

## ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

## CRIME &amp; VIOLENCE – STUDY

**(No. B/1272) Mrs S. Hanoomanjee (Second Member for Savanne and Black River)** asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs whether, in regard to crime and violence, he will state if a study has been carried out to determine the causes thereof and if not, will he consider commissioning such a study.

**The Prime Minister:** Mr Speaker, Sir, in my reply to Private Notice Question on 29 June 2007, I informed the House that a study would be conducted on the evolution and pattern of criminal behaviour and national crime trends.

The Mauritius Research Council has been approached to conduct a study on crime and violence in the country. Preliminary consultations have been held with the major stakeholders for the conduct of the study. In the light of the consultation exercise, the Mauritius Research Council together with the Centre for Applied Social Research has prepared a research proposal setting out the proposed Terms of Reference and the objectives of the study. These are currently being finalised by my office in consultation with the Mauritius Research Council, the Police department and the Attorney-General's office. Necessary funds have been made available.

I believe the study will start around February 2009.

**Mrs Hanoomanjee:** Mr Speaker, Sir, is the hon. Prime Minister aware that there have been some studies - though not in-depth ones – which have been carried out by sociologists of the University of Mauritius and in view of the situation now, there is ground to have a solid networking. The Mauritius Research Council, the centre for applied research, was mentioned, but still can the University of Mauritius be roped in so that we can really have an in-depth study?

**The Prime Minister:** I have no objection to rope in the University of Mauritius provided they have time and they do not delay the project.

**Mrs Hanoomanjee:** Is the Prime Minister aware that there are already some studies which have been made by the University of Mauritius, but which are still in the drawers?

**The Prime Minister:** I have been told that the University of Mauritius has confirmed, in fact, that they have not carried out any research regarding crime and violence. However, in 2004, I suppose that the previous Government asked the Police Department with the technical and financial support of Safer Africa and NGO based in Pretoria to carry out a Mauritius Crime Survey which was then published.

**Mr Bérenger:** Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether the makers of that study will tap into expertise in international specialized bodies and whether they will be asked to make recommendations also?

**The Prime Minister:** We are finalising the objectives and terms of reference. I think this is something valid which we will take on board.

**Mr Dowarkasing:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Prime Minister has just stated that the studies are about to start in February. Is there any time frame where we expect the study to be completed?

**The Prime Minister:** I believe they said that it would take about 40 weeks.

**Mr Ganoo:** Will the study be made public or will it be used only for the internal use of Police or Government?

**The Prime Minister:** I notice that the previous crime survey that was done by the previous Government was made public. It was published in July 2004. Perhaps we should also make it public unless there are certain things which make us think that we should not. Sometimes if they give details of how things have been done, we will have to look at the public interest, otherwise I would have no objection.

**Mrs Hanoomanjee:** Can the hon. Prime Minister say whether, within the terms of reference of this study, it will be purely a sociological study or will it also cover a restructure of the Police Department?

**The Prime Minister:** In fact, I must say that this will help the Police in the restructuring that they have already started, I should say, of the department depending on what the studies will say.

**MORCELLEMENT RAFFRAY, TERRE ROUGE –  
LARCENY CASES**

**(No. B/1273) Mr P. Jhugroo (Third Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue)** asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs whether, in regard to larceny and larceny with violence committed in the region of Morcellement Raffray, Terre Rouge, over the last two years, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to –

- (a) the number of reported cases thereof, and
- (b) if consideration will be given for the setting up of a Police Post thereat and, if not, why not.

**The Prime Minister:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that 59 cases of larceny, committed in the region of Morcellement Raffray, Terre Rouge, for the last two years have been reported to Police. For the same period, no case of larceny with violence has been reported.

The region of Morcellement Raffray falls under the jurisdiction of the Terre Rouge Police Station which is situated at a distance of about 1.5 km. The local Police keeps a presence in the region through patrols and crackdown operations and is supported by other units such as the Criminal Investigation Division, Anti Drug Smuggling Unit, Police du Transport, Divisional Support Unit, Brigade des Mineurs and the Special Supporting Unit when required.

Given that the region is adequately serviced by the Terre Rouge Police Station, it is therefore not envisaged at this stage to set up a Police Post thereat.

However, I have requested the Commissioner of Police to look at the possibility of intensifying the policy in the region with a view to curbing larceny.

**Mr Lesjongard:** Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Prime Minister, in the 59 cases he has mentioned for the past two years, how many women have been victims of those cases of larceny?

**The Prime Minister:** I do not have the details of exactly how many women have been victims, but I can say that 24 cases are pending inquiry. One case, in fact, is in front of the court.

**Mr Lesjongard:** Can the hon. Prime Minister confirm to the House whether those cases have taken place in the afternoon?

**The Prime Minister:** I would hardly know this, Mr Speaker, Sir,

## **NATIONAL ASSEMBLY PROCEEDINGS – LIVE BROADCAST**

**(No. B/1274) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière)** asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs whether, in regard to the live broadcasting of the proceedings of the National Assembly by the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation and the private radios, he will state where matters stand as to the proposal for the setting up of a Select Committee thereon.

**The Prime Minister:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I have already indicated in the House that I am not against, I am for the idea of live broadcasting of the debates of the National Assembly. However, as I have stated in my previous replies to Parliamentary Questions on the subject, there are complex issues surrounding the live broadcast of the proceedings of the House and these

have to be addressed cautiously. For this reason, I have been in consultation with Mr Speaker, to look into their implications.

It is my understanding that the National Assembly is proceeding with the implementation of a new public address equipment comprising of both an audio and a digital recording system. If Members have noticed, on our side, people seem to have a lesser volume, they do not hear us very well.

*(Interruptions)*

We have noticed this, Mr Speaker, Sir! That digital recording system is being finalised at the Central Procurement Board. The National Assembly is in the process of issuing a letter of award to the retained bidder. Furthermore, I understand the lighting system is also being reviewed and this will be important for televising the debates. It is my understanding that the whole system might be operational by March 2009. In any case, I do not think that we have to wait until March 2009 because already, I should add, the proceedings of the National Assembly are extensively covered, especially the Private Notice Question of the Leader of the Opposition. In fact, I, myself, noticed this.

*(Interruptions)*

That is not true! This was happening when I was Leader of the Opposition! Not now! It's not true! May be my answers are long sometimes. I intend to bring the motion to the House for the setting up of a Select Committee.

**Mr Bérenger:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I am sure the hon. Prime Minister will agree that the sound system in the House has nothing to do with the decision to have live broadcasting of debates. Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister not to hide behind this and let us go forward?

**The Prime Minister:** I am not hiding, Mr Speaker, Sir. I am all for it because I think it would be to our credit if we do it. I am told that it would have to be a better system. In fact, many Members have noticed - we have complained also - that, on our side, we cannot hear the voice.

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Bhagwan:** The Prime Minister has told us about the work to be done and I consider that this has nothing to do. If they cannot start with the MBC/TV, can I ask the Prime Minister if, at least, they can start with the private radios in which the population has confidence?

**The Prime Minister:** I should add that when I was Leader of the Opposition, I was never appearing on MBC/TV. I went to complain, I went to protest, Police tried to arrest me.

*(Interruptions)*

They warned me and I said: “arrest me, if you want!”. It was the same; we should not have a selected memory. They should remember what happened when we were in the Opposition!

**Mr Ganoo:** I am being very serious about this question. I have been told that Mr Speaker has become an expert on that matter for having visited the House of Commons on a few occasions recently. Perhaps he can be given this task of producing a report which the House can consider about how this has taken place in the House of Commons and in other Parliaments. We can start with this report produced by Mr Speaker.

**The Prime Minister:** I would have no objection, but I thought, Mr Speaker, Sir, that I have to start by a motion for a Select Committee.

**Mr Speaker:** Being given that my name has been mentioned, I think this is a very complex matter. The rule of coverage is at the foundation of live broadcasting and anywhere in the world where this system had been introduced in a Parliament like ours, there has been a Select Committee which has drawn the rules of coverage amongst other things and this is what the Select Committee has to do. The Speaker cannot, unfortunately, do that on his own.

**Mr Bodha:** May I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether the Select Committee cannot be appointed and do the work in the meantime pending the exercise as far as the tender is concerned and the re-engineering of the sound system?

**The Prime Minister:** In fact that is what I said, I am bringing it. We are working on the terms of the Select Committee. I have a draft here which the Clerk of the National Assembly has sent to my office, but we are working on it.

**Mr Bhagwan:** The last reply dates back to 01 April. Can we have a time frame from the Prime Minister? It is dated 01 April and now we are nearing December, can we have a time frame?

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Order! We are losing time! Prime Minister, is there a time frame?

**The Prime Minister:** As I said to hon. Bodha just now, we are working on the terms of reference.

## **CHAGOS ARCHIPELAGO – MAURITIUS SOVEREIGNTY**

**(No. B/1275) Mr E. Guimbeau (First Member for Curepipe and Midlands)** ask the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs whether, in regard to the hardships suffered by the Chagos community, following the detachment of the Chagos Archipelago from Mauritius, he will state where matters stand concerning the different proposals that were being canvassed by the legal advisers of Government.

**The Prime Minister:** Mr Speaker, Sir, as I repeatedly mentioned in the House, Mauritius maintained and continues to maintain its rightful and legitimate claim of sovereignty over the Chagos Archipelago. This claim is based on the fact that the Chagos Archipelago was illegally excised from the Mauritian territory in violation of two United Nations General Assembly Resolutions.

As regards the question of hardship endured by the Chagossians following their removal from the Chagos Archipelago by the UK Government, I should draw the attention of the House that in July 1982 the Mauritian Government reached an agreement with the UK Government whereby the UK Government would pay into a Trust Fund to be set up under the Mauritian Statute, a sum of 4 million pounds together with 650,000 pounds (paid in 1972) as full and final settlement of any claim the Chagossians may have against the UK Government. This factor has been taken into consideration by the House of Lords in reaching its decision in the recent judgment, concerning *the application of Mr Bancoult*. The Lords of Appeal have in their "*Opinions for Judgment in the above case*" highlighted the fact that "*the importance of this judgment was that it unequivocally affirmed the validity of the 1982 settlement. The UK government had discharged its obligations to the Chagossians by payment in full and final settlement*".

Mr Speaker, Sir, I informed the House that following meetings I have had with the British Prime Minister, Mr Gordon Brown, I suggested that consultations should be held not, as the British were suggesting at our High Commission in London but, at least, for the beginning at the level of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. I can now inform the House that this has been agreed by the British Prime Minister and that the Foreign and Commonwealth Office has agreed to the holding of the first meeting of senior officials during the week starting 12 January 2009.

Different proposals are, in fact, being canvassed by our legal advisers and by our legal consultant, Mr Ian Brownlie, and we remain hopeful that we can resolve our differences with the UK Government by way of a constructive dialogue, whilst not neglecting all other avenues that are available to Mauritius under international law.

My colleague, the hon. Member will appreciate that the details of the legal advice tendered by our legal advisers are privileged information and that it would certainly not be advisable to give any details of this.

**Mr Guimbeau:** Mr Speaker, Sir, in view of this tragedy, will the Government consider helping the Chagos community to prepare a case of *crime contre l'humanité à la Cour Internationale de Justice*?

**The Prime Minister:** I did say in my answer that no avenue is being discarded. I don't want to give details of that, but we must act as a sovereign country. The Chagossians must understand that they are part of Mauritius.

**Mr Bodha:** Thank you Mr Speaker, Sir. At some point in time the issue of a common desk to address this issue of Chagos Archipelago and the sovereignty was raised. May I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether he can consider that idea. Second, I think the hon. Attorney-General promised a kit with all documents which are available on the Chagos issue, including the historical background and the court cases. I would like to know whether we have been able to compile that file?

**The Prime Minister:** I could not follow what hon. Bodha actually wanted me to do about a desk.

**Mr Bodha:** The idea was raised that, as it is a cross-cutting issue, it involves the whole nation, whether we can have a desk involving all the stakeholders, Government, the Opposition and all the NGOs working on the issue to see what will be the best ideas to go forward?

**The Prime Minister:** I think if there is any information to be shared, I should say, maybe, with the hon. Leader of the Opposition, but not for everyone. The danger is that in Mauritius people have discussions, they cannot hold their mouth shut, and they will start giving details of what we intend to do and that we don't want to do.

**Mr Guimbeau:** In PQ No. B/77, the Prime Minister stated that, I quote -

‘ Today, after secret documents deposited at the UK  
Public Records Office have been released (...)’

Is that possible for us, Mr Speaker, Sir, to be in possession of these documents since they have been released? This is what the Prime Minister stated in PQ No. B/77.

**The Prime Minister:** I think that is available. If it is public the hon. Member can use it.

**ATTORNEY-GENERAL – TELEPHONE CALLS – SUBUTEX CASE**

**(No. B/1276) Mr M. Allet (Second Member for Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière)** asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs whether, in regard to the telephone calls made by the Attorney-General to the Police in connection with the arrest of one Mrs C. L. and Mr J. in a subutex case, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as the outcome of the inquiry carried out thereinto.

**The Prime Minister:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the Private Notice Question at the session of the National Assembly on 05 August 2008.

I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that the telephone call made by the Attorney General to ADSU did not, in any way, influence the proper conduct of the Police enquiry regarding the subutex case involving Mrs Cindy Legallant and Mr Bernard Gaëtan Roger Joly. In fact, two persons namely Mr Joly and Mr S. Curpen, have been remanded to jail in connection with the case.

As for Mrs Cindy Legallant, she was charged with the offence of ‘Possession of Dangerous Drugs’ before the Grand Port Court. Although Police objected to bail, she was granted bail following a bail motion by her Attorney. She has furnished a surety of Rs500,000 and she also has to report daily to the Goodlands Police Station. The Police enquiry, I should add, Mr Speaker, has led to a fourth person being arrested.

**Mr Bhagwan:** Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether he has been aware that most surprisingly this lady has changed her statement and it seems that there is *anguille* not *sous roche*, *sous* subutex. There is something fishy somewhere and whether...

**Mr Speaker:** No!

**Mr Bhagwan:** I am asking...

**Mr Speaker:** I don't know whether the Prime Minister is aware whether there is something fishy, but the question can be put to the Prime Minister as to whether he is aware that that lady has changed her statement. That's all!

**Mr Bhagwan:** But there is *anguille sous roche*, Sir.

**Mr Speaker:** No, not that!

*(Interruptions)*

Order!

**The Prime Minister:** In fact, Mr Speaker, Sir, my information is that on 29 November 2008, Mrs Legallant gave a further statement to ADSU in the presence of the barrister at law, Mr Toorabally, whereby she confirmed the contrary to the affidavit she swore on 10 October 2008, that is, a bit more than one month before, disculpating Sada Curpen, all previous statements she had given to the Police since her arrest in the case were true and correct. She further stated that she had received threats from unknown persons and was intimidated to exculpate Sada Curpen, but fearing for her own safety, she gave instructions to Mr Iqbal Dauhoo, Attorney at Law, to prepare an affidavit which she consequently swore on October 10 before the Supreme Court. She added that she had no intention to make use of the affidavit as a public document and apparently she has destroyed the document.

**Mr Ganoo:** In our Dangerous Drugs Act, there is a specific section which deals with that type of situation and this section in the law was introduced by the Labour and MMM Government at that time. This is section 42. I would ask the hon. Prime Minister whether he doesn't think that any action should be taken in the light of what has happened. In this section, it is said that any person who causes a person whether directly or indirectly to make a declaration or statement to alter the content of a previous statement or declaration with a view to avoid the prosecution of another person shall commit an offence, that is, the law caters for the situation that when somebody has given a statement gives another statement to disculpate that person, an enquiry should be opened.

**The Prime Minister:** In fact, an enquiry has been opened. You know people think they can make affidavit and then change it. They have to bear

the consequences of lying in an affidavit which is very grave, but this is being enquired into.

**Mr Bhagwan:** Mr Speaker, Sir, can I know from the hon. Prime Minister whether there is a close monitoring, in the public interest, by the Police on that lady with regard to her *fréquentation*?

**The Prime Minister:** It is being done and, in fact, this was being done before. That is how she was caught at the airport. She was being monitored, in fact, and there is a close monitoring going on.

### **MINORS - LIQUORS AND CIGARETTES – SALE**

**(No. B/1277) Mrs S. Grenade (Second Member for GRNW and Port Louis West)** asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Home Affairs whether, in regard to the sale of liquors and cigarettes to minors, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the number of minors involved, over the past three years.

**The Prime Minister:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the sale of liquors and cigarettes to minors is an offence under the following legislations -

- (i) Regulations 2 and 4 of the Public Health (Restrictions on Tobacco Products) Regulations of 1999 makes provision for the prohibition of the sale of cigarettes to minors, and
- (ii) Section 16(1) (a) of the Child Protection Act which makes provision for the prohibition of sale of any liquor, rum or compounded spirit to a child.

Furthermore, according to Section 15 of the Excise Act 1994, every licensee shall display in a conspicuous place at his factory or licensed premises an appropriate notice, bearing the words “No alcohol/cigarette will be sold to or is allowed to be sold to a person under the age of 18 years”.

I am informed, Mr Speaker, Sir, by the Commissioner of Police that during the past three years, 11 cases of “Selling liquor to minors” involving 13 minors; and 46 cases of “Selling cigarettes to minors” involving 46 minors have been established.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the sale of liquors and cigarettes to minors is illegal and my Government has taken a number of measures to ensure that the minimum legal purchase age is enforced and that licensees exercise responsibility.

In this respect, the Police are, through the “*Brigade des Mineurs*”, maintaining regular watch and vigilance near points of sale of cigarettes or liquor, more particularly at places which are well frequented by students and minors. In fact, regular surprise checks and crackdown operations are carried out throughout the island.

Additionally, the “*Brigade des Mineurs*” and the Police Family Protection Unit regularly carry out frequent awareness campaigns for instance talks, lectures, public exhibitions, etc at schools, colleges, youth clubs/centres and socio-cultural organisations as well as programmes in the mass media with a view to sensitising students, parents and the community at large on the need for the protection of minors and youngsters against the ill effects of cigarettes and liquors.

Mr Speaker, Sir, our youth of today is extremely susceptible to the hazards associated with liquor and cigarettes, and it is our duty to protect them from such harm. We believe that this social dilemma will be more effectively tackled by sensitisation rather than enforcement.

I am also informed that the Health and Anti Drug Education Unit of the Ministry of Education, Culture & Human Resources provides advice and counselling to school administration and students regarding health promotion and drug prevention and organises school based activities related to –

- World Health Day;
- World No Tobacco Day, and
- International Day against Drug Abuse and illicit trafficking.

Health issues are now being integrated in the school curriculum and training to teachers at Primary and Secondary levels include modules relating to Health, among which the consumption of alcohol and tobacco.

The Ministry of Education, Culture & Human Resources is also currently working on its action plan for the revitalizing of Health clubs which will receive the support and guidance of the Regional Health and Educational Council. A School Health Club National Action Plan is also being concurrently worked out.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in this concerted effort against substance abuse, I must commend the key role which is being played by the National Agency for Treatment and Rehabilitation of Substance Abuses (NATReSA). The Agency has set up unprecedented networking in different sectors namely at schools, in the family, in the workplace, among the youth and the community as a whole in the fight against substance abuse. NATReSA's preventive initiative at the level of the youth in the various sectors, which I have just enumerated, consists of a module on the harmful effects of cigarettes, alcohol and drugs as well as Actions Plans at school level.

Mr Speaker, Sir, from a community point of view, it is imperative, that we can show an increasing intolerance against cigarettes and liquors, so as this phenomenon especially among the youth becomes socially unacceptable.

I would also like to inform the House that the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life has prepared the Draft Public Health (Restrictions on Tobacco Products) Regulations; and the Draft Public Health (Restrictions on Advertisement, Sponsorship, Sale and Prohibition of Consumption in Public Places of Alcohol Drinks) Regulations which are being finalised at the level of the Attorney-General's Office, and which will further regulate and strengthen the issue of selling tobacco and alcoholic drinks to minors.

**Mrs Grenade:** I thank the hon. Prime Minister who said that there is a lot of sensitisation for the youths regarding cigarettes and liquors. But we all know that there is also a lot to do again because around schools and on bus stations there are always youths with a can of beer, alcohol and cigarettes. Does the hon. Prime Minister not think that there must be

surprise checks by the Police in shops also to prevent the sale of liquors and cigarettes to the youths?

**The Prime Minister:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I remember there was a case when a Police Officer who was in civil stopped two youths at a bus station who were swearing out and so on. Then people were saying that the Police had brutalised the youths. But, in fact, the case was that the Police was doing their work. I will pass that to the Commissioner of Police to maybe have more checks.

**Mrs Grenade:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to make an appeal to the hon. Prime Minister. Does he not think that we must have *plus de publicités contre l'alcool et la cigarette? Parce que quand on regarde à la télévision il y a plus de publicités pour les achats d'alcool et les cigarettes. Malgré que sur la boîte de cigarettes c'est inscrit que c'est mauvais pour la santé, la cigarette tue, je pense que c'est mieux d'avoir plus de publicités contre l'alcool et contre la cigarette.*

**The Prime Minister:** Maybe I misunderstood the hon. Member. I thought the MBC is actually passing films against the consumption of alcohol and cigarettes. I don't have time to look at television as you know, but I thought that they were doing this. I will take this up.

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Order!

**Mr Dowarkasing:** Mr Speaker, Sir, concerning the ill doers, may I know from the hon. Prime Minister whether it does not seem that it would be more proper to amend the law to suspend the license of all those ill doers who are selling cigarettes and alcoholic drinks illegally to minors?

**The Prime Minister:** This is what we are doing. This is what the Attorney-General's office is working on together with the Ministry of Health.

**Mrs Hanoomanjee:** The hon. Prime Minister has just mentioned, and my colleague has strengthened this point, that *la Brigade des Mineurs* has a prominent role to play. Has the hon. Prime Minister been made aware that, very recently, the staff of *la Brigade des Mineurs* has been substantially

reduced and even the premises where they were operating have been removed from them?

**The Prime Minister:** I think there was a question, I am not too sure Mr Speaker, Sir, recently, and I gave an explanation. But as you know the Commissioner of Police is responsible for determining the use of the operations of the Police and which he controls. I can only give him guidelines for policy decisions. But I think I have given explanations. As far as I remember, there was a restructuring. I can again look at it and let the hon. Member know.

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

#### **SALE BY LEVY – DEFAULT INSTALMENT - FEE**

**(No. B/1285) Mrs S. Hanoomanjee (Second Member for Savanne and Black River)** asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Empowerment whether, in regard to the protection of borrowers, he will state if he has received representations from the Association Sale by Levy to the effect that some Attorneys are continuing with the practice of claiming a fee of ten per cent of the default instalment when serving a notice for recovery of payment and, if so, the remedial measures that will be taken.

**The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Empowerment (Dr. R. Sithanen):** Mr Speaker, Sir, as at date, no representation has been received from any association representing victims of sale by levy on this specific issue.

However, I wish to inform the House that prior to the coming into force of the Borrower Protection Act 2007, that is prior to 07 March 2007, a credit agreement between the parties, imposed an obligation on the borrower to pay the law practitioner a fee of 10 percent of the default instalment when he is served with a notice for the recovery of debt.

Thus, in cases where such a provision exists in a contract made before 07 March 2007, the law practitioner may claim that fee.

On the other hand, as the House is aware, under section 11(d) of the Borrower Protection Act 2007, such obligation can no longer be included in a credit agreement of a sum not exceeding Rs2 m. made after 07 March 2007.

In respect of debt recovery, the House may wish to note that the fees payable to a law practitioner for his services is set by the Court whenever the latter determines such cases.

Mr Speaker, Sir, if a credit agreement for a sum not exceeding Rs2 m. has been made after 07 March 2007, contains provision for payment of the fee of 10 percent, the borrower may make a complaint to the Commissioner for the protection of borrowers.

**Mrs Hanoomanjee:** Mr Speaker, Sir, my information is that representations have been made to the Minister and that only recently the Minister has received these people. If I can go back to what the Attorney-General stated when the Bill was being passed: “that the provisions of the law refer to fair and reasonable fees claimed before the Master’s Court only after determination of a case” Can I know what Government is doing to ensure that this is being done?

**Dr. Sithanen:** First, on the point made in the introductory part of hon. Mrs Hanoomanjee question, I did receive the Sale by Levy people, but they have not raised that specific point with me. They have raised other issues.

In fact, Mr Speaker, Sir, when we introduced this legislation into the House, we did realise that we were going to have a problem. If someone had a contract which has been duly signed by the two parties it is very difficult to have retroactive effect to this contract. That is why there is a cut off date which is 07 March 2007. After 2007, for an amount less than Rs2 m. it is the Court that will establish what will be the fee, but if in previous contracts this amount exist, it cannot be done, except if the two parties agree.

**Mr Dayal:** Mr Speaker, Sir, being given that the 10% commission is a private agreement between the lender and the borrower and, in most cases, the lender is the banking sector, will the Vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance urge the banks not to claim the 10% commission even in cases which were made before the Act was passed?

**Dr. Sithanen:** I have urged the banks to do many things, but they do not accept many requests. I will tell them, but I know what is going to be the reply from the banks. This is a contractual obligation between two parties and it is not good for Government or the Minister of Finance to get involved in such contractual agreement.

**Mr Dayal:** Mr Speaker, Sir, again being given that the Vice-Prime Minister has the power under section 22 (1) (b), to amend the First Schedule by regulation and that today the prices of the immovable property have increased considerably, especially the range of properties sought by the lower and middle class, can I therefore ask the hon. Vice-Prime Minister whether he will consider amending the First Schedule of the Act and increasing the amount which is of Rs2 m. to some Rs8 m. to protect the lower and middle income group of borrowers?

**Dr. Sithanen:** I think in the light of what the hon. Member has stated and also in view of inflation, there could be a case for raising the Rs2 m. threshold. I am not sure whether it would raise from Rs2 m to Rs8 m. because the purpose of putting it to Rs2 m. was basically to cover most people that would have transaction for a reasonable house. We will look into it, but I do not give any guarantee to the House that will be Rs8 m.

**Mrs Hanoomanjee:** In view of the fact that this is causing undue hardship to these people, can the Vice-Prime Minister – and I'll tend to strengthen on what my colleague here has said – start discussions with the Association of Bankers, at least, to see to it that they do not claim that 10% for those people? They are already undergoing a lot of hardship.

**Dr. Sithanen:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I'll do it, but I must tell you it is not easy to get sympathy from the banks....

**Mr Speaker:** Especially with the 'Shylocks'!

**Dr. Sithanen:** .... from the Association of Bankers. I made a statement recently in the press and I received many letters as to why I had to make that statement. I am sure you know what it was.

**Mr Dayal:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I heard the Vice-Prime Minister said that there is a possibility for amendments. Therefore, I should like to know whether he can give us a time frame.

**Dr. Sithanen:** Usually such decisions are made at the time of the Budget, Mr Speaker, Sir. So, we have to look at the implications.

**CEB – ELECTRONIC ENERGY METERS - TENDERS**

**(No. B/1286) Mrs S. Hanoomanjee (Second Member for Savanne and Black River)** asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Renewable Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to the purchase of 5000 electronic Energy Meters in July last, he will,, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Central Electricity Board, information as to if tenders were launched and, if so –

- (a) the date thereof;
- (b) the number of quotations received, indicating the names of the firms, and
- (c) the name of the successful bidder.

**The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Renewable Energy and Public Utilities (Dr. R. Beebeejaun):** Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the CEB that –

- (i) on 02 May 2008, an open bidding exercise was launched by the Central Procurement Board for the procurement of 20,000 single phase electronic energy meters along with 10 handheld devices. The bids received were opened at the Central Procurement Board and referred to CEB for evaluation;
- (ii) the Evaluation Committee found that none of the bids were responsive and recommended that new tenders should be invited;
- (iii) on 16 July 2008, all the bidders were informed of the cancellation of the tender exercise and the reasons for non-responsiveness of the bids;
- (iv) to avoid a shortage of meters, on 11 July 2008, CEB launched a restricted bidding exercise for the supply on a fast track basis with air-freight delivery of 5,000 single phase electronic energy meters along with one handheld device to upload reading from the meter.

- (v) I am informed that five firms which participated in the open bidding exercise namely, Elster Electricity LLC, Sagem/Mecatronics Ltd. Kabelek Ltd, Landis & Gyr and L'an Nur Ltd and two other firms Owen Brothers Ltd and Sheargold Ltd were invited to bid.
- (vi) Owen Brothers Ltd did not respond to the invitation and out of the six bids received, Elster Electricity LLC and Landis and Gyr were found to be technically responsive, and
- (vii) the contract was awarded to the best evaluated bid, namely Landis and Gyr for the sum of USD 100,400. The CEB did not proceed with the procurement of the handheld device given that it was too expensive.

**Mrs Hanoomanjee:** Mr Speaker, Sir, contrary to section 39 of the Public Procurement Act which states that tenders with the same specifications cannot be issued twice, the CEB has issued tenders with the same specifications twice contrary to what is specified in the Central Procurement Act. Can the hon. Minister say whether the CEB has done so, and if so, why?

**Dr. Beebeejaun:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that there was an urgency to purchase this equipment which is not easy to find and there were restricted amount of bidders who were qualified to bid. I am also informed that they were informed fully of the limitations and the *manquement* in the bids and they agreed - all of them - subsequently to bid again. There were the same five firms plus two more. It was done in a spirit of urgency.

**Mrs Hanoomanjee:** Mr Speaker, Sir, this is contrary to the spirit of the law. This is not something which happens everyday and it should not happen because tenders have already been opened with these specifications and the prices and all other information are known and now you issue another tender with the same specifications when the prices are already known to the committee.

**Mr Speaker:** It is against the law.

**Dr. Beebeejaun:** As to the law, I'll find out and inform from the House, but as to the specifications, they were different. The equipment may be the same, but the quantities, freight, and other details were different.

**Mr Bhagwan:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to know from the Deputy Prime Minister whether at the time of the processing of tenders, the Chairperson of the CEB effected overseas missions in that connection and whether he was aware of the cost of one or some suppliers? Could the Deputy Prime Minister inquire and inform the House accordingly?

**Dr. Beebeejaun:** I am not aware, Mr Speaker, Sir, but I'll certainly find out and inform the House.

**Mr Lesjongard:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I heard the hon. Deputy Prime Minister stating that for the tender which was launched on 16 July, all of the tenderers were non-responsive. We know that the CEB has been ordering meters for the past years. May we know why all of them were non-responsive for that particular tender?

**Dr. Beebeejaun:** I couldn't say why, but they were told why they were not responsive and they amended their tenders subsequently.

**Mrs Hanoomanjee:** Mr Speaker, Sir, in spite of what the hon. Deputy Prime Minister is saying, can he say whether the Chairman of the tender committee wrote to Sagem/Mecatronics, through its local representative, to state that the CEB has not received samples as asked in the tender?

**Dr. Beebeejaun:** Mr Speaker, Sir, it is not only Sagem, but all of them were told why they were not responsive. All the five who bided were told why they were not responsive for different reasons.

**Mrs Hanoomanjee:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the fact that they are not responsive is one thing, but the fact that they did not submit samples is another thing.

**Dr. Beebeejaun:** I have a list here. For the 20,000 single phase meters, Sagem/Mecatronics did not submit Office of Gas and Electricity Market (OFGEM) Certificate or certificate from any other body to certify lifetime of meters as per bidding condition.

For 800 three phase meters, Sagem/Mecatronics did not submit sample of proposed meters along with their bid as per bidding condition.

**Mrs Hanoomanjee:** Since there are some doubts on this issue, can the hon. Deputy Prime Minister lay on the Table of the Assembly the documents relating to this tender?

**Dr. Beebeejaun:** I'll ask the CEB first. I am not the Board, they will tell me what is the answer.

**Mr Speaker:** Next Question!

**BOARD OF INVESTMENT – OFFICIALS  
– OVERSEAS MISSION – NEW YORK**

(No. B/1287 Mrs S. Hanoomanjee (Second Member for Savanne and Black River) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Empowerment whether, in regard to the recent overseas mission to New York, undertaken by the officials of the Board of Investment, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Board, information as to –

- (a) the composition of the delegation;
- (b) the amount of money disbursed, including airfares and *per diem* allowances paid, and
- (c) the outcome thereof.

**The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Empowerment (Dr. R. Sithanen):** Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Board of Investment that it has not recently organised any overseas mission to New York.

However, I wish to inform the House that in October 2007, as part of its marketing campaign in North America, Board of Investment conducted an investment promotion mission to New York.

The purpose of the mission was to present the opportunities that exist in Mauritius as an International Financial Centre, in particular, how Mauritius can be used for international funds administration, assets management and estate planning.

Information regarding parts (a) and (b) of the question is being tabled.

Insofar as part (c) of the question is concerned, I wish to inform the House that the mission to New York pursued further the sensitising campaign to the investor community on the attractiveness of the Mauritius Global Business jurisdiction. The investor community in New York has expressed particular interest in legal process outsourcing, financial services, global business and using Mauritius as a hub for the region.

On the security side, there is wide interest from funds to include Mauritius stocks in Africa's Emerging Market portfolios. Several parties have since visited Mauritius and are already using the Mauritius Financial Centre.

**Mrs Hanoomanjee:** Mr Speaker, Sir, since the Vice-Prime Minister is saying that he is tabling the information in relation to the amount of funds which have been involved in the mission, can he say whether our Ambassador in the US could not have dealt with this issue first, instead of such a high delegation proceeding to New York?

**Dr. Sithanen:** The answer is 'no'. Mr Speaker, Sir, the delegation comprises many people from the private sector – 11 out of 15 are from the private sector. They know the business. This is quite a sophisticated business, Mr Speaker, Sir, they know best how to do it. As far as the amount of money spent, Mr Speaker, Sir, it is approximately Rs597,000 for workshop, breakfast meeting and cocktail.

Obviously, Mr Speaker, Sir, if it were easy to ask our Embassies abroad to do all the promotions, life would have been extremely easy. Unfortunately, we need people from the sector in order to promote Mauritius. Let me be very candid, the BOI has been very successfully since 2005.

#### **MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT & NDU - BINS DISTRIBUTION**

**(No. B/1288) Mr P. Jhugroo (Third Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue)** asked the Minister of Environment and National Development Unit whether, in regard to the bins distributed to households since 13 September 2008, he will give a list thereof, region-wise, indicating in each case –

- (a) the number thereof, and
- (b) the cost involved.

**The Minister of Agro Industry, Food Production and Security (Mr S. Faugoo):** With your permission, Mr Speaker, Sir, I shall reply to this question. With your further permission, I wish to reply to PQ No. B/1288 and PQ No. B/1325 together as both of them relate to the same issue. The information sought for is being compiled and will be laid in the Library of the National Assembly as soon as it is ready.

**Mrs Martin:** Mr Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Minister whether the whole island is concerned with this exercise?

**Mr Faugoo:** I think so, Mr Speaker, Sir.

**Mr Lesjongard:** May I ask the hon. Minister whether he has the information that it was Constituency No. 10 which benefited from the first distribution of the bins?

**Mr Faugoo:** I am not aware, but the information is being compiled, Mr Speaker, Sir.

**Mr Speaker:** The hon. Minister said that he is not aware.

**Mr Von-Mally:** Can I ask the hon. Minister how many such bins have been sent to Rodrigues?

**Mr Faugoo:** I don't have the information, Mr Speaker, Sir.

**Mrs Martin:** The hon. Minister mentioned that the exercise is being carried out and the compilation is going on, can we have a definite time frame as to when this exercise will be completed?

**Mr Faugoo:** I don't know, Mr Speaker, Sir.

**AFRICAN CHARTER ON DEMOCRACY, ELECTIONS &  
GOVERNANCE - RATIFICATION**

**(No. B/1289) Mrs F. Labelle (Third Member for Vacoas and Floreal)** asked the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade whether, in regard to the African Charter on democracy, elections and governance adopted in Addis Ababa in January 2007, he will state if it has been ratified by the Republic of Mauritius and, if so, when and, if not, why not.

**The Minister of Local Government, Rodrigues & Outer Islands (Dr. J. B. David):** Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I shall reply to this question. The African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance, adopted by the African Union Summit in Addis Ababa on 30 January 2007 was signed by Mauritius on 14 December 2007.

It is proposed to ratify the Charter following completion of the ongoing consultation process to ensure that Mauritius complies with the provisions of the Charter.

The Charter imposes numerous obligations on State parties. Under Article 44(1)(a) of the Charter, State parties are required to initiate appropriate measures, including legislative, executive and administrative actions, to bring their national laws and regulations into conformity with the Charter. State parties will also have to submit a report every two years on the implementation of the Charter. Since the provisions of the Charter require a lot of scrutiny, the process of the ratification of the Charter is bound to take some time.

So far, the Charter has not been ratified by other member States of the African Union, except Mauritania. It will enter into force following ratification by 15 member States.

**Mr Bodha:** Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister whether a Code of Practice is included in that Charter?

**Dr. David:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I'm laying copy of the Charter on the Table of the National Assembly.

**TRADE UNIONS – REPRESENTATIONS – WORK ON SUNDAY**

**(No. B/1290) Mr A. Ganoo (First Member for Savanne and Black River)** asked the Minister of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment whether, in regard to the provision in the Employment Rights Act 2008 making of Sunday a normal working day, he will state if he has received representations regarding the frustration caused thereby and, if so, if Government is proposing to amend the said provision.

**Mr Chaumière:** Mr Speaker Sir, the reply to the first part of the question is in the affirmative. In fact, in the course of a meeting I had with representatives of trade unions of workers on 29 September 2008, they made representations regarding work on Sunday.

As regards the second part of the question, it is not proposed to amend the said provision of the Act. As the House is aware, the Employment Rights Act as well as the Employment Relations Act have not been yet proclaimed. It is only when the Employment Rights Act is proclaimed and implemented that we will be in a position to know whether work on Sunday is, in fact, a cause of frustration to workers. We will examine and address the issue if the need arises.

**Mr Ganoo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Minister tell the House why the Acts have not been proclaimed so far and when will they be proclaimed?

**Mr Chaumière:** Because, Mr Speaker, Sir, we are working to set up the institutions and promulgate Regulations.

**Mr Ganoo:** Can the hon. Minister tell the House also whether the provision in this Act which has not yet been proclaimed, but assented to by the President of the Republic – I understand – is in contradiction with the Public Holidays Act which says that Sunday is a public holiday?

**Mr Chaumière:** Mr Speaker, Sir, we have had extensive consultations with the trade unions. In fact, there had been 24 working sessions and we are in conformity with the ILO Conventions. May I also add, Mr Speaker, Sir, that work on Sunday is not a new feature and has always been performed in the following sectors like animal farming, baking, bus transport industry, catering industry, distributive trades and so on. They are being paid...

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Ganoo:** It is a working day. But the workers used to be paid at double rate, i.e. at a higher rate in the past, Mr Speaker, Sir.

**Mr Chaumière:** That will be the case, Mr Speaker, Sir.

#### **SSR INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT – CUSTOMS ARRIVAL SECTION – ALLEGED CASES OF CORRUPTION & MALPRACTICE**

**(No. B/1291) Mr E. Guimbeau (First Member for Curepipe & Midlands)** asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance & Economic Empowerment whether, in regard to the alleged cases of corruption and malpractice at the Customs Arrival Section at the Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam International Airport and which were allegedly revealed by the CCTV Camera Systems, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Revenue Authority, information as to if the Authority has carried out an internal inquiry and, if so, the outcome thereof.

**The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance & Economic Empowerment (Dr. R. Sithanen):** Mr Speaker, Sir, insofar as the alleged cases of corruption and malpractice by Customs Officers, as referred to in the question of the hon. Member, are concerned, I am informed by the MRA that it initiated inquiries in November 2007.

Records of CCTV images were obtained from Airports of Mauritius Ltd and, to enable smooth running of the investigation, the officer-in-charge of the airport was transferred.

I am informed that, in all, 27 cases were investigated, and the findings are as follows –

- (i) in six cases, warnings were issued to the concerned Customs Officers for non observance of rules and regulations;
- (ii) in ten cases, disciplinary action has been initiated against the concerned officers who were suspected to have colluded with incoming passengers;
- (iii) two cases are still under investigation, and
- (iv) nine cases have been set aside as the allegations did not have any substance.

**Mr Varma:** Mr Speaker, Sir, could the hon. Vice-Prime Minister inform the House what has been the outcome of the disciplinary procedures that have been carried out?

**Dr. Sithanen:** Mr Speaker, Sir, as I indicated, there are four cases. There is warning in six cases. Basically, what this means is that the findings indicate need for disciplinary action, but the fault does not warrant a serious sanction. They have been given a warning. There are ten cases where disciplinary action has been initiated, but has not yet been completed. Depending on how serious the offence is, I presume the sanction will be commensurate to the gravity of the offence. Two cases are still under investigation, and in nine cases there was no substance in allegations.

**Mr Bérenger:** Mr Speaker, Sir, can I know from the hon. Minister of Finance whether the inquiry was carried out by the MRA or by the Police?

**Dr. Sithanen:** It's a good question. I don't have the answer, Mr Speaker, Sir. I'll find out from the MRA. It would appear, from the way the notes are drafted, that it must be the MRA. But, I will confirm, Mr Speaker, Sir. I am just looking at the way it is drafted.

**Mr Bérenger:** Mr Speaker, Sir, has anybody been suspended?

**Dr. Sithanen:** Mr Speaker, Sir, not to my knowledge; not on the basis of information given. As I indicated, the person who was responsible has been transferred, and there are the cases that I have just mentioned.

**Mr Guimbeau:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister talked about a report in 2007. Is it right?

**Dr. Sithanen:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the inquiry started in November 2007.

**Mr Guimbeau:** Is there any report available so far, Mr Speaker, Sir?

**Dr. Sithanen:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I just mentioned the outcome of the inquiry that started in November 2007. There are four types of cases. There are six cases, ten cases, two cases and nine cases. I have said that, in six cases, there have been warnings, in ten cases disciplinary actions still continue, two cases are still under investigation, and nine cases have been set aside.

**Mr Guimbeau:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to table a report on allegation of corruption and malpractice at SSR International Airport.

**Mr Speaker:** Is it an official report?

**Mr Guimbeau:** Yes, of course, Mr Speaker, Sir.

**Dr. Sithanen:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I can only hope that the summary is what I have been given as answer this morning.

**Mr Guimbeau:** Mr Speaker, Sir, this is the report coming from the Ministry of Finance, that is, the MRA itself.

**Mrs Hanoomanjee:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I think the hon. Minister has twice mentioned that the officer-in-charge at the airport has been transferred. Can we know whether the officer in charge at the airport has been found guilty of malpractice and has been transferred, or whether he is one of the parties? Because if he is involved, then we are only transferring the problem.

**Dr. Sithanen:** Mr Speaker, Sir, what I said in my reply is that, to ensure the impartiality and the smooth running of the investigation, it was deemed appropriate by the MRA to transfer the officer.

**Mr Varma:** Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Vice-Prime Minister inform the House to where the officer has been transferred?

**Dr. Sithanen:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I don't know. I'll find out, and I will let the hon. Member know.

### CALL CENTRES – NAMES, ADDRESSES, NUMBER, ETC

**(No. B/1292) Mr E. Guimbeau (First Member for Curepipe & Midlands)** asked the Minister of Information & Communication Technology whether, in regard to the Call Centres operating in Mauritius, he will state the number thereof, indicating in each case –

- (a) their names and addresses;
- (b) the number of employees, and
- (c) if they hold the required licences and permits to operate.

**Mr Dulull:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I am advised by the Board of Investment that, as per an internal survey carried out in the BPO industry on 160 operational companies during the month September/October 2008, there were a total of 43 companies engaged, *inter alia*, in call centre activities. I am tabling a list of the call centres with their names and addresses.

As regards part (b) of the question, I am informed that the total number of people being employed in these call centres is around 4,850.

Insofar as part (c) of the question is concerned, I am also advised that, in the spirit of the Business Facilitation Act, companies operating in the BPO sector are only required to hold a trade licence issued by the local authorities to operate.

**Mr Guimbeau:** Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Minister inform the House if he is aware of any reported case of sexual harassment in any of the call centres?

**Mr Dulull:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I am not aware, but I will look into it to see whether there has been any such case.

**Mr Guimbeau:** Mr Speaker, Sir, everybody is aware!

**Mr Speaker:** I am sorry. If the hon. Minister says that he is not aware and that he is going to look into the matter, the hon. Member has to accept his answer. If everybody is aware, he was not aware! That's all!

*At 12.57 p.m the sitting was suspended.*

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

**MINISTER OF HOUSING AND LANDS - MR O. M. –  
EMPLOYMENT**

**(No. B/1293) Mr M. Allet (Second Member for Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière)** asked the Minister of Housing and Lands whether, in regard to Mr O. M., he will state if he is employed at his Ministry and, if so, in which department.

**Dr. Kasenally:** Mr Speaker, Sir, Mr O. M. is not employed at my Ministry at this present time.

**Mr Bhagwan:** Can I ask the hon. Minister whether he is an employee of one of these parastatal bodies falling under his Ministry?

**Dr. Kasenally:** No, Sir. Mr O. M. stands for Osman Mohamed who holds a substantive post as Civil Engineer in the Ministry of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping. Due to a shortage of staff in the Housing Division of my Ministry, the services of Mr O. M. were made available since 20 September 2005 by the Ministry of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping to advise on matters relating to housing and engineering. Soon after my assumption of duty as Minister of Housing and Lands, he left.

**Mr Guimbeau:** Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Minister state if Mr O.M. has been...

**Mr Speaker:** No, I will not allow any further question on the matter.

## **FREEDOM OF INFORMATION BILL - INTRODUCTION**

**(No. B/1294) Mr E. Guimbeau (First Member for Curepipe and Midlands)** asked the Attorney-General whether, in regard to the proposed introduction of the Freedom of Information Bill, he will state if, on 31 July 2008, his Ministry had held a brainstorming exercise and, if so, the outcome thereof.

**Mr Valayden:** Mr Speaker, Sir, my Ministry did not, contrary to what I had indicated to the House in reply to PQ No. B/447 on 13 May 2008 organised a brainstorming exercise on the Freedom of Information Bill on 31 July. The hon. Member would appreciate that the Parliamentary Unit of my Ministry was fully taken up with the work of the National Assembly, so much so that the brainstorming session has had to be postponed. I need not remind the House that recently papers were produced on the issue of Bail and Legal Aid and were subject matter of debates with NGOs.

I do propose, however, once the National Assembly takes a break, to see to it that priority is given to the organisation of a brainstorming session on the Bill.

## **MAHEBOURG HOSPITAL – RENAMING**

**(No. B/1296) Mr Y. Varma (First Member for Mahebourg and Plaine Magnien)** asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether, in regard to the proposed renaming of the Mahebourg Hospital as the Sir Harold Walter Hospital, he will state where matters stand.

**Dr. Jeetah:** Mr Speaker, Sir, appropriate consultations are being held regarding the renaming of the Mahebourg Hospital as the “Sir Harold Walter Hospital”. A decision will be taken shortly.

**Mr Varma:** Can the hon. Minister inform the House whether it has been agreed that Mahebourg Hospital will be renamed Sir Harold Walter Hospital?

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

**Mr Speaker:** The hon. Minister has just replied, he has said consultations are being carried out.

**Mr Varma:** I have one more question. Can the hon. Minister inform the House what sorts of consultations are being carried out?

**Mr Speaker:** I will not allow this question.

**PQ No. B/1297 – See after PQ No. B/1304**

**L'AGRÉMENT, ST PIERRE – LIGHTING FACILITIES,  
FOOTBALL GROUND, ETC.**

**(No. B/1298) Mr S. Dayal (Second Member for Quartier Militaire and Moka)** asked the Minister of Local Government, Rodrigues and Outer Islands whether, in regard to l'Agrément, St Pierre, he will state if he will liaise with the relevant authorities to –

- (a) provide lighting and a cloakroom for the football ground;
- (b) upgrade the volley ball pitch, and
- (c) construct a children's playground thereat.

**Dr. David:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Moka/Flacq District Council that the plot of land at l'Agrément on which stands the football ground and volley ball pitch belongs to Mon Désert Alma S.E and is leased to the St Pierre Village Council. Accordingly, the Council is not in a position to undertake the construction of a cloakroom, provision of lighting facilities at the football ground and upgrading of the volley ball pitch.

As regards part (c) of the question, I am informed that there already exists a children playground at l'Agrément in the compound of St Pierre Village Hall and same has on 30 June 2008 been upgraded by the Council and is in good condition.

## PETIT VERGER CO-OPERATIVE BUILDING – SUB-HALL

**(No. B/1299) Mr S. Dayal (Second Member for Quartier Militaire and Moka)** asked the Minister of Local Government, Rodrigues and Outer Islands whether, in regard to the Petit Verger Co-operative building, he will state if he will consider the advisability of having it converted into a sub hall, in view of the deplorable state of the building presently rented for that purpose.

**Dr. David:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Moka/Flacq District Council that no building is presently rented in Petit Verger for use as a sub-hall. With regard to the conversion of the Petit Verger Cooperative Building into a sub-hall, I have taken up this issue with my colleague the Minister of Business, Enterprise and Cooperatives who is looking into the matter.

## COMMODITIES – PRICE

**(No. B/1300) Mr S. Soodhun (Fifth Member for La Caverne and Phoenix)** asked the Minister for Consumer Protection and Citizens Charter whether, in regard to the price of commodities, he will state the measures taken by his Ministry to enable consumers to benefit from the new exchange rate and decrease in prices on the world market.

**Mr Tang Wah Hing:** Mr Speaker, Sir, following the fluctuation in the exchange rate and the decrease in price on the world market, my Ministry has implemented appropriate pro-active measures to ensure that the decrease is ultimately passed on to consumers.

The House is already aware that the price of only eighteen essential items are controlled by my Ministry. As regards the price of non-controlled items, a price monitoring mechanism has been set up to undertake an in-depth survey of the prices and to analyse any fluctuation on the local market. Regular checks and inspections are being carried out by the officers of the Consumer Protection Unit to that effect.

Furthermore, given prices are determined by the market forces, I have sought the collaboration of the Mauritius Chamber of Commerce and Industry to press on its members to practise a fair and reasonable mark-up on all goods which should reflect the real market price.

I have also appealed to them to publicise any reduction in prices, in the best interest of consumers. In that breath, I have taken note that some importers have already advertised the reduction in price, which is indeed a positive signal.

Officers of my Ministry are presently undertaking site visits to collect relevant data on different commodities and in the event of abusive mark-ups, all legal and administrative avenues would be explored to curb those abuses.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in that breath, I am also tabling an indicative list which, *inter alia*, summarises the percentage decrease in the price of essential items, building materials and fertilizers.

**Mr Soodhun:** Mr Speaker, Sir, as the hon. Minister has just mentioned that he is going to table the information concerning building materials, whereas concerning the commodities, is the hon. Minister ready to table a list which can show that the price has gone down?

**Mr Tang Wah Hing:** Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir.

**Mr Ganoo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, two weeks ago the hon. Minister replied to a similar question and told the House about the possibility of reducing the price of bread since there is a correlation between the decrease in the price of petroleum products and that commodity, that is, bread and he said that an exercise had been carried out. Can the hon. Minister tell the House where things stand as regards the reduction of the price of bread?

**Mr Tang Wah Hing:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I can assure the hon. Member that this will be done very quickly. When the price of flour will be decreased, it will be automatically taken into consideration.

## LE MORNE MOUNTAIN – TOURIST-RELATED ACTIVITIES

**(No. B/1301) Mr G. Lesjongard (Second Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue)** asked the Minister of Education, Culture and Human Resources whether, in regard to the Le Morne Mountain, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Le Morne Heritage Trust Fund, information as to if tourist-related activities are being carried out thereat and, if so, if permission has been granted for such activities, indicating by whom and when.

**Dr. Bunwaree:** Mr Speaker Sir, I have been informed that two companies carry out tourist-related activities on the Le Morne Mountain.

Yanature carries out hiking since 2004.

Incentive Partners Ltd organises mountaineering trips since 2005.

I am further informed that the Forestry Service of the Ministry of Agro Industry, Food Production and Security, which controls Le Morne Brabant Mountain, classified as a reserve under the Forest and Reserves Act 1983, is aware that people go for trekking on the mountain. Under this Act, permission is not required to enter a mountain reserve. However, no request has been received at the Ministry of Agro Industry, Food Production and Security for commercial mountaineering activities on Le Morne Brabant Mountain.

Le Morne has been proclaimed as National Heritage in January 2006 and was inscribed on the World Heritage List in July 2008.

On the basis of the new status of Le Morne, activities proposed to be carried out in the Core and Buffer Zones should have approval of the National Heritage Fund and Le Morne Heritage Trust Fund.

I have been advised that there is no record that the promoters have sought and obtained permission to carry out their activities.

Thus Le Morne Heritage Trust Fund and the National Heritage Fund have not been in a position to assess whether these activities are compatible with the Le Morne Cultural Landscape Management Plan and the Planning Policy Guidance 2 – Le Morne Cultural Landscape.

The Le Morne Heritage Trust Fund and the National Heritage Fund have written to the two above mentioned companies to inform them of the National and World Heritage status of the site and requested them to apply for authorisation to carry out these activities, and in the meantime to put a halt to their activities on the mountain.

Upon receipt of the applications, these two bodies will examine them in line with Le Morne Cultural Landscape Management Plan and a decision will be taken.

Mr Speaker Sir, I have also been informed by the Tourism Authority that a “*Table d’Hôte*” is operating at the foot of Le Morne Mountain in Morcellement Cambier. A licence was issued on 27 May 2008 by the Tourism Authority.

The Tourism Authority is liaising with the National Heritage Fund and Le Morne Heritage Trust Fund to find out whether the activity is compatible with the heritage status of the site.

**Mr Lesjongard:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I understand from the Minister that there is a “*Table d’Hôte*” operating there since May 2008 and we all know that during that period the management plan for Le Morne was under preparation. How do we reconcile that, at the same time that the dossier was being presented at UNESCO, the Tourism Authority issued a licence for the operation of a “*Table d’Hôte*” at Le Morne Mountain?

**Dr. Bunwaree:** It is difficult for me to answer this question because the Tourism Authority had given the licence, but this is being looked into. In any case the licence is valid until May 2009. We will look into all that, Mr Speaker, Sir.

**Mr Bérenger:** I heard the hon. Minister say that the two Trust Funds, Le Morne Heritage Trust Fund and the National Heritage Trust Fund, wrote to the two operators, telling them to hold their operations pending their making a request and it seems that they have just carried on. Have these two Trusts taken any action, approached Government for action, including Police action?

**Dr. Bunwaree:** This is being envisaged, Mr Speaker, Sir, but these people were carrying these activities before and we have given them some time to stop. In fact, they ought to have stopped altogether by this time.

**Mr Lesjongard:** The hon. Minister mentioned that the Authority is looking into the compatibility of those activities. May we know the outcome, Mr Speaker, Sir, because I understand that there are other requests pending at the Tourism Authority for commercial activities?

**Dr. Bunwaree:** Sir, since we have obtained the inscription, things have become very serious, but these people were already operating there and all this is being taken into consideration. We do not know the outcome because the work is not over yet.

**Mr Ganoo:** Can the hon. Minister inform the House whether the “*Table d’Hôte*” is being run by a private company or by an individual? If so, can we know the name and whether the Morne Village Council opinion was sought before granting this licence?

**Dr. Bunwaree:** In fact, the licence was issued to *l’incontournable* Shangrilla. I do not know whether it is the name of the place or company. I’ll look into that and inform the Member accordingly.

**Mr Ganoo:** Was the opinion of Le Morne Village Council sought?

**Mr Speaker:** The Minister said that he will look into the matter.

**Dr. Bunwaree:** The licence was given by the Tourism Authority and they must have looked into all that.

**TERRE ROUGE-VERDUN HIGHWAY PROJECT**

**(No. B/1302) Mr G. Lesjongard (Second Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue)** asked the Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping whether, in regard to the Terre Rouge-Verdun Highway Project, he will state where matters stand, indicating if a re-evaluation of the project is being envisaged and, if so, the reasons therefor.

**Mr Bachoo:** Sir, the Central Procurement Board is presently evaluating the tenders that have been received. At this stage a re-evaluation exercise is premature and the question will not arise until and unless the Central Procurement Board decides for such a re-evaluation after completion of the present exercise.

**Mr Lesjongard:** Mr Speaker, Sir, can the Minister confirm that at the time the feasibility study was carried out for that project, the internal rate of return was 37% based on a project worth Rs1.2 billion? Now that the project is worth some Rs3 billion, can we know the internal rate of return?

**Mr Bachoo:** We have not worked on that. I will only request the hon. Member to bear with us, let the evaluation be over and then I'll be in a position to answer.

**Mr Lesjongard:** If this is the case, Mr Speaker, Sir, why are we evaluating a tender when we do not even know what is the internal rate of return on the project?

**Mr Bachoo:** Sir, I have just mentioned that the evaluation exercise is on. Let that be over and if a re-evaluation is to be conducted, it will be done, but for the time being, it is not within my control.

**Mr Lesjongard:** This is the case, Mr Speaker, Sir. Why don't we cancel the ongoing exercise and go for fresh tenders because we know that there has been a serious escalation of price with regard to that project?

**Mr Bachoo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, that is in the hands of the Procurement Board and, at the same time, we have already requested BCEOM, the consultant, to look into all these issues. Let us wait for it!

**Mr Bérenger:** Is the Minister aware of a petition signed and circulated by 128 small planters of Boulingrin, Robinson, Rivalland villages in the area, objecting to the compulsory acquisition of their land and suggesting an alternative route?

**Mr Bachoo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I am made to understand that they were able to find a solution to this problem, but still lately a group of planters came and met me, but unfortunately it was too late.

**Mr Bérenger:** Mr Speaker, Sir, my colleague has just suggested re-tendering. Is Government prepared to re-tender and open the tendering exercise to Mauritian companies and other companies? Because I have a strange feeling that there has been cartel like behaviour in this whole affair?

**Mr Bachoo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, there are two issues involved in that. Firstly, I have just mentioned to let the evaluation exercise be over and then Government will have to take a decision. Secondly, it has been the practice, even with the previous Government also, that when we receive funds from foreign Governments, to allow those companies proposed by the donor countries. It was the case even with India in the past. I remember when we got funds for the construction of Vivekananda Cultural Centre, it was, in fact, the Indian company that came forward. This is the practice and they try to impose such conditions on us. I hope that if it was open, things could have been better, but unfortunately the procedures are such.

**Mr Soodhun:** Can the hon. Minister inform the House how many contractors have submitted for tenders?

**Mr Bachoo:** The four Chinese contractors short listed are selected by Chinese Exim Bank. They tendered their bids.

**Mr Soodhun:** Can the hon. Minister confirm that one of the contractors has already been selected among the four?

**Mr Bachoo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, how can I say? Because the bids are being evaluated, I cannot jump to conclusions.

**Mr Dowarkasing:** Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister whether he will see to it that we are getting value for money with respect to this project?

**Mr Bachoo:** This is what I have just said. Let the evaluation be over, I cannot poke my nose when the evaluation exercise is on. It is against the law.

**Mr Lesjongard:** Can the hon. Minister confirm that the present average cost for the construction of one kilometre of road is Rs50 m. and as per the tender submitted by the Chinese contractors, the average cost of one kilometre of road will be R100 m.?

**Mr Bachoo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I cannot confirm that the construction of one kilometre of road is Rs50 m. because there are cases where one kilometre of road is costing us hardly Rs10 m. while in other cases, it is Rs50 m. I cannot confirm at this stage. That is why I am repeatedly requesting the hon. Members to bear with me. Let the bids be finalised and Government will have to take a decision.

**Mr Lesjongard:** If the Minister says he cannot confirm will he agree that, for the Tian Li project, which has recently been allocated, the cost of one kilometre of road, that is, the two-lane road, was Rs50 m. per kilometre?

**Mr Bachoo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, there is another road which we are constructing just now. It is a new road which will cost us hardly Rs25 m. one kilometre. How do we reconcile the two?

**Mr Soodhun:** I would ask the hon. Minister to take into consideration the fact that the southern highway project done by a Chinese company has cost double. Besides it has taken also an additional eight months. May I inform the Minister that the same contractor has also quoted for this contract and I insist that more precaution should be taken for the allocation of this contract.

**Mr Speaker:** The hon. Minister will pass on the message to the Tender Board.

**Mr Bachoo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, this is an open tender exercise.

**Mr Speaker:** The hon. Minister will pass on the message.

**Mr Bachoo:** Yes.

**MOUVEMENT BIEN ETRE BATTERIE CASSÉE  
– INTERNATIONAL CREOLE DAY - MASS**

**(No. B/1303) Mr G. Lesjongard (Second Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue)** asked the Minister of Local Government, Rodrigues and Outer Islands whether, in regard to the mass which was celebrated to mark the International *Créole* Day, he will state if he is aware that no sound system was provided by the Municipal Council of Port Louis, as agreed with the *Mouvement Bien Etre Batterie Cassée* and, if so, will he, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Municipal Council, the reasons therefor.

**Dr. David:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Municipality of Port Louis that the *Mouvement Bien Être Batterie Cassée* had not made any request for provision of sound system on the occasion of the mass celebrated to mark the International Creole Day.

**SUMMER TIME – ENERGY SAVINGS**

**(No. B/1304) Mr G. Lesjongard (Second Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue)** asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Renewable Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to the maximum demand and KWh consumed by domestic, commercial and industrial consumers, he will state the energy savings, since the introduction of summer time.

**The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Renewable Energy and Public Utilities (Dr. R. Beebeejaun):** Mr Speaker, Sir, I apologise for not being present previously.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Summer Time project is being implemented on a pilot basis for a period of five months, starting on Sunday 26 October 2008 and ending on Sunday 29 March 2009.

Given that the project has been implemented for four weeks only, it is too early to give conclusive data on energy savings at this stage.

The CEB, the Joint Economic Council and the Mauritius Employers Federation are monitoring the impact of summer time on domestic, industrial and commercial sectors. The CEB has installed electronic meters in selected residential areas and 21 commercial centres and industrial enterprises in different regions of the island to assess the consumption of electricity prior to the introduction of summer time and during summer time.

A detailed report will be submitted at the end of the summer time period.

**Mr Bérenger:** Can we know from the hon. Deputy Prime Minister whether complaints have been received to date?

**Dr. Beebeejaun:** Not that I am aware of!

**Mr Lesjongard:** I do agree with the hon. Minister that, with regard to energy consumption, it is not possible to give a figure at this stage. But with regard to maximum demand, I remember when we were debating, the former Minister himself showed us a graph of a simulation that they carried out at the CEB and even the newly appointed General Manager of the CEB on the radio said that we are going to shave off the peak. At least, can the hon. Minister give us an indication as to whether we have shaved off that peak or there is still the same peak?

**Dr. Beebeejaun:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I was intentionally being very cautious concerning analysis of the figures. Various figures have been mentioned and as the hon. Member has mentioned, there is a shaving off of 15 MW or, at the present, 17 MW. How much is attributed to summer time, how much is attributed to low energy bulb is a matter of debate, but for sure it has gone down. The estimated figure is 10 MW, but I don't want to hazard because there has been a change in the pattern of energy consumption

recently and I would like the hon. Members to be aware that the curve is no longer as a peak in the evening. It has been sort of distributed evenly.

**Mr Lesjongard:** As an engineer, I think figures cannot be a matter of debate. With the equipment they have at the CEB, can the hon. Deputy Prime Minister, at least, give us an indication as to the maximum demand today with the introduction of summer time?

**Dr. Beebeejaun:** Today all factors considered, it is about 17 MW less.

### **CEB – ENERGY SAVING BULBS - DISTRIBUTION**

**(No. B/1297) Mr Y. Varma (First Member for Mahebourg and Plaine Magnien)** asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Renewable Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to the energy saving bulbs, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Central Electricity Board, information as to the number thereof distributed as at todate, indicating the impact thereof on the energy consumption.

**The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Renewable Energy and Public Utilities (Dr. R. Beebeejaun):** Mr Speaker, Sir, in the context of Government Policy to ensure energy efficiency and the *Maurice île durable* concept, a national campaign to promote the use of compact fluorescent lamp (CPL) (CFL) was launched by the CEB in August of this year.

Under this scheme, CEB is providing free CFL lamps at a subsidized rate of Rs40 with a contribution of Rs20 per CFL for the *Maurice île durable* Fund.

I am informed that as at Friday 21 November 2008, 305,303 energy saving bulbs had been sold to domestic customers and the use of CFL has led to an average daily saving of 23,500 KW/H which is reflected in a reduction of about 7.5 MW/H in the evening peak demand.

**Mr Lesjongard:** May I ask the hon. Deputy Prime Minister whether Government is envisaging reducing the summer time period?

**Dr. Beebeejaun:** No, Mr Speaker, Sir. I am glad the hon. Member has asked this question. When we introduced the summer time for five months, there have been several representations as to whether it should be three, four, five or six months. What I said at a recent interview is that we are not introducing it now; at the end of five months, we will look at all the factors and will decide whether it should be three, four or five. There is no harm in looking at all the figures and come to some conclusion. There has been a representation to the effect that we should start it on the 15 of November to 15 of February for three or four months and the reason being for schooling. There are many factors and we have to look at them seriously before we make a mistake.

### **CHEBEL - NHDC HOUSING UNITS**

**(No. B/1305) Mr M. Allet (Second Member for Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière)** asked the Minister of Housing and Lands whether, in regard to the construction of the NHDC housing units of firinga type in Chebel, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the National Housing Development Company Ltd., information as to –

- (a) if the construction works have been completed;
- (b) the number of units constructed;
- (c) the selling price of each unit, and
- (d) the expected date of delivery thereof.

**Dr. Kasenally:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the NHDC that 533 housing units of Firinga types are being constructed on six sites across the island including Chebel.

In regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed that the construction works have been completed.

In regard to part (b), there are 54 housing units constructed at Chebel.

In regard to part (c), I am further informed that the selling price will be Rs325,000 each.

In regard to part (d), I am additionally informed that expected date of delivery of these units is December 2008.

**Mr Allet:** Est-ce que le ministre peut nous confirmer si priorité sera donnée aux habitants de la circonscription No. 20 qui sont vraiment dans le besoin d'un logement?

**Dr. Kasenally:** The policy of the Government is to give priority to people living in the drainage area. For example, in Chebel, for 54 units we have had 1492 applications and the number of applicants who came for interview was 1,467. I can assure the hon. Member, Mr Speaker, Sir, that everything will be done in a fair, equitable and transparent way.

**Mr Guimbeau:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister said there were six sites, including Chebel. Can he tell us about the other five sites identified?

**Dr. Kasenally:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the other sites are Bambous – 78; Henrietta - 156; Ville Noire - 70; Rivière des Anguilles – 91 and Rose Belle - 84. This makes a total of 533.

## **PETROLEUM PRODUCTS – STRATEGIC RESERVE**

**(No. B/1306) Dr. A. Husnoo (Second Member for Port Louis Maritime and Port Louis East)** asked the Minister of Business, Enterprise and Co-operatives whether, in regard to petroleum products, he will state if he will consider setting up a strategic reserve thereof, following the fall in their prices on the world market.

**Mr Gowressoo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the strategic reserve of petroleum products should not be linked to prices. Any country should ensure that it has an adequate strategic stock of petroleum products. Due to that necessity and increase in demand of the products, my Ministry launched in February 2008 a request for proposals to increase the storage capacity of Mogas by 15,000 metric tons, Gas Oil by 10,000 metric tons and LPG by 10,000

metric tons. The closing date for the request for proposals was 05 May 2008.

Since I have assumed responsibility of the Ministry in September 2008, I have had several meetings with the oil majors to fine-tune the proposals and reach a consensus on a joint project to increase storage facility for petroleum products.

At present, the storage capacity for petroleum products is as follows –

	MOGAS Metric Tons	GAS OIL Metric Tons	LPG Metric Tons
Actual working storage capacity	9,500	47,500	6,000
Actual stock days available	35	54	27
Stock days on arrival of vessel	5 to 10	20 to 25	5

With the expected facility of 15,000 metric tons of Mogas, 10,000 metric tons of Gas Oil and 10,000 metric tons of LPG, the situation would be as follows –

	MOGAS	GAS OIL	LPG
Stock days available	60	75	54
Stock days on arrival of vessel	30 to 35	40 to 45	25

**Mr Varma:** Mr Speaker, Sir, this question relates to the prices of petroleum products. Can the hon. Minister inform the House at what price are we purchasing petroleum products for the time being?

**Mr Gowressoo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, it is on a monthly platt rate.

**Mr Varma:** Mr Speaker, Sir, can we know the price?

**Mr Gowressoo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Member should come with a substantive question.

## COOKING GAS – PRICE

**(No. B/1307) Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun (Third Member for La Caverne and Phoenix)** asked the Minister of Business, Enterprise and Co-operatives whether, in regard to cooking gas, he will state if Government is proposing to review downwards the price thereof on the local market.

**The Minister for Consumer Protection and Citizens Charter (Mr Tang Wah Hing):** Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission I shall reply to this question.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I have to inform the House that the price of a 12 kg cylinder of LPG cooking gas which had been fixed at Rs315.00 in October 2006, has remained unchanged until today.

In fact, the real price of a 12 kg cylinder at the end of September 2008 was Rs537.00. The annual subsidy provided by the Government was around Rs600 m.

In November 2008, there has been a market decrease in the price of LPG cooking gas from USD 810 per metric tonne to USD 490 per metric tonne. Despite this fall in price, the real price of a 12 kg cylinder is still well above the subsidised price. Nevertheless, it is proposed to maintain the price of LPG (cooking gas) at its present level as a commitment to our consumer protection policy. Should the price of LPG go further down on the world market, action would be taken to pass on the decrease to the population.

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister the amount of reduction in subsidy that has followed the falling of the price of cooking gas?

**Mr Tang Wah Hing:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I need notice to this question.

**Mr Bérenger:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I have heard the hon. Minister say that Government is paying so much subsidy. Is it not a fact that Government is paying no subsidy at all? There is special tax on the imported petroleum products and, therefore, the money is taken out of consumers' pockets and cross-subsidising cooking gas.

**Mr Tang Wah Hing:** I am not agreeable to the opinion of the hon. Leader of Opposition.

### **MAURITIUS NATIONAL IDENTITY CARD PROJECT**

**(No. B/1308) Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun (Third Member for La Caverne and Phoenix)** asked the Minister of Information and Communication Technology whether, in regard to the National Identity Cards, he will state if Government is proposing to issue new ones and if so, indicate the data that will be contained therein.

**Mr Dulull:** Mr Speaker, Sir, as regards the first part of the question, the answer is yes.

Insofar as the second part of the question is concerned, I wish to inform the House that Government agreed to the setting-up of an Inter-Ministerial Committee chaired by the hon. Prime Minister to spearhead the Mauritius National Identity Card Project, the e-citizen project. The new national ID card would contain, in visual and electronic format, all existing information on the current ID card, as well as new features to combat identity fraud. The visual data on the card would comply with the requirements of the International Civil Aviation Organisation, which is becoming an international norm for presentation of identity data on documents, such as ID cards and passports.

Further, as the implementation of the Mauritius National Identity Card project involves highly focused business lines, a system Integrator/Implementer will be appointed to ensure effective coordination of these business lines and is an internationally recognised operational model.

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister whether it is intended to have finger prints included in the data of the ID cards?

**Mr Dulull:** The Inter-Ministerial Committee will look into the possibility.

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister what has been the cost of the design of the card? Because in the Budget, it was proposed that Rs20 m. be assigned for the consultancy.

**Mr Dulull:** For the design and consultancy of the card, we have considered it not feasible at this stage because to design a card, we do not need to spend Rs20 m. It is a waste of public money. It is so simple. We can go on internet where we can find a series of types of cards. It is a complete waste, therefore, we have put aside the design. We have set a Technical Committee to look into it. It consists of SIL Members, National Computer Board Members and CIB. We have already discarded this stage and we are moving to the implementation of the card.

**Mr Varma:** Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Minister inform the House whether there is a time frame for the implementation of the project?

**Mr Dulull:** Once we are in the process of issuing the tender document and the tender is allocated, we hope in six months we will be able to start delivering the cards.

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** Mr Speaker, Sir, can I know from the hon. Minister who is preparing the specifications for the tender documents?

**Mr Dulull:** We have a Technical Committee chaired by Dr. Oollun.

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister whether he is already at the stage of preparing the specifications when the data is still to be decided upon?

**Mr Dulull:** The Technical Committee is working on the preparation of the tender document. But we are in the process to see what is the right platform, how many applications we want to be on the card and so on. Because the more applications we have on the card, the more costly it is going to be. There is a trade-off between the number of applications and the cost of the card.

**Mrs Martin:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I just heard the hon. Minister say that the sum of Rs20 m. had been discarded and put aside. May I ask him why was it first decided to invest such money into the cards and if that money is not going to be used for designing the cards, how will it be reallocated?

**Mr Dulull:** The Government procedure is that when you have to go for a tender you have to have an expression of interest, a request proposal and it is very time consuming. We are also using public fund. It is a question of using public fund wisely and I have designed the means to go to it.

*(Interruptions)*

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** *Mieux vaut tard que jamais!*

Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister just stated that they are still deciding on the number of applications, what are the issue, they are going to put on the card and, at the same time, there is a committee sitting and deciding on the design. I think there has to be a correlation between the information you want to put into the card and the designing and I do not think this particular work can be done side by side. We have to finish off with the decision on which information we want to include on the card first.

**Mr Dulull:** To put it in a very crude shape, it is like having to design a drawer and how many drawers you want in. It is also a question of what you want to fill in. You can design the drawers, but you must know what you want to fill in. We will have the cupboard with the drawers and it is up to us to see what we want to store in it.

**Mr Speaker:** Last question.

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** Mr Speaker, Sir, it would seem that the decision has been taken, but then when we talk about the specifications of a tender document, we have to be precise on that. We cannot be making the specifications on the tender document and yet not knowing what we are expecting from the tenderer.

**Mr Dulull:** Unfortunately, this is what you have always been made to believe. We can work in parallel, get the design without the specifications for the tender and once we agree, we can fine tune it. But there is nothing stopping us to start the procedure, to prepare the tender document, because it is not going to be overnight.

### **CEMENT AND IRON BARS - PRICE**

**(No. B/1309) Mr A. Ganoo (First Member for Savanne and Black River)** asked the Minister for Consumer Protection and Citizens Charter whether, in regard to cement and iron bars, he will state the measures Government proposes to take to enable consumers to benefit from the decrease in the prices thereof on the world market.

**Mr Tang Wah Hing:** Mr Speaker, Sir, insofar as iron bars are concerned, the price has been liberalised since 07April 2007. The price of that commodity is, therefore, determined by market forces.

A comparative exercise has been undertaken on the price of iron bars since October 2008 to date. The analysis reveals that the average decrease in the range of 3.7% to 5.1%.

Furthermore, I have also appealed to the Mauritius Chamber of Commerce and Industry to impel on its members to practice a fair and reasonable mark-up on iron bars. Officers of the Consumer Protection Unit are also carrying out site visits and checks to collect the relevant data to that effect.

As regards cement, it is the practice for Government to review the price of that commodity in January/February each year following a tender exercise carrying out by the State Trading Corporation in October/November of the previous year. Exceptionally, in March 2008, Government revised the price downward by 10% due to the fall of the exchange rate.

However, I am informed that the award of the tender for cement for the period January to December 2009 was launched on 19 September 2008 and has not yet been finalised.

**Mr Ganoo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, may I take this specific case of steel prices? I have with me a document which is everywhere on the net. Steel prices have a nosedive fall from above USD1200 per ton in June to below USD300 ton, Mr Speaker, Sir.

*(Interruptions)*

Especially in the case of steel, we know that there is a quasi monopoly. There are one or two importers here. Can the hon. Minister use his good officers with these importers so that the Mauritian public, *les petits marchands, les contracteurs* can benefit from this nosedive fall in the price of steel?

**Mr Tang Wah Hing:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I have taken note of the hon. the hon. Member's information, but I do not think he is right, because we, on the Government side, we do our best to protect our consumers.

**Mr Ganoo:** Is the hon. Minister aware that in South Africa from which we source our steel, the price has come down by 25% to 30% there, Mr Speaker, Sir, and this document says that prices will likely resume crashing.

**Mr Speaker:** Hon. Member, please put your question one by one!

Is the hon. Minister aware that in South Africa the price has gone done?

**Mr Tang Wah Hing:** I am not aware.

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Ganoo:** One last question, Mr Speaker. Compounded with this is the price of our rupee in relation to the rand. What has happened to the rupee? The rand is getting down.

**Mr Speaker:** Hon. Member, put your question!

**Mr Ganoo:** Is not that a case for Government to intervene and see to it that the price of iron bars should, in fact, go down drastically?

**Mr Tang Wah Hing:** I'll ask the hon. Member not to worry about it, it will be taken in charge.

**Mr Speaker:** Next question!

### **FISHERMEN – PETROL AND DIESEL –PRICE**

**(No. B/1310) Mr A. Ganoo (First Member for Savanne and Black River)** asked the Minister of Agro Industry, Food Protection and Security whether, in regard to the fishermen, he will state if Government is proposing to take measures to make petrol and diesel available to them at a lower price.

**Mr Faugoo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, price adjustment for petrol and diesel falls under the purview of the Automatic Pricing Mechanism exercise which is carried out by the State Trading Corporation. In line with Government's decision to transmit any decrease in international purchase prices to the Mauritian public as soon as practical, the Automatic Pricing Mechanism has on 01 November 2008 adjusted downwards the price of petrol by 15% and that of diesel by 20% as compared to the prices prevailing in October 2008. The retail price of petrol is now Rs39.80 as compared to Rs46.80 in October and that of diesel is Rs41.00 as compared to Rs51.20 in October 2008.

This fall in prices has enabled Mauritian citizens and economic operators at large, including fishermen, to equally benefit to the maximum extent possible, from this reduction without any discrimination. It is also not the intention of Government to introduce any discrimination element in the decision.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as the House is aware, regulations have now been amended so that the Automatic Pricing Mechanism exercise for petrol and diesel will be carried out on a monthly basis instead of a quarterly basis. This measure no doubt goes in the right direction in assisting all sectors of the economy, including the fisheries sector.

I wish to bring to the attention of the House that various schemes are operated by my Ministry to assist the registered fishermen community ranging from Bad Weather Allowance, Closed Season Allowance, Winter Allowance, Sickness Allowance to specific loan schemes at the Development Bank of Mauritius at concessionary rates for fishermen.

The House will also wish to note that additional measures have been taken as announced in the Budget Speech.

**Mr Speaker:** I am sorry, this question relates to two items, petrol and diesel.

**Mr Faugoo:** I'll stop there, Mr Speaker, Sir.

**Mr Ganoo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, we are now talking of not one of the poorest, but the poorest section of our people. Can the hon. Minister make a special case for these fishermen? Now, we know that registered fishermen have dwindled to about less than 3,000 as far as I can remember. They were 6,000 a few years ago, now they are 3,000 less, Mr Speaker, Sir. Can't we, therefore, make a special case for these fishermen in view of the daily difficulties to earn a decent living?

**Mr Faugoo:** This is where I was coming to enumerate special cases which have been given in the Budget, Mr Speaker. As far as the petrol and diesel is concerned, I don't think we can make a special case for one category, because once we do that we will open a floodgate to other communities, other categories of people operating in other economic sectors.

**Mr Speaker:** In the light of the supplementary question which has now been put, the hon. Minister can carry on with his answer as to what different measures have been taken?

**Mr Faugoo:** As I was saying, in the Budget Speech of 2008/2009, Mr Speaker, Sir, to improve the livelihood of fishermen the bad weather allowance which already exists was increased from Rs165 to Rs200 daily. The financial support to Fishermen Investment Trust (FIT) has been increased by an additional amount of Rs15 m. to enable it to undertake seafood related projects on commercial lines in partnership with the private sector, that is, together with the fishermen community. Customs duties have

been removed from double space cabin vehicles without rear bed-caisson *and* whole single space cabin vehicles for fishermen's cooperatives.

**Mr Bérenger:** The hon. Minister said that it is not possible to envisage a quota system for fishermen although diesel - *essence* also, but mainly diesel - is their *outil de travail* basically. Is the Minister aware that in many countries, including Seychelles next door, such schemes do exist?

**Mr Faugoo:** As I said, Mr Speaker, Sir, we have to look at it globally.

*(Interruptions)*

Yes, but we are not Seychelles!

## **RESIDENCE RICHELIEU - QUARANTINE – COMPLAINTS**

**(No. B/1311) Mrs S. Grenade (Second Member for GRNW and Port Louis West)** asked the Minister of Agro Industry, Food Production and Security whether he will state if he is aware of several complaints made by the inhabitants of Residence Richelieu and the surrounding localities regarding the quarantine and, if so, indicate the remedial measures that are being taken.

**Mr Faugoo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that complaints have been received from Richelieu Village Council, the PTA of Richelieu Government School and the Black River District Council regarding foul smell emanating from the cowshed of the quarantine as well as smoke from the incinerator found on the quarantine premises. My colleague, the Minister of Local Government, Rodrigues and Outer Islands, hon. Dr. David, has also raised the issue with me some time back.

A meeting was held on 25 August 2008 between the *Forces Vives* of Richelieu and representatives of the Veterinary and Engineering Services of my Ministry and the Health Inspectorate of Black River District Council. The *Forces Vives* of Richelieu were given the assurances that the complaints would be looked into and appropriate action taken wherever necessary.

Accordingly, the following measures have been taken to mitigate the nuisance –

- (a) prevention of accumulation of waste-water and other wastes in the drainage canal/system, by regular and effective removal of the wastes;
- (b) use of high pressure water hose for cleaning;
- (c) use of a bobcat, a tractor and a trailer for a rapid and complete cleaning of the pens;
- (d) regular use of quick lime around the waste disposal pits, and
- (e) regular application of disinfectants and fly-repellants in the pens and around the waste disposal sites.

In view of the situation, my Ministry is considering to delocalize both the Quarantine Station and the incinerator from Richelieu. Alternative sites are in the process of being identified.

In the meantime, the matter is being closely monitored by my Ministry and other remedial measures will be taken, if and when necessary. I also wish to inform the House that my colleague, hon. Dr. David, who is equally following the situation closely, held a meeting on Monday 10 November 2008, with representatives of the *Forces Vives* of Richelieu, the Black River District Council, the Ministry of Health and also officers of my Ministry.

**Mrs Grenade:** May I ask the hon. Minister whether the buffer zone is being respected?

**Mr Faugoo:** I don't have any information to the contrary, Mr Speaker, Sir. As I said, it is being closely monitored and I don't have any adverse report so far.

**Mr Dowarkasing:** Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister whether this station is solely used for quarantine purposes or there are other animals that have been transferred from Salazie and other parts of the islands to that particular place?

**Mr Faugoo:** I understand it is only for quarantine, Mr Speaker, Sir.

**Mr Dookun-Luchoomun:** Mr Speaker, Sir, since the area has got a buffer zone, is it not proper, since we are having complaints, to see to it that the buffer zone is respected?

**Mr Faugoo:** The problem, Mr Speaker, Sir, is that we don't want to transfer the problem of Richelieu to any other place. Anywhere you go in this country, there are inhabitations. If you take it out from 'x' place, you go to 'y', there will be the same problem. This is why I say, we want to stop it altogether. But where do we go? This is where we are trying to find sites where we can have less problem or, at least, we can mitigate the problem to its minimum.

### **RODRIGUES - SIR GAËTAN DUVAL AIRPORT – RUNWAY STRIP – CONSTRUCTION**

**(No. B/1312) Mr J. C. Leopold (Fourth Member for Rodrigues)** asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Empowerment whether, in regard to the project for the construction of a new runway strip at the Sir Gaëtan Duval Airport, Plaine Corail, Rodrigues, he will state where matters stand.

**The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism, Leisure & External Communications (Mr X. L. Duval):** Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I shall reply to this question.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in my reply to PQ B/1169 on 20 November 2007, I informed the House that *Aéroports de Paris Ingénierie (ADPI)* would be approached to review and update the Master Plan of Sir Gaëtan Duval Airport, Rodrigues, which it had prepared in year 2000. I also stated that, in the meantime, a local firm, Gibbs (Mauritius) Ltd., which is experienced in

airport development works in Rodrigues, would be entrusted to provide a cost estimate for a new runway. This report was submitted in April 2008.

I am pleased to inform the House that ADPI has now completed the review of the Rodrigues Master Plan and has submitted its report in August 2008. It has recommended the following -

- (i) a new runway of 2100 m. length (for the short-term) with the possibility of an extension up to 3000 m. in the event of any future long haul traffic;
- (ii) the new runway to be realigned to minimize the earth filling volume so that the earth cut on the central part of the project may be used for other civil works in Rodrigues, and
- (iii) The new runway be linked to the existing runway by a taxiway.

Moreover, according to Gibbs (Mauritius) Ltd, the proposed facilities, including the Terminal facilities required for the new runway, would cost around Rs1.3 billion.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in view of the importance of this project for the development of Rodrigues and in particular tourism, I chaired a meeting on 03 November 2008, in the presence of the Minister of Local Government, Rodrigues & Outer Islands and the Chief Commissioner, and officials of the Ministry of Finance and Economic Empowerment to discuss the implementation of the project, in particular the financial component. We have agreed that the Rodrigues Regional Assembly would prepare the Terms of Reference for a feasibility study for submission to funding agencies for the financing of the project.

Sir, I am informed that the Office of the Chief Commissioner of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly is finalizing the Terms of Reference of the feasibility study in consultation with the Ministry of Finance & Economic Empowerment.

Subject to financing being secured, the new runway is planned for commissioning for A 319 aircraft by year 2012.

**Mr Leopold:** Mr Speaker, Sir, being given that things are moving very quickly at the airport in Mauritius but yet in Rodrigues, it is still lagging behind, can I know from the hon. Minister what are the other measures that he envisages to take into consideration in order to lower the price of air ticket from Mauritius to Rodrigues?

**Mr Speaker:** This question is irrelevant. I am sorry, this is a question about the construction of the runway.

### **BANK OF MAURITIUS - FOREIGN CURRENCY RESERVES**

**(No. B/1313) Mr A. Ganoo (First Member for Savanne and Black River)** asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Empowerment whether, in regard to the Foreign Currency Reserves, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Bank of Mauritius, information as to –

- (a) the amount thereof;
- (b) the amount of offshore funds and accounts held in Mauritius by foreign nationals;
- (c) if any amount thereof has been handed over to international banks overseas which have invested same in foreign stock exchanges;
- (d) how is the balance held, and
- (e) the impact of the recent financial crisis on the value thereof.

**The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance & Economic Empowerment (Dr. R. Sithanen):** Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Bank of Mauritius that the level of foreign currency reserves of the Central Bank as at end October 2008, stood at Rs56.142 billion. In addition, Commercial Banks' Net Foreign assets stood at Rs24.661 billion at end of September 2008. The net international reserves of the country amounted to Rs80.362 billion as at end September 2008. It comprises, Mr Speaker, Sir, the net foreign assets of the Bank of Mauritius, other banks and non-bank

deposit taking institutions, Government and the country's Reserve Position with the International Monetary Fund.

With regard to part (b), the amount of deposits of offshore funds held by GBL companies in Mauritius as at end September 2008 is valued at Rs200.138 billion. However, Mr Speaker, Sir, this is not included in the net international reserves of the country, as it is an offshore transaction.

The amount of foreign currency held by foreign nationals in bank accounts in Mauritius was valued at Rs42.816 billion as at end September 2008.

Regarding part (c) of the question, Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Bank of Mauritius that it makes placements of its reserves in several international financial institutions, both public and private. This includes the Bank of International Settlements, the IMF, the Federal Reserve Bank, the Bank of England, *la Banque de France*, the Bundesbank, and other Central Banks and international commercial banks. However, Mr Speaker, Sir, the placements of the Bank of Mauritius have not been invested in stock exchanges or in unlisted securities.

Concerning part (d), I am informed that foreign exchange reserves of the Bank of Mauritius are held mainly in balances in current accounts with central banks, fixed-term deposits with foreign central banks and foreign banks, in fixed income Government securities and in gold bullion.

With regard to part (e) of the question, I am further informed by the Bank of Mauritius that, given the asset classes they hold, the impact of the financial crisis is largely a question of paper valuation. The valuation of the various deposits is mainly affected by relative exchange rate adjustments and changes in the price of gold, and of fixed income securities.

The price of gold has fallen from USD828 per ounce on 01 September to USD756 per ounce on 21 November. Given the low holdings of gold, that is, only 2%, on the official reserves, this has resulted in a valuation loss of USD4.4 m., which has been more than offset by a rise in the valuation of the fixed income securities by USD10.8 m. Mr Speaker, Sir, had we invested 50% of reserves in gold, the valuation loss would have been around 100 million dollars, close to Rs3.3 billion. The crisis has had no adverse impact on the capital value of the deposits in various currencies.

**Mr Bérenger:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I think I heard the hon. Minister of Finance say that some of the foreign currency reserves of the Bank of Mauritius are invested in overseas central banks but also in overseas private banks. Can we have the names of the banks in which our foreign currency reserves have been invested?

**Dr. Sithanen:** Mr Speaker, Sir, it is a very small number. Most of reserves is invested with the BIS. The BIS accounts for Rs1.2 billion out of Rs1.6 billion. The BIS is the Bank for International Settlements. Then, there is the Bank of England, the Federal Reserve Bank of New York, *La Banque de France*, Deutsche Bank, Reserve Bank of Australia, Reserve Bank of New Zealand. All the Reserve Banks, including BIS, account for about 90%. There are \$133 m. invested with commercial banks. Some are first class banks, Mr Speaker, Sir: Barclays, Royal Bank of Canada, HSBC, Royal Bank of Scotland, UBS Zurich.

**Mr Ganoo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, is there any investment which has been made in non-bank financial institutions?

**Dr. Sithanen:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I don't have the figures. There is a very small amount in AIG. It is gold reserves.

### RETIREMENT AGE - POLICY

**(No. B/1314) Mr L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun (Third Member for La Caverne & Phoenix)** asked the Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms whether, in regard to the retirement age, he will state if there has been a change in policy with regard to the determination thereof, following the 2006 budgetary decision to gradually raise the retirement age as from August 2008.

**Dr. Hookoom:** Mr Speaker, Sir, in June 2006, it was announced in the Budget Speech that the retirement age would be gradually raised from 60 to 65 years, both in the public and private sectors.

This would have been done by adding one month to the retirement age every two months, starting August 2008 to reach the target of compulsory retirement age of 65 years in 2018.

I wish to inform the House that there has been no change in the stated policy. For public sector employees, the Pay Research Bureau has, in its

2008 Report, recommended that the normal retirement age of officers in post as at 30 June 2008, and who have opted to be governed by the new pension scheme, be gradually raised from 60 to 65 years, starting in August 2008.

As regards the retirement age for employees of the private sector, this has been aligned with what prevails in the public sector. The relevant pension legislations, namely the Pension Act, the Statutory Bodies Pension Fund Act, the Local Authorities Pensions Act, and the National Pension Act have been amended accordingly.

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** Mr Speaker, Sir, is the hon. Minister aware that the chart provided for the retirement age does not tally with what we have provided for in the Budget? I am going to ask for your permission, Mr Speaker, Sir, to just give the values – it's a tedious calculation. According to the Budget, it is stated that this extension of retirement age will be done by adding one month to retirement age for every two months, starting from August 2008. But, in fact, when we go through the list, we find that, for someone who is born in 1950, as from August 2008 till the retirement age, we have 27 months, and for every two months we have to count one month. As a result, we expect that person to retire in January 2012, considering that she will have to work for 13 more months. But, then, from the chart, which is being circulated, it is shown that this person will have to take her retirement in January 2013, which does not tally with what is mentioned in the Budget.

**Dr. Hookoom:** Mr Speaker, Sir, if the hon. Member comes with a substantive question, I will give the reply.

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Order! This is something which is now being brought to the attention of the hon. Minister. The hon. Minister has asked for a substantive question. I don't see anything wrong with it. It's a technical matter.

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** Mr Speaker, Sir, we will wait for the hon. Minister to assimilate and come back to Parliament later on. But, may I ask him whether he is aware that, in para-statal bodies and in some of the statutory bodies, this particular clause of the Budget is not being respected? In certain institutions, people who are now supposed to have an extended number of months of work, are not being given the opportunity to do so.

**Dr. Hookoom:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I am aware of the problem, and I will come to the House with the information in due course.

**Mr Bérenger:** Mr Speaker, Sir, since the 2006 budgetary proposal, can I ask the hon. Minister whether representations have been made by trade unions of both the private and public sectors and by the JEC and, if so, whether those representations can be laid in the Library of the National Assembly, so that we have a complete picture?

**Dr. Hookoom:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I will look into the matter.

**MINISTER OF HEALTH & QUALITY OF LIFE –  
FOREIGN MEDICAL & HEALTH OFFICERS –  
CONTRACTUAL EMPLOYMENT**

**(No. B/1315) Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun (Third Member for La Caverne and Phoenix)** asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether, in regard to the foreign Medical and Health Officers who were employed by his Ministry on a contractual basis in November 2001, he will state –

- (a) the number thereof, and
- (b) those who are still in service, indicating if changes have been brought to their initial contracts.

**Dr. Jeetah:** Mr Speaker Sir, I am informed that in 2000, to palliate the acute shortage of doctors, my Ministry had recourse to the employment of foreign doctors on a contractual basis as Medical and Health Officer/Senior Medical and Health Officer.

From November 2001 to August 2002, 52 foreign doctors (43 Indians and 9 Malagasy) were employed as Medical Health Officer/Senior Medical Health Officer on a contract basis. From January 2003 to January 2005, another batch of 93 doctors from India was recruited. Their contractual employment was initially for a period of one year and subject to renewal on a yearly basis up to the end of year 2007.

Presently, there are 28 foreign doctors (27 Indians and 1 Malagasy) who are still in service but they are now employed on a month to month basis on conditions applicable to such mode of employment, except the one from Madagascar who is still on a contract basis. The change from annual contract to employment on a month to month basis was due to the fact that there is no longer a dearth of doctors in the country.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the House that for period 2005 to date more than 200 qualified Mauritian doctors have been recruited. Another batch of 120 will complete their pre-registration training in February 2009 and will be available for employment.

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** Mr Speaker, Sir, there are certain doctors who are being employed right now on a month to month basis and this has been going on since January 2007, they are still in service. I would like to ask the hon. Minister until when do we expect to have these doctors in service? Are we going to keep on renewing their contract on a monthly basis until the end of the year?

**Dr. Jeetah:** Mr Speaker, Sir, this is a very delicate matter. At a certain time, we did need these medical doctors who actually did a good job and they assisted us. They have been given a deadline until when their contracts were going to be terminated. But then on a humanitarian ground, I understand many of these doctors requested that their contract be extended. The reasons are that the doctors have personal commitments, wife being pregnant, children attending school and so on. My Ministry has taken this on board and they are getting all the benefits that are due to them.

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** Mr Speaker, Sir, from my information, the doctors are still in service and, in fact, if on humanitarian grounds, you have accepted to keep them in service and their services are satisfactory, I feel that it is unfair - because my information is that some clauses of their contract are not being respected, they do not get the yearly gratuity since they are not being employed on a yearly basis, but we still need their services, it would seem...

**Mr Speaker:** Now the hon. Member is making a statement. The hon. Member should put her question to the Minister.

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** I would like to ask the hon. Minister whether he is going to consider ensuring that these people get the opportunity to take leave, get their gratuity and the passage benefits to which they were entitled?

**Dr. Jeetah:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Member has been misinformed. Actually, they are being paid according to law, they are allowed to a salary and draw rent allowance as well as travelling allowance as mentioned in their previous contract. The only change is that no gratuity is payable and leave is granted only after one year of complete service.

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** Mr Speaker, Sir, since these people have already worked since 2001 and they are now being required to work until the end of the year, at least, it would seem unfair to ask them to work without due consideration. Will the hon. Minister reconsider his decision and then allow these people to...

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Varma:** As per the contracts, could the hon. Minister inform the House whether certain foreign doctors are entitled to conduct private practice?

**Dr. Jeetah:** As far as I am aware it is only certain grades that are allowed, but I will have to look into it. If the hon. Member has the information, please do let us have it!

### **CEB – GENERAL MANAGER – APPOINTMENT**

**(No. B/1316) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière)** asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Renewable Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to the post of the General Manager of the Central Electricity Board, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Board, information as to the name of the incumbent, indicating his –

- (a) date of appointment, and
- (b) terms and conditions of appointment.

**The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Renewable Energy and Public Utilities (Dr. R. Beebeejaun):** Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the CEB that the CEB Board has appointed Mr Chavansingh Dabeedin as General Manager with effect from 21 November 2008 on a two-year contract.

I am tabling a copy of the terms and conditions of his appointment, which are the same as those of his predecessor.

**Mr Bérenger:** Mr Speaker, Sir, it would seem that there are quite a number of officers at the CEB who are much more senior than the gentleman who has been appointed, but later on we will discuss the Equal Opportunity Bill. Can I know at the instance of whom? Is it the Ministry? Is it Government? Did the Board consider his appointment?

**Dr. Beebeejaun:** At the level of the Board, Mr Speaker, Sir.

**Mr Bhagwan:** Can the hon. Minister inform the House whether consideration was given by the Board to the application of Mr Gérard Hébrard? I mention the name because he is the Deputy General Manager. He is an employee who has a long career at the CEB. There are other officers who are senior to that person. Why has this gentleman been appointed instead of the others?

**Dr. Beebeejaun:** Mr Speaker, Sir, as the hon. Member has said, there have been more than one interested candidates - I am not sure about the applications of candidates - and the Board found that that person was most suitable.

**Mr Allet:** Est-ce que le ministre peut confirmer s'il y avait un appel de candidature interne ou externe pour le poste de *General Manager* au CEB?

**Dr. Beebeejaun:** I don't know whether there was *un appel de candidature*. I left it to the Board to sort out what was the best.

**Mr Bhagwan:** Can the hon. Deputy Prime Minister inform the House whether the appointment of the gentleman is a reward because he is a well-known...

**Mr Speaker:** I am not going to allow this question.

**Mr Bhagwan:** Can I rephrase my question?

**Mr Speaker:** The hon. Member should rephrase his question.

**Mr Bhagwan:** Can the hon. Minister inform the House whether among the criteria used for the appointment of that person was his loyalty to the Government of the day and *l'Alliance Sociale*?

**Mr Speaker:** It is not a criterion. Is the hon. Minister aware whether it was a criterion?

**Dr. Beebeejaun:** This is a question which I can hardly reply.

**Mr Lesjongard:** As per the internal regulations of the CEB all posts should be advertised, even the post of the General Manager. Can the hon. Minister inform the House why, in this case, the post was not advertised?

**Dr. Beebeejaun:** I have already replied to this question.

**Mr Bhagwan:** Is the Deputy Prime Minister aware that this person, prior to being appointed, has already ordered a car?

**Dr. Beebeejaun:** I am not aware of this, Mr Speaker, Sir.

**Mr Guimbeau:** I just want to know from the hon. Minister if that selection was based on a principle of equal opportunity?

**Dr. Beebeejaun:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the debate will soon take place on the Equal Opportunities Bill. I leave it to the House to decide.

## HSC EXAMINATIONS 2008 – LEAKAGES

**(No. B/1317) Mr M. Dowarkasing (Third Member for Curepipe and Midlands)** asked the Minister of Education, Culture and Human Resources whether, in regard to the Cambridge Higher School Certificate Examinations 2008, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Examinations Syndicate, information as to if there has been leakages in respect of the examinations papers, especially the Mathematics, Physics and Chemistry papers and, if so, the remedial measures that will be taken.

**Dr. Bunwaree:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Mauritius Examinations Syndicate (MES) that it became aware on 13 November 2008 of possible leakages in the Physics, Chemistry and Mathematics examination papers at the Higher School Certificate level. Upon closer verification, it was found that there were no leakages relating to the Mathematics examination paper.

The alleged leakages were in form of discussions among students of different countries (Mauritius/Malaysia/Pakistan). The discussion topics it would seem were related to question papers already taken by candidates in Malaysia and which were being discussed with other candidates including Mauritians who were yet to take the examination papers on account of the time difference between the countries. The topics were discussed on websites hosted by Blackpapers.info. and Facebook.

The above gave rise to a series of questions which were put to Cambridge International Examinations (CIE) including similarities and differences in question papers set for Mauritius, Malaysia and Pakistan. CIE was pressed for replies to the questions put. Initially, CIE considered that the leakages would not have any meaningful impact on the HSC examinations and that it had its own inbuilt procedure to deal with such leakages. Subsequently CIE, after taking into account our specificity in awarding scholarships based on the results of the Higher School Certificate Examinations, soon realised the impact and implications that such leakages could have in Mauritius. Consequently, they responded positively to my request to travel to Mauritius in order to assess the impact of the leakages with our experts.

According to Mrs Ann Puntis, the Chief Executive of CIE, who arrived on Saturday 22 November 2008, it was imperative that an Academic Committee be set up to determine whether the security of the HSC Examinations had been compromised. Accordingly, it was agreed to set up such a committee with experts from CIE, MES and the Ministry to analyse and assess the impact on student performance of such leakages in the context of the application of the mark scheme to be applied and to make recommendations in the light thereof.

Two experts in Physics and Chemistry respectively from CIE have reached Mauritius today around noon and the Academic Committee will start its work at the MES as from today itself. I suppose it has already started because the time was scheduled for 3.30 p.m. It will submit its report by Thursday 27 November 2008, at latest, and a decision will be taken in the light of the findings of this committee.

**Mr Bérenger:** If you will allow me three questions, Mr Speaker, Sir. One, it is now today - 12 days ago, the Minister has just confirmed – that this problem was found. We've been promised reports from Cambridge day after day, it was supposed to be last Friday and yesterday a committee was set up. It is as if that that lady travelled for nothing, now a committee is being set up. Can we know when we will have something serious, a report from Cambridge and whether it will be made public?

**Dr. Bunwaree:** The report will have to be submitted by Thursday at latest, Mr Speaker, Sir, and I believe in Cabinet on Friday, the problem will be thrashed out and a decision taken.

**Mr Bérenger:** Can the hon. Minister give the guarantee to those students and their parents *qu'il n'y aura pas de retard dans la proclamation des résultats?*

**Dr. Bunwaree:** Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir. We have already taken this commitment, but we will have to take another decision for the laureates. There is no problem for the results, but for the laureates, it will depend on the findings and recommendations of the committee.

**Mr Bérenger:** I read this morning and yesterday, coming from the lady from Cambridge that there is no problem for next year, there will be Mauritius country specific examination papers. Why had this not been done until now?

**Dr. Bunwaree:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I do not want to appear '*méchant*', but this has been like that for some time, even when the hon. Leader of the Opposition was Prime Minister. *C'est aussi l'autre revers de la science, de l'informatique*. This is what we are facing. All this has been taken on board and I am sure that next year examinations will be done differently.

**Mr Dowarkasing:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I have three questions. On this matter, we've heard that there will be sanctions and we've even heard that the Cambridge International Examination Section is in presence of a list of students *qui ont pu tricher*. Is this a fact and, if so, are we really envisaging to take sanctions against students on this issue?

**Dr. Bunwaree:** At this point in time, I cannot answer this question because it all depends whether it has been done innocently or not, but the inquiry will prove itself.

**Mr Dowarkasing:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I just want to know whether the Cambridge International Examination has submitted a list to the Ministry of Education because this is what we've heard and what we've read that they are going to submit a list of all those students who have presumably cheated in those papers. Has this list been submitted to the Ministry of Education?

**Dr. Bunwaree:** Mr Speaker, Sir, there has been no list submitted because Cambridge is still continuing its inquiry. What Cambridge has said is that the students mentioned are essentially students from abroad and they have identified the source, that is, the student from Malaysia who has started the whole thing. Sanctions will be taken, if not, have already been taken, by Cambridge as regards that student. Of course, we must study the whole discussion which went on website and then decisions will be taken accordingly.

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister will agree with me that it may be the case – I am not stating that it is the case all the time – that one student while surfing comes across a particular discussion and since he is sitting for the exams, would come and get into the discussion, not because he has got some other motives, but simply, as we already know, it is common practice for students to discuss papers which have already come out not knowing that this particular paper was meant to be sent to Mauritius as well. My question now comes. Can the Minister consider ensuring that our students here do not get penalised by Cambridge just because their connections have been made with the person who started the whole thing?

**Dr. Bunwaree:** In the statement issued by Cambridge itself, it is mentioned that the distress has been caused by actions of candidates from other countries during the November 2008 examination session. I have already made this point that has been raised by the hon. Member to Cambridge myself and I have made it public also.

**Mr Bodha:** At one point in time, the issue was raised that models of exam papers will be brought to Mauritius to compare whether there were some differences. May I ask the hon. Minister whether this has been done?

**Dr. Bunwaree:** I must confess that I had some difficulty to get the papers from Cambridge itself because the examinations were still on and we were told that we have to wait for these to end. I appealed to our Embassies abroad and, in fact, we got the papers from two countries; we have not got all of them, the second one is being sent today. I have myself looked at a few questions and Mauritian specialists have looked at them. I can say to this House that I have found no difference between the questions set insofar as the information I have at this point in time.

**Mr Bodha:** Will the Minister agree, at least on that issue, that the University of Cambridge has not been collaborating with the Mauritian authorities?

**Dr. Bunwaree:** Somewhere I must say yes, but that was in the past. Now they are collaborating fully.

**Mrs Jeewa-Daureeawoo:** May I know from the hon. Minister whether Cambridge has been made aware of the introduction of summer time?

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

**Mr Léopold:** Mr Speaker, Sir, is the Minister aware that the information could also have been shared by 'sms' or by fax? Will these cases also be taken into consideration during these inquiries?

**Dr. Bunwaree:** I fully agree with it and this submission has been made to Cambridge.

**Mr Dowarkasing:** Mr Speaker, Sir, we've heard that there are three reports that have been prepared in the light of this issue and which has become a national one. There is one report from the MES, there is one from the Ministry of Education and one from the Cambridge International Examination. Can the House be apprised of the contents of those reports and can we get a copy thereof?

**Dr. Bunwaree:** At this point in time we cannot give copy of these reports. The problem has not been thrased out yet, but I have been keeping the population informed regularly and I am satisfied with the reaction that I have had from students and parents that the matter has been well dealt with.

### **RECO-MAP PROJECT**

**(No. B/1318) Mr M. Dowarkasing (Third Member for Curepipe & Midlands)** asked the Minister of Environment and National Development Unit whether, in regard to the Reco-Map Project, he will state where matters stand, indicating if any project has started as at todote.

**The Minister of Agro-Industry, Food Production and Security (Mr S. Faugoo):** Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I shall answer this question.

The implementation of the Reco-Map Project started in August 2006 and its completion is expected to be by July 2011. It is a regional project covering seven countries in the Eastern African and Western Indian Ocean including Mauritius.

Various activities are being implemented in the seven countries since August 2006. Those concerning Mauritius relates to –

- (a) capacity building on monitoring and conservation of coastal and marine biodiversity and natural resources;
- (b) development of a regional Centre for Excellence for Coastal Zone Management;
- (c) sensitisation on Integrated Coastal Zone Management Issues through school competition and other programmes, and
- (d) participation of non-state actors in the management of the coastal zone through implementation of demonstration projects.

**Mr Dowarkasing:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I do not know whether the hon. Minister will have the information, but I will still put the question. Is he aware that there was a workshop that needed to be conducted regarding the status of our coral reefs on this particular project? Has that workshop been conducted and, if so, when and can we know the outcome of that particular workshop?

**Mr Faugoo:** My colleague will be back by next week. As far as I know, in some record here, the lot of workshops which have been carried out regarding the different programmes which I just mentioned, there is one original training for coastal and marine technicians, original training on ICZM tools and planning was conducted at La Plantation Hotel from 19 to 25 May 2008. There was also a training workshop on the use of CoReMo coral reef database, version 3.1 carried out in May 2008.

**Mr Dowarkasing:** My question, Mr Speaker, was very specific. I think the hon. Minister has all the replies, but my question was very specific and that has not been answered: whether there was a workshop held in May 2008 regarding the status of our coral reefs specifically?

**Mr Speaker:** The hon. Minister said that he did not have the information.

**Mr Faugoo:** This is what I said: there was a training workshop on the use of coral reef database which was carried out in May 2008.

**Mr Dowarkasing:** Therefore, Mr Speaker, can the hon. Minister table the circulated report regarding that workshop?

**Mr Faugoo:** I will look into it, Mr Speaker, Sir.

**Mr Dowarkasing:** Can we know whether any proposals or any project proposals have been submitted so far and, if so, how many project proposals regarding the coastal management programme have been formulated and have been submitted for this project to be taken on board?

**Mr Faugoo:** I don't have the relevant information, Mr Speaker, Sir.

## **BIGARA CEMETERY – BURIAL FACILITIES**

**(No. B/1319) Mr M. Dowarkasing (Third Member for Curepipe and Midlands)** asked the Minister of Local Government, Rodrigues and Outer Islands whether, in regard to the Bigara cemetery, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Municipal Council of Curepipe, information as to if the Management Committee of the Federation of Massajid of Curepipe has made a request for the extension of burial facilities thereat and, if so, the actions taken as at to date.

**Dr. David:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Municipality of Curepipe that a request has been received on 21 October 2008 from the Federation of Masaajid of Curepipe for provision of various facilities in the context of late night burials at the Bigara cemetery, amongst others, increased lighting, levelling of unoccupied land for future burial, preparation for the prayer's space, tiling of the prayer's space. The request is under consideration at the level of the Council.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I seize this opportunity to inform the House that following consultations held between all local authorities and socio-religious bodies, facilities for late burials are already provided since last year.

**Mr Dowarkasing:** Mr Speaker, Sir, what I understand from Bigara cemetery is that the regulations have not been amended so that this becomes like a formal thing. It is as and when and whenever there are people available, then they can carry out otherwise they are being directed to Phoenix cemetery. I have got so many cases that have been directed to - I don't want to go into those details, but still it is not in the formal way because the regulations have not been amended to provide for same.

**Dr. David:** Mr Speaker, Sir, it cannot be as and when, it is mandatory.

**Mr Speaker:** Time is over!

*At 3.55 p.m. the sitting was suspended.*