

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

Mr Speaker: The Table has been advised that PQ No. B/174 has been withdrawn.

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY PROCEEDINGS – SELECT COMMITTEE – SETTING UP

(No. B/172) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Home Affairs whether, in regard to the proposed setting up of a Select Committee to look into the live broadcasting of the proceedings of the National Assembly on radio and television, he will state where matters stand.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, as I have stated in my reply to PQ B/1274 in November last, the modernisation of the Public Address System and the improvement of the lightings of the House was a pre-requisite for the live telecast of the proceedings of the National Assembly.

As members can see, the E-Parliament project has now been completed and is fully operational. The old audio system which had been there for the last 42 years had outlived its usefulness. Hon. Members will agree that the new arrangements are much better. At least, they can hear me very well.

I understand that the new Digital Recording and Public Address Systems are fully compatible for the live telecast of the proceedings of the House which can easily be grafted as another component to the new ICT structure of the National Assembly. I also understand that the webcast of live debates through the website of the National Assembly with archiving facilities may also be considered.

Mr Speaker Sir, now that the new ICT infrastructure is in place, I propose to finalise the terms of reference of the Select Committee with you, and the other parties concerned and thereafter, I shall come up with the appropriate motion to the House for the setting up of the Select Committee.

Mr Bhagwan: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I know from the hon. Prime Minister whether a time schedule forecast has been worked out for the Select Committee?

The Prime Minister: In fact, I have discussed with Mr Speaker. We have a draft proposal for the motion and we are ready to go forward with it.

Mr Bhagwan: Mr Speaker, Sir, being given that the issue is of national interest, can we know whether there will be consultations with the Opposition concerning the modalities and the setting up of the Committee?

The Prime Minister: I think the Select Committee wants to propose it. There will be Members from the Opposition side as part of the Select Committee and we'll look at the modalities which can be very tricky, but we'll have to look at them.

Mr Bodha: May I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether the Select Committee will have recourse to foreign expertise in view of the fact that in many countries this exercise is being done with a certain number of set criteria, and this is what we call *le cahier des charges*, for the broadcaster and the producer?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I think this was mentioned last time. One of the models we can look at is certainly the UK where it was done on an experimental basis, first, for one year, then it was further extended. The Select Committee can decide on that as we already have a lot of expertise in the House, including Mr Speaker himself.

Mr Dooloo: Mr Speaker, Sir, being given this is a very essential part of our parliamentary democracy, would the Prime Minister consider leaving the whole matter to the House to decide on the modalities under the guidance of Mr Speaker before the setting up of a Select Committee as such? I think the Select Committee should be set up at once to consider all these aspects?

The Prime Minister: That is what I mentioned. The Select Committee is going to look into all these aspects.

Mr Jhugroo: Mr Speaker, Sir, pending the appointment of the Select Committee, can the hon. Prime Minister impress upon the MBC...

Mr Speaker: No, the hon. Member should come with a substantive question.

2000 LISBON SUMMIT – EUROPEAN/UNION-AFRICA STRATEGIC PLAN OF ACTION

(No. B/173) Mr M. Dowarkasing (Third Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Home Affairs whether, in regard to the 2000 Lisbon Summit, he will state the measures and initiatives taken by Government to implement the European Union-Africa Strategic Plan of Action.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, let me first point out that the first EU-Africa Summit was held in Cairo in April 2000 and the second EU-Africa Summit was held in Lisbon in December 2007. I attended the latter Summit along with the then Minister of Foreign Affairs and Regional Cooperation.

The 2007 Lisbon Summit developed a new concept of the EU-Africa relationship in the light of many important changes that have taken place since 2000 with regard to democratisation, the emergence of new international and global challenges and interdependency among states. In addition, the African Union has been established creating a new continental framework addressing African issues and the membership of the European Union has increased to 27. Also, China's economic expansion in Africa has marked it out as the emerging power on the continent.

At the Lisbon Summit, the Lisbon Declaration and Joint Strategy were adopted. These provide a long term vision for a strategic partnership between the two continents.

The Strategic Partnership foresees three levels of cooperation, namely at domestic, bilateral and global levels and encompasses four clusters of policy priorities which are -

- (i) Peace and Security;
- (ii) Governance and Human Rights;
- (iii) Trade and Regional Integration; and,
- (iv) Key Development Issues.

The Joint Strategy is to be implemented through successive Action Plans that seek to identify short term priorities (2–3 years) and the actions required to achieve such priorities.

At Lisbon, Heads of State and Government agreed on a first Action Plan with eight thematic partnerships and projects for the period 2008 to 2010.

With a view to ensuring the effective implementation of the Joint Strategy and the first Action Plan, the African Union has held regional meetings in 2008 in Maseru, Lesotho, Ouagadougou and Burkina Faso.

Following this, the AU Commission has invited Member States to communicate their interests in the various Partnerships and to submit a list of concrete projects.

Mauritius has submitted ten projects through our Mission in Addis Ababa for consideration under the EU-Africa Joint Strategy. These projects span a variety of themes and include -

- The Development of a Regional Shipping Line and the acquisition of a “*porte conteneurs*” to serve the Indian Ocean region
- To improve the potential for Port Louis to play a regional logistics role and serve as a Regional Hub for Ports
- To help our institutions to comply with EC’s Sanitary and Phytosanitary Standards
- To develop a proper Quality Management System in Fruit and Vegetables in Mauritius, *inter alia*, through the setting-up of an ISO 17025 laboratory for testing of pesticide residues, establishment of a national database of producers and supply chain operators, capacity-building and technical assistance.
- The setting-up of a Special Education Needs Development and Resource Centre
- The setting-up of a Central Data Centre to realise the Government vision for provision of World Class Quality Education
- The setting-up of a Regional Training Centre for the training of trainers and supervisors/tutors in industry
- Development of a Diaspora Information Centre and Institutional Network
- The purchase of Wave Rider buoys for the Meteorological Service and the provision of technical assistance

- The purchase of weather equipment for collection and processing of data like wind speed and direction, air temperature, rainfall, solar radiation etc by the Meteorological Services

The projects submitted by Mauritius, as well as those submitted by other Member States, are currently being examined by the eight partnership groups set up.

We have been advised that the EU-Africa Troika meeting, which is scheduled for June 2009, would consider a Road Map for each of the partnerships. Subsequently, once this is done, when the EU-Africa Troika meets in November 2009, it will come up with guidelines in respect of projects that may be considered under the first Action Plan.

Mr Dowarkasing: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I know from the hon. Prime Minister whether Mauritius has made any proposal to be part of one or any of the eight expert groups that have been put in place?

The Prime Minister: I have just mentioned, Mr Speaker, Sir, that we have made ten proposals.

Mr Dowarkasing: Mr Speaker, Sir, I think the hon. Prime Minister did not get me well. I am not speaking of projects, but of all of the eight thematic issues that have been identified. I would like to know whether Mauritius has submitted any offer to chair one of those expert groups.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, normally, it is for the Summit to decide who will chair. If they ask us to chair, we will do so. But, I don't think they will specifically ask us to chair any of the expert groups.

Mr Dowarkasing: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am putting this question because I have learnt that there was an offer to chair the energy expert group. I just want to know whether the hon. Prime Minister could confirm if this is ongoing, and whether we have made any offer to chair that expert group on energy.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, we would be delighted to chair. I am not aware whether any such offer has been made.

Mr Dulloo: Mr Speaker, Sir, one of the matters that was discussed in the course of that Summit was the Economic Partnership Agreement, which was then at the interim stage, and the hon. Prime Minister would remember that the President of the Commission, Mr Barroso, undertook to meet Heads of States, especially following the intervention of Senegal, in order to revisit the EPAs which were being finalised. May I know from the hon. Prime Minister whether there was any follow-up? He has mentioned the meeting of the Troika in June and November. I would like to know whether Mauritius is ensuring that this reviewing of the EPA be considered.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, in fact, we have done this. I should add, just to clarify the previous point about the energy project, that we have not been asked to chair, but we have said that we would be interested to chair.

Mr Cuttaree: Mr Speaker, Sir, I come back again to the question of hon. Dulloo on this issue of the EPAs. As the hon. Prime Minister is aware, this issue concerns regional integration. The great complaint of the African countries is that these EPAs, as they are being negotiated now, leads to what has been called the balkanisation of Africa, and that this is against the Constitutive Act of the African Union, which aims at a continental integration. Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether, at the forthcoming meetings at the highest level, concerning...

Mr Speaker: Can I draw the hon. Member's attention that we are talking of the Summit? Because there is a Minister who is in charge of regional matters. If the hon. Member is talking of the Summit, he is fully entitled to do so.

Mr Cuttaree: Mr Speaker, Sir, you know me very well; that I don't mix oranges and apples! It's about the Summit. These issues were canvassed at the level of the Summit. Being given the importance of this issue of the EPAs to African integration, which is vital to countries like Mauritius, especially in this time of economic crisis, I would like to ask the hon. Prime Minister whether he will undertake to take up this issue of the EPAs and African integration in the context of the Constitutive Act of the African Union at the next highest level meeting?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, in fact, we are well aware of this, and I know that the hon. Minister of Foreign Affairs & Regional Co-operation has drawn attention – we have also drawn attention – to this. In all frankness, I must say that we are unhappy about the situation. The hon. Member mentioned balkanisation and, in fact, that is what is happening. Everybody is as if looking for his own interest in trying to forget the big picture. We have brought out attention to this, and we are very much against it. We thought we should act at once. But, unfortunately, this is not what has been happening, and I will certainly take up the matter again.

Mr Bodha: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Prime Minister will agree with me that we have a huge impact of the economic and financial crisis on the African economies. May I ask him how this is going to be considered; whether this strategic plan should not be reviewed in the light of this huge impact of the financial crisis, and how this is going to be taken care of in the future meetings?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I totally agree that this should be reviewed. Even at the SADC Summit, I mentioned informally that we should also have a meeting to see how to coordinate our action in view of the new challenges, especially the financial crisis that is taking place in the world. I totally agree with the hon. Member. But, whether this will happen or not is another matter.

Mr Dulloo: Mr Speaker, Sir, at the Summit, the hon. Prime Minister delivered a very strong speech. That speech was not available at the Ministry, when I was there then. May I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether he would circulate to the House the speech he delivered then, which contains certain proposals from Mauritius and also the position of Mauritius on vital issues?

The Prime Minister: I am sorry to hear that, except hon. Dulloo, probably nobody else has appreciated the speech. I will certainly make sure that it is appreciated by all Members of the House.

Mr Dowarkasing: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Prime Minister just stated that one of the pillars of this EU-Africa joint strategy is about the millennium development goals. Can we know from the hon. Prime Minister what is being undertaken at national level to achieve those millennium development goals, in particular the reduction of poverty by 50%, by the year 2015.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, in fact, I must say that during the Conference on Poverty Alleviation held in Mauritius, which was at the level of SADC and people in the region, we were congratulated for being one of the few countries which is actually doing something about poverty alleviation with concrete results, and we are continuing to do this and this is something that we always take up on the matter. Because what is important is that we don't just make speeches, but we actually see results in poverty alleviation.

CREVE COEUR – LANDSLIDE - INQUIRY

(No. B/174) Mr G. Lesjongard (Second Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Home Affairs whether, in regard to the landslide which occurred in Crève Coeur last year, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to if statements have been made by some inhabitants thereof to the effect that their respective residence were damaged as a result thereof and, if so, if inquiries have been carried thereinto and the outcome thereof.

(Withdrawn)

CCTV SURVEILLANCE SYSTEM – PUBLIC PLACES

(No. B/175) Mr P. Jhugroo (Third Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Home Affairs whether, in regard to the installation of CCTV Surveillance System in public places, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police a list of the places where same have been installed as at to date, indicating when the project is expected to be completed.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am pleased to inform the House that the first CCTV Street Surveillance System has just been installed at Flic-en-Flac and I will be officially inaugurating the project on Friday 24 April 2009, together with the hon. Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism, Leisure & External Communications. The installation works started on 05 January 2009 and were completed on 31 March 2009. 83 cameras have been installed across the village of Flic-en-Flac, including 9 cameras on the

public beaches at Flic-en-Flac and Wolmar. The Main Control Room is located at the Police Headquarters Operations Room, but there will be a Sub-control Room - in fact, there is a Sub-control Room at Flic-en-Flac Police station. The control rooms will be manned on a 24/7 basis and all the 83 cameras will be recorded for retrospective viewing.

Currently, the operators and the technicians are underworking practical training offered by the contractor - the Mauritius Telecom and the Central Electricity Board. The estimated cost of the project is Rs43,828,266, and I should add that the Tourism Fund has contributed Rs25 m. to this project.

The CCTV Surveillance System Project for the regions of Grand' Baie and Port Louis is being implemented with the assistance of the Government of the People's Republic of China through an interest-free loan of about Rs135 m. I should say, Mr Speaker, Sir, that, in fact, I had taken up the issue during my official visit to China in November 2008. I have taken up the issue with the Chinese Premier and this is what led to the agreement for them to give an interest-free loan of about Rs135 m.

271 surveillance cameras will be installed in the city of Port Louis and 69 others at Grand' Baie and, again, we will adopt the same procedure. A Sub-control Room will be based at the Grand' Baie Police station and it will be linked to the Main Control Room at the Police Headquarters in Port Louis.

The design of the system has been completed by the Chinese Authorities and, in January this year, a delegation from the Mauritius Police Force proceeded to China to look at the design and to approve it - which they have done. The Chinese Authorities will now proceed with the tendering exercise for the project. The CCTV Surveillance System at Port Louis and Grand' Baie is expected to be operational by early next year. The estimated cost - and I say, the estimated cost - of the project is around Rs120 m.

Mr Jhugroo: May I ask the hon. Prime Minister which Unit will be responsible for the monitoring of all these CCTV cameras?

The Prime Minister: I did not hear the question.

Mr Jhugroo: Will a special Unit be created?

The Prime Minister: There will be a special Unit, but also I especially wanted to make sure that we don't reach a system when you see that something has happened on that day and you find that the camera was not working or the recording had not recorded. We want to make sure that this does not happen, because this has happened in the past. That is why there is also a private contractor involved in the process; somebody who has experience in CCTV surveillance system.

Mr Jhugroo: May I ask the hon. Prime Minister how many Police officers are following this training course?

The Prime Minister: I don't have the details as to how many Police officers are being trained, Mr Speaker, Sir, but, as I said, this is not just Police, there will also be the

contractor who is supervising. He, himself, I must say, was highly placed in the French Police.

Mr Bodha: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether the footage can be adduced as evidence in the Courts in the case of children?

The Prime Minister: We are looking at this also. There is another question on evidence for children in Courts. In fact, this is being looked at. If we need to amend whatever we have to amend, we will do so, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Cuttaree: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Prime Minister is aware that, in the United Kingdom, in spite of the fact that CCTV cameras for security purposes are doing a very good job, there has been some concern expressed by various quarters regarding the invasion of privacy of homes through the use of CCTV cameras. May I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether ...

(Interruptions)

What is the problem?

Mr Speaker: Carry on!

Mr Cuttaree: Obviously, I am saying that we welcome this initiative. But, what I want from the hon. Prime Minister is some assurance that this is not going to be used as a tool for spying of people.

The Prime Minister: I can tell the hon. Member that, in fact, I take the privacy matters very seriously, that is why we want to bring laws in Mauritius to protect privacy matters. One of the things that we were told about privacy by a very eminent lawyer who had come to Mauritius to look at our Human Rights Laws, and I think he was looking at some other laws that we were doing, is that he was surprised, in fact, that we have so many - in our Constitution like the Human Rights Laws in Europe - safeguards for basic fundamental human rights. But he thought that we could strengthen the privacy laws. In fact, we were looking at all this when we are looking at the media law that we wanted to bring. As I mentioned, I think, in the past, there was a very eminent QC, Mr Jeffrey Robertson - whom I think some Members of the Opposition know - who has already done a report on that. We have been examining the report and, in fact, we are looking at it very actively. But, the hon. Member is right to say that; I must tell him, in fact, that I am also concerned that this is not abused. In fact, I can tell him, for example, that for the cameras on the motorways, I have insisted that the angle be put on the numbers, so that nobody knows who is travelling with whom...

(Interruptions)

... and doing whatever they have to do. We have to protect the private life of people, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Bodha: May I ask the hon. Prime Minister for how long the image will be stored in the hard disk at the control tower?

The Prime Minister: I have no idea how long it will be stored but, I suppose, like everything else, it will be stored for a reasonable time. But I can find out and let the hon. Member know.

Mr Varma: Mr Speaker, is the hon. Prime Minister aware that in our Prisons and other Detention Centres, we have the facility of CCTV surveillance system but, yet, the evidence obtained cannot be used as evidence in Court?

Mr Speaker: No! The hon. Prime Minister has just answered the question, that he is going to look into the law.

Mr Varma: What about the Detention Centres and Prisons? The CCTV....

Mr Speaker: No! That is irrelevant!

Mrs Martin: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether the cameras are only going to be used after reviewing post-incidents, or they are going to be used as well for rapid intervention and, in which case, whether thought has been put to increase the number of intervention units in the vicinity where the cameras are being placed?

The Prime Minister: First of all, for the first part of the answer, the answer is both for rapid intervention and post-incidents. Very often, in the UK, for example, it is on post-incidents that they look at issues.

As for the increase in the units, – I think the hon. Member mentioned that – the problem is we will try to, but we will have to do with what we have and the procedures that we have laid down to have more Policemen, which is being done at the moment.

Mr Speaker: I must remind hon. Varma that the question relates to surveillance system to public places, not in Prisons. Next Question, hon. Jhugroo!

(Interruptions)

CARO LALO, VALLEE DES PRETRES – GOATS AND HENS – DROWNING

(No. B/176) Mr P. Jhugroo (Third Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Home Affairs whether, in regard to one Mr P. of Caro Lalo, Vallée des Prêtres, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to if he has reported that 27 goats and 200 hens, belonging to him, have drowned in a river near his residence, following the heavy rainfall of 30 March 2009 and, if so, will he state if an inquiry has been carried out thereinto and the circumstances thereof.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am not sure that really hon. Members should ask the hon. Prime Minister such questions. I accept that hon. Members have a legitimate right to ask questions, but questions about how many hens and goats.....

(Laughter)

This is a private matter which has occurred due to flooding and the Police are enquiring into the matter.

Mr Jhugroo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I don't know why people on the other side of the House are laughing. This is a very serious case, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker: Don't mind about their laughing! So long as they are laughing, they are o.k.

(Laughter)

Mr Jhugroo: It concerns my constituency. There is flooding there. I want to know from the hon. Prime Minister whether Mr Peerun will be compensated by the Government.

Mr Speaker: I am sorry, this is a hypothetical question. The inquiry has to be done first and, once the inquiry has been done, then the hon. Member can come with the question of compensation.

Mr Dullooo: Mr Speaker, Sir, this concerns the livelihood of a small livestock breeder. May I ask the Prime Minister - because it is a natural calamity falling under the responsibility of his Ministry - whether Government is extending, right now, any support to the small breeder for him to continue his economic activity to earn the bread for his family and, if not, whether some form of compensation as asked for is being considered?

The Prime Minister: I must say, Mr Speaker, Sir, that the farm of that particular breeder is situation at the foot of a mountain and it is about 50 metres, I think, from the river. He has had recurrent problems. Every time, there have been flooding or heavy rainfalls, he has had problems. AREU is looking into the matter. They have advised the breeder to transfer the animals to another area where it is possible and, I think, they are looking at this. They have also, I know, advised him that the area where he breeds those animals should be in a dry area because there is a risk of them getting pneumonia when it is not a dry area which can be fatal in fowls and all those things. This is being done.

Mr Dullooo: Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether any site has been identified and proposed to him right now or if this is contemplated?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I think AREU is looking into the matter. They are advising and then I will see what happens.

PUBLIC PLACES – SMOKE – PROHIBITION

(No. B/177) Mr P. Jhugroo (Third Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Home Affairs whether in regard to the prohibition to smoke in public places, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the number of persons booked, since the coming into force of the Regulations in relation thereto.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that since 01 March 2009 to date - date on which part of the regulations came into force - 57 persons have been booked under these regulations.

Mr Ganoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Prime Minister if he has received any representations from any association or organisation complaining about the severity of the law?

The Prime Minister: Yes, I have, in fact, even individuals. Some people have said if both they and their wives smoke, why they can't smoke in the car. We are looking into this matter.

Mr Gunness: Mr Speaker, Sir, can we have a breakdown region wise?

The Prime Minister: Why does the hon. Member want to know it regionwise?

Mr Gunness: I mean district wise.

The Prime Minister: I have it here, but I still don't understand how that is relevant. Is the hon. Member going to say that in some regions they smoke more than others?

Mr Gunness: That's not my intention because I want to know in the east region how it compares to the west, for example.

The Prime Minister: As I said, Mr Speaker, Sir, there are 57 cases. I can give you the regions. If the hon. Member wants the region, I will have to go through the list. I have no objection to give it, but it will take time. Rose Hill:6, Mahebourg:4, Grand Bois:2, Chemin Grenier: 2, Vacoas:6, Curepipe:5, Eau Coulée: 1, Moka:1, Airport region:1, Grand' Baie:1, Piton: 1, Rivière du Rempart: 8, in the Line Barracks region of Port Louis:6, Fanfaron:1. I am sorry, they have not classified it; I see there is another additional case at Mahebourg. There are 4 more cases at Line Barracks, one at Pope Hennessy, 3 more cases at Line Barracks, 2 more cases at Port Louis and another case at Line Barracks.

Mr Bodha: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether there are any minors who are involved and whether there are any foreigners who are involved?

The Prime Minister: The answer to both questions is yes.

Mr Jhugroo: The hon. Prime Minister just mentioned that foreigners have been fined. Can I know how many tourists have been fined for smoking within the premises of the hotels?

The Prime Minister: I don't know whether any tourist has been actually fined, Mr Speaker, Sir, because they don't give the details of that.

Mr Speaker: Time is over! Questions addressed to hon. Ministers. The Table has been advised that Questions Nos. B/209/B/215, B/216, B/217, B/218, B/219, B/223, B/236 and B/253 have been withdrawn. Hon. Bhagwan!

TOBACCO BOARD – CHAIRPERSON – ALLEGED CORRUPTION

(No. B/196) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Agro Industry, Food Production and Security whether in regard to the Chairperson of the Tobacco Board, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Board, information as to if any allegation of corruption has been leveled against him and, if so –

- (a) the grounds thereof, and
- (b) if he is still in office.

Mr Faugoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am advised by the Tobacco Board that the Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC) has lodged a provisional charge against the chairperson on 26 February 2009 on ground of conflict of interest. The matter has been called *pro forma* on 07 April 2009. The case will be called anew on 25th June 2009.

The Chairperson has stepped down on 02 March 2009.

CEB – CONSUMERS – CLAIMS

(No. B/197) Mr G. Lesjongard (Second Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Renewable Energy and Public Utilities whether in regard to the consumers, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Central Electricity Board, information as to if they have been issued claims in excess of their consumption and if so –

- (a) The total amount thereof for the months of December 2008 and January 2009;
- (b) The number of consumers concerned, and
- (c) If any such occurrence had been reported in the past.

The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Renewable Energy and Public Utilities (Dr. R. Beebejaun): Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the CEB that it has not invoiced any customer in excess of actual consumption of electricity for bills issued in February 2009, representing consumption for the period December 2008 and January 2009.

Following representations from residential customers on the February 2009 bills, Government requested CEB to look into and address the matter. The CEB decided that pending an enquiry into the matter, all domestic customers should pay the amount they were charged in January 2009 if lower than the bill for February.

The CEB appointed a Fact Finding Committee chaired by Mr Gerard Hebrard, Deputy General Manager to look into the matter.

I am informed by the CEB that –

- (i) from data for previous years, the consumption of electricity for residential customers in the month of December has consistently been the highest and has been increasing year by year. For example, for period December 2006 to January 2007, consumption for residential customers was 59 GWh, for December 2007 to January 2008, it was 63 GWh and for December 2008 to January 2009 it was 67 GWh;
- (ii) for December 2008, the situation has been compounded by an exceptional increase by 1 to 2 degrees Celsius in air temperature and higher relative humidity;
- (iii) the practice at CEB is to read meters between 28 and 35 days. The average meter reading period for the January bill was 28 days and the bill for February was for 34 days. This has always been the practice at CEB, resulting in a lower bill followed by a higher bill or vice versa;
- (iv) however, due to a number of consecutive non-working days and bad weather conditions in December and January, about 13,000 domestic consumers have been billed for a period exceeding 35 days, averaging 37 days, and
- (v) where complaints have been received, the meters have been checked and found to be in good working condition.

The CEB Board will take cognizance of the report of the Fact Finding Committee and take appropriate action.

I am taking this opportunity, Mr Speaker, Sir, once again to remind the population to save and use energy efficiently and judiciously.

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Deputy Prime Minister whether this is the first time that such a situation is prevailing at the CEB and whether he can confirm that there are consumers who have been billed more than double their usual electricity bill?

The Deputy Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have given the details as they have been communicated to me. There has never been any excessive billing as I have said. If the amount is excessive, the explanation can be given and has been given to all the customers who have complained. The main issue, to my mind, so far, is the late

billing of between 35 and 40 or 42 days which, as I have said, is, on average, 37 days. I will agree with the hon. Member that there have been complaints not only for doubling but trebling of bills. One investigation where somebody complained that his usual bill was Rs3,000 and that it went up to Rs12,000 during that period, the investigation showed that it was a *campement* that had been leased to strangers and that it had been used fully during that month. So, there are explanations. As I have said, there have been lots of misinformation and disinformation communicated to the media. I will make an appeal to all Members to look carefully at any complaint and make representations, and the CEB will reply to them. If Members have any specific points, they can go to the CEB sub office, and they will be given the required information.

Mr Lesjongard: Can the hon. Deputy Prime Minister, at least, inform the House how many *campement* owners, have been refunded?

The Deputy Prime Minister: There has been no refund so far, as I have said. Whilst waiting for an investigation to look into the facts of the complaint, the CEB Board has decided to hold on till matters are cleared. Now that we have got a full report, the CEB Board will take appropriate action.

Mr Cuttaree: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Deputy Prime Minister has given us information about previous years, and one can see there is a consistency in what he is trying to say, namely that, every year, during that period, there is a problem because people are consuming more electricity. But why is it that it is only this year? If the same factors appear in all the other years, why is it that there has been such a big outcry only this year? It does not concern only one *campement*. The hon. Deputy Prime Minister is a Member of Parliament, and I am sure that he, himself, must have had lots of complaints from ordinary people regarding this issue.

The Deputy Prime Minister: I myself complained, but my wife told me not to, because she had been using the electricity. So, that's it! I am glad that this question had been raised, because it shows the mood of the country in certain sections of the press. It blows up anything and everything that happens and by repeating it, makes it a fact. We are talking about increases in consumption. If we look at last year, it jumped up from 54 GWh to 62 GWh January and February invoice and, this year, it is from 57 GWh to 66 GWh. There has been a big jump in consumption. As I have said, there has been an abnormal hot weather; one to two degrees higher. We are also using more electricity. Let's face it! More people today have fans, air-conditioners, refrigerators. It's a fact! I'll make an appeal once again. The bill is high, but it is justified. I would make an appeal that we go on energy saving and best use of energy efficiency.

Mrs Perrier: Mr Speaker, Sir, the Minister just answered that there was no refund. I think he got the wrong information from the CEB, because I have personally been refunded. I went to the CEB, because my number of units rose to more than 600 units. And, for the last six years, my consumption was 410 units on average. At that time, there were seven persons in my house.

Mr Speaker: The hon. Member should ask the question now. She has already said that she has been refunded!

Mrs Perrier: Sir, I want to explain, as the hon. Deputy Prime Minister said that there has been...

Mr Speaker: I am sorry. The Standing Orders provide that the hon. Member has to use certain words in order to make her question intelligible, but not make a statement. That is what the Standing Orders provide for.

Mrs Perrier: What I wanted to say is that a number of persons who made complaints on the excess billing have been refunded including myself contrary to the Minister's declaration.

The Deputy Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am not sure whether it is a refund or a readjustment whilst waiting. I would request people to look at the units consumed, and if there is any doubt, to come up to CEB and make complaint. The units consumed are the actual reading of the meters.

Mr Jugnauth: Mr Speaker, Sir, would the hon. Deputy Prime Minister consider laying a copy of the Fact Finding Committee's Report on the Table of the Assembly?

The Deputy Prime Minister: It had been submitted to the CEB, and I would gladly circulate it afterwards, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Ganoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, one of the explanations which the Deputy Prime Minister or the CEB came up with was the longer period for which the billings have been made regarding certain consumers. Can the hon. Deputy Prime Minister confirm the fact that, if billings have been made for 35 to 42 days, as he said himself, that was really excessive, unprecedented and unusual? Never in the past, had the billings been done for such a long time and the officers should be taken to task for that.

The Deputy Prime Minister: That is absolutely right, Mr Speaker, Sir. In the past, there was a system for the billing, where there was a cut off at 35 days. Unfortunately, a few years ago, when the new system was installed, this ceiling was not introduced; and it has been reintroduced again. Having said that, I take note that the CEB Meter Reading system should be made accountable. The Board will take this into consideration when looking at the 13,000 customers who had billing more than 35 days, and will act accordingly, I hope.

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Speaker, Sir, it is not a problem with the system. Will the hon. Deputy Prime Minister agree that it is because of wrong planning at the level of the Meter Reading Section that consumers were billed for a maximum number of days for their consumption for the month of December?

The Deputy Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, as I have said, it is the practice for years and years that bills are issued between 27 and 35 days. If on the previous month, it was an average of 28 days; the next month, it is normal that it should be higher than 28 days. As the hon. Member should know, the CEB cannot issue more than 12 bills in a year.

Mr Jhugroo: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I know from the hon. Deputy Prime Minister the reasons for the late billing?

The Deputy Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, as I mentioned in my reply, in December and January we had a number of holidays but also bad weather. I take the point of hon. Ganoo that we should look into this carefully, so that it does not recur.

Mr Cuttaree: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Deputy Prime Minister whether he will draw the attention of the Chairman of the CEB not to make remarks? When the whole problem was boiling up, he said that the electricity bill had gone up because this was holiday and children were opening the fridge too often. This is ridiculous, and I hope the hon. Deputy Prime Minister will bring this to his attention.

The Deputy Prime Minister: We have already brought it to his attention.

CITE LA CURE – WASTEWATER SERVICES

(No. B/198) Mr G. Lesjongard (Second Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Renewable Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to the wastewater services at Cité La Cure, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Wastewater Management Authority, information as to if complaints have been registered from the inhabitants thereof concerning the wastewater reticulation problems thereat, and, if so, will he state if a survey has been carried out to assess the extent of the problem, indicating if any project is in the pipeline to remedy the situation.

The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Renewable Energy and Public Utilities (Dr. R. Beebeejaun): Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Wastewater Management Authority that complaints were received during period October 2008 to March 2009 from inhabitants of La Cure Housing Estates located along Agra, Jumna and Reverend Schenepps streets in relation to blockages in the reticulation network.

The problems reported occurred because of the presence in the sewer network of debris and materials of various types such as used clothes, construction materials consisting of stones, aggregates, pieces of wood and an ingress of rainwater during heavy rainfall.

I am informed by the Wastewater Management Authority that the sewer blockages are being cleared as and when reported.

About 80% of the sewer network within Cité La Cure has been rehabilitated between 2002 and 2006, following a survey in 2001.

At that time, the remaining 20% at Bernardin de St. Pierre and Reverend Schenepps Streets were considered to be functioning adequately and did not require replacement.

A new survey of CHA and Low Cost Housing estates is being carried out island wide. The survey includes Cité La Cure, especially in the areas mentioned. The report of the survey is expected by mid-May 2009, and rehabilitation works will be carried out based on the recommendations.

I am taking this opportunity, Mr Speaker, Sir, to make an appeal to the public at large not to use the sewerage system as a dumping site and a dustbin.

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Deputy Prime Minister how old is the sewerage reticulation in that area?

Dr. Beebeejaun: It is very old, and I am surprised that, in the last survey, they did not include that part for rehabilitation.

Mr Varma: Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Deputy Prime Minister inform the House how many complaints have been received and when?

Dr. Beebeejaun: Mr Speaker, Sir, complaints are received, and I am sure it will keep recurring. We have between 10 and 22 complaints month by month. But if the cause is dumping into the sewer system, it will be recur again, and we have to act accordingly.

CITÉ LA CURE COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTRE – EXTENSION

(No. B/199) Mr G. Lesjongard (Second Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Health & Quality of Life whether, in regard to the project for the construction of the Cité La Cure Community Health Centre, he will state where matters stand.

Dr. Jeetah: Mr Speaker Sir, I wish to refer the hon. Member to the reply made to PQ No. B/176 in April 2008 by my colleague, the then Minister of Health & Quality of Life.

I am informed that the situation is as follows –

- (i) on 27 October 2008, bids for the extension of the Dr. A. Mahler Community Health Centre at Cité La Cure, were invited through open tenders with closing date of 10 December 2008;
- (ii) however, after the evaluation of the bids received in line with section 39 of the Public Procurement Act 2006, the Departmental Tender Committee of my Ministry recommended that a re-tendering exercise be carried out as the lowest bid received was almost 40% higher than the estimated cost, and
- (iii) the tendering documents with updated cost estimates are now being finalised by the Ministry of Public Infrastructure, Land, Transport & Shipping.

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Minister confirm that the bids he is talking about were first launched in 2006, as the works were supposed to start in 2007, and give the reasons why works have not started up till now?

Dr. Jeetah: In fact, Mr Speaker, Sir, I have a number of questions which have been answered. But I can remind the hon. Member that the inhabitants of Cité la Cure requested the extension of this building since year 2000.

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Speaker, Sir, I think I need a reply to the question I have put. Why is it that, in a question addressed to the Minister concerned in 2006, it was stated clearly that construction works are expected to start in May in 2007 and until now works have not started?

Dr. Jeetah: Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to refer the hon. Member to the answers. It's all in there.

Mr Lesjongard: Concerning the same question, Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Minister inform the House why works at the Community Health Centre at Cité la Cure – and I underline the words ‘Cité la Cure’ – have not started until now?

Mr Speaker: The hon. Minister has answered the question.

Dr. Jeetah: I have just replied to the question, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker: He has just replied. Next Question, hon. Jhugroo!

TOURISM AUTHORITY – STAFF – RECRUITMENT

(No. B/200) Mr P. Jhugroo (Third Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism, Leisure and External Communications whether, in regard to the recruitment of staff at the Tourism Authority, since May 2008 to date, either on a contractual or permanent basis, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Authority, a list thereof, indicating in each case their respective –

- (a) qualifications;
- (b) terms and conditions of employment, and
- (c) addresses.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism, Leisure and External Communications (Mr X. L. Duval): Mr Speaker, Sir, in line with its mandate to ensure a sustainable development of the tourism industry, the Tourism Authority has strengthened its monitoring activities as well as set up an additional unit for the implementation of embellishment projects such as –

- (a) upgrading/embellishment of tourist sites;
- (b) rehabilitation of infrastructural facilities;
- (c) painting and maintenance of bus stops;

- (d) planting and maintenance of decorative trees along motorways and public places;
- (e) removal of illegal posters, and
- (f) cleaning of frequently visited sites.

Additional staff has, consequently, been recruited by the Authority in order to properly man these units.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the detailed information in respect of the staff recruited at the Tourism Authority is being compiled and will be laid in the Library of the National Assembly.

Mr Jhugroo: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I know from the hon. Vice-Prime Minister whether procedures have been followed for the recruitment of all the staff?

Mr X. L. Duval: Of course, Sir.

LE MORNE/RIAMBEL– FISHERMEN

(No. B/201) Mrs D. Perrier (Fourth Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Minister of Agro Industry, Food Production and Security whether he is aware of the difficulties being faced by the fishermen in the region of Le Morne to Riambel and, if so, indicate the remedial measures Government proposes to take in relation thereto.

Mr Faugoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, fishermen in the region of Le Morne to Riambel have been complaining that certain tourism activities and coastal development works were disturbing their activities.

These tourism activities and development works are as follows –

- (i) kite surfing activities in the region of Le Morne;
- (ii) the construction of a new bridge at Macondé, and
- (iii) the creation of two swimming zones and a boat passage in the lagoon in front of Tamassa Hotel at Bel Ombre.

Moreover, a few fishermen of Bel Ombre are having difficulties to get access to the sea from the coastal road to carry out their fishing activities.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to tourism activities at Le Morne, my Ministry convened an inter-ministerial committee comprising the Ministry of Tourism & Leisure and External Communications, the Ministry of Environment & NDU, my Ministry and

the Tourism Authority on 01 December 2008. Following the meeting, the Tourism Authority has been requested to ensure that there is a proper supervision of tourism activities in the region. I am informed that a monitoring unit has now been set up by the Tourism Authority to supervise kite surfing activities near Le Morne.

The construction of the bridge at Macondé is nearing completion. The EIA approval provides for measures to be taken and conditions to be fulfilled to protect the marine environment. Monitoring of the EIA conditions has been conducted together with the Ministry of Environment and NDU, and reports have indicated that the undertaking has not caused prejudice to fishermen in that no adverse impacts were noted on the marine environment. Officers of my Ministry and the Ministry of Environment & NDU effected a site visit on 09 April last and reported that the water in the vicinity of the bridge was clear after officers have requested the contractor to stop works at sea pending remedial measures being taken to contain sedimentation.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to the project at Tamassa Hotel, I am advised that the promoter has been instructed not to continue works until the Environment Monitoring Plan and the Programme of works were submitted to the Ministry of Environment & NDU. This decision was taken following representations made by fishermen in June 2008. I understand that the promoters have had consultations with the fishermen of the region and have submitted an EIA application, which is currently being examined by the Ministry of Environment and NDU.

Regarding the problems of fishermen at Bel Ombre, site visits and meeting were held with the Ministry of Housing & Lands. The Ministry of Housing & Lands has now proposed two public accesses to the sea in the region. This proposal was communicated to the fishermen on 20 March, this year, and they are all agreeable thereto.

Mrs Perrier: M. le président, j'aimerais revenir sur Macondé et les pêcheurs de Baie du Cap. Est-ce que le ministre peut confirmer s'il a reçu une lettre de protestation le 06 avril dernier?

Mr Faugoo: I am not aware of any representation, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Mr Speaker, Sir, last week, at Adjournment time, I raised the issue of the Macondé Bridge. Can the hon. Minister say whether, in fact, there has been a letter which had been issued before that by the Ministry of Agriculture to the fishermen concerned, to say that any infrastructural work at sea has to be discussed with fishermen of the region first? Can he explain, therefore, the absence of dialogue with fishermen of that region?

Mr Faugoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am not aware of the letter which is being referred to now. Surely, I will look into it if there is anything. I will deal with same.

Mr Barbier: Mr Speaker, Sir, normally, for whatever works which need to be carried out at sea, we need an EIA certificate for that purpose. In this case, where the Ministry has asked to stop works, may we know whether there was any EIA certificate delivered for such works to be carried out?

Mr Faugoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, this project is a public one and it was exempted from EIA application as such. But nevertheless, there were conditions which were imposed by the Ministry of Environment and National Development Unit. Through all the observations and numerous visits which have been made, both by my Ministry and that of environment, they have followed and complied with all the conditions.

Mr Ganoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I will come to the construction of the Macondé bridge and the consequential prejudice that is being caused to the fishermen. Would the hon. Minister kindly organise a site visit so that he, himself, might see that the complaint of the fishermen is very simple? The sea is being reclaimed after the bridge for about 1 km and huge boulders are being placed on the side of the sea for several meters wide. And this is destroying the bait, the *goémon*, the small fishes, the *casiers* of the fishermen and so on. This is what they are complaining about! Would the hon. Minister himself care to come himself – I know he has sent Mr Mathieu Laclé, his adviser – and talk to the fishermen in the area, please?

Mr Faugoo: I have taken good note of the points raised by the hon. Member. But I must say, Mr Speaker, Sir, that this bridge is in the public interest. It was a priority project. Secondly, it is a flooding area, and thirdly, I must say that the fishermen don't fish in that particular region. They keep their boats and maybe they catch baits, etc. I must say if there is a direct impact on the activities of the fishermen, this should be reflected in the results. From the reports that I have, the catch in that region has increased from 5 kg to 9.5 kg in 2008; from 3.6 kg to 8.8 kg for 48 fishermen who are registered in that area. What I am saying today is that there is no impact which - we have observed - reflects in the catch. But, nevertheless, I have taken all the points which have been raised. And we have to make sure that they are given all the facilities, if there is any at all which escaped us will be dealt with.

Mrs Perrier: M. le président, le ministre vient de répondre qu'il n'y a pas d'impact sur la prise des pêcheurs sur leur travail. Or, les pêcheurs protestent vigoureusement et ont des preuves que leur travail a été pénalisé par le projet de Macondé. Nous sommes tous conscients que ce projet de Macondé est un projet d'intérêt général, mais pas au détriment des pêcheurs. Le ministre est-il aussi conscient que, le fait d'avoir jeté des roches jusqu'au Rocher de Macondé représente un danger pour les pêcheurs parce que c'est le chemin que les pêcheurs prennent pour sortir et entrer dans le lagon en temps de houle? C'est un endroit extrêmement dangereux; la passe est remplie de roches. Ils doivent contourner le Rocher de Macondé pour pouvoir sortir du lagon.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: The question is very clear, let the hon. Minister answer.

Mr Faugoo: I think I have already answered some of the questions which the hon. Member has raised. But, on the issue of rocks, there are certain temporary steps that have been taken for the construction of the bridge. But this is temporary. They are going to be removed from where they placed for the time being.

Mr Varma: Mr Speaker, Sir, would the hon. Minister confirm that, in fact, the construction of the Macondé bridge will facilitate the work of the fishermen in that region?

Mr Faugoo: In fact, it will help the fishermen, the people of the region and the country as a whole, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Mr Speaker, Sir, as we have just said, we are not against the construction of the bridge. But I raised the matter last time and I told the hon. Minister that a letter has been issued by his Ministry and he is saying that he has not seen the letter. I will give him a copy of that letter, if need be. But on the second question of access to the sea, as far back as March last year, the question of access was raised. Now the hon. Minister is saying that two public accesses have been made to the fishermen, but from what I learned from the fishermen, those two accesses, in no way, solve the problems of those fishermen. Can he try to look, once again, into this question of access for the fishermen?

Mr Faugoo: I will do that, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mrs Perrier: M. le président, je voudrais aussi revenir sur l'aspect de l'impact sur l'environnement. Le ministre vient de dire que malgré le fait qu'il n'y avait pas un *EIA*, les promoteurs ont respecté certaines normes qui avaient été mises en place au moment du contrat. Or, je voudrais déposer sur la table de l'Assemblée des photos qui montrent que, par exemple, les filets de protection pour empêcher les sédiments de se répandre dans le lagon n'ont pas été posés par le promoteur et le résultat est que la mer est devenue toute rouge et cela depuis plusieurs mois. J'ai des photos que je voudrais déposer.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! Order, please! Silence! Silence!

Mr Faugoo: In fact, Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Member is repeating what I said in my main answer. I said: "Officers of my Ministry and Ministry of Environment and NDU effected a visit on 09 April - we are today 14 April – last and reported that the water in the vicinity of the bridge was clear after officers had requested the contractor to stop works at sea pending remedial measures being taken to contain sedimentation." This is exactly what she is saying. When they went next day, they saw that the water was still clear.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: The hon. Member has made her point. She will deposit the photos and the hon. Minister will look into the matter. Hon. Ganoo!

Mr Ganoo: The question is not whether the water is clear, Mr Speaker, Sir. Even if that is so, the complaint of the fishermen is that they should be compensated because ...

(Interruptions)

This is what they are claiming!

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Mr Ganoo: As has been done in the past, for example, by the Waste Water Management Authority, in the case of Baie du Tombeau ...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Put your question!

Mr Ganoo: In that case also, because their *casiers* have been damaged, they are being deprived of small fish and *la boëtte*, this is causing prejudice to them. That is why they are claiming compensation.

Mr Faugoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, how do we explain that the catch has increased if all these have affected the fishermen? As I said, we have followed the EIA conditions. As I said today, some "*filets de protection*" was supposed to be placed by the contractors which was not done and we have requested them to stop the work, which they did. As far as compensation is concerned, this is not on the agenda of the Government.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Last question!

Mr Faugoo: Let me just add one thing, Mr Speaker, Sir, there are lots of schemes which are being put at the disposal of these fishermen to empower them to go off lagoon by the FIT, by the Food Security Fund and there are so many other schemes, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Mr Speaker, Sir, we may discuss lengthily on this issue, but would the hon. Minister kindly agree to receive the fishermen and explain to them the situation?

Mr Faugoo: Avec plaisir, M. le président !

Mr Ganoo: I thank the hon. Minister for reminding the House of the schemes. But, in this case, the majority of these fishermen are over 60 years old. In view of that fact, can the hon. Minister rather consider the issue of compensation?

Mr Faugoo: This is a different issue, that is the question of fishermen over 60, but still I will look into the matter.

ILE AUX BENITIERS – EIA CERTIFICATE

(No. B/202) Mrs D. Perrier (Fourth Member for Savanne and Black River) asked the Minister of Housing and Lands whether, in regard to the *Ile aux Bénitiers*, he will state where matters stand as to the proposed development project submitted by the lessee thereof, indicating if an Environment Impact Assessment certificate has been issued in relation thereto.

Dr. Kasenally: Mr Speaker, Sir, in July 2008, Soolaman Nubheebucus Company Ltd, the present lessee of *Ile aux Bénitiers*, submitted a proposal for a hotel development project on the islet. The project proposal comprises, among others, 160 villas, 4

restaurants and a shopping gallery. The proposal is still under consideration at the level of my Ministry. Consultations are ongoing with the different stakeholders.

In regard to the Environment Impact Assessment (EIA) Certificate, I am informed that so far no certificate has yet been issued by the Ministry of Environment and National Development Unit.

Mr Guimbeau: Mr Speaker, Sir, can we know from the hon. Minister what is the annual rental of *Ile aux Bénitiers* per *arpent* and whether it reflects the market value?

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: I will allow the question exceptionally although it does not arise from the main question.

Dr. Kasenally: If a proper question is put on that subject, I shall answer.

Mr Ganoo: Has the hon. Minister received representations from associations in the area, for example, from La Gaulette Pleasurecraft owners?

Dr. Kasenally: Yes, Sir. Whatever representation made is being considered by my Ministry and we are going, eventually, to meet all stakeholders, as I have already said, to ensure that everybody *sort gagnant*.

Mrs Perrier: Mr Speaker, Sir, is the hon. Minister aware that *Ile aux Bénitier* was used by the Mauritian population, not only the persons of the region. Is he ready to have consultation with the whole country before this project is implemented?

Dr. Kasenally: Mr Speaker, Sir, I know very well about the saga of *l'Ile aux Bénitiers* and a lot of people were using it and the last Government brutally terminated the lease in April 2003, but it was restored by this Government in September 2005. As far as meeting all the people in Mauritius, you will agree, Mr Speaker, Sir, this is not practicable, but however as far as possible, representatives of various interests will be met and will do it in all transparency.

Mr Barbier: May I know from the hon. Minister, whether Mauritians and tourists will continue to have access to *l'Ile aux Bénitiers* whatever project we have there?

Dr. Kasenally: Of course, provisions will be made, but nobody can go there and start dismantling things if there is a project. There will be provision, but within the limits of reason.

Mr Bhagwan: Mr Speaker, Sir, *l'Ile aux Bénitiers* is an island which forms part of the National Property, is the Minister aware of *l'état de décrépitude qui est cette île*? As it is in a state of uncleanliness, will the Minister say whether we can have a site visit conducted by the Ministry of Environment to see the present bad state of this island?

Dr. Kasenally: Sir, I am not in presence of the state of the island. I have never visited the islet so far, but let me assure the House that safeguards are being put when this island is developed to ensure that the environment is maintained. But I must also add that what the hon. Member is saying about *décrépitude* is that some people who have been on that islet have not been behaving properly. They have been throwing all sorts of *détritus*,

they have caused a lot of havoc and that is why it needs cleaning up. But there is this company Insigna, which together with Nabeebaccus, are trying to make a *bijou* out of this, I hope for all the Mauritians, of course, but within the parameters permissible by law.

Mr Bhagwan: Mr Speaker, Sir, the Minister said that they are trying to make a *bijou*. When the island was taken back, I said brutally it was supposed to be a project by the Government of Mauritius for the people of Mauritius, but not by the private sector. Sir, can I ask the Minister to look at the present state and liaise with the Minister of Tourism and Environment and to see whether it is in the interest of Mauritius to have an island in such a bad state?

Dr. Kasenally: Mr Speaker, Sir, the question is not addressed to me.

Mr Speaker: I don't know whether it is addressed to the hon. Minister. Next question.

FOREIGN TERTIARY EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS – PERMITS

(No. B/203) **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 granting of permits to Foreign Tertiary Educational Institutions wishing to operate in Mauritius, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Tertiary Education Commission, information as to the criteria used by the Commission for the granting thereof.

Dr Bunwaree: Mr Speaker, Sir, the Tertiary Education Commission is statutorily responsible for regulating the operation, registration and programme accreditation of Tertiary Educational Institutions (TEI) (both local and foreign). There are currently different possibilities for a foreign TEI to operate in Mauritius. These are as follows -

- (i) incorporating a local company which will offer programme(s) leading to a diploma/degree awarded by any other foreign/local awarding body;
- (ii) partnering with an already established local post secondary educational institution in Mauritius to offer its programme(s) through that institution. In that case, the local institution will become the vehicle through which the foreign institution will operate;
- (iii) setting up of a Branch Campus in Mauritius, and

- (iv) setting up of a separate entity from the parent institution with degree awarding powers at the start of activities.

I am tabling a full set of the guidelines for the operation of a TEI (in Mauritius) which are very detailed. These guidelines are also available on the website of the Tertiary Education Commission.

For the information of the House, Mr Speaker, Sir, however, I can summarise these guidelines, which refer to elements which aim at ensuring that only credible and *bona fide* institutions operate in Mauritius. They refer to sponsorship and governance, location, physical facilities, proposed programmes of study, curriculum, development of academic programmes, academic structure, admissions, fee structure, examination and assessment, quality assurance and student supervision, research, students, staff, national and international collaboration, financial plan, phased development of the institution and marketing and promotion.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the House will agree that the setting up of a TEI locally is not to be taken lightly as the reputation of Mauritius may be at stake. Consequently, the TEC has developed clear procedures for registration of a TEI and programme accreditation in order to ensure quality provision. I am also tabling these procedures.

Nevertheless, we are also aware that business needs to be facilitated if we wish to attract investors in the context of the setting up of a knowledge hub in Mauritius.

The TEC Board is currently reviewing the set of procedures so that the registration of institutions and the accreditation of their programmes are simplified without however compromising on quality.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: May I ask the hon. Minister whether he is satisfied that all tertiary institutions operating in Mauritius have got their courses accredited and that the qualifications and awards received by the students are recognised by the authorities in Mauritius?

Dr Bunwaree: Generally I must say 'yes'. As I said the TEC has got that responsibility, but there are problems now and then, which crop up and we take care of them.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister whether he has received any complaints - written or otherwise - from students who are attending such institutions in Mauritius, regarding the nature and the level standard of courses being given?

Dr Bunwaree: Yes we do receive complaints and we take care of them.

Mr Varma: Can the hon. Minister inform the House how many such permits have been granted so far?

Dr Bunwaree: I need notice of this question, Sir. I do not have the details.

Mr Speaker: Next question.

MAURAS SCHOOL OF DENTISTRY - OPERATION

(No. B/204) 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 Mauras School of Dentistry, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Tertiary Education Commission, information as to -

- (a) the date on which the application for its operation was made;
- (b) the date of approval;
- (c) the institution to which the Mauras School of Dentistry is affiliated, and
- (d) the number of students who have completed the Bachelor in Dental

Surgery Course from the School of Dentistry.

Dr. Bunwaree: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Tertiary Education Commission that -

- (a) The R F Gandhi A K Trust Ltd, operating as the Mauras College of Dentistry and Hospital and Oral Research Institute sought the approval of the Government of Mauritius for the setting up of a Dental College in Mauritius in September 2001;
- (b) Upon the recommendations of a Technical Committee set up by the then Ministry of Education & Scientific Research, provisional permission was given to the R F Gandhi A K Trust on 23 August 2002 to set up a 40 seat private dental college for the running of a 5-year BDS (Bachelor in Dental Surgery) programme, comprising a final year internship. Final permission was granted on 10 July 2003 following which the College was registered on 15 August 2003 with the Mauritius Quality Authority as a private post secondary educational institution. With the enactment of the Education and Training (Miscellaneous Provisions Act) in May 2005, the College is now registered with TEC. The registration, which is renewable on a yearly basis, is valid up to 31 July 2009.
- (c) As regards part (c) of the question, the Mauras College of Dentistry is affiliated to the Bhavnagar University, Bhavnagar, Gujarat, India.
- (d) A cohort of 35 students completed the 5-year BDS programme at the College in 2008. They were issued with a Provisional BDS Degree Certificate in August 2008 and awarded their final degree in December 2008.

Mrs Dookun Luchoomun: May I ask the hon. Minister which institution was the awarding body?

Dr. Bunwaree: The Mauras College of Dentistry, as I said, is affiliated to the Bhavnagar University, Bhavnagar Gujarat India which is recognised by the University Grants Commission, India enlisted on the International Handbook of the Universities.

Mrs Dookun Luchoomun: May I ask the hon. Minister whether there were any complaints from the Bhavnagar University regarding the standards of operation of the Mauras School of Dentistry?

Dr. Bunwaree: According to regulations set by international norms, when the students finish their studies, they get registered at the Dental Council. For the Indians, it is in India and for the Mauritians, it is in Mauritius. There is a set of issues that have to be taken care of and looked into. In fact, the Dental Council of India, at one point in time, came for a visit and they underlined a few shortcomings. These have to be looked into. But I must say we are gone above this now and for the first and second batches, those who were registered in the first year and the second year, the problem has been sorted out in India.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: May I ask the hon. Minister then whether there are new students who are still being admitted to the institution and what will be their fate?

Dr. Bunwaree: The college is open till June this year and they have to take care of certain shortcomings. This will be looked into and if they have taken care of it, then they will continue.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: May I then ask the hon. Minister if there have been new students who have got admission this year to the institution?

Dr. Bunwaree: They are continuing until the end of June this year.

Mr Jugnauth: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I know from the hon. Minister what proofs were required from the Bhavnagar University by TEC in order to be able to register that institution?

Dr. Bunwaree: There is a set of rules. I can circulate that as soon as possible, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Bodha: Mr Speaker, Sir, as regards the course, it provides for an internship of a year. May I ask the hon. Minister whether the internship was done in Mauritius? Secondly, I would like to know whether the students, who have been awarded the degree, can practise in Mauritius and whether they have been registered at the Dental Council.

Dr. Bunwaree: Mr Speaker, Sir, for the first batch, it ended last year. I think it was by November or December last year. These persons are supposed to ask for affiliation to the Dental Council now. I think, there is a question coming on that afterwards.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Can the hon. Minister confirm that this year there has been no new entrant to Mauras School of Dentistry?

Dr. Bunwaree: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have said that there are. According to the shortcomings that have been underlined and that have been submitted to the college, they are looking into the matter and their work is being monitored. If this is done to the

satisfaction of the TEC, then they will continue and they are, for the time being, continuing.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: May I ask the hon. Minister why then he mentioned that the internship and the award for the first two batches have been settled and whether there will still be queries on the award of certificates and registration for the coming batches?

Dr. Bunwaree: For intakes of the first two years, it has been settled. For the first year, it is over. For the second year, I have those who started in second year, five years ago, they are continuing and then, if everything is settled, the college will continue as if nothing had happened.

Mr Jugnauth: Can I ask the hon. Minister whether it is a condition that has been laid down by TEC in order to be able to recognise an institution from India that it should get a certification from the University Grants Commission?

Dr. Bunwaree: I think the answer is positive.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I then ask the hon. Minister whether this certification from the University Grants Commission was given to the Mauras School of Dentistry?

Dr. Bunwaree: I have to look into this matter. I believe it should be yes, Mr Speaker Sir.

Mr Speaker: Does the hon. Member have another question?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: No, I am still on the same question.

Mr Speaker: Carry on! The hon. Member should have been a lawyer; she would have been a very good cross-examiner.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Speaker Sir, in an answer given to a PQ, the Minister of Education stated that there is an International Monitoring Committee that already approved all the different stages: first, second, third, fourth and fifth year and even the internship. May I ask the hon. Minister then what is the difficulty that has been cropped up now that the certificates have awarded and the students have performed their internship?

Dr. Bunwaree: There are two things, Mr Speaker, Sir. One is the conditions that are imposed by the Dental Council of India. There is another set of conditions by the International Monitoring Committee. For the second one, there is no problem but for first one there is a problem. We are waiting for the Dental Council of India to give the go-ahead to the Indians in India so that the Mauritians can follow the same.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Speaker Sir, the University Grants Commission gives the certification on the basis of the parent – ‘if I may say so’ parent–institution, whether that parent institution has received all certifications there, before allowing that institution to settle into another country outside the State in India and more so outside the country. Then, my question, Mr Speaker, Sir, is: how come this step has been skipped and that the institution is operating here and that now we are waiting for the Dental Council of India to settle the case there?

Dr. Bunwaree: Mr Speaker, Sir, the problem is that the persons who have qualified, have to ask for the right to practise; and this is done to the Dental Council.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: One last question, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker: Yes.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: The Minister mentioned that now TEC has to be satisfied. Will he inform the House whether there was no representative of TEC sitting on the International Monitoring Committee?

Dr. Bunwaree: I have to look into this matter. I don't have a reply at hand.

Mr Speaker: Next question, hon. Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun!

MAURAS SCHOOL OF DENTISTRY – STUDENTS – REGISTRATION

(No. B/205) Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun (Third Member for La Caverne and Phoenix) asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether in regard to the students of the Mauras School of Dentistry, he will state the number thereof, who have been registered with the Dental Council of Mauritius.

Dr. Jeetah: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Dental Council of Mauritius that -

- (i) it has received applications from 16 newly qualified Mauritian dental surgeons who have completed a course in dentistry at the Mauras College of Dentistry, and
- (ii) it is seeking clarifications from the Dental Council of India prior to the registration of these applicants.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the House that my Ministry has taken up the matter with the Indian Authorities through our Ministry of Foreign Affairs. My Ministry has received a reply from the Mauritius High Commission in New Delhi, informing that the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare of the Government of India has issued a Notification, dated 06 March, 2009, recognising the BDS degree awarded by the Bhavnagar University for the Indian students of Mauras College of Dentistry, who were admitted during the academic sessions 2003-2004 and 2004-2005.

We have also been informed that the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare of the Government of India has made appropriate arrangements for the gazetting of the above notification in the Government of India Press.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Speaker Sir, did I get it right that the Minister stated that the Dental Council of India approved registration of Indian students. Has there been a distinction made between Indian students and Mauritian students?

Dr. Jeetah: I do not have this information, Mr Speaker Sir. All I have is that the Indian authorities have requested for the gazetting of this document.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: May I ask the hon. Minister what is going to happen to the Mauritian students who have completed their internship and who are sitting at home with their certificates? Because it seems that this matter has been settled for Indian students.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order, Order, please! Let the Minister answer!

Dr. Jeetah: We are all concerned about this case, Mr Speaker Sir. We are in the presence of a problem and we are working towards finding a solution.

It appears that we have reached a step where these students will be able to get their registration to the Dental Council. My Ministry is eagerly awaiting the gazetting; and after the gazetting, the Dental Council will be in possession of these documents and the graduates would be able to practise.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Speaker Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister, whether, once again, members of the Dental Council have not been sitting for years on the International Monitoring Committee of the Mauras School of Dentistry?

Dr. Jeetah: That is a very good question, Mr Speaker Sir. I asked the same question. There were not only members of the Dental Council, but there were members of TEC and so on. We are now facing the situation and we have to find a solution. I think we are going to see some light hopefully soon.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Will the hon. Minister give a time frame as to when he expects this matter to be settled?

Dr. Jeetah: Mr Speaker, Sir, in Mauritius if one was to gazette the documents we do it within a day. But, I cannot dictate what would happen in India. I have tried to talk to the Minister of Health in India today, but I understand that he was not available because of the elections. We are looking into the matter very closely.

At 1.00 p.m. the sitting was suspended.

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

Mr Speaker: Hon. Members, I will have, at the very outset, to make an announcement to the effect that PQ Nos. B/242, B/243, B/244 and B/245 have been withdrawn.

CAREER DIPLOMATS - TRAINING ABROAD

(No. B/207) Mrs S. Hanoomanjee (Second Member for Savanne and Black River) asked the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade whether, in regard to the career diplomats, he will state the number thereof, who

have been recruited, since July 2005 to date, indicating if they have been given training abroad and if so –

- (a) the names of those who have benefited therefrom and,
- (b) the amount of money disbursed therefor.

Dr. Boolell: Mr Speaker, Sir, since July 2005, thirteen Second Secretaries have been recruited by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade. In this respect, a first recruitment exercise for that grade was carried out by the PSC in February 2007 on the basis of nine vacancies. Out of this exercise, seven Second Secretaries joined the Ministry in February 2007 and, subsequently, one resigned on 18 February 2009. Furthermore, four additional vacancies which had occurred following the promotion of Second Secretaries to the grade of First Secretaries were reported to the Commission. Subsequently, six additional Second Secretaries joined since November 2008 to date.

It is the policy of this Ministry to provide overseas training to relevant officers to enhance their skills and knowledge. In line with this policy, three substantive Second Secretaries out of the six from the first batch who joined in February 2007 have already attended courses abroad as follows -

- Mrs N. Bauhadoor Gordhan and Miss S. Koa Wing attended the diplomatic training course for Anglophone African countries held in Cairo, Egypt from 04 to 15 January 2009 and 15 to 26 June 2008 respectively and all the costs of participation was met by the Egyptian fund for Technical Cooperation.
- Mr. J. Marie attended a training course on Key Issues on the International Economic Agenda at the Institute for Diplomatic Studies, in Cairo from 25 January to 12 February 2009. The United Nations on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), provided accommodation, meal and subsistence allowances. The cost of air ticket amounting to Rs41,600 was met from Public Funds.

The other three substantive Second Secretaries of the same batch have been designated to attend the following training courses abroad and a response is being awaited from the organisers on whom rest the final decision for selection of nominees -

- Mr D.K. Bucktowar has been designated to attend a Diplomatic Training Course on Crisis Management to be held in Malaysia from 12 to 29 May 2009 and the cost of participation will be met by the Institute of Diplomacy and Foreign Relation of Malaysia.
- Mr H. Ramdhian and Miss F. Furzun have been designated to attend the Official Fellowship Programme organized by the International Trade Information and Cooperation to be held in Geneva for a period 6 months with effect from May 2009 and the cost of participation will be met by the Agency for International Trade Information and Cooperation of Geneva.

I wish also to inform that the first batch of seven Second Secretaries recruited in 2007 has already followed an induction course on diplomacy as Foreign Trade organized by Ministry from 15 October to 17 December 2007.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Mr Speaker, Sir, from the reply of the Minister, I can gauge that most of the time we are relying on foreign funds to train our diplomats. Can the Minister say whether it is the policy of his Ministry to earmark funds specifically for the training of diplomats since this is a very important issue?

Dr. Boolell: The hon. lady is right. In fact, the Ministry intends to provide funds to set up an Institute of Diplomacy and Foreign Service. Of course, we can work it out with the University and other relevant institutions.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: I agree that diplomats already in the service should be given exposure abroad also, but as the Minister has said, I think, and does the hon. Minister also think, that we should work out a proper project for the setting up of an Academy for the training of diplomats in Mauritius?

Dr. Boolell: This is what I have stated. We need to give further thought to the setting up of an Institute of Diplomacy and Foreign Service.

Mr Varma: Mr Speaker, Sir, could the hon. Minister inform the House where the career diplomats who have been recruited since July 2005 are posted?

Dr. Boolell: Well, most of them are at base, although there are some posted in Embassies where they have to deal with matters which are of great concern to the interest of our country. But having said so, they are all doing a good job and, of course, there are some postings available which need to be filled.

Mr Bhagwan: Can I ask the hon. Minister whether, in the recent past, a request has been made to the Government of India for the setting up of certain institutes out of the cooperation of the foreign service of this land?

Mr Boolell: The hon. member is right. The services of the Indian Government were sought, but we are also having discussions with the Indian Government on this issue.

Mr Soodhun: Mr Speaker, Sir, will the hon. Minister agree with me that the non-career diplomats also need training?

Mr Boolell: They do undergo an induction course.

(Interruptions)

NATIONAL ENERGY POLICY

(No. B/208) **Mrs S. Hanoomanjee (Second Member for Savanne & Black River)** asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Renewable Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to the preparation of a National Energy Policy, he will state where matters stand.

The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Renewable Energy and Public Utilities (Dr. R. Beebeejaun): Mr Speaker, Sir, the final Energy Policy document prepared by the consultants appointed by the European Union and UNDP was submitted to my Ministry in June 2008 and considered by Government in December 2008.

The recommendations made by the team address all aspects of energy demand, supply and utilisation for the power and transportation sectors and emphasise on the development of renewable energy, energy efficiency and energy conservation at all levels. They also pertain to energy imports, security of supply, diversification of the energy mix, wider use of renewable energy sources, sectoral energy utilisation, transport, energy pricing, environment and education.

The implementation of the policy initiatives have wide ranging legal, financial, social, institutional, and technical implications in the local context.

In December 2008, Government agreed to policy measures outlined in the report for the period 2009-2025, subject to consultations with the relevant Ministries on the time frame for the implementation of the policy measures, taking into account the recent economic developments.

Based on the response from the various Ministries, an Action Plan will be worked out and the National Energy Policy document finalised before June 2009 in line with the commitment already taken with the EU.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Mr Speaker, Sir, will the Minister confirm that the same report he just mentioned, made recommendations with regard to the role of the STC in the import of coal and petroleum products?

Dr. Beebeejaun: Mr Speaker, Sir, among the many recommendations, this is one of them, and Government has not accepted the report *in toto*. There are about 25 reservations and STC is one of them.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Will the Deputy Prime Minister also say whether in the meantime any study is being carried out with a view to providing individuals who want to install microgenerators in their home and sell the surplus energy?

Dr. Beebeejaun: It is ongoing, microgeneration is in two forms. It is photovoltaic and also wind energy; we are working on the grid code for that. It is being presented to the stakeholders and we are moving ahead, but I would like to caution Members in the House about what is in the report. I would quote and I think it is well worth thinking about it. It says: 'it may take generations to reform the energy sector'. It is not going to be overnight.

Secondly, introducing more energy-efficient equipment takes less time and this is the emphasis on which my Ministry and myself were working upon.

Thirdly, changing buildings, energy supply sources and lifestyles take considerable time. We have made a start, Mr Speaker, Sir, we are going along, but we don't expect it overnight especially as it is expensive to start with. The upfront cost is very high.

Mr Dowarkasing: May I ask the hon. Deputy Prime Minister whether this report has taken on board the possibilities of having wave energy as one of the component of production of energy?

Dr. Beebeejaun: It does specifically mention that wave energy is not for today, but it is ongoing. I have been warned about a lot of offers for wave energy, but to be cautious. The answer is 'yes', it is on, even elsewhere wave energy is not in the frontline for the moment, but it is one of the component.

Mr Ganoo: Can the hon. Deputy Prime Minister inform the House whether the consulted had contacted people from the University also?

Dr. Beebeejaun: My information is that it a wide consultation, including University has been held and I am glad that the University is taking a lot of interest in *Maurice Ile Durable* and in all the projects that are ongoing, including energy and next week we are going to have an Energy Saving Week on the campus of the University itself.

Mr Jugnauth: Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Deputy Prime Minister say whether it is still the policy of Government to promote the use bagasse in making energy?

Dr. Beebeejaun: Yes, I would like to *mettre les pendules à l'heure* in terms of bagasse. Today, every ounce of bagasse that can be used is being used to produce energy, but there are three sites - Mon Loisir, St Aubin and a third one (Medine) where the burning of bagasse is not done efficiently. This is the next step to have efficient use of bagasse.

Mr Bodha: I have two questions to ask. May I ask the Deputy Prime Minister as regards the funding of the recommendations of the National Energy Policy, the recommendations which have been approved both by Government and European Union, how is the funding going to be done? Is it going to be funded by the European Union, partly by the CEB, or partly by the private sector?

Dr. Beebeejaun: We are working on it. I think we have to tread cautiously, it will be from all parties.

Mr Ganoo: Sir, can the hon. Deputy Prime Minister tell us what is the position with the grid code? Is it still in preparation and is there any difficulty?

Dr. Beebeejaun: As the hon. Member is aware, the grid code relates to production and sales and there is a sort of recoup. It is expensive. As far as I have been told in Reunion, a unit of electricity costs about seven to eight times more than it costs the average. We have to work on it, that is why I said we have to plan, taking the economic downturn worldwide and I am not talking about Mauritius.

Mr Bodha: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the Deputy Prime Minister what has been the recommendation as regards ethanol in the National Energy Policy?

Dr. Beebeejaun: Its recommendation has been to use more and more ethanol from G10 to G20 and it is part of the package that is being proposed.

NATIONAL PAY COUNCIL – TERMS OF REFERENCE

(No. B/209) Mrs S. Hanoomanjee (Second Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Empowerment whether, in regard to the National Pay Council, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Council, information as to –

- (a) if its terms of reference has been amended and
- (b) the number of meetings of the Council held, since July 2008 to date.

(Withdrawn)

ENTERTAINMENT SECTOR – SALARY SCALE STRUCTURE

(No. B/211) Mr E. Guimbeau (First Member for Curepipe and Midlands) asked the Minister of Education, Culture and Human Resources whether, in regard to the entertainment sector, he will state if Government will consider introducing entertainment laws and, if so –

- (a) when;
- (b) it is proposed to work out a salary scale structure for the sector.

Dr. Bunwaree: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I am aware of problems prevailing in the entertainment sector due to the absence of a legal framework. The quantum of pay to performing artists in the entertainment sector is a matter of great concern to me. In fact, it has come to my knowledge that there exists some sort of exploitation of artists going on in that sector.

I wish to inform the House that my Ministry with the assistance of UNESCO and the Mauritius Research Council is presently conducting a study on the Cultural Industry in Mauritius. The study comprises *inter alia* the status of our Cultural Industry including the entertainment sector and recommendations for improvement. The findings will enable us to introduce appropriate measures for the development of the sector.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that the final report of the study will be ready by June this year. The recommendations of the study will be validated after consultations with all stakeholders.

I cannot at this point in time pre-empt the recommendations but what I can say is that when an emerging economic sector grows and reaches a certain level, it becomes imperative to have a legal framework to regulate it. This legal framework may also include the question of remuneration of artists and which can only be in line with the new philosophy of the new labour legislations.

Mr Guimbeau: Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Minister tell the House whether he is in possession of any draft of the copyright law emanating from the stakeholders such as MASA, the Police and the Customs?

Dr. Bunwaree: Yes, we are working very actively on that.

Mr Bodha: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister whether he will agree with me that there should be a contribution of the Ministry of Tourism because in many cases this is where the cultural industry thrives? As he rightly pointed out, there is a lot of exploitation. For example, many of those Sega dancers are getting up to Rs100 for the show, and there are even minors. Something can be done there. There is a lot of scope of what can be done in the cultural and tourism industry.

Dr. Bunwaree: Mr Speaker, Sir, I fully agree and, as I said, we are going to consult all stakeholders.

Mrs Perrier: Is the hon. Minister aware that children are often used for entertainment, especially in the tourism sector? Will the hon. Minister cater for this aspect also in the new regulation?

Dr. Bunwaree: Certainly, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Guimbeau: Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Minister give us an idea when all of these measures are going to be in force?

Dr. Bunwaree: Mr Speaker, Sir, I said that we have to wait for the report, which I expect to get at the end of the month of June, and then we will have a meeting with the stakeholders. The hon. Member can rely upon me to go as quickly as possible.

AIR MAURITIUS LTD – AIRCRAFT FLEET – MAINTENANCE

(No. B/212) Mr E. Guimbeau (First Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism, Leisure and External Communications whether, in regard to the maintenance of the fleet of aircraft of Air Mauritius Ltd., he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Company, information as to -

- (a) the name of the contractor;
- (b) the contract value;
- (c) if an international tender exercise was carried out and, if so, indicate -
 - (i) the names of the bidders, and
 - (ii) the value quoted in each case, and
- (d) if the Company proposes to reduce the maintenance costs of the aircrafts.

The Vice Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism, Leisure and External Communications (Mr X. L. Duval): Mr Speaker, Sir, the House would appreciate that safety is the hallmark of Air Mauritius and that, so far, the company has maintained a perfect – 100% - safety record. Accordingly, all matters pertaining to maintenance of aircraft are treated with utmost seriousness. There cannot, therefore, be any compromise

on such issues, the more so as the company is listed on the IATA Operational Safety Audit (IOSA) Registry.

The House will further note that this question relates to a commercial and operational matter of Air Mauritius, which being given its status of a limited company, cannot be dealt with in the House. I am, therefore, unable to provide the specific information sought or to reply to any supplementary question thereon.

Mr Guimbeau: Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Minister state if it is Air Tanzania that is in charge of the maintenance of Air Mauritius?

Mr Speaker: I will have to remind the hon. Member that if the hon. Minister has given reasons why he cannot give the information, there cannot be supplementary questions.

Mr Guimbeau: Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Minister reassure the House that there will be no cut in maintenance?

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to be very clear. There are a lot of people who are trying to denigrate Air Mauritius - I am not saying this for the hon. Member. This is not the time to partake in such things. Air Mauritius has a wonderful 100% safety record and it is doing everything necessary to maintain this. There is absolutely no cut in the type of maintenance. What has been done, with the help of McKinsey, is that MK has renegotiated to its advantage the terms of the maintenance; not the actual maintenance itself.

Mr Bodha: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister whether some maintenance is done in Mauritius? I would also like to ask him whether he would agree with me that, at some point in time, there was a contract for the maintenance of planes from other companies to be done in Mauritius?

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, there are various types of maintenance that are done. For instance, just after and before a flight, there is maintenance. MK does this for themselves and also do that for other airlines that land in Mauritius. I am not aware whether planes come specifically to Mauritius for that.

SBM LTD – HEAD OFFICE – STATE LAND

(No. B/213) Mr E. Guimbeau (First Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the Minister of Housing & Lands whether, in regard to the State Bank of Mauritius, he will state if the Head Office thereof is located on State land and, if so, indicate -

- (a) the extent of land
- (b) the terms and conditions of the lease
- (c) the annual rental and
- (d) if the rental value reflects the actual market value

Dr. Kasenally: Mr Speaker, Sir, in regard to part (a) of the question, the Head Office of the State Bank of Mauritius is located over a portion of State land of an extent of 2223m² (that is, 53P).

In regard to part (b) of the question, the terms and conditions of the lease are, *inter alia*, as follows -

- (i) Type – industrial site lease
- (ii) Purpose – the construction of a multi-storey headquarters building for the State Commercial Bank Limited
- (iii) Duration - 29 and a fraction years to expire on 30 June 2019
- (iv) Renewal Clause – may be renewed at the expiry of the lease for two consecutive periods of 15 years, subject to the rent being revised on each renewal to reflect the market value.

In regard to part (c) of the question, at the time of lease, that is, in 1989, the rental agreed upon was at a nominal value of Rs1,000 per annum.

As regards part (d) of the question, the Finance Act provides for the terms and conditions of all industrial and commercial leases to be reviewed, including the annual rental to reflect the market value. A specific provision has been made in the Act to include the State land industrial leases in the City Centre. The State Bank of Mauritius Ltd forms part of this category of leases.

Mr Guimbeau: Mr Speaker, Sir, can we have an idea when the rent is going to be revised?

Dr. Kasenally: Following the Finance Act approved in June 2009, there has been consultation with the State Law Office, and there were a lot of issues which had to be sorted out. Finally, we sorted out the problem, and I am expecting that the matter will be resolved probably in three or four months' time. Perhaps the hon. Member would like to know that the rental for the State land - because it will be prime land in the City Centre - might be between Rs8 to Rs10 m. per annum.

Mr Guimbeau: We all know, Mr Speaker, Sir, that many big businesses are leasing land in the capital for *pitance*. So, will this include all other industrial sites?

Dr. Kasenally: Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir. There are about 28, and I think that Government stands to gain a fair amount of revenue accruing to that. Because there are two on prime land in the City Centre and one is beyond. The city centre is a bit more expensive. For example, I understand that Harel Mallac is paying about Rs500. This also would be substantially increased.

LA CAVERNE & PHOENIX – SOCIAL CENTRE

(No. B/214) **Mr S. Soodhun (Fifth Member for La Caverne & Phoenix)** asked the Minister of Environment and National Development Unit whether, in regard to the

project for the construction of a social centre at CTR Lane, St Paul, and another one near the Castel Madrassa at Allée Brillant Road, in Constituency No. 15, La Caverne & Phoenix, he will state where matters stand.

Mr Bundhoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to the construction of a social centre or multipurpose complex at CTR Lane, my ministry, in collaboration with the Municipal Council of Vacoas-Phoenix, is still looking for a portion of land for this purpose.

As regards to social centre near Castel Madrassa at Allée Brillant Road, I am informed that the Municipal Council of Vacoas-Phoenix was, at one point in time, considering the possibility of renting one floor of the Madrassa Building for that purpose. Unfortunately the request could not be entertained.

Furthermore, Mr Speaker, Sir, I am pleased to inform the House that, subsequent to the request of hon. Dr. Kasenally, hon. Chaumière and hon. Dr. Hawoldar and after having gone through the questions, I have been informed that the Municipal Council of Vacoas-Phoenix is in presence of an offer to purchase a plot of land of an extent of some 25 perches near the junction of Allée Brillant and Phoenix, that is, close to the Mahebourg Road. I am also informed that, once the land is acquired, the Municipal Council will proceed with the construction of a multipurpose complex, including a social centre.

SAVINGS ACCOUNT – INTERESTS – INCOME TAX

(No. B/215) **Mr N. Bodha (First Member for Vacoas & Floreal)** asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance & Economic Empowerment whether, in regard to the payment of income tax on interests accruing to the savings account, he will state if he proposes changing the policy thereof.

(Withdrawn)

LA VIGIE-SSR INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT - MOTORWAY- FLOODING

(No. B/216) **Mr J. R. Spéville (Second Member for Rodrigues)** asked the Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport & Shipping whether he is aware of the flooding problem on the Motorway, from La Vigie to the Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam International Airport, especially around the roundabout at the junction of La Rosa, L'Escalier/Souillac, and if so, the remedial measures that will be taken.

(Withdrawn)

DBM – CUSTOMERS - LOANS

(No. B/217) **Mr J. R. Spéville (Second Member for Rodrigues)** asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance & Economic Empowerment whether, in regard to the customers of the Development Bank of Mauritius Ltd., who had contracted a loan up to

Rs200,000, before April 2003 and who are entitled to the special measures as announced in the Budget 2008-2009, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Bank, information as to –

- (a) the number thereof, and
- (b) the total amount money it represents, indicating the amount for Rodrigues.

(Withdrawn)

MAURITIUS/RODRIGUES – PUBLIC OFFICERS – PERMANENT TRANSFER

(No. B/218) Mr J. R. Spéville (Second Member for Rodrigues) asked the Minister of Civil Service and Administrative Reforms whether, in regard to the public officers who have applied for permanent transfer and who have been granted same from the Rodrigues establishment to the Mauritius establishment and *vice versa*, he will state –

- (a) the number thereof for period
 - (i) January 2000 to December 2005 and
 - (ii) January 2006 to date and
- (b) their job title, indicating their respective previous and present posting

(Withdrawn)

RODRIGUES - EMPOWERMENT FOUNDATION – ACTION PLAN

(No. B/219) Mr J. R. Spéville (Second Member for Rodrigues) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Empowerment whether, in regard to the Action Plan of the Empowerment Foundation, he will state the number of projects earmarked for 2008 and 2009 for Rodrigues, indicating –

- (a) the amount of funds transferred to the Development Bank of Mauritius Ltd., as at to date in relation thereto and
- (b) the beneficiaries thereof, indicating the amount of money disbursed.

(Withdrawn)

BEAU CHAMP SUGAR ESTATE CAMPS – REGISTRATION DUTY

(No B/220) Mr G. Guinness (Third Member for Montagne Blanche and GRSE) asked the Minister of Agro Industry, Food Production and Security whether he is aware that the buyers of the Beau Champ Sugar Estate camps are now being asked to pay additional registration duty ranging from Rs25,000 to Rs50,000 and, if so, state the reasons therefor.

Mr Faugoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, my colleagues, hon. Ministers Indranee Seebun and Lormus Bundhoo and the hon. Member Cader Sayed Hossen have drawn my attention to the problem being faced by some beneficiaries of land at Deep River Beau Champ Sugar Estate camps and an enquiry has been initiated by my Ministry.

I would like to inform the House that five remaining sugar camps at Deep River Beau Champ Sugar Estate are in the process of being phased out and the 180 workers concerned have been allocated land at Cité Boutiques, Beau Champ. 133 of these beneficiaries have obtained their title deeds on 10 November 2008.

In accordance with Section 26 of the SIE Act 2001 as amended afterward, beneficiaries of land under the phasing out of camps project, are exempted from payment of registration duty. According to the Registrar-General's Office, 18 beneficiaries have paid registration duty because no mention has been made in their title deeds that they are exempted from payment of registration duty. This is due to an omission on the part of the notaries who prepared the title deeds. Even the sugar estate, which is exempted under the same section of the SIA Act from payment of land transfer tax, was made to pay the tax because of this particular omission.

These beneficiaries have been served a notice under Section 28(2)(b) of the Land (Duties and Taxes) Act to pay additional registration duty following a re-assessment of the value declared in the title deeds. Since they are already exempted from payment of registration duty, the question of paying additional registration duty does not arise.

As it is Government policy that beneficiaries of land under phasing out of camps should not pay the relevant duties and taxes, I have consulted the Ministry of Finance and Economic Empowerment to request that the Notice served on the 18 beneficiaries be not enforced.

I would wish to assure the House that the 18 beneficiaries and also other beneficiaries who are yet to register their title deeds will not have to disburse any money.

Mr Guinness: Mr Speaker, Sir, the papers are in my hand. It is good that the Minister has clearly stated that they don't have to pay anything. Can I ask the hon. Minister to request the Ministry of Finance to send another letter cancelling the previous letter? Because this is creating headache to these people.

Mr Faugoo: This is exactly what I said, Mr Speaker, Sir. This letter does not emanate from the Ministry of Finance; it emanates from the Registrar-General. In fact, we are working out with the Ministry of Finance so that we can give instructions to the Registrar General so that the needful is done and the process of re-assessment and claims is stopped.

Mr Guinness: Mr Speaker, Sir, in fact, the Registrar-General is an emanation of the Ministry of Finance. The heading is Ministry of Finance. I can lay a copy for the Minister. I have brought all the 18 copies.

Mr Speaker: It is a Department under the Ministry of Finance.

Mr Guinness: These people are having a headache because in the letter it is said 28 days - they have to make an appeal within 28 days. I am going to tell them obviously that they do not have to pay, but they will wait for an official letter and the 28 days are lapsing in a few days.

Mr Faugoo: It is not up to the Member to come and tell me how we are going to work out the modus. I said that these people are exempted and they are not going to pay. How we are going to do it in practice is something else.

Mr Guinness: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am not here to tell the hon. Minister how to do things. I have just put the question ...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Please! I don't understand the reaction of the hon. Minister. The hon. Member has just asked whether a letter of instruction could be issued to the Registrar-General's Department, and this in the line with the answer which the hon. Minister has given. That is all.

Mr Faugoo: I have said in my main reply, Mr Speaker, Sir, that I am working with the Ministry of Finance to find a way to settle the problem. I cannot give instructions to the Ministry.

Mr Guinness: If you will allow me, Mr Speaker, Sir, my point is that they have 28 days as from the date they received this letter and they have to make an appeal. They have to deposit 30% of the amount that has been requested. So, these people should have known by now that they do not have to make an appeal and they do not have to deposit that sum of money.

Mr Faugoo: Had the hon. Member listened to my answer, Mr Speaker, Sir, he would have known that they won't have to go through all these.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Let me put an end to this argument. The Minister has given an answer in the House. I don't know who is going to write to these people. I think the answer given by the hon. Minister is in itself an undertaking and it may be communicated to the persons involved.

Mr Ganoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, if I understood the Minister properly, he said that some workers have, unfortunately, already paid the registration duty when they should not have done so. It is because of the omission of the notary who failed to mention it in the title deed that this was a transaction done in the phasing out. Can I ask the hon. Minister if he can liaise with the Minister of Finance so that these people be refunded the money which they have paid to Government? In other cases, these people can be refunded that money if they petition the hon. Minister of Finance. This is a technical omission which has not been declared in the title deed and they should be refunded that money which they have paid to the Government.

Mr Faugoo: This is very relevant and pertinent, Mr Speaker, Sir, because when the title deeds were presented, they had already paid a certain amount of money. The question of refund will also be taken on board; I have already spoken to the Ministry of Finance and the needful will be done.

LA BRASSERIE TRANSFER STATION – TENDER EXERCISE

(No. B/221) Mr M. Allet (Second Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Local Government, Rodrigues and Outer Islands whether, in regard to the La Brasserie Transfer Station, he will state if any ongoing work is being carried out thereat and, if so, indicate if a tender exercise was carried out and, if so –

- (a) when
- (b) the names of the bidders;
- (c) the value of each bid received and
- (d) the name of the successful bidder.

(Withdrawn)

AFRICAN UNION, ADDIS ABABA – AMBASSADOR

(No. B/222) Mr M. Dowarkasing (Third Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade whether, in regard to our Ambassador to the African Union based in Addis Ababa, he will state if he has received representations as regards his conduct and, if so, the measures Government proposes to take.

Dr. Boolell: No, Sir.

Mr Dowarkasing: May I know from the hon. Minister whether he has taken cognizance of certain different articles that have been published in foreign press about the behaviour of our Excellency based in Addis Ababa?

Dr. Boolell: I don't pay heed to articles that appear in the press, Mr Speaker, Sir.

SOLIDARITY LEVY – MONEY COLLECTED

(No. B/223) Mr M. Dowarkasing (Third Member for Curepipe and Midlands) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Empowerment whether, in regard to the Solidarity Levy, he will state the amount of money collected for each of the last three years, indicating how these sums have been used.

(Withdrawn)

MOBILE PHONES – HEALTH HAZARDS

(No. B/224) Mr S. Dayal (Second Member for Quartier Militaire & Moka) asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether, in regard to mobile phones, he will state the health hazards that the use thereof represent.

Dr. Jeetah: Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to refer the hon. Member to the reply made to PQ No. B/1064 at our sitting of 05 August 2008. As stated therein, my Ministry usually stands guided by the recommendations of the World Health Organization on all matters pertaining to health.

Cellular phones operate with radio frequency which is a form of electromagnetic energy. This form of radiation is emitted by cell phones.

Since the introduction of mobile phones, there have been persisting concerns worldwide about the possible impact of mobile phones technology on human health. In this regard, worldwide research is being carried out to evaluate the possible health effects associated with the use of mobile phones. Current scientific evidence indicates that there are very small and reversible biological and physiological effects that do not necessarily lead to diseases and injuries.

The balance of evidence to date suggests that exposure to radio frequency radiations, which are emitted by mobile phones below the safe level, as enshrined in the International Commission on Non-Ionising Radiation Protection (ICNIRP) guidelines, do not cause adverse health effects to the population in general.

However, given that the issue of possible health effects of mobile phones is very much alive in the mind of the public, I wish to reassure the House that my Ministry will continue to follow up the matter with the World Health Organisation and take any action as required.

Mr Dayal: Mr Speaker, Sir, although we have respect for the opinion of the World Health Organisation, will the hon. Minister agree with me that there have been certain researches conducted and that there is considerable body of evidence that the microwave radiation from the mobile phones causes brain tumour and disturbs brain functioning among others, that is, the cancer risk?

Dr. Jeetah: Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to go through some of the notes, because I know that the hon. Member comes well prepared. I see that in 1997, there was,

at least, one study that found that RF - radio frequency and not microwave - increased the rate at which genetically engineered minds developed limb trauma. I also understand as a conclusion of this report that says - and I would like to read this, Mr Speaker, Sir – “that there are gaps in knowledge that have been identified for further research to better assist health risk.” The point I am trying to make is that research is still on, but, at this stage, we don’t have any conclusive evidence to show that it is a health hazard.

Mr Dayal: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have got some documents which I am going to table. My question is: will the hon. Minister agree that the radiation of mobile phone is too strong to be safe and even birds never sit or fly near any transmitter pillar transmitting radiation of mobile phone? Nature is showing the way.

Dr. Jeetah: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have got my personal concern, but I can only go by what the WHO has to say on health matters; and so far there is no conclusive evidence that shows that it can be causing any kind of cancer or any kind of harm to the human being. Research is on and until such time that we have known adverse effects we have to go by recommendations of the WHO.

Mr Dayal: Mr Speaker, Sir, I can only hope that we won’t wait for people to die before we react. We have got evidence and I am going to table it. Being given that we have considerable evidence and it has been found that it is very risky for youngsters below 20 years because they can have brain tumour, can the hon. Minister consider the advisability of educating and advising youngsters, especially below 20, on limited restrictive use of mobile phones?

Dr. Jeetah: Obviously, Mr Speaker, Sir, one needs not abuse of any kind of communication equipment. There is another mention that the further we keep the phone from the head, the better it is in terms of allowing radiation to affect this very sensitive part of the body, that is the brain. But here again, I would like to reiterate, that I can only go by WHO recommendations.

Mr Varma: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister has spoken about research carried out internationally and the WHO. Is it being envisaged to carry out some research locally as well?

Dr. Jeetah: It would have been nice to have research at that level in Mauritius. I will have to look into it. I will certainly pass on the suggestion to the Mauritius Research Council.

PETIT VERGER ST PIERRE GOVT. SCHOOL - FOOTBALL GROUND – FENCING

(No. B/225) Mr S. Dayal (Second Member for Quartier Militaire & Moka) asked the Minister of Local Government, Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether, he is aware

of the state of the fencing of the football ground, found adjacent to the Petit Verger St Pierre Government School, and, if so, will he state the remedial measures that will be taken.

The Minister of Youth & Sports (Mr S. Ritoo): Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I shall reply to this question.

I thank the hon. Member for having drawn our attention to the state of the fencing of the football ground found at the back of Petit Verger St. Pierre Government School.

I am informed by the Ministry of Housing & Lands that the football ground is not vested in my Ministry and is located on the land acquired for the construction of the school.

The Mauritius Sports Council has confirmed that the fencing and the block walls of the football ground is seriously damaged and represents a hazard for the users of the playground and the inhabitants of the vicinity.

Therefore, as an immediate measure, I have requested the Mauritius Sports Council to remove the damaged fencing and block walls.

My Ministry will liaise with the Ministry of Education, Culture & Human Resources and the National Development Unit to work out the modalities, including funding, for reinstating the fencing and block walls.

Mr Dayal: Can I know from the hon. Minister how soon the work will start? Here are the photos showing how dangerous it is and the fencing is almost leaning against several houses in the vicinity.

Mr Ritoo: I will request the Ministry of Education and the NDU so that we can have a meeting and start work soon.

PETIT VERGER ST PIERRE GOVERNMENT SCHOOL – TOILETS – UPGRADING

(No. B/226) Mr S. Dayal (Second Member for Quartier Militaire & Moka) asked the Minister of Education, Culture & Human Resources whether, in regard to the Petit Verger St Pierre Government School, he will state if he will consider upgrading the toilets thereat.

Dr. Bunwaree: Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the House that action has already been initiated by my Ministry to implement upgrading works in one of the two existing toilet blocks at the school, the other one being in good condition.

I am informed that the Ministry of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport & Shipping (MPI) is presently carrying out a detailed survey at the school and will,

subsequently, submit the cost estimates for the project by end April 2009, that is, in a few days' time.

Tentatively the works are expected to start around mid-May 2009 and will be completed around mid-August 2009. I am going to take into consideration the question of the fencing around the football ground, because we have found a way out. In fact, I did not have time to discuss with my colleague and I am sure that this will be taken on board at the same time as we are looking after the toilets.

LE POUCE MOUNTAIN, ST PIERRE – RIVER - PLATFORM

(No. B/227) Mr S. Dayal (Second Member for Quartier Militaire and Moka) asked the Minister of Environment and National Development Unit whether, in regard to the banks of the river, near Le Pouce Mountain, St Pierre, which are used by devotees to offer prayers during the religious festivals, he will state if he will consider putting up a platform thereat.

Mr Bundhoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, a site visit will be effected at the site concerned. A decision will be taken subsequently.

ADAMAS LTD - INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS

(No. B/228) Mrs F. Labelle (Third Member for Vacoas and Floreal) asked the Minister of Labour, Industrial Relations & Employment whether he is aware of the litigious industrial relations prevailing at the Adamas Ltd. and, if so, state if an inquiry has been carried out thereinto and, if not, why not.

Mr Chaumière: Mr Speaker, Sir, my Ministry is not in the presence of any report of litigious industrial relations prevailing at Adamas Ltd.

However, at my request officers of my Ministry carried out a surprise visit at the enterprise and I am informed that the industrial relation is harmonious except for a request made by the employees for the establishment of a communication system with management. I am also informed that management is agreeable to the setting of a work council with the assistance of my Ministry.

Mrs Labelle: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister whether his Ministry did not receive a claim from an employee regarding the payment of commission since last year?

Mr Chaumière: No, Mr Speaker, Sir. But I am advised also that there was an industrial dispute regarding one particular person in a letter dated 17 October 2008 received at my Ministry on 21 October 2008. Mrs P.J., a sales clerk, reported an industrial dispute against Adamas on an issue relating to non-payment of commissions since July 2008.

Mrs Labelle: May I ask the hon. Minister whether his Ministry carried out an inquiry in that particular case?

Mr Chaumière: Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir. On 29 December 2008, an inquiry was carried out at the undertaking whereby Messrs. Denton Managing Director, and Mr Benjamin Samba, Manager, were met. They proposed to increase the basic salary of Mrs Jouany by Rs1,500 and to pay a monthly bonus ranging from Rs1,500 and Mrs Jouany requested for a delay in order to take a stand. On 08 January 2009, Mrs Jouany requested that management communicates to her, her proposal in writing. As the case was not yet finalised, a meeting was held at the Commission for Conciliation and Mediation on 06 March 2009 with Mrs P. Jouany and Adamas as represented by Mr Samba, Manager. Management proposed to increase the basic salary from Rs8,000 to Rs9,500 effective as from July 2008. As regards the claim of commission, parties opted to negotiate between themselves. A meeting was, therefore, fixed for 06 April 2009 to report developments. At the meeting held at the Commission for Conciliation and Mediation on 06 April, Mr Erol Jouany the husband of disputant stated that his wife passed away on 02 April 2009 and submitted a copy of the death certificate.

Mrs Labelle: Mr Speaker, Sir, this case is a very sad one. It's a case of a woman who has been enduring undue harassment for nearly one year and fell in the office after a dispute and died some days after. I have to bring to the attention of the House that other employees are submitting the same treatment.

Mr Speaker: This issue can be raised at Adjournment Time if the hon. Member so wishes because now she is making a statement. She can raise it at Adjournment Time. Now it is Question Time!

Mrs Labelle: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Is the hon. Minister aware that this employee was drawing a monthly commission of nearly Rs7,000 and it was decided to bring back to only Rs1,000 or Rs1,500?

Mr Chaumière: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am not aware. But I have said that my Ministry has taken appropriate measures to inquire into this. There was a meeting which was scheduled on 06 April. Unfortunately, the lady passed away.

Mr Bodha: May I ask the hon. Minister whether there was a redundancy exercise at Adamas recently?

Mr Chaumière: I am not aware, Mr Speaker, Sir.

**ROBIN STREET & MOOTOO LANE, CUREPIPE –
PEDESTRIAN ACCESS**

(No. B/229) Mrs F. Labelle (Third Member for Vacoas & Floreal) asked the Minister of Local Government, Rodrigues and Outer Islands whether he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Municipal Council of Curepipe, information as to if it has received a petition from the inhabitants of Robin Street and Mootoo Lane, Curepipe, regarding the obstruction of a pedestrian lane and, if so, indicate where matters stand.

Dr. David: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Municipality of Curepipe that a petition has been received on 07 February 2009 from inhabitants of Robin Street and Mootoo Lane, complaining that the owner of the plot of land situated at the corner of Mootoo Lane and Robin Street had stacked tonnes of stones thus obstructing the pedestrian access.

I am informed that following an investigation carried out by the Municipal Council in the matter it has been found that no mention of any pedestrian road is made in the title deed of the owner of the land. However, there exists only a track on the site.

I am further informed that the Municipal Council is not in a position to request the owner to remove the stones as they are found on his private land.

**UNIVERSITY OF LIMOGES, L'INSTITUT SUPÉRIEUR DE TECHNOLOGIE
AND THE SWAMI DAYANAND INSTITUTE OF MANAGEMENT –
PROTOCOL - RENEWAL**

(No. B/230) Mrs F. Labelle (Third Member for Vacoas and Floreal) asked the Minister of Education, Culture and Human Resources whether, in regard to the protocol existing between the University of Limoges, *l'Institut Supérieur de Technologie* and the Swami Dayanand Institute of Management which expired in February last, he will state if same has been renewed and, if so, when and, if not, why not.

Dr. Bunwaree: Mr Speaker, Sir, a protocol Agreement was initially signed on 01 October 1999 for a period of three years and renewed twice up to February 2009 between the Technical School Management Trust Fund and the University of Limoges. The protocol provided for the running of a two-year programme at the '*Institut Supérieur de Technologie*' leading to a "*Diplôme Universitaire Supérieur de Technologie*", co-awarded by the University of Limoges and IST.

Action has already been initiated for the renewal of the protocol and the TSMTF has written to the University of Limoges accordingly. Consultations have already been held with the delegation from the University of Limoges presently on visit in Mauritius to

finalise procedures for the renewal of the protocol. An agreement in principle has been reached with the delegation and will be signed very shortly.

As regards the Swami Dayanand Institute of Management, being given that it is an English Medium Institution and runs programmes in a limited number of corresponding fields to those of the University of Limoges, it has established collaboration with the Technical and Further Education (TAFE) of Australia.

Mrs Labelle: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister whether one of the conditions from Limoges is that the TSMTF should be affiliated or BE under the aegis of a university so that they can keep on with this agreement?

Dr. Bunwaree: This is a fact and we are reviewing the structure of the TSMTF altogether. In fact, we are going to detach the *Institut Supérieur de Technologie* and the Swami Dayanand Institute from the jurisdiction of the TSMTF and bring them under the jurisdiction of the University of Technology (Mauritius). This will become a reality soon. But we will have to come to the Assembly to amend the legislation. The draft legislation is getting ready at the State Law Office.

Mrs Labelle: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister whether he is aware that the University of Mauritius submitted, I think, in March last year, a draft Memorandum of Understanding? And, may I know whether there is a particular reason why we have not gone forward with the University Mauritius and decided to do it with the University of Technology?

Dr. Bunwaree: There is no difference because they asked for it to go under the aegis of a University and this is what is being done. It has been discussed lengthily and finally we came to the conclusion to bring the two institutions under the aegis of the University of Technology Mauritius.

Mrs Labelle: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister whether it is not a very subtle way to get the fees payable because fees under University of Mauritius are free while under THE University of Technology fees are payable. Actually, fees at *l'Institut Supérieur de Technologie ne sont pas payants*, and once this will be under the University of Technology what will happen to fees?

Dr. Bunwaree: Mr Speaker, Sir, we are looking into the matter. At this point in time and I discussed this with my technicians in the course of the week and we are trying to do our level best for these fees not to be paid in this particular aspect because we are being helped financially by the French Government, and also the TEC will be awarding a budget for it to the University of Technology Mauritius. But the whole framework of university fees is being looked into.

Mrs Labelle: Mr Speaker, Sir, I think I have heard the hon. Minister mentioned that everything will be settled in the coming days. If this is the case, will it be known in the coming days whether the fees will be payable because from what I understand,

recruitment for IST is already due. Are we going to advertise for the courses in the coming days and, if so, are we going to say whether the fees are payable or not?

Dr. Bunwaree: The renewal is going to take place in a matter of days as I said and recruitment is going to follow the same pattern as last year for the time being and then we are going to look into the matter for the later years.

STANDARD III ENGLISH AND FRENCH TEXTBOOKS - REPRESENTATIONS

(No. B/231) Mr Y. Varma (First Member for Mahebourg and Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Education, Culture and Human Resources whether, in regard to the new Standard III English and French textbooks, he will state if he is aware of any complaint in relation thereto and, if so -

- (a) the nature thereof, and
- (b) the remedial measures that will be taken.

Dr. Bunwaree: Mr Speaker, Sir, I thank the hon. Member for this question. I am indeed aware of representations made regarding the new English and French textbooks of Standard III including comments from some trade unionists in the press. The bottom line of these representations is that the new textbooks are generally overloaded and the Standard III English and French textbooks in particular are complicated and are of too high a level for the pupils.

Be it as it may, Mr Speaker, Sir, I must say that the new textbooks are premised on the National Curriculum Framework (Primary) which was elaborated after a National Debate on Curriculum Reform in December 2005 in which all stakeholders and all trade unions took part. There was synergy and consensus on the broad curricular issues.

Further, the new textbooks have been written by experienced educators who form part of the subject panels. Before these textbooks were finalised and issued to students, they have been tested on a pilot basis and there was no negative feedback received then.

Consequently, there is no clear indication at this stage that the textbooks are in fact really overloaded or complicated. However, it is admitted that –

- (i) these textbooks follow a new approach whereby life skills and a number of concepts like values or environmental consciousness have been integrated therein, and
- (ii) students with learning difficulties particularly in the ZEP schools may have some difficulty to grasp the new concepts thus requiring additional efforts from the Teacher.

As a result thereof, there could have been a perception that the textbooks are complicated when, in fact, such may not be really the case.

Nevertheless, the MIE has been requested to carry out a fresh evaluation of the two textbooks and submit a report.

Mr Varma: Mr Speaker, Sir, could the hon. Minister inform the House when is the report expected to be ready?

Dr. Bunwaree: Well, I want this to go as quickly as possible. In fact, this is also a question of days. But, the Ministry is very closely monitoring, Mr Speaker, Sir, the situation of the third and fourth standards with respect to these books and inspectors may be called upon to provide necessary support to the teachers in case of necessity.

BLUE LAGOON HOTEL – TAXI STAND

(No. B/232) **Mr Y. Varma (First Member for Mahebourg and Plaine Magnien)** asked the Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping whether, in regard to the *non-gazetting* of the Taxi Stand for the Blue Lagoon Hotel in Blue Bay, he will state the reasons therefor, indicating when remedial action will be taken.

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, the taxi stand for Blue Lagoon Hotel has already been gazetted as per Government Notice No. 103 of 2006.

INDIAN RESORT & PLANTATION HOTELS – EMPLOYEES – LAID OFF

(No. B/233) **Mr A. Ganoo (First Member for Savanne and Black River)** asked the Minister of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment whether, in regard to the employees recently laid off at the Indian Resort Hotel and the Plantation Hotel respectively, he will state, in each case –

- (a) the number thereof;
- (b) the date on which they received their notice of termination of employment;
- (c) their length of service, and
- (d) if any offer of compensation was made to them and, if so, the amount thereof.

Mr Chaumière: Mr Speaker, Sir, the number of workers laid-off by Indian Resort Hotel and the Plantation Hotel is 41 and 45 respectively.

I am informed that the notices of termination of employment were issued on 10 February 2009 by Indian Resort and on 09 and 18 February 2009 by the Plantation Hotel.

Both hotels indicated in their letters that the termination of employment would be with immediate effect.

As regards part (c) of the question, the length of service of the workers of Indian Resort ranges from two months to seven years and for workers of the Plantation Hotel, the range is between 6 months to 10 years.

As regards part (d) of the question, an offer of compensation was made to the laid-off workers, as follows –

- (i) for those reckoning above 10 years services - 10 days' wages per year of service which is equivalent to the recycling fee payable by the employer plus 3 months' wages as gratuity;
- (ii) for those reckoning between 5 to 10 years' service - two months' wages as gratuity in addition to their joining the Workfare Programme, and
- (iii) for those reckoning between 1 to 5 years' service - one month's wages as gratuity in addition to their joining the Workfare Programme.

The above compensation is being paid over and above the indemnity payable in lieu of notice and, for those reckoning less than 10 years service, over and above the recycling fee payable under the Employment Rights Act.

Mr Ganoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Minister inform the House whether the workers have, in fact, refused the compensation offered to them?

Mr Chaumière: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have received the letter from the Hotels and Restaurants Employers Union and the organisation of Hotels and Catering Workers Unity of Mr Shanto and Mr Lutchmanen where they say that there has been a special general meeting with the workers which has been held on Friday 06 March, and at the special general meeting, the decision was taken to accept the proposals provided that the total payment be effected at one time.

Mr Ganoo: I am sorry to inform the hon. Minister that he might be mistaken. The case he is talking about is the Ambre Hotel where, in fact, these two unions represent the workers of Ambre Hotel. But as far as these two hotels are concerned, they are not represented by any union and they have refused the compensation. Can I ask him whether the Permanent Secretary of his Ministry will initiate proceedings to sue the employers? Because the employees do not agree that the hotels had laid them off for bankruptcy or other similar reasons.

Mr Chaumière: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Member, himself, came at my Ministry once, with the workers; and there were discussions, especially about the payment of gratuity and all these things. And I must say, Mr Speaker, Sir, that as from then, my Ministry has not received any complaint of that sort.

Mr Ganoo: Therefore, can the hon. Minister inquire into the possibility of having his Permanent Secretary referring the matter to court since these employees of these two hotels, not of *Ambre*, are not admitting the fact that the employer is justified in laying them off.

Mr Chaumière: Certainly, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker: Next question hon.Ganoo!

BLACK RIVER – SCABIES - OUTBREAK

(No. B/234) Mr A. Ganoo (First Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether he will state if there was recently an outbreak of scabies in the region of Black River and, if so, indicate –

- (a) when were the first cases detected;
- (b) the number of patients who had reported to the hospital in Black River for treatment and
- (c) the remedial measures taken to prevent the resurgence thereof.

Dr. Jeetah: Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to point out that scabies is an infestation of the skin and spreads rapidly under crowded conditions where there is frequent skin-to-skin contact.

Regarding part of (a) of the question, I am informed that cases of scabies are reported all year round throughout the island. However, it is noted that there has been an increase in the number of scabies reported at Yves Cantin Community Hospital for the months of November and December 2008.

As regards part (b) of the question, the number of cases reported at Yves Cantin Community Hospital for the months of November and December 2008 was around 150. The number of cases has decreased to a monthly average of 60 since January 2009.

Concerning part (c) of the question, Mr Speaker Sir, in line with established protocol, medical treatment is provided to such cases at the level of hospitals and health centres. Counseling is usually given by doctors and nursing officers to the parents/relatives of patients. Furthermore, preventive measures through continuous Health Education is carried out in all Government primary schools under our School Health Programme.

However, I wish to thank the hon. Member for raising this issue as well as Dr. Babajee from the same Constituency. This has given me the opportunity to make an assessment of the problem, especially in the Black River region. The Mobile Clinic of my Ministry will carry out screening and will also sensitize the people of the region on preventive measures to avoid the spread of scabies.

Simple measures, Mr Speaker, Sir, like the regular washing of hands with soap and water will help to prevent infestation with scabies.

Mr Ganoo: I thank the hon. Minister for his answer. But is the Minister confirming that, in fact, since January there have been no reported cases or no patient has gone to Yves Cantin Community Hospital for treatment for scabies?

Dr. Jeetah: No, Mr Speaker, Sir, I mentioned that there has been an increase for the months of November and December and the figure went down to 60 in general.

Mr Ganoo: Does the Minister have figures as from January?

Dr. Jeetah: I have got the figures, Mr Speaker, Sir. For February, it was 56 and March 63.

Mr Ganoo: The Minister has said that there are preventive measures which are being taken. This is what we call *la gale* in fact in our *creole*. Can he think of other measures to sensitise the population in that area of how to prevent them from catching this disease?

Dr. Jeetah: Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir, I did have a meeting with the technical members of my Ministry; and amongst the measures that we have discussed was to see if we could dispense a special soap that takes care of the disease. But I agree with the hon. Member that this is information that people don't have. It is basic rules of hygiene. People are living with their pets inside the house. We are not teaching our kids to wash their hands. My Ministry has taken measures, and we have set ourselves targets to make sure that we bring down these figures. I hope that we will achieve our goals.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Jhugroo, you have got a supplementary question.

Mr Jhugroo: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Can the hon. Minister confirm whether this outbreak of scabies has been in other regions of Mauritius?

Dr. Jeetah: Mr Speaker, Sir, I didn't mention any outbreak; I just mentioned trends, maybe because of November and December where more kids stay at home; and I have figures for other regions, if the hon. Member would wish to have it.

Mr Speaker: The hon. Member can circulate it.

REPUBLIC OF MADAGASCAR – BUTTER BEANS – IMPORTATION

(No. B/235) **Mr A. Ganoo (First Member for Savanne & Black River)** asked the Minister of Business, Enterprise and Co-operatives whether, in regard to the importation of butter beans from the Republic of Madagascar, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the State Trading Corporation, information as to if officials of the Corporation negotiated with a group of planters through the Malagasy authorities for the purchase thereof and, if so, indicate –

(a) when

(b) the names of the officials

- (c) if advance payment to the planters and a guaranteed price of 600 USD per ton, as a hedging transaction, were agreed upon and
- (d) the agreed contract price.

Mr Gowressoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, in 2007, the world had experienced an unprecedented shortage of food items which were due *inter-alia* to the following –

- (i) severe drought in Australia;
- (ii) unavailability of pulses for export from India;
- (iii) adverse climatic conditions in Madagascar resulting in poor harvest.

Mr Speaker, Sir, these external factors were beyond our control and this is why prices of imported pulses including broad beans increased in figure on the local market. In this context the House will recall that Honourable Members highlighted that there was more than 100% increase in the price of pulses. This was indeed a fact in 2007. The government took the right decision to request STC to look for supply of pulses at reasonable prices.

The STC, accordingly, fielded a mission to the Republic of Madagascar to have discussions with recognised authorities there. Consequently the STC signed a contract with Millennium Challenge Account and TAMI. The MCA is an organisation set up by Government of Madagascar to manage funds provided by the Millennium Challenge Corporation, which is an American Funding Organisation. The TAMI, which was the supplier, is a cooperative body involved in the production of butter beans.

With regard to part (a), missions were held in September and October 2007. With regard to part (b), the officials involved in the missions were the General Manager, the Commercial Manager and one Board member who were all mandated by the STC Board. Mr Speaker, Sir, it would be unethical to make public the name of the officers concerned.

With regard to part (c), no hedging transaction was effected. However, an advance payment of euro 50,000 was effected to TAMI for the purchase of seedlings. As regards part (d) of the question, a contract price of euro 653.13 (FOB) per metric ton was agreed upon.

Mr Speaker, Sir, let me inform the House that through this intervention of the STC on the local market, the price of broad bean which was Rs38 per half kg in 2007 was down to Rs24 and ultimately to Rs12 and, at the same time, avoiding shortage on the local market, to the benefit of the consumers.

Mr Ganoo: Can the hon. Minister inform the House what is the actual price on the world market now?

Mr Gowressoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, it is a very difficult to know the actual price of the broad bean because it changes.

Mr Ganoo: As at today or yesterday!

Mr Gowressoo: Mr Speaker I cannot say actually, maybe an indicative price of half kg of broad beans on the local market is Rs12. So you multiply it by 1000 kg.

(Laughter)

Mr Ganoo: Can the hon. Minister confirm whether, in fact, the price per ton is about 200 euros at the moment?

Mr Gowressoo: Mr Speaker, Sir the retail price per half kg is Rs12., so if you multiply it by £200 it gives you the figure.

Mr Ganoo: What is the guaranteed price that the official of the STC agreed to pay to the MCA?

Mr Gowressoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, at that time, that is, in September 2007, it was 653.13 euro fob.

Mr Ganoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Minister inform us whether among the officials who went to Madagascar to finalise this deal, Mr Ah Fat was one of them?

(Interruptions)

Mr Gowressoo: Mr Speaker Sir, I just said, that it is not ethical...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Hon Guinness. Order, order, please!

Mr Guinness: Can I know from the Minister is for how many years the agreement between TAMI and the STC is?

Mr Gowressoo: Mr Speaker Sir, it was for 600 metric tonnes.

Mr Guinness: My question is not for how many tonnes. For how many years is the agreement?

Mr Gowressoo: Agreement! The contract was for 600 metric tonnes, Mr Speaker Sir.

Mr Guinness: Mr Speaker Sir, why does he not lay on the Table of the Assembly the convention whereby it was agreed to deliver 600 tonnes, the agreement is for two years and the price agreed was 700 euro per metric tonne? I lay it on the Table of the Assembly. Can the Minister confirm it? And this is the agreement.

(Interruptions)

Mr Guinness: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I know from the Minister - when negotiations were going on at that time - whether there were other suppliers prepared to supply the same beans at 400 euro metric tonne ?

(Interruptions)

Mr Gowressoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, concerning the contract, the price I have was 653.13 euro fob. I don't have this figure.

Mr Guinness: Mr Speaker Sir, I will lay another document under the signature of Mr Soomoroah, Executive Director of STC whereby it is said that we have requested quotations from several suppliers in Madagascar and have up to now obtained the best offer of 400 euro metric tonne, CIF and he writes it to the President through the MCA. Therefore, can the Minister confirm whether there were negotiations with other planters?

Mr Gowressoo: Maybe, Mr Speaker Sir, because at that time, there was a shortage of broad beans on the local market. Maybe the price has been decreased Mr Speaker, Sir, because the price fluctuates, and it is like this.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order, order please!

Mr Guinness: Mr Speaker Sir, I am talking of the same period. Can I know whether last year, in 2008, the STC has already advanced 50,000 euros for *semence* as per the agreement as the Minister himself said? Can we know whether they supplied beans to Mauritius in 2008?

Mr Gowressoo: No, Mr Speaker, Sir, the supply has not come to Mauritius and that is why we had discussions with the Embassy of Madagascar. I asked Mr Lemaire to look into this matter, because there is the political problem. That is why discussion is ongoing, Mr Speaker, Sir.

(Interruptions)

Mr Guinness: Mr Speaker Sir, there is a political problem now. We are talking of 2008 and there was an agreement in 2007 for two years. We have paid 50,000 euros for *semence* in advance. How is it that in 2008 we were not provided with the beans?

Mr Gowressoo: Mr Speaker Sir, it was for the crop of 2008 that there was an advance payment, but the quality at that time was not good and the broad beans were flooded on the market in Mauritius. Then why do we import and then it is spoiled? That is why we prefer to leave the supply for this year and negotiations are ongoing to have the money back or the broad beans.

Mr Guinness: Mr Speaker, Sir, the Minister is talking about the quality of the beans which were supplied in 2007. Can the Minister confirm whether, in the agreement, it is written that officers from the STC will go and check the quality? Will he also say whether officers of the STC went there to check the quality of the beans which the Minister himself is saying was of bad quality and how much money was therefore lost?

Mr Gowressoo: Mr Speaker Sir, the hon. Member is talking

(Interruptions)

The negotiation, that is the agreement of 2007, was 600,000 tonnes.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order, order!

Mr Gowressoo: When the broad beans came to Mauritius, they were not of good quality and there were re-negotiations to know what would happen to the supply in Mauritius. They accepted to refund 105,000 euros on that product.

The second issue is about the advance payment of 50,000 euros which we gave to the company and for the seeds also. Then there was also this advance payment for the crop of 2008, but we have already faced the problem for the crop of 2007, that is, the initial one. How are we going to deal with this problem of broad bean, Mr Speaker Sir?

(Interruptions)

Mr Ganoo: Can I ask the hon. Minister if he can confirm that at the time of harvest in 2007, the STC had to make unnecessary expenses, in fact, as its officials had to travel to Madagascar, to inspect the shipment and the actual product, as the Minister rightly says, was mostly rotten and only a small portion of the containers had come to Mauritius?

Mr Gowressoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, we surely all remember that an hon. Member came in this August Assembly with a packet of broad beans! What we could we do at that time? If we do not travel to another country to negotiate, how can we do business, Mr Speaker Sir?

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Hon Bodha! Hon. Bodha! Do you have a question? Hurry up, time is running up! Three more questions!

Mr Jhugroo: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister mentioned that there has been an advance payment of 50,000 euros and then he mentioned that he is negotiating for 105,000 euros. Can he clarify this point?

Mr Gowressoo: Maybe the hon. Member has not listened well. I said that the sum of 50,000 euros is the advance payment for the new crop and the refund on 600,000 tonnes is another issue. These are two different things Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker: Hon Gunness, last question!

Mr Gunness: I will put a double-barrelled question Mr Speaker, Sir. Can I know from the Minister whether the STC wrote to Madagascar saying that it was of poor quality. Is the Minister in presence of the letter where it is said, I quote –

“(...) Je souhaite mettre en valeur les points ci-après, les agents successifs et représentants de STC à Madagascar ont cautionné la conformité des produits par leurs contrôles réguliers et constants sur place et par le paiement des produits à chaque livraison”.

In the last paragraph it is said –

"Pendant la période où TAMI a effectué cette première exportation auprès de la STC Maurice, cette dernière a également importé des pois de cap à travers d'autres fournisseurs malgaches".

Therefore, is the Minister in presence of this? Can we know at the same time - since this is the last question - whether the two other representatives were Mr Ah Fat and Mr Ali?

Mr Gowressoo: Mr Speaker Sir, at this point in time, I don't have the letter, but I will check with the STC. I can assure the House that the company has already accepted to refund 105,000 euros and we are looking into the matter. We had discussions with the Embassy to see what is going on, Mr Speaker Sir.

Mr Speaker: Time is over! Let me inform the House that Parliamentary Questions Nos. B/237 and B/238 have been withdrawn.

MAURITIUS TELECOM – MR R.R. & Mr. I.C.

(No. B/236) Mr N. Bodha (First Member for Vacoas and Floreal) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Empowerment whether, in regard to the conflict opposing Mr R.R. and Mr I. C. to the management of the Mauritius Telecom, he will state if he has received a letter dated 31 March 2009, in connection therewith, from the France Telecom.

(Withdrawn)

ANAHITA WORLD CLASS SANCTUARY-BEAU CHAMP – TAXI LICENCES

(No. B/237) Mr G. Gunness (Third Member for Montagne Blanche GRSE) asked the Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping whether he is aware that the National Transport Authority has issued notice for the granting of Public Service Vehicle (Taxi) Licences on transfer to operate from the Anahita World Class Sanctuary-Beau Champ and, if so, will he, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Authority, information as to if many surrounding localities have been omitted from the list, indicating the remedial measures that will be taken.

(Withdrawn)

VERDUN-TERRE ROUGE ROAD PROJECT - CONTRACT

(No. B/238) Mr G. Guinness (Third Member for Montagne Blanche & GRSE) asked the Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping whether, in regard to the Verdun-Terre Rouge Road project, he will state –

- (a) the name of the contractor ;
- (b) the contract value;
- (c) when works are likely to start;
- (d) the estimated value of the project by –
 - (i) the Consultant and
 - (ii) the Road Development Authority, and
- (e) if Government has resorted to direct negotiations.