

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

TOURISTS -CRIMINAL OFFENCES AGAINST – CASES

(No. B/1137) Mr N. Bodha (First Member for Vacoas and 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 criminal offences, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the number of reported cases thereof in which tourists are involved, since March 2007 to date.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to state that Mauritius remains one of the safest and most secured destination for tourists in the world. Although there had been a number of reported cases of criminal offences against tourists – some against the tourists themselves and some the other way round, but most of these crimes are of a petty nature.

I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that since March 2007 to date, the number of reported cases in which tourists have been victims is as follows -

March – December 2007	693
January 2008 to date to 14 August 2008	566

Mr Speaker, Sir, the House is aware that Mauritius is witnessing an unprecedented rise in the number of tourists and, therefore, the number of cases reported has to be put in its context also, especially taking into account the increase in the number of tourist arrivals in 2007 by 120,000.

Furthermore, I must point that the percentage of aggression against tourists has remained relatively constant and it is at the figure of 0.1%. I again stress, as I have always said in this House, Mr Speaker, Sir, that one case of aggression is one too many.

(Interruptions)

Not even aggression, but most of them are petty cases. We call it aggression in this case, but it is very low. But, as I say, one case is one case too many. We must not take the other view as if to highlight these things, as if Mauritius is a place where tourists are being attacked everyday.

Furthermore, Mr Speaker, Sir, Government has increased the safety measures for tourists. The Police and the Ministry of Tourism, Leisure and External Communications have taken a series of additional measures for the security of tourists. I explained, I think, last time. These are -

- (i) a CCTV Camera Surveillance System will be installed at Flic en Flac and Grand Bay. The Central Procurement Board has already received pre-qualified bids for the project at Flic en Flac. Bids will be called from pre-qualified bidders by the end of this month. As regards the project at Port Louis and Grand Bay, a Chinese team of experts has already carried out a feasibility study and the project has reached the design stage. I must say – because it is on the line of credit – that the design has to be done by the Chinese authority and not by us;
- (ii) a special patrol scheme comprising teams of SSU, SMF, ADSU, ERS, local CID and Police and the *Police du Tourisme* has already been set up in the regions of Flic en Flac, Black River and Grand Bay;
- (ii) a 24-hour service information counter has been set up at the SSR International Airport terminal to inform tourists. I can't remember whether it was hon. Ganoo or somebody else, or maybe hon. Bhagwan, who had at one point suggested that the tourists should be warned. We have not actually warned the tourists, because it will be deleterious, but there is information for tourists about the contact numbers for the Police and emergency institutions in case of need and help;

- (iv) Police posts have been set up at Le Mahot, Trou d'Eau Douce and Plaine Champagne to provide assistance and security to tourists proceeding to the areas of Plaine Champagne, Ile aux Cerfs and neighbouring islets, and
- (v) Police is organising a Security Week at the end of this month in order to raise awareness on the need to ensure the safety of visitors on our shore. The media will also be invited to support the programme. There will be exhibitions, distribution of leaflets and briefings to visiting tourists and members of the public on security and safety for their own self and at places of residence.

There are sometimes basic things that we need to do. It is not just tourists, but tourists even, I suppose, because they are on holidays. If you leave your mobile phone on the beach, it is likely that somebody will pick it up. These are little things that we have to tell them not to do.

As from 01 October 2008, all licensed tourist operators will have to be equipped as follows -

- (i) hotels will have to be equipped with 24-hour camera surveillance, 24-hour watchmanship, digital safes, emergency telephone numbers and a leaflet containing security advice to tourists, and
- (iii) guest houses and bungalows having more than five rooms will have to be equipped with burglar alarm system with rapid response, digital safes, emergency telephone numbers and again there will be leaflets given to tourists. I think I need to mention that a security camera will also be there.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to appeal to all stakeholders of the tourism industry and to the population in general. We must develop a culture of safety and security towards our visitors. All it takes, Mr Speaker, Sir, is one high profile case to tarnish the reputation of the whole industry and of the whole country. We have seen recently in Antigua where a honeymoon

couple – just married – was murdered. I don't know whether the hon. Member knows that the tourism numbers in Antigua, because of this high profile case, has actually dropped to practically zero. Just one case! That is why we have to be very careful, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Let me assure the House that my Government is fully committed to ensure the safety and security of our tourists and, in fact, I must say that all these additional measures that I have mentioned are new measures that have not been taken before.

Mr Bodha: Mr Speaker, Sir, I agree totally with the Prime Minister that one case is one case too many. May I ask the hon. Prime Minister in how many of these cases, there has been a prosecution and whether in some of the cases, the complainants have been a witness?

The Prime Minister: I think I mentioned last time that the new Commissioner of Police, when he was Acting Commissioner of Police, had put up a fast track. But, one of the problems is that by the time the case comes to Court, the tourist has gone and who would come back to Mauritius and pay just for a small theft or whatever. They have put on a fast track and I am told that it is working properly. I don't have the exact figures of how many actually have been going through the Courts.

DRUGS – SEIZURE - YEAR 2007

(No. B/1138) Mr N. Bodha (First Member for Vacoas and 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 drugs, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the amount thereof seized in 2007, indicating –

- (a) the category;
- (b) the name, and
- (c) if they have been disposed of.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (a) and (b) of the question, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that details of drugs seized in the year 2007 are as follows -

NAME OF DRUG	CATEGORY ACCORDING TO THE DANGEROUS DRUGS ACT	AMOUNT SEIZED
Cocaine	Schedule I	0.4 grm
Heroin	Schedule I	5 kg790. 211
Hashish	Schedule I	24 kg386.446
Cannabis	Schedule I	40 kg454. 729
Buprenorphine (Subutex)	Schedule II	79,619 pills
Sedatives/Tranquilizers	Schedule II	1,411 pills
MDMA (Ecstasy)	Schedule II	54 pills

As regards part (c) of the question, I wish to refer the hon. Member to my reply given to PQ B/435 on 13 May of this year. Therein I mentioned that all drugs which are produced in Court as exhibits are forfeited and disposed of by the Court. As regards cases where offenders are unknown, the drugs are, after investigation, destroyed at the Line Barracks.

Details relating to the amount of drugs disposed of in the year 2007 are being compiled and will be placed in the Library of the National Assembly.

Mr Bodha: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Prime Minister what is the value of the drugs which have been seized in 2007?

The Prime Minister: I mentioned the amount, Mr Speaker, Sir. I am no expert at valuing this, but it is easy to work it out. I don't know how much cocaine, heroine, hashish, cannabis, etc. If the hon. Member had asked the question, I would have asked them to make a valuation, but there has been no valuation in my answer here, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Bérenger: May I ask the same question because, again, what should be of special interest to us is the trend? We have been given figures, the amount of dangerous drugs seized in 2007. Can the hon. Prime Minister tell us how does it compare with 2006 and 2008 to date, if he has the figures?

The Prime Minister: Yes, I have this information, Mr Speaker, Sir. Actually, I have the number of cases reported. You can see, Mr Speaker, Sir, that the trend has been going up since 2000. But, in 2008, it seems to have dropped. So far, we are in August, God knows if in three/four months it will go up again, but it has dropped dramatically. Does the hon. Leader of the Opposition want me to give the number itself? But, this is the information I have.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Prime Minister, for the sake of transparency, consider inviting some NGOs or key Ministries to be present when drugs are being disposed of?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I will ask the Commissioner of Police to look into that. I don't know whether it is a good idea because very often the more people are involved, the more you see drugs disappear.

SUSPECTS – BAIL – NEW POLICE CASES

(No. B/1139) Mr N. Bodha (First Member for Vacoas and Floreal) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether in regard to the suspects who have been released on bail and who are under an objection to departure, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the number thereof who have, since July 2005 to date, been –

- (a) given permission to leave the country, and
- (b) involved in new Police cases.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that during the period July 2005 to date, a total of 41,796 suspects were released on bail and against whom an objection to departure was raised. Out of these, 832 left the country after having obtained a variation of prohibition order by the Court.

As regards part (b) of the question, the information requested for is being compiled and will be placed in the Library of the National Assembly. The reason, Mr Speaker, Sir, is that it is very time-consuming. The information asked for is, at present, there does not seem to be any linkage; everywhere is computerised. That is why it is time-consuming.

Mr Bérenger: I am sure that the hon. Prime Minister has looked into the most shocking cases after recent events. Can we know whether there are lots of cases of somebody being released on bail two to eight times successively? Has he looked into that and is the Police taking a tougher stand before the Courts?

The Prime Minister: We have look into that, Mr Speaker, Sir. I find it quite unacceptable myself that somebody who has committed an offence is on bail, commits the same offence or even a further offence and he gets bail again. I have told the Police that they should object to bail in every case. The advice that they have been given is that very often when they see a similar case and the Court has said that there is not enough reason not to allow the person to go, they say it is a loss of time. But I have told them to be stricter and make sure that this is looked at. There are reasons for bail, it is clear, and what the Court should be doing.

Mr Bhagwan: Mr Speaker, Sir, it is the same question I asked last time. Can the hon. Prime Minister direct the Commissioner of Police for the Police Prosecutor's Office does not accept any political interference...

(Interruptions)

...any interference...

Mr Speaker: Can I stop the hon. Member? The hon. Member has shot himself in his leg. He said he has already asked the question and the hon. Prime Minister has answered. He cannot come with the same question in the same session. He must rephrase the question.

Mr Bhagwan: Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether he is aware that the Prosecutor's Office regularly meets with interference as far as the question of application for bail at the Court is concerned?

The Prime Minister: I have told the Commissioner of Police many times, Mr Speaker, Sir, and when the cases have been recently highlighted, this has again been brought to their attention. I think everybody is now well aware that there should be no interference and they cannot accept interference for bail.

Mr Dayal: Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to suspects who have been released on bail and involved in new cases during the period of release, can I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether criminal proceedings have been initiated for the breach of conditions of release?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, that is how it should be but, as the hon. Leader of the Opposition has been saying, once you breach the conditions of bail, there should be additional measures.

DRUG CASES - SUSPECTS – OVERSEAS TRIPS

(No. B/1140) 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 the suspects who have been released on bail in connection with drug cases, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the number of overseas trips undertaken by each of them, since July 2005 to date, indicating in each case –

- (a) the countries visited, and
- (b) the airport of destination.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that during the period 2005 to date, a total of 2349 suspects were arrested and released on bail in connection with Subutex-related cases and against whom an objection to departure was raised. Out of these, 13 left the country after having obtained a variation of prohibition order by the Court.

The 13 suspects have undertaken overseas trips as follows -

- Three have travelled to France and the airport of destination was Charles de Gaulles Airport, Paris.
- Two have travelled to Hong Kong and the airport of destination was Hong Kong.
- Two have travelled to India and the airport of destination was Mumbai.
- One has travelled to France on four occasions and the airport of destination was Charles de Gaulles Airport, Paris.
- One has travelled to Madagascar and the airport of destination was Antananarivo.

- One has travelled to Singapore and the airport of destination was Singapore.
- One has travelled to United Kingdom and the airport of destination was Heathrow.
- One has travelled to Reunion and the airport of destination was Saint Denis.
- One has travelled to Australia and the airport of destination was Perth.

Mr Jhugroo: Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Prime Minister confirm whether any of these suspects have benefited a VIP access while travelling?

The Prime Minister: There is a specific question which has been asked on this, but let me just clarify the situation. Very often, we make this – we also are responsible – reference which, I think, is a bit misleading. There is a VVIP lounge which is called a State lounge. This is strictly controlled from my Office. Then, there is La Terrasse which is a commercial lounge, but also we allow certain people - I am going to answer this question later –

to use this, and we call it a commercial lounge cum VIP. For example, in the commercial lounge, Mr Speaker, Sir, somebody can pay and actually go there. But also if they apply through my office, that does not come directly under me, it depends who and they are allowed to use that lounge. Then, Government pays for both State lounge and La Terrasse a fixed amount every month so that guests can be allowed to go there. For example, in many cases, hon. Members themselves have a relative, we think it is fair that they are allowed to go through the La Terrasse and that is very often the case that happens. But otherwise people can pay and go there.

Mr Bérenger: I think I heard the hon. Prime Minister correctly when he gave the number of cases of people released on bail in drug cases, but only in reference to subutex. Is that the case that the situation has evolved so dramatically that there are no longer people caught and released on bail on other dangerous drugs, brown sugar and so on, and it is all subutex cases?

Mr Speaker: Can I here perhaps correct the hon. Leader of the Opposition. There has been a typing mistake in the question. The second line should read “(...) with drug cases involving subutex (...)”. I am sorry about that.

Mr Ganoo: Coming back to the question of bail, Mr Speaker, Sir, the House was promised a few weeks ago that a new Bail Bill was going to be introduced and a working document was going to be circulated highlighting the contents of this Bill.

The Prime Minister: I am told that it has already been circulated. But they took a long time, I must say. There was dispute of whether we should, in fact, change the Bail Act. I think I mentioned that once. Although we were thinking it should be changed, there was a question as to whether it should actually be changed or not, there were different viewpoints. But I am told the Law Reform Commission has circulated it.

Mr Ganoo: Can we know to whom it has been circulated?

The Prime Minister: I know the Law Reform Commission has sent me one copy, but we are looking at it. It does not mean we will accept what is being said because I have said that we have got different opinions. Not necessarily everything that they recommend will be accepted.

SSR INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT - MS C. L. – LOUNGE FACILITIES

(No. B/1141) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether in regard to Ms C. L., he will state if she has been granted any lounge facilities on arrival and on departure, at the Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam International Airport, since July 2005 to date, and if so, indicate –

- (a) on whose request, and
- (b) the dates.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to refer the hon. Member to my reply to PQ B/198 on 24 April 2007. Therein I stated the policy in respect of VIP facilities granted at the Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam International Airport.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as I explained just now, there is presently one VVIP lounge commonly known as the State Lounge and then we have this commercial cum VIP lounge also known as La Terasse.

The State Lounge is the Government's official lounge, as I just explained, Mr Speaker, Sir, and access thereto forms part of Government hospitality which is extended also to foreign and local dignitaries. The use of the State Lounge is under the strict control of my Office, and is allowed to persons on an established list which has been approved by Government.

An amount of US\$1000 is paid monthly to the Airports of Mauritius Ltd (AML) for maintenance and service costs for the use of the State Lounge.

As regards “La Terasse”, it is a commercial lounge run by AML, and access thereto is allowed to any departing passenger against the payment of a fee of 60 Euros to AML. La Terasse lounge is also used by Government to extend courtesy as part of its hospitality to a number of guests, upon recommendation of my Office. For instance, access is granted to Government officials proceeding on official mission abroad, members of the private sector of a certain status, heads of religious bodies - in fact, many people don't know it; people with the highest decoration should automatically be getting access to it, many of them don't know - as well as guests and relatives of Members of Parliament. Government also pays a sum of US\$1000 to AML in relation to the use of La Terasse.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the House may wish to note that my Office, as I said earlier, receives numerous requests not only from Members of Parliament including Government and Opposition sides – there is no harm in that - for the use of La Terasse lounge for both departure and arrival of their relatives and guests.

In line with the existing practice, a request was received on 25 April 2008 from a Parliamentary Private Secretary, for access to La Terasse to be granted to one Miss Ms C.L. at her arrival in Mauritius from France on 29 April 2008.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the House that access to La Terasse commercial lounge is now currently being reviewed because of this.

Mr Bhagwan: Mr Speaker, Sir, in the public interest, can we know who is that PPS who made the request?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am sure the hon. Member knows. It is hon. Richard Duval.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Mr Speaker, Sir, there seems to be some confusion on access to La Terasse lounge. Can the hon. Prime Minister state whether approval of his Office is required for access to La Terasse Commercial Lounge?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, in fact, not always. As I said, people can actually pay. They don't have to come to my Office. If somebody wants to use the commercial lounge, he pays €60 and has access to it. It's not everybody.

Mr Bhagwan: Mr Speaker, Sir, can we know from the hon. Prime Minister whether, for that particular arrival, his Office has inquired from the Customs Authorities whether the luggage of that person was scrutinised?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, normally whenever you travel through the La Terasse lounge, it does not mean that you have blanket immunity and that you are exempted. In fact, on the new review we are looking, we are saying that there should be more searches of people who are using this, unfortunately.

Mr Bhagwan: Mr Speaker, Sir, can we know from the hon. Prime Minister whether, for that particular case, scrutiny was done?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, there are many officers, and it is difficult to know who they have searched and who they have not searched.

Mr Bhagwan: Mr Speaker, Sir, being given that there is a serious case of alleged importation of drugs, we can presume that, in this particular case, drugs could have transited from the La Terasse Lounge?

Mr Speaker: The hon. Member is asking for an opinion from the hon. Prime Minister, and the question is a hypothetical one.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, just to clarify one point. Let us not forget the fact that the person has been arrested with Subutex tablets.

Mr Jhugroo: Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Prime Minister confirm whether the hon. Member was present when she arrived?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that he was not.

Mrs Martin: Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to this case and to the request that was made by one hon. Member of this House to allow Ms C. L. to benefit from La Terasse facilities, the hon. Prime Minister mentioned that people who ask for this type of favour are either relatives or have a close relationship with such a person. May I know what type of relationship was mentioned in the letter, to allow Ms C. L. to benefit from this facility?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I don't want to give names, but even when I was in the Opposition and if I wanted to use it, I would have asked the Office of the Prime Minister. The same is happening with Members of the Opposition, as well as Members of the Government. If a Member of Parliament asks, we tend not to say no, because it's pointless. That is what we have done.

INTERCULTURAL HARMONY

(No. B/1142) Mr Y. Varma (First Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether he will state if Government proposes to set up a Race Relations Commission, having as object, the promotion of inter-communal harmony.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, as the House is aware, Mauritius already has an outstanding record of inter-communal harmony compared to countries in other parts of the world. Our cultural pluralism has always been a source of great pride, and my Government is fully committed to reinforce our multiculturalism, celebrate our cultural and linguistic diversity as well as our multiple identities. We have also made it very clear that we do not believe in compartmentalisation and fragmenting our social fabric, and we will implement policies aimed at promoting national unity.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the House will agree that inter-communal harmony depends largely and also on social justice and education. This is the reason why, in the Government Programme 2005-2010, we have pledged to gear our country towards a future that is prosperous for all – a future where economic success will be characterised by equity and social justice.

In order to fulfil this pledge, we have, over the last three years, implemented profound measures, which aim precisely at building a new economic model through the democratisation of the economy and reconciling economic efficiency and social justice. In fact, no other Government before has done more than the present Government insofar as fighting poverty and social exclusion is concerned.

Mr Speaker, Sir, when we speak of inter-communal harmony, we already have NGO's like the Organisation for National Unity and the Council of Religion, which are working for the promotion of peace and harmony in the country. We also have a number of Government organisations which are endeavouring for the enhancement of social peace and community cohesion. These organisations include -

- (i) the Social Welfare Division of the Ministry of Social Security and the Sugar Industry Labour Welfare Fund, which organise various activities, including Inter-Faith Meet, all round the islands to foster a community spirit;
- (ii) the Ministry of Education, which has introduced the teaching of a series of "life skills" to primary and secondary students, so as to make of them responsible citizens;
- (iii) the Ministry of Arts and Culture, which organises numerous activities to promote patriotism and national unity, and
- (iv) the National Economic and Social Council, which also contributes towards the strengthening of social peace and harmony.

I should add that there is another groundbreaking measure in the pipeline, the Equal Opportunities Bill, which will provide for equal opportunities in employment and access to resources.

Mr Speaker, Sir, Government took the historic step to promote social justice and national unity through the introduction, last week, of the landmark Bill for the setting up of the Truth and Justice Commission.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as I said earlier, inter-communal harmony has always been a way of life for all generations of Mauritians. And that harmony has blossomed into the grand concept of Unity in Diversity, of which we are so proud and which is part of our day-to-day culture. It is, therefore, felt that there is no need to consider the setting up of such a Race Relations Commission, in case it diminishes what we are doing.

B.C., MR – FORMER COMPTROLLER OF CUSTOMS

(No. B/1143) Mr E. Guimbeau (First Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether, in regard to Mr B. C., former Comptroller of Customs, he will state if he has information that he has been forced to resign because he has exposed to the Mauritius Revenue Authority and the Ministry of Finance & Economic Development, numerous cases of fraud and corruption, amongst others, in respect of –

- (a) a customs officer, posted in Rodrigues;
- (b) a case of undervaluation of whisky, which has not prosecuted, and
- (c) a case of smuggling of cigarettes by a broker.

(Vide reply to PNQ)

CUSTOMS DEPARTMENT – ALLEGED CASES OF MALPRACTICE

(No. B/1144) Mr E. Guimbeau (First Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether he will state if he has been made aware of the existence of alleged cases of malpractice at the Customs Department and, if so, will he consider setting up a Commission of Inquiry thereinto.

(Vide reply to PNQ)

**MBC – CONTRACTUAL/PERMANENT OFFICERS - JULY 2005-
AUGUST 2008**

(No. B/1145) **Mr P. Jhugroo (Third Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue)** asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether he will now table the list of the officers recruited at the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation, either on a contractual or a permanent basis and in all grades, since July 2005 to date, indicating in each case –

- (a) their names and addresses;
- (b) their qualifications;
- (c) their postings;
- (d) their terms and conditions of employment, and
- (e) the procedure followed.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, the information regarding officers recruited on a contractual basis for the period July 2005 to 31 March 2008 – I am glad that, in the question, the hon. Member has stated ‘whether he will now table’. In fact, I checked why this was not tabled. Unfortunately, it was not tabled earlier through oversight, and I must apologize to the hon. Member. It was ready to be tabled, and I don’t know why it was not tabled. Now, the hon. Member has asked additional questions. The first question was on contractual. Now, the hon. Member has asked question on permanent basis and has also added that he wanted to know the procedure followed.

As regards contractual employees recruited after 01 April 2008 and employees recruited on a permanent basis in all grades since July 2005, we are going to make it available, because it was an oversight, but since the hon. Member has asked for additional information, this would be placed in the Library, I hope, by next week.

DU CRAY, STE CROIX – DRUG ADDICTS

(B/1146) Mrs B. Juggoo (First 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 Constituency No. 4, Port Louis North and Montagne Longue, he will state if he has been made aware that a particular group of drug addicts is creating disturbances and causing inconveniences to the inhabitants of the region of Du Cray Ste Croix, particularly, near the Citizens Advice Bureau, and if so, will he consider requesting the Commissioner of Police to inquire thereinto.

(Withdrawn)

MBC – DIRECTOR, RADIO – CAR – ACCIDENT

(No. B/1147) Mr G. Gunness (Third Member for Montagne Blanche and GRSE) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Director General of the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation, information as to if the car put at the disposal of the Director, Radio, of the Corporation, met with an accident, on or about 07 August 2008 and, if so, if the Director General had phoned the Commissioner of Police in relation thereto on the following day, indicating the reasons therefor.

(Withdrawn)

Mr Speaker: Time is over!

At 1.10 p.m the sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 2.45 p.m. with Mr Speaker in the Chair.

ANNOUNCEMENT

BUSINESS PARKS OF MAURITIUS LTD – FACT-FINDING COMMITTEE – REPORT

Mr Speaker: Hon. Members, before we continue with the Parliamentary Questions, I have an announcement to make.

Hon. Members, I have an announcement to make in regard to the tabling of the report of the Fact-Finding Committee on the Business Parks of Mauritius Ltd.

Hon. Members will recall that at the sitting of the House on 31 October 2006, the hon. Minister of Information Technology and Telecommunications laid a copy of the Report of the Fact-Finding Committee on the Business Parks of Mauritius Ltd and its subsidiaries on the Table of the National Assembly.

Subsequently, an application for judicial review was made by four applicants who felt aggrieved by the findings of the Fact-Finding Committee. On 25 July 2008, the Supreme Court ordered that the findings of the Fact-Finding Committee and certain other paragraphs of the Report on the Business Parks of Mauritius Ltd quoad these applicants be quashed, set aside and expunged as the case may be.

On Tuesday the 12 August last, the hon. Leader of the Opposition saw me in my office and invited my attention to the judgment and to take action as appropriate.

Following the meeting, I sought for, and obtained a certified copy of the proceedings of the Supreme Court of 25 July 2008 which include the judgment of the Supreme Court.

Standing Order 19(1) of our Standing Orders provides that papers laid before the Assembly include “reports and other documents presented by Ministers”. For the purposes of our Standing Orders, the Report of the Fact-Finding Committee is a paper laid before the Assembly.

Documents, once laid on the Table become public documents and form part of the permanent record of the House. Such documents are placed in the Library of the National Assembly and may be consulted at any time.

In the present case, as mentioned above, the Court has made an order to the effect that the findings of the Fact-Finding Committee and certain other paragraphs of the Report quoad the applicants be quashed, set aside, or struck out, as the case may be and expunged from the Report.

In the House of Commons, it is provided that if a department which has presented a paper wishes subsequently to withdraw it, the order that the paper do lie on the Table may be discharged, and the paper withdrawn. However, being given that the present Report contains comments and findings in regard to other persons who did not contest the Report, it would not be in order to follow that procedure.

In the circumstances, and in the absence of any formal procedure in our Standing Orders to cater for such a situation and after careful consideration, I am, by virtue, of Standing Order 77 of our Standing Orders directing the Clerk to annex copy of the judgment of the Court to the Report forming part of the record of the National Assembly so that the judgment forms an integral part of the Report and that both the Report and judgment be read together as a single document.

I thank you.

GAMING HOUSE *TI VEGAS* – ALLEGED FRAUD

(No. B/1150) **Ms K. R. Deerpalsing (Third Member for Belle Rose and Quatre Bornes)** asked the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to the gaming house *Ti Vegas*, operating in Quatre Bornes, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Gambling Regulatory Authority, information as to if it is considering revoking the licence thereof, following an alleged case of fraud *vis-à-vis* the Central Electricity Board, and, if not, why not.

The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance & Economic Development (Dr. R. Sithanen): Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that the enquiry in the alleged case of fraud *vis-à-vis* the Central Electricity Board is still ongoing. As a result, the Gambling Regulatory Authority is not in a position to determine whether disciplinary action may be taken against a licensee as per section 99(1) of the Act.

Ms Deerpalsing: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister knows as well as hon. Xavier Duval and myself, the terrible problem that the inhabitants of Quatre Bornes are facing with this becoming the hub of drugs and prostitution and so on and really the red-light district in the centre of Quatre Bornes. Given the fact that these people, *Ti-Vegas*, were caught red-handed for frauding of CEB electricity and that international norms for casinos suggest that there should be no iota of suspicion, even the smallest iota of suspicion on any casinos, the degree of integrity has to be the highest, can I ask the hon. Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance whether this, in itself, does not constitute enough reason for him to take action to take this terrible problem out of Quatre Bornes?

Dr. Sithanen: Mr Speaker, Sir, let me be very candid about this issue. In addition to being MP for that Constituency, I have three reasons to be equally concerned, if not more concerned, of what happens there. I am a resident of that town. Better or worse I stay within one kilometre of that place. Very often, I work until late in my office, and I have to go through the town centre to reach my home. And I can tell you I have to endure the unsightful spectacle of the oldest profession being unfolded there. So, I am equally concerned. And very often, I ring the Police or I ask the security

officers who are in my car to ring the Police. I am a resident of Quatre Bornes, besides being the MP for Quatre Bornes. Second, Mr Speaker, Sir, I am the father of three boys and I know, as a father, how boys can be tempted to go into these places where they ought not to go. Three, Mr Speaker, Sir, I have lived in Quatre Bornes for almost 30 years: eight years as MP, twenty-two years as an ordinary, simple law-abiding citizen. I have a network of excellent friends in Quatre Bornes and every time they invite me or I invite them this is one of the issues raised. Having said that, we have to operate within the parameters of the law. There are two cases in Quatre Bornes which have happened. This particular casino itself was denied a permission some time back and they went to Court and they won the case. I am equally concerned, Mr Speaker, Sir, as hon. Xavier Duval and hon. Ms Deerpalsing. This is the law. Recently, there was a food court that was denied a permit, allegedly on an arbitrary basis, they went to Court and again they won their case. The law is very clear. It must be a proven case of fraud for the Gaming Regulatory Authority to consider whether disciplinary action can be taken. I am equally concerned, Mr Speaker, Sir, for the three reasons that I have given you. I don't like what I see everyday, I have to go through there and, obviously, we need to wait for the completion of the inquiry and, then if need be, if we have to change the law, we will do so.

Ms Deerpalsing: Mr Speaker, Sir, as I said they have been caught red-handed and the international norms for casinos ask for highest degree of integrity. Can I ask the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance whether, at least, until the inquiry is done, the licence is suspended?

Dr. Sithanen: I don't know whether it is possible. I will seek for legal advice. As I said, the experts are mindful of the fact that they can be taken to Court and they will lose the case. As I said, Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to see this place basically relocated elsewhere, but the problem is the law as it is today.

(Interruptions)

Dr. Sithanen: As I said, this is the law, I am equally concerned. I meet many people who say that they are very annoyed. Besides hon. Varma. I think I am the one in this House who stays closer to that place.

Ms Deerpalsing: M. le président, l'honorable ministre est un homme très intelligent et il sait trouver des solutions ingénieuses à beaucoup de choses. I have disturbing information, Mr Speaker, Sir, that the owner of this casino has said that he has the power of money and nobody will ever be able to get him out of there. May I ask the hon. Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance whether he will personally see to it that the power of money will not supersede the power of the people?

Dr. Sithanen: The hon. Member can rest assured that I will do it. When I introduced fiscal reform in this House, Mr Speaker, Sir, my life was threatened by some people, but I did not give up.

Mr Varma: Sir, the Deputy Prime Minister has conceded the social problems linked to *Ti Vegas* in Quatre Bornes. Can he inform the House when was the last time he informed the Commissioner of Police about these social problems?

Dr. Sithanen: Mr Speaker, Sir, when I go through the city, either I ring the Police of Quatre Bornes or I ask my security officers to ring them and ask them to put some order, but the next day they are back. It is really bad, especially in the centre of the town. I totally agree that there is a social evil, but the law is the law. As I said, some of the officers are a bit concerned that if they were to act on the basis of an alleged theft which has not been proven, they might be taken to Court. There has been a case where they have been taken to Court.

Mr Soodhun: In fact, the Minister just informed the House that he is agreeable that it is a nuisance and he personally witnessed it. Can I ask the hon. Minister whether he could set up a committee composed of the representatives of his Ministry, the Police Dept. and the State Law Office to sit down and see, once for all, the decisions that can be taken as soon as possible?

Dr. Sithanen: I am not absolutely sure whether this is the responsibility of the GRA. It might probably be the responsibility of the Municipality or other authorities that issue licences. I have to check. What the Gaming Regulatory Authority does, in fact, in case you have been proven guilty of an offence, they can suspend the licence. I think the initial permit is not given by the GRA, just like the case before. In that same casino, their permit was removed by the Municipality of Quatre Bornes. They went to Court, they won their case and the Municipality of Quatre Bornes had to give the permit back to them.

Ms Deerpalsing: Is the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance aware that he is talking about what happens at night, but there are retired professionals in that area who, at 5 or 6 o'clock in the morning, can't even get out of their gate even to buy their daily loaf of bread because there are such disgusting things in front of their gates like *seringue*, *capote* and all kind of things. Can I ask the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance whether he can *utiliser la confiance et le pouvoir que le peuple a placé en lui afin d'ôter de Quatre Bornes ce centre d'insalubrité qui est en train de transformer cette ville en dépotoir ?*

Dr. Sithanen: I do not know why the hon. Member is hitting at me. I am not the law. She should ask the question to the Ministers responsible for the law. I am not the law. I am not responsible for this. I have children and I am very concerned about this problem.

Mr Dowarkasing: Sir, the fact that they have been caught red-handed, does not the hon. Minister think that this could be treated differently instead of waiting for an inquiry to be carried out?

Dr. Sithanen: I am not the law. It is the CEB that is conducting the case...

(Interruptions)

These are the allegations. This concerns the Police.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Hon. Minister of Finance, look at the Minister of Local Government instead!

(Interruptions)

Ms Deerpalsing: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I appeal to the Minister that we bring an amendment? Because we make the law in this country. We are here to make laws and to make amendments to laws. If there is a law that is not helping the Minister to bring an amendment to the Gaming Authority, something must be done so that such thing can be caught next time.

Dr. Sithanen: I am not the one to bring the amendment. I do not even know which Minister is responsible. I will pass it on. I am not the one who will find out. The hon. Member should ask questions to the Ministers responsible.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: The hon. Minister stated that he is not aware whether it is the Gaming Regulatory Board or not which issues the permit. Should it be the case, would the hon. Minister take the commitment of going to the Board and trying to see whether the permit should be suspended or not?

Dr. Sithanen: The Board is an independent one. Section 99 (2) says clearly that there must be a fraud and not an allegation of fraud. I cannot substitute myself for the Police. I am not the Minister responsible for the Police, I am not the Minister responsible for Local Government, I am not the Minister responsible for CEB. I can only act by asking the GRA whether they can find something on the basis of law.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Sir, since the Minister is saying that he does not know whether it is the Municipality which is concerned, can he confirm that concerning the issue of licences, the Gambling Regulatory Authority recommends to his Ministry and requires his approval for the issue of licences?

Dr. Sithanen: It is the reverse that takes place. Basically, they go and see whether there is a 'no objection'. We have the same problem in Flacq and I spoke to hon. Bachoo. There are two groups in his constituency, one group wants to have the gaming house and the other group does not

want it. Ti Vegas has obtained its permit and I do not like it, but this is the way it is done. I'll ask the Gaming Regulatory Authority to suspend the licence if there is a case of fraud, but it is not the Authority that issues the licence in the first case. I do not know whether it is their job.

Ms Deerpalsing: Mr Speaker, Sir, I agree with the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, neither himself nor hon. Duval, nor myself, nor the inhabitants of Quatre Bornes like the situation. None of us like it. But the difference between the inhabitants and the three of us here is that we have been voted to power, to try and change the lives of people. The Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance has said that he does not know who is responsible. Since he is a Deputy Prime Minister, number four in Government, can I ask him to, at least, do something to find out a solution to this problem?

Dr. Sithanen: Sir, I am a resident of Quatre Bornes and I am a father of three children. I know many people are against this. I shall do whatever is legal to find a solution for the problem.

MR D. – QUATRE BORNES – TRADE LICENCE

(No. B/1151) **Ms K.R. Deerpalsing (Third Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes)** asked the Minister of Local Government whether, in regard to one Mr D., who has recently been granted a trade licence by the Municipal Council of Quatre Bornes, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Council, information as to if he is selling counterfeited CDs and DVDs in public, opposite the Town Hall and, if so, the remedial measures that will be taken.

Dr. David: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Municipal Council of Quatre Bornes that a trade licence was granted to one Mr D. on 13 July 2007 for recording, sale, hire of audio, video, cassette compact disc and other recording/storage devices at Juddoo fils, George Town Building, St Jean Road, Quatre Bornes.

With regard to the question as to whether Mr D. is selling counterfeited CDs and DVDs in public opposite the Town Hall, I am informed that the relevant authorities for such activities are the Anti Piracy Unit of the Police Department and the Mauritius Society of Authors.

Ms Deerpalsing: May I ask the hon. Minister whether he is aware that Councillors of the Municipality have raised this question at the Council level and further to that they have been threatened on the phone for physical violence?

Dr. David: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am aware that the Council has raised the issue, but I am not aware whether any Councillor has been threatened. If this is the case, it is very serious.

Mr Hawoldar: Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Minister inform the House, if he has the information, as to when the application was made for this permit, that is, the date the application was made and the date the permit was given?

Dr. David: No, Mr Speaker, Sir, I am not aware. But I know that the permit was granted last year and the answer says 'recently', maybe it has been renewed.

QUATRE BORNES – TRAFFIC CENTRE – SAFETY REVIEW

(No. B/1152) Ms K. R. Deerpalsing (Third Member for Belle Rose and Quatre Bornes) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping whether, in regard to the bus traffic centre, adjacent to the Municipal Council of Quatre Bornes, he will state if he will consider conducting a road traffic safety review thereat with a view to ensuring the safety of the bus passengers and of the pedestrians.

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

Sir, I am informed that following a request from the Municipal Council of Quatre Bornes, the Traffic Management and Road Safety Unit carried out a review of the traffic centre in 2006 with a view to improve the safety of both pedestrians and passengers.

The new design of the centre proposed by the Traffic Management and Road Safety Unit included road safety measures, namely –

- (i) shifting away of the entrance and exit of the Traffic Centre from the junction of St Jean road with Victoria Avenue;
- (ii) construction of an alighting platform and several boarding platforms with shelters;
- (iii) installation of handrails and flat top pedestrian crossings within the traffic centre to segregate pedestrians from vehicular traffic; and
- (iv) construction of a humped pedestrian crossing along Victoria Avenue, near the new Quatre Bornes State Secondary School.

The implementation of these measures was completed in November 2007 and no accident has been reported since then.

The Traffic Management and Road Safety Unit has also recommended the provision of additional footpaths from the Quatre Bornes State Secondary School up to St. Jean road which is being considered by the Road Development Authority.

The Traffic Management and Road Safety Unit will monitor the situation at the traffic centre and recommend additional safety measures, if necessary.

Miss Deerpalsing: Mr Speaker, Sir, I know the substantive Minister is not here, but is the hon. Minister aware that there is a major *cafouillage* everyday at peak hours in the morning and in the afternoon especially with the Quatre Bornes SSS? Because the way it has been designed, the bus has to go outside of both lanes, even facing incoming traffic, and it really creates havoc both in the morning and in the afternoon. May I ask the hon. Minister whether he can appeal to the substantive Minister to have Traffic Management and Road Safety Unit conduct an urgent review and redesign of that traffic centre?

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I will request the substantive Minister to carry out a review of the new centre.

COMPANIES – SALARY COMPENSATION 2008

(No. B/1153) Mr S. Soodhun (Fifth Member of La Caverne and Phoenix) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether he will state if his Ministry is in presence of information to the effect that there are companies which have paid a salary compensation over and above the quantum prescribed in the Additional Remuneration Act 2008 and, if so, the number thereof.

The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development (Mr R. Sithanen): Mr Speaker, Sir, as the House is aware, Government has implemented in toto the recommendations of the National Pay Council on the quantum of salary compensation as prescribed in the Additional Remuneration Act 2008. On the other hand, Government has granted a 9 percent increase, more than the compensation rate, to all beneficiaries of Basic Retirement Pension, Basic Widows Pensions, Basic Invalidity and other pensions and social aid programmes. This covers some 205,000 beneficiaries.

Insofar as companies are concerned, we have, as it was the case last year, also urged performing enterprises which have the ability, to pay a rate of compensation higher than that recommended by the NPC.

In fact, the House would recall that last year, the Mauritius Employers' Federation did carry out a survey which indicated that some 56 percent of enterprises granted a salary compensation higher than the prescribed rate.

As the House is aware, the salary compensation became effective as from the first of July 2008, and was paid only at the end of last month. As such, to date no data has been compiled on the number of companies which have paid salary compensation over and above the quantum prescribed for this year. I am, however, well aware that a number of companies have indeed paid higher amounts than prescribed.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that a survey will be carried out to gather such information as it occurred last year.

FOREIGN INVESTORS, SELF EMPLOYED & FOREIGN PROFESSIONALS – OCCUPATION PERMITS

(No. B/1154) Mr S. Soodhun (Fifth Member of La Caverne and Phoenix) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to foreign investors, self employed and foreign professionals who have applied for an occupation permit, since August 2007, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Board of Investment, information as to the number of applications received and approved.

The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development (Mr R. Sithanen): Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that for the period starting 01 August 2007 to 14 August 2008, the Board of Investment has received a total of 1,675 applications for Occupation Permits, of which 325 were from investors, 49 from self employed, and 1301 from professionals.

All the applications have been approved, except as regards 4 applications from investors.

PORT LOUIS - VEGETABLE AUCTION MARKET - CONSTRUCTION

(No. B/1155) Mr N. Bodha (First Member for Vacoas and Floreal) asked the Minister of Agro-Industry & Fisheries whether, in regard to the project for the construction of the vegetable auction market in Port Louis, he will state if he has had meetings with the stakeholders thereof and, if so, where matters stand.

Dr. Boolell: Mr Speaker Sir, as the hon. Member is aware, a study was commissioned by the Agricultural Marketing Board in year 2004-2005 to review the Auction Market System given that marketing of vegetables and fruits was being effected in very poor conditions. A site of 5 acres of land at Riche Terre was identified for the setting up of the Auction Market because of lack of appropriate space in Port Louis. The project was not implemented in 2005 as no provisions were made in the 2005-2006 Budget. Moreover, the land identified is no longer available as it forms part of the larger plot of land allocated to the Tianli Group of Industries at Riche Terre.

Recognizing the various shortcomings in the vegetables and fruits auction marketing and the urgent need for a well structured marketing system, Government has provided funds in the current budget for the setting up of a National Auction Market under the Food Security Fund. A technical Committee has already started working on the modalities for the new system. The Committee comprises the following stakeholders -

- (i) Small Planters Welfare Fund
- (ii) Agricultural Marketing Board
- (iii) Agricultural Research & Extension Unit
- (iv) Ministry of Health & Quality of Life
- (v) Ministry of Local Government
- (vi) Small Planters Association
- (vii) Mauritius Agricultural Marketing Cooperative Federation
- (viii) Market Traders Association
- (ix) Mauritius Chamber of Agriculture

The Committee has met on three occasions and is expected to finalise the strategic document by the first week of October 2008.

Mr Barbier: Can I know from the hon. Minister whether the committee set is to look for the National Auction Market only? Is it one unit for the whole country or several auction vegetables markets around the island?

Dr. Boolell: It will cater for the whole country.

Mr Barbier: Only one?

Dr. Boolell: Yes.

**PATIENTS – FOREIGN HEALTH INSTITUTIONS
– FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE**

(No. B/1156) Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun (Third Member for La Caverne and Phoenix) asked the Minister of Health & Quality of Life whether, in regard to the patients who cannot be operated in Mauritius and who required to be operated in foreign health institutions, since July 2005 to date, he will state the number thereof, indicating the amount of money that have been spent by Government in terms of financial assistance.

Mr Faugoo : Mr Speaker, Sir, Since July 2005 to July 2008, 1532 patients inoperable in Mauritius have been treated in foreign health institutions and my Ministry has provided financial assistance for a total amount of Rs145 m. for that period.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Considering the fact that the amount given to the patients is normally much less than the required amount for the operation and that these patients have to undergo a lot of stress to try to get the remaining sum of money, will the Minister consider increasing the amount allocated to these patients?

Mr Faugoo: I believe it is the contrary, Mr Speaker, Sir. Because for cases relating to ophthalmological, neurosurgical and cardiac problems, the Government pays the whole expenses for those illnesses. For other illnesses, it is Rs200,000.

We have carried out a study and we have seen that, in those institutions where we have Government collaboration, for ophthalmology on the average, it costs Rs70,000; for cardiac cases, it is Rs150,000 and for neurosurgery it is Rs200,000. People who go to those institutions with which we have an understanding, we foot the whole bill. If they choose to go to some other countries, then we give these amounts which is an average of the costs incurred. If ever they choose to go to the US or to France, they have to foot the difference.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Can the hon. Minister state whether none of the patients who have been sent to institutions with which we have some arrangements and have had to pay more?

Mr Faugoo: There may be such cases where the ceiling is Rs200,000, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Bérenger: I heard the hon. Minister say that, in those three categories of treatment, we pay everything. I thought that with one hospital in India whatever treatment is required for these three or any other, Government pays everything, but if the parents choose to go elsewhere then it is Rs200,000. Is it for these three categories only or one hospital where any treatment is free?

Mr Faugoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, there has been only one policy and there has been no change in the policy even from the previous Government. For any medical problem which is inoperable in Mauritius, they can go to these institutions. For these three cases, we pay the whole sum incurred; for others, they can always go, if it cannot be treated here, but we pay the maximum up to Rs200,000. This is the difference.

Mrs Martin: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister mentioned the number of people who have been treated in those foreign institutions. Does he have the information with regard to the backlog of people who have applied for financial assistance?

Mr Faugoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I think, I have answered this question in the past. There is no backlog as such. It is on a case to case basis. It is either a case referred by the treating doctor or the patient himself or the relative or the next of kin applies to the Ministry and it is decided within a week, Mr Speaker, Sir. So, there is no backlog.

Mr Bérenger: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister told us that 1,532 patients had been treated. Does he have a breakdown of how many were fully paid for and how many opted for the Rs200,000 maximum and went in a hospital or clinic of their choice?

Mr Faugoo: In fact, I have a breakdown of the different cases, different types of illnesses, but I don't have a breakdown of how many went to those institutions where we have collaboration and those who went outside. I can make it available, Mr Speaker, Sir.

INTEGRATED RESORT SCHEME - PROJECTS

(No. B/1157) **Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun (Third Member for La Caverne and Phoenix)** asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to the integrated Resort Scheme, he will state the number of projects which have been implemented, since July 2005 to date, indicating the number of foreigners who have purchased units therein and the revenue generated to Government by the sale thereof.

The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance & Economic Development (Dr. Sithanen): Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Board of Investment that since July 2005 to date, 5 projects are being implementation under the Integrated Resort Scheme. These are the -

- (i) Tamarina Estates Ltd;
- (ii) Anahita Estates Ltd and Anahita IRS Forty Ltd;
- (iii) Les Villas de Bel Ombre Ltd;
- (iv) Belle Rivière Promotion Ltd, and
- (v) Albion Development Ltd (Club Med)

These projects comprise the constructions of around 800 residential units.

I am further informed that out of the 300 residential units that have already been sold, 281 units have been bought by non-citizens.

The total revenue generated from the sale of those 300 residential units in terms of registration duty and land transfer tax amounts to around Rs1.1 billion. The IRS companies will, on the other hand, also be liable to pay corporate tax on the amount of profits made from the sale of those properties.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Speaker, Sir, I heard the hon. Minister say that 281 units have been sold to foreigners. May I ask him whether the other units have been sold to Mauritians or are they still unsold?

Dr. Sithanen: I don't know. I have to check. Because the way the transaction is structured is on the basis of progress payment. So, they pay an initial amount - I think it starts with 30%, if my memory serves me right - then they pay gradually and it is only once it is completed and they make the final payment that the transfer of the deed takes place. Some of them may be between 30% and 100%.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister whether any of these units have been purchased by Mauritians?

Dr. Sithanen: I don't know, I will check. But if my understanding is correct, there is nothing that prevents a Mauritian to buy.

UNIVERSITY OF MAURITIUS – ADMISSION 2008-2009

(No. B/1158) Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun (Third Member for La Caverne and Phoenix) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether, in regard to the University of Mauritius, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the University –

- (a) information as to the number of students admitted thereat for the academic year 2008-2009, and
- (b) a list of the courses, which are no more offered, indicating the reasons therefor, in each case.

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the University of Mauritius as follows –

- (a) as at date, 2825 students have registered for the 2008-2009 academic year. The projection made was 4467. 3980 seats were offered, and

- (b) as has been the practice for several years, the University proposes in its advertisement a wide range of programmes of studies to prospective students. Inevitably, certain programmes do not fetch the required number of applicants and therefore cannot be run for efficiency reasons (high investment/cost compared to very few candidates). Out of a total of 133 courses, 17 will not be run. I am tabling a list of the courses that will not be run. A fresh advertisement has been issued by UoM to give another choice to candidates to join other courses where seats are available.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister for the subjects which have been cancelled, whether a certain number of applicants had applied for these and if so, the number of seats that were filled?

Mr Gokhool: I don't have this information, but there is a critical number of candidates who should register for the programme to be run. I believe the University has taken this into consideration and has decided not to run these courses.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister if a survey was carried out beforehand to decide on the courses that would be offered to students?

Mr Gokhool: This is normal practice. When the University plans the courses, it has got various consultations with the private sector; there are various committees and then they come with a list of programmes. There is also the question of demand and supply.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister whether any inquiry was carried out to find out why there are about 1,900 students, if I am not mistaken, who have chosen not to be admitted to the University?

Mr Gokhool: No enquiry has been carried out but, as is the practice, some students apply for various universities. Some get the seats, others decide not to join universities and take up a job. There are various reasons and this happens every year.

Mr Guinness: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I know from the hon. Minister what lapse of time there is between the closing date of calling for applications and the students are informed whether they have got a seat or not?

Mr Gokhool: I will not be able to give a precise answer, but there is a certain period which is given for them to apply and then they are informed whether they have got a seat or not.

Mr Guinness: I am asking this question because in cases of courses where we have very few candidates, I suppose that these students lose their chance to get admitted in another institution. In September, when they are told that the courses are not being offered, they have no possibility to apply for another institution.

Mr Gokhool: As is the case, normally, students apply to various universities. But, for students who apply for the University and do not get a seat, a new advertisement is made by the University so that they are given the chance to apply for other courses.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: May I ask the hon. Minister whether he tried to find out for students who did not choose to get admitted to the University whether there is no link between this shortfall in number with the fact that these students could not pay for the fees at the University?

Mr Gokhool: I don't have this answer, but we can find out from the University.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister whether he has got the information about the number of students who have benefited from the special loan scheme for admission, in this term, to the University?

Mr Speaker: I am sorry! It does not relate to the question. Next question!

PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA – SCHOLARSHIPS

(No. B/1159) Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun (Third Member for La Caverne and Phoenix) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether he will state if the Government of the People's Republic of China has awarded scholarships to the Mauritian students for the academic year 2008-2009 and, if so, indicate –

- (a) the fields of study therefor, and
- (b) the number of scholarships awarded for postgraduate courses in medicine, giving a list of the Mauritian doctors who have been awarded scholarships.

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, each year, the Government of the People's Republic of China offers scholarships to Mauritian nationals. For the academic year 2008/2009, 10 scholarships were on offer.

As regards part (a), the fields of studies are as follows –

Postgraduate level
 Cardiac Surgery
 Neurology
 Medical Imaging Science & Nuclear Medicine
 Cardiothoracic Surgery
 Cardiology
 Internal Medicine
 Undergraduate Level
 Mandarin Language
 Medicine

As regards part (b), seven scholarships were offered by the Government of the People's Republic of China in the field of medicine at postgraduate level as follows –

Cardiac Surgery
 Neurology
 Medical Imaging Science & Nuclear Medicine
 Cardiothoracic Surgery
 Cardiology

Internal Medicine

Out of the seven nominated candidates, only six have accepted the scholarship. Dr. B. Taukoor who was nominated by the Chinese Authorities to study Neurology has informed the Ministry that he has declined the offer, as his choices of fields of study were –

- (i) Psychiatry
- (ii) Radiology
- (iii) Physical Medicine

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: May I ask the hon. Minister whether initially there were five scholarships for medicine and whether two additional seats were offered afterwards?

Mr Gokhool: I am not aware of this. I have the information as regards the number of seats which were offered.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am talking about the number of seats offered only. The Minister stated that there were 10 seats offered; for medicine 7 seats were awarded and out of these 7 seats one student refused. My question is whether initially the number of seats allotted for medicine was 5 or not?

Mr Gokhool: What I said is that 7 scholarships were offered at postgraduate level and one candidate declined. The seat is still there. What will happen is that the panel will go to the waiting list and pick up the next candidate.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: May I ask the hon. Minister whether the panel has already convened a meeting and has decided upon the next candidate to be awarded the scholarship?

Mr Gokhool: I am not aware of this.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: May I ask the hon. Minister when the students are expected to leave Mauritius for their studies?

Mr Gokhool: I think they have been informed by the Chinese Authorities, but I do not know the exact date when they will leave. The only problem will be with regard to the candidate who has declined and the panel will have to identify a new candidate.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: A last question, Mr Speaker, Sir. May I ask the hon. Minister how many of the doctors who have gone for postgraduate studies were already employed at the Ministry of Health, if ever the hon. Minister has the answer?

Mr Gokhool: I do not have this answer, Mr Speaker, Sir.

MR B. C. - FORMER COMPTROLLER OF CUSTOMS – TERMINATION OF EMPLOYMENT

(No. B/1160) Mr P. Jhugroo (Third Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue) the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to Mr B. C., former Comptroller of Customs, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Revenue Authority, information as to (a) the date of his appointment (b) the posts he has occupied at international level and (c) the date his employment was terminated, indicating the reasons therefor.

(Vide reply to PNQ)

CPE EXAMINATIONS- INVIGILATORS' ALLOWANCES

(No. B/1161) Mr P. Jhugroo (Third Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether he will state if he has received any representation from the Government Teachers Union, regarding an increase in the payment of the invigilators' allowances for the Certificate of Primary Education Examinations and, if so, will he, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Examinations Syndicate, information as to if their request will be acceded to and, if not, why not.

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, the Ministry has received a request dated 06 August 2008 from the Government Teachers Union for a meeting regarding an increase in payment of invigilation fees. I understand that on 06 August 2008 itself the Director of the MES had a meeting with the GTU on the issue.

According to the MES, the GTU has requested for a 25% increase in the invigilation fees for the CPE examinations 2008 involving additional expenditure to the tune of Rs5 m. On account of budgetary constraints, the MES could not accede to the request of GTU.

It is worth pointing out that the invigilation fees have been increased as from 2002 up to 2006 which reached a percentage increase of 58.4%. It was then tacitly agreed that the fees would be maintained for a period of at least two years.

Quite apart from the question of increase in allowance, my Ministry will pursue discussions with the unions and the MES with a view to ensuring that there is no impediment to the organization and conduct of the CPE examinations.

MAURITIUS PORT AUTHORITY – CHAIRPERSON – OVERSEAS MISSIONS

(No. B/1162) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin and petite Rivière) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism, Leisure and External Communications whether, in regard to the Chairperson of the Mauritius Port Authority, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Authority, information as to the number of overseas missions he has undertaken, since his appointment to date, indicating in each case (a) the countries visited and (b) the amount of money spent.

The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism, Leisure and External Communications (Mr X. L Duval): Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I am tabling a list of the official missions undertaken by the Chairperson of the MPA Board from April 2006 to date, including the expenses incurred in each case, as obtained from the Authority.

The current Chairperson who has been in office for 30 months has traveled on six occasions. The total sums disbursed by the MPA in respect of these missions amount to Rs829,000. For the sake of transparency, I am also providing the same information as regards the two former Chairpersons of the MPA, Mr Maunthrooa and Mr Boissézon.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the House may wish to note that Mr Maunthrooa, who was Chairperson from October 2000 to November 2003, that is, 37 months, travelled on 10 occasions and the total expenses incurred amounted to Rs 2.4 m.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order now!

Mr X. L. Duval: As regards Mr Boissézon who was in post between April 2004 and May 2005, that is 14 months, the amount paid by the MPA for 4 missions abroad was Rs1.149,000.

Mr Bhagwan: Mr Speaker, Sir, can the Minister confirm whether the Chairperson of MPA was given credit cards facilities whilst traveling overseas?

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, this question was in the press this morning. It was the practice for Chairpersons of the MPA to have such cards. He had a card at a certain time, but he no longer has the card.

Mr Lesjongard: May I ask the Deputy Prime Minister whether the Chairperson of the MPA has used that credit card to buy a home cinema?

Mr X. L. Duval: I understand that was not the case, Mr Speaker, Sir. There were some private expenses to be reimbursed, but nothing of the sort.

SIC – CASINOS – STRATEGIC PARTNER

(No. B/1163) **Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière)** asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to the privatization of the casinos owned by State Investment Corporation, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Corporation, information as to where matters stand.

The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development (Dr. R. Sithanen): Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that following a tender exercise, SIC appointed KPMG in June 2007, as its Financial Adviser to assist in the selection of a Strategic Partner in the 5 Casino companies. Subsequently, in August 2007 SIC, with the assistance of KPMG, launched an open international invitation seeking expressions of interest from firms willing to enter into Strategic Partnership with SIC. By the closing date of 29 October 2007, SIC received 7 expressions of interest and after appraisal 5 firms were shortlisted.

These firms were given the opportunity in December 2007, to accede to information relating to the Casino business so as to enable them to submit a firm offer by 15 February 2008. By the closing date 3 bids were received.

I am informed that based on the recommendations of the Financial Adviser, the SIC Board decided in mid July 2008 to retain Invicta Investment Management Company Ltd., a UK based company as the Preferred Partner for discussions with a view to finalising the terms and conditions of the Strategic Partnership.

Mr Bhagwan: Can we know from the hon. Deputy Prime Minister whether the Casino's union had discussions with the management of the Union concerning this issue?

Dr. Sithanen: I think that there has been consultation. But we all know, Mr Speaker, Sir, in the strategic partnership, we may have consultation, but we will never get perfect agreement on what is to be done. But one thing we will try to do, Mr Speaker, Sir, is to task the SIC to ensure that the interest of the employees are protected in the strategic partnership that would be done with the company.

Mr Bhagwan: Can the hon. Deputy Prime Minister say how many employees are actually working for the casinos or whether they have been offered to retire voluntarily on certain terms and whether discussions are ongoing?

Dr. Sithanen: I do not have the answer to that specific question, but if the hon. Member will come to a substantive answer, I will ask ...

(Interruptions)

Maybe the hon. Member has more information that I have. As usual.

LES DOMAINES LES PAILLES – SIC/GID - MoU

(No. B/1164) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to Les Domaines Les Pailles, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the State Investment Corporation, information as to where matters stand in relation to the project for the sale thereof or the entering into strategic partnership.

The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development (Dr. R. Sithanen): Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to PQ B/565 in May 2008.

I did inform the House that Golf Development International (GDI), in its submission, had proposed to take over Domaine Les Pailles Ltee as a going concern with all its staff, amenities, buildings, assets and liabilities. In this context, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed between SIC and the GDI on 21 February 2008.

As per the terms of the MoU, GDI was granted 120 days to conduct a comprehensive legal, tax, financial, accounting and development due diligence on the project. The successful completion of the exercise would allow the parties to enter into a sale agreement.

However, I am informed by the SIC that following the diligence exercise, SIC and GDI could not conclude on the proposed project mix and agree on contribution to be made by GDI towards meeting the cost for an access road to the site. Consequently, in mid July 08, SIC Board decided not to pursue further discussions with GDI on the proposed project. There will thus be no sale agreement with GDI as initially contemplated.

FISHERIES PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT – EUROPEAN UNION

(No. B/1165) Mr M. Dowarkasing (Third Memebr for Curepipe and Midlands) asked the Minister of Agro Industry and Fisheries whether he will state if a new Fisheries Partnership Agreement has been finalised with the European Union and, if not, why not.

Dr. Boolell: Mr Speaker, Sir, the reply being lengthy, I will circulate it (**Appendix**).

Mr Dowarkasing: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I know from the hon. Minister whether the issue of reference tonnage has been agreed upon?

Dr. Boolell: No, discussions are still ongoing. We have put our proposals to the EC side. Technical committee is meeting and we hope that they will come to better feelings to conclude the Fisheries Partnership Agreement.

Mr Bérenger: The hon. Minister could have said: no, the Fisheries Partnership Agreement has not been finalized. I have been following that rather closely and I find that the European Union is being very, very difficult, - as elsewhere, in Africa, but especially difficult. Does the hon. Minister have the information to the effect that the Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA), have a hidden agenda at the back of their mind and they are in their way tying these two things together?

Dr. Boolell: It is difficult to say whether they want to tie the two issues, but the hon. Leader of the Opposition is right to say that they have been very difficult. In fact, we have tried to bring them back to their senses. I have written personally to the Commissioner of Fisheries, Mr Borg, but it seems that following technical meetings, they are more amenable now in

respect of reference tonnage, the amount of fees to be disbursed. Then on the issue of IUU, they wanted us to bear the cost of each *sortie* in respect of IUU which, of course, is almost prohibitive for us.

Mr Dowarkasing: Mr Speaker, Sir, in a previous answer given to the House, the hon. Minister stated that he has informed the EC about his position regarding the IOTC. I would like to know the position of the Mauritian Government regarding the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission.

Dr. Boolell: In fact, one of the issues which they wanted us to link with the discussion was the de-linking of IOTC from the FAO and I don't have to highlight the repercussions that this would have, including the issue of sovereignty. We have made it very clear to them that we are dead against; we stood firm in our decision and now they are coming back to their senses in respect of this issue. There is not going to be any de-linking of IOTC from the FAO.

Mr Dowarkasing: I have one more question, Mr Speaker, Sir. May I know if there is any reason as to why the EC has proposed that the duration of any new FPA will be six years?

Dr. Boolell: There is no specific reason, although this is the duration that they would like it to be. We are not against this. But, of course, we are against the substance that was initially proposed, because it was to our disadvantage.

Mr Dowarkasing: Mr Speaker, Sir, in a reply the hon. Minister stated that there are technical committees meeting in July 2008. Can I know exactly whether it has taken place and what has been the outcome of those meetings?

Dr. Boolell: There was a meeting which was held on 14 May 2008. Let me outline our political commitment to conclude the FPA. The Commission was willing to show some flexibility in the negotiating process. The issue of IUU has to be seen in a wider context. I have stated that the proposed Protocol on the IUU may not be incorporated into the FPA text, but annexed to it, and that a technical meeting to be held between European Commission (EC) and Mauritius in a meeting scheduled for early June 2008 in La Reunion to further discuss the issue FPA, including IUU. In fact, on

04 June 2008, Mauritius had a meeting with representatives of the Director-General, Fish Office of the European Commission to finalize outstanding issues which I have highlighted.

My Ministry also participated in the second technical meeting which was held in Brussels on 04 to 05 August 2008. And since then we have noted progress. They are more amenable and the meeting focussed on cross-cutting issues, regarding catch data, vessel monitoring system, IUU, etc. We have agreed that there was a need to review actual catch which they wanted to increase from 3,000 tonnes to 6,500. Since they are more amenable, let's hope that the process will move forward to enable us to conclude the Fisheries Partnership Agreement.

Mr Bérenger: I asked the hon. Minister whether he believes that there is a linkage between this Fisheries Partnership Agreement and the Economic Partnership Agreement. Can I ask him whether the Commission is making a link between this Fisheries Agreement and the issue of the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission around Taiwan and China to control illegal fishing?

Dr. Boolell: Not at all! But, however, because it is an interim economic partnership agreement, when it comes to obtaining additional tuna on the issue of automatic derogation, we have to put in a request and it has to be done on an annual basis. Hence, we have obtained 3,000 tonnes of canned of tuna and 600 tonnes tuna loins for export. But this issue is not linked to the issue which the hon. Leader of the Opposition has raised. It is not linked to the interim Economic Partnership Agreement.

SMOKING - PUBLIC PLACES – PROHIBITION

(No. B/1166) Mr M. Dowarkasing (Third Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether, in regard to smoking of cigarettes in public places, he will state if the Steering Committee set up to look thereinto has submitted its report and, if so, indicate the main recommendations thereof.

Mr Faugoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the House that the draft Public Health (Restrictions on Tobacco Products) Regulations 2008, providing for, *inter alia*, the prohibition of smoking in public places, have already been prepared and widely circulated through the website of my Ministry and through communiqués in the newspapers with a view to having the comments/suggestions of all stakeholders and the public at large.

The draft regulations have taken on board the main recommendations of the Steering Committee which has considered four main issues, namely, “Legal Framework”, “Education, Training and Research”, “Support and Liability” and “Medical and Rehabilitation”.

Thereafter, a Round Table Consultation was held with all stakeholders, including those who had commented on the draft regulations. The regulations duly finalised will be promulgated shortly.

Mr Dowarkasing: May I know from the hon. Minister whether a final revised draft was not circulated on 08 June 2008?

Mr Faugoo: It was indeed. We have not taken on board all the representations that were made. We are, in fact, at the final stage of working out the first draft. Within weeks, I am sure, it would be promulgated.

Mr Bérenger: Can I ask the hon. Minister whether the regulations will apply to Rodrigues and, if yes, whether the Rodrigues Authorities have been consulted?

Mr Faugoo: It will surely apply to Rodrigues, Mr Speaker, Sir. I am sure that Rodrigues has been consulted, but I must confirm if that is so.

Mr Dowarkasing: Can I ask the hon. Minister whether he is taking on board all the necessary steps so that enforcement of the forthcoming legislation be taken care of?

Mr Faugoo: When we pass such regulations and laws, Mr Speaker, Sir, there is always a problem with regard to alcohol and cigarettes as far as enforcement is concerned. We are trying to work out so that whatever we do is practical and we can enforce as much as we can, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Jhugroo: Can I ask the hon. Minister whether he will consider the Lunch Room of the National Assembly and the *Salle du Trône* as a non-smoking zone.

Mr Faugoo: Once it is promulgated *per se* it will be included, Mr Speaker, Sir.

CWA & WMA – MANAGEMENT

(No. B/1167) Mr M. Dowarkasing (Third Member for Curepipe and Midlands) asked the Minister of Public Utilities whether he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Central Water Authority and the Waste Water Management Authority, information as to if they are negotiating the taking over of their management and/or maintenance by the British Company, Severn-on-Trent.

Dr. Kasenally: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by both the Central Water Authority and the Wastewater Management Authority that they are not in the process of negotiating for any taking over of their management and/or maintenance by the British Company “Severn Trent Water International” or any other company.

However, I am informed that, following a competitive bidding exercise, the British Company Severn Trent Water International was recruited for the provision of Consultancy Services under the CWA Reduction of Non Revenue Water Project (NRW Project) in 2004. The Consultant completed its assignment in 2005 under Stage I of the project and submitted a report in February 2006. The provision of services by Severn

Trent Water International under Stage II of the project is presently under consideration, but this has nothing to do with any management or maintenance contract.

For the purposes of the Stage II which I have just referred to, I have been informed that following an invitation by the Central Water Authority, it is expected that Severn Trent Water International will be in Mauritius by the end of August or early September 2008. The aim of this visit is to enable the company to take cognizance of the progress achieved so far and also to work out a proposal for its continued service in consultation with the CWA.

Mr Dowarkasing: Mr Speaker, Sir, I just want to know whether the hon. Minister knows the track record of this company on the international arena and how many times this company has been fined for illegal transaction and even for producing falsifying datas and all that?

Dr. Kasenally: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am told by the CWA and by my Ministry that they are satisfied as far as this project is concerned. They cannot say what are they wondering around in the world.

Mr Dowarkasing: Mr Speaker, Sir, does the hon. Minister find it normal that he is not concerned about what this company is doing on the international scene? So, none of those institutions bothered to go and look at the credentials and the credibility of any company before allocating any contract?

Dr. Kasenally: Mr Speaker, Sir, I dare say that this contract was negotiated before this Government came into power. By the time we came to power, the project was already over. Of course, I am very much concerned about what any company does in the CWA. In fact, there are lots of things which I want to put straight in the CWA and the WMA for that matter.

“KEEP PACE” COMPANY - COMPLAINTS

(No. B/1168) Mr M. Dowarkasing (Third Member for Curepipe and Midlands) asked the Minister of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment whether he will state if his Ministry has registered complaints from the employees of the Keep Pace company in relation to their contract of employment with the company.

Dr. Bunwaree: Mr Speaker, Sir, complaints have been registered at the level of my Ministry from employees of the “Keep Pace” company. For details of the complaints registered, I would like to refer the hon. Member to the reply made to part (d) of PQ B/1061 on 05 August last by my colleague, the Minister of Education and Human Resources.

I wish to inform the House that the company has undertaken to pay all remunerations due to the workers as soon as it receives payment in respect of its contract. The company has further requested that the individual claims of non-payment of wages in respect of the 239 complainants be worked out by officers of my Ministry and submitted to it by the end of August 2008. Thereafter, the company will have a meeting with officers of my Ministry on 12 September 2008.

The matter is being closely monitored by my Ministry. If the need arises, the matter will certainly be referred to the Industrial Court.

Mr Dowarkasing: Mr Speaker, Sir, I thank the hon. Minister for this reply. I just want to inform him that even up to now employees have not been paid their salary for the past month.

Mr Speaker: The hon. Minister has said it.

Dr. Bunwaree: This is what I have mentioned.

Miss Deerpalsing: Mr Speaker, Sir, is the hon. Minister aware that this is the same company for which there have been complaints about the level of service at Dr. Regis Chaperon SSS for the employees themselves are not equipped with the necessary tools to do the job properly?

Dr. Bunwaree: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am not aware of this. It might have been reported to my Ministry. If a proper question is put, I can give a reply.

**MR B. C. – FORMER COMPTROLLER OF CUSTOMS –
TERMINATION OF EMPLOYMENT**

(No. B/1169) **Mr G. Gunness (Third Member for Montagne Blanche and GRSE)** asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether in regard to the termination of employment of Mr B. C., former Comptroller of Customs, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Revenue Authority, information as to –

- (a) the circumstances thereof, and
- (b) the reasons therefor.

(Vide Reply to PNQ)

RIVIERE DES CRÉOLES – MUSLIM CEMETERY

(No. B/1170) **Mr Y. Varma (First Member for Mahebourg and Plaine Magnien)** asked the Minister of Local Government whether he will state if he will consider upgrading the Muslim cemetery in Rivière des Créoles and, if so, when.

Dr. David: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Grand Port/Savanne District Council that there is no Muslim cemetery as such at Rivière des Créoles but a Muslim Section within the cemetery.

I am also informed that the Rivière des Créoles cemetery is in good condition except that during heavy rainfall, storm water coming from the nearby greenbelt overflows into the cemetery. The Council had decided as a remedial measure to open a drain along one side of the cemetery to contain this overflow.

I am informed that the project will be implemented during this financial year.

Mr Varma: Mr Speaker, Sir, is the hon. Minister aware that the fencing around the cemetery has been damaged and subsequently removed?

Dr. David: I am not aware, Mr Speaker, Sir. I'll check with the Council.

TUNA FISH - CATCHES

(No. B/1171) Mr Y. Varma (First Member for Mahebourg and Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Agro Industry and Fisheries whether in regard to tuna fish, he will state if he is aware that there is a drop in the catches thereof in the Indian Ocean and, if so, will he state –

- (a) the reasons therefor, and
- (b) how it affects Mauritius.

Dr. Boolell: Mr Speaker, Sir, according to the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC), tuna catches across the Indian Ocean have dropped by about 30% in 2007 and there are indications that recent catches are below averages.

With regard to part (a) of the question, according to the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC), the exact reason for this drop is not known.

Experts are divided over whether this drop is due to climatic change or cyclical ocean conditions or overfishing.

As for to part (b), according to data available on fish traffic in Port Louis, which mainly comprises of tuna, it increased from 96,790 tonnes in 2005 to 130,182 tonnes in 2006 but decreased to 116,983 tonnes in 2007. In 2006, some 82,000 tonnes of tuna fish were processed. Operators in the Seafood Hub have recently experienced some difficulties in sourcing originating tuna fish. In this context Government initiated action since January 2008 in order to benefit from automatic derogation for the export of non-originating processed tuna to the European Community market pending entry into force of the Interim Economic Partnership Agreement after signature and ratification.

In this context, the EU has thus recently allocated a quota of 3,000 tonnes of canned tuna and 600 tonnes of tuna loins for export under automatic derogation to Mauritius. This will enable operators to source non-originating materials for processing, thereby alleviating their difficulties in sourcing originating fish.

Mr Bérenger: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Minister whether he confirms that, in fact, the drop in catches of tuna is worldwide and more the drop is sharper in other areas than in the Indian Ocean?

Dr. Boolell: Yes, we have downloaded some information and it reflects what I have stated in the reply. Tuna catches in the Indian Ocean which accounts for roughly part of the global haul dropped by a third last year to the lowest level for more than a decade. But the hon. Leader of the Opposition is right to say that the catches in the different seas, for example, in Pacific is worse and in the Atlantic it is much worse.

Mr Bérenger: I heard the hon. Minister say that one of the causes could be climate change. Is there any serious scientific evidence that climate change in terms of a change in temperature has made in the Indian Ocean the tuna swim at deeper *profondeur* and that, therefore, this is affecting the catch?

Dr. Boolell: Nobody really knows except that, as I have stated, experts are divided as to whether these warm waters are the results of climate change or cyclical ocean condition. But there is an expert who has highlighted basically what the Leader of the Opposition has stated, that they have descended from the normal level of about 250 metres below the surface where they could be caught to a depth of 400 metres where, apparently, they are safe. It is difficult to know whether it is due to climatic change or simply they have gone deeper.

Mr Dowarkasing: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have listened to the reply given by the hon. Minister. Regarding the drop in the catches, I just want to know whether they have considered illegal fishing as one of those reasons. I didn't hear that.

Dr. Boolell: In fact, it is one of the reasons. That's why we have to wage an intensive war on IUU because of depletion of fish stock in the Atlantic and Pacific. We have many fishing trawlers coming and fish probably illegally in our region and there is a lot of transshipment at sea. Hence, the relevance of the Ministerial Meeting which was held in Winhoek, precisely, to harmonise policy as how best to wage war on IUU.

Mr Bérenger: Mr Speaker, Sir, I come back to the few questions I put earlier. Clearly, it is possible that it is overfishing and/or illegal fishing that is hurting us. Have we made progress insofar as roping in Taiwan without putting in question the one China policy? Taiwan ships are one of the biggest operators and yet, because of the issue between China and Taiwan, they are not on board. Therefore, the proposal was made to have the Indian Ocean Commission outside UN so that it does not hurt the feelings of the Chinese at all, but we rope in Taiwan for purposes of combating illegal and overfishing. Have we made any progress?

Dr. Boolell: Mr Speaker, Sir, progress has been made and, in fact, this is an issue that was raised and canvassed at the FAO. As long as they meet the parameters clearly defined by IOTC, we have no problem in issuing licences or they can obtain licences elsewhere. But we have to make sure that they respond to norms and standards, at all parameters set by IOTC, and hence IOTC will recognise the licences being issued to those fishing trawlers.

Mr Varma: Mr Speaker, Sir, could the hon. Minister inform the House what is being done to avoid overfishing of tuna in our waters?

Dr. Boolell: Mr Speaker, Sir, as I have stated, this is an issue which is being canvassed very forcefully. We have to make sure, first, that there is compliance to IOTC; second, to other international conventions, for example, CAMLAR, and, of course, that there is harmonisation in respect of SADC policy on waging war with regard to IUU. I must say it's a difficult task given the wide Exclusive Economic Zone. But, we must have a harmonisation policy to ensure that we are being effective.

Mr Dowarkasing: Mr Speaker, Sir, in terms of illegal fishing and surveillance of our EEZ, can I know whether, in the recent agreement with Seychelles, that has been taken on board and, if so, what has been the outcome?

Dr. Boolell: Mr Speaker, Sir, this issue was discussed in Seychelles when there was the ministerial conference organised by the Indian Ocean Commission. There is a unit, which is probably going to be set up in Reunion Island, with the assistance of the French Government, precisely in respect of vessel monitoring surveillance system.

Mr Varma: Mr Speaker, Sir, as far as surveillance of the EEZ is concerned, will the hon. Minister inform the House what is being done specifically to combat overfishing?

Dr. Boolell: Mr Speaker, Sir, as I have stated, it can be an arduous task. We have no choice but to interact very forcefully with countries of the region. We also have to rely upon support from EU. IOTC, of course, makes it quite clear that only fishing trawlers that are registered and recognised by IOTC are allowed to be given licences. You may recall also, Sir, that a new Fisheries & Marine Resources Bill was brought, to ensure that we are in compliance with legislation being set by other SADC countries.

Mr Varma: Mr Speaker, Sir, could the hon. Minister inform the House what is the frequency the surveillance is done?

Dr. Boolell: Mr Speaker, Sir, there is frequent surveillance, because the loss can be as high as €1.5 billion to countries of the region. For other countries belonging to the SADC, it can be as high as €6 billion. It's an industry with a huge turnover. We are constantly on the watch, to ensure that there is proper vessel monitoring system. But, as I said, it's an arduous task.

SECONDARY SCHOOLS –WORKING HOURS – EXTENSION

(No. B/1172) Mr J. C. Barbier (Third Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Education & Human Resources whether, in regard to the recommendation of the Pay Research Bureau for the educators to work up to 1500 hrs, he will state if it is being implemented and, if so, the measures that are being taken in relation thereto.

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I shall reply to PQs B/1172, B/1177 and B/1180 together, as they pertain to the same issue.

I would like, first of all, to thank the hon. Members for giving me the opportunity to clarify matters regarding the issue of the extension of hours of work of secondary schools and also to place the whole issue in its proper perspective.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to remind the House that the PRB Report 2008 has made detailed recommendations for secondary schools. Some of these recommendations have been implemented *ipso facto* as from 01 July 2008 like, for example, salary, whereas the specific recommendations concerning hours of work is implementable as from 01 August 2008 according to the PRB itself.

In making these recommendations, PRB has taken into consideration the remuneration packages of educators (secondary). All employees, through the signing of the appropriate option forms, have agreed to the recommendations contained therein.

For the implementation of the detailed recommendations, my Ministry has set up a committee under the chairmanship of a PAS.

One of the recommendations to be implemented as from 01 August 2008 relate to the extension of hours of work to 1500 hrs. Accordingly, all schools have been informed that working hours of secondary schools as from 11 August (i.e. the beginning of the 3rd term) will be 1500 hours.

As for the increase of the number of teaching periods from 28 to 30 (i.e. 1120 minutes to 1200 minutes), this will be implemented as from 1st term of 2009. This has been decided in order to allow for timetable planning at the level of schools and also not to disrupt the existing timetable arrangements as far as students are concerned.

A proposal for a new timetable has been sent to schools. My Ministry has noted reactions and received representations, and the committee looking after the implementation will consider them and also meet the stakeholders.

In the spirit of the Programme Based Budgeting, where specific targets have been spelt out and which have to be met, schools have to be managed on the basis of clearly spelt out objectives, outputs and Key Performance Indicators. Opportunity has, therefore, been taken by the

committee to correct anomalous situation or situations that have given rise to a certain amount of abuses and inequity, which can adversely impact on the achievement of the set targets and KPIs.

The direct responsibilities of the Heads of schools as reporting and accounting officers have, therefore, been strengthened.

It is in the light of the foregoing that the Movement Book, which allowed educators to leave frequently their place of work when they were not teaching without the Head of school being aware of same, has been removed. Such situation has led to a lack of control on the movement of staff, and a consequential abuse thereof. However, educators will still be allowed to leave school on permission from the Rector who will record all such movements in a special permission book for transparency and accountability purposes, which will remain in his/her custody. This is part of the Ministry's strategy to empower the Rectors.

These are purely internal management issues and, therefore, are not specifically contained in the PRB Report.

As regards the specific issue raised in PQ B/1177, as to whether a pedagogical survey has been carried out, I need to say that, as amply articulated at paragraphs 3 and 4 in the Circular under reference, the recommendation of the PRB has been made precisely in a context of pedagogical improvement, and educators will be required to devote the additional time to a number of tasks which are ancillary to teaching and which have so far been neglected, such as marking of homework, preparation of lesson plans, sharing and communicating information about pedagogical practices, including remedial education, addressing problems of discipline, lateness and absenteeism, and having meetings with parents.

My Ministry has already issued a press communiqué to clarify matters and to remind educators of the option they exercised, as well as the set mechanism for making representations and addressing grievances.

Mr Barbier: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister whether, in that context, he has received any letter from BEC and, if so, the contents thereof, and how he reacts to that letter?

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have received a letter, and it has to do with the timetable. As I have indicated, the timetable arrangements will be relooked for January 2009, and the committee will look at the representations made by BEC.

Mr Dayal: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Minister whether he is aware that the trend today is flexibility and not rigidity? It is also built on trust, partnership and psychological contract between administration, staff, students and other stakeholders. Is the hon. Minister aware or has he been made aware that what his Ministry has done so far is not only provoking the teaching community, but is also demotivating the whole *corps enseignant* with the tone, with the *esclavagiste* language conveyed to the teaching fraternity?

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, I will like to briefly refer to what I have said in my reply. The measures we are implemented relate to PRB, but we cannot dissociate it from the PBB. National targets have been set, and the schools are also required to work out school based targets and KPIs.

When we work out the implementation of the recommendations, we have to take into account the interests of the students first and foremost, and also the interests of parents in education.

This is the third term and it is linked to the national target set in the PBB. We do take into account that the application of this measure may cause certain inconvenience to educators, but we have to weigh the interests of the students, the need to improve their performance and the minor inconvenience which inevitably happens when we have to implement the recommendations of the PRB.

Mr Dayal: Mr Speaker, Sir, this is precisely what the hon. Minister has been doing, has been on the television rousing the parents against the teachers...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: I am sorry! The hon. Member is imputing motives on the hon. Minister.

Mr Dayal: I will put the question in a different way, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker: Yes.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Mr Dayal: The hon. Minister has just mentioned the interests of the students. We are for the interests of the students; we have no problem whatsoever with the 30 minutes extension. Therefore, Mr Speaker, Sir, I should like to know whether the hon. Minister has read the circular No. 14 of 04 August...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: We are losing time.

Mr Dayal: Mr Speaker, Sir, this is what I am going to come to. Teaching had never been and will never be, Mr Speaker, Sir, within the boundary of 8 a.m. to 2.30 or 3.00 p.m., because teachers do the work...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: I am sorry, hon. Dayal!

Mr Dayal: I am referring to the circular letter, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker: I am sorry! The hon. Member is making a statement. I would like him to put questions. I will allow some leeway, but the hon. Member has to put the question and not make statements.

Mr Dayal: With regard to asking permission from the Rector, is the hon. Minister aware that in a college in the east, a lady, responsible for that school, slapped a lady teacher who was three months pregnant? In what way can the staff avail themselves of permission? This is creating dictatorship.

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to the incident referred to by the hon. Member, if it is a private college, it has to be referred to the PSSA for appropriate action. But, coming to the substantive issue of permission, I think my hon. friend is an experienced teacher like other teachers in this House. We have what we call the attendance register where teachers have to sign in...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Listen to the answer first, then supplementary questions can be put!

Mr Gokhool: They don't listen and then they ask questions.

Mr Speaker: Carry on.

Mr Gokhool: The attendance register is there for staff to sign in and sign out. This issue of movement book has been there for some years. Mr Speaker, Sir, I went to visit a school. At 11 o'clock a teacher was taking her car and going home. I asked the teacher what is happening. She said: "I have finished my teaching at 11.30 and I am going home." The second question I asked: is the Rector of the school aware of it? When I checked with the Rector, he was not aware. Why? Because the movement book is kept in the staff room or is with the Usher. What we are trying to do is that, in line with the need to ensure the national performance indicators are achieved, we are making Rectors responsible for all resources.

We are not removing the permission, because if educators have to leave, the only change is that, instead of signing the movement book which is at the staff room or at the Usher's room, they have to sign it with the Rector. The Rector will have to know where the staff is, because at times we have emergencies, we have to replace staff or there are other matters to be addressed. We are making the Rector responsible for all resources and management of the school. It is very simple. I know it is going to cause inconvenience to certain people who were utilising the movement book to be away and managing the time by themselves. I think this is not on, we are changing this.

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have listened carefully to the reply of the hon. Minister. Will he agree that, with the implementation of such a simple measure, he has created so much frustration among the teaching community in the country, especially, at a time where we are during the last term in most of the colleges and schools in the country?

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, there is a simple principle. Privileges of position should be accompanied by the responsibilities of the position. The teachers/educators have signed the option form. Do you know that the packages of teachers have been increased between Rs8,000 to Rs10,000 per month? I am just implementing what the PRB has recommended, that the hours of work should be extended to 15.00 hrs. Now, if the educators have problems with that, they have to make their representations according to the procedure with the PRB.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: I know that this is a question of national importance, I will have to give some more time.

Mr Varma: Mr Speaker, Sir, the decision has been taken to extend the hours of school from 14.30 to 15.00 hrs and the hon. Minister has stated that it is for marking purposes, meeting parents, etc. Will he inform the House whether any plan has been drawn up by his Ministry that on each specific day of the week what the teachers are expected to do, say, on Monday, to meet parents, on Tuesday, to do this or that, etc? Is there any plan of that sort?

Mr Gokhool: This is where hon. Dayal has been talking about flexibility. The overall policy is that school hours should be extended by 30 minutes. How this should be used productively, we are not prescribing it, we are just indicating a number of examples. Hon. Dayal and other teachers know that, in a class, we do have certain pupils who have certain difficulties of a personal nature, or maybe of a pedagogical nature. When will these pupils meet the teachers? There may be need for remedial education. This is the time allotted. Either they can meet the students to look at their personal problems...

(Interruptions)

Because they don't know the reality of the school, that's why they are speaking like that!

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! Order!

Mr Gokhool: I know the reality of the school. If a pupil has a problem to discuss with the teacher, the best time is after classes, to take permission with the parents and meet the teacher. We are promoting a strategy of remedial education. When will the remedial education activities take place? Thirdly, Mr Speaker, Sir, if a parent has to meet a teacher, he can do so after classes. Parents are very interested with the education of their children. Do you know that some schools were having PTA meetings at 8.30/9.00 o'clock?

(Interruptions)

I can't accept that because, at that time, parents are at work. They should be able to come at a time which is convenient to them and not convenient to certain people in the organisation.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! I will expect short questions and short answers, because there are so many Members who are interested with this issue and want to put questions.

Mr Guinness: Can I ask the hon. Minister whether he is prepared to withdraw this circular letter, because this is a very bad tool in the hand of certain managers who act like butchers?

Mr Gokhool: The proposal to remove the circular is not on, because we are implementing the recommendation gradually. There are about 20 recommendations of PRB and we are implementing them gradually. The only measure we are implementing now is that school hours be extended to 3.00 p.m. and a number of activities can be undertaken. A valid point was made by hon. Guinness, Mr Speaker, Sir, as regards private colleges. We have the Manager and the Rector. The Rector is the pedagogical Head and, I think, the Managers should leave the Rectors to manage the pedagogy, the time-table and so on. I am going to make this clear, because we have to achieve the national targets and if Managers interfere with the work of Rectors, I don't think this is the right condition. We have to clarify this. Managers have their responsibilities and Rectors have their responsibilities

as regards pedagogy and they should not mix it up. Because who speaks on behalf of the private colleges? It is the Managers. But, it should be the Rectors who should speak about educational matters relating to pedagogy, because they are daily concerned with the performance of the students. So, I agree with the hon. Member and I will clarify that.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Speaker, Sir, the Minister stated that teachers had signed the option forms. Would he confirm to the House that teachers never refused to work for the additional 30 minutes, that this was not the issue, but the fact was that they were asked to stay in school when students were away from school?

Mr Gokhool: Sir, we have indicated that all students do not have to stay at school, but there are certain students who have personal problems and they need pastoral care or there are students who have certain difficulties with certain subjects where they will require remedial education. Who knows best than the teacher who are the students who have these difficulties? This is one part of activity.

(Interruptions)

Mr Léopold: Mr Speaker, Sir, presently there are certain schools which are starting at 8 o'clock, others at 8.05 a.m., 8.10 a.m., 8.15 a.m., 8.25 a.m. 8..30 a.m. and all are finishing at 15.00 hours. Does the Minister think that this is creating a certain frustration among teachers and it is a case of treatment of *deux poids, deux mesures*?

Mr Gokhool: This point has been made and we have taken it into account because the colleges start at different hours in the morning. We have allowed the colleges to start at the time that they use to start, but for the 30 minutes, we have already given an indication of the type of activities that can be conducted, but we have to start implementing the recommendation of the PRB. Let me also tell our hon. Members who are teachers that the biggest difficulty will arise not with this one, but with the implementation of the Performance Management System and the Unions are dead against it. I'll have to handle that as well because I'll have to implement the Performance Management System. We measure the performance, we look at the performance of students. When it comes to the performance of teachers, they will say they do not want it, but we have to implement it.

Mr Varma: Mr Speaker, Sir, will the Minister agree that this decision should have been implemented on a pilot scheme because it might happen, in the future, that teachers stay in schools from 14.30 p.m. to 15.00 p.m., doing nothing?

Mr Gokhool: I have to quote what some teachers say, that during those 30 mins, they will '*tourne pouce ou bien touye mouche*'. But this is a lack of imagination and a lack of creativity. Let me just state why we have changed the title of teacher to educator. It is because the role of educator is broader now, it is not only teaching and learning. They have to get involved in the community life of the school and that's why we have given time and they have to be imaginative. They cannot come and say: what are we going to do? *Touye mouche ou tourne pouce?*

Mr Dayal: Mr Speaker, Sir, I listened very attentively to the hon. Minister when he said that there is abuse made by certain teachers. In each department there are *brebis galeuses* and even in this House we have *brebis galeuses*...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! No, the hon. Member cannot! So far as the *brebis galeuses* are outside the House, it is alright. Referring to hon. Members as *brebis galeuses* is out of order, he should withdraw.

Mr Dayal: I withdraw it in this House.

(Interruptions)

Why does not the hon. Minister consider the advisability of dealing with those *brebis galeuses* instead of penalising the whole lot of teachers?

Mr Gokhool: It is not penalising. When you have to ask for explanation, the Rector is often in difficulty to provide same. We are giving the responsibility for accountability to the Rectors. We are not withdrawing the permission. In fact, the circular is clear. If they want to leave for 30 minutes, they go and see the Rector and the permission will be granted, but

it will be properly recorded for accountability purposes. I cannot really understand the difficulty of the hon. Member.

Mrs Martin: M. le président, le ministre a mentionné les 30 minutes additionnelles comme étant une panacée pour régler tous les problèmes auxquels les étudiants et les professeurs font face. Je voudrais savoir si tous les problèmes, dont le ministre fait mention, ne sont pas déjà adressés dans la journée normale d'un professeur ? Y a-t-il eu un cas où un professeur a refusé de rencontrer un parent ou refuser d'aider un élève ?

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, if a parent wants to meet a teacher and we do not have these 30 minutes, when will the parents meet the teachers?

(Interruptions)

Recess time is too short! It is not possible to attend to parents in ten minutes.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Let the Minister answer!

Mr Gokhool: What teachers would normally do is to leave their classes and attend to the parents. What about staff and heads of department meetings? When are they held? Aren't they held during working hours? That's why we are saying that most meetings should be held later on during the 30 minutes time. You will not have to do everything during the 30 minutes time

Mr Jhugroo: M. le président...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Please keep quiet!

Mr Jhugroo: Est-ce que je peux demander au ministre si des études approfondies ont été faites parce que le pays a un problème très grave qu'est la circulation routière ? Si tous les collègues, toutes les écoles terminent à la même heure, qu'est-ce qui va se passer concernant la circulation routière dans le pays ?

Mr Gokhool : M. le président, il y a un petit changement...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker : Order, please!

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, si ce petit changement....

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: I have said order. The House is becoming like a market place!

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, this is a minor change and it is generating so much heat. People will realise where the resistance is. We are just changing the closing time of schools to 3 o'clock and that will concern only the teachers, the educators. It will not concern the students. The students will leave, as usual, at 2.25 p.m or 2.30 p.m. and they will come at the time that they are used to come. I do not think there is any problem of transport which the hon. Member is referring to.

Mr Bundhoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister just stated that it is only a matter of students and the teacher. May I ask the Minister if he is aware that a very sizeable percentage of teachers travel by school bus and that this, in itself, acts as a deterrent, for insecurity and indiscipline in all these school buses? Now that we are departing from this principle and also the very principle of installing discipline within and outside school hours, how will the present policy ensure discipline and security in school buses?

Mr Gokhool: Very simple, Mr Speaker, Sir. The problems of indiscipline which occur at the schools begin in the classrooms and have to be handled at the level of the school first. That is where the teacher has personal contacts with the students, that is where the problems of classroom discipline should be managed first, then we can look at problems of discipline in the buses...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! Order!

(Interruptions)

Mr Gokhool: The hon. Member has to listen to my answer though he does not agree.

(Interruptions)

Am I provoking? Today I have decided not to provoke anybody.

Mr Speaker: The issue itself is provocative. What can I do?

Mr Gokhool: What I am saying is that the hon. Member is raising the issue of indiscipline. Indiscipline has to be tackled at the level of the classroom, at the school. There is indiscipline in buses. But we have to know of our priorities. I am looking at the interest of the students first and this is the dertermining factor since I became Minister; I am not going to depart from this principle.

Mr Gunness: The hon. Minister is saying time and again PRB report and what not. The PRB report states 30 periods whereas the circular of the Minister says that next year it will be 34 periods teaching time. Where is it in the PRB report that it will be compulsory next year for students to take eight subjects? And we know what financial difficulty it means for slow learning students. In the circular, it is said 30 periods have to be taught; here, the hon. Minister is saying 34, eight subjects are compulsory. Where is it said in the PRB report?

Mr Gokhool: I have said in my answer that a committee has been set up. There have been reactions and representations with regard to the timetable arrangement, that is, about 28 to 30 periods, but this, I have said, will be looked into and discussions will be held with the stakeholders before we arrive at a final decision. When I open up to dialogue, people say I am not dialoguing, but this is dialogue.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Mr Speaker, Sir, I'll come back to the reply made by the hon. Minister. At the beginning of his reply, he said that this measure is a temporary one and that students will leave school at 3 o'clock at from 2009; next he just said that there is no problem for students because students will continue to leave at 2.30. Which is which? Is that a temporary measure and a full measure will be implemented in 2009?

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, in my answer, I don't think I have stated that students will leave at 3 o'clock. I have said that they will leave at 2.25 and 2.30. This is what I have said. I have not said...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order please!

Mr Dayal: Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to ask the hon. Minister how he will reconcile with what is in this reprehensible circular letter where it says: 'Similarly, Heads of departments will be required to teach 28 periods of 35 minutes, totalling 980 minutes, and in the PRB report, vol. I, page 286, recommendation 14.22.71: 'We also recommend that education officers now restyled educators performing the duties of Heads of department should continue to teach subjects of specialisation for a maximum of 25 periods'. Maximum means that there is a ceiling. It could be 20, 25 and here it says 28 periods. This is against the recommendation of the PRB report.

Mr Gokhool: The difficulty in this House is that when you answer people don't listen. I have already said that the matter of the timetabling 28 to 30 periods for educators and those of Heads of departments will be discussed in the implementation committee because there have been representations. The only measure which is being implemented is that school hours will be extended to 3 o'clock. That is all.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: I have heard the hon. Minister state again and again that he is sticking to the PRB report. I'll just ask the hon. Minister whether he has taken note of his circular letter where he states that teachers have been neglecting work ancillary to teaching. May I ask the Minister what he meant by that? Whether he is stating that teachers have not been doing that work and whether he thinks that within 30 minutes teachers will manage to do that work if they have not been doing it till now.

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have said certain ancillary activities have been neglected. I have not said that all teachers are doing that. In fact, I have to pay tribute to many teachers who are doing their work very professionally. But I have also received complaints and we have got representations from parents that children do not receive any homework. How do you reinforce teaching and learning when children are not given a little bit of homework? We are recommending, we are asking the teachers to make that extra effort on behalf of the children of the Republic of Mauritius. That is all.

Mr Jhugroo: Will the hon. Minister confirm that, as from January next year, the students will leave school 30 minutes earlier than teachers?

Mr Gokhool: This matter will be looked into because we have received representations. I cannot now, having received the representations, decide unilaterally. The stakeholders wanted to discuss the matter. We have asked them to come forward; we will discuss the matter and then we will finalise the timetable for 2009.

Mr Speaker: Last question, hon. Dayal!

Mr Dayal: Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to the proposed timetabling, is the hon. Minister aware that, at the MGI and all the several MGSS, there already exists nine periods. The first period is 40 minutes, there are eight periods of 35 minutes. When it is added, it is 320 minutes daily, multiplied by 5, it is 1,600 minutes teaching time, break, lunch time are not included. In this one, there are nine periods of 35 minutes; 9 times 35 is 1,575. This means that what MGI has been doing for several decades is 25 minutes more. Now the hon. Minister is proposing 1,575 minutes; this is already being implemented at the MGI, year in year out, in all the SSS we are having performance to the tune of 100%. Is the hon. Minister saying that at the MGI

teachers are not performing? Can the hon. Minister confirm to the House that all teachers are not performing, all teachers are *brebis galeuses*?

Mr Gokhool: I'll only comment on the relevant part of the question where the MGI does more work, that is, the hours of work are longer than what is being recommended. If they are doing more and they want to continue doing more, there is no problem about that. We are going by the norm which has been recommended by the PRB and if MGI wants to do more for the students, they are most welcome.

NHDC – CITÉ LA CURE & LA CROISÉE, VALLÉE DES PRÊTRES – INHABITANTS – COMPLAINTS

(No. B/1173) Mrs B. Juggoo (First Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Housing and Lands whether, in regard to the NHDC complex of Cité La Cure and that of La Croisée, Vallée des Prêtres, he will state if he has received complaints from the inhabitants thereof in relation to security problems they are facing within the complexes and, if so, indicate the remedial actions, if any, that have been or will be taken.

Mr Dulull: Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the House that the NHDC Ltd. is the executive arm of Government for the construction of housing units and once these housing units have been delivered to the beneficiaries, it is the responsibility of the Syndic to maintain and upkeep common areas. Any problems that may arise are referred by the Syndic to the competent authorities for appropriate action.

Sir, in regard of NHDC Complex of Cité La Cure, I am aware of the representations made by the inhabitants thereof regarding security problems and cases of theft. In view of the sensitivity of the problems in the region, Government has, in its wisdom, exceptionally agreed to disburse funds for the construction of a 880 m boundary block wall around the Housing Estate to avoid further social tension.

In regard to the NHDC Housing Complex at La Croisée, Vallée des Prêtres, I am informed by the NHDC that the Syndic of the Housing Estate has reported several thefts to competent authorities. Moreover, a meeting was held with the inhabitants whereby the NHDC advised the Syndic to carry out any remedial work for the upgrading of the fence around the housing estate.

Mrs Juggoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, is the hon. Minister aware that there was a meeting held last year at the NHDC Rose Hill where it was resolved that a wall would be erected at the NHDC complex of La croisée Vallée des Prêtres for security purposes?

Mr Dulull: Had there been a meeting with NHDC and it had been agreed as per the hon. Member, I think they will have to stand by their word.

Mrs Juggoo: Concerning the wall that is being erected, the hon. Minister has just mentioned that it is 1.5 metres. It is just a small thing that is not good for security purposes. Can the hon. Minister consider to have a wall of two metres being erected as from the reservoir block water pump to the block A of the NHDC flat of Cité La Cure?

Mr Dulull: I can assure the hon. Member that we will look into it and make sure that the wall serves its purpose.

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Speaker, Sir, I heard the hon. Minister, in his reply, stating the sensitive nature of the problem at NHDC Cité la Cure. Can he let us know what is that sensitive nature of the problem?

Mr Dulull: We have cases of reported theft and regular intrusion in the housing complex by people in the vicinity.

Mrs Juggoo: Is the hon. Minister aware that these thefts happen because at the entrance of the whole complex of 336 flats, there is no proper entrance. It is just a fencing which is an eyesore. Can the hon. Minister consider having, as promised at the NHDC meeting as well, fencing made out of a wall of maybe one metre and a fencing erected?

Mr Dulull: I wish to remind the hon. Member that the housing complex was constructed in 1994 and care should have been taken at that time to make it a proper housing estate with security and adequate fencing. However, with the means and funding available at NHDC, we are trying to remedy the situation and we will make sure to give satisfaction to the inhabitants.

MARE D'ALBERT – SWIMMING POOL – CONSTRUCTION

(No. B/1174) Mr G. Guinness (Third Member for Montagne Blanche and GRSE) asked the Minister of Youth and Sports whether, in regard to the construction of the swimming pool of Mare d'Albert, he will state –

- (a) the name of the contractor;
- (b) the date on which the contract was awarded, indicating the terms and conditions thereof;
- (c) the date on which the project was completed, and
- (d) the amount of liquidated damages, if any -
 - (i) claimed from the contractor, and
 - (ii) written off

Mr Tang Wah Hing: Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the House that the name of the contractor who was awarded the contract for the construction of the Mare d'Albert Swimming Pool is PAD & Co. Ltd.

Concerning part (b), the contract was awarded in August 2004 on the terms and conditions applicable to Government contractors for building projects.

With regard to part (c), the handing over of the swimming pool was done in June 2008.

With regard to part (d), as a matter of fact, Mr Speaker, Sir, the issue of liquidated damages does not arise in this case. In fact, PAD & Co. Ltd had claimed about Rs8.2 m for breach of contract, non payment of works performed, as well as for modification and variations in scope or works. The contractor had demobilised from site in July 2006 and had, in February 2007, entered a case in Court.

However, the Ministry of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport Shipping (MPI) was of the view that, in accordance with the conditions of the contract, PAD & Co. Ltd was liable to pay damages for delay in project execution.

Several meetings were held. However, the parties had reached a deadlock. The matter was referred to the State Law Office on several occasions and we were advised that further meetings be held with all parties concerned to reach an amicable settlement. It is to be pointed out that Court cases usually involve tedious and lengthy processes.

Accordingly, PAD & Co. Ltd agreed to withdraw its case in Court and resumed works on site. Government had, in January 2008, agreed to the settlement of the claim of the contractor at the earliest possible so that the swimming pool could be commissioned.

Mr Guinness: Mr Speaker, Sir, the MPI requested the Ministry - it is the MPI which supervises the work - that liquidated damages be claimed from the contractor. Can I know what amount the MPI claimed from the contractor?

Mr Tang Wah Hing: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have already answered the question. It is Rs8.2 m.

Mr Guinness: Mr Speaker, Sir, I understand that this sum of Rs8.2 m. has not been claimed from the contractor. It was retained and given back to him. I want to know from the hon. Minister whether the sum of Rs8.2 m. has been paid by the contractor.

Mr Tang Wah Hing: Actually, the sum which has been disbursed from my Ministry is the amount of Rs4,194,852.

Mr Guinness: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister said that there was a settlement between the client Ministry, which is the Ministry of Youth and Sports, and the contractor, and the settlement was that no liquidated damages will be claimed from the contractor. Am I right?

Mr Tang Wah Hing: Yes.

Mr Guinness: Can I know from the hon. Minister whether any certificate has been obtained from the MPI stating that the settlement can be done like that?

Mr Tang Wah Hing: Yes, of course.

Mr Guinness: Is the hon. Minister prepared to table a copy of the certificate from the MPI?

Mr Tang Wah Hing: I have no problem to table it, Mr Speaker, Sir.

HAJJ ORGANISERS – BOND VALUE & REGISTRATION FEES

(No. B/1175) Mr S. Soodhun (Fifth Member for La Caverne and Phoenix) asked the Minister of Arts and Culture whether, in regard to the Hajj, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Islamic Cultural Centre, information as to if the Centre has received complaints from the organisers thereof regarding the changes in the bond value and the registration fees payable.

Mr Gowressoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, the answer is no.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order, now!

Mr Soodhun: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister should know that the regulation we are talking is in my hand ...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! Hon. Soodhun, you may put the question now!

Mr Soodhun: Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Minister inform the House what is actually the sum that the Hajj organisers have to pay as bond?

Mr Gowressoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I don't know the actual price which Hajj organisers will have to pay.

Mr Soodhun: Mr Speaker, Sir, the answer is "no" and the simple answer is that the sum does exist. The hon. Minister must be aware of it

when he says “no”. The PQ which has been put to him relates as to whether there is any change in the bond value.

Mr Speaker: The hon. Minister has said ‘no’!

Mr Soodhun: He must be aware about the sum. How can he say ‘no’?

Mr Gowressoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I want to know from the hon. Member: what is the sum?

Mr Speaker: The hon. Minister cannot put questions, he must answer questions. The first answer was “no.” What is the second question of the hon. Member?

Mr Soodhun: Can the hon. Minister inform the House as to the registration fees payable?

Mr Gowressoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I refer the hon. Member to the statement made by my colleague, the hon. Minister of Public Utilities, on Tuesday 05 August in this House on the last Hajj pilgrimage and to the reply I made to PQ B/1124 last week, which was circulated in the absence of the hon. Member.

Mr Soodhun: The answer is so simple, Mr Speaker, Sir. According to information that the hon. Minister has at hand, can he inform the House of the registration fees payable? Because according to my information, the fees have been increased.

Mr Speaker: I am sorry, hon. Soodhun, a question was asked and a written answer was given. In the written answer, do you have the reply that you are seeking now?

Mr Soodhun: No, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker: The hon. Member should tell the hon. Minister that there is no reply there.

Mr Soodhun: This is why I would like to know from the hon. Minister - because the last answer does not mention about the actual registration fees - whether any registration fees are applied to the Hajj organisers.

Mr Gowressoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, the registration fees is Rs10,000. The security bond has been increased from Rs250,000 to Rs750,000.

Mr Soodhun: Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to know when the regulation was amended to increase the registration fees from Rs5,000 to Rs10,000 and the security bond from Rs250,000 to Rs750,000.

Mr Gowressoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, in my reply to PQ B/1124, there is no regulation as such, and I read it again -

“The Saudi Authorities have requested that this number be increased to 200 in order that organisers may provide better accommodation to their pilgrims and to improve the level of transport.
The Islamic Cultural Centre subsequently requested the Saudi Authorities to bring the minimum level for Mauritius to 150 (...) Consequently, as the Islamic Cultural Centre Board is empowered under Section 3 (...)”

That is what the hon. Member wants to know.

“(...) and 6 of the Islamic Cultural Centre Trust Fund Regulations 2001, to issue permits to organisers on such terms and conditions as it thinks fit, the Board decided to increase the security bond proportionately from Rs250,000 to Rs750,000 (...)”

(Interruptions)

This year, Mr Speaker, Sir!

Mr Soodhun: Can the hon. Minister inform the House who is empowered to sort out a regulation? Is it the Minister or the Board?

Mr Gowressoo: The Islamic Cultural Centre, that is, the Board, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Lauthan: The bond and the greement regulation forms part and parcel of an agreement document handed over by the hon. Minister of Public Utilities lately. In the meantime, he has shifted the responsibility to the Ministry of Arts and Culture. I want to ask the Minister if he taken cognizance of this agreement.

Mr Gowreesoo: Yes.

Mr Lauthan: If he has, is he aware that the agreement refers to 42 points. Any agreement between two parties, Mr Speaker, Sir, is bilateral in nature and here 42 points are unilateral and at no place does the Islamic Cultural Centre take the responsibility to remedy the situation following the shortcomings of its mission last year.

Mr Gowreesoo: What is the question, Mr Speaker, Sir?

Mr Speaker: Apparently the question is that the agreement is a unilateral agreement and that the Islamic Cultural Centre has no say in the matter. Is that the question?

Mr Lauthan: Yes.

Mr Gowreesoo: There has been a bilateral agreement between the Islamic Cultural Centre and the Hajj operators and they have signed it.

BANK OF MAURITIUS – EMPLOYEES SUSPENSION/DISMISSAL

(No. B/1176) Mr S. Dayal (Second Member for Quartier Militaire and Moka) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Bank of Mauritius, information as to the number of its employees who have been either suspended or dismissed, since March 2008 to date, indicating the reasons therefor, in each case.

The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development (Dr. R. Sithanen): Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Bank as follows: since March 2008, there are two employees who have been dismissed and one is under suspension.

Mr Dayal: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Deputy Prime Minister whether he is aware that one Mr Doobree received a letter of suspension on 21 March at around noon and it appeared in “Le Matinal” on 21 March in the morning? I can ...

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

Mr Dayal: The question is: Is the hon. Deputy Prime Minister aware?

Dr. Sithanen: I am not aware. Mr Speaker, Sir, I see the hon. Member is getting ready for many questions. Obviously, I do not control his agenda. Let me, right from the outset, say that it is a very embarrassing situation for me because when I requested information, the Bank of Mauritius says that it is an independent body and that I should not give information and, on the other hand, there is much information circulating on many issues in the public. So, I’ll ask the hon. Member to take this into account. I refuse to give the initial answer because there is other information circulating. I am not aware of the dates when the letter of suspension was issued.

Mr Dayal: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am going to demonstrate that this is the case of constructive dismissal. My second question is: Is the hon. Deputy Prime Minister aware that in one of the charges labelled against Mr Doobree was : “You failed to comply with the instruction of Mr Sooben.” Mr Sooben is an officer very much junior to him and very much lower in rank to him. Is not a case of humiliation and victimisation on the part of the Governor?

Dr. Sithanen: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have the answer from the Bank of Mauritius. Again, I have no choice than to rely on the answer from the Bank of Mauritius even though ...

(Interruptions)

.. even though that gentleman has written to me and to the Prime Minister to give a completely different version from what is contained in the file that I have received from the Bank of Mauritius.

Mr Dayal: Mr Speaker, Sir, the said Mr Doubree was requested to give explanation, which he did on 24 March and, at the same time, the same explanation was given to the CCID which did not retain any charges against him. According to the Bank of Mauritius conditions of service and disciplinary procedures I am going to read

Mr Speaker: There is no need to read.

Mr Dayal: It is very important, Mr Speaker, Sir. At 2.6.4, it is said - “an employee acquitted of a criminal charge in any Court shall not be dismissed or otherwise punished on any charge upon which he has been acquitted.”

And on 06 August, he has been dismissed.

Dr. Sithanen: Mr Speaker, Sir, there are documents circulating which state exactly what the hon. Member has said. The reply I have from the Bank of Mauritius is different. And again, what do I do? I do not want to take the time of the House to give the explanation of the Central Bank. They said that they have set up a Disciplinary Committee and I have asked a specific question: what did the Police inquiry reveal? I do not have any answer, but the answer I have from the papers that are circulating is that the Police did not find any charge against the gentleman whose name has been mentioned.

Mr Dayal: Mr Speaker, Sir, is the hon. Minister aware that Mr Doobree was proposed a trade-off, a deal, ‘*un mari*’ deal, to the effect that if he would give statement incriminating other officers, then, he will be reinstated? I can say that there is even an audio record of this ignominious deal? It is in a secured custody and as and when required it will be out.

Dr. Sithanen: Mr Speaker, Sir, the gentleman lives in my Constituency. He did come to see me and he did inform me about what is being said by the hon. Member. The version of the Central Bank is different. There is another letter that is circulating which is unsigned and where reference is made to what the hon. Member is alluding. But, Mr Speaker, Sir, I am only a Minister that sits in my office and I am incapable of knowing who is saying the truth. I must be very honest and that is why I did not give the standard reply that I usually give for the Bank of Mauritius in terms of secrecy, confidentiality and independence. It is quite a tricky issue.

Mr Bundhoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have two questions. The first one: may I ask the hon. Deputy Prime Minister if he is aware that some of the members of the Board of Directors from the Bank of Mauritius have written letters complaining about the way the Governor behaves and the way he takes decisions, in particular, with the cases of dismissal and suspension that we are discussing at the moment?

Dr. Sithanen: Again, Mr Speaker, Sir, there are two versions.

Mr Speaker: Whether the hon. Deputy Prime Minister has received letters from the Board of Directors?

Dr. Sithanen: Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir. The letter is also copied to the hon. Prime Minister. With respect to the specific case, again, I have asked the question about what exactly happened. If he has been sacked, he is entitled to seek redress from the Board, but I am also told that the Board has not been apprised of the request from that person. The answer I get from the Central Bank is different. I spent my time this morning trying to find information on MRA and on the Central Bank. I have said it even in the case of the MRA. You received two versions and what do you do? I do not have a private investigator. I am not Inspector Colombo. I have to rely on institutions that are paid by the State to fulfil their functions. The hon. Member spoke to me and I told him that I do not know. This is the situation, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Bundhoo: May I ask the hon. Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance whether he has taken cognizance of a circular or a letter that has been circulating with regard to the bedside manner, attitudes and dictatorial ways of the Governor of the Bank of Mauritius? This very letter or circular highlights some 58 malpractices that are happening at the Bank of Mauritius and, if the hon. Deputy Prime Minister is not aware, with your permission, Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to give him a copy of the circular letter with regard to the malpractices of the Governor of the Bank of Mauritius.

Mr Speaker: If the hon. Member is going to lay this letter on the Table of the House, he will have to certify it. If he gives it to the hon. Deputy Prime Minister directly, then there is no problem.

Mr Bundhoo: With your permission, Mr Speaker, Sir, I am going to give it to the hon. Deputy Prime Minister.

(Interruptions)

Dr. Sithanen: Yes, I have a copy! As I said, Mr Speaker, Sir, that is why in some cases I try to do my best to get the information and then I try to make a comparison between what I think is the correct answer and the answer that is submitted to me. Many Members on the other side have been Ministers and they know that; I try to be fair to Parliament and give an honest answer. In this particular case, there are so many documents that are in circulation, including this one. I have a copy since one week and many people have received it. I think it is copied to the hon. Leader of the Opposition also.

Mr Jhugroo: I thank the hon. Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance for his reply. But, when we, Members, from this side of the House, ask questions about the Bank of Mauritius, we do not get any reply from him, but today

Mr Speaker: No, that is out of order!

Mr Bundhoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, now that the hon. Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance has said that he has had a copy of this document for some time, can I ask him, as a responsible, able, and capable Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance...

Mr Speaker: There is no need to go on like that.

Mr Bundhoo: May I ask him what has he done with these documents?

Dr. Sithanen: Mr Speaker, Sir, let me, with your permission...

Mr Speaker: The hon. Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance wants to respond to the criticism which has been made against him.

Dr. Sithanen: No, it is a fair point, because as I said, there are cases which are clear-cut and I do invoke confidentiality. But, in this particular case, it relates to people; and there are many versions that are circulating. If the hon. Member had asked me a question on the Bank of Mauritius or on any Bank where confidentiality is crucial, I would not have answered. You know that very well. In this particular case, all these facts are in circulation. For the sake of transparency, I have tried to ignore the initial answer given to me by the Bank of Mauritius and attempted to be fair to the House, because I know that these letters are in circulation.

As I said, I have a copy of the document. What do I do?

Mr Dayal: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance said that two persons have been sacked and one has been suspended. Can he confirm whether the person who has been suspended is the Director of IT and that he was suspended because the Governor of the Bank of Mauritius asked the password and he refused to give it, and asking the Governor to use his password instead? Upon refusal, that person was suspended because of “gross insubordination”?

Dr. Sithanen: Mr Speaker, Sir, again, there are two versions. There is the version from the Bank of Mauritius and there is a version that is contained in the letter that the gentleman has written to the Board; there is also the version contained in the letter that the hon. Chief Whip is referring to.

Mr Dayal: Mr Speaker, Sir, in the light of the answers given to this House and in view of the strained relationship between the Governor, the Board of Directors and the personnel of the Bank, and in view of the atmosphere prevailing at the Bank of Mauritius, will the hon. Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance appoint a full-fledged Commission of Enquiry in order to safeguard the institution?

Dr. Sithanen: Mr Speaker, Sir, I will have to seek legal advice on this particular issue. Just to show my good faith, Mr Speaker, Sir, I made a statement yesterday that I personally would have no problem to have a Commission of Enquiry on the allegations of Mr Cunningham. But, as I said, there are issues that I'll have to discuss, because there are important institutions involved. My personal reply, just like I said yesterday in the papers for the MRA, I have no problem as long as this does not create an institutional sclerosis or an institutional paralysis.

Mr Bérenger: We are talking about one of the most important institutions of Mauritius. The hon. Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance is in a delicate situation, because the hon. Prime Minister appoints the Governor of the Bank of Mauritius and he replies in Parliament. But, being given the fact that the present Governor pretends not to be taking any salary, which is ridiculous, and then he pressurizes in public members of the Monetary Policy Committee, to force them to follow him in a zigzagging monetary policy, which is very dangerous for Mauritius.

Thirdly, the hon. Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance said that he has received letters from Board members, complaining the way the Governor of the Bank of Mauritius behaves, and clearly there are cases of victimisation, of unfair dismissals and so on. Can I, therefore, ask the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance – he does not appoint the Governor, but he replies in the House – if he has, at least, taken up the matter with the Prime Minister and asked for his replacement?

Dr. Sithanen: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Leader of the Opposition is a very smart person and he is trying to embarrass me, and he knows my position.

(Interruptions)

I have to respect institutions, Mr Speaker, Sir. And let me be honest, it does not please me to stand up and to reply for things that I am not responsible for.

But, I am doing my job.

(Interruptions)

I have spoken to the hon. Prime Minister and I have told him what the situation is. And let me be very honest again. I agree with the first point made by the hon. Leader of the Opposition. This has been raised even by many of my colleagues here, that you don't go out and mention who has voted for what or who has not voted for what in a committee. But, as I said, I need to respect the function that I occupy and I need to respect the institution that I represent. I will raise it again with the hon. Prime Minister.

Mr Varma: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance informed the House that the employee is under suspension. Could he inform the House whether the employee will appear before a Disciplinary Committee and, if so, when?

Mr Speaker: How can the hon. Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance know?

Dr. Sithanen: I have to spend my time saying that there are two versions. One version is yes. Mauritius being a small country, everybody has access either to an MP or to a Minister, and people may think that they are not given a fair trial. The gentleman that the hon. Member is mentioning says that the trial that was meted to him was not fair.

Mr Soodhun: Mr Speaker, Sir, can Dr. the hon. Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance inform the House whether he is satisfied with the performance of the Governor of the Bank of Mauritius?

Mr Speaker: It is very difficult. The hon. Member is asking for the opinion of the hon. Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance.

Dr. Sithanen: Then the hon. Member will say in the press that I am responsible for everything.

Mr Bhagwan: Has the attention of the hon. Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance been drawn to the fact that, on many occasions, the Governor of the Bank of Mauritius has stated that: “If you are not with me, if you don’t do what I tell you to do, you are out.” Does the hon. Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance agree that the Governor of Mauritius is running the Bank of Mauritius as if it is his own property and with the blessing of the Prime Minister?

Mr Speaker: No, the hon. Member is imputing motive against the Hon. Prime Minister.

(Interruptions)

I am sorry, hon. Bhagwan!

Mr Bhagwan: It is like this!

Mr Speaker: Hon. Bhagwan, the fact that you have said “with the blessing of the Prime Minister” you have to withdraw it.

(Interruptions)

Mr Bhagwan: I am reporting what people are saying.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: You have to withdraw the allegation that you have made, namely, “with the blessing of the Prime Minister”.

Mr Bhagwan: I remove the words “with the blessing”, but as it ...

Mr Speaker: No qualification! You withdraw!

Mr Bhagwan: I withdraw, but I can add that....

Mr Speaker: No qualification! You have withdrawn or not?

Mr Bhagwan: Because he has been appointed...

Mr Speaker: I am asking you to withdraw. Have you withdrawn?

Mr Bhagwan: I withdraw and I said that he has been appointed by the Prime Minister....

Mr Speaker: Appointed, yes, but you should not impute motives.

(Interruptions)

Hon. Bhagwan, are you restating that?

Mr Bhagwan: No, Sir.

(Interruptions)

He has been appointed by the Prime Minister.

Mr Speaker: That's the law.

Mr Bundhoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance mentioned that there are one, two or three versions of what has been happening at the Bank of Mauritius and he said also that he is seeking legal advice with regard to ...

Mr Speaker: There is no need for the hon. Member to repeat.

Mr Bundhoo: ... the setting up of a Commission of Enquiry, pending legal advice. May I ask the hon. Deputy Prime Minister, within what powers in his hand as hon. Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, to see to it that, at least, for the time being, pending such time of an enquiry, the Governor of the Bank of Mauritius stops harassing the employees of the Bank?

Dr. Sithanen: I'll convey the message.

SECONDARY SCHOOLS – EDUCATORS -- WORKING HOURS

(No. B/1177) Mr S. Dayal (Second Member for Quartier Militaire and Moka) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether, in regard to the recommendation of the Pay Research Bureau to extend the working hours of the educators by thirty minutes daily, he will state if his Ministry has carried out any study of its pedagogical effect, prior to the implementation thereof.

(Vide reply to PQ. No. B/1172)

At 5.05 p.m. the sitting was suspended.