

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

CID – CASES - INQUIRY

(No. B/578) 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 cases reported at each of the offices of the Criminal Investigation Division, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the outstanding number thereof as at to date, on a yearly basis, in which inquiries have not yet been completed?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, there are 36 CID units including one unit in Rodrigues operating under the Central CID. They deal, Mr Speaker, Sir, with a wide variety of crimes and misdemeanors.

I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that despite all the efforts put in by the Police, enquiry in some of the cases taken a longer time to be completed due to the complexity from various reasons.

The hon. Member will appreciate that it would take quite some time to compile, especially on a yearly basis, all the outstanding cases of the 36 CID units covering the whole island. The list will be circulated once compiled.

Mr Jhugroo: Can the hon. Prime Minister inform the House whether the victims are being made aware of the progress of the Inquiry?

The Prime Minister: No, I never intervene in the progress of the enquiry, Mr Speaker, Sir. The Police have their independence and they have to carry on the enquiry. I never interfere in an enquiry to see how it is proceeding.

Mr Jhugroo: What I asked the hon. Prime Minister is whether the victims are being made aware of the progress of the enquiry?

Mr Speaker: The Prime Minister has answered. He does not interfere, he does not know. Next Question, hon. Jhugroo!

(Interruptions)

I am not going to allow waste of time during Question Time. There are so many questions.

POLICE SERGEANTS - PROMOTION

(No. B/579) Mr P. Jhugroo (Third Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs whether, in regard to the Police Sergeants with more than 10 years working experience in this grade, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the number thereof, indicating if consideration will be given for them to be promoted either to the rank of Sub-Inspector of Police or that of Police Inspector.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that as of 18 June 2009, there were 1,113 Police Sergeants in post in the Police Force, of whom 356 reckoned more than 10 years service in a substantive capacity in that grade.

I am also informed that promotions in the Police Force are governed by the provisions of Regulation 19 of the Disciplined Forces Service Commission Regulations as well as Standing Order 16 of the Police Force which set out the procedures to be followed.

I am further informed that at present the following avenues for promotion of Police Sergeants to the rank of Sub-Inspector of Police or Inspector of Police exist in the Police Force –

- (i) Police Sergeants reckoning at least 10 years' satisfactory service in a substantive capacity in the grade are eligible for promotion on the basis of experience, merit and seniority to the grade of Sub-Inspector of Police, depending on the availability of vacancies. I understand that an exercise is currently under way for the filling of 56 existing vacancies in the grade of Sub-Inspector of Police.
- (ii) Police Sergeants reckoning at least two years' service in a substantive capacity in the grade may sit for the Competitive Examination to the rank of Inspector of Police conducted by the Disciplined Forces Service Commission. Those who pass the Competitive Examination are considered for promotion as Inspector of Police, again depending on the number of vacancies available in that grade.
- (iii) Police Sergeants posted to some specialised units of the Police Force, such as the Special Mobile Force, the Explosives Handling Unit, the Special Mobile Force Engineering Squadron, the Radio Workshop and the Dog Unit, are considered for promotion to the grade of Sub-Inspector of Police and Inspector of Police on the basis of their qualifications, experience, merit and seniority by the Disciplined Forces Service Commission. Promotions are subject again to vacancies existing in the grade of Sub-Inspector of Police and Inspector of Police.

- (iv) Police Sergeants who are nominated to follow approved training courses of at least one year's duration in Military Academies abroad or in other recognized institutions overseas, may, on successful completion of such courses, be considered for promotion as Inspector of Police.

FOREIGNERS – PROPERTIES – PURCHASE

(No. B/580) Mrs S. Hanoomanjee (Second Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs whether, in regard to the foreigners who have purchased properties, in Mauritius, which do not fall under either the Integrated Resort Schemes or the Real Estate Development Schemes, he will state the number thereof, since July 2005 to date, indicating –

- (a) their respective nationality, and
- (b) if the prior authorization of his Office was sought and obtained in respect of all the cases.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to parts (a) and (b) of the question, I wish to inform the House that since July 2005, my office has issued 19 authorisations under the Non-citizens (Property Restriction) Act to non-citizens from the following countries: France, South Africa, UK, India, Italy, Sweden, Japan and Monaco.

I wish to point out that with the coming into operation of the Business Facilitation (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act in 2006, the Board of Investment authorises the acquisition of immovable property for business purposes by non-citizen investors. However, my office is generally consulted by the Board of Investment whenever such applications are examined and prior to issue of any authorization.

As regards residential properties, in addition to the Integrated Resorts Scheme and the Real Estate Scheme which was announced in the Budget Speech 2007-2008, it is aimed at giving small land owners the opportunity to participate directly in such developments.

In fact, Mr Speaker, Sir, it has been brought to my attention that schemes are being used to circumvent the provisions of the Non-citizens (Property Restriction) Act to enable non-citizens to acquire or hold residential property outside the above-mentioned schemes or by the use of leasehold rights, '*droit d'occupation*' or successive subsidiaries.

These schemes are in contradiction and contravention with the spirit of the Non-citizens (Property Restriction) Act. Furthermore, they are in direct competition with the two other schemes, that is, the Integrated Resorts Scheme and the Real Estate Scheme; and also result in a loss of revenue to Government in terms of Registration Duty and Land Transfer Tax.

It was announced in the last Budget Speech, Mr Speaker, Sir, that the legislation is being amended to prevent non-citizens from acquiring residential properties outside these two schemes, that is, the Integrated Resorts Scheme and the Real Estate Scheme without the required authorisation. Consultations have been held with all stakeholders to plug the loopholes in the law and amendments for that purpose will be included in the forthcoming Finance (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill.

Furthermore, we are also considering action, Mr Speaker, Sir, against those who have acted in contravention with the spirit of the laws in place, as well as to recover the unpaid duties and taxes arising out of these transactions.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Prime Minister say whether he has made any inquiry with a view to detecting the number of companies or the number of trusts which have been formed and which have eventually circumvented the whole procedure?

The Prime Minister: In fact, this is what we are looking at, Mr Speaker, Sir. There are not many, but there are a couple, I think, who have done this and we are looking at that.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Can the hon. Prime Minister say how much money Government has lost through the illegal transactions so far?

The Prime Minister: It is difficult to answer that question, Mr Speaker, Sir, until we have actually done the inquiry. At the moment, we cannot do it until we plug these loopholes that I have mentioned.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Can the hon. Prime Minister inform the House whether these promoters are Mauritians or foreign nationals?

The Prime Minister: I think they are both.

Mr Bérenger: Mr Spaker, I have a question, if you will allow me. I think the hon. Prime Minister say that generally the Board of Investment informs the Prime Minister's Office of this or that request. Have there been cases where this generality has not applied, that is, cases where the Board of Investment has moved on its own and has this been investigated into?

The Prime Minister: In fact, I said it on purpose, Mr Speaker, Sir. I see the hon. Leader of the Opposition has picked on it. In fact, what has happened is that the late Secretary for Home Affairs was a Director there, his views were always sought by the Board of Investment on application from non-citizen investors for that position of immovable property for business purposes. Because he was there,

his views were sought, now that he is not there, we are about to put somebody else in his place, that is why I said generally. In the meantime, we have asked the Board of Investment to actually get the authority from my office.

Mr Bérenger: Did I hear the hon. Prime Minister say that Government is considering action against those who have gone against the spirit of the law? Has he received legal advice from the State Law Office that, *en notre Etat de droit*, you can act where the spirit of the law, but not the letter of the law, has been violated?

The Prime Minister: In fact, there is the law that says that you should not break those rules. We are looking at that. That is why we are still having discussions with the State Law Office to come to a final decision. But, in the meantime, for future cases, in any case, we are going to plug those loopholes.

Mr Ganoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I come back to these schemes which have been used to circumvent the law as it is. Can the hon. Prime Minister tell us whether these schemes or these projects have been drafted by a notary and was the Registrar General aware of these alleged sales or transfer of property?

The Prime Minister: The deeds were drawn by notaries and the Registrar General is now aware.

Mr Ganoo: Can the Prime Minister's Office then send a document, a communiqué, to all the notaries and tell them not to proceed with that type of sale? Is that possible?

The Prime Minister: In spite of the fact that there is one person that is continuing and that is why I am saying that we have to ensure that they pay whatever they due to the State.

**POLICE OFFICERS - VIP SECURITY UNIT - ELECTION
ALLOWANCE**

(No. B/581) Mr S. Lauthan (Third Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs whether, in regard to the Police Officers, posted to the Very Important Persons Security Unit, who have worked during the recent by-election in Constituency No. 8, Moka and Quartier Militaire, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to –

- (a) the number thereof, indicating their respective grades, and
- (b) if they have been paid the election allowance and, if so, when and, if not, why not.

(Withdrawn)

**UNIVERSITY OF MAURITIUS - ALLEGED MISMANAGEMENT -
INQUIRY**

(No. B/582) Mr S. Dayal (Second Member for Quartier Militaire & Moka) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs whether he will state if he will consider appointing a Visitor to conduct an inquiry into allegations of mismanagement in the affairs of the University of Mauritius.

(Withdrawn)

MINORS - RAPE CASES – JULY 2005 TO JUNE 2009

(No. B/583) Mr N. Bodha (First Member for Vacoas & Floreal) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs whether, in regard to reported cases of rape in which minors have been involved, either as victim or accused, since July 2005 to date, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the number –

- (a) thereof, and
- (b) of minors who have been convicted, indicating the sentence inflicted.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am tabling the information requested by the hon. Member.

However, I would like to refer to the hon. Member to the reply I gave to PQ No. B/103 on 07 April of this year, wherein I mentioned the measures taken to reinforce protection afforded to children to prevent sexual abuse.

Mr Bodha: May I ask a supplementary question, Mr Speaker, Sir? May I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether he is aware that, in some cases, offences of rape are, in fact, converted into a charge of sexual relations with female under the age of 16?

The Prime Minister: That is not within my purview, Mr Speaker, Sir, whether they look at it and look at what evidence they have. They have to look whether the evidence will actually stand in court, I suppose. And they look at all these parameters before they decide, but I can ask a follow-up of this.

Mrs Labelle: I would like to refer to this question, because there are really several cases of rape of minors and it even concerns girls of eight years and where this case when it goes to court has been stated as sexual intercourse with minors.

Recently there have been other cases. May I reiterate the request of my colleague to the hon. Prime Minister if he can insist upon the Commissioner of Police so that we can be enlightened on such situations because it is becoming, I would say, a common practice?

The Prime Minister: I don't know whether it is becoming a common practice, because there are cases of rape actually, which are on the list but I suppose, Mr Speaker, Sir, lawyers would know. It depends on the evidence that is available, but I will certainly draw his attention to it. I should point out also, Mr Speaker, Sir, that we have amended the law to make the penalties stiffer, for example, for crime of rape, it has changed from five years to ten years, and for a person having intercourse with a minor under the age of 16 or mentally handicapped it has changed again from 10 years to 20 years.

Mr Bérenger: Mr Speaker, Sir, it is a fact that a certain number of cases have been changed from raping a minor through sexual intercourse with a girl of less than 16? Can I know from the hon. Prime Minister whether he has checked in all those cases, the DPP's office was consulted or whether in certain cases the Police took it upon itself?

The Prime Minister: I think the procedure is the Police do the investigation and then they send it to the DPP. I don't know whether the hon. Leader of the Opposition is saying whether the DPP was consulted before the charge was changed, but I think not, Mr Speaker, Sir. I am speaking without having talked to the DPP. I don't speak to him, Mr Speaker, Sir. Basically, I suppose....

(Interruptions)

I can talk to the Police that the DPP. In fact, the Police are doing their investigation. They decide on whether it should be rape or illegal sexual intercourse. It could well be to do with evidence that they get whether it would actually stand in court, whether it would pass the evidential test. I think, that is what is happening, but I will check with the Commissioner of police.

Mrs Labelle: Mr Speaker, Sir, more so in some cases which came to our knowledge. It is as from the Police. It is when the Police makes the investigation, and, in some cases, Police officers even require the mother of the child: 'Okay, wait until they are going to get married and leave the case'. Such behaviour is still prevailing in our services. May I ask the hon. Prime Minister to look into that? Because officers of Police do not have to tell young girls who have been raped to just wait and get married to this person. From what I heard, there is some time a sort of connivance between the rapist and the Police officers.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, we must be careful not to put blame and allegations, mere allegations. Give us proof, give us evidence I will look into it, but the hon. Member cannot just take an allegation and see what is happening. This is done to demoralise the Police. The hon. Member should be very careful, she must be patriotic. If she has got any evidence, she should give it.

Mr Dowarkasing: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I know from the hon. Prime Minister, in case of minors being accused of rape, whether there is any recurrence in some cases?

The Prime Minister: If the hon. Member comes with a substantive question, I will answer it.

FOREIGNERS - PERMANENT RESIDENCE SCHEME & SAPES

(No. B/584) Mr N. Bodha (First Member for Vacoas and Floreal) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Home Affairs whether, in regard to the grant of permanent residence, he will state the number of foreigners who have applied therefor, since 2006, indicating the number of applications which have been refused.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that prior to October 2006, there were two schemes for granting permanent residence to non-citizens, namely –

- (i) the Permanent Residence Scheme for expatriates who invest a minimum of 500,000 US Dollars in Mauritius, and
- (ii) the Scheme to Attract Professionals in Emerging Sectors (SAPES) to attract scarce and new talents, know-how and expertise. Beneficiaries under the scheme were granted Work and Residence Permits for three years. At the expiry of the three-year period, they were entitled to apply for permanent residence.

Under the Permanent Residence Scheme, eight applications for permanent residence were received in 2006 and granted accordingly.

Under the SAPES, seven applications for permanent residence status were received since 2007, out of which two have been granted permanent residence status. The remaining five applications were received and are under consideration, but they have not been given that status yet.

Following the coming into force of the Business Facilitation (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act on 01 October 2006, the Permanent Residence Scheme and the SAPES were repealed and replaced by the Permanent Residence Permit for ten years.

The Permanent Residence Permit for ten years is applicable to expatriates who hold Occupation Permit or Work Permit for three years and meet the following criteria -

- (i) Investor must generate an annual turnover of, at least, Rs15 m. for three consecutive years;
- (ii) Self-Employed Category generating an annual income of at least Rs3 m. for 3 consecutive years;
- (iii) Professionals holding an Occupation Permit or Work Permit and earning a monthly salary of, at least, Rs150,000 for three consecutive years, and
- (iv) Retired non-citizens who transfer into Mauritius a sum of 40,000 US Dollars per year for three consecutive years.

I am informed by the Board of Investment that non-citizens falling into the categories of investor, self-employed and retired non-citizen, shall, in fact, become eligible to apply for permanent residence only on or after 01 October 2009. As such no application has been received.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Prime Minister say whether those two who have been granted permanent residence, whether their families, either the spouses or the children of those who have been granted the permanent residence have taken up employment in Mauritius?

The Prime Minister: There are two schemes, Mr Speaker, Sir. The permanent residence scheme was introduced in January 2000 and the other one was introduced in February 2002 and persons who are eligible for the permanent residence scheme include the spouse of the investor, the child, the stepchild, the lawfully adopted child under the age of 18, and then the immediate wholly dependent next of kin, a maximum of three. So, if they fall into that category, they will automatically be allowed, if they satisfy the criteria.

Mr Dowarkasing: Does the hon. Prime Minister have the figures for Rodrigues also?

The Prime Minister: As far as I see there is nobody from Rodrigues, but, maybe, they are going to come to us later on.

PRISONS - CCTV SURVEILLANCE SYSTEMS

(No.B/585) Mrs M. Martin (Second Member for Curepipe and Midlands) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Home Affairs whether, in regard to the prisons, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Prisons, information as to if CCTV Surveillance Systems have been installed in all of them and, if not, why not.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Commissioner of Prisons that Closed Circuit Television (CCTV) Surveillance Systems are now in use at the New Wing Prison at Beau Bassin, at Phoenix Prison and at Beau Bassin Central Prison. As far as Beau Bassin Central Prison is concerned, additional cameras are being installed in order to cover the outer perimeter. Remember, we had a question in Parliament. This project is scheduled to be completed by December of this year.

As regards the Grand River North West Remand Prison, the CCTV system which has been out of order - in fact, it was damaged in 1999 during the riot - they tried to repair it, but the repair was unsuccessful. It is beyond repair and is now being replaced by a new system. A Consultant is presently working on the specifications and location of these cameras. It is expected - I say expected because there are some procedures they have to follow - to be completed by the end of this year.

On completion of the above two projects, a study would be then carried out for the installation of CCTV at the Women Prison and Petit Verger Prison.

I am further informed by the Commissioner of Prisons that the Correctional Youth Centre for Boys and the Richelieu Open Prison are two facilities which are of minimum security nature and the installation of CCTV there is not warranted at this stage.

Mrs Martin: Following the installation of CCTV in the prisons, can the hon. Prime Minister say whether there has been notice of any deterring effect on aggressive behaviour of prisoners towards the prison officers and vice versa?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am told by the Commissioner of Prisons that he is satisfied with the workings of the CCTV cameras. It is a system which is meant to watch the movement and the behaviour of detainees.

Mrs Martin: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Prime Minister where the tapes of these cameras are stored, if there are any tapes?

The Prime Minister: I don't know whether these are tapes or CDs, but they are stored. They are stored for a period of time; they cannot be stored eternally.

Mrs Martin: With a view to avoid tampering of evidence, can the hon. Prime Minister say whether these CDs are stored inside the prison premises itself or outside?

The Prime Minister: I can't say where they are stored, Mr Speaker, Sir, but I know they are stored for a period of time, not for ever.

CROSSING THE ROAD OUTSIDE A PEDESTRIAN CROSSING - OFFENCE

(No. B/586) Mr Y. Varma (First Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Home Affairs whether, in regard to the pedestrian crossings, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the number of persons who have been booked for not using same for crossing the road, since the coming into operation of the regulations in relation thereto as at to date, on a yearly basis?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that, since the coming into operation of the Road Traffic (Pedestrian Crossings) Regulations in 2002, no person has been booked for the offence of "Crossing the Road Outside a Pedestrian Crossing".

Regulation 8 provides that where pedestrian crossings exist between adjacent intersections, pedestrians shall not cross the road at any place except on the crossing. Consequently, this regulation does not apply to all pedestrian crossings in general.

Mr Speaker, Sir, road safety remains one of our priorities, and the Police are already assisting pedestrians on crossings, which are at risky intersections and on roads having a heavy flow of vehicles, apart from the humps that we actually use.

By the mere presence of Police Officers on the spot, pedestrians generally refrain from crossing the road at any place, except at the pedestrian crossing. The Police, therefore, usually adopt a preventive approach to address this issue; and more attention is being focused on sensitising pedestrians on the need to use those crossings at all times.

MBC – ALLEGED MISMANAGEMENT

(No. B/587) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Home Affairs whether, in regard to the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation, he will state the remedial measures he proposes to take in view of the allegations of mismanagement in the affairs thereof.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, following various allegations of mismanagement in the affairs of the MBC, including those made regarding the “Pepsi Segá Hungama”, if the hon. Member remembers, I took the initiative to ask the Management Audit Bureau to enquire into the matter.

I have now received the report from the Management Audit Bureau, and this report is being studied by my office.

I shall certainly consider appropriate remedial measures in the light of the findings and recommendations of this report.

Mr Bhagwan: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I know from the hon. Prime Minister whether he has been made aware of serious allegations concerning the whole issue of publicity, and whether the Management Audit Bureau has been asked to look into that particular problem of the whole publicity network with the MBC

Managers and has been asked to make a study? If yes, can we know where matters stand?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, the MAB was asked to look into the matter of the 'Pepsi Segá Hungama', including all the aspects, which they have done.

Mr Bhagwan: Mr Speaker, Sir, can we know from the hon. Prime Minister when the House can be apprised of the findings of the MAB?

The Prime Minister: First of all, my office will have to study it. I will have to talk to various officers, and then I will take appropriate actions after having looked at all the implications of the MAB report.

Mr Barbier: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether a copy of this report will be laid in the Library of the National Assembly?

The Prime Minister: May I remind the hon. Member that I took the initiative to ask the MAB to do an enquiry. I would not have asked if I did not want to. I did ask, and that is for my office to look at, and we will see whether there is need for it or not.

Mr Guinness: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I know from the hon. Prime Minister whether there was another MAB report on the financial situation of the MBC? And if yes, whether a copy of the report can be laid on the Table of the Assembly?

The Prime Minister: I suppose the hon. Member is referring to the report that the Director-General made; that was very praiseworthy on the MBC. Is that the report that the hon. Member is talking about?

Mr Bhagwan: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether he has had the opportunity, as Minister responsible for the MBC/TV, to discuss with the Chairperson of the MBC/TV of the different *excès* of the management,

including the Director-General, and whether any recommendation has been made to the MBC/TV by the Ministry concerning a code of conduct which they have to adopt in the management of the affairs of the MBC/TV?

The Prime Minister: In fact, Mr Speaker, Sir, once I ask the MAB to do an enquiry, I prefer not to speak to anyone, so that I don't appear to have taken sides for anyone. Once the report is ready, I will look at it.

Mr Jhugroo: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether he is satisfied with the management of the MBC?

The Prime Minister: As Prime Minister, I am never satisfied with anything. I would try to get even better performance wherever we can.

Mr Guinness: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Prime Minister asked me whether I am talking about a report praiseworthy for the MBC. No. I am talking about the MAB report, whereby the MBC had a plan to increase the licence fee, whereby there were projections over so many years to improve the finances of the MBC. Therefore, can I know from the hon. Prime Minister whether this MAB report can be tabled?

The Prime Minister: There is no need to table the report, but I did answer that question. First of all, the MBC is not making losses. Their profit has been reduced, but they are not in deficit. They had requested - I think I answered a question from hon. Bhagwan - for an increase in the fees, which Government has turned down.

Mr Bhagwan: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether he has had an opportunity to look at the news of the MBC/TV? Repeatedly, we have news at 3.00, 6.00, 7.00, 7.30 and 11 o'clock and, on the next day, we have the same news. Did the hon. Prime Minister have the opportunity of looking at

himself and other Ministers five times? This is gross mismanagement. When we look at this and at our Rs100, it is very hard to see them every day on five to six occasions. Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether he has the opportunity to visualise all these news?

The Prime Minister: First of all, I never like to look at myself on the MBC. Very rarely, I get a chance to look, and probably it is better that I don't look. Whether the coverage is too much, I will ask them to look at it.

BANK OF MAURITIUS BOARD – CONFLICT SITUATION

(No. B/588) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Home Affairs whether, in regard to the resolving of the conflict situation prevailing at the level of the Board of the Bank of Mauritius, he will state where matters stand.

(Vide reply to PNQ)

PROMENADE ROLAND ARMAND/ROSE HILL, LE DAUGUET AND SIGNAL MOUNTAIN/PORT LOUIS – SECURITY MEASURES

(No. B/589) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Home Affairs whether, in regard to the health tracks of the Promenade Roland Armand at Rose Hill, and those of Le Dauguet and Signal Mountain at Port Louis, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the number of recent reported cases of harassment of joggers having occurred thereat, indicating the remedial security measures that will be taken.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that, as at 18 June 2009, no case of harassment of joggers has been reported to the Police at the health tracks being referred to by the hon. Member.

However, a case of harassment at Promenade Roland Armand was verbally reported to the Police, and although no official complaint was received, the Police have intensified vigilance in that region.

I am also informed that mobile patrols, which are carried out by the Western and the Metropolitan (South) Divisional Support Units, the Emergency Response Service, including the Bike Patrols, and by the respective Police Stations have been increased.

I should also add, Mr Speaker, Sir, that the Environmental Division of the Ministry of Environment and National Development Unit has arranged for security services on a 24 hour basis at Le Dauguet and Signal Mountain health tracks. A Security Officer is posted at the entrance of each site for the control of access, prevention of vehicle access and control of parking space.

Mr Bhagwan: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have been myself one of the complainant amongst others. I think things are becoming serious. I have had the opportunity to ask the Police on behalf of the inhabitants, especially of Port Louis Ward IV, Signal Mountain and the people of Beau Bassin/Rose Hill. Can I reiterate my request to the hon. Prime Minister that seriously the Police should be asked to look into this aspect visually? They must be there and not going along every 30, 40 or 50 minutes. People start to walk at 5 o'clock in the morning up to 10 o'clock at night. Health is something which is very important. I am making a plea to the hon. Prime Minister on behalf of the people who go to these jogging parks, so that

Police can take immediate action, to put the CID or whatever unit, to protect, at least, the women.

The Prime Minister: In fact, that is what the Commissioner of Police has told me; visual appearance of the Police.

Mr Speaker: Time is over! Questions addressed to hon. Ministers!

HENRIETTA, GLEN PARK – VRS – LAND ALLOCATION

(No. B/596) Mrs F. Labelle (Third Member for Vacoas & Floreal) asked the Minister of Agro Industry, Food Production and Security whether, in regard to the ex-employees of the Médine Sugar Estate who opted for the Voluntary Retirement Scheme in 2007 and residing in the vicinity of Henrietta, Glen Park, he will state where matters stand in relation to the allotting of their plots of land.

Mr Faugoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am advised that 431 workers of Médine Sugar Estate opted for VRS II in December 2007, and three sites have been identified and agreed upon for land allocation, namely Cascavelle, Chebel, and Camp Mapou at Henrietta.

With regard to the site at Camp Mapou, Henrietta, which concerns some 57 beneficiaries, the clearances of the 11 service providing institutions have been obtained. Médine Sugar Estate is currently preparing the relevant plans, which will be submitted along with its application for morcellement permit to the Morcellement Board.

I am informed that these documents will be ready by the end of July this year. The letter of intent will thereafter be issued by the Morcellement Board to enable infrastructure works to start. According to the SIE (Amendment) Act 2007, these works should be completed within a period of 15 months as from date of

letter of intent. Upon completion of the works, the plots of land will be allotted to the beneficiaries.

Mrs Labelle: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister whether this land has already been surveyed, whether the Sugar Authority has already effected tests on this land? Because this was a concern expressed by Médine to the persons concerned. They were waiting for such tests to be carried out.

Mr Faugoo: This has been done, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mrs Labelle: May I ask the hon. Minister whether he has the date on which this has been effected?

Mr Faugoo: The month of May. I don't know the date exactly but it was done in May of this year.

PRIMARY & SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS – LINGUISTIC & CULTURAL RIGHTS - EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

(No. B/597) Mrs F. Labelle (Third Member for Vacoas & Floreal) asked the Minister of Education, Culture and Human Resources whether, in regard to the primary and secondary school students, he will state if Government is contemplating implementing measures to ensure that equal opportunities be provided to all of them, on the basis of linguistic and cultural rights.

Dr. Bunwaree: Mr Speaker, Sir, primary and secondary schools are already equal opportunities settings, and all pupils/students attending these schools are afforded the same opportunities, inasmuch as they follow the same curriculum, use the same textbooks and are taught by educators having the same level of relevant qualifications and training.

However, we have to reckon with the fact that all pupils/students do not have the same facilities and aptitudes, with the result that many of them have learning and other difficulties. It is for this reason that Government has introduced measures of positive discrimination, like the “ZEP Project” in the primary sector, and the “Books for Needy Students” in the secondary sector.

On the linguistic side, English and French are core compulsory subjects, both at primary and secondary levels, whereas the Asian Languages are optional but are extended to pupils/students of non-Asian descent too. Creole language is also used as a support language to facilitate learning at lower primary level.

As regards culture, there is no such subject in its own right either at primary or at secondary. However, cultural issues are integrated in the curriculum and cut across the subjects, more particularly History and Geography at primary level and Social Science as well as History at secondary level. It is to be noted that ad-hoc cultural activities such as Drama, Theatre, Music are also carried out in schools. Such activities have been initiated this year during the activity period, which has been introduced in secondary schools in January last. They will be fully operational in all schools in 2010, both at primary and secondary levels.

We are making, Mr Speaker, Sir, every effort to ensure that there is, therefore, no linguistic or cultural discrimination of any kind in primary and secondary schools.

Mrs Labelle: Mr Speaker, Sir, the Minister will agree that, if we give the same thing to children with different needs, it is not ensuring equal opportunities. In this respect, particularly when low performing students or schools are concerned, studies have shown that when the culture is not being valued, there is high risk for low academic performance. Will the hon. Minister contemplate to

initiate actions, so that we can have proper studies to see such impact in our education sector? This is my first question.

Secondly, the Minister has said that the Creole language is being used as support in lower primary, but we are all aware that Creole language is being used at all levels, even at University. But, as a language itself, is the Minister contemplating introducing this in our curriculum sector?

Dr. Bunwaree: In fact, we are seriously working on this possibility, Mr Speaker, Sir, to see in what way the language can be used as a medium of instruction. It is allowed in Standard I, II & III officially for the time being. But, of course, we are working on it, and we have to devise ways and means of agreeing on the language itself, which is not yet done, as a written language for the time being. I agree that whenever teachers feel the need of using Creole in any class, this is done, but not at the risk of penalising the English language in any case.

Mrs Labelle: May I ask the hon. Minister whether he has taken cognizance of what has been done in PreVoc/BEC and whether he has taken cognizance of the evaluation already effected after more than four years of such training?

Dr. Bunwaree: I am constantly in touch with that, because it is of interest to me personally, I must say, Mr Speaker, Sir. But they have not evaluated completely, and there is much work still to be done. In fact, this morning, I had a phone conversation with the Director of BEC, and they are expecting, by the month of August, to come forward with a work paper, and from then on we will see.

Mrs Martin: Mr Speaker, Sir, can the Minister say whether he is contemplating initiating discussions. I know there had been a lot of discussions which have started under different Governments, but this time with a view to make

at least a step forward in putting the Creole language at par with the other languages which are taught in schools.

Dr. Bunwaree: I think I have already partially replied to that. At this stage, we cannot put it at par, but we are moving into that direction. But I must say it is a slow process, and we have to be very careful because all experts seem to agree for the time being, that, if we do it too quickly, it could be to the detriment of English, which would not give the good results that we are expecting.

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Speaker, the hon. Minister has stated that Creole language is being used as a support language at the lower primary level. Can I know from the hon. Minister whether his Ministry has identified problems related to the use of the Creole as a support language at other levels of education?

Dr. Bunwaree: Well, not exactly, but I can say that, on the other side, there is no empirical evidence that the use of Creole as a medium of instruction - and as it is in use - has allowed students to learn better or improve. We do not have empirical evidence.

Mrs Labelle: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have heard the hon. Minister mention that experts have stated that introducing the Creole may be to the detriment of English. But an empirical study has been carried out during the past four years for Prevoc BEC, where the results have shown that the English performance of these kids has been increasing at a considerable and impressive way. Is the Minister aware of this? Because this is empirical.

Dr. Bunwaree: I have looked into that, Mr Speaker, Sir, but there is no document to confirm what the hon. Member is saying.

CHILD BIRTH – CAESAREAN CASES

(No. B/598) Mrs F. Labelle (Third Member for Vacoas & Floreal) asked the Minister of Health & Quality of Life whether, in regard to child birth, he will state the ratio rate by caesarean to natural since January 2003 to April 2009.

Dr. Jeetah: Mr Speaker, Sir, statistics available indicate that there has been an increase in the percentage of deliveries done by caesarean section. The rate of caesarean section in Government hospitals was 31.6% in 2003, and it is 42% for the period January to April 2009. As regards to the rate of caesarean section in the private sector, it was 42.1% in 2003, and it has reached 50.1% in December 2008. Data for period January 2009 to April 2009 from private clinics has been requested, and is being compiled.

Mr Speaker Sir, with your permission, I am tabling the detailed information for period January 2003 to April 2009. I am informed that the rate of caesarean section worldwide is on the increase, and in most countries it exceeds the WHO standard of 15%. In countries like USA and Greece, the rates are 31.8% and 41.6% respectively.

I am also informed that the prevailing rate of caesarean section in Mauritius could be due mainly to the following reasons -

- (a) many pregnant ladies have repeated caesarean section. All women with two previous caesarean section undergo a third caesarean section to avoid complications;
- (b) the high rate of association of hypertension and diabetes with pregnancy. These two diseases are known to have serious foetal and maternal complications, and

- (c) there are many women who marry at a relatively advanced age 35 to 40 years. These pregnancies are classified as high risk because they may lead to serious foetal and maternal complications.

There has been no national guidelines for management of cases in obstetrics and gynaecology. In February 2009, all consultants in Obstetrics and Gynaecology have been called upon by the Director Health Services (Curative) to prepare national guidelines for dealing with these cases. These national guidelines are incessantly being finalised.

Mr Speaker Sir, I must admit that I view this increase with serious concern, and I have directed the Mauritius Institute of Health to undertake a study on the issue.

Mrs Labelle: Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to thank the hon. Minister for the figures he has just given to the House. Above the medical reasons why caesarians have to be practiced, has the hon. Minister been apprised of several occasions where the time of delivery has to be accommodated as per doctors' agendas? Is there this tendency? Has he been apprised of such situations?

Dr. Jeetah: I have been aware of various reasons that are possible causes, Mr Speaker, Sir. But, as I have mentioned, I think the most important thing is to get national guidelines for management of cases.

Secondly, I have requested MIH to make some research on the subject. As I have mentioned earlier on, there is a 50% caesarian rate in the private sector as opposed to 40% in the public sector. Obviously, there is a need to investigate and find some solutions to this problem.

Mr Bérenger: Clearly, the hon. Minister has looked carefully on the whole issue. Has work been done to evaluate how things compare? By things, I mean death of mother and/or baby, complications in the case of caesarian interventions as compared to natural birth? Has some work been done to compare how complications and deaths differ?

Dr. Jeetah: In fact, this is a fairly complex situation, Mr Speaker, Sir. The difficulty that arises is, once a problem comes up, then there is the question of whether it should have been by done by caesarian section or not. I don't have any evidence of any study that states in either way, that's why I have requested MIH to look into the matter.

Mrs Martin: The hon. Minister has mentioned some national guidelines which have gone into preparation as from February 2009 – if I am not mistaken. Can he give us details as to when it is expected that these national guidelines will be issued so that the women as well are aware with regard to these practices?

Dr. Jeetah: I did mention, Mr Speaker, Sir, it is any time now. I am hoping to get the guidelines as soon as possible, but I can't give the hon. Member a date.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: The hon. Minister has just mentioned three categories wherein caesarians are usually being performed, but does he have figures which fall outside those categories, I mean the ratio rate of caesarians being performed outside those categories which have just been mentioned?

Dr. Jeetah: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have got a list of reasons why caesarian sections are undertaken. Issues such as feotal distress, abruptio placenta, detachment of placenta, placenta plevia, etc. We have all the details as well and I can circulate further data.

MALCOM DE CHAZAL TRUST FUND – BOARD COMPOSITION & MEETINGS

(No. B/599) Mrs F. Labelle (Third Member for Vacoas & Floreal) asked the Minister of Education, Culture and Human Resources whether, in regard to the Malcom De Chazal Trust Fund, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Fund, information as to the –

(a) composition of the Board, and

(b) number of meetings held by the Board, since July 2005 to date.

Dr. Bunwaree: Mr Speaker, Sir, the Malcolm de Chazal Trust Fund Board has not been reconstituted since July 2005.

When the new Government assumed Office in 2005, it was decided to review the constitution, functioning and operation of the Cultural Centres and other cultural institutions and this was contained in the Government Programme.

In this context, a Ministerial Committee was set up to look into the matter and advise Government.

As regards Cultural Centres, as we know, an interim decision has been taken. As regards other centres, such as the Malcolm de Chazal and the Basdeo Bissoondoyal Trust Fund Boards, my Ministry is actually working on a repertory of all renowned Mauritians who have marked the arts and culture space in Mauritius with a view to finding ways and means to perpetuate their memories, philosophy and works for future generations and will come up with an appropriate framework for that purpose.

The reconstitution of the Malcolm de Chazal Trust Fund Board and the Basdeo Bissoondoyal Trust Fund will be considered in the same wake.

Mrs Labelle: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am a bit surprised to hear this answer and the ease with which it is said. It is through an Act of Parliament that we have got the Malcom De Chazal Trust Fund as well as the Basdeo Bissoondoyal Trust Fund. It is nearly four years now and nothing has been done and there are people who are attached to this Trust Fund. They don't know where they are going. There are grants – I suppose – from Government which are being given to these Funds. Are we interested to know what is happening with these Funds?

Dr. Bunwaree: I understand the hon. Member. As I have said, it was in our Programme. There are other Mauritians who also have to be honoured. This is why I am waiting for the repertory to come and then we will see.

(Interruptions)

This is the decision we have taken. To be fair to the hon. Member, of course, this should not prevent Mauritians in any way, even my Ministry, to honour Malcom De Chazal in various other means. But, a decision would be taken very soon. Since I have taken Office, I have asked at least for that repertory to be carried out. Work is being done on that. It is nearing completion; I am waiting for that and then we will come forward. If there is the need to do as we have done for the cultural centres to appoint the Board, and if I see that there is no other way for them to perform actively, I'll do it. But then, I want to get this repertory to know how many such Mauritians should also be honoured in the same way.

Mrs Labelle: Mr Speaker, Sir, must I take it from the hon. Minister that since he has not completed the list of those he thinks have to be honoured, namely people such as Malcom De Chazal or Prof. Basdeo Bissoondoyal, we have to keep

what has been decided concerning these people aside, until the Ministry has completed his list? It is as if those two persons do not deserve, until the list concerning others is being completed.

Dr. Bunwaree: No, this is the question of constituting the Board. But, we don't let the work be affected. The Ministry is seriously looking into that. In fact, we can organize all the functions that are supposed to be taken care by the Board and this can continue, and should.

Mrs Labelle: I am sorry, one last question, Mr Speaker, Sir. I was just looking again at this Malcom De Chazal Trust Fund Act. There is nothing that we can do without the Board and the hon. Minister is fully aware, because there were letters from his Ministry. Since 2003 and 2006, every action that was asked, it was replied, ok, please wait until the Board is constituted. And now, the hon. Minister is telling me that something can be done. There is nothing that can be done without the Board and the Minister is fully aware. Is he aware of these letters?

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Let the hon. Minister answer! Does he agree with this?

Dr. Bunwaree: What I have said is that my Ministry can allow activities and the functions of the Board to be carried out.

At 1.00 p.m. the sitting was suspended.

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

The Deputy Speaker: The Table has been advised that Parliamentary Question Nos. B/600, B/601, B/612, B/629 and B/634 have been withdrawn.

BRAMSTHAN – STONE CRUSHER - POLLUTION PROBLEM

(No. B/600) Mr G. Guinness (Third Member for Montagne Blanche & GRSE) asked the Minister of Environment and National Development Unit whether he is aware of the serious pollution problem caused by a stone crusher to the inhabitants of Bramsthan in Constituency No. 10, Montagne Blanche and Grand River South East and, if so, will he state the remedial measures that will be taken.

(Withdrawn)

**BELLE ROSE, CLEMENCIA AND LA NOURRICE, OLIVIA -
COMMUNITY CENTRES**

(No. B/601) Mr G. Guinness (Third Member for Montagne Blanche & GRSE) asked the Minister of Environment and National Development Unit whether, in regard to the community centres situated at Belle Rose, Clemencia and La Nourrice, Olivia, in Constituency No. 10, Montagne Blanche and Grand River South East, constructed since 2005 and which are ready to be operational, he will state if they will now be put at the disposal of the inhabitants for the purpose for which they were set up.

(Withdrawn)

VUILLEMIN/PITON DU MILIEU – ROAD TARRING

(No. B/602) Mr S. Dayal (Second Member for Quartier Militaire & Moka) asked the Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping whether he will state if he will consider the advisability of having the road leading from Vuillemin to Piton du Milieu, ex-teabelt, upgraded and tarred so as to alleviate hardships caused to the sugar cane planters of the region.

The Minister of Local Government, Rodrigues & Outer Islands (Dr. J. B. David): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I shall reply to this question. I am informed by the Moka/Flacq District Council that the road from Vuillemin to Piton du Milieu which is found within sugarcane fields needs to be resurfaced.

I am further informed that the Council is not in a position to undertake the resurfacing of the road estimated to cost Rs15 m. due to financial constraints and as it is not frequently used by commuters except sugarcane lorries.

However, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, taking into consideration that the aforesaid road is found in the previous tea belts, I intend to hold consultations with appropriate authorities with a view to finding a satisfactory solution.

Mr Dayal: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the situation there is very dangerous, especially as it is harvest time and lorries do ply this road. There is a bridge which is made of wood there and my colleague, hon. Pravind Jugnauth, visited it last week. This is really in a chaotic situation, I should like to impress upon the hon. Minister to liaise with the relevant authorities to do the needful and the soonest possible because harvest time is on.

Dr. David: This is what I've said, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Mr Jugnauth: May I inform the hon. Minister that there are a number of bushes that have grown near the road and that these are, in fact, preventing the proper passage of lorries? If the hon. Minister could see to it that at least these are cleared so that the lorries could get along?

Dr. David: We will certainly do that, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

POTATOES AND ONIONS – CESS FEES

(No. B/603) Mrs S. Hanoomanjee (Second Member for Savanne & Black River) asked Minister of Agro Industry, Food Production and Security whether, in regard to potatoes and onions, he will state the reasons as to why cess fees have been introduced in 2008 and 2009, respectively.

Mr Faugoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am advised that the Agricultural Marketing Board has, in accordance with Section 11 of the Mauritius Agricultural Marketing Board Act, been levying a cess on import of potato since 1998 following the liberalization of imports of that commodity. The cess was 20 cents per kg.

In view of the accumulated deficits registered by the AMB during the period 2002 to 2008 to maintain a strategic stock of potato which amounted to more than Rs30 m., the Board has decided in February this year to increase the rate from 20 cents to Rs1.50 per kg.

With regard to onions, the importation of the commodity was partly liberalized as from 2008. The Board of the AMB, has, likewise, decided to levy a cess of Rs1 per kg on imported onions to enable it to maintain a strategic stock.

With measures to be undertaken under the Food Security Fund Strategic Plan, local production of potatoes and onions is expected to reach 80% of self

sufficiency by 2011 and 2015 respectively. As such, importation will decrease drastically and the levy will be revised accordingly as maintenance of a buffer stock will diminish.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, does not the Minister think that with regard to onions, usually there is the granting of a permit of around 25 tonnes each to importers for the importation of around 2000 tonnes of onions? Doesn't the Minister think that this policy should be reviewed as this only goes towards the detriment of consumers as during the two months that the importers are allowed to import onions they much prefer to toe the line to the price of the AMB which is twice higher than the cost price of those importers?

Mr Faugoo: As I said, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, they have to charge because they have a cost which they incur when they keep a strategic stock. It is only since last year that importation of onions have been liberalised at 50%. In fact, in 2009 they have imported 43% of the total import. So, as I said, with the boosting up of local production, automatically we will have to revise whatever rate is being imposed now.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I will repeat my question. Usually there is a limited number of importers who are allowed to import onions and they are each given a quota of around 25 tonnes each, so that when they import 25 tonnes each, the cost is much higher and, on top of that, now, they have to pay the cess of Rs1,000 per tonne which is to the detriment of consumers. Consumers are paying a higher price for those commodities when, if reviewed, can bring down the price of both onions and potatoes.

Mr Faugoo: I agree; it is the same for potatoes as well. We cannot review at this stage because that will have a bearing on the cost of keeping a buffer stock.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, regarding cess, doesn't the Minister think that there seems to be a contradiction in the policy of the Ministry? On one side, there is the question of reviewing, reducing cess with a view to ultimately eliminating it on sugar and now, on the other side, for potatoes and onions the amount of cess is being increased. Definitely, there is a contradiction in the policy of the Ministry itself and this has to be borne by consumers.

Mr Faugoo: We have to compare light to light, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. As I said, we are liberalising onions only since last year and there was a cess which was being imposed since 1998 on potatoes which was of 20 cents on 1kg and it no longer reflects the cost involved as far as AMB is concerned for stocking and also for strategic buffer stock.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I don't think the Minister has given the reply as to why there has been the policy of increasing the amount of cess. For example, for potatoes, in 2008 it was Rs200 per tonne; in 2009, it is Rs1500 per tonne and consumers are having to bear the cost of the increase of the price of those commodities and we all know that both onions and potatoes are widely being used in Mauritius.

Mr Faugoo: The hon. Member is asking the same question again and again Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, and I will give the same reply. AMB has incurred a loss of Rs30 m. over the past few years and they have to find a way somewhere to recoup the costs.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: If I understand, it is consumers who have to subsidise the cost of the increase in the price of potatoes and onions. Can the hon. Minister confirm that it is consumers who are being asked to subsidise the price?

Mr Faugoo: The price which is charged to consumers reflects the cost.

EMPOWERMENT PROGRAMME - UNEMPLOYED WOMEN

(No. B/604) Mrs S. Hanoomanjee (Second Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Minister of Women's Rights, Child Development and Family Welfare whether, in regard to the unemployed and retrenched women, he will state the number thereof who have, since July 2005 to date, grouped themselves into business networks, indicating the respective fields of operation.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Empowerment (Dr. R. Sithanen): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I am replying to this question.

The Special programme for Unemployed Women under the Empowerment Programme was set up in the 2006/07 Budget as part of a comprehensive approach to address the problem of high unemployment and retrenchment among women.

A sub-committee of the Empowerment Programme was set up to develop Schemes to put women back in employment. The sub Committee has held consultative meetings with Women Associations, NGOs, relevant public as well as private institutions, and it has concluded that for the success of the scheme, it was imperative to develop group networking among the unemployed and retrenched women.

Accordingly the unemployed women have been encouraged to set up business networks.

In fact, from June 2007, several brainstorming sessions have been carried out with unemployed/retrenched women to sensitise them on the benefits of working in groups and, at the same time, to identify their interests and motivation in business projects.

To date, some 203 such networks have shown interest in developing business. Out of these 203, 147 have already started their projects and they are networked in the following -

- Duck rearing, processing and distribution.
- Strawberry cultivation and marketing.
- Patchwork and textile craft production.
- Home Textile design wares and garment making.
- Onion Mars cultivation, processing and marketing.
- Interim Services – Under this project the group acting as network agency to mobilise and market services of individuals for home care, domestic gardening and babysitting.

Over and above encouraging women to group themselves for business purposes the National Empowerment Foundation has also been assisting unemployed/retrenched women who wish to secure a job to acquire the necessary skills. As to date the NEF has provided placement/internship and training to some 2500 women in various sectors namely, Hotel, ICT, Manufacturing, Service, Health-Care, Agriculture & Farming and Food Production.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we have been making consistent progress in reducing unemployment among women. The rate of unemployment among women had reached 16.4 per cent due mainly to massive job losses in the textile

and clothing industry which was shedding jobs held by women at an alarming rate. We have since taken a series of measures to put women back in jobs and to open opportunities for them to set up businesses. As a result, the number of unemployed women has come down by 18 percent since 2005, that is, from 31,700 to 25,800. The unemployment rate accordingly of women has come down from 16.4 percent in 2005 to 12.7 percent in 2008. This is good progress considering that between 2001 and 2005 the female unemployment rate has jumped from 9.5 percent to 16.4 percent.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I agree that networking is important as well as training as the Deputy Prime Minister has just said. But I understand that those women have been geared towards production and they have been trained as well. Can the Minister say as to why, up to now, in spite of the fact, that these women have followed training courses in fields such as patch work – the Minister just mentioned - design, garment making, there is no standardisation of production?

Dr. Sithanen: I am not aware of this problem of lack of standardisation. The question was on networking. I think we have started a good job and the Chairperson of that particular group, is doing a very good job to encourage women to network. So, there is one aspect in terms of business activities and there is another one in terms of training and a third one in terms of trying to find alternative jobs for retrenched women. So, if the hon. Member has a specific question on lack of harmonisation in standard. If the hon. Member submits it to me, I will give it to the lady who is the Chairperson of that group and I am sure she will look into it.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, you know if there is no standardisation of production there will be no marketing outlets. Can the hon.

Minister said how many of the products of those women have found their way into our hotels, they have had a sort of guaranteed market in our hotels?

Dr. Sithanen: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, nobody can give a guaranteed market. What we can do is to help women to identify market possibilities; there will be a new market outlet in Bambous which will start to operate. We are constructing a new tourism village and we have also agreed to discuss with the hotel sector in order to provide an outlet. But there, the quality also is very important. This is where probably we have to give more training in order to ensure that – I am not very sure whether standardisation is the right thing because you need horses for courses also, not everybody would like to have a standardised product. We have to produce - I kept telling everybody who comes to see me, who want to do business, do not do what you want, you have to produce what the market will purchase.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Ms Deerpalsing, please!

Ms Deerpalsing: Thank you Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. May I ask the hon. Vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, in view of the answer that he gave to the original question, what specific measures and programmes are being formulated, policy measures, to address the high level of female unemployment?

Dr. Sithanen: Mr Speaker, Sir, because we started with a huge gap in gender unemployment. The unemployment rate of women was about 18% in 2005 and that of men, I think, was about 8 or 9%. Today the unemployment rate of men is about 4.6%, in effect, this means that there is only frictional unemployment. But there is a huge gender gap for two reasons, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. The huge backlog that we had in 2005 as a result of the closure of many industries in the EPZ. I am sure that the hon. Member knows very well that for every 100 people that work in the EPZ, about 75 are women. We are trying to clear this backlog. On

top of that, the participation rate of women has increased in 2005, which is a good thing, which means that women are keener to enter the labour market because of higher skills and education. What we are trying to do, one is to create jobs for everybody and since there is a bigger pool of women, obviously, if we create jobs, women are likely to get these jobs first. In the Budget, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, last year and this year, we have introduced some specific measures that are tailored to address the problems of female unemployment. New financing are available to women to start jobs and, in fact, in one particular case, for the unemployment programme, we have agreed to pay 75% of stipend for woman as opposed to 50% for man in order to encourage people to take woman on training and on placement.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes, last question!

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Thank you Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. In fact, my question has already been taken up by hon. Ms Deerpalsing, but to follow on what she has just said, can the Ministers say whether a sort of database has been created whereby information with the relevant profiles of unemployed women, those who will have been retrenched, their experience, what they are interested to produce and, at the same time, a database of women entrepreneurs, those who are already women entrepreneurs so that others can, at least, consult the database and have an idea of where and in which fields those women entrepreneurs have been successful and in which fields they have not been successful and why?

Dr. Sithanen: This database did not exist before. We are creating it. We have been able to create a very interesting exchange platform among those who are asking for jobs and those who are willing to offer jobs. We are building that database also for the point that the hon. Member has just raised. But, it is not an easy thing because when she says that people have failed, It does not mean that everybody that has gone into that sector has failed. We are doing our best to create

an interactive information platform to allow people who are looking for A to find A.

The Deputy Speaker: Next question please!

STC – GENERAL MANAGER – VISIT TO SEYCHELLES

(No. B/605) Mr G. Gunness (Third Member for Montagne Blanche and GRSE) asked the Minister of Business, Enterprise and Cooperatives whether, in regard to the State Trading Corporation, he will for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Corporation, information as to if, on or about the month of April 2009, its Director, accompanied by two representatives of the Mangalore Petroleum, travelled to the Seychelles and, if so, the purpose therefor?

Mr Gowressoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed that following STC's Board approval, the General Manager proceeded on official mission to Seychelles from 09 to 11 April 2009.

He had meetings with representatives of the Seychelles Petroleum Corporation Ltd (SEYPEC). In fact, in February 2005 and again in December 2006, STC had recourse to SEYPEC for DPK - jet fuel, due to delay in arrival of our vessel. There is a mutual relationship between STC and SEYPEXC and also Société Réunionaise de Produits Pétroliers (SRPP) for cooperation especially where one party needs to effect an urgent purchase.

I wish to inform the House that, in January 2005, STC had recourse to Société Réunionaise de Produits Pétroliers for Petroleum Products due to delay in arrival of its tanker. In September 2008, SEYPEC has recourse to STC for supply of DPK due to delay of arrival of their tanker. During the recent mission in April

2009 the General Manager of STC met his counterpart in SEYPEC and discussed the following issues –

- (a) security of supply;
- (b) possibility of STC to buy white oil and fuel oil for SEYPEC, and
- (c) additional business opportunities.

It is good to note that SEYPEC has four petroleum tankers which may be of help in case of need by STC. The General Manager, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, of the STC was not accompanied by representatives of the Mangalore Refinery & Petrochemicals Ltd.

Mr Gunness: Can I know from the hon. Minister - he is saying that no representative of Mangalore petroleum accompanied the General Manager. Can he confirm whether recently the air ticket which has been paid to a travel agency by STC has been refunded by the General Manager and, I think, the two other guys?

Mr Gowressoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in fact, there were two representatives from Pratibha Shipping Corporation who went on a business visit to Seychelles. The STC did a common invoice in order to pay the air tickets and then it was refunded by the two guys. I have the bank statement and I can lay it on the table of the Assembly, the bank statement of the STC for the refund made by the two guys in 2,215 USD.

Mr Gunness: Can I know from the Minister whether the Board approved the participation of the representative of Pratibha Shipping together with the General Manager in that meeting in Seychelles?

Mr Gowressoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, they were in a private visit to Seychelles, the business visit we can call it. But it is not the Board that will approve it; the board can approve only the departure of the General Manager.

Mr Bérenger: They were supposed to be on private business visit. How is it that the STC, as in the case of races, gets involved and pays for the air tickets and then supposedly when we come forward, gets refunded?

Mr Gowressoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it was refunded just some days after. It is not because the STC did a common invoice for the tickets, whichever...

Mr Guinness: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, can we know from the Minister since it is a private visit, why is it that we must get a common invoice?

Mr Gowressoo: It was a business visit for the representative of Pratibha, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Mr Bhagwan: Can I ask the hon. Minister who made the travel arrangements and to lay copy on the Table of the Assembly of all the invoices which were sent to the STC by the travel agents?

Mr Gowressoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I can lay what I have, this is the travel agency invoice.

Mr Bhagwan: Can we know which travel agency it is?

Mr Gowressoo: The IKS travel agency Ltd.

Mr Jhugroo: Can I ask the hon. Minister when was the decision taken at the level of the Board for the Director to travel to Seychelles accompanied by these two persons that the hon. Member just mentioned?

Mr Gowressoo: These people came to Mauritius and then at the same time they went to Seychelles because it is the first time that they thought going to Seychelles for a business visit, that is why.

Mr Gunness: Can the Minister inform the House whether the General Manager did meet the representatives of Pratibha Shipping in that horse racing activity where the General Manager of the STC was present?

Mr Gowressoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this I am not aware, but what I know I am explaining to the House.

The Deputy Speaker: Last question, hon. Bhagwan!

Mr Bhagwan: Can the Minister inform the House the way this trip was organised and the way all these air tickets purchased and refund were effected, that the Director of the STC had been acting as an agent of this Pratibha Shipping?

Mr Gowressoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this is the opinion of the hon. Member.

The Deputy Speaker: Next question, please!

Ms Deerpalsing: Sir, I would like to seek your guidance on this and this pertains also to question B/610 and B/611. According to Erskine May, there is need for declaration of interest, if the Member has an interest in this question, I don't know. I would like to seek your guidance whether the Member should have declared interest in terms of this question.

(Interruptions)

Mr Bérenger: What is the point? Who is supposed to have declared his or her interest? We cannot raise the point like that without any name, without any Member being....

(Interruptions)

Dr. David: There has been a point of order and we are requesting your guidance, not comments on the point of order.

Mr Bérenger: I rose on the same point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, to say that a point of order cannot be in thin air like that. I put it to you, who is supposed to have declared his or her interest?

Dr. David: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, there is only one Speaker or Deputy Speaker in the House.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: I am on my feet. There have been several instances where questions on *Centrale Thermique du Sud* have been put by this hon. Member and were allowed. I see no reason why I would not allow this question.

(Interruptions)

I would like some order in this House, thank you!

COMPAGNIE THERMIQUE DU SUD LTEE PROJECT – HIGH POWERED COMMITTEE - REPORT

(No. B/606) Mr E. Guimbeau (First Member for Curepipe and Midlands) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Renewable Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to the High Powered Committee set up to look into the different aspects and components of the *Compagnie Thermique du Sud Ltée* project, he will state if the Committee had submitted a report and, if so, table copy thereof.

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

The hon. Member may wish to refer to the reply made to Parliamentary Question B/1410 in December 2008.

As previously mentioned, an agreement was signed between Government and the Mauritius Sugar Producers' Association in April 2008, providing *inter alia* that Government and MSPA will appoint jointly an independent expert or entity of international repute and with the appropriate expertise to review the energy sector with regard to the Independent Power Producers.

In November 2008, an international bidding exercise was carried out jointly by Government and MSPA.

I can now inform the hon. Member that an independent Consultancy firm, Hunton and Williams LLP, based in USA has been appointed.

The Consultant has started the review on 08 June 2009 and will submit a report after twelve weeks.

Mr Guimbeau: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, just to inform the House, the hon. Minister has not answered the PQ which is as follows: "in regard to the High Powered Committee set up to look into the different aspects and components of the CTSL". He has not answered the question.

Dr. Kasenally: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this consultant firm will look into all the aspects of the problem raised by the Minister not only *Compagnie Thermique du Sud Ltée* but all the other IPPs as well.

Mr Guimbeau: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, can we know from the hon. Minister the reason why the proposed Commission of Inquiry has been replaced by an Inter-Ministerial Committee and then replaced by a High Powered Committee?

Dr. Kasenally: The Inter-Ministerial Committee works together with a committee of the MSPA to set up this International Committee and it is going to look into all the aspects as I have mentioned.

Mr Guimbeau: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in reply to PQ B/812, the hon. Prime Minister stated: “in the light of preliminary findings of an Inter-Ministerial committee, I shall consider the advisability of setting up a full commission of inquiry so as to get to the bottom of the matter”. I would like to know if in the preliminary findings, the committee has found any *scandale du siècle* as it was stated by the Minister of Finance or any *magouille* as it was stated by hon. Deerpalsing. We would like to know in the findings where matters stand?

The Deputy Speaker: Please put your question.

(Interruptions)

No cross talking hon. Sithanen! Thank you. You stand up if you want to speak. It is the Minister who is replying for now. Thank you!

Dr. Kasenally: In fact, it was not on an inter-Ministerial committee but there were other members in the committee and it was decided on the basis of what we have found to discuss jointly with the MSPA to set up and to ask for international tender for an independent and high powered arbitrator or experts to look into all the aspects. I don't want to procrastinate or see whether there was a scandal. We will leave it to the international consultant to decide on that.

Mr Guimbeau: Mr Speaker, Sir, if there has not been any Commission of Inquiry, that means that there has not been any *scandale du siècle* or any *magouille*. Can the hon. Minister...

The Deputy Speaker: No, I will not allow this question.

(Interruptions)

Order, please!

Mr Guimbeau: M. le président, la conclusion de tout ce qu'on a fait autour de CTDS, c'est de la pure démagogie, à connotation raciste...

The Deputy Speaker: I will ask the hon. Member to withdraw this word 'racist' in this House. It will not be allowed in this House.

(Interruptions)

The hon. Member is being requested to withdraw the word 'racist' in this House.

Mr Guimbeau: I can withdraw, but there was a hidden agenda during the last campaign, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Member, please, I am on my feet! We are not actually working in an orderly manner. No improper word is to be used; no unparliamentary word is to be used. Please, do not start imputing motives, at any stage, in the proceedings of this House. You are being allowed to put your question. Put them, and that is enough. Thank you!

Mr Guimbeau: It is not good, it is not proper to make demagoguery on such issues, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. This is the whole point I am raising. During the last electoral campaign, the Prime Minister was stating that there was *magouille*...

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Member, please put the question, and that will do. Thank you!

Mr Guimbeau: To conclude, I want to know from the hon. Minister...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Please, put the question. Thank you!

Mr Guimbeau: The Minister is hiding the truth, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. The House would like to know what is the conclusion of the findings of this report.

Dr. Kasenally: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I think the hon. Member's imagination is running wild, and he is imputing motives.

The Deputy Speaker: Please, do not impute motives. Just answer the question, hon. Minister.

Dr. Kasenally: Yes, that's what I am coming to answer. The hon. Member is provoking me.

The Deputy Speaker: Then, do not be provoked.

(Interruptions)

Dr. Kasenally: I am not afraid of Phoenix! I can say whatever I said...

The Deputy Speaker: Please, just answer the question.

(Interruptions)

Order, please!

Dr. Kasenally: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the hon. Member is entitled to his opinion, and I cannot comment on that.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

SOCIETE PIERRE BLEUE - STATE LAND - LEASE

(No. B/607) Mr M. Allet (Second Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Housing and Lands whether, in regard to the lease of State land to Société Pierre Bleue on *Pas Géométriques* at Anna, Flic-en-Flac, he will state -

- (a) the nature of the lease, and
- (b) the date the lease was

- (i) approved, and
- (ii) signed.

Dr. Kasenally: The Utility Regulatory Authority Act was proclaimed in ...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please!

(Interruptions)

Order, please! Thank you. Can we have the attention of Members of this House?

(Interruptions)

Dr. Kasenally: Stop all this!

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order! Order! I am on my feet! I would like to ask all the Members for their cooperation. I would like everyone to act in an orderly manner. Can I please invite the Minister to reply to this question! Thank you.

Dr. Kasenally: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, my *fusible is not sauté*. So, I start again...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Ms Deerpalsing, I would like to ask you to keep quiet, please!

Dr. Kasenally: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in regard to part (a) of the question, Société Pierre Bleue holds an industrial site lease over a plot of State land of an extent of 8860m² being part of *Pas Géométriques Anna* at Flic-en-Flac for the purpose of a bungalow complex.

The site was originally leased to Mr Demrajsing Sewock for planting fruit trees and vanilla. In 1996, the lease was transferred in the name of Mr Ashvin Krishna Dwarka, at the request of the original lessee, that is, Mr D. Sewock. In 1999, Mr Dwarka submitted a notarial deed witnessing the “*apport*” of his leasehold rights over the subject site in the name of Société Pierre Bleue. Consequently, the lease was transferred to Société Pierre Bleue as from July 1999. In December 2005, the purpose of the lease was changed from planting of fruit trees and vanilla to construction of a bungalow complex. The grant of the new lease in favour of Société Pierre Bleue was approved on 06 December 2005, and the lease signed on 23 January 2008.

Mr Guimbeau: Can the Minister confirm there has been a change of purpose of a lease? It was cultivation, and then it moved to industrial. Can the Minister confirm this?

Dr. Kasenally: As I said, there has been a change in the purpose of the lease in December 2005.

Mr Guimbeau: Can the Minister tell the House if there has been any change in the membership of the *société* from time of approval of the lease and time of signature of the lease?

Dr. Kasenally: This is what I have said; from the time of reservation and the grant of new lease made in favour of Société Pierre Bleue. The site was originally leased to a Mr Sewock. I have made it quite clear in my answer.

Mr Guimbeau: If you go on the agreement, on article 18, the change of membership and purpose of a lease; if you will allow me, I read it, Mr Speaker, Sir.

The Deputy Speaker: No, I would rather you put your question...

Mr Guimbeau: It's two lines. "In case of any change in the membership of the society..."

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Member, I would like you to put your question. You cannot go and read the clause of an agreement. Put your question to the Minister.

Mr Guimbeau: No, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. It is clearly stated in the agreement that if you change purpose and shareholders, the lease has to be cancelled. How is it that the lease has been renewed for another 60 years?

The Deputy Speaker: So you see, you can put the question without reading the article.

Dr. Kasenally: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I think if clause 18 is included in the initial reservation, then the lease cannot be given to another person if there is a change. But, in this case, article 18 does not apply.

Mr Guimbeau: I have a last question. What I would like to ask hon. Minister is to review the procedures on the lease, because this is a typical case, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, where some friends get a cultivation lease, then convert the land into industrial, sell it to a society, transfer it to somebody else, and sell it for millions overnight, and the State gets peanuts, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. What I would like to ask the Minister is when he is going to review the State Land Act, so as to ensure that this kind of things does not occur again.

Dr. Kasenally: In fact, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it has been reviewed. That's why we have included article 18, which makes it impossible to change the purpose of the lease. However, we are reviewing it still, and we are trying to improve upon it to prevent people who have got ulterior motives when initially asking for a piece of land for a specific project.

Mr Allet: Je souhaite, M. le président, au nom de la transparence, que le ministre fasse une enquête pour éclaircir des zones d'ombre, et je dépose aussi *the industrial site lease between the Government and Société Pierre Bleue*.

Dr. Kasenally: I will certainly look into that, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

**AMBASSADORS/HIGH COMMISSIONERS & TRADE ADVISERS -
NEW TERMS & CONDITIONS OF APPOINTMENT**

(No. B/608) Mr P. Jhugroo (Third Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade whether, in regard to each of the Ambassadors/High Commissioners and Trade Advisers posted in the Mauritius Embassies or High Commissions, he will state if their respective terms and conditions of appointment have been reviewed following the Pay Research Bureau Report 2008 and, if so, indicate –

- (a) their new terms and conditions of appointment, and
- (b) the additional fringe benefits to which they are entitled.

Dr. Boolell: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am advised that the terms and conditions of appointment of each of the Ambassadors/High Commissioners and Trade Advisers in our Missions abroad have been reviewed following PRB Report 2008, and will be further reviewed, where applicable, following the recent PRB Errors and Omissions Report.

The salary, Foreign Service allowance, entertainment allowance, gratuity payable to Ambassadors, High Commissioners, as well as Trade Advisers, has been reviewed. In respect of rent and utilities, the ceiling for Trade Advisers also has been reviewed. The detailed revised terms and conditions for each of the

Ambassadors/High Commissioners and Trade Advisers posted in our Missions abroad are being compiled.

Mr Jhugroo: I know that it is being compiled. Can I know when it will be compiled and tabled in the National Assembly? Can I have a date from the hon. Minister?

Dr. Boolell: As soon as the compilation is done.

(Interruptions)

Mr Jhugroo: How soon is soon? Because we often we hear the same answer. So, how soon is soon? Can the hon. Minister give me a date?

Dr. Boolell: Sooner than expected, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Mr Jhugroo: Can I have the expected date and year from the hon. Minister?

Dr. Boolell: Before Parliament is dissolved.

INDEPENDENT UTILITY REGULATORY AUTHORITY – SETTING UP

(No. B/609) Mr E. Guimbeau (First Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Renewable Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to the proposed setting up of an Independent Utility Regulatory Authority, he will state where matters stand.

The Minister of Public Utilities (Dr. A. Kasenally): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I shall reply to this question.

The Utility Regulatory Authority Act was proclaimed in September 2008 and pursuant to section 9 of the Act, the appointment of the Chairperson and the three Commissioners is being considered.

CEB - INDEPENDENT POWER PRODUCERS – ELECTRICITY PURCHASE

(No. B/610) Mr E. Guimbeau (First Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Renewable Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to the proposed purchase of electricity by the Central Electricity Board from the Independent Power Producers, namely, Gamma Coventa and CT Power he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Board, information as to the price per Kwh in each case as compared to the cost per Kwh produced by the Board.

The Minister of Public Utilities (Dr. A. Kasenally): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I shall reply to this question.

The power generation park of the CEB comprises different types of generating units namely fuel oil and kerosene. These units were commissioned at different periods. Each unit has its own generation cost per kWh. However on average, at March 2009, the cost per kWh was Rs3.57. The average cost is subject to fluctuations based on the cost of fuel and exchange rates.

With regard to the proposed purchase of electricity from Gamma Covanta and CT Power respectively, I am advised by the CEB as follows -

With regard to the Gamma Covanta project, it is expected that the plant will be commissioned in the third quarter of 2011. The project for the generation of electricity for a capacity 20 MW was initiated following a Letter of Intent issued by the Board of Investment on the 05 May 2006. Since then, negotiations are being carried out with the CEB on a Power Purchase Agreement. In parallel, a Project Implementation Agreement Committee comprising representatives of the

State Law Office, Ministry of Finance and Economic Empowerment, Ministry of Local Government, my Ministry and CEB are negotiating the Project Implementation Agreement. A number of other agreements are also being negotiated between the promoter and other authorities.

As far as CT Power is concerned; in respect of the CT Power project, an agreement has been signed between the promoters and the CEB on the 23 December 2008, whereby CEB has agreed to purchase electricity at a price of Rs3.01 per kWh. This price is based on an exchange rate of Rs32.056 for the US Dollar, 70 US Dollar per metric ton of coal and a plant load factor of 75%.

I also wish to inform the House that the agreement between CEB and CT Power is subject to the latter obtaining an EIA licence.

Mr Guimbeau: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I thank the hon. Minister for giving me the figures for CT Power, but what about the price per Kwh for the Gamma Coventa?

Dr. Kasenally: For the Gamma Coventa, negotiations are not finished yet. We are going to come to a clear-cut figure, but it should be above Rs5.

Mr Guimbeau: I heard it is going to be Rs5.31. Is that right, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir?

Dr. Kasenally: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this is not final, that is why I didn't want to commit to a particular figure.

Ms Deerpalsing: May I ask the hon. Minister, in view of his answer he has given, whether he can give the comparative price for the other IPPs?

Dr. Kasenally: The other IPPs are slightly higher. I think one is about Rs4.57 and they have different components, but they are a bit higher. In fact, it is

much higher than CT Power and certainly higher than what the CEB produces. It is much above Rs3.57.

The Deputy Speaker: Next question, please!

**CEB - *COMPAGNIE THERMIQUE DU SUD*, CT SAV & CTBV –
ELECTRICITY PURCHASE**

(No. B/611) Mr E. Guimbeau (First Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Renewable Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to the actual purchase of electricity by the Central Electricity Board from –

- (a) the *Compagnie Thermique du Sud*;
- (b) CT SAV;
- (c) CTBV and
- (d) Suzlon Energy, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Board, information as to the price per Kwh in each case.

The Minister of Public Utilities (Dr. A. Kasenally): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I shall reply to this question.

I am informed by the CEB that the actual purchase of electricity is as follows -

- (a) *Compagnie Thermique du Sud* – Rs4.94/kWh
- (b) CT SAV – Rs4.51/kWh

As regards to part (d) of the question, I am advised that the CEB has not signed any power purchase agreement with Suzlon Energy.

Mr Guimbeau: What about CTBV, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir?

Dr. Kasenally: The price per Kwh for CTBV is Rs4.04 comprising of the following elements. The PPA is based on a single part tariff and a take or pay obligation of 325 gigawatt-hours (GWh).

Mr Bérenger: We have been talking about these but, earlier on, we were told that, as in the case of CT Power an agreement has been signed for Rs3.01. I am sure that the agreement must provide for revisions in certain cases. Can a copy of that agreement which is subject to obtaining an EIA agreement between CEB and CT Power be placed in the Library?

Dr. Kasenally: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I'll check with the CEB. If there is no legal impediment to that effect, we will certainly be open-minded and I'll see to the request of the hon. Leader of the Opposition.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, hon. Minister.

Ms Deerpalsing: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, following the answer of the hon. Minister, if that is the case, may I ask whether all of the PPAs can be tabled for the sake of transparency?

Dr. Kasenally: Again, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we have also to consult our partners because there is a legally binding document. If there is no legal impediment, we shall certainly do so.

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

**JARDIN DE LA CONCORDE, PLAINE VERTE – SPORTS COMPLEX -
CONSTRUCTION**

(No. B/612) Mr S. Lauthan (Third Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Local Government, Rodrigues and Outer Islands whether, in regard to the proposed construction of a sports complex on the premises of the Jardin de la Concorde in Plaine Verte, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Municipal Council of Port Louis, information as to where matters stand.

(Withdrawn)

LA GAULETTE PRIMARY SCHOOL – IT TEACHER

(No. B/613) Mr A. Ganoo (First Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Minister of Education, Culture and Human Resources whether, in regard to the La Gaulette Primary School, he will state the reason as to why a full time IT Teacher has not been posted thereat, indicating the remedial measures that will be taken.

Dr. Bunwaree: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the policy of my Ministry is for an ICT Teacher to dispense ICT courses at a frequency of 3 periods per class per week.

I understand there has been some problems in the school because we have had, in fact, we are still having a lack of ICT Teachers.

I wish to apprise the House, however, that there is an ICT Teacher at La Gaulette Government School where there are only six classes, 1 class for each Standard. ICT courses are being offered to all six classes on a basis of 3 periods per class per week, that is, 18 periods per week implying that, pupils at La Gaulette

Government School are being exposed to the maximum number of ICT courses as required according to norms.

Mr Ganoo: Can the hon. Minister then confirm that, at some time, recently there was no IT teacher, but the problem has been solved now?

Dr. Bunwaree: Yes, I would say that not only at La Gaulette we have had some problems with the ICT teachers, because many of them have been employed on contract, in fact, they have left after the PRB Recommendation because there are some changes which are going to take place. In fact, the requirement for ICT teachers is 253 and we have only 189 ICT teachers for the time being. So there is, of course, a sharing among schools. As I said, we are making sure that the maximum number of classes are being organized.

Mrs Labelle: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister has just mentioned that many ICT teachers have left because they were on contract. May I ask the hon. Minister what measures are being taken so that we have full-fledged ICT teachers to avoid the situation where they are going to leave because they are on contract since four years, I think?

Dr. Bunwaree: We are in the process of recruiting. In fact, in the course of the coming weeks the number 253 will be acceded to.

**MINISTERS OF FINANCE - OVERSEAS MISSIONS – SEPTEMBER
2000 TO JUNE 2009**

(No. B/614) Mr P. Jhugroo (Third Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Empowerment whether, in regard to the overseas missions undertaken by the respective Ministers of Finance, since September 2000 to date, he will give a list thereof, indicating in each case -

- (a) the countries visited and duration thereof;
- (b) the composition of the delegation, and
- (c) the amount of money spent in terms of air tickets, *per diem* and other allowances.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance & Economic Empowerment (Dr. R. Sithanen): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the information sought in parts (a) and (b) is being compiled.

With respect to part (c) of the question, I wish to inform the House that all payments with respect to air tickets, *per diem* and other allowances have been made in accordance with the applicable approved mission rates in respect of the countries of destination.

Mr Jhugroo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I know why it is going to be compiled and tabled. How will the hon. Vice-Prime Minister explain when the sea was calm and the sky was blue, the former Minister of Finance, hon. Jugnauth travelled only on two occasions? And today, when we have *une crise financière sans précédente*, the actual Minister of Finance has been travelling so many times and even last week he was abroad. I hope that this will be compiled and tabled as soon as possible.

Dr. Sithanen: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is very unfair to compare someone who has been Minister for four and a half years to someone who was Minister for two years. Second, there were many missions that were extremely important. There was no Minister of Foreign Affairs for quite a while and I lobbied for AGOA in the United States, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, and I represented also the country for the WTO negotiations and for the WTO lobby. We have done very well in both cases, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. I also had to go to lobby to make sure that the OECD does not put Mauritius on the black list or on the grey list, Mr Speaker, Sir. Last but not least, we have brought massive foreign direct investment to this country compared to what it was before. I hope the hon. Member was just making a passing joke when he was telling this.

MUNICIPAL SOCIAL HALL, CLAIRFONDS – PETANQUE COURTS - LIGHTING FACILITIES

(No. B/615) Mr S. Soodhun (Fifth Member for La Caverne and Phoenix) asked the Minister of Local Government, Rodrigues and Outer Islands whether he is aware that the lighting facilities at the petanque courts of the Municipal Social Hall, situated at Quirin Street at Clairfonds No. 1 Phoenix, are defective and, if so, will he, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Municipal Council of Vacoas/Phoenix, information as to the remedial measures that will be taken.

Dr. David: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the House that fog lights were previously fixed at the two petanque courts found on the premises of Edgar Quirin Municipal Social Hall and these had to be removed following complaints received from residents of the vicinity to the effect that same were causing inconvenience to them.

Subsequently, the Municipality of Vacoas/Phoenix replaced those fog lights by two lanterns on 22 May 2009. Following representations made by the users of the petanque courts to the effect that lighting of the court was inadequate, two additional lanterns were installed on 05 June 2009.

Mr Soodhun: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I visited the same social hall THAT we are speaking of. The fact that both petanque courts are situated within the premises of the social hall, the hon. Minister will agree with me that these social halls do not compose of any tennis courts or football pitches. I don't understand how can one in the same premises - they are neighbours, I have no objection - of both sections and the other which is very close is too small, because of lack of space, they have put two. I make an appeal to the hon. Minister to see to it again if they can put it because it is the wish and the request made by the people who are using this petanque court.

Dr. David: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as I said, this caused inconvenience to the residents. If there were no inconvenience, definitely this would have been replaced. But being given that the Municipality of Vacoas/Phoenix received complaints, this is why two lights were placed there near the petanque court and then at the request of the players themselves we added two more. But if this is not yet sufficient we will try to find out other solutions.

EMBASSIES/MAURITIUS MISSIONS – CLOSING DOWN

(No. B/616) Mr S. Soodhun (Fifth Member for La Caverne and Phoenix) asked the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade whether, in regard to the Embassies/Mauritius Missions abroad, he will state if those which will be closed down, as announced in the last Budget speech, have been identified as at to date, and if so, indicate same.

Dr. Boolell: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as announced in the Budget a special unit under the Prime Minister's Office will examine all cost cutting budgetary measures, including the rational necessity to close down Embassies. A decision will be taken thereafter.

Mr Soodhun: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, will the hon. Minister inform the House what are the Embassies that are in the pipeline?

Dr. Boolell: I have stated, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that a decision will be taken thereafter.

Mr Soodhun: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, will the hon. Minister inform the House whether the Embassy of Kuala Lumpur is in the pipeline?

Dr. Boolell: No. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have stated very clearly that a committee is being set up under the Prime Minister's Office and we are supplying all the relevant information and then a decision will be taken in the light of the study being carried out.

Mr Soodhun: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, will the hon. Minister inform the House that he is aware that since July 2005 we don't have any Ambassador as such in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, till now?

Dr. Boolell: But the work is being done. We have to have a rationalized approach.

Mr Bérenger: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I understand that the hon. Minister is saying that they are taking holistic approach and then they will decide which Embassies, which High Commissions, if any, will be closed down. Is it a fact that in the case of a separate UNESCO representation in Paris a decision has already been taken?

Dr. Boolell: A decision will be taken in the light of all the relevant information which is going to be submitted to that committee, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

MAURITIUS DIPLOMATIC MISSIONS – MEDICAL EXPENSES

(No. B/617) Mr S. Soodhun (Fifth Member for La Caverne and Phoenix) asked the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade whether, in regard to the Mauritius Diplomatic Missions abroad, he will state the amount of money spent in terms of medical expenses, since 2007 to date, indicating the measures that have been taken to control such expenditure.

Dr. Boolell: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in accordance with the terms and conditions of service and in line with recommendation contained in the PRB Report 2008, all home based staff serving in our diplomatic missions along with their spouse and dependent children aged up to 20 years are being refunded medical expenses at the rate of 90% provided same are supported by medical certificates, prescriptions and invoices. In case of hospitalisation for surgical intervention, the totality of medical expenses incurred is being refunded.

Prior to July 2008, the home based staff, their spouse and children aged up to 20 years were refunded medical expenses at the rate of 85%. The totality of medical expenses was being refunded in case of hospitalisation for surgical intervention.

I am informed that an amount of Rs10.8 m. has been spent since July 2007 to May 2009 on refund of medical expenses in respect of home based staff and their dependants of our 21 overseas missions.

Mr Speaker Sir, controlling illnesses of home based staff and their dependents as well as charges of medical practitioners abroad and costs of medicines are beyond our control. My Ministry consults the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life in case of claims of medical refund which raise any doubts.

The Ministry has fully explored the option of having recourse to the Medical Insurance Scheme for our diplomats abroad and their families as recommended by the Director of Audit. However, after consultation with MAB and SICOM, it has been found that the medical insurance would not be a viable alternative and would cost more than what is being actually refunded to home based staff.

Mr Jhugroo: M. le président, en voyant les chiffres de R 10.8 millions pour 21 ambassades, *nos ambassadeurs sont des gens malades parce que R 10.8 millions M. le président, pour 21 ambassadeurs, c'est assez conséquent. Au moins R 500,000 par ambassadeurs annuellement ; c'est assez conséquent.*

Dr. Boolell: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, there is no reason to pinpoint ambassadors. Of course, no one would wish to fall ill when one is overseas. Nevertheless, if a person falls ill, he needs to be properly attended to and by the best.

**PARASTATAL BODIES – PART TIME CHAIRPERSONS –
CHAUFFEUR DRIVEN CARS & PETROL ALLOWANCES**

(No. B/618) Mr S. Soodhun (Fifth Member for La Caverne and Phoenix) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Empowerment whether, in regard to the part time Chairpersons of boards of parastatal bodies, he will state if they are entitled to chauffeur driven cars and petrol allowances and, if so, the number thereof who have been provided with such privileges, since July 2005 to date.

The Minister of Civil Service and Administrative Reforms (Dr. B. Hookoom): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I shall reply to this question.

I am informed that as regards part-time Chairpersons of Boards of Parastatal Bodies, there is no stated policy on their entitlement to chauffeur driven cars and petrol allowances.

As a matter of fact, the tenure of office of any chairperson is provided for in the relevant legislation governing that parastatal body. The terms and conditions of Board Members may be decided by the Board in consultation with the parent Ministry

PRIVATE TUITION – SURVEY

(No. B/619) Mr N. Bodha (First Member for Vacoas and Floreal) asked the Minister of Education, Culture and Human Resources whether, in regard to private tuition, he will state if he will consider the advisability of carrying out a survey to assess the -

- (a) number of students who are involved and at what levels;
- (b) the financial implications thereof, and
- (c) how to address the issue.

Dr. Bunwaree: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, private tuition is a phenomenon which is rampant internationally and also has far-reaching implications. At the local level too, there are strong indications that private tutoring is widespread at different levels.

I wish to point out that, in our educational establishments, tuition is allowed in Government primary and aided schools to pupils of Stds IV, V and VI and the schools keep records of teachers providing private tuition, of the children involved and of the classrooms where tutoring takes place.

However, it is a fact that tutoring is also provided to pupils of different classes outside the primary school premises. At the secondary level, however, tuition is given in private tuition centres or on private premises.

Some information already exists about the scope and financial spread of private tuition. It is estimated that about 75% of the Stds IV and VI of the student population resort to private tuition. As for the secondary sector, given that students take tuition in individual subjects, this percentage could be higher.

Private tuition is a real scourge in our educational system. It is hard to reconcile the fact that on the one hand, education is free and yet on the other, parents have to disburse considerable sums as private costs to education. This problem becomes more acute as private tuition places a huge onus on poor parents and raises the question of equity since most of them may not be able to afford it. Equally, private tuition also has a human dimension since long hours of tuition lead to stress and other health and psychological problems for pupils. This has been amply researched by several scholars, with some of the studies specifically focusing on the Mauritian case.

Mr Speaker, Sir, relevant alternatives to private tuition have to be envisaged. In fact, we are already working on a number of measures that require some more in-depth discussions and consultations with all stakeholders.

We are planning to tackle this problem at its root and in a phased manner. In view of the fact that we shall be having three cycles of two years at the primary level as compared to two cycles of three years previously, my Ministry is proposing to address the issue by prohibiting private tuition at Std IV level in primary sector by January next year. Once this is done, we will ensure that remedial education will take place for the weak pupils while options will also be provided for the bright ones. Equally, we shall be giving greater emphasis on the co-end extra-curricular activities. The process has already been initiated.

Mr Bodha: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I'll ask for some figures. May I ask the hon. Minister whether he is aware that for every Rs3 spent by Government - I think the Budget is about Rs6/Rs7 billion - parents are spending Re1 and that there is a matter of urgency? As he said himself it's a scourge and we can't continue with the system.

Dr. Bunwaree: Yes, we know what is the problem and I think everyone in the House is well aware. In fact, I didn't venture to give figures because it's very difficult for some students take tuitions to two or even three places. We know that it is a problem, we have to address it, but it's not very simple as you know and *je n'ai pas envie d'agacer les professeurs qui se donnent aux leçons privées*, but something has to be done. As I said, we are trying to go by in a phase manner and, at least, for Standard IV, next year, we should be able to move it with the help of everyone in this House.

Mr Dowarkasing: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister whether he has been appraised of the fact that private tuition is being held even in pre-primary institutions?

Dr. Bunwaree: This is not a fact, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. What happens is that after pre-primary school ends in the afternoon, some parents are not in a position to take the child and then the child goes in *crèche*, something like that. This has been interpreted, but I am going to watch in any case to see to it that this does not occur.

Ms Deerpalsing: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we are talking about major amount of money that are not going into the coffers of the State through taxes and MRA action. Can I ask the hon. Minister whether, in the meantime that a solution is found, his Ministry will sensitise parents and the students to declare where they are taking tuitions so that then the teachers, who are giving tuitions on a commercialized basis, can be tracked by MRA? I am sure the hon. Minister of Finance will be more than happy to get more money in the coffers.

Dr. Bunwaree: This is one way of trying to put order in the system, but I must say for primary teachers there is no problem because, as I mentioned in my reply, we know these teachers, they are giving officially. I don't want to be unfair

to them also *parce que pour eux c'est facile et à ce moment là on saute sur eux* and then for whom it's not very easy to catch them, then they run out of the system. In any case, we have discussed with people at the MRA, the Minister of Finance is informed and then we will try to see in what we can make justice become more justice, if I may say so.

Mr Cuttaree: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I want to come back to the question raised by hon. Dowarkasing. May I ask the hon. Minister to verify the information which has been given to him, namely, that there is no private tuitions being given in pre-primary? I know of cases where this is done and how much money is being paid by parents. I know of one case where it is Rs150 per month. I will give him the information Can I ask the hon. Minister whether it is not advisable to have a circular from his Ministry sent to all these registered pre-primary schools informing them that if this practice is introduced or continues, licenses can be removed?

Dr. Bunwaree: This is going to be done. But, at the same time, I would like to have the names of these people who are trying to let the children have private tuitions. But, in most cases, it is a question of parents not in a position to take their children at certain point in time in the afternoon and then, what is being done to the children, this is what we are looking into. As I said just now, I am watching and, of course, we are going to take action, but we are doing the necessary so that all those who are involved in the business of pre-primary schooling are informed of the whole matter.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: May I ask from the hon. Minister whether he has envisaged putting a ceiling on the number of students per session at primary level and secondary level for private tuitions?

Dr. Bunwaree: In fact, we are considering seriously a few measures and I don't want to say everything here because we have to discuss with stakeholders not to rouse other interest, but this is one thing we are looking into. We are also looking into prohibiting private tuitions in the early morning, for example. We looking into other aspects of private tuitions where supposedly the teacher should not get involved in giving private tuitions to the same students that he is teaching in the school himself.

Mr Bodha: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister whether he can see also as regards to private premises because often the students being in the laboratories, studying science in the garage of the same teacher? Can we do something on that as well?

Dr. Bunwaree: In fact, this is what I said. The teachers are not supposed to give tuitions to the students he is himself coaching in the school and, of course, the problem of using garage as laboratories also, are being looked into.

HOTEL RECONSTRUCTION SCHEME - BENEFICIARIES

(No. B/620) Mr M. Dowarkasing (Third Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance & Economic Empowerment whether, in regard to the Hotel Reconstruction Scheme, as announced in the last Budget Speech, he will state if prior assessment of the potential beneficiaries thereof will be carried out before benefiting therefrom and, if so, give details thereof.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance & Economic Empowerment (Dr. R. Sithanen): Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I will reply to PQ B/620 and B/638 at the same time as they both relate to the Hotel Reconstruction Scheme.

As stated in the 2008/2009 Budget, Government took the policy decision to align the new rental rates of industrial sites lease in the coastal strip and the city centre of Port Louis with that of *campement* site leases.

Consequently, under the new policy, existing lessees of industrial sites who, therefore, opt for a new lease will be required to pay market determined rental. The rental payable will be adjusted every three years by reference to the cumulative rate of inflation for the period based on the consumer price index. When the fiscal cadastre Land Administration, Valuation and Information Management System (LAVIMS) project is operational, the adjustment in rental will be based on the actual change in market value of the property.

Thus, while the new industrial site lease policy guarantees Government a fair market return from its prime land assets, it is also business friendly as it avoids the burden on the lessee of a sudden increase in rental, which would have been payable under the old lease agreements.

However, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, Government has been sensitive to the plight of hotel industry of this additional cost of policy change with respect to the applications of new rentals, especially at a time when the industry is hit by the global economic recession. This is more difficult particularly for those hotels that are being pulled down for reconstruction.

Without a temporary change in policy, the new rental would have applied to those hotels undergoing reconstruction that would not be deriving any income during the construction period, while on the other hand they would have to invest in the new building, pay the wage bill of the employees. There was a serious risk of laying off of employees

To ease the situation, and as announced in the 2009 Budget Speech, decision has, therefore, been taken, in line with the burden sharing approach to help sectors where jobs are at risk, to grant a facility to hotels whose rental have recently been increased or is being increased with the new industrial lease policy during the period of reconstruction.

In this respect, Government will contribute an amount equivalent to the lower of -

- (a) the difference between the new rental and the old rental in respect of the period the hotel is under reconstruction or up to the period ending 31 December 2010, whichever comes earlier, and
- (b) 50% of the wage bill of the hotel as at 01 January 2009 during the same period.

With respect to eligibility, it would be only the hotel whose building has been pulled down after January 2009 or will be pulled down and a new one constructed that would benefit from the incentive. This facility will also be conditional on the hotel safeguarding the employment, including the terms of service of all employees during the period of construction. So far, no application has been received under the scheme.

Mr Dowarkasing: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, of course, there must be a Budget forecast because there will be financial implications on the measure that he has taken. So, has his Ministry made an assessment of how many hotels would be undergoing reconstruction before putting that measure into that Budget?

Dr. Sithanen: Of course! I mean, just like every time there is a Budget, people come with their shopping list. So, we had to make a decision. There was that case where either they would have closed down or they would have delayed

the construction or they would have laid off their workers temporarily. We think there could be a maximum of two; we don't know. We should also remember that, for the smaller hotels, we are asking them to pay the whole rental in order to give support to the smaller hotels; this is under one hectare, and those who have, I think, 50 rooms. So, for the corridor of 01 January 2009 to 31 December 2010, they would pay the whole rental. It depends basically on which is the lower of the two. The lower of the two could be the 50% of the wage, and the lower of the two could be the difference between the old rental and the new rental. Let me also inform the House, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, there has been a problem with the new rental, and let be very honest about it. There are three problems with it; the first one, it did not change for 20 years. Can you imagine inflation over 20 years and what is the new rate? Second, in the older system, you did not pay 100% of the rate. You start paying a small percentage and, then, after a number of years, you pay the full percentage. If we adjust these two, in some cases, the rental has increased by 5,000%. What that means in simple term is that the rental has increased by 50 times; not 50%. So, obviously, there was a problem, especially for those that are going to reconstruct and that are not going to generate any income during that period and will have to keep people on their payroll. It will depend on these two. We have done some calculation, and we think that, probably, for the case that most people have in mind, it is going to cost a maximum of Rs38 m. for a 18-month period. Against that, there's going to be construction; this will help the construction industry. We are going to generate VAT on this construction, they will keep the job of 350 people, and they are going to make investment.

Mr Dowarkasing: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister has mentioned that, obviously, he thinks that there might be two cases. Can we know exactly what he means by that? Do we have those two cases?

Dr. Sithanen: I don't know! The hon. Member asked me a question, and I've just said two cases. There is one case on the east coast, and everybody knows that. The other cases will depend. The idea is basically like some countries are trying to do: to fast track and front-load some investment, so that there are activities for the construction sector. We have taken a series of measures to help the construction sector. So, we believe that if the investment takes place now as opposed to two years' time, there will be a benefit to the economy, and this is part of the Additional Stimulus Package.

Mr. Cuttaree: Where a hotel has already taken the decision before the Budget to reconstruct - and he knows the case I am talking about - why give them these facilities? Because they have already decided that they are going to reconstruct, they are going to start pulling down, they are selling all their furniture and what not and, then, suddenly, the Budget comes, and they get Rs10 m.

Dr. Sithanen: Let me tell hon. Cuttaree there has been no application yet, but there was the case that they were not going to do the investment now and there was also the case that they were going to suspend the employment of 350 people. Let me explain, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. In the case of a bigger hotel, it is easy pour *répartir* 300 employees on seven hotels. In this case, it is more difficult, because they have only three hotels that are working.

Mr. Ganoo: Will this apply to a hotel which has taken the decision before this budgetary measure was announced, but also tends to reconstruct before 2010?

Dr. Sithanen: No. We have said that the pulling down must take place now, and the construction must take place over the corridor. The hotels that have started their construction are not going to benefit from that. So, there are conditions attached to it.

Mr Dowarkasing: I just want to be clarified by the Vice-Prime Minister. Following what hon. Cuttaree has said, it seems that this measure has been tailor-made for certain hotels. Am I right or am I wrong? I just want the hon. Minister to clarify this.

Dr. Sithanen: Certainly not! Remember that, for all the small hotels, we have given them without any condition, because we want to support the SMEs. They are going to pay the old rate, when it comes for renewal, during the period of the corridor. For the big hotels, because we want to encourage investment, it has been on the card for a long time. There is a question by hon. Jugnauth on IRS. It is not easy. So, we have to take certain measures in order to support the construction industry. The construction industry is one of the most important industries in our country, and it has ripple effect on the entire economy. There are many countries around the world, in their Stimulus Package, that are trying to front-load their investment, because they believe that this is the right time to do their investment as it is going to give one additional percentage of growth.

Mr Jugnauth: Can the hon. Minister say how he intends to differentiate between hotel reconstruction and renovation, whereby the hotel had to close down because there might be a complete renovation?

Dr. Sithanen: Like we said, this does not apply for renovation; there is another scheme for renovation for SMEs. I have stated this very clearly in my reply, but it has to be pulled down. So, it has to be new investment, new construction, and it has to take place now.

CHILDREN (DISABLED) – FINANCIAL SUPPORT

(No. B/621) Mr M. Dowarkasing (Third Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the Minister of Social Security, National Solidarity and Senior Citizens Welfare & Reform Institutions whether, in regard to the disabled children aged between 0 and 15 years old, she will state the financial support extended thereto.

Mrs Bappoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in accordance with Social Aid Regulations 1984, financial supports such as an *ex gratia* allowance is extended to children aged between 0–6 months and Carer's Allowances are provided to children aged between 6 months to 15 years, whose parents' total income does not exceed Rs150,000 or Rs250,000, as the case may be. That is an annual income.

There is also a range of other benefits, which are being provided to disabled children, among which the refund of bus fare to disabled children attending specialised schools and the Francois Sokhalingum Award, which is a Scholarship Scheme, in the form of a monthly stipend of Rs500.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I am tabling a detailed list of all the different financial assistance and other benefits being provided to disabled children.

Mr Dowarkasing: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, from the reply I got from the hon. Minister, it seems that the disability factor has not been taken on board at all for children from six months to 15 years. They are getting carer's allowance because the parent or somebody has to take care of them as they are disabled. How about their disability? That has not been considered at all.

Mrs Bappoo: The Social Aid Act is an Act which is here since years and years and through the Social Aid Act, disabilities for small children aged between 0 to 15 years, it is means tested. That is why there is the annual income ceiling of Rs150,000 and Rs250,000 to disabilities which are much more difficult cases, des cas graves comme nous disons. But, they are in the form of carer's allowance to the family to take care of the disability whether the family needs to have medical support and visits etc., it is given in that. But after 15 years, they are diverted to a BIP, which is a request for Basic Invalidity Pension.

Mr Dowarkasing: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, my next question is about the income tested summit. Will the hon. Minister consider revision of that Rs150,000 per annum, because now with the cost of living that has gone so high, I think many parents are being penalised by this Rs150,000?

Mrs Bappoo: There has been a continuous revision of this annual income ceiling. It has been increased gradually and, recently, the last one has been the ceiling of Rs250,000 due to those children who are in very difficult cases, for example, children with HIV Aids, with muscular dystrophy, the allowance has gone beyond the Rs150, 000. So it goes on being reviewed.

Mr Bodha: The hon. Minister has just said that the Social Aid Act dates back since long. Does not she consider that legislation needs to be amended in view of the new exigencies of our social welfare system?

Mrs Bappoo: This is what I said last time in the spirit of having the general social protection review; these things will be taken also on board.

TUNA FISH EXPORT – AGREEMENT – EUROPEAN UNION/MAURITIUS

(No. B/622) Mr M. Dowarkasing (Third Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the Minister of Agro Industry, Food Production and Security whether, in regard to the export of tuna fish, he will state if an agreement has been reached between the European Union and Mauritius.

Mr Faugoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as the House is aware, the trading relationships between Mauritius and the EU were governed by non-reciprocal arrangements under the Lomé Conventions and the Cotonou Agreement. As these unilateral and non-reciprocal preferences under these agreements were not compatible with the provisions set out under Article XXIV of GATT, both the EU and the ACP countries, including Mauritius, undertook under Articles 36 and 37 of the Cotonou Agreement to conclude new WTO compatible trading arrangements by 31 December 2007.

The Cotonou Agreement was to be replaced by the Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) between the ACP and the EU. However, given the fact that negotiations for the agreement could not be completed as scheduled in December 2007, Mauritius therefore initialed an Interim EPA, pending the completion of a full EPA.

Under the Interim EPA, Mauritius has been able to maintain preferential access in general, including for fish and fish products. Consequently, we continue to benefit from the duty free and quota free access on the EU market. In 2008, Mauritius exported 38,380 tonnes of tuna loins and 32,977 tonnes of canned tuna to the EU market worth some Rs8 billion.

Furthermore, under the Interim EPA, Mauritius has also been able to secure an increased quantity under the Automatic Derogation for preserved tuna (canned tuna and loins). It is to be noted that under the Cotonou Agreement an amount of 10,000 tonnes under the Automatic Derogation was meant for all ACP States compared to a similar amount of 10,000 tonnes under the Interim EPA for Mauritius, Seychelles and Madagascar only.

Pending the signature of the Interim EPA, tentatively scheduled for August 2009 in Mauritius, I am informed that the EU has, once more, acceded to the request of Mauritius for a normal derogation for 3,000 tonnes of canned tuna and 600 tonnes of loins on a retroactive basis for the year 2009. Mauritius did benefit from a similar derogation in 2008 and fully utilised the quota allocated.

Consequently, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, export of tuna fish on the EU market does not warrant any specific agreement between the European and Mauritius as the Interim EPA fully takes care of the export of fish and fish products to the EU.

Mr Dowarkasing: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, from the reply given by the hon. Minister, we can see that our request for 7000 tonnes of tuna fish to be exported to the EU has not been agreed to.

Mr Faugoo: I don't know what the hon. Member is talking about, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. We have a quota free and duty free, there is no limit as far as it is originating tuna. We have automatic derogation for another 3,000 tonnes for tuna/canned tuna and 600 tonnes for loins. Now, we are exporting under the normal quota which has been given for last year and this year also. I don't know what the hon. Member is talking about; I am sure he is confused.

Mr Cuttaree: May I ask the hon. Minister whether the issue of the SPS – Sanitary and Phyto Sanitary issues - maybe this is what my friend was driving at - have been sorted out now?

Mr Faugoo: I replied last time, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that we have a full-fledge competent Authority now, which has approved by D. G. (Sanco) and we are expecting another visit in a couple of months time just to give the final certification.

Mr Dowarkasing: May I know from the hon. Minister whether the EU has imposed an action plan on Mauritius with regard to the IUU?

Mr Faugoo: That is something different. As I said we don't need any bilateral agreement to export tuna as fish or any fish product from Mauritius to the EU; that is out of question. Mauritius had a fishing agreement with the EU which dates back to 1990 and which I think expired in December 2007. Now we are trying to negotiate another bilateral agreement between the EU, if the Member is referring to that, then I must inform the House that we have not agreed exactly upon the IUU, because they were trying to impose upon Mauritius to sign an agreement with the EU, to have an IUU plan of action for Mauritius which would have costed Rs41 m., and under that agreement they were trying to give us only some Rs20 m. This was one of the questions.

There was another issue on which we did not agree, that was on the reference tonnage. Under the previous agreement, we had a reference tonnage of 6500 tonnes of tuna which was fished in our water. Under the new agreement, instead of increasing that figure, they were trying to decide on 3000 tonnes, which was not agreeable to Mauritius. So, this is where we have not agreed and negotiation is still open.

(Interruptions)

Mr Bérenger: I am laughing, because the Minister gave the impression that with inflation worldwide that quota needs automatically to increase, which is not the case - but never mind. Can I ask the hon. Minister whether, apart from that dispute on the cost of this action plan against IUU fishing, was there not also another issue, that is, bringing Taiwan within the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission supposedly to better combat IUU fishing?

Mr Faugoo: I cannot confirm this, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, but as far as I am aware it is only those two contentions which led to a stop in the negotiations. As I said, we were trying not to increase but, at least, keep whatever the reference tonnage was under the previous agreement that we had.

Mr Bérenger: The Minister has confirmed that for the time being we are exporting duty free, quota free to the European Union, but that export of tuna products will be governed by the interim and then full economic partnership agreement. Can I know, over the years, what is going to happen? For how long we will benefit from quota free, duty free entrance into the European Union, what will happen over two, five and ten years?

Mr Faugoo: It is difficult to say at this stage, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. But what I can say, what we have done under the EPA, it is WTO compatible. They want to open trade; only time can tell us how long we can extend on this issue.

The Deputy Speaker: Next question, please!

SSR MEDICAL COLLEGE – STUDENTS - BDS EXAMS

(No. B/623) Mr M. Dowarkasing (Third Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the Minister of Education, Culture and Human Resources whether, in regard to the students who have passed the BDS examinations from the Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam Medical College, he will state if he has taken cognizance of the problems that they are facing in relation to the recognition of the degree delivered to them and, if so, will he state the remedial measures that will be taken.

Dr. Bunwaree: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Tertiary Education Commission that the 5-year BDS programme of the SSR Medical College comprises a final year of internship. A first batch of six students and a second batch of 15 students have already passed their BDS examination at the SSR Medical College in December 2007 and June 2008 respectively.

In order to be awarded their degrees and apply for registration with the Dental Council of Mauritius, these students require completion of 1 year internship, which, has however not yet been accredited by TEC. The procedure for the setting up of Dental Colleges is that there is an International Monitoring Committee (IMC) set up by the regulatory body (TEC) to monitor the appropriateness of the management, staffing, infrastructure and equipment of the institution during the progress of the first cohort.

The IMC meets on a yearly basis. This International Monitoring Committee comprising representatives from my Ministry, the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life, Mauritius Institute of Health, Dental Council of Mauritius, the Tertiary Education Commission and two international experts has been convened on a yearly basis to follow up on the progress of the BDS programme during the five years.

TEC has not yet accredited the internship of the BDS programme due to the fact that during the IMC of March 2008, it was revealed that the SSR Medical College had not yet started the internship and the intern year started only on the advice of the IMC. Hence, internship for the first batch started in March 2008 and ended in March 2009 whereas the internship for the second batch will be completed in June 2009.

In line with the recommendations of the IMC of December 2008, the TEC has been monitoring the internship of the BDS at the SSR Medical College and a Quality Assurance Visit was conducted by TEC in February 2009. It was observed further to this visit, that there was no adequate and appropriate supervision for internship in the following areas:

- Dept. of Oral Medicine, Diagnosis and Radiology
- Dept. of Conservative Dentistry and Endodontics
- Dept. of Oral Pathology/Dental Anatomy & Oral Histology

The TEC Board was apprised of the above, and a Sub-Committee was set up comprising representatives of my Ministry, the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life and the University of Mauritius to look into the matter. The Sub-Committee met on 18 May 2009, 21 May 2009 at the TEC and on 17 June 2009 at the SSR Medical College. I am informed that the subcommittee was of a view that appropriate and adequate supervision has already taken place and has therefore recommended to the TEC Board that the internship of the BDS Programme be accredited. The decision of the Sub Committee has yet to be ratified by the Board and I believed this is going to be done in the coming week.

The Deputy Speaker: The Table has been advised that Parliamentary Question Nos. B/624, B/625, B/626, B/633 and B/635 have been withdrawn.

HIGH LEVEL ATHLETE SCHEME – CRITERIA, CATEGORIES, ETC.

(No. B/624) Mr G. Lesjongard (Second Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Youth and Sports whether, in regard to the High Level Athlete Scheme, he will state the –

- (a) various categories concerned;
- (b) criteria laid down, and
- (c) duration of the assistance.

(Withdrawn)

HIGH LEVEL ATHLETE SCHEME - BENEFICIARIES

(No. B/625) Mr G. Lesjongard (Second Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Youth and Sports whether, in regard to the High Level Athlete Scheme, he will state the names of the beneficiaries thereof who participate at the world level, indicating in each case –

- (a) the quantum of the assistance, and
- (b) when was the assistance last reviewed.

(Withdrawn)

HIGH LEVEL ATHLETE SCHEME - FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

(No. B/626) Mr G. Lesjongard (Second Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Youth and Sports whether, in regard to the financial assistance given to A. C., under the High Level Athlete Scheme, he will state if it has recently been decreased and, if so, the reasons therefor?

(Withdrawn)

RIVALLAND ROAD, CRÈVE COEUR – REMEDIAL MEASURES

(No. B/627) Mr G. Lesjongard (Second Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Local Government, Rodrigues and Outer Islands whether he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Pamplemousses/Rivière du Rempart District Council, information as to if the Council has received representations from the inhabitants of Crève Coeur in respect of the bad state of a portion of public road starting from the residence of one Mr G. to that of one Mr B. and if so, the remedial measures that will be taken.

Dr. David: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Pamplemousses/Rivière du Rempart District Council that no representation has been received from inhabitants of Creve Coeur in respect of the bad state of the stretch of the public road off Rivalland road at Creve Coeur from the residence of Mr Govind to that of Mr Beekharry.

MEDICINES - RETAIL PRICE

(No. B/628) Mr S. Dayal (Second Member for Quartier Militaire & Moka) asked the Minister for Consumer Protection and Citizens Charter whether he is aware of the sudden substantial increase in the retail price of medicines and, if so, will he state the reasons therefor and, if not, indicate if inquiries will be carried out thereinto.

Mr Tang Wah Hing: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the prices of pharmaceutical products are controlled under the Consumer Protection (Consumer Goods) (Maximum Mark Up) Regulations 1998, whereby importers are allowed 2% special allowance on the CIF value of the goods and thereafter a Mark-Up of 35%.

Prices are calculated on a consignment basis. Consequently, there are changes in prices for each consignment, depending on the CIF value of the goods, and mainly on the rate of exchange.

With the depreciation of the rupee *vis-à-vis* foreign currencies, the price of pharmaceutical products calculated on a consignment basis has been increasing.

For comparison purposes, the Euro has appreciated by 5.36% in May 2009 as compared to January 2009. Similarly, the Pound Sterling, the US Dollar and the South African Rand have all appreciated by 7.36%, 5.54% and 17.71%, respectively during the same period.

I must, however, point out that an analysis carried out by my Ministry on the movement of prices does not indicate a substantial increase. There are some cases where there has been a decrease in the price of some commonly used drugs.

Mr Dayal: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Minister in how many cases over the last six months, he has asked for importation documents for importers to be verified and see whether the prices at which the drugs are being sold are not excessive and are within norms set by the Ministry? And here, I have a case - which I am going to give to the hon. Minister - with two receipts for the same drug, namely No. 040508 – Rs375; No. 120609 – Rs440.

Mr Tang Wah Hing: I will take cognizance of the information given.

Mr Dayal: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, can I, again, ask the hon. Minister - he said that his Ministry has carried an enquiry, but I should like to know whether this has been done - what is the incidence of the appreciation of the dollars and other currencies and its incidence on the prices of medicines? If this has been done, can he lay a copy on the Table of the Assembly?

Mr Tang Wah Hing: I will do so.

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

Hon. Mrs Martin, I chair proceedings.

Mrs Martin: I thought it was my question.

The Deputy Speaker: It is the next question! I have been told that PQ No. B/629 has been withdrawn.

SOOBRAMANEY AVENUE, RÉDUIT - DRAIN WORKS

(No. B/629) Mr S. Dayal (Second Member for Quartier Militaire and Moka) asked the Minister of Environment and National Development Unit whether he will state where matters stand in regard to the drain works being carried out at the Soobramaney Avenue, Réduit, which are causing undue hardships to the inhabitants thereat because of the accumulation of muddy water

(Withdrawn)

DENGUE FEVER - MEASURES

(No.B/630) Mrs M. Martin (Second Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether, in regard to the Dengue Fever, he will state the evolution thereof, indicating the additional security and sanitary measures that have been or are being taken to prevent its spread.

Dr. Jeetah: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, a first suspected case of benign type of Dengue Fever was detected on Wednesday 03 June, 2009. Subsequently, other suspected cases were detected mainly from the Port Louis region, with a few isolated cases in other regions of the island.

Since then, blood samples are being taken from persons presenting with symptoms suggestive of Dengue Fever and are being sent on a daily basis to the Central Health Laboratory at Victoria Hospital. Some of the initial samples were also sent to South Africa and Singapore for validation. Results received on Thursday 11 June 2009 are consistent with our laboratory findings, thus confirming the diagnosis of Dengue Fever. As at 19 June 2009, 208 cases have been found to be positive for Dengue Fever.

However, it has been noted that as from 19 June 2009, the number of suspected and confirmed cases of Dengue Fever has been decreased as follows -

Date	No. of samples examined	No. positive for Dengue Fever
19 June 2009	57	16
20 June 2009	38	4
21 June 2009	21	4
22 June 2009	13	3
23 June 2009	13	0

It is well known that the incidence of Dengue Fever fluctuated with temperature being higher when the temperature rises.

As regards security and sanitary measures, a first meeting was held on the same day, that is, on Wednesday 03 June 2009 with Officers of my Ministry to discuss prevention and control strategies. Fogging activities were started immediately in Port Louis.

A second meeting was held on Thursday 04 June, with different stakeholders, and the following measures were taken immediately –

- (i) fogging activities that were started on the previous day were continued and were pursued with the active collaboration of the Special Mobile Force during the week-end in the regions where cases were identified within a radius of 300 metres around the infected houses, as well as in all the educational and health institutions within these regions. As cases in Port Louis are scattered over the whole region, the fogging activities were scheduled to cover the whole of the capital. A repeat exercise is being undertaken after 7 days;
- (ii) the ongoing larviciding exercise throughout the country has been reinforced, and is continuing on a regular basis;
- (iii) entomological surveys which are routinely carried out by the Vector Biology and Control Division have been reinforced in the localities where cases have been detected;
- (iv) a National Cleaning Campaign has been launched under the aegis of the Ministry of Local Government, Rodrigues and Outer Islands in collaboration with the Ministry of Environment and National Development Unit, with particular focus in the Port Louis region;
- (v) action has been taken to include Dengue Fever in the list of Notifiable diseases under the Public Health Act; instructions have been given to all health personnel, including those in the private sector, to closely monitor the situation and report any suspected case with symptoms suggestive of the disease;

- (vi) A fever survey is being carried out on a daily basis in Port Louis and other localities where cases of Dengue Fever have been reported, and persons with fever are being requested to attend the nearest health service point for blood sampling to detect the presence of Dengue fever;
- (vii) the services of an Epidemiologist and Virologist have been retained by my Ministry to elaborate a Preparedness Plan to enable prompt and effective actions to be taken in such cases. In addition, he is following the epidemiological trend of the Dengue Fever in the country;
- (viii) a special programme, namely '*Allo Dokter*' is also being broadcast on MBC-TV on Sundays in which officers of my Ministry are providing information and advice on specific medical conditions including Dengue Fever;
- (ix) a sophisticated equipment namely Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) machine has been acquired to carry out early diagnosis and monitoring of, amongst others, various diseases of viral origin like Chikungunya, Dengue and Influenza A (H1N1). An expert in molecular biology has been recruited to assist and advise my Ministry in this field.

Furthermore a National Sensitization Campaign has been launched to educate the public on precautionary measures to prevent mosquito bites and proliferation. These measures include personal protection against mosquito bites and destruction of mosquito breeding and harbouring grounds in the immediate environment. The campaign is two-pronged. On one hand, officers of my Ministry are conducting house-to-house awareness campaign throughout the island, and on

the other hand, several Ministries/Departments namely Ministry of Social Security, National Solidarity and Citizens Welfare and Reform Institutions, Ministry of Women's Rights, Child Development and Family Welfare and Ministry of Education, Culture and Human Resources and other stakeholders including the private sector are carrying out community awareness sessions with the active collaboration of my Ministry. In addition, media channels have been utilized to carry out health education programmes.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is to be emphasized that for the success of this prevention and control programme, community participation remains a vital prerequisite.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you! Hon. Ministers are reminded if their replies are going to be long, they should circulate them. The Minister has taken six minutes, that should be circulated only.

The Table has been advised that PQ No. B/600...

(Interruptions)

Please, if you will allow me! The Table has been advised that PQs Nos. B/600, B/643, B/644 and B/645 have been withdrawn. Unfortunately, time is over!

MOTION

SUSPENSION OF SO 10(2)

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism, Leisure and External Communications (Mr X. L. Duval): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I beg to move that all the business on today's Order Paper be exempted from the provisions of paragraph 2 of Standing Order 10.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance & Economic Empowerment (Dr. R. Sithanen) rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

At 16.16 p.m. the sitting was suspended