

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

POLICE OFFICER V. H. – TRAINING SESSION – DEATH

(No. B/953) Mr G. Lesjongard (Second Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether, in regard to Police Officer V. H., who was posted at the Very Important Person Security Unit and who passed away at the age of 34 years, on Friday 27 June 2008, following a training session, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to –

- (a) the cause of his death;
- (b) when he was posted at the Unit, and
- (c) if he underwent a physical and medical examination before his posting at the said Unit.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that on 27 June 2008, following a routine physical training around the Special Mobile Force Barracks and the Gymkhana compound, late Police constable V. E. complained of chest pain and fainted after returning to the VIPSU Barracks.

The Police constable was attended to by the doctor attached to the Special Mobile Force Regimental Medical Unit and, thereafter, he was immediately conveyed to the ENT hospital on the advice of the attending doctor. However, on reaching the hospital he was found to have already passed away.

An autopsy report revealed the cause of death to be “Acute Coronary Occlusion - Natural Cause”. He was also found to have undetected coronary artery disease.

As regards part (b) of the question, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that late Police constable V. E. was posted at VIPSU since 26 November 2005.

Insofar as part (c) is concerned, I am further informed that all Police officers are mandatorily required to undergo a thorough medical test on joining the Police Force. Late Police constable V.E had joined the Police Force in 1993 and had then undergone a full medical test. I should add that when he was first posted at VIPSU, he attended a one-week induction course at the VIPSU Training Establishment. In addition, he has also successfully completed a two-week training in July 2006. Both courses comprised modules relating to physical fitness, including endurance training and strength training.

I have, Mr Speaker, Sir, however, requested the Commissioner of Police to review the existing policy regarding medical tests for Police officers who are transferred to Units requiring more strenuous physical exercises.

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Speaker, Sir, I thank the hon. Prime Minister for his reply. This is a very sad event and I understand that the hon. Prime Minister has stated that he will ask the Commissioner of Police to review medical tests. Can I know for those who are posted at the VIPSU at what frequency do they have medical tests? Or is it only when they join the Police Force, when they join the VIPSU that they undergo medical tests at regular intervals?

The Prime Minister: In fact, Mr Speaker, Sir, it is only when they join the Police Force that they undergo medical tests. Although I am told that there are different categories - I have the list here - when they are of a certain age, they undergo, depending where they are posted, medical tests. For example, the SMF personnel who are above 45 years of age, they have the option to undergo the exercise or not. From the SSU, those who are above 40 years of age, are required to undergo medical tests. Those above 45 years of age are required to do normal exercise only. There are different categories, I can go on with the list. But in his case, like all Police officers, it is when they join the Police Force.

I think we should review this, because otherwise we will miss people who are relatively young, that is, less than 45 years of age, who might have coronary artery disease, as was the case here. But, as I said, Mr Speaker, Sir, I have asked the Commissioner of Police to see whether we can do a thorough medical examination, including stress tests, perhaps upon posting and then regularly after that.

I also want to take this opportunity to again present my condolences to the wife and family of the late Police constable V. E.

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Speaker, Sir, like the hon. Prime Minister said, we know that that Police officer left behind his wife and a three-year old son. Is there some sort of insurance coverage for that Police constable or for any other Police officer posted at the VIPSU, because we know they work under very stressful conditions when they are posted at the VIPSU?

The Prime Minister: I think there is a gratuity which is paid, Mr Speaker, Sir, in accordance with the provision of the Pensions Act. As regards the death, there is the payment of a death gratuity and also a cash allowance in lieu of the sick leave which is paid to the heirs of the Police officer, in this case, the late Pc. They would have to submit the necessary documents to the Accountant-General and this is done afterwards.

Mr Dayal: Mr Speaker, Sir, in the wake of the sad event, by way of suggestion, van I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether he will consider the advisability of introducing a medical scheme to be implemented compulsorily to Police officers, including VIPSU, so as to effect regular medical check-up on a yearly basis, if possible, as a preventive measure?

The Prime Minister: The only problem, I understand, is that they don't have the personnel at the Ministry of Health to be able to do that. But I must say that, in the past, during my first term, I had suggested that there should be a scheme for everyone, not just Police officers, but even for Members of Parliament and for everyone. It doesn't cost that much, but, I believe, at the time, some people objected and it was not gone through. But, I will ask them to have a look at it again.

POLICE FORCE – UNIFORMS & SHOES - DISTRIBUTION

(No. B/954) Mr S. Naidu (Third Member for Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether, in regard to the police uniforms and boots, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the frequency at which same are renewed, indicating the date on which they were last renewed.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that boots are distributed to the Special Supporting Unit, the Special Mobile Force and the National Coast Guard.

I presume that the hon. Member is referring to the distribution of uniforms and shoes to the regular Police Force. The frequency of distribution thereof is as follows -

- (i) two sets of shirts and trousers per year;
- (ii) caps on an “as and when required” basis;
- (iii) a raincoat every three years, and
- (iv) two pairs of shoes per year.

As regards the second part of the question, the last issue of shirts and trousers was effected in February 2008 and another exercise is ongoing which will last until August 2008, and the last issue of raincoats was effected in December 2007.

I am also informed that there has been a delay in the distribution of shoes because tender specifications were not met by the bidders, and Police had to launch a new tender exercise. However, the distribution exercise is now ongoing and will continue until all Police Officers are issued with at least a pair of shoes by September of this year.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I have also impressed on the Commissioner of Police to see to it that tender procedures for supply of all items of uniforms and equipment are completed in a timely manner.

PUBLIC OFFICERS – PRESS – STATEMENTS

(No. B/955) Mr P. Jhugroo (Third Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether he will state if public officers are allowed to make public statements to the press and if not, why not.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, there is no prohibition as such for public officers to make statements to the press, provided that the making of such statements does not constitute a breach of the Official Secrets Act and that the rules laid down in the Personnel Management Manual are complied with. These rules require a public officer to seek prior authorisation of his Supervising Officer before making any statement to the press.

Insofar as supervising officers themselves are concerned, they may make public statements to the press in order to explain Government policies, in line with the principles governing disclosure of information by public officers as laid down in the Personnel Management Manual and the Code of Ethics of public officers.

However, public officers are not allowed to write letters to the press, publish articles or circulate leaflets and pamphlets on political matters.

Mr Jhugroo: Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Prime Minister inform the House as to how many public officers have been sanctioned for making public statements to the press since July 2005?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, none in that case because none have gone beyond what they are allowed to do according to the Personnel Management Manual and also to the Official Secrets Act.

Mr Bérenger: Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether he has been made aware and whether he has read carefully two public statements through press interviews on 12 July by the new Secretary for Home Affairs and on 13 July by the new Commissioner of Police? I won't say anything further, but I would like to know whether the Prime Minister has been made aware and whether he has read carefully and discussed it with the two top officials concerned.

The Prime Minister: In fact, I must say I haven't read the interviews myself, Mr Speaker, Sir, but I have not been aware. I have seen that there were interviews in the press, but I haven't actually read them myself.

Mr Jhugroo: Can the hon. Prime Minister confirm whether the ex-CMO, Dr. Sungkur, had been sanctioned for making public statements to the press?

The Prime Minister: In that case, he went beyond his call of duty and he made statements that were not, in fact, correct.

PUBLIC SERVICE - WORKMEN'S GROUP – ENTRY AGE

(No. B/956) Mr S. Soodhun (Fifth Member for La Caverne and Phoenix) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether in regard to the Workmen's group of the public service, he will state if Government will consider raising the existing age limit for entry thereto, following the raising of the retirement age to 65 in the public service.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, at present the age limit for entry to the Workmen's group in the public service is 45 years.

The PRB, in its last Report, has maintained this age limit which has been accepted by employees in the Workmen's group.

It is not considered advisable to change the age limit for entry in the Workmen's group as this age limit is already higher than the age limit for other categories of officers which is 40 years.

Mr Soodhun: Mr Speaker, Sir, is the hon. Prime Minister aware that Mauritius is a party of the Convention 111 which prevents all forms of discrimination including discrimination based on age? Will the hon. Prime Minister consider introducing legislation, as in the case of UK, to protect persons against age discrimination when they apply for a job?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, in that case, we are talking of the Workmen's group. In fact, for others, the age limit for entry has been raised from 35 to 40 years according to the PRB Report but, in that case, the age limit is already higher, that is, 45. If there is a discrimination, it is in favour of them, not the other way round.

CRIME PREVENTION – MEASURES

(No. B/957) Mr S. Soodhun (Fifth Member for La Caverne and Phoenix) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether he will state if consideration will be given for the setting up of a National High Powered Committee with a view to building partnerships with all the stakeholders to develop a national Action Plan to combat crime.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am convinced that by harnessing the goodwill and trust of the whole community, we shall have greater success in combating crime and creating the climate of security which our people are entitled to expect. During my first mandate as Prime Minister, I had, in 1998, made a speech and enunciated measures for the establishment of a new relationship between the Police and all the citizens of Mauritius through the creation of participative institutions in which our citizens could have some voice over the objectives and priorities of the Police. The ultimate objective was to change from a Police Force to a Police Service responding to the anxieties and concerns of ordinary Mauritians. I repeated during my last speech to the new recruits that we should have a Police Service.

This idea was reaffirmed in the Government Programme for 2005-2010 wherein it was announced that in its endeavour to consolidate law and order, Government would, *inter alia*, amend the Police Act and adopt a Policing Charter which would lay the foundation for customer-based policing. Furthermore, Government would set up Regional Police Advisory Councils under the aegis of a Mauritius Police Authority which would provide a permanent platform for exchange of views between the Police, the *Forces Vives*, economic players, opinion leaders and other persons from the region on policing issues in the region concerned.

We have covered a lot of groundwork on these new concepts and I am discussing with the new Commissioner of Police so that I can have his views. In the meantime, conscious of the need for concerted and collaborative efforts, the Police have adopted a targeted and multi-pronged strategy, involving all stakeholders. They are already working in partnership with 57 Government and Non-Governmental Organisations on the elaboration and implementation of programmes aimed at preventing and tackling crime. From July 2005 to date, a total of 1137 sensitisation sessions have been organised by the Crime Prevention Unit for targeted groups such as students, senior citizens, workers/employees, and especially youngsters.

Specialised units of the Force such as the *Police du Tourisme*, the Police Family Protection Unit, the Anti-Drug and Smuggling Unit, are taking on board all stakeholders concerned with their respective fields of intervention. For instance, since its creation, the *Police du Tourisme* has organised 11 networking sessions jointly with the *Association des Hôteliers et Restaurateurs de l'Île Maurice*, 12 working sessions on illegal trading on public beaches in collaboration with the Beach Authority and 11 working sessions with beach hawkers. Furthermore, 92 hotel security staff have been trained in self-defence by personnel of the Police Training School.

Another key element of the strategy adopted by the Police is the involvement of the public at large through the Police Public Partnership Policing scheme. This is in a large measure, Mr Speaker, Sir, similar to the Police Community Consultative Group I proposed in 1998. The desired outcome under that scheme is to engage and consult people in local communities on their priorities, and build their confidence in the system put in place so that we can prevent and combat crime. At the same time, they are sensitised on their shared responsibility to build safer communities and are

encouraged to set up Neighbourhood Watch Schemes. Under this scheme, people of specific regions work in partnership with their neighbours, the Police, as well as local authorities on measures to reduce levels of crime. To-date 54 such schemes have been set up across the island and are operating in close collaboration with the Police.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I have always said that law and order is not a partisan issue. With the support of Government, the Police have already adopted a strategy whereby they are taking on board various stakeholders in their daunting task to combat crime. At this stage, the setting up of a National High Powered Committee is, therefore, not warranted. However, I wish to appeal to all stakeholders, including the public at large, that partnerships with the Police are intensified with a view to implementing effective programmes geared towards the prevention and the suppression of crime.

Mr Soodhun: I thank the hon. Prime Minister for the answer. I am sure that the hon. Prime Minister is aware that in UK the Home Secretary has recently introduced a green paper proposing to cut red tape and allow Police officers more time to do their job of reducing crime and improving public confidence. Will the hon. Prime Minister review the work procedure of the Police officers to ensure that they concentrate more on policing?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, in fact, this is being done. I think there was a Parliamentary Question which was put in the House as to why so many officers are being transferred. This is precisely why. He is cutting down red tape, cutting down on Police Officers doing administrative work, and he is rather putting them on the beat.

Mr Soodhun: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am sure the hon. Prime Minister has taken this matter seriously. He has just mentioned that the community will be involved. Is the hon. Prime Minister ready to create the grade of Police Community Support Officers to address issues such as anti-social behaviour, drugs, graffiti and other misconduct in the public and, thus, strengthen Police action?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, this is why I said that in 1998 we wanted to have a Police Community Consultative Group. It is basically what they are trying to do with the Police Public Partnership Policing Scheme, as well as to stress the need for everybody to be responsible in that attitude.

Mr Soodhun: Mr Speaker, Sir, as the Prime Minister is aware, we badly need Police Officers in view of the prevailing situation today. I would like to know from the hon. Prime Minister whether he is going to examine the possibility of contracting out certain duties carried out by the Police, such as watchmanship, so that they may perform their policing work more effectively.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, that is a good suggestion from the hon. Member. In fact, I know that the Commissioner of Police is looking at everything.

MBC – DIRECTOR-GENERAL – OFFICIAL CAR

(No. B/958) Mr G. Guinness (Third Member for Montagne Blanche & GRSE) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether, in regard to the official car put at the disposal of the Director-General of the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Corporation, information as to the –

- (a) make;
- (b) purchasing price;
- (c) date of purchase;
- (d) annual insurance premium paid;
- (e) insurance value;
- (f) mileage as at to date, and
- (g) number of times it met with an accident, indicating the total cost of repairs.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, as regards parts (a), (b) and (c) of the question, I am informed by the Director-General of the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation that his official car make “Mercedes” was purchased for a duty free price of Rs1,089,000 on 10 April 2006.

As regards parts (d) and (e) of the question, the Director-General has informed that the Corporation is currently paying an annual insurance premium of Rs57,860 in respect of his official car, which is insured for an amount of Rs2,893,000.

Insofar as part (f) of the question is concerned, the Director-General has informed that, as at 24 July 2008, the odometer reading was 180,373 kms.

As regards the last part of the question, the Director-General has informed me that his official car was involved in road accidents on two occasions. The car suffered damages on three other occasions but not as a result of accidents involving other vehicles. The total cost of repairs paid by the insurer amounted to Rs671,958.50. For each accident, the MBC had to pay an amount of Rs10,000 representing the “Policy Excess”.

Mr Guinness: Mr Speaker, Sir, I presume it is an official car, that is, for duty...

Mr Speaker: That’s what the Prime Minister said.

Mr Guinness: Can I know from the hon. Prime Minister whether he finds it normal that a 2-year car has run 180,000 kms...

Mr Speaker: This is a matter of opinion.

Mr Bérenger: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am sure the hon. Prime Minister would have taken note of that little phrase that, on a number of occasions, the car was damaged but not by accident. I am sure he has inquired into that. Can we know what led to this strange situation?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I said it was damaged on three occasions, but not as a result of accidents involving other vehicles. I can tell the hon. Leader of the Opposition that, on 06 June 2006, the car knocked against an electric pole; on 10 August, it hit a tree; on 19 June 2007 it knocked against the wall of the MBC garage.

Mr Guinness: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I know from the hon. Prime Minister whether he has asked any explanation from the Director-General as to how the car has run 180,000 kilometres?

Mr Speaker: No, again, this is...

Mr Guinness: I am asking whether the hon. Prime Minister has sought an explanation from the Director-General.

Mr Speaker: The hon. Member is saying that the car should not have run 180,000 kms. Hon. Prime Minister, have you asked the Director-General why he has run the car for 180,000 kms?

The Prime Minister: No, Mr Speaker, Sir. I did not ask the Director-General.

Mr Jhugroo: Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Prime Minister confirm whether the Director-General used his car as a mobile office?

Mr Speaker: This question is not allowed.

MBC - HARD DISK VIDEO DISC UNIT & CAMERA ADAPTOR – LOSS

(No. B/959) Mr G. Gunness (Third Member for Montagne Blanche & GRSE) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation, information as to if certain items are reported to have been lost at the University of Mauritius, when a team attended thereat for the ENG knowledge channel, on 16 July 2008, and if so, indicate –

- (a) the items which were lost and the surrounding circumstances thereof, and
- (b) the measures taken, if any, to prevent the recurrence of any such incident.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, as regards part (a) of the question, I am informed by the Director-General of the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation that, on 16 July 2008, an MBC crew lost a hard disk video disc unit and a camera adaptor during a video recording on the premises of the University of Mauritius.

Insofar as part (b) of the question is concerned, the Director-General has informed that the case has been reported to the Moka Police Station, and I am advised by the Commissioner of Police that an inquiry is in progress. For its part, the Corporation has sought the explanations of the employees concerned, and a departmental inquiry has been instituted. In the light of the findings, disciplinary action will be taken against the employees concerned for non-compliance with the MBC rules and regulations. As a matter of fact, Mr Speaker, Sir, the Director-General has informed that the attention of all employees of the Corporation were drawn on 20 December 2006 and

16 May 2007 to the effect that they should at all times ensure the proper care of the Corporation's property entrusted to them for the performance of their duties.

I am further informed by the Director-General that the Corporation has tightened its internal control mechanism, and all employees are required to personally sign the issue and receipt vouchers for items of mobile equipment needed for outdoor activities.

I am also informed that it is being envisaged for deductions to be effected from the salaries of negligent officers.

MBC – SABA CONFERENCE – PARTICIPANTS - HOTEL ACCOMMODATION

(No. B/960) Mr G. Gunness (Third Member for Montagne Blanche & GRSE) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation, information as to if the Corporation has made arrangements with any hotel for the accommodation of the participants who will be attending the Southern African Broadcasting Association (SABA) Conference, from 17 to 20 August 2008, and if so, the name of the hotel and the costs thereof.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Director-General of the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation that the Corporation had approached four hotels having conference facilities to submit their best quotations for the provision of accommodation to participants who will be attending the Southern African Broadcasting Association Conference in Mauritius from 17 to 20 August 2008.

In the light of the response obtained, the Corporation has made arrangements for the participants to stay at La Plantation Resort and Spa Hotel.

I am further informed by the Director-General that the cost of accommodation will be borne by the participants themselves, except for a few guests whose accommodation expenses will be borne by the MBC.

He feels that it would not be proper to disclose the rates that would be charged by the hotel as the information is of a commercial nature.

Mr Guinness: Can I know from the hon. Prime Minister what are the four hotels where quotations were sought and what was the total price that each hotel quoted for?

The Prime Minister: The four hotels I can say, Mr Speaker, Sir, were the Belle Mare Plage Hotel, Maritim Hotel, Villa Caroline Hotel and La Plantation Resort and Spa Hotel. He has not given the price of each, but the problem was that they could not give the details. I think three of them, namely Maritim Hotel replied that they have only a maximum of 80 rooms available, Belle Mare Plage Hotel again said they were unable to accommodate more than 100 persons and Villa Caroline Hotel said they cannot afford for the conference.

MAURITIUS PORTS AUTHORITY – CHAIRPERSON – TRANSFER OF FUNDS - ALLEGATIONS

(No. B/961) Mr G. Guinness (Third Member for Montagne Blanche and GRSE) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether he is aware of the content of a fax dated 10 October 2006 from the firm Boskalis International, addressed to the Chairperson of the Mauritius Ports Authority, informing the latter that an amount of 25,000 USD has been transferred into his account, and if so, if an inquiry has been initiated in relation thereto and the outcome thereof.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, following a publication of an article in the press on 19 July 2008 regarding allegations of transfer of funds by a foreign company into the account of the Chairperson of the Mauritius Ports Authority, the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism, Leisure and External Communications addressed a letter to the Chairperson, Mauritius Ports Authority on 21 July 2008 requesting his comments on the allegations.

On the same day, a letter was also addressed to the Director General Mauritius Ports Authority by the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Tourism,

Leisure and External Communications requesting him to seek explanations from the foreign company.

All the files and documents connected with the dealings of the Mauritius Ports Authority and the foreign company have been impounded on the very day when this was found.

In addition, the Independent Commission Against Corruption has started an investigation into the allegations.

The Director of Investigation is expected to file a Preliminary Investigation Report within 21 days as provided by Section 46 (1) (b) of the Prevention of Corruption Act.

I wish to assure the House, Mr Speaker, Sir, that the Investigation will be conducted without hindrance and necessary action will be taken in the light of the findings of the Independent Commission Against Corruption and the investigation that is being done at the level of the Ministry of Tourism.

Mr Bérenger: Being given that what was, in fact, published was a photocopy of a letter from the company saying so much money has been paid by the company which won a huge tender with the institution concerned and it seems that this was one payment amongst others, can I know from the Prime Minister why he has not been, at least, suspended pending the inquiry?

The Prime Minister: For two reasons, first of all, we follow the principle that we will allow an inquiry to see whether there is a *prima facie* case first and, secondly, in any case he is not in Mauritius at the time.

(Interruptions)

Mr Bérenger: The hon. Prime Minister mentioned a *prima facie* case. A copy of a letter from the company saying: 'Your bank account (...) so much money has been put into your bank account'. Is this not *prima facie* evidence?

The Prime Minister: In fact, in a sense, Mr Speaker, Sir, anybody can write a letter like this.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

The Prime Minister: We have to find out whether this actually has been transferred and whether it is true. Also, I can say that the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Tourism has told me - and he is repeating it again - that they have also asked the company to explain.

Mr Bérenger: Can the hon. Prime Minister give the guarantee that he won't be appointed adviser to the hon. Minister like somebody else?

(Interruptions)

Yes, Mr Rault. It has been a mess at Pizza Hut, he is now at...

Mr Speaker: No, no! We are not referring to Mr Rault. Time is over! Questions addressed to hon. Ministers! The Table has been advised that PQ No. B/966 has been withdrawn.

CITÉ RICHELIEU - WOMEN'S CENTRE - COURSES

(No. B/967) Mrs S. Grenade (Second Member for GRNW and Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Women's Rights, Child Development, Family Welfare and Consumer Protection whether she will state if the Women's Centre of Cité Richelieu is presently carrying out courses for the inhabitants of the area, and if not, why not.

Mrs Seebun: Mr Speaker, Sir, Richelieu Women Centre is operational since 23 April 2005. Since its setting-up, several courses have been conducted for women of the region.

For the period May 2005 to December 2007, 645 women have been benefitted from courses and only for the current year a batch of 250 women has been trained.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! I said, Order!

Mrs Seebun: A second batch of 136 women is presently enrolled for the same courses which have started on June 2008 and will be completed in September 2008. Subsequently, a third batch will be enrolled for period September 2008 to December 2008.

Furthermore, some 247 women have enrolled in 10 months courses in tailoring, machine embroidery, home economics, fabrics painting, dressmaking and others.

Moreover, Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the House that on 27 December 2007, hon. Dr. James Burty David and myself inaugurated a regional development centre in Richelieu to ensure the economic empowerment of women. Since then women have been trained in serigraphy, catering, kitchen gardening and sewing. The objective behind it is to encourage women to set up self-help projects

Mrs Grenade: Est-ce que l'honorable ministre est au courant qu'il y a des appareils de sérigraphie qui ont été mis à la disposition de ce centre depuis l'époque du MSM/MMM et que ces appareils sont toujours à l'état de neuf et n'ont pas été utilisés? Pourquoi est-ce le cas?

Mrs Seebun: *Je ne crois pas que c'est vrai*, Mr Speaker, Sir because, as I said earlier, on 27 December 2007, my hon. colleague and myself, we did launch serigraphy courses at the regional development centre. We did see women performing, they are still following serigraphy courses.

Mrs Grenade: Est-ce que la ministre peut nous informer du nombre d'habitants, surtout de Richlieu, qui bénéficient de ces cours?

Mrs Seebun: Je viens de citer tous les chiffres.

Mr Speaker: Does the hon. Member mean that she has already answered?

Mrs Seebun: I have just answered the question and I gave several figures.

Mr Speaker: The hon. Member should follow the reply.

Mrs Grenade: M. le président, c'est vrai que l'honorable Ministre a mentionné le nombre de cours qui sont dispensés dans ce centre. Mais ce que j'aimerais savoir c'est le nombre de gens de la région, car d'après mes informations ils n'ont pas accès au centre et ne bénéficient pas de ces cours?

Mrs Seebun: I will ensure that everyone gets access and is given opportunity to be trained.

CHAMP DE MARS – HORSE RACING – LEASE

(No. B/968) Mrs S. Grenade (Second Member for GRNW and Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Local Government whether, in regard to the Mauritius Turf Club, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Municipal Council of Port Louis, information as to if the terms and conditions of the lease of the Champ de Mars for the purpose of carrying out horse racing granted thereto have been reviewed, and if so, the new terms and conditions thereof.

Dr. David: Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the House that initially the lease agreement between the Municipality of Port Louis and the Mauritius Turf Club concerning Champ de Mars was being made on a yearly basis. Following a request made in September 2007 by the Mauritius Turf Club for entering into a lease agreement for a period of 20 years instead of an annual basis in order to obtain necessary finance from banks to undertake renovation works at Champ de Mars, Government has on 09 May 2008 agreed to the Council's proposal to enter into a lease agreement with the 20 years starting as from 23 May 2008. The new terms and conditions of the lease agreement are as follows –

- (a) the rent of the race tracks and the buildings which was Rs110,000 for each racing day and Rs181,500 per annum respectively have been increased by 5% as from 23 May 2008, and the same rate of increase will be applied each year during the term of the lease;

- (b) a yearly rental of Rs10,000 will be claimed per billboard of a minimum of 12m x 3m found within the compound of Champ de Mars;
- (c) The Mauritius Turf Club will be responsible for the following –
 - (i) renovation of the children garden and its maintenance thereafter;
 - (ii) upgrading and maintenance of the pond, making provision for freshwater fish, maintenance of the Malartic Tomb and Statue of Edward VII;
 - (iii) embellishment works and creation of green spaces;
 - (iv) placing of benches at strategic places;
 - (v) upgrading of the lighting system;
 - (vi) tarring of the tarmac to create a parking space which will be put at the disposal of the Municipal Officers free of charge during weekdays throughout the year;
 - (vii) placing of camera for security purposes;
 - (viii) maintenance of a kiosk; and
 - (ix) general maintenance of Champ de Mars.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the House may wish to note that Section 145 (1) (c) of the Local Government Act 1989 provides that the State may, at any time, resume its full rights over the whole or any part of the land, if required for public purposes upon giving notice to the Council.

Mrs Grenade: Est-ce que le ministre peut informer la Chambre si le *parking* payant qui se fait au Champs de Mars forme partie des *new terms and conditions of MTC*?

Dr. David: Je viens de parler des *parking spaces* pour dire ceci, M. le président –

“(vi) tarring of the tarmac to create a parking space which will be put at the disposal of the Municipal Officers free of charge during weekdays throughout the year;”

But the hon. Member is referring to specific parking, I will check the information.

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Minister inform the House whether the lease now is considered as an industrial lease and whether the Chief Government Valuer was involved before the new terms and conditions were decided upon?

Dr. David: The lease conditions were sent to the Attorney-General’s Office, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Bodha: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister whether he can enlighten the House as to the area which has been rented?

Dr. David: These are specific figures. I will check.

DEVELOPMENT BANK OF MAURITIUS - UNEMPLOYED WOMEN - START UP SCHEME

(No. B/969) **Mrs S. Grenade (Second Member for GRNW and Port Louis West)** asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance & Economic Development whether he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Development Bank of Mauritius Ltd., information as to the number of unemployed women who have benefitted from its Start Up Scheme, region-wise since 2007 to date.

The Minister of Labour, Industrial Relations & Employment (Dr. V. Bunwaree): Mr Speaker, Sir, the answer is 87 and I am tabling the breakdown region-wise.

PLAINE SOPHIE - STATE LAND - LEASE

(No. B/970) Mrs S. Grenade (Second Member for GRNW and Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Agro Industry and Fisheries whether, in regard to the lease of State land in the region of Plaine Sophie, since January 2006 to date, he will state the number of beneficiaries thereof, indicating their names and respective residential addresses.

Dr. Boolell: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Land Use Division of my Ministry that 7 *arpents* of State land at Plaine Sophie have been leased to the following 6 planters for foodcrop cultivation since January 2006 to date –

(i)	Mrs Bibi Sakeelah Bissessur	15 Canton, Vacoas	0.50A
(ii)	Mr Suresh Bungraz	Nehru Road, Seechurn Ave, Quatre Bornes	2.00A
(iii)	Mr Feroze Abdolla	Glen Park, Vacoas	2.00A
(iv)	Mr Reshad Jhingoor	Premier Rd Glen Park, Vacoas	0.50A
(v)	Mr Deoduth Purmessur	Glen Park, Vacoas	1.00A
(vi)	Mr Deoduth Ramchurn	Glen Park, Vacoas	1.00A

I wish to point out that there are 95 planters, including the 6 I have just mentioned, on the tenant list of the Land Use Division who hold duly signed leases with my Ministry. They occupy land of an extent of 154 *arpents* mainly for the cultivation of foodcrops. The rent payable is Rs1000 per *arpent* per year and the period of lease is for 7 years.

Furthermore, there are 7 beneficiaries occupying an extent of 78.24 *arpents* since 1998 whose Lease Agreements have not yet been drawn. The matter is being looked into. I can give the list of the beneficiaries if the hon. Member so wishes.

I am also informed that the number of planters occupying land in that region is higher than those on the record at the Land Use Division. In this connection, the Land Use Division of the Ministry is presently carrying out a

comprehensive survey in that region to determine the exact field occupancy and will initiate action as deemed necessary.

Mr Jhugroo: Le ministre peut-il informer la chambre comment est-ce que ces planteurs ont soumis leurs applications pour les *leases* ? Est-ce qu'ils l'ont fait suite à une annonce parue dans les journaux ?

Dr. Boolell : As practice existed in the past.

Mr Gunness: Can I know from the Minister what are the criteria that have been used to allocate a plot of land to the seven beneficiaries?

Dr. Boolell: They have improved upon the existing lease.

Mr Cuttaree: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister will recall that in a similar instance, some time back, I asked him if he has got a project for land settlement and whether it is not proper to advertise and lay down the specific criteria and then choose people on the basis of these criteria. He said yes, he would do it, but now he is claiming that he is following the same procedures as before.

Dr. Boolell: Mr Speaker, Sir, these people have been on the waiting list since years immemorial. In fact, their problems need to be addressed and since we came into power, we have made sure that they become beneficiaries. Since many of them are holders of AREU farmers card, we have processed the application and we've given satisfaction to all those whose applications have been pending since days immemorial.

Mr Soodhun: Can the hon. Minister table the complete list which he is referring to?

Dr. Boolell: With pleasure, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Bodha: Just on the same line as my hon. colleague, can we know how many applications are still on the waiting list?

Dr. Boolell: I can't give the exact figure, but my hon. friend can rest assured that it is the policy of Government to make use of all land existing to

ensure that they are put under cultivation and, of course, to meet our objective in respect of food security.

Mrs Martin: Sir, the hon. Minister said that there are many beneficiaries who are owners of the AREU card. Does he have a list of those people who are not owners of the AREU card, but who have benefited as well?

Dr. Boolell: We usually dispense advice to them and ask them to register so that the card is issued to them.

ROCHE BRUNES SEED PRODUCTION CENTRE - LEASE

(No. B/971) Mr G. Lesjongard (Second Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Agro Industry and Fisheries whether, in regard to the Roche Brunès Seed Production Centre, he will state if his Ministry has leased it out and if so -

- (a) the name of the lessee;
- (b) the value ascribed to the land and to its building;
- (c) the extent of the land leased;
- (d) the rental value, and
- (e) the terms and conditions of the lease.

Dr. Boolell: Mr Speaker, Sir, the Roche Brunès Seed Production Centre is of an extent of 95A comprising the following -

- (I) An extent of 69A under the control of my Ministry consisting of -
 - (a) 62A for vegetable seed production.
 - (b) 5A is under orchard for plant propagation and plant genetic resources;
 - (c) 2A under buildings and offices;

(II) The remaining 26A leased as follows -

- (i) 5A to Institut de Development Viti Vinicole on 16 April 1999 for table grape production at an annual rent of Rs14,000 for a period of seven years. The lease expired on 12 January 2006 and was not renewed for noncompliance by the lessee with the contract;
- (ii) Two plots of 16A to Mr Richad Punjoo as follows -
 - (a) a first plot of 7A for goat breeding purposes on 04 September 2000 at an annual rent of Rs10,000;
 - (b) a second plot of 9A for fodder production on 19 January 2004 at an annual rent of Rs13,500;
 - (c) Mr Punjoo has submitted a request for an additional 10A for the expansion of his goat breeding activities which is being considered by the Ministry;
- (iii) 2A to Mr Hervé Aimée for mixed farming on 27 March 2008 at an annual rent of Rs1,000/arpent;
- (iv) 1A to Mrs Mylene Abdoolkader for vegetable cultivation on 16 May 2008 at an annual rent of Rs1,000/arpent;
- (v) 1A to Mrs. Arianne Antoinette for vegetable cultivation on 18 April 2008 at an annual rent of Rs1,000/arpent, and
- (vi) 1A to La Ferme Coowar Ltd for farming and fodder development on 06 June 2008 at an annual rent of Rs1,000/arpent.

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Speaker, Sir, earlier the hon. Minister stated that there is a waiting list with regard to the allocation of land. Can he state whether there was a waiting list with regard to the land that has been allocated at the Roches Brunes Feed Production Centre? Can he also say what is the experience of the persons who have been allocated land in the

field of agriculture because I have heard of the former candidate of the *Alliance Sociale* having obtained land at the Roches Brunes Feed Centre?

Dr. Boolell: Mr Hervé Aimée is a citizen of Mauritius. He has a legitimate right to submit an application which has been entertained in the light of the project he has submitted. I can ask my hon. friend to make a site visit and he will be surprised as to the outcome of the investment.

(Interruptions)

Mr Jhugroo: Can I ask the hon. Minister when did Mr Aimée make his application?

Dr. Boolell: Mr Aimée applied way back in 2000. His application was never entertained and it is only when we have been in office that we have given thought to the application of Mr Aimée.

(Interruptions)

Mr Lesjongard: We have heard the speech of the Minister with regard to the food crisis at Budget time. Can we know what is being cultivated?

Dr. Boolell: Well, I said vegetables. I do not have to list down all the vegetables and I have said 5A under orchard. Of course, if the plots have been leased for goat breeding, my good friend Mr Hervé Aimée has gone for mixed farming, Mrs Mylène Abdoolkader is growing vegetables and Mrs Arianne Antoinette is doing the same. The results are visible and tangible.

Mr Bhagwan: Has the attention of the hon. Minister been drawn to the cases of subleasing?

Dr. Boolell: It can be a problem and we are addressing it. As we know, many of these lessees and sub-lessees are poor people and we impress upon them not to go against the provisions in the lease deed which they have to comply with.

Mr Jhugroo: Can the hon. Minister table the letter of application of Mr Aimée?

Dr. Boolell: I will do so with the consent of Mr Aimée. If he so agrees, I will do it.

BOIS MARCHAND AGRICULTURAL CENTRE – LEASE

(No. B/972) Mr G. Lesjongard (Second Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Agro Industry and Fisheries whether, in regard to the Bois Marchand Agricultural Centre, he will state if his Ministry has leased it out and if so -

- (a) the name of the lessee;
- (b) the extent of the land leased;
- (c) the rental value, and
- (d) the terms and conditions of the lease.

Dr. Boolell: Mr Speaker, Sir, the Bois Marchand Agricultural Centre is of an extent of 39A58. Its main activity was the production of seeds and planting materials for sale to growers and the public.

Following the launching of Tianli project in May 2007 -

- (i) 15 *bona fide* ex-tenants of the Riche Terre Land Settlement were relocated to Bois Marchand over an extent of 15 arpents for seed production activities. In the first instance they are allowed to cultivate vegetables. Subsequently, they would be encouraged to go for seed production under the guidance of the technicians of the Ministry and Agricultural Research Extension Unit;
- (ii) the lease is valid for a term of 8 years and 2 months as from 01 of May 2007 to expire on the last day of June 2015 at a nominal rent varying between Rs117.50 and Rs126.00 per arpent per year, and
- (iii) eight plots of an extent of 8 arpents have not been allocated since the eligible planters have entered a case against the quantum of compensation in the Supreme Court. The case is scheduled for 31 July 2008.

The remaining 15A02 under orchard, nursery and office premises have been leased to a private company (BRG Gain Private Co Ltd) to carry exactly the same activities that were being performed in the nursery solely for the production of planting materials for sale to growers and the public;

The lease is valid for a term of 25 years as from 01 of March 2008 to expire on last day of February 2033 at an annual rent of Rs15,020 for the period 01 March 2008 to 28 February 2015. Thereafter the rent shall be increased annually by a percentage which shall not exceed 5% of the current rent.

The name of the lessees, the terms and conditions of the leases are being tabled.

Mr Lesjongard: May I ask the hon. Minister whether it is now the policy of his Ministry to dismantle those agricultural stations?

Dr. Boolell: It is the policy of my Ministry to make sure that land available is put to good use and we have to see to it that we allocate land to *bona fide* and existing farmers because for too long, these centres have been mismanaged and we know with what consequences. At the time when Government is introducing performance based budgeting, we have to be true to the policy defined by Government.

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Speaker, Sir, since we are leasing big plots of land, can I ask the hon. Minister whether the Valuation Office has been involved in assessing the value of those plots of land before they have been leased?

Dr. Boolell: Every policy in respect of lease agreement has been complied with.

STATE LANDS – LEASE

(No. B/973) **Mr E. Guimbeau (First Member for Curepipe and Midlands)** asked the Minister of Housing and Lands whether, in regard to State lands leased to socio-cultural, religious and private organisations or individuals, since July 2005 to date, he will state –

- (a) the number of applications received, indicating the names of the applicants;
- (b) the number of plots leased, indicating the location, extent and purpose of each plot;
- (c) the name of the organizations which have benefited therefrom, indicating if they are registered or not, and
- (d) the annual rental payable and the conditions of each lease.

Mr Dulull: Mr Speaker, Sir, the comprehensive and detailed information requested by the hon. Member needs time for compilation and I have given instructions that the beginning of this compilation exercise starts forthwith, and once completed, the information will be placed in the Library.

Mr Guimbeau: Can I at least know how many plots were leased?

Mr Dulull: The information is being compiled.

Mr Speaker: The hon. Minister does not have the information, it is being compiled.

Mr Guimbeau: Mr Speaker, Sir, I need to get the answer from the hon. Minister. I have got Parliamentary Questions which have been put and I have been waiting for two years to get the answers from the hon. Minister.

Mr Speaker: Can I repeat to the hon. Members that, according to our Standing Orders and Erskine May, if a Minister has said that he is going to take certain action, and he has not done it within three months, the hon. Member can come back to the Assembly with that same question.

(Interruptions)

I have given my rule.

Mr Guimbeau: D'après les pratiques parlementaires, après trois mois...

Mr Speaker: I have told the hon. Member that these are the standing orders, he has to comply with them.

Mr Jhugroo: Since three years, the information is still being complied. Can I know when the hon. Minister will table the information?

Mr Speaker: This question is not allowed. Next question!

TRIOLET – MR D. D. – COMPULSORY LAND ACQUISITION

(No. B/974) Mr E. Guimbeau (First Member for Curepipe and Midlands) asked the Minister of Housing and Lands whether, in regard to the compulsorily acquisition of a plot of land, in Triolet, from one Mr. D. D., for the purpose of erecting a Community Resource Centre, he will state –

- (a) the extent of the land;
- (b) if the Chief Government Valuer has assessed the value thereof and if so, indicate the assessed value, and
- (c) the actual amount of compensation paid out to him.

Mr Dulull: Sir, in regard to part (a) of the question, the extent of the land acquired from Mr. D. D is 946.50m².

With regard to part (b) of the question, the Chief Government Valuer assessed their value at Rs100,000 per square perch on 26 June 2000, which Mr D.D did not accept.

In regard to part (c) of the question, the Board of Assessment, during its sitting on 07 August 2006, awarded the amount of Rs110,000 per square perch. An amount of Rs3.5 m. was paid to the heirs of late Mr D. D. in full and final settlement for the total land extent of 946.50m² inclusive of costs and interests.

Mr Guimbeau: Mr Speaker, Sir, this is quite strange. Out of a lease of 161 compulsorily acquired land from September 2005 to November 2007, four owners of land in Triolet have been compensated ten to fifteen times the assessment value made by the Chief Government Valuer. Can the hon. Minister state whether the Board of Assessment went into the merit of the case of Mr D. D. or was it just a ‘no objection’ from the Ministry of Housing and Lands to pay such an amount?

Mr Dulull: Mr Speaker, Sir, it is not a compensation of 10 or 15 times. The Chief Government Valuer valued the land at Rs100,000 per square perch and the Board of Assessment evaluated it at Rs110,000 per square perch. It is only a margin of 10% and not 10 or 15 times as mentioned by the hon. Member.

Mr Guimbeau: I am referring to 1061 cases of compulsory acquired land where some plots have been evaluated 10 to 15 times the value assessed by Government.

Mr Speaker: This question relates to the land of Mr D. D. If the hon. Member wants to ask a general question on the practice of how land is acquired, he can come with a substantive question.

MON CHOISY HOUSING UNITS – FACT FINDING COMMITTEE

(No. B/975) Mr E. Guimbeau (First Member for Curepipe and Midlands) asked the Minister of Housing and Lands whether, in regard to the Fact Finding Committee that has been set up to inquire into the allocation of the housing units of the National Housing Development Corporation in Mon Choisy and Trou aux Biches, respectively, he will state –

- (a) the composition thereof and
- (b) where matters stand as to the works of the Committee.

Mr Dulull: Sir, I am informed by the NHDC Ltd. that a Fact Finding Committee was set up to inquire into the allocation of the housing units at Mon Choisy, and those housing units at Trou aux Biches have not been the subject of such or of a similar Committee.

As regards part (a) of the question, the composition of the Fact Finding Committee is as follows –

Mr Denis Vellien, Chairperson of
Information and Communication
Technologies Appeal Tribunal - Chairperson

Mr Dan Bundhoo, Corporate Adviser,
Corporate Advisory Services - Assessor

Mr Yacoob Ghanty, Consultant IR/HR/PR
Customer Care - Assessor

Mr H.K. Samboo - Secretary

With regard to part (b) of the question, I am further informed by the NHDC that the report has been completed in December 2007, and that appropriate action has been initiated by the Board.

Mr Guimbeau: Can the hon. Minister table the findings of the Fact-Finding Committee?

Mr Dulull: I'll look into the possibility of tabling with the NHDC Board.

Mr Guimbeau: Mr Speaker, Sir, in the name of transparency and good governance, I believe the Minister should table all the information asked.

Mr Dulull: I have said that I will look into it.

PLAINE VERTE, ROCHE BOIS, CAMP YOLOFF – ABANDONED VEHICLES

(No. B/976) Mr S. Lauthan (Third Member for Port Louis Maritime and Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Environment and National Development Unit whether, he is aware that there are several abandoned vehicles in various streets in Constituency No. 3, in the regions of Plaine Verte, Roche Bois and Camp Yolloff, thereby representing eye sores and hindrances to the pedestrians, and if so, will he state if consideration will be given for the removal thereof.

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, following complaints received and several site visits, 31 abandoned vehicles have been identified since January until 25 July 2008. 22 of them have already been removed through the intervention of Police de l'Environnement. The owners of 3 more abandoned vehicles have also been traced out and sensitized to remove same to which they have agreed.

Enquiry is ongoing to trace the owners of the remaining 6 vehicles and any action deemed necessary will be taken.

ABDOOL RAMAN ABDOOL GOVERNMENT SCHOOL – MARILYN MANSON SUBCULTURE

(No. B/977) Mr S. Lauthan (Third Member for Port Louis Maritime and Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether he is aware that some children of the Abdool Raman Abdool Government School have been affected by the Marilyn Manson subculture (Gothism), and if so, will he state if measures have been taken to avoid the further spread of this subculture in the primary schools.

Mr Gokhool: Mr. Speaker Sir, I am informed that on 12 June 2008, 10 pupils of the CPE class at the Abdool Raman Abdool Government School were found to have cuts on their forearms caused apparently by blades from a pencil sharpener. Their parents were called on the same day and were informed of the situation. Only seven parents turned up. At this stage there is no evidence that links this situation to the Manson subculture neither is there any conspicuous sign of adherence of the pupils to that subculture.

As informed in my reply to PQ B/824, notwithstanding the fact that there is no widespread adherence to the Manson subculture preventive action is being taken by my Ministry to curb the spreading of such subculture in schools and close monitoring is carried out at the level of the schools and zones. Clear instructions have been issued to Heads of schools to report any incident of such behavior immediately. Action is taken to provide psychological assistance to students in need.

However, in the case of the Abdool Raman Government School, I would deplore the fact that notwithstanding these arrangements, officers at the level of the school and the zonal directorate have failed to report this incident in accordance with the standard operating procedures. In view this, I have requested my Supervising Officer to carry out an in-depth enquiry with a view to situating responsibility and instituting an enquiry against those responsible. Concurrently, my Ministry is extending psychological support to the students with a view to ensuring that there is no repetition of such behaviour.

I want to make an appeal to parents to exercise vigilance on their children lest they are following this cult. They may, if they so wish, seek the assistance of psychologists either from my Ministry or that of the Ministry of Women's Rights, Child Development, Family Welfare and Consumer Protection, should that be necessary. My Ministry has initiated action in connection with a survey to gauge the extent of the problem.

Mr Lauthan: Mr Speaker, Sir, I thank the hon. Minister for having revealed the truth about the number of students, but there might be more. I want to draw the attention of the hon. Minister that there are two aspects of the issue. Firstly, many schools students adhere to this lifestyle, *c'est une question de mode*, without having got into the philosophical point of view of it. There is also the other aspect where they get into this subculture which is creating real havoc between the students and their families. Without stigmatising regions or schools, there is a lot of work to be done to enable the students and their parents to cope with the situation.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: The hon. Member is making a statement. I am sorry! The hon. Minister has given an answer. The hon. Member can put a question on what he has said. He is advising the hon. Minister what he has to do. Next question, hon. Lauthan!

Mr Lauthan: I am sorry, Mr Speaker, Sir, it is a very serious issue
...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: I am sorry. I have called the next question!

DR. HASSEN SAKIR STREET – ROAD HUMPS

(No. B/978) Mr S. Lauthan (Third Member for Port Louis Maritime and Port Louis East) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping whether, he is aware that the Dr. Hassen Sakir Street, Port Louis, between its junction with the Diego Garcia and the Paul et Virginie Streets, has recently been tarred and that motorcycles are driving very fast and dangerously thereat, and if so, will he state if consideration will be given for the setting up of road humps along the said road.

The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport & Shipping (Dr. R. Beebeejaun): Mr Speaker, Sir, long overdue extensive road upgrading and resurfacing works are being carried out in Port Louis.

Dr. Hassen Sakir Street is part of the road improvement programme, where works are still in progress.

After completion, the Traffic Management and Road Safety Unit will consider appropriate road safety measures including the installation of humps.

Mr Lauthan: Mr Speaker, Sir, as the hon. Deputy Prime Minister knows it is a region where there are several *madrassa* students and mosque. The humps are very important.

DR. AMBROSINE STREET, PORT LOUIS – ONE WAY STREET

(No. B/979) Mr S. Lauthan (Third Member for Port Louis Maritime and Port Louis East) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping whether he will state if consideration will be given for the conversion of the Dr. Ambrosine

Street, in Port Louis, into a one way street, so as to prohibit vehicles from entering the street from the Sir Abdool Razack Mohamed Street.

The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport & Shipping (Dr. R. Beebeejaun): Mr Speaker, Sir, the Traffic Management and Road Safety Unit of my Ministry has already, on 22 July, converted Dr. Ambrosine Street into a one way road from its junction with Sir Abdool Razack Mohamed Street to its junction with Cité Laval Street.

This has been decided to achieve a balanced flow of traffic in the road network of the region.

At 1.00 p.m. the sitting was suspended.

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

IMPASSE SUSHIL, RICHE TERRE – SEWERAGE SYSTEM

(No. B/980) Mr P. Jhugroo (Third Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Public Utilities whether, in regard to the Impasse Sushil, at Riche Terre, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Waste Water Management Authority, information as to if consideration will be given for the provision of the sewerage system to the inhabitants thereof.

Dr. Kasenally: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Wastewater Management Authority that there are no sewerage facilities at Impasse Sushil, Riche Terre. The soil in the region has a very low permeability which results in frequent overflows of the onsite wastewater disposal systems.

I am also informed that Impasse Sushil, Riche Terre, is within the proposed project area for Le Hochet/Riche Terre/Terre Rouge and adjoining areas identified for the provision of sewerage facilities under the Baie du Tombeau Sewerage Project – Phase III.

The project will be considered for implementation under the next National Sewerage Programme. Meanwhile, the inhabitants should have recourse to private carriers for the emptying of their cesspits, as and when required.

Mrs Juggoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, can the Minister inform the House whether there has been any feasibility study done in the region of Riche Terre or does he envisage to have it done in the near future in the region of Riche Terre and its vicinity.

Dr. Kasenally: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, there has been no feasibility study done yet, but in the course of our planning there will be a feasibility study for all the adjoining areas as soon as we have funds to implement this project which will cost about Rs980 m.

SAMU SERVICE – VEHICLES & MEDICAL AND SUPPORT STAFF – NUMBER

(No. B/981) Mr S. Naidu (Third Member for Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether, in regard to the SAMU service, he will state the number of vehicles and medical and support staff attached thereto, in each hospital.

Mr Faugoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, each of the five regional hospitals, namely Dr. Jeetoo hospital, SSRN, Flacq, J. Nehru and Victoria Hospitals has one fully equipped SAMU ambulance. One spare SAMU ambulance is on standby at the Transport Division of my Ministry.

SAMU services are organised centrally from Dr. Jeetoo Hospital and is under the responsibility of the Director, Emergency Services. There are 15 Permanenciers to handle incoming calls.

At the level of each hospital, the services are provided by 4 Emergency Physicians, 9 Nursing Officers and 4 Ambulance Drivers who work on a roster basis. The SAMU services are available round the clock.

Mr Naidu: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is the Minister aware of any situation where the lack of medical personnel has caused delay in the transfer of victims from the site of an accident to the hospital?

The Deputy Speaker: The question does not relate to what the hon. Member is saying. It's just factual; the number of vehicles and the medical support staff.

Mr Jhugroo: Can the hon. Minister confirm whether any complaints have been received against the drivers of SAMU and, if yes, may we know the nature of same?

Mr Faugoo: I am not aware of any complaints made against drivers.

Mr Jhugroo: Can the hon. Minister confirm whether any drivers of SAMU have been arrested under the influence of alcohol?

Mr Faugoo: I will have to check, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Mr Lauthan: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, much has to be done still in terms of sensitisation. We have, I am sure, all witnessed situations where SAMU solicits vehicles to give way and usually people give way with much difficulty. It is a question of minutes that could save lives. Can the Minister ...

The Deputy Speaker: This is altogether another question.

Mr Lauthan: It is about the service of SAMU.

PHYSICALLY HANDICAPPED PEOPLE – FREE DOMICILIARY VISITS

(No. B/982) Mr S. Naidu (Third Member for Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Social Security, National Solidarity and Senior Citizens Welfare & Reform Institutions whether, in regard to the physically handicapped people, she will state if she will consider granting thereto the benefit of free doctor home visits, and if not, why not.

Mrs Bappoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the policy of my Ministry is to offer domiciliary visit upon request to some 2,200 persons who are above 75 years of age and who are severely handicapped. This is costing Government more than Rs8 m. a year.

In addition, my Ministry is providing Rs600 on a monthly basis to children with severe disabilities aged 6 months to 15 years, to meet expenses in respect of medical home visits or transport cost to attend treatment at hospital.

As regards beneficiaries of Invalidity Pension, we have some 30,000 such beneficiaries on our database who are below 60 years of age. It is observed that a large number of them are economically active and are fully integrated in the mainstream society. This is a clear indication that they are not so much suffering from any type of illness, which would require the visits of a Medical Practitioner on a monthly basis. The House is well aware that the objective of Government is to empower and integrate physically handicapped people and not to segregate them.

Nevertheless, I wish to point out here that in exceptional cases, my Ministry, through the National Council for the Rehabilitation of Disabled persons (NCRD), is providing assistance in the form of free domiciliary visits on *ad hoc* basis to severely disabled persons under 75 years of age. In view thereof, we do not propose to extend this policy to all beneficiaries of invalidity pension, for obvious social and financial reasons which I have just mentioned.

Mr Naidu: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I listened carefully to the hon. Minister's answer. She mentioned about *ad hoc* visits to people who are severely handicapped and below 75 years of age. I can assure the hon. Minister that when that request is made, the answer which comes immediately from the Ministry is: "if the person is not more than 75 years

old, we are not coming”. Will the hon. Minister look into the matter and see how this can be redressed?

Mrs Bappoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, there is a policy, but if the request specifies about any severe disability in that person who is below 75 years, it is being taken on board under NCRD for a doctor’s visit.

Mr Soodhun: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, last month, I personally accompanied one patient, who is completely paralysed, for a visit to the doctor of Social Security and I had to wait for nearly one hour. Finally, I went to see the doctor who sat on the Board to know whether the lady deserved a medical visit at home.

The Deputy Speaker: What is the question of the hon. Member?

Mr Soodhun: It is nearly one month now and no answer has been received from the Board. I would like to know whether this is the normal procedure, because the lady who is completely paralysed was asked to come before the Board for an assessment.

Mrs Bappoo: If such is the case, I’ll certainly look into it, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. I also agree with the hon. Member that this is not a recommended practice, to bring the person for assessment as to whether he or she needs a domiciliary visit and to have no answer afterwards. I totally agree with the hon. Member. If he gives me the details, I’ll certainly look into that case.

The Deputy Speaker: The Table has been advised that PQ. No. B/989 has been withdrawn. Next question!

MINISTRY OF TOURISM - MR J. R. – ADVISER

(No. B/983) **Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière)** asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism, Leisure & External Communications whether, in regard to Mr J. R., adviser to his Ministry, he will state the date of his appointment and the terms and conditions thereof, including the allowances and other benefits to which he is entitled.

The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism, Leisure & External Communications (Mr X. L. Duval): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, Mr Joël Rault has been appointed, as Senior Adviser on Tourism Product Development, as from 14 July 2008.

I am informed that his terms and conditions are being finalised by the Ministry of Civil Service Affairs & Administrative Reforms.

I shall lay details of the terms and conditions of his contract of employment as soon as it is finalised.

Mr Bhagwan: Is Mr Rault the same person who was at the Tourism Authority?

Mr X. L. Duval: Yes, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Mr Bhagwan: Can the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Tourism inform the House how somebody who had been taken to task ...

(Interruptions)

I have not completed my question.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member should put his question and then the hon. Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Tourism will answer.

Mr Bhagwan: Can we know from the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Tourism whether this person, who has mishandled a certain case at the Tourism Authority, has now been rewarded in a way?

Mr X. L. Duval: I have a copy of the judgement here. I can lay it on the Table of the House. The judgement, in fact, arises from a different interpretation of what is a tourist enterprise, and the powers of the jurisdiction. There is no taking to task in this judgement, at least, of Mr Joël Rault. I am satisfied that he is fulfilling completely and satisfactorily his duties at the Ministry.

Mr Bhagwan: How does the hon. Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Tourism reconcile the statement he made publicly that this

person has in a way ‘*fané*’ at this Authority? He made that public statement himself.

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I do not recall. I do not know what the hon. Member is trying to quote. It is false, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir,. I have never made such a statement.

Mr Bhagwan: I never make false allegations. I’ll bring it to the attention of the House.

Mr Jhugroo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, may we ask the hon. Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Tourism on what ground did Mr J. R. leave the Tourism Authority?

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we are at mid term and we thought that it would be good to use different capabilities at the Ministry differently.

TOURISM AUTHORITY – DIRECTOR

(No. B/984) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism, Leisure & External Communications whether, in regard to Mr R. P., Chairperson of the Tourism Authority, he will state –

- (a) the date of his appointment and the terms and conditions thereof, including the allowances and other benefits to which he is entitled, and
- (b) if he is also the Chairperson of Discover Mauritius Limited, and if so, in which capacity and all the allowances and other benefits to which he is entitled.

The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism, Leisure & External Communications (Mr X. L. Duval): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed that Mr Robert Pallamy was appointed as Director of the Tourism Authority on contract for a period of two years as from 15 July 2008. As stipulated in the 2008 PRB Report, Mr Pallamy is drawing a salary of Rs80,000.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I am tabling copy of his contract of employment containing all the requested information.

Regarding part (b) of the question, I am informed that Mr Pallamy was appointed Chairman of Discover Mauritius Limited in August 2006.

I am also informed that he has not drawn any salary whatsoever for the last two years.

Mr Bhagwan: May we know from the hon. Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Tourism whether this person was the Municipal Councillor of Quatre Bornes?

Mr X. L. Duval: Yes, he was.

Mr Bhagwan: Can the hon. Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Tourism tell us whether he has resigned?

The Deputy Speaker: Next question, hon. Bhagwan!

FERTILIZERS – PRICE

(No. B/985) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Agro Industry and Fisheries whether, in regard to fertilizers, he will state the actions Government proposes to take in favour of the sugarcane and vegetable planters, in view of the increase in the price thereof, since 2006 to date.

Dr. Boolell: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with your permission I shall make a common reply to PQ No. B/985 and PQ No. B/988 as both relate to the same subject.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the agricultural sector is in a vulnerable situation, particularly with the hike in the prices of all agricultural inputs, namely agro chemicals and planting materials. The factors impacting on the rising trend of agro chemicals include increase in the prices of raw materials, oil and freight costs with the consequence of an increase in import at the

local level. Fluctuations in exchange rates and increase in local transport costs have also made the situation more difficult.

The use of fertilizers has a prominent role in maintaining agricultural productivity. Mauritius imports a yearly average of 55,000 tonnes of fertilizers for an average amount of Rs500 m. The quantity imported in year 2005 was 61,600 tonnes and decreased in year 2007 to 45,300 tonnes.

I have been advised by AREU that from year 2006 to date, there has been a very significant increase in prices of fertilizers used by vegetables growers which range from 61% to 303%. The increase has been substantial for phosphate potassium fertilizers and complex fertilizers 13:13:20:2.

To meet the increase in the costs of agro chemicals and also increase in agricultural productivity, my Ministry is laying emphasis on various actions. These include precision agriculture with more analysis of soil belonging to farmers prior to planting, new technologies, that is, protected culture where duty has been removed in the new budget on nutrients for hydroponics. Promotion is also being made for organic farming and increased use of composts and bio-fertilizers.

A new company, Aadicon Biotechnologies Ltd in collaboration with AREU has already started research and production activities for bio-fertilizers and bio-control agents.

In respect of the sugar sector, in view of the increase of the price of fertilizers, the following measures have been undertaken by the Mauritius Sugar Industry Research Institute –

- A lower rate of application of fertilizers is being recommended so that sugar cane planters can continue to derive the maximum return from their investment on fertilizers.
- Encouraging the small sugar cane planters to have their soils analyzed at the time of planting so as to avoid wastage of fertilizers.
- Promoting the use of factory scums, at planting, to replace phosphate to sugar cane soils. The use of vinasse or concentrated molasses stillage (CMS) obtained as a by-product during the

production of ethanol is also being recommended as a substitute for muriate of potash.

- Research for alternative sources to mineral fertilizers and recommendation that a leguminous crop (nitrogen fixing plant) is grown on land and incorporated in the soil prior to replanting of sugar cane to substitute for nitrogen.
- Research is also in progress to assess the value of other species of leguminous crops that can contribute to the Nitrogen requirements of sugar cane when grown as an interline crop in ratoon cane.

Furthermore, since year 2006, several services, are being offered to small planters under the Field Operation and Regrouping Project which include derocking, land preparation, application of fertilizers and other soil amendments. A first phase of the Regrouping Project comprising 299 planters and covering an area of 340 hectares on 10 sites spread over the island, was undertaken on a pilot basis during the period July 2006 to April 2007. The second phase comprising 591 planters and covering 836 hectares of land is nearing completion. Upon completion of this phase, Phase three will be embarked upon and some 2000 planters will benefit on an area of 2000 hectares. These facilities have reduced the investment costs of small planters. Moreover, such pre land preparation will allow for a higher efficiency of fertilizer use and will help planters reduce the amounts of fertilizers to be used.

Mr Speaker, Sir, Government, has in the budget 2008-2009 enunciated a five-pronged strategy to boost up agricultural production including optimum food production. In addition, various incentives have been provided to farmers in support to their production activities. Under the Food Security Fund, for which a provision of Rs1 billion has been made, schemes would be devised for farmers to access to fertilizers and other agricultural inputs.

At the international level, various organisations have pledged to support farmers for the latter to access to agricultural inputs and agricultural services. An EU Facility to the tune of euro 1 billion for years 2008 and 2009 is being established to finance supporting measures in developing countries to address soaring food prices. Taking into account the specific

level conditions, the following measures for financing support will be available –

- (a) measures to improve access to agricultural inputs and services, including fertilizers and seeds, and
- (b) safety net measures aimed at monitoring or improving the agricultural productivity capacity and at addressing the basic needs of “most vulnerable populations.” The indicative list of criteria for target countries has been drawn and includes, *inter alia*, food price inflation and its potential socio-economic and political impact and also reliance on food import. The resources will be mostly channeled through international and regional organisations. On our initiative, the ACP is meeting the Commission to see how best the ACP countries can benefit from this Facility. According to the criteria, Mauritius would be eligible to the resources under this Facility.

The Eastern and Southern Africa and Indian Ocean region have been requested to prepare a programme for grant funding from this euro 1 billion Facility. This Facility is in addition to euro six hundred and forty five million (645 m.) allocated to COMESA, EAC (East African Community), IOC and IGAD (Intergovernmental Authority on Development) under the EDF 10 Programme. This was finalised at a high level meeting on “Accelerating Regional Integration in Eastern and Southern Africa and Indian Ocean” held on 17 and 18 July in Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Minister, is it question B/985 that you are answering?

Dr. Boolell: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with all due respect to you, if you want me to stop, I will do so.

The Deputy Speaker: It is rather lengthy. It is a very straightforward question.

Dr. Boolell: Because two questions have been put to me, I am giving a comprehensive reply as this is a very important matter and, of course, there have been discussions with the planters involved. I am meeting them on

Thursday together with Minister Jeetah, Minister Seebun and other stakeholders, but I can stop if you ask me to.

The Deputy Speaker: No, but...

Dr. Boolell: I have a few more sentences.

My Ministry along with the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development will endeavour towards tapping all those resources. A Mauritian delegation will proceed to Zambia this week for a COMESA Regional Meeting for the preparation of a regional programme to be submitted for financing by the EU. This matter will be pursued further during the visit of Mrs Mariann Fisher-Boël, EU Commissioner for Agriculture in Mauritius from 04 to 06 September 2008.

Mr Bhagwan: The Minister has been in office for three years now. There are lots of promises and false hopes. At this period of time, *nous constatons la mort des petits planteurs*. This is happening, the Minister knows about it! Can the Minister inform the House what concrete action he intends to take to alleviate the sufferings of these small planters as far as fertilizers and other materials are concerned?

Dr. Boolell: Mr Speaker, Sir, despite the lengthy reply, despite the measures I have enumerated, I feel sorry that my hon. friend is yet to understand; either he has plugged his two ears or it is information that he does not want to stomach.

Mr Bérenger: Being given the massive increases in the price of fertilizers which the hon. Minister himself has detailed, is Government prepared to consider introducing subsidies to bring down the price of fertilizers?

Dr. Boolell: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have highlighted that discussion is ongoing with donors. There is the visit of Mrs Boël and the EU has highlighted a series of criteria and Mauritius does qualify.

Having said so, we expect that there will be disbursement of fund and we are looking into the possibility of setting up a stabilizing fund. Besides,

STC has stated that it is willing to import fertilizers. We have the network and we would be willing to distribute it to the farmers concerned. Let me make it quite clear, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. If we compute the incentives and facilities granted to the planters, these are not *mesures d'annonce*.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Let the hon. Minister answer!

Dr. Boolell: These are concrete measures which are being taken to address the plight of small planters, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

(Interruptions)

As my hon. friend is saying, unequal! We are consistent in what we are doing, there is clarity in our policy and we are delivering, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Mr Soodhun: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, after all the *bla bla bla* of the Minister, can he inform the House

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: I am sorry! I am not the one who said that *bla bla bla* is unparliamentary. The Speaker has said so. I'll abide to what Mr Speaker has said.

(Interruptions)

I am just sticking what the Speaker said.

Mr Bérenger: He spoke of bluff, not *bla bla bla*.

The Deputy Speaker: He spoke of *bla bla bla* as well.

(Interruptions)

Order now! Order!

(Interruptions)

I am on my feet!

(Interruptions)

I have said that I am on my feet now! Hon. Soodhun!

Mr Soodhun: Can the hon. Minister inform the House whether there has been a study on the impact of the increase in the price of fertilizer on vegetables and on the farming community as a whole?

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order! The hon. Member has put his question.

Dr. Boolell: Mr Speaker, Sir, I can understand that all kinds of nonsense come from the nincompoop.

(Interruptions)

There are people who are full of sound and fury all the way. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, not only have we conducted a study, but we have prepared and submitted a report in respect of status of planters. The hon. Member should go and read the Agricultural Diversification and Livestock Report, he will then understand the measures being taken to address in a very forceful manner the plight of small planters.

Mr Dayal: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in view of the fact that a decision was taken at continental level that a sum of 10% of the Recurrent Budget would be allocated for the production of food, will the hon. Minister consider the advisability of extending subsidies to small planters? Because he agrees himself that the increase is unsustainable. Therefore, can he inform us what is the time frame?

Dr. Boolell: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this is the reason why I have convened a meeting. In fact, I have invited my good friend to attend that meeting. All these issues will be addressed in no uncertain terms. I have also stated that there is provision in the Food Security Fund. If the need is felt, following discussion with all stakeholders, we will give due consideration to that.

Mr Soodhun: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Minister inform the House whether he has personally made any recommendation to the Ministry of Finance on subsidy or on fiscal measures to support the planters?

Dr. Boolell: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we work as a team, and we cluster our strength. As I have stated, whenever there is a policy, we assume collective responsibility.

Mr Varma: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, could the hon. Minister inform the House as from when will the STC start importation of fertilizers?

Dr. Boolell: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the STC has expressed interest. We had interaction with the cooperative societies, and we have invited them to express interest. But, they are yet to come with concrete proposals. This matter will be again highlighted at the meeting that we are going to hold on Thursday.

Mr Guinness: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister referred to a meeting which will be held on Thursday. Can I know whether he has invited representatives of planters' associations and, if so, which one and if not, why not?

Dr. Boolell: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as has always been the case, those who are genuine representatives of planters will be in attendance.

Mr Bhagwan: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Minister state whether he has received any written representation in the past few days concerning the hardship of the small planters not only with regard to the purchase of fertilizers, but also concerning other materials in their day-to-day work?

Dr. Boolell: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this is why Government is responding very positively to the needs of the small planters.

Mr Cuttaree: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister has been talking about hypothetical funding coming from the EU. I thought that Government had a bumper crop. Ironically, the producers are going to be suffering. The hon. Minister said something, which I find very strange. If I heard him rightly, he said that he is going to encourage planters to reduce the use of fertilizers. Doesn't that affect yields also?

Dr. Boolell: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have stated in no uncertain terms that we are going to encourage them to use fertilizers and other chemicals judiciously and not lavishly.

WAKO WORLD KICK BOXING CHAMPIONSHIP – MR F. B. - PARTICIPATION

(No. B/986) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Youth & Sports whether he will state if he has received representations for the award of a cash prize to Mr F. B. who came out 3rd at the Wako World Kick Boxing Championship, which was held from 24 to 30 September 2007 and, if so, if he has acceded thereto, indicating the quantum thereof and, if not, why not.

The Minister of Arts & Culture (Mr M. Gowressoo): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I shall reply to this question.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Ministry of Youth & Sports has received a request from the *Fédération Mauricienne de Kickboxing et Disciplines Assimilées* to award a cash prize to athlete Mr F. B. who had won the Bronze medal in the 54 kg category at the Wako World Senior Championship held in Serbia in September 2007.

The request of the *Fédération Mauricienne de Kickboxing et Disciplines Assimilées* for award of a cash prize to Mr F. B. has not been acceded to, being given that the requirement for a minimum of eight competitors taking part in the championship was not satisfied.

Accordingly, the High Level Sports Unit of the Ministry of Youth & Sports, which is responsible to provide financial assistance to high level athletes, has found that Mr F. B. is not entitled to a cash prize under the existing Cash Prize Scheme. In fact, only seven participants had taken part in the championship.

CONSTRUCTION PRICE INDEX – PERCENTAGE INCREASE

(No. B/987) Mr S. Soodhun (Fifth Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance & Economic Development whether, in regard to the construction price index, he will state if he has undertaken an analysis of the percentage increase in the yearly average thereof, during the last five years, and of its impact on the middle and lower income earners and, if so, if he is considering any fiscal or other measures to relieve these categories of workers in the construction of their houses.

The Minister of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment (Dr. V. Bunwaree): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as the House is aware, the Central Statistics Office compiles the construction price index for a single storey house based on prices of a representative selection of basic inputs such as labour, plant, materials and transport that go into the construction work.

According to the recent figures published by the CSO, the construction price index has increased by 4.7 percent in 2003, 6.3 percent in 2004, 7.7 percent in 2005, 6.6 percent in 2006 and 11.8 percent last year. On average, the construction price index has increased at an annual rate of 7.4 percent over the past five years.

This increase was mainly a result of a rise in the prices of labour inputs, transport and materials, particularly cement, steel bars, timber, metal openings, paint and electrical installation. These price increases are a result of international developments over which we have absolutely no control.

In view to better assist poor families in meeting their housing needs and also to support low and middle income families in their housing projects, we have revamped, consolidated and strengthened our different social housing schemes.

- During the last 3 years, some 1,582 Firinga units have been delivered. A batch of 533 housing units will be allocated by the end of this year. In the recent Budget, we have allocated Rs170 m. towards infrastructure for the construction of 774 Firinga houses on 10 sites across the island for very low income families.
- Since July 2005, the Trust Fund for Vulnerable Groups has provided assistance for the construction of 2,041 housing units at a total cost of

Rs108 m. The Fund will finance the construction of an additional 1,100 units in 229 pockets of poverty as from this year.

- Some 19,300 families have benefited from the sale of land on which stand ex-CHA houses at a nominal price of Rs2,000.
- Since July 2005, we have financed the casting of roof slabs for 15,185 families at a cost of Rs683 m.
- For the lower middle income families, Government is leasing plots of State lands with all necessary infrastructures at an annual rate of Rs3,000. Some 309 plots will be delivered during this financial year.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we are also implementing an integrated housing project at Bambous that will benefit some 200 families. This is indeed a landmark improvement to our housing policy, which will include other social programmes such as training, empowerment, employment, education and circular migration. We are currently working with NGOs and the private sector to expand the scheme to other regions and pockets of poverty to cover more low income families.

In addition to these efforts, we are developing a new model that will meet the housing needs of all income segments of our population. Half of the 2,000 *arpents* from the Government/MSPA deal is being allocated for social housing programmes. Under this new model, some 10 mixed-income communities will be built on a PPP basis. A Social Housing Fund with a seed capital of Rs500 m. has been established to manage the housing programmes and offer a new housing loan to assist low and middle income earners in the purchase of land and building of the house.

Moreover, to increase access to finance for housing projects, two new housing loan schemes as stated in the Budget Speech, will be developed by October, this year, to facilitate owners to gradually extend their housing unit and for first time home owners among middle income working couples to access to higher loan amounts. Furthermore, to make the payments affordable, the repayment period will stretch over a period of 35 years and the Housing Fund will subsidise the initial monthly repayments so that the couple does not pay more than 35% of their total monthly income.

Mr Soodhun: I thank the Minister for his answer. Concerning the construction steel bars, cement, blocks have increased by more than 10%, will the hon. Minister examine the possibility of introducing tax reduction for persons with low or middle income level to enable them to construct their house?

Dr. Bunwaree: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have enumerated a list of measures that Government is taking to enable the lower income group to construct their houses. This is one of the proposals that has to be examined, it can always be taken on board in the next Budget.

Mr Ganoo: Can the hon. Minister tell us what is the number of house seekers at the NHDC, the number of people who have applied and who are still waiting for a house at the NHDC?

Dr. Bunwaree: No, I don't have this information. The hon. Member can come with a substantive question.

FERTILIZERS – PRICE

(No. B/988) Mr S. Soodhun (Fifth Member for La Caverne and Phoenix) asked the Minister of Agro Industry and Fisheries whether, in regard to fertilizers, he will state if Government will consider introducing a scheme to subsidize the small planters, following the increase in the price thereof.

(Vide Reply to PQ No. B/985)

PHARMACEUTICAL PRODUCTS – QUALITY CONTROL LABORATORY

(No. B/989) Mr S. Dayal (Second Member for Quartier Militaire and Moka) asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether, in regard to the pharmaceutical products that are being used in the public and private health care institutions, he will state if Government is proposing to establish a quality control laboratory to ensure the quality thereof, and if so, when and if not, why not.

(Withdrawn)

SMALL PLANTERS – FLOODS – SPECIAL LOAN SCHEME

(No. B/990) Mrs F. Labelle (Third Member for Vacoas and Floreal) asked the Minister of Agro Industry & Fisheries whether, in regard to the special loan scheme that has been set up for the small planters, following the floods of March 2008, he will state –

- (a) the number of applications received, indicating the number thereof which have not been approved, and
- (b) if the successful applicants have received their money.

Dr. Boolell: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the beneficiaries of the scheme are individual planters and co-operative societies. A special desk was opened to operate the scheme on a fast track basis at the Head Office of DBM and in all its seven branches.

The Development Bank of Mauritius has informed me that 2346 applications were received. It has processed 2197 cases for an amount of Rs96 m. and an amount of Rs65 m. has already been disbursed to planters and farmers. For all the loans sanctioned, the full amount of the loans was disbursed at one go upon signature of the deeds of the loan. The DBM is monitoring the remaining disbursements.

149 cases have not been approved because of either incomplete information or documents and in some cases the applicants did not meet the criteria for the special loan under the scheme.

Mrs Labelle: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister whether those planters whose applications have not been approved have been informed of the situation?

Dr. Boolell: I can't say, but I take it for granted that they have been informed, because usually some of them do file in complaints and I expect

that the DBM has informed them. Nevertheless, if the hon. Member can submit a list of complainants, I'll deal with it.

Mrs Labelle: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in my Constituency, many planters of La Mairie have not received an answer and they are still waiting. Can the hon. Minister look into this matter?

Dr. Boolell: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, if the list is submitted, I will look into it personally.

PRIMARY SCHOOLS – KREOL LANGUAGE

(No. B/991) Mrs F. Labelle (Third Member for Vacoas and Floreal) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether in regard to the introduction of the Kreol language in the primary schools, he will state if his Ministry has set up a committee to look into the matter and if so, when and if not, why not.

Mr Gokhool: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the setting up of a committee regarding the introduction of Mauritian Creole in primary schools is presently being considered by my Ministry.

In fact, in the course of a meeting I had with the *Bureau d'Education Catholique* (BEC) on 25 February 2008, the suggestion to have a team comprising of representatives of my Ministry, the BEC, the Mauritius Institute of Education and the University of Mauritius was retained. It was also agreed in the course of the same meeting that, as a first step, BEC would carry out a large scale socio-linguistic study to determine the modalities of introducing Mauritian Creole as a subject in some primary schools on a pilot basis as a first step.

My Ministry is still awaiting the outcome of the study by BEC. In the meantime, my Ministry has received from BEC, the proposed terms of reference of the committee which focuses only on Mauritian Creole. On 11 June 2008, a committee chaired by the Permanent Secretary of my Ministry examined the proposed terms of reference submitted by BEC. However, in view of the fact that I have also received representations of a similar nature regarding Bhojpuri, the terms of reference of the committee would have to

be enlarged to include Bhojpuri as well, as both Mauritian Creole and Bhojpuri are heritage languages.

STATE LAND – SALE

(No. B/992) Mrs F. Labelle (Third Member for Vacoas and Floreal) asked the Minister of Housing and Lands whether in regard to the plots of land acquired by Government for the realization of different projects, he will state the number thereof which have been sold by his Ministry or which his Ministry has decided to sell, since July 2005 to June 2008, indicating the names of the buyers.

Mr Dulull: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have given instructions that the information requested by the hon. Member be compiled at the earliest and be placed in the Library as soon as the compilation and verification have been completed.

Mrs Labelle: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister has just mentioned that this information is being compiled. But, from the report of the Director of Audit, there are 31 plots already mentioned, which led me to believe that this information has already been compiled some time, somewhere. Is it the case or am I mistaken?

Mr Dulull: Let me remind the House that when Government compulsorily acquires a plot of land for a particular project and Government decides not to go ahead with the project or if there is a change in purpose for another project, the option that is left to the Government is to offer the plot of land to the original owner at market price. In case the original owner does not want to take back the land, it becomes a piece of State land and can only be leased. We are in a situation where we want to compile land acquired and we have offered it to the original owner. It is for the owner to tell us whether he needs the land or not. If he does need the land, then it becomes State land. I can't see where is the problem.

Mrs Labelle: I don't think I have mentioned any problem. I just wanted, as a Member of this Parliament, to have additional information as to

whether the Ministry of Housing and Lands has, in fact, sold plots of land and I do not have any problem with that, it is just a question.

The Deputy Speaker: But the answer that has been given is that the information will be compiled. I cannot compel the hon. Minister to state right now how many plots there are. He said will provide the information.

POINTE AUX SABLES CENTRE – RATES

(No. B/993) Mrs F. Labelle (Third Member for Vacoas and Floreal) asked the Minister of Social Security, National Solidarity and Senior Citizens Welfare & Reform Institutions whether in regard to the Pointe aux Sables Centre, she will state if the rates charged for staying thereat have recently been changed, and if so indicate –

- (a) when, and
- (b) the previous and new rates applicable.

Mrs Bappoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the residential and recreation centre for senior citizens and disabled persons at Pointe aux Sables started operation in February 2001. The rate was then Rs100 per night.

Owing to the increase in the running costs of the centre, in January 2003 the then Government had no alternative but to increase the rate to Rs150 per night.

As at to date, there has been no change in the rates charged to senior citizens which is Rs150 per night. However, given the fact that there has been substantial increase in the running costs (including the high increase in the price of food items) of the centre over the past years, (that is, an increase of 107% compared to January 2003), my Ministry originally decided to increase the existing rates, with effect from August 2008, from Rs150 to Rs250 per night. This represents a subsidy of 51% per head per night compared to 38% in January 2003.

It is to be noted that approximately 30 Senior Citizens Associations have already made and confirmed their reservations at the new rate of Rs250 per night while some 6 Associations have made representations for a review

of the new rate. However, in a spirit of solidarity, my Ministry in consultation with the Senior Citizens Council which met last week, has reviewed the rate and decided that the increase be phased as follows –

MONTH	AMOUNT Rs	REMARKS
July – September 2008	150 per night	No increase
October – December 2008	200 per night	Rs50 increase per night of stay
January 2009 onwards	250 per night	Rs100 increase per night of stay

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the centre also caters for other groups with higher rates whenever the centre is free. This has been the policy of the Ministry since 2001.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, a list of the other groups with their respective rates is being tabled.

Mrs Labelle: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I think I have heard the hon. Minister mention the rate of Rs250 for two nights. Is there any change?

(Interruptions)

In a letter sent, there are two different types of rate, one concerns one night and the other for two nights. The rates are different when it is a question of two nights and one night. Is it the case?

Mrs Bappoo: The letter made mention about the rates for two nights because they usually stay for two nights, but per night it is half of the two nights.

Mrs Labelle: Unfortunately, the letter sent to the old persons stated that the residential stay for one night is Rs300.

Mrs Bappoo: I just said that was the increase that the Ministry intended to have. In fact, there have been six associations which have made some representations and the Ministry sat with the Senior Citizens Council and they tried to review the rate. Now it is being phased with the increase that I have just mentioned, that is, as from January 2009, it will be Rs250 per night.

Mrs Labelle: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, allow me to insist because in a letter there are two rates. One concerns two nights at Rs500, that is, Rs250 per night and on this issue, the hon. Minister has clearly explained that this rate has now been reviewed. I am concerned now with the rates for one night since in the letter it was stated Rs300. May I know whether in this particular case of one night, there has been a review too?

Mrs Bappoo: In fact, Mr Deputy Speaker, there have been two letters sent to the Senior Citizen Association by the Ministry. In the first letter, it mentioned the sum of Rs500 for two nights and Rs300 for one night and this has been an error on the part of the Ministry. They then sent a second letter which stated Rs500 two nights and Rs250 per night. There has been an error, that's why the second letter followed. But now the new rate is going to be phased to make it a bit more smoothly for them to adjust to the new rate.

(Interruptions)

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

SCHOOLS (PRIMARY) – DEPUTY HEAD TEACHERS/ASSISTANT SUPERVISORS (TAMIL) - POSTS

(No. B/994) Mr J. Cuttaree (Second Member for Stanley & Rose Hill) asked the Minister of Education & Human Resources whether, in regard to the post of Deputy Head Teachers (Tamil) and of Assistant Supervisors (Tamil) in the primary schools which are vacant, he will state if they will be filled, and if so, when.

Mr Gokhool: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the existing vacancies for the post of Deputy Head Teacher (Tamil) as at 30 June 2008 have already been filled. As at today there is only one vacancy for Deputy Head Teacher which

occurred on 15 July and will soon be reported to the Public Service Commission.

As regards Assistant Supervisor (Tamil), there are presently 4 vacancies. The vacancies will be filled upon the finalisation of the scheme of service by the Ministry of Civil Service and Administrative Reforms and the Public Service Commission. I cannot give a date at this point in time when the vacancies will be filled as there are various procedures to be completed. However, as soon as the scheme of service will be finalised, the post will be advertised for filling of the vacancies and selection will be carried out by the Public Service Commission.

ST PIERRE TRAFFIC CENTRE – SAFETY MEASURES

(No. B/995) Mr S. Dayal (Second Member for Quartier Militaire & Moka) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport & Shipping whether he will state if he has received representations regarding the lack of security at the St. Pierre Traffic Centre and if he is aware that many accidents, including fatal ones, have taken place in the recent past thereat, and if so, will he state if needful will be done with a view to reinforce security thereat.

The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport & Shipping (Dr. R. Beebeejaun): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, representations have been made to the National Transport Authority and the Police regarding road safety hazards at St Pierre Traffic Centre.

Since January 2008, one fatal and three minor accidents have occurred at the Centre.

I am informed that several road safety measures are in place at the Centre –

- (i) one humped pedestrian crossing and once road hump;
- (ii) handrails on the central reservation to discourage pedestrians to walk across the bus carriage way;
- (iii) double yellow lines to prohibit buses from stopping at hazardous locations;
- (iv) yellow box inside the car park adjacent to the bus terminal;
- (v) a pedestrian crossing at the entrance of the bus terminal, and
- (vi) no entry signs on fair days.

However, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it has been noted that buses were disembarking passengers at hazardous locations and parking in a haphazard manner. Moreover, pedestrians were not using the pedestrian footway thus creating risks of accidents.

I am informed that two Police Officers from St Pierre Police Station carry out policing from 06 30 h to 18 30 h daily at the Traffic Centre and regular mobile patrols are maintained by the Emergency Response Service, Traffic Branch and *Police du Transport*. The Traffic Management and Road Safety Unit will review the existing situation and advise on additional road safety measures required to improve road safety.

Mr Dayal: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Deputy Prime Minister to look into the problem of the platform where passengers are alighting. Passengers can be made to alight at the embarkation platform because all along the pedestrian pavement where passengers alight, there are no handrails and passengers have the habit of walking on the pavement to go to the other end to catch another bus where there are individual buses which are always in competition and hence no security. Since the construction of this Traffic Centre there have been five fatal accidents. Will the Minister look into it? The region is a very rainy one and the bus shelters as well have to be redesigned.

Dr. Beebeejaun: Sir, it is a fact that there have not been many fatal accidents. In 2005: 0; in 2006: 0; in 2007: 0 and, unfortunately one fatal

accident in 2008. Having said that, I agree that if we can improve, I'll certainly put it to the TMRSU to improve the situation.

Mr Bhagwan: Mr Deputy Speaker, may I appeal to the Deputy Prime Minister, since we are talking about traffic centres and life of people that things are getting worse at the Place Margéot...

The Deputy Speaker: No, no, this has nothing to do.

(Interruptions)

The hon. Member should put a substantive question for Place Margéot.

(Interruptions)

Mr Dayal: Sir, I thank the hon. Deputy Prime Minister for giving due consideration to this case. I am not saying that there were five fatal accidents between 2005 to date. I am saying that since the very construction of the Traffic Centre, there have been five fatal accidents and I know that from 2005 to 2008, there have been 13 accidents and one fatal this year.

Dr. Beebeejaun: I have said that since the fatal accidents occurred in the past, there have been improvements. This is the point that I am trying to make. I will take into consideration the point that the hon. Member has raised and I will certainly put it to the TMRSU regarding the embarking and disembarking.

ENTERPRISE MAURITIUS - SHARES

(No. B/996) Mr S. Dayal (Second Member for Quartier Militaire & Moka) asked the Minister of Industry, Small & Medium Enterprises, Commerce and Co-operatives whether, in regard to Enterprise Mauritius, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the company, information as to –

- (a) the institutions each Director represents;
- (b) its shareholding, and
- (c) the mode of financing of its activities.

Dr. Jeetah: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, Enterprise Mauritius is a public company, established under the Companies Act of 1981.

I am informed that there are three categories of shares at Enterprise Mauritius, namely –

- (a) Class A shares subscribed by Government
- (b) Class B shares subscribed by the private sector
- (c) Class C shares subscribed by entrepreneurs

The above shareholders are represented as Directors on the Board of Enterprise Mauritius as follows –

- (i) Mr L. Amédée Darga who has also been nominated as Chairperson of the Board;
- (ii) Mr J. Suzanne from the Prime Minister's Office;
- (iii) Mrs S. Pareatumbée from the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development;
- (iv) Mrs Z. Guness-Goolbar from the Ministry of Industry, SMEs, Commerce and Cooperatives;
- (v) Mr Arif Currimjee from the Joint Economic Council;
- (vi) Mr Ahmed Parkar from the Mauritius Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and
- (vii) Mr François de Grivel from Mauritius Exports Association.

Government holds shares amounting to Rs79,782,000 while the three private sector institutions each holds Rs100,000 worth of shares.

Enterprise Mauritius is financed from Government funds through an output agreement which defines the services that Government will buy from the company.

Mr Varma: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, could the hon. Minister inform the House what is the percentage of class 'A' shares owned by the Government?

Dr. Jeetah: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, 99.6 class 'A' ordinary shares.

Mr Dayal: Is it not paradoxical that the SME has no representation or no voice on the Board? Being given that Government's strategy is to strengthen SME through various schemes implemented, especially it is the policy of Government to democratise economy and to give opportunities to job creators, is it not paradoxical that the SME has no representation on the Board?

Dr. Jeetah: It can be a paradox Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. I must say the previous Government took the decision then, but I think we will have to look into the issue.

Mr Bundhoo: When Enterprise Mauritius was created, is it correct to say that 9 members were to be appointed on the Board? Is that information correct?

Dr. Jeetah: I have mentioned the number. There is one class 'C' share which, I understand, has not been nominated as yet from the private sector.

Mr Bundhoo: Can I ask the hon. Minister if he is aware that simultaneously the number of members sitting on the Board has been reduced from 9 to 7 and the number of persons constituting a quorum for the Board to sit has been reduced from 5 to 4?

Dr. Jeetah: I am not aware of this, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Mr Varma: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, will the hon. Minister inform the House whether Government will only act as a financing agency of Enterprise Mauritius with no control over it?

Dr. Jeetah: That is a very valid point, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. The idea of the previous Government was to have a privately controlled Enterprise and now it is clear that some difficulties could arise when Government does not have any control of the Board. Government holds a minority on the Board.

Mr Dayal: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, according to information reaching me, there are seven directors. There are four from the Government side and four out of seven, Government is clearly the majority shareholder. Is the hon. Minister aware that the Chairman unilaterally decides to change the quorum to suit the way in which he wants to direct the Board?

Dr. Jeetah: In a previous question which the hon. Member put last week, I specifically asked: if the hon. Member has any matter that has been against good corporate governance, he can let me have the information and I will look into.

Mr Varma: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is the hon. Minister aware that the Chairman of Enterprise Mauritius has given a policy that he would implement certain projects which are contrary to corporate good governance?

Dr. Jeetah: Once again, if there is information, please let us have it, and we shall look into it.

Mr Varma: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is the hon. Minister aware that on 13 April 2007, the Chairperson of Enterprise Mauritius said that he was only informing the Board - it was not a Board decision - that he would take full responsibility for the development and operation of certain projects?

Dr. Jeetah: The hon. Member is better aware than myself.

Mr Dayal: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with regard to the second part of the question regarding shareholders, obviously, Government having 99.6% of 'A' class shares, financing is almost to the tune of 100%. How does the hon. Minister reconcile what he said in his reply to PQ No. B/921 that he does not hold any control on the Board because Government does not have majority shares on the Board? I know the hon. Minister's good intentions, but I would like to point out that he is being misled.

The Deputy Speaker: Let the hon. Minister respond to the question.

Dr. Jeetah: I have listened to the hon. Members' queries and I will certainly look into that. I will not accept being misled and I will not accept that Government is being misled. If the hon. Member has any information, as I have said in the past, he can submit it, we will certainly do what we have to do.

Mr Varma: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Minister give the guarantee to the House that, as from now on, the percentage of financing of Enterprise Mauritius will be reflected in the number of persons on the Board?

Dr. Jeetah: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, there was another question some time ago where I did seek advice from the State Law Office with regard to how funds were utilized. I have said it in the past – it was for the supplementary expenditure - that there are questions, I am prepared to answer because I have a ruling. I will have to make sure that money that has been provided from Government funds needs to be judiciously used.

ENTERPRISE MAURITIUS – PROJECTS - IMPLEMENTATION

(No. B/997) Mr S. Dayal (Second Member for Quartier Militaire and Moka) asked the Minister of Industry, Small & Medium Enterprises, Commerce and Co-operatives whether, in regard to Enterprise Mauritius, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the company, information as to if its Chairperson was given full responsibility for the development and operation of each of the following sectors (a) Regional Trading Houses (b) Jewellery (c) Furniture (d) Tourist-Oriented products and (e) Marine and Boat Building and, if so, indicate, in respect of each project thereof, the budgetary allocations and whether a status report of their implementation is available.

Dr. Jeetah: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the setting up of Regional Trading Houses was announced in Budget Speech 2006/2007 in order to promote a shopfront, warehousing facilities and marketing services, among others, for Mauritian products.

I am informed that Mauritius Trading House has been incorporated on 05 June 2008. State Investment Corporation and Enterprise Mauritius are presently the two shareholders, with an equity contribution of Rs1.5 m. and Rs750,000 respectively.

State Trading Corporation will also join as a shareholder with a contribution of Rs1m. The Association of Mauritian Manufacturers (AMM), Mauritius Export Association (MEXA) and Small & Medium Enterprises Federation (SMEF) have equally been invited to join as shareholders.

I am further informed that the Mauritius Trading House will shortly recruit a project manager to develop its business plan for the next two years, following approval of which, the company will start operations. The target is to set up three Trading Houses in the first year and three others in the second year. The countries where the Trading Houses will be set up will depend on the feasibility to be indicated in the business plan.

I am informed that projects relating to parts (b), (c) and (d) of the question, fall under the Empowerment Programme, for which Enterprise Mauritius is the implementing agency. A subcommittee of the Empowerment Programme, under the co-chairmanship of Mr Amédé Darga and Mrs N. Nathoo determine individual projects under each sector.

The information regarding progress of those projects is being compiled and will be placed in the Library of the National Assembly.

With regard to part (e) of the question, the Marine and Boat building project has been approved by the Board of Enterprise Mauritius. Information pertaining to progress of this project is also being compiled and will be placed in the Library of the National Assembly.

Mr Dayal: Can I ask the hon. Minister whether, at Enterprise Mauritius, there is a mechanism to ensure accountability, answerability, transparency and good governance when a non-executive Chairman is given such responsibilities? And I'll quote here, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, from the Minutes of proceedings dated 13th April 2007.

‘I am informing the Board that I will take full responsibility for the development and operationalisation of the following projects’

We know that the management is accountable to the Board, but here if the Chairman himself is doing all the things, he is responsible, he is accountable to whom. Is this good governance?

Dr. Jeetah: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, once again, the hon. Member is well informed. I see some information that I got from Enterprise Mauritius and I have got a note that the Steering Committee of the Empowerment Programme has requested the status from Enterprise Mauritius. They have asked for information such as name of project, objective of project, amount approved, amount disbursed, KPI of the project where applicable and so on. They do question the implementation of projects to Enterprise Mauritius.

Mr Dayal: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, can I understand from the hon. Minister that the Chairperson takes upon himself the right to manage Enterprise Mauritius? We have management and, on the other side, we have the Board and the Chairperson arrogates upon himself all the powers. And, as I said, he takes the decision and informs the Board that he is going to implement all the projects himself. Is it good governance?

Dr. Jeetah: The information I have here, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is that there is a subcommittee of the Empowerment Programme under the co-chairmanship of Mr Darga and Mrs Nathoo.

The Deputy Speaker: Is this the answer that the hon. Member has got?

Dr. Jeetah: Yes.

Mr Bundhoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Minister whether under the law governing Enterprise Mauritius, it is in order for a part-time Chairman to implement and to oversee day-to-day running of Enterprise Mauritius and more so to implement projects that have been earmarked and proposed by the Board?

Dr. Jeetah: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, there is no law that stops somebody from sitting, let's say, for example, in this committee of the Empowerment Programme. That is something separate. It has got nothing to do with what the hon. Member is talking about.

Mr Varma: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is the hon. Minister aware that at the meeting of 13 April 2007, there was no co-chairmanship and that Mr Darga was the only Chairman? Is he aware of the contents of the Minutes of Proceedings? I will beg leave to lay on the Table of the Assembly a copy of the Minutes of proceedings.

Dr. Jeetah: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am not aware. There is one thing I am going to do. I am going to conduct an inquiry to see what is happening here. I understand this information is not ...

(Interruptions)

Because instead of doing what the Empowerment Programme has asked to do, I see a lot of fishy business going about. I will certainly look into that.

Mr Bhagwan: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have asked so many questions myself on Enterprise Mauritius. At least, in the nation's interest, can the hon. Minister confirm that, at any one time, he has been the business partner of this particular part-time chairman of the Enterprise Mauritius?

(Interruptions)

Est-ce que le ministre peut nous dire si ce part-time Chairman est protégé par lui pour des raisons obscures?

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Varma!

Mr Varma: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I will refer to the sectors which have been mentioned in the Parliamentary Question. Can the hon. Minister inform the House the project cost, ...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order! Let me hear the question of the hon. Member!

Mr Varma: ...the funds received and the amount spent on each of these sectors?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister has said that the information is being compiled. This is what he has answered. If the hon. Minister has anything to add, he can do so.

Dr. Jeetah: I don't have all the details, but I do have some information with regards to the sum disbursed. For handicraft, there is an amount of Rs786,000 approved and Rs627,842 were disbursed; for in-house Technical Assistance in the Printing sector, there was a sum of Rs934,500 approved and Rs552,470 were disbursed, and for colonial style furniture, I don't have any information with regards financing.

Mr Dayal: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I disagree with the hon. Minister when he said 'fishy business'. As parliamentarians we are doing our work. I should like to put the question clearly. In the light of the substantial budgets allocated to these projects – there are four projects to the tune of Rs20,856,000, to take one example - is it not against the principle of sound management and accountability for a Chairperson to implement them?

Dr. Jeetah: As I said, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I did not decide on who actually runs the Empowerment Programme and who chairs which subcommittee. I think the hon. Member has to put the question to the appropriate Minister who actually decided on that.

Mr Dayal: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, will the hon. Minister agree with me that when a Chairman implements projects, it constitutes a departure from corporate governance and is a perfect recipe for conflicts to arise between the Chairman and the management?

Dr. Jeetah: There can be many reasons where there are conflicts. But as I said, I do not have any say on projects financed by Empowerment Programme; that falls under another Ministry. Probably the hon. Member would have to put the question to the appropriate Ministry.

Mr Varma: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister said that the information, as far as the project costs, funds received and amount spent, is being compiled. I have got some information which I will lay on the Table of the Assembly for the hon. Minister to check if that is correct.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: If the hon. Member has the information, why is he asking for it now?

Mr Varma: I want to know whether it is correct or not, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

The Deputy Speaker: Is the hon. Member asking the hon. Minister whether the information is correct?

Mr Varma: Yes.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member is asking for his opinion now.

Mr Bhagwan: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister has not replied to my question as to whether he was, at a period of time, the business partner of the ...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member wants to get particular information.

Mr Bhagwan: The country wants a reply.

Dr. Jeetah: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I did conduct a survey for SADC while I was at the University of Mauritius. Mr Darga as well participated in part of the work. This report was written a long time back. We did some work for SADC. SADC chose all the members as per their credentials as I used to work at the University at that time.

Mr Dayal: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is the hon. Minister agreeable to set up a full-fledged enquiry to clear the air in order to ensure good governance?

Dr. Jeetah: On this point, I will agree with the hon. Member. There needs to be good governance. On this, I don't have any problem!

CAMP DE MASQUE FOOTBALL GROUND - FLOODLIGHTS

(No. B/998) Mr L. Bundhoo (Second Member for Montagne Blanche and GRSE) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping whether he is aware that lights have been placed at the Camp de Masque football ground but that same have not been connected to the Central Electricity Board, as at to date, and if so, will he state the remedial measures that will be taken.

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

I am informed by the Moka/Flacq District Council that the Camp de Masque football ground was provided with six high pressure sodium vapour lanterns. However, the Camp de Masque Pavé Village Council has decided to replace these lanterns by floodlights. Consequently, the District Council has purchased ten new floodlights out of the Capital Grant 2007-2008 for the project. Works are in progress and are expected to be completed by mid August 2008.

Mr Bundhoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister if he is aware for how long these new types of lamps have been installed and why they have not been connected so far?

Dr. David: That's not in the question, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. The bottom line is that the work is being done.

Mr Bundhoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Minister, at the bottom line, when is the light going to be installed?

Dr. David: I have just said that the works will be completed by mid August 2008.

MEDCO COLLEGES – SC & HSC – PASS RATES

(No. B/999) Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun (Third Member for La Caverne and Phoenix) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether, in regard to the MEDCO colleges, he will state the number thereof, which are presently operating in the island indicating the percentage pass rates for the Cambridge School Certificate examinations and the Cambridge Higher School certificate in respect of each of the Medco Colleges for each of the past five years?

Mr Gokhool: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, there are at present four MEDCO schools operating in the island of Mauritius, namely, MEDCO Alex Bhujoharry Secondary School, MEDCO Cassis Secondary School, MEDCO Trinity Secondary School and MEDCO Clairfonds Secondary School.

MEDCO Alex Bhujoharry Secondary School is the only one to run HSC classes, the others being Forms I – V schools.

As regards the percentage passes at School Certificate level for each of the schools over the past five years, I am tabling the information. However, I wish to inform the House that there has been a steady increase in the performance of the students from 50% to 96% at MEDCO Alex Bhujoharry Secondary School from 2003 to 2007 whereas for the others, the percentages have varied from 20% to 54%.

The HSC results of MEDCO Alex Bhujoharry are as follows -

Year 2003	- 64%
Year 2004	- 55%
Year 2005	- 40%
Year 2006	- 61%
Year 2007	- 89%

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Deputy Speaker, may I ask the hon. Minister whether he could inform the House on the activities being carried out with regard to the celebration of the 15th anniversary of MEDCO colleges?

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

The Table has been advised that PQS Nos. B/1016, B/1017 and B/1018 have been withdrawn.

HSC PROFESSIONAL EXAMINATIONS

(No. B/1000) Mrs D. L.Dookun-Luchoomun (Third Member for La Caverne and Phoenix) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether, he will state when the decision was taken to hold Higher School Certificate Professional Examinations, indicating the colleges which offer the courses leading to these examinations.

Mr Gokhool: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as the House was informed, in the reply to the PNQ of Tuesday last, as part of the education reform programs, the objectives of my Ministry is to go one step further in traditional mainstream education by introducing the vocationalisation of the curriculum.

Already in many schools, subjects like fashion & fabric, food studies, art & design, design & communication and travel & tourism are being offered and some schools are even standing out to dedicating themselves to the vocationalisation of secondary education. A case in point is the John Kennedy College.

It is the policy of my Ministry to give growing importance to vocational subjects in view of the new orientation of the economy. In this context, my Ministry has requested the MES to work with Cambridge on the possibility of introducing the HSC Professional as a new qualification at the end of the secondary cycle in parallel with the present system of HSC which is mainly academic in nature. The HSC Professional has a direct linkage of school with the world of work in that it includes a placement programme for the students, encourages entrepreneurship and allows, by virtue of its four streams, a clear focus on a professional line that a student could opt for. This

qualification is a three-year course based around a work related programme and has a modular examination approach.

The advantages of the HSC Professional is that it will help reduce the number of drop-outs after School Certificate by offering an appealing work study package, decrease existing mismatch in skills of school leavers and the requirement of the job market, reinforce academic skills and allow students to learn valuable work related skills as the HSC Professional has a work placement component, help fight unemployment, allow students to make informed career decision and provide more opportunities to students to accede to tertiary education through diversified channels and work incentive.

The MES has been requested to refine the proposals made to the Ministry. Once these are finalised, they will be submitted for consultations to all stakeholders.

Subject to all the conditions being fulfilled, my Ministry is considering the advisability of introducing the HSC Professional tentatively as from 2010 on a pilot basis. Meanwhile the range of vocational subjects will be increased.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Deputy Speaker, may I ask the hon. Minister whether - if I have got him right - he is planning to have HSC professional being implemented in years to come and that the subjects that will form part of this course are, amongst others, design and communication, design and technology and other subjects that he has just mentioned, which are presently being taught at schools?

Mr Gokhool: These subjects form part of the family of professional subjects. The other subjects are banking, finance, ICT, and these are the package of subjects which can fall within the ambit of HSC professional.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: I heard the hon. Minister state that if students fail at SC level, we should be able to get them back into the professional line. However, I would like to stress, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with your permission, and ask the Minister whether he is aware that students are already doing very well in these subjects and many of these subjects form part of the scholarship groups of subjects and that most students taking design and technology do so with the view of getting a scholarship. And,

therefore, the question of stating that these students will be restored through a professional line at the HSC level does not arise.

Mr Gokhool: I have made myself clear. There is a new stream, the HSC professional, where a certain number of subjects will be grouped and if students opt for that, they will sit for the exams and they will be awarded an HSC professional and not the conventional HSC certificate.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: It's only going to be a change in the name of the examination. The certificate only will bear another name whereas the teaching and the course will still be the same as the one being taught at school.

Mr Gokhool: I think the hon. lady may wish to take a look because the structure of the programme is available at Cambridge. Right now a certificate of HSC is awarded and the subjects are mentioned, but the HSC professional regroups subjects which belong more to the family of professional subjects. It is a distinct certificate and, as I said, it is a different kind of a programme and it is not the same programme that the hon. lady is thinking of.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the present HSC examination consists of three main subjects and two subsidiary subjects amongst which we have General Paper. My question is whether we are going to have a separate appellation.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister said it is a new stream.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: No, it cannot be, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

The Deputy Speaker: This is the answer that has been given.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: That is why I want a clarification from the Minister. If we are saying that the students would be given a new course, then I do not agree and I will ask the Minister to state how this is going to be a new course. Because the students are ...

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member has made her point.

Mr Gokhool: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I kindly request the hon. lady to look at my answer and she will get the answer.

Mr Rucktooa: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, to embark on studies of HSC, usually the prerequisite of SC qualification is a minimum of 4 credits. Is the hon. Minister considering the same prerequisite to embark on the HSC professional examination?

Mr Gokhool: I stand guided by the MES because it is looking at all the issues.

Mr Guinness: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, recently the Director of the MES stated that the syllabus for the HSC professional is ready and will be submitted to stakeholders in the education sector. Can I know whether the Ministry has received a copy and, if yes, is the hon. Minister prepared to table copy of the syllabus.

Mr Gokhool: We have received a copy, it has been looked into and sent back to MES for further consideration. At this stage, I do not think it is proper for me to table a copy. Once the MES has finalised, I will have no problem to submit copy of the programme.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: May I know from the Minister whether students in the mainstream who opt to take business, banking or design and technology would also be attributed the same certificate or will they be allowed to have an HSC academic certificate as the Minister states?

Mr Gokhool: If they opt not to go for the HSC professional, they will be given the normal HSC certificate, but if they opt for the HSC professional which is, as I said, three-year duration, they will be awarded the HSC professional.

Mr Rucktooa: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, personally I think a lot of confusion is arising, because of the appellation of 'Higher School Certificate Professional Examinations'. The hon. Member was talking about scholarships and I know what she is referring to. All this is arising because of the words "Higher School Certificate Professional Examinations". Will

the hon. Minister consider giving the same course on these subjects, but calling it by another name like “Higher National Certificate”?

Mr Gokhool: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this is a programme which is offered by the Cambridge International Examinations Body and I don’t think we can change it. The MES is in consultation with the CIE. It is an internationally recognised certificate. I don’t think that in Mauritius we can try to bring about amendments and all that. It will affect its international standard.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister whether, from now on, we are going to have two sets of scholarships for HSC professional students and HSC academic students?

Mr Gokhool: There will be incidence once the project is approved. I said the project, in any case, will be piloted as from 2010 and all the modalities will have to be finalised. We are still ahead of time and if this project goes ahead, then it will have implications for the scholarships.

The Deputy Speaker: The Table has been advised that PQ Nos. B/1008, B/1009, B/1010 and B/1019 have been withdrawn. Next question!

VACOAS/PHOENIX - CASTING OF SLABS SCHEME – BENEFICIARIES

(No. B/1001) Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun (Third Member for La Caverne and Phoenix) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to the Casting of Slabs Scheme, he will state the number of persons residing in the region of Vacoas/Phoenix who have received the grants therefor, if any, since January 2008 to date, indicating the date on which the applications in relation thereto were made.

The Minister of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment (Dr. V. Bunwaree): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with your permission I am replying to this question.

I am informed by the National Housing Development Housing Company that since January 2008 to date, there are 67 beneficiaries of grant for casting of slabs in the region of Vacoas/Phoenix. They relate to applications received during the preceding years. I have a list of the dates of application for the 67 beneficiaries. I am going to table it.

As the House is aware, the NHDC receives applications from all the regions of Mauritius, including Rodrigues and, obviously, it takes time to process the applications, effect site visits, determine eligibility and request for funds from Government and sanction payment.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: May I ask the hon. Minister the latest date of application that has been given the grant?

Dr. Bunwaree: It is 27 November 2007.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: May I ask the hon. Minister whether he is aware that there is a backlog and that people having applied as far back as May 2007 and March 2007 have still not received any answer as to whether they are eligible or not, and they are still awaiting for the answer, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir?

Dr. Bunwaree: I very much understand the frustration of the hon. Member. I am also a Member of the Constituency No. 12; people come to us for the same problem. There is a problem there and together with the Ministry of Housing we are trying to see in what way we can expedite matters.

The Deputy Speaker: Time is over!