

## ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

## CHILDREN – SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

**The Leader of the Opposition (Mr P. Bérenger)** (*By Private Notice*) 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 trafficking of children for the purpose of sexual exploitation, he will state if –

- (a) he is aware of last month's US State Department Report, reporting that there are some 2,600 child prostitutes in Mauritius and that the Police and the authorities are not doing enough to eliminate child prostitution rings, in particular, in the tourism industry and, if so, will he state the actions taken, if any, and
- (b) Mauritius complies with the minimum standards for the elimination thereof, indicating if the –
  - (i) Police is provided with the necessary resources, and
  - (ii) existing legislating caters thereof.

**The Prime Minister:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, each year, the US Department of State issues a report to monitor the progress of several countries to eliminate trafficking in persons which is defined as -

“The recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by mean of threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability, or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or removal of organs”.

Each country under scrutiny by the United States is classified in four TIER Placements, namely -

TIER 1, which includes countries whose governments fully comply with the US Trafficking Victims Protection Act's minimum standards.

TIER 2 groups countries whose governments do not fully comply with the TVPA's minimum standards, but are making significant efforts to bring themselves into compliance with those standards.

TIER 2 WATCH LIST, which includes countries whose governments do not fully comply with the TVPA's minimum standards but are making significant effort to bring themselves into compliance with those standards and -

- (a) the absolute number of victims of severe forms of trafficking is very significant or is significantly increasing;
- (b) there is a failure to provide evidence of increasing efforts to combat severe forms of trafficking in persons from the previous year, or
- (c) the determination that a country is making significant efforts to bring themselves into compliance with minimum standards was based on commitments by the country to take additional future steps over the next year.

TIER 3 groups countries whose governments do not fully comply with the minimum standards and are not making significant efforts to do so.

As the House may be aware, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in the US Department of State Trafficking in Person Report of 2005, and which refers to conditions prevailing in the previous year, Mauritius was placed in the TIER 2 WATCH LIST category, which is, as I said, a TIER lower than the TIER 2 category assigned to Mauritius in 2004.

The fact that Mauritius has now progressed in the TIER placement in 2006, I think, is a testimony of the various actions taken by the Government to combat trafficking in persons and child prostitution. As a matter of fact, the trafficking of persons mentions “the Mauritian Government demonstrated increased anti-trafficking laws enforcement efforts, vigorously investigating cases of human trafficking throughout the year”.

For the information of the House, I should like to enumerate those actions, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir -

- The Ministry of Tourism has set up a multi stakeholders committee to address the issue of child prostitution and is finalising a brochure to sensitise all tourist agents.
- The “*Brigade pour la Protection des Mineurs*” (BPM) is now working in close collaboration with the Ministry of Women’s Rights, Child Development, Family Welfare and Consumer Protection on the protection of the child from all forms of abuse including commercial sexual exploitation of children.
- To create public awareness, sensitisation and awareness campaigns targeted towards children are carried out on a regular basis through media by way of radio and television programmes. Talks are delivered to school children at primary and secondary levels, to parents, in regions at risks and to the community at large with a view to sensitise on the protective needs of children against all forms of harm and abuse.
- Construction of a residential Drop-in Centre at GRNW is being envisaged with a view to removing victims of commercial sexual exploitation from their living environment, where they are exposed to the risk of being engaged in prostitution by family members and peers. The removal of victims from their environment will ensure their successful rehabilitation.

- Information, education and communication campaigns, which are ongoing, is being enhanced in primary, secondary and tertiary educational institutions with a view to educating children about the problems associated with commercial sexual exploitation.
- Professionals, such as Family Welfare & Protection Officers, Child Welfare Officers, Police Officers, Probation Officers, Medical Social Workers and NGOs working with children have been trained by a local consultant with a view to providing better services to victims of CSEC. The training programmes are ongoing.
- The National Parental Empowerment Programme, which was launched on 30 May 2007, provides guidance to parents regarding the sexual education of their children.
- Since January 2008, crackdown operations are organised at regular intervals by officers of this Ministry, of the Women's Rights, Child Development, Family Welfare & Consumer Protection, National Children's Council, *Brigade des Mineurs*, in collaboration with NGOs to ensure that young persons and students are attending schools during normal school hours. Such operations are seen to contribute in an efficient way to prevent young persons from playing truancy and loitering thereby getting involved in illicit activities. These operations are carried out all around the island.
- A Community Child Protection Programme has been launched in August 2007 to ensure that local communities are also closely involved in the protection of children. Communities are sensitised on the phenomenon of child abuse and are thus capable of initiating actions at their end when children are at risk, thus contributing to prevent child abuse, including commercial sexual exploitation of children. A surveillance mechanism in high risk areas has also been set up. A capacity building programme has been launched in May this year.

- The Child Protection Act 1994 was further amended in December 2005, to make provision for all cases of child trafficking, abandonment and abduction to be dealt with by officers of the Ministry of Women's Rights, Child Development, Family Welfare & Consumer Protection who are responsible for child welfare and development. Tougher penalties have also been provided for, in case of contravention of the provisions of the law. Penalties under the present Child Protection Act for sexual offences and indecent photographs of children have been revised from a fine of Rs50,000 and imprisonment not exceeding 5 years to Rs75,000 and 8 years respectively. As for cases of mentally handicapped victims, offenders will be liable to a fine of Rs100,000 and imprisonment not exceeding 15 years instead of Rs75,000 and 8 years respectively.

As regards part (b) of the question, although Mauritius is not fully compliant with the minimum standards set out in the United States Trafficking Victims Protection Act we have taken a series of measures as I have indicated earlier to address the situation.

- So far, a total of 831 officers of different ranks both male and female have been trained in courses ranging from trafficking in persons to sensitization against sexual exploitation and abuse of minors.
- On a regular basis, Police officers visit schools and deliver talks and lectures on child abuse and services available for the protection of children.
- On a regular basis, in collaboration with the social workers of the Ministry of Education and also with the Child Development Unit reconnect children who are cut off from schools to the education system.
- Regularly, Police officers refer children who have been abused, to the Child Development Unit for psychotherapy and placement to shelters, if required.

In addition, the Police provide the following services –

- 24-hour hotline service.
- At divisional level, an Operations Room is open on a 24-hour basis.
- Likewise, at Line Barracks the Operations and Information Room is open on 24-hour basis.
- A protocol of assistance to child victims ranging from protection to counseling exists, whereby all Police officers serving in any part of the country know how to deal with reported cases of child abuse.
- With the amendment of the Child Protection Act in 2005, and incorporation of a comprehensive anti-child trafficking provision, the penalty of imprisonment has been made stricter – by providing for imprisonment not exceeding fifteen years.

With regard to part (b) (ii) of the question, the Child Protection Act 1994 was amended in December 2005 to provide for child trafficking, child abduction, abandonment of child as offence and punishable by law.

However, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with a view to providing better protection to children as well as adults, a holistic approach is being considered and all provisions relating to human trafficking are being clustered under one legislation. We need to criminalise trafficking in person, prevent potential victims falling prey to traffickers, detect and prosecute and punish all those involved in that activity, raise awareness even more, promote collaboration among law enforcement agencies and foster partnership with civil society and all stakeholders.

In that respect, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the State Law Office had already prepared a draft Bill in February 2008. The draft has now been finalized and it is called “Combating of Trafficking in Persons” Bill. These followed preliminary comments on the draft Bill by the United Nations Office for Drugs and Crime (UNODC), a request for assistance was conveyed to the UNODC through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, International Trade and Cooperation in February 2008.

In April 2008, UNODC responded positively to our request for assistance in the drafting of the Bill. In this context, a Senior Legal Adviser visited Mauritius in June 2008. Working sessions were held with stakeholders and the views of UNODC on the Bill, following the visit of the Senior Legal Adviser, are awaited, but otherwise the Bill is actually being finalized and should be ready very soon

**Mr Bérenger:** I am sure the hon. Prime Minister will agree with me that that figure put forward by the United States of some 2,600 child prostitutes in Mauritius is very disturbing. He has refrained from making reference to that figure. Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether he agrees with that figure and whether the Police and other authorities in Mauritius have carried out a thorough inquiry to try and arrive at a given figure?

**The Prime Minister:** In fact, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I did not refer to that figure, because in the 2008 report, no mention is made of that figure of 2,600. In fact, in 2001 the Ministry of Women's Right, Child Development and Family Welfare commissioned a study which was done by the University of Mauritius. In that study, which the report was published in 2002, the figure of 2,600 is mentioned. But, I should say, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the figure is mentioned, but if I read it from the report 2002, it says that according to the estimates made by the study, there may be as many as 2,600 children victims in Mauritius. But, the new report does not refer to that figure, that is why I did not refer to that figure. There is no new survey that is being carried out just now, whether we should or not, perhaps we should look at that.

**Mr Bérenger:** I think the hon. Prime Minister is aware that it is not only in the reports of the United States Department that that figure is quoted, but in several reports. For example, the US Department of Labour Report on labour in different countries also makes reference to the figure. I quote –

“Mauritius has an estimated 2,600 child prostitutes”

This is being quoted as a kind of accepted figure. Being given the impression that has been given by the latest report, very harsh words that the authorities are not doing enough to eliminate prostitution rings involving children, very tough comments, does not the hon. Prime Minister think that

we should react? For example, in not a distant past, New Zealand was referred to in the US Department Report and the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade came out with a press communiqué, a reaction, and also a reaction on Internet, because these figures are not only in the press, but on the Internet also.

**The Prime Minister:** As I said, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that figure of 2,600 came out from the report that was commissioned by the Government at the time in 2001, which was published in 2002, and I cited from the report which says -

“There may be as many as(...)”

But that figure has now been taken by everybody else, as if we have shot ourselves in the foot. But I must say with caution that we should make sure that the figure is actually nil, but in no country it is actually nil, not even in the United States. But, as I said, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we have reacted. I don't know whether we are reading the same report, but the report recognizes that the Government is making significant efforts. Let me just read part of it, it says –

“The Mauritian Government demonstrated increased anti-trafficking law enforcement efforts, vigorously investigating cases of human trafficking throughout the year.”

It goes on to say -

In July 2007, the number of Police Officers working in the Minors' Brigade increased from six to 35 and the number of vehicles from one to five, allowing adequate coverage of all regions of the island.”

Also it says –

“Police discovered eight cases of children engaged in prostitution and arrested 22 adults caught exploiting such children.”

It goes on to say –

“The Ministry of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment conducted inspections to enforce child labour laws.”

I am not reading the whole report, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, but it says –

“The Government provided funding to NGOs offering protection and services to victims of trafficking, and referred victims to these organisations for shelter and other assistance. The Government run drop-in centre for children engaged in prostitution actively advertised its counselling services through bumper stickers, the toll-free number, a community outreach.”

And it continues –

“The Government encourages victims’ assistance in the investigation and prosecution of trafficking crimes. The Government ensures that victims are not inappropriately incarcerated, fined or otherwise penalised solely for unlawful acts as a direct result of being trafficked.

The Government made notable efforts to prevent the commercial sexual exploitation of children and reduce demand for commercial sex acts during the year.”

It goes on to say, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that, in fact, the Government is doing quite a bit of effort and that is why I suppose it has explained that we have moved up a tier instead of being on the watch list, we are now in tier 2 list.

**Mr Bérenger:** Will the hon. Prime Minister agree with me that one case of child prostitution is one case too many? I am not going to *polémiquer*, because it is question of *un verre à moitié rempli ou à moitié vide*. The hon. Prime Minister is quoting all the positive parts. But the report also says that the authorities are not doing enough to eliminate prostitution rings involving children and even when they are positive they say the following –

“The Government of Mauritius does not fully comply with the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking; however it is making significant efforts to do so.”

That is, of fully complying and, even today, the hon. Prime Minister admitted that we still are not fully compliant. And the hon. Prime Minister quoted the number of Police officers and vehicles in the *Brigade des Mineurs*. I think that this Mauritian full inquiry by the Police should be carried out so that we have material to challenge this figure of 2,600 that is now accepted all over the place. Will the Prime Minister, therefore, agree that there is need for such a thorough survey and does he think that, although we have progressed, there is not need for, especially with tourism in mind, increasing the number of policemen and of vehicles available à la *Brigade des Mineurs*?

**The Prime Minister:** In fact, I want to say two things before I answer the last question. The report that the hon. Leader of the Opposition is referring to is from the South African press agency which says differently what the report actually says.

*(Interruptions)*

Nowhere it accuses the Mauritian Government for not doing enough to eliminate child prostitution. It actually says that Government is making significant efforts to do so, but never is never enough. As I said, and the hon. Leader of the Opposition agrees, even if there is one case, it is one case too many. We have moved up from the watch list to the TIER 2 which includes, surprisingly, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, countries like Singapore and many countries from the European Union including also Israel, Japan which are well-known for what they do. That is why I do not agree but, unfortunately, that figure of 2,600 came out in that report and it has stuck. Maybe we should do something to change that perception. Although it says “it may be as many as”. The figure has been taken. as if that is the figure.

**Mr Bérenger:** There should be a thorough survey so that we have material to challenge that, if it needs be. I tried to grasp exactly what further amendments are being brought to the law to better combat trafficking in child prostitution. For example, is the Prime Minister prepared to make it an offence to be a clear client of the child prostitute? Not just those pushing children into prostitution, but if a person is a client, he is committing a crime. Should not the law be made tougher as far as this part is concerned?

**The Prime Minister:** I would have thought that that this is also covered by the law, but that is actually being toughened in the new draft Bill about combating trafficking of persons, which is coming to the House, as soon as it is ready. As I said, Sir, it is the United Nations Office for Drugs and Crime which has been looking at the draft Bill. We have made a request for assistance from a Senior Legal Adviser who has come to Mauritius last month and they had working sessions with all the stakeholders, including the State Law Office as well and that is why the Bill is being finalised. I forgot to mention whether we should increase the number of policemen. In fact, it has been increased from 3 to 35 and the vehicles will be increased, if need be, furthermore. Unfortunately, the report of 2002 gives an indication which everybody takes as a fact. Perhaps we should do a new survey and see to it, after a while, what is the new figure.

**Mr Bérenger:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the report also recommends that the Government of Mauritius should complete the prosecution of suspected traffickers apprehended in 2006 and 2007. Can I know from the hon. Prime Minister where matters stand for 2006, 2007 and 2008 and whether there have been cases found guilty in Court and what stage the prosecution has reached? Because there were some very disturbing cases, especially in the north of the island, in those years?

**The Prime Minister:** I have the figure with me, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, but I know that the number of people who are actually being arrested and prosecuted is increasing. It has increased over the years. The latest number for this year, up to June, is 4; last year 24 people were arrested; the years before, it was 10 and then 1, 8, 7. As I said, last year, the number has increased and we are vigorously prosecuting them and, as at June this year, there are 4 persons.

**Mr Bérenger:** The number of 24 for last year is very disturbing also. I listened also to the very good efforts that are being made to better coordinate and combat child prostitution in the tourism sector but, in the same report, the US authorities “wish to see the Government of Mauritius take greater steps to discourage child sex tourism in Mauritius” which means that it is a serious problem. But they recommended the issuing of warnings to foreign tourists on arrival at the airport. Of course, we must not overreact completely in the other direction but, as we know, in certain countries, for example, drug trafficking is advertised at the point of entry and here it is recommended that warnings to incoming tourists should be properly made.

**The Prime Minister:** We are considering what the hon. Leader of the Opposition is precisely saying here, but we should not be seen as overreacting and doing as if we are a country where there is a lot of child prostitution in the tourism industry. As I said, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, if you look in the TIER 2 of the list – I do not want to read the whole list - many countries in the European Union fall in the same list. We will have to look at it and see whether we should actually do that.

**Mr Bodha:** May I come back to the report, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. The fact that the report explains who are the children who are vulnerable to the problem, what are the possibilities, for example, it refers to the children from the underprivileged areas, role of taxi drivers in the network, may I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether we should not do an in-depth inquiry because we know what are the vulnerable areas and who are the vulnerable children to this scourge?

**The Prime Minister:** It is the same in all countries, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Very often, it is when you are more vulnerable that you are prone to these and the networking includes taxi drivers. It is the same for all countries. As I have said, we have graduated from two TIER 2 WATCH LIST to a better level and we should not attract attention just as this report mentions figures and we are now stuck to this figure. Of course, as I have said, one is too many and we need to target properly.

**Mr Bodha:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the report also says that a lot of efforts has been made to cater for children who were in prostitution, but one issue which was addressed was that the children could not have immediate shelter and went back to the network. Can I ask the hon. Minister whether something can be done so that once we have the children, we can provide them with the *encadrement nécessaire* so that they do not fall back again in the network?

**The Prime Minister:** In fact, I did mention that there is a new shelter that is being constructed, but we do what we can also. We cannot pretend to be the United States of America and we have solutions to everything.

**Mrs Navarre-Marie:** Sir, the hon. Prime Minister talked about legislation being prepared for better protection of our children. We all know that, although legislation is important, it is not sufficient. What is more important is the enforcement, the training of officers and so on and so forth. The Prime Minister knows certainly that we signed the other optional Protocol to the Convention of the Rights of the Child in 2001. Will he envisage the ratification of such Protocol?

**The Prime Minister:** I should say, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that, in fact, we have progressed. It is not as if we are going down, we are going up the list and we are progressing. We have strengthened the legislation and we have increased the officers who are being put in action regarding this problem. It is not just the law as the hon. Member said, but also the enforcement. That is why I have mentioned all these and I do not want to repeat what we are doing. And for the ratification, of course.

**Mrs Jeewa-Dawreeawoo:** As we all know, child prostitution is very often linked with poverty. The Prime Minister has just enumerated a list of measures. May I know from him what additional measures Government envisages to help the families of those child prostitutes?

**The Prime Minister:** In the Budget, I think, the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance mentioned the poverty areas and these are the areas which we are targeting. These are the measures that I have just mentioned are being looked at.

**Mr Bérenger:** It is acknowledged that we are not yet fully compliant with the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking. Can I, therefore, have it from the Prime Minister - I am sure he will agree - that we rely on additional efforts to become as rapidly as possible fully compliant with the minimum standard for the eliminating of trafficking? Also, can I have confirmation that there will be a thorough survey done by the Police and others to try and arrive at a credible figure, but also to better target those guilty of trafficking in child prostitution, as hon. Bodha has just said? The whole survey will allow us to better target those guilty of such trafficking and of improving on our performance.

**The Prime Minister:** In fact, I should say again, Mr Speaker, Sir, we have actually progressed from TIER 2 Watch List to TIER 2. It is already a progress. We are progressing; that means efforts are being done and we are getting results. I don't know whether the Police should make the survey or whether we should have other people as well, but we should have a survey to correct this image that was created in 2002.

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

### **MBC – MR D. R. – APPOINTMENT**

**(No. B/734) Mr P. Jhugroo (Third Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue)** asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether, in regard to Mr D.R., he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation, information as to –

- (a) his present grade;
- (b) his qualifications and terms and conditions of employment, and
- (c) the different posts he occupied in the Corporation, since his appointment to date.

**The Prime Minister:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as regards part (a) of the question, I am informed by the Director-General of the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation that Mr D. R. is the holder of a substantive post of Cameraman.

As regards part (b) of the question, the Director-General of the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation has informed that Mr D. R. has studied up to Form III and has subsequently attended a series of training programmes locally, including a two-year course on Audiovisual Production Techniques organised by the MFDC and the Ministry of Arts & Culture from 1999 to 2001 and a training workshop in sound recording at the MFDC in 2002.

His terms and conditions of employment are governed by the provisions of the PRB Report of 2003.

Insofar as the last part of the question is concerned, I am informed by the Director-General of the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation that Mr D. R. was appointed Driver/Handy Worker in January 1988. He was subsequently assigned the duties of Cameraman in the News Department from 01 August 2000 to 08 November 2005.

From the 09 November 2005 to November 2006, he acted as Resource Person for the News Production Crew and was assigned the duties of News Production Assistant/Camera Duties from November 2006 to 08 February 2007.

He was again assigned the duties of Cameraman from 09 February 2007 to 15 June 2008. As from 16 June 2008 he has been appointed Cameraman with the MBC.

**Mr Jhugroo:** Can the hon. Prime Minister inform the House whether Mr D. R. has travelled on the inaugural flight from Mauritius to Bangalore and if yes, when and in which capacity?

**The Deputy Speaker:** This question is not allowed. The hon. Member can come with a substantive question.

**Mr Jhugroo:** It is a supplementary question, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The main question is about his qualifications, terms and conditions of employment and the different posts occupied. The hon. Member should come with a substantive question. Next question!

**Mr Jhugroo:** I want to know whether he was on the flight and in what capacity.

*(Interruptions)*

**The Deputy Speaker:** This is not a matter which has been included in the question. How can I accept that?

**Mr Dayal:** Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether there has been any remark or any complaint made as to whether he has not discharged his duties properly?

**The Prime Minister:** In fact, I think the hon. Deputy Prime Minister answered a question on that same gentleman some time back where he explained that he has made a lot of efforts to improve himself, he went to follow courses and that we should encourage people if they want to make efforts and to gain experience.

**Mr Jhugroo:** Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether his job does entitle Mr D. R. to go on foreign missions?

**The Prime Minister:** Well, I suppose all Cameramen can go on foreign missions if they are Cameramen. At one point or the other they will be going.

**Mr Jhugroo:** Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister who chose to send this Cameraman on foreign missions?

**The Prime Minister:** It is not part of the question, as the hon. Deputy Speaker said. It has nothing to do with me, I don't choose people who travel with me.

**Mr Jhugroo:** I just heard from the hon. Prime Minister that he was promoted from several posts during the past few years. Is it because he is the nephew of the personal adviser of the Prime Minister that he has got a fast-track promotion at the MBC?

**The Deputy Speaker:** The question does not arise. Next question!

**MBC – OUTDOOR BROADCASTING VEHICLE - ACCIDENT**

**(No. B/735) Mr P. Jhugroo (Third Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue)** asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation, information as to if an Outdoor Broadcasting vehicle of the Corporation met with an accident, on or about Saturday 24 May 2008 and, if so –

- (a) the circumstances thereof;
- (b) the value of the damages caused, and
- (c) if an inquiry has been carried out thereinto and the outcome thereof.

**The Prime Minister:** Mr Speaker, Sir, as regards part (a) of the question, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Director-General of the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation that an Outside Broadcast vehicle of the Corporation which was on its way from Flacq met with an accident on Sunday 25 May 2008 at around 00 25 hrs at the La Vigie roundabout.

As regards part (b) of the question, the Director-General of the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation has informed that the surveyors of the insurance company are awaiting the Police report to complete the insurance procedures and assess the value of the damages caused to the vehicle.

Insofar as the last part of the question is concerned, I am informed by the Ag. Commissioner of Police that the case file is nearing completion.

For his part, the Director-General of the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation has informed that the outcome of the departmental inquiry which has been instituted is still being awaited.

**Mr Jhugroo:** Can the hon. Minister inform the House who were in the vehicle at the time of the accident?

**The Prime Minister:** His son was in the vehicle with him.

**Mr Bérenger:** Has it been established whether that Outside Broadcast vehicle, which is a very expensive piece of equipment, was on official authorised use?

**The Prime Minister:** There was an official programme earlier on that date. I think it was up to late hours, but not midnight.

**Mr Jhugroo:** Can the hon. Prime Minister inform the House whether there was any live coverage on that day?

**The Prime Minister:** I would not know whether there was a live coverage, but there was a programme, as I said, on that day.

**Mr Jhugroo:** Can the hon. Prime Minister inform the House whether the driver has undergone any alcohol test on that day and, if so, can we know what is the outcome?

**The Prime Minister:** There is a Police inquiry which is going on, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, and I think they have done all that has to be done. If he has not given, then he will be charged as if he was drunk.

**Mr Guinness:** Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether it is normal practice for drivers to keep the Outside Broadcast vehicle at their residence when it is late or do they have to come back at the MBC?

**The Prime Minister:** I am not sure what is the actual policy with the MBC, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, what they do when it is late, but I know the driver, Mr Sooben, at the time, had a programme there, as I said.

**Mr Ganoo:** Can the hon. Prime Minister confirm that it is the mandatory rules that when this vehicle is to be driven, the driver should be accompanied by another employee, by another attendant sitting by his side?

**The Prime Minister:** I don't know whether it is a mandatory rule, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir

**Mr Jhugroo:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether the said driver was involved in any previous accident before?

**The Prime Minister:** I have no details of whether Mr Sooben has had any accident before, Mr Speaker, Sir. I know he has a proper driving licence and he has never been subject to disciplinary actions in the past. So, I presume there has been none.

**Mr Lesjongard:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, does the hon. Prime Minister have information concerning the age and the cost of that vehicle?

**The Prime Minister:** The vehicle was purchased in June 2003 and it cost Rs39 m. because there are lots of facilities in it. But I must say, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have also checked; since then, things have moved on and a new vehicle will not cost as much because of the new digitalised process. It is going to cost much less.

### ***LES ANGES DU SUD* HOTEL CONSTRUCTION PROJECT– FAKE LETTER OF INTENT**

**(No. B/736) Mr G. Lesjongard (Second Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue)** asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to if an officer of the Ministry of Housing and Lands has recently given a statement to the Line Barracks Police Station, concerning the issue of a letter of intent to the promoters of the *Les Anges du Sud* hotel construction project.

**The Prime Minister:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Acting Commissioner of Police that on 02 May 2008, one Principal Surveyor of the Ministry of Housing and Lands stated at the Pope Hennessy Police Station that -

- (i) on 02 May 2008 he took cognizance of a letter of reservation dated 28 January 2008 issued in the name of “*Les Anges du Sud*” in respect of a plot of land to the extent of 25A at La Prairie in the district of Black River;

- (ii) when he went through the letter, he noticed that it had a false reference and his own signature had been forged, and
- (iii) after perusal of the relevant file, he also noticed that the Ministry of Housing and Lands had issued a negative reply to “*Les Anges du Sud*” on 23 December 2007.

He further stated that since more than two years, he had been in charge of the Pamplémousses and Port Louis Districts only.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am also informed that on 05 May of this year, the case file was referred to Port Louis (South) CID for enquiry.

On its part, the Ministry of Housing and Lands has, by way of a letter dated 15 May 2008 addressed to the Acting Commissioner of Police, informed that it has never approved the issue of a reservation letter in favour of “*Les Anges du Sud Ltée*” for a plot of State Land at La Prairie and requested the Police to investigate into the matter. The enquiry is under way.

**Mr Lesjongard:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Prime Minister when his office was informed of the existence of that fake letter of intent and by whom?

**The Prime Minister:** It is not something that pertains to my office. It goes to the Ministry of Housing and Lands. I must say, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, my information is that it is actually the hon. Minister who noticed this because there are lots of applications at the BOI and while he was looking through the file, he himself noticed that it seems to have been given when it has never been given. That is when the inquiry started.

**Mr Lesjongard:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in reply to PQ B/620 dated 10 June this year, the hon. Prime Minister informed the House that the promoter was informed that the land will not be made available. And just now, he has stated that it was on 23 December, whereas my information is that the promoter was informed on 26 December. Can we get the confirmation when the promoter was informed that the plot of land was not available for development?

**The Prime Minister:** I don't think there is a big conflict there, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. The letter was issued apparently on 23 May and he probably got it on 26 May.

**Mr Lesjongard:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Prime Minister who made the statement at the Police Station concerning the existence of that fake letter of intent?

**The Prime Minister:** It was the Principal Surveyor of the Ministry of Housing and Lands.

**Mr Lesjongard:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, can I know who had signed that fake letter of intent?

**The Prime Minister:** As he said himself in his statement, he noticed that his own signature had been forged.

### **DRUG TRAFFICKING – FOREIGN NATIONALS**

**(No. B/737) Mr S. Dayal (Second Member for Quartier Militaire and Moka)** asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether, in regard to the importation of drug or drug trafficking, he will -

- (a) for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the number of foreign nationals who have been convicted in Mauritius, over the last ten years, indicating the cases in which the accused has -
  - (i) served the prison sentence in Mauritius
  - (ii) been repatriated to his country of origin and
- (b) state if he will consider re-introducing the death penalty in relation thereto.

**The Prime Minister:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Acting Commissioner of Police that over the last ten years, sixty-one foreign nationals have been convicted for different drug offences.

Forty of these foreign nationals are serving their sentence in Mauritius, thirteen have been repatriated to their country of origin to serve their sentence, seven have been repatriated after having completed their sentence in Mauritius and one passed away while undergoing sentence.

As regards part (b) of the question, the Abolition of Death Penalty Act 1995 provides for the sentence of death to be replaced by a sentence of penal servitude for life. However, at the time of the enactment, no amendment was brought to section 4 of the Constitution relating to the Protection of right to life. Therefore our Constitution provides for the possibility that the death penalty be reintroduced by an ordinary law.

However, fewer countries are choosing to retain the death penalty in their statute books. The fallibility of human judgment and the possibility of new evidence in favour of a convicted person becoming available after his execution have also been invoked by human rights advocates as powerful reasons for abolishing the death penalty.

The Judicial Committee of the Privy Council has indicated its clear abhorrence to the death penalty in appeals from the Caribbean courts and has recently ruled that the mandatory death penalty amounts to “inhuman or degrading punishment” in breach of the provisions of the Human Rights Convention which is akin to section 7 of our Constitution.

A number of international instruments to which Mauritius has subscribed or is a party, also provide for the right to life and for the protection from inhuman or degrading treatment namely the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment and the Optional Protocol for the Convention against Torture and other Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.

**Mr Dayal:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I thank the hon. Prime Minister for his commitment regarding this scourge. We have, unfortunately, got this attitude in Mauritius whereby we just dismiss it as “*cela n’arrive qu’aux autres*”. Is the hon. Prime Minister aware that Mauritius is ranked first in the region of Africa since 2002 - and this morning I heard that it is second in the world - regarding this drug trafficking? I have personally come across many cases whereby schoolchildren are affected by a new culture which is known as the “Manson culture”. It is especially in several colleges whereby drug taking and other social evils are dramatically increasing. Does not the

hon. Prime Minister think that sentences must be toughened with regard to drug traffickers, especially, the big sharks, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, who are spoiling our youngsters? That a big, huge, loud and clear signal be sent to say “halt”!

**The Prime Minister:** The previous Governments have already strengthened the law for drug traffickers and we have also passed laws to further strengthen it. I mentioned the other day - only one newspaper, “l’Express”, in fact, picked it up - that in our laws we are very hard on the drug traffickers, but much less with the people who are actually using it because the feeling is that they are just smoking and it is not as bad as the drug traffickers. But the evidence that we are seeing is that, in fact, these are the people who go and commit these thefts, larceny, crimes and so on and whether we should not relook at the law. That is what I said.

**Mr Bérenger:** I think I heard the hon. Prime Minister saying that 17 foreigners found guilty of drug trafficking were sent back home to jail. Can I know which countries and whether I am right in saying that some countries are not collaborating? I am not asking for their names, but some countries are saying it is too expensive, it is a trouble for us and so on and, therefore, not cooperating in having their nationals sent to their prisons back home.

**The Prime Minister:** It is true to say that Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. I shall also refrain from naming the countries. India is the main one where we are sending back the foreign nationals, but some countries are saying that they are not prepared to accept them, that they committed the crimes here and we deal with them in whatever way we think we should, they will not take them back.

**Mrs Labelle:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I would like to come back to the point raised by hon. Dayal concerning drugs in schools. In fact, it is a real problem – the Manson, the Gothic and so on. Will the hon. Prime Minister ask the Minister of Education to initiate an inquiry in schools? It is present in many secondary schools, in State schools as well as in star schools; every school is concerned with this phenomenon. Will the hon. Prime Minister look at this matter?

**The Prime Minister:** I will ask the Minister of Education to do a survey and see how extensive the problem is.

**Mr Soodhun:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, many leaders of political parties have expressed different views on death penalty. It might be that the hon. Prime Minister has a different view. Is the hon. Prime Minister ready to come forward with a referendum concerning the death penalty in the country?

**The Deputy Speaker:** But the referendum does not exist constitutionally in that case. It is a separate matter.

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Dayal:** Mr Deputy Speaker, as I said, I have personally come across several students who even challenged me in saying that in several careers they won't be able to earn what they can earn in five minutes. This is a very serious matter. We can have the best of laws, but if legislation is not well implemented it will be of no avail. Can I, therefore, ask the hon. Prime Minister what supplementary measures will be brought forward in order to crack down drug trafficking in well-known areas where this usually takes place? Social workers have indicated the regions where this operates?

**The Prime Minister:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir I have answered a question the other day, in fact, on all the measures that we are taking to combat this scourge of drug trafficking, including, as I said, the laws that have been toughened, more Policemen have been put on the streets for it. In fact, this is part of the restructuring of the Police programme. We are also trying to get more information available because we need a good system of information to know where this is being done. I am not saying that it is infallible. There are problems in some areas, but we are actually increasing the surveillance that we are doing.

**Mr Ganoo:** Does the hon. Prime Minister have the figures for foreign nationals who are presently on remand awaiting trial for drug related offences?

**The Prime Minister:** I know that there are 40 foreign nationals serving the sentence. Concerning those on remand, I have the figures with me, but it is a long list. I will let the hon. Member have it.

**Mr Bérenger:** Mr Deputy Speaker, there is a big number of foreigners that have been convicted, but I am sure we can see a pattern. Many, if not most, of these foreigners are coming from certain countries, certain capitals. May I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether special intelligence job has been or is going to be done by Interpol, Police authorities in those countries which are sending us most of the traffickers so that we can better target the problem *à la source*?

**The Prime Minister:** In fact, we are working with Interpol on this, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. I also know what we sent our own Policemen in these countries – I will not mention their names – to have a collaboration between them.

**Mr Guimbeau:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would like to ask the hon. Prime Minister if there is a Drug Commissioner and, if so, what is the role of a Drug Commissioner?

**The Deputy Speaker:** The question is not in the original PQ.

**Mr Soodhun:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would like to come again to my previous question. Since the majority of the population is in favour of death penalty, I would like to ask if the hon. Prime Minister would consider amending the Constitution to have the referendum?

**The Prime Minister:** I know you have already ruled on this, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as to whether we should go by majority, feelings in the country, on such issues. I think we need to have a proper look at it and Members of Parliament should be able to analyse it properly. Mr Deputy Speaker, wince what I mentioned was taken by 'L'Express' the other day, we are getting figures from Singapore to see what they are doing. It is not just one thing in Singapore, it is the whole justice culture, the justice system and all this is different. We are looking at the evidence that we are getting among those who are not really traffickers, but then going on to commit all sorts of larceny and crimes.

### CARS (STOLEN) – CRIMINAL CASES

(No. B/738) 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 stolen cars, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the number thereof which are reported to have been used in the commission of serious criminal offences, since January 2008 to date.

**The Prime Minister:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Acting Commissioner of Police that since January 2008, out of sixty-two stolen cars, two were used in the commission of serious criminal offences on 26 and 27 May 2008 by the same group of individuals. I am given to understand that the Western Division ERS and the CID reacted promptly in these cases and the accused parties were traced and arrested on the same day. The two stolen vehicles have been recovered.

I am further informed that a series of measures has been taken by the Police Department to tackle the problem of larceny of vehicles. These include -

- (i) the setting up of a Robbery Squad at each Divisional CID, which has the responsibility to, *inter alia*, carry out investigations with the aim of detecting and locating any lost vehicle;
- (ii) the flashing by the Police Headquarters Operations and Information Room, of full particulars of any vehicle reported stolen to all mobile and static Units on ground throughout the island;
- (iii) regular awareness campaigns by the crime Prevention Unit with a view to sensitizing members of the public on elementary precautionary measures to be taken to protect their properties. Moreover, Police vigilance is maintained on a twenty-four hour basis at places where such types of offences are commonly committed, and

- (iv) the implementation of the “Iron Rod” scheme whenever a vehicle is reported stolen by violent means. During that exercise, the Regular Police are reinforced by the Special Support Unit and the Special Mobile Force, and are placed at strategic places throughout the island with a view to intercepting the offenders. In some cases, the Police helicopter is also solicited to participate in the tracking exercise.

**Mr Bodha:** May I ask the hon. Prime whether he intends to increase the number of road blocks to see to it that we have the better inspection of vehicles, the more so, at odd hours of the night?

**The Prime Minister:** This is being done whenever it feels that there should be an increase. We do not want also to give the impression that we are a Police State, that we are arresting all sorts of people or stopping people all over the place. There is a balance to be carried out on this.

**Mr Guinness:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, concerning the 62 stolen cars, can I know from the hon. Prime Minister if we can have a breakdown region-wise?

**The Prime Minister:** I can lay down the breakdown region-wise on the Table of the Assembly, Mr Deputy Speaker. As I said, there are only 62, not hundreds.

## INTEGRAL HELMETS – LARCENY WITH VIOLENCE

**(No. B/739) 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, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to if, in reported cases of larceny with violence, the inquiries have revealed that *casque* integral have been used in the commission thereof, and, if so, will he state if Government will consider the advisability of prohibiting the use and sale thereof.

**The Prime Minister:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Acting Commissioner of Police that in cases of larceny with violence where an integral helmet was worn at the time of the commission of the offence, the full particulars of the auto or motor cycle and the circumstances of the

case are reported by the Police Headquarters Operations and Information Room in order to alert all mobile and static units throughout the island.

At present, we cannot prohibit the use or sale of the integral helmet and I do not think it is advisable to actually ban it because it affords protection to the ordinary person who is traveling on a motorbike or on an autocycle. The use of the integral helmet considerably reduces the seriousness of facial and head injuries in cases of accidents. Furthermore, under section 123N of the Road Traffic Act, it is an obligation for all drivers of auto and motor cycles to wear securely on their heads a protective helmet so as to afford protection.

I am also informed by the Acting Commissioner of Police that in order to track down such offenders, a Robbery Squad, as I have just mentioned, has recently been set up at each divisional CID. This Squad carries out frequent checks on habitual criminals. In addition, regular stop and search exercises are carried out to check vehicles and the Crime Prevention Unit conducts regular awareness campaigns island-wide in order to sensitize the population on crime prevention issues and protection of life and property.

I should say, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that we have been looking at this because we looked at the statistics and we are thinking of amending the Road Traffic Act in that sense. In fact, the Bill, I am told, is already ready. We have been working on it for some time. We just want to do a small amendment. The use of the *casque* integral must be for the sole purpose of riding the motorcycle or autocycle or if you are a rider. Once the person has stopped and alighted from the vehicle, he must remove his helmet and we will make it an offence if it is not removed.

**Mr Soodhun:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would like to thank the hon. Prime Minister for coming forward with this amendment. According to my information - and we have also witnessed that - many people do not use it only when they are riding their motorcycles, but also in the bank and other places.

**Mr Bérenger:** I think it is a good move, but how effective it would be, I am not sure. I agree with the hon. Prime Minister that we can't ban *casque* integral. This is a very dangerous instrument. Can't we imagine some kind of registration and can't it be provided in the law that somebody who buys *casque* integral that his name and address are recorded, that there is an identification possibility and put it in the law that somebody who loses or

who pretends to lose his *casque* integral has to report to the Police, otherwise it is an offence? I am sure we can work out something practical.

**The Prime Minister:** I am told that this has been considered by the department and we will look at it further.

**Mrs Martin:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the hon. Prime Minister has just mentioned we will have a robbery squad in the different Police stations. Can we have more details as to how many Policemen are affected to this squad?

**The Prime Minister:** What I said was that the robbery squad will be like they do in other countries because, in the past, we had a small unit. We will look at it at the region. We need to have a robbery squad specifically for robberies and this is being done at the Central Investigation Division.

### ANAND SQUARE HANUMAN MANDIR, TRIOLET – ALLEGED LARCENY

(No. B/740) **Mrs F. Jeewa-Daureeawoo (Third Member for Stanley and Rose Hill)** asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to if an alleged case of larceny has recently been reported to have taken place at the Anand Square Hanuman Mandir, Triolet, and if so, if an inquiry has been carried out thereinto, indicating the value of the property/amount of money reported to have been stolen.

**The Prime Minister:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I shall reply to PQ Nos. B/740 and B/741 at the same time as they relate to the same issue.

I am informed by the Ag. Commissioner of Police that on 05 June 2008, one Mr K. D. reported that between 21.30 hours on 04 June 2008 and 06.20 hours on 05 June 2008, a sum of about Rs300 was stolen from the donation box of Shri Hanuman Mandir, situated at Shri Indira Gandhi Road, Triolet.

The spot was examined on the same day by CID. The scene of crime officers also attended the case.

Two suspects as hereunder were brought for questioning -

- (i) on 06 June 2008, who denied the charge, but after questioning him, he was allowed to go after enquiry, and
- (a) on 16 June 2008, one other person who also denied the charge, but is still under detention in connection with other cases at the same time.

### **WORSHIP PLACES - ALLEGED LARCENY**

**(No. B/741) Mrs F. Jeewa-Daureeawoo (Third Member for Stanley and Rose Hill)** 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 alleged cases of larceny committed in places of worship, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the number of reported cases thereof, since May 2007 to May 2008, indicating –

- (i) if inquiries have been carried out thereinto and the outcome thereof, and
- (ii) the measures he proposes to take to prevent such recurrence.

*(Vide reply to PQ. No. B/740)*

**The Deputy Speaker:** Time is over! The Table has been advised that PQ Nos. B/750, B/754 and B/763 have been withdrawn.

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**AIRPORT OF MAURITIUS LTD –  
MR M. M. S. A. K. – EMPLOYMENT**

.....  
**(No. B/751) Mr P. Jhugroo (Third Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue)** asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism, Leisure & External Communications whether he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Airport of Mauritius Ltd., information as to if one Mr M. M. S. A. K. is employed thereat since 2006 and, if so –

- (a) in what capacity;
- (b) his qualifications, and
- (c) the salaries drawn by him.

.....  
**The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism, Leisure & External Communications (Mr X. L. Duval):** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, Airport of Mauritius Ltd. is a public company incorporated in the Companies Act. The powers of Government are, therefore, limited to those of the shareholder.

I would also like to reiterate that in line with the standing policy applied by the present as well as the previous Government, I do not propose to deal with the internal day-to-day matters of the company in this House. In consequence, I shall not be able to entertain any supplementary questions thereon.

**CAMP THOREL BUS PARK – ROAD  
- RESURFACING & DRAINS**

**(No. B/752) Mr S. Dayal (Second Member for Quartier Militaire and Moka)** asked the Minister of Local Government whether, in regard to the new Bus Park at Camp Thorel, he will state if he will consider –

- (a) the resurfacing of the access leading thereto, and
- (b) the construction of drains in the vicinity thereof.

.....  
**Dr. David:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Moka/Flacq District Council that there is no proper access as such leading to

the newly constructed Bus Park at Camp Thorel. In fact, the present access is a link road from Camp Thorel to L'Esperance.

The District Council has indicated that it will consider including this project in its list of projects for implementation during this financial year.

**Mr Dayal:** I thank the hon. Minister for that.

**BONNE VEINE, QUARTIER MILITAIRE**

.....  
**– HANDRAILS & DRAINS**

.....  
**(No. B/753) Mr S. Dayal (Second Member for Quartier Militaire and Moka)** asked the Minister of Local Government whether, in regard to the village of Bonne Veine, Quartier Militaire, he will state if he will consider –

.....  
 (a) reinstating the damaged handrails along the Community Road, and

.....  
 (b) covering the existing drains with concrete slabs.

**Dr. David:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Moka/Flacq District Council that the handrails along Community Road at Quartier Militaire are, in fact, completely rusted and the open drain needs to be covered.

The District Council has indicated that it will consider including the project in its list of projects for implementation during this financial year.

**Mr Dayal:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, may I request the hon. Minister if he can use his good offices to speed up matters, because that part of the road is very dangerous?

**Dr. David:** I'll do that, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

.....

## COURTS ACT – AMENDMENT

**(No. B/754) Mr S. Dayal (Second Member for Quartier Militaire and Moka)** asked the Attorney-General, Minister of Justice & Human Rights whether, in regard to the absence of witnesses in court in criminal cases, he will state if he will consider amending the Courts Act, with a view to introducing provisions similar to those obtained in section 118 of the Criminal Procedure Act of the United Kingdom, which caters for situations where it is impossible to secure the presence in court of key witnesses or because they have passed away.

*(Withdrawn)*

## LAND ADMINISTRATION VALUATION AND MANAGEMENT INFORMATION SYSTEMS PROJECT - TENDERS

**(No. B/755) Mr E. Guimbeau (First Member for Curepipe and Midlands)** asked the Minister of Housing and Lands whether in regard to the Land Administration Valuation and Management Information Systems Project (LAVIMS) of properties in the island, he will state if the tenders have been launched and if so, when the contracts are expected to be awarded.

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

Tenders were floated internationally by the Central Procurement Board for the LAVIMS Project on Thursday 01 November 2007 and the closing date for submissions of bids was 16 January 2008.

I am advised that the Central Procurement Board completed first, the evaluation of the Technical Proposals on 26 May 2008 and affixed the results on its Notice Board on Wednesday 04 June 2008.

I am further advised that, thereafter, the Central Procurement Board completed the evaluation of the Financial Proposals, and has already initiated the process for awarding the contract to the successful bidder.

Pursuant to Section 40 (3) of the Public Procurement Act, the unsuccessful bidders who have been informed, have until 02 July 2008 to challenge the decision of the Central Procurement Board. In case of no challenge, the contract is expected to be awarded by end of July 2008.

**Mr Guimbeau:** Can the hon. Minister confirm that the LAVIMS will cover all private land, State land and Pas Géométriques, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir?

**Dr. David:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I'll pass on that question to the substantive Minister.

### **LAVIMS PROJECT – STEERING COMMITTEE**

**(No. B/756) Mr E. Guimbeau (First Member for Curepipe and Midlands)** asked the Minister of Housing and Lands whether, in regard to the Steering Committee of the Land Administration, Valuation and Management Information Systems (LAVIMS), he will state the names and status of –

- (a) each of its members, and
- (b) the members of the Programme Implementation Unit that supports the Committee.

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

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, a Steering Committee of officials under the chair of Sir Bhinod Bacha, Senior Adviser in the Ministry of Housing and Lands was set up in January 2007 to ensure follow-up of the LAVIMS Project which was approved by Government in July 2005.

In February 2008, the composition of this Committee was enlarged to include stakeholders from both private and public sectors, including Local Authorities. The full composition of this Committee is being placed in the Library.

In regard to part (b) of the question, the Project Implementation Unit (PIU) was a team set up within the Ministry of Housing & Lands in April 2006, before the coming into operation of the Steering Committee, to initiate action for the implementation of the project in line with the recommendations of the Land Scrutiny Mission carried out in July 2005 by consultants from Landgate, Government of Western Australia. This unit completed its basic work in March 2007, after which time its members were roped in the Steering Committee.

The composition of the Project Implementation Unit which comprised only officers of the Ministry of Housing and Lands was as follows -

**Chairman &  
Head of PIU** - Sir B. Bacha,  
Senior Adviser

**Members**

Mr O. Mamoojee - Assistant Secretary

Mrs B. Kissoon-Luckputtya - Assistant Secretary

Mr F. Nathire - Chief Cartographer

Mr R. Gheeseawon - Principal Surveyor, Ministry of Housing  
& Lands

Mr N. Seenauth - Principal Town & Country Planning  
Officer

**Ad-hoc Members**

Mr H. Rajcoomar - Principal Surveyor

Mr N. Luchoo - Principal Surveyor

## FLOODS VICTIMS – GRANT

**(No. B/757) Mr E. Guimbeau (First Member for Curepipe and Midlands)** asked the Minister of Social Security, National Solidarity and Senior Citizens Welfare & Reform Institutions whether, in regard to the 4,589 beneficiaries of the grant of Rs5,000, following the recent floods, she will state –

- .....
- (a) if they include residents of apartments, indicating, in each case, if they occupy the ground, first or second floor, and
  - (b) the names of the Social Security Officers involved in the exercise.

**Mrs Bappoo:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, following the decision taken by the High Level Committee on 30 March 2008 to pay a special allowance of Rs5,000 to flood victims, the Police Department was requested to carry out appropriate enquiries in respect of the flood victims.

On submission of reports and on the basis of the recommendations made therein by the Police department on a case to case basis, payment of the Special Allowance of Rs5,000 was effected to eligible victims by my Ministry.

My Ministry has been informed by the Commissioner of Police that data related to part (a) of the question, is not available.

With regard to part (b) of the question, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Social Security Officers of my Minister were in no way involved in the exercise on the field.

**Mr Guimbeau:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Minister state if all precise criteria for eligibility have been circulated yet and, if not, can she say when those criteria will be circulated, as promised in PQ No. B/332?

**Mrs Bappoo:** Does the hon. Member mean the criteria? The inquiry has been done as per the criteria that was set up.

**Mr Bérenger:** The hon. Minister has replied that the Police does not have information. It seems that those Rs5,000 have been paid – I am sure the hon. Prime Minister will be interested in that question – to people living in apartments first or second floor. These Rs5,000 have been paid to people. We have their addresses. Doesn't the Minister and the Prime Minister think that an inquiry should be carried out?

**Mrs Bappoo:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as per the report that has been submitted to the Ministry, such data are not available. Now, it will depend on another survey that we'll need to carry out if we want to know whether it was the first floor or the second floor, but, as the hon. Member has just said, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it 'seems' – this is what the question is – but the report does not give any details about whether it was the first floor or the second floor, whatever it is.

**Mr Bérenger:** What report are we talking about? All I heard the Minister say is that the Police has no information available. The Police is the Police. If it is not asked to inquire, of course, we won't have any information.

**Mr Guimbeau:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as at to date, can the hon. Minister state how many eligible beneficiaries did not turn up to collect their money? Can we have the number of people?

**Mrs Bappoo:** I don't have the exact figures now, but I did mention in one of the previous Parliamentary Question that there were some 200 who never turned up.

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, why didn't the hon. Minister consider then to have another inquiry done? How come 300 people who were eligible did not come for the money? It seems that the inquiry was not done properly.

**Mrs Bappoo:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would try to examine this possibility with the Police but, as already stated, the Police has carried out individual inquiries and the final report is that either it recommended or it did not recommend for payment. If we are to start another inquiry, it is going down to the 5,000 families and to see about their buildings, their houses, etc, and ask for refund if they have to refund.

**Mr Guinness:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, if it happens that I give the Minister a list of those people in my constituency who reside on the first floor but who have received the Rs5,000, what action is she prepared to take?

**Mrs Bappoo:** I'll invite the hon. Member to submit the list and I will check with the Commissioner of Police.

*(Interruptions)*

The hon. Member should submit the list.

*(Interruptions)*

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order! Order, I said! Let the hon. Member put his question! I have said, order!

**Mr Lesjongard:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister whether all cases that have been submitted, have been attended to or are there still cases in abeyance?

**Mrs Bappoo:** There are no cases in abeyance. The investigations have been carried out by the Police, the report for each case has been recommended and the payment has been done.

*(Interruptions)*

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. Jhugroo, if you have questions, you just set them.

*(Interruptions)*

Order, I have said! Order!

**Mr Guimbeau:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as taxpayers, we just want to make sure that the money has gone to the victims. Can the hon. Minister confirm to the House that the money has not gone to fictitious victims?

**Mrs Bappoo:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the payment has been made according to the recommendations made by the Police.

**Mr Guimbeau:** Can the hon. Minister give the names, addresses and places of work of the Police Officers involved in the investigation for eligibility?

**Mrs Bappoo:** The hon. Member must come with a substantive question to the hon. Prime Minister. I can't ask the Commissioner to give addresses of the Police Officers. That's not my duty.

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** May I ask the hon. Minister whether she is satisfied with the inquiries carried out?

**Mrs Bappoo:** It is the genuineness of the Police Department. The hon. Member wants to put the question to me as to whether I am satisfied with the inquiry done by the Police.

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, my question to the Minister is simple. She informed the House that 200 persons did not come for the grant. The question is whether she herself did not question her officers how come this came about.

**Mrs Bappoo:** Sir, I answered. My officers cannot answer. The only recommendation came from the Police and my officers were not involved in the inquiry.

**Mr Guimbeau:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister has just said that about 200 victims did not turn up to collect the money. Is the Minister going to ask the Police to contact those victims?

**Mrs Bappoo:** We have requested the Police several times to go back in the field and try to see these families, but they have not been able to come

in touch with these families and to ask them to come and collect their allowance.

### **OLD AGE PENSIONERS – BLANKETS**

**(No. B/758) Mrs F. Labelle (Third Member for Vacoas and Floreal)** asked the Minister of Social Security, National Solidarity and Senior Citizens Welfare & Reform Institutions whether she will state if the old age pensioners have received a grant *in lieu* of blankets for the financial years 2006-2007 and 2007-2008 and, if so, indicate the date on which payments were effected and, if not, why not.

**Mrs Bappoo:** No, Sir, as the policy for the provision of blankets and even cash *in lieu* of same has been stopped by the MSM/MMM Government since the year 2004. The last payment of Rs120 was effected only in July 2003.

### **UoM/UTM – ACADEMIC YEAR 2008-2009 - INTAKE**

**(No. B/759) Mrs F. Labelle (Third Member for Vacoas and Floreal)** asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether in regard to the intake of students at the University of Mauritius and the University of Technology for the academic year 2008-2009, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to if the number thereof will be doubled, and if so, the measures that have been or are being taken to cater for the increased number of students.

**Mr Gokhool:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in line with Government policy to increase access to post secondary and tertiary education as enunciated in the Budget Speech 2008/2009, the two public universities and other publicly funded tertiary educational institutions have taken steps to increase student intake as from next Academic Year as follows -

The UoM has already initiated to cater measures for an increased number of student admissions from the figure of 3089 in 2007 – 2008 to 4467 in 2008-2009. These include the merging of classes to optimise access and use of resources, use of flexible programmes, the rationalisation of infrastructure

usage and introduction of foundation courses. This will result in an increase of 45% of the intake compared to last year.

The possibility of using underutilised capacity of private institutions through some form of collaboration to run joint programmes with award made by the UoM and the UTM will also be explored.

As regards the University of Technology, Mauritius, I am informed that the intake for Academic Year 2007/2008 which was 900 will be doubled in 2008/2009 so as to reach 1800 by 2009. I am further informed that due to space constraint at the La Tour Koenig campus, UTM which already has recourse to rented accommodation at IVTB, Pointe aux Sables and MIE and MCA will rent additional space for afternoon lectures.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the measures which I have just enunciated shall in no way be detrimental to the quality of higher education delivered. To respond to the challenge of broadening access and enabling more of our qualified youth to have access to higher education, our universities have had to revisit their mode of operation.

Today, it is unimaginable to have class sizes of 25, 30 or 40. To assist teaching and learning to larger groups of students, all classrooms are being equipped with new educational technology tools such as laptops, PCs and LCD projectors. At the same time, all laboratories are being upgraded. For instance, the University of Mauritius is investing in equipment and is purchasing 300 PCs.

We live in a virtual world where access to knowledge should not be only limited to the classroom. Students should have access to information anywhere on the campus. The UoM library is being upgraded to increase space and access to the internet through WiFi connections.

The above, together with the Quality Assurance System already in place will ensure quality of teaching and learning in higher education.

I assure hon. Members that my Ministry is ensuring that measures announced in the 2008/2009 Budget with regard to broadening access to higher education are effectively implemented on a progressive basis.

**Mrs Labelle:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister has mentioned several measures. Will he confirm that these measures will be ready for resumption of studies in six weeks? For example, he has mentioned additional space in the library, PCs in all classrooms.

**Mr Gokhool:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, action has been taken, but I cannot say that all the measures will be completed at the beginning of the academic year. This is an ongoing process. The University is taking steps for the smooth running of courses at the university.

**Mrs Labelle:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, right now, there is no space for students in the library. With the increase in the number of students, I can imagine what will be the situation. On the other hand, regarding the teaching staff – actually, it is a big problem - has the University already embarked on recruitment of additional staff for the next academic year?

**Mr Gokhool:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as regards recruitment of staff, the exercise has started. Concerning the library, true it is that there is a problem of space. I have been informed that action is being taken to increase access to internet facilities, so that students will not have to go to the library. Meanwhile, the library facilities are being upgraded. I don't think all this can happen overnight, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

**Mr Soodhun:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister said that there will also be evening classes. The fact that there is a big problem of transport encountered by the students, has the hon. Minister taken on board this problem with regard to evening classes?

**Mr Gokhool:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this is a practical problem. But, we have taken steps so that part-time courses, where normally students have their own transport facilities, are run in the late evening. We have to make sure that students who attend full-time courses, and who do not have transport facilities, do not face these difficulties.

**Mr Ganoo:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am sure the hon. Minister must have been apprised of the apprehensions of Mr Mohamedbhai, who certainly knows what he is talking about. One of these apprehensions is that, with the doubling of students, the lecturers will have less time to do research work, especially in view of the pressure that will be put upon them with the increase in the number of students. How does the hon. Minister react to that?

**Mr Gokhool:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it seems that wisdom comes to people after they leave the institution itself. The question asked by the hon. Member relates to quality assurance...

*(Interruptions)*

The hon. Members on the other side of the House have also to listen to what I have to say! *have to say!*

*(Interruptions)*

Third class Opposition!

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the university has got...

*(Interruptions)*

**The Deputy Speaker:** A question has been put. Let the hon. Minister reply!

*(Interruptions)*

Order, please! Hon. Jhugroo!

**Mr Gokhool:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the university usually has quality assurance processes. For example, there is the Senate, there is the pro vice-Chancellor looking after teaching and learning, there is a team that looks after quality assurance, and there are advisory committees. The system is in place. Let me also inform the House that we have a system of external examination to look at the quality of education offered by the university. I can assure the hon. Member that all these aspects have been taken into consideration.

**Mrs Labelle:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister mentioned that we must forget classes of 25-30. Can he assure the House that when are going to have large groups, the university will have the same facilities as universities abroad?

*(Interruptions)*

True it is that we have lectures of 100, 200 and 300. Of course!

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. Mrs Labelle, put your question!

**Mrs Labelle:** The hon. Deputy Prime Minister & Minister of Finance is just...

**The Deputy Speaker:** But, you are not supposed to respond to the hon. Deputy Prime Minister.

**Mrs Labelle:** Yes, but I have been disturbed, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

**The Deputy Speaker:** You have let yourself be disturbed. Put your question!

**Mrs Labelle:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, if we are looking forward to have classes of 100 or 200, will the hon. Minister of Education ensure that we have the same facilities, that is, tutorials, teaching assistance? This is the question. We cannot compare...

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

**Mr Gokhool:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, all I can say to the hon. lady is that, in line with our vision for a world-class quality education, we are going to provide world-class facilities at the University of Mauritius.

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

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

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. Members, the Table has been advised that Parliamentary Question No. B/760 has been withdrawn.

### **PRIMARY SCHOOLS – COMPUTERS**

**(No. B/760) Mrs F. Labelle (Third Member for Vacoas and Floréal)** asked the Minister of Education & Human Resources whether, in regard to the computers in the primary schools, he will state the average number thereof as at 31 May 2008.

*(Withdrawn)*

## **EBÈNE BUSINESS PARK - BUS SERVICE**

**(No. B/761) Mr S. Naidu (Third Member for Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière)** asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping whether, in regard to the Ebène Business Park, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the National Transport Authority, information as to if consideration will be given for the review of the bus services provided thereat, in view of the irregular working hours of the people working thereat.

**The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping (Dr. R. Beebeejaun):** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed that bus services are being provided at the Ebène Business Park, in respect of 12 routes covering districts of Port Louis, Plaines Wilhems, Grand Port, Savanne, Moka and Flacq. Services are also provided at specific times, starting at 5.30 hours and the last trips vary between 16.30 hours and 19.15 hours according to destinations.

On 24 January, this year, I carried out a site visit with representatives of the NTA, TMRSU, RDA, the Police and the local authorities and BPML.

BPML was requested to provide information on the hours of operation of firms at the Cybercity, the number of employees who require bus facilities, and the routes along which they travel to assess the need for extra bus services for employees who work at irregular hours. This information when available will be used to adjust timetables for buses after consultation with bus operators. Having said that, I wish to point out, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that it would not be possible to satisfy the demand of all firms which operate at odd hours.

There are at present contract bus services, which is the most suitable option for employees working at odd hours, especially for convenience and security reasons as they provide a door to door service. This mode is already being used by other economic operators, such as hotels, textile industry, casinos and call centres, which also operate at irregular hours and at night.

**Mr Naidu:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the information I have is that the bus towards Rose Hill and one towards Port Louis stop at 5.30 in the evening, which is very early compared to the requirements of the people there. They have to walk from the Business Park to the main road between Réduit and Rose Hill to catch the bus and, especially, these days, when it is getting dark, they are having lots of difficulties. Can the hon. Deputy Prime Minister look into this matter?

**Dr. Beebeejaun:** As I said, the buses in the afternoon start at 4.30 hrs and end at 19.15 hrs. If there is a need to provide specific times, I will certainly look into, but I will be happy to get more information from BPML so as to cover all the needs.

### **BICYCLES (ELECTRIC) – LEGISLATION**

**(No. B/762) Mr S. Naidu (Third Member for Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière)** asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping whether, in regard to the electric bicycles, he will state if Government proposes to amend the law, with a view to bringing it at par with motor cycles, inasmuch as the legal age for driving and the wearing of helmets are concerned and, if not, why not.

**The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping (Dr. R. Beebeejaun):** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, electrically propelled cycles being eco-friendly are recommended for short trips and are being adopted in many countries as an alternative to motorcycles and auto cycles. They have already been introduced in Mauritius.

As the existing legislation does not contain any specific provision regarding this type of cycles, new regulations have been submitted to the State Law Office for vetting and will be introduced subsequently.

The proposed “Road Traffic (Electric Cycle and Power Assisted Cycle) Regulations” will provide *inter alia, that* –

- (i) such cycles should be registered and have a registration number plate;

- (ii) appropriate safety devices, such as reflectors, horns and lamps should be installed on the cycles;
- (iii) no person under the age of 15 years shall ride such cycles, and
- (iv) the wearing of protective helmets by riders of such cycles shall be mandatory.

### **FOIRE DA PATTEN ROSE HILL – STALLS – RENTAL**

**(No. B/763) Mr S. Naidu (Third Member for Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière)** asked the Minister of Local Government whether he will state if he has received copy of a letter addressed to the Municipal Council of Beau Bassin Rose Hill by the Association Marchands de la Foire Da Patten Rose Hill in regard to the arrears for the rental of stalls in the foire Da Patten and if so, the measures he proposes to take, if any.

*(Withdrawn)*

### **SECONDARY SCHOOLS – FORM V STUDENTS – REVERSION**

**(No. B/764) Mr G. Gunness (Third Member for Montagne Blanche and GRSE)** asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether, in regard to the students of the State and Private Secondary Schools who were in Form V at the beginning of the year, he will state if any of them have been reverted to Form IV classes or have left school since and, if so, the number thereof, in each case.

**Mr Gokhool:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed that –

- (i) out of 8,325 students in Form V in the State Secondary Schools at the beginning of the year, 104 have been reverted to Form IV, and
- (ii) out of 12,168 students in Form V in the private secondary schools, 12 have been reverted to Form IV;

making a total of 116 reversions.

I am also informed that the reasons differ from case to case for such reversions. In most of the reverted cases, the students had poor results at Form IV level and had been exceptionally and conditionally promoted to Form V, but when their parents realised that they could not cope with the level, they applied for reversion.

**Mr Guinness:** Can the hon. Minister, first of all, give us the names of the State Secondary Schools where such reversions have taken place?

**Mr Gokhool:** I do not have the names right now, but I can submit the information later on.

**Mr Guinness:** Is the hon. Minister aware that in most of these cases, it is because the parents are not being able to collect the amount of money needed to pay for the SC exams fees? That is why the children have not been able to pursue in Form V and they have been reverted to Form IV.

**Mr Gokhool:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the information we have gathered is that parents have looked at the level of the students and then they have requested for reversion.

*(Interruptions)*

But I am answering the question and the hon. Member should listen to my explanation. I do not have any formal representation that students were reverted because of the inability to pay fees. I am giving the information I have. If the hon. Member has got official information, he has to communicate to the House and I will look into it.

**Mr Guinness:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, anyway the student has been promoted to Form V. I cannot see the point of the Minister that it is now that the parents find that the student is not able to pursue and, therefore, is reverted back to Form IV.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Yet the hon. Minister has said that this is the answer that he has been provided with.

*(Interruptions)*

Let him seek for the information!

**Mrs Labelle:** Is it the policy of the Ministry to let parents make evaluation of pupils as to whether they can be in a class? Is it the duty of parents to make such evaluation?

**Mr Gokhool:** Not only this is part of their responsibility and they will have to talk to the Head of the school to assess what is the level of the student. I don't think the parents should be left out of this exercise and this is proper thing to do.

**Mr Guinness:** The student has been promoted to Form V. Let us say that the student is not in a position to pay for the examination fees, why is it that he or she has to be reverted to Form IV?

**Mr Gokhool:** This is the hypothesis of the hon. Member. I don't agree with that. I have given the information I have. What I am saying is that parents, in most cases, together with the school administration, realise that the student is not able to cope. The other thing that I have said - I am not saying that it is automatic - is that only exceptionally and conditionally. There are many cases of students who are unable to cope and they write to the Ministry and they say they would want to revert back to the lower form. This is a normal practice.

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister how many of the 140 students who have been reverted back to Form IV had written to the Ministry requesting for their demotion from Form V to Form IV?

**Mr Gokhool:** I cannot say exactly how many, but we can look for the information. Normally this takes place at the level of the school and when the matter is sorted out, this is not reported. When students do write to the Ministry requesting a reversion, this is addressed at the level of the Ministry otherwise these matters are sorted out at the level of the school.

**Mrs Labelle:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, from the answer given by the Minister, there is a situation where parents have been challenging the evaluation of the school, which has found these students fit to be promoted to Form V. Is it normal that we experience such a situation?

**Mr Gokhool:** I am sorry. I think the hon. lady is not understanding the process. The child is admitted on a conditional basis; it can happen that a child can start in January and we have so many cases of children facing difficulties. This will be made known to the parents who come to the school and discuss. Let me inform the House that out of 8,325 children, there are only 104 in State Secondary Schools and out of 12,168 children, only 12 have been reverted. It is not a serious problem because there are some children who have problems. I cannot understand the logic of the hon. lady. At times they want to help students and when we are helping them, they find a problem out of it.

*(Interruptions)*

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order!

*(Interruptions)*

Hon. Minister! Stop now!

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Bodha:** May I ask the hon. Minister whether he has the figures for last year and whether this happened only this year because of the reason which was pointed out by my colleague?

**Mr Gokhool:** I have given the answer to the question with regard to the reversion of classes for this year. If a question is set to me about the trend, I can give the answer.

**Mr Guinness:** Can I know from the Minister whether there is any student who is not sitting for SC examinations and who has not asked to be reverted to Form IV, but is still pursuing Form V?

**Mr Gokhool:** I won't have the answer right now.

**Mr Mohamed:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister has made mention of two figures, if I am not mistaken. The first case: 104 and the second case: 12. Since the Minister said that he does not have the exact figures as to what the situation is, that is, whether it is about non-payment of fees or inability to pay, would he consider carrying out a survey among

those set figures of students and later on tabling it for the House to have an exact idea?

**Mr Gokhool:** I have no problem with that, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

## **HOTELS – CONSTRUCTION/RENOVATION PROJECTS**

**(No. B/765) Mr N. Bodha (First Member for Vacoas & Floreal)** asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism, Leisure & External Communications whether, in regard to the projects for the construction of new hotels and for the renovation of existing ones, he will state –

- (a) the number thereof, indicating their location;
- (b) the amount of investment to be involved;
- (c) the number of rooms involved, and
- (d) the social component thereof.

**The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism, Leisure & External Communications (Mr X.L. Duval):** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, my Ministry is aware of some 27 new hotels which are either presently under construction or are still at the project stage. A further 11 existing hotels are being renovated and extended.

In total, should all the projects be completed, this will result in an overall addition of 5,000 rooms and will involve an investment of some Rs29 billion.

As the House is aware, each hotel promoter pays Rs25 m to the Tourism Fund, upon signature of the lease agreement where State land is involved.

I am placing in the Library full details of the hotel projects involved as well as the social component thereof.

## COMPETITION COMMISSION – SETTING UP

**(No. B/766) Mr N. Bodha (First Member for Vacoas & Floreal)** asked the Minister of Industry, Small & Medium Enterprises, Commerce & Co-operatives whether, in regard to the Competition Commission, he will state when it will be set up.

**Dr. Jeetah:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as indicated in the Performance Indicator of the 2008-2009 Estimates, the Competition Commission is expected to be operational by December 2008.

My Ministry is currently working with UNCTAD, a UN agency, in identifying candidates for consideration to the post of Executive Director. The Ministry has further secured the services of a Senior Adviser from UNCTAD, Mr George Lipimile, to commence the work on the institutional framework related to the setting up of the Competition Commission. It is anticipated that the time-frame shall be in accordance with the forecast in the budget of 2008-2009.

## CEB – ILLEGAL CONNECTIONS & METERS TAMPERING

**(No. B/767) Dr. A. Husnoo (Second Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East)** asked the Minister of Public Utilities whether, in regard to the loss of revenue resulting from illegal electricity connections and/or tampering with the electric meters, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Central Electricity Board, information as to the estimated amount thereof for each of the last five years.

**Dr. Kasenally:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the CEB that since the establishment of a new Customer Service Department within the Central Electricity Board in 2006, an aggressive campaign has been initiated to uncover illegal electricity consumption islandwide and also in the island of Rodrigues, I dare say. The campaign has been successful and the CEB has detected a number of illegal electricity connections or tampering with the electric meters.

In this connection and with your permission, I am placing in the Library a copy of a document highlighting the number of cases of fraudulent abstraction of electricity along with the estimated amount for each of the last five years. In fact, the total is about Rs35.1 m.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am also informed that the CEB is in the process of strengthening its Revenue Protection Squad in order to enable a more effective tracking down of fraudulent cases. The CEB will also shortly launch a campaign to sensitise electricity consumers and the population at large on the fact that fraudulent abstraction of electricity, in addition to being a hazard, is a criminal offence and any person who commits such an offence, is liable to pay a heavy fine or may be imprisoned.

At present, the CEB officers must rely on their personal flair to detect suspected cases of fraud. The informant available does not allow for online detection of fraud. The CEB is investigating other avenues whereby sophisticated technological equipment and methods may be used to detect fraud, and eliminating the human element which, I am afraid, sometimes cannot be trusted upon.

**Dr. Husnoo:** Can the Minister inform us, if possible, how many people and companies are involved and how many of them have been prosecuted?

**Dr. Kasenally:** There are 1,454 cases. The amount claimed was Rs46.4 m. we have managed to get back Rs35.1 m. I dare say that this sum of Rs35.1 m. concerns mostly big companies which run into millions, and that the common people are far and few to tamper with the ordinary meters which we have in the house. It is only these big sharks who either disconnect - and I am afraid to say that they do this with people who are technically skilled to do that.

**Dr. Husnoo:** Can the Minister inform us about the number of companies that have been prosecuted?

**Dr. Kasenally:** There are two problems. If they are agreeable to pay, we persuade to get our money. If we sue them, it takes a lot of time and, in fact, afterwards, I am going to answer a question put by another hon. Member. A long time is taken and very often there is an arduous long

dragging procedure in Court which is very costly. Therefore, we go for the option of getting the money as fast as we can.

**Mr Cuttaree:** Can I ask the hon. Minister whether he can table a list of the companies or institutions which liability was more than Rs200,000?

**Dr. Kasenally:** Most of them are running millions, I am afraid, and I will try to have it compiled and lay it on the Table of the Assembly.

**Mr Cuttaree:** Can I ask the hon. Minister whether he can lay on the Table of the Assembly a list of educational institutions where there have been problems with tampering of terminal boxes?

**Dr. Kasenally:** I don't think I should give just those concerning education. I'll give the whole list in the name of transparency.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The list that the hon. Minister will table will be all encompassing.

**Dr. Kasenally:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I will open the file wide so that everybody can see.

**Dr. Mungur:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, since the hon. Minister mentioned about the sophisticated method to detect the fraud, may I ask him when same will be available and what will be its cost implication?

**Dr. Kasenally:** In fact, we have just come to know about one highly technological method. It has to be proven. Somebody will come to propose the case and we will see what is the cost. The most important thing that we want to see is whether it is cost-effective. We don't want to invest in something where we have nothing in return. But one thing is that this method, as far as I know - I have read only - can actually detect a fraud as it is happening. So, you can go and catch them immediately.

**Mr Lesjongard:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this is not the first time that we hear of illegal connection, in tampering of CEB meters. Can the hon. Minister confirm whether there exists a black list at the Central Electricity Board with regard to those consumers? And can the hon. Minister inform the House which section of the Central Electricity Board deals with those consumers?

**Dr. Kasenally:** There is a Customers Service Department, but there is also a meter lab. We have got a few dedicated engineers who have been going around, but the field is so wide, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. We have not yet had a black list, as the hon. Member would say. There is a problem. I am ashamed to say it, but I'll be very frank. Unfortunately, some members of the CEB have been interdicted and while on interdiction, they have been performing and some of them are retired. The problem with the CEB is that even if they are sacked, they are being pensioned off, they are still active.

**Mr Lesjongard:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Minister confirm to the House whether there exists a fraud section at the CEB and how many officers are posted thereat?

**Dr. Kasenally:** As I have said, it is because of our fraud unit that we have managed to uncover this illegal horde. Currently, there are about five or six, but they will not be able to cover the whole island. In fact, recently they went to Rodrigues. I must say, in Rodrigues, it is lesser. It is the Mauritians, who have been caught here, and have their subsidiary in Rodrigues, who have been caught as well there. They have got their consultant and I understand one of them made a trip there and did something. This is how we caught them.

### **CWA – POTABLE WATER – SUPPLY**

**(No. B/768) Dr. A. Husnoo (Second Member for Port Louis Maritime and Port Louis East)** asked the Minister of Public Utilities whether, in regard to drinking water supplied by the Central Water Authority, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Authority, information as to the quality thereof, as compared to the standard prescribed by the World Health Organisation.

**Dr. Kasenally:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed that the Central Water Authority treats water for distribution all over the island in accordance with the requirements of the World Health Organisation standards under the Environment Protection (Drinking Water Standards) Regulations 1996.

.....

Each month, with the assistance of the Water Quality Auditors of the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life, the CWA collects an average of 350 water samples from different points covering the whole island. The same samples are analysed and the results, over the last three months, revealed that the quality of our drinking water conforms on an average of 98% with the standards prescribed by the World Health Organisation.

The 2% non-compliance rate is attributed to mechanical failures of chlorinators and booster-pumps at the chlorination points and are beyond human control. These failures are promptly attended to by the CWA to ensure compliance with the prescribed standards.

**Dr. Husnoo:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Minister tell us how does the water supplied by the CWA compare with the bottled water in Mauritius?

**Dr. Kasenally:** It compares very favourably as far as the CWA is concerned. There are some minor differences. I would point them out. The total dissolved solids as far as the CWA potable water is concerned is 100 milligrammes per litre whereas for the bottled water it is 170. The pH for drinking water is 6.5 to 8.5 whereas for the bottled water it is 6.9. We have about 20 microelements in the tap drinking water whereas here there is much less than that. It is much controlled because, as you would imagine, the water is taken from our aquifers and, therefore, does not contain as many trace elements as the water which we get from reservoirs which is treated.

**Mrs Perrier:** The hon. Minister should be aware that the water supply is not permanent. We have many regions in the country which have water supply only three or four hours a day, and the public is forced to stock water in tanks. This affects considerably the quality of the water. Can the hon. Minister give a time-frame for the supply of water on a 24-hour basis islandwise?

**The Deputy Speaker:** This question does not arise.

**NAÏADE HOTEL, BEL OMBRE – ENVIRONMENTAL CLEARANCE**

**(No. B/769) Mr A. Ganoo (First Member for Savanne and Black River)** asked the Minister of Environment and National Development Unit whether he is aware that sand, coral and beach rocks are being removed from the beach in relation to works being carried out by the Naïade Hotel at Bel Ombre and, if so, will he state if -

- (a) an Environment Impact Assessment Licence had been applied for and obtained in relation thereto, and
- (b) he has received any complaints from the *Association Professionnelle des Pêcheurs du Sud Ouest* in relation thereto.

**Mr Bachoo:** Sir, on 26 November 2007, Naïade Resorts applied for an Environmental Clearance for the creation of three swimming zones and a boat passage in the lagoon at Tamassa Hotel involving manual removal of loose boulders.

The Ministry of Agro-Industry and Fisheries (Fisheries Division) was consulted and in the light of the favourable views received from the latter, Naïade Resorts was issued a Clearance on 29 April 2008 allowing the latter to create two swimming zones and a boat passage, subject to a set of conditions. It is to be noted that no EIA licence is required for such works.

On 05 June 2008, fishermen from Bel Ombre complained about the removal of boulders by Tamassa Hotel. Site visits have been effected on 05, 06, 19 and 27 June 2008 by the officers of my Ministry. Works in relation to the creation of swimming zones and boat passage has not yet started. No removal of sand, coral and beach rocks were observed. My Ministry will maintain monitoring to ensure compliance with the conditions stipulated in the Clearance.

**Mr Ganoo:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Minister, therefore, confirm that, at some point in time, his Ministry did receive complaints from the fishermen?

**Mr Bachoo:** In fact, I received complaints on 05 June 2008 at around 7.20 p.m. At that particular moment, I sent officers of my Ministry to have a look at the situation and I can assure the hon. Member that, in fact, we are monitoring the situation closely.

**Mr Ganoo:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Minister – this is what I have been told by the fishermen – whether at some point in time the Ministry or the Director of Environment has had to intervene by way of a prohibition notice or stop order to prevent the works from going on?

**Mr Bachoo:** I have given instruction to my officers if in case they are flouting the law, to issue immediate stop order notice. That was the instruction I gave, but, in fact, it was not put into practice because nothing was done.

**Mr Ganoo:** The hon. Minister is confirming that there have been no works, no removal of beach rocks or sand at all on the beach?

**Mr Bachoo:** Not until now, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. As I have said, I am going to monitor the situation closely.

### **ABBE DE LA CAILLE, CUREPIPE – DRAIN WORKS**

**(No. B/770) Mrs M. Martin (Second Member for Curepipe and Midlands)** asked the Minister of Environment and National Development Unit whether, in regard to the region of *Abbé de la Caille, Curepipe*, he will state if any drain works are being carried out thereat, following the floods of 26 March 2008 and, if so, indicate -

- (a) when works started
- (b) the cost of the infrastructural works, and
- (c) the expected date of completion.

**Mr Bachoo:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, following the floods of 26 March 2008, works had started for the implementation of a drain scheme at Impasse Mungra, Abbé de la Caille on 04 June 2008 with the assistance of the Municipal Council of Curepipe. The cost of the infrastructural works is of the order of Rs839,425.83 and the works are expected to be completed by the end of July 2008.

**Mrs Martin:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister how many metres of drain have been treated as from to date?

**Mr Bachoo:** I do not have that information. But works are expected to be completed by the end of July, that is, in 29 to 30 days' time.

**Mrs Martin:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, actually, the works have been done only on part of the drain, that is, the end part of it is still not being treated. Can the hon. Minister look into this, otherwise, if it will rain again, the efficacy of this measure will not be optimal?

**Mr Bachoo:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, once we approve a contract and a work order is awarded, a few months' time is normally given to the contractor. Then, we have to look at the terms and conditions and if we find that there has been delay, of course, the contractor has to be penalised for that purpose. But I will look into it and see to it that the works get completed on time.

**Mrs Martin:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, Impasse Mungra and the other impasse along which this drain goes, the roads are very narrow and sometimes accidents have happened where people fall in the ditch of which the drain is being composed of. Can the hon. Minister say whether handrails have been envisaged on both sides of the different impasses?

**Mr Bachoo:** I don't have that information with me, but I will request officers who are responsible to look into the issue.

**Mrs Martin:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Minister also find out whether the whole drain will be treated or only half of it?

**Mr Bachoo:** As I have just mentioned, so far only one impasse is included. At the same time, I would like to inform the hon. Member that in other places also works order have already been issued, for example, Camp Le Juge, Morcellement Senneville, Gorun lane, Charles Cheron St; Malherbe St, Leclezio St, etc. I don't know at that particular region whether we have got some additional works to be done. Once these works are completed, I will look into the other issues.

### **CUREPIPE AND MIDLANDS – BUS STOPS**

**(No. B/771) Mrs M. Martin (Second Member for Curepipe and Midlands)** asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping whether, in regard to the bus stops in the Constituency No. 17, Curepipe and Midlands, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the National Transport Authority, information as to the number thereof without shelters.

**The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport & Shipping (Dr. R. Beebeejaun):** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, bus shelters along classified roads are under the responsibility of the Road Development Authority, and along non-classified roads (urban and rural), the responsibility lies with the Municipal Councils and District Councils.

The required information for Constituency No. 17 is being compiled by the National Transport Authority and will be placed in the library.

**Mrs Martin:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, Curepipe being a particularly rainy region, this problem has been recurrent throughout the years with the fact that there are no shelters on different bus stops and it is particularly inconvenient for children and people who go to work in the morning and in the afternoon. Can I appeal to the hon. Minister to see to it that in Curepipe, especially, in the region of Constituency No. 17, at least, where it is very rainy, these bus shelters are actually placed?

**Dr. Beebeejaun:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I could not agree more with the hon. Member. I think we have a lot to do regarding bus shelters, conditions of safety and comfort for passengers. Certainly, I will address this issue. I am glad to inform the House that my colleague, the hon. Minister of Tourism, is working on a standard bus shelters so that we have it island wide and get the environment a little bit quite nicer.

### **CENTRAL WATER AUTHORITY - WASTE WATER SERVICES**

**(No. B/772) Mrs M. Martin (Second Member for Curepipe and Midlands)** asked the Minister of Public Utilities whether, in regard to the customers of the Central Water Authority, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Authority, information as to the number thereof who are not connected to the waste water system and who are being charged for waste water services.

**Dr. Kasenally:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the WMA that as at the end of May 2008, out of a total of 300,439 CWA bills that were issued, 50,831 also contained waste water charges.

From January to May 2008, 41 complaints were received to the effect that the customers were being billed while they were not connected to the sewer network. These complaints have been investigated. Four investigations are still ongoing because of the difficulty to have access to the houses. They have gone many times and residents were not around. While in the case of the 37 others, the complaints were found to be justified.

In addition to an attempt to regularise a maximum number of CWA customers who have been benefiting from waste water services free of charge, particularly residents of the NHDC Housing Estates, the WMA with assistance provided by the CWA issued some 2900 bills at the end of 2007.

Subsequently, the WMA received 160 complaints from residents in the Coromandel and Pointe aux Sables regions. After investigation it was found that 327 households were outside the NHDC Housing Estates. All these accounts were cancelled following a full site survey. Nonetheless, the exercise enabled the WMA to discover 32 cases of illegal connections. Accounts have been opened for these 32 households who are now

regularised. Some of these customers have already settled their dues, including the arrears. I have impressed upon the WMA to be extremely more careful and not to do their work in an amateurish way and I am following the situation closely.

**Mrs Martin:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in regards to those people who are not connected to Waste Water Services and who are required to pay for the services which they don't enjoy, sometimes they are asked to pay with lots of arrears and it causes them a lot of inconveniences. May I ask the hon. Minister if there is a special office where these people can go and complain, so that these inconveniences are not imposed on them, because it is a major stress for them?

**Dr. Kasenally:** I am sorry, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this is exactly what I have said. They have got the complaints and ...

*(Interruptions)*

**The Deputy Speaker:** The answer is in the reply.

**Dr. Kasenally:** The answer is in the reply if the hon. Member would have cared to listen. Perhaps she has prepared the supplementary question beforehand.

**Mr Bérenger:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, will there be refunding to those who paid for services not rendered?

**Dr. Kasenally:** Those who are not connected do not even pay. They just complained and we waived them off. I think nobody has been made to pay when they were not connected.

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister to look into the matter because it seems that there are many people who are not connected to the waste water system and who are being made to pay? Many of them are not aware of the fact that they should not pay. Maybe the Waste Water Authority should have a communiqué placed on papers to let people know about it?

**Dr. Kasenally:** I will reiterate. Those people who are connected are the only ones who are going to pay. If they are not connected, they will not be required to pay. But if a bill has been sent to them, they protest, because anybody who is not connected is not going to pay, and they report it.

*(Interruptions)*

So long as I am Minister, nobody should be afraid not to pay waste water if he is not connected. But, however, as I explained, I have impressed upon the WMA administration to do their job properly. I have regular meetings with them and I check all that. If they have done it, it is wrong and they have to correct it.

**Mr Cuttaree:** Mr Deputy Speaker, I am a bit confused by the answer of the hon. Minister. As far as I know, there is only one bill for water and waste water. Therefore, if somebody has been billed wrongly for waste water, he has no choice but to pay, because he has to pay for his water bill. I do not understand what the hon. Minister means when he says that they should not pay.

**Dr. Kasenally:** Actually, there are people who have not got waste water, they do not pay. They just pay their water bill and the CWA accepts it.

**Mr Dowarkasing:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I want to know whether the hon. Minister is aware of the case that has been filed on this issue of waste water tariff in the Court.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The case is in Court.

**Mr Dowarkasing:** Yes.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The case is in Court. What is the point of asking?

**Mr Guimbeau:** Mr Deputy Speaker, will the hon. Minister consider having two bills, one for water and one for waste water?

**Dr. Kasenally:** I think it is a question of economy of scale.

**PAUL OCTAVE WIEHE AUDITORIUM - "YOUR RIGHT TO  
KNOW ORGANISATION" – REQUEST**

(No. B/773) Mrs M. Martin (Second Member for Curepipe and Midlands) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether he is aware of an incident which occurred on Saturday 04 June 2008 at the University of Mauritius, whereby the members of the 'Your Right to Know Committee' were not allowed to hold a meeting on the premises thereof and, if so, will he, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the University of Mauritius, information as to the reasons why they have not been allowed to do so.

**Mr Gokhool:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, at the very outset I would like to draw the attention of the hon. Member that the date to which reference is made in the question, is Saturday 14 June and not 04 June, which was a Wednesday.

I am informed by the University of Mauritius as follows -

- (i) a request from 'Your Right to Know' a Non-Governmental Organisation, was received for the use of the Paul Octave Wiehe Auditorium, on 14 June 2008;
- (ii) subsequently, on the eve of the event, i.e. 13 June 2008, at 15.45 hours, a letter from the Students' Union reached the University administration to the effect that the event was to be held with its collaboration and hence the Students' Union was requesting the use of one lecture theatre, for same, free of charge.

I am also informed by the University that access to its premises (in this case the Paul Octave Wiehe Auditorium) is subject to payment of the appropriate fees, i.e. Rs 6,000. Since payment had not been effected by the NGO, access was not acceded to by the University.

**Mrs Martin:** May I ask the hon. Minister whether members of the organisation “Your Right to Know” were made aware that they had to pay Rs6,000 to be able to use the auditorium?

**Mr Gokhool:** The organisation’s name is “Your Right to Know.” It must know what is the procedure prevailing at the University.

**Mrs Martin:** We don’t tell someone about his rights, how do we expect him to know? May I ask the hon. Minister what are the activities that are carried out by the NGO “Your Right to Know”?

**Mr Gokhool:** I cannot answer, but I want to tell the hon. Member that the rights are always accompanied with responsibilities.

**Mrs Martin:** Can I ask hon. Minister whether it is because “Your Right to know” organization has made different remarks against the governmental policy that it has not been authorised to use the auditorium.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The question does not arise.

**Mr Gokhool:** I will answer, with your permission, Mr Deputy Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** If the hon. Minister chooses to!

**Mr Gokhool:** In fact, I have checked all the information, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. As I said, as regards this organization “Your Right to Know,” rights are always accompanied with responsibilities. They made a request to the University to use the facilities, but they have to pay and, meanwhile, they are sticking posters all around the place. There is academic freedom, but we have to live by the spirit, we can’t stretch it so far. They are waiting for the permission and meanwhile they are sticking posters all around the place. Which University will allow that?

**Mr Guimbeau:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Minister just said that it was free of charge. Is that so?

**Mr Gokhool:** No, Sir.

**Mr Guimbeau:** Mr Deputy Speaker, I have a letter from the University of Mauritius where it is stated that “Paul Octave Wiehe Auditorium will be put at your disposal on Saturday 14 June for the launching ceremony free of charge.”

**The Deputy Speaker:** For which organisation? Is it related to this organisation?

**Mr Giumbeau:** Yes, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. I would like to table the letter. It is written “free of charge” and now they say that it has to pay.

**Mr Gokhool:** The hon. Member can table the information.

### **HSC 2007 EXAMINATIONS - URDU PAPER - RECOUNT**

(No. B/774) **Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun (Third Member for La Caverne and Phoenix)** asked the Minister of Education & Human Resources whether he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Examinations Syndicate, information as to if a student, who had made a request for a recount of her Urdu Paper taken for the November/December 2007 Higher School Certificate Examinations, was informed that her script was untraceable and, if so, the reasons therefor.

**Mr Gokhool:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Mauritius Examinations Syndicate (MES) that there was indeed one candidate of Maurice Curé State College for the 2007 HSC Examinations who had applied for a remarking of her papers for Chemistry, General Paper and Urdu and who was informed that of the two papers she took for Urdu, one was lost and could not be traced back.

According to MES, the candidate had applied both for remarking and for individual candidate’s report. Following the remarking a practice for all ranked candidate by Cambridge International Examinations, her results for Chemistry, General Paper and Urdu were maintained. She was provided with individual candidate reports in respect of all the papers save and except for Paper 2 of the Urdu Question Paper. CIE has informed MES that -

- (i) loss of the paper is an extremely rare failure of a sophisticated and complex system whereby CIE handles more than 5 million scripts per year, and

- (ii) since the paper had been marked and also remarked by a Principal Examiner, there is no room for doubt about the marks awarded to the candidate.

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** May I ask the hon. Minister whether the MES has asked for the situation in which a script may become lost or untraceable at the CIE?

**Mr Gokhool:** Yes, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the MES has been in touch with the CIE. On two occasions, they have written and phoned to the CIE to look for the explanations and these are the explanations provided by the CIE.

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** May we know exactly where the papers have landed? Because they have given an explanation and it seems that to have a script out of a lot untraced is a matter of concern to all those involved in marking of student's papers.

**Mr Gokhool:** It is a matter of concern. It has been mislaid. When they do the remarking they have to look for the scripts and send the scripts to the Principal Examiner to do the exercise, and in the process, they said that the script was mislaid.

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** Have there been many other cases of loss of scripts for Mauritian students in the past?

**Mr Gokhool:** From time to time there are cases. I think these are brought to the attention of the public and MES gives the explanation which it seeks from the CIE.

**Mrs Labelle:** With your permission, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, since we are talking about MES and all these problems, there was a committee set up regarding errors on SC French Paper in 2006.

**The Deputy Speaker:** This does not arise.

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** May I ask the hon. Minister whether there are measures which are being taken for such matters not to recur in the future?

**Mr Gokhool:** At this stage, the candidate can make an appeal. In fact, CIE has decided to waive the fee chargeable for the remarking which amounts to Rs7,316. Secondly, the candidate can make an appeal against the decision of CIE and, thirdly, of course, the candidate may also go to Court and sue the CIE.

**Mr Mohamed:** Is this the case that the only script that has disappeared is for that only student who has asked for recount?

**Mr Gokhool:** This is the case of a student who asked for remarking. We know about this case.

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** May we know what is the rank of the student as far as Cambridge Scholarships are concerned?

**Mr Gokhool:** I don't have this information, but the candidate was ranked.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Minister can provide the information later.

**Mr Gokhool:** Yes, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** Will the hon. Minister look into the matter and let us know whether this has not impacted on the student's chances of securing a scholarship?

**Mr Gokhool:** I can check this information, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

### **CASTING OF SLABS SCHEME – CRITERIA**

**(No. B/775) 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 if he will consider reviewing the income criteria for eligibility for the grant for the casting of slabs, in view of the high rate of inflation.

**The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development (Dr R. Sithanen):** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as the House is aware, the maximum grant per beneficiary under the Casting of Roof Slab Scheme was increased from Rs55,000 to Rs60,000 in the financial year 2007/2008. Furthermore, the House would recall that the household monthly income eligibility threshold was raised from Rs7,500 to Rs8,500. The income threshold was increased to Rs8,500 essentially to extend the scheme to support a larger number of low income families.

Insofar as the housing sector is concerned, and as I announced in my last Budget Speech, we are currently in the process of revamping, consolidating and strengthening our social housing schemes. In this respect, an amount of Rs500 m. has been provided to finance a Social Housing Fund to be managed by the Minister of Housing & Lands. The Fund will manage 1,000 arpents, provide financing and oversee the implementation of a new and ambitious programme to build 10 new mixed housing communities. Each community will be built as an attractive village complying with energy saving and environmentally friendly standards.

In parallel, Government is moving ahead and strengthening the traditional housing programme relating to the construction of Firinga type housing units for which we have provided Rs170 m. for financing infrastructure cost for the construction of 774 units over 10 sites.

In addition, Government stands committed to combat poverty in all forms and wherever it exists and our actions are tailored to meet the needs of the poor and to reach them effectively.

To do so, Government has initiated an Eradication of Absolute Poverty Programme (EAP) to support integrated development projects within 229 pockets of poverty, where 7,157 families have been identified to be living in extreme poverty.

A sum of Rs395 m. has been earmarked for this initiative which will also be supported by the private sector as part of the CSR Programme. The EAP will finance the construction of housing units in these deprived regions.

Furthermore, Government will be working with NGOs and the private sector to develop integrated....

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Soodhun:** On a point of Order, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. The question is straightforward and the hon. Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance is going on and on, explaining, as if a second Budget Speech.

*(Interruptions)*

**Dr. Sithanen:** The hon. Member can also open up the question. They can't dictate what I should reply! Do they want to dictate the question and the reply also?

*(Interruptions)*

Furthermore, Government will be working with the NGOs and the private sector to develop integrated housing projects of the type that is implemented in Bambous.

We have also announced a financing scheme aimed at supporting middle income working couples who would be first time house owners with the assistance from the Social Housing Fund.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as I mentioned in my Budget Speech, two new Social Housing Schemes will be developed by October 2008. We would, while developing these schemes, also examine the need for reviewing, as appropriate, the household income threshold for the low-income group under different schemes.

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** If I am not mistaken, the hon. Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance said that the threshold has been raised to Rs8,500.

**Dr. Sithanen:** Yes, it is.

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** May I then ask the hon. Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance whether the same threshold will apply to all other grants given by Government and whether this will also apply for the grant of the subsidy for the fees of students sitting for SC exams?

**Dr. Sithanen:** This is not what I have said.

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the hon. Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance has just said that he has opened up the answer so that we can open up the question. I am asking a question now: whether he does not consider it to be proper to have the same threshold applied for the subsidy for fees of examinations at SC and HSC level?

**Dr. Sithanen:** This will be considered in due course.

**Mr Ganoo:** But the purpose of this question, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is because in the past months, we all know that building materials, including cement and other aggregates, have shot up. This is why a case is made for the increase of the criteria.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The case has been made.

**Dr. Sithanen:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we have just passed the Budget. The hon. Member has been in Parliament for a very long time, he should at least have some consideration for the budgetary measures that have just been announced. I can't have a Budget every day just to please the hon. Member.

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Ganoo:** I am not asking the hon. Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance to please me; if he does not want to please me, there is no problem. I am asking whether he will be envisaging this possibility in the future.

**Dr. Sithanen:** We just passed the Budget.

*(Interruptions)*

They are going to tell us what we should do, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir!

*(Interruptions)*

**The Deputy Speaker:** I said order! Order!

*(Interruptions)*

I have said order!

**Mr Cuttaree:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I don't understand the attitude of the hon. Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance. He, himself, said that this issue of the threshold is going to be reviewed. He said it! My friend, hon. Ganoo, asked a question: being given that the cost of building materials is going up, why does he not do it now? This has nothing to do with re-opening the whole debate on the Budget.

**Dr. Sithanen:** Mr Speaker, Sir, of course, it is. I just said that we have set up this Committee. The Committee will take its time to review.

*(Interruptions)*

**The Deputy Speaker:** A question has been asked.

**Dr. Sithanen:** We have just finished the budgetary measures; we have not even enacted the Finance Bill, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

**Mr Ganoo:** May I ask the hon. Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, since he has spoken on Government policy on the housing sector, may we know what is the number of people who are on the waiting list at the NHDC? I am sure he must have the figures.

**Dr. Sithanen:** If the hon. Member puts a substantive question, I'll give him an answer.

### **CEB – ARREARS – WRITE-OFF**

**(No. B/776) Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun (Third Member for La Caverne and Phoenix)** asked the Minister of Public Utilities whether he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Central Electricity Board, information as to the number of people who have benefited from the writing-off of the arrears on electricity bills, since June 2007 to date.

**Dr. Kasenally:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the CEB that since June 2007 to date, arrears had been written off in respect of four customers in cases of under billing and this totalled to Rs820,296.00.

Before writing off any debt, the CEB pursues long protracting negotiation followed by legal actions. If these are unsuccessful, the CEB prefers, after weighing all its options and financial considerations, to write off rather than to pursue expensive legal action.

*(Interruptions)*

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order! Order!

*(Interruptions)*

Order! Hon. Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance!

**Dr. Kasenally:** The four firms for which under billing have been carried out are Food & Allied Industries, Ruisseau Creole, La Mivoie Black River, National Store and Oasis Hotel.

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** May I ask the hon. Minister whether he would give us information about the number of people - hardship cases - whose bills have been written off? I am not speaking of forgery.

**Dr. Kasenally:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, a lot of these cases date back well beyond this period of time and some up to 2002 and 2003. In fact, in March this year, the Central Electricity Board has also written off arrears on electricity bills in respect of 10,175 customers whose accounts have been closed in 2002 and 2003. The write-off related to individual debts of Rs5,000 or less and amounted to Rs9,064,658. These are bills which have been written off for the '*ti-dimounes*'.

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** May I know which criteria has been used for determining the list of these '*ti-dimounes*'?

**Dr. Kasenally:** We cannot establish criteria. There are certain procedures to follow. We send them reminders, cut off their electricity and negotiate with them. We also have people who are experts in debt recovery, but they have not been very much successful. These people just can't afford. These bills are not just for one, but two or three months. Therefore, their bills are written off on humanitarian ground; it is a very costly humanitarian effort.

## NTA OFFICE, CASSIS – PARKING FACILITIES

(No. B/777) Mrs A. Navarre-Marie (First Member for GRNW and Port Louis West) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping whether in regard to the problems encountered by members of the public due to the lack of parking facilities at the offices of the National Transport Authority, situated at Cassis, he will state where matters stand.

**The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping (Dr. R. Beebeejaun):** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed that parking facilities exist within a radius of 200 to 300 metres from the National Transport Authority, but are insufficient especially at the end of the month, as a higher number of persons call at the NTA during that period.

To reduce the need for motor vehicle owners to call at the NTA, the following measures have been taken –

- (i) the payment of road tax for motor cycles and private cars has been decentralised to 33 post offices and to District Court Cash Offices. It is planned to increase the number of post offices where motor vehicle licences may be renewed to 50 during this financial year, as announced, and
- (ii) appeals have been made to motor vehicle owners to renew their motor vehicle licence as from the 16<sup>th</sup> of the month in order to avoid the peak end of the month period.

NTA will continue with its communication exercise appealing to motor vehicle owners to use the decentralised facilities at Post Offices and District Court Cash Offices.

The majority of persons turning up at the NTA Head Office are holders of public service vehicle licence, which has to be renewed on a yearly basis.

Appropriate amendments are being made to the legislation with a view to extending the validity of the public service vehicle licence to 5 years, which will enable its holder to renew his road tax on a regionwise basis. This measure is expected to reduce the number of persons calling at the NTA by 50%.

### **PROTECTION OF BORROWERS – COMMISSIONER – APPOINTMENT**

**(No. B/778) Mrs A. Navarre-Marie (First Member for GRNW and Port Louis West)** asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether he will state if the Commissioner for the Protection of the Borrowers has been appointed and if so, the name of the incumbent.

**The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development (Dr. R. Sithanen):** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the reply is yes. In fact, the former Judge Mr Louis Pierre Robert Ahnee, CSK was appointed on contract as Commissioner for the Protection of Borrowers under section 3(2) of the Borrower Protection Act with effect from 13 March 2007.

### **LA GAULETTE SSS – KNOWLEDGE BASED TRAINING CENTRE – CONVERSION**

**(No. B/779) Mrs D. Perrier (Fourth Member for Savanne and Black River)** asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether in regard to the La Gaulette State Secondary School, he will state if he will consider reviewing the decision taken to have it converted into a polytechnic, as announced in the Budget Speech 2008-2009.

**Mr Gokhool:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the decision of converting the La Gaulette SSS into a modern Knowledge Based Training Centre has been a well thought one at the level of both my Ministry and the Ministry of Finance & Economic Development, as announced by the hon. Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance & Economic Development in his Budget Speech and we are not considering reviewing this.

In the same line as measures are being taken to increase access to post secondary and tertiary education, the policy of my Ministry as regards technical and vocational education is for the expansion of opportunities for the benefit of students who do not wish to pursue studies in the mainstream academic system.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the La Gaulette institution will not be a mere technical or prevocational school as stated by some. It will be an opportunity to work towards a new model of knowledge-based training centre with new programmes and contents with an enhanced use of technology. Courses offered will be in wide range, with a flexible approach through apprenticeship and distance strategies. My Ministry is working with all stakeholders, including the Industrial & Vocational Training Board (IVTB), the Human Resource Development Council (HRDC) and the Mauritius Qualifications Authority (MQA) on these strategies.

As was announced in the Budget Speech 2008/2009, my Ministry will come up with a national examination system at the end of Form IV so that students are provided with alternate pathways to choose from either academic or technical/vocational streams. Thus students who would wish to opt for technical and vocational education would be given the chance to stream into their respective sectors in line with their aptitudes. It is a pedagogical fact, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that students must be given as many possible learning methodologies and channels to ensure that every learner has his or her place in the system.

The objective of the Knowledge Based Training Centre to be set up at La Gaulette SSS would be to offer such alternate pathways to students as from Form IV onwards. It would, in the first instance, be proposing new programmes at lower levels to expand the provision of training in technical education, an area of need which has been highlighted in the HRDC Plan of 2007. It is also our strategy to make optimal utilisation of all facilities available in the Education and Training sectors.

The initiative, in the longer term, will be to also expand access to Tertiary Education in the region as the programmes to be offered at the school will later progress to higher levels in areas where there is both a demand and an economic imperative.

Moreover, my Ministry is open to discussions with all stakeholders regarding the modalities for the setting up of the Knowledge Based Training Centre, and all options will be analysed for the benefit of both students of the region and of Mauritius.

Finally, I wish to state that there is no change of policy as far as running of prevocational classes is concerned.

**Mrs Perrier:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we do agree with the Minister that a modern polytechnic will be another opportunity for the children of other regions. But is he aware that when the school opened in La Gaulette, it was a step forward in combating poverty in the region? And the feeling of the people was that, for once, a Government cares for them and, more importantly, they had trust in their capacity to succeed if they got the opportunity. This is why I make a plea to the hon. Minister to look into the possibility of having another building in the vicinity, if necessary, to accommodate a modern polytechnic in the region, but not closing the State Secondary School.

**Mr Gokhool:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I appreciate the fact that the hon. Member is not against the concept of a Knowledge Based Training Centre which will link up with higher education and cater from Form IV and beyond.

As regards the secondary school, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we have given careful attention to this project and we have carried out a thorough school mapping which means that we have to take into account the number of students in the region who want to go to secondary schools and the number of seats which are available.

I can give the figures as regards La Gaulette SSS. The number of seats for Form I is 160 and in 2005, out of 160 seats which were on offer, only 85 students registered. In 2008, only 45 registered. It means that such a facility is not being optimally utilised.

Secondly, as regards the concern as to where will the students in that region be accommodated in secondary schools, we already have a new school which is operational, that is, the St. Esprit Case Noyale. We also have St. Mary's in Bambous, Swami Sivananda SSS and Bambous SSS. All these schools are under subscribed. There is the possibility of

accommodating the students in that region. And let me also make it clear that there are only 12 students in Form I who come from the region of Le Morne, La Preneuse, Case Noyale and La Gaulette. We have to optimise the facilities. In fact, this project will be to the benefit of that region and we are taking into account the needs of the students who go to secondary schools.

I can assure the hon. Member and other Members of the House that this is a project which will benefit that region and Mauritius as a whole.

**Mrs Perrier:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we know exactly what the Minister is talking about. It is about the small number of pupils being registered in this school. But instead of closing the school, can the hon. Minister try to find out the reason as to why the registration at the school is very low. I just mentioned recently that in Le Morne Primary School, for example, you had at the last CPE...

**The Deputy Speaker:** This is yet another matter which...

**Mrs Perrier:** No, it is not. It is related, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member has talked about the low intake of students in that school, which I allowed, but this question is not related to the other question and can perfectly be the matter of another parliamentary question.

**Mrs Perrier:** My point, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is that the primary school feeds the secondary school.

**The Deputy Speaker:** I understand what the point of the hon. Member is. She must not worry. We were given the figures for Le Morne. I think, it was 8% or whatever, she herself had raised the matter, but that question is not applicable to the present subject.

**Mrs Perrier:** The hon. Minister said that the school is not utilised at its maximum. As I suggested before, is it possible not to close the school but open a part of it, if necessary, into a modern polytechnic? I don't think it is a good idea to close the school totally.

**Mr Gokhool:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I think it is not a closure that is taking place; it is a conversion. It has happened. We have Nouvelle France SSS and MG SSS which we had to combine into one school. Here, we have analysed the situation and we feel that the facilities are not being optimally utilised. We have also taken into account the needs of the students in that locality. We have considered all aspects of the decision.

**Mr Ganoo:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, *gouverner c'est prévoir*. The Black River area is an area which is fast developing in terms of population. We knew, at the time we built the school, that in the first year it will be underutilised. But doesn't the hon. Minister think that in taking this present decision - without disputing the need for a Knowledge Based Training Centre, as my friend just said – Government is sending a wrong signal to the whole region of Black River and to the thousands of families and schoolchildren in the western region that this area is unfit to have a State Secondary School?

**Mr Gokhool:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I think the hon. Member should understand that we are looking at the future. I can give many examples. For instance, the school at Bel Air should not have been built where it is actually.

*(Interruptions)*

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order!

**Mr Gokhool:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have given the figures. Right from 2005, the number of students has been declining. Furthermore, let me give another piece of information. We provided seats for Lower VI, but there were not enough students and we had to transfer them to other colleges. It means that there is a problem with regard to having optimal capacity at that school. There is another secondary school which has just been built. We have taken all these aspects into consideration. In fact, we are looking at the future of the region.

**Mrs Labelle:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister said that the needs of the students have been looked into. He also mentioned that only 12 children from this region came to this school. We all know that we don't have enough children having the required level to have access to this secondary school. But, when we close the only State Secondary School...

**The Deputy Speaker:** This is a statement, hon. Mrs Labelle.

**Mrs Labelle:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, by closing this State Secondary School, is it not telling the parents of this region that the need of their children is not to have access to a State Secondary School?

**Mr Gokhool:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have a difficulty in understanding the hon. lady and other Members on the other side of the House. What we are trying to do is address the needs of the children for the future, and we are providing the facilities. Do they want two secondary schools to coexist and to be undersubscribed?

**The Deputy Speaker:** Before moving to the next item, I would like to inform you that, following a supplementary question that had been put by hon. Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun, about the rank of a candidate, the hon. Minister has asked for permission to give the information, which he has been granted.

**Mr Gokhool:** Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. I have checked, and the student was ranked 25<sup>th</sup> on the Science side (Girls) for the State of Mauritius scholarships.