am not in the presence of any communication from the trade unions, but I shall certainly look into that.

**Mrs Labelle:** Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister whether he has been apprised of the reasons as to why another patient was in the same cell of a dangerous patient? Is it in order that a cell of a dangerous patient be shared by another patient?

**Dr. Jeetah:** That was the High Security Ward.

**MINISTER OF TOURISM, LEISURE AND EXTERNAL  
COMMUNICATIONS – MISSION – AUSTRALIA –  
TOTAL EXPENDITURE**

**(No. B/1218) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière)** asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism, Leisure and External Communications whether, in regard to his recent mission *cum* road show to Australia, he will state –

- (a) the total expenditure incurred from public funds, giving a breakdown thereof in terms of –
  - (i) travel costs;
  - (ii) *per diem* allowances, and
  - (iii) other expenses, and
- (b) the number of advisers and other persons representing parastatal bodies who accompanied him, indicating their respective names and status.

**The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism, Leisure and External Communications (Mr X. L. Duval):** Mr Speaker, Sir, in line with our strategy to diversify tourism source markets, Australia is being targeted in view of its expanding economy and growing outbound tourism potential. Australia also has a reservoir of ethnic tourism with a large number of residents belonging to the Mauritian origin and the strategic location of Mauritius on the route from Australia to Africa and Europe.

In fact, by virtue of its location and the availability of connecting flights, Mauritius offers interesting possibilities of combined destination for Australian travelers.

These factors together with signs of an impending financial crisis and the economic recession in our main traditional tourist generating markets meant that it was imperative to have a more aggressive and dynamic presence in Australia which has, as I mentioned, an excellent outbound tourism potential and long term growth prospects.

It is in this perspective that I led a joint public and private sector delegation in Australia in May this year to carry out an intensive promotional campaign in three cities of Australia, namely Melbourne, Sydney and Perth with a view to enhancing our visibility and capitalizing on the potential of the Australian market.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the information relating to part (a) of the question is being compiled and will be placed in the Library of the National Assembly as soon as available.

With regard to part (b) of the question, I was accompanied by –

- (a) Mr Lindsay Noë, Adviser at my Ministry;
- (b) Mr Robert Desveaux, Chairman of the MTPA;
- (c) Dr. Karl Mootosamy, Director of the MTPA, and
- (d) Ms Uma Desai, then Tourism Promotion Officer at the MTPA.

In addition Mr Subhash Seeruttun, General Manager of the Beach Authority, joined the mission on the return leg in Perth, to look into beach management issues.

**Mr Bhagwan:** Can the hon. Minister inform the House whether there was a representative of Air Mauritius in that delegation?

**Mr X. L. Duval:** No, Sir.

**Mr Bhagwan:** Can the hon. Minister inform the House whether in line with that mission he made a statement to tourism professionals that there will be an increase in the number of flights to Australia, and, in fact, the opposite has happened on his return?

**Mr X. L. Duval:** There will be an increase in the number of flights to Australia, Mr Speaker, Sir. Obviously, we have a short-term, but we will do it on the long-term. Nobody doubts that there will be an increase in tourism and in flights to Australia. However, the Member may well be aware that there was at the same time a terrible upsurge in the cost of the barrel of petrol and this has led Air Mauritius to take very drastic measures. Had it not taken drastic measures, Mr Speaker, Sir, we may not even have an Air Mauritius today!

**TOURISM AUTHORITY - CHAIRPERSON –  
ALLEGED BRIBERY CASE**

**(No. B/1219) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière)** asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism, Leisure and External Communications whether he is aware that there is an alleged case of bribery against one Mr M. B., Chairperson of the Tourism Authority and, if so will he, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Authority, information as to if any inquiry has been carried out thereinto.

**The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism, Leisure and External Communications (Mr X. L. Duval):** Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that an alleged case of bribery was lodged at ICAC against the Chairperson of the Tourism Authority.

I am further informed that the case has, however, been set aside.

**Mr Bhagwan:** Can we know whether the Chairman is an active member of the political party of the...

**Mr Speaker:** No!

**Mr Bhagwan:** I am just asking, Sir. I am not mentioning names. I am not asking whether that person...

**Mr Speaker:** Can I ask the hon. Member in what way the question that he is putting now is relevant to this question?

*(Interruptions)*

Next question!

## **TOURISM AUTHORITY - LICENSING COMMITTEE - COMPOSITION**

**(No. B/1220) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière)** asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism, Leisure and External Communications whether he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Tourism Authority, information as to the present composition of its Licensing Committee.

**The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism, Leisure and External Communications (Mr X. L. Duval):** Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that the present composition of the Licencing Committee which is now chaired by the Director of the Tourism Authority, is as follows –

- (a) a representative of the Ministry of Tourism and Leisure;
- (b) a representative of the Ministry of Finance and Economic Empowerment;
- (c) a representative of the Ministry of Local Government, Rodrigues and Outer Islands;
- (d) the President of the Association Hôtels de Charme, and
- (e) the Director of the Mauritius Tourism Promotion Authority.

In addition, representatives from the following organisations are co-opted members –

- (i) Ministry of Health and Quality of Life;
- (ii) Police Department, and
- (iii) Fire Services Department.

**Mr Bhagwan:** Can we say who is chairing the committee?

**Mr X. L. Duval:** The Director of the Tourism Authority

## **DBM - LOANS**

**(No. B/1221) Mr S. Dayal (Second Member for Quartier Militaire & Moka)** asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Empowerment whether, in regard to loans granted by the Development Bank of Mauritius Ltd., since January 2000 to date, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Bank, information as to –

- (a) the number thereof;

- (b) the amount disbursed;
- (c) the number of cases of unpaid loans and the amount involved, and
- (d) the number of cases where debts have been written off and the amount thereof.

**The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Empowerment (Dr. R. Sithanen):** Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that for the period January 2000 to date, the Bank has approved 102,444 loans in respect of which a total amount of Rs7.97 billion has been disbursed.

As regards part (c) of the question, out of the 102,444 loans approved and disbursed since year 2000 to date, there are 48,177 cases of unpaid loans with a total outstanding capital balance of Rs3.4 billion.

I am advised, Mr Speaker, Sir, that the normal tenure of loans is in the range of four to seven years inclusive of the grace period. Taking into consideration that the loans are of a developmental nature, the Bank is flexible in the recovery of its loans. It is a common practice for the Bank to accede to genuine cases, to requests for extension of moratorium period and loan rescheduling. It is only in cases where all measures for loan recovery have failed that the Bank proceeds with loan write-offs.

Insofar as part (d) of the question is concerned, I am informed that the total amount written off for the financial years 2000 to 2007 as booked in its final accounts stands at Rs10.224 m. This amount refers also to loans that were granted prior to the year 2000 that had matured in the period post 2000 and for which all measures for recovery had failed.

Between 2000 and 2007 the loan loss provision charged to the profit and loss account was Rs199 m. Furthermore, in terms of the amnesty scheme announced in the 2008/2009 Budget for small individual borrowers with loans of up to Rs200,000, the loan loss adjustment is being reviewed by the external auditors.

**Mr Dayal:** Can the hon. Vice-Prime Minister inform the House whether there is a restructuring exercise being envisaged and, if yes, what is the time frame?

**Dr. Sithanen:** A good question, but a difficult one! We are looking into it, Mr Speaker, Sir. Let me very candid to the House. We are not happy with the way things have happened over a long period of time at the DBM. Unfortunately, in many of these instances, notwithstanding the will to change and to give priority to the objective that needs to be served, it has not been easy to implement change. There are some issues that we are discussing and we hope that we'll find a solution that will protect both the interests of the employees and, at the same time, make the bank more effective in the delivery of services, especially to small and medium entrepreneurs.

### **MSPA/GOVERNMENT – SUGAR REFORM - AGREEMENT**

**(No. B/1222) Mr S. Dayal (Second Member for Quartier Militaire & Moka)** asked the Minister of Agro Industry, Food Protection and Security whether, in regard to the sugar sector reform programme, he will state if he has started negotiations with the Mauritius Sugar Producers Association with a view to obtaining 2000 acres of land to be distributed among the workers of the sugar industry.

**Mr Faugoo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the agreement reached between Government and the Mauritius Sugar Producers Association on 05 December 2007 on the implementation of the sugar reform *inter alia* provides that 2,000 arpents of land will be granted by the corporate planters who are members of the MSPA to the State through the Empowerment Programme and the land will be used for the needs of the State for social purposes and agricultural diversification.

As the House is aware, this historical deal was successfully concluded thanks to the personal efforts of the Prime Minister.

In his Budget Speech this year, the Vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and Economic Empowerment indicated that 1000 of the 2000 arpents would be reserved for foodcrop production and Government would seek large tracts of 50 to 100 arpents to be leased to food production companies consisting of regrouped small and medium planters.

A Committee chaired by the Secretary to Cabinet and Head of Civil Service has been set up to monitor the implementation of the 2,000 arpents scheme. With regard to agricultural production, my Ministry has, for this year, requested 267 arpents of land islandwide for food crop production and

livestock projects. Discussions are ongoing with the MSPA for the release of the land for eventual lease to planters. MSPA together with officials of my Ministry and AREU are now finalising the sites to enable us to take status of the condition of the land prior to starting land preparation. So far, we have received applications from farmer associations, for land, food crop production, amounting to 682 arpents. AREU is providing technical assistance to these associations to enable farmers to formulate the proposals.

**Mr Dayal:** Can the hon. Minister state to the House if he can give an indication of the institution to which the 2,000 acres of land will be transferred?

**Mr Faugoo:** In fact, the land will be transferred to the Empowerment Fund and then transferred again to the Ministry of Agro-Industry. Then these lands will be leased to planters who are regrouping small and medium size planters.

**Mr Dowarkasing:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister has just stated that he is planning to have 267 acres of land under food production. Can we know from the hon. Minister what are the crops that will be produced on the land?

**Mr Faugoo:** As I said, they have not yet started cultivating. We have earmarked 267 acres of land out of which 50 arpents have been earmarked in the north for potato, onion and groundnut cultivation. The land in the north belongs to Group Harel Frères. In the west, we have earmarked some 30 arpents for the production of onions, spices and soya beans and the land belongs to Médine Sugar Estates. In the east, we have earmarked 50 arpents for the production of potatoes, garlic, maize and onions. Another 50 arpents again in the east for the production of fodder by one firm which is planning to open a dairy farm. In the east, there are also seven arpents which have been earmarked for pig breeding activities, and 50 arpents have been earmarked in the south for the setting up of a dairy farm and also fodder production.

**Mr Dayal:** Mr Speaker, Sir, can the Minister inform the House when these negotiations will be completed and when the transfer of these 2,000 acres of land will be concluded and transferred?

**Mr Faugoo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the negotiations are ongoing and, in fact, the land earmarked so far, that is, 267 arpents. will be leased before the end of this year.

**Mrs Hanoomanjee:** Mr Speaker, Sir, can the Minister say whether there are clear-cut criteria for the allocation of this land to planters?

**Mr Faugoo:** Yes, indeed Sir.

**Mr Dayal:** Can the Minister inform the House whether funds have been earmarked for the preparation of the land and who will be responsible for it?

**Mr Faugoo:** Funds are available under the Food Security Fund set up in the 2008/2009 Budget, Mr Speaker, Sir, the land will be prepared in terms of derocking, fine derocking and irrigation services will be provided for by the Mauritius Sugar Authority and extension services will be provided for by AREU.

**Mrs Hanoomanjee:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the Minister has just said that there are clear-cut criteria, can we know what are the criteria?

**Mr Faugoo:** I do not have the information at hand, Sir.

### **SCHOOLS (PRIMARY/SECONDARY) – TEACHER TO STUDENTS RATIO**

**(No. B/1223) Mr Y. Varma (First Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien)** asked the Minister of Education, Culture & Human Resources whether he will state the current teacher to students ratio in primary and secondary schools.

**Dr. Bunwaree:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the average teacher:pupil ratio at primary level, GP and OL teachers combined, is 1:22. The ratio in respect of GP teachers alone is 1:29. These figures have remained steady over the past five years.

As regards the secondary level, the average teacher:pupil ratio which again, has remained steady over the past five years is 1:16.

This is accounted for by the fact that, contrary to the primary sector, teaching is subject-based at secondary level and my Ministry's policy is for schools to offer a subject if there is a minimum of 10 students for subjects considered to be scarcity areas (oriental languages, Design and Communication/Design and Technology, Home Economics) and 16 students for other subjects.

Although the average ratio is 1:16, the situation differs from subject to subject. This is understandable.

For example, for “core subjects” like *English, French and Maths*, the ratio would be higher than the average, generally in the region of 1:30 whereas for optional subjects and scarcity areas subjects, it will obviously be lower.

**Mr Varma:** Can the Minister inform the House whether it is being envisaged to improve the teacher:student ratio as far as the core subjects are concerned?

**Dr. Bunwaree:** This is a constant work that is being done at the Ministry. In fact, it has stayed steady for the last five years but, of course, we are trying to improve and when we look at it generally compared with other countries, Mauritius is well placed.

### **MAHEBOURG/PLAINE MAGNIEN –ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT - PROJECTS**

**(No. B/1224) Mr Y. Varma (First Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien)** asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Empowerment whether, in regard to projects for economic development in the Constituency No. 12, Mahebourg and Plaine Magnien, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Board of Investment, information as to where matters stand.

**The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Empowerment (Dr. R. Sithanen):** Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Board of Investment that three projects have been implemented in Constituency No. 12, Mahebourg and Plaine Magnien namely –

- (i) one ICT project with an investment of around Rs12 m. in the Beau Vallon Industrial Park which currently employs 70 persons. Employment is planned to increase to 110 by January 2009, and
- (ii) two projects in the airport area with total investment of 250 m. One is a VVIP private terminal with an investment of Rs120 m and the other one is a warehouse and office space

for the Mauritius Duty-Free Paradise, with investments totalling Rs130 m.

I am also informed that BOI has approved two projects relating to property development in the region with estimated investment value of Rs650 m.

Furthermore, the infrastructure development of the airport is itself expected to trigger other developments in the region.

**Mr Varma:** Mr Speaker, Sir, is the hon. Vice-Prime Minister aware of any IRS project in Le Bouchon?

**Dr. Sithanen:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I understand there are some IRS and RES projects. There are two major projects that are being discussed. I think one is promoted by Mon Trésor Mon Desert and the other one, if my memory serves me well, by the SIT, in collaboration with some foreign investors. It is a long process, as the hon. Member is aware. BOI is trying to fast-track some of the authorisation, but to a large extent it also depends on the state of preparedness of the promoters to start the project.

### **MAHEBOURG AND PLAINE MAGNIEN – PROJECTS – FUNDS EARMARKED**

**(No. B/1225) Mr Y. Varma (First Member for Mahebourg and Plaine Magnien)** asked the Minister of Environment and National Development Unit whether, in regard to projects in the Constituency No. 12, Mahebourg and Plaine Magnien, he will state –

- (a) the amount of money earmarked by his Ministry for the financial year 2008-2009, and
- (b) the current status thereof.

**Mr Bundhoo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (a) of the question I would like to inform the House that the overall budget provision for the current financial year is of the order of Rs501.2 m. Funds are allocated on a need basis, depending on the nature of the projects.

With regard to part (b), list of projects for Constituency No. 12 – Plaine Magnien/Mahebourg - undertaken by the Ministry is being tabled.

### **GLOBAL FINANCIAL CRISIS – DOMESTIC MARKET**

**(No. B/1226) Mr S. Soodhun (Fifth Member for La Caverne and Phoenix)** asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Empowerment whether, in regard to the global financial crisis, he will state the measures taken by Government to mitigate the impact thereof on the domestic market.

*(Vide reply to PNQ)*

### **GLOBAL FINANCIAL CRISIS – TOURISM & TEXTILE INDUSTRIES - ASSESSMENT**

**(No. B/1227) Mr S. Soodhun (Fifth Member for La Caverne and Phoenix)** asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Empowerment whether, in regard to the global financial crisis, he will state

–

- (a) if any assessment on the impact thereof on the tourism and textile industries has been carried out and, if so, indicate the findings thereof, and
- (b) the other sectors that would be effected, indicating how.

*(Vide reply to PNQ)*

### **GLOBAL FINANCIAL CRISIS – FORECASTED GROWTH 2008**

**(No. B/1228) Mr S. Soodhun (Fifth Member for La Caverne and Phoenix)** asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Empowerment whether, in regard to the global financial crisis, he will state the impact thereof on the forecasted growth for the year 2008, indicating the revised forecasted growth for the year 2008.

*(Vide reply to PNQ)*

## HORSES – CRUELTIES - MEASURES

**(No. B/1229) Mrs F. Jeewa-Daureeawoo (Third Member for Stanley and Rose-Hill)** asked the Minister of Agro Industry, Food Protection and Security whether, in regard to the horses, he will state the actions he proposes to take to protect them against cruelty and torture.

**Mr Faugoo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, following newspaper report dated 21/22 September 2008 regarding atrocities meted out to retired racing horse ‘Mythical Man’, I convened a meeting with relevant stakeholders on 22 September to review the situation and to decide on remedial measures to be taken to provide better protection to horses. The meeting was attended by representatives of the Mauritius Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, the Mauritius Turf Club, the Protection of Animal Welfare Society, the Mauritius Meat Authority and the Division of Veterinary Service of my Ministry.

The following measures have been recommended -

- (i) the setting-up of a Technical Committee comprising representatives of the State Law office, the MSPCA and the Division of Veterinary Services of my Ministry to review the existing legislation pertaining to animal welfare and to propose amendments to prevent cruelties to animals in future and to promote animal health and welfare in general;
- (ii) new conditions to be inserted on import permits to exercise a rigid control on transfer of ownership and sale of horses and their movement;
- (iii) the establishment of a consolidated Register of Horses and the issue of a Registration Card in respect of each horse;
- (iv) the launching of a national sensitisation campaign for the general public regarding proper treatment and care of animals, and
- (v) the writing-up of a project for the setting up of a “*Maison de Retraite*” for horses.

The Technical Committee has met on four occasions and is finalising the drafting of regulations. These regulations will be published shortly.

The Division of Veterinary Services is now inserting new conditions on import permits to ensure that there is a proper control regarding the transfer of ownership and sale of horses and their registration. Guidelines are also being prepared as regards follow-up on horses after their racing lifetime and humane disposal after their death.

**Mrs Jeewa-Daureeawoo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, may I know from the hon. Minister what is the role of the Mauritius Turf Club regarding retired race horses?

**Mr Faugoo:** As far as I know, Mr Speaker, Sir, it is not regulated as it is now. This is what we are trying to find out. We are creating a register for these horses because they are imported by the Mauritius Turf Club and then later on they are transferred to owners who can dispose of these horses, and they are free to sell to anybody. This is where we are trying to bring in laws and regulations to control from imports to disposal of the horses.

**Mr Bodha:** Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister whether he is aware that at the time this case broke out there was an alleged case about the illegal slaughter of retired horses in the region of *Petite Rivière* and the sale of meat from retired horses? I don't know whether an inquiry has been done in this particular case. Was he aware of this?

**Mr Faugoo:** In fact, I was told by someone that there was such a thing which was never reported either to the Police or to my Ministry, but I have asked the Veterinary Services to look into it and report.

**Mr Dowarkasing:** Mr Speaker, Sir, it seems that in many cases we await for an incident to happen and then we react. Can I ask the hon. Minister whether the officers of his Ministry have conducted an inquiry to know how many retired horses are there around the island, where they are located and have a full database on that issue?

**Mr Faugoo:** This exercise is ongoing, Mr Speaker, Sir.

#### **NTC – BUSES – PURCHASE**

**(No. B/1230) Mr S. Naidu (Third Member for Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière)** asked the Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping whether, in regard to the purchase procedures of eighty buses of the make TATA in 2007, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain

from the National Transport Corporation, information as to if there has been any allegation of malpractice and, if so, indicate if an inquiry has been carried out thereinto and, if not, why not.

**Mr Bachoo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, in the wake of rumours about alleged malpractice with regard to the purchase of 80 buses, I have been informed that all tender procedures have been strictly followed. However, to make assurance doubly sure, I have instructed that an inquiry be carried out into this matter.

**Mr Naidu:** Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Minister inform the House when the report is expected?

**Mr Bachoo:** I can assure the House that when the inquiry is completed, I will lay copy of the report on the Table of the Assembly.

**Mr Bérenger:** Mr Speaker, Sir, can I know from the hon. Minister who is going to conduct that inquiry?

**Mr Bachoo:** The Permanent Secretary of my Ministry assisted by the PAS.

### HIV AND AIDS – CASES

**(No. B/1231) Mr S. Naidu (Third Member for Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière)** asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether, in regard to the HIV and AIDS, he will state if the number of reported cases thereof is on the increase.

**Dr. Jeetah:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the reply is in the negative. I am informed that there was an increase in the number of new cases of HIV and AIDS detected from 2001 to 2005 as follows –

2001	-	55 new cases
2002	-	98 new cases
2003	-	225 new cases out of 76,577 tests carried
2004	-	525 new cases out of 86,292 tests carried
2005	-	921 new cases out of 86,288 tests carried
2006	-	542 new cases out of 87,842 tests carried
2007	-	546 new cases out of 91,980 tests carried

2008(Jan to Sept 2008)- 423 new cases have been detected

The sharp rise from 2003 to 2005 coincided with the period when the proposed HIV testing for selected groups such as the IDUs in the prisons started.

In fact, during that period a great number of infected IDUs were captured. A prompt response to this increase started in 2005 itself as soon as this Government came into power. It includes among others the introduction of the Methadone Substitution Therapy Programme and the Needle Exchange Programme in 2006.

Consequently in the following two years a decline was noted in the number of detected cases and this despite an increase in the number of tests carried out in the community and prisons.

The figures from 2006 onwards would tend to indicate that there is a stabilisation in the number of new cases.

**Mr Dowarkasing:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I just want to ask the hon. Minister whether he is aware that a very active NGO in this field has said that there is an increase of about 50 cases on a monthly basis which is not at all what the hon. Minister is stating in the House today. Can we know his stand on it?

**Dr. Jeetah:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I will have to stand by the figures provided to me by my Ministry.

### **MILK & FOOD PRODUCTS – HARMFUL INGREDIENTS – ANALYSIS**

**(No. B/1232) Mr S. Naidu (Third Member for Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière)** asked the Minister of Consumer Protection and Citizens Charter whether, in regard to milk and other food products imported from sources other than China, he will state if tests are being carried out thereon to determine if they contain forbidden ingredients.

**The Minister of Health and Quality of Life (Dr. R. Jeetah):** With your permission, Sir, I shall reply to this question.

In accordance with the provisions of the Food Act, importers of food and food items are requested to apply and obtain a Pre-Market Approval. For the purpose, samples of the products are sent to the Government Analyst

Division for analysis. This allows determination as to whether the product contains any ingredient harmful to health. I am tabling the list of food requiring Pre-Market Approval.

Following reports received at the end of September 2008, regarding the presence of melamine in milk and milk based products originating from China, it was decided to request all importers of these products to produce an original Certificate of Analysis from an independent accredited laboratory from the country of origin to the effect that the product is free from melamine. A communiqué was issued in this respect.

With regard to milk and milk based products, many exporting countries have taken measures to prevent import of milk from China and are, therefore, certifying that these products are free from melamine. These countries are amongst others EU, Australia, New Zealand and Singapore. In view of the above, melamine free certificates are now being requested for milk and milk based products from China, Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia and Vietnam. A correspondence has been received on 10 November, 2008 from the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Indonesia certifying that the products are melamine free.

I am informed that from January 2008 to date 2206 tests have been carried out by the Government Analyst Division.

The test for Melamine has become a basic analytical test parameter for all products containing high level of proteins such as milk and milk based products, soya sauce, infant foods and meat products. I am tabling the list of non-permissible food items.

I am also advised that the Government Analyst Division is carrying analysis to detect the following –

- (a) the presence of permissible natural and artificial food colours and non-permissible food colours such as Sudan dyes and Rhodamine;
- (b) heavy metals contaminants such as Mercury, Cadmium, Arsenic, Lead and Antimony in foods;
- (c) identification of the type of fat in foods eg. adulteration of full cream milk with vegetable fats.

**Mrs Martin:** Can I ask the Minister whether with regard to milk and other food products which are mentioned in this question, some of them have been discovered to contain those substances which he has mentioned that the Ministry is testing on?

**Dr. Jeetah:** Mr Speaker, Sir, there was a sweet where it was found there was melamine. I think it was 'bonbons lapin' and there were samples which were sent to the Ministry for pre-market analysis.

**Mr Cuttaree:** Mr Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Minister whether he is aware that a large number of children are actually fed on soya milk and whether the Ministry has carried out any test on soya milk to find out whether the soya milk on the market is safe for consumption?

**Dr. Jeetah:** I did instruct the Government Analyst to test all types of milk and milk based products, but I have to look into and inform the House at a later stage.

**Mrs Martin:** Apart from melamine, Mr Speaker, Sir, there are also some chemical acidic substances which are contained in some edible foodstuffs. Are surveys being carried out and experiments being....

**Mr Speaker:** I am sorry to interrupt the honourable Member. We are talking about milk.

**Mrs Martin:** Aside from melamine, there are also, like I was saying, chemical acidic substances which are contained in some sweets. Has any study being carried out to discover whether those are on sale in Mauritius and what is being done to prevent such sales?

**Dr. Jeetah:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I have laid on the Table of the Assembly for the benefit of everybody to see what is not permissible. I have also requested the Chief Medical Officer, that is, the Director General of Health Services, to set up a food monitoring committee with a number of stakeholders to keep on assessing the situation. I have also instructed MIH to give us information daily with regard to food alerts throughout the world.

**Mr Speaker:** Hon. Members, the Table has been informed that the following Parliamentary Questions have been withdrawn, namely, Nos. B/1235, B/1236, B/1237, B/1238, B/1245, B/1246 and B/1271.

### SSS – SCHOOL HOURS - EXTENSION

**(No. B/1233) Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun (Third Member for La Caverne and Phoenix)** asked the Minister of Education, Culture and Human Resources whether, in regard to the students of the State Secondary Schools, he will state if, as from January 2009, they will be required to remain in schools till 3.00 p.m.

**Dr. Bunwaree:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the reply to the question is yes.

In line with the recommendations of the Pay Research Bureau to the effect that Educators (Secondary) should be required to teach during periods 30 in a week, and work up to 15.00 hours, my Ministry is making arrangements for school hours in the State sector to be extended from 14.30 hours to 15.00 hours on resumption of studies in January 2009, both for educators and students.

Accordingly, all State schools will start at 8.00 a.m and will end at 15.00 hours i.e 7 hours of work daily. The existing number of eight teaching periods of 40 minutes duration will be maintained and will be complemented with one additional period of 35 minutes, save and except for eight selected State Secondary Schools which will implement the “broadening the curriculum” project on a pilot basis in January 2009.

The extension of the school day for students to stay till 3.00 p.m. would, Mr Speaker, Sir, enable us to fulfill the real mission for which schools have been created. A holistic education as against mere instruction has to be provided across the different levels. Our learners must imbibe a set of values, develop their aesthetic sense and be exposed to civic education for sound citizenship such that they become responsible and respectable adults of tomorrow. Some of the additional time provided to schools will hence be utilized so as to effectively inculcate these fundamental human values into our children and thus contribute in a significant manner to enrich their learning experiences.

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** Mr Speaker, Sir, we do appreciate the fact that the Ministry has gone on this line. May I ask the hon. Minister whether the same situation will prevail in the private sector?

**Dr. Bunwaree:** We are trying to uniformise as far as possible. Of course, but many of the private schools have got one Manager for one school, apart from BEC. We are still trying to give some flexibility to the private schools for them to toe the line. The main principle is that schools should work seven hours daily and the number of minutes that have been allocated to teachers for one week according to PRB, that is, 1200 minutes, will have to be respected.

**Mr Varma:** Could the hon. Minister inform the House what will be done by his Ministry to monitor the objectives that have been spelt out by him in Parliament?

**Dr. Bunwaree:** This is not a problem, in fact. We have a good monitoring unit at the Ministry.

**Mrs Labelle:** In line with the question which has just been put, may I ask the hon. Minister whether there are particular activities which have been scheduled to reach the objectives mentioned?

**Dr. Bunwaree:** Mr Speaker, Sir, a set of activities will be spelt out very soon. In fact, we have asked the managers and representatives of the teachers to submit a report because they have the experience, they must be knowing what is the best way to go in line with what I have just mentioned here.

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** May I ask the hon. Minister if we are going to abide by the seven hours of work on a daily basis whether the students will be required to stay beyond 15.00 hours up to 15.30 hours in certain colleges?

**Dr. Bunwaree:** Not in State secondary schools.

**Mr Guinness:** While working out this timetable for students and teachers, may we know from the hon. Minister whether the transport problem was taken into consideration? It seems that bus operators are a bit worried as students will be leaving at 15.00 hours and transport problem may arise.

**Dr. Bunwaree:** In fact, the problem was raised and I have contacted my colleague who is responsible for bus transport. There should be no problem.

### **HSC EXAMS 2008 - INVIGILATORS**

**(No. B/1234) Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun (Third Member for La Caverne and Phoenix)** asked the Minister of Education, Culture and Human Resources whether, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Examinations Syndicate, information as to if there has been a shortage of invigilators in the examinations centres for the November/December 2008 Cambridge Higher School Certificate examinations.

**Dr. Bunwaree:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Mauritius Examinations Syndicate that no shortage of Invigilators at the examination centres has been reported to the syndicate for the November/December 2008 HSC Examinations which are being held from 23 September to 21 November 2008. MES has a sufficient number of invigilators for the

conduct of all the examinations and its bank of invigilators, I am informed, is updated all through the year.

A total of 1528 invigilators have been recruited to work at sixty examinations centres for the HSC examinations. Where there are absentees or whenever an invigilator ceases to work, the Centre Supervisor contacts the MES and replacement is provided immediately.

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** May I ask the hon. Minister whether he is aware that during the chemistry examination at the QEC the practical exams had to start at least two hours later, because of the fact that invigilators were not available for the start of the exams?

**Dr. Bunwaree:** This is what I have heard from outside, but I have investigated. In fact, the examinations for that paper started late not only at the QEC, but in all the centres of the country; I am told that the complexity of the preparation was responsible for that.

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** May I ask the hon. Minister to look into the matter, because my information is that the organiser for practical refused to start the examination because, precisely, there were no invigilators and she was asked to start the examination in presence of a single invigilator?

**Dr. Bunwaree:** I'll take this information on board. But then I don't understand why in all the other sectors also the exams started late.

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** May I ask the hon. Minister whether he is aware of the fact that in a particular centre one of the invigilators was made to invigilate an examination hall where her own daughter was sitting for the exams?

**Dr. Bunwaree:** This is being looked into. and I can inform the House at a later stage. In fact, the information that I have is not because of lack of invigilators that the examinations started late there. This is the information I have.

**ELECTRICITY TARIFFS – REVIEW**

**(No. B/1235) Mr G. Lesjongard (Second Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue)** asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Renewable Energy and Public Utilities whether, following the decrease in the price of fuel oil, he will state if Government is envisaging to review the electricity tariffs to alleviate the burden on consumers.

*(Withdrawn)*

**NATIONAL PENSIONS FUND  
– INVESTMENTS - AMOUNT**

**(No. B/1236) Mr G. Lesjongard (Second Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue)** asked the Vice-Prime Minister of Finance and Economic Empowerment whether, in regard to the investment of the funds of the National Pensions Fund, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Fund, information as to the total amount of investment made in the different institutions as at to date, indicating –

- (a) the investment for the last month, and
- (b) the status thereof.

*(Withdrawn)*

**TOURIST ARRIVALS – NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2008 & JAN 2009**

**(No. B/1237) Mr G. Lesjongard (Second Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue)** asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism, Leisure & External Communications whether, in regard to the tourist arrivals, he will state the forecast for the months of November and December 2008 and January 2009.

*(Withdrawn)*

## SQUATTING – SURVEY & EVICTION ORDERS

**(No. B/1238) Mr G. Lesjongard (Second Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue)** asked the Minister of Housing and Lands whether, in regard to squatting, he will state if –

- (a) his Ministry has recently carried out a survey thereinto, and
- (b) eviction orders have been issued over the past six months, indicating the number thereof which have been executed.

*(Withdrawn)*

## QUEEN VICTORIA HOSPITAL – PHARMACY & CASUALTY DEPARTMENT

**(No. B/1239) Mr S. Dayal (Second Member for Quartier Militaire and Moka)** asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether, in regard to the Queen Victoria Hospital, Candos, he will state if he is aware of the shortcomings of the –

- (a) pharmacy of the new outpatients department in relation to the –
  - (i) aeration;
  - (ii) staffing;
  - (iii) lift, and
  - (iv) road access to the store, and
- (b) overcrowding in the casualty department, particularly in the X-ray unit, indicating the remedial measures that will be taken.

**Dr. Jeetah:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the House that a number of services have been transferred to the New Central Outpatient Department as from 04 October 2008. These include, *inter alia*, the Accident and Emergency Unit, the unsorted and sorted OPD, pharmacy, the X-ray and the ECG units.

There were some teething problems that arose at the start, but remedial actions have already been taken by the Ministry.

With regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed that –

- (i) the problem of aeration at the level of the pharmacy is temporary on account of the noise emanating from the air conditioners. There have been protests from the inhabitants nearby and it has been decided to use only one chiller instead of two. The Ministry is proceeding with the installation of acoustic cladding that will eliminate the noise pollution and thus enable the two chillers to operate fully.
- (ii) there is no problem of staffing in respect of dispensers as the number of staff deployed is adequate. On average daily, there are 11 dispensers available from 9.00 hours to 16.00 hours.
- (iii) The problems referred to in sections (iii) and (iv) regarding the lift and road access to the store are related to the inaccessibility of big lorries to the store situated at the basement and as such drugs have to be delivered at the delivery bay at the ground floor and thereafter channelled to the store at the basement through the goods lift. This lift which is broken is being repaired by Rey & Lenferna Co. Ltd. In the meantime, the pharmacy store in the old building is being used.

Concerning part (b) of the question, it needs to be pointed out that the waiting halls in the new building are more spacious and have more sitting accommodation. In fact, overcrowding in the Accident and Emergency Unit and the X-ray Unit is often caused by relatives who accompany patients. In order to circumvent this problem, only one relative is now being allowed to accompany patients.

**Mr Varma:** Mr Speaker, Sir, is the hon. Minister aware that vehicles that come to leave patients at the casualty do not have access to the main entrance of the casualty? They have to leave their vehicles quite a distance and the patients have to walk towards the casualty unit.

**Dr. Jeetah:** Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir.

**Mr Varma:** Mr Speaker, Sir, will the hon. Minister inform the House of what is being done by his Ministry in order to solve this problem?

**Dr. Jeetah:** I did mention, Mr Speaker, Sir, that there were some teething problems. I think we will have to look at the whole system and take the appropriate actions thereupon.

**Mr Dayal:** Is the hon. Minister aware that there is no covered access to the different wards for patients who are to be admitted to the different wards? In fact, the wards are on the other side of the road. Is he aware of the plight of the people who are to be admitted? Of course, there is no proper planning. May we know what he is doing to address the problem?

**Dr. Jeetah:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I am fully aware of the inconvenience caused to the patients and I must reassure the hon. Member that a covered passage from the new outpatient department to the wards at Victoria Hospital will be implemented on a fast-track basis by the Ministry of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping at a cost of around Rs4 m.

### **TAXES & VAT – MONEY COLLECTED**

**(No. B/1240) Mr N. Bodha (First Member for Vacoas and Floreal)** asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Empowerment whether, in regard to petroleum products, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Revenue Authority, information as to the amount of money collected in terms of Value Added Tax and other taxes for the financial years 2005/2006 to 2007/2008 and period July 2008 to October 2008.

**The Vice Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Empowerment (Dr. R. Sithanen):** Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Mauritius Revenue Authority that the amount of taxes collected on petroleum products, that is, for mogas and gas oil, are as follows -

- (i) Value Added Tax : Rs1.1 billion for financial year 2005-2006; Rs1.2 billion for financial year 2006-2007, and Rs1.4 billion for financial year 2007-2008.
- (ii) Excise duties and MID levy: Rs1.9 billion for financial year 2005-2006; Rs2.0 billion for financial year 2006-2007, and Rs2.0 billion for financial year 2007-2008.

For the period July 2008 to October 2008, the data is being compiled.

A significant part of the increase in tax collections on petroleum products reflects the natural buoyancy of taxes in response to rising nominal consumption. In fact, the increase in petroleum taxes has lagged behind the increase in taxes on other products.

Thus, the excise duties and MID levy on petroleum products have increased by only 1 percent over the period 2005/06 to 2007/08 compared with an average increase of 19 percent for all excise duties.

As a result, the share of petroleum taxes in total excise taxes has fallen from over 29 percent to less than 25 percent.

It should also be noted that the share of VAT on petroleum products has fallen from 7.8 percent of total VAT receipts in 2005/06 to 7.6 percent in 2007/08.

Mr Speaker, Sir, it is worth mentioning that petroleum taxes in Mauritius tend to be relatively low by international standards. For example, in Mauritius taxes on diesel amount to about a fifth of the retail price whilst in Madagascar it is over a quarter; in Spain it is 40 percent; in France 50 percent, and in the UK 55 percent.

**Mr Bodha:** It is a perfectly typical answer of the Minister, Mr Speaker, Sir.

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Order!

**Mr Bodha:** May I ask the hon. Vice-Prime Minister whether he will agree that, in fact, all those billions have been paid by the Mauritian customers and that he could have adopted another policy, that is, not on a percentage basis, but on a saving basis?

**Mr Sithanen:** Mr Speaker, Sir, let me make it very clear. One, there are different levels of taxes. I don't know whether the hon. Member is aware that for excise duties, the tax is not *ad valorem*, it is specific. And the idea of a specific tax is that it is a fixed amount in absolute term. It is precisely what has helped to cushion the impact of the rising price of fuel.

For VAT, Mr Speaker, Sir, it is either 15% or zero or it is exempt. I have demonstrated that the share of VAT from petroleum products as a share from the total VAT has come down slightly.

I have also indicated very clearly, Mr Speaker, Sir, that even in countries where they have reserves of oil, the share of taxation in the final price that consumers pay is higher than in Mauritius. Let me tell my friend, hon. Bodha: who pays taxation in the country? If consumers and people don't pay, who will? Is it manna that falls from heaven!

**Mr Guinness:** Mr Speaker, Sir, concerning the value added tax on petroleum products, I am sure the hon. Minister must have got representations. I got representations from the Taxi Operators Association. VAT is not calculated on the basic value. There have been proposals from the Taxi Operators Association that if the Government will not waive the VAT, at least, VAT should be changed on the basic value instead of totalling the expenses in connection with importation, contribution to RDA and then, at the end, VAT is calculated. Can the hon. Vice-Prime Minister consider charging VAT on the basic value only?

**Dr. Sithanen:** It is a tricky one, Mr Speaker, Sir. We studied this file. I have looked at this file in and out for two weeks before we announced the decisions of last week. It is trickier than what it appears and I am not sure that the relief would be substantial. The relief that we have provided by bringing prices down by 15% and 20% is significantly higher. Mr Speaker, Sir, I don't want to play politics. I am not the one who increased VAT from 10% to 15%.

### **SOLAR WATER HEATER SYSTEMS – DBM - LOAN FACILITIES**

**(No. B/1242) Mr N. Bodha (First Member for Vacoas and Floreal)** asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Empowerment whether in regard to the loan facilities as announced in the Budget Speech 2008-2009 for the purchase of solar water heater systems, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Development Bank of Mauritius Ltd., information as at to date of –

- (a) the number of applications received, and
- (b) the amount of money disbursed.

**The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Empowerment (Dr. R. Sithanen):** Mr Speaker, Sir, as announced in the

Budget Speech 2008/09, the MID Fund would be providing an outright grant of Rs10,000 for every solar water heater purchased through the loan scheme run by the DBM. It was subsequently also decided to provide the same amount of grant to those who prefer to effect cash purchases instead of taking a loan from the Bank. This Scheme is time bound and will remain in operation till 31 December 2009.

In this respect, I am informed by the DBM that as at 31 October 2008, the Bank has received a total of 3,794 applications for the purchase of solar water heaters. The Bank has disbursed a total amount of Rs15.6 m. in respect of 1,100 applicants. Of these, 338 have applied to the DBM for a loan whereas 762 are applicants who have opted for cash purchases. As such Rs11 m. has been disbursed as grant and Rs4.6 m. as loan.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that the remaining 2,694 applications are under process.

**Mr Bodha:** May I ask the hon. Vice-Prime Minister whether he is aware that there is a backlog and whether he could consider the possibility that there is a fast track because we have many people who are interested in having a solar heaters system, but who have, in fact, been waiting for months? The money is there, but they are still not having the possibility to have the loan or the grant.

**Dr. Sithanen:** I have given “instructions” to the DBM to do that. However, I am sure my hon. friend would realise there is a problem in terms of who is an accredited solar water heater provider. Mr Speaker, Sir, there are so many technologies. Someone came to see me and said it is possible to have solar water heater at Rs9,000. I don’t know what the technology is. I hope when there is sunlight it does provide hot water. There are many technologies and I hope that people will take the best technology even if it is slightly more expensive because you have to look at the lifespan of the technology.

**Mr Speville:** Can I ask the hon. Minister whether he is aware that the providers of solar heaters should hold an ISO licence whereas the small SMEs are not able to benefit from the bank for this project?

**Dr. Sithanen:** If the hon. Member will give me the information, I will look into it. Mr Speaker, Sir, we want to promote SMEs also to have access to this facility.

**Mr Ganoo:** Can I know from the hon. Minister why the offer was time bound and is it possible to consider extending it?

**Dr. Sithanen:** Mr Speaker, Sir, it was urgent to convince people to move from fossil to renewable. So, if you don't have an urgency, then people will say they can do it any time. And what we have demonstrated to people is that, one, it is good for society and two, it is good for your pocket also because your consumption of electricity will fall. In fact, there are many people, Mr Speaker, Sir, whom I have met in my own constituency, who have changed their bulbs to economy bulbs and who are using solar heater. And their electricity bill has come down.

**Mr Dowarkasing:** Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Minister state what mechanism he has put in place or is the DBM putting in place to ensure that those who are taking cash are really purchasing the solar water heater system because we know what happened with the computer scheme?

**Dr. Sithanen:** I don't know what happened with the computer scheme. We have raised this question and this is being looked through a control via the accredited agents in order to make sure that there is no slippage in the system.

**Mr Ganoo:** Can the hon. Minister tell us if there is any type of quality control, that is, is anybody allowed to import any type of solar heaters?

**Dr. Sithanen:** I have seen exceptionally good solar heaters in Reunion Island and in Mauritius for Rs50,000 and yet some people tell me that they can get solar heater, for Rs9,000. Obviously, to a simple mind like me - I don't understand Physics and Chemistry - it seems to me that there must be a difference in the quality of the technology between one that costs Rs50,000 and Rs60,000 and one that costs Rs9,000. Unless it is the same technology, one is produced in a low-cost country and the other one in a high-cost country. You see that for TV. The same TV - 42" plasma, identical - one manufactured in Japan is Rs130,000, one manufactured in a low-cost location is Rs60,000, but the technology is the same. I don't know. I have asked that question.

## NATIONAL PENSIONS FUND – INVESTMENTS

**(No. B/1243) Mr M. Dowarkasing (Third Member for Curepipe and Midlands)** asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Empowerment whether in regard to the National Pensions Fund, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to –

- (a) total amount of money in the Fund as at to date, and
- (b) if there has been any foreign placements of these funds and, if so, give details thereof, indicating the amount of money accrued as interest as at to date.

**The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Empowerment (Dr. R. Sithanen):** Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I am replying to both PQs B/1236 and B/1243 because both of them relate to the NPF.

**Mr Speaker:** I am sorry. PQ B/1236 has been withdrawn. So, the hon. Minister will have to answer only to PQ B/1243.

**Dr. Sithanen:** This is the answer that I have, Mr Speaker, Sir.

**Mr Speaker:** Yes, but if the other question will come again it will not be receivable as it has already been replied.

**Dr. Sithanen:** When I spoke to you to answer the question, it was...

**Mr Speaker:** But, unfortunately, now I have been informed that the question has been withdrawn, but the Minister can answer the other question. If the same question is put again, I will have to decide if it is receivable.

**Dr. Sithanen:** It is all the same, Mr Speaker, Sir.

I am informed that the NPF revalues its portfolio of investment on a quarterly basis with the latest valuation on 30 September 2008. This frequency is sufficient for the needs of the NPF since it provides an indicative value of the evolution of investment. NPF is building up its assets and not actively selling. The indicative market values are useful to guide investment policy but have no direct bearing on actual return which would only be known once assets are transacted and realised.

For the quarter ended 30 September 2008 the Fund was valued at Rs53.04 billion.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the book value – this is different from the market value - of the investments at 30 September 2008 stood at Rs47.09 billion and at 07 November 2008 stood at Rs47.60 billion.

As regards foreign placements, I am informed that the National Pensions Fund has been making foreign placements since July 1994. The last foreign placements in the total amount of USD 8 m. were made in March 2005.

As at 30 September 2008, the Fund had total foreign placements valued at Rs3.03 billion as follows -

Foreign Equity: Rs2.28 billion, and  
Hedge Funds: Rs750 m.

These types of foreign investments do not yield interest, but generate returns in terms of capital gains which are realised on disposal. The book value of the investment in foreign placements is Rs1.892 billion.

I am also informed that during the month of October 2008, the Fund invested a total amount of Rs1.126 billion as follows -

Rs282 m. in Treasury Notes;  
Rs51 m. in local Equities;  
Rs625 m. in rollover of foreign currency deposits held in local  
banks, and  
Rs168 m. new foreign currency deposits in local banks.

As regards the status of these investments, I am informed that the Treasury Notes and the foreign currency deposits are being held by the Fund until they reach maturity.

Insofar as the investments in local equities are concerned, some shares were disposed generating capital gains amounting to 10%, that is, Rs131,000. The remaining investments in local equities amounting to Rs50,113,890 (at cost) are still being held by the Fund and will be disposed of as and when market opportunities arise to realise gains.

**Mr Bérenger:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister has given information on investments in foreign companies, foreign equity and local equity. Is there any problem to give a detailed list, at a later stage, comprising the dates on which the equity was bought, the amounts concerned, the names of the companies, and if the shares have been sold in the meantime, on which date?

**Dr. Sithanen:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I don't have any problem with this. The fund management is entrusted to a professional group. What is unclear in my mind is whether we will put pressure on people for them now to release what they have done on each day. Let me inform the House that they have some threshold that they can't go beyond in terms of how much they invest abroad and locally. In terms of how much they invest abroad, there also they have sub-ceiling, that is, how much they can invest in equity, in cash and in bonds. In Mauritius also, they have some sub-ceiling about how much they can put in Government paper, in DBM and MHC. The hon. Member is mentioning a specific case. Mr Speaker, Sir, they are mandated to invest in equity. In fact, a report submitted by the World Bank, assessing how pension funds are managed worldwide, has indicated that the NPF and the National Savings Fund are very well managed. We need to give them flexibility. We also don't want this information to be available to those who have vested interests in determining what will happen on the Stock Exchange. I know exactly what happened in that particular case, Mr Speaker, Sir, and I know who complained.

**Mr Bérenger:** Give the information!

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Order!

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Order! I say order, now!

**Mr Bérenger:** Do you think this is acceptable, Mr Speaker, Sir? Mentioning names, but not giving the information?

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Order!

**Mr Dowarkasing:** Mr Speaker, Sir, can I know from the hon. Minister what percentage of the funds has been invested abroad?

**Dr. Sithanen:** Mr Speaker, Sir, foreign currency deposit: 15.15%, foreign equities: 4.27%, Hedge Fund: 1.54%. That's close to 20.9%. This is according to the figures I have.

**Mr Dowarkasing:** Mr Speaker, Sir, can I know whether our investment abroad has been undertaken through the American Investment Bank, Morgan Stanley? If so, can we know where this investment bank has disposed of the NPF funds?

**Dr. Sithanen:** Mr Speaker, Sir, let me explain very clearly how this takes place.

**Mr Speaker:** The question is a simple one.

**Dr. Sithanen:** But, I have to explain, Mr Speaker, Sir.

**Mr Speaker:** I will give the Minister some latitude to explain, but not much.

**Dr. Sithanen:** Mr Speaker, Sir, we are not experts on where to invest. We appoint experts to do that. It is not me who appointed that firm. It has been appointed since a long time. Morgan Stanley, which is one of the most reputable organisations, gives advice to the Board on where to invest the funds abroad. For the local funds, the NPF/NSF employs a firm of chartered actuaries, which is one of the best, in order to advise them on how to invest. The Board itself is made up of professionals. They are either chartered accountants or professional economists.

**Mr Speaker:** We know that. Please answer the question!

**Dr. Sithanen:** They decide what to do on a daily basis, Mr Speaker, Sir, based on the advice given by Morgan Stanley. This is what I am trying to explain, because everybody believes that they have become expert in fund management.

**Mr Speaker:** I am sorry. As a Member of the House, the hon. Member has the right to put questions, and it is the duty of the hon. Vice-Prime Minister to answer or decide not to answer.

**Mr Bodha:** Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Vice-Prime Minister whether the foreign investment has been affected by the credit crunch recently?

**Dr. Sithanen:** Mr Speaker, Sir, as I said, there are foreign currency deposits. A deposit is not affected!

*(Interruptions)*

We know what a deposit is, Mr Speaker, Sir! They are asking questions!

*(Interruptions)*

Mr Speaker, Sir, I did not want to reveal! Let me reveal it!

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Order! There is a simple question from the hon. Member, namely whether whatever deposit that has been made has been affected by the credit crunch. There is no need for the hon. Vice-Prime Minister to ask whether the hon. Member knows what a deposit is! Let us assume he is ignorant and does not know!

**Dr. Sithanen:** Mr Speaker, Sir, that's what I have explained. There is a difference between a loss when assets are sold and an unrealised loss. I have said very clearly that they don't calculate asset value every day, but every three months. As I have said, part of assets is foreign equities. This is what I am trying to explain, Mr Speaker, Sir. Let me inform the House that it is not under the mandate of this Government that we invested in Hedge Fund. There has been a loss in the Hedge Fund in 2005. I am not saying that it is the hon. Leader of the Opposition who is responsible, as he was Prime Minister. I am saying that mistakes can be made. I don't want to play politics with this, Mr Speaker, Sir. It is a highly technical issue.

**Mr Mardemootoo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Vice-Prime Minister whether the IRR for the total investment of the NPF exceeds more than 5%, which is a reasonable return?

**Dr. Sithanen:** Mr Speaker, Sir, let me give the figure. For 2007-2008, it has achieved 12.1%, and it is a very good return. I don't know whether it will be able to attain 12.1% this year. Morgan Stanley is one of the few investment banks that have resisted the banking turmoil. Meryllinch has not been able to do that; Lehman Brothers has gone under. They know better than we do! I am not an expert in fund management, Mr Speaker, Sir! Hewitt is one of the best actuarial advisers. The NPF/NSF takes advice from them. We have taken the precaution. The committee has have talked to the *syndicalistes* and told them that, even if they have a choice, to choose a chartered accountant even if he is not a leader *syndical*, and they have agreed. You will see that the two workers' representatives are both chartered accountants, Mr Speaker, Sir. We don't want to play politics with the NPF/NSF fund, Mr Speaker, Sir, because this is serious. As the hon. Leader of the Opposition said, this is money that belongs to workers and employees. That's why we have to make sure that we have the best people to manage the fund. We have insisted that everybody sitting on the Board be either a professional economist, a chartered accountant or an actuarial scientist, so that they understand the issues well. In fact, at that particular press conference, the workers' representatives said that they are very happy about how the fund is managed.

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** Mr Speaker, Sir, since we are talking about the National Pension Fund, I would ask the hon. Minister whether he does not think that, in the name of transparency, information should be made available to the Mauritians at large through the Parliament?

**Dr. Sithanen:** I have no problem to give all the information. I hope my hon. friends on the other side know how fund management is done everyday, they have to move in and out everyday. I cannot come to this House and give all the transactions that take place 365 days minus 52 days, which is for Saturday and Sunday. How can I do that, Mr Speaker, Sir? What I can do to please my friends on the other side is that at each valuation that is done every three months, I will give it to the House. It would be difficult to ask the fund managers - there are so many fund managers - and let me say it, because I have tried to understand, I don't know everything, Morgan Stanley does not manage the fund itself, they give it in bits and pieces to thousands and thousands of sub-managers, Mr Speaker, Sir. Some invest in Japan, some in equity, some I don't know where. At the end of the day, we have to discuss whether 12.5% is a good one and it is good by other pension funds standards, Mr Speaker, Sir.

**Mr Dowarkasing:** Mr Speaker, Sir, in the light of the financial crisis that broke up, the investment committee met recently in the presence of an external investment consultant. Can the House be apprised of the major decisions taken up by this investment committee in the light of our external investments?

**Dr. Sithanen:** Again, Mr Speaker, Sir, I did not want to make certain statements, because I want to protect their professionalism. With what has happened in the press, some of the members have become more cautious than they ought to be. My own feeling - and I have looked at the figure - is that there are many opportunities out there which many fund managers are taking. And we are talking about an investment not over two days, but over a very long period. There are many opportunities out there. I hope people know what Warren Buffett has done at Goldman Sachs. But because there has been unfair accusation against these people that they are not managing it well, they have adopted a more prudent approach. If you look at how fund managers that manage similar funds in other countries, you will see that their share in equity is higher than what it is in Mauritius, Mr Speaker, Sir.

There are good opportunities. I am sure many hon. Members know what a price earning ratio is. There were some price earnings ratio on the local stock exchange that were so attractive that their shares snatched away; and when the NPF tried to enjoy some of this, some people criticised.

**Mr Bodha:** In view of the fact that the financial crisis has been on for four months, may I ask the Vice-Prime Minister whether he can enlighten the House as to the impact of the crisis on our foreign investment from the NPF now?

**Dr. Sithanen:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I have stated very clearly that they do their evaluation every three months. The value at the last evaluation was, Mr Speaker, Sir, if my memory serves me right, Rs53.04 billion and the cost at 30 September was Rs47.09 billion. If the market value is higher than the book value, it is very clear what has happened. The next evaluation will be done on 31 December. They do perform some evaluation at specific rates, but this does not mean much, because there is a huge difference between unrealised gain, unrealised loss, realised gain and realised loss. The transactions that have been the source of criticism by some people in the press, was basically on two banking institutions. Let me tell the House that they had gone up to the ceiling, they have disposed some of the shares and in one of the leading banks they have made money; on the other bank, they have not yet taken a decision. Let me also say to the House, Mr Speaker, Sir, that there are big players in the market and there are some few companies that account for a high percentage of transactions and, on that particular day, they had given instruction to move the market in one direction. Little did they realise that the NPF was going to intervene; and this is exactly what happened. The NPF intervened and changed the trend, but they had given instruction to their people to act in the opposite direction.

### **CUREPIPE AND MIDLANDS – NDU PROJECTS**

**(No. B/1244) Mr M. Dowarkasing (Third Member for Curepipe and Midlands)** asked the Minister of Environment and National Development Unit whether he will list the projects carried out in the Constituency No. 17, Curepipe and Midlands, since July 2005 to date.

**Mr Bundhoo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to refer the hon. Member to the reply made to PQ No. B/528 of 29 May 2007.

The updated list for the remaining period is being compiled and will be tabled as soon as available.

**Mr Dowarkasing:** Mr Speaker, Sir, there is one question that I cannot understand in this House. Hon. Ministers are being given one week prior notice of questions and still they can't come to the House with details about projects and that keeps going on and on and on. I think there is a time that this should stop.

**Mr Speaker:** There is nothing I can do. Next question!

### **RECO-MAP PROJECT - DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENT - MONITORING MEETINGS**

**(No. B/1245) Mr M. Dowarkasing (Third Member for Curepipe and Midlands)** asked the Minister of Environment and National Development Unit whether, in regard to the Reco-Map Project, he will state the number of monitoring meetings to which the Director of Environment has attended, giving details thereof.

*(Withdrawn)*

### **MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT & NDU – OFFICERS - WORKSHOPS & SEMINARS**

**(No. B/1246) Mr M. Dowarkasing (Third Member for Curepipe and Midlands)** asked the Minister of Environment and National Development Unit whether, in regard to the meetings, conferences, workshops and seminars attended to by the officers of his Ministry, since July 2005 to date, he will give –

- (a) details thereof, and
- (b) the outcome thereof, indicating the follow up thereon.

*(Withdrawn)*

### **MAURITIUS TELECOM - TRADE UNIONISTS - DISMISSAL**

**(No. B/1247) Mr G. Gunness (Third Member for Montagne Blanche and GRSE)** asked the Minister of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment whether, in regard to the two trade unionists of the Mauritius Telecom who have recently been dismissed, he will, for the benefit of the

House, obtain from the Mauritius Telecom, information as to the circumstances of the dismissals, indicating if any actions are being taken for their re-instatement.

**Mr Chaumière:** Mr Speaker, Sir, Mr Speaker, Sir, as PQs Nos. B/1247 and B/1269 and also PQ No. B/1268 addressed to the hon. Minister of Information and Communication Technology are related, I wish, with your permission, to reply to all three of them at the same time.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the House that I am not empowered to ask for information from the Mauritius Telecom Ltd or MT which operates under the aegis of the Ministry of Information and Communication Technology. However, it has been reported by the parties concerned in the course of meetings at my Ministry that –

- (a) in letters dated 22 July 2008, addressed to the President of the Mauritius Telecom Employees Association (MTEA) and the Secretary of the Telecommunications Workers Unions (TWU), MT requested them to confirm by Tuesday 29 July 2008 whether they had indeed made statements in the press prejudicial to the company, failing which MT would assume that the report in the press faithfully reproduced the statements made by them;
- (b) in a letter dated 25 July 2008, the president of the MTEA informed the Management of MT that, following several complaints from its members from all ranks, including Managers, to the effect that they were constantly and continuously being ill-treated by one Executive Head of the organisation, the MTEA had no other alternative than to alert public opinion and claim the departure of that Executive Head. The MTEA also drew the attention of management that its president was being harassed to prevent him from exercising his constitutional right of freedom of expression;
- (c) in another letter dated 06 August 2008, the president of the MTEA was requested to submit written explanations as to why the association had caused the press article to be emailed to the employees using the company's facilities;
- (d) the president of the MTEA denied in a letter dated 14 August 2008 having used the company's facilities;

- (e) on its part, the TWU did not reply to MT's letter dated 22 July 2008, and
- (f) In a letter dated 29 August 2008, MT terminated the employment of the president of MTEA and of the Secretary of TWU on the ground of having intentionally embarked on a course of conduct to cause prejudice to and denigrate the corporate image of MT.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as regards action being taken by my Ministry to have the two trade unionists reinstated, I wish to inform the House that following report of this case to my Ministry, several meetings were held between officers of my Ministry and the parties separately with a view to have the two trade unionists reinstated in their employment. When I took office, I have personally intervened with the parties on different occasions. I last met the two employees and their trade union representatives on 30 October 2008 and management representatives on 31 October 2008.

At a certain point in time, there was an understanding that MT would be prepared to reinstate the two employees on condition that their respective trade unions sign a procedure agreement to regulate the relationship between Management and the trade unions. In this connection, I had enlisted the assistance of the Chairperson of the Industrial Relations Commission, Professor Thorul, to bring the parties together for discussions on a procedure agreement acceptable to them. The Chairperson has met the parties separately on various occasions. The proposal of the trade unions was for a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to be followed by an undertaking to sign a procedure agreement. The aim of the proposed MoU was to have the two employees reinstated in the first instance and to pave the way for a procedure agreement. This was not acceptable to MT which insisted on the signature of a procedure agreement only.

I have been informed that, at its meeting of 22 October 2008, the Board of Directors of MT decided not, as a first option, to reinstate the two employees. However, MT would be prepared, as a second option, to consider a higher compensation package or, third option, re-engage them as new employees, on condition that their respective trade unions sign a procedure agreement with MT. These offers were relayed to the two trade unionists on 03 November 2008 but they have rejected same.

I have again appealed to MT to reconsider its position and make further proposals for the reintegration of the two employees. The matter is being closely monitored.

**Mr Guinness:** Mr Speaker, Sir, will the Minister not agree that this is a case of victimisation of two trade unionists and we cannot tolerate such a situation in this country?

**Mr Speaker:** I think the hon. Member is asking for the opinion of the Minister which is not allowed under our Standing Orders.

**Ms Deerpalsing:** Sir, in his answer, the hon. Minister has made mention of a move by Mauritius Telecom to get a procedure agreement. This is what the Minister has said in his answer. May I know from the hon. Minister whether what is being said is that the procedure agreement contains conditions for the trade unionists not to talk to the press and therefore those conditions being totally against their constitutional rights?

**Mr Chaumière:** That is why I have said that trade unions have rejected the said procedure agreement.

**Ms Deerpalsing:** Mr Speaker, Sir, if I am right, France Telecom has a significant shareholdership in Mauritius Telecom. Has the hon. Minister made a comparison of labour laws that apply in France and can I ask him whether a case study can be made as to whether the same kind of treatment or procedures from management would have been acceptable in France? Would a French company in France have gotten away with such an unacceptable behaviour as the France Telecom shareholdership here which, I understand, is bullying MT management decision?

**Mr Speaker:** I think the question should be direct to the hon. Minister: whether as a Minister and Minister of Labour, he agrees with such conditions being imposed. I do not think it is fair for him to compare what is obtainable in France. I think the question should be direct to the Minister.

**Ms Deerpalsing:** Mr Speaker, Sir, if I may!. What I am trying to ask is: according to best practice and international standards, whether these trade unionists are being treated in the same best practices that, for example, exist in France?

**Mr Chaumière:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I do agree with the hon. Member that employees should be treated according to best practices. In fact, Section 32 of the Labour Act of 1975 stipulates that “no employer shall dismiss a worker unless he has afforded the worker an opportunity to answer any charges made against him...”

**Mr Speaker:** That is a legal matter. I am sorry, hon. Minister, we cannot get into details, we’ll never finish. The question was: whether the conditions imposed in the memorandum or in the agreement which has been forwarded by the MT about relation with the press, talking to the press, is something which is acceptable according to international norms.

**Mr Chaumière:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I’ll go by your ruling. The purpose of a procedure agreement itself should be negotiated between the employer and the employee, which has not been done.

**Ms Deerpalsing:** If that is the case, may I ask the hon. Minister to inform the House whether this proposal of a procedure agreement has been forced upon on the Mauritian counterpart shareholdership? If that is the case, have we become a France colony?

**Mr Varma:** Can the hon. Minister inform the House whether the officer who requested explanations from these employees is from France Telecom or MT?

**Mr Chaumière:** From MT, Mr Speaker, Sir.

**Mr Ganoo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, in this whole process, the Chairman of the IRC, Professor Torul, in fact, considered that this was an unjustified and unlawful action on the part of MT. I understand that even the Minister feels so. The Chairman of the Board has been nominated by the Prime Minister, by Government. In view of such a situation, why can’t Government put more pressure for the reinstatement of these two employees, especially that our law provides that, in certain cases, reinstatement is possible?

**Mr Chaumière:** Mr Speaker, Sir, since this happened, I have taken on myself to have negotiations between the representatives of the management and the workers. I really believe that things should be solved through conciliation and negotiation. That is why we have tried as far as possible to avoid confrontation. I do think that by now Government, through my Ministry, is trying its best to solve this problem satisfactorily.

**Ms Deerpalsing:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister, in one of his answers, said that the procedure agreement has been negotiated between the two parties; and that has not been done. If I am not mistaken, we are a Labour Government and the Labour Party was born in the fight for workers. As there was no negotiation of the procedure agreement, can the hon. Minister impart upon the management of Mauritius Telecom that these procedures have to be followed and not flouted?

**Mr Chaumière:** Negotiations are still being carried out, Mr Speaker, Sir.

**Mr Mardemootoo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, from what I grasp, I believe that the Mauritian counterpart as well as members of the Board are majority at the MT. If this law applies in Mauritius, according to the Mauritian law, where is the problem with our Mauritian counterpart to reinstate these two persons?

**Mr Chaumière:** It is not about Mauritian or French counterpart. We have only one party which is Mauritius Telecom and that's all.

**Mr Gunness:** Can we know whether the Chairman of the MT attended the meeting and, if not, does the hon. Minister intend to meet, at least, the Chairman of the MT and impress upon him?

**Mr Chaumière:** I have met both the Chairman and the Chief Executive of Mauritius Telecom.

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I understand from the Minister that negotiations are on between MT and the employees. But is it not the role of Government to impose upon a party which is failing to abide by the rules of the country to work according to the norms set in this particular country?

**Mr Chaumière:** Mr Speaker, Sir, let me clarify matters. When we started negotiations, the employees had already been laid off. From there after negotiations, we came to the fact that there could be reinstatement. This is where negotiations came to. There have been some diverging opinions, yet we are still pursuing negotiations and we still think that we can find a solution.

**Mr Varma:** Sir, the Minister has stated that the three options were rejected by the employees, but negotiations are ongoing. What is the time frame for the problem to be solved?

**Mr Speaker:** I do not think that the Minister has a time frame.

**Mr Chaumière:** As soon as possible.

**Mr Cuttaree:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I am flabbergasted by this whole issue. Can we imagine what could or would have happened or what we would have heard from the other side if instead of MT, we were dealing with a private sector firm? This is a firm where Government has majority ownership, there is a majority of Board members appointed by Government, the Chairperson is appointed by Government as well as the Chief Executive. Has this Government become a lame duck Government that it is not in a position to reinstate two employees?

contd./

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Order now!

**Mr Chaumière:** Mr Speaker, Sir, as I have said, we are following a course of action and I cannot impose upon them.

**Mr Dayal:** Mr Speaker, Sir, IT falls under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of IT.

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** That we are aware!

**Mr Dayal:** Has the hon. Minister impress upon his colleague, the hon. Minister of IT, for the reinstatement of the two workers?

**Mr Chaumiere:** We are doing the needful.

## MES – DATA PROCESSING SYSTEM - REORGANISATION

**(No. B/1248) Mr G. Gunness (Third Member for Montagne Blanche and GRSE)** asked the Minister of Education, Culture and Human Resources whether, in regard to the Mauritius Examinations Syndicate, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Syndicate, information as to if the Data Processing System has been reorganized and, if so, indicate if the necessary precautions have been taken to avoid any mishap, particularly during the transfer of data for the 2008 certificate of Primary Education, School Certificate and Higher School Certificate examinations.

**Dr. Bunwaree:** Mr Speaker Sir, I am informed by the Mauritius Examinations Syndicate that the Data Processing Section has been reorganised both for reasons of security and efficiency in a first phase and a major review of all the systems in place is planned for March 2009 to cope with the increasing number of users as a result of the decentralisation process.

Following the incident which occurred in the transmission of marks to Cambridge International Examinations (CIE) for the 2006 School Certificate examinations, procedures have been amended and implemented both at the level of the MES and CIE.

As regards, the Certificate of Primary Education examinations, there is no transfer of data to CIE as the marking exercise is carried out locally.

**Mr Gunness:** Mr Speaker, Sir, can I know from the hon. Minister whether the persons who are heading the data processing section system are fully qualified for this section?

**Dr. Bunwaree:** My information is that they have got enough experience maybe in doing that work, but the Fact Finding Committee has shown certain flaws; this is being remedied.

**Mr Speaker:** Time is over! The Table has now been advised that PQ Nos. B/1257, B/1258 and B/1265 have been withdrawn.