

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS**VALLEE DES PRETRES - POLICE POST –
CONSTRUCTION**

(No. B/1026) Mr P. Jhugroo (Third Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to if consideration will be given for the renting of a building to house a Police post temporarily in the Vallée des Prêtres region, pending the construction of a new Police Station thereat.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, as I indicated to the House in my reply to Parliamentary Question B/82 on 01 April 2008, a plot of State Land of an extent of 1120m² situated at Sainte Marie Street, Cité La Cure has been vested in my Office for the construction of a new Police Station that will cover the region of Vallée des Prêtres and Cité La Cure.

I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that the design of the building is under preparation and construction thereof is scheduled to start during this Financial Year.

Therefore, the renting of a building temporarily to house the Police Station at Vallée des Prêtres is not being contemplated.

**ADVISERS & PRESS ATTACHÉS - PRB 2008 - SALARIES &
TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF APPOINTMENT**

(No. B/1027) 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 each of the Advisers and Press Attachés appointed by Government, he will state if their respective salaries and terms and conditions of appointment have been reviewed, following the Pay Research Bureau Report 2008 and, if so, indicate their new salaries and terms and conditions of appointment.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, it has been the practice to review the salaries of Advisers after every major salary review in the Public Sector. An adjustment in the salaries of Advisers was effected in the wake of the 2003 PRB Report.

Similarly, following the PRB Report of 2008, the salaries and terms and conditions of all Advisers, including Advisers on Information Matters have been revised by the PRB in a separate exercise. The new salaries have taken effect on 01 July 2008.

The information requested by the hon. Member is being compiled.

Mr Jhugroo: Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister when he is going to table this document?

The Prime Minister: It concerns all advisers and all Government posts and, therefore, it will be tabled as soon as it is compiled.

Mr Speaker: Parliamentary Question No. B/1028 will be replied by the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development.

PQ No. B/1028 – See after PQ No. B/1089

FATAL ACCIDENTS – DEAD BODIES – REMOVAL

(No. B/1029) Mr S. Lauthan (Third Member for Port Louis Maritime and Port Louis East) 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 fatal accidents, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the procedures laid down for the removal of the dead bodies from the site thereof.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that, according to the arrangements in place, whenever a request is received for the removal of dead bodies from an accident site, actions are immediately initiated at two levels concurrently, namely, at the level of the Transport Guardroom and at the level of the Divisional Commanders.

Actions to be initiated at the level of the Transport Guardroom are as follows –

- (i) The officer-in-charge, Transport Guardroom, must ensure that an adequate number of body bags is available in the mortuary van.
- (ii) The Police officer-in-charge of the mortuary van should, in liaison with the officer-in-charge of the Police Station concerned, ensure that the dead body is placed in a body bag and embarked in the mortuary van.
- (iii) He should also ensure that the Police sentry travels on board the mortuary van from the site up to the Mortuary.
- (iv) At the Mortuary, the officer must, with the help of the sentry, disembark the dead body.
- (v) He should complete the necessary formalities at the Mortuary and ensure that the dead body is placed in the refrigerator.

These actions should be initiated concurrently at the level of the Divisional Commanders as follows –

- (i) the Divisional Commanders should ensure that a Senior Officer (of the level of at least an ASP) is present on the site to give necessary instructions, prior to the removal of the dead body;
- (ii) the Divisional Commanders should ensure that the officer detailed to perform sentry, travels on board the mortuary van, and
- (iii) they also see to it that the sentry provides all necessary assistance while embarking and disembarking the dead body and properly take over after having been placed the body in the refrigerator of the Mortuary.

The above procedures are laid down in detail in a circular, Mr Speaker, Sir, which was issued by the Commissioner of Police in May 2004, to all Divisional Commanders and Branch Officers.

Mr Lauthan: Mr Speaker, Sir, as you can see, it is quite a long procedure. The day before yesterday I witnessed an accident where the father and son were killed at Pailles, their bodies laid on the street and the tension rose. Can we ask the hon. Prime Minister that the Police officers from the local Police Station – these are the people who come first on the site – be provided, at least, with bed sheets to cover the dead bodies where the bodies are completely mutilated, because the sight of these corpses give rise to tension at times?

The Prime Minister: I tend to agree with the hon. Member if they can put a sheet. I did not realise that they do not put sheets on the bodies and they can activate matters. Certainly, I will pass on the message.

Mr Lauthan: Mr Speaker, Sir, at times, the person is not dead, the SAMU is called. By the time the SAMU arrives, the person passes away and the SAMU, according to its rules and regulations, can't take a dead body. This gives rise again to tension, because the people had been expecting the SAMU. There is need for intensive campaign and explanation on the TV. Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister to look into this matter?

The Prime Minister: There is a reason why they don't allow SAMU to take the dead bodies. It is because they feel it would be better for them to do other work than to do that.

FORENSIC SCIENCE LABORATORY – VACANCIES

(No. B/1030) Mr S. Lauthan (Third Member for Port Louis Maritime and Port Louis East) 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 Forensic Science Laboratory, he will give a list of the number of vacancies existing thereat, indicating the grade in each case.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, the Forensic Science Laboratory has an establishment of 17 posts in the Biology Section, 19 posts in the Chemistry Section and 8 posts in the Administrative Section. There are nine vacancies in different grades. I am tabling the information requested for by the hon. Member.

I wish to point out, Mr Speaker, Sir, that necessary arrangements are being made for the filling of these vacancies. Recommendation has already been made with the relevant authorities for the filling of five posts; for four posts the scheme of service is being amended in the light of the PRB Report of 2008 and for one post training will be provided to enable the candidate to qualify for promotion.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the required technical expertise in the forensic field is scarce and retention of staff has always been a problem. In 2006 eleven posts in different grades were filled. Since then six persons have retired and two have resigned.

I am aware of the difficulty of having personnel for the Forensic Science Laboratory. I have approached the UK for assistance to carry out a scoping study for the Forensic Science Laboratory. Their recommendations with regard to staffing are being considered actively. A long-term staffing strategy is being worked out to meet the current and future demands for a quality Forensic Service for Mauritius.

Mr Speaker Sir, as the House is aware, I have also approached the Staffordshire University for an exploratory needs analysis at the Forensic Science Laboratory. A team from the University was in Mauritius in November last year and the experts identified important fields in which training is required in the field of forensic science, namely –

- (i) Forensic Awareness;
- (ii) Expert Witness Training, and
- (iii) FSL Training.

The expert team from Staffordshire University will be in Mauritius from 23 August to 06 September of this year for the running of the training programmes for officers of the Forensic Science Laboratory, as well as the Police Department.

Furthermore, Mr Speaker, Sir, I mentioned that the University of Staffordshire has received a grant of €500,000 from the European Union to be used for development of educational and training programmes in forensic awareness and forensic science that will be delivered to two countries of which one is Mauritius, the other one being Jamaica. The project will be spanned over a period of three years. Part of the money will be used to provide machines, tool and equipment for the University of Mauritius, whilst the remaining funds will be used to sponsor two Mauritian candidates to pursue an MSc in Forensic Science who will, thereafter, become educators in Forensic Science at the University of Mauritius.

POLICE OFFICERS – POLICE STUDIES - BSc (HONS) DEGREE

(No. B/1031) Mr S. Dayal (Second Member for Quartier Militaire & 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 Police Officers who are holders of a BSc (Hons) degree in Police Studies, he will for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to –

- (a) the number thereof, as at to date, and
- (b) where matters stand in regard to the scheme proposed for providing new avenues and creating more opportunities for their advancement in the hierarchy in the Police Force.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that to date, 249 Police Officers hold a BSc (Hons) in Police Studies.

As regards part (b) of the question, I am further informed that with a view to enhancing the career prospects of police graduates, the Cadet Scheme is being reviewed to enable holders of BSc (Hons) in Police Studies to join the scheme.

The proposed scheme of service for Cadet Officer has already been worked out and is being re-examined in the light of the PRB Report 2008.

I wish to refer the hon. Member to the reply I made to PQ No. B/819 on 24 July 2007 where I stated that the Commissioner of Police has made certain proposals to open up avenues for a better utilisation of the knowledge, skills and abilities acquired by the Police Officers. However, some of the proposals are very likely to have repercussions in other services. The implications of these proposals are therefore being thoroughly examined at the level of my Office.

Furthermore, I wish to point out that the PRB has made appropriate recommendations in order to reward Public Officers including Police Officers, who acquire additional qualifications by payment of additional increments.

Mr Dayal: Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Prime Minister confirm to the House that it was in his first mandate that this course was initiated and it was following a report of “EFFECT consultant”, as far back as 28 June 1997, which found that the training offered to Police officers and new recruits were more of a military nature than on core Police work?

The Prime Minister: I can confirm, Mr Speaker, Sir, that it was further to this report that we decided to start the BSc (Hons) in Police Studies and I am glad to say that today 249 Police Officers hold a BSc (Hons) in Police Studies.

SSR INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT – SUBUTEX - SEIZURE

(No. B/1032) **Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière)** asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether, in regard to subutex, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to –

- (a) the amount and value of the last seizure thereof at the SSR International Airport, indicating if the suspect has been arrested and released on bail and, if so, when and its conditions;
- (b) since July 2005 to date –
 - (i) the amount and value thereof seized, and
 - (ii) the number of persons convicted in cases in relation thereto, and
- (c) the actions that will be taken to combat its trafficking.

(Vide reply to PNQ)

ZIMBABWE – POLITICAL CRISIS

(No. B/1033) **Mr N. Bodha (First Member for Vacoas & Floreal)** asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether, in regard to Zimbabwe, he will state if he has been apprised of the latest developments in finding a solution to the political crisis thereat.

Mr Bodha: Sir, for once we have a question on Zimbabwe.

The Prime Minister: I honestly thought that the hon. Member would remove that question because he already knows what I will tell him.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as the House will recall, in my reply to PQ B/790, I had stated that the African Union adopted a resolution at the Summit level endorsing the SADC mediation efforts led by President Mbeki to assist the people and the leadership of Zimbabwe to resolve their problems they are facing and to promote peace, stability and reconciliation of the Zimbabwean people.

Mauritius, as the House is aware, has been giving its full support to President Mbeki right from the beginning of the mediation process and we are pleased to report that his efforts, which are now being supported by a large number of Leaders including President Sarkozy in his capacity as EU President, are bringing significant results.

The mediation team has been reinforced and now includes the Special envoy of the United Nations, and the Chair of the African Union Commission which is known as the “Reference Group”.

As a result of the work of the Reference Group, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed in Harare by President R. Mugabe, Mr M. Tsvangirai, the Leader of the MDC-T, and Mr A. Mutambura, the Leader of the MDC Faction, on 21 July in the presence of President T. Mbeki under which the signatories committed themselves to dialogue with each other with a view to creating a genuine, viable, permanent and sustainable solution to the Zimbabwe crisis. The signatories have also agreed to an agenda which includes the economic, political and security situations in the country. They have equally agreed to complete the dialogue within a period of two weeks from the date of the signing of the MoU.

A copy of the MoU is being tabled.

The signing of the MoU is a landmark achievement and has led to a change of tone among the key adversaries *vis-à-vis* one another.

The Leader of the Opposition is reported to be fairly satisfied with the way the power sharing talks are evolving although we understand that the negotiations which started in Pretoria after the signature of the MoU, were suspended on 28 July. However, the following day Mr Tsvangirai travelled to Pretoria to meet President Mbeki and on 30 July President Mbeki proceeded to Zimbabwe to meet with President Mugabe and Mr Mutambura, Leader of the MDC Faction. I understand that the talks resumed on Sunday 03 August.

Mr Bodha: Mr Speaker, Sir, will the hon. Prime Minister say whether after the visit of Mbeki, the last one to Harare, the hon. Prime Minister has had the opportunity to talk to him about what is happening in the next weeks?

(Interruptions)

The Prime Minister: I would not say difficult, but they are having negotiations and we are not going to publish what the negotiations are about. But what is being said is known publicly.

Mr Bérenger: I am sure that the hon. Prime Minister is aware that there will be a Southern African Development Community (SADC) Summit in South Africa in ten days' time. We all hope that before then an agreement will have been reached between the outgoing Government and the Opposition. But some countries like Botswana have said that if it has not been sorted out, they are not prepared to be present if Mr Mugabe is invited as President of Zimbabwe. Has Mauritius given thought to that?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, it is our hope also that a solution is found and that everybody can meet at the SADC Summit. That is what we are hoping for.

Mr Dowarkasing: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether he can state if he is aware of the state of the new sanctions that were about to be enforced on Zimbabwe?

The Prime Minister: I think that the sanctions cannot take effect because the talks have started.

MBC – EQUIPMENT - LOSS

(No. B/1034) Mr N. Bodha (First Member for Vacoas & Floreal) 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 the number of cases in which broadcasting and other items of equipment have been reported lost, since July 2005 to date, indicating, in each case if –

- (a) an inquiry has been carried out thereinto and the outcome thereof,
and
- (b) any disciplinary action has been taken.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Director-General of the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation (MBC) that since July 2005 to date, there are four cases in which broadcasting and other items of equipment have been reported lost at the Corporation.

Insofar as two of these cases are concerned, I wish to refer the hon. Member to the reply I made to PQ Nos. B/196 and B/959 on 24 April 2007 and 29 July 2008 respectively in which I have already provided the information requested by the hon. Member.

As regards the third case which concerns the loss of a camera in Port Louis in November 2006, I am informed by the Director-General that three employees who were initially interdicted were subsequently reinstated in their employment in the light of the explanations they had provided to the departmental inquiry. The Commissioner of Police has reported that, on 18 July 2008, the MBC was informed that the Director of Public Prosecutions has advised no further action in the matter, but has suggested that departmental action be initiated against the employees concerned. I am informed by the Director-General that the Corporation is proceeding accordingly.

As regards the fourth case where a lighting kit was reported lost on 23 December 2007, I am informed by the Director-General of the MBC that, in the light of the findings of the departmental inquiry, two employees of the Corporation were given a warning and were instructed to exercise more care in future. For his part, the Commissioner of Police has informed that the case was classified by Police on 17 April 2008.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Director-General of the MBC has reassured me that the Corporation has tightened its internal control mechanism in respect of the issue of mobile equipment for outdoor activities. As I indicated last week, the Corporation is envisaging to make deductions from the salaries of negligent officers.

POLICE – LIE DETECTOR TESTS

(No. B/1035) Mr Y. Varma First Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to if the Police is currently carrying out lie detector tests during the interrogation of the suspects and, if not, if same is being envisaged.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that no lie detector or polygraph is available in the Police Department.

Furthermore polygraph tests are inadmissible in Courts in most European countries and in several states of the USA because its accuracy has not yet been established, although some States use it, I must say. But at the moment, it is not envisaged to introduce lie detector tests during interrogation of suspects.

OVERSEAS MISSION – GERMANY - ACTIVITIES

(No. B/1036) Mr S. Dayal (Second Member for Quartier Militaire & Moka) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether he will state if Government has obtained reports of the activities which have been carried out by our mission in Germany, since July 2005 to date and, if so, will he table copies thereof.

(Withdrawn)

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE –REPORTED CASES – JANUARY 2007- 05.08.2008

(No. B/1037) 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 domestic violence, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the number of reported cases thereof, since January 2007 to date.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that since January 2007 to July 2008, the number of cases of domestic violence that has been reported to the Police is as follows

January to December 2007	-	2,753
January to July 2008	-	1,637

In line with the Government Programme 2005-2010 to provide better protection to victims of domestic violence, the Protection from Domestic Violence Act was amended in November 2007 and consultation is being held with the Chief Justice before its proclamation. A full range of other measures being implemented by the Ministry of Women's Right, Child Development, Family Welfare and Consumer Protection to fight this problem was elaborated in the reply I made to PQ No. B/1237. I then mentioned that domestic violence has become a societal problem which is causing damage to our social fabric.

Domestic violence is a problem that society worldwide is facing. It is a complex issue which involves changing values of our society, the rapid evolution of societal relationships, values, customs and should not be looked at from a political perspective. But, as I have said, we are doing what best we can.

Mrs Jeewa-Daureeawoo: May I know from the hon. Prime Minister how many cases of domestic violence have caused serious bodily injuries and/or death of the victims?

The Prime Minister: The exact number is not there, Mr Speaker, Sir, because the question was not asked specifically. But if a substantive question is put, I will answer.

Mrs Jeewa-Daureeawoo: I have another supplementary question. In view of the increasing number of domestic violence, does the hon. Prime Minister envisage to set up a special division in the Supreme Court to deal with the matter in support with attached psychologists and the assistance of the Ombudsman for Children?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, it all depends on, as we say, the manpower, but womanpower also at the Courts.

SEXUAL HARASSMENT – JANUARY 2005-05.08.2008

(No. B/1038) 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 sexual harassment, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the number of reported cases thereof, since January 2005 to date.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that the following number of cases of sexual harassment has been reported to the Police since January 2005 -

Year 2005	-	4
Year 2006	-	8
Year 2007	-	7
Year 2008 (up to July)	-	5

I wish to point out that a number of cases of sexual harassment are also directly reported to the Sex Discrimination Division of the National Human Rights Commission, which refers any offensive case to the Director of Public Prosecutions.

Sexual Harassment is a form of sex discrimination and constitutes a violation of Human Rights. In its 2007 Annual Report, the National Human Rights Commission has elaborated an Anti-Harassment Policy containing guidelines to ensure the prevention of sexual harassment at the workplace. These guidelines should be adopted to address such deviant behaviour by joining efforts from individuals, organisations as well as the community.

I also understand, Mr Speaker, Sir, that a study has recently been carried out by the Mauritius Research Council on “Sexual harassment in the workplace in Mauritius”. The recommendations of the Report have been disseminated to all stakeholders including Government Organisations and NGOs during a workshop.

Mrs Jeewa-Daureeawoo: May I know from the hon. Prime Minister how many cases under investigation have been completed and whether there has been any prosecution?

The Prime Minister: Yes, I have the figures since 2003. Of 24 cases reported, 18 were disposed of and 1 was referred to the DPP. In 2004, 37 cases were reported, 20 were disposed of and none was referred to the DPP. In 2005, 16 cases were reported, 6 were disposed of and 1 was referred to the DPP. In 2006, 19 cases were reported, 15 were disposed of, 3 were referred to the DPP, and in 2007, 11 cases were reported, 8 were disposed of and none was reported to the DPP.

SUBUTEX - SEIZURE

(No. B/1039) 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 the recent seizure of about Rs22 m. worth of subutex, he will for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to –

- (a) the number of persons arrested and
- (b) the measures that will be taken to ensure that those who are allegedly suspected in the said offence and who have not yet been arrested do not leave the country.

(Vide reply to PNQ)

KINDERGARTENS – CHILDREN - ASSAULTS

(No. B/1040) 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 the kindergartens, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the number of reported cases of babies and/or children who have been physically and sexually assaulted whilst being thereat, since July 2005 to date, indicating in each case, if an inquiry has been carried out thereinto and the outcome thereof.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that since July 2005 to date, 3 cases relating to physical and sexual assault on children in kindergartens have been reported.

In the first 2 cases, Police enquiry has been completed and the Director of Public Prosecutions has advised no further action into the matter.

As regards the third case, I am informed that following Police enquiry, one accused was arrested on 19 July 2008 and was bailed out the next day upon furnishing a surety of Rs15,000. The case will be referred to the Director of Public Prosecutions for advice on completion of the enquiry.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to add that several measures are already in place to prevent child abuse. The '*Brigade des Mineurs*' is actively conducting various working sessions and awareness campaigns to sensitise children, parents, teaching and non-teaching staff of pre-primary schools on protection, safety and security aspects of children. These persons are being encouraged to report and to provide information on suspected cases of abuse to the Police.

Furthermore, the Early Childhood Care Authority, previously known as the Pre-School Trust Fund, regularly conducts workshops and seminars for educators, supervisors and parents in different regions. Since the year 2007, thirty such programmes have been organized with a view to empowering educators and parents on child protection and other social ills.

Mr Speaker, Sir, it is the duty of every responsible Government to protect every child from abuse and, as I have already said, one case is too many. The fight against this scourge should be a priority for the society at large and not only for the Police.

I would also like to remind the House that it was in 1998, under my Government, that the Child Protection Act and the Criminal Code were amended to reinforce protection to children against abuse and to provide more stringent penalties for offenders.

Mrs Jeewa-Daureeawoo: May I know from the hon. Prime Minister whether the Early Childhood Authority has been set up?

The Prime Minister: I will have to check. The question is not directly related to the main question. I am not aware as to whether it has been set up yet.

PRIME MINISTER – RESIDENCE – ROGUE & VAGABOND - ARREST

(No. B/1041) Mr P. Jhugroo (Third Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to if a person has been arrested for rogue and vagabond at the residence of Dr. the Honourable Prime Minister, at Riverwalk, Vacoas, on or about Monday 21 July 2008, and if so, if an inquiry has been carried out thereinto and the outcome thereof.

The Prime Minister: I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that on 21 July 2008, at around 19.25 hours, a Police Constable who was performing duty as sentry in front of my residence reported that a private car some 10 metres away in front of another private residence was creating noise. On being questioned by the Police Constable as to his presence on that no through road which is a *cul-de-sac*, the driver, one Mr R. A. G., could not explain why he was there and he came out of his car and used filthy words in a loud tone to the address of the Police Constable.

Mr R. A. G. who was also suspected of driving under the influence of alcohol, refused to undergo a breath test. He then complained of chest pain and wished to be medically examined. He was conveyed to Victoria Hospital and found to have nothing wrong with his heart. He was then brought back to Vacoas Police Station for further enquiry. He was afterwards detained on a charge of “Rogue and Vagabond”.

On 22 July 2008, he was brought before the District Magistrate of Curepipe Court and was provisionally charged of “Rogue and Vagabond” and was bailed out after furnishing a surety of Rs1,000 plus Rs480 cost and a recognizance of Rs10,000.

I am further informed that the case against Mr R. A. G. was lodged on 28 July 2008 before the Curepipe District Court and he is being charged for -

- (i) Rogue and Vagabond;
- (ii) failing to provide a specimen of breath for a Breath Test, and
- (iii) driving or being in charge of motor vehicle when under influence of intoxicating drink or drugs.

The case is fixed Proforma for 09 September 2008.

FRUITS AND VEGETABLES – THEFT & VANDALISM

(No. B/1042) 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 world food crisis and the supplementary efforts put by all the food growers, it is envisaged to strengthen the laws relating to the theft of and acts of vandalism with regard to fruits and vegetables.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, our legal framework has been developed in such a way as to ensure maximum protection of private property. Specific provisions exist in the Criminal Code Act for punishment in cases of thefts and acts of vandalism relating to fruits and vegetables.

In fact, Section 302 of the Act provides for any person convicted for an offence of larceny of produce of soil, to be liable to imprisonment and to a fine not exceeding Rs5,000. The law further provides for stricter penalties in the event of such cases of larceny are committed with aggravating circumstances.

Furthermore, provisions exist under Section 356 of the Criminal Code for any person found guilty of an act of vandalism with regard to fruits and vegetables to be punished by a term of imprisonment not exceeding 6 months and a fine not exceeding Rs10, 000.

I am further informed that consultations have been held by the Ministry of Agro Industry and Fisheries with the Office of the Attorney General on the need to reinforce the law in order to discourage thefts in fields. The latter has advised that there is no need to provide, in isolation, for amendments to the Criminal Code Act as provisions already exist for fines and imprisonment or penal servitude in such cases.

Nevertheless, specific measures have been taken by the Ministry of Agro Industry and Fisheries to tackle the problem of thefts of agricultural produce. A Steering Committee has been set up at the level of the Small Planters Welfare Fund comprising different stakeholders including the Police Force, the Local Authorities, the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life, small planters and the AREU. This Steering Committee has worked out an Action Plan which includes the following –

- (i) regular meetings between planters and representatives of the Police Force for the identification of strategic places requiring more attention;
- (ii) explanatory campaigns around the island by the Crime Prevention Unit aiming at sensitising planters on their rights and preventive measures to be taken to protect their fields;
- (iii) rigid control measures with local authorities on agricultural produce sold on road sides without any permit; and
- (iv) the introduction of the concept of traceability in the food supply chain from the field to the market with a view to making it possible for Inspectors of the Local Authorities to trace back the origin of any agricultural product sold on the market.

I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that the Police have also reinforced measures with a view to reducing theft of fruits and vegetables. These include -

- (a) Intensive patrols by station personnel, local CID, Divisional Support Unit and Emergency Response Service on a 24-hour basis;

- (b) Stop and search of all suspicious characters found laundering near vegetable plantations;
- (c) Frequent checks of vegetable carriers and questioning of occupants and drivers;
- (d) Active use of Public Police Partnership Policing (PPPP) to report any suspicious behaviour and act and to provide timely information to Police; and
- (e) The issue of Police Communiqué to sensitise members of the public on various offences, penalties and the consequences through mass media.

Mr Dayal: I listened attentively to the hon. Prime Minister. I would like to request the hon. Prime Minister whether he could reinforce the Police patrol in the specific areas where the plantation of fruits and vegetables are carried out. The planters toiled a lot and others who do not know their sacrifice, the amount of money and time invested, they reap in lieu and place of the planters.

The Prime Minister: In fact, we are trying to do this, but we are limited. We are becoming a country where we will need to have a policeman every ten feet in Mauritius, Mr Speaker, Sir.

FLIC EN FLAC – GRAND' BAIE & TROU D'EAU DOUCE POLICE STATION - LARCENY, LARCENY WITH VIOLENCE – CASES

(No. B/1043) Mr N. Bodha (First Member for Vacoas and Floreal) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether, in regard to larceny and larceny with violence, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the number of reported cases thereof for the past two years, at the –

- (a) Flic en Flac Police Station;
- (b) Grand' Baie Police Station, and
- (c) Trou D'Eau Douce Police Station

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am tabling the information asked for by the hon. Member, but I would like to inform the House that action has already been initiated to install a Close Circuit Television (CCTV) Surveillance System at Flic en Flac. A notice for pre-qualification proposals has already been issued and the time limit for the submission of proposals is 07 August 2008. Tender documents are being finalised and it is scheduled to start with the installation of the system before the end of this year.

It is also proposed, Mr Speaker, Sir, to install the CCTV Surveillance System at Grand Baie with the assistance of the Government of the Republic of China. A Chinese Team which visited Mauritius in April last has already identified 69 surveillance points in the Grand Baie area. The Chinese experts are working on the basic design of the project.

Mrs Martin: Mr Speaker, Sir, since the hon. Prime Minister has mentioned CCTV, can he inform the House who will be responsible for the safe keeping of the footage which will be recorded by the CCTV?

The Prime Minister: Generally, it would be the Police, except at Flic en Flac, we are trying a new idea, but with the cooperation of the Police.

Mr Bodha: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether he is aware that in these three very sensitive tourism areas most of the villas and bungalows have been burgled - that was the reason of my question - and ask what are the specific measures being taken so that the stay of visitors in Mauritius do not become a disaster because of larceny which is becoming very common in those three areas?

The Prime Minister: I have given details in the last question. They have increased the ERS patrol in those areas and we are also having Police who are not in uniform there.

Mr Speaker: The Table has just been advised that PQ No. B/1046 has been withdrawn. Time is over! Questions addressed to hon. Ministers!

**SIR SEEWOOSAGUR RAMGOOLAM INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT
- MRS C. L - SUBUTEX - SEIZURE**

(No. B/1044) Mr M. Allet (Second Member for Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether, in regard to the Rs22 m. worth of subutex found in the luggage of one Mrs C. L., at the Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam International Airport, on 24 July 2008, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to if there has been any interference in the inquiry thereof.

(Vide reply to PNQ)

PQ Nos B/1045, B/1046, B/1047 and B/1048 – see ‘Written Answers to Questions.’

PQ No. B/1049 – see after PQ No. B/1028.

“BRANDING OF MAURITIUS” PROJECT - TENDERERS

(No. B/1050) Mr S. Naidu (Third Member for Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism, Leisure and External Communications whether, in regard to the project “Branding of Mauritius”, he will state –

- (a) the names of the tenderers, indicating
 - (i) their respective bids, and
 - (ii) the name of the successful bidder
- (b) the composition of the evaluation committee, and
- (c) if the former Director of the Tourism Authority, now Senior Adviser at his Ministry, has been given the responsibility to monitor the project.

The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism, Leisure & External Communications (Mr X. L. Duval): Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed that the following firms have tendered for the consultancy services contract for the Branding of Mauritius Project –

- (i) Penn Shoen and Berland Associates

- (ii) Prophet
- (iii) Nitro Group
- (iv) Acanchi Limited
- (v) Placebrands Limited
- (vi) Landor Associates
- (vii) Interbrand Corporation
- (viii) Ogilvy Advertising

I am further informed that the tender document provides for a two stage procedure for the evaluation of the bids; the first stage involves the technical evaluation and the second one, the financial evaluation.

Only bidders whose technical proposals score at least 70 marks are qualified for the financial evaluation. Bidders who fail to achieve the minimum pass mark of 70 have their financial proposals returned unopened.

Four out of the eight bidders scored at least 70 marks for their technical proposals in accordance with the prescribed evaluation criteria.

Consequently, only the financial proposals of these four bidders were opened and assessed. The four bidders which qualified for financial evaluation and their bidding prices are as follows – I am rounding up the figures, Mr Speaker, Sir -

Acanchi Limited	Rs37,000,000
Landor Associates	Rs79,000,000
Placebrands	Rs27,000,000
Ogilvy Advertising	Rs41,000,000

The other four bidders namely Penn Schoen and Berland Associates, Prophet, Nitro and Interbrand Corporation scored below 70 marks and had their financial proposals returned unopened.

I am further informed, Mr Speaker, Sir, that, following the technical and financial evaluation of the bids, in accordance with the prescribed evaluation criteria, Acanchi Limited scored the highest marks and was subsequently awarded the contract for the consultancy services for the project.

As regards part (b) of the question, I am informed that the evaluation committee comprised of the following members -

- (i) Mr A.K. Utchanah , Principal Assistant Secretary of the Ministry of Industry, Commerce and Cooperatives
- (ii) Mr D. Payen of Air Mauritius
- (iii) Mr A. Martin of Sun Resorts
- (iv) Mr R. Narainen of the Municipal Council of Quatre Bornes, and
- (v) Mr S. Seebun from the Institute of Marketing and Management.

As regards part (c) of the question, I am informed that Mr Joel Rault will form part of the team of officials which will be responsible to coordinate and monitor the implementation of the project.

PORT AREA – SAND PROJECT - TENDERS

(No. B/1051) Mr P. Jhugroo (Third Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism, Leisure and External Communications whether, in regard to the dredging of sand project within the port area, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Ports Authority, information as to –

- (a) the dates on which the tenders were launched;
- (b) the name of the successful tenderer;
- (c) the tender amount, and
- (d) the total amount of money already paid to the tenderer.

The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism, Leisure & External Communications (Mr X. L. Duval): Mr Speaker, Sir, in relation to the Dredging Works Project at Port Louis harbour, I am informed by the Mauritius Ports Authority that -

With regard to part (a), bids were launched in the Press by the then Central Tender Board through a tender notice dated 26 August 2005.

With regard to part (b), the successful tenderer was Messrs Boskalis International b.v.

With regard to part (c), the amount quoted by Messrs Boskalis International b.v was Rs439,660,000. However, given that the tendered price was significantly higher than the budgeted amount of Rs350 m, the MPA Consultants, Messrs Consulting Engineering Services (India) Pvt., Ltd. recommended that negotiations be initiated with the successful tenderer for the reduction of the price as they assessed that the tendered amount was

excessive. Accordingly, with the approval of CTB and the MPA Board, negotiations were conducted in July 2006, and the contract value was reviewed by the bidder to Rs380 m.

With regard to part (d), the total certified payment made to Messrs Boskalis International b.v is Rs372,494,949.12 which is less than the contract price.

Mr Jhugroo: Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Deputy Prime Minister inform the house whether the Chairman of MPA is back from overseas mission?

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, the supplementary question is not connected to this question, but he is back.

Mr Jhugroo: Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Deputy Prime Minister inform the House whether he has received any explanation from the Chairman of MPA?

Mr Speaker: This question is not allowed. It does not relate to the main question. The hon. Member has to come with a substantive question.

Mr Bérenger: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Deputy Prime Minister said that discussions took place between Mauritius Ports Authority and Boskalis Ltd. Can I have the names of those who represented MPA?

Mr X. L. Duval: It was headed by Captain Toi. I'll get the full list in a second, if the hon. Leader of the Opposition will bear with me.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! Order now! Hon. Jhugroo, it is the last time I am calling you to order. You have been trying to misbehave in this House for quite some time now. I am asking you to keep quiet and this is my last warning to you.

Mr X. L. Duval: The answer is Captain Toi, Mrs Bunwaree-Ramsaha, Mr Goburdhone, Mr S. Seelochun and Mr C. Rogbeer. These are the people from MPA and there were two representatives of the consultants and two people from Boskalis Ltd.

Mr Bérenger: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I have the date on which the Board of the MPA agree to the results of these discussions and who chaired the Board?

Mr X. L. Duval: I am afraid, I don't have this information. I can get it.

Mr Bhagwan: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I know from the hon. Minister whether an EIA assessment and any post-monitoring have been carried out as far as this project is concerned and whether the Ministry has received representations that there has been departure from the conditions laid down in the EIA given to the Authority?

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, I understand that there was an EIA which was obtained by Boskalis Ltd for this project. There was an incident during the dredging. I am not aware of any recent complaint.

Mr Jhugroo: Mr Speaker, Sir, will the hon. Deputy Prime Minister confirm that in reference to the oceanographer, Mr Vasant Coopamootoo, concerning the dredging, Boskalis has been operating in violation of Section 38 of the Fisheries and Marine Resources Act of 1998?

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, this question relates to the award of the contract and not to the ongoing work. I am not aware of what the hon. Member is saying.

Mr Dowarkasing: Mr Speaker, Sir, is the hon. Deputy Prime Minister agreeable to conduct a full and complete environment assessment?

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, as I said, I can look into it, but the question was the award of the contract and not on the actual work performed.

Mr Dayal: Can I ask the Deputy Prime Minister whether he can inform the House where the dredged materials are stocked and whether they are intact and have not been tampered with?

Mr Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, I think there is quite a bit of sand that was collected and it has quite a high value. I understand from the MPA that the sand has been stocked in a place that is very difficult to access and the whole stock is there.

Mr Guinness: Mr Speaker, Sir, concerning the contract which has been awarded to Boskalis Ltd., may I ask the Deputy Prime Minister whether there were any written or unwritten conditions to transfer a certain amount of money in the account of the Chairman, and, if so ...

Mr Speaker: This question is not allowed.

Mr Bhagwan: Mr Speaker, Sir, has the attention of the Deputy Prime Minister been drawn concerning payments which have been made to the contractor despite negative reports from the consultants and, if yes, whether the Deputy Prime Minister can make an inquiry and report to the House?

Mr Duval: No, Mr Speaker, Sir, I am not aware of any such issues.

Mr Ganoo: Can the hon. Minister inform the House whether this contract was awarded under the old Central Tender Board Act or after the new Public Procurement Act has been proclaimed?

Mr Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, I understand it was under the old Central Tender Board Act.

PHARMACOVIGILANCE COMMITTEE – SETTING UP

(No. B/1052) Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun (Third Member for La Caverne and Phoenix) asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether, in regard to the introduction of pre-clinical testing of drugs in Mauritius, he will state if his Ministry is planning to set up a Pharmacological Vigilance Unit or its equivalent.

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

A legal framework for the conduct of clinical trials is under preparation at the level of the Ministry of Health.

It will certainly incorporate international best practices in terms of mechanisms regulating clinical experimentation.

One of the main provisions of the proposed legislation is indeed going to be the setting up of a Pharmacovigilance Committee.

HOSPITALS - DRUGS & MEDICINES - LABELS

(No. B/1053) Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun (Third Member for La Caverne and Phoenix) asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether, in regard to drugs and medicines dispensed in hospitals, dispensaries and health care centres, he will state if they are properly labelled and if their names and the expiry dates are clearly indicated.

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

Mr Speaker, Sir, in July 2005, 17 immediate measures were introduced to improve the health services. One of these was that appropriate stickers, labels and plastic or paper bags should be used for dispensing of drugs. These labels ought to clearly indicate instructions for taking of drugs. This measure is already being implemented.

Around 85% of all drugs which come in the form of capsules and tablets are already supplied in strips or blister packs that bear the name, strength and expiry date of the products. Additional instructions based on doctor's prescription are provided by the dispensers on the labels with regard to dose regimen at time of dispensing.

All liquid preparations are supplied in pre-packed plastic bottles that are labelled with the name of the product, its strength, manufacturing date and the expiry date. Here again, additional instructions regarding the use of the product are placed on labels which are affixed to the bottle at the time of dispensing.

On the other hand, a number of drug tablets is supplied in bulk by the manufacturers. Strict control is exercised at the Central Supplies Division to ensure that the drugs supplied have the appropriate shelf life. Such drugs are dispensed in plastic sachets on which the name of the drug and the instructions for its use are clearly indicated. I agree that there is some weakness in the last part where the medicine is disposed in sachets because it is not still, at this time, the habit for them to put all the details. But the Ministry is working seriously and I think it is going to be corrected soon.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Is the Minister aware that presently, even on boxes and even if stickers are applied, the names are not written and the expiry dates not given and this is very harmful as people tend to stock these medicines and do not know whether these are still proper for use or not.

Dr. Bunwaree: As I said, Mr Speaker, Sir, there could be weaknesses. If the hon. lady is aware of cases, we will look into them, but even if she does not inform us, we will try to do our best to see what we can do to correct this.

Mr Jhugroo: M. le président, je crois que le ministre serait d'accord avec moi, en tant que médecin, que même le pharmacien ne comprend pas ce qui est écrit sur les sachets en plastique.

Dr. Bunwaree : C'est pour cela qu'on va essayer de coller des *labels*.

At 1.00 p.m the sitting was suspended.

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

ROCHE BOIS & BAIE DU TOMBEAU – BUS ROUTE NO. 152

(No. B/1055) Mr S. Lauthan (Third Member for Port Louis Maritime and Port Louis East) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport & Shipping whether, in regard to the bus service on the Route Number 152, he will state if he has received representations from the inhabitants of Roche Bois, and, if so, will he, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the National Transport Authority, information as to the remedial measures that will be taken, if any.

The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport & Shipping (Dr. R. Beebeejaun): Mr Speaker, Sir, sewerage works in the regions of Roche Bois and Baie du Tombeau started in March 2008. In July, traffic had to be diverted and redirected because of works along the coastal road between Bruniquel Bridge, Roche Bois and Le Goulet, Baie du Tombeau, inevitably impacting negatively on bus services.

On 21 July 2008, inhabitants of Roche Bois made representations accordingly to the National Transport Authority and I am requesting the National Transport Authority to review the situation, liaise with Wastewater Management and examine the possibilities of introducing short services to alleviate the temporary inconvenience to the inhabitants.

I wish to point out that sewerage works are essential, but their execution causes traffic problems which one tries to minimise as far as possible.

Mr Lauthan: The hon. Deputy Prime Minister surely has the letter; the UBS has been so kind to respond. May I ask him to appeal to his colleague, because sewerage works are causing undue delay to expedite matters?

Dr. Beebeejaun: Yes, Sir.

MONNERON STREET, PORT LOUIS – HAWKERS

(No. B/1056) Mrs B. Juggoo (First Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Local Government whether, in regard to the holders of a hawker's licence who were operating at the Monneron Street, Port Louis, and who were made to vacate therefrom last year, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Municipal Council of Port Louis, information as to if an alternative location has been identified for them to operate their activities and, if not, why not.

Dr. David: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Municipality of Port Louis that no licence has been issued by the Municipal Council to any hawker to operate at Monneron Street, Port Louis.

I am also informed that the Municipal Council had decided to relocate some 110 hawkers operating near the LIC Building at Monneron Street. In this connexion, an alternative site was identified by the Municipal Council at the back of the ex-NTA Building, Victoria Square and was subsequently vested by the Ministry of Housing & Lands in the Council for such purpose.

I am informed that a floor dressing has already been carried out at the site and there are, at present, around 70 to 100 hawkers operating thereat.

STATE LAND – INDUSTRIAL AND COMMERCIAL LEASES - BENEFICIARIES

(No. B/1057) Mr E. Guimbeau (First Member for Curepipe and Midlands) asked the Minister of Housing and Lands whether, in regard to each of the plots of State land leased for business purposes and for other economic activities, he will state –

- (a) the number of beneficiaries thereof, indicating their –
 - (i) names;
 - (ii) addresses, and
 - (iii) the actual terms and conditions of their lease, including the annual rent payable, and
- (b) if he is considering reviewing the terms and conditions thereof, including the rent, so as to reflect the real market value and, if so when.

Mr Dulull: Mr Speaker, Sir, assuming that the hon. Member is referring to the industrial and commercial site leases, may I remind him of Section 33 of the Finance Act 2008, which makes provisions for the review of the terms and conditions of those industrial and commercial leases, including their rentals, which will reflect the market value and are aligned with those for *campement* site leases.

In regard to the timing of the application of new industrial and commercial site leases, a working group comprising representatives of my Ministry, the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development, and the Valuation Office, will be meeting shortly to work out the conditions for the option forms in relation thereto.

Meanwhile, the hon. Member may wish to know that there are some 640 industrial site leases around the island, out of which some 155 leases need to be renewed.

The time-consuming exercise for the compilation of the requested pieces of information has started, and once completed and verified, same will be placed in the Library of the National Assembly.

Mr Guimbeau: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am not referring to industrial leases and *Pas Géométriques*, but to industrial leases inland, for example, in Port Louis and in all the districts of Mauritius.

Mr Dulull: I mentioned in my answer that there are 640 industrial and commercial site leases, including those in the hither land. Only 188 industrial site leases are along the *Pas Géométriques* with the following breakdown –

- Bungalow complexes: 73
- Guesthouses: 15
- Hotels: 92
- Apartment (including NHDC) : 8.

BOARD OF INVESTMENT – CHAIRPERSON – APPOINTMENT

(No. B/1058) Mr E. Guimbeau (First Member for Curepipe and Midlands) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to the Chairperson of the Board of Investment, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Board, information as to –

- (a) the name of the incumbent;
- (b) the date of his appointment, indicating the terms and conditions thereof, and
- (c) the number of overseas missions he has undertaken, since his appointment to date, indicating in each case -
 - (i) the amount of money spent on air fares, per diem and/or other benefits, and
 - (ii) the countries visited and the duration thereof.

The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development (Dr. R. Sithanen): Mr Speaker, Sir, Mr Lim Sit Chen Lam Pak Ng was appointed Chairperson of the Board of Investment on 23 November 2005. As per the terms and conditions of his appointment, he is entitled to a fee of Rs20,000 per month, with no other benefits. However, I am informed that he had signified his wish not to be paid the monthly fees. Consequently, no such payment has been made to him since his appointment as Chairperson.

As regards part (c) of the question, the Chairperson has effected three overseas missions for the account of the BOI.

Insofar as *per diem* is concerned, I am informed that since May 2006, the Board has decided, as a matter of policy, to discontinue with the practice of granting *per diem*. This applies to its staff, the Managing Director as well as to the Chairperson. They are instead provided with accountable advances when they travel on mission.

Information relating to the cost of the Chairperson's missions, countries visited and duration thereof is being tabled.

Mr Guimbeau: Can we know the remuneration of the Chairman of the BOI? Is it in the form of a bonus or commission?

Dr. Sithanen: I am not aware. As I said, he is eligible to a monthly fee of Rs20,000 and he has relinquished this amount. I am not aware of any commission or allowance that the hon. Member is mentioning.

BOARD OF INVESTMENT – MANAGING DIRECTOR – APPOINTMENT

(No. B/1059) Mr E. Guimbeau (First Member for Curepipe and Midlands) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to the Managing Director of the Board of Investment, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Board, information as to –

- (a) the name of the incumbent;
- (b) the date of his appointment, indicating the terms and conditions thereof, and

- (c) the number of overseas missions he has undertaken, since his appointment to date, indicating in each case -
- (i) the amount of money spent on air fares, *per diem* and/or other benefits, and
 - (ii) the countries visited and the duration thereof.

The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development (Dr R. Sithanen): Mr Speaker, Sir, the Managing Director of the Board of Investment is Mr Bhanu Pratabsingh Jaddoo. He was appointed Managing Director of BOI on 23 November 2005. His employment contract provides for salary review every year based on performance.

Details relating to his conditions of contract and information sought for in part (c) of the question are being tabled.

Mr Guimbeau: Can the hon. Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance say whether the total emoluments of the Managing Director are Rs2.6 m. per year?

.../...

Dr. Sithanen: Mr Speaker, Sir, I can provide the details of the information that I have. He was paid Rs100,000 when he was appointed, plus extra remuneration at approved rates and then this has been reviewed, and he currently earns Rs200,000, Mr Speaker, Sir. If the hon. Member multiplies this by 13, he will get the annual figure.

The other information is being tabled, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Guimbeau: Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance confirm to the House whether the Managing Director of the BOI is still an Executive Director and Chief Financial Manager of the Titanium Resources Group in the Republic of Sierra Leone?

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

Mr Guimbeau: Mr Speaker, Sir, I think everybody is aware, because if you go on the website of the Titanium Resources Group, you will see that Mr Jaddoo is the Executive Director under the Management Team.

Dr. Sithanen: I am not aware, Mr Speaker, Sir. If the hon. Member gives me the information, I'll check and confirm or deny.

Mr Guimbeau: Mr Speaker, Sir, is it common practice that taxpayers, pay Mr Jaddoo about Rs3 m. and he is an Executive Director in Sierra Leone?

Dr. Sithanen: I don't know exactly what the Member is referring to. There are people who sit on Boards and I don't even know what are the remunerations of these Boards. But let me inform the hon. Member that Mr Jaddoo has been performing his job very well as Managing Director of the Board of Investment and we all know how much FDIs are coming to this country. So, he is doing a very good job. I am not aware of this extra information that the hon. Member is providing; but Mr Jaddoo has been performing his job very well as Managing Director of the Board of Investment.

Mr Guimbeau: Mr Speaker, Sir, I'll table the information. Being the Managing Director of BOI, which is a full-time job, I don't think it is proper for him to have other jobs in other countries.

Mr Speaker: That is a comment. The hon. Member should put the question. Accordingly, if a Member is laying a document, he has to certify it. Can the hon. Member certify it?

Mr Guimbeau: Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir.

SUGAR BEACH HOTEL – MR C. M. – ACCIDENT

(No. B/1060) Mr G. Lesjongard (Second Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment whether, he is aware that one Mr C. M., aged 49, met with an accident at the Sugar Beach Hotel, on 01 July 2008, and, if so, will he state if an inquiry has been carried out thereinto, indicating –

- (a) the cause of the accident, and
- (b) the name of the contractor who was employing him and if he was contributing to the National Pensions Scheme, and

(c) he will be able to resume work.

Dr. Bunwaree: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that Mr C. M. was victim of an accident on 01 July 2008. The accident was notified to the Occupational Safety & Health Inspectorate of my Ministry on 07 July 2008 by the brother of Mr. C. M. An enquiry started on the same day and has revealed the following -

On 01 July 2008, Mr C.M was detailed by his employer, to do painting work on the roof of a villa at the Sugar Beach Resort Hotel. At about 9 a.m., he was standing on the roof of the villa and was about to anchor his safety harness to the lifeline already fixed when he slipped and fell down from a height of about 7 metres. He sustained injury and was immediately conveyed to Victoria Hospital, Candos, where he was admitted. I am informed that he is still at the hospital.

The victim was employed by a job contractor, Mr Soopaya Marimootoo.

As to whether the job contractor was contributing to the National Pension Fund, according to information obtained from the Ministry of Social Security, National Solidarity and Senior Citizens Welfare & Reforms Institutions, Mr Marimootoo is registered with the National Pension Scheme but he has not been contributing to the Fund since September 2006. I am given to understand that an enquiry is underway at the Ministry in that connection. And I have just been given the information that for the month of June this year, his contribution has been paid.

As regards part (c) of the question, it is difficult, Mr Speaker, Sir, at this stage to indicate when or whether Mr C. M. will be able to resume work. I had an oral conversation with his doctor who took care of him in the hospital. His situation is, in fact, very serious. This is a dramatic case, Mr Speaker, Sir; I can assure the hon. Member that everything will be done in the interest of the worker on all aspects of the case, and I wish to thank the hon. Member for this question.

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Speaker, Sir, I also thank the hon. Minister for his reply. As he stated, this is a very serious case where we don't even know whether the worker will be able to resume his work. We also understand that the contractor has not paid the NPS for quite some time. May we know whether he was subcontracting the job at Sugar Beach Hotel or was he the main contractor for that job?

Dr. Bunwaree: According to my information, he was subcontracting.

Mr Lesjongard: Can the hon. Minister inform the House whether he has a job contractor certificate for that type of job?

Dr. Bunwaree: He is a known job contractor. There are also some doubts as to a certain period when his job contractor permit had lapsed. He didn't renew it immediately, but the law allows that it can be renewed after the payment of a fine is effected. It has been renewed. He is today a regular job contractor, but I must admit that at the time of the accident there were some problems there and the Ministry is looking very seriously into the matter. An inquiry is being conducted in that case.

Mr Guimbeau: Mr Speaker, Sir, Mr C. M. is completely paralysed; he lost his two legs. Will the hon. Minister consider coming up with legislation so as to protect casual workers working with all types of contractors and subcontractors, be it in the field or in any kind of industry?

Dr. Bunwaree: We are already doing quite a lot in that direction. The question is an eye opener. This is why I thanked the hon. Member for this question. The sanctions that are going to be taken against the job contractor may not be to the level of what he deserves.

Mr Lesjongard: I am making an appeal to the Minister. Since he has stated that an inquiry is on, will he let us know the outcome of it once it is completed?

Dr. Bunwaree: Yes, Sir.

Mr Guimbeau: Mr Speaker, Sir, what I want to make sure is that the hon. Minister comes along with legislation to protect the casual workers who are paid on a daily basis.

Dr. Bunwaree: Next week, we'll be talking about that in the House.

**SCHOOLS – SECURITY AND CLEANING SERVICES –
CONTRACT**

(No. B/1061) Mr G. Lesjongard (Second Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether in regard to the contract awarded for the security and cleaning services in the schools, he will state –

- (a) the names of the companies thereof;
- (b) the value thereof, indicating if performance bonds were required;
- (c) if there has been any late payment by his Ministry, and
- (d) if he has received any complaint from the workers of the companies and, if so, the nature thereof.

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed that –

- (a) Keep Pace Security Guard Ltd was awarded the contract for providing “Watch and Security Services” in schools and other institutions of my Ministry with effect from 01 November 2006;
- (b) Mauriclean Ltd, Tropical Cleaning Co. Ltd, Silver Clean Co. Ltd and Special Cleaning Services were awarded the contract for providing cleaning services in schools and other institutions from 01 October 2005 to 30 September 2007. These contracts were renewed on the same terms and conditions on a month-to-month basis on approval of the Central Procurement Board pending award of a new contract. However, as provided in the contract conditions, in some schools where performance was not satisfactory, Best Super Clean & Moolchand Cleaning Services were awarded a short-term contract to provide their services pending award of a new contract following a fresh exercise.

Regarding part (b) of the question –

- (i) Keep Pace Security Guard Ltd was awarded the contract for the monthly sum of Rs1,914,658 with effect from 01 November 2006, for renewal periods of six months up to a maximum period of two years upon satisfactory performance.
- (ii)
 - (a) Mauriclean Ltd was awarded the contract for cleaning of toilets and the contract value is Rs11,845,508.20 for 2 years.
 - (b) Tropical Cleaning Co. Ltd was awarded the contract for cleaning of premises and the contract value is Rs117,990 for 2 years.
 - (c) Silver Clean Co. Ltd was awarded the contract for cleaning of toilets and the contract value is Rs284,050 for 2 years.
 - (d) Special Cleaning Services Ltd was awarded the contract for cleaning of toilets and premises and the contract value is Rs2,864,098 for toilets and Rs6,497,088 for premises for 2 years.
 - (e) Best Super Clean was awarded the contract for cleaning of toilets and premises for period 08.01.07 to 30.09.07 and the contract value is Rs60,210.00 for R. Ramguttu Hindu Aided School and Rs72,375.00 for Colonel Maingard Prevoc SSS. As from 01 October 2007, the contract is on a month-to-month basis.
 - (f) Moolchand Cleaning Services was awarded the contract for cleaning of premises for period 10.05.07 to 30.09.07 and the contract value is Rs127,454.50. As from 01 October 2007 the contract is on a month-to-month basis.

- (iii) In order to guarantee due performance of their obligations by contractors, performance bonds were required for all contracts. However, for a month-to-month contract, the same terms and conditions are applied. Liquidated damages are thus claimed for non performance of contractual service.

Regarding part (c) of the question, Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that as far as cleaning services are concerned, there has been no late payment. However, regarding the contract for security services, we have been facing a lot of problems recently with the company. I am given to understand that there was a dispute between Keep Pace Security Guard Ltd and CIM Finance Ltd, a financial institution with whom Keep Pace Security Guard Ltd was working. On 26 January 2007, the company requested that all payments be credited to CIM Finance Ltd by direct banking at the Hong Kong Shanghai Banking Cooperation, Port Louis. Since it was understood that CIM Finance Ltd was a financial institution and the payment due to Keep Pace Security Guard Ltd could be credited to CIM Finance as requested, Keep Pace Security Guard Ltd was informed on 12 February 2007 that “the Ministry is agreeable to its request but does not in any way contract any liability in issuing this letter.” Payment was made to CIM account as from 27 February 2007.

On 22 June 2007, the Keep Pace Security Guard Ltd requested my Ministry to forward all payment directly to its account at Baroda Bank Ltd, Curepipe. Payment was consequently credited to Baroda Bank Ltd on 29 June 2007. On 31 July 2007, the company wrote once again to request the Ministry to remit directly to the account of CIM Finance Ltd, at Hong Kong Bank, the proceeds of all its invoices. Payment was accordingly made to the CIM Finance on 13 October 2007.

On 24 October 2007, the Keep pace Security Guard Ltd once again requested my Ministry to forward, with immediate effect, all their payments directly to their bank as they were not working with CIM Finance Ltd. My Ministry agreed to such request on the condition that we would not be held responsible for any liability or settlements of any claim which may arise either from CIM Finance Ltd or any other banking or other institution with which Keep Pace Security Guard Ltd may have dealings/agreements, and that settlement of any such claim/s would be its direct responsibility.

On 04 December 2007 and 31 January 2008, CIM Finance Ltd claimed that payment for services provided by Keep Pace Security Guard Ltd should be made payable to it in view of a factoring agreement signed between them. On 11 February 2008, the Solicitor of Keep Pace Security Guard Ltd wrote to say that his client has retained his services to settle matter with CIM Finance Ltd and that needful will be done in due course and Ministry should pay to Keep Pace Security Guard Ltd as service provider. On 30 April 2008, Keep Pace Security Guard Ltd requested the Ministry to withhold payment pending a written confirmation from CIM Finance's legal adviser of an agreement reached between the two companies.

No copy of the agreement signed between the two companies in April 2006, whereby CIM Finance Ltd claimed payment, was submitted to the Ministry nor was any copy sought by the Ministry, as we dealt with only one contractor and paid to accounts specified in the letter.

In the meantime, on 03 June 2008, CIM Finance Ltd has served a *mise en demeure* on my Ministry to claim payment of Rs9,073,323.32 for services provided by Keep Pace Security Guard Ltd. This amount was already settled by my Ministry, part to Keep Pace Security Guard Ltd as per contractor's request. Consequently, payment in respect of bills for period 2008 onwards are still outstanding, since my Ministry is not in a position to effect payments to two claimants. Furthermore, Keep Pace Security Guard Ltd has ceased to provide its services to our schools as from 12 June 2008 on financial grounds. Invoices for the months of May and June 2008 have still not been obtained. Legal advice is actually being sought to finalise the payments due to the companies

Regarding part (d) of the question, I have been informed that some employees of Keep Pace Security Guard Ltd have registered a complaint with the Ministry of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment that they have not been paid their salaries for part of March, April, May and up to 11 June 2008. Even though I sympathise heartily with these workers, it is the responsibility of the security company to pay its employees. I understand that the Ministry of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment is taking up the issue regarding the non payment of salaries to workers

Mr Speaker, Sir, in order not to have any recurrence of such an embarrassing situation, my Ministry will see to it that in all its new tendering exercise, a new clause will be inserted wherein bidders are informed that the Ministry will not be liable to any third party with whom the selected service provider may have a contract, whether signed before, during or after the award of contract for providing services to my Ministry.

In addition, my Ministry is now having recourse, on a pilot basis, to have alarm system installed in high risk schools.

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Speaker, Sir, like we say in Creole, in the meantime, '*cabri pé manz feyaz*'. Mr Speaker, Sir, this is a case where workers have not received their salary for the past four months, because of arrangements that have been made between Keep Pace Security Guard Ltd and the Ministry of Education. We understand that when workers have not been paid their salary, they have not reported to their work, which means that the work has not been performed correctly. The Minister is saying that the contract is ongoing. May I know whether the hon. Minister is satisfied with the performance of that security contractor?

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, it's a multi-barrelled question. Let me clear one point. The contract is between my Ministry and Keep Pace Security Guard Ltd. Keep Pace has entered into arrangement with CIM Finance. At times, it has given instruction that we pay to CIM, which we have done. Then, Keep Pace has withdrawn that instruction. The problem is not really between my Ministry and Keep Pace. They have to sort out their problems, between Keep Pace and CIM, and then the Ministry will have no problem in settling the amount. Furthermore, there is a *mise en demeure*. Once the *mise en demeure* is there, we cannot settle the accounts. The fact is that the matter has been referred to the Ministry of Labour & Industrial Relations. It is not a simple matter. It is quite complicated, and we have to let the law take its course.

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister whether those arrangements were made before or after the contract was awarded?

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, these arrangements were made before the contract was awarded.

ASSOCIATION DES CHOMEURS DE ROCHE BOIS – RECRUITMENT – CHC & MPA

(No. B/1062) Mr G. Lesjongard (Second Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism, Leisure and External Communications whether he will state if he has had any meeting with the *Association des Chômeurs de Roche Bois* and, if so, indicate if –

- (a) any decision has been taken concerning their recruitment at the Cargo Handling Corporation Ltd and the Mauritius Ports Authority, and

- (b) he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Cargo Handling Corporation Ltd and the Mauritius Ports Authority a list of the unskilled workers recruited thereat, since January 2007 to date, together with their addresses.

The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism, Leisure and External Communications (Mr X. L. Duval): Mr Speaker, Sir, I met with the representatives of the *Association des Chômeurs de Roche Bois* informally during a social gathering some time ago. However, I also understand that they have met officials of the MPA, CHC Ltd and my Ministry in the course of this year. The House may wish to know that the *Association des Chômeurs de Roche Bois* held a public gathering on 30 April of this year at Roche Bois roundabout, which was attended by some 20 persons.

As regards part (a) of the question, I wish to inform the House that the Cargo Handling Company is a Limited Company incorporated under the Companies Act. As such, matters pertaining to recruitment to staff is the responsibility of its Board of Directors. It is, therefore, not appropriate for me to reply to this part of the question or to any supplementary question relating thereto.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I have, however, been assured by Cargo Handling Corporation that their recruitment policy is based purely on the principles of meritocracy. Furthermore, the recruitment procedures that are currently in use have been in place there for the last ten years. As such, members of the *Association des Chômeurs de Roche Bois* have, as citizens of Mauritius, the same employment opportunities as any other citizen.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the House would furthermore wish to know that Cargo Handling Corporation, under its agreement of the unions, strictly observe the requirement to offer 25%, that is, a quarter, of all job opportunities to offsprings of workers or ex-workers of the company subject, of course, to educational and other qualifications. To my knowledge, Mr Speaker, Sir, Cargo Handling company is the only company in Mauritius which adopts such a practice which is, of course, of substantial benefit to its labour force.

With regard to the Mauritius Ports Authority, I am informed that its policy is to advertise all vacancies in the press, except for unskilled jobs where recruitment is made from within a list of applications already available in the Human Resource Department. Recruitment is effected on the basis of meritocracy. All candidates, including unskilled labour, have to invariably undergo the selection process conducted by the staff committee, a sub committee of the Board. This was not the policy under previous

Governments. A list of the 34 workers recruited since January 2007, their names and details is being tabled.

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister whether, in a meeting with the representatives of the *Association des Chômeurs de Roche Bois*, one Mr Alcindor has promised them that ten persons among them will be recruited in a short time?

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, Mr Alcindor is one the Directors of the Cargo Handling Corporation. I am not aware of this meeting.

BUS COMPANIES/GOVERNMENT – AGREEMENT

(No. B/1063) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport & Shipping whether, in regard to the agreement signed between the bus companies and the Government in respect of diesel subsidy, he will state the basic price that was approved in August 2004, indicating if it has changed and, if so –

- (a) when;
- (b) the reasons therefor;
- (c) if all the bus operators have benefited therefrom, indicating if they are granted the subsidy on the same basis and give details thereof, and
- (d) the total savings made by Government.

The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport & Shipping (Dr. R. Beebeejaun): Mr Speaker, Sir, the Bus Companies Recovery Account was created in April 2004 following the introduction of the Automatic Pricing Mechanism, to compensate bus operators for increases in the price of diesel. The compensation is calculated on the difference between a base price and the market price.

The base price fixed in 2004 was Rs11.44 for bus companies. There was no base price and no diesel subsidy for individual operators, as the scheme as originally conceived, applied only to bus companies. It was then considered that individual operators did not need the subsidy, as they could absorb the increase in the cost of gasoil at that time.

In October 2005, this Government extended the scheme to individual operators, and a base price of Rs17.25 was set for them given that they have lower operational costs than bus companies.

As regards part (a) of the question, in May 2008, bus fares were reviewed and the base price was revised to Rs25 for bus companies and Rs30 for individual bus operators.

The reasons for the change is that –

- (i) the base price had to be adjusted in the light of the increases in the price of diesel which had evolved from Rs11.90 in 2004 to Rs35.60 in April 2008, and Rs42.70 as from July 2008, and
- (ii) the increase in bus fares would enable the operators to recoup part of rise in the cost of diesel.

With regard to part (c) all the bus operators are benefiting from the diesel compensation. The individual operators have been informed that they would be eligible for the same base price as bus companies, if they group themselves into regional associations and provide bus services on a collective basis.

As regards part (d) of the question concerning savings, since the setting-up of the Bus Companies Recovery Account, there have always been shortfalls of revenue due to the constant rise in the price of diesel. These shortfalls had to be supplemented by three grants from Government, totalling Rs87 m.

As from May 2008, arrears of Rs142 m. were overdue to bus operators. With the increase of 20% of the diesel price increased in 2008, an amount of Rs132 m. is payable to operators for quarter July to September 2008, as compared to Rs135 m. last year, that is, before the base price was changed.

Hence, the question of savings does not arise.

MOBILE PHONES – RADIO FREQUENCY RADIATION – STUDY

(No. B/1064) Mr Y. Varma (First Member for Mahebourg and Plaine Magnien) asked Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether he will state if a study has been carried out on the impact of the use of mobile phones on the health of the users thereof and, if not, if same is being envisaged.

The Minister of Labour, Industrial Relations & Employment (Dr. V. Bunwaree): Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I shall reply to this question.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Ministry of Health usually stands guided by the recommendations of the World Health Organisation (WHO) on all matters pertaining to health.

As regards the use of mobile phones, studies on the effects of radio frequency radiation carried out so far by researchers abroad, show that there are very small and reversible biological and physiological effects that do not necessarily lead to diseases or injuries.

Moreover, research findings in relation to development of cancer have indicated that exposure to Radio Frequency fields such as those emitted by mobile phones and their base stations, is unlikely to induce or promote cancers.

Since there are still gaps in knowledge, continued research and better health risk analysis are needed. It is to be understood that such research activities are complex in nature and as such, these cannot be undertaken in Mauritius.

However, being conscious of the growing concern about the effects on health attributed to exposure to the electromagnetic fields produced by mobile phones, the Ministry of Health will continue to follow up the matter with the World Health Organisation and take any necessary step as and when the need is felt.

Mr Speaker: Before I call the next question, can I inform the House that Parliamentary Question Nos. B/1066, B/1074 and B/1075 have been withdrawn. Next question, hon. Varma!

PLAINE MAGNIEN - MUSLIM CEMETERY

(No. B/1065) **Mr Y. Varma (First Member for Mahebourg and Plaine Magnien)** asked the Minister of Housing and Lands whether, in regard to the compulsory acquisition of a plot of land for the extension of the Muslim Cemetery in Plaine Magnien, he will state where matters stand.

Mr Dulull: Mr Speaker, Sir, two portions of private land have been identified by the Ministry for the extension of the Muslim cemetery in Plaine Magnien.

The first portion of land measuring 7059m² (1A67P) has been compulsorily acquired from Mon Trésor and Mon Désert Limited. The Notice, given under Section 8 of the Land Acquisition Act, has been transcribed on 23 June 2008.

In regard to the second portion of land measuring 1616m² (0.38A), same is being acquired by way of private agreement from the heirs of the late Mr Hassam Majie. On 06 June 2008, a Notary Public has been appointed to draw up the deed of sale.

Mr Bérenger: May I ask the hon. Minister whether the part that has been compulsorily acquired has already been compulsorily acquired?

Mr Dulull: A notice has been given under section 8 and has been transcribed on 23 June 2008.

Mr Bérenger: Can I ask the hon. Minister whether there have been consultations with the Muslim organisations concerned and that they are satisfied with the two pieces of land that will go towards extending the Muslim cemetery?

Mr Dulull: I must thank hon. Dr. Bunwaree, hon. Varma and hon. Duval who have been very much involved in the acquisition, together with the members of the socio-religious groups of Plaine Magnien, and things are progressing to their expectation.

MARE D'ALBERT - SWIMMING POOL

(No. B/1066) Mr Y. Varma (First Member for Mahebourg and Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Youth and Sports whether he will state when will the swimming pool in Mare d'Albert be operational

(Withdrawn)

CASTING OF SLABS SCHEME – BENEFICIARIES – JULY 2005 - 05 AUGUST 2008

(No. B/1067) Mr M. Allet (Second Member for Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Housing and Lands whether, in regard to the Casting of Slabs Scheme, he will now give the list of the beneficiaries thereof, constituency wise, since July 2005 to date

Mr Dulull: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the NHDC Ltd that from July 2005 to date, 11,003 families across the island, including Rodrigues, have benefitted from the Casting of Roof Slabs Scheme, at a total cost of Rs515,441,550.

With your permission, Sir, I shall read out the number of beneficiaries constituency-wise or I can table.

Mr Speaker: Why does not the hon. Minister circulate the answer if it is too long.

Mr Dulull: I will table the information.

Mr Speaker: Yes, table the answer.

Mr Dulull: Sir, I have stated the numbers and not the names of the beneficiaries, as it would not be in the best interest to give their names. This is because their privacy and dignity need to be preserved.

Mr Bhagwan: M. le président, est-ce que j'ai bien entendu que le chiffre accordé est de R 50 millions?

Mr Dulull: C'est R 500 millions

(Interruptions)

Mr Guimbeau: Mr Speaker, Sir, we got same answer in November 2007. What we are asking the hon. Minister is to table all the names of the 11,000 beneficiaries.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Guimbeau, I am sorry to intervene. The hon. Minister has given the reasons why he cannot give the names of the beneficiaries.

(Interruptions)

He has given numbers. We don't get the names of the persons on television.

(Interruptions)

I think the hon. Minister has answered the question. Does hon. Jhugroo have a supplementary question?

Mr Jhugroo: Puis-je demander dans combien de cas le ministre a fait venir la MBC/TV pour couvrir l'évènement?

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: No!

Mr Jhugroo: It is my right to ask questions.

Mr Speaker: Order!

Mr Jhugroo: Dans combien de cas est-ce que le ministre a fait venir la MBC/TV pour couvrir l'évènement? Le ministre a mentionné le *privacy*. *I want to know where is privacy here.*

Mr Dulull: As a Minister I am in charge of the policy and I am not a timekeeper or a countkeeper.

**MINISTERS – OVERSEAS MISSIONS –
JULY 2005 - 05 AUGUST 2008**

(No. B/1068) Mr M. Allet (Second Member for Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to each of the overseas missions undertaken by the hon. Ministers since July 2005 to date, he will state –

- (a) the countries visited;
- (b) the composition of the accompanying delegations, and
- (c) the amount of money paid in terms of *per diem* and allowances.

The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance & Economic Development (Dr. R. Sithanen): Mr Speaker, Sir, the information is still being compiled.

Mr Guimbeau: Mr Speaker, Sir, once again, the same question was asked to the hon. Minister three times by hon. Jhugroo and myself. All we are asking the hon. Minister, in the name of transparency, is how much *per diem* since July 2005 all the Ministers have got?

Dr. Sithanen: The information is being compiled.

Mr Guimbeau: We are taxpayers, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Dr. Sithanen: We are taxpayers also.

Mr Speaker: The hon. Minister has answered it is being compiled.

(Interruptions)

Last week, I said that according to Erskine May, if a Minister has given an answer to the House that he is going to take certain action and he has not done so within three months, hon. Members are entitled to come back with the question in the same session. This is what has been done and the Minister has said that the information is being compiled. I can't do anything more than that.

Mr Guimbeau: I agree with Erskine May. But why don't you amend the Standing Orders so that after three months the Minister should give the answers to Members of Parliament?

Mr Speaker: Can I inform the hon. Member that the Standing Orders cannot be amended by me? The Standing Orders have been prepared by a Select Committee of the House, approved by the House, and if we want to amend the Standing Orders, we have to appoint a Select Committee of the House to look into it.

Mr Guimbeau: Mr Speaker, Sir, can write to the Select Committee and make the suggestion?

Mr Speaker: That is for the hon. Member to find out how he is going to go around this problem.

Mr Jhugroo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I came with a similar question previously and I am still waiting for my answer.

Mr Speaker: You have a point of order.

Mr Jhugroo: Yes. I think that my hon. friend is right to come with a similar question, because I have not yet got my answer since long.

Dr. Sithanen: Mr Speaker, Sir, it is being compiled and we will circulate it.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Sir, as the hon. Member has raised a point of order, I must respond to it. One thing that I cannot do is force a Minister to answer a question. The second thing is that if a question has been put in a session, an hon. Member cannot come back with the same question in the same session. However, if a Minister has stated that he is going to take certain action and he has not done so within three months from the date he said it, the hon. Member can come back with the same question in the same session. This is what the hon. Member has done. That is my ruling and that is the procedure that has to be followed.

Mr Guimbeau: This is what we have been doing for the past three years. Every three months, we come back on questions and we are never given answers, Mr Speaker, Sir.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order, please! I am complying with the Standing Orders and I cannot do anything. I am trying to explain this to the House because there have been certain comments which have been made in the press. I am saying it here that this is what is provided for by the Standing Orders and Erskine May. If hon. Members feel that the Standing Orders have to be looked at, it is for them to make the necessary *démarche* to go ahead.

Mr Jhugroo: Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Minister give the exact date when he will compile and table the information?

Dr. Sithanen: Mr Speaker, Sir, let me make four points. In the past, so many questions were asked and the same answer was given. Second, whenever a specific question is asked on a specific Ministry or a specific institution, I give it just like now for the Board of Investment. Three, it is being compiled. I asked the question to my officers who informed me that it takes time to compile the information. Fourth, hon. Dulloo is still leading the pack by far.

MONEY CHANGERS –PERMITS

(No. B/1069) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to the Money Changers, he will state the number of new permits, which have recently been issued, indicating the number thereof operating as at to date

The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development (Dr. R. Sithanen): Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Bank of Mauritius that it has issued money-changer licence to 14 companies on 23 July 2008. The licencees names have been disclosed in the Bank's website as per a communiqué dated 31 July 2008.

I am further informed that none of the 14 companies have commenced operations. They will be permitted to do so only upon fulfillment of conditions as specified in the licences that have been issued.

MONETARY POLICY COMMITTEE – PROCEEDINGS – PUBLIC DISCLOSURE

(No. B/1070) Mr S. Dayal (Second Member for Quartier Militaire & Moka) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether he will state if the Governor of the Bank of Mauritius is allowed to disclose publicly the proceedings and the votes expressed by the members of the Monetary Policy Unit of the Bank, and if not, if he is aware of the recent public disclosure of the proceedings and decisions thereof by the Governor.

The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development (Dr. Sithanen): Mr Speaker, Sir, I presume that the hon. Member is referring to the Monetary Policy Committee.

As the House is aware, sub section 55 (3) of the Bank of Mauritius Act 2004 specifies that in the discharge of its functions, the Monetary Policy Committee shall not be subject to the direction or control of any other person or authority. Furthermore, sub section 54 (3) provides that the MPC shall regulate its meetings and proceedings in such manner as it thinks fit.

In addition the MPC shall, as soon as practicable under sub section 55 (2) after every meeting, cause to be published the gist of the monetary policy to be conducted by the Bank.

It is, therefore, up to the MPC to decide on the most appropriate mode of publicity and extent of disclosure as to the gist of the Bank's monetary policy.

STE CECILE ROAD, RICHE TERRE – REPRESENTATIONS

(No. B/1071) Mrs B. Juggoo (First Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport & Shipping whether he will state if he has received representations from the inhabitants of the Sainte Cécile Road, Riche Terre, for the construction of a new road thereat.

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

Representations have not been received at the Ministry.

The matter has been referred to the Ministry of Local Government for appropriate action.

CHITRACOOT – LANDSLIDE – SPONSORED LOAN SCHEME

(No. B/1072) Mrs B. Juggoo (First Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to the inhabitants of Chitracoot who were given plots of land after the landslide thereat, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Housing Corporation, information as to if consideration will be given for an increase in the amount of the loan granted to them for the purpose of building houses.

The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development (Dr. Sithanen): Mr Speaker, Sir, as the House is aware, some families residing in the region of Chitracoot have been victims of landslide in that region and some residential units were damaged. In fact, specific representations were made by 13 families for concessionary loan

facilities from the Mauritius Housing Company under the Government Sponsored Loan Scheme to enable them build another housing unit on land leased to them at a different region namely, le Hochet, Terre Rouge.

The cases of these families were examined by the MHC, and I was informed that none of these families could benefit as per the eligibility criteria set under the Government Sponsored Loan since, amongst others, their monthly family income exceeded the income threshold requirement of Rs8,500.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as a Government, we could not be insensitive to the plight of these families for assistance. We exceptionally relaxed the eligibility criteria to enable these families benefit from the concessionary loans under the Government Loan Scheme.

I am advised that out of the 13 families, only four applied for the Government Sponsored loan and were granted the maximum loan of Rs 325,000 at a fixed rate of 6.5% per annum, whereas one who had applied for a smaller amount was granted the same. The remaining eight families, I am told, have not so far applied.

Mr Speaker, Sir, insofar as loans above the maximum amount of Rs 325,000 fixed under GSL are concerned, MHC is prepared to advance additional loans at an interest rate currently applicable to its normal loan subject to the repayment capacity of the families concerned.

Mrs Juggoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, is the Minister aware that some of the people among the 13 families are approximately 60 years old, that's why they could not apply for the loan? Some are getting their land transferred on their children's name and they would, therefore, request that the loan of Rs325,000 be given on a 6% basis. They were requesting that the sum of Rs25,000 was for documentation and only Rs300,000 remain for building the house. After the increase of price in building materials and so forth, they are requesting for Rs500,000 rather than Rs300,000.

Dr. Sithanen: Mr Speaker, Sir, I intervened to waive the criteria with respect to eligibility and what the hon. lady is asking is that we waive another criteria with respect to the ceiling. I understand that this might cause some problems, but I will request the MHC, as a measure of exception, to look into it.

MOTORWAY – SPEED LIMIT

(No. B/1073) Dr. A. Husnoo (Second Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport & Shipping whether, in regard to the maximum speed limit on the motorway, he will state if consideration will be given for the increase thereof to 100 kilometers per hour.

The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport & Shipping (Dr. R. Beebeejaun): Mr Speaker, Sir, setting of speed limits is based on many factors such as road features and condition, accident records, pedestrian activity, vehicle flows and the actual travelling speed. Some countries have used additional criteria and imposed speed limits to ensure fuel efficiency and to reduce emissions and pollution.

Two common criteria are the design speed of the road which is a selected speed used to determine the various geometrical design features of the road and the 85th percentile of travel speed which is based on the speed that separates the bottom 85% of vehicle speed from the top 15%.

As regards speed limits on our motorways, a speed review exercise was carried out in 2004 with a view to address speed limit anomalies and make the speed limit more reasonable and acceptable to drivers.

Following the exercise, the speed limit was raised from 80 to 90 km per hour, based on the 85th percentile speed. Speed zones of 60 km per hour were also introduced in built up areas with high pedestrian activity to ensure road safety.

The existing speed limit is a safe driving speed satisfying both the design and the percentile speed. The Traffic Management and Road Safety Unit does not recommend raising the speed limit to 100 kilometres per hour.

Mr Bérenger: Mr Speaker, we are talking about maximum speed on the motorway. As the hon. Deputy Prime Minister knows, there are different lanes. Does not the hon. Deputy Prime Minister feel that there is a lot of education, of pedagogical work to be done, because those who drive slowly too often stay on the right and can cause accidents. Should we not use the television for good purpose, unlike the normal use, and get the drivers to behave?

Dr. Beebeejaun: I agree entirely with the Leader of the Opposition. If the hon. Prime Minister were here, he would have said the same thing. We just have to learn good driving and how to use the roads.

COOKING OIL - PRICE

(No. B/1074) Mr R. Guttee (Third Member for Grand' Baie and Poudre d'Or) asked the Minister of Industry, Small & Medium Enterprises, Commerce and Co-operatives whether, in regard to the recent increase in the price of cooking oil, he will state if he will consider liberalizing the importation thereof.

(Withdrawn)

ECOLE DE FOOT - EQUIPMENT

(No. B/1075) Mr R. Guttee (Third Member for Grand' Baie and Poudre d'Or) asked the Minister of Youth and Sports whether, in regard to the "*Ecole de Foot*", he will state if he has received representations from the coaches thereof to the effect that –

- (a) there is a lack of equipment for training purposes and
- (b) the coaches have not received their allowances, since September 2007 to date.

(Withdrawn)

**PROFESSOR BASDEO BISSOONDOYAL COLLEGE –
COMPLAINTS**

(No. B/1076) Mr G. Gunness (Third Member for Montagne Blanche and GRSE) asked Minister of Education and Human Resources whether, in regard to the Professor Basdeo Bissoondoyal College, Flacq, he will state if he has received letters dated 10 and 24 July 2008, respectively, from the students and the attendants thereof, complaining of the recurrence of mismanagement thereat and, if so, if he proposes to set up a fact finding committee to look into the whole matter?

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, I received copies of the two letters dated 10 July 2008 and 24 July 2008 emanating from a group of students and attendants of Professor Basdeo Bissoondoyal College respectively.

The first letter of 10 July 2008 is, in fact, an anonymous one emanating from a group of students.

Although the allegations were anonymous, the Private Secondary Schools Authority (PSSA) has looked into the matter and I am informed that-

- (i) the school has undertaken an overall cleaning of the premises and the broken window panes are being replaced. The school management has been requested to complete all outstanding minor repairs before the resumption of studies on 11 August 2008;
- (ii) the management of the school has denied having taken any contribution from students for organising the function on music day and internal examinations. It has not been possible for the PSSA to collect evidence that there has been any forced contribution, and
- (iii) with regard to the misuse of the PTA funds, the PSSA has not been able to establish facts. However, the Registrar of Association is being requested to look into the matter.

I wish to remind the House that, as indicated in my reply to PQ No. B/720 on 17 June 2008, so long as the complainants prefer to remain under anonymous cover, the allegations cannot be crosschecked and verified.

The second letter of 24 July 2008 emanated from attendants of the school who alleged to modification of their hours of work without their consent and imposition to work on Saturdays up to 17.00 hours. The PSSA has informed that the school management of Professor Basdeo Bissoondoyal College has been instructed to strictly comply with the official working hours provided by PRB Report 2008.

The two complaints are of an administrative nature, relate to different issues and are being addressed by the PSSA as appropriate. Consequently, as indicated at our sitting of 17 June 2008, the need for a fact-finding committee does not arise.

Mr Guinness: Mr Speaker, Sir, I take the first letter of the 10 July from the students. The Minister said that, in the case of music day, inquiries have been carried out and that there has been no contribution. Can I ask the hon. Minister whether the PSSA inquired as to whether students were asked to pay Rs40 for the internal examination fees? Is it normal practice for schools to ask students to pay for internal examination fees?

Mr Gokhool: In fact, the matter has been looked into and, as I indicated, the PSSA was not able to find evidence to the point being raised by the hon. Member.

Mr Guinness: Can I know from the hon. Minister whether the PSSA enquired from any student and, if yes, can he give the names of the students to whom questions were asked?

Mr Gokhool: I am not aware of the nature of the enquiry that was carried out. The enquiry was carried out by the officers of the PSSA at the level of the school.

Mr Guinness: Mr Speaker, Sir, I think, at this stage, be it an anonymous letter, since students have made complaints that they are paying, at least, the supervisors or the inspectors should have called certain students to verify whether this is the case.

Mr Speaker: The Minister has said that he does not have the details on how the enquiry was carried out, but an enquiry was carried out and the result is that there has been no evidence.

Mr Guinness: Mr Speaker, Sir, I agree, but you would imagine that my question goes in line with that letter and the Minister would have presumed that I will ask these supplementary questions.

Mr Gokhool: I know, but, as I have said, this was an anonymous allegation. In spite of the fact that it was anonymous, the PSSA was requested to find out what was exactly the situation.

Mr Guinness: Mr Speaker, Sir, the Minister said that...

Mr Speaker: We are turning round and round. We are taking a lot of time of the House. If the hon. Minister does not have the details as to whether it was an enquiry carried out student by student, he should say that he does not have the information.

Mr Gokhool: I said that I don't have all the details of the enquiry.

Mr Speaker: The hon. Member can come with a substantive question.

Mr Guinness: Mr Speaker, Sir, I'll come to the letter from the attendants. Is it normal that a school modifies the timetable and the attendants are asked to work from 8.30 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Saturdays?

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, as I said, this is contrary to PRB recommendations and the school has been given strict instructions to comply with the provisions of the PRB Report 2008. I can add, as I said last time, if the employees are still not satisfied, they can refer the matter to the Ministry of Labour and Industrial Relations because their contract is being infringed by the school.

Mr Guinness: There is a number of cases like that where the college does not adhere to existing rules. This is why several times I have asked the Minister whether he is ready to set up a fact-finding committee to let people come and talk. Why is the Ministry refusing the setting up of a fact-finding committee?

Mr Gokhool: I have already given my answer, but I can assure the hon. Member that my Ministry is monitoring the situation at the school and PSSA has been given strict instructions not to condone any malpractice. This is the guarantee I can give to the House.

Mr Guinness: Can I ask the hon. Minister whether he has looked into the case where four attendants had registered in the attendance book that they were at their site of work supposedly at Flacq at 7.51 a.m., 7.49 a.m., 7.38 a.m. and 7.58 a.m. respectively, but these same four attendants were obliged to go to work at Ebene, that is, the Eastern University. Has the hon. Minister looked into that matter?

Mr Gokhool: That matter was raised in PQ No. B/720.

(Interruptions)

If it is being raised again, I'll look into the matter because this is a new information that is being given to me.

Mr Guinness: I cannot understand. There have been articles in two different newspapers with pictures.

Mr Speaker: I am sorry. The hon. Member can put questions, but he cannot expect the hon. Minister to read all the press.

Mr Guinness: It seems that the hon. Minister is not aware, even though he went to the college for only five minutes. Can I ask the hon. Minister whether the supervisors have met the four attendants and asked them to state that they had taken a vacation leave on that day when they were seen on the site of work?

Mr Gokhool: I am not aware of this, Mr Speaker, Sir, but I may look into it. What I can say to the hon. Member is that we have a union of employees registered and recognised. The employees know their rights. I think they will help the Ministry if they can report the matter in an official manner and then we can look into it and open an inquiry. But anonymous allegations make it difficult.

Mr Guinness: Mr Speaker, Sir, I heard the Minister refer to the union of employees, but it is the same union of employees who has asked the Minister several times to set up a fact-finding committee, and the Minister is saying that he is going to collaborate! The hon. Minister should set up the fact-finding committee and we will see.

Mr Gokhool: But the hon. Member has to advise the union to come with evidence or with facts which will be the basis of the fact-finding committee and not mere allegations. We cannot act on mere allegations.

Mr Speaker: I think we have had enough debate on this question. Next question!

CUREPIPE – PRIVATE LANDS – ILL-KEPT

(No. B/1077) Mrs M. Martin (Second Member for Curepipe and Midlands) asked the Minister of Local Government whether, in regard to ill-kept private lands situated in Curepipe and whose owners are known to the Municipal Council of Curepipe, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Council, information as to –

- (a) the number thereof, and
- (b) if any action has been taken to remedy the situation and, if so, give details thereof.

Dr. David: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Municipal Council of Curepipe that the number of ill-kept private lands including State lands found within the town of Curepipe and whose owners are known is 154.

As regards part (b) of the question, I am informed that the Municipal Council had served notices on the owners of those lands for cleaning of same. The Municipal Council has also established an ongoing programme for the cleaning of bare lands.

Whereas in the case of State lands, cleaning is being undertaken by the Municipal labour especially as they represent a serious risk to public health and security. In addition, I have requested my colleague, the Minister of Housing and Lands, to urge all lessees of State lands to keep their lands cleared.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the issue of overgrown bare lands/waste lands is a serious problem being faced by the local authorities. The House may wish to note that since the outbreak of the Chikungunya disease in 2006, local authorities have established ongoing programmes for the clearing of bare lands and waste lands which are situated within hundred metres of built up areas. Moreover regular inspections and monitoring of all bare lands are being carried out by the local authorities and notices are being served upon owners requiring them to clear their lands.

However I am also informed by the local authorities that, in some cases, owners do not comply with notices served relying on the local authorities to get the lands cleared. In many cases the owners of the lands are unknown or untraceable and therefore, despite limited funds and human resources, the local authorities have to clear these lands to ensure the safety and security of the public. Consequently, Government had decided on 13 June 2008 that local authorities should claim a fee from the owners of bare

lands/wastelands whenever these are cleared by the Councils' employees. Accordingly, local authorities have been requested to prepare appropriate regulations under the Local Government Act to claim fees from known owners of overgrown bare lands whenever these lands are cleared by Councils' employees.

Furthermore, I have no doubt that with the proclamation of the Environment Protection (Amendment) Act 2008 on 15 July 2008, this problem can be addressed more effectively by Local Authorities which have been empowered under the Act to serve an eyesore abatement notice on any owner/occupier of the land or building where an eyesore is detected requiring him to abate the eyesore within a specified time.

In case of non-compliance with the notice, the Local Authorities may serve a fixed penalty notice to the contraveners who will be liable to pay a fine amounting to Rs10,000.

In cases where the contraveners fail to pay the fixed penalty, criminal proceedings may be instituted against them, and on conviction, they would be liable to a fine which shall not be less than thrice the fixed penalty.

Mrs Martin: Mr Speaker, Sir, I thank the hon. Minister for his answer. He mentioned that on 13 June, Government decided to implement a measure whereby the Municipality, through regulations, should apply a fee to contravenants. Does he know if the Municipality of Curepipe has, in fact, prepared the regulations?

Dr. David: I will check, Mr Speaker, Sir. But, what I know is that, as soon as we start cleaning the bare lands or wastelands, two or three weeks later, there is overgrowth and then we start again. This cannot go on. This is why we have said that we are going to apply penalties to the owners. And those who cannot be traced, we will fine them later on when they start using the land either for construction or doing anything with the land.

Mr Jhugroo: Mr Speaker, Sir, is the hon. Minister aware that the Municipal Council of Curepipe cannot clean these bare lands because they do not have enough manpower?

Dr. David: That's true, Mr Speaker, Sir. This is why I said that owners have to take their responsibility.

Mr Bhagwan: Mr Speaker, Sir, as far as State lands are concerned, it is a real problem. *L'exemple doit venir d'en haut.* In each Local Authority or even District Council, we have bare lands under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Agriculture. I won't mention my own Constituency. They should go and see the state of these bare lands which are under the authority of the Ministry of Agriculture. It is a shame for Mauritius. What does the hon. Minister intend to do? Recently, mention was made about putting enclosure. I would like to know from the hon. Minister whether Government is coming with immediate action regarding State lands.

Dr. David: I took that pledge last time, Mr Speaker, Sir, and I have liaised with my colleague, the hon. Minister of Housing and Lands. In fact, he has already issued letters to all Ministries where State lands have been leased to them. They have the responsibility to clean these lands.

Mrs Martin: Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Minister say whether the Municipality will give priority to the lands where the owners are known or even State lands where neighbours have put in complaints for years or maybe months and nothing has been done? Can he ask the Municipality to look into it and then be diligent in its work?

Dr. David: In fact, we have done this, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Dowarkasing: Mr Speaker, Sir, many of the owners of these plots of land are abroad. I want to know from the hon. Minister what his Ministry is contemplating to do in such cases.

Dr. David: This is why, Mr Speaker, Sir, we have contacted the State Law Office to find out whether we can amend part of the Land Act or the Notaries Act.

DEVOYENNE, FOREST SIDE – LAND ALLOCATION - LETTERS OF INTENT

(No. B/1078) **Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun (Third Member for La Caverne and Phoenix)** asked the Minister of Agro Industry and Fisheries whether, in regard to persons who were issued with letters of intent for the allocation of land at Devoyenne, Forest Side, he will state if they have –

- (a) been informed that they will instead be transferred to the ex-tea belt area, and

(b) signed their lease agreement.

Dr. Boolell: Mr Speaker, Sir, in regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed by the Land Use Division of the Ministry that in April 2005, 9 beneficiaries were issued with letters of intent for the allocation of land over an extent of 9A73 at State land Devoyenne.

In the course of the land survey, to enable subdivision of the land, it was brought to our attention that the land is very marginal, extremely marshy and unsuitable for cultivation. In fact, the AREU Division of the Ministry has recommended that the land be afforested. The 9 beneficiaries were subsequently informed that they are being relocated to appropriate sites within the ex-tea belt area.

With regard to part (b) of the question, I wish to inform the House that a site visit was effected with the planters concerned on 18 February 2008 in order to familiarise themselves with the new proposed sites and facilitating access with accompanying measures.

I further wish to inform the House that in April 2005, 74 other beneficiaries were issued similar letters of Intent each in other regions of the ex-tea belt. Due to subdivision problems of large plots into smaller plots, lease agreements could not be finalised. Upon my request a second Surveyor was posted to the Ministry in October 2007 to alleviate the problem of survey works pending at the Ministry. Necessary action is being taken to regularise the lease agreements of all the planters concerned. In most of the cases the land allocated will be in excess of one *arpent*.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Speaker, Sir, it seems that some people were allotted new portions of land and they have already signed their lease agreements whilst others were kept in abeyance. May I ask the hon. Minister to look into the matter and to see to it that all the beneficiaries get the same treatment?

Dr. Boolell: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Member can rest assured that all beneficiaries will have parity of esteem.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Speaker, Sir, the planters were requested to contact the mechanical pool to get the land cleared. May I request the hon. Minister to look into the matter again because they cannot do so without the contract or the lease agreement?

Dr. Boolell: Mr Speaker, Sir, this can be a problem since most of the equipment belonging to Sugar Planters Mechanical Pool are being used by the Project Implementation Committee for regrouping of planters. However, I will personally look into it.

TEACHER EDUCATOR SUPERVISORS UNION – PETROL MILEAGE ALLOWANCE

(No. B/1079) Mr J. C. Barbier (Third Member for GRNW and Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether he will state if he has received a letter from the Union of Teacher Educator Supervisors in connection with the non adjustment of the petrol mileage allowance by the Pre-School Trust Fund, thus ignoring the different circular letters issued by the Ministry of Civil Service Affairs and, if so, the remedial actions that will be taken.

Mr Gokhool: Mr. Speaker Sir, I have not personally received any letter from the Union of Teacher Educator Supervisors but I am informed that the Mauritius Union of Pre School Educators has written a letter on 30 May 2008 to the Minister of Labour, Industrial Relations & Employment, complaining that the travelling of Teacher Educator Supervisors has not been adjusted in accordance with Circular Note No.3 of 2007 from the Ministry of Civil Service Affairs & Administrative Reforms issued on 23 November 2007.

I understand that the Teacher Educator Supervisors by virtue of the salary they draw are not entitled to travel grant. However as they performed field work, namely carrying out school visits, they are eligible for refund, on the days on which they carry field duties, the running costs for distance which is not considered as official mileage, i.e. from home to office, and for official travelling between office and site of work / for official travelling by the most economical route at approved rates subject to a ceiling, which under the PRB Report 2003, was limited to MUR 4,200 monthly. Mileage is paid subject to the officer giving evidence that he/she or his/her spouse owns a car and uses same to perform field work.

In November 2007, following hikes in the prices of fuel, new rates were applicable for refund of mileage and the Teacher Educator Supervisors were eligible to these revised rates. However, the revision of the mileage rates could not be applied at the PSTF in that some of the Teacher Educator Supervisors did not own a car or were effecting school visits by bus, even when they own a car, but were claiming mileage. The PSTF felt that there

was a need to consider the whole issue and in the meantime to maintain the earlier ceiling of MUR 4,200.

The matter is now forming the subject of an industrial dispute. I also understand that as soon as the new Board of the Early Childhood Care and Education Authority (ECCEA) is appointed, action will be taken to compensate the Teacher Educator Supervisors for cost incurred as official travelling in accordance with regulations in force.

Mr Barbier: Mr Deputy Speaker, the hon. Minister mentioned that the Ministry of Civil of Civil Service and Administrative Reforms in a circular letter dated 23 November 2007 made some adjustments, after the increase in petroleum products, to the mileage and petrol allowance. Why should there be a dispute? Is it not rationale that these officers who were entitled already to Rs4,200 monthly benefit an increase on the same *barême* as stipulated in the letter I have just mentioned?

Mr Gokhool: I asked the same question to the officers, then I came to know that the problem is with regard to payment of mileage which is tied up to the officer owing a car and using the car. The information I have been given is that some officers are claiming mileage by car, but are performing field duties by bus. It is not regular. There are some who have no car licence, but are claiming the mileage allowance and are driven by the husbands who are public officers. These are irregularities. We cannot accept it. We have to put some order and then the payment will be done.

Mr Barbier: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister is talking about some officers. But what about the general policy of the Government towards these officers concerning mileage and petrol allowance?

Mr Gokhool: This refers to mileage, but those who travel by bus are being refunded. It is only a question concerning mileage.

**MINISTRY OF HEALTH - NURSING OFFICERS & TRAINEE
HEALTH INSPECTOR – VACANCIES**

(No. B/1080) Mrs D. Perrier (Fourth Member for Savanne and Black River) asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether, in regard to the posts of Nursing Officers and Trainee Health Inspector, he will state the number of vacancies which had to be filled at the last recruitment exercise, indicating the number of –

- (a) applications received, and
- (b) successful applicants who took office.

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

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, vacancies in the grade of Nursing Officers at the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life are filled from Student Nurses who have successfully completed a three-year training course in General Nursing at the Central School of Nursing. All Student Nurses who pass the final examination are offered appointment as Nursing Officer.

I wish to inform the House that the entry grade to the post of Nursing Officers is therefore at the level of Student Nurse.

The last recruitment exercise for the enlistment of Student Nurses, which falls under the responsibility of the Public Service Commission, was carried out in March 2006. The Public Service Commission submitted lists of 306 suitable candidates in different batches during period June 2006 to December 2007. In all 235 had assumed office as Student Nurse, but following drop-outs, 221 are currently undergoing training.

As regards the grade of Trainee Health Inspector, the last recruitment exercise was initiated in July 2007 for the enlistment of 25 Trainee Health Inspectors. In May 2008, the Public Service Commission submitted a list of 25 suitable candidates of which only 13 candidates accepted the offer whilst 10 did not respond and 2 declined the offer. The Public Service Commission has been requested to submit a further list of 12 candidates from the waiting list.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as the recruitment of the two grades i.e. Student Nurse and Trainee Health Inspector falls under the jurisdiction of the Public Service Commission, I am not in a position to indicate the number of applications received.

Mrs Perrier: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister said that out of 25, only 13 took office for the post of Trainee Health Inspector. Can we know what are the reasons behind the poor interest for this post?

Dr. Bunwaree: We will have to look into the matter. I will transmit the request to my colleague, but, in fact, this is the situation.

Mrs Perrier: Is the Minister envisaging to review the conditions attached to this post so as to give more incentives to the people? The public is suffering from the poor quality of the service because of lack of personnel.

Dr. Bunwaree: We will look into that, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. I have already asked the officers of the Ministry, when we were preparing the answer to look into that aspect.

SOUTH REGION –REGISTERED FISHERS

(No. B/1081) Mr J. C. Barbier (Third Member for GRNW and Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Agro Industry and Fisheries whether he will give a list of the fishers registered for fishing activities in the south region, since July 2005 to date.

Dr. Boolell: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, a total of 58 fishers were registered for fishing activities in the south regions since July 2005 to June 2008.

Mr Barbier: Mr Deputy Speaker, may I ask the Minister whether he can circulate the list of the registered fishers?

Dr. Boolell: I will table the information, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

FRUITS & VEGETABLES – EXPORTATION - FREIGHT REBATE SCHEME

(No. B/1082) Mr J. C. Barbier (Third Member for GRNW and Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Agro Industry and Fisheries whether, in regard to the Freight Rebate Scheme for the exporters of fruits and vegetables, he will state if any change has been brought thereto and if so, the reasons therefor.

Dr. Boolell: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Freight Rebate Scheme introduced in the Budget of 1991/1992 provides for part refund of freight cost incurred by exporters as a boost up for export of a few selected horticultural products.

The Scheme was revised more than once to take on board new horticultural products, new export destinations, new rates and basis for refund. The last review was undertaken in December 2005 to reorient exports from fresh to minimally processed fresh/dried horticultural produce and to diversified market including for long haul destinations such as Dubai, Singapore and Japan.

As at date, there has not been any change in the Scheme and funds would be disbursed under Programme 481 (Policy and Strategy for Agro Industry and Fisheries) Item 'Food Security Fund' under which an amount of Rs50 m. has been provided for this financial year.

Fifteen exporters are registered under the Scheme. Pineapples constitute the main export and the others are litchis, mangoes, breadfruit, chillies and green. The Scheme is managed by Agricultural Marketing Board since June 2001 and funds disbursed under the Scheme since July 2001 to date amount to some Rs55 m.

In line with Government Programme for export oriented non sugar cane agriculture and agro-industry, the Scheme is being revisited in consultation with concerned stakeholders.

Mr Guinness: Can I know from the Minister why is it that in 2005 a refund of 50% of the freight was being given to the exporters and then it has been brought down to 25%? Why this change from 50% to 25%?

Dr. Boolell: Sometimes it depends on the quantum of the financial resources available.

Mr Guinness: I think the hon. Minister will agree with me that, at a point in time when the freight is increasing, at the same time, the refund, instead of increasing, is being reduced from 50% to 25%. Does the Minister see it as a good policy?

Dr. Boolell: If the hon. Member had paid heed to what I have stated, he would have known that funds disbursed under the Scheme since July 2001 to date amount to Rs55 m. In fact, under the Programme 481 a amount of Rs50 m. has been earmarked for this financial year.

Mr Guinness: Is the hon. Minister aware that, for example, exporters of pineapples are waiting for the refund, for more than six to eight months now? May we know why this delay in the refund?

Dr. Boolell: There has been no delay. There was an inquiry which was conducted in the light of abusive practices. Corrective measures have been taken to address the situation. I can assure my hon. friend that the AMB is looking into the matter and claims are submitted, as the hon. Member is aware, by exporters to AMB, provided the documentary evidence, such as bill of entry and EUR1 certificate, is submitted.

Mr Guinness: Mr Deputy Speaker, it is quite serious what the hon. Minister is saying concerning abusive practices. Can I know what are the abusive practices that have been going on?

Dr. Boolell: Abusive practices which occurred in 2001 to 2005 and, of course, we had to put the house in order and I can assure my hon. friend that there was a case which was even referred to the SLO.

BLUE BAY MARINE PARK – ENTRY FEE

(No. B/1083) Mr J. C. Barbier (Third Member for G.R.N.W. and Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Agro Industry and Fisheries whether, in regard to the Mahebourg Marine Park, he will state if an entry fee is charged for access thereto, and if so, the quantum thereof.

Dr. Boolell: Mr Speaker, Sir, the Marine Park in Mahebourg is known as the “Blue Bay Marine Park”.

The Fisheries and Marine Resources (Marine Protected Areas) Regulations 2001, amended in October 2007, provide for measures to regulate the activities inside the Blue Bay Marine Park through a system of permits and fees for entering the park and carrying out of activities therein.

In line with section 12(1) of the Regulations, any person in charge of any boat or any vessel entering the Blue Bay Marine Park should be the holder of a permit. The fee charged is Rs5,000 yearly. However, in order to relieve owners of boats/vessels, an optional weekly fee of Rs100 was introduced in October 2007, to enable smaller payments for those wishing to enter the park for a shorter period only.

The charging of fees to enter the park does not apply to registered artisanal fishermen having fishing boats. Moreover, pleasure crafts have started paying the entry fee as from October 2007, under the Fisheries and Marine Resources (Marine Protected Areas) Amendment Regulations 2007.

Mr Barbier: Mr Speaker, Sir, insofar as the pleasure crafts are concerned, they are already paying licence to the Ministry of Fisheries. They are also paying a licence under the Ministry of Tourism; now they are being asked to pay Rs100 per visitor on their boat and another Rs5000 as licence fee to the Marine Park itself. Doesn't the Minister consider it a burden for these people to pay a fee to the Ministry of Fisheries, the Ministry of Tourism and Rs100 per visitor? Will he agree with me that there is need to review the whole policy and to make this policy more accessible to all Mauritian citizens?

Dr. Boolell: Mr Speaker, Sir, it is the minimal and there has been no complaint registered.

LE MORNE - PROFESSIONAL FISHERS - ACTIVITIES

(No. B/1084) Mrs D. Perrier (Fourth Member for Savanne and Black River) asked the Minister of Agro Industry and Fisheries whether he will state if he is aware of the difficulties faced by the professional fishers in the region of Le Morne to carry out their activities and, if so, the actions taken or he intends to take to address the issue.

Dr. Boolell: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am advised that fishermen of the region of Le Morne have complained that certain tourism activities are disturbing their fishing operations.

Representatives of one Fishermen's Association from La Gaulette has on 29 July last complained to the Fisheries Division of the Ministry that the placing of poles in the lagoon and water skiing activities from hotels situated in the area of Pointe Petit Pêcheur were posing problems for them to navigate and to fish for baits.

I am proposing, Mr Speaker, Sir, to set up an inter-Ministerial committee comprising the Ministry of Tourism, Leisure & Economic Development and my Ministry to look into the matter and come up with recommendations with regard to the resource use in the lagoon of the Le Morne region.

However, I must say that we have impressed upon hotel owners that they should comply to provisions in Regulations, in respect of the obligations that they have *vis-à-vis* the fishermen.

Mrs Perrier: Mr Speaker, Sir, they derive their income from this activity. Can the hon. Minister give us a time-frame for the setting up of this committee?

Dr. Boolell: Mr Speaker, Sir, we are not waiting only for the committee to be set up. In fact, we have impressed upon those owners that they need to comply with speed limit and the matter has been taken up at the level of the Ministry of Tourism. But next week I'll convey the meeting.

Mrs Perrier: Is the hon. Minister aware that, in the past, they had an agreement with all the tourism operators of the hotels in the region to come with a compensation to these fishermen to help them in this difficult situation. Can the hon. Minister say whether he has looked into this possibility?

Dr. Boolell: Mr Speaker, Sir, I won't pronounce on this issue. Let us take it up at the inter-Ministerial meeting which is going to be held and then we can look for certain what was the outcome of discussions between fishermen and the promoters. As I have stated, we know what the rights of fishermen are and what are the obligations of those promoters and, if need be, they will have to comply with the obligations and commitments given.

Mr Ganoo: The point is that the hon. Minister himself said that the increased activities in the lagoons now are reducing the already narrow opportunities of the fishermen in the locality. I wish also to ask the hon.

Minister this question. There has been, in the past, a commitment taken by the owners of the hotels to pay a certain compensation to these fishermen. Could the hon. Minister, please, liaise with the owners and see whether they are willing to do that? Perhaps with the Minister's influence and intervention, we could find a solution.

Dr. Boolell: My hon. friend knows that, if there is an obligation, we will make sure that they comply and adhere to, and they have to compensate. But, let's look at the notes of the previous meeting and, certainly, we will do the needful.

NOTRE DAME - WOMEN CENTRE – CONSTRUCTION

(No. B/1085) Mrs B. Juggoo (First Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Women's Rights, Child Development, Family Welfare & Consumer Protection whether, in regard to the construction of the women centre at Notre Dame, she will state where matters stand.

Mrs Seebun: Mr Speaker, Sir, the contract for the construction of a women centre at Notre Dame was awarded to Tabernacle Ltd. on 22 October 2007 by the Ministry of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping. Civil works started on 04 December 2007 and the completion date was on 03 June 2008. An extension time of one month was granted to the contractor on account of heavy rainfalls. The extended completion date was 04 July 2008.

I am informed that right from the start of works, the Project Architect observed that there were persistent delays, despite several notices to the contractor. The latter was requested to increase his resources in order to catch up the delays. However, at the last site meeting held on 19 June 2008, work on site was delayed by 12 weeks.

At a meeting held on 04 July 2008, MPI informed my Ministry that the contractor has left the site. Status of construction on site as at date is 20%.

During the meeting, the contractor was asked by MPI to reconsider his position. Through a letter dated 07 July 2008, the contractor requested for an extension of time of four months to complete the outstanding works.

On 04 August 2008, the PS of MPI convened a special meeting with the contractor and all other stakeholders (the client Ministry, Architecture, Engineering and Quality Surveying Sections) to discuss on the delay on the part of the contractor.

I am informed that decision will be taken by MPI on the way forward on Wednesday 06 August, 2008, that is, tomorrow.

Mrs Juggoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I request the hon. Minister to contact MPI again and to make sure that the work that has started is not delayed again? It was due to be ended in June 2008.

Mr Speaker: The hon. Minister has answered that there is a meeting tomorrow. Therefore, let us wait and see what happens.

**STC - FLOUR & BROAD BEANS
– FUNNY FLOUR & RICE CO. LTD.**

(No. B/1086) **Mr G. Guinness (Third Member for Montagne Blanche and GRSE)** asked the Minister of Industry, Small & Medium Enterprises, Commerce and Co-operatives whether, in regard to the flour and broad bean sold to the Funny Flour and Rice Co. Ltd., he will for the benefit of the House, obtain from the State Trading Corporation, information as to –

- (a) the price at which a 50 kg bag of flour and 50 kg bag of broad beans were purchased by the Corporation, and
- (b) the procedures adopted for the sale of the flour and broad beans to the Funny Flour and Rice Co. Ltd.

Dr. Jeetah: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the State Trading Corporation (STC) that the price at which the Corporation purchased flour from *Les Moulins de la Concorde Ltée* is USD 34.25 per bag of 50 kg for Type A and USD 34.60 per bag of 50 kg for Type B. For broad beans, the price per 50 kg purchased from Madagascar by the Corporation is EUR 32.66.

As regards part (b) of the question, the requirements with regard to the procedures for the sale of flour are as follows –

- (a) proof of registration of an entity as a wholesaler in accordance with the provisions of the Local Government Act;
- (b) the insurance of a bank guarantee equal to the value of flour to be purchased against payment by cheque, and
- (c) the sale of flour at price fixed by Government in accordance with Consumer Protection (Price and Supplies Control) Act 1998.

As regards sale of broad beans, the STC proceeds to sale points/retailers and wholesalers and sells to whoever expresses interest through phone, direct contact and onsite visits. Sales are made in bulk and in pack of ½ kg.

The number of outlets involved are –

- (i) 104 wholesale outlets;
- (ii) 81 bakers, and
- (iii) STC sheds in Port Louis.

Mr Guimbeau: Mr Speaker, Sir, I don't know whether the hon. Minister has the 50 kg bag in rupee terms because my question was 50 kg bag of flour in rupee terms. Can I know from him how much it costs the STC a 50 kg bag of flour?

Dr. Jeetah: Mr Speaker, Sir, of course, that would depend on the exchange rate, but I don't have today's rate.

Mr Guinness: Did the Minister say that the purchase price for Type B is 34 euros or USD?

Dr. Jeetah: Mr Speaker, Sir, I mentioned 32.66 euros for broad beans.

Mr Guinness: Can I get for flour?

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

Mr Guinness: I am asking the Minister to repeat the answer.

Dr. Jeetah: The hon. Member must listen properly. It is USD 34.60 for Type B.

Mr Guinness: Mr Speaker, Sir, it is USD 34.60 for flour. If I take it to be Rs30.00 for one USD and I round the figure, it costs Rs900.00 to buy a 50 kg flour bag. Last week, the Minister gave a written reply. We sold it to Funny Flour and Rice Company Ltd. for Rs655 per 50 kg bag. How can the Minister reconcile that the STC is buying at more than Rs900.00 and selling at Rs655? Can he give an explanation?

Dr. Jeetah: Mr Speaker, Sir, it is a bit similar to the saying, "Somebody has discovered America on the map". The hon. Member ought to know that this Government is giving Rs700 m. of subsidy, hence, the difference in the price. The actual price that it is being sold is Rs655 per bag of 50 kg.

Mr Guinness: Can I get it from the Minister? When we sell to Funny Flour and Rice Company Ltd., we are not selling to retailers or wholesalers, we are selling to a trader. Can I know whether we sell it at a subsidised price to the trader?

Dr. Jeetah: Mr Speaker, Sir, flour is sold at a wholesale price of Rs655 per bag of 50 kg and there is a small difference for the depot in Arsenal where it is sold at Rs652 per bag offered as a discount for the distance.

Mr Guinness: Can I know from the hon. Minister whether he knows how much the trader Funny Flour and Rice Company Ltd. sells the flour on the market?

Dr. Jeetah: All these prices are fixed by Government and can't be varied. There is a price structure when there is a margin for the wholesalers and the price in retail to consumers is fixed.

Mr Guinness: As far as broad beans are concerned, can I know from the hon. Minister whether it is the same broad beans from Madagascar which were imported by the STC that has been sold to Funny Flour and Rice Company Ltd.?

Dr. Jeetah: Mr Speaker, Sir, I can't keep on repeating what I have just said. The hon. Member has to listen.

Mr Guinness: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I know from the hon. Minister what is the procedure because how is it that only Funny Flour and Rice Company Ltd. can buy at this price? I would like to know whether there has been an open tender calling for any trader who wants to buy flour and broad beans. What has been the procedure for selling these products to Funny Flour and Rice Company Ltd.?

Dr. Jeetah: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Member needs to listen when I answer. I have mentioned that there are 104 wholesale outlets, there are 81 bakers and the STC shed provides to anyone who wishes to buy. So, I don't know what he is fishing at.

Mr Guinness: We know that the STC sells to the retail outlets, but here we are selling to a trader, Funny Flour and Rice Company Ltd. Therefore, how is it that this company only can buy at this price? Can I know whether flour has been sold at the same price to other companies?

Dr. Jeetah: Mr Speaker, Sir, this is the sale price. If the hon. Member wishes to buy, from the information I have just given, if he can provide registration as a wholesaler, if he can issue the bank guarantee or whoever, if somebody could give the guarantee that he can sell at this fixed price, it is available to the whole public.

Mr Guinness: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I know whether on broad beans also we have subsidy? Because according to the price that the Minister has quoted, again here also, the buying price for STC is higher than the price that it has been sold.

Dr. Jeetah: Mr Speaker, Sir, the price of broad beans has varied between Rs10 and Rs21. I recall, at one stage, it used to be sold at Rs38. When STC got into the business of importing broad beans, the price went down, I think, by Rs10 or Rs14 between one or two days. The price depends on the period of activity, the quantity sold, the client's turnover in terms of business with STC, the expiry date of the broad beans, the distributive capacity of the client, the established account credibility with the STC and market volatility.

TROU D'EAU DOUCE - TROPICAL CRUISE LTD. – LICENCE

(No. B/1087) Mr G. Guinness (Third Member for Montagne Blanche and GRSE) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism, Leisure and External Communications whether in regard to the Tropical Cruise Ltd., he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Tourism Authority, information as to if it has been issued with a licence to operate a business of rental of cars and marine equipment to tourists at Trou d'Eau Douce and, if not, the actions that will be taken against the said company.

The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism, Leisure and External Communications (Mr X. L. Duval): Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Tourism Authority that it has not received any application from Tropical Cruise Ltd. for the operation of a business of rental of cars and marine equipment to tourists at Trou d'Eau Douce.

However, that company has instead applied to the Tourism Authority for a Tourist Enterprise Licence as Tour Operator at Trou d'Eau Douce. Following clearances received from the Police Department, the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life and the Fire Services Department, the Licencing Committee of the Tourism Authority approved the issue of a Tourism Enterprise Licence to Tropical Cruise Ltd. for providing tour operator service at Trou D'Eau Douce as from 23 May 2008.

Mr Guinness: Can I know from the hon. Minister whether the Tourism Authority approved the licence? One of the conditions is the location of the premises. Can I know whether this company has a proper location?

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have not seen it myself, but I am told that it is from a converted container at Trou d'Eau Douce.

Mr Guinness: Can I refer the hon. Minister to PQ B/934 which I put to the Minister of Housing and Lands last week? I'll just quote what the Minister said –

“Tropical Cruise Ltd, a company dealing with the renting of cars and marine equipment, is currently occupying the land illegally, without the mandatory authorisation of my Ministry.

Consequently, action is being initiated at the level of my Ministry to serve a 'Notice to Squatter' on Tropical Cruise Ltd."

How can a squatter be given a licence?

Mr X. L. Duval: I don't know, Mr Speaker, Sir, but I have got a copy of a lease agreement. But I'll look into it. If it is a fact, then we'll take action. Don't worry!

BEL OMBRE - ERADICATION OF ABSOLUTE POVERTY PROGRAMME

(No. B/1088) Mr A. Ganoo (First Member for Savanne and Black River) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether he will state if consideration will be given for the inclusion of the village of Bel Ombre in the Eradication of Absolute Poverty Programme.

The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development (Dr. R. Sithanen): Mr Speaker, Sir, in my Budget Speech 2008/09, I announced that the focus of the Eradication of Absolute Poverty Programme would initially be on the 229 pockets of absolute poverty already identified by the Trust Fund. The objective of the programme is to tackle the problems of absolute poverty in an integrated manner with the collaboration of the NGOs and the private sector.

The village of Bel Ombre is not among the pockets of poverty already identified by the Trust Fund, but I am informed that any other cluster of severe poverty that is identified will be considered for inclusion in the EAP Programme.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we do realise that there are households outside the pockets of poverty which are facing poverty. The Trust Fund, in collaboration with NGOs continues to cater for the immediate needs of these households in accordance to its existing schemes which *inter alia* includes community projects, loans to needy students for tertiary education, micro credits and income generating activities.

In the case of Bel Ombre, in addition to the above, the National Empowerment Foundation in collaboration with the Trust Fund is also looking into the possibility of providing training to the unemployed of the

region with a view to enhancing their employability under the scheme of 'placement and training'. Furthermore, the NEF proposes to include the inhabitants of Bel Ombre in its NGOs training programme in Life Skill in order to facilitate "*accompagnement*" to the needy.

Mr Ganoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have no quarrel with the reply of the hon. Deputy Prime Minister and I refer to the last reply he gave to the PQ on the same matter and pockets of poverty. But, can I ask him whether it is possible to review the findings of the Trust Fund?

Dr. Sithanen: Mr Speaker, Sir, as I said, as they do the work in the field and if there is need to broaden the scope to include more villages, we will do it. As the hon. Member would know, there are areas where it's a question of percentage of poor. It is true that in the areas that have not been initially identified, there are people who are poor. That's why I have suggested these three pathways in order to address that problem.

Mr Lauthan: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I draw the attention of the hon. Deputy Prime Minister & Minister of Finance to the case of two extremely poor ladies, without revenue, who have spent a whole week at the rear of the *Marie Reine de la Paix* monument? They are being taken care of by...

Mr Speaker: Hon. Lauthan, I fully agree. You are very compassionate about these two persons. But this is a question related to Bel Ombre. I fully agree with you, but if you have a specific problem, you can see the Minister in person and talk to him.

DELHI - MK FLIGHT 745 – INCIDENT

(No. B/1089) Mr A. Ganoo (First Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism, Leisure and External Communications whether, in regard to the recent incident involving the MK flight 745 bound for Mauritius from Delhi, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from Air Mauritius Ltd, information as to if the second aircraft which was ferried to Delhi to ensure that the passengers reach Mauritius at the earliest, failed to do so and, if so, the reasons therefor.

The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism, Leisure and External Communications (Mr X. L. Duval): Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by Air Mauritius Ltd that the replacement aircraft ferried to Delhi to transport the passengers of MK flight 745, operated the return flight late

in the evening of 25 June. That flight was initially scheduled to depart at 6.00 a.m. on that day.

However, I understand that prior to the departure of the aircraft from Delhi, a flight control defect was reported and that technical fault needed to be investigated and rectified.

I am further informed that the repairs took quite some time, which resulted in the expiration of the flight crew duty time, whereby rest becomes mandatory. In those circumstances, arrangements were made for passengers to be taken back to the hotels provided by the company.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in its handling of this exceptional situation, the company has been guided by its uncompromising commitment to the safety of its passengers and crew.

Mr Ganoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, fortunately, this is not a recurrent happening for Air Mauritius. Can I inform the hon. Minister that the passengers had many complaints on that day, so that in the future when another such incident happens, they be properly looked after? I know that some Indian nationals who were coming to Mauritius even left the hotel and went away, and did not want to come to Mauritius for having waited for so long. In the future, can Air Mauritius be more attentive to the plight of passengers when things like this happen?

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, I will raise the matter with them.

Mr Ganoo: May I apologize, Mr Speaker, Sir? In fact, hon. Bodha and I were in the Chief Whip's office, and we did not hear the bell.

Mr Speaker: I accept your apologies. PQ No. B/1028, addressed to the hon. Prime Minister on IRS, will be now replied by the Deputy Prime Minister & Minister of Finance.

IRS – POLICY - REVIEW

(No. B/1028) Mr A. Ganoo (First Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & administrative reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether, in regard to the Integrated Resort Scheme, he will state if any decision has been taken to review the policy in regard thereto and, if so, the reasons therefor.

The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance & Economic Development (Dr. S. Sithanen): Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I am replying to this question.

Government had stated in its Programme that the Integrated Resort Scheme (IRS) would be reviewed. That is why, in November 2007, the Real Estate Development Scheme was introduced. The new scheme consists of an amended IRS for large landowners and a Real Estate Scheme for small land owners, that is, those owning in the aggregate less than 10 hectares but more than 01 *arpent* of land.

The IRS as initially formulated did not contain any provision to ensure that benefits will flow to the local community at large. It also targeted only large land owners.

This Government has brought an enhanced and equitable dimension to the Scheme by making provisions in the new Regulations for IRS developers to include measures for development of the locality and upliftment of the local community, thus transforming the IRS into a real engine for socio-economic development.

The objective is to ensure that the benefits accrue not only to the developers but also to the local people, the small entrepreneurs supplying goods and services and all those along the supply chain of an IRS development, in terms of employment and business opportunities, development of infrastructure, social amenities and community facilities.

In this respect, promoters of IRS projects are required to submit a written undertaking that benefits shall accrue to the local community and to small entrepreneurs generally, in terms of employment and business opportunities.

As per the amended IRS Scheme, it is also mandatory for IRS promoters to make a social contribution of Rs200,000 per residential property. This contribution will be channelled towards the development of social amenities, community development and other facilities for the benefit of the most needy people in the neighbouring community, based on a methodological and comprehensive assessment of the social needs of the region by the promoters. The social contribution could be in terms of training, health facilities & social care, sports and leisure facilities, education, scholarships and development of market places.

In addition, the Real Estate Scheme has been introduced alongside the conventional IRS to create opportunities for small landowners to participate in real estate development.

The RES will accordingly be instrumental in restoring a level playing field by encouraging small landowners to secure direct participation in real estate development projects as investors, entrepreneurs and promoters.

The new regulations make provision for the payment of a processing fee of Rs10,000 when an application is made to acquire a property under the IRS.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we have recently fine-tuned the scheme by an amendment that has been brought through the Finance Act 2008 for the levy of registration duty to be at USD70,000 or 5% of the value of the IRS residence, whichever is higher, instead of a fixed duty of USD70,000.

Mr Ganoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, this question was prompted by a statement which the Prime Minister has made, giving the impression that the concept of IRS is being reviewed. This is why I put this question. Can I ask the hon. Minister how many ongoing IRS projects have been given the green light as at now?

Dr. Sithanen: Mr Speaker, Sir, I think there are four or five that have either started construction or are close to starting construction. I will check and give the answer.

WTO MINISTERIAL MEETING – MAURITIAN DELEGATION

(No. B/1049) Mr N. Bodha (First Member for Vacoas & Floreal) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service and Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues and Outer Islands whether, in regard to the talks of the World Trade Organisation, held recently in Geneva, he will state –

- (a) the issues raised by the Mauritian delegation which participated therein, and
- (b) if talks have failed and if so, the impact thereof on the future of the Mauritian trade.

The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance & Economic Development (Dr. S. Sithanen): Mr Speaker, Sir, I led the Mauritius delegation to the WTO Ministerial meeting last month. The objective was to secure agreement on modalities on agriculture and non-agricultural market access (NAMA).

I was also the coordinator and spokesperson of the ACP group in the Green Room.

The main issues canvassed by the Mauritian delegation related to the following -

- (i) securing a long enough transition period for tariff cuts for agricultural exports. In our case, this is essentially sugar while for other ACP countries, these are cut flowers, rum, bananas and other specific agricultural products;
- (ii) ensuring that expansion of tariff quotas for sugar is phased in over a long transition period in the event that sugar is classified by the EU as a sensitive product;
- (iii) making sure that sugar is not classified as a tropical product. Tropical products are subject to deeper cuts over a shorter time frame;
- (iv) negotiating a long adjustment period for our non-agricultural exports such as textiles, clothing, tuna, gems and jewellery;
- (v) ensuring that Mauritius is exempted from undertaking any tariff cut in its current applied rates, and
- (vi) securing a commitment from the WTO members for financial assistance, primarily Aid for Trade, amongst others, to mitigate the erosion of preferences.

In spite of significant progress made in many areas, the talks failed as there was no consensus among some major players on some key sensitive issues.

Mr Speaker, Sir, from a strictly narrowly defined and short term perspective and if nothing changes, the current *status quo* obviously protects our preferential market access for our exports as Mauritius will not see any erosion of its preferences from MFN liberalisation.

However, there are many risks that could potentially adversely affect our non reciprocal preferences, especially as these are not compatible with WTO rules. Failure could lead to more disputes from countries that are against our non reciprocal preferences, as were the cases for bananas and sugar. It could also trigger a wave of rising protectionism which would adversely affect global trade and economic growth. It could also pave the way for more bilateral and regional trade agreements that would erode our preferences without the safeguards that we could have from a rules-based multilateral trading system.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I propose to make a statement later on.

Mr Bodha: Can I ask the Deputy Prime Minister how he thinks that the failure of the WTO talks will impact on EPA negotiations that we are going to have soon?

Dr. Sithanen: Mr Speaker, Sir, as I said in my reply, I am sure the hon. Member knows, and there are Members on the other side who have participated in these negotiations, that there is a cardinal principle which is the single undertaking: nothing is agreed until everything is agreed. We've made significant progress in securing some of the interests of Mauritius in sugar. That's why most Ministers who were there made a plea that whatever is on the table remains on the table and we find a framework where we could capture these benefits so that the next time when there is the reopening of the trade talks we don't go back to square one. Hopefully, if this can be done, we would have secured some benefits. As to the specific question as to how this will impact on the Economic Partnership Agreement, the hon. Member knows very well that one of the reasons why we need to sign these Economic Partnership Agreements is because the non reciprocal preferences are incompatible with the WTO. And one of the ways of making sure that they are compatible is through an Economic Partnership Agreement. Discussion is still going on. We have a temporary agreement with the EU. We have, until the end of December 2008, to finalise the EPA agreement between the EU and the Eastern and Southern African region.

Mr Bérenger: I have followed discussions in Geneva as closely as I could. Will be agree with my assessment, and then I will pick up where my colleague left, that in fact, this big actor is blaming the other actor. When we look at the pattern, with the forthcoming election in the US, the behaviour of the US Congress during the talks, will the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance agree with me that the talks have failed in priority,

because of the selfishness of the developed countries, beginning with the United States? Will he agree with me that the danger now is that this mood – it was mainly the United States, but also the European Union – can impact on the ongoing discussions through the EPAs - the selfishness that we witnessed? And will he agree with me and, through him, the question is to his colleague, the Minister of Environment, that it can also be the same scenario when we will be discussing post Kyoto, that frame of mind, that selfishness remains, we are in for very big trouble?

Dr. Sithanen: Mr Speaker, Sir, it is more *nuancé* than what the hon. Leader of the Opposition is saying. I was just reading the ‘Economist’, I don’t always agree with them, Mr Speaker, Sir, but for once I totally agree with their opinion. Look at what they say! I will just quote it and I am sure hon. Bérenger has read it –

“In many examinations 90% is an excellent score deserving a price and a handshake from the headmaster. In Geneva this week, only full mark 100% would do.”

What has happened, Mr Speaker, Sir? There has been progress on a significant number of issues in relation to agriculture and industrial products; they call it by the fancy name, NAMA, it is about industrial product. But, there are many other issues that remain outstanding, besides the one on which everybody said the talks floundered, which is basically the safeguard mechanism to protect farmers in India, China and other developing countries for livelihood security, food security and for rural development. But, there were many other issues that remain unresolved such as cotton. Cotton was not even discussed. Here, I agree with the hon. Leader of the Opposition that the Americans did not even want to discuss with the C4 spokesperson on cotton. There were many other issues also that remain unresolved like duty-free, quota free for LDC countries. However, the structure that Pascal Lamy had suggested meant that if you don’t make progress on some of these issues, especially among the big players, which form part of the G8, you could not advance. But, as stated by the ‘Economist’, I tend to agree with it, a lot of progress has been made. However, the fear expressed by hon. Bérenger is echoed by many people in Geneva. One, the election in the US; two, there will be a change of Commissioners in the EU and, three, there could be change in administration in other major players. That’s why we have made a plea that we should ring-fence, some of the gains made, especially, for small and vulnerable economies, LDCs and countries like Mauritius and other ACP countries that have been able to carve a niche with respect to products of long-standing

preference in agriculture and products that receive non-reciprocal preferences in textile, clothing, tuna, gems and jewellery.

Mr Cuttaree: Mr Speaker, Sir, I agree with the general assessment of the Minister, but I don't agree with his conclusions in the sense that, as he said himself, in these negotiations nothing is agreed until everything is agreed. If one looks at the pattern from Cancun, Hong Kong and we come to what it is, in each of these negotiations, a certain amount of progress was made and then, ultimately, the talks broke down. Therefore, this concept of what he is talking about, I presume, is the early harvest, that is, what has been reached in favour of the developed countries; he has talked about NAMA and safeguards for sugar and so on; all this is hypothetical. Therefore, can I ask the hon. Minister whether he agrees with the Deputy Prime Minister of Kenya who said that, I think, as from 20 July, the ACP was completely out of the Green Room process and that the negotiations - in fact, if I can quote him here. This is what Uhuru Kenyatta said –

“The Seven were closeted in the room while Africa was in the waiting room.”

Dr. Sithanen: Again, Mr Speaker, Sir, we were three Ministers; one was the co-ordinator of the ACP, i.e Mauritius, one was the co-ordinator for Africa from Kenya and one was the co-ordinator for LDC from Lesotho. We were in the Green Room all the time and then we reached a particular stage where we could not make progress in a group of 38 or 80 Ministers; even though there were 30 countries, some of the big countries brought two Ministers. What Pascal Lamy proposed was a two-track negotiation approach. One track to address some of the issues that primarily concern the G8 but, at the same time, there were discussions where I participated with the Deputy Prime Minister of Kenya, on issues that were of relevance to us. For instance, we had two days discussion on the list of agricultural products that will receive the status of long-standing preferences. We had a big fight with the Tropicals and I am sure hon. Cuttaree knows what the Tropicals were asking. The Tropicals are led by 13 countries from Latin America. They wanted to have a faster erosion of preferences both in terms of tariff cuts and treatment. What they call treatment is the time over which this is done. They wanted sugar to be a tropical product. We had discussions with them and the next day we had meeting with all those countries that were against our non-reciprocal preferences in textile, clothing, tuna. There were many countries. I think the hon. Member knows very well that what we are asking, other countries believe that they are being deprived of market access. Countries like Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Cambodia, Nepal, even China.

Bangladesh has protested, because it thinks that it will be a disproportionately affected country. We had to discuss with China to remove their objection, because some of the lines on which we are asking protection are basically lines in which China has competitive advantage in textile. We had to do the same thing with Brazil and the Minister from Australia, because they were opposed to sugar receiving either the status of a sensitive product or the status of a long-standing preference product.

Mr Cuttaree: The hon. Minister himself said that our preferences are under threat at the level of the WTO for being incompatible with the WTO. This is the first point. Therefore, the question I am asking him is: since it will be many years, I think, before we get an agreement to address the issues which he, himself, said are of importance to Mauritius, what is the approach of Government post Geneva in terms of ensuring market access for our products of vital interest?

Dr. Sithanen: We should continue to do that. The problem with this, Mr Speaker, Sir, is that there are three dangers. In fact, the very day that the talks collapsed, two countries that were in the Green Room, signed a bilateral agreement and they said: If we cannot reach an agreement here, we are going to go and reach agreement separately so that we can bring down the tariff barriers. There is a danger of a proliferation of bilateral agreements. There could also be a surge in regional agreements and it is precisely to avoid this that we want to have protection in the multilateral system in the WTO. There is nothing that will prevent America or Europe to enter into a free trade agreement either with China, India or Latin America. Preference erosion remains a danger for us. The other danger that exists - and hon. Cuttaree knows that very well - is that one of the countries that is suffering because "of our non-reciprocal preference" can lodge a case. This is what happened for banana, for sugar. The Minister from Bangladesh was very unhappy as to why Bangladesh which is a poor country is not receiving the same treatment as ACP countries. Some countries could use this against us.

Mr Bodha: Mr Speaker, Sir, you are very interested in this subject as well. One very small question: apart from the sugar which has been canvassed as a sensitive product since Cancun, what were the other sensitive products which were proposed for Mauritius?

Dr. Sithanen: This is not true. Sugar was never accepted in Cancun as a sensitive product. Even today - it is important that hon. Bodha knows - we can't declare sugar a sensitive product, it is the importing country that does it. We have to negotiate with EU to declare sugar as a sensitive product and on the side we have to negotiate with Thailand, Brazil and the US to support that position. What we can do as a country is to ask for sugar to be on the list of long-standing preference products and this is what we have done. We have covered sugar both ways. From an ACP standpoint, we ask that sugar should be a product of long-standing preference or if the EU - which, I think, the EU will do, sugar is treated as a sensitive product. It is also important that the EU has been able to secure 1% of tariff lines as sensitive products. And they will also keep their SSG which is a special safety mechanism to protect against a surge the importation of sugar. This should protect our sugar interests.

Mr Speaker: Time is over!