

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

POLICE OFFICERS - PROMOTION

(No. B/612) Mr S. Lauthan (Third Member for Port Louis Maritime and Port Louis East) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether, in regard to the Police Officers promoted, since March 2007 to date, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to their names, grades and length of service, indicating their former and new posting.

Reply: I am informed by the Ag. Commissioner of Police that 266 Police Officers of different grades have been promoted since March 2007 to date.

I am tabling the information requested by the hon. Member.

LES ANGES DU SUD AND LE DODO RESORTS PROJECTS

(No. B/620) Mr G. Lesjongard (Second Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether, in regard to the projects for the construction of hotels in the southern part of the island, he will state if the Fast Track Committee in connection therewith has taken any decision recently and, if so, if the projects of Les Anges du Sud and Le Dodo Resorts have been approved.

Reply: The fast track committee has so far met on five occasions under the chairmanship of the prime minister but no hotel project in the south has been considered during these meetings.

I am informed that the promoter of the Dodo Resorts project applied for an investment certificate to the Board of Investment (BOI) in January 2006. However the project was not approved by the BOI as the promoter had not secured any lease of state land from the Ministry of Housing and Lands for the implementation of the hotel project in the area of La Cambuse.

In fact, the Ministry Agro Industry and Fisheries has requested the Ministry of Housing and Lands not to consider leasing any land for development in that area in order to better preserve and help conserve the habitats of the surroundings as any development would adversely affect the Blue Bay Marine Park and its fauna and flora.

As regards Les Anges du Sud, I am informed that on 27 August 2007 the promoter of the project submitted an application to the Ministry of Housing and Lands for the lease of state land at La Prairie. On 26 December 2007, the promoter was informed by the Ministry of Housing and Lands that the land in question being a public beach was not available for lease.

SODNAC – ALLEGED RAPE - INQUIRY

(No. B/621) Mr G. Lesjongard (Second Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether, in regard to the case of alleged rape of a girl, on 23 May 2008, at Sodnac, Quatre Bornes, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to if an inquiry has been carried out thereinto, indicating the outcome thereof, including if any arrest has been effected in relation thereto.

Reply: I am informed by the Acting Commissioner of Police that following an in depth police enquiry, one J. S. L., aged 17, has been arrested at Pointe aux Sables on 04 June 2008 and he has confessed having committed the rape of the young girl on 23 May 2008 at Sodnac, Quatre Bornes.

On the same day, the victim has also positively identified the suspect.

On 05 June 2008, a provisional charge of “Rape” has been lodged against J. S. L. before Black River Court. He has been remanded to Police cell up to 12 June 2008.

MBC – BROADCASTING VEHICLE

(No. B/622) Mr P. Jhugroo (Third Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation, information as to if an outdoor broadcasting vehicle of the Corporation has met with an accident, on or about Saturday 24 May 2008 and, if so –

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

(Withdrawn)

MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS – WOMEN - ALLOWANCE

(No. B/623) Dr. R. Mungur (Second Member for Flacq and Bon Accueil) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether, in regard to clauses 3 and 4 of the Millennium Development Goals in relation to the promotion of gender equality, the empowerment of women and reducing child mortality, he will state if he will consider providing a specific subsistence allowance to helpless women when they are carrying a baby and to their newborn.

(Withdrawn)

MEDIA TRUST - CHAIRPERSON

(No. B/624) Mr R. Issack (Second Member for Port Louis South and Port Louis Central) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether, in regard to the Media Trust, he will, for the

benefit of the House, obtain from the Trust, information as to if the Chairperson thereof has been appointed and, if not, why not.

Reply: As the House is aware, Government is seriously envisaging to revisit the legal provisions relating to the media in general.

In this context, the role and functions of the Media Trust may have to be reviewed.

Pending the reconstitution of the Board of Trustees of the Media Trust, the affairs of the Trust are being managed by the outgoing Chairman.

LA BASTILLE PRISON - INCIDENT

(No. B/625) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether, in regard to the La Bastille Prison, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Prisons, information as to if it has been re-opened and, if so –

- (a) since when
- (b) the number of detainees thereat as at todate and
- (c) where matters stand in regard to the recent incident that occurred thereat.

(Withdrawn)

VIDEO CLIPS - COMPLAINTS

(No. B/626) Mr S. Soodhun (Fifth Member for La Caverne and Phoenix) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to if a young student has recently lodged a complaint in regard to the production of video clips of pornographic nature, and if so, if an inquiry has been carried out thereinto and the outcome thereof.

Reply: I am informed by the Acting Commissioner of Police that on 11 May 2008, a young student lodged a complaint to Police regarding the circulation of a video clip of obscene nature on mobile phones.

Police instituted an enquiry and a minor was arrested the next day. A provisional charge of “dealing in obscene matters” was lodged against him. He was allowed bail after furnishing a recognizance of Rs50,000.

Inquiry in the matter is still under way.

EMBASSIES & HIGH COMMISSIONS – MEDICAL ASSISTANCE

(No. B/627) Mr J. C. Barbier (Third Member for GRNW and Port Louis West) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether, in regard to the High Commissioners, Ambassadors and officers of the diplomatic corps abroad who are presently in office, he will state the number thereof who have benefited from medical assistance, since their appointment to June 2006.

(Withdrawn)

VIDEO CLIPS – MOBILE PHONES

(No. B/628) Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun (Third Member for La Caverne and Phoenix) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether, in regard to the illegal transmission of video clips through mobile phones, he will state if he will consider toughening the law in relation thereto.

Reply: The transmission or reception through mobile phones of video clips which are “grossly offensive, or of an indecent, obscene or menacing character”, is sanctioned under our criminal laws by virtue of section 46(h)(i) of the Information and Communications Technologies Act 2001.

Any person who provides an information and communication service, which includes the sending out of information in the form of sounds and images, must, pursuant to section 24 of the Information and Communications Technologies Act 2001, hold a licence issued by the Information and Communications Technologies Authority.

Section 47(1) of the Information and Communications Technologies Act provides that any person who commits an offence under the Act, if convicted, is liable to a fine not exceeding 1,000,000 rupees and to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 5 years.

Moreover, where a person is convicted for an offence under the Information and Communications Technologies Act 2001, the Court before which a person is convicted may, under Section 47 of the Act, in addition to any penalty imposed, order the cancellation of the licence held by the person convicted and the forfeiture of any installation or apparatus used in connection with the offence.

The provisions in our current legislation constitute an adequate deterrent to the illegal transmission of video clips through mobile phones or any other electronic means and there is no need for toughening the law at this stage.

However, I wish to inform the House that the issue is being addressed from a holistic perspective rather than simply legal compliance. Under the National Information and Communications Technology Strategic Plan, consideration is being given by the Ministry of Information Technology and Telecommunications to a multi-prong approach to address the problem of illegal video transmission.

BROWN SEQUARD HOSPITAL – INPATIENTS - MISSING

(No. B/629) Mrs S. Grenade (Second Member for GRNW and Port Louis West) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to if there are inpatients of the Brown Sequard Hospital who have gone missing since July 2005 to date, and if so, the number thereof, indicating the number thereof who have been found.

Reply: I am informed by the Acting Commissioner of Police that since July 2005 to date 12 inpatients have been reported missing from the Brown Sequard Hospital.

Out of these, nine have been found and three patients are still missing.

I am further informed by the Acting Commissioner of Police that the Police is still enquiring into these three cases.

MBC – FIXED DEPOSITS

(No. B/630) Mr P. Jhugroo (Third Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation, information as to if the Corporation has been holding fixed deposits with financial institutions since July 2005 to date, and if so, obtain a list thereof, indicating in each case –

- (a) the amount of money deposited and
- (b) the date of the transactions.

(Withdrawn)

BEL AIR LABOUR OFFICE - MR V. C. – TERMINATION OF EMPLOYMENT

(No. B/638) Mr S. Lauthan (Third Member for Port Louis Maritime and Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment whether, in regard to one Mr V.C., of Montagne Blanche, he will state if his Ministry has been apprised of his having been allegedly unjustly dismissed from his work, following an accident which occurred at his workplace and if so, the actions taken by his Ministry, if any, in connection therewith.

Reply: A case of termination of employment was registered at the Bel Air Labour Office on 30 October 2007. The complainant, Mr V. C. of Montagne Blanche, has reported that he had been dismissed from work on 29 October 2007 on grounds of alleged repeated absences. There was no mention of any accident.

At a conciliatory meeting held on 22 November 2007 by officers of my Ministry with the complainant and the representative of his former employer, the latter reported that the complainant was dismissed because of his repeated absences from work.

The employer's representative further stated that the complainant had been warned on 11 September 2006, 13 November 2006 and 29 January 2007 for his numerous absences from work. In spite of these warnings, complainant continued to absent himself.

He appeared before a disciplinary board on 24 October 2007 following which his employment was terminated on 29 October 2007.

At the conciliatory meeting at my Ministry, the employer's representative made an offer for compensation representing indemnity in lieu of notice and severance allowance for length of service. This was more than normal compensation.

The complainant informed that he would consider the offer and revert to the Ministry. However, as the complainant had failed to revert back to the Ministry by end of February 2008, he was convened at the Bel Air Labour Office on 06 March 2008. He informed the Labour Office on that day that he was suing his employer, through his trade union, and would no longer require the services of my Ministry. He signed a statement to that effect.

METHADONE PROGRAMME TREATMENT - IMPLEMENTATION

(No. B/639) Mr S. Lauthan (Third Member for Port Louis Maritime and Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether, in regard to the Methadone Treatment Programme, he will state –

- (a) the number of patients who are undergoing same, and
- (b) what is being done to ascertain the successful implementation thereof.

Reply: My Ministry introduced the Methadone Substitution Therapy in Mauritius in November 2006 as a harm reduction strategy to address the problem of transmission of HIV and AIDS among the Injecting Drug Users (IDUs). At the initial stage, 10 male clients were being induced fortnightly.

Thereafter, the former Detox Centre at Barkly has been renovated and converted into a National Methadone Substitution Therapy Centre to increase the number of clients for methadone induction. Currently, 60 clients are being induced monthly at the Centre.

Furthermore, with a view to extending the services to female clients, a ward at the old Brown Sequad Mental Health Care Centre has been completely walled off and female IDUs are now being induced on methadone in that ward. This service started in March 2008 and currently 30 female clients are being induced monthly.

To date there are 781 clients who have gone through the methadone treatment programme, comprising 701 males and 80 females.

As regards part (b) of the question, the following measures are currently being implemented –

- (i) all Methadone Maintenance Therapy clients are followed up by trained social workers at the Rehabilitation Centres for psychosocial support and their reinsertion within the community as well as the workplace;
- (ii) each client is seen by a Doctor once every fortnight for renewal of the prescription of methadone and for one to one counselling. This exercise is presently carried out at the Rehabilitation Centres and arrangements are being made for such follow up to be done in Regional Hospitals in view of the limited capacity of the Rehabilitation Centres;
- (iii) dispensing units are operational in the five Regional Hospitals as well as at the Brown Sequad Mental Health Care Centre and at the Dr Bouloux Area Health Centre, and
- (iv) as a dissuasive measure, random urine testing is carried out on the clients with a view to detecting any use of heroin or subutex amongst the clients. Such random tests have not revealed any use of these substances.

I wish to inform the House that the programme is already yielding positive results and need to be scaled up. In this connexion, my Ministry is looking into the possibility of opening new induction centres in each Health Region. In addition, the possibility of introducing outpatient induction clinics in the regional hospitals is being looked into.

Besides, my Ministry has had positive consultation with the Prisons authorities for the introduction of methadone therapy on a pilot basis among IDU prisoners.

With these measures , Mr Speaker Sir, my Ministry aims at reaching 2500 clients by June 2009.

I wish also to inform the House that -

- (i) the Mauritius Institute of Health will be conducting a comprehensive evaluation of the Methadone Substitution Therapy Programme. This exercise is expected to start shortly, and
- (ii) the Indian Ocean Commission is sponsoring the services of a consultant to conduct a general evaluation of the ongoing programmes relating to harm reduction strategies and the management of the Injecting Drug Users and People Living with HIV and AIDS.

Based on the reports of the two evaluation exercises, my Ministry will take appropriate measures as may be required.

ROCHESTER FALLS – ROADS & EMBELLISHMENT WORKS

(No. B/640) Mr S. Lauthan (Third Member for Port Louis Maritime and Port Louis East) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism, Leisure and External Communications whether, in regard to the Rochester Falls, in Surinam, he will state if consideration will be given for the –

- (a) upgrading of the roads leading thereto, and
- (b) embellishment works to be carried out thereat.

Reply: Rochester Falls is a popular tourist site visited by many tourists and Mauritians alike.

However, the House may wish to note that roads leading thereto as well as the viewpoint are privately owned.

My colleague, the Minister of Local Government and myself, are proposing to hold a facilitation meeting with the Grand Port/Savanne District Council and owners of the roads leading thereto as well as the viewpoint in order to establish whether in return to the embellishment works, public access to the site can be guaranteed.