

## ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

## CENTRAL PRISON &amp; PHOENIX PRISON – INCIDENTS, INDEPENDENT INQUIRY COMMITTEE, ETC.

**The Leader of the Opposition (Mr P. Bérenger)** (*By Private Notice*) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether, in regard to the situation prevailing at the Phoenix Prison and at the Central Prison of Beau Bassin, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Prisons, information as to if -

- (a) the independent inquiry committee, set up to inquire into the assault on the three detainees at the Phoenix Prison on 22 May 2008, has submitted its report;
- (b) incidents occurred at the Central Prison of Beau Bassin on 27 May and 04 June last;
- (c) drugs and cellular phones are readily available to prisoners at the Central Prison of Beau Bassin, and
- (d) dissatisfaction exists amongst prison officers.

**The Prime Minister:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Commissioner of Prisons that on 22 May 2008 at about 12.25 hours, five detainees, whilst they were in the newly constructed Association Yard 2 at the Phoenix Prison, broke the iron bar supporting the TV stand found thereat and used it to break the padlock of the metal door. They then proceeded to the adjoining Association Yard 3 and broke the padlock giving access to that yard and assaulted three detainees. The three detainees were seriously injured and were admitted to the Detainees' Ward at Jawaharlal Nehru Hospital for medical treatment. The matter was reported to the Police on the same day at 13.40 hours.

A preliminary investigation was subsequently initiated and on 26 May 2008, the five assailants have been provisionally charged of "Assault with Premeditation" before the Curepipe District Court.

Following this incident, on the basis of the preliminary investigation undertaken by the Commissioner of Prisons, the Officer-in-Charge of the Phoenix Prison was interdicted for gross neglect of duty with effect from 27 May 2008 for not exercising proper supervision and proper deployment of staff.

I should add, Mr Speaker, Sir, that an Independent Inquiry Committee has been set up on 30 May 2008 under the Chairmanship of an Assistant Commissioner of Police, and comprising an Assistant Commissioner of Prisons and an Assistant Secretary of the Prime Minister's Office to carry out a thorough investigation into the circumstances

surrounding the incident and to submit a report. I understand that the report is expected in about a month's time.

As regards part (b) of the question, I am informed by the Commissioner of Prisons that on 27 May 2008, at 16.30 hours, at Beau Bassin Central Prison, at the time of the lock up, a minor incident occurred when one detainee used abusive language against a Prison Officer leading to a scuffle between the Prison Officer and the detainee. However, the detainee did not make any official complaint.

Also, 04 June 2008, at about 15.00 hours, two prisoners who were detained in the Punishment Block at the Phoenix Prison broke the apertures of their cell doors and expanded metal frames fixed to the ventilators in the cells and used them to break open the cell door locks. After the incident, the Commissioner of Prisons moved the two detainees concerned to the Punishment cell at Beau Bassin Central Prison.

As regards part (c) of the question, I am informed that drugs and mobile phones have been found in the possession of some prisoners. However, I am advised by the new Commissioner of Prisons that several measures have been taken to curb the introduction of drugs and mobile phones in the prisons. These include -

- (i) the installation of telephone jamming system at the Beau Bassin Central Prison;
- (ii) the establishment of an Intelligence Unit within the Prisons to gather information on entry of prohibited items;
- (iii) tightening of security checks at the Prison gate which is under the supervision of an Assistant Superintendent of Prisons;
- (iv) the use of metal detectors for carrying out searches on detainees as well as officers;
- (v) systematic search on all prison officers, irrespective of their grades, as well as all other persons, whilst entering and leaving the prisons;
- (vi) the installation of a separate control room with CCTV cameras to control movements of all activities at the gate;
- (vii) the re-designing of existing wall towers and equipping them with security equipment to allow detection of prohibited articles coming over the wall from outside; and
- (viii) the regular rotation of prison staff within prisons, so that they do not stay at the same place of work for a long time.

As regards part (d) of the question, there are in fact some reports of dissatisfaction amongst some Prison Officers. However, measures have been taken to address these complaints. A new staffing structure has been put in place to enhance the efficiency of the staff and also to give the staff more scope for promotion. As a matter of fact, recently 107 Prison Officers in different grades have been promoted and recommendations have already been made to the Disciplined Forces Service Commission for the filling of 32 vacancies.

In the recent report of the PRB, recommendation was made for delaying of the organizational structure from ten to seven levels in line with present trend of modern and dynamic organizations and to provide for staff development. It has been recommended that the grades of Prison Officer grades II and I be merged and restyled Prison Officer/Senior Prisons Officer; the grades of Chief Prison Officer and Assistant Superintendent of Prisons be merged and restyled Assistant Superintendent of Prisons. This merging takes into consideration certain conditions of employment to position the Prison Department such that it can face today's challenge which consists of providing decent conditions to detainees and preparing their integration into the community and providing for staff development.

**Mr Bérenger:** Mr Speaker, on the 10 of June, the Ag. Prime Minister said that the Inquiry Committee had been asked to submit its report at the earliest. Now we are being told that it will take another month. Is there any particular reason why it is not being submitted at the earliest?

**The Prime Minister:** I have been told that they feel that they have to take that time because maybe they did not get all the cooperation they wanted; they think they will take another month.

**Mr Bérenger:** I will refrain from putting a lot of questions on that incident being given that the Inquiry Committee is sitting. But I listened to the hon. Prime Minister, I heard him say that the incident took place on the 22 of May and that the Police came in on the same day whereas, when the Ag. Prime Minister replied to questions on the 10 of June last, he said: "I am also informed that the matter was reported to the Police on 26 May". And that puzzled me - four days later. In the press and elsewhere there have been plenty of reports of cover-ups in that meantime. Can I know which is which and whether this issue of cover-up has been looked into?

**The Prime Minister:** In fact, I can say that the Leader of the Opposition has picked up on this. In fact, I was given the same answer, that the matter happened on the 22 of May and that the Police - I think I have the original answer here - came in on the 26. I immediately asked the question, because I was not here when the Deputy Prime Minister answered the question: why this gap? Why did the incident happen on the 22 of May and the Police came on the 26 of May? It is then that I called the Commissioner of Prisons; because this is what has been told to different officers and he gave the answer. When I queried it, he told me, in fact, the Police came on the same day, but it was the preliminary investigation that was initiated and on the 26 of May that the five assailants have been provisionally charged. This is the reason. I further inquired, in fact, why this gap.

**Mr Bérenger:** Especially that there have been all sorts of reports of cover-ups, of activities to cover-up what exactly happened. Can I know whether the Prime Minister has looked into that?

**The Prime Minister:** In fact, I have told the Commissioner of Prisons that we will not tolerate any cover-up and any officer, whoever it be, who tries to do any kind of cover-up or gives false information will have to pay the consequences of his act.

**Mr Bérenger:** We were informed by the Ag. Prime Minister again on the 10 of June that he had received reports that everything was ready to receive those dangerous prisoners, that the works that had been going on, had reached a stage where everything was ready. Everybody said so and we were informed that prison officers had visited the site. Now we hear that the officer-in-charge has been suspended for gross neglect of duty. Can I know what is meant by that gross neglect of duty? Because we were given the guarantee that the site was ready to receive those dangerous prisoners.

**The Prime Minister:** In fact, what the Deputy Prime Minister said is right. I have also looked into it. After various inspections by senior officials of the prison and also a visit by a member of the National Human Rights Commission, it was decided that it was ready to move them. But why this officer has been interdicted is because he did not do his duty properly in the sense that he had to do a duty roster which was meant to have a prison officer in the corridor in the corner. There was no such prison officer there. Had there been a prison officer there, this incident could not have happened.

**Mr Bérenger:** I listened carefully to the Ag. Prime Minister and now to the hon. Prime Minister. It seems to me that in such a serious affair, it is not the Commissioner of Prisons himself that went to Phoenix Prison to check for himself whether everything was in shape. If reference is made to prison officers and not to the Commissioner of Prisons, doesn't the Prime Minister think that, in fact, a visit by the Commissioner of Prisons should have taken place?

**The Prime Minister:** I am sorry, I should have said that he also waited for the various inspections by the senior officials of the Prisons and the member of the National Human Rights Commission, then the Commissioner of Prisons, himself, was satisfied that the Phoenix Prison could be opened for re-use.

**Mr Bérenger:** He is satisfied sitting in his office, it seems! Such a serious matter, very dangerous criminals, was taking place and so on. How on earth does the Commissioner of Prisons refrain from going to see for himself and giving the green light?

**The Prime Minister:** Whether he actually went or not I did not check, but he said to me that he was satisfied, but maybe he went, maybe he did not go. I did not ask whether he specifically went to check.

**Mr Bérenger:** I think he should have gone and I think it is not too late. Can I know what is the health status of the third prisoner who was very seriously injured. Is he out of danger?

**The Prime Minister:** I don't have the details of his actual situation, Mr Speaker, Sir.

**Mr Bérenger:** I won't put questions on whether there was need for a special padlock and so on because I'll leave the Inquiry Committee to do its work. Will the hon. Prime Minister agree with me that systematically – it was like that when I was Prime Minister and I am sure it is like that again – things are underplayed? Information does not reach the Prime Minister's Office. The two incidents which I referred to, on the 27 of May, according to reports - and I have talked to ex-prisoners, to Prison Officers - there was a mini *émeute* and this is downplayed completely; and on the 04 of June, this time, the prisoner concerned started a fire in his cell and again this is downplayed completely. Does not the Prime Minister think that there is something wrong there, that it is very difficult to get information about what exactly takes place?

**The Prime Minister:** I did ask the Commissioner of Prisons this morning, because I had also seen in the papers that there was a mini riot. He maintained that there was not a mini riot, but there was a scuffle. There were blows exchange, he does not call it a mini riot, he does not agree that it was a mini riot. It is true to say that, in fact, it is a question of getting all the information eventually which has to come to the Prime Minister wherever the Prime Minister is and this always is the difficulty.

**Mr Bérenger:** Mr Speaker, Sir, if I can move on to the next part of the question of whether drugs and cellular phones are readily available. I have listened to the hon. Prime Minister, but I think he knows, it is common knowledge - I repeat, I have talked to ex-prisoners, to certain Prison Officers - and there was this report a few days ago - I think the hon. Prime Minister was not here - « *La prison est le seul lieu où il ne manque jamais de drogue.* » I think this is very bad for the image of Mauritius and either it is true and it is unacceptable or it is not true, but action must be taken so that this image of Mauritius and of its prison service is not projected. I heard the hon. Prime Minister refer to some years back, that we found that there was not a proper intelligence gathering system in the Prison? Does not the hon. Prime Minister think that it is working as it should or that there is need to very much improve on its performance?

**The Prime Minister:** From the evidence that I have, Mr Speaker, Sir, I must say, in 2005, the number of drug cases reported in prisons was 43. But then, the Commissioner of Prisons, Mr Bill Duff, was here and he had instituted a mechanism whereby there was a higher detection rate. This is what I am told. From then onwards, the number of drug cases in prisons has diminished continually. It was 43 in 2005; 39 in 2006; 25 in 2007, and only 14 in 2008 so far. But, it seems to be on a declining trend. It seems that the Intelligence Gathering Unit is doing a good work.

**Mr Bérenger:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I know that the number of detected cases is declining, but from what I understand, *la prison est vraiment le seul lieu où il ne manque jamais de drogue.* Is the hon. Prime Minister aware that there has even been on 01 June, in the prison, a case of overdose ?

**The Prime Minister:** Yes. But I am saying, Mr Speaker, Sir, that we have to go by the official cases reported. But, in any case, one case is too many.

**Mr Bérenger:** Mr Speaker, Sir, especially, what disturbs me very much is the situation of sharing *les seringues* in the prison itself and HIV affected people. Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether he has looked into this problem very seriously and whether we cannot introduce the methadone treatment in the prison itself?

**The Prime Minister:** As far as I remember, the hon. Minister of Health is actually starting this programme of methadone treatment very soon.

**Mr Bérenger:** As regards the fourth part of my question, granted there are, as everywhere, in the Police, in the political class, in the Prison service, *les brebis galeuses*, but we cannot generalise. I think I heard the hon. Prime Minister say: yes, there is dissatisfaction amongst Prison officers. There is very, very dangerous and deep frustration. I wonder whether the hon. Prime Minister is aware. Can I start with the United Nations report that got things moving at Phoenix Prison? I asked that in the past. Can this report be placed in the Library of the Assembly so that we can have a good look at it, because some Prison Officers think that they have not been treated as they should in that case. Before the report came in, without proper inquiries, they were just suspended without having a chance and they are interdicted. Is the hon. Prime Minister prepared to lay a copy and is he satisfied that the Prison officers concerned got a fair deal, were listened to, have a chance to place their case before whatever authorities?

**The Prime Minister:** There are two things, Mr Speaker, Sir. In the interest of transparency and good governance, I see no reason for the report not to be laid on the Table of the Assembly. I can see no problem with it because the whole point is to learn from where the errors are and to correct. As far as whether the officers are given a fair hearing, let's see what the report says.

**Mr Bérenger:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Prime Minister will have understood better, I am not trying to score point and so on. I have been Prime Minister, I know how difficult it is to know exactly what the situation is in both prisons. It is very difficult to get genuine reports in spite of the intelligence gathering system that has been set up. Does not the hon. Prime Minister think that we should have a go at clearing the air for good or, at least, as good as you can make it and have a solid former Judge of the Supreme Court - we don't want to make any political approach to that issue - or Chief Judge of the Supreme Court, a full-fledged Commission of Enquiry, sitting in camera when required, to hear what some of the Prison Officers and some of the ex-prisoners have to say and come with recommendations?

**The Prime Minister:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the difficulty with that is that we do not undermine what is happening at the head of the Prison. I must say, Mr Speaker, Sir, in all due respect, the same thing that is happening to the actual Commissioner of Prisons happened to Mr Bill Duff as well who was, according to me, a very good officer. It is a pity that he felt he was not getting any cooperation and that at one point people were putting *bâtons dans les roues* and that he felt that he cannot carry on working. Now, the new Commissioner of Prisons who came in as an adviser in 2004 from the Government of India is as good as Mr Bill Duff, if not better, I don't know, but he is very good. What

is happening is that he feels – I get reports also - that he is fighting in the same spirit as Mr Bill Duff against a Mafiosi organised in the prisons. He told me - he did not have the actual numbers – that roughly 20 Prison Officers have been arrested by Police because they have been found to be involved in criminal matters. Two Prison Officers have been interdicted. What is happening, in fact, is the same thing that happened before. He is - because he is a good officer, according to me - upsetting the business as usual that was going on in the prisons.

At one time, if the hon. Leader of the Opposition, who was also Prime Minister, as he said, even before both of us were Prime Ministers, we heard about daily occurrences in prisons and all that. These bad habits which have taken roots he is trying to stop these and take actions and sanctions. It seems the same thing is happening again. Some people think that he is a problem because he is putting order and they are trying to make his life difficult. They know, for example, that his contract is terminating on 13 July. Some of them, apparently, from the information that we have gathered also, think that they should make things more difficult for him so that we do not renew his contract. In fact, I told him today that a decision has already been taken to renew his contract with effect from 14 of July. Because he is doing a good job, I think he should be allowed and we should make sure that others do not make his life difficult because we are getting results.

**Mr Bodha:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I have a few questions, if you would allow me.

**Mr Speaker:** Because of time constraint, I will listen one by one.

**Mr Bodha:** I appreciate the reply of the hon. Prime Minister. Is he not aware that we are here in front of a situation which may explode at any time and that something urgent has to be done? May I ask him a few questions about what has been said?

**Mr Speaker:** I am sorry, the hon. Member has to go one by one. I have to give the opportunity to other Members as well.

**Mr Bodha:** May I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether when the Prison was said to be ready whether there were cell locks in the cells at La Bastille and there were not, what we call, *targette* instead of cell locks? This is my first question and together with it, the second one is: who selected the prisoners who had to be taken to La Bastille?

**The Prime Minister:** This is a day-to-day administrative work, Mr Speaker, Sir, to see whether there were locks, *targettes* or whatever. It is difficult for me to say unless I go there myself and leave my job here.

*(Interruptions)*

As far as I can say, Mr Speaker, Sir, they were satisfied, not just the Commissioner of Police, but also the Senior Officers, the visitor from the National Human Rights Commission that this could be done. But what it seems had happened is that there were no officers present there to prevent these people from doing these things.

**Mr Speaker:** Hon. Members must remember that the Prime Minister has said that there is an Inquiry Committee; refrain from putting questions which will be dealt with by the Inquiry Committee.

**Mr Ganoo:** Does the hon. Prime Minister have information as to the very serious and explosive situation in the female wing of prisoners where there are bandit queens reigning over the female prisoners? There are only about 40 Female Prison Officers for about 150 female prisoners and this is where drug trafficking, money trafficking, food trafficking activities take place and where kids of less than five years are to be found. This is the place where drugs are transferred from the female wing to the male wing. The Female Prisons Officers are powerless and cannot cope with the situation and they have themselves been saying that ADSU should organise *une opération coups de poing* and come and search this female wing where probably a lot of drugs will be found.

**The Prime Minister:** I know they are going to do a few things, but maybe it won't be right if I say in Parliament what is actually being planned. But I can also say that we are looking for more equipment for Female Prison Officers. There is also a new maximum security prison that is being built at Melrose. This is being started.

**Mr Lesjongard:** Mr Speaker, Sir, concerning the incident that occurred on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of May, the hon. Prime Minister stated in his answer that the detainees used iron bars to break the padlocks. We understand that there were some ongoing construction works at the time they were shifted. Did they take the iron bars from the construction site, Mr Speaker, Sir?

**The Prime Minister:** I have said, Mr Speaker, Sir, that they broke the iron bars supporting the TV stand.

**Mrs Perrier:** Mr Speaker, Sir, is the hon. Prime Minister aware that in some countries in order to fight against cellular phones in prisons, the authorities have installed electronic apparatus to just make interferences on line? Can the Minister suggest that to the Commissioner of Prison to look into that option?

**The Prime Minister:** I did say that they have installed a telephone jamming system there.

**Dr. Mungur:** Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether it is feasible to carry out a random structured exit interview from prisoners coming out of the prison to reinforce the Intelligence Service?

**The Prime Minister:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I will pass on the suggestion to the Commissioner of Prisons.

**Mrs Hanoomanjee:** Mr Speaker, Sir, on 10 June, the Ag. Prime Minister then said that a security audit has been carried out at Phoenix Prison with the aim of reviewing the security arrangements there. I asked for additional information on who has carried out that security audit, whether there has been any report which has been given to the Prime Minister's Office and whether certain measures have been proposed in that security audit. Can I have some information from the hon. Prime Minister on this issue?

**The Prime Minister:** In fact, all this is being given to the committee of inquiry, Mr Speaker, Sir and they will look into the matter and report.

**Mr Bérenger:** In fact, what the hon. Prime Minister himself has said is frightening, *effrayant*, situation that we are facing. Being given that there are quite a number of Prison Officers who have been arrested, charged by the Police, that there is corruption, involvement in drug trafficking by some Prison officers, that there are *des brebis galeuses*, but not all, and there are lots of Prison Officers who are scared stiff – it is a very dangerous situation - what the hon. Prime Minister himself has said, does he not think that it supports my claim that we should get a former Judge to sit *in camera* when required, get all this information, including from the present Commissioner of Prisons, inquire fully and make recommendations?

**The Prime Minister:** Of course, everything is right! But to go on and say that this is a dramatic situation, I do not know whether it would be right to say that. Let's not forget that the National Human Rights Commission also visits the prisons and they make statements. There is not just one person who is looking at this. I would like to see what the Enquiry Committee comes up and then we will see.

**Mr Speaker:** Time is over! Questions addressed to the hon. Prime Minister.

### POLICE VEHICLES – FITNESS TEST

**(No. B/682) Mr P. Jhugroo (Third Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue)** asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether, in regard to Police vehicles aged ten years or more, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, a list thereof indicating –

- (a) where they are attached to, and
- (b) if they are sent to undergo the fitness test.

**The Prime Minister:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Acting Commissioner of Police that the Mauritius Police Force currently has a fleet of 1,405 vehicles out of which 250 are ten years old. The list of these vehicles and information relating to the Units and sub Divisions to which they are attached, is being tabled.

With regard to part (b) of the question, I am informed that although Government vehicles, including Police vehicles, are exempted to undergo fitness tests, strict measures are taken for all Police vehicles to be regularly maintained and serviced in order to ensure that they are in good running condition.

I am further informed that the Police Department has a plan for the renewal of its fleet of vehicles. Actually, I can tell the hon. Member an exercise for the procurement of 127 new vehicles is ongoing and is expected to be completed by end June this year. In fact, there have been several questions by hon. Members of the Opposition, but we also get the information. Hon. Bhagwan has asked many questions about the lack of vehicles in Police stations or whether they are there and they are not in running conditions or there are no Police drivers. That is why in the PRB report, there is a special allowance being given to the Police officers who agree to drive the vehicles. Because, very often, they do

not want to drive the vehicles because they think it is too much trouble. They will get an allowance if they drive the vehicles. So, this is being done.

**Mr Jhugroo:** Can the hon. Prime Minister inform the House which authority is entitled to fine defective Police vehicles?

**The Prime Minister:** As I said, they are exempted from fitness, but the Police maintain that they ensure that their vehicles are actually of service to order. I must say to the hon. Member that even though there is no legal obligation, we may have to do it to show that everybody is having the same treatment.

**Mr Jhugroo:** Est-ce que le Premier ministre est au courant que beaucoup de ces véhicules sont dans un état déplorable ? Suite à ma question adressée à cette Chambre, je remercie le Prime ministre d'avoir envoyé, après une année, une voiture à Montagne Longue. Mais ce qui est déplorable c'est qu'il n'y avait pas de 'starter' ...

**Mr Speaker:** What does the hon. Member mean?

**Mr Jhugroo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I want to ask the hon. Prime Minister to send a good vehicle at the Montagne Longue Police station, not an old one.

**The Prime Minister:** In fact, hon. Mrs Juggoo has been asking for this as well, but I have already sent a good vehicle.

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** A new vehicle!

**The Prime Minister:** Is the hon. Member asking for another new one? I'll ask for it.

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Jhugroo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I have the right to ask supplementary questions.

**Mr Speaker:** On so many occasions, I have said to this House that the control of supplementary questions rests with the Chair. Next question!

#### **POLICE VEHICLE – ROAD ACCIDENT – 11 MARCH 2008**

**(No. B/683) Mr P. Jhugroo (Third Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue)** asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to if the Police vehicle registered under the number 5630 DC 05, has recently been involved in an accident and if so, if an inquiry has been carried out thereinto and the outcome thereof.

**The Prime Minister:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Ag. Commissioner of Police that Police vehicle bearing registration number 5630 DC 05 was, in fact, involved in a road accident on 11 March, 2008. On that day, at about 17 25 hours, Police

constable A. M., then posted at the Crime Intelligence Unit at the Police Headquarters, made a declaration to the Line Barracks Police station to the effect that he had an accident while he was driving the said vehicle along Pailles road, GRNW. According to the Police officer, the vehicle hit against a tree by the roadside whilst he was trying to avoid a stray dog. He was not injured but the vehicle sustained damage.

An enquiry was instituted in the matter. Officers of the Forensic Science Laboratory attended to the case on 27 and 31 March, 2008. The latter excluded the site as being the real spot of the accident after examination of the extensive frontal damage caused to the vehicle, and noting the absence of contact evidence or debris of the vehicle.

In view of the evidence at hand, the Police Officer concerned was arrested on 25 April 2008, and a provisional charge of "Conspiracy to commit Forgery" was lodged against him before the District Court of Port Louis. He was bailed out on 29 April 2008, upon furnishing a surety of Rs5,000 and a recognizance of Rs50,000. The Police officer has been interdicted from duty with effect from 28 April 2008, as criminal proceedings have been instituted against him.

I am further informed that the case file was referred to the Central Criminal Investigation Division on 08 May 2008 for further investigation. The enquiry is still under way and after completion thereof, the case file will be referred to the Director of Public Prosecutions.

**Mr Jhugroo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Prime Minister confirm to the House whether the logbook which deals with the movement of the famous Toyota Prado has disappeared?

**The Prime Minister:** According to the information I have, it is not that it has disappeared, but it seems that there has been overwriting and that it has been tampered with.

**Mr Jhugroo:** Can we know the contents of the report of the Forensic Science Lab?

**The Prime Minister:** There is going to be a Court case now, Mr Speaker, Sir. All this, I am sure, will be asked in the Court case.

**Mr Jhugroo:** Can the hon. Prime Minister confirm whether this accident happened in the south and not at Pailles Road, GRNW?

**The Prime Minister:** As I indicated, Mr Speaker, Sir, the Forensic Lab said that they find no evidence and they dispute what the Police officer has said, that he had tried to avoid a stray dog and hit a tree. That by itself shows that there is something wrong, but here it seems they have confirmed that this is not the case and the accident never happened as he said and where he said it was.

**Mr Jhugroo:** Can the hon. Prime Minister confirm whether a relative of the ACP was in the vehicle?

**The Prime Minister:** That is difficult for me to say who was in the vehicle with him and what they were doing; I can't say.

**Mr Speaker:** Next question!

### **POLICE FORCE – SNIFFER DOGS**

**(No. B/684) Mr P. Jhugroo (Third Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue)** asked Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether, in regard to the sniffer dogs at the Dog Section of the Police Force, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to –

- (a) the present number thereof;
- (b) if the trainers thereof are being provided with adequate training, and
- (c) the measures taken for the replacement of the old dogs.

**The Prime Minister:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Ag. Commissioner of Police that the Police Dog Unit has 42 trained Police dogs, out of which 10 are specialized as drug sniffers.

With regard to part (b) of the question, the Unit has 46 trained Police dog handlers out of whom -

- 5 have been trained abroad;
- 5 have been trained locally by South African instructors;
- 34 have been trained by instructors of the Unit itself, and
- 2 are presently undergoing training in India.

Among the personnel of the Unit, there is also a qualified instructor who carries out refresher courses under the supervision of the Officer in Charge of the Unit.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with a view to providing the Unit with new techniques, we have approached the French Authorities and they have agreed to provide the services of a French Instructor to train new dog handlers and sniffer dogs. The French Instructor is expected to arrive in October this year.

As regards part (c), the Unit has 13 new puppies which have been born thereat and 12 young dogs have been bought on the local market in May 2008. All these young

dogs will be trained by the French Instructor and these will be subsequently used to replace the old dogs and reinforce the Unit.

**Mr Jhugroo:** Will the hon. Prime Minister inform the House where are these sniffer dogs kept?

*(Interruptions)*

**The Prime Minister:** I am sure they are in Police kennels, Mr Speaker, Sir.

**Mrs Martin:** May I ask the hon. Prime Minister what will become of those sniffer dogs once they grow old? How are they disposed of?

**The Prime Minister:** I have not asked that information, but I know that in the past people were willing to have these dogs as their pets.

**Mr Jhugroo:** Can the hon. Prime Minister confirm whether all the luggage that pass on the conveyor belt at the airport are verified by these sniffer dogs?

**The Prime Minister:** I don't think that in any country all the luggage are sniffed by dogs. The dogs are used and I have seen also that while they go along they sniff and pinpoint one of the luggage.

**Mr Jhugroo:** Can the hon. Prime Minister say how many cases these sniffer dogs have helped to arrest drug dealers?

**The Prime Minister:** Does the hon. Member mean over the years? I don't have from years ahead, but I have the figures for 2006 and 2007 and this year. In 2006, there were 4 cases; in 2007: 14 cases, and so far in 2008, that is, up to 13 of this month, there were six cases.

## **MR GEOFFREY ROBERTSON - MEDIA LAW REFORM - RECOMMENDATIONS**

**(No. B/685) Mrs S. Hanoomanjee (Second Member for Savanne and Black River)** asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether, in regard to media law, he will state –

- (a) if the conference on the Development of Media Law held by Mr Geoffrey Robertson, Q.C., at the Sir Harilal Vaghjee Memorial Hall was organised under the aegis of the Prime Minister's Office, and

- (b) if Mr Robertson has made recommendations in relation thereto, indicating if Government is proposing to implement same and, if so, the time frame set out, if any.

**The Prime Minister:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to recall that Mr Geoffrey Robertson, Q.C., a well-known authority on media law and author of several books on the subject had, as far back as 1999, advised Government on Media Law Reform in Mauritius. He also advised on the setting up of the National Human Rights Commission. He submitted a report to Government on Media Law Reform then, but given the changes in the audio-visual landscape – not only just audio-visual landscape, but changes in the political landscape - over the past years, it was felt that a fresh visit by him with a view to reviewing his report and updating Government on recent development and current trends in media law would be useful both to the public and to Government in devising the appropriate media framework.

As the Minister responsible for information, my Office organized the visit, the public lecture as well as consultations between Mr Geoffrey Robertson and various stakeholders, including the press. All Members of Parliament were also invited to the public lecture. I hope the hon. Member attended the lecture; I am not sure whether she did, but she was invited. I checked the list and her name was there.

As regards part (b) of the question, a number of suggestions have been made by Mr Geoffrey Robertson, but he will be updating his report which he will submit to Government before the end of this year.

When we get this Report, then Government will take a look at it and we will see what his proposals are and what we should implement.

**Mrs Hanoomanjee:** Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Prime Minister say whether in the context of the revision of the old laws, it is proposed to come up with a Media Complaints Act?

**The Prime Minister:** I think it is something similar. I think he has proposed a Media Complaints Commission, if I am not mistaken.

**Mrs Hanoomanjee:** Will the hon. Prime Minister say whether through the legislation, it is proposed to establish a sort of voluntary press council?

**The Prime Minister:** Well, his contention, including that of Mr Bloom Cooper, who was here and who was also a chairperson of the press council at one point - I think he gave an interview in the press if I am not mistaken - is that a voluntary press council does not have any bite and it does not work.

**Mr Bodha:** May I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether he will be prepared to lay on the Table of the Assembly the recommendations of Mr Robertson?

**The Prime Minister:** Let me have a look at it first and then I'll tell the hon. Member.

**Mrs Hanoomanjee:** Can the hon. Prime Minister say whether there is any time-frame for Mr Robertson to submit his report and, if so, in-between the time that he submits his report and the new legislation comes into force, whether he proposes to appoint a chairman to the Media Trust Board in the meantime?

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**The Prime Minister:** We don't propose to appoint any person until we get the report which is due, as I said, at latest, before the end of the year, but I think it will be even before that. Maybe in October or November we will get the report.

**Mr Bodha:** Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Prime Minister in view of the fact that the Freedom of Information Bill as well will be represented in the National Assembly, whether he can consider the fact that both the Freedom of Information Bill and the changes that he intends to bring in the House as regards to the Media Council could be taken into account at the same time?

**The Prime Minister:** Whether at the same time or not, I am not sure, but the Freedom of Information Bill is actually part of our programme, we put it in our manifesto and in the Government Programme. He is also for it, I must tell the hon. Member and he thinks that we should bring it.

**Mr Speaker:** I have to inform the House that questions B/690 addressed to Dr. the hon. Prime Minister will be replied by the Minister of Arts and Culture and that questions B/694 and B/695 addressed to Dr. the hon. Prime Minister have been withdrawn.

#### **PUBLIC SECTOR – FEMALE CANDIDATES - RECRUITMENT**

**(No. B/686) Mr S. Dayal (Second Member for Quartier Militaire and Moka)** asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether he will state if Government will consider devising ways and means of ensuring that a minimum of 30% of the posts in the minor grades in the public sector be allocated to women, in view of the high percentage of unemployment amongst women at the lower rung of the ladder, and if so, will he also consider impressing upon the private sector to follow suit.

**The Prime Minister:** Mr Speaker, Sir, it is felt that the introduction of any binding quota system might be construed as constituting discrimination on ground of sex and the hon. Member may be aware that such discrimination is prohibited by the Constitution of Mauritius and by the Sex Discrimination Act 2002, sections 4 & 5 of which prohibit the giving of any preferential treatment, especially in the field of employment where this is likely to impair equality of opportunity.

Nevertheless, some measures have already been taken to open up, where possible, lower level posts in the public service to women. For example, the posts of Office Attendant and General Worker, which were traditionally a male domain, have already been opened to female candidates as well. I am informed that, at the last recruitment exercise of Office Attendants 30% of the recruits were female.

There is no fixed ratio for recruitment in the public service. Recruitment in the public service is based on merit. If female candidates are found to be more suitable for a job, they may even exceed the ratio of 30% in that job. Besides, in several grades like Clerical Officer/Higher Clerical Officer, women already outnumber, by far, their male counterparts. In fact, female officers in the Public Service represent more than 30% of the workforce.

I am also informed that schemes of service for posts in the public sector are now being framed in such a manner as to remove any gender bias to cater for the recruitment of female candidates, except in cases where the nature of the duties dictates otherwise.

Insofar as the workmen's class is concerned, there is a dearth of female candidates possessing the appropriate technical skills, which itself may be the result of cultural barriers that keep women from taking jobs such as electrician, plumbers, drivers, metal working, gardeners, etc. However, steps have been taken to attract women in these trades through appropriate training programmes.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we believe that women deserve a better access not only to low levels jobs, but also to all level jobs, be it in the public or private sector. In fact, in the public sector, women have already made significant inroads in posts at the higher echelon. But we need to go further, and as already announced by the Government, we will be coming up with an Equal Opportunities Bill which will reinforce the merit principle in employment both in the public and private sectors.

**Mr Bérenger:** The hon. Prime Minister has replied in relation to lower grades and minor grades in the public sector. Does he not think that we should act as far as the recruitment of Police Constables is concerned, where we have a lot of ground to catch up to have a decent number of female constables?

**The Prime Minister:** I totally agree, Mr Speaker, Sir. I don't know for whatever reason. In fact, I said last time in Parliament that we'll be recruiting more women officers and we are ensuring also that they get training as well.

**Mr Dayal:** Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether Mauritius has taken any commitment with SADC and African Union with regard to increasing the number of ladies in the public sector?

**The Prime Minister:** I don't think there is a commitment on the public sector. In SADC, there is this requirement that there should be more ladies in Parliament and this is something that we all agree with.

**MR I. G. - TELFAIR, MOKA – DEATH**

**(No. B/687) Mr S. Dayal (Second Member for Quartier Militaire and Moka)** asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether in regard to one I. G., of Telfair, Moka, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the circumstances of his death, which occurred on the day following his arrest on Thursday 05 June 2008, indicating if an inquiry has been carried out thereinto and the outcome thereof.

**The Prime Minister:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Acting Commissioner of Police that on 05 June 2008, MCIT Curepipe arrested one I.G in connection with a case of “Unidentified Dead Body”, and he was thereafter detained at Grand Bois Police Station.

After presenting before Court on 06 June 2008, he was escorted by Rose Belle CID personnel to Ebène for an identification exercise. Reaching Ebène, I.G was left in the Police vehicle, handcuffed and under the care of Detective Corporal of the Rose Belle CID.

At that time, he feigned nausea and on being allowed to get out of the van, he pushed the door of the vehicle towards the Police Officer, who lost his balance and fell down. I.G escaped towards the nearby bush and disappeared in the bushy area leading towards Ebène river. Searches were made in the area by officers and Police dog, but in vain and these were abandoned at dusk. The fugitive was also looked for at his place of residence and in the neighbouring outskirts, but without success.

Searches resumed on the next day, that is, 07 June 2008 with the help of GIPM and the dead body of I.G was found in the water of Ebène river with a handcuff in one hand.

An autopsy was carried out by the Chief Police Medical Officer in the presence of Dr. Gujjallu, representing the interests of the family of the deceased; both unanimously concluded that the cause of death was “Asphyxia due to Drowning”. No foul play is suspected.

I am further informed, Mr Speaker, Sir, by the Acting Commissioner of Police that an enquiry has been initiated at the CCID to shed light on the circumstances of the escape. After completion of the enquiry, the matter will be referred to the Director of Public Prosecutions for advice.

**Mr Bodha:** Mr Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether there were any traces of Police brutality on the body?

**The Prime Minister:** I just said nobody suspected foul play. There was a doctor who was representing the interests of the family at the autopsy and they unanimously concluded that the cause of death was 'Asphyxia due to Drowning'.

### **POLICE BAND - BANDSMEN – APPOINTMENT**

**(No. B/688) Mrs F. Labelle (Third Member for Vacoas and Floreal)** asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether in regard to the Police Band, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to if the trainee Bandsmen, recruited in April 2003 and appointed as Bandsmen in November 2005, have been confirmed in their respective post and, if so, when and, if not, why not.

**The Prime Minister:** Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I am replying to Parliamentary Questions B/688 and B/697 together as they relate to the same issue.

I am informed by the Acting Commissioner of Police that on 03 March 2003, 34 Trainee Bandsmen were enlisted in the Mauritius Police band, out of whom seven left the Force.

The 27 Trainee Bandsmen completed their two years' training in accordance with the Scheme of Service and on 14 November 2005, they were appointed as Band Constable on one year's probation.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am further informed by the Acting Commissioner of Police that all Band Constables have already been recommended for confirmation to the Disciplined Forces Service Commission, except for four of them among whom -

- two are on unauthorised absence;
- one has resigned, and
- one has been interdicted.

**Mrs Labelle:** Is the hon. Prime Minister aware that on the appointment letter dated 09 November, these officers were supposed to be on 12 months' probation? This means that they were expected to be appointed after one year, that is, in 2006, but, up to now, they have not been appointed, that is, they are not on the permanent and pensionable establishment.

**The Prime Minister:** I am not sure whether when they are on probation, they have actually to be appointed straightaway. But what I said is that the recommendations have already gone to the Disciplined Forces Service Commission.

**Mrs Labelle:** May I, with your permission, Mr Speaker, Sir, table a copy of the letter of appointment where it is clearly stated that after one year they will be put on the permanent and pensionable establishment?

**The Prime Minister:** Mr Speaker, Sir, this goes with a proviso that they must be satisfied. I can tell you, there are some reasons, in fact, since the hon. Member is laying this letter on the Table, for example – I don't know whether I have it here, but I did read it somewhere - that the Police felt that they needed to have further training. They were not performing as there was no synchronisation between them and they thought that it should be continued until the time they felt that they could get their promotion. This is what the Police said. Their names have been put forward, except for four of them, for the reasons I have given.

**Mrs Labelle:** Mr Speaker, Sir, may I know from the hon. Prime Minister whether these officers have been informed that they were not up to the required standard to be appointed on a permanent basis?

**The Prime Minister:** I suppose they should have been in any case. But I don't know whether the hon. Member saw the French Police Officers playing the national anthem in France.

**Mrs Labelle:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I am not disputing the fact as to whether they are not up to the level. But if they were told that after one year they would be placed on a permanent list and if they are not up to the standard, if there are some adverse reports, is it not reasonable that these officers be informed of any adverse reports against them.

**The Prime Minister:** The answer is yes.

**Mr Jhugroo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, does the hon. Prime Minister think that they will have to play music until they are confirmed in their post?

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

**Mr Von-Mally:** Mr Speaker, Sir, being given that quite a few bandsmen come from Rodrigues, and that it was question to have a similar band set up, can I know where matters stand?

**The Prime Minister:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I will look into the matter and inform the hon. Member. To add something to what hon. Mrs Labelle was saying, I must say that she is right and that they should be informed. If they have not been informed, this should be corrected.

#### **FLOREAL POLICE STATION – RELOCATION**

(No. B/689) **Mrs F. Labelle (Third Member for Vacoas & Floréal)** asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether, in regard to the Floréal Police Station, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to if he will consider the advisability of having it

transferred to another location with a view to rendering it more accessible to the inhabitants of the region of Floréal.

**The Prime Minister:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Acting Commissioner of Police that the relocation of the Floréal Police Station is being envisaged with a view to providing better accessibility and services to the inhabitants of the region.

A plot of land of an extent of 1167 m<sup>2</sup> has already been vested with my Office by the Ministry of Housing & Lands for the construction of a new Police Station.

Police has its programme for the renovation or relocation of existing Police Stations and the construction of new ones. Necessary consideration will be given, therefore, to the relocation of the Floréal Police Station.

**Mr Bérenger:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to ask the hon. Prime Minister whether he is aware – I remember those days – that this Police Station at Floreal was situated there mainly for the purpose of better spying on foreign Embassies in those days. Therefore, it should urgently be transferred to Mangalkhan or somewhere where it can really be effective.

**The Prime Minister:** I thank the hon. Leader of the Opposition. In fact, I know of one incident that happened there, but, maybe, I should not say it here.

(PQ No. B/690 – see after PQ No. B/733)

#### BANGLADESHI NATIONALS – WORK PERMITS

(No. B/691) **Mr G. Lesjongard (Second Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue)** asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether, in regard to the five Bangladeshi nationals who were working for Best Metal Co. Ltd, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to if the immigration authorities have traced them out and, if so if they have left the country, indicating who paid for their return air tickets.

**The Prime Minister:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Acting Commissioner of Police that five Bangladeshi nationals were granted work permits to take up employment at Best Metal Company Ltd. for the period February 2006 to February 2008.

However, following an incident which occurred on 03 June 2007 between one of the Bangladeshi nationals and his employer, a case of ‘Assault’ was reported against the employer at the Camp de Masque Police Station.

Following a request from the employer, the work permits were cancelled by the Ministry of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment on 27 November 2007. Consequently, the residence permits were cancelled on 13 December 2007.

However, the Bangladeshis were allowed to stay, as they had to appear in the case of 'Assault' lodged against their employer and, in the meantime, a new company had applied for work permits in their favour.

The case of 'Assault' was dismissed before the Flacq District Court in March 2008 and in April 2008, and the new application for work permits made by the new company, however, were not entertained.

I am informed by the Acting Commissioner of Police that the five Bangladeshi nationals have been under Police custody since 13 June 2008, and that arrangements are being made with the Ministry of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment for their early repatriation. The security deposit submitted by the former employer, Best Metal Co. Ltd. will be used for their repatriation.

**Mr Lesjongard:** Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to a case where the Passport & Immigration Officer issues a letter for the cancellation of a work permit, may I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether there is a delay in the execution of that cancellation?

**The Prime Minister:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I think the cancellation takes effect on the day mentioned in the letter.

**Mr Lesjongard:** Mr Speaker, Sir, may I know why it took so much time in executing that cancellation?

**The Prime Minister:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I said that it was felt that they had to go Court because of the case of assault and, therefore, this was not put into effect.

**Mr Lesjongard:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Prime Minister mentioned that the case was over, in March this year.

**The Prime Minister:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the case was dismissed in March, and then, as I said, there were two cases in April 2008. After that, there has been new application for work permits. This was looked into at the Ministry concerned, and it was not entertained.

**Mr Lesjongard:** Mr Speaker, Sir, may I know who made the application for new work permits?

**The Prime Minister:** Mr Speaker, Sir, apparently it is a new company. I don't know whether I have the name with me. Would it be relevant to know who made the application?

**Mr Guinness:** Mr Speaker, Sir, last time, I laid a letter on the Table of the National Assembly. Can I know from the hon. Prime Minister whether he talked to the MP concerning that matter? Because we are in a country where the rule of law prevails, and it is not good that MPs intervene in such matters in the way it is written in the letter.

**The Prime Minister:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I was about to travel abroad for an official visit, and I did not have time. I will look into the matter.

## FOREIGNERS – OVERSTAY IN MAURITIUS

(No. B/692) **Mr S. Soodhun (Fifth Member for La Caverne & Phoenix)** asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether, in regard to the foreigners, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the number thereof who have overstayed after their entry into Mauritius over the past year, indicating –

- (a) their respective nationality, and
- (b) the actions he proposes to take.

**The Prime Minister:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Acting Commissioner of Police that the information regarding the number of foreigners who have overstayed and their nationality is being compiled and will be laid on the Table of the National Assembly.

With regard to part (b) of the question, I am informed by the Acting Commissioner of Police that action is already being taken to track down overstayers. The Tracking Team of the Passport and Immigration Office tracks down overstayers with the help of the regular Police and other specialised units of the Force such as ADSU, CID and Crime Intelligence Cell (CIC).

Consultations are also being held with a view to reviewing the legal framework in order to toughen penalties for those who harbour overstayers.

Furthermore, a new Border Control System, which is a fully computerised system, will be operational by September 2008 at all points of entry. This system will ensure a more efficient monitoring and control of foreigners who enter and leave Mauritius.

**Mr Bérenger:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I heard that now there will be a computerised system. But, from the answer the hon. Prime Minister has received from the Police, it would seem that there is no follow-up. It's because a question has been put that now an audit is going to be carried out to find out how many foreigners are overstaying in Mauritius. Does not that disturb the hon. Prime Minister?

**The Prime Minister:** Mr Speaker, Sir, in fact, to be truthful, I did ask why they can't give a number. It's because they want to make sure and re-look at every case where there has been overstaying. That's the reason.

**Mr Soodhun:** Mr Speaker, Sir, is the hon. Prime Minister aware that foreigners who have stayed for a long time are operating in Mauritius? I can give one address. There is a *Tabagie* called 'Modern Tabagie' at GRNW, which is owned by a foreigner who has overstayed.

**The Prime Minister:** Mr Speaker, Sir, if the hon. Member gives me the name, I will have him deported straightaway.

**CRIMINAL CASES – COURT DISMISSAL**

(No. B/693) Mr N. Bodha (First Member for Vacoas and Floreal) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether, in regard to the criminal cases which have been dismissed by the court by reason of weaknesses in the Police inquiry, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the number thereof since January 2007 to date, indicating the remedial measures he proposes to take.

**The Prime Minister:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Acting Commissioner of Police that, since January 2007 to date, there has been only one case which has been dismissed before the court by reason of weaknesses in the Police inquiry.

It is to be pointed out that criminal cases are dismissed for a variety of reasons, as the hon. Member well knows, and not necessarily by reason of weaknesses in the Police inquiry. I understand that any case which is dismissed for any weaknesses in the Police inquiry, the reason thereof is clearly indicated in the judgment by the Magistrate or the Judge.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as part of the ongoing reforms of the Police Force, we are sparing no efforts to enhance the capability and professionalism of the Police personnel and to provide the necessary tools and resources to enable them to operate in a most effective and efficient manner.

A lot of emphasis is being put on the capacity building of the Police Force. In the field of crime investigation, over 120 officers have followed training courses abroad in investigative methods with a view to upgrading their investigative skills.

We are also in the process of enhancing the forensic investigative capability through the reorganisation of the Forensic Science Laboratory. A long-term strategy for the use and development of forensic science has been worked out with the help of foreign experts. I should also add that we have also enlisted the assistance from the University of Staffordshire of UK for upgrading the skills of the local staff. In this respect, the team from Staffordshire University will conduct training programmes in Mauritius from 24 August to 06 September 2008. We will also be introducing into the National Assembly a DNA Bill shortly.

Mr Speaker, Sir, there is need for the Police to use modern techniques in the investigation of crime. In this regard, CCTV system has been installed in two of the three detention centres for monitoring of detainees to prevent any oppressive conduct during the early investigation stage, a Video Interview Room has been set up at Line Barracks for recording suspects interview.

I should also point out that, at our request, the French Government has provided us recently with the software for the “*portrait robot*” which we have started using for identification of suspects, and it is already giving the desired results.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I should also add that, during my recent official visit to France, I sought the assistance of the French Government to enable our Police Force to fight criminality more effectively. I indicated that there have been in recent years a number of

crimes that have gone unresolved and requested the French President and the French Minister of Interior to dispatch a team from the French Police to train our officers in crime detection. This team will also comprise a Forensic Specialist and a member of “*Police Judiciaire*”. They will also look at unresolved crimes. The French Government, I must say, has agreed to my request.

**Mr Bodha:** Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether he can see to it that there is better and effective collaboration between the State Law Office and the Police Department so that there are no weaknesses when the case is presented in Court?

**The Prime Minister:** I will pass this on to the Police and the State Law Office, but it is true that this has to be ensured.

**Mr Speaker:** Time is over! Questions addressed to hon. Ministers!

### **BRITISH AMERICAN TOBACCO BUILDING – GOVERNMENT PURCHASE**

**(No. B/698) Mr G. Lesjongard (Second Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue)** asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to the land and building belonging to the British American Tobacco at Nicolay Road, Port Louis, he will state if Government has finalized the purchase thereof and, if so –

- (a) if the Government Valuation Office was involved;
- (b) the estimated value thereof, and
- (c) the actual price paid by Government.

**The Minister of Housing & Lands (Mr A. Dulull):** Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I shall reply to this question.

Government has finalized the purchase of the land and building formerly belonging to the British American Tobacco at Nicolay Road, Port Louis. The deed of sale was signed on 20 May 2008.

In regard to part (a) of the question, in accordance with established practice, the Chief Government Valuer was consulted on 30 November 2007 regarding the value of the property to be acquired, and he submitted his assessment on 13 February 2008.

In regard to parts (b) and (c) of the question, the Chief Government Valuer valued the property at Rs160 m., which valuation was accepted by Government, and Government paid a total sum of Rs160 m. for the purchase of the land together with the building standing thereon.

The deed of sale was signed by my Ministry on 20 May 2008, after all necessary procedures for such a purchase, including notarial deed, were completed.

Mr Speaker, Sir, may I emphasize that the land together with the buildings standing thereon, has been vested in the Ministry of Education and Human Resources for a regional training centre that will cater for students both in the vicinity and in the areas considered to have desperate need for training opportunities, such as, Roche Bois, Cité La Cure, Vallée Pitot, Plaine Verte, Vallée des Prêtres, Pointe aux Piments and even Poudre d'Or Village.

**Mr Lesjongard:** Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister of Housing and Lands whether there was a second valuation made by the Government Valuation Office for an amount of Rs150 m.?

**Mr Dulull:** The property was acquired on an as is and where is basis valued at Rs160 m. by the Government Valuer.

**Mr Lesjongard:** Mr Speaker, Sir, my question is very clear: whether there was a second valuation made by the Government Valuation Office for a sum of Rs150 m. and request was made by the Government valuation Office to the Ministry of Housing and Lands for acquiring that property at that amount.

**Mr Dulull:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the amount of Rs160 m. was given Cabinet approval.

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Barbier:** May I know from the hon. Minister the area of the land and whether it is State or private land?

**Mr Dulull:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the extent of the land consists of two portions. The freehold land on which stands the building is 4A 79P and the leasehold land is of an extent of 3516 M<sup>2</sup>.

**Mr Lesjongard:** May I ask the hon. Minister whether the Chairperson of the IVTB was involved in the acquisition of that property?

**Mr Dulull:** The acquisition of the property to be used for public purpose is acquired by the Ministry of Housing and Lands following valuation by Government Valuation Office.

**Mr Lesjongard:** Can the hon. Minister confirm whether the Chairperson of the IVTB was a former employer of the BAT?

**Mr Dulull:** I am not aware of such a thing, Mr Speaker, Sir.

**Mr Guimbeau:** The hon. Minister has not answered the question of hon. Lesjongard concerning the sum of Rs150 m. Can the hon. Minister answer the question?

**Mr Speaker:** I have told hon. Members so many times that the Chair is helpless if the Minister does not want to give a direct answer.

**Mr Bérenger:** Can I ask the hon. Minister whether there have been two evaluations for that property - yes or no?

**Mr Dulull:** We had an evaluation which says plus or minus 10%.

*(Interruptions)*

### HIGHLANDS GOVERNMENT SCHOOL – DRAIN

**(No. B/699) Dr. R. Hawoldar (Second Member for La Caverne and Phoenix)** asked the Minister of Environment & National Development Unit whether, in regard to the project for the extension of a drain near the Highlands Government School, he will state where matters stand.

**Mr Bachoo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the project for the construction of drain near Highlands Government School was entrusted to Road Development Authority on 29 November 2007 with funding by the National Development Unit of my Ministry.

The most cost effective solution to the problem of flooding in that region is to have part of the drain cross private properties to finally discharge storm water run off to the nearby river. The project has been delayed because authorization was not obtained by one landowner.

I am advised that the Municipal Council of Vacoas-Phoenix is negotiating with another property owner in order to obtain way leave. It is expected that clearance from the property owner would be conveyed soon.

Once necessary way leave would be granted measures would be taken to embark on the drain scheme.

**Dr. Hawoldar:** Mr Speaker, Sir, may I just inform the hon. Minister...

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** There is too much noise in the House, please!

**Dr. Hawoldar:** I thank the hon. Minister for his answer, but may I inform him at the same time that the property owner himself has backed out. May I ask him whether he can look into the case? With all the experts that he has at the Ministry, the consultants,

the engineers, the architects and so on, could they not devise another system where a drain could be built to get rid of this water? Children are having their shoes and socks wet every morning and this has been going on for years, Mr Speaker, Sir. I have myself been fighting for this project for the last three years.

**Mr Bachoo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, as I have just mentioned, unfortunately, we have got the problem of way leave. The hon. Member is aware that we have made every effort in order to get the persons to accept. The best solution will be after the Budget, I think there must be a site visit conducted by all the stakeholders in the presence of all the Members concerned.

*(Interruptions)*

I don't want the MBC; we don't utilise the MBC. We will go on the spot and try to find what is the best solution to this problem.

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** May I ask the hon. Minister whether it has been envisaged to place in that particular area some sort of absorption drain?

**Mr Bachoo:** Absorption drain will not serve any purpose because that is a very dangerous place and it is prone to floods. Absorption drain won't be of any help.

**Mr Speaker:** Let me give hon. Soodhun a chance to ask questions.

**Mr Soodhun:** Thank you, Sir. This issue is very delicate. The drain work has stopped near the mosque and the rest you know very well, Mr Speaker, Sir. What I am suggesting to the hon. Minister is to come with a solution, even we can do it in the middle of the road which has been done in the past.

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Bachoo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, all of us are concerned with this issue and I can assure the hon. Member that we are looking into it, because Dr. Hawoldar has been on that spot many times along with technicians.

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Order!

**Mr Bachoo:** This question has been asked by the hon. Member and, of course, I am going to listen to what he has said. I can assure him that I will do the needful.

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** The hon. Minister has said that he is going to do the needful.

**MORCELLEMENT BONIFACE, QUIZE CANTONS - CHILDREN'S  
PLAYGROUND**

**(No. B/700) Dr. R. Hawoldar (Second Member for La Caverne and Phoenix)** asked the Minister of Environment & National Development Unit whether, in regard to the project for the construction of a children's playground at *Morcellement Boniface*, Quinze Cantons, Vacoas, he will state where matters stand.

**Mr Bachoo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the vesting of the piece of land identified for the project with the Municipality of Vacoas Phoenix is still awaited. The Local Authority will be requested to speed up matters and, once that plot is vested with the Municipality, I will do the needful.

**Dr. Hawoldar:** Mr Speaker, Sir, may I just remind the Minister that the visit on the site was done in November 2005 and almost three years have lapsed and the land has not been found or has not yet been vested with the Municipality. Being given the time taken, could the hon. Minister give us a time-frame as to when he thinks that land will be vested with the Municipality? Will it be before 2010 or after 2010, with all the expertise they have?

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Order!

**Mr Bachoo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, once the land is vested to the Municipality, then I can undertake the work. We have requested the Municipality of Vacoas/Phoenix - the last request was on 07 March, 2008 - to speed up the matter. Once the land is vested with the Municipality, my Ministry will come in.

**Dr. Hawoldar:** Mr Speaker, Sir, does the hon. Minister mean that between November 2005 to March 2008, the Municipality was never asked to make a request to get the land vested in it.

**Mr Bachoo:** I have mentioned the last time that we took up the issue was in March of this year. I will try to request them to speed up the matter and once the land is vested with the Municipality, as I have already said, I'll start the work.

**LA CAVERNE/PHOENIX -DRAINS**

**(No. B/701) Dr. R. Hawoldar (Second Member for La Caverne & Phoenix)** asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport & Shipping whether, in regard to the drains along the classified roads in the Constituency No. 15, La Caverne and Phoenix, he will state when they have last been cleaned.

**The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport & Shipping (Dr. R. Beebeejaun):** Mr Speaker, Sir, the cleaning of drains forms part of routine maintenance activities carried out by the Road Development Authority.

With regard to the classified roads in Constituency No. 15, a general cleaning of drains was last carried out in December 2007 and January 2008. As from February 2008 to date, cleaning of drains has been carried out at the following specific areas -

February 2008 – Main road at Parisot, Mesnil

March 2008 - Main road at Phoenix and Highlands near Aleemiah College and roundabout at Dowlut

April 2008 - Main Road at Glen Park, Vacoas, Modern Square, Vacoas and Highlands

May 2008 – Main Road at Paillotte, Vacoas

**Dr. Hawoldar:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I thank the hon. Deputy Prime Minister for his answer. May I ask the hon. Deputy Prime Minister to verify the information which has been given to him. I have with me 11 letters from the Municipality of Vacoas/Phoenix written to the Ministry since 2006, requesting for those drains along all classified roads to be cleaned. Part of the answer given by the Deputy Prime Minister is right. What actually has happened is that there were lots of clogging. For example, in Paillotte, the drain has been cleaned over a distance of maybe 10 or 15 metres and the rest of it has stayed like it was and we took over by 2005. I am told that the last time the drains were cleaned along these classified roads is some time in 2002 or 2003. May I ask the Deputy Prime Minister to look carefully at the reports which are being given to him by the officers in his own Ministry as it seems, according to me, that they are giving him the wrong information?

**Dr. Beebeejaun:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I quite understand the reaction of the hon. Member. I have asked the RDA to increase the staff and to contract out, if need be, so that they may be able to carry out the required works.

#### **ROAD HUMPS – GOVT. POLICY**

**(No. B/702) Dr. R. Hawoldar (Second Member for La Caverne & Phoenix)** asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport & Shipping whether, in regard to the construction of road humps, he will state if Government has changed its policy in relation thereto.

**The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport & Shipping (Dr. R. Beebeejaun):** Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Member may refer to the statement which I made in the National Assembly on 25 July 2006, wherein I

explained that where traffic calming measures are genuinely needed, the installation of humps should be a solution of last resort.

In each case, the Traffic Management and Road Safety Unit carries out a detailed survey taking into account the traffic volume, the number of vehicles and the number of reported accidents along the stretch of the road, the availability of side walks and the topography of the road. The Traffic Management and Road Safety Unit recommends the construction of a hump on the basis of the findings of its survey.

I also explained that though road humps are effective in reducing speed and as a traffic calming measure, they have a number of drawbacks such as slowing down emergency vehicles, increasing journey time for public transport, creating shocks and vibrations, increasing congestion and carbon emission and causing migration of accidents to other sections of the road.

It is therefore not the policy of my Ministry to construct road humps along classified roads, except in the vicinity of schools.

**Dr. Hawoldar:** Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the Deputy Prime Minister in what cases does the Ministry decide to place *rumbles* instead of road humps?

**Dr. Beebeejaun:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the question of rumbles was brought up last week or the week before and I have looked into it. Where rumbles have been placed, there have been complaints about the noise made. At the same time it warned the motorists about the possible hazard ahead.

**Dr. Hawoldar:** Mr Speaker, Sir, with all the expertise that is required to fix either road humps or rumbles, will the Deputy Prime Minister say how long the officials of his Ministry take before they come to a decision to put either road humps or rumbles along a road?

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Order, please!

**Dr. Beebeejaun:** Mr Speaker, Sir, if I were to respond to the request of the Members of the House regarding rumbles and humps, the whole of Mauritius will have rumbles and humps. We have to be careful in what we ask as there are specific criteria for putting up rumbles and humps. I would ask the Members of the House, if need be, we can conduct visits together; we have been in Rivière Noire, Plaines Wilhems and everywhere. I must say that following visits many have withdrawn their request and more importantly we have had request for removal of humps instead of putting them.

**Mr Bodha:** Mr Speaker, Sir, are there places where humps have been removed?

**Dr. Beebeejaun:** Yes, Sir. As far as I am concerned, this year there were about five or six, but I have to check.

**Mr Bérenger:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I think the hon. Deputy Prime Minister took note the other day that for ‘Cross Here’ the sign warning drivers are on the ‘‘Cross Here’’; the same is true for humps also and, in that case, there are not many tourists who are used to the number of humps that we have on our roads. Will the hon. Deputy Prime Minister agree that it is even more urgent to have those signs at a reasonable distance?

**Dr. Beebeejaun:** Sir, following the intervention of the hon. Leader of the Opposition I have asked the TMRSU to review the whole issue. The standard answer is that, 35 metres from the humps or the crossing, there are signs. But I have asked them to check again and to make sure that the signs are restored, are visible or appropriately placed. I thank the hon. Leader of the Opposition for the suggestion.

**Mr Bundhoo:** On the same line as the Leader of the Opposition, may I request the hon. Deputy Prime Minister to ensure if it is possible to have humps painted with fluorescent paint in order to be able to notice it earlier and make it more visible?

**Dr. Beebeejaun:** I hope that we are not going to get a fluorescent Mauritius.

**Dr. Hawoldar:** I have asked a question to the Deputy Prime Minister and I have not received an answer. Once a request comes to his Ministry to get either the rumbles or humps placed, he has to ask his experts, his engineers and the CEB to go round and decide whether humps or rumbles can be put. My question is: how long does it take usually between the time that a request is received and it is executed, that is, to put the rumbles or the road humps?

**Dr. Beebeejaun:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I would stress again to the hon. Member that the reply is within three or four weeks. I am more often than not told that it is not advisable to put either. In the case where they are put up, I have to look at the time it takes.

**Mr Bodha:** Mr Speaker, Sir, in view of the fact that humps or rumbles can become a road hazard, the policy is that we should have street lighting above the humps and, in many cases, this is not the case. Can the Deputy Prime Minister see to it that on all the humps and rumbles, we have lighting so that this does not become a hazard?

**Dr. Beebeejaun:** I thank the hon. Member. I think that following the suggestion of last week and the week before, we are looking at the whole issue again and we are providing for these improvements in the budget.

**Mrs Hanoomanjee:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I understand the problems which have been stated by the Deputy Prime Minister regarding the road humps. But I suggested to the Deputy Prime Minister some time back as to whether he can consider discussing with his engineers regarding the redesigning of the road humps so as to make them more practical.

Can I ask the Deputy Minister whether he can consider this or whether it has already been considered?

**Dr. Beebeejaun:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the point that was raised is whether we can have the humps in two. I have put the suggestion to the Traffic Management and Road Safety Unit. They are not very keen on it in the sense that the middle will be used by motorcycles for speeding, but I am not very sympathetic to that reply. I will look into it again. The basic question is redesigning of these humps.

**Mrs Perrrier:** Can we have a standardisation of these humps? Some are very high, some are little, some are narrow, some are real hurdles on the road.

**Dr. Beebeejaun:** Mr Speaker, Sir, yes, there are flat humps, high and low humps; and I remember in the old days, there was a Minister, when questions were about the height of the humps, he said: 'go and raise them' so that they stopped asking questions.

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

*On resuming at 2.00 p.m. with Mr Deputy Speaker in the Chair.*

**The Deputy Speaker:** The Table has been advised that Parliamentary Questions Nos. B/708, B/709, B/726, B/727 have been withdrawn.

## **MUNICIPAL COUNCIL OF PORT-LOUIS – BUDGET – REPRESENTATIONS**

(No. B/703) **Mrs S. Grenade (Second Member for GRNW and Port Louis West)** asked the Minister of Local Government whether, in regard to the priorities and items budgeted by the Municipal Council of Port Louis for the financial year 2008-2009, he will state if he has received representations from the Councillors.

**Dr. David:** No, Sir.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Next question!

*(Interruptions)*

Hon. Mardemootoo, this is a mockery of Parliamentary democracy.

*(Interruptions)*

You should not do that next time. I have said before that Ministers should be in the House when questions are set for them to answer.

*P.Q. Nos. B/704 and B/705 – see after P.Q. No. B/706*

**TRUST FUND FOR VULNERABLE GROUPS – OFFICER –  
ALLEGATIONS AGAINST**

**(No. B/706) Mrs M. Hanoomanjee (Second Member for Savanne and Black River)** asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether he is aware that a member of the staff of his Ministry is alleged to have been involved in getting a project, in respect of a socio-cultural organization, approved by the Trust Fund for Vulnerable Groups, when she had a personal interest in the project, and if so, will he state if an inquiry has been carried out thereinto and the outcome thereof.

**Mr Sithanen:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I presume that the hon. Member is referring to the allegations made against an officer of the Trust Fund and not a staff member of the Ministry of Finance regarding irregularities in connection with community based projects financed by the Trust Fund. In this respect, I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to Parliamentary Question No. B/1346 of 11 December 2007.

I, however, wish to inform the House that currently a three-member committee is carrying out a full-fledged enquiry into those allegations. I am informed that the committee has already held 14 sessions and has convened some 28 persons including the relevant NGO and staff of the Trust Fund. I am further advised that the committee is expected to submit its report by end of July 2008.

**Mrs Hanoomanjee:** May I ask the hon. Minister who are the members of this committee and why is it that it is taking so long? Since last year till now the work of the committee is not over yet.

**Dr. Sithanen:** That is a very fair question. I asked the same question this morning and they gave me the following answer. The committee consists of the following officers: Mr Conhye, PAS, Chairperson; Mrs Pareatumbee, Principal Financial and Management Analyst, and Mr Ramburn, Personal Officer. In fact, they told me that they have had to hold 14 meetings. They have had to call 28 persons including the executive members of the Sabha and they will soon call Mr Callychurn and the other person. They expect to finalise the report by end of July 2008.

**Mrs Hanoomanjee:** Mr Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Minister whether the officer concerned is still posted in the same division and dealing with projects or is she being posted elsewhere pending this enquiry?

**Dr. Sithanen:** Let me say one thing, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. The money has been retrieved. I will need notice of the question being raised by the hon. Member as to whether the officer is posted in the same constituency as before. I'll check it.

**Mr Bérenger:** Mr Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Minister whether there was not sufficient evidence to refer the case to the Police?

**Dr. Sithanen:** Again, I asked the same question. Apparently, no, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. According to what I understand, it is more complicated than the competitive thought.

**Mrs Hanoomanjee:** I have one last question, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Can the hon. Minister say whether he will look into whether that officer is still dealing with projects and approval of projects and so on - because this is a very serious matter, she is still there - and whether she would be posted elsewhere till the enquiry is completed?

**Dr. Sithanen:** I thought I have answered the question, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Let me make it very clear to the House. These officers do not approve the projects. The projects are approved by a committee and secondly, I have given instructions - because yesterday, hon. Mrs Perrier also raised one particular case where there was abuse; my colleague, hon. Dr. David, also has raised a case even though it dates a very long time back - to the committee to make sure that there is no abuse of the system and that they stop giving cash to the social workers. I have given clear instructions that this money is destined to help poor people and we should not tolerate any abuse where people try to cheat poor people.

**Mrs Perrier:** I want to make something clear to the hon. Minister. He just said that he gave instructions not to give cash to the social workers. It is amazing how the Government can give cash to people who are not eligible to get this money and people who are waiting don't get the money. As I mentioned yesterday and during my intervention on the Budget, this practice has been on for one and a half years and now the Trust Fund asked the person to sue civilly the social worker, but he has no money to do that.

**Dr. Sithanen:** We agreed yesterday in the corridor that the hon. Member would submit the case and I will certainly look into it.

#### **MAURITIUS REVENUE AUTHORITY – EMPLOYEES - INQUIRIES**

**(No. B/707) Mrs S. Hanoomanjee (Second Member for Savanne and Black River)** asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Revenue Authority, information as to if the Authority has carried out inquiries in respect of some of its employees, and if so -

- (a) the number thereof, indicating their respective grade;
- (b) the outcome thereof, and
- (c) the disciplinary measures taken against them, if any.

**The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance & Economic Development (Dr. R. Sithanen):** Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed as follows: that since its coming into operation on 01 July 2006 to date, the Internal Affairs Division of the Mauritius Revenue Authority has carried out inquiries into cases relating to alleged malpractices against 76 employees.

The 76 employees concerned are from different grades. 22 of them are from the Supervisory grade, 52 from Technical grade and 2 from Support grade.

In respect of parts (b) and (c) of the question, I am further informed that following investigations, the MRA Board has cast aside 21 cases as they were found to be merely frivolous, vexatious and having no substance; three cases have been referred to ICAC, and four cases have been referred to police for further enquiry.

Furthermore, five officers have been interdicted pending disciplinary proceedings and one officer has been issued a final written warning.

I am advised that investigations are still going on regarding the remaining cases.

**Mrs Hanoomanjee:** Mr Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Minister whether amongst the allegations made there was one regarding the question of suspicious omissions with a view to claiming the exact amount of tax?

**Dr. Sithanen:** I don't have the details, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. I will find out and I will give the information to the hon. Member.

**Mrs Hanoomanjee:** Can the hon. Minister say whether there have also been questions of malpractice regarding the issue of under evaluation of imported goods?

**Dr. Sithanen:** I am sure there should be.

**Mrs Hanoomanjee:** Can the hon. Minister say whether 26 employees have been transferred to other units and whether any enquiry had been made before their transfer since everything relies on the integrity of the officers of the MRA? Why is it that some employees have been transferred whilst others have been interdicted?

**Dr. Sithanen:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have given the whole spectrum of what is happening; some cases are frivolous and vexatious, some officers have been interdicted and, in other cases, enquiries continue. I don't interfere in the affairs of the MRA. I have to rely on the integrity, not only of the officers, but also of the Board. It is in their hands and I will have to rely on their judgment and wisdom to make decisions that are in the best interest of the MRA.

**Mrs Hanoomanjee:** Has any enquiry been opened on the comptroller of customs recently?

**Dr. Sithanen:** I am not aware of it.

**Dr. Boolell:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, can I convey my sincere apologies to you and to the hon. Second Member for Grand River North West and Port Louis West for being late when the question was put to me. I sincerely apologise to you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

**The Deputy Speaker:** I accept your apologies and hon. Ministers should be made aware that it is of paramount importance that they be in the House when questions are set for them to answer. Next question, hon. Mrs Grenade!

### FISHERMEN WELFARE FUND – BOARD MEETING

**(No. B/704) Mrs S. Grenade (Second Member for GRNW and Port Louis West)** asked the Minister of Agro Industry and Fisheries whether, in regard to the Fishermen Welfare Fund, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Fund, information as to the number of times the Board has met for the past year, indicating if the Chairperson was present, in each case.

**Dr. Boolell:** Mr Deputy Speaker Sir, the Chairperson of the Fisherman Welfare Fund was present for all the five Board meetings held during the past one-year up to now. Another meeting of the Board is scheduled for today in line with the objects of the Fishermen Welfare Fund Act to advance and promote the welfare of fishermen and their families the Fund operates several schemes namely -

- (i) grants of 107 Scholarships every year for post CPE, post SC, post HSC and vocational courses;
- (ii) grant for damage boats and outboard motors;
- (iii) financial assistance to family in distress of fishers lost at sea;
- (iv) sickness allowance for hospitalised fishermen, and
- (v) payment of winter allowance for bank fishermen.

The Board regulates its meeting to address the above mentioned schemes as and when required depending on the urgency and volume of work to be addressed by the Board. In 2005/2006 seven board meetings were held and in 2006/2007 five similar meetings were convened.

In October 2007, the term of office of Board members lapsed and the Board was reconstituted in March 2008 after submission of information in respect of Fishermen's Associations by the Registrar of Associations and Registrar of Cooperatives, Rodrigues Regional Assembly and ultimately Fishermen's Associations which have the largest number of members.

**Mr Lesjongard:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I have heard the hon. Minister stating that the Board has met for six or seven times on a yearly basis. May I ask the hon. Minister

whether he is aware that as per the Fisherman Welfare Fund Act of 2000 at section (6) regarding meetings of the Board, it is stated that –

“the Board shall meet, at least, once monthly at such a time and place as the Chairman considers appropriate.”

**Dr. Boolell:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I do realise so. But, it has been impressed upon the Board to meet as per the provision of the legislation. Of course, when they meet, they have to make sure that they discuss matters which are relevant to the welfare of fishermen.

**Mr Lesjongard:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is the hon. Minister also aware that because the Board is not meeting regularly, there are lots of pending issues regarding the welfare of fishermen?

**Dr. Boolell:** I am not aware, Sir.

#### **FISHERMEN –CHILDREN - SCHOLARSHIPS**

**(No. B/705) Mrs S. Grenade (Second Member for GRNW and Port Louis West)** asked the Minister of Agro Industry and Fisheries whether, in regard to the scholarships granted to the children of the fishermen, he will state if –

- (a) any of these scholarships has been cancelled, and
- (b) there has been any delay in the disbursement of funds in relation thereto.

**Dr. Boolell:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the answer is no.

**Mr Lesjongard:** Can the hon. Minister confirm whether there are cheques of beneficiaries of those scholarships that have been held since 28 May 2007?

**Dr. Boolell:** This is not so. It could have happened, that there was delay in payment in certain cases due to non availability of relevant documents. But once these documents were submitted, matters were addressed very forcefully.

**Mr Lesjongard:** The Minister confirms that amounts related to scholarships were kept in abeyance. May we know for how long were they kept in abeyance?

**Dr. Boolell:** I said there was delay in payment in respect of relevant document not being submitted in time. I have all the relevant information, I have shared ..

*(Interruptions)*

**Dr. Boolell:** Maybe the hon. Member does not have the exact information!

### PRIVATE SECTOR – SALARY STRUCTURE

**(No. B/708) Mr S. Dayal (Second Member for Quartier Militaire and Moka)** asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to the appeal he has recently made to the private sector for the payment to its middle class management of compensation, over and above the amount proposed by Government, following the publication of the Party Research Bureau Report, he will state if he has officially approached the Mauritius Employers Federation, indicating if he will further impress upon the Federation to agree to salary commissioners being appointed to review the salary structure of the employees of the lower and middle class levels and, if not, why not.

*(Withdrawn)*

### PRIVATE SECTOR – SALARY COMPENSATION

**(No. B/709) Mr S. Dayal (Second Member for Quartier Militaire and Moka)** asked the Minister of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment whether, in regard to the payment of salary compensation in the private sector last year, he will state if his Ministry has carried out a survey with a view to establishing a list of the companies/enterprises which had paid salary compensation, over and above the amount provided for by law, and if so, will he table copy thereof and if not, will he cause a survey to be carried out now.

*(Withdrawn)*

### JAYNARAIN ROY MULTI PURPOSE HALL, CHARLES REGNAUD, CUREPIPE – ACTIVITIES

**(No. B/710) Mrs F. Labelle (Third Member for Vacoas and Floreal)** asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to the Municipal Centre situated at Charles Regnaud, Curepipe, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Municipal Council of Curepipe, information as to –

- (a) the activities which are being carried out thereat, and
- (b) if the Council is considering running a library thereat.

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

The information requested at part (a) of the question is being laid in the Library of the National Assembly.

As regards part (b) of the question, I am informed that no decision has been taken by the Municipal Council of Curepipe for the running of a library at Jaynarain Roy Multi Purpose Hall at Charles Regnaud.

### STATE SECONDARY SCHOOLS - AGRICULTURE SUBJECT

(No. B/711) **Mrs F. Labelle (Third Member for Vacoas and Floreal)** asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether, in regard to the State Secondary Schools, he will state if Agriculture is being offered as a subject and, if so, indicate –

- (a) the number of schools offering same, and
- (b) up to which level.

**Mr Gokhool:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, Agriculture is offered for school at prevoc level, Colonel Maingard SSSV, Emmanuel Anquetil SSS, Forest Side Boys SSS and Rose Belle SSSV

I am also informed that it is taught in 42 private secondary schools as follows :24 up to Form III level and 18 up to Form V level.

Should there be demand for Agriculture, my Ministry will consider in accordance with the existing policy of my Ministry regarding a minimum number of students for a subject to be offered.

My Ministry has a policy of reviewing subjects offered and the point raised by the hon. Member will be given consideration in future.

**Mrs Labelle:** If I heard the Minister right, he said that: “should there be a demand.” May I ask the hon. Minister if he does not think it fit to create this demand? We are talking about food crisis, to eat what we produce. Is it not time for us to inculcate this love for agriculture in our secondary schools, in our students? Will he consider this issue?

**Mr Gokhool:** Given the situation as it is, Mr Speaker, Sir, the point raised by the hon. Member is valid and the planning for the next year programme of studies is being undertaken and I will refer the matter to the appropriate committee.

### PORT LOUIS NORTH AND MONTAGNE LONGUE – FOOTBALL GROUNDS

(No. B/712) **Mr G. Lesjongard (Second Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue)** asked the Minister of Local Government whether, in regard to the football grounds in the Constituency No. 4, Port Louis North and Montagne Longue, he will state –

- (a) the number thereof which are provided with floodlights, and
- (b) when the Morcellement Raffray football ground was last marked and maintained.

**Dr. David:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Pamplemousses/Riviere du Rempart District Council that only the football ground at

Long Mountain out of the six other football grounds found in the five villages forming part of Constituency No. 4, is provided with floodlights.

As regards part (b) of the question, I am informed that the Morcellement Raffray football ground at Le Hochet is maintained once every month and it was last marked on 08 May 2008.

**MINISTRY OF HOUSING & LANDS – OFFICERS –  
STATE LAND LEASE**

**(No. B/713) Mr E. Guimbeau (First Member for Curepipe and Midlands)** asked the Minister of Housing and Lands whether, he will state if officers of his Ministry have been granted leases of State land and if so, will he –

- (a) state if the information in relation thereto is available at the Land Information System Unit and, if not, why not;
- (b) give a list of the officers, indicating their respective grade;
- (c) state the type, purpose and terms and conditions of the lease granted to each officer, and
- (d) state if the land, in each case, was leased on the basis of its respective market value and, if not, why not.

**Mr Dulull:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed that such practice was not uncommon in the past and that some officers did, in fact, benefit from such leases of State land.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, however, since this Government took office in July 2005 and my assumption of office as Minister of Housing and Lands, no State land has been allocated to any officer of my Ministry.

Notwithstanding this, I have requested an in-house in depth investigation on the matter and I firmly intend to initiate appropriate action on suspect cases where there have been unethical and ill practices. Following facts that will be established by such an investigation, the pieces of information asked for in parts (a) to (d) of the question will most certainly be placed in the Library of the National Assembly.

**Mr Guimbeau:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Minister inform the House about the grade of the officers who have been granted State lands?

**Mr Dulull:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, based on information made available up to now to me, it seems that the range officers listed from top officers to office attendants including even the ex-Minister of Housing and Land.

**Mr Guimbeau:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, can the Minister inform us whether the Land Information System is working properly.

**The Deputy Speaker:** This has nothing to do with the question.

**Mr Guimbeau:** It is in the question, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Alright!

**Mr Dulull:** The Land Information System is working efficiently and we intend to improve it with the introduction of the Land Administration Management, Evaluation and Information System coming with LAVIMS project.

**Mr Guimbeau:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Minister just said that the Land Information System is working efficiently. Why does it take so long for a Minister to place answers in the Library, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir?

**Mr Dulull:** I said that the system is working efficiently, but it depends on the workload of the officer in the section.

**Mr Guimbeau:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, according to my information, there are no less than five Parliamentary Questions on the desk of the hon. Minister, waiting for his approval. Can I make an appeal to the Minister to see to it that these are table as soon as possible?

**Mr Dulull:** I wonder through which system is the Minister picking information from my office.

**Mr Guimbeau:** This is, what we call, *bafoué la démocratie parlementaire*, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. We, backbenchers, are paid to ask questions to Ministers. All that I am asking is to have the answers table.

**Mr Dulull:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have said that we will place the information in the Library. We have already placed a set of information. We are in the process of giving the pieces of information requested because we have nothing to hide.

### **VALLEE DES PRETRES – MAIN ROAD – SAFETY MEASURES**

**(No. B/714) Mr P. Jhugroo (Third Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue)** asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping whether, in regard to the main road at Vallée des Prêtres, where a road accident occurred, on or about Friday 30 May 2008, he will state the remedial measures that will be taken, if any, with a view to ensuring the safety of the pedestrians and of the vehicles thereat.

**The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping (Dr. R. Beebejaun):** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Upper Vallée des Prêtres is in a hilly region and the road has a steep gradient and several sharp bends, with a relatively higher risk of accidents.

I am informed that there are footpaths on both sides of the road with handrails on one side to segregate pedestrians from vehicles in the vicinity of the site where the accident occurred.

Footpaths also exist along the main road between La Croisée Vallée des Prêtres to the area commonly known as terminus.

The Traffic Management and Road Safety Unit is taking immediate steps to improve road signage and marking along the road and is carrying out a comprehensive survey including a topographical survey to determine the need for other road safety measures.

In view of the topography of the road, the National Transport Authority has been requested to replace long buses by the short buses and restrict buses older than 10 years from plying along the road.

**Mrs Juggoo:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, can the Deputy Prime Minister tell us how many accidents took place in the same place and when was the first one occurred?

**Dr. Beebeejaun:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I do not have the answer, but I gather it was between 2002 and 2003, but I am not aware of any other accident. But I thank the hon. Member for drawing my attention to it after the accident and necessary steps will be taken.

**Mrs Juggoo:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, has the hon. Minister received any communication from the UBS Ltd requesting him to have humps and guard rails fixed on the way down the Caroline road to avoid similar accidents?

**Dr. Beebeejaun:** The answer is yes and we are looking into it.

#### **CONSUMER GOODS – CUSTOMS DUTY - REDUCTION**

**(No. B/715) Mr S. Soodhun (Fifth Member for La Caverne and Phoenix)** asked the Minister of Women's Rights, Child Development, Family Welfare & Consumer Protection whether, in regard to the items which have been subject to the reduction in customs and other duties, as announced in the Budget Speech 2008-2009, she will state the measures that are being taken by her Ministry to monitor that the reduction is reflected on the market prices thereof, to benefit the consumers.

**Mrs Seebun:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, since announcement of the removal and reduction of customs duty on consumer goods on 06 June in the Budget Speech, on the very next day the officers of the Consumer Protection Unit were on field for collection and monitoring of current prices.

On 12 June, the Price Monitoring Committee met and the Committee took note that 12 importers had already reduced the prices on existing stock. Up to date, 15 importers have already complied accordingly.

At the meeting, I made it duty to convince all stakeholders that measures announced by this Government should be passed on to consumers with immediate effect.

Moreover, the Consumer Protection Unit is ensuring that all products clearly indicate pre-budget and post-budget prices with price-labelling clearly marked. Price-labelling is one way to win this battle. Checks at various supermarkets have revealed that these prices have been affixed and are already in force.

So far, 300 inspections have been effected around the island, and aggressive sensitisation campaigns are ongoing with focus on intelligent buying and best buy practices.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, however, the House is already aware that only 17 items are under price control. Hence, the Price Monitoring Committee can only make an appeal to traders to apply the decrease in customs duty on existing stocks and publish the new price list for the benefit of consumers. During the committee, the representatives of Shop Owners Association had made a special request to grant them a breathing space of three weeks to allow an integral effect to take place.

However, I reminded them that as when price rises, traders make instant windfall gains. Hence, the same principle should apply and be adhered to, even if for a short while they have to undergo windfall losses. However, as prices are not under the price control system, they are determined by market forces. All stakeholders should ensure that there is a fair competition for the benefit of consumers.

In that breath, I firmly believe that these measures will be for the benefit and welfare of consumers.

**Mr Soodhun:** I thank the hon. Minister for giving all the information. In fact, as the hon. Minister just mentioned, what will happen to those importers who are not going to comply with her decision? May we know what action the Minister is contemplating to take against these importers?

**Mrs Seebun:** As such, we cannot take any concrete action, but it is clear that most of those large scale retailers as such expressed their intention to decrease their prices and it is visible. It is as such that prices are being decreased. Other traders will have to toe the line, if not, they will not get buyers.

**Mr Lesjongard:** Yesterday, in one of the hypermarkets we all watched on TV a visit effected by officers of the Ministry of Women's Rights, Child Development, Family Welfare & Consumer Protection and, at one point in time, we saw an advertisement board, where it was written "*Promotion Budget*". Are the measures that have been taken in the Budget linked to some sort of *promotion*?

*(Interruptions)*

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order! Let the hon. Minister reply!

**Mrs Seebun:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I understand and share the concern of the hon. Member, because promotion prices do not really reflect decrease in prices. Promotion is done normally at the end of the month. My Ministry, through the Consumer Protection Unit, will ensure that there is no misunderstanding and overlapping. Prices should decrease in concrete terms and should not be misunderstood as *prix promotionnels*.

**Mr Bodha:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we have had the decrease on custom tariffs a few times in Budgets, sometimes involving 1,000 to 3,000 articles. What really happens is that with the next consignment this decrease is mopped up by the retailers and the trading community. I would like to know what the hon. Minister can do to see to it that the decrease in prices continue to the benefit of the consumer?

**Mrs Seebun:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this is a very important concern which I take note. But I wish to remind the hon. Member that only on 12 June, Mr Jayen Chellum, one of the most important representatives of consumers, did express that it is for the first time that we have a Price Monitoring Committee to ensure that consumers benefit from each decrease.

### VACOAS - MARKET PLACE

**(No. B/716) Mr S. Soodhun (Fifth Member for La Caverne and Phoenix)** asked the Minister of Local Government whether, in regard to the market place in Vacoas, he will state if he is aware of the leakages and other problems prevailing thereat and, if so, will he, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Municipal Council of Vacoas Phoenix, information as to the remedial measures that will be taken.

**Dr. David:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Municipality of Vacoas Phoenix that there is no problem of leakage at the Vacoas Market.

**Mr Soodhun:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I think the Minister has received the wrong information, or he has been wrongly advised. The fact is that I have, together with one Municipal councillor, visited the market last Friday. It was raining and we witnessed it. I would like to know whether it is not urgent to call a meeting with the MPs and councillors.

*(Interruptions)*

I am not blaming the Minister. If we can have a meeting to sort out the problem, because there are other problems also affecting the vegetables sellers.

*(Interruptions)*

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order!

**Dr. David:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, let me make things clear. There is one place called the market where there is no leakage and there is another one called the fair where there is leakage. The question, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, relates to the market place of Vacoas...

*(Interruptions)*

No, it is not the same thing! A market is a market and a fair is a fair! As for the fair, in fact, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister Abu Kasenally, hon. Dr. Hawoldar and yourself, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, spoke to me regarding this issue.

*(Interruptions)*

We are talking of the fair now! The Municipal Council is conscious of this problem and has decided to replace the whole roof of the fair phase-wise as from the next the financial year. The project is estimated to cost Rs4.5 m.

Furthermore, the flooring and drain system within the fair is currently being upgraded. The lighting system and fire safety measures at the fair have also been improved. The Council has further informed that palliative measures are being taken by the Municipal Council in the meantime to remedy the leakage problem. So, I was well informed; the hon. Member spoke of the market, not of the fair. If the hon. Member wanted to get an answer about the fair, this is it.

**Mr Soodhun:** The hon. Minister is right to say that it concerns the fair and not the market itself. The fact is, as you know very well, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, there exists a scavenging problem there as well as lighting. I am happy that the Minister mentioned that the roof is to be repaired. In fact, only, we can solve the problem and I have asked the Minister that a meeting be fixed. I don't mind if the three Members of the *Alliance Sociale* together with two Members of the Opposition met the Minister to discuss about the problem existing in the fair of Vacoas Municipality.

#### **MAURITIUS TELECOM – DATA TRANSMISSION – SPEED**

**(No. B/717) Mr N. Bodha (First Member for Vacoas and Floreal)** asked the Minister of Information Technology and Telecommunications whether, in regard to connectivity, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Telecom, information as to –

- (a) the official speed promoted by the Mauritius Telecom, and
- (b) If he has been made aware of any complaint in regard to the actual speed being provided.

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

As the House is aware, the Mauritius Telecom offers, after approval of ICTA, two sets of Broadband internet services which vary according to the market segment that is being served namely, those customers in Home market segment and those in the Business market segment. The variable bandwidth relates to the respective capacity and speed of data transmission. Information in respect of the details of these offers is available on the web site of the Mauritius Telecom and in all its outlets.

In respect of customers in the Home market segment, MT offers Orange ADSL Home with bandwidth of 128 Kilo bytes (Kb) and 512 Kb. It also provides MyT Service of 256 Kb, 512 Kb and 1 Megabyte (Mb)

Insofar as the Business segment is concerned, it provides Orange ADSL PRO with Bandwidth of 256 Kb and 512 Kb as well as Orange ADSL Business of 256 Kb, 512 Kb, 1Mb and 2 Mb.

I am informed, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that these offers having variable speeds achieve maximum speed at times equivalent to the corresponding offer.

I am further advised that Internet being an internationally shared network, the speed of access is adjusted according to: first, the international traffic route; second, the server being accessed abroad, and third, as to whether the user PC is being affected by virus and spyware.

In these circumstances, there are possibilities at times that the maximum speed is not achieved. I experience that everyday in my office and I go mad.

However, I understand that MT subscribers are made aware of the terms and conditions of the offers at the time of subscription to the respective services in as much as Paragraph 6 of the terms and conditions of the subscription form stipulates, that “ADSL and MyT services are based on a shared access depending upon local and international scarce connectivity resources.”

As such, both services are being offered on a best effort service – I repeat, on a best effort service - as no guarantee is being made regarding the speed of access.

The House may wish to note that it is a worldwide common practice to offer ADSL or Broadband on a “best effort service “at an affordable price.

Mr Deputy Speaker Sir, with regard to part (b) of the question, I am informed that MT has received queries - including from me - and complaints regarding the actual speed being provided and these customers have been informed of the speed being achieved as per the offer they have subscribed.

However, MT has, in its endeavour to offer Broadband at a more affordable price and with a better quality of services reduced its tariff since 2003 and upgraded its international connectivity via SAFE in January 2008. The upgrade has more than tripled its capacity to offer a continuous quality of service to its subscribers both to the home and business segment.

I am further advised, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that MT will continue to invest and upgrade its international capacity to offer affordable prices for broadband services and to maintain the quality of service.

**Mr Bodha:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I thank the hon. Deputy Prime Minister for being candid and mad sometimes.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, may I ask the Deputy Prime Minister how we can make the best offer service even better?

**Dr. Sithanen:** Mr Speaker, Sir, it is basically by investing in infrastructure. This is precisely what Mauritius Telecom is doing. There is a third upgrade of SAFE that will cost US\$ 10 m. US\$ 8 m. will be invested in Eassy and they are also investing US\$ 12 m. in LION, Lower Indian Ocean Network submarine cable. What needs to be done is to invest in capacity so as to improve access and increase speed, but, as I mentioned earlier on, it is a shared service. You will remember, I think, my colleague, the Minister responsible for IT mentioned how some people try to attack the central server of Government and how we had to handle this difficult problem. If you try at 12 o'clock to download some documents, it is very difficult because it is a shared service. The solution is to invest in infrastructure and in improving the facilities.

**Mr Bodha:** One last question, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. May I ask the hon. Deputy Prime Minister whether he will agree that something has to be done as urgently as possible because this has an incidence on the image of Mauritius as a cyber island?

**Dr. Sithanen:** We should not exaggerate, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. I use it at home; I use it on my desktop and also on my laptop. At times, it is all right. Most of the big firms don't have any problem because they have dedicated lines.

Having said this, I think we need to improve the quality of the service and we should continue to bring down the cost so as to make it more affordable to all Mauritians.

### **POCKETS OF POVERTY – SURVEY**

**(No. B/718) Mr G. Gunness (Third Member for Montagne Blanche and GRSE)** asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether he will state if any survey has been carried out to identify 229 pockets of poverty with 7157 families and, if so, indicate –

- (a) the findings thereof, and
- (b) if copy thereof will be tabled.

**The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development (Dr. R. Sithanen):** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, since 2003, while working at grassroots level together with NGOs, the Trust Fund for Social Integration of Vulnerable Groups investigated into the specific poverty characteristics of various localities with a view to having a more effective approach for dealing with poverty.

The survey was carried out by the Fund over a period of more than two years and was completed in the last quarter of 2006. It revealed, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, 229 pockets of poverty, comprising 7,157 households that needed a specific intervention. The 229 pockets of poverty have been identified using indicators like monthly income of less than Rs4,000; the structure of the housing unit; family size and number of persons residing in the single housing unit; connected or not to electricity and water supply; employment opportunities in the locality; age and level of education, and health status of the households. Based on these criteria, these households are considered to be in the group of absolute poor.

In addition to the Trust Fund, the Central Statistics Office (CSO) has also carried out surveys in 1996/97 and 2001/02 and recently that allow us to understand the challenge posed by poverty in Mauritius.

The CSO has established the following poverty lines –

- (i) \$2 per person a day (put forward by the World Bank) which is relevant for middle income countries like Mauritius. On this measure of \$2 per person per day, there are about 5,000 families in Mauritius affected by poverty;
- (ii) half the median of household income adjusted for differences in the needs of adults and children and for economies of scale. This relative poverty line is more relevant to high income OECD countries like Canada, France and USA. According to this measure, over 26,000 families are in relative poverty in Mauritius, receiving less than Rs3,821 per adult equivalent per month which is equivalent to Rs10,000 per month per family.
- (iii) The Trust Fund Survey is somewhere between these two poverty lines.

With respect to part (a) of the question, one of the main findings of the Trust Fund survey was that there is an urgent need for 4,350 housing units. It has also been noted that most of the families do not possess land title deeds as the land belongs to their ancestors with numerous heirs.

As far as part (b) of the question is concerned, a listing of the pockets of poverty is being tabled.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, clearly the problem is not information but willingness to act. In this regard, I wish to inform the House that the Trust Fund, other public institutions, the civil society as well as the private sector have been intervening in these pockets independent of each other and there has so far been no shared programme to tackle absolute poverty collectively.

This is why, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have, in the next financial year, provided a sum of Rs395 m. to finance projects focusing on these pockets of poverty under the Eradication of Absolute Poverty Programme.

This programme will be steered by a Committee comprising the Trust Fund, the National Empowerment Foundation, civil society and the corporate sector. This Committee will be adopting an integrated approach to address and eradicate absolute poverty in Mauritius, including Rodrigues.

I wish to reiterate that part of the sum of Rs395 m. will ensure that –

- (i) all poor children of pre primary school-going age attend school;
- (ii) these children are provided with a decent lunch;
- (iii) parents are trained to get a decent job with sustainable income;
- (iv) social problems are dealt with;
- (v) there is training in life skills management for parents and children, and
- (vi) adequate infrastructure to those needing it.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Eliminating Absolute Poverty Programme will be implemented in partnership with the private sector that has agreed to cover 30 percent of the cost as part of their CSR programme.

**Mr Guinness:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I heard the hon. Minister saying that there are some 4,300 housing units and households which need some assistance. Can I know from him what has been done and what is actually being done in these cases?

**Dr. Sithanen:** I explained it in the Budget, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. I think there is a question on that subsequently. The Trust Fund has already helped approximately 1,500 of these poor people this year to have housing facilities. I have just *débloqué des fonds* so that they can invest in 1,000 additional housing units until the end of the year. I have also mentioned about the Corporate Social Programme of the private sector and their partnership with NGOs and Government. In addition to providing education and empowerment for people in terms of skill upgrading, we will also invest in low-cost housing so that these people will have *un toit* over their head.

**Mr Guinness:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister has said that he would table the list of the 229 pockets of poverty. I heard the Minister saying that it would be done in collaboration with the NGOs, the private sector, which is very good. Can I know whether in the regions that have been identified as having pockets of poverty, the *forces vives*, the village councillors, the members of community centres will be taken on board to move the process ahead?

**Dr. Sithanen:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, there are some NGOs that have done and are doing a good job, and there are some corporate entities that have good programmes. I don't want to mention them. The Trust Fund has also been doing a lot. The Empowerment Programme also. The idea that I had some time back is a bit like the Declaration of Paris on aid effectiveness. It happens in development assistance programme.

Many are trying to help, but they get into the path of each other. What I have tried to do is to call them so that we have a shared vision and to have more effectiveness in the fight against poverty. We will work together with the NGOs, the corporate sector on a geographical basis; and in fact we have already identified – I am having a meeting with most of them this week – these pockets of poverty and the NGOs *ont le relais* in terms of networking, and we will work with the NGOs, with the Trust Fund, with the Empowerment Programme and with the corporate sector to effectively fight poverty in these pockets of poverty.

**Mrs Perrier:** In his answer, the Minister has talked about the 20,000 families that were in a relative poverty identified by the CSO. Can we know what is the mechanism which has been put in place to avoid these families falling into absolute poverty?

**Dr. Sithanen:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Minister there are three definitions of poverty: a dollar a day – we don't have any in Mauritius; 2-dollar a day, which is about 1.5% of 335,000 households. If we use the definition of France or the UK, which we call relative poverty and which is 50% of the medium income, there will always be people who will be relatively poor, just like there are people who are relatively rich. This is where we have 8%. We will have a multi-pronged programme. One is education. I will say it as often as I am given the opportunity to say it. The best passport and the best antidote against poverty is to give education to people. We are giving education at both ends. We are trying to make sure that these 5,000 kids who are three or four years old get access to pre-primary education. Today, they are victims of poverty, and tomorrow they are going to be the cause of poverty. We will help them. We also have to give their parents life skills; we are re-skilling them. There are many people who are poor because they are unemployed. What we have done is to provide gainful employment opportunities to them while, at the same time, give them training. We are introducing *l'école de la seconde chance*. We are targeting people who did not have a chance in their life. They will get a second chance, and will be able to reintegrate the mainstream economy.

**Mr Spéville:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister said that the survey has been done, including Rodrigues. Can I ask him, out of the 229 pockets of poverty and the 7,157 families, how many are from Rodrigues?

**Dr. Sithanen:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I will circulate the information with regard to Rodrigues. It's a good work that has been done in terms of information collection. In fact, when my friend, hon. Gunness, will look at the figure, it does make sense. We know where the pockets of poverty are. What we have done is to develop what is called an Index of Human Development (IDH). We know where some of the poorest regions are. Some are in Constituency No. 4. The richest region is in Quatre Bornes central. It makes sense. It does tally with where we think the pockets of poverty are. Admittedly, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in many of the rich places in our country, there are also small pockets of poverty, just like in many of

these very poor regions there are also some few pockets of people who are rich. We have tried everything, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, since 25 or 30 years, and it has not worked. This is the best solution; it has worked in other countries. Let's give it our best try, and we'll see in two years', three years' time what progress is made.

**Mr Bundhoo:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, can I know from the hon. Deputy Prime Minister how are the pockets of poverty distributed?

**The Deputy Speaker:** In fact, he has already answered that question.

**Mrs Labelle:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the hon. Deputy Prime Minister mentioned the question of title deed, saying that these poor families do not have title deed and live on land belonging to their parents. Is there any provision, in the sum allocated to alleviate poverty, to help these people regulate the title deed? We all know that it is very expensive. Sometimes, they cannot have the title deed because of lack of funds. Is there something provided for this particular issue?

**Dr. Sithanen:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we will help them, just like we have shown our compassion towards the 20,000 people living in CHA houses. We have done our best to make sure that they get their title deed and become owner of their houses. That's why we need flexibility in the system. I shall appoint members of the committee; it will be a joint committee – Government, corporate sector, NGOs – and if there are cases that deserve our compassion, our assistance, we will give it to them, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

**Dr. Mungur:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, corporate social responsibility was highlighted in the last Budget. Can we have an idea of what was their contribution for last year?

Second, I would like to know whether we can put the parliamentarians on board of such an important committee.

**The Deputy Speaker:** I think this has nothing to do with the question.

**Dr. Sithanen:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the answer to the first question is that we had not woven the strategic partnership last year. This is a new programme. It's akin to the Paris Declaration on aid effectiveness. They were doing their bit. Let me be very fair to some of them. Some have done an excellent job in terms of education, empowerment and training. What we are trying to do this year is to see whether we can define a common programme and whether we can have a shared objective. Then, we will decide whether A will invest in B and C will invest in X. At Government, we are very good at investing in infrastructure. But, I am not sure whether we are very good in *accompagnement social*. Let us use the private sector and the NGOs for *accompagnement social*, for *le suivi*, for reporting, monitoring and evaluation. In terms of infrastructure, Government has a very long and good history of how to invest in infrastructure. This is the shared vision, and this is the common objective that we are trying to have.

With respect to the second point, my humble submission would be no. We can take on board the views and opinions of parliamentarians. If we were to include them on the committee itself, there is the risk that it will be unduly politicised. Poor people are already suffering. Let's not make political football out of people who are poor. My own feeling is that we need to fight poverty wherever they are, whoever they are. Let's give a chance to this committee, and then we will review it in two years' or three years' time to evaluate progress.

### STC – MRS R. - CONTRACT

**(No. B/719) Mr G. Guinness (Third Member for Montagne Blanche & GRSE)** asked the Minister of Industry, Small & Medium Enterprises, Commerce & Co-operatives whether, in regard to one Mrs R., former Confidential Secretary to the General Manager of the State Trading Corporation, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Corporation, information as to if she has retired from service and, if so –

- (a) since when, and
- (b) if she has been reappointed on a contractual basis, indicating the terms and conditions of the contract.

**Dr. Jeetah:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, Mrs R. is not the Confidential Secretary to the General Manager. However, I am informed that Mrs R. is the Confidential Secretary to the Financial Manager of the STC. She has retired from the service since 01 March 2008.

Regarding part (b) of the question, I am informed that Mrs R. is actually employed on a contractual basis for a period of ten months. I am tabling the terms and conditions of the contract.

**Mr Guinness:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, can I know from the hon. Minister whether he finds it normal that a Confidential Secretary retires, and then is employed under contract?

**Dr. Jeetah:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have to point out that this lady has been within establishment as far back as 1970. I would like to read the recommendation of the Financial Manager. I quote –

“Mrs R. has always performed her duties to my entire satisfaction and was a very reliable officer”.

Therefore, she has a lot of experience in what she is doing. That's why I suppose her services have been retained.

**Mr Guinness:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am not disputing the competence of Mrs R. But, I am asking the Minister whether he is aware that, in the same establishment, there are many other ladies who are expecting to be promoted as Confidential Secretary. Now, it's as if they have to wait, and they don't even know whether the contract of the lady will be renewed further. Can the hon. Minister inform the House whether the contract will be further renewed?

**Dr. Jeetah:** I cannot say whether it is going to be renewed or not, but one thing I say is that this lady is a very competent person.

**Mr Guinness:** Mr Speaker, Sir, my question is not on competency. My question is on other officers, because this is a position where you get many officers who can perform this duty. It is not a scarce area, otherwise I would have agreed. Does not the hon. Minister find that he is depriving other officers from their chances of getting promotion in that post?

**Dr. Jeetah:** There are two issues, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. I would like to remind the hon. Member that STC has got a turnover of about Rs34 or Rs36 billions this year and it is a large enterprise. One has to look at the number of questions that has to be answered. I suspect STC has taken the decision because of her competence. But I will have to look into the hon. Member's concern about other employees' promotion.

**Mr Jhugroo:** Can I ask the hon. Minister whether it is a decision of the Board to reappoint Mrs R. on a contractual basis and, if so, can he table a copy of the minutes of proceedings of the meeting?

**Dr. Jeetah:** Appointment, normally, has to go through the Board and the Minister has to give further approval. I'll have to look into the hon. Member's request and if I have the information, I shall table it.

**Mrs Labelle:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, from the answer given by the hon. Minister, must we take it that there is no competent person to be promoted to the grade of Confidential Secretary right now? The hon. Minister was talking about competency, saying that we need competent persons. But there are officers waiting to be promoted. Must we take it that these persons are not competent yet to be promoted to this grade?

**Dr. Jeetah:** Obviously, we are playing politics with this. If the hon. Member knew the lady whom we are talking about, she would not have said that...

**The Deputy Speaker:** The question is not whether she knows the lady. The question is whether there are not other people who would be suitable to occupy that position.

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

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Minister has replied what.

*(Interruptions)*

Is it, yes or no?

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

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Minister has asked whether the hon. Member knows the lady. Does he assume that hon. Member knows the lady? Hon. Minister, I am waiting for your answer!

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

**Mrs Labelle:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am sorry. Maybe my question was not clear. With your permission, may I be allowed to repeat my question. From what I heard from the hon. Minister, he talked about competence, saying that this lady is a competent person. She has retired, but there are other officers who are waiting to be promoted to this grade. Must I take it that these persons who are waiting are not competent enough to be promoted to the grade of Confidential Secretary? Because we have got to reemploy someone after 38 years of service on a contractual basis, maybe up to now, among these officers who are waiting, there is no one competent enough to be promoted to this grade? This was my question, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

**Dr. Jeetah:** I just replied to hon. Guinness that a point has been made regarding the employees where we need to look into their career prospect. I did mention that we are going to look into this aspect.

**Mr Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Minister will be looking into it.

### **PROFESSOR BASDEO BISSOONDOYAL COLLEGE - ALLEGED MISMANAGEMENT**

**(No. B/720) Mr G. Guinness (Third Member for Montagne Blanche and GRSE)** asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether, in regard to the Professor Basdeo Bissoondoyal College, Central Flacq, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Private Secondary Schools Authority, information as to if a fact finding committee will be set up to look into the allegation of acts of mismanagement levelled against the management thereof.

**Mr Gokhool:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, my Ministry receives from time to time, representations by way of anonymous letters from staff members of Professor Basdeo Bissoondoyal College to the effect that they are victimized by the Manager of the school.

The representations relate generally to non-approval of sick leave and casual leave, drastic cuts in salaries, refusal of release to follow MIE courses and compelling of staff to do private work for the Manager.

As the PSSA is the Authority responsible to regulate the private secondary schools sector, the complaints are invariably referred to the Authority for investigation and report.

I am informed by the PSSA that it could not conclusively deal with any of these representations because –

- (i) when PSSA Supervisors visit the school, the Manager invariably denies the allegations and is reluctant to cooperate and allow them access to the information required, and
- (ii) most of the whistleblowers or complainants prefer to remain under anonymous cover and therefore the allegations cannot be cross-checked and verified, particularly, in the absence of evidence to the effect.

However, as a measure of precaution the PSSA always reminds and cautions the Manager of the school of the need to remain consistent with the Education Act, the PSSA Act and the School Regulations.

It is felt that the Industrial Relations Act makes ample provision for sound industrial relations between employee and employer and for conflict resolution. It is, therefore, imperative for employees who feel aggrieved by the decisions and actions of their employer to take advantage of the existing mechanism under Industrial Relations Act. At this stage, the question of setting up a Fact Finding Committee does not arise.

**Mr Gunness:** I heard the Minister himself saying that employees don't want to go ahead, they don't want to talk. That is why I feel there is urgent need. There is allegation that Mr N.S – I am not going to mention any name – who is employed as caretaker at the school is working a whole day at Poste Lafayette in the bungalow of the Manager. Is the hon. Minister aware of that particular case?

**Mr Gokhool:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I must inform House what the hon. Member has mentioned and the information I have given is only one side of the story, because the supervisors make regular visits and they have other information. With regard to the point being raised, it is part of the allegation. That's why I say that if people have certain grievances and complaints, they must reveal themselves and the PSSA can take appropriate action or if they have an industrial relations problem, they can refer the matter to the Ministry of Labour and Industrial Relations.

**Mr Gunness:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, once an employee in that institution comes forward to denounce what is going on, I am sure the hon. Minister is not aware of the harassment there, if I take the case of Mr V.K.B. and Mr G.R.

**Mr Gokhool:** Can I take a point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir? I have just mentioned – I have a copy of the allegations - that these are anonymous. I don't know whether it is allowed for the hon. Member to use the anonymous allegations to put questions.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Just a personal explanation! Does the hon. Minister mean to say that he is aware of what the hon. Member has just been stating right now?

**Mr Gokhool:** Yes, Sir.

**Mr Guinness:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, there is not only allegation in that. The last time the hon. Minister answered...

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Minister says that he is aware of that.

*(Interruptions)*

This is what I meant, the hon. Minister is only aware.

**Mr Guinness:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in the case where there is victimization, for example, in the case of Mr B., in June 2007, the hon. Minister answered that the PSSA accordingly deducted two days' salary from the teacher's pay and in the light of the representation of Mr B., the PSSA is further investigating the matter. Can I know where this matter stands after one year?

**Mr Gokhool:** I cannot give the answer as to where matters stand with regard to this specific Mr B. Mr B. identified himself. That's why the PSSA was able to conduct the enquiry and take remedial action. This is the best way to proceed. I do think the hon. Member has some qualms about victimization. If we know the case, we are going to take action; just like in the case of Mr B., action has been taken.

**Mr Guinness:** Mr Speaker, Sir, unfortunately, I am sad to say that these people are still being victimized, the increment has not been paid to them in January of this year, because they have come forward. At least, these two gentlemen have got the courage to come forward and no increment is being paid to them.

**Mr Gokhool:** Precisely, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this will be an industrial relations matter which can be referred to the Industrial Relations Office of the Ministry of Labour and action will be taken at that end.

**Mr Guinness:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, can I know from the Minister whether he is aware that even the Union UPSEE has requested for a full-fledged Fact Finding Committee so that, at least, the employees can come forward and depone and say what they have to say in the mismanagement and *in camera*, if possible.

**Mr Gokhool:** I have received the representation from the Union, but the problem is that it is of an anonymous nature. If we have any person, any organisation identifying and making representation on the basis of facts, that will help certainly.

**Mr Guinness:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I put the question whether UPSEE has insisted on a Fact Finding Committee, the Minister said that he is aware, he received representations from the UPSEE and now he is saying that these are anonymous. I insist that it is urgent and imperative - in fact, I am sure hon. Bachoo and hon. Peetumber are also aware of it,

knows a bit; but as an ex-trade unionist, I am asking to the Minister - that a Fact Finding Committee be set up and we will get all the truth out of it.

**Mr Gokhool:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the conditions do not exist for me, to consider, at this stage, a Fact-Finding Committee.

**Mr Jhugroo:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Minister earlier mentioned that there were visits done by supervisors of the PSSA. Can I ask the hon. Minister whether these visits were scheduled ones or surprised ones?

**Mr Gokhool:** There are both normal and surprised visits which are carried out.

### NEEDY STUDENTS – SCHOLARSHIPS & LOANS

**(No. B/721) Mr G. Gunness (Third Member for Montagne Blanche & GRSE)** asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether he will state if a survey has been carried out in the tertiary institutions, with a view to assess the number of students, hailing from a family whose household income does not exceed Rs7,500 per month and who are facing severe hardships, following the death or serious incapacity of a wage earner and, if so, indicate the number thereof.

**Mr Gokhool:** Mr Speaker Sir, no survey, as mentioned by the hon. Member has been carried out at this stage. However, it is in line with Government policy to increase access to post secondary and tertiary education and to make it affordable to all socio-economic groups that several measures have been enunciated in the 2008/2009 Budget Speech.

As the House is aware, a Human Resource, Knowledge and Arts Development Fund has been set up for the promotion of post secondary and tertiary education. It will be managed and administered by a committee under the chairmanship of my Ministry. My Ministry will in consultation with stakeholders from, *inter alia*, the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development, devise ways and means to ascertain that the funds are used from amongst others provision of loans and scholarships to students in genuine need.

It would therefore be premature at this stage to give a figure of such students.

**Mr Gunness:** Can I know from the Minister whether he will propose to Government to remove the conditionality of a wage earner following the death or serious incapacity of a wage earner for the granting of scholarship to children whose family earns less than Rs7,500, in absolute poverty? Can he ask Government to remove that conditionality?

**Mr Gokhool:** As I said, we have to carry out the survey first. I have just noted the question being asked by the hon. Member and I can't give an answer offhand.

*(Interruptions)*

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order!

*(Interruptions)*

Order! Hon. Minister! Order, I have said! I am on my feet!

*(Interruptions)*

Hon. Gunness! Hon. Gunness! I request you to remain silent.

*(Interruptions)*

Both of you! I am going to take some drastic measures now. Order! Next question.

### **RODRIGUANS – CERTIFICATE OF MORALITY - PROCEDURE**

**(No. B/722) Mr J.R. Spéville (Second Member for Rodrigues)** asked the Attorney-General, Minister of Justice & Human Rights whether he is aware that the citizens of Rodrigues are facing difficulties to obtain a Certificate of Morality, and if so, will he state the remedial measures he proposes to take.

**Mr Valayden:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the procedure presently resorted to for a Rodriguan to obtain a certificate of morality ...

*(Interruptions)*

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order, I have said!

**Mr Valayden:** ... is as follows –

- (a) the applicant attends the Police Headquarters of Rodrigues to make his application and deposits the documents required by section 3 of the Certificate of Morality Act 2006.
- (b) the papers are then transmitted to Inspector Anthony posted at the Central CID at the first available opportunity.
- (c) the officer then calls at the Morality Section of my office to make the official application on behalf of the Rodriguan applicant.
- (d) the application is processed and the Certificate of Morality is delivered to Inspector Anthony, and

- (e) the officer then transmits the Certificates of Morality to the Rodrigues Police Headquarters where the applicant can collect his certificate.

One may fully understand that though the difficulties encountered by Rodriguans on account of the fact that the papers have to be transmitted to and from Mauritius mainland by plane and this may cause sometimes an additional delay in the delivery of the Certificate of Morality.

I have already made arrangements with the Police for the urgent despatch of the papers to Mauritius on the first available plane. I thank the hon. Member for his question and I will look into it so that we simplify matters.

**Mr Spéville:** Can I ask the hon. Minister how long does the transaction from Rodrigues to Mauritius take normally?

**Mr Valayden:** It must take as for the other applicants, that is, a maximum of four weeks. In fact, as from 23 June, it will be within two weeks.

**Mr Spéville:** What happens to somebody who must attend an interview within that same period?

**Mr Valayden:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we have a fast track procedure which we have instituted since 03 June, but the applicant must send the relevant documents to support same. Before people were sending me letters and this was, I believe, a sort of undue pressure on the Certificate of Morality section.

#### **TRUST FUND FOR VULNERABLE GROUPS – NEEDY STUDENTS - ASSISTANCE**

**(No. B/723) Mr J.R. Spéville (Second Member for Rodrigues)** asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Trust Fund for Vulnerable Groups, information as to if the Trust Fund had recently approved a project to support the needy students and, if so –

- (a) the names of the students who have benefited therefrom, and
- (b) the amount of money approved as grants, indicating if the sums have been disbursed and, if so, since when.

**The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development (Dr. R. Sithanen):** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, one of the objectives of the Trust Fund for the Social Integration of Vulnerable Groups is to assist primary and secondary school children from needy and vulnerable families by providing them school materials in terms of school bags, copybooks, other stationery, uniforms and shoes.

With regard to the information being sought, I presume that the hon. Member is referring to Trust Fund projects being implemented in Rodrigues. In this respect, I wish to inform the House that during this financial year, eight such projects submitted by NGOs, including PTAs, have been approved by the Trust Fund.

As far as part (a) of the question is concerned, the eight projects cover a total of 761 needy students. Mr Deputy Speaker Sir, I am advised that they have all gone through a screening process and out of respect to these needy students, it would not be appropriate to disclose their names.

With regard to part (b) of the question, the Trust Fund has approved a total amount of Rs806,122 for implementing the eight projects. Out of this amount, a sum of Rs37,033 was disbursed as grant on 23 January 2008 to the NGO promoting the project for the purchase of school materials. These materials were distributed to 26 school children on 26 January 2008.

The other seven projects were approved by the Trust Fund on 15 May 2008. I am informed that disbursement will be effected during the course of this week, on submission of the relevant quotations by the NGOs promoting the respective projects.

**Mrs Perrier:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, can I appeal to the Deputy Prime Minister that this is done at the beginning of the year and not in April. May as it happened in my constituency this year? It was in last April, but the students have got all their amenities. It was too late as the parents had already spent their money.

**Dr. Sithanen:** I'll look into it, Sir.

#### **TRUST FUND FOR VULNERABLE GROUPS – NGOs - GRANTS**

**(No. B/724) Mr J.R. Spéville (Second Member for Rodrigues)** asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Trust Fund for Vulnerable Groups, information as to if the Trust Fund had recently approved a project to support the non-governmental organisation and, if so –

- (a) the name of the Chairperson and Accounting Officer of the organisations who have benefited therefrom, and
- (b) the amount of money approved as grants, indicating if the sums have been disbursed and, if so, since when.

The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development (Dr. Sithanen): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the House that apart from assisting needy school children as referred to in my reply to the preceding question, the Trust Fund

for Social Integration of Vulnerable Groups also assists the needy and less privileged groups in improving their living conditions with the active participation of NGOs. Indeed, the collaboration of NGOs is critical in ensuring the successful implementation of community based projects.

I again understand that the hon. Member is referring to projects in relation to Rodrigues. In this respect, I wish to inform the House that a community based project was submitted to the Trust Fund in April 2008 by an NGO with an estimated project cost of Rs108,724. The project was approved on 15 May 2008.

With regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed that the NGO promoting this project is "*Association des Handicapés Mentaux de l'île Rodrigues*". This association is registered with the Registrar of Association since 2003. Again Mr Deputy Speaker Sir, while the information sought for may be verified at the Registrar, but out of respect, it would not be ethical to disclose the names of the persons benefiting from this facility

As far as part (b) of the question is concerned, the amount approved as grant stands at Rs108,724. This sum will be used to purchase furniture and equipment to provide adequate facilities to some 25 mentally handicapped children. These children are currently accommodated in an inadequately equipped building at Citronelle.

I am further informed by the Trust Fund that the Association has been requested to submit the relevant quotations from suppliers of equipment and furniture prior to effecting any disbursement.

**Mr Spéville:** Can I ask the hon. Minister whether he is aware that three of the Trust Fund staff are members of the Board management of one of the NGOs which has been benefiting from the financial assistance?

**Dr. Sithanen:** I am not aware, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

### **IAN PALACH, CUREPIPE - DRAINS**

**(No. B/725) Mrs D. Perrier (Fourth Member for Savanne and Black River)** asked the Minister of Environment and National Development Unit whether he will state if he has taken cognizance of a petition signed by the owners and co-owners of the commercial units at the Gallerie Ian Palach, Curepipe, regarding the nuisance caused by an open drain and, if so, indicate the remedial measures that have been taken, if any.

**Mr Bachoo:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the owners and co-owners of the commercial units have submitted a petition to the Municipality of Curepipe to have the open drain covered with pavements because of nuisances caused by bad smell, littering and rodents.

A joint site-inspection was carried out by officers of my Ministry and the Local Authority on 12 June 2008. At time of visit, it was observed that there was free flow of rainwater in the drains and there was no nuisance.

I have also been informed by the Municipal Council of Curepipe that -

- (i) it undertakes regular cleaning and maintenance of the drain every 3 months. The canal was last cleaned on 19 May 2008 and the next one is scheduled for early August 2008;
- (ii) rodent control has been contracted out at the market place;
- (iii) an application has been made to the Wastewater Management Authority for connection of all hotels to its sewerage system to prevent accumulation of wastewater, and
- (iv) covering of the drain would imply direct access to a large number of commuters, mostly pedestrians into the commercial complex thereby creating traffic hazards. It is worth noting that the Ian Palach bus terminal located along the uncovered drain opposite the Gallery is heavily used by buses on a regular basis.

#### **CEB – ILLEGAL CONNECTIONS & METERS TAMPERING**

**(No. B/726) Dr. A. Husnoo (Second Member for Port Louis Maritime and Port-Louis East)** asked the Minister of Public Utilities whether, in regard to the loss of revenue resulting from illegal electricity connections and/or tampering with the electric meters, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Central Electricity Board, information as to the estimated amount thereof for each of the last five years.

*(Withdrawn)*

#### **CWA – DRINKING WATER - QUALITY**

**(No. B/727) Dr. A. Husnoo (Second Member for Port Louis Maritime and Port-Louis East)** asked the Minister of Public Utilities whether, in regard to drinking water supplied by the Central Water Authority, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Authority, information as to the quality thereof as compared to the standard prescribed by the World Health Organisation.

*(Withdrawn)*

#### **ROAD ACCIDENTS – BUSES & HEAVY GOOD VEHICLES – MEASURES**

**(No. B/728) Dr. A. Husnoo (Second Member for Port Louis Maritime and Port-Louis East)** asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping whether, in regard to the accidents caused by buses and

heavy goods vehicles, over the last three years, he will state the number thereof indicating

—

- (a) the number thereof in which there has been loss of life, and
- (b) the remedial measures that have been taken to control speeding by these vehicles.

**The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport & Shipping (Dr. R. Beebeejaun):** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed that over the past three years, there have been 685 road accidents involving buses including minibuses and 351 involving heavy good vehicles.

Out of these, 93 were fatal, involving 36 heavy vehicles, 9 minibuses and 48 buses. 105 victims died, 62 were involved in bus accidents and 43 in heavy goods vehicles accidents.

As regards part (b) of the question, remedial measures taken to control speeding by these vehicles are as follows -

- (i) over the past three years, the Police has established 709 speed contraventions against buses and 1089 against heavy goods vehicles;
- (ii) the Police has conducted also 178 educational and information sessions in 2005, 194 in 2006 and 186 in 2007 at worksites of bus companies and transport companies;
- (iii) the Traffic Management and Road Safety Unit has carried out a speed review exercise along classified roads and set up speed zones along specific areas where there are heavy pedestrian activities;
- (iv) national campaigns including radio and television programmes have been organized on a yearly basis on dangers of speeding, and
- (v) road humps and traffic calming devices have been established along certain roads.

My Ministry and the Police department are now in the process of acquiring mobile speed camera detection units, which will improve enforcement against speeding.

**Dr. Husnoo:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the traffic Police is trying to monitor speeding, very frequently on the motorway, we see that there is over speeding at 80/90 kilometres per hour. Nowadays, as the hon. Deputy Prime Minister knows, we have gadgets that can limit the speed of a vehicle. Would the Deputy Prime Minister consider having these gadgets fixed in the heavy goods vehicles - lorries and buses - to prevent them from over speeding?

**Dr. Beebeejaun:** Mr Speaker, Sir, this is a very good suggestion. I take note of it.

## FLOUR – DUMPING – MARE CHICOSE LANDFILL STATION

(No. B/729) **Mrs D. Perrier (Fourth Member for Savanne and Black River)** asked the Minister of Industry, Small & Medium Enterprises, Commerce and Co-operatives whether, in regard to flour imported from Turkey, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the State Trading Corporation, information as to if any quantity thereof has been dumped at the Mare Chicose Landfill Station, and if so, the value thereof.

**Dr. Jeetah:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, 322 metric tons of flour have been found unfit for consumption by the health authorities.

*(Interruptions)*

**The Deputy Speaker:** Can the hon. Member speak up?

**Dr. Jeetah:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, 322 metric tons of flour have been found unfit for consumption by the health authorities. It has been disposed and the value is estimated at Rs6.4 m. The product is under marine insurance cover.

As per normal practice, claims will be settled after submission of report from surveyors of insurance companies and the STC. I am also informed that recently STC had to send back two lorries loaded with flour, that is, 32 metric tons received from a local supplier due to the presence of weevils, spiders and cobwebs. This was done in a spirit to ensure that consumers are not provided with products unfit for consumption.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am further informed that STC always ensures that products of quality are provided on the market. In this context, all products are subject to strict control by the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life before being put on the market. The latter gives the green light to STC to sell the product to bakeries or wholesalers.

Additionally, the Ministry of Health also advises STC either to sell as animal feed or to dispose of products that do not meet specifications or are found unfit for consumption. STC deals with about 2,000,000 bags of flour annually.

**Mrs Perrier:** Do we understand that there is no quality control before sending the flour?

**Dr. Jeetah:** In fact there is, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. If I am not mistaken, there is normally SGS that has to certify the quality of goods at port of embarkation.

**Mrs Perrier:** Can we know how we have received non good flour?

**Dr. Jeetah:** During *la traversée*, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it may well happened because of faulty containers or whatever. I don't have all the details. The fact remains that if a product being purchased by STC, as it is the usual practice, is not according to the norms and quality requirements, that is the end of the story. It is not sold to the consumers and insurance will have to take care of the losses.

**Mr Bérenger:** The hon. Minister has mentioned – I tried to hear – the firm concerned by insurance. Can we have the name of the firm and in which country it is based?

**Dr. Jeetah:** I do not have the information, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, but if I get notice, I shall certainly give the answer. This is the usual practice. CIF includes insurance. That is the way business is normally done.

**Mr Bérenger:** I am quite surprised that the hon. Minister does not know. He has the name, he mentioned it, now he has forgotten it and he does not know in which country it is based. Can I know whether that firm has paid insurance to the STC in any case before?

**Dr. Jeetah:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, let me read this again. I said: as per the normal practice, claims will be settled after submission of report from surveyors of insurance companies and the STC. Previously, I said that there was marine insurance cover. I did not mention the name.

**Mrs Perrier:** Can we know if any quantity of this flour which has been disposed of in Mare Chicose is not part of the flour which has been flooded in the shed in the *port franc*?

**Dr. Jeetah:** We cannot have flour at Mare Chicose and flour being sold. If it is *périmé*, as we say in French, it must have been disposed of.

**Mrs Perrier:** Je peux répéter ma question M. le président.

**The Deputy Speaker:** I am afraid, yes.

**Mrs Perrier:** Je voudrais savoir si aucune quantité de la farine qui a été brûlée ou jetée à Mare Chicose, ne faisait partie de la farine qui avait été âbimée, moisie par les inondations dans le port franc?

**Dr. Jeetah:** I have two issues. When the Ministry of Health found that the flour was unfit for consumption, it was discarded. Moreover, there were thirty tons from the local supplier which had weevils, spiders and cobwebs and that was returned back to the supplier. I don't know what happens from there, but I can certainly look into it.

**Mr Lesjongard:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I understand from the hon. Minister that the flour is insured and quality control is done at the port of embarkation and

disembarkation. May we know precisely when was it discovered that the flour was unfit for consumption?

**Dr. Jeetah:** It happened here in Mauritius?

**Mr Lesjongard:** Mr Speaker, Sir, was it before the quality control was exercised or when officers from the Ministry of Health went there and check? Because the hon. Minister stated that SGS was responsible for the quality control. Was it discovered by SGS or by officers of the Ministry of Health?

**Dr. Jeetah:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, let me explain the procedure. SGS has to guarantee the quality at the port of embarkation. It has to give a certificate of quality according to all the requirements. We have got a number of requirements which I have, in the past, given to Members of the Assembly. In Mauritius, we have our quality procedures and it is the Ministry of Health that looks into the quality aspects.

**Mr Guinness:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I come back with the question of compensation from insurance. Can I know from the hon. Minister in how many cases, up to now, the STC have been paid compensation?

**Dr. Jeetah:** I need notice, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. STC has been here for about 25 years.

**Mr Jhugroo:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Minister confirm whether the containers used for the transportation of flour were according to the specific requirements?

**Dr. Jeetah:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the hon. Member has a valid point. I suspect it might not have been for these containers. Out of all the lot that they obtained, some managed to have water seeping in. It must have been the case, as the hon. Member mentioned.

**Mr Lesjongard:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that is why I put my question earlier. Does not the SGS have a local representative in Mauritius to ensure that for such a consignment it is checked at the port of embarkation and also at the point of disembarkation? Because I understand that SGS has checked outside the country, but then the verification here at the port of disembarkation is only done by the Ministry of Health.

**Dr. Jeetah:** The hon. Member has a valid point. I have to look into that, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, flour has got about 14 to 15 parameters that need to be checked. But I have to look into it.

**Mr Guinness:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Minister give the guarantee that there is no flour which has been fumigated and put to sale on the market?

**Dr. Jeetah:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I have mentioned in the past that I don't look into the day-to-day running of STC. I had a specific question and I went to look for specific answers. But if the hon. Member gives notice, I can certainly look into that.

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister if any amount of that flour which has been considered to be damaged was put to sale to a livestock feed company?

**Dr. Jeetah:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the answer I gave is that 322 tons have been disposed of from the batch.

### **DBM - ALLEGED MISMANAGEMENT**

**(No. B/730) Mr Y. Varma (First Member for Mahebourg and Plaine Magnien)** asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to the Development Bank of Mauritius Ltd, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Bank of Mauritius, information as to if it has recently highlighted cases of alleged mismanagement at the DBM Ltd, and if so, the corrective measures, if any, that have been taken, as at to date.

**The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development (Dr. R. Sithanen):** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, under the current regulatory framework, the Development Bank of Mauritius does not fall under the jurisdiction of the Bank of Mauritius.

However, in view of the expertise that the Bank of Mauritius holds on supervisory matters, I am advised that the Board of the DBM, requested the Bank of Mauritius to conduct, under conditions of confidentiality, an examination of its systems and procedures.

I am informed that the report has been received by the DBM. I am also advised that due to its confidential nature which relates to the Bank's systems and processes, it would not be appropriate to disclose details thereof. However, I understand that due consideration will be given to the recommendations contained in the report.

**Mr Varma:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance inform the House when was the report concerning the DBM ready?

**Dr. Sithanen:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I don't have the answer. I am sure the hon. Member has probably the answer.

**Mr Varma:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, when I intervened at adjournment time on this specific matter, the hon. Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance stated that it is a very tricky issue and that he would take corrective measures. Can he inform the House what corrective measures have been taken to date?

**Dr. Sithanen:** There are two sets of corrective measures. One is about the system, the process and the procedure where the Bank of Mauritius, in its wisdom and judgment, had made recommendations. I understand that the Development Bank of Mauritius is looking into these recommendations. I am sure my good friend, hon. Varma is looking at the second set of issues. This is why I stated it is trickier than it appears at first sight. We have to be careful on how we act, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, so as to preserve the integrity of the bank and the interest of all customers. But I am sure the hon. Member is aware of how tricky the situation can be and we are looking into it, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

**Mr Varma:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the hon. Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance stated that he is aware on one aspect of the recommendations made. Is he aware on the other hand, that there have been cases of mismanagement which have been highlighted?

**The Deputy Speaker:** The document is not so secret then!

**Dr. Sithanen:** This happens very often in this House. People ask me to make documents public and they are citing abundantly from the report itself. I don't know whether I would call it mismanagement, but there are issues that have been raised by the Bank of Mauritius which carried out the investigation. This is being looked into, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

**Mr Varma:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the hon. Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance has just stated that the matter is being looked into. Can he inform the House what aspects of the matter are being looked into and by whom?

**Dr. Sithanen:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have said there is the process, the procedure and to make sure that there is more accountability and transparency in the system at the DBM. I know where my good friend is coming. But I have told him that there is institutional memory - I like this term - that needs to be preserved. I have to look at what is in the best interest of the institution and also in the best interest of the shareholder which is Government. But we are looking into it, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as

I said. Institutional memory is extremely important and I have to preserve the interest of the shareholder which is the Government of Mauritius.

**Mr Varma:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is the hon. Deputy Prime Minister aware that ever since this report has been submitted to the Bank of Mauritius, there has been enormous pressure so that it does not become public?

**Dr. Sithanen:** By its very nature, it is confidential. There is nothing I can do to stop people leaking the document. We have seen that in the past. There was one particular document that was in the custody of only one person in this country and it found its way in the press. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, there is nothing I can do. As a responsible Minister of Finance, I cannot divulge what is confidential and I have to keep

the seal of confidentiality notwithstanding the irresponsibility of other people who have divulged what is contained in the report.

### **WORLD BANK - "NEW DEAL FOR GLOBAL FOOD POLICY"**

(No. B/731) **Mr Y. Varma (First Member for Mahebourg and Plaine Magnien)** asked the Minister of Agro Industry and Fisheries whether he is aware of the "New Deal for Global Food Policy" formulated by the World Bank and, if so, will he state the stand taken by the Ministry in relation thereto.

**Dr. Boolell:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I will circulate the reply. **(Appendix 1).**

### **CASTING OF SLABS SCHEME – MONEY DISBURSED**

(No. B/732) **Mr Y. Varma (First Member for Mahebourg and Plaine Magnien)** asked the Minister of Housing and Lands whether, in regard to the Casting of Slabs Scheme, he will state –

- (a) the amount of money disbursed, since November 2007 to date, and
- (b) the proposed duration of the scheme.

**Mr Dulull:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed that since November 2007 to date, an amount of Rs63, 181,305 has been disbursed to some 1310 beneficiaries.

With regard to part (b) of the question, this scheme was introduced in 1997 under the then Prime Ministership of Dr. Navin Ramgoolam, demonstrating his concern for those who are at the lower rungs of the ladder.

In line with its policies of "*un toit pour toi* & People's Empowerment" Government will maintain the Casting of Slabs Scheme.

**Mr Jhugroo:** As a caring Minister and Gouvernement, est-ce que je pourrais demander au ministre pourquoi on n'a pas augmenté l'allocation qu'on donne aux familles pour couler la dalle, surtout que le prix du ciment a augmenté de plus de 65% et le prix de fer de construction de plus de 50% ?

**The Deputy Speaker :** I am sorry. The question purports to the amount of money disbursed. The hon. Member can put substantive question.

## LE BOUCHON – COMMUNITY CENTRE

**(No B/733) Mr Y. Varma (First Member for Mahebourg and Plaine Magnien)** asked the Minister of Environment and National Development Unit whether, in regard to the proposed construction of a community centre at Le Bouchon, he will state where matters stand.

**Mr Bachoo:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the House that the Ministry of Housing and Lands has compulsorily acquired a portion of land for the construction of a community centre at Le Bouchon. Vesting of the portion of land has been effected on 11 May 2007.

Consultations are being held with the Sugar Industry Labour Welfare Fund and the Ministry of Social Security, National Solidarity, Senior Citizens Welfare and Reform Institutions regarding the implementation of the Scheme as appropriate budgetary provision needs to be made by SILWF and Ministry of Social Security for running and maintenance of the community centre.

The approval in principle of the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development will be sought for embarking on new community centre schemes, in view of the difficulties being experienced for the coming into operation of newly constructed community centres.

## LE MORNE MOUNTAIN – HERITAGE LIST

**(No. B/690) Mr G. Lesjongard (Second Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue)** asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether, in regard to the Le Morne Mountain, he will state if it has been included in the Heritage list by the World Heritage Committee of the UNESCO.

**The Minister of Arts and Culture (Mr Gowressoo):** With your permission, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I shall reply to this question.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have already addressed this issue in the reply I made to PQ No. B/348 and No. B/671. However, I am pleased to inform the House that ICOMOS has recommended that Le Morne site be inscribed in the Heritage list.

**Mr Lesjongard:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in the report submitted by ICOMOS to the World Heritage Committee, they have recommended three important points for the State party. Can I ask the Minister whether those recommendations can impact on the decision to be taken for the inscription of Le Morne as a heritage site?

**Mr Gowressoo:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we have already cleared all the issues concerning this matter.

**Mr Lesjongard:** I have made it clear, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, because when the hon. Prime Minister addressed himself to the nation, he had also submitted a document from ICOMOS, that is, the document which had been submitted to the World Heritage Committee and, in that document, there are three recommendations to be made to the State party. What I want to know is whether those three recommendations might impact on the decision of the World Heritage Committee.

**Mr Gowressoo:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I do not think there is any impact on the recommendations from ICOMOS to the World Heritage Committee. There is no impact

**Mr Lesjongard:** May I ask the hon. Minister whether those recommendations are linked with the weaknesses that have been highlighted in the management plan?

**Mr Gowressoo:** There have been no weaknesses, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. ICOMOS recommends a dossier to the World Heritage Committee; it will be examined there and it will be approved.

**Mr Bérenger:** The Minister said that there are no issues left to be solved, all issues have been solved, whereas we read that there is some privately owned land that needs to be either exchanged or compensated for. Which is which? Is there this issue left?

**Mr Gowressoo:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have already addressed this issue in my PQ No. B/671 for inscription of a dossier in the World Heritage Committee. This is not an issue to discuss.

**Mr Bérenger:** We know the promoter in that case is cooperative; he wants to help. But it is his money, if he goes to Court, does not the Minister think that it will impact on the work of the Committee?

**Mr Gowressoo:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we have already dealt with it.

**Mr Ganoo:** I put it to the Minister that land ownership is an issue in the development; it is a condition and it is part of the management plan that the issue of land ownership should have been settled with the adjoining land owners.

**Mr Gowressoo:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I insist that the land issue is not an issue for the inscription in World Heritage Committee. But we are assuring that the problem of land is solved in Mauritius with the promoters and the land owners. This is what we are doing.

**Mr Lesjongard:** Can I ask the Minister whether he is now giving the assurance to this House that before he leaves for that Committee all problems will be solved?

**Mr Gowressoo:** This is what we are doing, Mr Deputy Speaker.

**Mr Ganoo:** Can the hon. Minister confirm that, in fact, the day the hon. Prime Minister announced that to the nation, the Ministry received a letter from one of the promoters, the MPP, that the issue of compensation should be finalised?

**Mr Gowressoo:** As I have answered, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we have not received any letter.

**Mr Ganoo:** Did he not receive a letter signed by one Mr Tom Gosling, Director of the MPP?

**Mr Gowressoo:** No, Sir.

*(Interruptions)*

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order! Order! Does the hon. Member have any more questions?

**Mr Ganoo:** I have not heard the answer; I want to repeat the question, that one Mr Tom Gosling, one of the directors ...

*(Interruptions)*

**The Deputy Speaker:** How can the hon. Minister hear the question?

**Mr Ganoo:** ... has sent a letter to him as Minister responsible, to the Attorney-General, to other Ministers of the Government and to the different Ministries'.

**Mr Gowressoo:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we have set up a Ministerial Committee, maybe one Mr Gusling has sent a letter there. There is no problem, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, because we are discussing and trying to solve the problem. These landowners are supportive to this project, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Time is over! Next item!

**MOTION**

**SUSPENSION OF S.O. 10 (2)**

**The Ag. Prime Minister:** Sir, I beg to move that all the business on today's Order paper be exempted from the provisions of paragraph (2) of Standing Order 10.

**The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development rose and seconded.**

*Question put and agreed to*