

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

EUROPEAN UNION/MAURITIUS – FISHING AGREEMENT

(No. B/475) Mr M. Dowarkasing (Third Member for Curepipe and Midlands) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms, Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether, in regard to the fishing facilities extended to the European countries to fish in our economic zone, he will state if Government has held any bilateral meeting with the European Union and , if so, the details thereof.

Reply (The Minister of Agro Industry and Fisheries): A Fishing Agreement was first signed in November 1990 between EC and Mauritius. There have, so far, been five protocols under the Agreement and the fifth one lapsed on 02 December 2007.

Upon the request of the EC to conclude a new Fisheries Partnership Agreement (FPA) with Mauritius a first round of negotiations took place between both parties in June 2007 in Brussels. An agreement could not be reached as the EC was proposing a reference tonnage of 3,000 tonnes compared to 6,500 tonnes under the outgoing protocol. However, during discussions the draft Agreement, its Protocol and Annexes [including the Vessel Monitoring System (VMS) Protocol] were thoroughly scrutinized and both sides agreed on the major parts of the instruments. Subsequently, it was agreed by both parties to have a second round of negotiations in Mauritius in the third quarter of 2007.

However, on 19 October 2007, the Director-General of the Directorate for Fisheries and Maritime Affairs of the EC requested that Mauritius expresses a strong support and a formal and written commitment to the reform of the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC) at the FAO meeting of the informal Group of Legal Experts held in October 2007 in Rome. Without clarification as to where Mauritius stands on this issue, the EC would not have an appropriate framework under which a future FPA could be concluded. After consultations with the Prime Minister's Office, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, International Trade and Cooperation and the Attorney-General's Office, I informed the EC of our position regarding the reform of the IOTC.

Subsequently, the EC confirmed the postponement of the second round of negotiations in Mauritius as it felt that there was still not the appropriate framework under which an FPA could be negotiated.

On 29 October, 2007, I met the European Commissioner for Fisheries and Maritime Affairs, Mr Joe Borg, during the High Level Conference on “Eradication of Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) Fishing in Portugal. During our interactions, I comforted the Commissioner on the different actions being undertaken by Mauritius in its endeavour to combat IUU fishing in Mauritius waters. The Commissioner agreed to take up the issue with the negotiating team and to consider favourably the conclusion of a FPA in the interest of both the EC and Mauritius. Consequently, an EC delegation visited Mauritius on 07 and 08 November 2007 with a view to clarify the framework within which a second round of negotiations could take place.

The EC Delegation presented an Action Plan termed “Actions to prevent, deter and eliminate illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing in Mauritius waters and ports” as a pre-requisite for Mauritius to negotiate the FPA.

During that session the EC delegation informed the Mauritian team that -

- (i) they maintain their original proposal made in Brussels during the first round of negotiations for a reference tonnage of 3000 tonnes based on reported catches for period of 2004-2007 ;
- (ii) the duration of the new FPA would be for 6 years;
- (iii) Mauritius should use 100% of the financial contribution to implement the proposed Action Plan ;
- (iv) implementation of the proposed Action Plan will be subject to scrutiny every three months in 2008 and thereafter on a yearly basis, and
- (v) if the EC is not satisfied with the implementation of the proposed Action Plan, it will suspend payment of the financial contribution to Mauritius.

It was noted that the cost of implementation of the proposed Action Plan would be more than Euro 1 million (about Rs45 m.) per year only for the aerial patrol and surveillance of our maritime zones whilst the reference tonnage of 3000 tonnes would fetch an annual amount of around Euro 472,000 (about Rs21 m.) only.

On 12 December 2007, I wrote to Mr Joe Borg, European Commissioner for Fisheries and Maritime Affairs, and assured the latter that Government attaches great importance to its relation with the European Union and is committed to conclude a forward looking and sustainable bilateral Fisheries Partnership Agreement with the European Community that takes fully into account the interests of both sides and respects their sovereign rights.

As negotiations could not be concluded by 02 December 2007, Mauritius proposed to the EC a one-year extension of the Fifth Fisheries Protocol under the existing terms and conditions. The EC did not agree to the request.

Mauritius also proposed to issue private licences directly to the EC fishing vessels to fish in our maritime zones upon application as is presently the practice with other foreign countries pending finalisation of the new Fisheries Partnership Agreement. The EC also did not agree to this proposal.

On the other hand, the EC informed Mauritius that it has already requested its fleet to leave Mauritian waters as from 03 December 2007. Furthermore, the Commission also issued a formal notification to its fishing fleet operators to the effect that no direct negotiations for private fishing licences between individual ship-owners and the Mauritius authorities are authorised.

On 14 December 2007, Mr Joe Borg, the European Commissioner for Fisheries and Maritime Affairs, confirmed the availability of his services to pursue the negotiation process for a new Fisheries Partnership Agreement that would be in the best interest of both parties.

In a reply to Commissioner Borg on 07 January 2008, I reiterated that Mauritius attaches great importance to its relations with the EU and is committed to conclude a new FPA with the EC that takes fully into account the interest of both parties and respect their sovereign rights.

The Mauritius Ambassador based in Brussels had a meeting with the Cabinet of Commissioner Borg on Friday 11 January 2008 on the Mauritius/EC FPA and pursued discussions with the EC side on the outstanding issues before formal negotiations could take place on the FPA.

Consequent to an informal meeting our Mission in Brussels had with the Director, International Relations and Market Access, Directorate General (Fisheries) of the Commission on 14 May 2008, the following has been outlined -

- (i) there is a political commitment to conclude a Fisheries Partnership Agreement (FPA) as soon as possible on both sides;
- (ii) the Commission will show some flexibility in the negotiation process ;
- (iii) the issue of IUU has to be seen in a wider context. Therefore, the proposed Protocol and Action Plan on IUU may not be incorporated into the FPA text itself but annexed to it, and
- (iv) a technical meeting may be held between the EC and Mauritius in the margin of a meeting on the IOC Regional Plan for Surveillance scheduled for early June 2008 in La Réunion to further discuss the FPA including IUU fishing.

We have been made to understand that a second round of negotiation may in principle take place in July 2008 in Mauritius to favourably conclude an FPA.

MEDICAL NEGLIGENCE - LEGISLATION

(No. B/488) Mr N. Bodha (First Member for Vacoas and Floreal) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms, Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether, in regard to medical negligence, he will state if he will consider reviewing the existing legislation in respect thereof, in view of the recent reported cases.

(Withdrawn)

ENVIRONMENT PROTECTION FEE

(No. B/491) Mr M. Dowarkasing (Third Member for Curepipe and Midlands) asked the Minister of Environment and National Development Unit whether, in regard to the Environment Protection fee, he will state if the objectives set out for the imposition thereof have been met since July 2005 to date.

Reply: The objective of the Environment Protection Fee (EPF) is to raise fund for the promotion of local environmental initiatives aimed at preventing and reducing pollution.

The revenue collected is being credited to the Consolidated Fund out of which Government expenditure is being met towards different projects at the national level including environmental projects such as coastal protection works, wastewater projects, and upgrading/embellishment of the physical environment.

To this effect, I would state that the objective of the Environment Protection Fee is being continuously met.

SCHOOLS – FURNITURE - TENDER

(No. B/492) Mr M. Dowarkasing (Third Member for Curepipe and Midlands) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether, in regard to the supply of various items of furniture for the primary and secondary schools, he will state if tenders were launched in September 2006 and, if so, give –

- (a) details thereof and
- (b) the name of the successful tenderer.

Reply: Yes, tenders were invited through the press by way of a Tender Notice dated 29 September 2006 for the supply of various items of furniture for primary and secondary schools for the Financial Year 2006 – 2007. I am arranging for the list of items purchased and the names of the successful tenderers to be placed in the Library of the National Assembly as there were 17 different items purchased from five different contractors for primary schools and 24 different items purchased from 9 different contractors for Secondary Schools.

**MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND NDU
– PROJECTS – JULY 2005-JUNE 2006**

(No. B/493) Mr M. Dowarkasing (Third Member for Curepipe and Midlands) asked the Minister of Environment and National Development Unit whether, in regard to the projects carried out by his Ministry, he will state –

- (a) the number thereof already designed and not yet awarded since July 2005 to June 2006 and
- (b) the amount of consultancy fees paid in connection therewith, including to Gibbs Mauritius Ltd., and Mega Design, with a breakdown thereof.

Reply: The information sought is being compiled and will be placed in the Library of the National Assembly once it will be ready.

YOUTH CENTRES – OPENING HOURS, CRITERIA, ETC

(No. B/517) Mr M. Allet (Second Member for Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Youth and Sports whether, in regard to the Youth Centres, he will state the number thereof, indicating –

- (a) the daily opening hours;
- (b) the eligibility criteria for access thereto and
- (c) the indoor games which are available thereat, indicating when was the last audit exercise carried out to verify if all the games listed on the inventory of each of the centres are still available.

Reply: With regard to part (a), I wish to inform the House that at present, there are 23 Youth Centres across the island. The opening hours of these centres are normally from 09 00 to 18 00 hours from Mondays to Saturdays and as regards Sundays, the centres are opened as and when activities are scheduled by my Ministry or other organisations.

However, some centres are also used after 18 00 hours for the celebration of special events and other activities carried out by my Ministry, the various Associations/Clubs or other stakeholders of the region.

With regard to part (b), the eligibility criteria for access, Youth Centres, are, as a matter of principle opened to young people aged 14 to 29 years.

However, Non Governmental Organisations and members of the public also have access to the Youth Centres as, over and above specific activities for the youth, an integrated and holistic approach is adopted by my Ministry to enlist the increasing participation of the public and other stakeholders in the promotion of youth development through the organisation of community based programmes and inter generational activities.

As regards part (c), indoor games such as Scrabble, Carrom, Domino, and *Des Chiffres et Des Lettres* are normally available in Youth Centres, according to the needs and specific demands of the young people of the region.

However, in some regions, the youth is more interested in indoor activities such as Table Tennis, School Boxing, Judo Karaté, Tae Kwon Doe, Dancing and Aerobics.

As regards the audit exercise to verify the availability of all games listed on the inventory of each centre, I wish to inform the hon. Member that such exercise is carried out regularly by the Officers-in-Charge of the Youth Centres.

Moreover, the Director of Youth Affairs and representatives of the Internal Control, Stores and Finance Sections of my Ministry also effect regular site visits to these centres to monitor closely the situation.

UNEMPLOYED – REGISTRATION

(No. B/518) Mr M. Allet (Second Member for Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment whether, in regard to the unemployed people, he will state the number thereof who have been registered with the *Bureau du Travail*, on a monthly basis, since July 2005 to March 2008, indicating in each case –

- (a) the sector in which there has been more demand for work and
- (b) the number of unemployed in the average age group
 - (i) 18 to 25
 - (ii) 26 to 40 and
 - (iii) 41 to 60.

Reply : As at March 2008, there were 23 393 persons registered as unemployed with the Employment Service of my Ministry.

As regards part (a) of the question, it has been observed that most of the jobseekers registered with my Ministry aspire to take up employment in the public sector.

With regard to part (b), I wish to inform the House that information in respect of unemployed persons is currently compiled according to the following age groups:

- (i) 16 – 19 years
- (ii) 20 – 29 years
- (iii) 30 – 39 years
- (iv) 40 years and above

I am tabling a breakdown of the number of unemployed persons registered with the Employment Service of my Ministry, as at the end of each month, from July 2005 to March 2008 according to the age groups mentioned earlier.

I would like to take this opportunity, to draw the attention of the House to the fact that the average number of unemployed jobseekers has substantially decreased from 32,465 in year 2005 to 23,088 as at March 2008. In addition, this downward trend is observed from statistics of unemployment rate from the Central Statistical Office which show a decline in the rate from a peak of 9.6% in year 2005 to 8.5% in year 2007.

This is a very good achievement and we, in Government, are confident that this trend would continue and should lead to a situation of full employment in the coming years.

WORKERS (FOREIGN) – NUMBER, SECTORS ETC.

(No. B/519) Mr M. Allet (Second Member for Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment whether, in regard to the foreign workers presently employed in Mauritius, he will state the number thereof, indicating -

- (a) the different sectors in which they operate, and
- (b) their terms and conditions of employment.

Reply: According to records available at my Ministry, as at 14 May 2008, there were around 36,500 foreign workers in employment in Mauritius. Around 75% of these workers are employed in the manufacturing sector. I am tabling a breakdown of the number of foreign workers sectorwise.

As regards part (b) of the Question, the terms and conditions of employment of expatriate workers vary from sector to sector and also according to the monthly salary they draw.

Regarding those workers drawing less than Rs20,000 a month, I can assure the House that their terms and conditions are in compliance with those prescribed in our labour legislation for local workers of the same grades. I wish also to inform the House that the Special Migrant Workers Unit at my Ministry vets the contracts of employment of all such migrant workers to ensure that the provisions of the contracts are in compliance with the labour legislation. These vetted contracts of employment have to be submitted when applications for work permits are made in favour of the workers concerned.

Regarding those migrant workers drawing more than Rs20,000 monthly, and therefore not covered by the provisions of our labour legislation, their terms and conditions of employment are normally negotiated with their potential employers and mutually agreed upon. These workers constitute a small minority only and they would normally be professionals or technical cadres.

In addition to what is prescribed in law, current policy requires that migrant workers be provided, among others, with -

- a Return Air ticket, and
- decent accommodation inclusive of water, electricity, gas, necessary furniture and sanitary amenities.

PORT LOUIS MUNICIPAL COUNCIL – BUDGET - REPRESENTATION

(No. B/536) Mrs S. Grenade (Second Member for GRNW and Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Local Government whether, in regard to the priorities and items to be budgeted by the Municipal Council of Port Louis for the year 2008-2009, he will state if he has received any representation from the councillors.

(Withdrawn)

ILOT GABRIEL - ACCESS

(No. B/537) Mrs M. Martin (Second Member for Curepipe and Midlands) asked the Minister of Agro Industry and Fisheries whether, in regard to public access on the Ilot Gabriel, he will state if he has taken cognizance of the recent judgment of the Supreme Court in relation thereto and, if so, the measures he proposes to take to ensure free access to the island by Mauritian nationals and tourists.

Reply: Yes, I have. The lessee will comply with the judgment.

CPE EXAMINATIONS 2008

(No. B/538) Mrs M. Martin (Second Member for Curepipe and Midlands) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether, in regard to the Certificate of Primary Education, he will state the dates of the examinations thereof.

Reply: The Certificate of Primary Education (CPE) examinations will be held on four days from Tuesday 21 to Friday 24 October this year. I am herewith tabling the calendar of examinations.

QUARTIER MILITAIRE MARKET FAIR – FENCING, FOOD COURTS ETC.

(No. B/539) Mr S. Dayal (Second Member for Quartier Militaire and Moka) asked the Minister of Local Government whether, in regard to the Quartier Militaire market fair, he will state if he will consider the possibility of –

- (a) making provisions for fencing with lock system;
- (b) enlarging the main entrance;

- (c) providing small food courts;
- (d) providing separate stalls for fish, meat and chicken;
- (e) providing toilet facilities upstairs, and
- (f) water proofing.

Reply: I am informed by the Moka/Flacq District Council that the fencing of the Market Fair at Quartier Militaire with lock system does not fall under the priority list in view of the fact that it operates for a maximum of three hours on Sundays and Wednesdays and no complaint has been received to that effect. I am also informed tha the St. Pierre Market has the same design.

As regards part (b) of the question, I am advised that the size of the main entrance is presently four metres wide and is considered adequate for the influx of buyers and sellers and no complaint has been received at the council in that connection. Nonetheless, taking into consideration the safety aspect at that Market the council will provide a rear access to facilitate the exit of users.

As far as parts (c), (d) and (e) are concerned, I am informed tha the Council is exploring the possibility to provide small food courts in the market, separate stalls for fish, meat and chicken as well as toilet facilities upstairs.

With regard to water proofing, painting and electrical works at the market I am informed that works will be completed before the end of the current financial year.

HOUSEHOLD REFUSE – INCINERATION – GAMMA/COVENTA PROJECT

(No. B/540) Mrs M. Martin (Second Member for Curepipe and Midlands) asked the Minister of Public Utilities whether, in regard to the Gamma/Coventa Project of the incineration of household refuse, he will state where matters stand.

Reply: The EIA Licence which was granted on 16 November 2007 is being disputed by the representatives of the *Plateforme Anti Pollution*.

The case has been fixed for 19 June 2008.

VEGETABLES (FRESH) – IMPORTATION

(No. B/541) Mrs M. Martin (Second Member for Curepipe and Midlands) asked the Minister of Agro Industry and Fisheries whether, in regard to fresh vegetables, he will state the amount thereof, which have been imported since January 2008 todate, indicating the number of importers thereof.

Reply: Import permits for the importation of vegetables are issued by the National Plant Protection Office of my Ministry to ensure compliance with phytosanitary norms.

The importation is normally restricted to fresh exotic and selected off-season vegetables in specific quantities to satisfy special markets, exclusively for hotels, hypermarkets and supermarkets. These products comprise baby vegetables, mushrooms, aromatic herbs, salads and green/yellow/red peppers, i.e. vegetables not consumed by the general public.

Importation of vegetables such as carrots, beans and cabbages for sale on the local market is allowed in exceptional circumstances following natural calamities such as cyclones, floods or drought to make up for shortfall in local production and to ensure supply on the local market. The quantity to be imported and the schedule of imports are decided by a Technical Committee comprising officials of my Ministry, the NPPO, AREU and the Agricultural Marketing Board. The Technical Committee also recommends the grant of import permits to bona fide importers.

For the period January to date, some 320 tonnes of vegetables have been imported by 15 private importers for sale to hotels and in hypermarkets and supermarkets including 28 tonnes of carrots imported by two companies (SKC Surat and Kingbell) in April and May. The Agricultural Marketing Board has, on its part, imported 93,700 kg of carrots and 72,000 kg of cabbage for the period April to mid May 2008 for sale on local market to compensate shortfall in local production following the passage of ex-Lola cyclone in March.

COPYRIGHT ACT – AMENDMENT

(No. B/542) Mr J.C. Barbier (Third Member for GRNW and Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Arts and Culture whether, in regard to the Copyright Act, he will state if he has received a request for amendments to be brought thereto to make provision for the Mauritian Authors Society Association to become an autonomous body and, if so, where matters stand.

Reply: My Ministry has had consultations with the State Law Office and other stakeholders on amendments to be brought to the Copyright Act to better protect copyright of works and to be in line with the latest developments in the ICT Sector and international laws and conventions on Copyright.

During consultations held with MASA, the latter has *inter alia* made a proposal for the Society to become an autonomous body to enable it to elect its Chairman and members at its General Assembly.

My Ministry in consultation with the State Law Office is currently finalizing the amendments and the issue of autonomy is but one of the many proposals being considered.

FISHERMAN WELFARE FUND – BOARD MEETINGS

(No. B/543) Mrs S. Grenade (Second Member for GRNW and Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Agro Industry and Fisheries whether, in regard to the Fisherman Welfare Fund, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Fund, information as to the number of times the Board has met for the past one year, indicating if the Chairperson was present, in each case.

(Withdrawn)

FISHERMEN – CHILDREN – SCHOLARSHIPS

(No. B/544) Mrs S. Grenade (Second Member for GRNW and Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Agro Industry and Fisheries whether, in regard to the scholarships granted to the children of the fishermen, he will state if (a) any of these scholarships has been cancelled and (b) there has been any delay in the disbursement of funds in relation thereto.

(Withdrawn)

IVTB – SCHOOL OF DESIGN – ENROLMENT

(No. B/545) Mrs I. D. Dookun-Luchoomun (Third Member for La Caverne and Phoenix) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether, in regard to the School of Design of the Industrial and Vocational Training Board, he will, for the benefit for the House, obtain from the Board, information as to (a) the number of students enrolled thereat (b) the various courses offered and (c) the amount of fees payable for each course.

Reply: With regard to (a) the number of students enrolled, (b) courses offered and (c) fees paid at the School of Design of the Industrial and Vocational Training Board, I wish to inform the House that for full time courses, the information is as follows –

Courses	No. of students enrolled	Annual Fees
HND Fashion and Textile Design Year I (2007-2009) Year II (2006-2008)	12 10	Rs12,000
HND Graphic Design & Multimedia Year I (2007-2009) Year II (2006-2008)	22 21	Rs12,000

Diploma in Foundation Studies (Art and Design) (2007-2008)	40	Rs8,000
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As regards part-time course, there is only one course namely the Advance Design and Product Development for the period April to June 2008 for which 20 students are currently enrolled and the fee is Rs9,000 per participant.

**UNIVERSITY OF MAURITIUS – TEXTILE TECHNOLOGY DEPARTMENT
– LECTURERS, STUDENTS, ETC.**

(No. B/546) Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun (Third Member for La Caverne and Phoenix) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether, in regard to the Textile Technology Department of the University of Mauritius, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the University, information as to (a) the number of (i) lecturers forming part thereof and (ii) students enrolled for courses dispensed thereby and (b) the amount of fees payable in respect of each course.

Reply: I am informed by the University of Mauritius (UoM) as follows –

With regard to part (a) (i) and (ii) 8 lecturers are presently attached to the Department of Textile Technology, where 107 students are enrolled on the two programmes currently being dispensed namely BSc (Hons) Textile Technology and BSc (Hons) Textile & Fashion Design.

With regard to (b) in line with Government policy, the two full time undergraduate programmes dispensed by the Department of Textile Technology do not attract any tuition fees. However, the following fees comprising general fees, Students' Union Membership fee and laboratory fees are payable per student in respect of both programmes as follows:

Year I	Rs 14,050
Year II	Rs 11,700
Year III	Rs 8,700
Year IV (Re-sit)	Rs 6,900