

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

AGRICULTURAL SECTOR – THEFTS

(No. B/410) Mrs S. Hanoomanjee (Second Member for Savanne and Black River) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs whether, in regard to thefts in the agricultural sector, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the number of reported cases thereof over the past two years, indicating if consideration will be given for the setting up of a special unit to deal therewith.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, first of all, let me make it clear that thefts in the agricultural sector are not a new phenomenon, although, I must say, we have seen an increase in the last year.

I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that in 2007 there were 353 cases, 419 cases in 2008 and 135 cases have been reported to the Police so far this year.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in my reply to Parliamentary Question B/1042 on 05 August of last year, I had indicated to the House that concerted actions were being taken by the Ministry of Agro Industry, Food Production and Security, the Police, the Small Planters Welfare Fund and the local authorities to tackle the problem of thefts in the agricultural sector. Accordingly, a series of measures have been taken -

- (1) regular meetings between planters and representatives of the Police Force for the identification of strategic places requiring more attention are taking place;
- (2) sensitisation campaigns around the island by the Crime Prevention Unit aiming at sensitising planters on their rights and preventive measures to be taken to protect their fields;
- (3) control measures with local authorities on agricultural produce sold on road sides without any permit;
- (4) intensive patrols by station personnel, local CID, Divisional Support Unit and Emergency Response Service on a 24-hour basis.
- (5) stop and search of all suspicious characters found loitering near vegetable plantations;

- (6) frequent checks of vegetable carriers and questioning of occupants and drivers;
- (7) active use of Public Police Partnership Policing to report any suspicious behaviour and act to provide timely information to the Police.

I am further informed that the Police have further stepped up efforts to tackle the problem. Divisional Commanders are having regular meetings with planters with a view to enhancing preventive measures. A co-ordinated patrol scheme has been established at divisional level with the involvement of the Divisional Support Unit (DSU), the Emergency Response Service (ERS), the Police du Transport, the Traffic Branch, the Local CID and the ADSU to prevent all types of larceny.

In addition, Mr Speaker, Sir, the Police has provided the Vegetables Planters' Association with a direct line of communication with the Divisional Commanders and the Divisional Operations Room on dedicated lines to enable the association to seek assistance at short notice and for a prompt response. Visible Police presence is also being ensured at station levels through foot and mobile patrols.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in order to ensure that those who indulge in such criminal activities are caught and punished, the Ministry of Agro-Industry, Food Production and Security has given its approval for the Small Planters Welfare Fund to implement a Delivery Note System with a view to ensuring traceability of vegetables and fruits on the market. Under this arrangement, the Small Planters Welfare Fund would issue delivery notes to planters of vegetables and fruits, who would, in turn, issue such notes to stallholders to certify the sales transaction.

I am further informed, Mr Speaker, Sir, that the Ministry of Local Government, Rodrigues and Outer Islands is bringing necessary amendments to the existing Councils Market/Fair Regulations to empower market Inspectors to require stallholders to produce the delivery notes during their routine inspections or upon receipts of complaints. In the event, any stallholder fails to produce the required delivery notes; the matter would be reported by market Inspectors to Small Planters Welfare Fund or the Police for necessary action. It is considered that such a system will enable to track down stolen agricultural produce and ensure better control on the sales of these products.

The Plant Protection Act will be therefore amended as well as a review of legislation to provide for more severe penalties.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in view of the current measures being taken to tackle the problem, it is felt by the Police that, at this stage, there is no need to set up a Special Unit to deal with such cases, although the situation is being closely monitored.

Mr Speaker Sir, in view of the current measures being taken to tackle the problem, it is felt by the Police that, at this stage, there is no need to set up a special unit to deal with such cases although the situation is being closely monitored.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Mr Speaker, Sir, the Minister has just mentioned some control measures as to where these vegetables or fruits or flowers are being sold. Has there been any report so far from the Commissioner of Police on this issue of traceability?

The Prime Minister: We will have to amend the law on this issue of traceability, Mr Speaker, Sir, and this is why I said this is going to be done.

Mr Bhoda: Mr Speaker, Sir, for this year we have 135 cases and last year we had 419 cases. Can we have an idea of the value of stolen goods?

The Prime Minister: No, I have no idea of the value of stolen goods; they are vegetables, but there is no value as such.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Mr Speaker, Sir, among the cases of thefts that the Prime Minister has just mentioned there have been some cases resulting in *mort d'homme* and there has recently been a case. The person who was recently beaten to death had four cases of Police theft against him and each time he has been released *on parole*. Can the Prime Minister say whether he is envisaging to amend the law so as to make the penalty more severe in these cases? He has been released on *parole* four times.

The Prime Minister: This is a problem that is dealt with by whatever Court is looking at it, Mr Speaker, Sir. We have a judgment from the Privy Council to say that we should not try to impose. On the discretionary power of the Judge, of the Magistrate, it is our hope that they take this into consideration, but often they look at all the circumstances, as you know. I do not know about the circumstances of this particular case, but I did mention that we are also coming with legislation to strengthen the penalties.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Mr Speaker, Sir, one last question. Obviously, those stolen fruits and vegetables are being sold to the public immediately after they have been stolen. Can the Prime Minister say whether there has been any arrest of those who are selling vegetables in every nook and corner of the island because there are some hot spots like La Marie, Belle Mare and so

on? Can the Prime Minister say whether there has been any arrest of those vegetable sellers along the road, those *marchands ambulants*?

The Prime Minister: The answer is yes, Mr Speaker Sir. Many people have been arrested.

LATE PC J.S & PC J.C.P. – SEARCH AND RESCUE OPERATION – DEATH

(No. B 411) Mr R. Speville (Second Member for Rodrigues) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Home Affairs whether, in regard to the inquiry carried out in the case of late PC J. S. and PC J. C. P., who lost their lives in a search and rescue operation, on or about 13 May 2007, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to where matters stand, indicating if compensations have been paid to their heirs;

(a) in compliance with the PRB Report 2003 and, if so, when and, if not, why not and,

(b) under the Prime Minister's Relief and Support Fund.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that the late Police Constable J.C.P. reckoned 6 years of service and late Police Constable J.S. reckoned 12½ years of service. Compensation, under the Pension Regulations, amounting to Rs355,487.81, has been paid to the heirs of late Police Constable J.C.P. and the sum of Rs 705,462.30 to the heirs of late Police Constable J.S.

I am also informed that the High Powered Committee has approved payment of the extra compensation as recommended by the PRB Report 2003 to dependents of the two deceased Police Officers. Arrangements are being made by the Accountant General for the payment of Rs 676,440 to the dependents of late PC J.C.P. and Rs 789,480 to the heirs of late PC J.S.

As regards part (b) of the question, I informed the House on 12 August 2008 in reply to Parliamentary Question B/1090 that a notice has been served upon the hon. Attorney General by the heirs of late PC J.C.P on 07 March 2008 for damages worth Rs2 m. With regard to late PC J.S, a notice has been served on 05 June 2008 for damages worth Rs1.6 m.

A decision on the payment of an extra compensation under the Prime Minister's Relief and Support Fund would be only taken on the conclusion of the Court cases as is usually the case.

Mr Bérenger: Mr Speaker, Sir, I listened to the Prime Minister and we are now in May 2009. This sad incident took place in May 2007. I am sure of that the hon. Prime Minister would agree with me that those extra payments could have been decided upon and paid a long way back, not two years later. It is now being paid.

The Prime Minister: As I mentioned, Mr Speaker, Sir, the pension under the Pension Regulation has already been paid. As for the compensation, unfortunately, under the PRB, it is payable under the Workmen's Compensation Act and not under the Pensions Regulations. This Act refers to dependents and not heirs. Therefore, a new affidavit has to be prepared and thus the Industrial Court will have to determine who are the dependents before payment is effected and that is why the delay has taken place.

Mr Speville: I listened to the Prime Minister. Can he confirm whether the payment from the Prime Minister's Relief and Support Fund will depend on the outcome of the case that they have been filed to the Attorney General?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, generally the Prime Minister's Relief and Support Fund has the following objectives. First of all, assistance to victims of accidents, injuries or severe handicap and two, financial support to persons and organisations engaged in activities for a good cause in the public interest. Concerning the criteria to be considered in order for benefit from assistance from the Fund, there are different criteria Mr Speaker, Sir, and we don't need to go into all of this but the victims or dependent of victims, eligible for any form of compensation under the Workmen's Compensation Act or National Pension Fund or other statutory benefits or schemes will not, in principle, qualify for assistance under this scheme. However, notwithstanding that Mr Speaker, Sir, victims or dependent of victims may benefit from relief if the Board is of the opinion that the benefit obtains from the different schemes that they had before are not sufficient, that is the criteria that is used. But when there is a court case then they suspend all the decision until the court case is over.

NATIONAL COAST GUARD - VESSELS

(No. B/412) 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 National Coast Guard, he will;

- a) for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the number of vessels presently available, indicating the number thereof attached to each post and,
- b) State if Government proposes to sell the Le Vigilant and, if so, indicate if it will be replaced.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, there are at present 52 vessels attached to the National Coast Guard, of which 11 are attached to the Port Louis Harbour.

The other 41 Vessels are based at the NCG Posts and support services as follows -

NCG Post	No. of Vessels
Black River	5
Flic en Flac	1
Albion	1
Bel Ombre	1
Mahebourg	1
Blue Bay	3
Souillac	2
Grand Bay	3
Trou aux Biches	2
Grand Gaube	1
Poudre D'Or	1
Flat Island	1
Poste Lafayette	1
Belle Mare	1
Ile aux Cerfs	1
Trou d'Eau Douce	1
Deux Freres/GRSE	2
Rodrigues NCG	5
Agalega NCG	3
St. Brandon NCG	2

Marine Training Establishment	1
Quick Reaction Group South	1
Police Driving School	1

As regards part (b) of the question, as I have mentioned in an earlier reply to the House, the contract for the construction of the CGS Vigilant was signed in February 1994. Since its commissioning, the vessel had repeatedly encountered shaft problems, as we all know, and had undergone major repairs on various occasions at the Naval Dockyard, Mumbai, India in 2000, 2001, 2003 and 2004.

After several unsuccessful attempts to repair the vessel, in July 2007, a Board of Survey was set up for the early disposal of the vessel.

I am given to understand that the survey of the vessel has now been completed and all reports and documents have been forwarded to the official consultant appointed to assist the Board of Survey in finalizing the report and that report is being finalised now.

Mr Speaker, Sir, perhaps I should add that during my visit to India in October of 2005, the Government of India agreed to provide an Offshore Patrol Vessel to the Government of Mauritius under the US\$100 million Indian line of credit. The project for the acquisition of the Offshore Patrol Vessel was included in the list of projects submitted by the Government of Mauritius at the 10th session of the India-Mauritius Joint Commission held in Port Louis on the 18th of December 2007. Following the Joint Commission meeting, specifications for the vessel were conveyed to the Indian authorities on the basis of which a design has been prepared. The design has been approved by the Mauritian side and it meets the operational requirements of the Mauritius Police Force. The Indian authorities have already identified a Government of India undertaking under the Indian Ministry of Defence to build the vessel. The estimated construction time of the vessel is around 3 years.

Although I must add that we are still looking at the price that the vessel will cost us. I would like to add also Mr Speaker, Sir, that we will shortly obtain a Fast Patrol Boat donated by the US Government which is currently under construction and this will improve our capability for patrolling our areas.

Mr Bérenger: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether, out of the vessels scattered all around the main island and in the outer islands, he has checked how many are not in working order?

The Prime Minister: I do not have the exact figure, but I know there were cases where some of them were not in order, but I believe that some of them have already been repaired. Whether there is still some being repaired, I can't say, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Bodha: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether he will agree that with the growing problem of piracy in the Indian Ocean - in fact, we had cases of piracy in the Seychelles - the fleet has to be upgraded as urgently as possible?

The Prime Minister: It is a question of how much money we have also, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Jhugroo: May I ask the hon Prime Minister whether he will consider to have an NCG post between North and South Island of Agalega and to put a vessel there?

The Prime Minister: We have already placed some boats in that area.

Mr Speaker: Next question, hon. Varma!

POLICE TRAINEES – RECRUITMENT EXERCISE

(No. B/413) Mr Y. Varma (First Member for Mahebourg and Plaine Magnien) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Home Affairs whether, in regard to the forthcoming recruitment exercise of Police Trainees, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to if a Waist Hip Ratio will be used together with the Body Mass Index to indicate overweight or obesity in the assessment of physical fitness.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that in January 2005, the Disciplined Forces Service Commission requested the Police to consider amending the Scheme of Service for the post of Trainee Police Constable in view of the fact that some apparently physically strong candidates might not satisfy the necessary requirements as there was no provision to exclude any candidate who might be overweight or obese in the absence of provisions for the calculation of the Body Mass Index of candidates. Consequently, the Body Mass Index was introduced as a requirement for enlistment as Trainee Police Constable.

In my reply to PQ B/971 on 07 August 2007, I mentioned, *inter alia*, that the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life had advised that waist circumference alone may provide a more

practical correlate of abdominal fat distribution and associated ill health. It recommended that waist circumference be utilized as an adjunct to Body Mass Index in the recruitment of Police Trainees.

I understand from the Commissioner of Police that action has subsequently been initiated for the Scheme of Service for Trainee Constables to be amended accordingly. However, in the course of consultations on the proposed amendment, it has been found that the issue of Body Mass Index and Waist Circumference as indicators of overweight and/or obesity needs to be reassessed. I am informed that the matter is currently being examined.

Pending the review of the Scheme of Service, the forthcoming recruitment exercise for Police Trainees is being carried out on the basis of the existing Scheme of Service.

Mr Dayal: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether, instead of introducing the Body Mass index as an additional criteria for recruitment, is it not high time to revisit the whole recruitment and selection process in order to develop a profile of a Police officer who can better serve our modern society more particularly the psychometric test to ensure that applicants are mentally stable and capable of functioning in stressful and traumatic situation, which are inherent to Police Force, instead of giving much weightage to the BMI and waist hip ratio?

(Interruptions)

The Prime Minister: That is the test that we should do for everyone. I will pass the information to the Commissioner of Police.

Mr Speaker: Next question hon. Bhagwan!

**PARASTATAL BODIES & GOVERNMENT OWNED COMPANIES –
CHAIRPERSONS – DECLARATION OF ASSETS**

(No. B/414) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Home Affairs whether, in regard to the Declaration of Assets Act, he will state if Government will consider making regulations thereunder with a view to making it compulsory for the Chairpersons of parastatal bodies and Government Owned Companies to declare their assets on their appointment and on the expiry of their contract.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, the House will recall that in my reply to PQ B/1282 in November of last year, I explained that declaration of assets by one category of

officials alone would not be an adequate safeguard against unethical or corrupt practice in the public sector. I emphasized the need to extend the requirements of the declaration of assets to all categories of officers and office holders who perform duties and exercise powers of such a nature that people may be tempted to offer them gratification.

I am, therefore, all in favor of extending the application of the Act not just to chairpersons of para-statal bodies, but to all categories of officers and office holders.

I must point out, Mr Speaker, Sir, that it appears that chairpersons of para-statal bodies cannot be brought under the ambit of the Act by way of regulations, as the hon. Member is suggesting. The reason is that the word “officer” in the Declaration of Assets Act does not extend to persons who hold chairmanships or memberships of parastatal bodies.

In the same breath, when we do the amendment, provisions will be made for the Act to be also extended to Municipal and District Councillors.

Insofar as Government Owned Companies are concerned, I am advised that they do not again come under the ambit of the Declaration of Assets Act since they do not fall within the meaning of “statutory body” as defined in the Act. As the House is aware, Government Owned Companies are governed by the provisions of the Companies Act. The Companies Act does not make any provision for the declaration of assets by the chairpersons. It would not be appropriate, it is felt, to amend the Act in order to extend it to chairpersons of Government Owned Companies. We think this is better left to the Government Owned Companies themselves providing, in their own constitutions, for the disclosure of the assets of the chairpersons.

Having said that, Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that Government Owned Companies are already reporting the remuneration of directors, including those of the chairpersons, in their financial statement as part of their compliance with the principles of good governance laid down in the Code of Corporate Governance.

I wish to reaffirm our unequivocal subscription to public governance and our commitment to restore and maintain the integrity of our institutions. Besides, it is in this context that the Government has started a new Public Enterprise Reforms Programme with the assistance of the World Bank. The programme is expected to bring along a new culture of transparency and accountability in para-statal bodies.

Mr Bhagwan: Can I asked the hon Prime Minister whether, in the course of the amendment which he contemplates to bring, he can add the advisers? We have seen, in the recent past, advisers appointed....

(Interruptions)

Why? Am I not right? I won't mention names. Hon Members know to whom I am making reference. Can I ask the Prime Minister whether ..

Mr Speaker: They will include advisers.

Mr Bhagwan: Advisers who are appointed by Government in different ministries and also in para-statal bodies.

The Prime Minister: I will look into it, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Ganoo: Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether he has taken cognizance of a report made by the Parliamentary Committee of the ICAC to the effect that this whole matter should be looked into in a comprehensive manner? Suggestions have been made to amend this Act in order to cater for all types of officials, advisers and chairmen. The suggestion has been made already.

Mr Speaker: The Prime Minister has already answered the question in a comprehensive manner.

Mr Ganoo: I am asking my question, if you listened to me properly, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker: I have listened.

(Interruptions)

Sorry, I am on my feet! I listened to the hon. Member when he said whether the report of ICAC has been mentioned or amending the law. This is what he said. The Prime Minister has answered it.

(Interruptions)

The Prime Minister has already answered.

(Interruptions)

The Prime Minister: Yes, I have.

Mr Speaker: Not on the report, but he has answered on the issue.

Mr Ganoo: My question was whether he has taken cognizance of the report.

The Prime Minister: As the hon. Member knows, in fact, there are court decisions on this issue. There is the court case of the Local Government Services Commission and Mr

Bancillon clearly illustrates that principle that I have just mentioned. Even in the report of ICAC falls into that ambit.

Mr Speaker: Next question, Mr Bhagwan!

MBC – CHAIRPERSON – OVERSEAS MISSIONS

(No. B/415) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Home Affairs whether, in regard to the Chairperson of the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Corporation, a breakdown of the official overseas missions attended to, since his date of appointment to date, indicating in each case-

- (a) the amount of money paid out in terms of air tickets, *per diem* and other allowances, and
- (b) the countries visited and the purpose of each mission.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, the information requested is being compiled.

Mr Speaker: Next question, hon. Mrs Martin!

POLICE OFFICERS – RECRUITMENT EXERCISE

(No. B/416) Mrs M. Martin (Second Member for Curepipe and Midlands) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Home Affairs whether, in regard to the ongoing recruitment exercise of Police Officers being carried out, he will state-

- (a) the number of applications received,
- (b) when application forms were issued,
- (c) the criteria laid down for selection,
- (d) the date of the examinations, and
- (e) the expected date of completion of the exercise.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that the post of Trainee Police Constable was advertised by the Disciplined Forces Service Commission on 04 December 2008. The recruitment exercise is currently ongoing.

With regard to parts (a), (c), (d) and (e) of the question, these relate to privileged information held by the Disciplined Forces Service Commission, which cannot be disclosed in accordance to Regulation 4 of the Service Commission Regulations.

Mrs Martin: Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Prime Minister give information with regard to the percentage, at least, in terms of gender, in the letters which have been sent?

The Prime Minister: No, Mr Speaker, Sir, this is privileged information of the Disciplined Forces Service Commission.

Mrs Martin: Can the hon. Prime Minister say what is the number of Police Officers aimed to be recruited after the current exercise?

The Prime Minister: I think in the region of 550, as far as I remember.

Mr Speaker: Hon Bodha!

Mr Bodha: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether he will not consider the possibility that the candidates be informed of the different stages of the exercise?

Mr Bodha: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether he will not consider the possibility that the candidates be informed of the different stages of the exercise? Everybody knows that, in fact, we have the first stage where we have the measurements, the exams, interviews, medical examinations and Police clearance. In most cases, the candidates are not aware where they are and at what stage they have reached in the exercise. I think something should be done.

The Prime Minister: The more information given is better, but I don't know whether this would not cause an administrative problem, Mr Speaker, Sir. For example, there must be more than 1,050 people who have applied. I don't know whether we can actually do this administratively, and if it is practical. But I'll look into it.

Mrs Labelle: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether he can inform the House in which publications these advertisements appeared in December 2008?

The Prime Minister: I am not sure in which publication, but it must have been published. People obviously know of it, because they have applied.

Mrs Martin: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether he knows if the place or region of residence of the applicants will also be a determining factor in the recruitment exercise?

The Prime Minister: It is again for the Disciplined Forces Service Commission to look into that. There is no political interference in that. We have a Constitution that says everybody has to be treated equally.

Mr Léopold: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether, during the recruitment exercise, the candidates will be given the possibility to choose whether to join the SMF, the National Coast Guard or the Police Force?

The Prime Minister: I don't think so. They eventually have a rotation, but I don't think they will be given this choice.

Mr Jhugroo: Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister how many persons have applied for this post?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, as I explained, this is an information that the Disciplined Forces Service Commission will not give to me.

Mrs Martin: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Prime Minister what is done with regard to transparency following these exercises?

The Prime Minister: If the hon. Member would remember, I have already passed a Bill, and if she has complaints, she can do so. There is also the court. But, again, there must be confidence in the Disciplined Forces Service Commission. It is not the Prime Minister who chooses, and this is why there is this institution.

CUREPIPE & MIDLANDS - POLICE STATIONS – POLICE OFFICERS

(No. B/417) Mrs M. Martin (Second Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs whether, in regard to the police stations in Constituency No. 17, Curepipe and Midlands, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the number of Police Officers presently posted in each of them, indicating the unit to which they are attached.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that there are four Police Stations in Constituency No. 17 – Curepipe/Midlands, and these are staffed as follows -

	<u>No. of Police Officers</u>
i. Eau Coulée Police Station	41
ii. Midlands Police Station	36
iii. Curepipe Police Station	90
iv. Dubreuil Police Station	23

I would also like to inform the House that there are no Units as such at Police Stations. However, there are Police Operational Units which are based, and are operational at Divisional level.

I am further informed by the Commissioner of Police that, for policing purposes, the abovementioned Police Stations all fall under the jurisdiction of the Central Division, except Dubreuil Police Station which falls under the Eastern Division.

Mrs Martin: Is the hon. Prime Minister aware that some of those Police stations are understaffed and cannot often answer distress calls that they receive?

The Prime Minister: From what I see, Mr Speaker, Sir, there seems to be quite a number of Police stations. For example, at Curepipe, there are 90. Whether it is felt that it is understaffed, I will pass this on to the Commissioner of Police.

SUBUTEX – ARRESTS - JULY 2005 TO DATE

(No. B/418) Mr A. Ganoo (First Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs whether, in regard to possession of Subutex, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the number of arrests effected in connection therewith, since July 2005 to date, on a yearly basis.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that, from July 2005 to date, the number of suspects who have been arrested in connection with possession of Subutex are as follows -

<i>Period</i>	<i>No. of suspects arrested</i>
July to December 2005	177
Year 2006	820
Year 2007	805
Year 2008	843
Year 2009 (up to 06.05.09)	311

CANNABIS – ARRESTS– JULY 2005 TO DATE

(No. B/419) Mr A. Ganoo (First Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Home Affairs whether, in regard to possession of Cannabis, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the number of arrests effected in connection therewith, since July 2005 to date, on a yearly basis.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that, since July 2005 to date, the number of suspects who have been arrested in connection with possession of Cannabis, are as follows -

<i>Period</i>	<i>No. of suspects arrested</i>
July to December 2005	220
Year 2006	595
Year 2007	709
Year 2008	754
Year 2009 (Up to 06.05.09)	298

PLAINE VERTE, VALLEE PITOT, ROCHE BOIS AND ST CROIX – DRUG OFFENCES – ARREST

(No. B/420) Dr A. Husnoo (Second Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs whether, in regard to drugs offences, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the measures taken over the last three years to prevent the sale thereof in Plaine Verte, Vallée Pitot, Roche Bois and Ste Croix, indicating the number of drug peddlers who have been arrested.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that, since May 2006 to April 2009, a total of 94 drug peddlers have been arrested in the regions of Plaine Verte, Vallée Pitot, Roche Bois and Ste Croix.

Since the last three years, Police has reinforced its capacity and has empowered these regions with different units with a view to curbing down these drug problems. There are nine units of ADSU covering the regions with a strength of 121 Police Officers and 36 vehicles. The following measures have been implemented by Police -

- (a) regular searches and arrests by ADSU units based in and outside the four regions;
- (b) the organisation of crack down/joint operations, with the support of other adjuncts of the Force against drug traffickers;
- (c) special mobile patrols by ADSU with the collaboration of Alpha Squad, CID North and the Divisional Support Unit North to prevent and deter sale of drugs during day and night;
- (d) community policing with socio-cultural groups, with a view to raise awareness on drug abuse among the inhabitants, and
- (e) active participation of ADSU personnel in close collaboration with NATReSA and other civil society organisations in prevention and rehabilitation campaigns in these regions.

Mr Speaker, Sir, to further reinforce the present existing measures, CCTV cameras will be installed in these regions next year. This will help Police to monitor and control the movements of suspected persons and vehicles even better.

Mr Speaker: Time is over! The Table has been advised that Parliamentary Questions nos. B/432, B/461, B/462 and B/468 have been withdrawn. Hon. Guimbeau!

COASTAL REGION STATE LAND – RESERVATION LETTERS

(No. B/428) Mr E. Guimbeau (First Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the Minister of Housing & Lands whether, in regard to State land on the coastal region, he will state if reservation letters have been issued to prospective promoters for the lease thereof, since September 2008 to date, and, if so, indicate in each case-

- (a) the name and address of the beneficiaries thereof;
- (b) the date of the reservation;

- (c) purpose of the lease;
- (d) the extent;
- (e) the location, and
- (f) the rental value proposed.

Dr. A. Kasenally: Mr Speaker, Sir, the information is being compiled and, as soon as it is ready, I shall arrange for it to be placed in the Library of the National Assembly.

HAJJ PILGRIMAGE 2008 - SHORTCOMINGS

(No.B/429) Mr S. Lauthan (Third Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Education, Culture & Human Resources whether, in regard to the Hajj pilgrimage, he will state if he has received a letter from one Mr D. B., a member of the 2008 Hajj mission, stating the shortcomings in relation to the last Hajj pilgrimage and, if so, will he, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Islamic Cultural Centre, information as to the measures that will be taken to avert the recurrence thereof.

The Minister of Housing & Lands (Dr. A. Kasenally): Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I shall reply to this question.

The reply to the first part of the question is in the affirmative.

Regarding the second part of the question, I would wish to refer the hon. Member of the House to PQ B/239, wherein he raised the same issue, that is, measures to be taken to avoid shortcomings for the forthcoming Hajj.

The last Hajj pilgrimage went on generally well. I wish to assure the hon. Member that the Islamic Cultural Centre will take any corrective measure(s) that may be required to ensure that the Hajj pilgrimage proceeds smoothly in the future.

Mr Lauthan: Mr Speaker, Sir, the main problem lies with the senior officer of the Islamic Cultural Centre who takes everything on him. He does not even give access to his office to members of the mission there.

There is also the issue of a special visa called the *Mafee* visa, which enables persons to move around the big cities in Makkah. We have learnt from the letter of this gentleman that four members of the mission were deprived of this visa while one, a friend of that senior officer from

Reunion Island, got the same visa. This is unacceptable. Can the hon. Minister assure us that this visa will be distributed in an appropriate manner?

Dr. Kasenally: Mr Speaker, Sir, I took cognizance of that and, in fact, all the visas for the next Hajj mission are with me. I will ensure, with the help of my colleague, the Minister, and the ICC, that it is properly distributed to those people who are involved in the Hajj mission.

Mr Lauthan: Mr Speaker, Sir, I can't understand the presence of the ex-Chairman of the ICC in the mission. While he was the Chairman, with full capacity and authority as such, he did not perform and was replaced by another Chairman. How is it that, now, he continues to be a member of the mission as adviser?

Dr. Kasenally: Mr Speaker, Sir, this gentleman was taken as my special Adviser because he is a very efficient and capable man and has helped in the past. There might have been shortcomings in other fields, but I take the responsibility for taking him, and it was approved by Cabinet.

Mr Lauthan: Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Minister confirm that, following the submission of this report by the member of the mission, the case was presented to Justice Ahmed, and whether it was recommended that the officer, Mr T. B. - I won't mention his name. He is a friend of mine, but in terms of fundamental principles of Islam, no friendship comes in the way - be sacked?

Dr. Kasenally: Mr Speaker, Sir, as far as the Ahmed Report is concerned, there was never a question of sacking him. In fact, that report was submitted to our Legal Adviser, who is no less than Sir Hamid Moollan, Q.C., and he recommended the reintegration of that gentleman. I can bow for this gentleman. He is very efficient; he worked night and day during the Hajj mission, and performed well. However, they were some shortcomings, as there are shortcomings with everybody in everyday life, but especially with the Hajj organisers. I am taking appropriate action with the ICC to ensure that these are not repeated.

Mr Lauthan: Mr Speaker, Sir, for the sake of transparency, can I ask the hon. Minister to lay on the Table of the Assembly a copy of the Justice Ahmed Report?

Dr. Kasenally: Mr Speaker, Sir, this is privileged information. I'll have...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: The Minister is answering, why are you...

(Interruptions)

Dr. Kasenally: No, if the hon. Member wants to get political mileage out of Hajj...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Wait! Order!

Dr. Kasenally: If the hon. Member wants to get political mileage out of Hajj...

(Interruptions)

Dr. Kasenally: Can I answer, please?

Mr Speaker: Every time, there is a problem. I am sorry. The hon. Member has put a question as to whether the hon. Minister can lay the report. Let the hon. Minister answer whether he is going to lay it or not.

(Interruptions)

I am sorry. The hon. Member provoked the Minister while he was answering the question.

Mr Bérenger: On a point of order, Mr Speaker, Sir. I want your ruling. Is it not imputing motives when a hon. Minister tells a hon. Member that he wants that report for political politicking? This is what he said!

Mr Speaker: Let me put it in the right perspective! The hon. Member put the question to ask the hon. Minister to lay the report on the Table of the Assembly, and when the hon. Minister started to say that this was privileged information, there was a reaction from the hon. Member.

(Interruptions)

I am sorry, let me finish! Then, I don't know how the hon. Minister reacted as to political mileage. I would ask him to answer the question. If he wants to lay the report, he lays it; if he does not want to lay it, that's his own decision.

Dr. Kasenally: Mr Speaker, Sir, to every action there is a reaction. I will consult...

(Interruptions)

... the Islamic Cultural Centre and the legal people to see if we can, for the sake of transparency, lay this. If not, it will not be laid.

LANDLORD & TENANT (AMDT) ACT – TENANTS - REPRESENTATIONS

(No. B/430) Mr P. Jhugroo (Third Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Housing & Lands whether he will state if he has received representations from the tenants following the proclamation of the Landlord and Tenant (Amendment) Act and, if so, the actions, if any, that will be taken.

Dr. Kasenally: Mr Speaker, Sir, on a point of order. I would like to have you ruling. The hon. Member was imputing all sorts of motives or passing all sorts of remarks when I was sitting, and I will...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Let us put an end to this! I have said it so many times that there is no need at all in generating so much heat on a particular question like this. I will request hon. Members to please behave as hon. Members of this House.

Dr. Kasenally: Mr Speaker, Sir, following the proclamation of the Landlord and Tenant (Amendment) Act in May 2005, my Ministry has, in fact, received representations from the Association of Tenant Traders and Professionals to the effect that the ensuing increases in the rent of business premises were too high, putting at stake the existence of small businesses.

Sir, we have been sympathetic to these representations, and, in a spirit of fairness and transparency, a number of meetings have been held with all stakeholders since 2005, and several proposals have been put forward for discussions.

I am pleased to inform the House that, at the last meeting held on 21 April 2009, the Association of Tenant Traders and Professionals and the Joint Economic Council have undertaken to come forward with proposals agreeable to both parties by mid May 2009 and, if need be, amendments to the existing legislation will be presented to the National Assembly.

VALLÉE DES PRETRES – DRAINS - CONSTRUCTION

(No. B/431) Mr P. Jhugroo (Third Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Environment and National Development Unit whether, in regard to the construction of drains in the Vallée des Prêtres region, since July 2005 to date, he will state in each case –

- (a) the length thereof;
- (b) the name of the contractor;
- (c) the cost thereof, and
- (d) when works are expected to start and to be completed.

Mr Bundhoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, the information sought is being tabled.

BINS - DISTRIBUTION

(No. B/432) Mr P. Jhugroo (Third Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Environment and National Development Unit whether he will state if his Ministry has distributed bins since September 2008 to date and, if so, the number thereof region-wise, indicating in each case, the costs thereof.

(Withdrawn)

CAMP THOREL ROAD/BUS PARK – UPGRADING AND TARRING

(No. B/433) Mr S. Dayal (Second Member for Quartier Militaire & Moka) asked the Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport & Shipping whether he will state if Government will consider upgrading and tarring the road leading to the newly constructed bus park at Camp Thorel.

The Minister of Local Government, Rodrigues and Outer Islands (Dr. J. B. David): Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I shall reply to this question.

I am informed by the Moka/Flacq District Council that the base work of the road leading to the newly constructed bus park at Camp Thorel has been completed while the bus park project implemented. However, the resurfacing of the road with Premix asphalt was not undertaken due to financial constraints.

I am further informed that, following the recent rainfalls, part of the base work has been washed out, and same will be reinstated by the Council next week. The Council has indicated that it will construct a drain and resurface the road with Premix asphalt in the next financial year.

Mr Dayal: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I request the hon. Minister to consider the possibility of having two lay-bys along the road because of the narrowness of the road leading to the bus park?

Dr David: Mr Speaker, Sir, I will convey the message to the appropriate authorities.

NTC - LOSSES

(No. B/434) Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun (Third Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport & Shipping whether, in regard to the losses incurred by the National Transport Corporation for the period 2007-2008, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Corporation information as to if the increases

in the salaries and the wages, as a result of the implementation of the recommendations of the National Remuneration Board and of the Pay Research Bureau, account therefor.

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by NTC that the operational loss can be attributed to a series of factors, ranging from the high volatility in the price of fuel, the increase in the cost of operational and maintenance of an ageing bus fleet, and a bus tariff structure which is not reflective of the principles of full cost recovery. The increase in staff costs in the wake of the NRB award which amounts to Rs14 m. for May and June 2008 has also contributed in the financial distress of the NTC.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: May I ask the hon. Minister whether he could confirm, from the reply he has given to a former PQ, that the cost of NRB and PRB amounted to around Rs7 m. and that the amount of revenue obtained from an increase in tariff, diesel, petroleum products, etc, amounted to Rs12 m. per month, which would mean that the cost of NRB and PRB increases cannot account for the losses incurred by the NTC? Furthermore, can he explain how the volatility in petroleum prices have been such even earlier and there were still profits obtained at the NTC?

Mr Bachoo: I did not say that the increase in the NRB and PRB has been solely responsible for the present situation of the NTC. I have mentioned that it has partly contributed to the prevailing situation at the NTC. Secondly, there has been an increase of about 28% in the ticket fares but, unfortunately, the 28% increase in tariff hasn't given us the desired results. There has been only an increase of 18% in real terms. The second apprehension that the hon. Member has shown is how is it possible that, with the increase that there has been in the past, that much of loss wasn't felt but, now, we are seeing it. There is a series of reasons for this, Mr Speaker, Sir. For example, I have mentioned that there has been an increase of 28% in the tariff and it had not been reflected in the real terms, it is only 18%. This is number one. Secondly, it was when the base price was increased from Rs11.44 to Rs25 that the real problem was felt, because whatever difference had to be met by the NTC, that is, the full compensation was not obtained to NTC and NTC made a very big loss. The amount of money which was recovered from the increase in the tariff was too small compared to what we were spending at the NTC. Another problem which occurred was that the amount of 200,000 litres of petrol was not paid by the NTA to NTC and that is the reason why I have requested a performance audit of the scheme by the National Audit Office and, at the same time, I have also requested the MAB to look into the problem, the

conflict which is arising between the NTA and the NTC and then we will request the MAB to come with a formula which is more transparent, fair and equitable.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Can the hon. Minister confirm whether out of the bus fleet of 440 buses, the NTC is being given compensation by the NTA on only 390 buses, whether this does not account for the losses and whether this loss incurred by the NTC is not being caused by the way things have been dealt with at the level of the NTC or the Ministry itself?

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, in fact, it is not 440 but 520 buses and it is not being compensated for all those buses. It is only 92% of the fleet that is being compensated. This is one of the causes which have probably led to this situation of conflict between the NTA and the NTC. We have decided that the MAB would look into the issue and come up with suggestions. Another reason also which is attributed to this situation is that 40% of the routes are non-commercial and unproductive. At the same time, we are providing a bit of social services for which the NTA is not providing any additional cent to NTC. There are numerous reasons which had led to the present situation. But I can assure the House that the MAB has undertaken this work and, probably, within a fortnight the report will be ready and we are going to act on that.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Concerning that issue, Mr Speaker, Sir, the Minister is trying to say that there is some problems between the NTA and the NTC. May I ask the hon. Minister why did we wait for so long to take action? I have information and I am going to ask the Minister to confirm whether this is also true that, for every 100 kilometres run by the bus, the NTC is being provided compensation on 26 million litres, whereas the consumption is around 32.5 million litres, whether such a situation could be allowed to prevail for such a long time and then the impression being given is that the NTC is not being run properly whereas this has all been created by policies of the Ministry itself?

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, in fact, I can't say that the NTA had been partial towards the NTC. It is the same for other companies also. It is a fact that for the automatic buses which are being utilised by the NTC, the consumption is 42 litres of petrol for 100 kilometres and we are paying only 32 litres for 100 kilometres. There are 51 air-conditioned buses where 62 litres of consumption per 100 kilometres are being utilised and, in fact, the payment is only for 32 litres, but the same situation is also for the private companies. Since the very beginning we had been trying hard to find a solution to the problem, but even the NTA had got its own reasons why

it does not want to pay more than that. It is for that reason only that we had requested the MAB, which is an independent body, to come forward with certain recommendations.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Since the Minister has mentioned himself that the problem between the NTA and the NTC is a very thorny problem which requires an urgent solution, has the MAB been given any time frame to complete this exercise?

Mr Bachoo: I have just mentioned that in a fortnight the report will be ready and, at the same time, we had been looking into the report which the NTA has submitted. But, at first, it would appear that the NTA is right by providing only 32 litres for 100 kilometres and, of course, NTA does not look into other considerations like the social services which are being provided by the NTC.

Secondly, under the Bus Modernisation Programme which was started by the previous Government itself, for example, we have introduced new type of buses, air-conditioned buses. So, these factors have not been taken into account by the NTA.

Mr Soodhun: Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Minister confirm whether there has been any request for the increase of ticket fare recently?

Mr Bachoo: There has not been officially any request for the increase as such till now.

Mr Bhagwan: Can the hon. Minister inform the House whether the MAB will also look into the unnecessary expenditure of the Corporation? Last time, I raised the issue of car for the Chairperson - we are still expecting a reply from the Minister - and also the purchase of unnecessary spare parts which are laying dormant in the stock. Can the hon. Minister, at least, inquire whether one particular firm, MIDAS, - I mentioned that to him, he knows who is the owner - has been supplying unnecessary spare parts to the NTC?

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, in fact, we have taken a series of measures. I had earlier announced in the House that a committee had been set up under the chairmanship of my Permanent Secretary where we have taken a series of measures, for example, looking at the conduct allowance, at the overtime which has to be reduced by 25%; we are trying to discontinue night services. The central workshop...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: The last question is simple and straightforward: whether the MAB will look into all these matters as well. The Minister should say either yes or no.

Mr Bachoo: In fact, the committee set up by the Permanent Secretary of my Ministry is looking into all these.

Mr Jhugroo: Can I know from the hon. Minister the amount of money paid by NTC for the purchase of spare parts last year?

Mr Bachoo: I don't have it in mind, but it is under strict control.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister just mentioned that the same treatment is being given to NTC and other bus companies. If other bus companies make around 32 or 42 litres per 100 kilometres, it is fine that they get compensation for that amount. But, he himself has mentioned that the NTC buses are consuming more petroleum for every 100 kilometres. Now, this is not fair treatment. I would like the hon. Minister to confirm this.

Mr Bachoo: According to the NTA, if the NTC buses are consuming more petrol, it means that there is something basically wrong at the garage of the NTC; this is what they claimed. According to the NTA, we have to see to it that they become more competitive like the other private companies and that is the reason of the clash.

At 1.00 p.m. the sitting was suspended.

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

NTC – BUSES – PURCHASE & MAINTENANCE

(No. B/435) Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun (Third Member for La Caverne and Phoenix) asked the Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping whether, in regard to the buses of the National Transport Corporation, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Corporation, information as to the –

- (a) number thereof purchased yearly, since 2003 to date;
- (b) maintenance cost thereof

- (i) for each of the years 2005 to 2008, indicating in each case the amount of money spent on tyre replacement and
- (ii) since 2008 to date and
- (iii) the amount earmarked therefor for 2009 and

(c) number of engine replacement effected on buses purchased in 2007.

Mr Bachoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have arranged for the information to be laid in the Library of the National Assembly.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: May I ask the hon. Minister, Sir, whether he could give us information, as far as engine replacement is concerned, for the buses purchased in 2007, the number of buses which are involved?

Mr Bachoo: I have got the information with me: eleven engines been removed, reconditioned and fitted to the buses purchased in 2007.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: May I ask the hon. Minister whether he could give for the buses purchased in 2007 the number of buses which had their tyres replaced and the rate at which the replacement is being done?

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I don't have that information regarding the replacement of tyres.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Can the hon. Minister then give us some information about the increase in the cost of maintenance as far as these buses are concerned as compared to 2006/2007?

Mr Bachoo: Regarding the maintenance 2006/2007, the cost was Rs53, 479,499 and for 2007/2008, it was Rs60, 778,343.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: May I ask the hon. Minister then, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, whether he can account for such a situation since he himself has mentioned that the number of buses has increased? The fleet is a new one as from 2007 onwards. How come the cost of maintenance is increasing?

Mr Bachoo: Firstly, it is because the prices of spare parts have gone up and, secondly, let's us not also forget that we have got an ageing fleet of buses that needs regular reparation. Because of the multitude of makes and models, we are bound to keep different types of mechanics for those works.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister is referring to an ageing fleet of buses. Could he just inform the House on the number of buses purchased between 2005 and 2007?

Mr Bachoo: I am circulating the list, but let me have a look at it. The number of buses purchased in 2003:16; 2004:-15; 2005: 95; 2007:100 and 2008: nil.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, if I go by the figures given by the Minister, it would seem that almost half of the fleet consists of new buses and the point of view expressed by the hon. Minister of an ageing fleet of buses does not stand good.

Mr Bachoo: No, it is above 60% of ageing bus fleet. We have got let us say less than half which we can consider to be new. Despite this, the costs of spare parts have gone up. We should not forget, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that we are utilising all of these buses to the maximum and that explains the reason why there had been so many breakdowns. I would also like to add that technicians from India have also been invited to conduct a survey of the buses. They have submitted the report. Technicians and engineers from my Ministry have also submitted reports concerning the conditions of those buses and I am going to lay copies on the Table of the House.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Minister just mentioned that the 11 of the new buses purchased in 2007 have had their engines replaced. I consider that the replacement of engines is a major maintenance. Could he explain how, within one year, these buses have had to have their engines changed and whether there was not a performance bond or anything attached to the purchase of these buses?

Mr Bachoo: We had performance bonds and partly the mother company was able to bear the costs. As far as those engines are concerned, I am not in a position to say much because, according to the report which was submitted by the Indian experts as well as Mauritian

engineers, they have come to the conclusion that the mechanical and technical problems were due to lack of proper maintenance of vehicles and to the use of spare parts which were not at all appropriate or compatible to the engine design. In fact, in Mauritius we have a lack of that type of spare parts.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in one year, an engine of a bus has to be replaced and we are being told that it is due to maintenance. I think it is a very serious issue. What type of maintenance do we have to give to an engine that, in one year, it has to be replaced? Talking about the same buses, can the Minister confirm whether there was no guarantee on these buses?

Mr Bachoo: The guarantees were there. It was when the guarantees were over that most of the engines were changed. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have just mentioned that, being given they are new buses, they have utilized them to the maximum and probably there has been a problem.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister is stating that there are reports and that the buses are fine. It seems that the problem arose after the one-year guarantee period. Will the Minister confirm whether it is not true to say that from day one of the use of these buses, there were complaints made by both drivers and conductors about the engines and the buses themselves?

Mr Bachoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, there had been complaints even in the past, there used to be complaints. When I was the Minister of Public Infrastructure, I remember, we bought 100 buses from Ashok Leyland. We had the same problem all the time. The conductors and bus drivers were complaining. Even at that time, these buses were procured from India and there were complaints. As I just mentioned, I am not an expert nor am I a mechanic. The reports of those experts are in front of me, and according to the reports, all the buses were in good condition. In fact, we had problems regarding the engines and they had to be replaced. I have also mentioned that we are utilizing them to the maximum, to the full, and this might have been the basic reason why there have been so many breakdowns.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Minister is saying that we used them to the maximum extent. Is he aware that the replacement of tyres on buses is done normally after 25,000 kilometres and that for the new buses the replacement of tyres has been done after 9,000 kilometres only? Furthermore, will the Minister confirm that the petroleum consumption of these buses exceeds that of the air-conditioned buses and still there is news that such buses are going to be ordered again? Will the Minister confirm same?

Mr Bachoo: This is not true, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. First of all, as far as the tyres are concerned, these buses are 12 metres long, they had the capacity of 66 passengers; hence, more tyres are used. But I am not an expert, as I just said, to know how many kilometers they have to go. I am not a *casseur la roue!*

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order! Order, please!

Mr Bachoo: Secondly, the hon. Member has mentioned that the utilisation of petrol of these buses is more than that of air-conditioned buses. This is not true because air-conditioned buses are utilising 62 litres of petrol per 100 kilometres. These automatic buses are consuming an average of 42 litres of petrol per 100 kilometres.

Mr Jhugroo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Minister confirm to the House whether any inquiry has been conducted regarding the failure of the engine of the said bus?

Mr Bachoo: Inquiries were conducted and that is the reason why a team of experts came from India. I have received their report, which I have already submitted before the Assembly.

Mr Bhagwan: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister has made mention of spare parts. Is he aware that the spare parts which were not according to specifications have been used and whether an inquiry has been made as to who is the supplier? In a question earlier I mentioned MIDAS. Is he aware that these spare parts which were sold at an excessive price to the National Transport Corporation were not according to specifications?

Mr Bachoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the hon. Member asked me this question this morning and I have said that I am waiting a reply from them at Bonne Terre, Vacoas.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister is stating that the buses purchased in 2007 have got a petroleum consumption of 62 litres per 100 kilometres. I

would like the Minister to confirm whether this is correct because my information is that the same buses are using more than 68 litres per 100 kilometres.

Mr Bachoo: According to the information available to me, automatic buses which we bought are utilising 42 litres of petrol whereas air-conditioned buses which were bought a few years back are using 62 litres of petrol.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister is stating that the 18 new buses purchased in 2007 have got a consumption that is lower than the air-conditioned buses. Will he confirm and give, once again, the values as he is mentioning here so that there is no confusion?

Mr Bachoo: I am only making a statement that is available to me. I hope that they are all accurate statements. It is 42 litres for automatic buses, 62 litres for air-conditioned buses and for ordinary buses; it is 34 litres of petrol per 100 kilometres.

MAURITIUS REVENUE AUTHORITY - ARREARS

(No. B/436) 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 arrears on revenue, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Revenue Authority, information as to the amount thereof in relation to the -

- (a) Value Added Tax;
- (b) Gaming Tax;
- (c) Sales Tax, and
- (d) Companies Division, indicating the steps taken to recover same.

Dr. Sithanen: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Mauritius Revenue Authority that the arrears on revenue as at 30 April 2009 are as follows -

VAT: Rs703 m.

Gaming Tax: Rs109 m.

Sales Tax: Rs5.0 m.

As regards the amount of arrears of revenue at Registrar of Companies, I am informed that it stood at Rs276 m. as at end April 2009. They consist primarily of licence fees that all registered companies have to pay annually.

I am informed that action has already been initiated by both the MRA and the Registrar of Companies to recover those arrears of revenue. In fact, payment of arrears of tax is enforced using a number of instruments as provided in our tax legislation. These include, amongst others -

- attachment order on the banks and on the debtors of the indebted taxpayer;
- issue of distress warrant;
- inscription on immovable properties;
- prosecution, and
- objection to departure.

On the other hand, the registrar of Companies issued letters of reminders and initiated actions for striking off of companies failing to settle their outstanding dues in accordance with the provisions in the Companies Act.

In fact, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, during the current financial year up to 30 April 2009, an amount of Rs295 m. of VAT arrears has been collected, Rs26 m. under gaming tax and Rs0.05 m. under the sales tax.

The Registrar of Companies has, on its part, recovered during the same period Rs7 m. as arrears.

Mr Bérenger: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, if I heard the hon. Minister correctly, there are more than Rs700 m. of arrears of Value Added Tax. Can we know how the situation has evolved, let's say, as from 2004? Has it been deteriorating?

Dr. Sithanen: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, let me also tell the House that when we say that it is Rs703 m., many of them have already made arrangement to pay over a long period of time. I have got the list here of how many notices for payment have been issued, how many attachment order on salary inscription and there are many people who have reached an agreement, but since the amount has not been fully paid, this is shown in the book as an arrear.

Mr Dowarkasing: I will come back again to the same question. Can the hon. Minister confirm whether the debts are on the increase from 2004/2005 every fiscal year and, if this is so, I want to know what the MRA is, actually, doing to overcome this problem?

Dr. Sithanen: In fact, I have just replied. It depends how we count. If we count it as a percentage of the tax, I think it has come down. There is always a difference between absolute level and percentage level. What has happened is that in many cases, they have reached an agreement, but this agreement is going to last in some cases for 12 months, in other cases for 24 months and in other cases for 60 months. Work is being done in order to recover it. But, there is always pressure that is being put by these people. They will say that if you force them to pay, they will go into liquidation and they will do this or that. I must also inform the hon. Member that for the case of Companies Tax, there is a slight anomaly, in my mind, in the system, because there are many companies that are dormant companies. They have not been struck off, but their names are still on the book and the amount that they ought to have paid is shown as an arrear until their name is struck off.

Mr Dowarkasing: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Minister whether the arrears have increased under the Voluntary Disclosure Scheme?

Dr. Sithanen: We cannot, because the very purpose of the VD Scheme is to bring it down. Even if you collected one rupee from VDS, it has to come down. But, in fact, in the first year of VDS - I think I did give the figures to this House - they have collected money, but there is also an agreement that has been signed because not everybody who has chosen to come under VDS will pay the actual amount of money that they have owed for a number of years in one particular year. Obviously, this will go on over three or four years.

Mr Bérenger: The Minister gives us a precise figure, more than Rs700 m. of arrears on Value Added Tax as at now. The question is simple. A year ago, what was the figure?

Dr. Sithanen: The figure I have, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is Rs971 m. The balance of old debts is Rs598 m., the new debts is Rs104. m. It is very clear that you always start with a stock and then you add two flows, a flow of old debts and a flow of new debt. It was Rs971.4 m. at 30 June 2008 and it is Rs703.7 m. now.

Mr Dowarkasing: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I will come to the arrears on the gaming tax. The hon. Minister would agree with me that there is no such company that is involved in gaming is running at loss. Is there any sort of measure to recover - especially in that particular case - that Rs109 m. which are lying, and whether he could consider the fact of even suspending their licence, if they don't pay?

Dr. Sithanen: It is a very fair question, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Every year we have this problem on the eve of the beginning of the racing season, essentially the bookmakers; they had to submit a paper to the MRA that they don't owe any money to the Gaming Regulatory Authority. Again, every year, there is a lot of pressure that is being put and we have taken this decision this year, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that we are going to apply the law. In the majority of cases, I am being given to understand, they have signed an agreement with the MRA in order to pay the outstanding amount. Over what period of time? Obviously, it varies from one bookmaker to another bookmaker.

Mr Jhugroo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Vice-Prime Minister which companies are not paying their Gaming Tax?

Dr. Sithanen: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I can't tell.

Mr Dowarkasing: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the figures the hon. Minister has already given is about Rs1 billion that is outstanding as arrears on revenue and we know that we are going through difficult days. I am just asking the hon. Minister, in view of the fact that, from the figures he has already given, about Rs1 billion is outstanding as arrears on revenue, and we know we are going through difficult days. Is the hon. Minister happy with the way MRA is functioning in terms of recovering the arrears?

Dr. Sithanen: I think the MRA has done a very good job in terms of tax administration, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. As I said, as a percentage of revenue, the debt has come down. In fact, I am just answering the hon. Leader of Opposition: even in absolute terms it has come down. Obviously, there is room for improvement and they are doing their best to recover it. And again, you have to use the benchmark that exists in the world; your outstanding debt compared to the revenue that you're collecting. I think we are well within the parameters that are accepted as international norm. But, obviously, we will try to do the best, and I fully share the view of the hon. Member that, in this difficult time, money that is owed to Government should be paid.

Mr Dowarkasing: May I know from the hon. Minister whether he has the figures with respect to the large taxpayers? Have any of these companies that owe Government applied for the stimulus package? Insofar as the companies which fall under the category of large taxpayers are concerned, is the hon. Minister aware or has he got information as to whether any one of them has applied for support under the stimulus package?

Dr. Sithanen: I don't think there is any company which has benefited yet, because - I'm speaking from memory - as I said to the House a couple of weeks ago, there are different levels of entry into the stimulus package, and there are some that have just started to make an application. But, I will check and let the hon. Member know.

Mr Soodhun: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would like to know from the hon. Minister whether there has been any application for the stimulus package?

Dr. Sithanen: I don't know; I'll have to check. If the hon. Member comes with a specific question, I will go and check.

FISH & FISH PRODUCTS - TESTING

(No. B/437) Mr M. Dowarkasing (Third Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the Minister of Agro Industry, Food Production & Security whether he will state if Government has entered into an agreement with a private laboratory for testing fish and fish products and if so, indicate -

(a) when and,

(b) the amount of money paid out as at to date.

Mr Faugoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the European Union has, since 01 January 2006, following the visit of an FVO mission in Mauritius, laid down strict rules and regulations for certification of fish and fish products, and auditing of fish establishments involved in the export of fish and fish products to the European Union. Prior to 2006, certification was effected only on the final product.

All establishments exporting fish and fish products to the EU should, therefore, comply with the EU requirements on food hygiene and safety. In this context, they have put in place all necessary infrastructure and systems to satisfy the established norms. Analysis on fish, fishery and aquaculture products, ice and water is an integral part of their activities.

The competent authority is responsible for the certification of fish and fish products exported to EU and other countries. In this respect, prior to issuing health certificates for export purposes, the competent authority carries out analysis on samples of fish and fish products, aquaculture products, water and ice to countercheck whether the EU norms and standards are being complied with by the establishments. As per the recommendations of the FVO Mission,

such tests should be carried out by a laboratory which is accredited to ISO 17025. It is, therefore, mandatory that the tests are carried out as recommended by the EU; otherwise Mauritius may run the risk of being penalised through a ban on our export.

However, none of the Government laboratories is accredited to ISO 17025. Thus, the competent authority has had to have recourse to the services of a private laboratory. There is only one laboratory in Mauritius, which is accredited to ISO 17025. After approval of the Central Tender Board was obtained, a contract was signed with that laboratory, namely *Société Générale de Surveillance Ltée* (SGS), in November 2007. Measures are currently being taken for the accreditation of the Food Technology Laboratory of the Government.

With regard to part (b), I am informed that the amount paid to SGS Ltée so far is Rs5,987,525.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would like to inform the House that a number of shortcomings were noted by the FVO Mission in January 2006, and a decision was accordingly taken by the EU that no new establishments would be added on the list of companies eligible to export fish and fish products to the EU unless and until those shortcomings, including testing by accredited laboratories, have been addressed to EU's satisfaction. Following corrective measures taken by my Ministry, this ban was lifted in October 2007. Moreover, I would like to add that the seafood hub sector has an annual turnover of Rs16 billion, and export earnings are around Rs8 billion annually.

Mr Dowarkasing: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister has stated in his answer that none of the Government laboratories has the capacity or is certified ISO 17025. Can we know, therefore, what he intends to do in terms of, at least, having one of these laboratories ISO certified?

Mr Faugoo: I am very grateful that the Member has asked this question, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. In fact, we have applied for accreditation of the food lab. But, I must highlight here that, when the FVO mission had come, back in 2006, they had this to say:

“The information provided by Mauritius after previous FVO mission - and the mission was about five years before the 2006 mission - proved to be factual only in relation to the

transfer of the cannery to its new premises, given that the competent authority has no legal text regulating its organisation and official control functions. Secondly, the accreditation process of the official laboratory is not yet finalised after more than six years.”

This is what they had to say, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, and I am confirming, today, to this House, that we have started the process back in 2006, and we are going to get it soon.

Mr Dowarkasing: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with regard to those exported fish, does not the law or regulation provide that the onus is on the applicant to submit all the necessary and appropriate certification? If this is the case, why is it that Government has to pay for the lab fees?

Mr Faugoo: This is not the case and this is also the case, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. This is the case as far as local law is concerned. We have regulations in our local law, and this passes the onus on the establishment if this is asked by the competent authority. But then, we have EU regulations, which prevail over our local law and regulations. Under the EU Regulations, we need to have control over the whole process, and not only the final product. It is from the beginning, that is: fish/fish going in the can/export. We have to control the whole process. This onus is on us. We do charge a fee. For example, when we effect any visit, or any survey is done on the establishment, they have to pay; there are regulations to that effect. They will not be charged directly as fees for the examination, but we are charging them for whatever work that is being done.

Mr Cuttaree: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, several times, the hon. Minister has made reference to the competent authority for certification, testing and all that. May we know what is that competent authority?

Mr Faugoo: A competent authority is provided for in every country which exports any item to the EU. We are exporting 92% of the fish products to the EU. Under the EU Regulations, we need to have a competent authority, which gives certification as to the quality, that is, whether it is safe for human consumption. I must say that, even the competent authority was not there before. We amended the law back in 2006, and provided for the setting up a competent authority which is responsible to give export certificates towards the EU.

Mr Cuttaree: This is my point. What is that competent authority? We are all hearing about a competent authority. What is it? Is it a person, an organisation?

Mr Faugoo: It is a unit within my Ministry, which is being run by a foreigner, Mr Thepaut, who is a specialist.

(Interruptions)

He is doing a very good and brilliant job I must say. He is supported by Vets, because competent authority falls within the purview of the DVS (Divisional Veterinary Services) of my Ministry. There are Vets, technicians and inspectors. It is a whole unit which we have set up, because there are very strict conditions imposed by the EU. In fact, they banned us when they came in 2006; they said that, apart from those 10 exporting to the EU, they would not allow any single extra establishment to export until we comply with all the conditions that they have imposed.

Mr Guimbeau: Can the hon. Minister inform the House whether fish which have been tested so far has revealed any presence or trace of mercury?

Mr Faugoo: Not to my knowledge.

Mr Dowarkasing: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, may I know from the hon. Minister whether, since the setting up of this competent body, we have received any complaint so far from the EU as regards the norm and quality of the fish exported?

Mr Faugoo: We have received compliments that we are, at least, complying with whatever conditions they have imposed so far, and we have gone a long way Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in being compliant to EU regulations.

SOLIDARITY LEVY – AMOUNT COLLECTED

(No. B/438) Mr M. Dowarkasing (Third Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance & 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.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance & Economic Empowerment (Dr. R. Sithanen) : Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed that the amount of Solidarity Levy collected for the financial year 2006-2007 was Rs145 m.; Rs201 m. for financial year 2007-2008, and as to date, an amount of Rs101 m. for the current financial year. This is only till December 2008.

Insofar as the use of the Levy is concerned, and as the House is aware, these sums have primarily contributed to the financing of the Empowerment Programme as mentioned in the 2006 Budget Speech.

However, to support enterprises in the tourism sector in the current economic crisis, and as announced in December 2008 under the “Additional Stimulus Package”, the Solidarity Levy has been suspended for a period of two years ending 31 December 2010.

Mr Dowarkasing: May I know from the hon. Minister whether the MEF has requested any sum of money from this Solidarity Levy Fund for training purposes?

Dr. Sithanen: No. Let me explain, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir! I have said it before that money that comes in the treasury is fungible by nature. You cannot identify that this specific money comes from that specific tax, and that it is going to be earmarked for that amount. But we did mention, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that this money will be used primarily for the Empowerment Programme. I am not aware of such request by the MEF.

Mr Guimbeau: Can the hon. Vice-Prime Minister give a breakdown of the Solidarity Levy collected per hotel?

Dr. Sithanen: I do not have this. I don't know whether we'll publish this Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. I do not know whether for corporate tax, or even for individual tax, the hon. Member will ask me to publish the names of 75,000 or 80,000 taxpayers. I don't think that it is in the spirit of taxation to do that, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Mr Dowarkasing: The hon. Minister will reckon that it is quite a large amount of money that is being collected from the Solidarity Levy. Can we know at what time this Levy has been suspended? Is there any time frame; is it indefinitely or whatever?

Dr. Sithanen: I did mention in the additional stimulus package that we have created a corridor of two years, starting 01 January 2009 and ending 31 December 2010.

ALIMONY – NON-PAYMENT - COMPLAINTS

(No. B/439) Mr M. Dowarkasing (Third Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the Attorney-General whether he will state if he has received complaints from the public, especially mothers, for non-compliance with arrangements in respect of alimony and, if so, indicate the measures he proposes to take.

Mr Valayden: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is true to say that, from time to time, I do receive complaints from members of the public regarding non-payment of alimony. I must, however, immediately point out that payment of alimony is a matter falling under the jurisdiction of the courts. Where a person fails in his obligation to pay an alimony, which has been ordered by a court, three distinct avenues are open to the unsatisfied claimant –

First, civil action is possible for attachment under the general law; attachment maybe for property or person; as far as an alimony case is concerned, attachment of property is more realistic than attachment of person - Section 55 of the court Civil Procedure Act.

Second, the aggrieved spouse may report the matter to the Police for the initiation of criminal proceedings under section 261(1) of the Criminal Code, since failure to pay alimony is an offence under that section.

The problem with this second option is that it does not empower the court to make an order for a defendant to honour his/her undertaking. It only provides for a penalty in case of conviction, which is a fine or imprisonment. In practice, only very grave or persistent failure may lead to imprisonment.

I wish to point out that, where a person is convicted of an offence under section 261(1) of the Criminal Code, this does not extinguish the civil liability of a defendant.

Finally, the aggrieved spouse may bring an action for civil contempt of court for disobedience of an order of the court. Section 18(c) of the Courts Act provides that the Supreme Court, on a motion made to that effect, supported by affidavit, may find that a person has committed a contempt and may sentence that person to imprisonment for a term not exceeding one year or to a fine not exceeding Rs300,000 and may make such order as it thinks fit.

In conclusion, provisions already exist in the law for the court to deal with payment of alimony and failure to do so. As it is a very serious matter concerning children, I still intend to

request the Law Reform Commission to look into the matter and come up with recommendations on how to improve the existing legal framework.

Mr Dowarkasing: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I thank the hon. Minister for his reply. But, he will agree with me that all these provisions in the law with regard to this question of non-payment will come in force only after the person responsible has not paid the alimony for three consecutive months. What is happening is that they do not pay for two months and, on the third month, they go and pay for it. Then, they play again with this three months' time. I will just ask the hon. Minister whether he could review the law in that perspective. People are just doing away with it, because there need to be three consecutive months of non-payment. We can use the provisions of the actual law to remedy the situation. Will he look into that matter?

Mr Valayden: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I intend to send the matter to the Law Reform Commission, and I will also refer that particular proposal from my hon. friend.

TIANLI PROJECT

(No. B/440) Mr E. Guimbeau (First Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance & Economic Empowerment whether, in regard to the Tianli project, he will state where matters stand.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance & Economic Empowerment (Dr. R Sithanen): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I will reply to PQs B/440 and B/465 together.

As the House is aware, in March 2007, Government and the Tianli Enterprise Group signed a Framework Agreement for the setting up of the Mauritius Tianli Economic and Trade Cooperation Zone over 211 hectares of land over a period of five years. As per the Agreement, the project promoter has the responsibility to construct onsite infrastructure and buildings whereas Government, on the other hand, has the responsibility to develop the required offsite infrastructure, namely access roads and other utilities.

The detailed Project Master Plan for the Mauritius Tianli Economic and Trade Cooperation was approved by Government in March 2008. At that time, the Tianli Group had secured around 30 investors to invest in this zone in Mauritius. The project implementation was initially scheduled to start last year. However, it has been delayed, as the clearance from the

Chinese authorities on the detailed engineering design was being awaited. Added to that, the global financial crisis has also prevented Tianli from securing additional investors to implement the project rapidly.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the visit of His Excellency, Mr Hu Jintao, President of the People's Republic of China to Mauritius in February this year has given a new impetus to the project. It will now be financed by three main shareholders as opposed to one; the China Africa Development Fund, the Shanxi Government through a special investment vehicle, and the Tianli Group of Companies.

I understand that the Provincial Government of Shanxi has been requested to ensure swift implementation of the project. There is also now confirmation from the Chinese side that construction works will, in all likelihood, start in the third quarter of this year, namely by September 2009.

I wish to further inform the House that BOI has been entrusted with the task of facilitating and monitoring the project implementation. It is closely following up with the project promoters to ensure that the new deadline is met, and the project is effectively started in the 3rd quarter of 2009.

Mr Guimbeau: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as regards the Framework Agreement, in reply to a PNQ of the Leader of Opposition on 10 June 2008, the hon. Minister stated that he would have no problem to request the Chinese to have the agreement made public. I would like to ask the hon. Minister if he made that request to the Chinese.

Dr. Sithanen: I do not think that the Chinese side are very keen to make this public.

Mr Guimbeau: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the same project was done in Zambia, and it was signed and made public. So, why is it that in Mauritius we cannot have the agreement made public?

Dr. Sithanen: Because we have signed an agreement where there are clauses of confidentiality, and we have to respect the clauses of confidentiality. This is one of the biggest projects that this country will ever know. We have to respect what our Chinese friends also have requested us.

Mr Guimbeau: Will the Tianli Project be granted exemption of VAT and, if so, can the Vice-Prime Minister give an estimate?

Dr. Sithanen: It is primarily for exports, and I'm sure the hon. Member would know that when you are exporting there is no VAT.

Mr Soodhun: Can the hon. Vice-Prime Minister indicate whether there is any modification of the plan?

Dr. Sithanen: Yes, there has been a modification. In fact, this has been an ongoing process. They have to review it, based on what the market can demand and what they would be able also to sell to Africa.

Mr Guimbeau: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as regards the off-site infrastructure, which adds up to Rs750 m. paid by Mauritius, can the hon. Minister state how much has been spent so far?

Dr. Sithanen: I do not have the exact figure. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, let me explain to the hon. Member.

(Interruptions)

It is good that we know the context. The Chinese are going to invest 700 million dollars, and if we multiply this by 34, we get about Rs22 billion. They are going to create about 30,000 jobs directly. They will export annually about 300 million dollars. There are countries in Africa that are queuing up, lining up in order to get the Chinese to come. You have to do something also to get this investment, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. I do not understand where the hon. Member is coming to. There are countries in Africa that have sent their Prime Minister, their Minister of Finance to China to beg the Chinese to have this Trade and Economic Corporation Zone in their country. This is one of the most important projects that will come our way.

Mr Guimbeau: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we all agree with what the Vice-Prime Minister is saying. But, all we are asking for is transparency in that project, which is one of the biggest projects as he has just stated. Now, as far as the State land is concerned, the hon. Vice-Prime Minister stated it was leased at a concessionary rate. Can we know what is the rate?

Dr. Sithanen: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, let me again explain for the enlightenment of my hon. friend. In some countries like Botswana, they are willing even to pay the salaries of the

workers that will work in that zone, and they did not get this zone. We do not have oil; Nigeria got it because of oil. We do not have copper; Zambia got it because of copper. There are other countries that are giving zero corporate tax. We refused to give zero corporate tax. But, as I said, - I have said this anecdote - we are not the only beautiful girl in town. You need to make sure that you compete and offer a conducive environment to attract people to come and do business in this country. We have had to make some concessions, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. I think that, in Zambia, they are not paying any corporate tax. Here, they will have to pay 15% corporate tax. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, you need to have some unique selling propositions in order to attract investors to this country. You can't just pray God, and hope that investors will come.

Mr Soodhun: The Vice-Prime Minister mentioned that there are changes. We would like to know what are the major changes.

Dr. Sithanen: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it was primarily light engineering, Freeport, logistics and now they have broadened it to include what they would call a warehousing facility where they will showcase what China can do in Mauritius for Africa. Then, they have decided to add also business services and training institutes.

Mr Guimbeau: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we all agree with what the Vice-Prime Minister has said, but he has not answered my question. What is the rate per *arpent* for the State land? As we are taxpayers, we would like to know the rate per *arpent*. Can he also indicate what type of lease it is? Is it a commercial, agricultural or industrial lease?

Dr. Sithanen: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, let me repeat to the hon. Member: this is the largest single investment that this country has known and we have had to make concessions. Let it start! They want to kill the project before it starts. This is the intention of the hon. Member. They always do this; they want to kill the project.

Mr Guimbeau: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have a last question. Can the Vice-Prime Minister tell the House then if it is still Rs50 an *arpent* for a 500-*arpent*?

Dr. Sithanen: I do not know; I don't have the exact figure.

AIR MAURITIUS LTD – FLEET

(No. B/441) Mr N. Bodha (First Member for Vacoas & Floreal) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism, Leisure and External Communications whether, in regard to the recent policy of Air Mauritius Ltd. to do away with some of its fleet, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Company, information as to the consequences thereof on the number of flights on different destinations.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism, Leisure and External Communications (Mr X. L. Duval): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed by Air Mauritius Ltd. that fleet planning is a long-term decision-making process based on market requirements and projected network development. However, in order to cope with market uncertainties, fleet flexibility is also built into the fleet planning process.

As a result of anticipated decline in demand due to the current international economic crisis, and with the arrival of a second A330-200 aircraft in October 2009, the company has taken the decision not to renew the lease of an A340-300 aircraft as from the same month. Consequently, the number of its wide-bodied aircraft will remain unchanged.

Furthermore, given the prevailing market conditions, one aircraft is in excess of the company's requirements. This aircraft is being offered for a short-term lease also from end 2009.

The House may wish to note that the above will not have any impact on the operations capability of Air Mauritius Ltd.

Mr Bodha: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Vice-Prime Minister whether there has been a reduction in the number of flights on a certain number of destinations like Italy, for example?

Mr X. L. Duval: Yes, there has been according to demand. It is a normal thing. It varies according to low and high seasons.

Mr Bodha: We have the impression that we are more relying on foreign carriers like the Emirates or Corsair, which have increased the number of flights from France and from Dubai.

Mr X. L. Duval: Not really, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. In fact, as from the beginning of this year, the number of flights from a number of carriers was reduced by at least 10. So,

gradually, we are catching up. In fact, we have less flights from foreign carriers today than we had at the beginning of the year.

Mr Guimbeau: Can the hon. Vice-Prime Minister state if there has been any sale of Air Mauritius ATR to Air Pacific?

Mr X. L. Duval: No, Sir. It is at the airport! The hon. Member can have a look at it.

Mr Guimbeau: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would like to table a document, which shows that there has been some kind of transaction between the Fiji and Air Mauritius.

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, firstly, I don't think this is true. But, if it was, I do not answer here for the commercial operations of Air Mauritius.

Mr Guimbeau: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would like to table a document I received concerning a transaction between ATR Air Mauritius and Air Pacific.

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I object to the laying of this document. I do not know what it is, but the principle is that, as Minister, I am not responsible for the commercial operations of Air Mauritius Ltd. It is a limited company. I provide information insofar as planes are concerned, because it concerns tourism and travel overseas. But, the operations of Air Mauritius Ltd. are not to be examined in the House.

Mr Guimbeau: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I was just trying to come on the question, that is, to do away with some of its fleet; this is part of the question.

Mr X. L. Duval: I don't mind. It is up to the hon. Member. But, it's not a good principle.

The Deputy Speaker: Next question, hon. Bodha!

MAURITIUS/INDIA - COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC COOPERATION PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT

(No B/442) Mr N. Bodha (First Member for Vacoas & Floreal) asked the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration & International Trade whether, in regard to the Free Trade Agreement with India, he will state where matters stand.

Dr. Boolell: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir...

As the house is aware, India and Mauritius entertain very close and unique ties, which encompass virtually all aspects of bilateral and multilateral relations. With a view to giving a new momentum to bilateral relations in the context of the globalising world economy, both parties have agreed to conclude a Comprehensive Agreement that goes beyond a simple Free Trade Agreement.

Discussions on the Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Partnership Agreement (CECPA) started in 2005...

An Empowered Negotiating Team comprising senior officials of Indian and Mauritian side was established. Four main areas have formed the basis of discussions, namely the Preferential Trade Agreement, Trade in Services, Investment and Economic Cooperation. So far, India and Mauritius had ten rounds of negotiations.

While we have completed negotiations on the PTA and Economic Cooperation, the chapters on services and Investment are yet to be finalised. Our position is that we should move to sign and implement the PTA as an early harvest, given the huge potential for trade that exists on the Indian market. We have in this regard raised the possibility for an early signature of the PTA both with the Indian Minister of Commerce & Industry and the Minister of External Affairs.

As Members of the House are aware, India is one of the leading economic, trade and investment partners of Mauritius. The total trade of Mauritius with India in 2008 stood at Rs25,060 m. and is currently the 6th largest trading partner of Mauritius. The balance of trade is, however, largely skewed towards India. Mauritius exports to India in 2008 stood at Rs141 m., whilst our imports amounted to Rs24, 900m. The conclusion of the CECPA agreement, in particular the implementation of the Preferential Trade Agreement, is expected to open new avenues for trade and diversify our export basket to India.

Once signed, the agreement would offer several benefits to local businesses, including preferential access on an array of products such as rum, textile products, fish, fresh cut flowers, pasta, ship models and sunglasses amongst others. India would also provide enhanced market access for rum on an initial quota of 150,000 litres. On textiles products, Mauritius would obtain duty free access for 3 million pieces of garment. It is also expected that our exports to India will increase fourfold with the implementation of the PTA and open new avenues in the

services sector, such as computer related services, telecommunication, accountancy and distribution services.

With respect to the Economic Cooperation, several sectors have been identified, namely Information and Communication Technology, Telecommunications, Health Care, Pharmaceutical sector, Agriculture and Agro Industry, Fisheries, Tourism, Industrial and SME development. The issue of triangular cooperation has also been discussed in view of using Mauritius as a launching pad for Indian investors willing to penetrate the SADC or COMESA region.

The PTA and Economic Cooperation chapter would be operational, following the signature of the whole CECPA agreement. I need to underscore that the PTA is an initial step undertaken by the Mauritian and Indian side to consolidate trade relations. It is expected that the conclusion of the Preferential Trade Agreement will pave the way for an eventual Free Trade Agreement with India, where substantially all trade will be duty-free basis.

In view of the general elections currently being held in India, we intend to pursue the matter with the next Indian Government.

Mr Bodha: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister whether he has some time frame in mind for the signature of the first leg, that is, the Free Trade Agreement?

Dr. Boolell: I'm sure my hon. friend is aware that, until and unless, they agree to decouple the PTA from the CECPA, it would be impossible for us to move the process.

Mr Bodha: May I ask the hon. Minister whether, at some point in time, the delay in the discussions was linked to the decision or desire of India to renegotiate the Non-double Taxation Treaty?

Dr. Boolell: This is what I have stated. But, let me impress upon my hon. friend that there are ongoing discussions between the Financial Services Sector and the equities of India, and many of these issues have been addressed.

Mr Cuttaree: With regard to the PTA, can I ask the hon. Minister whether the issue of Rules of Origin has been sorted out now?

Dr. Boolell: No, in fact, if anything, matters have been completed following the negotiations between India and the LDCs of COMESA AND SADC.

SUGAR SECTOR – EX-EMPLOYEES – VRS II

(No. B/443) Mrs S. Hanoomanjee (Second Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Minister of Agro Industry, Food Production & Security whether, in regard to the ex-employees of the sugar sector who have benefitted from the Voluntary Retirement Scheme II, he will state the number thereof, who have already been given their lot numbers, pending the preparation of the title deeds by the notaries.

Mr Faugoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, 6,627 employees of the sugar sector have retired under VRS II as from December 2007. These employees are eligible to a land compensation in addition to a cash compensation.

With regard to land allocation, a Steering Committee, comprising representatives of different institutions, is screening the 63 sites mutually identified by the employers and the employees to determine their suitability for housing purpose. These sites cover a total area of some 650 *arpents*. As at date, 36 sites have been cleared, and letters of intent for 14 sites have been issued by the Morcellement Board.

I am advised that the drawing of lots exercise has been effected for 1 site so far, namely at Lady Barkly, Souillac, which concerns 140 beneficiaries. The drawing of lots for the 13 other sites, involving 1009 beneficiaries, is being organised and will be effected shortly

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would like to point out that the allocation of land to employees who retired under VRS I in 2001 has taken considerable time because of a number of bottlenecks. A large majority of these employees, i.e. more than ninety per cent, obtained their title deeds from 2006 onwards, thanks to the efforts made by my Ministry to address these bottlenecks.

For VRS II, amendments have been brought to the SIE Act in February 2007 to *inter alia* address two major constraints, namely the time taken to process applications for land conversion and the absence of a time-frame for the completion of infrastructure works. The SIE Act 2007 accordingly provides for the elimination of land conversion permit for VRS sites and for completion of infrastructure works within a period of 15 months as from the date of letter of intent issued by the Morcellement Board.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, my question related to VRS II, but since the Minister has deemed it fit to mention VRS I, let me inform him that VRS I was something new where we had to define the procedures, to establish and set up the committees. He has inherited all this and, yet, VRS II is taking its time. Can I come now to my question? Can the Minister inform the House what is the procedure which is being adopted for those who benefitted from VRS II to obtain their plot of land?

Mr Faugoo: As I said, it is simple. They have to identify the land mutually; agreed by the employees and the employers. These sites are visited by the authorities concerned. There is the Traffic Management Unit, the Morcellement Board and so many institutions which visit. Once they give the green light, the estate is given a couple of weeks to apply to the Morcellement Board. A letter of intent is given, and once a letter of intent is given for a particular site, according to law - this is where we have established a principle; there is a provision in the amended SIE Act - they have 15 months to complete the infrastructural work.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, will the Minister say what is the average time taken by the Morcellement Board to issue the letter of intent once it has obtained all the relevant documents from the Sugar Authority?

Mr Faugoo: I don't have the relevant information. The Morcellement Board does not fall under my purview.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Morcellement Board may not fall under the purview of the Minister of Agro Industry, but he has to work in close collaboration with the Morcellement Board to be able to...

The Deputy Speaker: Maybe the hon. Member should come with a substantive question.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this is where the problem lies. Can I know whether the Minister or his representative chairs any committee to monitor the situation closely, to see to it that things are done very quickly even at the level of his Ministry, the MSA or the Morcellement Board?

Mr Faugoo: This is exactly what my Ministry is doing, and this is why we managed since 2006 to complete 95% of the work which was left on VRS I, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Minister give, at least, a time frame? He has just mentioned that 16 letters of intent have been issued and, according to the SIE Act, there is a delay of 15 months from the time these have been issued. Can he, therefore, say whether that delay will be respected for sure?

Mr Faugoo: It is mandatory. It is in the provisions of the law, and they are bound to apply. Otherwise, it is an offence, and they will have to pay fines, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Mr Jugnauth: Since the hon. Minister has mentioned the time taken under VRS I, let me ask a simple question: how long does it take from the time that an employee expresses his interest to apply for VRS II up to the time all the clearances are obtained, that is, the letter of intent is issued? I know the Minister won't have the time for all the applications, but on average, how long does it take for that process?

Mr Faugoo: It would be proper if the hon. Member can come with a substantive question, as I don't have the information.

Mr Ganoo: Is the hon. Minister aware of any case where the delay of 15 months has not been respected, that is, since the time the letter of intent has been issued and the 15 months have elapsed, and the sugar estate has not yet handed the land to the employees?

Mr Faugoo: There is no such case, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Mr Ganoo: No case has been reported to the hon. Minister or he is not aware?

Mr Faugoo: I am affirming to the House that there is no such case.

Mrs Labelle: Since the procedure is that land has to be identified, may we know from the hon. Minister what is the time frame the person can expect for him to receive the letter of intent, once the land has been identified?

Mr Faugoo: This is administrative, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. It is not provided for under the law.

Mr Ganoo: Can the hon. Minister be so kind as to inform the House what is the situation in the case of Bel Ombre VRS II?

Mr Faugoo: Again, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this is a specific question.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member should come with a substantive question.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Between the time the land has been identified and the issue of the letter of intent, can I know who chairs that committee, who forms part of that committee and what has been the frequency of the meetings of that committee?

Mr Faugoo: The hon. Member should come with a substantive question, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Mr Ganoo: In the case of St. Felix also, will the hon. Minister agree that 15 months have elapsed?

Mr Faugoo: This is not the case, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. As I said, there is no single application of a case where the 15 months prescribed by law has elapsed.

BASSIN, QUATRE BORNES - BUS SERVICE

(No. B/444) Mrs S. Hanoomanjee (Second Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport & Shipping whether, in regard to the bus service in the region of Bassin, Quatre Bornes, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the National Transport Authority, information as to if it has received any complaint from the inhabitants thereof to the effect that the service is irregular and, if so, will he state the remedial measures that will be taken.

Mr Bachoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the National Transport Authority that complaints about bus service in the region of Bassin, Quatre Bornes have been received. In fact, on 24 February 2009, students and residents complained of a lack of transport facilities during morning and peak hours; on 17 March 2009, one lady reported that transport difficulties were encountered between 07.00 hours and 07.30 hours to travel to Rose Hill, and on 29 March 2009, residents made a complaint about irregular bus services.

The National Transport Corporation was informed of these complaints, and remedial actions were taken accordingly.

The National Transport Authority has informed that it is a fact that the services being provided by National Transport Corporation on the bus route in Bassin are erratic. Thus, it is liaising with the National Transport Corporation to ensure that the inhabitants of Bassin benefit from a satisfactory level of service. The NTA Inspectorate is monitoring the situation.

On the other hand, the NTC has informed that it has provided two additional services from Bassin to Port Louis for fare paying passengers at 07.30 hours and 08.00 hours respectively.

Inhabitants of Bassin also travel by the service starting from Beau Songes to Port Louis.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, Bassin is a densely populated area, and the Minister may be aware that the service is very irregular or there is absolutely no service on Sundays and public holidays. Can he take up the matter and consider whether, instead of putting a 60-seater bus on Sundays and public holidays, a 15-seater van be put, which would be more economical and, at the same time, a win-win situation for the NTA and the inhabitants as well?

Mr Bachoo: Unfortunately, the National Corporation does not have the 15-seater van, but I'll request the inspectorate to monitor the situation closely.

FOETAL ALCOHOL SYNDROME

(No. B/445) Mr S. Dayal (Second Member for Quartier Militaire & Moka) asked the Minister of Health & Quality of Life whether he is aware of cases where children have been diagnosed with foetal alcohol spectrum disorder (FASD) and, if so, will he state –

- (a) the number thereof, and
- (b) the steps that have been taken by Government to sensitize pregnant women on the ill effects of the consumption of alcoholic drinks during pregnancy, indicating the mechanism that has been put in place to achieve same.

Dr. Jeetah: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I take it that the hon. Member is referring to Foetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS) which concerns growth, mental and physical problems that may occur in a baby when a mother drinks alcohol during pregnancy.

I am informed that, from 2005 to date, only two cases of foetal alcohol syndrome have been reported in our hospitals. This may not necessarily reflect the real situation, as I understand

that the parents may not volunteer all information and, therefore, it may be difficult to make the diagnosis.

Accordingly, my Ministry is taking necessary steps to review the present system for identifying and registering cases of foetal alcohol syndrome, with a view to ensuring that all newborns with any characteristics of foetal alcohol syndrome are recognised and appropriate remedial measures are taken in time. In this connection, health education campaigns will be reinforced to encourage pregnant women to give all necessary information, so that they can be provided with optimal care.

As regards part (b) of the Question, the House may be aware that the Public Health (Prohibition on Advertisement, Sponsorship and Restrictions on Sale and Consumption in Public Places of Alcoholic Drinks) Regulations 2008 have been promulgated as from 01 March 2009, to address, amongst others, problems related to alcohol consumption. In this context, my Ministry is carrying out a series of activities to sensitise pregnant women on the ill-effects of the consumption of alcoholic drinks during pregnancy. These include –

- (i) sensitisation of pregnant women attending antenatal clinics in the public health institutions through one to one counselling as well as mass counselling;
- (ii) awareness campaigns and talks by health professionals in the community, namely in social welfare, community and women centres in collaboration with the Ministry of Women's Rights, Child Development & Family Welfare;
- (iii) distribution of pamphlets and brochures during antenatal clinics and sensitisation programmes;
- (iv) postnatal home visits by community midwives for follow-up, growth monitoring and medical check-up, and
- (v) regular sensitisation campaigns on both antenatal and postnatal care through the media.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the abovementioned measures are implemented through the network of Area Health Centres and Community Health Centres, with the participation of Community Health Care Officers, Community Midwives, Community Health Nurses and

Community Physicians amongst others. The programme is run under the supervision of the Regional Public Health Superintendent of each Health Region.

Mr Dayal: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, being given the gravity of the disease in that, first, it causes brain damage to children; second, a range of physical, behavioural and cognitive disabilities resulting in learning difficulties and poor co-ordination and hyper activity, will the hon. Minister consider to forcefully advise pregnant women to totally abstain from consuming alcohol, especially during pregnancy?

Dr. Jeetah: I have explained, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. This country is governed by the rule of law, and there is only so much that we can do. We have got a programme of sensitisation, we have passed on new regulations and, as I mentioned to the hon. Member, every action that can be taken to make sure that people get the information that alcohol is dangerous during pregnancy will be done, and we also have to make people aware of all the difficulties their would-be child could be suffering.

Mr Bérenger: Can I ask the hon. Minister when hospital services make a diagnosis that a child suffers from this disorder as a result of a pregnant woman having consumed alcohol, is the diagnosis simply 'yes or no the disorder exist', or does the diagnosis evaluate the level of disorder, that is, the amount of alcohol that must have been consumed for that disorder to be present at a certain level in the young child?

Dr. Jeetah: I would like to thank the hon. Leader of the Opposition. Allow me, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, to give characteristics of this syndrome. I have got a list, and I would like to mention it, so that everybody gets to know. Babies are born small for date. Babies have congenital heart disease, pre-term deliveries. Also babies are born with low birth rate. They also suffer from mental retardation, birth defects, abnormal facial features, growth problems, problems with the central nervous system, trouble remembering and/or learning, vision or hearing problems as well as behavioural problems. I am also given to understand, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that this syndrome can last for a long time, and there is no cure. I cannot, at this stage, give an answer to the hon. Leader of the Opposition as to how much alcohol was consumed or not, but there is a range of characteristics that is used to diagnose the case.

Mr Bérenger: I heard the Minister say that this is a country that has rule of law. Fair enough! But, we make the law, we change the law. In a case like that, I heard the hon. Minister say - and I think we all agree with him - that this is a very dangerous matter. These not-yet born kids are hurt because of alcohol consumption by the mother. Can I ask the hon. Minister, what does the law say? Is there any offence that can be committed or should there be any offence that can be committed by a pregnant woman consuming or over consuming alcohol?

Dr. Jeetah: That again is a very valid point. I would like to mention to the House that I need to seek advice from the State Law Office on this issue.

Mr Lauthan: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, on the question of asking pregnant women who are already dependent on alcohol to stop drinking, it is more easily said than done. One taboo that all the Ministries and NGOs will have to face is that alcoholism has been for too long limited to categories of workers. I won't mention the categories of people, but it is now everywhere. Younger and younger people are getting drunk, and more women and young girls. So, we need to target even the teenagers. We cannot wait for them to get pregnant and then to target them. We need to be proactive, and target the youngsters more than anything else.

Dr. Jeetah: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, here again, allow me to give some information. In this country, with a population of 1.2 million, we consume 6,000,000 litres of rum, 17,000,000 litres of whisky and 36,000,000 litres of beer. Over and above this, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, about 35% of patients who come to our hospitals are there because of alcohol...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please!

Dr. Jeetah: ... and nearly 50% of our patients are in Brown Sequard Hospital because of alcohol. That is the very reason why we have passed on these regulations, whereby one cannot sell to children as well as one cannot drink in public. We are well aware of the difficulties that can arise in a community because of alcohol abuse. As I said, I am not totally satisfied with the way this issue is being handled insofar as pregnant women are concerned, and we are reviewing the system.

Mr Dayal: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Minister whether he is satisfied with the mechanism he has put in place, and if it is delivering the expected results? Cigarette kills also!

Dr. Jeetah: This is a medium to long-term process, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. We will have to be able to educate our people of the difficulties that one could face with alcohol abuse. At least, we have had the courage to pass on these regulations.

TRIANON – TRAFFIC CONGESTION

(No. B/446) Mr S. Soodhun (Fifth Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport & Shipping whether he is aware that the traffic congestion in the vicinity of Shoprite, Trianon, in the afternoon, is increasing and if so, will he state if –

- (a) an assessment thereof has been carried out, and
- (b) the matter will be addressed, in view of the new commercial and residential projects coming up in the neighbourhood.

Mr Bachoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, presently, it can be observed that St. Jean interchange, that is, in the vicinity of Shoprite, Trianon, operates practically under forced flow conditions during the afternoon peak hours because of major developments in its surroundings, amongst others.

With regard to part (a) of the question, I am informing the House that no previous overall traffic impact assessments had been done. However, the Consultant appointed for the Verdun-Trianon link road will assess the effects of all developments in this area, including around the St. Jean interchange.

As for part (b) of the Question, the surroundings of Shoprite Commercial Centre are developing at a very rapid pace. The Verdun-Trianon link road, the Phoenix-Beau Songes link road, the ring road, the bus way and the bus lane projects will alleviate the expected negative traffic impacts that would arise from the future development projects. In the meantime, the Traffic Management and Road Safety Unit and the Road Development Authority are both scrutinising applications for developments before granting the necessary traffic and access clearances.

Mr Soodhun: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am sure the Minister is aware – as he mentioned – that, in the afternoon, there is a big traffic congestion. For the time being, we do have Police officers from the Traffic Branch up to 6.00 p.m. I would like to know from the hon. Minister if it is possible to liaise with the Commissioner of Police to increase it up to 8.00 p.m.

Mr Bachoo: I have already requested the Traffic Management Unit of my Ministry to look into it. I would like to inform the hon. Member that, in fact, from Trianon roundabout to the St. Jean roundabout, we are putting up a third lane to and fro on both sides. We are looking into this possibility, and I hope that the work will be completed soon.

NTC – MINOR GRADE STAFF - RECRUITMENT

(No. B/447) Mr S. Soodhun (Fifth Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport & Shipping whether he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the National Transport Corporation, information as to if minor grade staff have recently been recruited thereat and, if so, give a list thereof, indicating their respective names and addresses.

Mr Bachoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have arranged for the information to be laid in the Library of the National Assembly.

SEHDA – MANAGING DIRECTOR - APPOINTMENT

(No. B/448) Mr S. Soodhun (Fifth Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Minister of Business, Enterprise & Co-operatives whether, in regard to the Small Enterprises Handicraft Development Authority, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Authority, information as to if a new Director has been appointed thereat and, if so –

- (a) if the post was advertised and
- (b) the basis on which the selection exercise was carried out.

Mr Gowressoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I wish to apprise the House that no new Director has been appointed at the SEHDA. The present Director is still in post.

If the hon. Member is referring to the appointment of a new Managing Director, then let me inform the House that the answer is yes. The new Managing Director, in the person of Mr Vijay Ramgolam, has been appointed by the SEHDA Board as from 21 April 2009.

I wish to inform the hon. Member that he is the 4th Managing Director in post since the creation of the organisation. The first Managing Director was Mr Vassan Appanah, from May 2005 to April 2006; the second one was Mr Ramgolam who was appointed on a contract basis for 2 years, as from 19 May 2006 to 18 May 2008. His contract was not renewed in 2008, as he could not be granted further leave without pay from the Civil Service. The third Managing Director appointed by the SEHDA Board was Mr Rajesh Boodhoo. His contract was terminated in April 2009.

In all these cases, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, there was no advertisement for the post.

Mr Vijay Ramgolam has been reappointed by the Board on the basis of his competence and knowledge of the sector. He has 37 years of experience in the public sector, out of which around 25 years in the Ministry responsible for the industrial sector. He has been closely associated with the development of SMEs.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in this period of crisis, when it is crucial to attend to the needs of our SMEs, which we consider as the engine of our economic growth, we need to have someone who already knows the sector and who can attend to its needs. Mr Ramgolam is the appropriate person.

Mr Gowressoo: We need to have someone who already knows the sector and who can attend to its need. Mr Ramgoolam is the appropriate person, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Mr Soodhun: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Minister inform the House whether this time he has been granted leave from the civil service?

The Deputy Speaker: Can the hon. Member put the question again?

Mr Soodhun: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Minister confirm whether this time, when he has been appointed, he has been granted leave from the civil service?

Mr Gowressoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, he has been appointed as Managing Director of SEHDA on a permanent and pensionable basis.

Mr Ganoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, since this question of not renewing Mr Ramgoolam's contract at that time was raised in this very House, although the hon. Minister was

not then the Minister responsible, is he aware that at the time Mr Ramgoolam's services were brutally done away with, the letter was sent to him and no reason was advanced in it as to why his contract was not renewed as the hon. Minister is alleging today?

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order, hon. Bundhoo!

Mr Gowressoo: At that time, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, Mr Vijay Ramgoolam was appointed on a contract basis of two years. As he was a civil servant, he could not be appointed for more than two years as it should be during the 10 years, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Mr Ganoo: No such reason was given to him when the letter was sent to him.

Mr Gowressoo: I am not aware, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: *Ce sont des propos très, très élogieux envers Monsieur Vijay Ramgoolam !* The hon. Minister said that he has now been appointed as Managing Director on a permanent basis. Can we know whether that post was advertised?

Mr Gowressoo: I have already replied to this question, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Minister has not mentioned whether the post of Managing Director has been advertised or not.

Mr Gowressoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as I have said in my main reply, since the creation of SEHDA, Mr Vijay Ramgoolam is the fourth Managing Director and the post has never been advertised before.

Mr Jhugroo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Minister whether the contract of Mr Rajesh Boodhoo, the third Managing Director, was only for one year, and if not, why his contract has been terminated?

Mr Gowressoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the contract of Mr Rajesh Boodhoo was for two years. There is another PQ concerning the same matter which I am going to answer later on.

Mr Jhugroo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Minister why his contract has been terminated?

Mr Gowressoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have just said that there is another PQ which I am going to reply.

Mr Bérenger: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Minister whether Mr Ramgoolam has resigned from the service?

Mr Gowressoo: Yes, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Mr Soodhun: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Minister inform the House about the criteria for the selection of the General Manager? Is the Public Service Commission or the Minister who decides about it?

Mr Gowressoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I don't have the criteria with me as to the appointment of the General Manager.

Mr Soodhun: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is it the Minister or the Public Service Commission who appoints a General Manager?

Mr Gowressoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have just replied that it is the SEHDA Board.

Mr Jugnauth: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, doesn't the hon. Minister think that it is unfair not to have advertised the post although that would have allowed anyone to apply and then probably to choose the best one? It could well have been Mr Vijay Ramgoolam also. But for the sake of transparency and fairness, they could have advertised the post which is permanent and pensionable.

Mr Gowressoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have said in my reply that since the creation of SEHDA, one Mr Vasant Appanah was appointed in May 2005. So, it is the previous practice, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

RODRIGUES - CEB – BRANCH MANAGER

(No. B/449) Mr J. R. Spéville (Second Member for Rodrigues) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Renewable Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to the post of Branch Manager of the Central Electricity Board Branch in Rodrigues, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Board, information as to –

- (a) when was the recruitment exercise carried out, indicating the -
- i. criteria laid down, and
 - ii. qualifications requirements therefor.

The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Renewable Energy and Public Utilities (Dr. R. Beebeejaun): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the CEB that the post of Branch

Manager was occupied by Mr Claude Roussety, until his retirement in February 2004. The post was advertised subsequent to his retirement but no candidate was found suitable.

The qualifications and experience required for the post are –

- degree in electro-mechanical or electrical or mechanical engineering or equivalent;
- registered professional engineer in Mauritius;
- 5 years experience in a utility environment;
- knowledge of transmission and distribution of electricity of customer service functions of an electricity utility, and
- familiarity with generation of electricity and generation equipment.

It is the policy of the CEB to give priority to Rodriguan candidates for the posts in Rodrigues including that of Branch Manager. But, I am informed that due to lack of qualified and experienced candidates, the CEB has opted for a tour of service by an engineer from Mauritius as stipulated in the collective agreement between CEB and the CEB Staff Association for a period of two years to assume duty in an acting capacity, pending the appointment of a Rodriguan candidate.

Mr Spéville: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Minister how many Branch Managers on tour of service have been going to Rodrigues since 2004 till now?

Dr. Beebeejaun: There has been one or two years' rotation, between one and two years, there have been three or four. But I would like to inform the House that, yes, it is our policy and I can understand that we have to form Rodriguans to take charge in Rodrigues. We did try. We have Mr St. Pierre who has been in post there for the past four or five years, but he is going to Australia, unfortunately. He has applied and there is a letter that he is going to Australia. If he comes back, we will find a job appropriate for his qualification and experience, and there is a post of Superintendent in charge of power stations. I hope he does come back. He has asked for leave and I think he is going to Australia on a contract. And further, there are two other Rodriguans who are engineers, who have been recruited and are being trained. It is the policy of the CEB firmly to get appropriate Rodriguans, well-trained candidates for the post in Rodrigues.

Mr Spéville: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, according to my information, since Mr Roussety left, Mr Payen took over. Now we are at the fourth Branch Manager on tour of service in

Rodrigues. In fact, in 2004, the then Minister, in a previous PQ, said that Mr St. Pierre was to be given appropriate training. Being a Mechanical and Electrical Engineer, he was supposed to have management training for six months to take over after Mr Payen. The hon. Minister just confirmed that Mr St. Pierre is going to Australia. May I ask the hon. Minister whether it is in the interest of Government to have people going abroad instead of being given appropriate training?

Dr. Beebeejaun: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, Mr St. Pierre is a graduate in Mechanical Engineering, not Mechanical and Electrical as mentioned by the hon. Member. Secondly, he has been trained and, at the moment, there is no post of Station Superintendent in charge of power stations. Should he come back, this post will be created and he will be given the post. But he has no training so far to take over the whole establishment in Rodrigues.

Mr Spéville: My main concern remains, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, why has this post not been advertised as such?

Dr. Beebeejaun: As I have said, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the post was advertised. We are looking for a suitable Rodriguan candidate. We have not found any. If the hon. Member has any qualified and experienced candidate who responds to the qualifications required, I will be only too happy to put an end to this rotation and appoint him.

AIR MAURITIUS LTD – RODRIGUES ROUTE – FLIGHTS CANCELLATION

(No. B/450) Mr R. Spéville (Second Member for Rodrigues) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism, Leisure and External Communications whether he is aware that the Air Mauritius Ltd. is operating a short notice cancellation policy on flights on the Rodrigues route and, if so, will he, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Company, information as to the reasons therefor.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism, Leisure and External Communications (Mr X.L. Duval): Mr. Speaker Sir, I am informed by Air Mauritius Ltd that with regard to Rodrigues the Company has put in place a flight monitoring process to forecast forward loads and consequently, identify flights with abnormally poor loads. Since April 2007, the Company has also introduced a guideline whereby any cancellation of flight is normally effected within a period of at least 10 days prior to departure.

However, I am also informed that there have been instances where flights have been cancelled at very short notice. Mr. Speaker Sir, I have received representations regarding much inconvenience caused to the public due to the cancellation of flights on the Rodrigues route at short notice. I have requested Air Mauritius Ltd to avoid such cancellations except in exceptional circumstances, with the exception, of course, of cancellations effected for technical reasons.

Mr Spéville: Mr Speaker , Sir, when somebody don't travel to Rodrigues or elsewhere they are asked to pay a penalty fee of Rs500 and then Air Mauritius at short notice does not even get the decency of informing the customers and now the Minister is saying that it has received complaints from the public and customers. What does he envisage to compensate these people who have been victims?

Mr X.L. Duval: That's a good point Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. As you know, in Europe if you cancel somebody's flight then you have to compensate the person. However, in this case, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, to put it in context, Air Mauritius has always said that it is a loss making route and it is, in fact, effecting this route for social reasons and national interest reasons. Therefore, this is a difficult situation where, in fact, as I mentioned, I will try to see that such cancellations are kept to a minimum but nevertheless, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, what happens, say, on the eve of the flight, a large group cancels its reservations then Air Mauritius just finds itself with a nearly empty plane and cancels the flight. But I agree that it is a lot of inconvenience to Rodriguans and the travelling public.

Mr Léopold: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Minister whether he is agreeable that at least two flights per day are maintained in Rodrigues? One in the morning and one at night or late in the afternoon at least for cases of emergency where we have come to Mauritius to be treated.

Mr X.L. Duval: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is a whole question of who should pay for these social flights and national interest flights. Air Mauritius is making a loss on its flights as the Member knows, travelling to Rodrigues, at least, by Mauritian citizens, has fallen sharply over the recent months and Air Mauritius being a commercial company is trying to do its best, but I will pass on his comments to the direction.

Mr Guimbeau: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister just stated that Rodrigues-

Mauritius is a loss- making profit route. Can he inform the House where matters stand as far as the second carrier is concerned?

Mr X.L. Duval: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, happily there is room for a second carrier, there is nobody wanting to operate.

Mr Jhugroo: Would the Vice-Prime Minister agree with me that if we decrease the air fares between Mauritius and Rodrigues we will have more people travelling from Mauritius to Rodrigues and vice versa?

Mr X.L. Duval: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that depends on the price and demand on that route but, obviously, the solution lies in a longer air field where, in fact, larger planes will be able to go to Rodrigues thereby reducing the cost of air ticket.

Mr Guimbeau: The hon. Minister just stated that there is room for a second carrier but nobody applied. Can he inform the House about Cato Vert?

Mr X.L. Duval: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, what about Cato Vert,? Cato Vert has its permits, it can operate tomorrow. It has its assets, there is no problem with Cato Vert or anybody. Obviously, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, given that it is a loss-making route Air Mauritius will be happy to have somebody taking over, at least, part of that load.

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, since the hon. Minister has stated earlier that it is a loss-making route, that is, the route to Rodrigues, is he aware that with regard to taxes on that air tickets it amounts to Rs3200 taxes?

Mr X.L. Duval: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it depends on what you call taxes. A lot of people confuse taxes and surcharges which are often called taxes. In fact we have got airport charges. I myself took away the airport charges when I was Minister responsible for IML but you also have a fewer surcharges.

Mr Guimbeau: Can the hon. Minister confirm to the House whether Cato Vert has never applied for a route Maurice and Rodrigues?

Mr X.L. Duval: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I don't understand this. Cato Vert was running the route Mauritius-Rodrigues for a long time. The problem with Cato Vert, I don't know if it is relevant to this, was the route Mauritius to Reunion, never the route Mauritius to Rodrigues.

GLOBAL POSITIONING SYSTEM TECHNOLOGY

(No.B/451) **Mr Y. Varma (First Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien)** asked the Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping whether, in regard to the Global Positioning System Technology in respect of motor vehicles, he will state if it is currently being used and, if so, since when and, if not, the reasons therefor.

Mr Bachoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Global Positioning System Technology in respect of motor vehicles was first introduced in Mauritius in early 2000. It is being used mainly by the police department E.R.S. Division, private companies such as those engaged in cash transit, tour operators and the distributive trade for the tracking of vehicles. The Rose-Hill Transport Ltd is the only bus company which uses this system mostly for monitoring of its bus services along route one, that is Rose-Hill - Port-Louis via Beau-Bassin and Route 174, that is Express services between Rose-Hill and Port-Louis via Réduit and Pailles.

As at the date, some 1500 vehicles are equipped with G.P.S: of which there are 60 buses for Rose-Hill transport Ltd, 40 for the Police and the remainder in respect of vehicles owned by private companies.

It is to be pointed out that, that it is not compulsory for any individual or company to make use of such technology. However, some operators such as taxi owners have been encouraged to have recourse to such system to enhance their own security.

PETIT BEL AIR, MAHEBOURG – VILLAGE HALL

(No. B/452) **Mr Y. Varma (First Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien)** asked the Minister of Local Government, Rodrigues and Outer Islands whether, in regard to the project for the construction of a new building to house the village hall in Petit Bel Air, Mahebourg, he will state where matters stand.

Dr. David: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I wish to refer the hon. Member to the reply made on 20 November 2007 to Parliamentary Question B/1137 on this issue.

The House may wish to note that the plot of land of an extent of 1858.58 m² near the Petit Bel Air Social Welfare Centre and football ground has already been acquired and vested in the Grand Port/Savanne District Council for the construction of the Multipurpose Complex.

I am informed that the Council has submitted a request to the Local Infrastructure Fund for the funding of this project.

PLAINE MAGNIEN – FOOTBALL GROUND

(No. B/453) Mr Y. Varma (First Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Youth and Sports whether, in regard to the football ground in Plaine Magnien, he will state if Government will consider the advisability of ;

- (a) Having its fencing repaired and,
- (b) Building a change room for the benefit of the users.

Minister of Local Government, Rodrigues and Outer Islands (J. B. David) : Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I shall reply to this question.

I am informed by the Grand Port/Savanne District Council that it will not be in a position at this stage to undertake the fencing of the football ground in Plaine Magnien at one go due to the exorbitant cost involved. It has therefore decided to repair the fencing facing the sugarcane field as a priority and in respect of which funds are available.

I am further informed that a tender has already been launched in this respect and the closing date for submission of bids is 22 May 2009.

With regard to part (b) of the question, I am informed that the National Development Unit will be providing a cloakroom and lighting facilities to the football ground.

AIR MAURITIUS LTD – HELICOPTERS – SERVICES

(No. B/454) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism, Leisure and External Communications whether, in regard to the helicopters of the Air Mauritius Ltd., he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Company, information as to if, following the losses incurred as a result of the recent hedging transactions, the services provided thereby would be ceased and if so, if same will be sold, indicating where matters stand.

Mr Duval: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed by Air Mauritius Ltd that the Company is currently conducting an exercise to examine strategic options for its helicopter operations. The exercise is expected to be completed in July 2009, on the basis of which an appropriate decision will be taken by the Company.

EAU COULEE - DRAINS

(No. B/456) **Mrs M. Martin (Second Member for Curepipe and Midlands)** asked the Minister of Environment and National Development Unit whether he is aware of the infrastructural problems in the region of Eau Coulée, namely in regard to the evacuation of water and to the drains during heavy rainfall and, if so, will he state the remedial measures Government proposes to take.

Mr Bundhoo: Mr Speaker Sir, I have taken note of the request. A site visit will soon be undertaken by the Consultant of the National Development Unit in *collaboration with the Municipality of Curepipe. On receipt of the survey report, a decision will be taken in respect of the infrastructural problems in the region of Eau Coulée.

May I, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, assure the hon. Member that some remedial works are already being carried out and others are in the pipeline. Some available information is being tabled for the benefit of the House.

Mrs Martin: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, could I ask the hon. Minister whether the local MPs will also be invited to these site visits?

Mr Bundhoo: I would certainly look into the matter if this request comes from such a hon. MP.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes, hon. Dowarkasing.

Mr Dowarkasing: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister has said in his reply that he will undertake a site visit together with the Municipal Council of Curepipe. Will he make sure that funds are available for such projects? As per my information, there are no more funds available for the construction of drains. Will the hon. Minister make sure that funds from the NDU are available for that project?

Mr Bundhoo: May I, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, remind the hon. Member that it is precisely why I have taken the pains of informing that the visit will be conducted with the Municipal Council of Curepipe? I also assure the hon. Member that the Vice Prime Minister will shortly be presenting the Budget for the next six months where I am sure funds will be made available under the NDU, the RDA and the Local Government Council.

The Deputy Speaker: Next question!

PIGLETS – IMPORTATION

(No. B/457) Mr J. R Speville (Second Member for Rodrigues) asked the Minister of Agro Industry, Food Production and Security whether he will state if 3420 piglets have recently been imported from South Africa under the National Empowerment Programme.

Mr Faugoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as the hon. Member is aware, following the outbreak of the African swine Fever (ASF) in 2007 which has been successfully eradicated, a Pig Sector Restructuring Committee was set up to relaunch the sector on a more professional basis.

In that context, there was a need to import pigs both for fattening purposes and for reproduction. In fact, it was the Mauritius Pig Marketing Cooperatives Federation which imported 3420 pigs from South Africa in January of this year, namely 3000 weaners for fattening, 400 gilts and 20 boars for reproduction. The necessary funds and logistic support were provided by the National Empowerment Foundation.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Members, I would like to make a ruling. I have had a chance of perusing the document purported to be tabled by hon. Guimbeau in relation to PQ No. B/441. After looking at it, I have come to the conclusion that unsigned document does not appear to establish any alleged sale or any kind of transaction regarding the ATR or any ATR by Air Mauritius to Air Pacific. I, therefore, rule out this document. Time is over!