

Debate No. 26 of 27.10.2009

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

SYNDICAT DES PÊCHEURS - REPRESENTATIONS

(No. B/1025) Mr G. Lesjongard (Second Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Home Affairs whether he will state if he has received representations from the *Syndicat des Pêcheurs* de Maurice regarding the difficulties being faced by the fishermen and, if so, indicate the remedial measures that have been taken.

Reply (The Minister of Agro Industry, Food Production and Security): A petition was addressed to the hon. Prime Minister and to me on 30 April 2009 by the *Syndicat des Pêcheurs* regarding problems faced by fishermen. The issues raised therein are as follows-

- (i) Fishermen should not be expelled from lagoon as a result of hotel construction and tourism activities in the coastal zone and illegal works which were having negative impacts on the marine ecosystem of the lagoon.
- (ii) Fishermen should be encouraged through relevant accompanying measures to engage into other activities. A Fund should therefore be created to compensate fishermen whose activities are affected by coastal development projects.
- (iii) Fishermen should be given training and equipment to enable them to fish off-lagoon and part of the Rs10 billion earmarked under the Additional Stimulus Package should be used to give financial and technical assistance to them.
- (iv) All outstanding debts of fishermen should be written off and the bad weather allowance should be replaced by a fixed monthly allowance of Rs3,000.
- (v) Fish Aggregate Devices should be replaced, the Fishermen Cooperatives should be restructured, the lagoon should be better protected and the criteria for the determination of bad weather allowance should be reviewed as well as registration of fishermen.

Following the receipt of the petition, two meetings have been held at the Fisheries Division of my Ministry with the *Syndicat des Pêcheurs* on 26 May and 18 June 2009 when all the issues have been discussed and appropriate explanations given regarding measures taken by my Ministry. I am tabling a copy the petition addressed by the *Syndicat des Pêcheurs* and a summary of the discussions held on the issues raised therein.

I wish to inform the House that the Fisheries Division of my Ministry holds regular meetings and consultations with representatives of fishermen to discuss their problems and to find solutions thereto. There are actually 46 organisations including the *Syndicat des Pêcheurs* which represent the 2310 registered fishermen. According to the records available at the Registrar of Associations, the *Syndicat des Pêcheurs* has only 19 members. Its position on a number of issues may, therefore, not necessarily reflect the views of the whole fishermen community.

MOTORWAYS - STREET LIGHTING

(No. B/1040) Mr S. Lauthan (Third Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Local Government, Rodrigues and Outer Islands whether he is aware that street lighting on the motorways, coming from the North, and the main roads of towns and villages leading to the Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam International Airport, are inadequate, thus being sources of potential danger for major road accidents at night and, if so, will he, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Municipal and District Councils, information as to if consideration will be given for the reviewing of the street lighting system in connection therewith.

Reply: I am informed by the Road Development Authority which is responsible for the provision of street lighting facilities along all motorways that such facilities are adequately provided along the motorway starting from the North to Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam International Airport.

I wish to inform the House that Local Authorities are only responsible for the maintenance of the street lighting system. Such maintenance is effected on a regular basis.

LA PAIX STREET, PORT LOUIS – VEHICLES - PARKING

(No. B/1041) Mr S. Lauthan (Third Member for Port Louis Maritime and Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping whether he is aware that the disorderly parking of vehicles along the La Paix Street, Port Louis, in the vicinity of the Notre Dame de la Paix R.C.A School, when the school starts and finishes, is causing traffic congestion and, if so, will he state if consideration will be given for the provision of yellow lines thereat, on both sides of the road, in view of the narrowness thereof and for the taking of other appropriate measures.

Reply: I am informed by the Traffic Management and Road Safety Unit (TMRSU) that, indeed, there is a disorderly parking of vehicles along La Paix Street near the Notre Dame de la Paix R.C.A. School when the school starts and finishes.

A survey has been carried out and it has been found that the yellow lines painted there have faded and, this is giving rise to the present unsatisfactory situation.

Immediate arrangements are being made for yellow lines to be painted along one side of the road to prohibit parking while the other side will not have any markings thus allowing vehicles to park on that side.

EBENE BUSINESS PARK & REDUIT - TRANSPORT PROBLEMS

(No. B/1042) Mr S. Lauthan (Third Member for Port Louis Maritime and Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping whether he is aware of the transport problems being faced by the employees working in the Ebène Business Park and the students attending the University of Mauritius at Le Réduit, when they finish up late in the afternoon and, if so, will he, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the National Transport Authority, information as to if consideration will be given for the extension of the time of buses plying thereat.

Reply: I am informed by the National Transport Authority that, at present, no transport problems are being encountered by the employees working in the Ebène Business Park and by the students attending the University of Mauritius at Le Réduit, when they finish up late in the afternoon.

Fourteen bus routes operate via both Ebène Business Park and the University of Mauritius, while three bus routes operate via the University of Mauritius only and two other routes via Ebène Business Park only. These routes are served by the United Bus Service, Rose Hill Transport Co. Ltd., the National Transport Corporation and individual bus operators.

It is a fact that, on 10 March 2009, a complaint was received regarding lack of accommodation in the last bus released from Rose Hill and scheduled to pass through the Cybercity at 17 45 hours for Port Louis. At that time, buses were released from Rose Hill at intervals of thirty minutes and the last bus (a 40-seater) left Rose Hill at 17 30 hours. After consultations with the Rose Hill Transport Co Ltd., the timetable was revised, as from 27 July 2009. Bus releases are now being made at intervals of twenty minutes and an additional trip is

being performed at 17 40 hours. Checks carried out by the Inspectorate of the National Transport Authority on 30 March 2009 and 26 May 2009 have confirmed that the new timetable is being adhered to and no transport problem has been observed. With the new arrangement, no further complaint has been received from passengers working at Ebène Cybercity.

Additionally, to make sure that students of the University of Mauritius enjoy a reliable and satisfactory bus transport service, a revised timetable has been made operational since 10 August 2009, whereby, in addition to normal services, fifteen short services from Le Réduit towards Mahebourg and four towards La Sourdine are provided as from 15 00 hours. Buses are released at Le Réduit at an average interval of ten minutes from 15 05 hours to 18 10 hours.

REDUIT - BUS STOPS

(No. B/1043) Mr S. Lauthan (Third Member for Port Louis Maritime and Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping whether, in regard to the Le Réduit bus stops, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the National Transport Authority, information as to if consideration will be given for –

(a) the conversion of the two bus stops into a single bus stand, and

(b) allowing buses plying towards Port Louis to link the motorway directly through Martindale.

Reply: Regarding part (a) of this question, I am informed by the National Transport Authority that there is a bus stop on each side of the road between the University of Mauritius and the Réduit roundabout. Each of these bus stops has a ‘4-bus capacity’ lay-by to avoid traffic congestion on this segment of the road. A bus park near this road segment has recently been constructed to cater for short services in the afternoon peak periods and the new infrastructure is already operational. This has improved the traffic flow to a great extent within the University compound.

Réduit is an intermediate point to various destinations and, with the creation of the bus park at this location, the need to convert the two bus stops into a single bus stand does not arise, at least, for the time being.

As for part (b) of the question, I am informed that the National Transport Authority has already authorised buses heading towards Port Louis to move directly along Martindale Avenue during peak hours.

RODRIGUES – EXPATRIATES - WORK PERMIT

(No. B/1065) Mr J. R. Speville (Second Member for Rodrigues) asked the Minister of Local Government, Rodrigues and Outer Islands whether, in regard to the expatriates who have been granted work permit in Rodrigues, he will state the number thereof, indicating in which companies, governmental or non-governmental organisations they are working.

Reply (The Minister of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment): According to records at my Ministry, there are actually six expatriates who have been granted work permits to work in Rodrigues. Four of them were granted work permits to work in companies/organisations located in Rodrigues, namely BDPM Fishing Co. Ltd, Blue Water Big Fishing (Rodrigues) Ltd, and the Rodrigues Student Needs Association.

The other two work permits were issued in favour of expatriates to work in Rodrigues but employed by companies/organisation based in Mauritius, namely A & J. Maurel Construction Limitee and the Roman Catholic Diocese of Port Louis.

SOCIAL AID AND BASIC INVALID PENSIONS - BENEFICIARIES

(No.B/1066) Mr J. R. Spéville (Second Member for Rodrigues) asked the Minister of Social Security, National Solidarity and Senior Citizens Welfare & Reform Institutions whether, in regard to social aid and the Basic Invalid Pensions, she will state if a fast track has been set up to avoid the potential beneficiaries thereof long delays to go through a Medical Board or appeal before the Medical Tribunal.

Reply: Prior to April 2009, claimants of basic pensions have always had to suffer undue hardship due to the delay in the processing of their applications. However, the solution was not to implement a fast track system, within the existing ineffective system.

Conscious of this difficult situation, my Ministry, has as from April 2009, proceeded with a complete review for the processing of basic pensions in Rodrigues. The system has been completely computerized since then. The processing as well as award of basic pensions are now entirely carried out in Rodrigues. However, the processing of paysheet is still being effected in Mauritius and sent to Rodrigues for payment, as the budget for the Basic pensions for Rodrigues is still integrated with that of my Ministry.

A Principal Social Security Officer has been posted in Rodrigues since July 2009 and training has been provided to the Social Security staff there for the smooth implementation of the new computerised system. By January 2010, the budget for the Basic pensions will be transferred to Rodrigues. Consequently, processing of paysheets will equally be carried out in Rodrigues thus further reducing the processing time.

With the change in the new system, the processing time has been significantly reduced from 4 to 1 month for the basic retirement and basic widow's pension and from 6 months to 6 weeks for the basic invalidity pension, as claimants have to be medically boarded.

As regards Medical Boarding, these are carried out on a weekly basis as well as on the last Friday of each month in Rodrigues. According to figures obtained, the average number of BIP applications on a monthly basis for Rodrigues stands at 60 and 12 claimants are examined at each session, which appears reasonable.

As far as appeal cases are concerned, the practice is that 2 Medical specialists from the panel of specialists who are serving as members of the Medical Tribunal, proceed to Rodrigues on a yearly basis to hear Rodrigues appellants. Until 2008, the Tribunal was presided over by the visiting magistrate and as stated earlier, it was meeting on a yearly basis in view of the limited number of cases. With the posting of a Residing Magistrate at the end of 2007 and in view of the consistent increase in the number of appeal cases, decision has now been taken to increase the frequency of visits of the 2 Medical Specialists.

As regards Social Aid applications, all processes were carried out manually in Rodrigues prior to the computerization project. However, with the putting up of the new system, all processing are now done electronically with efficiency gains in terms of data management.

FOREIGN NATIONALS - OCCUPATIONAL PERMIT

(No. B/1067) Mr J. R. Spéville (Second Member for Rodrigues) asked the Minister of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment whether, in regard to the foreign nationals operating in mainland Mauritius and Rodrigues, he will state the number thereof who are holders of an occupational work permit, under the Business Facilitation Act, indicating, in regard to those residing in Rodrigues, the number thereof and their country of origin.

Reply (The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Empowerment): I am informed by the Board of Investment (BOI) that as at 20 October 2009, there was a total of 3,692 foreign nationals holding Occupation Permit issued under the Business Facilitation Act for the whole of Mauritius, including Rodrigues.

Of these, 920 are in the category of investors, 135 are self employed and 2,637 are in the category of professionals.

I am further informed that seven Occupation Permit holders have given their address in Rodrigues at the time of registration with BOI.

MOBILE TELEPHONE SECTOR – FOURTH OPERATOR

(No. B/1068) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Information and Communication Technology whether, in regard to allowing a fourth operator in the mobile telephone sector in Mauritius, he will –

- (a) state where matters stand, and
- (b) table copy of the correspondences dated 03 and 04 August 2009 respectively, from his Ministry to the Information Communications Technology Authority.

(Withdrawn)

ABBE DE LA CAILLE STREET, CUREPIPE – DRAINS

(No. B/1069) Mrs M. Martin (Second Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the Minister of Environment and National Development Unit whether he is aware that there exist open drains in the impasses, along the Abbé de La Caille Street, Curepipe, thus representing real hazards to the inhabitants thereof and if so, will he state if remedial works will be carried out thereat and, if so, when and if not, why not.

Reply: I am pleased to inform the House that the drain at Impasse Mungra, Abbé de la Caille is included in the Emergency Rehabilitation Programme of my Ministry prepared in the aftermath of the flash flood of 26 March 2008.

I am informed by the Municipal Council of Curepipe that it has awarded a contract for three sites, namely Malherbes/Leclezio Street, Morcellement Senneville and Impasse Mungra at Abbé de Caille on 08 September 2009. Mobilisation is in progress and works are expected to start shortly and once started, would be completed within 60 days according to the terms of the contract.

I further wish to inform the House that the project is funded by the National Development Unit.

RELIGIOUS PILGRIMAGES – INFRASTRUCTURE - FINANCIAL PROVISIONS

(No. B/1070) Mr E. Guimbeau (First Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping whether, in regard to religious pilgrimages, he will state if Government makes financial provisions therefor in relation to infrastructures and other facilities and, if so, indicate the amount of money spent thereon, since July 2005 to date, on a yearly basis.

(Withdrawn)

MEDICAL DRUGS (FAKE) - INQUIRY

(No. B/1072) Mr S. Soodhun (Fifth Member for La Caverne and Phoenix) asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether he is aware that Mauritius has been reported as being a hub for the trafficking of fake medical drugs and, if so, will he state -

- (a) if an inquiry has been carried out thereinto
- (b) the number of reported cases of fake medical drugs having been detected or seized as at to date, and
- (c) the measures his Ministry proposes to take.

Reply: The reply is in the negative. Therefore, the question of conducting an inquiry does not arise.

With regard to part (b) of the question, I am informed that, according to records available at the Police Department and the Mauritius Revenue Authority, no cases of fake

medical drugs have either been detected or seized for period 2005 to 2008. As regards 2009, one suspected case of fake medicine is being currently investigated by the Police.

Concerning part (c) of the question, I wish to reassure the House that my Ministry is taking all appropriate measures to ensure that quality drugs are imported and dispensed in Mauritius. In this connection a Quality Control Laboratory for testing of pharmaceutical products has been set up at a cost of Rs25 m., at the Government Analyst Division since July 2009. In addition, the scope of work of the Central Flying Squad set up in October 2008 which has together with the Health Inspectorate Division of my Ministry seized 850 tonnes of foodstuffs over the last 12 months, has been extended to cover inspection of Pharmacies too. Furthermore the activities of the Pharmacovigilance Unit which was set up in November 2008 for public health institutions, are being extended to cover the private sector as well.

DAGOTIERE – NHDC HOUSING COMPLEX – SEWERAGE PROBLEMS

(No. B/1073) Mr S. Naidu (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière)

asked the Minister of Housing and Lands whether, he is aware of the sewerage problems existing at the NHDC housing complex at Dagotière, and if so, will he, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the National Housing Development Company Ltd., information as to the remedial measures that will be taken.

Reply: I wish to refer to the reply I made to the Private Notice Question from the hon. Leader of the Opposition in May 2009 where I explained clearly to the hon. Members of the House the responsibility of syndics under existing legislation pertaining to “*règlement de copropriété*” in regard to “parties communes” in NHDC housing estates.

The responsibility to ensure the proper maintenance and running of the NHDC housing estates, including the sewerage system rests entirely and solely with the co-owners through their respective syndics. It is very unfortunate that syndics are not assuming their responsibility in most housing estates. As I mentioned in the reply I made, I am very much aware of the situations prevailing in NHDC housing estates and wish to reiterate the fact that this Government has at heart the proper living conditions of its citizens, particularly, those at the lower rung of the ladder.

As regards sewerage problems, my Ministry, through the NHDC and with the collaboration of the Wastewater Management Authority (WMA) is, within the financial means available, doing its level best to maintain the sewerage system in all NHDC estates which are not connected to the sewer network.

I am informed that following sewerage problems which cropped up in the past at Dagotière NHDC housing complex, my Ministry acquired land to accommodate a new leaching field and a pumping station. Rehabilitation works to the tune of around Rs10 m. were completed in June 2007.

However, due to lack of maintenance which should have been undertaken by the Syndic, sewerage problems, particularly overflowing of septic tanks were again reported at the Dagotière NHDC housing complex in August 2009. The problems were compounded by the disappearance of manhole covers which had been stolen by not well intentioned persons. I am informed that necessary remedial action has already been taken since September 2009. The manhole covers have been replaced by concrete covers and have since then stayed in place. At this point in time there is no sewerage problem at Dagotière NHDC housing complex.

STC – EMPLOYEES - RECRUITMENT

(No. B/1074) Mrs A. Navarre-Marie (First Member for GRNW and Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Business, Enterprise and Co-operatives whether, in regard to the employees of the State Trading Corporation, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Corporation, information as to the number of persons recruited thereat, since September 2005 to date, indicating their respective names, addresses and grades.

(Withdrawn)

CARGO HANDLING CORPORATION – EMPLOYEES - RECRUITMENT

(No. B/1075) Mrs A. Navarre-Marie (First Member for GRNW and Port Louis West) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism, Leisure and External Communications whether, in regard to the employees of the Cargo Handling Corporation, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Corporation, information as to the number of persons recruited thereat, since September 2005 to date, indicating their respective names, addresses and grades.

(Withdrawn)

CWA – STOCK OF WATER

(No. B/1076) Mr A. Ganoo (First Member for Savanne and Black River) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Renewable Energy and Public Utilities whether

he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Central Water Authority, information as to the measures the Authority proposes to take to ensure an adequate supply of water to the population, indicating the present stock of water in our reservoirs and aquifers.

Reply: Potable water is supplied from three different sources, namely –

Groundwater: 50%;

Storage reservoirs: 30%, and

River off-takes: 20%.

On 19 October, the actual storage level in the reservoirs was 78.9% of the total storage capacity as compared to the average level of 66%.

Following the recent rainfall, the actual storage level in the reservoirs increased to 83.4% on 26 October, above the average but lower than last year at the same date which stood at 94.5%. The recent rainfall has contributed some 4.3 million cubic meters in the storage capacity of reservoirs and has also slightly improved the ground water levels and river flows, and likewise, the level in the aquifers decreased by 10 to 20% with a peak of 35% at Hollyrood boreholes but with the recent rainfall it has slightly improved.

The Hollyrood boreholes supply the regions of Quatre Bornes, Rose Hill, Beau Bassin and the neighbouring areas which depend entirely on ground water. The yield at Hollyrood boreholes has now increased from 13,000 to 17,000 meter cube daily which is still below the maximum production of 21,000 meter cube per day.

Depending on the severity of the dry season, I am informed that the following measures will be implemented by the Central Water Authority (CWA) to ensure optimal use of available water resources island wide -

- (i) adjustments depending on rainfall in the draw-off from the main reservoirs namely, Mare aux Vacoas, La Nicolière, Piton du Milieu and water abstraction from boreholes with consequential increase or decrease in hours of supply in the six water supply zones and to keep the public informed;
- (ii) operation of stand-by sources from rivers and boreholes used for irrigation to supplement water resources where the need arises;
- (iii) enhance the water tanker service to supply customers in the most affected areas, and

- (iv) the media awareness campaign throughout the year is being reinforced to inform the public of the water supply situation and the planned interruptions.

Moreover, two months ago on the initiative of the Hon. Prime Minister, a special Emergency Unit has been set up at the level of the CWA to promptly attend to emergencies, disruption of supply and major breakdowns.

The House may wish to note that the water distribution network in Mauritius especially in the urban areas dates back to more than 100 years and this contributes to a high level of non-revenue water, estimated at around 48%.

The level of non-revenue water has remained unchanged for a number of years and is, therefore, a cause for serious concern. Many attempts have been initiated over the last 10 years to implement an intensive non-revenue water programme which will require massive investments to replace the very old pipe lines. In this respect, the European Investment Bank has provided a loan of Euro 20 m. to reduce the level of non-revenue water.

Meanwhile, the CWA, on its own initiative is implementing on a small scale a non-revenue water campaign in the six water supply zones involving 24 localities and covering around 10% of the total number of customers. I am informed that the level of non-revenue water has been reduced from around 50% to an average of 37% in these localities.

A private sector operator will be appointed by next year, under a Management Services Contract, to implement a performance-based non-revenue water programme island wide.

For the long-term development of water resources and to ensure a reliable water supply to the population, the following projects are being implemented -

- (i) elaboration of a Master Plan for the development of the water sector up to 2050;
- (ii) construction of Bagatelle Dam and Riviere des Anguilles Dam as well as diversion of Riviere du Poste to increase the storage at Mare aux Vacoas;
- (iii) construction of a new treatment plant at Pailles to improve water supply in Port Louis, and
- (iv) replacement of old pipe lines islandwide in a phased basis for which tenders have been floated in respect of works to be carried out in the eastern region.

Notwithstanding the measures I have enumerated, I wish to stress on the need to make judicious use of our water resources. We should not lose sight of the impact of climate change which may drastically affect water resources availability in the long term and cause our country to move towards a water stressed State. In this respect, I have instructed the CWA to implement an aggressive campaign to sensitize the public on the need to save water.

PUBLIC SECTOR - EDUCATORS - DUTY-FREE CAR FACILITIES

(No. B/1077) Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun (Third Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Empowerment whether, in regard to the duty-free car facilities granted to educators in the public sector, he will state if the latter have been informed that, contrary to the agreement that they had signed, they will not be entitled to duty free car facilities for a period of seven years, as opposed to the period of six months as indicated in the initial agreement.

(Withdrawn)

CAMP FOUQUEREAUX - DRAINS

(No. B/1078) Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun (Third Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Minister of Environment and National Development Unit whether he will state if his Ministry will consider the advisability of constructing covered drains at Camp Fouquereaux, in front of the Mosque.

Reply (The Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping): The site at Camp Fouquereaux in front of the Mosque is a built-up area and the road is narrow. The provision of covered drains on that location will require land acquisition.

The Road Development Authority will be requested to carry out a survey to look into the possibility of implementing the project.

PHOENIX-BEAUX SONGES ROAD - CONSTRUCTION

(No. B/1079) Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun (Third Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping whether, in regard to the project for the construction of the Phoenix-Beaux Songes Road, he will state where matters stand.

Reply: On 30 September 2009, the RDA awarded the contract for the construction of the Phoenix-Beaux Songes Link Road to COLAS (Maurice) Ltée. Works were due to start around 28 October 2009. Two private owners of lands have challenged the legality of the land acquisition for the project. However, one of them has already removed the challenge.

The challenge has caused a certain delay but will in no way jeopardise the implementation of the project.

FORM V – SCIENCE SUBJECT

(No. B/1080) Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun (Third Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Minister of Education, Culture and Human Resources whether, in regard to the project to render compulsory the taking of science as a subject up to Form V level, he will state where matters stand.

(Withdrawn)

MS G. G. - HIGH LEVEL ATHLETE - ASSISTANCE

(No. B/1081) Mr J. R. Speville (Second Member for Rodrigues) asked the Minister of Youth and Sports whether, he is aware that Ms G. G., a high level sportswoman who was injured in judo in 1998, is suffering from Meniscus tears and Anterior Cruciate Ligament rupture of the right knee and which needs urgent surgery to avoid permanent incapacity and, if so, will he state if his Ministry proposes to extend any assistance to her.

Reply: I wish to refer the hon. Member to the reply I made to PQ No. B/925 on 21 July 2009 whereby details were given on the benefits/assistance being provided to the abovenamed athlete.

I am further informed that apart from the social aid and income support of Rs1,123 which is being paid to her since January 2008, the athlete has also been awarded –

- (i) a sum of Rs10,000 by the National Solidarity Fund in July 2009;
- (ii) a Basic Invalidity Pension of Rs2,652 monthly for a period of one year with effect from 2009 and a Contributory Invalidity Pension of Rs77, and
- (iii) a Carer's Allowance of Rs1,606 per month as from June 2009.

Moreover, her case has been referred to the Training and Employment of Disabled Persons Board for possibility of training and employment.

BLACK RIVER - PUBLIC BEACHES - ACCESS ROAD

(No. B/1082) Mr A. Ganoo (First Member for Savanne and Black River) asked the Minister of Housing and Lands whether he will state if he has received representations from a non-governmental institution and the inhabitants of the Black River District in regard to their difficulties to have access to the public beaches of the region, including being denied access to an access road allowing them entry to the beaches.

Reply: My Ministry has indeed received representations from the inhabitants and the *Forces Vives* de Grande Rivière Noire claiming that they are being denied access to a public beach at Les Salines Koenig. I wish to inform the House that there is no proclaimed public beach or open space at Les Salines Koenig and the access road referred to is located on private land belonging to Société Koenig Frères.

With a view to provide an open public space, my Ministry has earmarked a site of an approximate extent of 5A61P for the creation of a public beach at *Pas Géométriques* Les Salines Koenig. Action is being initiated to proclaim the site as a public beach.

FISH AUCTION MARKET - CONSTRUCTION

(No. B/1083) Mr J. C. Barbier (Third Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Agro Industry, Food Production and Security whether, in regard to the proposed construction of the fish auction market, he will state where matters stand.

Reply: The Fish Auction Market project is a much awaited project both by the local artisanal fishermen and operators in the seafood hub as it is expected to democratise and modernise the fisheries sector.

The implementation of the project has been delayed for a number of reasons which are all beyond the control of my Ministry. In my reply to Parliamentary Question No. B/150 on 07 April 2009, I indicated that the tender exercise would be launched and the construction of the market would start once the tender is awarded.

Bids for the construction of the Fish Auction Market were effectively launched locally on 10 August 2009 and 11 bids were received on 15 September 2009, the closing date for submission of bids. A Bid Evaluation Committee was set up to evaluate the bids. The Committee has submitted its report on 21 October 2009.

The recommendations are being examined by my Ministry and a decision will be taken soon.

BAMBOUS VIRIEUX – AQUACULTURE PROJECT

(No. B/1084) Mr J. C. Barbier (Third Member for GRNW and Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Agro Industry, Food Production and Security whether, in regard to the proposed implementation of an aquaculture project in the region of Bambous Virieux, he will state if he has received representations from the fishers of that region complaining against the implementation thereof.

Reply: I am aware of representations from fishermen of Bambous Virieux regarding the proposed aquaculture project to be implemented in that region.

I have also been advised that the elected representatives of fishermen on the Board of the Fishermen Investment Trust had, at the Board meeting held on 27 February 2009, reported that a group of fishermen of Bambous Virieux was opposing the aquaculture project of the Fishermen Investment Trust on the following grounds:-

- (i) The structures to be put at sea for the aquaculture project, i.e. the fish cages, would be an obstacle to their fishing activities and navigation in the lagoon would be restricted by the presence of the cages;
- (ii) the marine environment could be affected, and
- (iii) there would be a decrease in the fish catch.

The Fisheries Division of my Ministry which is closely monitoring the implementation of the aquaculture project at the La Ferme Marine de Mahebourg Ltd as well as the lagoon ecosystem in that region holds the view that the grievances expressed by the group of fishermen of Bambous Virieux may not be justified because of the following reasons:

Fish cages occupy an insignificant area of the lagoon and do not represent any obstacle to the navigation of artisanal fishermen and other users;

- (i) There has so far been no adverse effect on the marine environment;
- and

- (ii) There has been no decrease in the catch rates of fishermen in that particular region.

I am advised that the FIT will convene a meeting with the fishermen concerned in due course to discuss the merits of the project and the advantages and benefits which they will derive thereof. It is relevant to mention that this aquaculture project will be financed under the Food Security Fund and its objective is to increase fish production in that region for the benefit of the fishermen.

BAIL ACT - AMENDMENT

(No. B/1086) Mr A. Ganoo (First Member for Savanne and Black River) asked the Attorney-General whether, in regard to the Bail Act, he will state if the proposed amendments thereto have already been worked out, indicating if Government proposes to come up with a new Bail Bill.

Reply: I presume that the hon. Member is referring to the recent Report dated August 2009 of the Law Reform Commission entitled 'Bail and Other Related Issues'.

As the House may be aware, the Report is available to the public on the website of the Law Reform Commission at <http://lrc.gov.mu> since the beginning of September 2009.

Any comments, suggestions and proposals with regard to the contents of the Report and, in particular, on bail reform are most welcome and will be given due consideration.

In the meantime, my Office is considering the recommendations made by the Law Reform Commission, which have public interest, legal and financial implications.

GLOBAL FINANCIAL CRISIS – FUNDS – AMOUNT DISBURSED

(No. B/1087) Mr P. Jugnauth (First Member for Quartier Militaire and Moka) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Empowerment whether, in regard to the Food Security Fund, the Human Resource, Knowledge and Arts Development Fund, the Maurice ile Durable Fund, the Local Infrastructure Fund, the Saving Jobs and Recovery Fund and the Social Housing Development Fund, set up by Government, he will state the amount of money disbursed from each, as at to date.

Reply: In early 2008, we were worried that the global financial crisis that was unfolding could culminate into a major global economic crisis with severe ripple effects on our economy. We therefore used the greater fiscal space that the success of our reforms had generated to allocate some Rs6 billion to various funds in order to address crucial long-term development issues while at the same time shielding our population, our enterprises, and our industries from any adverse impact of the crisis. With hindsight we know that we have taken the right decisions.

With the resources in these funds we have been able to save thousands of jobs directly by preventing closures, especially in the textiles and clothing industry and in the tourism sector. Jobs have been saved mostly because we have required that firms that benefit from the stimulus measures of Government do not lay off workers. And these measures, include, not only the use of resources from the various funds but also revenue foregone by Government in terms of temporary fiscal reliefs. As a result, the economy has shown remarkable resilience in 2008 and the growth projection for 2009 has been revised upward.

To carry out the activities and implementing projects under these six funds we have to date an allocation of around Rs8.4 billion out of which the Savings Jobs and Recovery Fund absorbs Rs3.1 billion. In addition Government has provided an amount of Rs1 billion as equity for the modernization and expansion of the airport.

All the resources in the funds have been committed. As the hon. Members would appreciate, disbursements out of the funds depend on the speed of implementation of projects and their payments schedule. As at to - date, the total amount of money disbursed out of the six funds is around Rs2.3 billion. They are summarized as follows-

Airport expansion & modernisation	Rs1 billion
Saving Jobs and Recovery Fund	Rs399 m.
Food Security Fund	Rs27 m.
Human Resource, Knowledge and Arts Development Fund	Rs74 m.
<i>Maurice Ile Durable Fund</i>	Rs157 m.
Local Infrastructure Fund	Rs272 m.
Social Housing Development Fund	Rs403 m.
Total	Rs2332 m.

There are some projects which are being implemented and for which money has not yet been disbursed as there is always a time difference between execution of projects and payment by the Accountant General. These works are estimated to cost an additional Rs863 m. by the end of December 2009 giving a disbursement of Rs3.195 billion.

We have also allocated Rs1 billion to RDA to implement major road infrastructure projects. Some of these road projects have already started such as the Goodlands Bypass, the Triolet Bypass, the Dual Carriageway from Pamplémousses to Sottise and widening of Motor way M1. We expect disbursement to follow rapidly for these projects.

Additional disbursement for projects already approved from those funds are expected to be as follows over the next three years-

For FY 2010	Rs2.9 billion
For FY 2011	Rs2.27 billion
For FY 2012	Rs2.1 billion

FOOD AID & SOCIAL AID - BENEFICIARIES

(No. B/1088) Mr P. Jugnauth (First Member for Quartier Militaire and Moka) asked the Minister of Social Security, National Solidarity and Senior Citizens Welfare & Reform Institutions whether, in regard to Food Aid and Social Aid, she will state the number of beneficiaries thereof as at to date, indicating the

- (a) amount of money disbursed during the last four financial years, and
- (b) eligibility criteria therefor.

Reply: Food Aid was first introduced in the year 1993 and an amount Rs 25 was paid per month in respect of each member of households in receipt of Social Aid and needy beneficiaries of a basic pension.

Following the reorientation of the subsidy of rice and flour towards the most needy and destitutes, the Income Support was introduced in replacement of the Food Aid in July 2006. Under the Income Support Policy, today an amount of Rs115 is being paid to each family member instead of Rs50 paid in the year 2004, that is, an increase of 130%.

As at September 2009, there were 64,009 households representing 87,120 members benefiting from Income Support compared to 31,019 households representing 38,847 members in the year 2004/2005 that is an increase of 106% and 124% in the number of households and members, respectively.

(a) The amount disbursed during the last four financial years

for Income Support are as follows:

Income Support

Financial Year	Amount disbursed (Rs) M
2005/06	30.5
2006/07	75.8
2007/08	69.4
2008/09	108.7

In the year 2008/2009, the amount disbursed as Income Support has increased to Rs108.7 m. representing an increase of 256% compared to Financial Year 2005/2006 (Rs30.5 m.)

The amount disbursed for Social Aid are as follows-

Social Aid

Financial Year	Amount disbursed (Rs) M
2005/06	269.7
2006/07	335.9
2007/08	309.5
2008/09	336.9

(b) (1) **The eligibility criteria for Income Support are:**

- (i) All beneficiaries of Social Aid and Unemployment Hardship Relief; and
 - (ii) Beneficiaries of a Basic Pension under the National Pensions Act where the beneficiaries would have been qualified for Social Aid in the absence of the Basic Pension (BRP, BWP, BIP).
- (2) **The eligibility criteria for Social Aid are:**

The eligibility criteria for Social Aid under the Social Aid Act are the same since 1983. However, my Ministry is proposing to review the Social Aid Act with a view to making it more responsive to the needs of the vulnerable groups.

DBM – FINANCIAL SITUATION

(No. B/1089) Mr P. Jugnauth (First Member for Quartier Militaire and Moka) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Empowerment whether, in regard to the Development Bank of Mauritius Ltd., he will -

- (a) for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Bank, information as to its present financial situation and
- (b) state if Government is proposing to wind up the Bank?

Reply: I refer the House to the reply I gave to PQ B/129. I did mention that Government has on various occasions and more particularly in the 2006/07 Budget stressed on the need to restructure the Development Bank of Mauritius. In fact, I mentioned that DBM had over the years developed into a mammoth organisation with outdated, cumbersome, inefficient procedures and unable to sustain satisfactorily our SME's which are increasingly operating in globalised and highly competitive market.

In this respect, I did inform the House that an international firm, the International Financial Consulting Ltd was hired to help diagnose the problems of the DBM and suggest options to make the Bank more responsive to the needs of the SMEs and other clients. In its report in late February 2009, one of the conclusions of consultant was that DBM was in a very heavy loss situation with its capital base severely eroded.

Furthermore, in so far as part (a) of the question is concerned, the situation has not improved. I am informed by the Bank that for the financial year ending June 2008 the percentage of capital in arrears to its loan portfolio stands at 37% with operating profit being around Rs 140 million which could be completely wiped out with loan loss provisioning of over Rs 400 million. It has total assets of around Rs 8 billion with a 1.69 % return on capital employed which as per its projections is expected to deteriorate further during this financial year.

In a loss making situation , one can give many reasons for qualifying the Banks poor performance. But it is also to be recognised that the bank's loan portfolio comprises higher risk clients as is generally the characteristic of development bank portfolios.

In so far as part (b) of the question is concerned ,I wish here to also add that the consulting firm which I referred to earlier has, as per its extended terms of reference submitted a final report in June 2009 indicating the way forward for the restructuring of the Bank

In this respect, my Ministry has set up a committee which includes the chairman of the Bank to examine the proposals and make policy recommendations on how best to restructure the Bank and make it a more efficient financial intermediary to meet the needs of SMEs and other clients.

TERRE COUPÉ, MOUNT ORY – ROAD ACCESS

(No. B/1090) Mr P. Jugnauth (First Member for Quartier Militaire and Moka) asked the Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping whether he will state if there is any project for the provision of road access to the inhabitants of Terre Coupé, Mount Ory, in view of the fact that they are encountering hardships due to the lack of such an infrastructure.

Reply: The Road Development Authority has no project to provide for road access to the inhabitants of Terre Coupé at Mount Ory. The Ministry of Local Government has been requested to look into the matter.

**RICHE TERRE MIXED FARMING CO-OPERATION SOCIETY –
VEGETABLE GROWERS**

(No. B/1091) Mr G. Guinness (Third Member for Montagne and GRSE) asked the Minister of Agro Industry, Food Production and Security whether, in regard to the 23 vegetable growers of the Riche Terre Mixed Farming Co-operative Society Ltd., whose leases are due to expire in 2015 but have had to vacate their respective plots of land as a consequence of the implementation of the Jing Fei project, he will state if a committee has been set up to look into their claims and, if so, indicate the outcome thereof.

Reply: In reply to Parliamentary Question No. B/544 addressed to me by the hon. Member, I indicated that 97 out of the 120 former lease holders of State land at Riche Terre were paid the compensation of Rs. 120,000 per arpent and 37 out of the 51 planters eligible for land were allocated one arpent of State agricultural land each at either Bois Marchand or Arsenal.

I am informed that the 37 planters are well settled now on the new sites and are doing fairly well in terms of vegetable production.

One of the 23 planters came to see me in August last and accepted to take his compensation and one arpent of land on lease at Bois Marchand. He was invited to call at my Ministry on 19 August 2009 to collect his compensation but has not done so up to now.

It is unfortunate that 22 planters have been misguided into believing that they could obtain a higher compensation. They are now claiming a compensation of Rs. 900,000 each. The payment of such a compensation will entail serious financial implications and may give rise to similar claim from the other 98 planters. In such an eventuality, there is a risk that Government might end up paying around Rs. 100 Million to have back the rights on its own land.

A Committee set up at the level of my Ministry is currently re-examining the survey reports of the plots of land occupied by the 22 planters to determine whether there is any justification for payment to them of additional compensation, ie. over and above the compensation of Rs. 120,000 per arpent approved by Government. Upon receipt of the report of that Committee, appropriate decision will be taken and communicated to the planters.

I would like to indicate that the offer of the cash compensation of Rs. 120,000 per arpent to the 22 planters and of lease of State land of one arpent to each of the 13 eligible planters at an annual rental of Rs. 120 until 2015 still holds good. The planters concerned may, at any time, call at my Ministry to collect their compensation and sign the documents relating to the lease of the land.

