

Deb. 01 of 08.02.2005

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

- (a) **KARO KALYPTIS, RESIDENCE KENNEDY, ETC - LAW AND ORDER SITUATION**
- (b) **INDIAN NATIONAL - LA SALETTE - DEATH**

The Leader of the Opposition (Dr. N. Ramgoolam) (*By Private Notice*) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Home Affairs whether, in regard to the law and order situation and (i) the recent events related to drugs, insecurity and crime in Karo Kalyptis, Résidence Kennedy, Beau Séjour, Stanley, Cité Mangalkhan and other areas and (ii) the violent death of an Indian national at La Salette, he will state –

- (a) the reason/s for the protests and disturbances in these areas;
- (b) the circumstances surrounding the death of the Indian national, and
- (c) the consequences these may have on the security and safety of citizens, tourists and investors and their impact on our image abroad.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, it is not helpful to mix issues the way the hon. Leader of the Opposition is doing in his PNQ.

In regard to drug related incidents at Karo Kalyptis, Résidence Kennedy and elsewhere, we are, in fact, paying the price of the recent success of the Police and ADSU in combating the importation of dangerous drugs into the country and drug trafficking within the country in general.

Indeed, the House is aware of the number of recent arrests of importers of drugs at the airport and of the number of drug traffickers arrested recently. 37 arrests have been effected at the airport for the period 01 March 2004 to 07 February 2005. This has resulted in a situation where certain dealers still in operation as well as some drug addicts move from one area to another in search of drugs. This has provoked the reaction of the *forces vives* of the different areas concerned. The Police and ADSU have kept the pressure on dealers and are working in close collaboration with the *forces vives*.

At the same time as we have been intensifying measures against traffickers and dealers, we have also been increasing our efforts for the

treatment and rehabilitation of drug addicts. To that effect, NATReSA has been provided with additional means and is taking new initiatives.

In the case of Karo Kalyptis in particular, the fact is that over the past years, Karo Kalyptis had become a no-go area for the Police where a number of notorious criminals took refuge and operated therefrom. The situation had deteriorated so much that the Police could not even be present there. All this has changed now. The Police has on several occasions recently carried out a number of operations, raids and arrests and this is going to go on until that area returns to normality.

At the same time, squatters at Karo Kalyptis are being relocated in Firinga type houses in the region.

I wish to add that, of course, not all the inhabitants of Karo Kalyptis are criminals and that we are working closely with the *forces vives* there also.

In the case of the violent death of an Indian national at La Salette recently, the House is already aware that within hours four persons were arrested for this despicable crime to which they have confessed. The inquiry is still under way. Our sympathy goes to the members of the family of the murdered Indian national.

In regard to law and order in general, the House is already aware that since 2000 –

- (i) 3077 Police officers have been recruited;
- (ii) there have been 2492 promotions in the Police Force;
- (iii) 1545 Police officers have undergone training.

Moreover, X-ray scanning equipment will very soon be available for the scanning of illegal goods, including drugs.

As a result of the above measures, the situation regarding law and order is well under control and everybody, including tourists and investors, are aware thereof. Nothing better illustrates that situation than the serenity and calm that prevailed during the end-of-year festivities.

Mr Speaker, Sir, let me take this opportunity to thank the Police and ADSU for the good work they are doing and to reassure once more the *forces vives* that we share their concern and will keep on working with them.

Dr. Ramgoolam: Mr Speaker, Sir, can the Prime Minister tell the House why does he think that the people in these suburbs were so desperate that they wanted to take the law into their own hands?

The Prime Minister: I have replied, Sir, that there was unusual *va-et-vient* caused by the activities of ADSU and the Police in general. The *forces vives* these days are encouraged to help the authorities. Dialogue is on and that is why, in certain areas, we have seen the drug-related incidence referred to.

Dr. Ramgoolam: Mr Speaker, Sir, the reason why I asked that question is because it is not clear. If there had been dialogue and Police was going to and fro, it should not have been in their interest to take the law into their own hands. I am asking why did they feel so desperate that several times they had to take the law in their own hands.

The Prime Minister: I do not have much to add. But I would request the hon. Leader of the Opposition to keep in mind that things are different from one area to the other. The reason why something erupts at a given point in time in that area compared to the other is because there are different local reasons. I gave the general background, then issues get complicated by local conditions. Let me take one example, which happened recently in front of Abercrombie Police. Because, unfortunately, demand for drugs is there - it is big money, unfortunately - there are people supplying that demand. I take this example of Abercrombie. Some 50 accomplices of the drug dealers assembled in front of the Police and nearly started fighting each other. That is one specific case where I inquired with the Commissioner of Police. There were not enough Police officers in that station, at that point in time, to intervene. It would have resulted in a lot of violence, in rioting, probably, in loss of life. The Police had to handle the situation, but those responsible were arrested within hours. The reaction of the Police had to be spread in time. The Police and ADSU react as per local conditions in different areas.

Dr. Ramgoolam: The Prime Minister says that we are paying the price of our success in combating the importation of dangerous drugs. I take it that he is confirming that there is no *pénurie de la drogue* in Mauritius.

How does he reconcile what the senior Police officers and social workers have said with what he has said, which is completely different? One of them has said that he knows that there are enough drugs in this country for the next 50 years.

The Prime Minister: There are some so-called social workers that say anything any day. There are no Police officers, senior or otherwise, who made the statements as reported in a certain press. This was wrongly reported.

We have acted recently - the figures speak for themselves, Mr Speaker: 37 arrests effected at the airport from the period 01 March 2004 to 07 February 2005. If that is not success in combating importation of illegal drugs into Mauritius, then, what is it? Of course, inevitably, this will result in less dangerous drugs available on the market. With the number of traffickers, big peddlers that have been arrested recently, this also obviously makes it less easy for drug addicts to get the drugs that they were after. So, in that sense, yes, there is – I would not use the word *pénurie*, I don't think that is the proper expression in that case – less dangerous drugs available as a result of the arrests at the airport and of the arrests of the big dealers inside the country. There are less drugs available. I refrain from using the word *pénurie*. Whether some drug traffickers, on top of that, had their part to cause a *pénurie artificielle*, as has been mentioned, to get prices increased, I do not exclude that in certain areas at certain points in time. Our job as a Government, with the Police, ADSU, NATReSA, the *forces vives*, is to repress the importation and trafficking in dangerous drugs, *sans pitié*, to repress the dealers, the traffickers! But, at the same time, to be as productive as possible in terms of treatment and rehabilitation. I must salute the fantastic work done by NATReSA these days; the superb work done by NATReSA and the *forces vives* at the head of NATReSA and its centres. I must say that Government, the Ministry of Social Security, the Ministry of Education and NATReSA are also doing a great job in terms of prevention, through education and, in many ways, prevention also has a vital role to play. We have to reduce the demand, for it is because that demand is there that supply is forthcoming and there is trafficking in drugs, which is on the decrease as I have said. But, the demand remains there and it has to be a long-term struggle to reduce that demand.

Dr. Ramgoolam: I am glad to hear that the Prime Minister now withdraws the word '*pénurie*' and uses a different word, because that was the wrong word to use obviously.

(Interruptions)

I think both the Prime Minister and the Minister of Social Security used the word '*pénurie*'.

The Prime Minister said that some social workers say whatever they want. Does the Prime Minister think that people like Areff Bahemia and Ally Lazer don't know what is the situation?

The Prime Minister: I am not going to mention names, Mr Speaker, Sir, especially those who do not deserve to be taken seriously.

Dr. Ramgoolam: I mentioned the names, because Mr Areff Bahemia is the one who said that there are enough drugs for 50 years in this country, and Mr Ally Lazer too has said something like that. Can the Prime Minister say how he comes to assess the supply and demand of drugs? How does he come to that conclusion?

The Prime Minister: I don't think it is my job to assess the amount of drugs on the market at a given point in time. But, with the number of arrests at the airport, it is clear, Mr Speaker, Sir, that the big international and regional traffickers have lost a lot of money. Therefore, before sending new *cargaison*, they are being very careful, and we are equipping ourselves better by the day to prevent this importation. When we manage to prevent importation, it is clear that the amount of drugs on the market decreases. As a layman and as Prime Minister, it is clear. This is why this X-Ray equipment will add to our capacity to prevent drug importation through the airport or through the port. *A la source*, we must stop it, and we are stopping it - the number of arrests, the actions taken. As a result, clearly the amount of dangerous drugs available on the market does go down.

Dr. Ramgoolam: Now, the Prime Minister no longer says that there is *pénurie*, but that the amount of drugs has gone down. Then, the last place that we would expect drugs to be openly used with syringes, with all the collateral damages that there are with HIV, is the prisons. How does the Prime Minister explain that in prisons, the last place, where there should not have been drugs, we are still having drugs openly being used?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I don't want to blame either the hon. Leader of the Opposition, who was Prime Minister for four and a half years, and also the former Prime Minister. I only speak for the job that I am called upon to do. I have inherited a very bad situation in the prisons from the previous Government – *juste pour mettre les points sur les 'i'*. It is improving, measures are being taken by the day; the situation is improving.

We are going to reach a situation where there will no longer be any drug peddling inside the prisons, especially Beau Bassin Prison. We are progressing. It is a very difficult situation. The really difficult situation is in the new wing. I don't want to go back onto that, but it's completely badly designed. It's the worst kind of prison, and I don't have to remind the House who was Prime Minister when that was designed. I have inherited from that kind of situation. We are working very hard in the prison system. There is a new Commissioner...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

The Prime Minister: There is a new Commissioner for Prisons, with a lot of experience. We are building new prisons; we are improving on the new wing, on the existing prison installations. Things are moving in the right direction and improving, including in the case of drug peddling in the prisons.

Dr. Ramgoolam: The population would have noted what the Prime Minister says, that, first of all we are paying the price of our success and second, buildings are now the cause of drugs in prisons. It is absolutely ridiculous! In fact, may I remind the Prime Minister, even though he says that's what he has inherited from the former Prime Minister and the previous Prime Minister, that there has been an upsurge of drugs in prisons while he has been Prime Minister. That is the fact and that is the truth. It has been reported in the papers – and if the Prime Minister reads, he will see - that there has been an upsurge of drugs in the prisons when he was Prime Minister. That's when the upsurge took place, not before the previous Prime Minister or even the Prime Minister before! That is a fact.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

The Prime Minister: There has been no upsurge. I don't know what upsurge means in that kind of situation. But, there has been no upsurge. The situation is improving in the prisons. I mentioned the buildings, because one problem in the prisons gets mixed up with another problem. For example, now we are restarting full detoxification inside the Beau Bassin Prison, amongst other initiatives of NATReSA and this Government. I mentioned the buildings, because the badly designed new wing, the overcrowding, which we are leaving behind us, has been a major cause of

problems in the prison. We are taking a *panoplie* of measures and things are improving.

Dr. Ramgoolam: In April last year, the Prime Minister similarly announced to give him three months and he would eliminate drugs in certain suburbs of Port Louis. It is now ten months since that great declaration was made. Does he feel he has eliminated them and, if not, why not?

The Prime Minister: Some people invent something, then keep on repeating it and, by the end of the day, they believe in what they had invented. Those who know me know that I am not in the habit of saying 'in three months, in one month, in 100 *jours*, *solution en poche*'. I am not that kind of person, especially, Mr Speaker, Sir...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

(Interruptions)

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, let's be serious; drug trafficking, drug addiction is one of the worst problems that has developed over the recent years - hurting our youths, killing people, ruining families. It has never been a question of saying three months or one month or what have you a *solution en poche*, but the fact is that we are doing everything that can be done in terms of recruiting

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Hon. David until you have been asked to take the floor, I don't want to listen to you.

(Interruptions)

Order!

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, you have given a ruling and the hon. Member is challenging your ruling straightaway. Mr Speaker, as I said we are doing everything that can be done in recruiting officers, training, providing state-of-the-art equipment, increasing staff in the hot spots. Everything that can be done is being done and we are progressing. I repeat there was a time when drug carriers were going through the airport on a regular basis. Now I repeat, Mr Speaker, Sir, 37 arrests of *passeurs* in one year. If that is not success in preventing importation through the airport,

then, what is it, Mr Speaker, Sir? I am not in the habit of bluffing. We are working hard and I thank the ADSU, which is doing great work. Some people are making politics out of the situation, Mr Speaker, Sir. Some people will until they die always be on an ego trip, anything for a picture in the press. I won't mention names, but we all know who is in that business, Mr Speaker, Sir. Some people are making politics with this drug trafficking issue. I repeat, some people are on a permanent ego trip. Government, the Police, ADSU, NATReSA, the *forces vives*, we are working day and night and progressing as far as importation and trafficking of dangerous drugs are concerned.

Mr Duval: The hon. Prime Minister made a statement to the effect that drugs are in short supply and that prices are increasing. This appears to be in straight contradiction to what the *forces vives* of Cité Mangalkhan said only yesterday. This is what they said - I am tabling the copy of the newspaper - "*Are R 10 ou capave droguer, né plis besoin R 250*". It is straight contradiction to what the Prime Minister said just now.

(Interruptions)

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, some people will say anything. At Cité Mangalkhan, in particular targeted action ...

(Interruptions)

Well, anything that appears in the press is the truth, it is there! Mr Speaker, the truth is that at Cité Mangalkhan ...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order, please!

The Prime Minister: At Cité Mangalkhan, in particular, targeted action by ADSU and the Police has already been taken, Mr Speaker, Sir. So, the real *forces vives* are very helpful wherever there is a problem, Mr Speaker, Sir.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! Order please!

Mr Dulloo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am glad that the hon. Prime Minister has now publicly stated that the word '*pénurie*' was wrong in the circumstances, that one should have used ...

The Prime Minister: On a point of order, I have not said that it was wrong. I said that I would refrain from using the word '*pénurie*', but I made myself clear that the amount of dangerous drugs on the market, according to me, has gone down. I did not say that using the word '*pénurie*' was wrong. I said that I did not find that word adequate in that when we are dealing with dangerous drugs.

Mr Dulloo: Government has deliberately used the word '*pénurie*' and we have stated that there is no '*pénurie*' as such. Government is now saying that there is less drug, but no *pénurie*. Now that the Prime Minister is stating that there is a possibility that there has been a *pénurie artificielle* created by the drug traffickers and the drugs suppliers, therefore, would I ask him whether the public declaration from the part of the Government that there was a *pénurie* of drugs has not in a sense made Government act as a sale agent of drug traffickers in order to boost up the price of drugs on the market?

The Prime Minister: I repeat for those who want to understand. As a result of the arrests of the action taken at the airport, *à la source*, we have inevitably reduced the amount of dangerous drugs coming into the country and on the market; it is clear. I did not use the word '*pénurie*' because, in fact, we all would wish that there were no dangerous drugs at all on the market. I don't like using that word. But I repeat, as a result of the action at the airport and in the country also, the amount of dangerous drugs available has gone down and as we tighten importation, it will keep on going down. I used very carefully my words to say that I do not exclude the possibility that in that situation caused by our tightening on importation of dangerous drugs at the airport and at the port, that some drug traffickers may have themselves taken action to *faire monter le prix*. I cannot exclude that; I do not have concrete evidence on that, because the job of ADSU and the Police is not to go and record things like that; it is to combat drug trafficking in any form and they are doing this and not inquiring whether this or that drug dealer is ...

(Interruptions)

Yes, they don't deal in price control, Mr Speaker, Sir! So, I am satisfied that we are doing everything that can be done, but I remain open-minded. I heard somebody giggling when I referred to NATReSA. They are doing heroic work; they are doing superb work, Mr Speaker, Sir. I am open-

minded when persons active in NATReSA, in the centres, those who have practical knowledge, come with new ideas, we are open-minded. The Police learn from overseas also. The Commissioner of Police, the Head of ADSU and ADSU officers learn from outside the country also how to better combat drug trafficking. So, it is an ongoing process; we are progressing, we have progressed, we will keep on progressing.

Mr Dulloo: The hon. Prime Minister has referred to price control. True it is that the drug suppliers, Mr Speaker, Sir, cannot come and announce a shortage of drugs, like the milk suppliers for example talking of *pénurie*. I have got two questions. First, the hon. Prime Minister has referred to the fact that there has been an amount of drugs seized at the entrance at the airport, this is the basis on which he is saying that there is less supply of drug. When he is saying that there is less supply of drugs around, can I ask him whether there is other indication, other criteria for assessment to come to such conclusion or whether, in fact, is it not because Mauritius was being flooded with such a huge supply of drugs that there has been so much drug confiscated at the entrance, at the airport and elsewhere?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, it is complete nonsense, as usual.

Mr Dulloo: A last question. The hon. Prime Minister has just mentioned the degree of success in reducing supply. But then when he has stated that more than 3,000 Police officers have been recruited, more prisons are being set up, more detention and rehabilitation centres are being set up, is that not an indication that there is therefore a breakdown of law and order?

(Interruptions)

And therefore there is need for more officers, more prisons, more detention and rehabilitation centres because the drug situation is getting out of hand. Is it not the reason?

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

The Prime Minister: Of course, this is nonsense, as the hon. Member is in the habit of uttering! But I have said, Mr Speaker, Sir, that the best disincentive as far as crime is concerned is the knowledge by the criminals that they stand every chance of being caught. The House would be interested to know that in 2004 there were 28 reported cases of murder - it is

a stable number whether the population increases but it stays around that figure. Out of these 23 have been solved; five inquiries are still on which give us a rate of above 80% and we must improve on that; and we are improving on that. We are at long last - because this has been going on for years with our Forensic Science Laboratory and elsewhere - equipping ourselves and we are progressing. What we need to achieve is a nearly 100% rate of success in catching those who commit crimes. Let me refer to some figures, Mr Speaker, Sir, concerning larceny with violence. In year 2000: 1,031 cases, 2001: 783 cases, 2002: 772, 2003: 704, 2004: 667 up to November, the figures were not available for December. So, we are progressing in general.

Mr Speaker: We have gone beyond the time for questions.

Dr. Ramgoolam: I have two questions, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker: Try to be very short.

Dr. Ramgoolam: First of all, I want to ask the hon. Prime Minister whether he is aware that the United Nations have published a report where it says that Mauritius is the No. 1 country for consumption of heroine which is a hard drug in the whole of Africa. Is he aware of that?

The Prime Minister: I am not aware of any such report. I doubt very much that it exists and I would invite the hon. Leader of the Opposition to lay a copy on the Table.

Dr. Ramgoolam: I have a copy with me and I will lay it. Even in Réunion Island, mention has been made of the report. I will lay on the Table what the Statistics say and also what *Le Quotidien*...

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am not interested in "*Le Quotidien*". I have invited the Leader of the Opposition to lay a copy of the report which he says he has.

(Interruptions)

Dr. Ramgoolam: I have it here, the United Nations *plus "Le Quotidien" de la Réunion* takes it up and says "*Maurice sous héroïne*", that is the title. I will also lay it down. But Mr Speaker, the other thing I want to ask is about the Indian national. We sympathise with his family. The Prime Minister said that an inquiry is going on. There has been a barbaric crime and I ask the Prime

Minister whether he can say if the Police has established the motive and has any theft been involved?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, this is a despicable crime and the Police has done a great job. Within hours the Police arrested a number of persons who have confessed. Of course, they are innocent until the Court finds them guilty, but they have already confessed. This has taken place within a few days and, of course, the inquiry will be completed and *justice suivra son cours*. I hope that in every single case of crime we reach that kind of success in catching the culprits or the alleged culprits.

Mr Speaker: Questions to the hon. Prime Minister. Hon. Hurnam.

D01/IF/P05/3

**MBC - *SHRIMAD BHAGWAT MAHA PURAN KI KATHA*
CELEBRATIONS - COVERAGE**

(No. B/1) Mr D. Hurnam (Third Member for Pamplémousses & Triolet) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Home Affairs whether he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information from the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation as to whether the Triolet Anand Square Hindi Cultural Circle had made a request for coverage by television of the annual celebrations of the *Shrimad Bhagwat Maha Puran Ki Katha* which was held from 21 to 28 November 2004.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Director-General of the MBC that the MBC has no record of any request from the Triolet Anand Square Hindi Cultural Circle for the coverage of the “Shrimad Bhagwat Maha Puran Ki Katha” held in November 2004.

However, I am further informed by the Director-General of the MBC that the MBC received a copy of a letter dated 26 November 2004 which the hon. Member addressed to the Acting Prime Minister requesting him to intervene so as to have the function covered by the MBC on the next day, Saturday 27 November.

The MBC has also informed me that its coverage of news or other items depends on availability of news crews and newsworthiness and that it is not in the practice of the MBC to cover such functions.

Mr Hurnam: Mr Speaker, Sir, will the Prime Minister inform the House whether the Ag. Prime Minister informed the MBC to consider covering this function even for at least an hour?

The Prime Minister: As I said we know how religious our country is and I am sure the hon. Member knows how many such religious activities there are every day. So, I do not interfere, the Acting Prime Minister and the Prime Minister try to be helpful, but we do not interfere in the day to day planning of the operations by the MBC. In that case the MBC has said it is not in the practice of the MBC to cover such functions and if a special request from the hon. Member was received for today, for tomorrow, it makes matters even more difficult.

Dr. Ramgoolam: May I ask the Prime Minister to look into it? Because the people who organised it did tell us - I am sure they told hon. Hurnam also -

that, in fact, they have asked the Deputy Prime Minister who was doing actingship as Prime Minister. He had intervened and asked them to try to cover it.

The Prime Minister: As I said the request was made today for to-morrow and on the same day, the Ag. Prime Minister relayed the request to the MBC.

Dr. Boolell: Can I ask the Prime Minister whether the request made by the Ag. Prime Minister was set aside because of his weakness and that he cannot exercise....

(Interruptions)

PREVENTION OF CORRUPTION ACT 2002 – AMENDMENTS

(No. B/2) Mr D. Hurnam (Third Member for Pamplemousses and Triolet) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Home Affairs whether he will state if Government intends to amend the provisions of the Prevention of Corruption Act 2002, relating to -

- (a) the Appointments Committee;
- (b) the Powers of Arrest, and
- (c) the membership of the Parliamentary Committee on ICAC.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, consideration is still being given to amendments to be brought to the Prevention of Corruption Act 2002, but at the same time, Government considers that ICAC has now found its cruising speed and should therefore be given some more time before any amendment is brought forward.

SALE BY LEVY - APPLICATIONS

(No. B/3) Mr E. Guimbeau (First Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Home Affairs whether, in regard to applications for sale by levy, he will obtain the following information –

- (i)(a) the number of cases disposed of by the Master's Court during each of the year from 1995 to date;
- (b) the number of applications pending to date, and
- (ii) the number of complaints of alleged fraud made to the Police and the

ICAC and the outcome thereof.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, information obtained from the Master and Registrar in regard to the number of levy cases disposed of by the Master's Court during each year from 1995 to date is being tabled. I am tabling it because it is interesting to follow the trend. The figures we have are about the total number of cases disposed of and then we have a breakdown, the number of cases where property was sold and where the same was struck out. The reading of the details is interesting.

I am informed by the Master and Registrar that the number of applications pending before Court to date is 680.

As regards part (ii) of the question, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police and ICAC that the number of complaints of alleged frauds made to them is, in relation to sale by levy affair, 20 and 8 respectively.

I am further informed that out of the 20 cases referred to the Police, eight cases have been forwarded to the Director of Public Prosecutions, who has advised no further action in two cases. The other six cases are awaiting the advice of the DPP. The 12 remaining cases are still being inquired into by the Police.

As regards the eight complaints received by ICAC, I am informed that investigations are ongoing. So far, two persons have been arrested and provisional charges have been laid against them.

Mr Guimbeau: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am asking Members of the House to give a helping hand to Government and try to help all those victims.

SALE BY LEVY - COMMISSION OF INQUIRY - RECOMMENDATIONS

(No. B/4) Mr E. Guimbeau (First Member for Curepipe and Midlands) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Home Affairs whether following the recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry on Sale by Levy, Government proposes to legislate with a view to bringing the law in line with the judgment of the Liverpool County Court in the case of London North Securities v/s Meadows (Liverpool judgment).

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, Government has set up a committee chaired by the Secretary to Cabinet and Head of the Civil Service

to oversee the implementation of the recommendations of the report of the Commission of Inquiry on Sale by Levy.

In the light of the Commission of Inquiry on Sale by Levy, former Chief Justice, Sir Victor Glover, made a series of recommendations. Some of these recommendations have already been covered when the Moneylenders Act was amended in 2002 to provide better protection to victims of unscrupulous moneylenders, *les casseurs*. For example, the amendments to the Moneylenders Act of 2002 stipulates that charging an interest higher than that authorised is an offence punishable by fine and an imprisonment not exceeding two years. It also provides that a contract for money lending shall be null and void where the security taken for the money lent consists of the principal residence of the borrower.

Further, a first draft of the Insolvency Bill has been submitted by Professor Mackenzie, expert in Company Law and it is expected that the final draft would be ready by the end of this month. The Bill addresses several of the points raised in the report.

The services of Sir Victor Glover have been retained to draft legislation to give effect to the recommendations contained in the report of the Commission of Inquiry.

I am informed that the Bill is almost ready and I am given to understand that the Bill will provide for a Commission on Indebtedness which will be empowered to take measures against credit facilities which, in its opinion, are unreasonable, and may, in certain cases, declare certain clauses of a contract null and void. The substance of the Liverpool judgement will, therefore, be taken care of in the draft Bill.

PRIME MINISTER/ASSOCIATIONS OF VICTIMS – SALE BY LEVY - MEETINGS

(No. B/5) Mr E. Guimbeau (First Member for Curepipe and Midlands) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Home Affairs whether he will inform the House if he has had meetings with representatives of the associations of victims of sale by levy and the Mauritius Bankers' Association and the outcome thereof.

The Prime Minister: Yes, Sir, I have had meetings with the Association of victims of sale by levy, the last one being on Monday 27 December 2004.

As regards the Mauritius Bankers' Association, I have had no meetings with them on the question of sale by levy. However, I wish to inform the House that the Mauritius Bankers' Association has submitted a memorandum expressing its concern over possible legislative changes.

The contents of the memorandum are under consideration and a copy thereof has been communicated to the Association of victims of sale by levy.

- (i) **MASTER AKMEZ AUMEER - ABDUCTION**
- (ii) **MS HANSEE ITTOO & MR TAGORESING SANDORAM - DEATH**
- (iii) **ST. PAUL, VACOAS - MASS MURDER/SUICIDE**

(No. B/6) Dr. J. B. David (Fourth Member for GRNW and Port Louis West) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Home Affairs whether, in regard to -

- (a) the abduction of Master Akmez Aumeer;
- (b) the death of Ms Hansee Ittoo and Mr Tagoresing Sandoram, and
- (c) the mass murder/suicide at St. Paul, Vacoas

he will obtain information as to whether the inquiries have now been completed.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police as follows -

- (a) As regards Master Akmez Aumeer, no positive result has been obtained so far in spite of intensive enquiries and searches. The Police enquiry is still on;
- (b) Regarding the death of Ms Hansee Ittoo and Mr Tagoresing Sandoram, the DPP has on 06 June 2004 advised that further enquiries be conducted following the receipt of an anonymous letter. The Police has interviewed anew one of the persons whose name was mentioned in the anonymous letter. Police enquiry is still in progress, and
- (c) As far as the mass murder/suicide at St. Paul is concerned, the case is still under investigation.

Dr. David: Mr Speaker, Sir, since these crimes have shattered the whole country, I would like to ask questions...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Dr. David: ...on each of these cases. The first one, concerning Master Akmez Aumeer. There has recently been...

Mr Speaker: Hon. David, you have asked the hon. Prime Minister to state where the inquiry now stands. That's all! The question is very precise. He has given the answer. If you want any other matter and information on these cases, you must come anew with a substantive question.

Dr. David: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I draw your attention personally that this is not the question which I formulated.

Mr Speaker: The Table has the right to sub-edit any questions. The Table has sub-edited the question and if you had any objection to make, you could have called on me and I would have corrected and taken any action which, in the circumstances, would have been necessary. You cannot raise this matter in the House. You are old enough in this House and should know these matters cannot be raised here. You should have called on me in my office.

CHAGOS ARCHIPELAGO/DIEGO GARCIA - MAURITIUS SOVEREIGNTY

(No. B/7) Mr M. Dulloo (Third Member for Grand' Baie and Poudre d'Or) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Home Affairs whether, in regard to the sovereignty of Mauritius over the Chagos Archipelago, including Diego Garcia, he will -

- (a) state the present position and status, and
- (b) inform the House of the latest discussion/s Government had with the United Kingdom and with the United States of America and the outcome thereof.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to refer the hon. Member to the reply made to PQ B/766 on the same issue on 26 October last.

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I had indicated then that the hon. Minister of Foreign Affairs, International Trade and Regional Cooperation had had a meeting in London on 04 October 2004 with Mr Jack Straw, Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs of the UK, and that the latter had made certain proposals which were not acceptable to us. There has been no positive development since then.

Work is ongoing, in consultation with our legal advisers in London, for a resolution to be presented to the United Nations General Assembly so that the General Assembly may seek an advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on the sovereignty issue.

However, in spite of negative signals from London on the issue, we remain hopeful that new positive developments may render such action unnecessary.

Mr Dulloo: May I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether there has not been an agreement or understanding of an arrangement between the Government of Mauritius and the UK or the USA Government for representatives of the Government of Mauritius to visit the islands on a regular basis? Has there been such an agreement?

The Prime Minister: I am not aware of such an agreement. It is the first time that I hear reference to any such agreement.

Mr Dulloo: Were there no discussions in this direction and response from both sides in the past on this arrangement?

The Prime Minister: This is the first time that I hear reference made to any such agreement either it is existing or having been discussed.

Mr Dulloo: May I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether it could not have been a singular act of sovereignty for Government to have really put a vessel at the disposal of the former inhabitants of Chagos island to enable them to visit the islands?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, as I said, we are still hopeful that there will be positive developments from London which would render our action at the level of the United Nations General Assembly and thereafter at the international Court of Justice unnecessary. But at the same time, I did say that work is ongoing in consultation with our legal advisers in London for a resolution to be presented to the United Nations General Assembly. I do not want to take any risk. These issues of sovereignty and

so on are very delicate and complicated. The hon. Member will remember some years back when agreement was reached for a team of Mauritian Ministers and one or more top civil servants and so on to visit Diego Garcia, everything was cancelled late on the night before, because the UK and the American Authorities had requested that this and that procedure should be followed, that passports were required and so on. I am not prepared to take any risk. Government does not want any vessel flying the Mauritian flag to be involved in that. We have every sympathy for the Ilois, they want to go there to visit the sanitariums, the churches and so on, and we will not *mettre des bâtons dans les roues*. Certainly not! But Government does not want any vessel flying the Mauritian flag to be involved, because we do not want to take any risk. We are over cautious. I never make a move; I never take an initiative without consulting *de long en large et en détail*, the State Law Office. So, this is our stand on that issue and I repeat we remain hopeful that there will be positive development. Let us say that for the time being we are allowing the American officials in the new administration to settle down and then we shall take other initiatives.

Mr Dulloo: May I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether, if a Mauritian vessel would have gone there, carrying the former inhabitants of Chagos Islands, Government would not have ensured, then, that representatives of Mauritius would go and accompany on that vessel and officially land on the islands thereby?

The Prime Minister: As I have said, I am not prepared to take any risk in relation to the exercise of our sovereignty over the Chagos Archipelago.

Mr Michel: I would like to know from the hon. Prime Minister whether in the past there has been any visit by Ministers to the Chagos Archipelago?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Member was not listening probably. I have just referred to a visit by Ministers and one or more top civil servants some years back; I did point out that on the eve of that visit, trouble upset everything, and the visit was cancelled. Then it was sorted out and the Ministers went.

Mr Dulloo: The hon. Prime Minister just now indicated that he is hopeful and we know that there was the threat of withdrawing from Commonwealth and all that if we were to go to the International Court of Justice and its implications. May I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether now a successful conclusion of this dispute with the UK has not been made even

more difficult when the hon. Prime Minister described the recent position of a UK Minister on our land here as smelling of a filthy rat?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I hope all of us here are genuine patriots and, I am sure, we reacted in the same way, except false patriots...

Mr Dulloo: *(Interruptions)*

The Prime Minister: All the others, I am sure, reacted in the same way...

Mr Speaker: Order, please! Hon. Dulloo, you have asked a question, now listen to the answer please!

The Prime Minister: ...when a Junior Minister from London takes the liberty, whilst being present on our soil, on the occasion of the United Nations Conference, to go and visit the *Illois* and utter provocative statements, Mr Speaker, Sir....

(Interruptions)

Provocative statements! *Intolérable! Inacceptable!* That explains why we talked of rats.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

HIV/AIDS - NUMBER OF CASES

(No. B/8) Dr. A. Boolell (Second Member for Vieux Grand Port and Rose Belle) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Home Affairs whether he will state if cases of HIV/AIDS are on the increase.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life that as at December 2004, 1,233 HIV/AIDS cases have been detected since the first case was detected in Mauritius in 1987. Among these, 109 were non-Mauritians.

Since 2002, a significant increase in the number of detected HIV/AIDS cases has been noted. While in 2002, 98 cases were detected, this figure increased to 225 in 2003 and 525 in 2004 - we are talking of detected cases.

I am informed that this increase can be explained by several factors.

Firstly, the number of tests done in 1987 was 8,000 whilst in 2004, it stood at 80,000. The AIDS Secretariat has, over the years, undertaken an aggressive sensitization campaign following which people have become more aware of the need to undergo HIV testing. Hence, more people are volunteering to be screened for HIV.

Secondly, programmes of counselling and testing targeting injecting drug users in the treatment and rehabilitation centres and in the field have been strengthened. This has resulted in more injecting drug users being tested and found positive.

Thirdly, the majority of HIV/AIDS cases detected recently could already have been infected some years back. For example, not all the 525 HIV/AIDS cases detected in 2004 have been infected in that particular year. This has been evidenced by the results of specialised laboratory blood tests regularly being carried out on HIV/AIDS patients.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to draw the attention of the House that HIV tests are now being carried out among different categories of persons, namely blood donors, pregnant women, high risk groups such as sex workers, prison inmates, migrant workers, contacts of infected persons and some hospital patients.

Injecting drug has become an even more rapid way of spreading HIV than sexual intercourse. In fact, various forms of drug use contribute to the spread of HIV. Alcohol consumption and marijuana smoking, for example, influence sexual behavior. But injecting drug use, especially needle and syringe sharing, poses the most direct and immediate risk for HIV transmission. Experience from other countries demonstrates that, once HIV enters the injecting drug use population, such countries can expect large and sustained HIV epidemics.

In Mauritius, to address this new situation, an Action Plan to prevent further transmission of HIV among drug users has been elaborated in 2003 by multisectoral stakeholders that include representatives of the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life, the Ministry of Social Security, National Solidarity and Senior Citizen Welfare and Reform Institutions, Ministry of Women's Rights, Child Development and Family Welfare, the Prison Services, the State Law Office, NATReSA, PILS, and *VIVRE Plus* - two NGOs which are very active in relation to HIV/AIDS.

It is a comprehensive plan and contains strategies of supply reduction, demand reduction as well as harm reduction. Supply reduction interventions, including law enforcement, are already in place even in prisons and have been reinforced. Demand reduction comprises primary prevention with sensitization programmes, targeting the most vulnerable groups such as youth and also programmes for the rehabilitation of established drug users. Treatment and rehabilitation programmes in the existing centres have been strengthened and a new centres for treating women drug users has been put in place in Bambous.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as the House is aware, Government has set up the National AIDS Committee which I personally chair and which meets on a quarterly basis. The issue of the increase in the number of detected HIV/AIDS cases and the HIV/AIDS infection trend in general is on its agenda.

Dr. Beebeejaun: The hon. Prime Minister quoted the figures of tests done during 2004, but what about the figures for 2002/2003?

The Prime Minister: Well, the figures must be available. I gave the figures for 1987 where the number of tests was 8,000 and the figure for last year where the number stood at 80,000. So, the trend must have moved over the years concerned from 8,000 to 80,000, but I can provide the information.

Dr. Boolell: Can I ask the Prime Minister whether he is satisfied with - (a) monitoring and (b) contact tracing?

The Prime Minister: Well, let me take the opportunity of saluting the exceptional work - which is saluted by the United Nations amongst others - done by the AIDS Secretariat and the officers at the Ministry of Health responsible for HIV/AIDS treatment, specifically the AIDS Secretariat. We are developing a know-how and experience that will be very valuable for the whole region and we are acting at the level of the United Nations. Yes, again, we are doing everything that can be done. In fact, we meet more than quarterly, we meet every two months now and we are doing a fantastic work as a team, Government, public officers, NATReSA, NGOs, everybody. I take the opportunity to remind the hon. Member that we voted the law to set up the National AIDS Committee at the request of the United Nations - it is the United Nations that voted resolutions in New York, requesting every country to have as powerful as possible a political body to give political momentum on the issue of HIV/AIDS. We are in the front line.

We are one of the few countries where the HIV/AIDS Coordinating Committee was chaired yesterday by the hon. Deputy Prime Minister, now by the Prime Minister, because this issue is very close indeed to my heart. We provided also for the Opposition to be present, not just NGOs, but unfortunately the Opposition has chosen not to be present since the setting up of this National AIDS Committee. You get a lot of information and you get the opportunity of participating, of learning but also of giving ideas.

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TSUNAMI EARLY WARNING SYSTEM

(No. B/9) Mr J. Von-Mally (Third Member for Rodrigues) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Home Affairs whether, in view of the vulnerability of the islands of the Republic of Mauritius to tsunamis and being given the nearness of Rodrigues to the Triple Junction and its location on one of the western extensions of the mid Indian Ocean Ridge, he will state what measures will be taken for the installation of observatories with modern equipment to register any tremor to forecast the occurrence of such calamities.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am advised that the United Nations is planning to have an Indian Ocean Tsunami Early-Warning System up and running by June 2006 with a global system operational by June 2007.

For our part, we are keen to see an anti-tsunami warning system set up for the Indian Ocean along the line of the Pacific Ocean one the soonest possible.

I discussed the issue as to which organisations or countries would take the lead on this matter with Mr Kofi Annan, Secretary General of the United Nations, the Director General of UNESCO, as well as with representatives of France, India, Germany and other countries during the recent Small Island Developing States meeting here in Mauritius.

The establishment of an Early-Warning System to cover all countries in and around the Indian Ocean, including relevant African States and Small Island Developing States, was taken up and endorsed at the meeting on Disaster Reduction held in Kobe, Japan from 18 to 22 January 2005 and at the Ministerial Meeting on Regional Co-operation on Tsunami held from 28 to 29 January 2005 in Phuket, Thailand.

However, confusion has arisen as to which organisations or countries would take the lead. It is also not clear whether an Early-Warning System for the whole of the Indian Ocean would be set up or whether sub-regional systems would be set up in the first instance.

Mr Speaker, Sir, let me inform the House here that, at the recent Kobe Conference, friendly countries have voluntarily accepted to promptly provide information on earthquakes/tsunami events to Indian Ocean countries during the coming six months. A firm commitment has been taken by the Japan Meteorological Agency.

Furthermore, the Mauritius Meteorological Services has an agreement with the *Observatoire Volcanologique du Piton de la Fournaise*, La Réunion, to exchange real time information on any tremor, depending upon its intensity, registered within 5000 to 10000 kilometres radius of the station in La Réunion. Hence, any significant seismic event in the vicinity of Mauritius, including Rodrigues would be detected and information made available within minutes to the Meteorological Services for appropriate actions.

Mr Von Mally: May I know from the hon. Prime Minister whether Mauritius has made or will make any proposals on that issue?

The Prime Minister: We propose that we put our heads together. There are big countries around like India, France with Reunion Island, Australia and even South Africa. So, there are big countries with a lot of means. I don't think Mauritius should take the lead and go ahead with its own tsunami warning system. Clearly, we must put the whole process on. This we are going to do. I have read very carefully statements made by Indian Ministers, French Ministers, including the possibility of using Reunion Island, which is a full-fledged department of France next door, to move things forward. Government has not concluded yet, but being given the urgency of the situation, the tragedy that the 26 December tsunami has been for the countries concerned, I tend to believe that we must press ahead with the sub regional tsunami early warning system and then see to it that it expands to cover the whole of the Indian Ocean and then is linked. The day would come when the different regional tsunami warning systems will become global, will be interconnected at the level of the whole world, but I think we should start by our sub region which will, of course, include Rodrigues.

**PRIVATE COLLEGES/UNIVERSITIES
- MEDICINE AND/OR NURSING - SETTING UP**

(No. B/15) Mr M. Dowarkasing (Third Member for Curepipe and Midlands) asked the Minister of Education and Scientific Research whether he will state if he has received any application from foreign institutions for the setting up of private colleges or universities in the field of Medicine and/or Nursing and, if so, will he state -

- (a) the number and names of the applicants, and
- (b) the outcome of each application.

Mr Obeegadoo: Sir, it is to be noted that my Ministry does from time to time receive applications for the setting up of private tertiary educational institutions in Mauritius. These applications come either from existing institutions or from individuals seeking to set up, for the first time, the organisational structure in Mauritius; presumably, they reflect the ever increasing local demand for tertiary education. The applications are invariably referred to the Tertiary Education Commission, which is the umbrella organisation for our tertiary sector.

It is important that we regulate our tertiary education sector in order to ensure its integrity and increase public confidence. I should like to point out that through the adoption of an open-door policy, certain countries have caused a lot of harm to their own tertiary education systems. The approach worldwide is now to have a robust regulatory framework for the tertiary education sector. Accordingly, my Ministry is coming up with legislation to put in place a regulatory framework for our tertiary education sector very shortly.

Mr Speaker, Sir, my Ministry has received two applications from overseas for the setting up of medical colleges as follows -

- (i) Shri Ramachandra Medical College and Research Institute which is a deemed university based in Chennai, India for the setting up of medical college;
- (ii) Baqai Foundation, a foundation based in Pakistan for the setting up of a Medical University and Teaching Hospital in Mauritius.

These two applications are being processed.

TEA LANDS - CONVERSION PROJECT

(No. B/16) Mr M. Dowarkasing (Third Member for Curepipe and Midlands) asked the Minister of Agriculture, Food Technology and Natural Resources whether, he will state if the inquiry on the ex-tea belt has now been completed and, if so, will he table a copy of the report and, if not, why not.

Mr Bodha: Mr Speaker, Sir, the House will recall that I had earlier mentioned that the project for the conversion of tea lands had started without a proper planning resulting in problems like low yields, pests, inadequate drainage, water logging and boundary disputes.

The project, Mr Speaker, Sir, had cost Rs560 m, which included payments for land preparation to the tune of Rs129 m; road constructions for the tune of Rs257 m; bridge construction for the sum of Rs123 m and other expenses.

Following adverse comments by the Director of Audit in his annual reports for the years ending 30 June 1999 and 30 June 2000, it was agreed that an in-depth inquiry be carried out.

The Director of Audit was requested to carry out that inquiry, but advised that his office was not mandated to do so. We then approached the Management Audit Bureau to see how it could help and the Management Audit Bureau has accepted to carry out the inquiry, but in view of the complex and technical nature of the assignment, requested assistance of specialists in the field to assist the MAB team.

Engineers from my Ministry have been identified and are assisting the MAB team and have to be kept informed of the results.

Mr Dulloo: Can I ask the hon. Minister, pending the inquiry, whether those people, who had been granted only two plots of land for conversion from tea to sugar in the meantime, be allocated further land - land which was converted from tea to sugar and which is not being exploited as it should - which is lying idle?

Mr Bodha: We are proceeding to the reallocation of land in the whole area.

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

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

PORT LOUIS - WATER SUPPLY - CUTS FRIDAY 21.01.05

(No. B/17) Dr. R. Beebeejaun (Second Member for Port Louis South and Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Public Utilities whether he will, for the benefit of the House, inquire from the CWA whether there were cuts in the water supply in certain regions of Port Louis on Friday 21 January last and the reasons therefor.

Mr Ganoo: Sir, I am informed by the Central Water Authority (CWA) that during the week 17 to 23 January 2005, water was supplied to the Port Louis regions from 3.00 a.m to 10.00 a.m in the morning and from 3.00 p.m to 10.00 p.m in the afternoon.

On Friday, 21 January 2005, the Muslim Festival "Eid Ul Adha" was celebrated. Water consumption on that day, as is usually the case when there are important religious/social events, was expected to be on the high side. The CWA had, therefore, taken precautionary measures on the eve to keep the reservoirs at full level so as to provide an adequate supply on the following day.

Upon requests made by Mr Ameeremeeah, President of Mosques, water tanker services were provided to mosques at Vallée Pitot, Rue Large and Pagoda Street to cover the period of the day when there were water cuts. The hours of supply of piped water were extended up to noon instead of 10 00 a.m in the regions of Plaine Verte and Vallée Pitot.

With the excessively high demand for water on that day, the Diego Garcia and the Upper Monneron Service reservoirs could not attain an adequate storage level in the afternoon with the result that water supply in some areas, especially Military Road, Pagoda Street, Gorah Issac Street and the upper part of Vallée Pitot were affected when water supply was resumed at 15.00 hrs.

The tanker service arrangement was maintained up to midnight and the CWA closely monitored the water distribution.

Despite the fact that the Central Water Authority is confronted to serious problems of inadequate water resources during the dry season, arrangements were successfully made for the least inconvenience to be caused to the inhabitants of the Port Louis regions on the occasion of the celebration of the Eid Ul adha.

Dr. Beebeejaun: I would like to ask the hon. Minister to inquire whether in ward 4 of Port Louis there was no water supply between 6 a.m and 2 p.m on Friday?

Mr Ganoo: I will look into the matter, Sir.

BOIS CHERI - DOMESTIC WATER

(No. B/18) Dr. R. Beebeejaun (Second Member for Port Louis South and Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Public Utilities whether he is aware that the domestic water supplied in the Bois Chéri area during the past months has been of poor quality and, if so, will he, for the benefit of the House, state if his Ministry has made an inquiry from the CWA regarding this matter and whether the CWA has informed the inhabitants of the health hazards and the precautions to be taken and, if so, how and when and what remedial measures are being taken.

Mr Ganoo: Sir, I am informed by the Central Water Authority (CWA) that the inhabitants of Bois Chéri area are supplied with water which is tapped from the river "Rivière des Anguilles". The water is treated and chlorinated at Bois Chéri pressure filters before distribution.

Water is normally supplied to the Bois Chéri region on a 24-hour basis.

I am informed that chemical analysis of water carried out by the CWA over the past months has revealed that the quality of water in the Bois Chéri area meets the WHO standards. Besides, the CWA has not registered any complaint over the past months regarding the quality of water supplied to the region of Bois Chéri. However, an isolated case of muddy water was reported by an inhabitant of the Bois Chéri area to the CWA on 26 December 2004. The CWA after investigations had caused the defective pipeline to be repaired.

Dr. Beebeejaun: Mr Speaker, the report from the CWA seems not to be in agreement with the complaints that are prevailing in that region. May I ask the hon. Minister if he has himself been on the field to find out? I have seen myself on a Sunday about two weeks ago, muddy water from the tap and it was not an isolated incidence.

Mr Ganoo: I go by what the official record is, Mr Speaker, Sir. The CWA has maintained that there is no registered complaint in the record over the past months as far as the quality of water is concerned except the isolated incidence that has been mentioned. But, I would certainly undertake that I

will again go back to the CWA records to check and insist that the CWA goes and finds out whether right now there is any problem as regards the quality of the water that is being supplied to the inhabitants of Bois Chéri.

Dr. Beebeejaun: May I ask the Minister to check with the CWA if there has been a communiqué last Saturday warning people about the quality of water and, if so, it does not seem to be in line with the hon. Minister's answer?

Mr Ganoo: Last weekend, after the heavy rains that poured over the country, Mr Speaker, Sir, following the continuous heavy rainfalls during the weekend, the Bois Chéri filters were clogged owing to the heavy silting in the water. The filters were attended to daily and the cleaning was done manually. The inhabitants were informed of the precautions to be taken during the weekend and there was a radio communiqué, which was issued. I have a copy of the communiqué, which reads thus -

"Suite aux grosses pluies de ces dernières 24 heures les abonnés de la CWA résidant à La Flora, Gros Bois et Bois Chéri sont conseillés de faire bouillir l'eau avant de la consommer et ce pendant deux jours. "

So, the hon. Member is right, we did issue a communiqué in view of the situation.

Dr. Beebeejaun: May I ask the Minister how long are the people expected to boil the water and is he satisfied that boiling muddy water will solve the problem?

Mr Ganoo: It is on very rare occasions that such things take place, Mr Speaker, but, of course, as the hon. Member knows, he was a former Minister of Public Utilities, the CWA provides water which meets the WHO standard everywhere in the country. But, from time to time, in certain specific areas, due to the filtering process like in Bois Chéri, we encounter certain problems.

Dr. Beebeejaun: Sir, I would like to draw the attention of the Minister to the fact that he does not need a question in the House to have a communiqué two days later, but this problem has been occurring

Mr Speaker: I am sorry, hon. Beebeejaun. Can I remind you that when you had sent this question to the Clerk's Office, the communiqué was not out yet. So, it does not have anything to do with ...

Dr. Beebeejaun: On Saturday.

Mr Speaker: Yes, but the question was sent before Saturday.

Dr. Beebeejaun: The question was official by Friday night.

Mr Speaker: I am taking into account that the question was sent before Saturday. The last day for you to send questions is Wednesday. So, I take it that the question was sent on Wednesday and the communiqué was issued on Saturday. I allowed you one question about the communiqué, but you cannot now again put supplementary questions on the communiqué. I am not preventing you from putting questions, which are in order.

Dr. Beebeejaun: In the interest of the public, I am making an appeal to the Minister to inquire again because this has been going on not for the first time, not last Saturday. For how long are they supposed to boil the water?

Mr Ganoo: Never mind if he has put this question on Tuesday or Wednesday, but everyone knows that we had heavy rainfall during the last weekend, Mr Speaker, Sir, and this is what caused the clogging. So, the CWA issued the communiqué after the heavy rains. If there was no rain, we would not have issued the communiqué. We did not issue the communiqué because of this Parliamentary Question, but because heavy rain fell during the weekend.

Mr Speaker: This is why I am saying that the communiqué has nothing to do with the case at hand. Next question.

ICC - INDEPENDENT COMMITTEE ON HADJ REGULATIONS

(No. B/19) Dr. R. Beebeejaun (Second Member for Port Louis South and Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Arts and Culture whether she is aware that -

- (i) the Committee known as the "Independent Committee on Hadj Regulations" established by the Islamic Cultural Centre (ICC) holds its sittings on the premises of the Centre, and
- (ii) its members are remunerated from the funds of the ICC and, if so, will she state what steps she proposes to take to make this committee really independent.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have been informed by the Islamic Cultural Centre that since the opening of the new ICC Complex, the "Independent Committee on Hadj Regulations" has itself requested to hold its sittings on the premises of the Centre. Previously, the meetings were held in an office in cramped conditions.

The members of the Independent Committee on Hadj Regulations are remunerated out of the grant given to the Islamic Cultural Centre for the organisation of Hadj.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Independent Committee on Hadj Regulations operates independently, without any interference from the Islamic Cultural Centre. It has appointed its own Secretary and only uses the premises of the Islamic Cultural Centre for its meetings. In fact, the Islamic Cultural Centre stands guided and abides by all the recommendations of the Committee.

The Committee is already working independently under the guidance of former Justice Abdullah Malleck Ahmed, who is a highly respected personality, known for his independence and professionalism.

Thus, no further action is deemed necessary.

Dr. Beebeejaun: Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I will read an extract of the letter which I will put at the disposal of the House. It is a letter from this Independent Commission signed by venerable Judge Malleck, Dr. Hassam Moosun and Mr Sohawon, all three members of the Commission.

Mr Speaker: Can we know to whom the letter was addressed?

Dr. Beebeejaun: It is a correspondence addressed to me. And it is said here -

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: A letter has been addressed to the hon. Member. As a Member of Parliament, he is entitled to bring it to the notice of the House.

(Interruptions)

Order!

Dr. Beebeejaun: The letter reads thus –

‘Being given that our committee has been established by the ICC and that our sittings are held on the premises of the ICC and we are remunerated from the funds of the ICC, only an amendment to the law and an enlargement of the powers conferred on our committee and its creation not by the ICC, but by the Ministry, can put an end to what is going on. I have laid a copy of the document.’

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Speaker, Sir, ...

(Interruptions)

Dr. Beebeejaun: No, it's asking for a change of the law, it's asking for independence, that's what it is asking.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Speaker, Sir, I would expect the hon. signatory to let the Ministry be aware of any complaint that he has to make regarding ICC.

**INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY ENABLING SERVICES
(ITES) COMPANIES – SERVICES PROVIDED, PERSONS
EMPLOYED, ETC.**

(No. B/22) Mr S. Sakaram (Second Member for Vacoas and Floreal) asked the Minister of Information Technology and Telecommunications whether, in regard to the ICT sector, he will, in respect of the calendar year 2004, give a list of the Information Technology Enabling Services (ITES) Companies which have started operations in Mauritius, indicating –

- (a) the respective services provided, and
- (b) the number of persons employed by each company

Mr Jeeha: Sir, according to information obtained from the Board of Investment 28 ITES companies have started operations in 2004. Information regarding the names of these companies, their activities and the number of employment to be created by each company is being tabled.

**CUSTOMS DEPARTMENT – REVENUE COLLECTED –
2000-2001/2003-2004**

(No. B/23) Mr S. Sakaram (Second Member for Vacoas and Floreal) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to the revenue collected at the Customs Department for each of the financial years 2000-2001 to 2003-2004, he will give the following information -

- (a) the quantum of increase during the above period;
- (b) the reasons for such increase, and

- (c) the measures taken to reduce illegal practices at the Customs and Excise Department.

The Deputy Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, the Customs and Excise Department collects a number of duties and taxes, namely customs duty, excise duty and VAT on imports. From financial year 2000-2001 to financial year 2003-2004, the combined duties and taxes collected by the Department have increased by Rs4.26 billion, as follows –

- Rs390 m. from 2000-2001 to 2001-2002;
- Rs2.25 billion from 2001-2002 to 2002-2003, and
- Rs1.62 billion from 2002-2003 to 2003-2004.

This represents an average annual increase of 10.8 per cent.

In regard to part (b) of the question, the level of customs revenue collection over a period is generally explained by the interaction of several factors, of which the main ones are –

- the volume of goods imported during the period;
- prices on the international markets;
- evolution of the value of the rupee;
- changes in duty and tax rates, and
- improvements in customs administration.

From Financial 2000-2001 to 2003-2004, the rupee value of imports which embodies the first three factors I have just mentioned increased on average by 7.4 per cent, that is, at a lower rate than revenue collection. This means that the increase in Government revenue cannot be attributed wholly to higher imports. During the period, the VAT rate as well as excise duty rates on alcoholic beverages and cigarettes were raised, but there was also a lowering in the rates of excise duty for motor vehicles and petroleum products. In addition, significant reductions in customs duties were made on a wide variety of goods.

It is thus clear that one factor contributing to the increase in revenue collection has been the implementation, as from October 2002, of the reform

and modernization programme at Customs. The focus has been on combating corruption, undervaluation, misdeclarations, smuggling and other types of fraud and illegal practices. Higher enforcement has, in turn, led to a marked improvement in traders' voluntary compliance with customs laws.

As regards part (c) of the question, the spectrum of measures and steps taken are wide-ranging. These include –

- (i) launching of Flexible Anti-Smuggling teams for re-verification of consignments already cleared;
- (ii) strengthening of the Customs Intelligence and Investigations Units through training and technical assistance;
- (iii) development of a set of Standard Operating Procedures manuals;
- (iv) strengthening the Department's Internal Audit and Internal Control Sections to ensure that these procedures and controls are in place and are followed;
- (v) more effective use of the Customs Management System and IT solutions and tools for risk-management;
- (vi) creation of a customs reference price database to counter undervaluation;
- (vii) greater focus and increased controls over high risk imports, such as exempt imports;
- (viii) introduction of the concept of open offices, separation of staff from traders and rotation of operational staff to minimize opportunities for collusion, and
- (ix) holding of meetings with stakeholders to solicit their cooperation in reporting malpractices to customs management.

Mr Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Deputy Prime Minister whether he has taken note of a statement by Mr Cunningham, Comptroller of Customs, which was published in "l'Express" newspaper which I table and he says this –

'Au Canada on passait les samedis soirs à regarder des matchs de hockey, à Maurice on les passe à préparer des fausses factures d'achats'.

And in view of our attempt to attract foreign investors, bring people here to set up duty-free shops, etc. - and this is available on the Internet to everybody - we should convince the Comptroller of Customs that denigrating this country in this way is not right.

The Deputy Prime Minister: I am not aware of this press article. I will look into it.

**GUIMBEAU, MR MAXIME HENRI PATRICK –
DEATH AT CLINIQUE DARNE**

(No. B/24) Mr E. Guimbeau (First Member for Curepipe and Midlands) asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether, in regard to the death of Mr Maxime Henri Patrick Guimbeau at the Clinic Darné on the night of 19 March 2004, he will state whether -

- (a) a full inquiry has been carried out and, if so, will he give the findings thereof, indicating if there was negligence;
- (b) action if any, has been taken, and
- (c) a copy of the report will be submitted to the family of the deceased and, if not, why not.

Mr A Jugnauth: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that late Mr Maxime Henri Patrick Guimbeau was admitted to Clinic Darné on 17 March, 2004 for an operation and passed away on the night of 20 March 2004.

Following representations made by close relatives of the deceased, a full enquiry has been carried out by officers of my Ministry, led by the Regional Health Director of Victoria Hospital. The main findings of the inquiry are as follows -

- (i) On the night of 20 March, 2004, around 2200 hrs, late Mr Guimbeau was restless. The resident doctor was not contacted. Instead, the anaesthetist who attended to him during his operation was informed by the nursing staff on the telephone of the condition of the patient.
- (ii) At 2300 hours, when the patient became confused, in addition to being restless, the nurses did not inform any doctor.
- (iii) At 2330 hours, the doctor was also not informed even when the patient was in a state nearing coma. At midnight, the patient started to gasp for breath. It was only then that the nursing staff contacted the resident doctor on duty. He attended to the patient at 00.05 hours when the latter had already passed away.

- (iv) There were five doctors who were looking after late Mr Guimbeau. It would seem that there was no one to coordinate the treatment, especially post-operatively. Furthermore, none of them took note of the fact that the patient had breathlessness after his by-pass surgery in Reunion Island some 8 months ago.
- (v) Notes were not properly kept in the medical file by the doctors. Apart from the entry made on 17 March, 2004, when the patient was admitted, the only next entry was made on 20 March 2004 when the patient was declared dead.
- (vi) There were no qualified nurses on level 3 of the clinic to look after 15 patients, including late Mr Guimbeau on the night the latter passed away. Of the nursing staff on duty at that time, one was a State Enrolled Nurse (equivalent to an assistant nurse), one a final year student nurse and two others auxiliary nurses who were in their resting time.
- (vii) A death certificate was issued by the cardiologist at the clinic and the cause of death was 'Acute Respiratory Failure'. The findings demonstrate that the patient was not properly supervised by the nursing personnel present on the night he passed away.

As regards part (b), the clinic has been severely warned regarding the absence of an adequate number of qualified nurses in accordance with the condition attached to its licence under the Private Health Institutions Act 1989. It has also been requested to take immediate steps to remedy the situation, failing which appropriate action would be taken against it. Furthermore, the matter has been referred to the Medical Council for investigation regarding alleged medical mismanagement of the case.

With regard to part (c) the question of communicating the report to the members of the family of the deceased is currently under consideration. A policy decision regarding such matters will be taken shortly and the family of the deceased would be informed, accordingly.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the House that my Ministry is closely monitoring the activities of private clinics. Regular visits are being carried out to private clinics to ensure compliance with the conditions attached to the licence issued by my Ministry under the Private Health Institutions Act 1989 and to ensure that these institutions have the proper

staffing, equipment and infrastructure to operate. Furthermore, all private clinics have been requested to submit monthly returns regarding admissions, deliveries/births, surgical interventions, deaths and bed occupancy rate. They have also been requested to submit quarterly reports on their medical and nursing personnel working on a part-time and full-time basis and an updated list of equipment available.

Mr Guimbeau: Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to know if there was any *stagiaire* from Candos Hospital on that night?

Mr A. Jugnauth: I have just been informed that there were two trainees, but I do not know whether they were from Candos Hospital or elsewhere. I will have to check.

Mr Michel: M. le président, est-ce que le ministre peut dire si une des conditions attachées au licence est qu'il y ait un médecin résident dans les cliniques privées?

Mr A. Jugnauth: There was a resident doctor in that case. But I will have to check whether the law makes provision that a resident doctor should be at the clinic all the time.

Mr Michel: M. le président, ma question n'est pas s'il y avait un médecin résident dans ce cas, mais en général.

Mr A. Jugnauth: I am not too sure. I will have to check whether the law makes it mandatory that each clinic must have a resident doctor. I will check and let the Member know.

Mr Speaker: Everybody is supposed to know the law and it is not the duty of the Minister to interpret the law. This question, strictly speaking, is not admissible, because the Minister is not supposed to interpret the law.

ICTA - EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR - RECRUITMENT

(No. B/25) Dr. R. Beebeejaun (Second Member for Port Louis South and Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Information Technology and Telecommunications whether, in regard to the filling of the post of Executive Director of the ICTA, he will state whether a selection exercise was carried out in 2002 and in 2005 and, if so, will he state the procedures adopted and the names and managerial experience of the appointees in each case.

Mr Jeeha: Mr Speaker, Sir, the post of Executive Director was first advertised by the Mauritius Telecommunications Authority in June 2001 before it became ICTA. Mr Narayana Iyer Parameswaran, an Indian National from the Department of Telecommunications of India, was offered appointment by MTA on 14 August 2001 as Executive Director. However, he could not take the job immediately. Thereupon, a fresh advertisement was launched locally by ICTA in August 2002, as a result of which 16 applications were received. After an interview exercise by a panel, comprising the Chairman and two Board Members, the Board of the ICTA decided to revert to Mr Parameswaran, who had already been selected previously.

Mr Parameswaran accepted a two-year contract and assumed duty on 05 January 2003. Mr Parameswaran was a qualified engineer and occupied the position of Deputy Director-General, Licensing and Regulation in the Department of Telecommunications, India.

One of the functions of Mr Parameswaran was to groom one of the four Directors of ICTA with a view to the best suited one taking over as Executive Director eventually.

In view of the fact that the contract of Mr Parameswaran was due to expire in January 2005, the Board of the ICTA decided in December 2004 to make an assessment of the experience gained by each of the four Directors under Mr Parameswaran. A selection was made accordingly by the Board, which decided to appoint Dr. K. Oolun as Executive Director.

The post previously occupied by Dr. Oolun, that is, Director of Engineering and Licensing, was offered to his immediate assistant, Mr Jérôme Louis. Both appointments took effect as from 05 January 2005.

I am tabling the *curriculum vitae* of Mr Parameswaran, Dr. K. Oolun and Mr J. Louis, which provide additional information relating to their qualifications and experience.

Dr. Beebeejaun: The Minister explained that there were four Directors who were being groomed. May I ask the Minister why the post was not advertised nationally or internationally as in the first case?

Mr Jeeha: As I have explained, Mr Parameswaran was recruited in 2003 after an advertisement exercise carried out by the ICT in 2002 to recruit an Executive Director. Being given that after this exercise there was no suitable candidate, the Board then decided to recruit Mr Parameswaran

and to give Mr Parameswaran as part of his assignment to train somebody to take over when his contract expires. At the expiry of his contract, the Board carried out an assessment exercise and the best out of the four Directors was offered the job of Executive Director.

Dr. Beebeejaun: Mr Speaker, Sir, the Minister is repeating the answer again. What I am asking is why this departure from the first time. I know the Board decided. But why do not we have national and international open competition to have the best candidate?

Mr Jeeha: I think the Board has taken into consideration what happened previously. I cannot answer for the Board, obviously.

Dr. Beebeejaun: For the information of the Minister, there are very well qualified distinguished Mauritians who would have been interested if they had been approached or if the job had been advertised. Has the Minister taken the trouble to find out?

Mr Jeeha: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have just replied to that question. In the first exercise that the Board carried out in 2002, there were 16 able Mauritians. But, unfortunately, the Board at that time found out that none of them could fill that post and that, eventually, the future Director should need to have experience in regulatory matters which nobody else offers in Mauritius.

Dr. Beebeejaun: *Protection des p'tits copains!* The Minister knows it. The Minister will see it in the next question that he will answer. *Protection!*

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Dr. Beebeejaun: They should be ashamed!

Mr Speaker: Order, please!

PHARMACEUTICAL SECTOR - TRADE PRACTICES - INQUIRY

(No. B/26) Dr. J. B. David (Fourth Member for GRNW and Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Commerce and Consumer Protection whether he is aware of a statement made by his predecessor about a mafia

operating in the pharmaceutical trade and say whether by now any name has been submitted to the Police and, if so, when and, if not, why not.

The Minister of Small Enterprises, Cooperatives, Handicraft and the Informal Sector (Mr P. Koonjoo): Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I shall reply to that question.

Sir, in reply to PQ No. B/835 of 2004, I had informed the House that an inquiry in the trade practices of the pharmaceutical sector had been initiated by my Ministry. The inquiry is ongoing and appropriate action will be taken in the light of the findings of the inquiry.

However, I would like to add that the pharmaceutical trade is a very complex one in view of the very large variety of pharmaceuticals imported by some 30 importers from a dozen countries and through different modes of trade, either direct from manufacturers or wholesalers or from retailers.

Dr. David: Mr Speaker, Sir, it is a coincidence that the predecessor is the one who is replacing the new Minister. But, anyway, the predecessor said that an inquiry is still on. Can we know who is conducting the inquiry?

Mr Koonjoo: My Ministry, Sir.

Dr. David: That is the biggest joke of the century!

LE MORNE - WORLD HERITAGE - SUBMISSION OF DOCUMENTS

(No. B/27) Dr. J. B. David (Fourth Member for GRNW and Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Arts and Culture whether she will state if the documents concerning the classification of Le Morne as World Heritage have been submitted to the UNESCO and, if so, when and, if not, will she state the reasons for the delay in the submission of these documents.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I shall reply to PQ Nos. B/27 and B/49 together as they are related.

There has been no delay in the submission of the nomination dossier of Le Morne to UNESCO. The Le Morne Heritage Trust Fund which was set up in July 2004, has carried out consultations with UNESCO experts and is in the process of finalising the dossier.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the House that the experts have tendered two different views on the inscription of Le Morne. One has advised that it is necessary to link Le Morne with the Black River Gorge National Park and present it as a mixed cultural and natural site. The other one has indicated that the nomination of Le Morne would be stronger if it were to be presented as a cultural site on its own.

The Le Morne Heritage Trust Fund will thus have to decide on the best strategy to ensure the inscription of the site on the World Heritage list.

Members of the House will recall that, in reply to PQ Nos. B/780 and B/851, the House was informed that it was the firm intention of Government to submit the Nomination Dossiers of Aapravasi Ghat and Le Morne together.

However, according to the new rules set up by UNESCO with regard to the inscription of properties on the World Heritage list, no State party can submit two Nomination Dossiers in the same year, unless at least one of them is for a natural site. Therefore, as both Le Morne and Aapravasi Ghat are cultural sites, it is not possible to submit the nomination of both sites together to UNESCO.

In these circumstances, as the Nomination Dossier of Aapravasi Ghat was completed in the last week of January 2005, that is, just before the deadline of 01 February 2005, Government decided to submit the Nomination Dossier of Aapravasi Ghat to UNESCO this year.

Mr Armance: Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like, first of all, to thank the Chairperson of the Aapravasi Ghat who has worked tremendously day and night in order to submit the report. I would like to ask the Minister whether she will state if any legal actions regarding Le Morne has been taken by any promoter or owner.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Not to my knowledge, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker: I don't think that this question is relevant. We are talking about the submission of the dossiers to UNESCO, and this has got nothing to do with promoters or whatever.

Dr. David: Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to ask two questions. The first one concerning the delay...

The Prime Minister: There is no delay!

Dr. David: There is a delay!

(Interruptions)

The Prime Minister is answering questions on behalf of the Minister!

Mr Speaker: Order, please! Can you take your seat, hon. Dr. David? The hon. Minister has clearly stated in this House that there was no delay. The question speaks of delay. Already this question states that there was delay as a fact. The hon. Minister has denied that there was any delay. We are not going to discuss it anymore. The matter regarding delay is closed. I am not going to preside over a discussion where one party says that there is delay and the other party says there is no delay. So, it's the end of the matter as regards delay. Any other question?

Dr. David: Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir. The Minister just said that the two projects, namely the Apravasi Ghat and Le Morne would be submitted separately. In this very House, Mr Speaker, Sir, and I quote from what Prime Minister said...

The Prime Minister: On a point of order, Mr Speaker, Sir. This is wasting the time of the House. The hon. Minister...

(Interruptions)

I am on a point of order, Mr Speaker, Sir!

Dr. David: I am not giving way.

Mr Speaker: Can you take your seat? This is not strictly a point of order, but any Member can draw the attention of the Chair that another Member is losing the time of the House. In fact, I listened to the hon. Minister who said that, at some point in time, Government had decided to submit both dossiers to UNESCO together, but that because the rules of UNESCO had changed, it was not possible for Government to submit both dossiers. That is clear; if the hon. Member has any other question to put, then he can do so.

Dr. David: Mr Speaker, Sir, therefore, can we know from the Minister when were the rules of UNESCO changed?

/...

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: I have just been informed, Mr Speaker, Sir, by the Director of UNESCO during his visit to the SIDS Conference that two nomination dossiers could be submitted by a country provided they are different, that is, one of a natural site and the other one of a cultural site.

Dr. David: Mr Speaker, Sir, is this really a change or was this the standard before?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Speaker, Sir, this was not the standard before. In fact, what was mentioned before is that if a country had not previously submitted a dossier to UNESCO, it could submit two at a time. But, now, the Ministry is informed that one dossier should be for a natural site and the other one should be regarding a cultural site.

Dr. David: Mr Speaker, Sir, was Government aware of that before, saying that they would submit two files or has it been changed recently? If yes, when?

(Interruptions)

I am going to ask my question!

Mr Speaker: Order!

Dr. David: I know what is happening on the other side. *L'implosion!* Just stay quiet! This is why I asked, Mr Speaker, Sir, whether Government would tell us if, at the moment they wanted to submit two files, it was the norms of UNESCO that two files could be submitted or was Government unaware of it.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: I have already answered, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker: This is true. We cannot just lose the time of the House.

(Interruptions)

Yes, you can! Listen to me! You can ask a question, but you cannot repeat the same question all the time. You cannot ask for the same information all the time. Let me remind you...

(Interruptions)

Order! Order, please! Let me remind the hon. Member that the hon. Minister replied that she has just been informed. So, the hon. Member cannot come again and ask when the decision was taken and when they were informed. This is clear for me. We are not going to lose the time of the House. It is not a question of hiding. I am not going to tolerate any departure from the rules. Once we start departing, we will never end.

Mr Michel: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have some questions on that issue. May I ask the hon. Minister whether she could provide to this House the new rules, which she says UNESCO has given?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: This will be submitted to the House, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Michel: May I also ask the hon. Minister to provide the communication which the Director of UNESCO made to her on that issue? I want that, because we are turning round. May I ask the hon. Minister...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order, please!

Mr Michel: May I ask the hon. Minister whether it was not because of the IRS project that this is being turned down.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Speaker, Sir, it is worth noting that Government has already rejected one IRS project and another one - the *telepheric* project. So, in case there are new projects that have been submitted, they are going to be considered by Le Morne Heritage Trust Fund and the Board would decide upon it.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Next question.

Mr Barbier: Mr Speaker, Sir,...

Mr Speaker: I have already called the next question.

CRASH HELMETS – IMPORTATION

(No. B/28) Dr. J. B. David (Fourth Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Commerce & Consumer Protection whether, in view of the several aggressions committed by people wearing crash helmets (*casques intégraux*), he will state if immediate action will be taken to ban the sale of such helmets.

The Minister of Small Enterprises, Co-operatives, Handicraft and the Informal Sector (Mr P. Koonjoo): Mr Speaker, Sir, the importation of crash helmets is controlled under the Consumer Protection (Control of Imports) Regulations 1999. A committee is presently working out on appropriate standard for crash helmets. This committee, which was set up in October 2004, is chaired by the Principal Assistant Secretary of the Ministry and comprises officers of the Ministry, the Mauritius Standards Bureau, the Police Department, the Mauritius Chamber of Commerce & Industry and importers of crash helmets.

One of the proposals being considered by the committee is to prohibit the importation and sale of crash helmets with tinted visors. However, crash helmets with transparent visors will be allowed to ensure protection of motorcyclists as recommended by the Traffic Unit and Road Safety Unit. The committee also intends to ban the importation of half face helmets, which are considered as dangerous for motorcyclists.

MILK IMPORTATION - IMPORTERS, PRICE INCREASE, ETC

(No. B/29) Mr M. Dulloo (Third Member for Grand'Baie and Poudre d'Or) asked the Minister of Commerce and Consumer Protection whether, in regard to the importation of milk, he will give -

- (a) a list of the importers, indicating the brand and amount imported by each of them,
- (b) the amount of the recent price(s) increase and of the profit margin allowed,
- (c) the control, if any, being effected on the price of such an essential commodity, and
- (d) the action being taken to prevent any shortage and profiteering.

The Minister of Small Enterprises, Cooperatives, Handicraft and the Informal Sector (Mr P. Koonjoo): Mr Speaker, Sir, with respect to

parts (a) and (b) of the question, the required information have been placed in the library of the Assembly.

As regards part (c) of the question, the price of powdered milk has been decontrolled since May 1994. The Market Analysis and Monitoring Unit, set up in January this year, is presently investigating the recent price increases. My Ministry will take appropriate action in the light of findings of the investigation.

In addition, my colleague, the substantive Minister of Commerce and Consumer Protection met the importers of Powdered Milk recently to discuss the issue. It was found that price increases were due to the two-year drought situation in Australia, the increase in demand for Powdered Milk in China and the decrease in subsidy on Powdered Milk in Europe. These are external factors beyond our control.

With respect to part (d) of the question surveys conducted by the Consumer Protection Unit have revealed that there is presently no shortage of powdered milk on the market. As regards profiteering, regular checks and control are exercised by officers of the Consumer Protection Unit.

Mr Dullo: The hon. Minister, if I heard him well, said there is presently no shortage. But is he aware that the substantive Minister talked in terms of *pénurie* of milk, which has led to the increase in the price of milk?

Mr Koonjoo: No, Sir, I am not aware.

Mr Dullo: From the reply given by the Minister, it seems that because of drought and heavy purchase by China, there was a shortage, the price has gone up.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

Mr Dullo: I have one last question. The hon. Minister said that the list would be circulated. Is the importer Nestlé one of the group of importers? What percentage of milk is imported by Nestlé?

Mr Koonjoo: I have not mentioned that.

Mr Dullo: The substantive Minister could have answered, unfortunately he is not here.

**VOLUNTARY RETIREMENT SCHEME - APPROVED
SCHEMES, TITLE DEEDS, ETC**

(No. B/30) Mr M. Dulloo (Third Member for Grand'Baie and Poudre d'Or) asked the Minister of Agriculture, Food Technology and Natural Resources whether, in regard to the Voluntary Retirement Scheme (VRS), he will give -

- (a) a list of the approved schemes where workers have not yet received their title deeds for the agreed 7 perches of land, indicating the date of approval of the VRS and the number of workers involved,
- (b) whether representations have been made against employers for transferring different plots of land contrary to agreement or the transfer of plots of land not fit for residential construction, and
- (c) why Union Sugar Estates Co Ltd has been allowed to proceed with the *morcellement* and sale on the open market of the plot of land situate at Lady Barkly Street, Souillac earmarked as agreed to be remitted to workers under the VRS.

Mr Bodha: Mr Speaker, Sir, in regard to part (a), the House may wish to note that as per the VRS Scheme, 29 sugar estates have applied to offer the VRS on a total of 71 sites and covering a total acreage of 812 arpents. 8207 workers have opted to proceed on retirement under the scheme and enjoy the benefits thereunder.

It is good to recall that completion of infrastructural works and delivery of title deeds involve a very long process, which begins with the worker agreeing on the site proposed, and the sugar estates initiating actions with regard to the application for land conversion and *morcellement* permits. Once these two processes are completed, the sugar estates undertake the infrastructure works namely: water supply, road and drainage networks and electricity. When all infrastructure works are completed and the *morcellement* permit has been received, the sugar estates proceed with preparation and delivery of title deeds.

I am informed by the Mauritius Sugar Authority that so far the whole procedure has been completed in respect of 226 workers of St Antoine Sugar Estate, whereas the drawing of lots exercise has been completed for 5190 workers.

Furthermore, infrastructural works for the four sites of Mon Desert Alma have already been completed, and the company is awaiting the *morcellement* permits to finalise the title deeds.

Mr Speaker Sir, I wish to add that infrastructural works have already started on more than 90% of workers' sites and are expected to be completed by mid 2005.

As regards part (b) of the question, I am informed that the Mauritius Sugar Authority has received three representations as follows –

- (i) The VRS beneficiaries of Union Sugar Estate have made reservations in May 2004 that the land being offered to them is slopy and not suitable for construction. I held a meeting on 10 November 2004 with the stakeholders, including the representatives of the workers and the elected members of the Constituency. In fact, I have visited the site. I requested the promoter to look for an alternative site, some 8 arpents identified as slopy. The promoter agreed to the proposal and is presently carrying out site clearance and survey to have an exact assessment of the slopy area, and subsequently propose an alternative site for the area found slopy and unsuitable.
- (ii) The VRS beneficiaries of Mon Trésor SE having opted for the site situated at Trois Boutiques, they have complained that the site offered to them is not the one which had been proposed initially. Following the complaint, the MSA has enquired with the sugar estate and the latter maintains that the site to be offered has not been changed, and is the same as per the plans submitted to the MSA. The MSA has confirmed that the site at Trois Boutiques is the same as the one listed in the plan received by the MSA. I am informed that the MSA is organising a meeting with all the stakeholders in the coming week to sort out this issue.
- (iii) Mon Loisir SE has advised the MSA on 31 January 2005 that the land earmarked to be offered to the beneficiaries of the VRS at L'Amaury is unsuitable for technical reasons.

Following the start of clearing and infrastructural works at the above site, the company encountered caves in certain places. Subsequently, the company commissioned a geological survey, which confirmed that there were further caves. The company has decided not go ahead with the site and instead to

offer another site to the workers. In order to adopt a fast track approach, the company has itself decided to offer land at another site, i.e. at Schoenfeld, which had been earlier earmarked for sale to recover cost. The land has already received its letter of intent from the Morcellement Board. A meeting by the MSA has been scheduled on the 10th February to present the new site to the beneficiaries with a view to reach an agreement.

As regard part (c), it is good to note that as per the VRS, all sugar estates are eligible to develop and parcel out land in order to recover costs incurred with respect to cash and land compensation offered to the workers.

In this context, Union Sugar Estate has been allowed to parcel out an extent of 6 arpent 13 situated along Lady Barkly Street, Souillac, adjacent to the plot of land earmarked for VRS workers. Land Conversion Permit was approved in September 2003 and the letter of intent was delivered in February 2004. The workers site and the one used to recover costs are two distinct sites, although adjacent, and should not be mixed up. I am informed by the MSA that there was no agreement to remit this plot of land to the workers.

Mr Dulloo: First, Mr Speaker, Sir, I have asked for a list of those schemes where the title deed has not yet been delivered. Will the Minister be circulating that list? Of those various schemes he said that 21 such schemes have been approved and he has given the statistics. We are asking about those schemes that have been approved where as at today the title deed has not yet been given to the workers.

Mr Bodha: I will circulate it.

Mr Dulloo: Thank you. Secondly, Mr Speaker, Sir, regarding the Union Sugar Estate, the hon. Minister is saying that the land is being parcelled out to recoup the expenses, etc. May I ask the hon. Minister whether that land, where a *morcellement* permit has been given for the parcelling out, is the same that was agreed upon between the workers and the Sugar Estate for the purpose of the VRS? That land, which is situated at Lady Barkly Street, Souillac, is being parcelled out by the Sugar Estate to sell on the open market. I lay on the table of the Assembly the letter of agreement for the Voluntary Retirement Scheme dated 27 December 2001.

Mr Bodha: Mr Speaker, Sir, the letter refers to the word 'along' and the VRS site is just on the other side of this *morcellement* site. We went there on site to see these sites. There are two sites, one is of 18A and one is 6A. The 18A site is the one which is in contention and the workers have

said that they don't agree at all with the 18A site and the Estate is saying that the 18A site is on land on which we can build. So, we said: prove it to us. I would like to reassure the House, Mr Speaker, Sir, that we will never impose a site on the workers. There is a committee chaired by the Deputy Prime Minister, which sees to it that VRS workers agree on the sites given to them. We go on each site together with the Mauritius Sugar Authority and, in many cases, with the Members of that particular constituency to see to it that satisfaction is being given to the workers, which we have been able to do in most cases because drawing of lots has already been done for almost 6,000 out of 8,000 workers.

Mr Baloomoody: Can the Minister confirm that the certificate of *morcellement* which has been laid on the Table by hon. Dulloo was done under the previous Government?

(Interruptions)

Mr Bodha: I'll have to check.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: I can't hear anything. Order, please!

Mr Dulloo: Since the hon. Minister has said that he has visited the site, may I ask him whether there is only one Lady Barkly Street and the land that was agreed upon under the VRS was the land at Lady Barkly Street, that is, the one which is being parcelled out for sale? The workers are being given slopy land where there is water stagnation and it is not good for the purpose of the VRS project. May I ask the Minister to look into this?

Mr Bodha: Mr Speaker, Sir, they are two different sites.

FORM I/FORM VI - ADMISSION EXERCISES - COMPLAINTS

(No. B/31) Mr M. Dulloo (Third Member for Grand Baie & Poudre d'Or) asked the Minister of Education & Scientific Research whether, in regard to the admission exercises in Form I and Form VI, he will state –

- (a) the system put into place to receive complaints from dissatisfied parents/students;
- (b) the number of complaints received;
- (c) the nature of those complaints, and
- (d) how the complaints are being dealt with.

Mr Obeegadoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, ever since 2003, my Ministry has introduced the concept of customer care desks to handle miscellaneous queries from the public with a view to ensuring effective communication. These customer care desks are located at my Ministry's main office in Phoenix as well as at the four zonal headquarters in Port Louis, Beau Bassin, Rose Belle and Quatre Bornes as well as in one outstation at Centre de Flacq. Furthermore, the Private Secondary Schools Authority operates a customer care desk on the same principle as does the Mauritius Examinations Syndicate immediately after proclamation of CPE, SC and HSC results. Similarly, the Commission for Education in Rodrigues also has a customer care service in Malabar. The customer care desks are operational throughout the year, but during peak periods also operate outside normal working hours, including Saturdays.

Customer care desks are staffed by experienced officers who are during the period of resumption of studies briefed on a quasi daily basis by the Communication Unit of my Ministry so that parents and students may obtain relevant updated information and immediate assistance and advice.

Turning to Form I admissions, allow me to remind Members of the House that in December at the time of proclamation of results, the Mauritius Examinations Syndicate issued offers concerning all Form I mainstream seats in State Secondary Schools and other publicly owned secondary schools as well as half the seats in all publicly funded private secondary schools. In effect about three-quarters of students passing the CPE are offered a seat. Thereafter, many parents call at the customer care desk concerning admission to Form I. Some who have not received an offer seek admission to a State Secondary School for their child although the State sector can only cater for 45% of Form I mainstream admissions. Others having obtained an offer of a seat in a private secondary school seek admission to a SSS. Others still having obtained an SSS, seek a transfer to another SSS for various reasons. The requests are in the nature of applications for admission or applications for transfers and sometimes they may be couched in language expressing a complaint.

Accordingly, it is quite impossible to quantify with any degree of accuracy complaints *per se*. Be that as it may, these requests are processed in different stages. Firstly, consideration is given to requests concerning serious medical cases and twins. Thereafter, consequential vacancies arising from filling of places in private secondary schools are allotted on the basis of grade aggregate. Then, remaining vacancies are allocated considering hardship and more specially long distance travelling. The exercise has now by and large been completed.

As regards Lower VI admissions, it is to be recalled that in the public sector, 16 out of 70 secondary institutions offer Sixth Form classes. Accordingly, the State school students eligible to move from Form V to LVI are invited to apply to move to a State Sixth Form College if they so wish. This year, all students concerned received offers of such places on 31 January and 02 February save for some 20 students whose results or choice of subject combinations make it extremely difficult to accommodate them. Nonetheless, these applications are being addressed on a case by case basis. Here again, queries of a varied nature are reported by the customer care desk. Some originate from private sector students wishing to join State Sixth Form Colleges although the relevant exercise has not yet begun. Others relate to students wishing to change from one State Sixth Form College to another although in general, students would have obtained a college they themselves applied for. Other requests concern change of subject combinations after the processing of application forms and that may sometimes entail a change of college. And of course, some requests may originate from students not having obtained an offer of a seat for reasons given. Finally, there are also students who are ineligible to join HSC classes who still insist on being allowed to do so. Here again, defining and quantifying complaints is quite impossible as the hon. gentleman will understand.

Nonetheless, it is widely acknowledged that the admission procedure for Form I and Lower VI admissions has this year proceeded even more smoothly than in years gone by. All representations received at the customer care desks are being handled promptly and in the vast majority of cases to the satisfaction of the makers.

Should the hon. gentleman have any particular cases in mind, I remain as always ready and willing to provide all appropriate assistance.

Mr Dulloo: I wish to seek one clarification, Mr Speaker, Sir. May I ask the hon. Minister whether complaints for those who would have liked to obtain admission - whether Form I or Form VI - in what is known as confessional schools are also being dealt with by his Ministry, that is, those who have applied and are not satisfied for one reason or the other? Can they come and seek some sort of intervention at the Ministry?

Mr Obeegadoo: The customer care desks are opened to everybody and anybody depending upon the nature of the complaint, assistance may or may not be given. Maybe three weeks ago, some parents came and said: "I do not have a school at all". So, we would provide them the list of all private secondary schools still having vacancies. At lower VI it is different. Right now, private school students have applied to private secondary schools if their own does not

offer lower VI and we have State to State transfers. In the very near future, in the days to come, the Ministry will advertise remaining vacancies in State VI Form colleges to the public at large.

Mr Armance: May I ask the Minister whether his Ministry has received complaints concerning reclassification of zones? It is not evident for a student of Form I living at Trou d'Eau Douce to travel to Beau Bassin. Does the Minister envisage a reclassification of zones?

Mr Obeegadoo: No, Sir. There is no question of reclassification of zones at this stage. When we first introduced reforms there were teething problems. I believe in 2003 probably we did have quite a number of cases of students travelling from one end of the zone to another. This year these cases are very few and far between. I just mentioned, in response to the question of hon. Dulloo, that we have considered hardship cases, long distance travelling and again if the hon. Member has any particular case in mind, he may refer the case to me.

CONSUMER PROTECTION UNIT - FOOD SAFETY

(No. B/32) Dr. S. Maudarbocus (Third Member for Port Louis South and Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Commerce and Consumer Protection whether he will inform the House of the activities of the Consumer Protection Unit of his Ministry with particular reference to food safety.

The Minister of Small Enterprises, Cooperatives, Handicraft and the Informal Sector (Mr P. Koonjoo): Mr Speaker, Sir, the Consumer Protection Unit of the Ministry of Commerce and Consumer Protection is mainly involved in the enforcement of all consumer legislation and in consumer education.

Food safety is governed by the Food Act which falls under the purview of the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life. However, the Consumer Protection Unit of the Ministry of Commerce and Consumer Protection enforces the Pre-packaged Food Regulations 1989 under the Consumer Protection Act which provides that no trader shall sell any pre-packed food beyond the expiry date indicated on the package.

However, I may add that visits are also effected regularly to school and college canteens to ensure that food on sale is fit for human consumption. Doubtful cases, if any, are reported to the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life for analysis and necessary action.

Dr. Maudarbocus: Will the Minister say if he will accede to the request of a consumer organisation which wrote to the Ministry in March last year asking for the setting up of a coordination committee to look after food security? This coordination committee will comprise people of all sectors dealing with food: importers, retailers, the health inspectorate section and the Consumer Protection Unit. All of them will work for food security, that the food is safe and secure for people to consume.

Mr Koonjoo: Yes, Sir, I think we had a meeting with all stakeholders. There is a committee working on it in collaboration with the Ministry of Health. Quality of food and problems of safety of consumers fall under the purview of the Ministry of Health.

Dr. Jeetah: Mr Speaker, Sir, is the hon. Minister aware that most of the primary schools in Mauritius have school canteens with food which leave much to be desired, especially in relation to primary school students? Can I ask the hon. Minister whether he proposes to take any action against these school canteens?

Mr Koonjoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I said that regular visits by the officers of the Consumer Protection Unit are made to school and college canteens and if in any case there is any contravention, the officers book the people concerned. I repeat again that so far it is the Ministry of Health which is concerned about the quality of food being sold in those canteens. Our officers just look at the expiry date and if there is any contravention the persons are booked.

DRUGS AND VACCINES - CLINICAL TESTS

(No. B/33) Dr. S. Maudarbocus (Third Member for Port Louis South and Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether in regard to clinical tests of drugs and vaccines to be carried out on volunteers in Mauritius, he will state if -

- (a) prior approval is sought from his Ministry;
- (b) his Ministry has any say on the tests protocols;
- (c) his Ministry has a *droit de regard* on contracts between the volunteers and the testing agency, and
- (d) proper legal provisions exist to protect the volunteers and to prevent abuse.

Mr A. Jugnauth: Mr Speaker, Sir, there is no legal framework to allow clinical tests of drugs and vaccines to be carried out on volunteers in Mauritius and as such the question of tests protocol and *droit de regard* between volunteer and testing agency does not arise.

However, in respect of other medical research, the Ministry has set up an Ethics Committee in January 2003 to examine and give clearance to the research proposals.

Dr. Maudarbocus: Is the Minister aware that the *Centre International de développement clinique* based at Darné clinic intends to carry out clinical tests of drugs and vaccines on Mauritian volunteers?

Mr A. Jugnauth: Mr Speaker, Sir, as far as this project is concerned, I am told that the project submitted by one Messrs. Dermexpert has been duly authorised to perform simple tests with cosmetics. There is difference between vaccines and drugs to be administered on volunteers and tests with cosmetics. According to standard approved protocols namely, champoos, sunscreens, etc. on healthy volunteers, that company has also obtained a development certificate from the Ministry of Industry and the BOI. The tests are performed on the premises of the Medical and Surgical Centre in Floreal.

Dr. Maudarbocus: I am surprised because cosmetics also are considered as drugs and people do get allergy and reactions with cosmetics.

Mr A. Jugnauth: Mr Speaker, Sir, before coming to Parliament, I double-checked whether cosmetics would be included in drugs and vaccines, I have been told no.

Dr. Maudarbocus: Commercially and administratively it is not, but everybody knows that cosmetics do give allergy and there are doctors here who have seen patients with cases of allergy. We are very afraid when people come to carry out tests in Mauritius or in third world countries because recently there were tests carried out in an African country and in a South East Asian country. In the South Asian country, there is a law concerning this matter and when the authorities were asking questions about their protocol and what tests they were doing, it was about the vaccines against HIV/AIDS. And the people can get AIDS from the vaccines. They stopped doing their tests in the South East Asian country, but they are still doing the tests in the African country, because there, there is no law to regulate this activity.

Mr A. Jugnauth: Mr Speaker, Sir, I totally agree with the hon. Member. As far as cosmetic is concerned, as I said, there is an Ethics Committee, there are guidelines and there are protocols. Until and unless they satisfy those guidelines, those protocols, they will not be given the approval and as far as this issue of vaccines the hon. Member is speaking about, I know about this. In Thailand when we were in the conference, we were told about it. The vaccine had, in fact, been tested and people have died of the HIV vaccine that the hon. Member has been speaking. But here, in Mauritius, we would not allow that.

As far as cosmetics and so on are concerned, as I have just explained, we have the guidelines. There is an Ethics Committee. You submit your proposals, they will look if it adheres to the international norms, then the approval will be given. So, we have the guidelines. But as far as vaccines and drugs are concerned, there is no legal framework and we do not allow these to be tested on volunteers.

Dr. Beebeejaun: Can we know whether the activities that have been approved are being monitored and by whom, how frequently and whom are they reporting to?

Mr A. Jugnauth: As I have just said, there is the Ethics Committee, they approve and then, of course, there is monitoring.

Dr. Boolell: Can I ask the hon. Minister who chairs the Ethics Committee meeting?

Mr A. Jugnauth: The Ethics Committee which was set up in January is chaired by the Chief Medical Officer and is composed of four Principal Medical Officers, the Consultant Physician, the Consultant Pathologist, the Director, Pharmaceutical Services, the Chief Clinical Scientist, the Chief Nursing Officer and the Executive Director of the Mauritius Institute of Health.

Dr. Beebeejaun: When did they last meet and how often do they meet?

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Dr. Beebeejaun: We are talking about monitoring.

Mr A. Jugnauth: As far as the proposals are concerned, they meet as and when proposals are made to them. Monitoring is another matter. I suppose they will have to keep on meeting to monitor.

**MINISTER OF LABOUR/SINOTEX LTD. - PROPOSED
CLOSURE - MEETINGS**

(No. B/34) Dr. A. Boolell (Second Member for Vieux Grand Port and Rose Belle) asked the Minister of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment whether regarding the proposed closure of Sinotex Ltd, he will state if he has had meetings with the representatives of its management and, if yes, the outcome thereof.

Mr Soodhun: Mr Speaker, Sir, I had meetings in January with the management of Sinotex Mauritius Ltd., which informed me that the main office of the company was considering the possibility of shifting all its operations from this region including Africa to Asian countries. However, a final decision had not yet been taken at that time.

Since then the Labour Inspectorate of my Ministry has been visiting the factory regularly to monitor the situation.

On 04 February, the management had a meeting with the workers and informed them that the factory would cease its operation on 31 March. The company has given the formal undertaking that it would pay wages in lieu of notice, compensation and refund of all outstanding annual leave as prescribed by law.

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(No. B/34) contd.

Yesterday, I had a meeting with the General Manager, Mr Edmond Lau and he has informed me that following my request, the company has agreed to pay additional benefits, over and above those prescribed by law, namely -

- (a) payment of all outstanding sick leave;

- (b) supplementary compensation of 4 months' wages and Rs5,000 to workers with more than 17 years' service, 3 months' wages and Rs4,000 to workers with 12 to 16 years' service, 2 months' wages and Rs3,000 to workers with 7 to 11 years' service, one month's wages and Rs2,000 to workers with 2 to 6 years of service and 3/4 of the monthly wage and Rs1,000 to workers who are in employment since 2004, and
- (c) twelve weeks' pay and Rs300 maternity allowance to workers who are pregnant.

The company has also set up a Hardship Fund of Rs500,000 to assist workers who are in difficulty.

The payment of the various benefits and compensation prescribed by law is estimated at Rs35 m. With the additional benefits, the company will be spending around Rs52 m., that is, 49% more than the payment to which workers were normally entitled. The management of Sinotex has given the commitment that all the payments will be made by the end of March 2005.

Various companies, namely Aquarelle, Denim de L'ile, Dallas Garments have already contacted my Ministry to recruit the workers. I have also approached Firemount Ltd., Star Knitwear Ltd., CMT and Thon des Mascareignes with a view to redeploying the workers within the shortest delay. The Redeployment Committee will be meeting the workers next Monday to assist them in finding an alternative employment. The management of Sinotex Ltd. has also indicated that it will contact other employers to facilitate the redeployment of the workers.

Mr Duval: We are talking about Sinotex and a sister company, Kentex. Can the hon. Minister tell us how many workers in all are concerned, including Mauritians and expatriates?

Mr Soodhun: 935 Mauritian workers, 115 Chinese workers and 309 Indian workers. For Kentex, it is about 280.

Mr Hurnam: The hon. Minister has mentioned the proposed settlements. Did the workers and management sign the proposed settlements? Was there a firm proposal which was signed by both parties?

Mr Soodhun: Mr Speaker, Sir, there is a firm commitment from the management of the Sinotex Co. Ltd. to my Ministry. All the workers were informed by the management last Friday. I have been informed that by next

week an agreement will be made between the workers and the employer. This has already been published and I can lay a copy of the document which is nearly official...

(Interruptions)

Mr Hurnam: One additional question, Mr Speaker, Sir. Is there a form of understanding which has been put into writing by both parties?

Mr Soodhun: Very soon, Sir.

Mr Duval: Can the hon. Minister tell us about the figures concerning Kentex, the sister company?

Mr Soodhun: It is about 280 workers.

Mr Dulloo: May we know whether the same operation is being carried out at Sinotex and Kentex? We would like also to know the total number of workers presently employed and all those that would be declared redundant.

Mr Speaker: I would like to draw the attention of the House that this question concerns Sinotex Ltd.

Mr Dulloo: Yes, that's right, but the hon. Minister should know that Kentex also, the sister company, is going through the same process. This is what we have understood. The hon. Minister mentioned Firemount Ltd. In fact, Firemount Ltd. has already indicated its intention to terminate the employment of a certain number of workers.

Mr Speaker: The hon. Minister said that he has contacted Firemount Ltd. to take over some of the workers of Sinotex.

Mr Dulloo: Is the hon. Minister aware that Firemount Ltd. has indicated its intention of reducing its labour force?

Mr Soodhun: Mr Speaker, Sir, Firemount Ltd. has opened a new factory in St. Felix. It is already in operation and 500 workers are working in St. Felix.

Mr Dulloo: I would like to know from the hon. Minister...

Mr Speaker: No! We are not going to open this question to the whole textile industry. This question relates specifically to Sinotex, so let's stick to Sinotex.

Dr. Boolell: Mr Speaker, Sir, since the hon. Minister agreed to lay copy of the proposed agreement on the Table of the National Assembly, may I impress upon him to do the needful?

Mr Soodhun: Sir, I have no objection.

Dr. Boolell: But then, the hon. Minister should lay copy of the proposed agreement on the Table of the National Assembly.

Mr Speaker : I heard the hon. Minister say that it is not official yet.

Dr. David: The hon. Minister said that it is nearly official.

Dr. Boolell: The Minister has made a promise and I expect him to honour his obligation and to lay copy of the proposed document on the Table of the National Assembly!

(Interruptions)

Mr Soodhun: I do honour my obligation! I am not like him!

(Interruptions)

MEDICAL COUNCIL ACT - AMENDMENT

(No. B/35) Dr. B. Hookoom (Second Member for Piton and Rivière du Rempart) asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether he will state if the Medical Council Act will be amended -

- (a) to empower the Medical Council to initiate action in cases of medical negligence, and
- (b) provide for the establishment of a 'Defence Union' for medical practitioners.

Mr A. Jugnauth: Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to refer the hon. Member to the reply made by my colleague, hon. Prem Koonjoo, the then Ag. Minister of Health and Quality of Life, in response to PQ. No. B/856 on 23 November 2004, wherein it was stated that proposed amendments to the Medical Council Act 1999, as subsequently amended, had been worked out

with all parties concerned and were being finalised with the State Law Office.

In fact, the procedures are being streamlined to empower the medical council to initiate action in cases of alleged medical negligence promptly. In this connection, I have to confirm that I am coming very soon with this Bill which is on the point of being finalised by the State Law Office.

As regards part (b) of the question, I am informed that the functions of the Medical Council do not include provision for the establishment of a 'Defence Union' for medical practitioners. However, medical doctors practicing in the private sector take their own insurance to cover their practice in case of litigation.

As such the Medical Council is not the body to provide insurance cover and legal assistance.

Dr. Beebeejaun: May I know what kind of protection the private practitioners benefit in the service?

Mr A. Jugnauth: Mr Speaker, Sir, in Mauritius, pursuant to Article 1384 of the Civil Code, the State as employer is responsible for the damage caused by its *préposé*, that is, its employees in the exercise of their duties. So, doctors come within this umbrella.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

RODRIGUES - MONT LUBIN COLLEGE - BUILDINGS AND SPORTS INFRASTRUCTURE

(No. B/36) Mr J. Von-Mally (Third Member for Rodrigues) asked the Minister of Public Infrastructure and Land Transport whether, in regard to the Mont Lubin College, he will state if the buildings and the sport infrastructure have already been completed, indicating if established norms have been strictly adhered to and if not, the reasons therefor, indicating any remedial measures taken.

Mr Guinness: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am advised that the project for the Mont Lubin College in Rodrigues was implemented in phases and had been completed.

The completion dates are as follows -

- Phase I comprising the administration block, classroom/canteen block, one toilet block, workshop/home economics block and site work involving internal court yard, tarmac, parking and boundary walls was completed on 04 March 2004.
- Phase II consisting of science block and one classroom block was completed on 09 September 2004.
- Phase III relating to a second toilet block was completed on 11 January 2005.

The works have been carried out as per the drawings, specifications and conditions of the contract.

At the time of handing over, a snag list and a list of outstanding items had been drawn up that are being attended by the contractor as per the conditions of the contract.

The project is still under the one-year liability period and the building is inspected by the Technical Team from the Ministry of Public Infrastructure, which effects site visit for projects in Rodrigues each month. Leakages have been observed in the roof of the Administration Block and same have already been attended to by the contractor.

Concerning the sport infrastructure, I am informed that the construction of the playfields has been delayed as these had to be redesigned to take into consideration the topography of the site which necessitates provision of drains and retaining wall to prevent soil erosion during heavy rainfall.

The redesigning involves additional works and additional funds for which approval is being sought before issuing instructions to the contractor.

The fixing of furniture in the science block, computer rooms, workshop and library had been awarded under a separate contract on 12 August 2004 to a specialised subcontractor. Works are in progress and are expected to be completed by the end of March 2005. Thereafter, the gas installation works would be undertaken.

Mr Von-Mally: I thank the hon. Minister for this first answer to my question. May I ask the hon. Minister whether he is aware that the boundary

wall, in fact, constitutes a danger for these students? I know that he is a new Minister, would he check if the boundary wall has been constructed according to norms?

Mr Guinness: Obviously I would like to inform the hon. Member that I'll get in touch with the Rodrigues Regional Assembly, with the Chief Commissioner and my colleague the Minister of Rodrigues. I am planning a visit to Rodrigues to see all the projects and I would also like to inform the hon. Member that I am not so sure that my predecessor, for four and a half years, has been to Rodrigues, but I'll do it as soon as possible.

Mr Speaker: Can I make one remark here concerning this Parliamentary Question B/36. The fact of accepting this question on the Order Paper may appear to go against the ruling which I gave this morning, but I make it clear here that it is not really against my ruling. The reason why I accepted this question is that it is the Ministry of Public Infrastructure, which has given the contract and is supervising this project. Henceforth, such questions should be addressed to the Rodrigues Regional Assembly and not here.

Mr Von-Mally: I have one last supplementary question. Has there been any retention money kept in order to make good for any repairs to be done?

Mr Guinness: We are still under the liability period. The liability period has not yet ended so there must be retention money. Once the final certificate is given, then everything is sorted out.

Mr Dowarkasing: May I just draw the attention of the Minister to the fact that there are no gates despite the fact that the yard is fenced.

Mr Guinness: I'll take it into consideration.

RODRIGUES - LE CHOU COLLEGE - EXTENSION WORKS

(No. B/37) Mr J. Von-Mally (Third Member for Rodrigues) asked the Minister of Public Infrastructure and Land Transport whether, in regard to the Le Chou College, he will state -

- (a) when the extension works were carried out for the new classrooms and sports infrastructure, indicating if there was any departure from the contract specifications, and
- (b) if any remedial measures were taken to make good for any departure from the said specifications, giving the reasons for any delay.

Mr Guinness: Sir, I am informed that the project for the extension of Le Chou State Secondary School comprised –

- (a) one block of 12 classrooms;
- (b) one toilet block;
- (c) one Science/Home Economics block, and
- (d) one workshop block

Concerning part (a) of the question, the construction works started on 15 January 2002 and were carried out in two phases –

- (i) Phase I consisting of classroom block, toilet block and courtyard was completed on 29 July 2002, and
- (ii) Phase II comprising Science/Home Economics block, workshop and site works was completed on 15 January 2003.

I am advised that sports facilities did not form part of the project as additional land is required for that purpose and the land issue has yet to be cleared.

I am also advised that the works were executed as per drawings, specifications and conditions of the contract and as such there was no departure from the contract specifications. However, certain defects were noted during the maintenance period. These include –

- (i) filler around the metal openings were coming out;
- (ii) leakage in the preparation room in the science block, and
- (iii) fading of paint.

These defects were brought to the attention of the contractor and same had been made good in accordance with the conditions of the contract prior to the final handing over.

Mr Von-Mally: May I ask the hon. Minister whether one of these defects does not comprise the anti slippery tiles to be put in this college?

Mr Guinness: As I have said, the defects, which have been brought to the attention of the contractor, are - filler around the metal openings, leakage and fading of paint.

Mr Von-Mally: Can I ask the hon. Minister whether these repairs were not to be done last year?

Mr Guinness: The contractor is supposed to make good of these defects during the liability period.

RODRIGUES - REDCO LTD. COLLEGES – STUDENTS - PROTEST

(No. B/38) Mr J. Von-Mally (Third Member for Rodrigues) asked the Minister of Education and Scientific Research whether he will state if students of the REDCO Ltd. colleges in Rodrigues refused to attend classes on Monday 31 January 2005 and Wednesday 02 February 2005, and, if so, will he give the reason/s thereof.

Mr Obeegadoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by REDCO Ltd that on Monday 31 January 2005, a group of pupils of Le Chou College and on Wednesday 02 February 2005, a larger group, this time, from Le Chou, Grande Montagne and Maréchal Colleges refused to attend classes and publicly demonstrated, in front of the Commission for Education in Malabar, against the transfer of teachers and non-teaching staff within REDCO schools.

Transfer of teachers and non-teaching staff is a yearly recurrent feature in the education sector as a whole and REDCO is no exception to the rule. Such transfers are effected either because of requests emanating from the teachers themselves or for reasons of administrative convenience. For example, when new teachers are appointed, there is need to ensure that there is a proper mix of experienced and new teachers in each school.

In the past, the transfer of REDCO teachers used to be effected on an *ad-hoc* basis, but it has, this year, assumed another dimension, because the number of REDCO schools has increased since 2000 from 3 to 5. Accordingly, REDCO management, with the collaboration of the rectors/principals of the REDCO schools and of the national inspectorate, attempted to effect a general transfer exercise as it is done in mainland Mauritius which is just and fair so as to ensure –

- (i) optimal utilisation of resources to dispense quality education in Rodrigues, and
- (ii) also a fair distribution of degree holders and diploma holders in secondary schools.

The transfer exercise was approved on Friday 28 January 2005 by the REDCO Board on which sit two representatives of the Commission for Education of Rodrigues and it was meant to become effective on Wednesday 02 February.

However, in the light of the public demonstrations, apparently not so much against the fact of the transfer but the timing of the transfer exercise, REDCO Management had discussions with the federation of PTAs of schools and the Commission for Education in Rodrigues and consensus was reached to limit the transfer exercise to about ten teachers who had themselves expressly requested their transfer. I am informed that the situation is back to normal now.

Mr Speaker, Sir, it is obvious that the protest could have been avoided if there had been better communication between REDCO and the PTAs of schools; and I have impressed on REDCO the need to improve communications in general in the education sector.

Mr Von-Mally: Being given that the Commissioner for Education said that he was not aware of the transfer, can we say that there has been a lack of co-ordination between the Commissioner of Education and the Ministry of Education?

Mr Obeegadoo: Sir, I am not aware of any such declaration, but as I have just stated, there is need to improve communication. Indeed, there is always need to improve communication, Sir.

ICTA - DIRECTOR OF ENGINEERING & LICENSING - APPOINTMENT

(No. B/39) Dr. B. Hookoom (Second Member for Piton and Rivière du Rempart) asked the Minister of Information Technology and Telecommunications whether, in regard to the appointment of the Director of Engineering and Licensing of the ICTA in 2003, he will -

- (a) give the name of the appointee, and
- (b) state if any selection exercise was carried out and, if not, why not.

Mr Jeeha: Sir, no appointment was made by ICTA in 2003 with regard to the post of Director of Engineering and Licensing.

Dr. Beebeejaun: If I may, what post was Dr. Oolun filling at that time?

Mr Jeeha: Are you referring to Dr. Oolun? He was already Director of Engineering and Licensing at the ICTA.

Dr. Beebeejaun: The question is: how was he appointed?

Mr Jeeha: If the Member wants to know how he was appointed, I would invite him to refer to the reply I made to the PNQ of the Leader of the Opposition on 07 September 2004.

Dr. Beebeejaun: Was the appointment by invitation, by application?

Mr Jeeha: This is what I said, Mr Speaker, Sir, I have already replied to a PNQ on that issue.

Mr Speaker: The reply was to a PNQ, isn't it? Dr. Hookoom, next question.

SIDS CONFERENCE - BANK OF MAURITIUS –

CONTRIBUTION

(No. B/40) Dr. B. Hookoom (Second Member for Piton and Rivière du Rempart) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development, whether he will state if the Bank of Mauritius has contributed to the expenses incurred for the organisation of the SIDS conference in January 2005.

The Deputy Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that the Bank of Mauritius, under section 6 (y) of the Bank of Mauritius Act 2004, has subscribed to the share capital of Les Pailles International Conference Centre Ltd in an amount of Rs300 m. by way of non-voting Redeemable Preference Shares.

A first call was made on the Bank on 24 December 2004 for an amount of Rs200 m. Payment was effected on the same day to Les Pailles International Conference Centre Ltd, which has been incorporated with the object, *inter alia*, to engage in any activity and/or organise and/or host

events which are in the public interest and/or which may contribute to increase the economic activity and the general prosperity of Mauritius.

I am given to understand that to date the cost of fit-outs and operational equipment for the UN SIDS Conference is estimated by the company to be Rs148.1 m. I would like to point out that a large part of the fit-outs and equipment will be used by the company for other events.

Mr Speaker, Sir, there is no doubt that the conference proved to be a resounding success. It has immensely helped and for coming decades will help to put Mauritius on the world map. All delegates attending the conference, including the Secretary General of the United Nations, have commented favourably on the holding of the conference. In his opening speech, the UN Secretary General thanked the Prime Minister and the people of Mauritius for the great skill with which they prepared and hosted the meeting. In a press briefings held on 14 January, he further said:

I quote -

"Here in Mauritius, I have been impressed with the very high level of attendance at the meeting on small island developing states. This shows a renewed interest and commitment on the part of the entire international community for the issues of concern to these states - from environmental vulnerabilities to small economies, remoteness from the world markets, high energy costs and waste management problems."

Mr Speaker, Sir, on this issue, I am rather perplexed at the stand taken by the hon. Leader of the Opposition. He initially criticised the holding of the conference, but thereafter was bent on meeting the Secretary General of the United Nations. This clearly demonstrates a lack of consistency, unless, of course, the criticism was meant only for demagogical purposes to which he is accustomed.

SUGAR INDUSTRY - ACTION PLAN

(No. B/41) Dr. A. Boolell (Second Member for Vieux Grand Port and Rose Belle) asked the Minister of Agriculture, Food Technology and Natural Resources whether he will state if the report on the future outlook for sugar prices has been prepared by Landell Mills and if so, when and whether an accelerated Action Plan on the sugar industry will be submitted.

Mr Bodha: Mr Speaker, Sir, in anticipation of the adverse impacts which the reforms of the EU Sugar Regime would have on the Mauritian

sugar industry, the Mauritius Sugar Authority was requested to work out a draft Action Plan for the period 2005-2015 in order to mitigate such effects, and maintain a viable sugar industry for Mauritius that would take into account the interests of all stakeholders, including the 30,000 small planters.

Concurrently a review of all the Service Providing Institutions financed by cess money has been undertaken to ensure that the services provided to the sugar industry are optimised and provided in a timely manner.

Following the 14 July 2004 announcement of the EU Commission proposing a drastic price cut, it has become evident that Mauritius needed to be ready with its own Action Plan as a matter of urgency, if it was to take advantage of the proposed EU Action Plan, containing accompanying measures to support ACP countries like Mauritius. It was indicated that these measures would provide adjustment assistance to signatories of the Sugar Protocol to moderate the economic and social impact of its reform proposals, which would entail substantive reduction of the guaranteed sugar prices.

Landell Mauritius Co. Ltd. was commissioned in November 2004 to carry out a study on choice of policy and measures proposed by Mauritius in its draft Action Plan 2005-2015 and to validate data and figures relating to the level of investment required to implement those measures.

At the meeting between the ACP and the EU Agriculture Council on 24 January 2005, the EU Commission released its Action Plan entitled "Action Plan on accompanying measures for Sugar Protocol countries affected by the reform of the EU Sugar Regime". I am tabling a copy of that report.

Landell Mills Co. Ltd has consequently been requested to take into account the proposals and framework made in the EU Action Plan, before finalising its report on the Mauritius Action Plan 2005-2015.

Mr Speaker, Sir, when our Action Plan 2005-2015 is ready, we will certainly inform the whole population and all the stakeholders.

Mr Dooloo: May I ask the hon. Minister on what basis Government mandated Landell Mills to prepare the report and who retained its services?

Mr Bodha: It was according to the Terms of Reference, which had been prepared by the Mauritius Sugar Authority.

Mr Dooloo: No, on what basis? The hon. Minister should know that Landell Mills had for years been acting as consultants for the MSPA and that

they were the witnesses of the MSPA before the PTA against the 40-hour week, etc. So, I would like to know whether Landell Mills were recommended by the MSPA directly and they were retained or whether there was any sort of tendering and open invitation to bid to retain the services of specific consultants.

Mr Bodha: It was not proposed by the MSPA.

Mr Dulloo: How was the Landell Mills retained for that exercise by Government? What was the procedure adopted?

Mr Bodha: The National Committee chaired by the Deputy Prime Minister and all the stakeholders had examined the Terms of Reference and on those Terms of Reference, Landell Mills was chosen.

Mr Dulloo: So, there were not direct negotiations with Landell Mills. They were retained just like that!

Mr Bodha: Yes, on the Terms of Reference.

RODRIGUES – ADSL - INTRODUCTION

(No. B/42) Mr J. R. Spéville (Second Member for Rodrigues) asked the Minister of Information Technology and Telecommunications whether he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information from the Mauritius Telecom as to whether it had recently carried out a survey to determine the feasibility of introducing ADSL in Rodrigues and, if so, will he state the outcome thereof.

Mr Jeeha: Mr Speaker, Sir, in reply to PQ B/475, the House was informed that a market survey was being carried out to determine the viability of introducing ADSL service in Rodrigues.

I am informed by Mauritius Telecom that the technical feasibility for the provision of ADSL in Rodrigues is confirmed, but the full assessment of the commercial viability is not completed yet.

The actual deployment of ADSL will depend on customer demand in Rodrigues. I am informed by Mauritius Telecom that as at date, there is only one application from the Rodrigues Administration for ADSL services.

**CENTRE INTERNATIONAL D'ATHLETISME, DAKAR –
MAURITIAN ATHLETES**

(No. B/43) Mr J. R. Spéville (Second Member for Rodrigues) asked the Minister of Youth and Sports whether, in regard to the Mauritian athletes presently undergoing training at the Centre International d'Athlétisme, in Dakar, he will state –

- (a) the number thereof ;
- (b) the terms and conditions of their training;
- (c) the facilities placed at their disposal in Dakar, and
- (d) the responsibilities, if any, of their respective local sports federation.

Mr Yerrigadoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that three Mauritian athletes are presently undergoing training at the Centre International d'Athlétisme in Dakar. They are namely Jonathan Chimier, Eric Milazar and Arnaud Casquette -

- (a) with regard to part (b) of the question, the athletes are required to sign a '*contrat de comportement*' a copy of which I am laying on the table of the Assembly. The following conditions are applicable:
 - (i) abide by the internal rules of the Centre;
 - (ii) to participate in training camps and competitions elaborated in their respective programme by the local federation and the Technical Direction of the Centre;
 - (iii) not to negotiate contract for sponsorship on a personal basis without the prior agreement of relevant authorities in Mauritius, and
 - (iv) not to leave the centre without the agreement of its Technical Direction and Administration.
- (b) With regard part (c) of the question, facilities placed at their disposal by the Centre in Dakar are *inter-alia* –
 - (i) board and lodging;
 - (ii) facilities for training;
 - (iii) payment of a monthly stipend;
 - (iv) an insurance cover during their stay in Dakar.

- (c) With regard part (d) of the question, the responsibilities of the local federation are –
- (i) to ensure that timely registration is made in respect of competitions for which the athletes are respectively preparing for, and
 - (ii) to make necessary arrangements for international travelling and visas of the athletes in order to facilitate their participation in these competitions.

Mr Spéville: Can I ask the Minister whether one Mr Fernando Augustin was at the Centre and, if yes, is he still training there?

Mr Yerrigadoo: I am informed by the Mauritius Amateur Athletic Association that Fernando Augustin who was undergoing training at CIAD last year has not been invited by the International Amateur Athletic Federation to join the Centre for the current season, because he did not achieve the required standard during the last season.

BIRMINGHAM CALL CENTRE EXPO 2004 – DELEGATION COMPOSITION, EXPENSES, ETC.

(No. B/44) Mr X. L. Duval (Fourth Member for Curepipe and Midlands) asked the Minister of Information Technology and Telecommunications whether, in regard to the participation of Mauritius at the Birmingham Call Centre Exhibition, he will –

- (a) give the composition of the delegation;
- (b) state the expenditure incurred in connection therewith, and
- (c) the name of the person/s who attended the investment seminar held on September 2004 in the context of the above exhibition.

Mr Jeeha: Sir, I was invited by the Board of Investment to lead the Mauritian delegation to the Birmingham Call Centre Expo 2004. I am tabling the composition of the delegation.

Total expenses amounting to Rs1.2 m. were incurred in relation to the stand, rental and decoration. Contributions from participating organisations to these expenses amounted to Rs637,200.

(Interruptions)

Mr Duval: On a point of order, Sir, I really cannot hear what the Minister is saying. I think he can make an effort to speak a bit slower and louder because we are slow people here.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Minister, speak up, please.

Mr Jeeha: I should like to point out that, in September 2004, in addition to the Birmingham Call Centre Expo, I also attended an ICT promotion mission with the BPML in London from 27 to 30 September 2004.

With regard to part (c), I must state that the Investment Seminar was called off, due to some logistic problems encountered by the Board of Investment.

I had very fruitful discussions on a one to one basis with Messrs. Anthony Newman of Sumit IT, Andrew Griffiths of Voice for Data, Erhard Jungmayr of Appletree and Clive Vokes of Clive Vokes Associates. In addition, meaningful first-time contacts were established with leading companies to set up operations in Mauritius, namely the Hinduja Group of UK and Infomil of France.

As a result thereof, Mr Pierre Danon who has international recognition in the field of Telecommunications has invested US\$500,000 in the Permanent Resident Scheme, to subsequently invest in an ICT project

On its part, Appletree which already has an operation in Mauritius, has expanded and increased its workforce to over 100. Sumit IT is negotiating with a local BPO company for outsourcing of some of its activities. The Hinduja Group has leased one floor in the Ebene, Cyber Tower to start its BPO operation. Infomil, has started outsourcing its IT Operations to an existing local Company, prior to the setting up of its own BPO Unit.

Mr Duval: Can I just ask the hon. Minister to give us the number of people in the delegation - private sector, public sector, please?

Mr Jeeha: Well, I am circulating the list, there were 14 people.

(Interruptions)

We have the list here, you can see it. If you don't have ears, I don't have a problem with that.

(Interruptions)

Mr Duval: Mr Speaker, I heard 30 people in the delegation. This is what I heard.

(Interruptions)

Mr Jeeha: 14 people.

Mr Duval: Can the hon. Minister tell us whether the Rs1.2 m. that were spent, include the Rs600,000 from the other FSPA, BOI ? Or is that exclusive of it?

Mr Jeeha: Well, the hon. Member has to listen, Mr Speaker, Sir. I gave my reply very clearly – Rs1.2 spent by Government, Rs637,200. contributed by participants.

Mr Duval: I take it that the whole mission cost Rs1.8 m., this is what we understand. Now, as far as the investment seminar was concerned, we know, in fact, that it was held, that there was catering for 100 people. The hon. Minister remember that, I am sure. So, it was not cancelled.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Yes.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, on a point of order. The Member put a question, he was even arguing, challenging the Minister. He should put his question, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Duval: I want to have correct information.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Can the hon. Member take his seat? Unfortunately, it is the Minister who has the privilege to have all the information; he has the file with him, he was present at the exhibition and I have to rely on what he is saying. What the hon. Member is saying is that he has the information; and the person who has given him the information is not here to vouch to the truth of the information. In that case

the hon. Member cannot go on disputing as to whether the seminar was held or it was called off. He insisted that the seminar was held there and the Minister says that it was not held. But we cannot go on discussing this issue.

Mr Duval: Mr Speaker, I am jogging his memory; he may have forgotten. Can I not remind him that it was like that, that there were 100 people and that there were catering for 100 people and that only one person turned up?

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order, order, please! Why don't you ask the Minister whether there was arrangement for catering or not? The hon. Member is stating it as a fact that there was catering arrangement. There is a difference between putting a question ...

(Interruptions)

Mr Duval: May I ask another question, Mr Speaker, Sir? Can I ask whether the other meetings that the Minister had mentioned took place at the High Commission in London or in Birmingham?

Mr Jeeha: I said it earlier in my reply - I was in Birmingham for only one day - before going to Birmingham I was leading the delegation of BPML in London from 27 to 30 September 2004 where we met these investors on one to one basis.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Time is up. Next item?

MOTION

SUSPENSION OF S.O 10 (2)

The Prime Minister: Sir, I beg to move that all the business on today's Order Paper be exempted from the provisions of paragraph (2) of Standing Order 10.

The Deputy Prime Minister rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.