

INDEPENDENT BROADCASTING AUTHORITY – COMPLAINTS AGAINST MBC

(No. B/1015) Mr P. Jhugroo (Third Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Home Affairs whether, in regard to the complaints which have been lodged at the Independent Broadcasting Authority against the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation, since January 2006 to date, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Authority, a list thereof, indicating in each case the -

- (a) name of the complainant;
- (b) nature of the complaint;
- (c) date thereof, and
- (d) outcome thereof.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, 17 complaints against the MBC have been lodged with the IBA since January 2006 to date.

Incidentally, during the same period, 23 cases have been lodged against the private radios.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I am tabling a statement giving all the information requested by the hon. Member as provided by the Director of the Independent Broadcasting Authority.

Mr Jhugroo: Can the hon. Prime Minister state if any actions are being taken to ensure proper follow-up of the outcome thereof?

The Prime Minister: As I said, I'll give all the information. In certain cases, Directors have been sued, in other cases the matters were set aside.

Mr Bhagwan: Mr Speaker, Sir, coming to the IBA, last time, in a reply to a Parliamentary Question which I asked, I made a statement that the IBA is a *bouledogue sans dent* and the Prime Minister accepted that this was the case. May we know if the hon. Prime Minister is coming with amendment to the IBA Act and also as proposed by the Chairperson of the IBA recently?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have been saying the same thing when I was in the Opposition. In fact, I myself had complained against the MBC.

(Interruptions)

I know the saga. I went to complain. The IBA thought I was right and, then, one day later, sent me another letter to ignore the first one. I have all this information. But, as I said in the past, I am looking at media law in general; this is imminent. We still have some discussions left to be done. There is another question, but the preliminary report of the eminent lawyer, Jeffrey Robertson, is already in my possession. We had further discussions. He sent somebody else to have a look and then we are going to have further discussions until we want to fine-tune the law before we bring it to the House.

Mr Bhagwan: Being given the urgency of the matter, Mr Speaker, Sir, complaints which are sent to the IBA are useless. I can say ‘useless’, because there is no follow-up. We agree on that. Can the hon. Prime Minister, at least, give us a timeframe as this is urgent? I am coming with a new PQ next week. The way things are happening at the MBC, people are discouraged to go the IBA. Can he, at least, give us a timeframe when this amendment will come to Parliament?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am sure the hon. Member is aware that there was a complaint that the MMM itself had an unfair treatment following a broadcast of a press conference and the IBA has given a directive to the MBC to correct it.

Mr Bhagwan: Nothing happened!

The Prime Minister: In my case, it was worse; a directive was given and then changed.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Hon. Bhagwan, I am sorry! The hon. Prime Minister is answering and you are standing up. Next question!

**METROPOLITAN (SOUTH) POLICE PROSECUTIONS OFFICE
- SHORTCOMINGS – MEASURES**

(No. B/1016) 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 Metropolitan (South) Police Prosecutions Office, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to if the Magistrate of the Port Louis District Court, Division III, has submitted any report to him in relation to shortcomings thereat and, if so, the remedial measures that have been or will be taken.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker Sir, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that he received a letter, dated 24 July 2009, from the District Magistrate in charge of the

District Court of Port Louis in relation to shortcomings of the Metropolitan (South) Police Prosecution Office.

I wish to state, Mr Speaker, Sir, that I, myself, am much concerned about such shortcomings. I have taken note of the remedial measures taken by the Commissioner of Police.

In fact, the Commissioner of Police has assured me that he has taken this opportunity to issue a Circular on 25 July 2009, to request Divisional Commanders to ensure that such shortcomings do not occur in Courts in their respective Divisions, while at the same time requesting them to master the 'Guidelines for Prosecuting Counsel' which was issued by the Director of Public Prosecutions one month earlier, that is, on 24 June 2009.

The Commissioner of Police has also on 27 July 2009 instructed all Deputy Commissioners, Divisional Commanders and Branch Officers to visit Prosecution Offices and Court Rooms under their responsibilities with a view to providing an efficient and effective prosecution service and policing in Court.

In addition, a Chief Inspector of Police has been posted to the Metropolitan (South) Prosecution Office for overall administrative supervision and coordination with the Judiciary and the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions.

Additionally, the Deputy Commissioner of Police, Mr Bruneau, has had several meetings with the District Magistrate with a view to ensuring that the measures taken are being adhered to.

Mr Jhugroo: Is the hon. Prime Minister aware that, according to this report, very often, Police Prosecutors' files are forgotten at Line Barracks on trial dates? Another point mentioned in this report is that Prosecutors posted at Division III come to court unprepared and one of them even fell asleep on two occasions in court. On, at least, two occasions, detainees have escaped from Police custody and one even entered the Magistrates Chambers. One last point I want to mention from this report is that warrants are not executed and have to be constantly extended. May we know whether actions are being taken to solve the remarks being made by the District Magistrate?

The Prime Minister: We take the remarks very seriously, Mr Speaker, Sir. As I mentioned earlier, I, myself, am very much concerned with such shortcomings which are quite unacceptable. This is why I said in my answer that the CP took this opportunity to issue a Circular on 25 July 2009 to request Divisional Commanders to ensure that such

shortcomings do not occur in courts. We had discussed this in the past. In fact, you see this kind of failures happened not just there, but in some other cases. I always say, Mr Speaker, Sir, whenever somebody takes a job, he or she must do it with diligence. You get paid for a job, you must do the job. It is in fact your duty to do the job. So many cases are struck out because procedures are not being followed, 'X' has not done what should have been done, etc. It is either one of the few things, apart from what the Commissioner of Police has said he is doing. We are doing it, in fact, but we should do more training for them. That is why he is telling them to do all this. I don't know whether some of these things are done deliberately or whether it is done in a slipshod fashion with a 'I could not care less attitude'. We have to provide for more training. Therefore, it will take more time, it will take money. I have asked the Commissioner of Police to list the names of the Prosecuting officers who show gross negligence or repeat the same mistakes, because I think if there is no sanction you will have the same thing. In one hundred years' time we'll see the same thing happening. We have to take sanctions and we have to be ruthless in taking sanctions.

Mr Bérenger: Clearly the hon. Prime Minister has not contradicted hon. Jhugroo who gave a list of the shortcomings which the hon. Prime Minister referred to. Can I ask him whether he is aware of three others which are perhaps even more serious, - three additional 'shortcomings', if that is the word - denounced by the District Magistrate -

'Prisoners are not brought to court in spite of court orders. Court orderly and one of the officers from the escort team, seen by me, loitering with prisoners and their relatives. There is a disparity in the stand adopted by Police in granting bail.'

I was really shocked when I got hold of this report from the District Magistrate. Is the hon. Prime Minister telling us that action is being taken on all those counts?

The Prime Minister: As I said, action is being taken on all those counts but, again, Mr Speaker, Sir, at the end of the day, the wine depends on the vineyard. We try to improve them. We are saying that we are going to take sanctions, we are going to take a list of the possible prosecutors who failed. There are some cases in court just now and the same thing is happening. We will have to provide more training. It is quite unacceptable. I agree with the hon. Leader of the Opposition, but we will have to take the action that we can take.

Mr Bérenger: I wish to congratulate the Commissioner of Police. He received that report from the District Magistrate on 24 July 2009 and - nearly immediately - on 27, wrote a letter entitled 'Shortcomings at Prosecution Offices', targeting all area commanders. I

congratulate the Commissioner of Police, but is the hon. Prime Minister aware that, in the same letter, the same Commissioner of Police says -

“I instructed area commanders in January last...”

that is, January 2009

“...to submit a reorganisation plan of Prosecution officers in their respective Divisions.’

But these reports have not been submitted yet. So, can I ask the hon. Prime Minister that he will see to it that the Prime Minister obtains results that time?

The Prime Minister: Yes, but to obtain results, Mr Speaker, Sir, I cannot have my hands tied. If I had my hands free – that is why sometimes I ask for additional things – I would have sacked them one by one straightaway, but, unfortunately, I have to go through the system. The procedures are like this. That is why I think ...

(Interruptions)

If the Opposition would agree with me, please give me additional powers to do it.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order, please!

Mr Jugnauth: In the light of the shortcomings of the police prosecutors, and so that justice must be really done, would the hon. Prime Minister consider nominating more counsels to appear before the district courts on the side of the prosecution in order to help to alleviate the workload of prosecutors? Because they appear in so many cases, and it is impossible, humanly speaking, for a prosecutor who is not qualified as a barrister, to handle so many cases. That is why I understand there are so many shortcomings.

The Prime Minister: This is what we are doing because, in fact, before this happened, I also talked to the Commissioner of Police, as I said. This is why he says he has taken this opportunity to issue the circular, because this is one of the problems that we have. We need more training, and we need more people. But we need to train them before.

Mr Bhagwan: I drew the attention of the Prime Minister in a similar question as far as interference from the Attorney General’s Office is concerned regarding the stand of police prosecutors in court. There have been many cases at the district court of Rose Hill in the past, and I asked the Prime Minister to go and inquire. He gave the assurance that he would

instruct certain people outside – at least, one is here - not to interfere directly as far as the stand of police prosecutors in court cases is concerned. Can I reiterate to the Prime Minister – he has just used the word ‘sack’ – our request that nobody from his Government should interfere, as far as the stand of police prosecutors in court cases is concerned, especially the Attorney General?

Mr Speaker: No, hon. Bhagwan! In the last part, you are imputing motives against a Member of the House.

Mr Bhagwan: Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister to give a firm undertaking to the House that he will give instructions to anybody on his side not to interfere?

Mr Speaker: Sorry! The hon. Member should remove the name. When he said the Attorney General’s Office, I kept quiet.

Mr Bhagwan: I remove the words ‘Attorney General’. I ask the Prime Minister to remove the Attorney General. From here!

(Interruptions)

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, not only I can give the guarantee to the House that I have done so, but I have also spoken to the Commissioner of Police. I have told him to make sure that his officers know that there is nobody who is above the law. I will not hesitate. They should not think that a Minister or a hon. Member is above the law and, as I said, the record speaks for itself.

Mrs Martin: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I know from the hon. Prime Minister the number of police prosecutors presently exercising? He also mentioned that there was an inquiry, which was going to be carried out on those who are found lacking in treatment of cases. Can we know when actually this inquiry is scheduled to start?

The Prime Minister: I didn’t say there is an inquiry on the police prosecuting officers. I said I have asked the Commissioner of Police to look at this carefully. We must have a list of those who are repeatedly doing such mistakes, whether deliberately or not, and we have to know what action we will take against them.

Mr Dulloo: The hon. Prime Minister is agreeing with hon. Jugnauth that prosecuting counsels be appointed. May I ask him, therefore, that he should ensure that prosecuting counsels are selected by the Judicial and Legal Service Commission, but by no other office, least of all, the Attorney General’s Office?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Member, I suppose, does not realise. On my request, we have separated completely the Attorney General's Office in the last Budget. I don't think it is proper. We have separated it; they have separate budgets; everything is separate.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Some time back, we raised the question of the police inquiring on the police. Can the hon. Prime Minister say whether, following this report that he has just received, it is the police who is inquiring on the police or is it somebody from his office, or is it the Commission for Human Rights?

The Prime Minister: In fact, in that case, we don't have to have the police inquiring. The facts speak for themselves where there have been mistakes, and there have been great gaps in whatever they were doing. These are factual. So, we are not inquiring into that as such, but we are looking at the facts.

**CCTV SURVEILLANCE SYSTEM - CONTROL ROOM - POLICE
OFFICERS & SECURITY & SAFETY EQUIPMENT**

(No. B/1017) Mr P. Jhugroo (Third Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Home Affairs whether, in regard to the Control Room of the CCTV Surveillance System, situated at the Police Information and Operations Room, at the Line Barracks, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to –

- (a) the number of police officers posted thereat, indicating the number thereof in each shift, and
- (b) if security and safety equipment are available thereat.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, the main control room of the CCTV Surveillance System, based at the Police Information and Operations Room, that is, at the Line Barracks, operates on a 24/7 basis.

I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that seven trained police officers are posted at the main control room, and they work as CCTV operators on a three 8-hour shift system. At least, therefore, two police officers are on duty at a time.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to draw the attention of the hon. Member that the main control room at the Police Information and Operations Room is a restricted area, and access by authorised staff to the CCTV Room is effected through two security checks, as follows -

- (a) primary access control at the main entrance of the Police Information and Operations Room through a personal access code, and
- (b) secondary access control at CCTV main control room itself through another access code.

In addition, there is a surveillance camera at the main entrance of the Police Information and Operations Room, which enables the monitoring of the movement of any person accessing or leaving the main control room. The monitoring of the staff posted at the Main Control Room is also effected by a camera available inside the sub-control room at Flic-en-Flac.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I have been assured by the Commissioner of Police that adequate security arrangements exist at the main control room.

Mr Bérenger: We are talking about CCTV Surveillance System, which works through cameras. Information has reached me that some of those CCTV surveillance cameras are dummies, are fake cameras, including the ones near Roche Bois. First, can I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether this is so? If that is so, have the police been guilty of that or any other authority? If it is another authority, who has been guilty of that? Because I am sure the hon. Prime Minister will agree with me that this is very dangerous. If that is true, it creates a false sense of security when we are dealing with dummy cameras.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, in fact, I should say to the hon. Member that, even in other countries, including the UK, they have these kinds of arrangements. People don't know; they increase the number. Even on the main motorway when you go from London to the airport, you have this.

(Interruptions)

They give the impression it is full, but it is not. But let me assure the hon. Leader of the Opposition that, in fact, we are putting cameras in all these areas. I think there is another question on this, including the areas of Port Louis.

Mr Bérenger: Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister in how many places do we have dummy cameras?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Leader of the Opposition has been Prime Minister; he knows.

Mr Bérenger: In how many places? Not where!

The Prime Minister: I don't want to give details. In fact, wherever there are, these are being replaced.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order, please!

Mr Jhugroo: Can I know from the hon. Prime Minister...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order, please! Order! Order!

Mr Jhugroo: Can I know from the hon. Prime Minister whether there are enough police officers posted in the CCTV room in one shift, to view 16 monitors for eight consecutive hours?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, we feel there are enough. It is an 8-hour shift, as I explained, and this is the same in other countries; they get trained, and they do it. Not only they do it there. As you probably know, they also do it at Flic-en-Flac.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! Hon. Duval, enough now! Please, no more interjections!

Mr Dulloo: May I ask the hon. Prime Minister that since those CCTV cameras are supposed to be for information, also preventive and enforcement purposes, should not the public be given adequate information and warning that those cameras are there and that we should not cheat on them, make believe and take them by surprise as is normally the case elsewhere, that adequate warning is given for preventive and enforcement purposes?

The Prime Minister: This is a fair point that hon. Dulloo has made. In the UK, for example, they warn you that the camera is further on. Here, we haven't done that, maybe we have to look at this.

Mr Bérenger: May I ask the Prime Minister now that he has confirmed that there are dummy cameras ...

The Prime Minister: No, I didn't!

Mr Bérenger: No! The Prime Minister compared with London which he knows well.

The Prime Minister: Yes, I compared with other countries, but I am not confirming anything and, in fact, Mr Speaker, Sir, I advise people if they try to do something that they should not do ...

(Interruptions)

Mr Bérenger: Mr Speaker, Sir, fairly he confirmed and it is a fact, if you go there it is an empty box. It is not difficult to check. I will ask the hon. Prime Minister whether those dummy CCTV cameras were installed by the police or by some other Authority - the Tourism Authority?

The Prime Minister: No, in fact, they were doing some improvement of the area.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: I can't hear the answer. Order!

Mr Bodha: May I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether any footage has been used so far in any prosecution and whether any of these officers have deposed in court as the maker of that footage?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have the list here. In fact, the hon. Member would be surprised to know that there has been a dramatic - I really use the word 'dramatic' - decrease in these kinds of larcenies and misdemeanours.

Mrs Martin: The hon. Minister mentioned in an answer to my colleague hon. Jhugroo that the number of police officers is quite sufficient. May I ask him concerning such an exercise as surveillance where constant attention is required if it is possible that the number of officers, especially who operate during the late hours at night, be increased specially during week-ends, where the increased traffic at night can give occasion to a crime to be committed and since the CCTV requires constant attention during late hours at night it might be a little bit difficult for only three officers to be monitoring all those CCTV cameras?

The Prime Minister: There has been no complaint as far as I know about this, but I can pass this to the Commissioner of police, because at Flacq it is done by private companies that have installed it precisely because we want to have the same standard as we have in other countries, but we can look at this.

Mr Jhugroo: Can we know from the hon. Prime Minister whether there is any review of the tapes and, if so, can we know by whom?

The Prime Minister: Review of the tapes, Mr Speaker, Sir, is a long procedure. If the hon. Member wants me to give him the answer, I will give him, but this is a long procedure. They have a system, what is called, the digital water marking, where you can prevent any tapping or alteration of the tapes. The access to the system itself is logged automatically and nobody who has no permission can look at them. There is a hardware fire wall built-in in that system, that is, to prevent any third parties to look at it. The extract of the images which is the hon. Member's main question is done through strict supervision. It is done by the officer in charge of the Communication branch and, as I said, he cannot even tamper with it because there is, what is called, a digital water marking system in it.

ECROIGNARD – POLICE SERGEANT - DEATH

(No. B/1018) Mr G. Gunness (Third Member for Montagne Blanche and GRSE) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Home Affairs whether, in regard to the incident which occurred, on or about 30 June 2009, at Ecroignard, in the course of which

Police Sergeant, K. H. lost his life, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to if an inquiry has been carried thereinto, and, if so, the outcome thereof.

The Prime Minister: I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that a group of persons had conveyed Police Sergeant B.H also known as K.H to Flacq Hospital on the 30 June 2009 at around 00 40 hrs. The doctor who examined him certified that he had already passed away. As it was a suspected case of murder, the Government Medical Officer referred the body to the Police.

On the same day, at 11 00 hrs, an autopsy was carried out and the Police Medical Officer certified that death was due to “crushing of the chest”.

The Flacq CID initiated an enquiry and several statements were recorded on 30 June of 2009. This resulted in the arrest of one Mr T.K.H. On the same day a provisional charge of “Murder” was lodged against him before the Flacq District Court and he was remanded to Police cell. On the 21 July 2009, he was remanded to jail, he asks for bail but the Police objected to his release.

On the 26 of August 2009, upon the advice of the Director of Public Prosecutions, the provisional charge of “Murder” lodged against Mr T. K. H was reduced to “Manslaughter”. On the same day, he was allowed bail before the Flacq District Court and was released upon furnishing one surety of Rs50,000 cash and a surety of Rs100,000 as security and a recognizance of Rs300,000. Furthermore, he has to report daily between 06 00 hrs to 18 00 hrs at Bel Air Police Station.

The enquiry in the case has been completed and the case file referred to the Director of Public Prosecutions on 31 August 2009.

Mr Bérenger: May I ask the hon. Prime Minister, being given that that person has been granted bail, whether he had previous convictions?

The Prime Minister: Yes, in fact, he had. He was interdicted in the past - that that was in 2007 - and in 2008 he was prosecuted before the Intermediate Court under 3 counts and he was sentenced to 9 months’ imprisonment. On the same day, he gave notice of appeal and that appeal was pending before Supreme Court until his death on 30 June.

Mr Bérenger: May I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether he finds it normal that that person has been granted bail?

The Prime Minister: I am sorry we are making a mistake. I thought the Leader of the Opposition was asking about the late Police Sergeant. In that case, Mr Speaker, Sir, the person who has been arrested, there is nothing in the file that said that he was condemned by the court.

Mr Bérenger: Doesn't the hon. Prime Minister find it shocking? He understood me wrongly. In his file the police have prepared information on the victim and there is no information on the accused. Does he find that normal? According to information we have he has previous convictions and he has been granted bail by the police and the same police do not give the information to the hon. Minister.

The Prime Minister: No, he has not been granted bail by the police, Mr Speaker, Sir. Police objected to bail, but he was granted bail later on by the Flacq District Court.

Mr Gunness: If I have heard the Prime Minister well, the provisional charge has been change from murder to manslaughter. Can the hon. Prime Minister give us as to the reason?

(Interruption)

The Prime Minister: As Member of Parliament, he should know that it is the DDP. I cannot go and tell the DPP what to do.

Mr Speaker: This is a matter for the DDP.

Mr Bérenger: May I ask the hon. Prime Minister to check whether the charge was brought down by the DDP from murder to manslaughter? When that was done, did the police keep on objecting to bail or did the police withdraw its objection to bail although manslaughter is manslaughter?

The Prime Minister: What I have here Mr Speaker, Sir, is upon the advice of the Director of Public Prosecution, on 26 August the provisional charge of murder was reduced to manslaughter. On the same day, he was allowed bail before Flacq District Court and was released upon furnishing one surety and so on. But originally, the police – what I have here, I am saying it - the police had objected to bail on 21 July.

Mr Bodha: May I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether he will not agree that, too often, the police reduce the charge from murder to manslaughter, in a way to see to it that the inquiry is ended soon and there is prosecution, and that this is too common a practice?

Mr Speaker: Hon. Bodha, I must tell you that this is a matter at the discretion of the DPP. Once the DPP has taken the decision, how can the Prime Minister answer for the DPP? Last question!

Mr Gunness: Can I know from the hon. Prime Minister whether, when the police was called on that particular site where there was the incident, they reached on time? When they came, the family said that the guy was on a JCB. Why didn't the police seize the key of that JCB? First, I would like to know whether they came on time and, if ever they came, why they left the key of that vehicle.

The Prime Minister: By the time the police came - the police came as soon as they heard; they have to travel to come there - he had already used the excavator and damaged the house, and was proceeding in doing the same again.

Mr Speaker: Time is over! The Table has been advised that PQs B/1020, B/1021, B/1022, B/1023 and B/1054 have been withdrawn. Questions addressed to hon. Ministers! The hon. Minister of Local Government has made a request to me to be given the opportunity to reply to Parliamentary Questions addressed to him out of turn, as he is taken up with the workings of the Commonwealth Local Government Forum hosted by the Government, which is being held in Mauritius. The House finds no inconvenience. I propose to accede to the Minister's request. Hon. Lauthan is not here. Parliamentary Question B/1044 will be replied by the Minister of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment. Hon Dayal!

QUARTIER MILITAIRE - SWIMMING POOL

(No. B/1049) Mr S. Dayal (Second Member for Quartier Militaire & Moke) asked the Minister of Local Government, Rodrigues and Outer Islands whether, in regard to the plot of land already identified and earmarked by the Moka/Flacq District Council for the construction of a swimming pool at Quartier Militaire, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the District Council, information as to where matters stand.

Dr. David: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that a plot of land of the extent of 8354m² at Quartier Militaire had already been vested in July 2001 in the Ministry of Youth & Sports for implementation of this project, which has been included in the strategic plan of the Local Infrastructure Fund.

I am further informed that a meeting was held on 16 October 2009 at the level of my Ministry with all parties concerned, namely the Ministry of Youth & Sports and the Moka/Flacq District Council on the way forward, and it has been decided that a geo-technical

survey be conducted in the first instance, so as to verify the suitability of the identified site for this project. A quotation is being launched by next week in this respect.

BEAU VALLON VILLAGE HALL - NEW BUILDING

(No. B/1055) Mr Y. Varma (First Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Local Government, Rodrigues and Outer Islands whether he will state if Government will consider the advisability of constructing a new building to house the Beau Vallon Village Hall.

Dr. David: Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to refer the Member to the reply I made on 18 April 2006 to Parliamentary Question B/308 on this issue.

I am now informed by the Grand Port/Savanne District Council that a plot of State land of the extent of 743 m² at Beau Vallon has been vested in April 2007 in it for the construction of a village hall.

I am also informed that, in view of the fact that new village halls will be constructed in the villages of Old Grand Port, Petit Bel Air and Camp Diable during financial years 2009 and 2010, the project for the construction of a new village hall at Beau Vallon will be implemented in financial year 2011.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Dowarkasing! Parliamentary Question B/1062!

Mr Dowarkasing: In fact, this question, Mr Speaker, Sir, was addressed to the Ministry of Environment. I don't know how it has been changed to Ministry of Industry and now to Ministry of Local Government.

MIDLANDS VILLAGE - INDUSTRIAL PARK

(No. B/1062) Mr M. Dowarkasing (Third Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the Minister of Industry, Science and Research whether, in regard to the project for the construction of an industrial park along the highway leading to Mahebourg in the boundaries of the Midlands village, he will state if his Ministry has given clearance therefor.

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

I am informed that an application has been received on 22 September 2009 at the Ministry of Environment and National Development Unit from Societé Masmil & Filature de Riche Terre Ltd. for an Environment Impact Assessment

license for the division of a plot of land of the extent of 21 hectares 1404 m² at La Vigie, Midlands, into 64 lots for industrial purpose. The application is still under consideration at the level of that Ministry.

Mr Dowarkasing: Mr Speaker, Sir, in view of the development that is supposed to take there, is the hon. Minister satisfied that this portion of land fits in the national strategy guidelines 2006 of the Ministry of Housing and Lands?

Dr. David: Mr Speaker, Sir, I will check with the relevant Ministry.

CINQ ARPENTS- MAIN ROAD- RESURFACING

(No. B/1071) Mr S. Soodhun (Fifth Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping whether he is aware that the main road at Cinq Arpents is almost impracticable due to the fact that it has not been tarred since many years and, if so, will he state if remedial measures will be taken.

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

I am informed by the Municipality of Vacoas/Phoenix that a tender exercise has already been launched on 20 September 2009 for the complete resurfacing of Cinq Arpents road, and works are expected to start before the end of this year.

BAMBOUS CEMETERY- EXTENSION

(No. B/1085) Mr A. Ganoo (First Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Minister of Local Government, Rodrigues and Outer Islands whether he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Black River District Council, information as to if the inhabitants of Bambous have made representations for the extension of the cemetery in view of the difficulties they are now facing for the burial of their relatives.

Dr. David: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Black River District Council that no representation has been received from the inhabitants of Bambous for the extension of the Bambous cemetery.

Mr Ganoo: Can I ask hon. Minister if he would be kind to liaise with the Black River District Council? Because there are several complaints that families are now finding it difficult to find a plot of land to bury their near and dears.

Dr. David: Mr Speaker, Sir, yes, I will be kind enough to do that.

SHOPS - 24/7 CONCEPT - OPENING HOURS

(No. B/1044) Mrs S. Hanoomanjee (Second Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Minister of Business, Enterprise and Co-operatives whether, in regard to the implementation of the concept of 24/7, he will state if Government proposes to amend the appropriate legislation to liberalise the opening hours of shops, supermarkets and other shopping centres.

The Minister of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment (Mr J. F. Chaumière): Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I shall reply to PQ B/1044. As the House is aware, the Finance Act 2005 has repealed the Shops Act, and the opening hours of shops are, therefore, no longer regulated.

LIVESTOCK FEED FACTORY- CLOSURE

(No. B/1045) Mrs S. Hanoomanjee (Second Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Minister of Agro Industry, Food Production and Security whether, in regard to the Livestock Feed Factory of his Ministry, he will state if the closure thereof is being proposed and, if so, indicate the reasons therefor.

Mr Faugoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, the Richelieu Livestock Feed Factory has ceased its operations since 15 October last, because it has become no longer economically viable for it to continue manufacturing livestock feed.

In fact, the following factors have motivated Government to decide on the closure of the factory -

- (i) the factory set up in 1943 has been operating with very old machinery which frequently broke down, thus necessitating high annual maintenance costs;
- (ii) the operations were labour-intensive, and 73 persons, half of whom were in the age bracket of 56-60 years old, have been working in the factory in very difficult conditions;
- (iii) productivity was very low in that only 7,000 tonnes of feed were manufactured annually, for a total national demand of 120,000 tonnes.
- (iv) costs of raw materials have increased substantially from Rs35 m. in 2007/08 to Rs85 m. in 2008/09.

- (v) cost of production, both for cow feed and pig feed, was higher than the selling price of similar products manufactured by private companies;
- (vi) the livestock feed was distributed free of charge at an additional cost of Rs4,000 per tonne.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to add that the price of livestock feed manufactured by Richelieu Livestock Feed Factory has not been revised since 1994, despite substantial increases in the price of raw materials over the years. For the past 15 years, the price of cow feed has remained at Rs2,500 per tonne and that of pig feed at Rs3,900 per tonne. Those prices included a subsidy element of Rs1,500 per tonne for the benefit of breeders owning up to 20 animals. For comparison purpose, the selling price of cow feed and pig feed marketed by the private manufacturers were Rs10,425 and Rs12,500 per tonne respectively.

My Ministry is encouraging the development of the dairy and livestock sector and, in that context, necessary measures are being taken to accompany and empower the breeders

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- (i) the subsidy on livestock feed has been increased from Rs1,500 to Rs2,000 per tone, and will benefit some 1,400 cow breeders and 500 pig breeders;
- (ii) arrangements have been made with the two local manufacturers of livestock feed to ensure a regular production and supply of the feed to the breeders;
- (iii) a Pasture Development Scheme is being introduced to reduce dependency on concentrates and to encourage planters and breeders to produce high quality fodder. In that context, a grant of Rs17,000 per *arpent* will be given to interested planters and breeders owning up to 25 *arpents* of land;
- (iv) the production, preservation and commercialisation of fodder by entrepreneurs is being encouraged;
- (v) land has been earmarked under the 1000A scheme of MSPA land, specifically for fodder production;
- (vi) a scheme is being introduced for small breeders to import animals of genetically superior breed, to increase productivity of meat and milk. Under this scheme, the breeders will be given a grant of Rs30,000 and a loan of

Rs40,000 at 3% interest rate, repayable over a period of five years plus a moratorium of one year;

- (vii) breeders are being encouraged to regroup to benefit from economies of scale, and arrangements are being made with the two big producers, namely Golden Cream Ltd and SKC Surat Co, to facilitate purchase of milk from the small breeders;
- (viii) in parallel, assistance will be given to cooperatives societies and groups of breeders to set up mini manufacturing units to produce feed rations.
- (ix) two pasteurization units are operational, and two others are in the process of being set up to encourage the breeders.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Mr Speaker, Sir, I thank the hon. Minister for his reply, but can he say whether, since the closure of that Livestock Feed Factory he has had meetings with the small breeders to know what procurement difficulties they are getting? He just mentioned that there have been meetings with those who would supply, but yet there have been regular shortages and has he had meetings to discuss with the small breeders about those shortages in producing the necessary material?

Mr Faugoo: We had lots of meetings with the breeders prior to making arrangement for the proper supply after the closing down of the factory. So far, there has been no complaint, Mr Speaker, Sir, neither from the suppliers nor from the breeders.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister has just said and, again, in his statement, he is saying that he is encouraging small breeders to breed goats, cows and pigs so that the country can become self-sufficient in meat, but can we know whether the closure of this factory is not in direct contradiction with his proposed policy, because we know that there is a Food Security Fund and could not this fund be used to subsidise the livestock feed which was required?

Mr Faugoo: How can it be in contradiction, Mr Speaker, Sir, when I have said that this was not sustainable economically? On the other hand, we are using funds from the Food Security Fund to enhance this sector. We have already moved from 2% production of milk locally to 4% today and we are targeting to reach 10% by next year and in two years time we are targeting to produce 14% of milk locally. This is an indication, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Dulloo: I don't know whether the hon. Minister is aware that since the 1980s private companies were putting pressure on Government to close down this Livestock Feed Factory. He has talked about what is sustainable economically, accompaniment and empowerment of the small livestock breeders. May I ask him whether this Livestock Feed Factory was not a very important element in sustaining the small cow breeders by making subsidised livestock feed accessible to them and whether he should, on the contrary, have considered putting up a modern factory there as has been considered over the years? There was a project to this effect. What has he done to that project?

Mr Faugoo: In fact, the operation of this factory should have been reviewed years ago, Mr Speaker, Sir. We are not only closing down, we are closing down because we cannot sustain. We cannot accept that the price of feed on the market by private companies is lower than the cost of production of that particular factory at Richelieu.

Secondly, as I said in my answer, we are putting up in specific areas, modern and small factories to produce cow feed and we are empowering the farmers and the breeders to manage their own feed factories, Mr Speaker, Sir. I enumerated a list of incentives which are being given to all these breeders.

Mr Jhugroo: Can I know from the hon. Minister whether there was any negative report from the Audit Department, or there was any recommendation to close the Livestock Feed Factory?

Mr Faugoo: I have already enumerated a list of reasons as to why it has to be closed down, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: May I ask the hon. Minister whether he has received any complaints from the small breeders regarding the high prices they have to pay for the livestock feed?

Mr Faugoo: This is why, My Speaker, Sir, I said that we reviewed the subsidy which is being given to the breeders, we have raised it and we are also working with the breeders and co-operators to put up some factories, small units so that they can be empowered to produce their own cow feed.

Mr Dulloo: Can I ask the hon. Minister whether he is aware that this Livestock Feed Unit in the Ministry has got wide expertise and experience in producing the proper type of livestock feed for the small breeders, whether for pigs, cows or other breeders and, therefore,

by one-go he is getting rid of all those expertise and experience that have been supporting those small livestock breeders so far?

Mr Faugoo: We had meetings with the technicians of the Livestock Factory and the private sector and they have given the guarantee that they are going to furnish the same kind of cow feed, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Dowarkasing: After the closure of this Livestock Feed Factory, is the hon. Minister aware that livestock feed is being sold on black market has gone even on black market now? People have to purchase their livestock feed in black?

Mr Faugoo: This is not true. On the contrary, there was abuse before, Mr Speaker, Sir, because ...

(Interruptions)

Let me answer! Because of the subsidy and the distribution network, there was abuse in the system, Mr Speaker, Sir. They were abusing on the price as they were supplying breeders who were not entitled to receive cow feed.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Mr Speaker, Sir, I can confirm what my colleague just said. From 25 of September to 06 October, there was absolutely no livestock feed on the market. There was a shortage. At a time when the Government is providing a stimulus package to other sectors of the economy, *les petits éleveurs sont encore plus vulnérables*. Can the hon. Minister say whether this measure that he has taken *va amener la disparition des petits éleveurs*, everything to the detriment of the small breeders and that, now, the big operators who are producing milk and others in the sector, are the ones who will benefit from this measure?

Mr Faugoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Member is doing politics. As I said, these measures are being taken to enhance the production of milk locally. Already, there was a mechanism where the small breeders were selling their milk to AMB at Rs15 a litre. Today, with the actions that we have taken, they are selling at double the price already. This is only one example and with all the schemes that we have put up, this is going to enhance the sector and encourage the breeders to carry on with them.

Mr Speaker: A last question, hon. Dulloo!

Mr Dulloo: May I ask the hon. Minister whether he is aware that the existence of this Livestock Feed Factory within the Ministry was acting as a price regulator by providing

subsidised livestock feed, this was preventing private operators/companies from allowing the prices to skyrocket and this is what would happen right now?

Mr Faugoo: As I said, My Speaker, Sir, this is temporary. We are giving subsidy. We are putting up under a scheme some factories where they will be empowered to produce their own cow feed. This is only a sort of make shift arrangement which will be phased out with the coming of the small cow feed manufacturing units.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: I have one last question, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker: No, sorry, we have to limit to the number of supplementary questions once the matter has been sufficiently discussed!

NPIP II- LAND CONVERSION TAX

(No. B/1046) Mrs S. Hanoomanjee (Second Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Minister of Agro Industry, Food Production and Security whether he will state if the Land Conversion Tax has fully been paid on the portions of land which were excised from the NPIP II and which were exempted from the payment of the Land Conversion Tax by a Committee, chaired by the Chairperson of the Irrigation Authority and, if so, indicate -

- (a) the total amount paid by each person concerned;
- (b) when the payments were effected, and
- (c) for which extent.

Mr Faugoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to inform the House that the land excision approved by the Board of Irrigation Authority was not restricted to NPIP – Phase II, but covered all the gazetted irrigation zones. But, more importantly, Mr Speaker, Sir, I am advised that the practice of excising land from irrigation zone started in November 2003 despite the fact that the Irrigation Authority Act makes no provision for land excision/land conversion. This practice has perpetuated over the years and was only stopped in February 2008 following written instructions from my Ministry.

In order to ensure that this practice does not recur, my Ministry has taken the following measures -

- (i) the issue of a press communiqué in July 2009 to inform the public that the Irrigation Authority has no power under the Irrigation Authority Act to excise

land and all applications for land conversion should be addressed to my Ministry;

- (ii) the Irrigation Authority, at my request, issued a similar communiqué in August 2009 and placed a notice at its head office to inform the public of the procedures to be followed for land conversion.

Moreover, I have personally instructed that an enquiry be carried out to ascertain whether the Irrigation Authority was still entertaining requests for land excision. Accordingly, My Ministry requested the Internal Control Unit of the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development to carry out the enquiry and to also conduct an audit of the books and records of the Irrigation Authority with a view to drawing up a full list of all persons whose land had been excised by the Board of the Irrigation Authority.

The Internal Control Unit has submitted its report on 15 October 2009 this year. The report reveals that the Board of the Irrigation Authority has approved the excision of land from irrigation zone from November 2003 to February 2008. There has been in all some 275 cases of land excision for a total extent of 396ha.

My Ministry proposes to write to all the land owners concerned to request them to apply for a land conversion permit in order to regularise their situation. The Land Conversion Committee will examine the applications with a view to determining whether a land conversion permit is required and/or land conversion tax is payable.

Mr Speaker Sir, it is worth pointing out that the hon. Member who has put the question was herself the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources when the practice started in November 2003.

(Interruptions)

Mr Faugoo: She can confirm ...

Mr Speaker: There is no need. The hon. Member has the right to put questions.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am glad that the hon. Minister said this because I am sorry to say that the hon. Minister in his haste *de renverser la vapeur* is totally confused. He is confused about the role of the Land Management Committee.

Mr Speaker: The hon. Member is making a statement; she must put her question.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Can the hon. Minister say whether he is confused about the role of the Land Management Committee? Can he say whether he is confused about the role of the Irrigation Authority? Can he say whether he is confused about the role of his Ministry because when he mentioned 2003, can he say whether, as he confirmed himself, there was - to quote his own words - “misunderstanding, misinterpretation of the law, no mandate for the Chairman of the Irrigation Authority”? Can he confirm what were the terms of reference of the Land Management Committee in 2003 or whether the terms of reference of the Land Management Committee has been purposely amended by the Chairman, the actual Chairman, since his appointment?

Mr Faugoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I could have been confused with the confusion in the mind of the hon. lady. But I am not! I am talking of facts, Mr Speaker, Sir. The conversion which has been given since 2003 is not by any committee. It has been approved by the full Board of the Irrigation Authority. This is on record, this is a fact and I am stating only facts. If this is not clear to her, I can repeat again. All the excisions and conversions have been given so far since 2003 by the Board and not by any subcommittee. Now, there is a subcommittee which studies the requests and these requests are sent to the full Board, Mr Speaker, Sir. This is a fact, which I am saying. They have, at least, on 30 occasions since 2003 to January 2005, in 30 cases given conversions, Mr Speaker, Sir. It is, therefore, not the doing of the actual Chairman of the Irrigation Authority; it is something which started back in 2003 and continued up to January 2008 where we stopped it. We have made sure that this does not happen because this is illegal.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: I'll say, Mr Speaker, Sir, where the confusion is. Can the hon. Minister say as to why the new Chairman, when he was appointed, I think, in 2006, why he changed the terms of the reference of that land Management Committee so as to insert in it excision of land? Why did he change that? That was not done in 2003.

Mr Faugoo: Because they were doing something which they were not mandated to do already since 2003. By doing so, in fact, the Chairman mandated that committee, gave them the power to study cases and requests and come forward to the Board, Mr Speaker, Sir. This is what happened. It is a fact. Can they deny that this did not happen in 2003? This is exactly what he did; in fact, he corrected the wrong that was being done since 2003. But I must admit that he was also wrong, because this was not allowed according to the law.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister is only confirming what I have just said. That he has given the powers to the Irrigation Authority to excise land, whereas last time under the same PQ he said that the Chairman did not have any mandate. Can I ask the hon. Minister whether in the list that he just said he has received, the audit report, whether the names of the Chairman and some members of the Land Management Committee appear thereon?

Mr Faugoo: In the list, there is a name of Bheechook, Mr Speaker, Sir, but I do not know whether it is the Chairman's name or it is some other Bheechook.

Mr Speaker: We will continue with the supplementary questions after lunch time.

At 12.56 p.m. the sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 2.33 p.m. with the Deputy Speaker in the Chair

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member have more supplementary questions, I understand.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. I have two more questions on this issue. Can I ask the hon. Minister whether, from the time he has received the report and the list on which the name of Mr Beechoo appears, that is, from that time till now, he has not had time to check if it pertains to the one and same person, that is, the name of Beechoo which is on the list and the name of the Chairman of the Irrigation Authority?

Mr Faugoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I had time to go through the report and I had time to check whether it pertains to the Chairman of the Irrigation Authority. I have been told no, he is not the person. Yet I have to confirm it.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: The Minister, before lunch, said that he does not know whether he is the one and same person. Now, can the hon. Minister say whether his Ministry gave instructions to the Chairman of the Irrigation Authority to change the terms of reference of that Land Management Committee?

Mr Faugoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have stated certain facts. All the answers – the main answer and those subsequent to the questions put to me - have been given. I have stated facts as a staff list by the internal control unit and by the management of the IA. All excisions were approved by the Board of the IA not by any subcommittee whatever the name it can bear. This is the first thing I have said. Secondly, I have said that I have given the extent of

the land excised since November 2003 and it was a bad practice which started under the previous regime and which we stopped as from last year. This is also a fact, it is on record. I have also stated how we are going to move forward to recuperate whatever tax ought to have been paid to Government. We are going to go case by case and ask them to come and apply and where applicable we are going to ask them claim the tax payable. Now on the issue of the Land Management Committee, it exists from before 2005. It has certain mandate. It has certain terms of reference. One of the terms of reference was changed at the level of the IA. It has nothing to do with the Ministry. We were not aware of this. And this is where when we were made aware that there were cases of conversion and excision, we decided to write and give instructions to IA to stop that practice, a practice which started in November 2003.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Minister to say why, in a previous PQ, he spoke of misunderstanding and of the Chairman having no mandate to do things? I have another question. Can he say whether one of the recommendations that have been made by the audit inquiry is that the Board has acted contrary to the provisions of the SIE Act?

Mr Faugoo: I don't know where the confusion is, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. I said the Chairman had no mandate. He does not have the mandate even today because it is illegal under the Irrigation Act and under the SIE Act. It is illegal. They cannot excise land which is agricultural land. It is so simple. They have been doing it since November 2003 which was illegal and that illegality continued in 2005, 2006 and 2007 which we put a stop to it. It's so simple. And I have said again this is going on 'the Chairman', it is not the Chairman, it is the Board. He is the Chairman of the Board; the Board has approved. This is black on white, this is factual. I don't know where the hon. Member is confused.

The Deputy Speaker: We will take a last question!

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Mr Deputy Speaker, the hon. Minister is talking of land excised altogether. My question relates to the NPIP II which is different. Land excised altogether from the irrigation zones is different. Land excised under NPIP II which is funded by BDA and ADB is different. This is where I say there is confusion. These are two different matters; it is not the same matter.

Mr Faugoo: How can it be two different matters, it is agricultural land whether it falls under project II or project I or any area which has been proclaimed agricultural land in the island. How can it be two different lands? It is land in one phase or second phase, but it

has been approved by the Board. It is an agricultural land. What is important is that no approval has been given by any subcommittee wherever the land is. Whether it is NPC II or I or any region it has been given by the Board. Can I be clearer than this, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir?

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you Minister. Next question, please!

QUARTIER MILITAIRE - RIVIERE FRANÇOISE – ROAD REALIGNMENT

(No. B/1047) Mr S. Dayal (Second Member for Quartier Militaire and Moka) asked the Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping whether he will state if Government will consider the advisability of realigning the road from the Rivière Françoise, Quartier Militaire roundabout to St Julien d'Hotman.

Mr Bachoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed that the Road Development Authority will, during the next financial year, appoint a consultant to carry out a technical study for the upgrading and rehabilitation of Higginson Road from Quartier Militaire to St Julien d'Hotman over a length of 10.6 kms.

DAGOTIERE TO ALMA – LINK ROAD

(No. B/1048) Mr S. Dayal (Second Member for Quartier Militaire & Moka) asked the Minister of Housing and Lands whether he will state if Government will consider the advisability of negotiating with the Mon Désert Alma Sugar Estate for the acquisition of part of the link road from the NHDC of Dagotièrre to Alma which is 202m long and 6m wide with a view to alleviating the hardships caused to the road users of the neighbouring regions.

Dr. Kasenally: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, my Ministry is empowered under the Land Acquisition Act to acquire lands for the implementation of Government projects. This exercise involves payment of substantial compensation by Government. Hence, prior to initiating the acquisition procedures, my Ministry should receive a formal request from the Ministry or Department concerned indicating the availability of funds, suitability of the site and the time frame for the implementation of the project. According to records available, no official request has yet been received for the construction of a link road from the NHDC of Dagotièrre to Alma.

Mr Dayal: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in fact, Mon Désert Alma has given the right of access but no authorisation to construct the road. Therefore, I would like to ask the hon. Minister if he could liaise with his colleague, the Ministry of Local Government and the relevant Authorities just as in the case of Flacq, Argy to La Porte, Constance La Gaité has given authorisation to construct the road on certain conditions - in fact, only 202 m. long road and people have to walk or drive a distance of 5 to 6 to kms. May we know if this could be done here also as it has been done in Flacq?

Dr. Kasenally: Yes, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Mr Ganoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is it possible for the hon. Minister to see if this can be done in the CSR programme?

(Interruptions)

Dr. Kasenally: I say that I shall negotiate. As far as I am concerned, I'll see what can be done...

(Interruptions)

Mr Dayal: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in fact, around 1998 I raised this question and the then Minister of Lands said that his Ministry would move for negotiations and if negotiations would fail, then it would have recourse to compulsory acquisition.

Dr. Kasenally: There must be a site visit.

QUARTIER MILITIAIRE – SWIMMING POOL - CONSTRUCTION

(No. B/1049) Mr S. Dayal (Second Member for Quartier Militaire & Moka) asked the Minister of Local Government, Rodrigues and Outer Islands whether, in regard to the plot of land already identified and earmarked by the Moka/Flacq District Council for the construction of a swimming pool at Quartier Militaire, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the District Council, information as to where matters stand.

(Withdrawn)

CEB - SECURITY SERVICES – TENDER EXERCISE

(No. B/1050) Mr G. Gunness (Third Member for Montagne Blanche & GRSE) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Renewable Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to the contracts awarded for the provision of security services by the Central Electricity Board, in the last tender exercise, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Board, information as to the names of the firms which had submitted tenders, indicating the -

- (a) bid value, and
- (b) name of the successful bidder.

The Deputy Prime Minister: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the CEB that –

- (a) Open bids were invited in the press in March 2009 for the provision of security services at 58 sites of the CEB. By the closing date of 22 April 2009, six bidders submitted their offers. The names of the bidders and the respective bid values are as follows –

• Keep Pace Security Guard Ltd.	Rs15,021,600
• New Security Guard Ltd.	Rs15,934,200
• Rapid Security Services Ltd.	Rs17,290,800
• Brinks (Mauritius) Ltd.	Rs26,465,664
• Chavii Security Guards Ltd.	Rs16,240,800
• Special Security Guards Ltd	Rs11,350,320

As regards part (b) of the question, after both technical and financial evaluation of the bids received, all 58 CEB sites were awarded to Brinks (Mauritius) Ltd, the only responsive bidder, for a period of one year as from 01 June 2009.

Mr Gunness: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, may I know from the hon. Deputy Prime Minister, because from the figures that he has just mentioned, I can see, for example, the lowest bidder is Rs11 m., whereas in the case of Brinks (Mauritius) Ltd, it is Rs26,454,664. Therefore, it is a difference of nearly Rs15 m. Can I know how can it be that it is the highest tenderer which has been awarded the contract?

The Deputy Prime Minister: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have replied already to this question. The others were not responsive. And I'll say one thing. I also looked at the figures to see which is the highest. I also looked at the previous security services and in 2006 or thereabout it was a about Rs24 m. In 2008, it was Rs26 m. So, this figure of Rs26 m was appearing high. But I repeat the main problem has been the evaluation...

(Interruptions)

If the hon. Member is interested, I'll lay a copy on the Table of the Assembly.

(Interruptions)

Later, I am thinking back. Sorry! I will be only too happy to give him a copy of how it was done.

(Interruptions)

Mr Bérenger: Can I ask the composition of the Evaluation Committee and the Chairperson?

The Deputy Prime Minister: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the evaluation team was made up of three persons; one is a Principal Engineer, the other one is the Senior Accountant and the third one is a Communications Officer. It is chaired by the Principal Engineer.

Mr Lesjongard: May I ask the Deputy Prime Minister on what grounds were the other bidders not found responsive?

The Deputy Prime Minister: The criteria were laid down in the selection process and the criteria as laid down were non-financial and financial and marks were given accordingly. It was on company profile and experience, site management and organisation, methodology and management approach, manpower policy, recruitment and screening

mechanism training, supervision and monitoring mechanism, logistics, equipment and facility. As I said, I will only be too happy to submit the complete evaluation criteria and lay it on the Table.

Mr Jhugroo: Can the hon. Deputy Prime Minister table a copy of the Minutes of proceedings of the Board when this decision was taken?

The Deputy Prime Minister: I can't say that I can, but I'll find out from the Board. This is a copy, I lay it on the Table.

Mr Gunness: Can I get it from the Deputy Prime Minister whether he is prepared to lay on the Table of the Assembly a copy of the Evaluation Report which has been prepared?

The Deputy Prime Minister: Here it is in my hand. I have just said, I would have offered it even before the hon. Member asked. I propose that I do it.

MRA – STATE LAND – BENEFICIARIES – FRAUD & TAX EVASION

(No. B/1051) Mr E. Guimbeau (First Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Empowerment whether he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Revenue Authority, information as to if beneficiaries of State land have been involved in cases of fraud or other forms of tax evasion, since July 2005 to date.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Empowerment (Dr. R. Sithanen): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Mauritius Revenue Authority (MRA) that since July 2005 to date, investigations have been carried out into 26 cases of under declaration of income by land developers by the investigation unit of the former Income Tax Department and the Fiscal Investigation Department of the MRA. In this respect, claims for a total amount of Rs56 m. , including penalties have been issued. I understand that out of these cases, six of them are still under appeal.

I am further informed that specific information precisely on beneficiaries of State land, who have been involved in cases of fraud or other forms of tax evasion, as requested for, is not compiled in the MRA data base. However, MRA in its efforts to make all taxpayers pay their fair share of tax liability, tracks all under collections of income tax irrespective of whether such declarations are in respect of development on freehold or State land.

I am also informed that MRA monitors closely all major real estate development projects to ensure that the promoters fulfil their obligations under the tax laws administered by the Authority.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as regards the complex schemes that have been devised by certain promoters to sell bungalows and apartments to non-citizens through mechanisms that might not be in accordance with the Non-Citizens (Property Restriction) Act, I wish to reassure the hon. Member that the MRA is examining closely those projects to determine whether there has been any case of tax evasion. On the regulatory side, as the House is aware, we have brought a number of amendments to the legislation in the Finance (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2009 to prevent the use of such schemes in the future.

Moreover, a committee has been set up to take stock of projects where there are presumptions that disguised ‘sale’ of immovable property to non-citizens have been effected with a view to determining the most appropriate course of action against such practices.

Mr Guimbeau: Will the Minister table the names of those involved in those cases of fraud and tax evasion?

Dr. Sithanen: I can't.

Mr Guimbeau: Why not, Sir?

Dr. Sithanen: You have to protect the privacy of individuals. You'll be surprised if these names are made known.

Mr Guimbeau: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I won't be surprised. That is the reason for which I am asking for the names.

Dr. Sithanen: You know that the law does not allow me to do this.

Mr Guimbeau: Can the hon. Minister request the MRA to initiate an audit trail on the bank accounts of all those who have benefited from State land and *Pas Géométriques* and then transferred it to a promoter? I want to know whether the Minister can request the MRA to have an audit trail on those accounts.

Dr. Sithanen: I wish this could be done. But, as you know, this is a country where there is the rule of law. We know under what circumstances we can have access to the bank accounts of individuals; and these are extreme circumstances. So, there must be a *prima facie* case of what has happened first, and this can be done. That is why we have set up a committee in order to investigate some of these colourable devices that have been used to circumvent the Non-citizens (Property Restriction) Act. It is a difficult subject, and that is why we have set up a committee. The MRA is doing its work.

Mr Guimbeau: It is the duty of the MRA to enquire into such cases as well. Is it the case?

Dr. Sithanen: The MRA cannot, on its own, go to the bank and look into the bank accounts. This is forbidden by the law of this country.

Mr Jhugroo: Can the hon. Vice-Prime Minister explain to me why names cannot be revealed when there is fraud or other forms of tax evasion? It should be published. People should know those who are doing tax evasion or fraud.

Dr. Sithanen: We will have to change the law, my hon. friend. What we are saying is that, for the moment, a person, even if I disagree with him, is deemed to be innocent until proof, evidence is given against him. This is a country where there is the rule of law, and this

is the way that it is being done. I would have liked if it could have been otherwise. We know many cases where basically that has happened, but there is a process which must be respected.

Mr Dowarkasing: Can I ask the Vice-Prime Minister whether he has checked if we can use the provisions of the Data Protection Bill to get those information?

Dr. Sithaneni: I don't know what information the hon. Member is talking about.

(Interruptions)

Then, we have to go to the court for this. First, we have to make a case. It cannot be a fishing expedition. Even though I am not very happy about certain things, there is a process which we have to respect. First, we have to satisfy the Judge that there is sufficient case for the information to be released.

The Deputy Speaker: Next question! Hon. Bhagwan!

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Can I have some order, please! For some reason, the hon. Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism, Leisure and External Communications is not in attendance. What I suggest is that we go to the next question, and then we will come back to this question as soon as he arrives. There must be some good reason for his absence.

BYRON, BRADLEY & GRAND BOIS COLLEGES – REDEPLOYMENT SCHEME

(No. B/1053) Mr G. Gunness (Third Member for Montagne & GRSE) asked the Minister of Education, Culture and Human Resources whether, in regard to the three colleges scheduled to be closed down in 2010, he will now state if the redeployment of the scheme of the teaching and non-teaching staff thereof has already been worked out and, if so, give details thereof and, if not, why not.

Dr. Bunwaree: Mr. Deputy Speaker Sir, in reply to PQ B/850 on 14 July 2009, I informed the House of the situation with regard to the three colleges, namely Byron College, Bradley College and Grand Bois College. Before going any further, let me reassure the hon. Member that, in the event of the closure of any school, arrangements will be made through MEDCO in line with the existing redeployment scheme for the teaching and non-teaching staff to be redeployed on no less favourable terms.

With regard to Bradley College, in July this year, a *mise en demeure* was served upon the PSSA and the Ministry by the Management of Bradley College contesting the decision of the PSSA and requesting it not to implement its decision to withhold the registration of the school as a grant-aided private secondary school as from January 2010 and onwards. Bradley College on the other hand has good infrastructure and industrial relations are not a perennial problem. In the case of Grand Bois College and Byron College, we have also noted that they have admitted a good number of pre-voc students exceeding the threshold for the prevocational stream, and many come from deprived areas.

My Ministry has examined the matter and observed that recommendations were made for closure of schools on ground of a shortfall by a relatively low number of students in the mainstream while in the pre-voc stream it exceeded the threshold. In line with our policy for an all-inclusive education system, we should not penalise schools which have admitted students in deprived areas especially where the school is situated in an isolated area and closure of same can cause social problems. It was concluded that in the event the school is made to close down, this may cause undue hardship and prejudice to the pre-voc students. Taking into consideration the social implication of such a step, it was decided that the matter would be reviewed.

Accordingly, a Technical Committee comprising representatives of my Ministry, the PSSA and the Management Audit Bureau has been appointed to review the existing criteria for payment of grants.

Pending the review of the criteria for payment of grants, we have given one additional year moratorium to Byron College and Grand Bois College. As regard Bradley College, it is expected to continue its operations and will be subject to normal assessment by the PSSA.

Mr Bérenger: Can I ask the hon. Minister for facts? Is it a fact that the regulations gazetted have been gazetted by the PSSA which, under the law, has the responsibility of setting the conditions whenever a school will close down and the PSSA has not amended those regulations? Is it, therefore a fact that the Ministry is in contradiction with the law, with the regulations prepared and gazetted by the PSSA?

Dr. Bunwaree: There is difficulty there, but we are saying that we are reviewing; we have appointed a technical committee. But all these will be put in order once we have the technical, it is not going to take too much time. The problem is that these three colleges have been given a warning for one year which is lapsing this year. We are extending that

moratorium for two colleges essentially. For Bradley, why there is *deux poids deux mesures en quelques sorte*? *C'est parce que pour* Bradley College, there is no industrial relation whereas in the two other colleges, the industrial relations are there and this poses another problem. So, if not, all the three would have been in the same boat.

Mr Gunness: It seems that the hon. Minister is changing the policy because previously it was, for stoppage of grant, 150 for the mainstream and 25 for prevocational. The hon. Minister himself answered questions in 2008 where he announced that it will operate in 2009 and in 2010 there will be stoppage of grants and pupils would be redeployed. Can the hon. Minister inform the House, for example, in the case of Byron College, how many pupils does the college have in the mainstream?

Dr. Bunwaree: As to the last assessment, in the mainstream it is 180 and 47 in the pre-voc sector. As I am saying Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the figures have changed because more of the pre-voc are being admitted.

Mr Gunness: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, again I think that the hon. Minister will have to be clear. We are all for education, we all care for the deprived area. Is the hon. Minister aware that in 2009 Byron college has only 10 pupils actually in Form I. According to regulations, since it has less than 15 pupils in Form I, it should not have gone for pre-vocational. Is the hon. Minister aware of that?

Dr. Bunwaree: I am aware of that Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. In certain cases the colleges are placed in such locality that the closing down causes social problems. This also had to be taken care of. There is a technical committee working on that and we will come to a decision.

Mr Gunness: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, if we take the Flacq region there are 18 colleges, namely, the MGI, the Gajadhur, the Darwin, the Eastern Colleges and so many other colleges. The point that the hon. Minister is trying to make does not stand. According to my information we have 103 in the mainstream. The hon. Minister himself last year stated that grant will be stopped and pupils are to be redeployed?

Dr. Bunwaree: What I have stated I am going to state again. I state that there is a technical committee working on that. As we have decided to set up this technical committee, we have not taken actions and actions will be taken soon.

Mr Gunness: Has the hon. Minister looked into the industrial relation in that particular case? For example, is he aware that, I think 9 former Rectors have been sued and there are actually court cases against Rectors?

Dr. Bunwaree: As I said there are industrial relation problems. All these are being looked into. This is a very important and we are following very closely.

The Deputy Speaker: Last question!

Mr Gunness: Can I ask the hon. Minister to personally intervene in that particular case?

Dr. Bunwaree: Personally, I brought it to Cabinet and decision was taken to set up the committee and to review the conditions.

The Deputy Speaker Sir: Thank you, hon. Minister. Hon. Bhagwan!

‘MAURITUS, C’EST UN PLAISIR” LOGO – PROJECT COST

(No. B/1052) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Hon. Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism, Leisure and External Communications whether, in regard to the new brand identity logo of Mauritius, “Mauritius, C’est un Plaisir”, he will state –

(a) the cost of the project and

(b) if he has received indications of the response thereto from professionals and the public.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism, Leisure and External Communications (Mr X. L. Duval): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I apologize for being late. I thank the hon. Member for this question, which provides me an opportunity to deal with some issues raised by our branding exercise.

It is a popular misconception that branding is merely comprised of the creation of a logo and accompanying strap line. This is so because the logo and the strap line are the most visible elements of the strategy, while in fact these components of the Brand Strategy do not represent more than 5 % of the whole project.

Indeed the preparation of a brand strategy is a complex exercise and quite a long process. It entails various stages and involves substantial qualitative and quantitative research, both in Mauritius and overseas.

For our country branding exercise, we have been quite fortunate to have selected Mrs Fiona Gilmore of Acanchi Limited, a world renowned specialist in country branding, following an international tender exercise carried out by the Central Procurement Board.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Central Procurement Board invited bids on 8 February 2008 from a short list of 15 firms with international experience in nation branding. Of these 8 firms submitted their bids to CPB.

Subsequently, the Central Procurement Board set up an independent Bid Evaluation Committee and approved the recommendations of the Bid Evaluation Committee to award the contract for the branding of Mauritius project.

Acanchi Ltd is a British company specialised in country branding with extensive know-how and experience in the field. It has an impressive track record having worked on similar assignments in various countries and regions namely Hong Kong Bahrain, Dominican Republic, Lebanon, Wales, Northern Ireland; Belfast; Zambia; Isle of Man, The Blue Mountains of Australia; and we understand that the firm is presently elaborating the brand strategy for Rwanda and Israel.

The total cost of the project as entrusted to Acanchi Ltd is Rs38.9m. The House will note that the highest bid amounted to Rs78.6 m.

The brand exercise consisted of four stages namely:

- i. Internal & external exploratory research
- ii. Development of hypothetical concepts
- iii. Research and exploration of the hypothetical concepts
- iv. Finalization of the brand proposition and brand positioning & sub-positioning strategies

Apart from the logo and the strap line, the Consultant has had to produce several other deliverables namely:

- i. Report on quantitative and qualitative research
- ii. Report on hypothetical positioning concepts
- iii. Photographic Country Portrait
- iv. Recommendations on brand proposition and umbrella positioning strategy.
- v. Report on Mauritius Brand Icons
- vi. Report on Micro initiatives to inspire citizen advocacy
- vii. 3000 copies of Brand Blueprint

- viii. Visual Identity Guidelines
- ix. Seal of quality – Made in Mauritius, Made with care
- x. Development of a website
- xi. Marketing Plan
- xii. Cascade and launch workshops

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, elaborating a country brand strategy is an expensive exercise, best left to specialists. For example, Australia has earmarked a budget of 20 million dollars to re-brand the country, out of which 4 million dollars is formal branding exercise. India will, Mr Speaker, Sir, spend USD69 this year alone to support the Incredible India brand. For Canada, just for its seal of quality, the country has earmarked 32 million dollars.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (b) of the question, concerning the signature logo, using Pieter Both mountain as an icon, I note with that this has been well accepted. However, in regard to the strap line, there has been some negative comments in the media. These comments are far from unusual and are expected. They are often the result of misunderstanding of the strategic intent of the branding process and misconception as to the nature of a branding exercise.

I would like to mention, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the case of the most successful country brands worldwide, namely Incredible India. When it was launched in 2002, it was subject of severe and persistent criticisms. It is known today in 2009, but 7 years later, and despite its success, vehement criticisms are still being made towards Incredible India. The same can be said for the Truly Asia strap line for Malaysia.

Similarly, in the case of South Africa which has come up with 'it's possible' as strap line, it has also been subject to severe criticisms. In the travel trade, for instance, the question is being asked whether it is possible to travel safely in the country after the spate of violence.

In fact, Mr Deputy Speaker Sir, any judgment based on taste will bring about both positive and negative comments and it is normal in these circumstances to receive some negative comments.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, however, we have had very positive feedback from the industry stakeholders as well as from the public. I note with great pleasure that firms and Mauritians generally are adopting the new visual identity in their day-to-day conversations and activities.

Many local firms have been enthusiastic about the new logo and strap line and have contacted my Ministry to request permission for the use of the logo.

Furthermore, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would like to make mention that the Director Philately of CASCO Ltd, UK, (formerly known as CROWN AGENTS who are the international specialists in stamps designing and production for around more than 50 countries around the world) has sent a special note of appreciation for Mauritius brand identity logo which he considers to be particularly eye-catching.

(Interruptions)

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would also like to inform the House, that Fiona Gilmore, Chairperson of Acanchi Ltd., after taking cognizance of the comments made in the press, has responded by stating that she strongly believes that “*C’est un plaisir*” is the most appropriate strap line in that it fully embodies the essence of the brand strategy, and the core values underlying Mauritius.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, Acanchi has put forward a number of arguments justifying the rationale behind the proposal that “*C’est un plaisir*” be used as strap line as follows –

- The French strap line with the English title, Mauritius, depicts the multi-cultural and multi-linguistic ability of the people.
- “*C’est un plaisir*” is in itself multi-faceted in that at a simple level, it is an expression of service that comes at the end of having given or done something. But it is also the feeling that investors and visitors in Mauritius have expressed. That “it is a pleasure” to deal with Mauritians either through a call centre, or in a hotel or shop, or to deal with professionals in our offshore sector. That “it is a pleasure” for foreigners to invest and to reside in Mauritius, for example, witness the success of the Integrated resort scheme.

“*C’est un plaisir*” is, therefore, easily applied to all sectors of the economy.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, finally the Branding of Mauritius project has potential to generate substantial socio-economic benefits. However, it is a long term investment and will certainly bring concrete results in the future.

However, we are only at the beginning of our journey and we should allow the Brand values to percolate through the population.

This initiative is of national interest and the branding of a nation does not belong to a Government or to a political party.

I agree that not everything in Mauritius “*c’est un plaisir*”. There are many areas where improvements are necessary. The strap line “*c’est un plaisir*” not only reflects the core values and the personality of the Mauritian nation but it is also partly aspirational and should be accepted on that basis. It is a commitment to a better future and the belief that we can make our country, a place that we can be proud of.

Mr Bhagwan: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this has cost nearly Rs40 m. of taxpayers money...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please!

Mr Bhagwan: Cela a été un mauvais départ. We are not against branding. I will ask the hon. Minister what was the cost of that launching ceremony at Citadel and whether that was well organised, because from our opinion there was a lot of gâchis, *qui a été mal répercuté au niveau international. Je veux savoir quelle ont été les répercussions au niveau des professionnels du secteur touristique. Il y a des firmes locales dont les compétences n’ont pas été requises.*

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as far as local firms are concerned, we would ask local advertising companies to create partnerships.

Secondly, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the second thing is that, in fact, it is quite usual to have criticisms. I have taken examples of the best brands. It will always give rise to criticisms, to attacks. This is part of life and part of branding.

Thirdly, actually, they are the best people in the branding business. We can all have our opinion. This lady is a specialist, and that’s her role. This is what she does for so many countries. They are happy...

(Interruptions)

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I can understand that if there are problems, the Opposition would act as an Opposition. But they just want to criticise. It does not matter, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir!

(Interruptions)

To understand, Mr Speaker, Sir, what makes Mauritius tick, there is another research. This brand new business will be available everywhere and to understand, Mr Speaker, Sir, what makes Mauritius tick, how to make it good, how to improve and also produce...

(Interruptions)

Of course, it is easy to criticise! *L'art est difficile, la critique facile!* The Opposition, the then Government when they were saying that during Budget they were going to do the branding exercise. Zero! Nothing came out of it!

(Interruptions)

Mr Bérenger: The figure of Rs40 m. is a lot of money! Does that include all the money that went into branding exercise, that is, authorities, parastatals everybody that put in money? Does that figure include all expenditure that went into this?

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, the figure is the amount paid.

Mr Bérenger: The amount paid, but has Government looked into how much money has been put by the Local Authority, by the Ministry, by other bodies in the branding exercise?

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, the branding exercise concerned only what has been paid to Acanchi. There is also the salary of the coordinator.

Mr Bérenger: It is clear that this has failed – it is not too late. *Il faut revoir* the whole copy. The best commentator, before going further asked Government *de revoir sa copie*. Can I ask whether Government *est en train de revoir sa copie* concerning this branding exercise?

(Interruptions)

Mr X. L. Duval: I would not accept that! It is normal that the hon. Leader of the Opposition should say that. We have a lot of demands from the private sector to use the logo, in fact, because we are managing the logo at the moment. If you were to go on the internet, you will see that a lot of people are using “*C'est un plaisir*” as their profiles. I must say that people who live outside Mauritius love the logo more than us.

Mr Bhagwan: I have a question about the cost of this launching ceremony. It is not clear. Has that firm subcontracted work to the local Mauritian community?

Mr X. L. Duval: I can't understand the hon. Member. As far as I know...

(Interruptions)

Mr Guimbeau: According to my information, the final logo has been modified in the last minute in Mauritius. Can the hon. Minister confirm this information?

Mr X. L. Duval: There are some arguments as to the colour scheme, not the logo, but the signature itself. We are talking about two things. One is the signature "Mauritius, Pieter Both", then there is the colour scheme, the colour range and then there is the strap line. The colour range was finalised at the last minute.

Mr Guimbeau: Was it found there or was it modified here?

Mr X. L. Duval: The wording is from Acanchi.

Mrs Perrier: Le ministre est d'accord avec moi que la politique du gouvernement est de promouvoir une clientèle touristique haut de gamme. Est-ce qu'il pense vraiment qu'on peut enfermer les richesses de l'île Maurice dans le mot 'plaisir' - 'Maurice est un plaisir' ? 'Plaisir', d'après le dictionnaire, signifie euphorie, satisfaction, bien-être, contentement, libido, désir, planer, savourer, volupté, jouissance. Est-ce que ce logo s'adresse vraiment à cette clientèle ? Est-ce ce n'est pas réductif et équivoque?

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, had I wanted to choose the logo myself, I would have done it, I would not have called on specialists to do it, but they have provided the justification for it in that '*C'est un Plaisir*' reflects a generosity of spirit of Mauritians. When you say thank you to somebody anywhere in a shop, in a hotel, the person would say *c'est un plaisir*. This is part of it. It is a service quality which transcends all whether it is a call centre, whether, in fact, you are addressing yourself to a lawyer or whatever. This is it. And the second part is the fact that international investors feel that, once they have dealt with Mauritians, they are actually pleased with Mauritius. These are the two things. One is the service and the other one is the business satisfaction. I mean we can all have fun, it is fine, it is all right. This is what they are here for I suppose. But let's think of branding a country like Mauritius. You have all the religions and cultures in the world. You don't have only tourism like Maldives or Seychelles, but you have seafood, textiles, sugar, call centres and banking. You have everything. It is such a complex country. It is not that easy to say one little thing. This strap line is what we are talking about and it is only the strap line that everybody is complaining about. Nobody is complaining about the brand book or Mauritius logo.

If we get back to the strap line itself, Mr Speaker, Sir, it has to reflect all these things. It has to work for the industry, for the offshore sector as it has to work for tourism. It is easy to say this or the other, but when you look at the whole complexity of Mauritius, you will find that branding a country like Mauritius is far more difficult than many other countries.

Mr Cuttaree: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Vice-Prime Minister whether what was proposed to him was only one slogan or did he have to make a choice out of several?

Mr X. L. Duval: In fact, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the firm ACANCHI came up with that on about 10 or 12 of the short list itself – you are talking about the slogan – but they themselves chose “*C’est un Plaisir*”.

Mrs Martin: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would perhaps like to ask the hon. Vice-Prime Minister something about the strap line itself. It is actually in two languages. Is the hon. Vice-Prime Minister using ‘Mauritius’ as an English word and “*C’est un Plaisir*” as a French phrase? Are we, therefore, to understand that the strap line nearly targets only francophone countries, or otherwise what is the rationale behind those two?

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I talked about religions and also of languages. We speak so many languages. They wanted to reflect the fact that Mauritius is bilingual and so they chose ‘Mauritius’ and the French, but you can use the logo without the strap line or you can use it in the English version “It is a pleasure”, but the recommended version is the French strap line.

Mr Bodha: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in view of the fact that it is very difficult to capture the essence of Mauritius in a few words, may I ask the hon. Vice-Prime Minister whether we can have a list of the proposals which were made among which “*C’est un plaisir*” has been chosen?

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, if it is Acanchi. I’ll ask them if there is. I am not going to present myself as an expert in branding, otherwise I would not have paid Rs40 m. to somebody else and we would have done it in our Ministry. So, we are not going to do that. At the same time, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we have to rely on specialist, otherwise what is the point of taking a specialist. There is no point in it if we don’t rely on what a specialist does. She has done it for about 20 countries before. We’ll try it and if it really doesn’t work – and I hope everybody plays the game. It is much easier to destroy something than it is to create a brand. A brand is not created like that. It has to be created

and, hopefully, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we'll get the whole nation and also the Opposition on this. We are talking about the Rs40 m. that we paid. I agree that's a lot of money if you look at it in Mauritian rupees, but compared with Australia which will pay \$4 m. It is on the website; I am not lying on this. It is a fact that it costs a lot of money for branding, but it also can bring a lot of benefits. For instance, if the nation branding works altogether, we can make Mauritius a more pleasurable place to live in. That's a great thing, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Not only to welcome our visitors, but for ourselves too. So, that's a positive thing to look at. Let's give it a try! It may not work out. I have no crystal ball to see that it will work in six months or a year's time. I hope it works, because we have the courage to do it. So, let's see whether it works! At least, one thing I can see is that the logo itself is beautiful, the brand book is there, the photographic picture of Mauritius is there and I think, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, from feedback that we have got from overseas the strap line will work - at least, for the market that we want it to work.

Mr Bérenger: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, can I insist on that question, because it is the Vice-Prime Minister who said that the firm concerned made a number of proposals and recommended the one that has been picked? Give us a chance! Give the number of proposals! Let's have a look at it! Because, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Vice-Prime Minister has said, we'll see, it might not work. I think the country, having paid Rs40 m., is entitled to see the range of proposals.

Mr X. L. Duval: I have got no problem to give it to the hon. Leader of the Opposition personally or to the Leader of the MSM also. Because, in fact, I must say, to be frank, I did ask the lady to meet the Opposition Members to make sure that she could express herself. That wasn't possible, but she is coming back and she can meet and talk. It is up to them.

(Interruptions)

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I spoke to her and she is happy with that. I have got no problem at all. I am happy that there is a question here; I am happy that there is a national exercise, I am happy that there is criticism. The worst thing was that there would have been nothing at all and people would just have ignored it. Bbut we are going to continue in good faith, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, to give a national brand to this country so that in this whole information world where people are swamped with information, little Mauritius can come up a little bit more on the radar.

The Deputy Speaker: I am happy to have given ample time for questions. So, we can go now to the next question. Hon. First Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien!

CHILDREN DAY CARE CENTRES - REGISTRATION

(No. B/1054) Mr Y. Varma (First Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Women's Rights, Child Development and Family Welfare whether, in regard to the children day care centres registered with her Ministry, she will state the number thereof, indicating the -

- (a) registration conditions, and
- (b) steps taken to ascertain that they operate according to acceptable standards.

(Withdrawn)

MON TRESOR MON DESERT SUGAR ESTATE – LINK ROAD – COMPULSORY ACQUISITION

(No. B/1056) Mr Y. Varma (First Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Housing and Lands whether he is aware that the Mon Trésor Mon Désert Sugar Estate is the owner of the road linking the villages of Des Places and Carreau Esnouf and, if so, will he state if his Ministry intends to compulsorily acquire that portion of land to enable the tarring of the said road.

Dr. Kasenally: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that the road linking the villages of Des Places and Carreau Esnouf belongs to Mon Trésor Mon Désert Sugar Estate.

As I have indicated in my reply to PQ No. B/1048 my Ministry is empowered under the Land Acquisition Act to acquire lands for the implementation of Government projects.

In his reply on that same issue to PQ No. B/1025 in July 2008, the Minister of Environment and National Development stated that the procedures were underway to declare the abovementioned road public following which consideration would be given to its upgrading.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as at date, I have not received any formal request for acquisition of the abovementioned private road linking both villages.

Once a formal request is made to my Ministry, I will initiate acquisition procedures on a fast track basis. Subsequently, the portion of land will be vested in the Ministry of Local Government, Rodrigues and Outer Islands to put it at the disposal of the Grand Port Savanne District Council for eventual tarring and maintenance.

Mr Varma: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, could the hon. Minister inform the House who actually should make the request with the Ministry for the compulsory acquisition of the land?

Dr. Kasenally: I don't make a request. Other Ministries make the request. The procedure is as follows: the parent Minister makes a request to my Ministry and before they do that they have to ensure that they have funds for implementing their project and then it goes through my planning division and the procedure is set in motion to acquire it either by negotiation or failing that by compulsory acquisition.

LA CONFIANCE, BEAU BASSIN – FOOTBALL GROUND

(No. B/1057) Mr M. Allet (Second Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Youth and Sports whether, in regard to the project for the construction of a football ground at La Confiance, Beau Bassin, he will state where matters stand, following the negotiations carried out with the Médine Sugar Estate.

Mr Ritoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have been informed by the Ministry of Housing and Lands that three *arpents* of land have already been acquired from the Medine Sugar Estates Company Ltd under the 800 *Arpents* Scheme for the construction of a football ground at La Confiance, Beau Bassin.

The land has been vested in the Ministry of Environment & National Development Unit for the construction of the football ground.

I have been further advised by the NDU that the project is estimated to cost Rs5 m. and that funds have already been earmarked by them in this financial year. Tenders are expected to be launched soon.

Mr Allet: M. le président, comme vous le savez, ce projet de La Confiance était *long overdue*. Depuis très longtemps, les jeunes des régions de Maingard, Dupérré et Dr. Reid avaient besoin d'un terrain de football. Etant donné que le projet est dans la phase de 2005-2010 et nous sommes à la veille de 2010, est-ce que, d'après vous, on pourra avoir le terrain pendant la période où ce gouvernement est encore là, avant les élections?

Mr Ritoo: As the hon. Member knows, this project forms part of the 5-year plan of the NDU, 2005-2010. However, I'll impress upon my colleague, the hon. Minister of Environment and National Development Unit to give this matter urgency.

Mr Bhagwan: I refer to PQ B/214 concerning the same project which was replied on 06 September 2005 by hon. Bachoo, the then Minister of NDU. He replied that nearly Rs671,000 were spent for levelling of ground and the project was going to be implemented. Now, it is nearly four years and we are on the eve of the election. Now that the Minister of Youth and Sports is replying, can we have a firm commitment that this project will be implemented? Having it in a plan, four and a half years have elapsed, and we have a parliamentary question which was replied here.

Mr Ritoo: As I informed the hon. Member, I will impress upon my colleague, the hon. Minister of Environment and National Development Unit to give this matter urgency.

CANOT – FOOTBALL GROUND - CONSTRUCTION

(No. B/1058) Mr M. Allet (Second Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Youth and Sports whether, in regard to the project for the construction of a football ground at Canot, he will state where matters stand in relation to the negotiations being carried out with the Médine Sugar Estate.

Mr Ritoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the hon. Member that Government has already agreed to the acquisition of a plot of land to an extent of 3 Arpents at Canot from the Médine Sugar Estates Co. Ltd for the construction of a football ground.

The Land Conversion Unit of the Ministry of Agro Industry, Food Production and Security has recommended the conversion of the site which is located near the residential area of Canot.

Besides, I am informed that the Ministry of Housing and Lands is liaising with the Médine Sugar Estates Co. Ltd for the Provision of an access road from the site to the Black River Road.

As soon as the issue regarding the access road is resolved, the Ministry of Housing and Lands will initiate action for the acquisition of the land which will ultimately be vested with my Ministry for the implementation of the project.

Mr Allet: Vu qu'on a échangé, à trois reprises, le terrain à Canot, j'aurais aimé demander au ministre s'il peut arranger une descente des lieux en tant que député de l'endroit avec ses officiers pour aller voir où cela se trouve.

Mr Ritoo: I have no objection.

MONT ROCHES, BARKLY/CHEBEL BRANCH ROAD - EXTENSION

(No. B/1059) Mr M. Allet (Second Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping whether he will state if he will consider the advisability of extending the road leading from Mont Roches, Barkly, to the Chebel Branch Road.

Mr Bachoo: Sir, I am informed that the extension of the road from Mont Roches, Barkly to Chebel Branch Road is in the township of Beau-Bassin/Rose Hill. The access, which passes through the land belonging to Médine Sugar Estates, is a water-bound road of length 1.2km from Cyril Fanny football ground to Chebel Branch Road.

The project is estimated at Rs50m. and will require land acquisition. The Ministry of Local Government has been requested to consider the project in the next financial year.

Mr Allet: M. le président, étant donné que le propriétaire de Médine est très généreux quand le gouvernement demande des terrains pour le football et autres, il y a une grande demande des habitants de Mont Roches, Barkly, surtout qu'il y a un lieu de culte à Mont Roches qui est très demandé, est-ce que le ministre peut faire une demande à Médine. Si je comprends bien, il y a un projet de développement dans cette région pour la propriété de Médine. Si on fait une demande, je suis sûr que Médine va nous aider.

Mr Bachoo: I'll try to approach the Sugar Estate, but I would like to inform the hon. Member that a link road will be constructed from the police quarters of Belle Étoile to Chebel main road and for that purpose land acquisition is already on. I'll look into that.

Mr Bhagwan: Je ne veux pas être méchant, mais je veux savoir qui est le PPS de cette circonscription. Il y a eu tellement de changement. Je vous dis honnêtement, si vous me demandez qui est le PPS, je ne sais pas, je ne l'ai jamais vu. I am making a plea to the hon. Minister that after four and a half years, at the eve of the general election, people of Beau Bassin can see, at least, the face of the PPS who is paid from public funds.

(Interruptions)

BEAU BASSIN/PETITE RIVIERE – LOW COST HOUSING UNITS

(No. B/1060) Mr M. Allet (Second Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Housing and Lands whether he is aware that there is a high demand for low cost housing units in the Constituency No. 20, Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière and, if so, will he state where matters stand.

Dr. Kasenally: Mr Speaker, Sir, according to information available from the NHDC, the demand for low cost housing across the whole island, as at 22 October 2009 stood at around 24,800. Furthermore, such demands seem to be higher along the Port Louis-Mahebourg corridor.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is true to say that there is a high demand for low cost housing in Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière. However, it is important to mention that there are equally other high demand areas, if not higher, for low cost housing across the island. I am sure everybody is aware of this. I am informed that 1930 applications for low cost housing units from families residing in Constituency No. 20, Beau Bassin/Petite Rivière, have to date been registered at the NHDC, as follows -

Beau Bassin	1575
Petite Rivière	208
Richelieu	84
Albion	45
Gros Cailloux	18

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, Government has constructed 533 low cost housing on 6 sites across the island namely Bambous: 78; Chebel: 54; Henrietta: 156; Ville Noire: 70; Rivière des Anguilles: 91 and Rose Belle: 84.

The allocation of these housing units to eligible beneficiaries, including the 54 units at Chebel, will be completed by the end of this month. Furthermore, the contract for the construction of 550 low cost housing units over 11 sites, namely Petite Rivière: 36, Glen Park: 60, La Tour Koenig: 39, Camp Diable: 60, Plaine Magnien: 60, Grand Bel Air: 50, Britannia: 45, D'Epinay: 60, Cottage: 60, Calebasse: 60 and Roche Bois: 20 has already been awarded and works have already started.

This Government has, under the Integrated Social Development Project, carried out by the National Empowerment Foundation operating under the aegis of the Ministry of Finance and Economic Empowerment, constructed some 198 housing units at La Valette, Bambous, to very low income family earners at a total cost of some Rs200 m.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, unfortunately, demands for housing units are higher in regions when there is practically no land available for further housing development. Thanks

to the vision of our Prime Minister, 2000 *arpents* of land are being made available to Government by the MSPA out of which 1000 *arpents* will be devoted to social housing projects. The hon. Member may wish to know that Chebel is one of the 12 sites already identified so far. Technicians of my Ministry are, in consultation with other stakeholders, finalising social housing project proposals.

Mr Allet: M. le président, je suis d'accord qu'on a construit 200 maisons à Chebel, mais est-ce que le ministre peut voir avec la NHDC et faire un survey parce que quand on a construit des *low cost houses* et vous bougez les gens de la région où ils sont habitués- les enfants sont à l'école et ils travaillent dans la région - pour aller à Beau Vallon ou Rose Belle, cela change complètement leurs vies? Est-ce que le ministre peut envisager de faire un *survey* pour voir s'il y a un problème de terrain et s'il y a une demande de donner une priorité. Je suis sûr que le ministre des finances va nous aider.

Dr. Kasenally: We will never move people from Beau Bassin to far away. There is a policy decision. The *sine qua non* criteria to be eligible are that all applicants should be the owner of a house and applicants should have the repayment capacity for the purchase of the house. The monthly repayment should not exceed 25%. For the sake of transparency, eligible applicants are thereby earmarked to a point based system.

As far as the catchment area is concerned, inhabitants of the area where the construction is being carried out, score higher so that they get it.

As far as the catchment area is concerned, the inhabitants of the area where the construction is being carried out, score higher so that they get it. All people outside, for example, people from Rivière du Rempart cannot aspire to have social housing unit in Beau Bassin. We try ,as far as possible, to get them nearer but we cannot build a house next door to where they are staying. You could have imagined the problems, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Mr Soodun: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Minister just mentioned 1000 acres of land. I would like to know where these 1000 acres of land are located.

Dr. Kasenally: 1000 acres have been given for social housing. In fact, I mentioned in my reply where they are about and it is all over Mauritius. I can give the details to the hon. Member afterwards.

Mrs Martin: The hon. Minister mentioned the catchment area as one of the priority criteria which make people eligible to obtain a housing unit. May I ask the hon. Minister whether he considers it fair for those who do not live in the catchment area but who are also aspiring for a home where there is no construction being made in any catchment area where they live? They are members of the MHC and they respond to all the criteria except for the catchment area. Is it fair to them that they apply and but they don't get the house?

Dr. Kasenally: The catchment area is in fact quite wide. I must point out that is not immediate; for example somebody living in Curepipe can aspire to come to Henrietta if no unit is available there. It is a bit flexible, but we do not want somebody from Mahebourg to come to Curepipe. That is why these portions of land are spread all over the island.

Mr Allet: M le président, quand mes mandants viennent me voir au sujet des maisons de la NDHC je trouve qu'ils sont très *confused* avec les officiers de la NHDC. Certains disent qu'il leur faut faire un versement de R100, 000 et d'autres disent que cela doit être R60, 000. Ce sont des gens pauvres qui ont beaucoup économisé et lorsqu'arrive le moment pour eux d'acquérir leur maison, on leur dit qu'il faut payer cash. Je peux vous dire que pour ces 57 maisons livrées récemment à Chebel, il y a eu beaucoup de problèmes. Je compte sur les bons offices du ministre et j'espère qu'à l'avenir on pourrait remédier à cela.

Dr. Kasenally: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, nobody is asked to pay cash. What happens in certain circumstances is that, as I have said, they should be able to make a deposit of at least 10%, it comes at about Rs50,000. What has happened recently is that some poor people have been having grant from non-governmental or charitable institutions which have been helping them. Nobody is compelled to pay cash. This information is erroneous. However, instead of going to the NHDC, I find that the hon. Member is very active these days in the problem of housing. I think the best thing to do is that he comes to my Ministry and I can have my officers to explain to him all the details about where the sites are so that he can help his *mandants*.

Mrs Martin: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, coming back to my former question, does the Minister consider that normally all the housing units are constructed within the catchment areas where all the people who aspire for a home will be covered by the different catchment areas and, if so, can he say whether those persons who live closest or those who live furthest will have priority?

Dr. Kasenally: Those who live closer will have priority and that is why, as I have explained, it is not possible to have them in the immediate catchment area. Some people will have to make a movement about a couple of miles. As I explained, people from Curepipe are being considered for Henrietta and they will be considered for the new Glen Park social housing scheme.

Mrs Perrier: Le ministre vient de dire qu'il n'y a pas de *cash payment* à faire, mais est-ce qu'il est au courant vraiment que pour les dernières maisons livrées par la NHDC, ceux qui avaient le plus d'argent à déposer, c'est-à-dire, jusqu'à R100,000, avaient droit à ces maisons ? Est-ce que ces maisons n'ont pas été faites pour des personnes dont les salaires ne dépassent pas R7500 ?

Dr. Kasenally: In fact, it is between Rs7, 000 to Rs10, 000. Some people have been there for a very long time despite the fact that they are earning Rs7 000 or Rs10, 000. As I have said, there are relatives and these people have been saving and they are putting Rs100, 000 and NHDC cannot prevent them but, they still fall in the bracket of Rs7000 to Rs10, 000. These people are considered as anybody else. If somebody comes in and their relatives bring in more money, the NHDC considers them; it does not give them priority but considers them.

Mrs Perrier: Comme le nouveau député de la circonscription no. 20 vient de découvrir...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Would you come to the point please, hon. Member!

Mrs Perrier: Pour les personnes qui ont R7, 500, je vois difficilement comment ils peuvent réunir R 100,000 dans le contexte économique actuel. On peut à peine joindre les deux bouts avec R7, 500 de salaire par mois parce que c'est le seuil de pauvreté qui a été identifié par le gouvernement lui-même.

Ma deuxième question concerne la réponse que le ministre a donnée par rapport à la liste, il n'y a aucune mention de la région de Rivière Noire. Or, à une question précédente de l'année dernière il avait été mentionné que pour le village de Rivière Noire seulement il y avait plus de 125 demandes de maison, or dans votre liste il n'y a aucun terrain alloué pour la région de Rivière Noire.

Dr. Kasenally: First of all, I will answer to the first question about the criteria of Rs100,000. The NHDC does not require that everybody pays Rs100, 000. The minimum is

10% and it is about Rs50, 000. Once they pay that, they are eligible and I think that there is a committee which meets and looks into this case. As far as Rivière Noire is concerned, I think we have constructed a fair amount of houses in the region of Bambous, some of the people can get it. As I said, there are 198 which the National Empowerment Fund has constructed and there are still some vacancies for which they can qualify if they make the appropriate application.

The Deputy Speaker: I will allow two last questions!

Mr Ganoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I will come back to this question of deposit. Can the hon. Minister liaise with the officers of the NHDC because what happens in fact is that when the choice has to be made and a decision has to be taken, the NHDC gives priority to applicants who can afford more deposit and hardship cases where applicants who are very deserving and who can come up with a 10% deposit are excluded to their own disadvantage. It is only the applicants who can offer double the sum like Rs100, 000 are chosen. So, there is an injustice to deserving hardship cases even when they can offer the 10% because other applicants who can offer Rs100, 000 are chosen to the detriment of the deserving cases. This would seem to be the principle criteria.

Dr. Kasenally: No, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. In fact, there is only 5% of the number of housing units which are allowable for people who can make extra deposit; the rest is according to the criteria of 10%, that is, Rs50, 000. Only 5% is in fact given. I am prepared to be transparent and equitable and lay on the Table of the House the list of people who have been given. We cannot satisfy everybody. I think there is pressure, there is counter pressure but, I, as Minister, have to ensure that there is transparency, equity and fair accountability, as far as these houses are concerned. It is very important, and I think that buying a house is perhaps the most expensive item for any couple anywhere, not only in Mauritius.

Mr Bérenger: It is a very serious matter; we are talking about social housing and equal opportunity, especially for those who do not have money. The hon. Minister said that the NHDC gives priority to those who can pay Rs100,000, but that they are all treated equally. It cannot be both. Now, he has said 5% of the units - supposedly - are reserved for those who can pay. Will the hon. Minister agree that this is in total contradiction with the concept of social housing? Those most in need should get priority, and not those who can pay a Rs100,000/Rs150,000. Can I ask the hon. Minister when was that decision taken?

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order!

Mr Bérenger: When was that decision taken?

Dr. Kasenally: As I have said, these people who pay extra money have to satisfy the criteria. They should make a deposit of, at least 10%. But if somebody is poor, and his repayment capacity is limited, the minimum is 25%.

Mr Bérenger: When was that decision taken?

Dr. Kasenally: I think it was taken before I became Minister. I think It has been there for a long time. But, let me, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Please allow the hon. Minister to reply. Thank you.

Dr. Kasenally: It is not the exclusion of those who deserve it. It is because the NHDC has to accept. As I have said, people are helping their relatives to buy, but they still fall under the criteria. If they do not satisfy the criteria, they will not be given a house.

The Deputy Speaker: Last question! Hon. Allet.

Mr Allet: Etant donné que ces gens pauvres ne sont pas vraiment au courant des critères pour l'acquisition d'une maison NHDC, je voudrais demander au ministre de demander à la NHDC s'il serait possible de faire une campagne d'explication à travers la radio - maintenant, nous avons plusieurs radios - ou à travers la télévision, afin que cette couche de la population, ces pauvres puissent savoir ce qu'il en est.

Dr. Kasenally: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the NHDC staff does interview each and every applicant, telling them exactly what are their rights and what are the procedures.

PRE-PRIMARY/PRIMARY/SECONDARY/TERTIARY – SCHOOLING RATE

(No. B/1061) Mr M. Dowarkasing (Third Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked Dr the hon. Minister of Education, Culture & Human Resources whether he will state the schooling rate at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels respectively, indicating the measures taken as at to date to enforce compulsory education.

Dr. Bunwaree: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the schooling rate is generally measured by the Gross Enrolment Rate (GER), which is the proportion of enrolment at a given level (i.e. pre-primary, primary, secondary or tertiary) to the population of that corresponding school

age. The GER for 2008 is as follows; I am adding pre-primary although the question was not put -

- pre-primary level - 94%
- primary level including repeaters - 101%
- secondary level, covering academic and pre-vocational - 74 %
- tertiary level - 41%

Education is compulsory up to the age of 16. However, it is also a fact that, while we have almost 100% enrolment at the primary level, it is in the secondary sub-sector that a drop-out is significantly seen. It must be kept in view that compelling parents by legal means to keep their wards in schools will imply the imposition of fines upon parents who may already be low-income earners. Consequently, enforcement of legal action will unduly penalise parents. However, increased motivation and incentivisation would yield better dividends than the enforcement of the law.

It is in this context that my Ministry has initiated, in collaboration with other institutions, namely the National Empowerment Foundation and IVTB, a series of measures, with a view to facilitating and increasing access to education -

- (i) Under the Eradication of Absolute Poverty (EAP) Programme, some 500 children have been identified and admitted to pre-primary schools. This has an incidence on their transition to primary level.
- (ii) The Second Chance Programme, currently being implemented by the IVTB in Mauritius and Rodrigues, has extended the possibility for youngsters below the age of 21 and who are not attending any formal training or are not in full time employment, to be equipped to participate in an economic activity. This training programme covers life skills management, basic literacy and numeracy, and advanced literacy and numeracy.
- (iii) Under the Special Needs Education Programme, my Ministry is also keen on the mainstreaming of many of those children who do not attend school because of physical impairments of some kind. This is also part of the inclusive education process. Hence, relevant technological support as well as infrastructural additions, in a move towards discouraging those with a disability from dropping out of school.

Finally, I would like to inform the House that, as part of the computerisation process of the Ministry, we are developing the School Administration and Management System (SAMS) which will facilitate, *inter alia*, the tracking of learners as well as those dropping out at the grass root level.

The following measures are also being taken to increase the enrolment rate at the tertiary level -

- (i) providing a greater diversity of programmes;
- (ii) providing opportunities for students who do not have 2 'A' levels to enroll for higher education through foundation programmes;
- (iii) setting up of the Open University of Mauritius;
- (iv) creation of more infrastructure to accommodate students;
- (v) increasing enrolment of publicly-funded tertiary education institutions, and
- (vi) establishment of brand name overseas institutions or their affiliates/centres/branches in Mauritius.

However, I wish to point out, Mr Deputy Speaker, that, while we are making every effort to increase access at tertiary level, yet, we are committed towards maintaining a quality education at that level.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is also to be noted that the measures introduced in the last two Budgets of this Government, namely the provision of scholarships and Government Guaranteed Loans under the Human Resource Knowledge and Arts Development Fund, have enabled the democratisation of access to tertiary education.

The policy adopted by this Government for the maintenance of free education, free transport facilities and supplementary food programme, as well as provision of textbooks for needy students, are all contributing towards increasing enrolment levels.

Mr Dowarkasing: I thank the hon. Minister for his reply. Let me come first to the primary sector. The hon. Minister has stated that the percentage is 101%, including the repeaters. Can we know the percentage without the repeaters?

Dr. Bunwaree: It is between 98 and 100; more towards 100 than towards 98. But as for the exact figure, we'll have to look into and come to the House.

Mr Dowarkasing: Therefore, my next question is: if we retain the figures of 98 or 100, it means that we have more than 4% to 5 % of the children who are attending pre-

primary and getting direct access to primary education. Has something been done in that area?

Dr. Bunwaree: I mentioned a list of measures that are being taken. In fact, we believe it is a very important thing at all levels, be it pre-primary, primary and secondary. But, according to us, the most important part is at pre-primary and tertiary.

Mr Dowarkasing: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I just want to know from the hon. Minister whether any special measures have been taken to address the issue in the poverty and extreme poverty zone, where eventually we can see children loitering on the streets during daytime and not attending schools.

Dr. Bunwaree: Yes, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in fact, this is what I have mentioned. The EAP Programme is, in fact, that. One difficulty is to identify, especially at pre-primary level, where are those children. As the hon. Member is saying, we do find children here and there. We are even using the possibility of surveying through the children who are in primary and secondary schools, asking them who are the younger children who could be in their residence and who are not attending schools. A survey is being carried out, so that we can identify them. But we have all the possibilities to get them on track and get them to school, provided we know. I appeal to all Members of the House and all stakeholders to try to help us to identify these children. In many cases, they are not identified.

Mr Dowarkasing: I am just putting this question because I think it is very important. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, for years - and the hon. Minister will agree with me - the schooling rate at the primary level has remained more or less 94%-95%. It goes around an average percentage. We are still missing 6% of children into our primary schools and that has gone for years. If you go for statistics you will see for 5, 6, 7 or even more years this situation is prevailing. This means that maybe the measures we are taking are not addressing the issue. Could we know what new measures can be envisaged in order to get everybody on the school bench?

Dr. Bunwaree: I beg to differ, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. I explained that we are giving the gross enrolment ratio. But if I take the enrolment at pre-primary age 3 and 4 years, in 2004-2005, for example, it was 84.9% and in 2009, it is 91%. So, we have improved significantly and we are going to continue to improve. We have taken certain measures, we are going to continue along these lines.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: The Minister has just mentioned with regard to the tertiary sector the Government Guaranteed Loan. Can he say up to now, from the time this scheme has been put in place, how many have benefited from this Government Guaranteed Loan?

Dr. Bunwaree: I have already answered to this question previously, but I don't have the figure. But I did mention that for the loans, people must come forward to apply for the loans. We are trying to mediatise further so that people be aware that this facility exists.

Mr Gunness: With regard to the policy of constructing pre-primary classes in the premises of primary schools, has this been stopped or are we going ahead with that? I don't hear any pre-primary classes being constructed in the premises of primary schools.

Dr. Bunwaree: We are going forward, but there is a survey which is done regularly. One thing I can say is that we have not stopped, but we have to do it judiciously.

The Deputy Speaker: Last question from the hon. Third Member of Curepipe and Midlands!

Mr Dowarkasing: Thank you, Sir. From his reply the hon. Minister has stated that he does not favour the enforcement of the law. May I know from the hon. Minister whether any parent has been taken to court due to the fact that they are not sending their children to school?

Dr. Bunwaree: Not to my knowledge, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

SUGAR INSURANCE PENSION FUND - BENEFICIARIES

(No. B/1063) Mr S. Dowarkasing (Third Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Empowerment whether, in regard to the Sugar Insurance Pension Fund, commonly known as the Commarmond Fund, he will state the names of the beneficiaries thereof, indicating the amount of money standing in the Fund as at to date.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Empowerment (Dr. R. Sithanen): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I presume that the hon. Member is referring to the Sugar Industry Pension Fund.

In this respect, I wish to refer the House to the reply to PQ B/771 given by my colleague, the then Minister-in-charge of Finance.

As stated in that reply, although the Pension Fund was established under the Sugar Industry Pensions Fund Act 1955, it is a purely private initiative. It was established to provide financial benefits to contributing members being employees of the sugar industry or directly concerned with the sugar industry and to the heirs of those employees. Such benefits are as those approved by the Board.

I am informed that the management of the Fund's assets is vested with a management company which is a wholly owned subsidiary of the Fund.

Furthermore, as it is a private Pension Fund, it would not be appropriate to disclose the names of its beneficiaries. However, the 2008 Annual Report of the Sugar Industry Pension Fund Board gives a five year summary on its financial performance, including contributions received from its members. In this respect, the Report indicates that, as at 31 December 2008, it had 1,570 contributing members as opposed to 3,460 three years earlier on. I am also informed that the beneficiaries are pensioners and contributing members in the category of staff, artisans and labourers.

As per its financial statements ending 31 December 2008, the net assets of the Fund available for benefits amounted to Rs 3.4 billion.

Mr Bérenger: Can I ask the hon. Minister of Finance when an actuary exercised last done to look into the long term viability of the Fund?

Dr. Sithanen: Usually it is done every five years, but what I understand, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is that, because of the extreme volatility that has happened in the world financial

market, they have had one done every year to ascertain regularly its fund value and determine if it can honour its obligation. This is the information that I have.

Mr Gunness: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I remember the last time I put the question to the Minister of Finance concerning the end of year bonus in the case of the beneficiaries of this Fund whereby for this end of year they will not be paid end-of-year bonus, and I even asked the Minister to look into the possibility of intervening financially since at that time we are talking of stimulus package. If in this case we can help at least the Fund to pay these beneficiaries their end of year bonus.

Dr. Sithanen: This is a private Fund. Second, they give a bonus which is not a thirteen-month. It is an end-of-year bonus which is related to the financial performance of the Fund. I inquired vis-à-vis the Fund and I am told that for this year they lost money. They lost money for a very simple reason. All Pension Funds in the world probably have lost money because part of it is in bond, part of it is in equity and part of it is in bank deposit and in bank deposit interest rates have come down, for equity the price has come down and for the bonds also the market has been quite volatile. So, this is the main reason that they have given, that they are not in a position to pay a bonus, but should the situation improve, obviously they will consider it.

The Deputy Speaker: The Table had been advised that PQs B/1068, B/1070, B/1074, B/1075, B/1077 and B/1080 have been withdrawn. Next question please!

LE RÉDUIT - RAIN WATER DRAINAGE SYSTEM

(No. B/1064) Mr S. Naidu (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Environment and National Development Unit whether he is aware of the problems being caused by the absence of a rain water drainage system at Le Réduit, and if so, will he state the remedial measures that will be taken.

Mr Bundhoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am aware of the problems of absence of rain water drainage system at Reduit which was brought to my attention by hon. Suren Dayal and subsequently by hon. Jayen Cuttaree.

A contract for resurfacing and upgrading works along Soobramaney Avenue, Réduit, has been awarded on 23 of October 2009 and works are expected to start soon. I am informed that the road works are expected to alleviate and solve the drain problem.

Another drain project along Soobiah Avenue, Réduit is being designed by the Consultant of the National Development Unit. Once all the clearances and way leave issues have been cleared with the Authorities concerned, the contract for the execution of the project shall be allocated forthwith.

Mr Dayal: Can I ask the hon. Minister if he can state to the House the estimated cost of the project and when it is estimated to be completed?

Mr Bundhoo: The estimated cost of the project is almost half a million rupees. The started date is scheduled somewhere around 05 November this year and God willing, climate being in our favour, it should be around 20 December 2009.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Time is over!