

STATE TRADING CORPORATION – DIRECTOR OF BOARD –

OVERSEAS MISSIONS

(No. B/891) Mr P. Jhugroo (Third Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Business, Enterprise and Co-operatives whether, in regard to the overseas missions undertaken by the Directors of the Board of the State Trading Corporation, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Corporation, information as to the number thereof, since their respective appointment to date, indicating in each case the –

- (a) countries visited and the duration thereof,
- (b) purpose of each mission and,
- (c) amount of money spent in terms of air tickets, per diem and other allowances.

Mr Gowressoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, in regard to the overseas missions undertaken by the Directors of the Board of the State Trading Corporation, I am tabling the information.

Mr Guinness: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I know from the Minister whether, from the list he is submitting, the mission undertaken by the Director General is in his capacity as the Director-General of the State Trading Corporation?

Mr Gowressoo: No, Mr Speaker, Sir. It is mentioned the Directors of the Board of the State Trading Corporation.

FINANCIAL, HOTEL AND TEXTILE SECTORS –

EXPATRIATES EMPLOYED

(No. B/892) Mr G. Guinness (Third Member for Montagne Blanche & GRSE) asked the Minister of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment whether, in regard to the expatriates, he will state the number thereof employed in the –

- (a) financial offshore sector;
- (b) hotel industry, indicating their respective posts and salaries drawn and,
- (c) textile sector.

Mr Chaumière: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that, as at 15 July 2009, there were 105 expatriates employed in the financial sector, 1077 in the hotel industry and 22,391 in the textile sector, holding either valid work permits or valid occupation permits.

In the hotel sector, the expatriates holding valid work permits are employed in posts ranging from Cooks to Managers. As for the financial sector, they are mostly employed at managerial level. The detailed information called for with regard to posts held will be compiled and tabled in due course.

As regards the salaries drawn by the expatriates, I wish to inform the House that for professionals and managerial posts, salaries are normally above Rs30,000 monthly which, in principle, render them eligible for an occupation permit. I am informed that expatriates granted an Occupation Permit by the Passport and Immigration office are not required to submit copy of their contract of employment. Where applications for work permits are made to my Ministry for such category of workers, the submission of the contract of employment is also not required.

For expatriate workers earning salary below Rs30,000 monthly and who require therefore a work permit, my Ministry ensures that these workers are not paid less than the rates prescribed in the relevant Remuneration Orders for such occupations. For these workers it is required that a copy of the contract of employment be submitted to my Ministry for vetting before an application for a work permit is made.

It would not be possible for my Ministry therefore to provide information on the salary being paid to each and every expatriate working in Mauritius in the three sectors mentioned. They are mostly employed at managerial level. The detailed information called for with regard to posts held will be compiled and tabled in due course.

As regards the salaries drawn by the expatriates, I wish to inform the House that for professionals and managerial posts, salaries are normally above Rs30,000 monthly which, in principle, render them eligible for an occupation permit. I am informed that expatriates granted an Occupation Permit by the Passport and Immigration office are not required to submit copy of their contract of employment. Where applications for work permits are made to my Ministry for such category of workers, the submission of the contract of employment is also not required.

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copy of the contract of employment be submitted to my Ministry for vetting before an application for a work permit is made.

It would not be possible for my Ministry therefore to provide information on the salary being paid to each and every expatriate working in Mauritius in the three sectors mentioned.

Mr Guinness: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister will agree with me that there are 1,077 expatriates in the hotel industry. Has the Ministry carried out a survey because it seems that there are fields in which Mauritians can do the job better than these expatriates? So, why is it that these people are allowed to take work like cook, receptionist etc., when Mauritians can do the job?

Mr Chaumière: Mr Speaker, Sir, there are very stringent criteria which those people have to comply with to be able to work in Mauritius. For example, one very important condition is that we must have these people in scarcity areas Mr Speaker, Sir. It is not only cook, it has to be executive cook mainly Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Guinness: Mr Speaker, Sir, we know in some cases how Mauritians are executive cooks and they are then downgraded so as to bring foreigners here. We know that. In the case of the textile sector, can I know from the Minister the reason why the Bangladeshi expatriates will no longer be allowed and are asked to leave?

Mr Chaumiere: Mr Speaker, Sir, I would ask the hon. Member to come with a substantive question.

Mr Bhagwan: Would the hon. Minister be surprised to learn or has he been made aware that foreign workers who are in the grades are paid *jardiniers*? We have a lot of people, experts who have been working in the Sugar Estates and who are recruited in the hotel industry, *plante l'herbe, plante gazon* even looking after the flowers and we do not have Mauritians as *jardiniers* in Mauritius! Would the Minister go and see in the files whether these permits have been granted?

Mr Chaumiere: I need to check the information.

Mr Speaker: Last question.

Mr Gunness: Can I come again with this question of Bangladeshi expatriates? The hon. Minister cannot inform the House because....

Mr Speaker: Sorry the hon. Member cannot question the Minister. He has asked him to come with a substantive question.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Mr Speaker, Sir, I know that in the past the Minister of Labour used to ask that these posts occupied by the expatriates be advertised in the local press first and when we do not get these people, it is only then that we can bring in the expatriates. Can the Minister say whether this procedure is still being followed?

Mr Chaumière: This is still the practice followed Mr Speaker, Sir.

**BOI (INDIA) - OFFICER- IN-CHARGE – TERMS & CONDITIONS OF
EMPLOYMENT ETC.**

(No. B/893) Mr G. Gunness (Third Member for Montagne Blanche & GRSE) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Empowerment whether, in regard to the office of the Board of Investment in India, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Board, information as to the –

- (a) name of its officer-in-charge, indicating his terms and conditions of employment, including allowances and other fringe benefits drawn;
- (b) running cost thereof, and
- (c) the achievements, if any, as at to date.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Empowerment (Dr. R. Sithanen): Mr Speaker, Sir, as the House is already aware, Mr. Rajendra Tagore Servansingh is the Officer-in-charge of the Overseas Representation of the Board of Investment in Mumbai. He is employed on a 3-year contract basis as Director, with effect from 14 October 2006. The terms and conditions of his contract of employment are being tabled. I however wish to point out that for him to take up the position of Officer-in-Charge of BOI Mumbai Office, the incumbent resigned from a permanent and pensionable post that he was occupying at the MCCI with an attractive package.

As regards part (b) of the question, I am informed by the BOI that the total running expenses, inclusive of salaries and compensation of all employees of the Mumbai Office amounted to Rs6.9 m. for the FY 2007-08 and Rs7.3 m. for the FY 2008-09.

Insofar as part (c) of the question is concerned, I am informed that the Mumbai Office has channelled over Rs100 m. worth of realised investment for the last two years.

In addition, the BOI Mumbai Office, through its representative, has also played a key role to enhance the visibility of Mauritius as an investment destination through participation in conferences and investor meetings in India. The Office has also prepared and coordinated investment related Ministerial visits to India with a view to promoting investment from India to Mauritius. The Office has also generated four committed projects for an investment value of around Rs2 billion and 14 leads in the manufacturing, telecommunications, BPO, financial services, education and health sectors. BOI Head Office is presently following up of these leads to ensure their realisation.

I am further informed that the BOI has carried out an objective assessment of the achievements made by its overseas representation in general and it considers that the same resources meant for running the two overseas offices (one in Paris and the other one in Mumbai) can be used more judiciously through targeted and well structured promotional campaigns from Mauritius, with an outreach well beyond these two jurisdictions.

The Board, at its last meeting, has consequently decided to close down these two offices and use our overseas diplomatic representation to promote Mauritius as an investment destination in conjunction with an Advisory Centre with dedicated investment advisors at the BOI's Head Office itself. This decision is in line with Government's strategy announced in this year's budget to reduce costs and make optimum use of overseas representation.

Mr Guinness: Mr Speaker, Sir, I hear the hon. Minister giving the *bilan* of Rs100 m. for investment, Rs2 billion for projects and now, on the other hand, mention is made that the office will be closed down. Therefore there is a sort of contradiction here, when we see the office in UNESCO which needs to be closed down, is not being closed down and the office which is supposedly bringing results is now being closed down and, according to the Minister, the office is bringing results, so why?

Dr. Sithanen: It is a different strategy Mr Speaker, Sir, as a lot of work has been done in order to enhance the visibility and to promote the image of Mauritius as an investment destination. But we have to optimise the resources and there are call centres now which are very effective. Part of the work that used to be done by officers in Paris or in Bombay can be done through an effective call centre operation where as soon as they ring from that place they are automatically transferred to BOI Investment Office in Mauritius. In addition to that, we are going to use the facilities that are available at our Embassies abroad. Last, but not least, in some of these places, we are also appointing experts who probably will continue the work that was done in order to optimise the resources.

Mr Bhagwan: Can the hon. vice Prime Minister inform the House that the very rare bird has already been rewarded somewhere else?

Dr. Sithanen: No, he is a competent officer and he has been offered another job. Of course, he has done very well in India.

(Interruptions)

Mr Guinness: Can I know from the hon. Minister whether the services of Mr Servansingh will still be used by the BOI and, if yes, where will he be posted now?

Dr. Sithanen: I thought you heard the reply of your hon. friend, hon. Bhagwan.

SIR HARILAL VAGHJEE - TRIBUTE

(No. B/894) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Education, Culture and Human Resources whether, in regard to Sir Harilal Vaghjee, he will state if Government will consider erecting a bust in the yard of the Government House, to pay tribute to him as the first Mauritian Speaker, on the commemoration of his 30th death Anniversary.

Dr. Bunwaree: Mr Speaker, Sir, Government fully recognises the valuable contribution of all Mauritian personalities who have marked the history of Mauritius in an indelible way. My Ministry is currently working on a project to honour such personalities.

As a matter of principle, the families of the personalities concerned are first consulted and if they are agreeable, my Ministry starts the process with the approval of Government.

Sir Harilal Vaghjee is certainly one of those personalities worthy of being honoured. It is precisely to pay tribute to him that the Hall at the New Government Centre situated in the compound housing our Parliament has been named Sir Harilal Vaghjee Hall. Should the family be agreeable to have his bust erected, Government will be too glad to undertake the project. Discussions have started with them.

Mr Bérenger: The hon. Minister has made reference to a project, in general, for illustrious Mauritians and so on. Is the hon. Minister aware that, for example, in the lobby of the Lok Sabha in India are present paintings or busts of Parliamentarians and, therefore, in the case of Sir Harilal Vaghjee, this should be considered, because he was the first Speaker? Therefore, can I request the hon. Minister to delink these things and to look into the possibility of us having eminent Parliamentarians of the past present somewhere in the compound?

Dr. Bunwaree: Mr Speaker, Sir, I must say that for Sir Harilal Vaghjee, there has been some sort of confusion in the minds of certain people because when we looked into the problem - not now, but since some time - we were left under the impression that he himself did not want these types of things, but we have been speaking to the family and we believe that for the erection of the bust it will be ongoing. We will take on board what the hon. Leader of the Opposition is mentioning.

Mr Speaker: Bear in mind that the Leader of the Opposition is an eminent Parliamentarian! You have to bear this in mind!

Mr Bhagwan: I thank the Minister and I know for sure that the family would be most agreeable. Can I appeal to the hon. Minister, this year is a very special year, it is the 30th death anniversary, that if the family is agreeable, which I think so, everything will be done to expedite matters before the end of this current year?

Dr. Bunwaree: We are going in that direction.

Mr Bhagwan: I had a visit this morning to the Sir Harilal Vaghjee Hall, Sir, and I'll invite all the Parliamentarians to do so. Can I state to the hon. Minister who is responsible for the buildings that there is no name? Nobody knows whether it is Sir Harilal Vaghjee Hall. There is no photo. The Hall itself has been converted into more than a kitchen. I have been there this

morning. Can I appeal to the Government to have at least a fresh look, to have a signboard, to have a photo of late Sir Harilal Vaghjee in the Hall?

Dr. Bunwaree: Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir.

MR BERT CUNNINGHAM –FORMER COMPTROLLER OF CUSTOMS –

ALLEGATIONS OF MALPRACTICES

(No. B/895) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Empowerment whether he will state if Government proposes to introduce a Fiscal Responsibility Bill, following the observations made by the Director of Audit in his last report.

Dr. Sithanen: Mr Speaker, Sir, the aims of a Fiscal Responsibility Law are -

- (i) to improve fiscal discipline and enhance accountability by requiring a government i.e., Ministries, Departments, Local Authorities and other public sector bodies, to declare and commit to a monitorable policy and strategy; and
- (ii) to make fiscal decisions more predictable and credible by establishing rules and procedures these bodies must follow and by setting up transparent mechanisms by which others can judge if they are complying with the set goals and priorities.

These are precisely the underlying objectives of the vast reforms that we have initiated and have been implementing in the budget area covering taxation, expenditure and public debt since we took office. However, instead of coming up with one unique all comprehensive fiscal responsibility law, we have been proceeding in steps, amending existing laws and coming up with new specific laws.

In the area of taxation, we have done away, Mr Speaker, Sir, with a complex system of high rates with a vast array of duty and tax deductions and exemptions, many of which were discretionary, and moved to a rules-based, simplified and transparent system. Indeed, in a bold move to uphold principles of fiscal responsibility and accountability, we have legislated three years ago to remove the Minister of Finance's discretionary powers of remission that existed for long under several tax laws including the Customs Tariff Act, the Excise Act, the Registration

Duty Act and the Land (Duties and Taxes) Act so that any derogation or exemption deemed necessary is now provided by way of law.

Last year, we introduced a new law on Public Debt namely the Public Debt Management Act that sets a statutory numerical limit on public sector debt levels to the extent of 60% of GDP. This is, in fact, an example of a “Codification of Fiscal Rule” and it requires that public debt to GDP to be on a downward track to reach 50% of GDP by end December 2013. Moreover, debt information is required to be updated regularly and a quarterly report of actual debt stock be made public.

On the expenditure side, we have also brought major amendments last year to the Finance and Audit Act to introduce Programme-Based Budget (PBB) system embedded in a Medium-Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF) as from last July. Estimates of expenditure are now based on programmes and sub programmes on a 3-year rolling basis, specifying the resources to be allocated and the services and outputs to be delivered.

In fact, Mr Speaker, Sir, the Act makes it an obligation for each Ministry to specify its strategy and policy, the services to be delivered to outside stakeholders and indicators of performance and results for the years. It also provides for enhanced reporting requirements on achievement of those indicators and targets. The Act also makes provision for the Director of Audit to carry performance auditing. In this regard, training of staff has been conducted with the assistance of the UK Audit Department.

In April this year, through the Additional Stimulus Package (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act, we have brought appropriate amendments to the Rodrigues Regional Assembly Act, the Local Government Act and the Statutory Bodies (Accounts and Audit) Act for extending the Performance-Based Budget framework and system to the RRA in 2010 and to Local Authorities and Statutory Bodies as from year 2011.

Application of the amended Finance and Audit Act as well as of the PBB has been accompanied by concrete provisions for enhancing accountability and responsibility in Government administration. Thus, there is legal provision enabling a responsible officer to refer an officer to appropriate instances for disciplinary action, in case of non-compliance with

instructions. Moreover, in the 2009 Performance-Based Budget just approved, one key output for every Accounting Officer is that the Ministry achieves economy, efficiency and effectiveness in the employment of public funds and the associated performance indicator is that, at least, 90% of the issues raised by the Director of Audit are dealt with and corrective measures are taken to avoid their recurrence.

In short, Mr Speaker, Sir, Government has been, *de facto*, putting in place a fiscal responsibility framework, gradually but actively. And we will pursue on this path, strengthening first the fiscal institutional framework, in particular the budgeting and public financial management (PFM) systems, to firmly pave the way for even higher standards of transparency and accountability rather than rush to introduce new legislation.

Mr Bhagwan: I have listened this long statement from my good friend, the Minister. But what is happening in Mauritius these days? What do we see at the NTA, at the STC where consumers are paying for mismanagement - Rs3 per litre? What has been happening at the MBC/TV? This is the financial responsibility of those Heads, Chief Executives, Chairpersons of these big institutions. How does the Minister reconcile the actions initiated by him and the result we have obtained? The population is paying for all these gross mismanagements of the financial affairs of the country?

Dr. Sithanen: I think my hon. friend is trying not to make the distinction between a fiscal responsibility and how resources are being used by parastatal bodies. Mr Speaker, Sir, in fact, I have said in my reply that we have started with Government and now we are extending it to parastatal bodies, to Local Authorities and also to RRA; then we are going to assign specific targets and objectives to these companies. The idea of a Fiscal Responsibility Act, Mr Speaker, Sir, is either to agree over time on what should be the deficit of the Budget as a percentage of GDP. This is basically what many countries have done, Sir. I thought the hon. Member was speaking about this as opposed – I mean he is right – to the good utilisation of resources that are given to parastatal bodies.

Mr Speaker: We will continue with the Parliamentary Question after lunch. I suspend for one and a half hours.

At 12.58 hours the sitting was suspended.

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

The Deputy Speaker: There were some supplementary questions, I understand.

Mr Bhagwan: Although we know what fiscal responsibility means by itself, the people of Mauritius, the taxpayers, those who are watching daily the dilapidation of funds in the different para-statal bodies, the nation, want to know what concrete action does Government, through the Minister of Finance, intend to take so that we don't have a repetition of what we are hearing everyday about the different financial problems in the para-statal bodies, the public companies and, as I stated, earlier NTC, MBC/TV, State Trading Corporation.

Dr. Sithanen: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as I indicated, there are two components. The first one - what the hon. Member is talking about - is a combination of transparency and accountability, and the second one is in terms of numerical targets, which most people speak of when they discuss fiscal responsibility. We are doing our best with respect to the first one, that is, that there is more transparency and more accountability in the system. We have started it in Government, and we are going to broaden its scope so that it takes into account para-statal bodies, local government and also Rodrigues with respect to both accountability and transparency.

Mr Bhagwan: Is it not time for the Ministry of Finance, at least, to have a sort of code of conduct for all these persons who are at the head of these institutions, as far as their responsibility with regard to fiscal matters are concerned?

Dr. Sithanen: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I think we need to do a combination of both systemic improvement and also responsibility of those people who are at the head of these institutions. We are working on system, and we are also trying to take on board the recommendations that are made by the Director of Audit and also the PAC, and the findings and recommendations of the Audit Committees that we have put in various departments of Government.

SUGAR SECTOR REFORM – MAURITIUS SUGAR PRODUCERS' ASSOCIATION

(No. B/896) Mr S. Soodhun (Fifth Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Minister of Agro Industry, Food Production and Security whether, in regard to the sugar sector reform, he will state where matters stand as to the 2000 *arpents* of land to be granted to the State by the Mauritius Sugar Producers' Association.

The Minister of Health & Quality of Life (Dr. R. Jeetah): With your permission, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I shall reply to PQ No. B/896.

In line with the spirit of democratisation of the economy and through the personal contribution of the hon. Prime Minister, as at date, some 433 *arpents* of land have been identified for transfer to Government, out of which 267 *arpents* would be allocated for agricultural diversification and 166 *arpents* for social housing programmes.

Regarding land for agricultural purposes, the Ministry of Agro Industry, Food Production & Security is assessing the project proposals received and, once this exercise would be completed, procedures would be initiated for the release of land by the Mauritius Sugar Producers' Association.

In regard to land for Social Housing Programmes, I am informed that the Ministry of Housing & Lands has already identified 166 *arpents* of land across the island. Technicians of that Ministry are finalising social housing project proposals. Once these are approved by Government, the identified plots of land will be transferred to the State in a programmed manner.

The lands, which are under cane, have already been surveyed by the technical teams of the Ministry of Agro Industry, Food Production & Security and the Ministry of Housing & Lands. These lands will be released as and when the harvest is completed.

Mr Soodhun: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as mentioned in my question, there are 2,000 *arpents*. But the Minister has answered that there are only 460 *arpents*. I would like to know from the hon. Minister what is happening to the remaining land out of the 2,000 *arpents*. I would also like to know from the hon. Minister whether agricultural land has been identified. If yes, in which region it is situated.

Dr. Jeetah: With regard to the first part of the question, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I understand that this is an ongoing process, whereby there are discussions between the Ministry of Agro Industry, Food Production & Security and MSPA, depending on projects and so on. With regard where the land is available, I have a list here, and I can circulate it. I can quickly just give an indication. In Belle Vue, for example, there are 50 acres for the plantation of potatoes; Mon Désert Alma, 50 acres for Bras d'Eau; Beau Champ, 25 acres of potatoes and so on.

Mr Soodhun: As the Minister has just mentioned, he has the list with him. Can he circulate same?

Dr. Jeetah: Yes. I don't have any problem, I can circulate it.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Minister say whether there has been a proper schedule prepared as to when Government will obtain the 2,000 *arpents* and, till then, what is the exact plan of work of the Ministry of Agriculture or other Ministries involved?

Dr. Jeetah: As I mentioned, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, insofar as these two plots of 267 *arpents* and 166 *arpents* are concerned, it is well on the way, but I don't have any further information. The hon. Member should have to ask the substantive Minister, who can maybe enlighten her further.

COMPACT FLUORESCENT LAMPS - STREET LIGHTING NETWORK

(No. B/897) 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 it has embarked on a project for the replacement of the Sodium Vapour Lamps by Compact Fluorescent Lamps on its street lighting network, and if so –

- (a) if prior expert advice was sought and obtained before embarking on such a project, and
- (b) the number of lamps that have been replaced.

Dr. David: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Pamplermouses/Rivière du Rempart District Council that it has, in fact, embarked on a project for the replacement of Sodium High Pressure Vapour lamps by Compact Fluorescent lamps (CFL) on its street lighting network.

I am informed that no prior expert advice was sought, but a trial pilot test was carried out in the village of Mapou between October 2006 and October 2007, whereby 211 lamps were replaced and which had reduced the electricity load to 58% and generated savings to the tune of Rs301,593.

Since 2006 to date, 10,105 Sodium High Pressure Vapour lamps have been replaced by CFL, which were purchased following a tender exercise. This has generated savings to approximately Rs1 m. per month.

Mr Lesjongard: May I ask the hon. Minister whether those sodium vapour lamps are covered by an international protection rating and which one, and whether the enclosure of those street lanterns can be tampered?

Dr. David: I'll check the second part of the question, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, but, as the first part of the question, as I said, there was a pilot project and the main objective was savings. In fact, a lot of savings were made. Secondly, there has been a committee, chaired by the Ministry of Renewable Energy, and there have been recommendations to the effect that, for period 2009/2025, there will be a change from the sodium lamp to the CFL in a more rational way.

Mr Lesjongard: From the reply of the hon. Minister, I understand that Government wants to save money, but I believe that it should not be at the risk of people's life. Will the hon. Minister agree that the enclosure I have mentioned protects not only the equipment, but also protects a person from potential hazard, that is, hazard of electrocution? Isn't it exposing people's life when the District Council is just tampering with the enclosure by replacing the Sodium Vapour Lamp by Compact Fluorescent Lamps?

Dr. David: If the hon. Member is asking about the technical aspect, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I won't be able to answer, but I am informed that this was done together with the CEB.

TROU AUX BICHES - GILL NET LICENCE - ISSUE

(No. B/898) Mr G. Lesjongard (Second Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Agro Industry, Food Production and Security whether he will state if his Ministry has recently approved the request for the issue of a Gill net licence to operate in the region of Trou aux Biches.

The Minister of Health & Quality of Life (Dr. R. Jeetah): With your permission, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I'll answer this question. The answer is in the negative.

AFRICAN UNION SUMMIT, LIBYA

– PEACE AND SECURITY IN MADAGASCAR

(No. B/899) Mr M. Dowarkasing (Third Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade whether he will state if the issue of Madagascar has been discussed during the last African Union Summit held in Libya and, if so, the decisions that have been reached.

Dr. Boolell: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the issue of peace and security in Madagascar was on the agenda of the 13th Assembly of Heads of States and Governments held in Sirte, Libya from 01 to 03 July 2009.

The Assembly expressed its concern at the lack of progress in restoring constitutional legality in Madagascar and supported initiatives for a way out of the crisis, as spelt out by the International Contact Group on Madagascar which met in Addis Ababa on 30 April 2009.

The Assembly also encouraged the Chairperson of the Commission to extend his full co-operation to efforts aimed at a return to constitutional order, in close consultation with Southern Africa Development Community (SADC), as well as the United Nations, the *Organisation of Francophonie (OIF)* and the European Union.

The appointment of the former President Joaquim Chissano as Special Envoy of SADC for Madagascar was further welcomed at the Assembly of Heads of States and Governments in Sirte, Libya.

The Assembly also looked forward to the outcome of the meeting of the Contact Group on Madagascar which is scheduled for this week to review the situation and mobilize further support for the efforts aimed at ensuring a speedy return to constitutional order.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the House that the Mauritius delegation which was led by Dr. the Hon. Deputy Prime Minister participated in the deliberations on peace and security in Madagascar and indicated its willingness to extend its support to the dialogue process given our proximity and relations with “*La Grande Ile*”.

It is, in fact, in the best interest of all the countries in the region that a durable solution is found to resolve the political impasse, taking into consideration the social, finance and business relations that exist between Mauritius and Madagascar.

Mr Dowarkasing: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister stated in his reply that the African Union has noted that there is a lack progress. So, doesn't he think that it is high time for a concerted action, because each entity is having a different field of action, SADC is having one, the United Nations is having another one, the *Francophonie* is having its own way? So, is it not high time to have a concerted action on this issue and whether that matter has been discussed and who is taking the lead in that issue?

Dr. Boolell: I thank the hon. Member for putting that question. In fact, there is a concerted action group and the meeting took place on 30 April in Addis Ababa. In addition to the European Union, those who were in attendance were: the representatives of the COMESA, the Indian Ocean Commission, the International Organisation *de la Francophonie*, SADC represented by hon. Minister Dlamini, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade of the kingdom of Swaziland, Chairperson of the SADC Ministerial Committee of SADC organ on Politics, Defence and Security Council and Security Corporation, United Nations, a representative of the current chair of the African Authority and special envoy of the Chairperson of the Union, Burundi on behalf of the AU Permanent Security Council and African Members and permanent Members of the UN Security Council. They all participated in the meeting. Of course, the object was to ensure that there is proper coordination that they coordinate the efforts of the international community to promote the rapid return to Constitutional Order in Madagascar.

Mr Bodha: I wish to come back to what my colleague said, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. May I ask the hon. Minister whether he is aware of the latest SADC initiative by former President Chissano where the initiative is to be able to put around on the same table the four last Presidents and the fact is also that a venue was mentioned, Angola? How does Mauritius relate to that initiative?

Dr. Boolell: First of all, President Chissano was in the Republic of the Malagasy on 19 July to 12 July. He convened a meeting with all the parties concerned. The object, of course, is to make sure that there is inclusive dialogue and that the ownership belongs to the people of the Malagasy Republic, hence the relevance of meeting with all the stakeholders, representatives of the different *mouvance*, representatives of civil societies, the army, etc. Following which they are going to convene a meeting in Addis Ababa and then they will decide on the venue. Of course, we have appealed to them and we have impressed upon them that the ideal location to host the ongoing political dialogue would be Mauritius. We have the support of countries like Ethiopia and Tanzania. Now, the only Minister who was a bit reluctant initially was the Minister of Foreign Affairs from South Africa and I had to impress upon her that notwithstanding our geographical proximity we have a lot in common with our brothers and sisters from the Malagasy Republic and Mauritius would be the ideal venue to host the political dialogue.

Mr Dowarkasing: In the light of the answer given by the hon. Minister, is it possible for us to consider the fact that the next meeting at the Contact Group be held in Mauritius? Could that be envisaged?

Dr. Boolell: We will leave it to the AU to decide, or let's say that if the process is being moved there will be a meeting of all the stakeholders in Addis Ababa and we hope that the venue would be identified and Mauritius would be that venue. Having said so, I am sure all Members of the International Contact Group do realize the relevance of the return to Constitutional Order in the Malagasy Republic. In fact, there is information that representative of the *Haute Autorité de Transition* is willing to hold elections in December. The object, of course, is to make sure that they all comply with the *Charter de Transition*, hence the relevance of deepening the democratic institutions in Malagasy Republic.

SURGICAL OPERATIONS – OVERTIME PAID

(No. B/900) **Dr. P. Ramloll (Third Member for Quartier Militaire & Moka)** asked the Minister of Health & Quality of Life whether, in regard to surgical operations carried out in the hospitals, he will state the number thereof in each field of speciality, following the PRB Report, indicating -

- (a) the number carried out during;
 - (i) normal working hours, and
 - (ii) after working hours;
- (b) the amount of overtime paid to the specialists in connection therewith, and
- (c) if private specialists have been involved in these operations, indicating the amount of fees paid.

Dr. Jeetah: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with a view to improve service to our patients, we have recently started a waiting list initiative. The objective behind this initiative is to reduce the waiting list and waiting time for surgeries.

In certain specific fields and in certain hospitals, in particular, the waiting list was unsatisfactory. This has been particularly the case for General Surgery at Victoria Hospital, Ophthalmology Surgery at S. Bharati Eye Hospital and surgery for Arterio Venous Fistula (AVF) in our regional hospitals.

To address this issue, arrangements have been made for Consultants and Specialists to perform extra sessions after working hours. These sessions are carried out between 1600 and 2200 hours during weekends, between 1200 and 1600 hours on Saturdays and from 0900 to 1300 hours on Sundays.

These sessions have considerably decreased the waiting list from 1,228 cases for General Surgery at Victoria Hospital as at December 2008 to around 503 cases now. For Ophthalmology this has led to a reduction from 3,261 cases as at January 2008 to 1,357 cases presently.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I am tabling the reply to parts (a)(i) and (ii) of the question.

As regards part (b) of the question, I am informed that the Consultants and Specialists are paid on call/in attendance allowances for emergency surgical operations in accordance with the 2008 PRB Report. These Consultants and Specialists conducting extra surgery sessions of three hours' duration each are paid an ad hoc allowance of Rs 1500 per hour. The information relating to the amount paid for the extra sessions for the period July 2008 to June 2009 is being compiled and will be laid in the Assembly.

Regarding part (c) of the question, the answer is in the negative.

Dr. Ramloll: I thank the hon. Minister for his answer. Is the Minister aware that the public sector specialists who are paid Rs1500 and the private sector specialists, if, at all, they are called to perform, are paid Rs500 only for the same service?

Dr. Jeetah: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this is a special initiative that we have started to decrease the waiting time and, as I mentioned, we have some results to show for this action.

Dr. Ramloll: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, only two weeks ago the Ministry decided to pay about Rs1500 to the private SPs as well. Is he aware that the public SPs, specialists, opposed and they decided then that we agree to carry on the operations; we don't need the service of the private sector? Is he aware of that?

Dr. Jeetah: I am not aware, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. What I want to make clear here is that our concern is the patients; we want to offer the best, we want to reduce the waiting time, we have started the initiative and it has started bearing fruits.

PUBLIC HEALTH SECTOR – EXPATRIATES – PRIVATE PRACTICE

(No. B/901) Dr P. Ramloll (Third Member for Quartier Militaire & Moka) asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether in regard to the expatriates working as specialists in the public health sector, he will state if they are allowed to engage in private practice and, if so, under which conditions.

Dr. Jeetah: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the reply is in the negative.

**DAGOTIERE VILLAGE/PROVIDENCE/QUARTIER MILITAIRE - DRAINS,
PAVEMENTS, HANDRAILS – CONSTRUCTION**

(No. B/902) **Dr. P. Ramloll (Third Member for Quartier Militaire & Moka)** asked the Minister of Environment and National Development Unit whether he will state if he will consider the advisability of constructing drains, pavements and putting up handrails along the main roads of Dagotière Village, Providence and Quartier Militaire, respectively, for the safety and the security of the inhabitants thereat.

The Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping (Mr Bachoo):
Sir, footpaths and drain works including handrails have already been provided by the Road Development Authority in different regions of Moka District, namely Petit Verger, Mont Ory, Nouvelle Découverte, Montagne Blanche, L’Avenir and part of Providence village as well. Similar works are scheduled in the villages of Dagotière, Providence and Quartier Militaire for the financial year 2010.

**L’AGREMENT, ST. PIERRE – SOCIAL HALL & CHILDREN’S PARK -
CONSTRUCTION**

(No. B/903) **Dr P. Ramloll (Third Member for Quartier Militaire & Moka)** asked the Minister of Housing and Lands whether in regard to l’Agrement, St Pierre, he will state if he will consider allocating the plot of State land, situated near the temple, for the construction of a children playground.

Dr. Kasenally: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed that the land in question belongs to the Sugar Industry Labour Welfare Fund and that the site has effectively been earmarked for the construction of a Social Hall and a Children’s Park.

PLAINE VERTE YOUTH CENTRE – CONSTRUCTION WORKS

(No. B/904) Mr S. Lauthan (Third Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Youth and Sports whether in regard to the Plaine Verte Youth Centre, he will state -

- (a) when the construction works thereof
 - (i) started, and
 - (ii) ended, indicating the cost thereof
- (b) the facilities provided thereat;
- (c) the activities which are being organised thereat, and
- (d) the number of staff employed, indicating their respective grades.

Mr Ritoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as regards parts (a) (i) & (ii) the construction of the Plaine Verte Youth Centre which was undertaken by the National Development Unit started on 02 February 2005 and was completed on 25 August 2006 at a cost of around Rs12m. The complex was handed over to my Ministry on 29 August 2006.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as regards part (b) of the question, the Youth Centre provides indoor facilities like a gymnasium with badminton court, volleyball pitch, table tennis, a *boulodrome* and other facilities like computers with internet connection and a committee room.

As regards part (c), the activities being organised at the centre include aerobics, yoga, drama, leadership and family life education courses and sports activities such as badminton, volleyball, table tennis and *pétanque*. Moreover, like in other youth centres, outdoor and outreach activities are organised and these comprise amongst others *Spéciales Vacances* Programme, National Youth Achievement Award, *Entreprenariat Jeunesse*, sensitisation campaigns against social evils and health promotion.

And finally as regards part (d), the Youth Centre is under the supervision of one Principal Youth Officer who is assisted by one Senior Youth Officer, one Temporary Youth Officer and one Attendant. In addition, part-time aerobic and yoga coaches conduct training sessions for ladies.

Mr Lauthan: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as regards the sensitisation programme of social evils, can the hon. Minister tell us whether there is an updating of the types of activities with relation to new emerging problems like teenage drinking, gambling in spite of what is being said on the radio as safeguards, gang violence, HIV/AIDS and so on?

Mr Ritoo: I can inform the concerned persons so that they can conduct such sensitisation campaigns.

COMPACT FLUORESCENT LAMPS – NUMBER & DISPOSAL

(No. B/905) Mrs D. Perrier (Fourth Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Renewable Energy and Public Utilities whether in regard to the Compact Fluorescent Lamps, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Central Electricity Board, information as to the –

- (a) number thereof distributed, since the beginning of the campaign to date, and
- (b) measures that have been put in place for the disposal thereof.

The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Renewable Energy and Public Utilities (Dr. R. Beebeejaun): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, Compact Fluorescent Lamps also known as CFL have been on sale and in use in this country for many years but not widely utilised till recently. In August last year, CEB started a campaign of energy efficiency using low energy bulbs (CFL). I am informed that CEB sold 934,179 bulbs in Mauritius and 40,250 in Rodrigues.

I am also informed that since CEB has started its campaign for the sale of CFL, specific boxes have been placed at the CEB Customer Service Centres island-wide for customers to drop the used lamps as a measure to mitigate pollution risks from mercury. Thereafter, these will be collected and transferred to a hazardous waste disposal site under the supervision of the Solid Waste Division of the Ministry of Local Government, Rodrigues and Outer Islands.

A national campaign is being mounted with the Ministry of Environment and National Development Unit and the Ministry of Local Government to sensitise the public on the safe disposal of fluorescent lamps compact or otherwise.

Mrs Perrier: Can the Minister inform the House when this campaign has started or when is it going to start?

Dr. Beebeejaun: The campaign at the level of CEB is already ongoing from the time that CFL lamps were being sold. But CFL lamps having 5-7 years life span, the campaign has been slow to start. As to the national campaign, we have already met and we are going to launch it, but, I must say, and I repeat it is not only the compact but also the florescent bulbs which have been there for decades and which are the major source of mercury risk.

Mrs Perrier: Can the Minister envisage advising the public at large on how to handle the burnt out lamps especially before they break because when they break, they can be in touch with the mercury, 5-8 milligram of mercury per lamp. Usually in the States and in Europe, they ask people to put them in a special plastic, put gloves to handle these lamps and in Mauritius, nobody is aware about that.

Dr. Beebeejaun: I take good note of what has been said and I thank the hon. Member for that.

SENATOR CLUB –TRADING LICENCE

(No. B/ 906) Mrs D. Perrier (Fourth Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Minister of Local Government, Rodrigues and Outer Islands whether he is aware of the existence of growing discontent amongst the inhabitants residing in the vicinity of the Edith Cavell and Mère Barthelemy Streets, in regard to the casinos operating in the area and, if so, will he, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Municipal Council of Port Louis, information as to the remedial measures that will be taken.

Dr. David: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the House that I am in presence of a petition from the residents of St Georges Street and those adjoining the Senator Club objecting to the renewal of the trading licence of the Senator Club. The matter has been referred on 02 June 2009 to the Municipal Council of Port Louis for appropriate action.

I am now informed by the Municipality of Port Louis that based on the legal advice obtained on 25 June 2009 to the effect that there is already a case pending in the Supreme Court, it would not be proper not to renew the licence of Senator Club. Consequently the licence of Senator Club has been renewed for the period 01 July to 31 December 2009.

The House may wish to note that a High Powered Committee has been set up under the Chairmanship of Dr. the hon. Prime Minister to look into the whole issue of gaming houses.

Mrs Perrier: The Minister stated that the Municipal Council said that they had no option than to renew the licence because there is a case in court. But Section 109 of the Local Government Act 2003 specifies that the Chief Executive can authorise the closing of a club or any premises when the business has been conducted in such a way as to the danger of public health, public order or public safety. I believe that this is the case and that is why people of the region are complaining about this casino in the vicinity. I can't see why the Municipal Council has not applied this section of the law which allowed them to close on a temporary basis.

Dr. David: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I'll go along with the answer given by the Vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance in Parliament last week. In fact, we know the case of 'Ti-Vegas', where the Municipal Council of Quatre Bornes has had to pay damages. It has been condemned by the court and even by the Privy Council. Now, we do not want to take arbitrary action. We have been guided by the Legal Adviser of the Municipality of Port Louis and we are acting according to the advice that he has tendered. We want to be reasonable, we want to respect institutions and this is why we are awaiting for the court case.

Mr Dowarkasing: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I just want to know from the hon. Minister, whether one of the criteria for issuing such a licence is availability of parking facilities. I am just wondering whether the Senator Club has parking facilities?

Dr. David: I understand, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that there is parking space.

Mrs Perrier: Is the hon. Minister aware that this casino is surrounded by three schools and this is very, very dangerous for the children attending these schools. They are tempted and they are spending their pocket money and their tuition fees in the casino.

Dr. David: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I share the concern of the hon. Member. In fact, we may be on the same wavelength as regards the fight against social evils. The "Senator" have been granted a licence and now we cannot arbitrarily cancel it.

Mr Jhugroo: Can the hon. Minister inform the House who is the Legal Adviser of the Municipal Council of Port Louis?

Dr. David: Hon. Yousouf Mohamed, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Mrs Perrier, last question!

Mrs Perrier: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I cannot understand how the Municipal Council cannot cancel or suspend the licence of that casino, because Section 109 of the Local Government Act specifies that the Chief Executive can do so.

Dr. David: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have answered the question. On top of that, everybody knows that there is a High-Powered Committee chaired by the hon. Prime Minister himself which will look into all the aspects of casinos, gaming houses and all these.

Mr Barbier: May I ask the hon. Minister whether he will consider the advisability of recommending to the Municipal Council of Port Louis not to renew their licence at the expiry date, that is, on 31 December next?

Dr. David: No, Sir, because we have got legal advice.

WHEEL CHAIRS – ORDER

(No. B/907) Mrs F. Labelle (Third Member for Vacoas & Floreal) asked the Minister of Social Security, National Solidarity and Senior Citizens Welfare & Reform Institutions whether, in regard to wheel chairs, she will state the date of the last order thereof, indicating the-

- (a) number thereof ordered, and
- (b) expected date of delivery.

Mrs Bappoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, regarding the first part of the question, following tender procedures, 562 wheelchairs were ordered on 22 May 2009.

In my reply to PQ No. B/631, I informed the House that the consignment was expected to be received by the end of June 2009. However, my ministry was later informed by the local contractor that due to some shipment problem, the consignment will arrive by mid-July, that is, a delay of two weeks. On 13 July 2009, the local contractor confirmed that the consignment will be received on 17 July and only yesterday 21 July 2009. Confirmation has been received that the consignment has already arrived in Mauritius. The Local contractor is proceeding with the custom formalities. The wheelchairs will be delivered to my Ministry for the distribution to applicants, once the custom formalities are completed.

Mrs Labelle: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister if she is aware whether different types of wheelchairs have been ordered to satisfy the different needs of disabled persons?

Mrs Bappoo: Yes, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. We have ordered the normal standard ones and the junior standard ones. But, we are also working on a new policy where we will try to hand over as per request of wheelchair, customized chairs for the applicants.

Mr Jhugroo: Can the hon. Minister inform the House as to the name of the local contractor?

Mrs Bappoo: It is Roadster Ltd.

Mr Gunness: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we have ordered 562 wheelchairs. Can we know from the hon. Minister the number of applicants, that is, the number of persons who are waiting for that wheelchair up to now?

Mrs Bappoo: At date, there is a waiting list of 400. So, 400 will be delivered immediately. These are the people on the waiting list and the other 162 will be distributed on a first come first serve basis.

POSTGRADUATES SCHOLARSHIPS

(No. B/908) Mrs F. Labelle (Third Member for Vacoas & Floreal) asked the Minister of Education, Culture and Human Resources whether, in regard to the postgraduates scholarships, he will state the number thereof –

- (a) granted by the State for the academic year 2008-2009, indicating the fields of study;
- (b) to be granted by the State for the academic year 2009- 2010, indicating the fields of study, and
- (c) offered by the friendly countries for 2008-2009.

Dr. Bunwaree: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the reply is as follows.

With regard to part (a) of the question, nine scholarships were awarded by my Ministry under the State of Mauritius Postgraduate Scholarships Scheme in 2008. I am tabling a list indicating the fields of study of the nine beneficiaries for Academic Year 2008/2009.

With regard to part (b), for Academic Year 2009/2010, nine scholarships under the scheme have been advertised by my Ministry on 26 June 2009. The closing date for submission of application is 14 August 2009. Hence, the fields of study will only be available after the selection exercise will have been completed.

As regards part (c), the number of postgraduate scholarships offered by friendly countries for 2008-2009, details are provided on the list being tabled.

**NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS
- VIOLENCE AND CHILD ABUSE - PROGRAMME**

(No. B/909) Mrs F. Labelle (Third Member for Vacoas & Floreal) asked the Minister of Women's Rights, Child Development and Family Welfare whether, in regard to the collaborative programmes of her Ministry to combat violence and child abuse, she will –

- (a) give a list of the Non-Governmental Organisations involved, indicating their -
 - (i) respective programmes;
 - (ii) target audiences;
 - (iii) duration of the programmes, and
- (b) state the amount of money spent on each.

Mrs Seebun: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would like to inform the House that my Ministry works in close collaboration with NGOs to address the problems of domestic violence and child abuse.

As regards to domestic violence, my Ministry intervenes directly and undertakes preventive measures. These measures include sensitisation programmes which are conducted in collaboration with NGOs to create awareness among the public at large on issues related to domestic violence.

In addition to that, my Ministry equally works with Community-Based Organisations through the Zero Tolerance Clubs with a view to involving the community to combat domestic violence. Members of these Clubs act as watchdogs to ensure that their respective localities are violence free. To date, five Zero Tolerance Clubs are operational, namely at Abercombie, Goodlands, Mare D'Albert, Pointe-Aux-Sables and Montagne Blanche.

Over and above the specific programmes with NGOs, my Ministry is also working with other NGOs, such as NATReSA, PILS, and Victim Support in our ongoing awareness programmes against alcoholism, sexually transmitted diseases and domestic violence. Through these awareness programmes, we are also targeting youths to enable them to adopt a culture of non-violence.

I would like to invite the attention of the hon. Member that many programmes initiated by my Ministry are meant to empower the umbrella organisations such as MACOSS and Council of Religions so that they may trickle down the programmes and awareness campaigns to their member organisations. This process enables my Ministry to sensitise a larger audience.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, concerning child abuse, the assistance of NGOs is sought to provide residential care to children victims of ill-treatment, abandonment, destitute or otherwise exposed to harm. Where a child is found at risk of harm, he or she is immediately placed at the shelter of my Ministry on a temporarily basis. Arrangements are thereafter made to commit the child in a residential care institution which has been declared as a place of safety following the issue of a Court Order.

Institutions which are providing accommodation and care to children are being paid an all inclusive daily grant of Rs211.94 per head.

I wish to inform the House that the duration of the stay of the children at these institutions depends upon the Committal Order/Interim Committal Order issued by Court.

With a view to combating child abuse, my Ministry is also working with the National Children Council (NCC) to conduct sensitisation campaigns on the issue of child abuse. From July 2005 to date, 690 campaigns have been carried out in schools, colleges and youth clubs reaching out 11,820 children. For the period July 2009 to December 2009, the NCC is planning to conduct further sensitisation campaign in 35 schools and colleges targeting some 3,500 children.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (a) of the question I wish to inform the House that since July 2005, we have undertaken specific programmes to combat domestic violence with six NGOs, namely -

- (a) Mauritius Family Planning and Welfare Association;
- (b) Mauritius Alliance of Women;
- (c) Media Watch Organisation;
- (d) MACOSS in collaboration with Aryan Women Welfare Association;
- (e) Council of Religions, and
- (f) Indian Ocean Centre for Education in Human Values.

In addition, as concerns child abuse, there are 12 institutions which are assisting my Ministry in providing accommodation and care to children who are victims of abuse and neglect. These institutions are –

- (a) Terre de Paix;
- (b) Foyer Père Laval;
- (c) Foyer Monseigneur Leen;
- (d) SOS Village for Children Mauritius (Beau Bassin);
- (e) SOS Village for Children Mauritius (Bambous);
- (f) CEDEM (Floreal);
- (g) CEDEM (Hollyrood);
- (h) Crèche Coeur Immaculée De Marie;
- (i) Gayasing Ashram;
- (j) Mauritius Muslim Orphanage;
- (k) Association D'Hébergement pour les Personnes Inadaptées, and
- (l) Shelter for Women and Children in Distress Trust Fund (Forest-Side).

My Ministry has also set up Participatory Advisory Committees (PACs) that operate at the level of the 15 women centres across the island. The aim of the PACs is to provide a platform for members of the community to work together to identify priority areas of intervention, formulate action plans and secure partnerships for interventions that would improve the livelihoods of the community at large.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am tabling before the House a list of NGOs, the programmes they are implementing, their target audiences and the duration of these programmes.

With regard to part (b) of the Question, as from July 2005 to date, a total amount of Rs1,059,622.22 has been disbursed in respect of programmes to combat domestic violence and an amount of Rs30,761,630.20 has been paid to NGOs providing residential care to children who are victims of abuse. Furthermore, for the period of July 2009 to December 2009, a sum of Rs730,000 has been earmarked for programmes to combat domestic violence and an amount of Rs6.9 m. has been earmarked for NGOs providing residential care to children victims of abuse. I am tabling the details of the amounts spent on each programme as from 2005 to date.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, can I ask the Minister whether she has got the figures concerning children who have been victims of abuse, who have been placed in shelters and who, ultimately, have found a place in a permanent residence or in a foyer somewhere during the past year?

The Deputy Speaker: Unless the Minister needs notice of the question.

Mrs Seebun: Sure, I need notice, but this is the current exercise. The hon. Member is much aware of it.

The Deputy Speaker: So, we'll come to the substantive question.

Mrs Seebun: Later I can give details to the hon. Member.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Mrs Labelle, you have a few questions!

Mrs Labelle: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. The hon. Minister has given a very long reply but, unfortunately, the specific answer I was expecting will be circulated. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in this House, some weeks back, it was after Committee of Supply, the hon. Minister mentioned a specific programme to combat violence and she mentioned collaborative programmes. So, this is what I asked for. I was not asking for the institutions who were receiving grants as Foyer Père Laval and so on and so forth, but I want to know whether there are any NGOs which are working with the Ministry with a specific programme to combat violence and child abuse. If there is such programme, which audience is being targeted and so on and so forth? This was my question. I don't know whether the hon. Minister has an answer to this.

Mrs Seebun: Sure, I have an answer, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. All the six plus twelve institutions I mentioned are aggressively working to combat child abuse and domestic violence. This is why I am giving details of all the programmes which the hon. Member and other Members can have a look.

MOSQUITOES – NON-PROLIFERATION

(No. B/910) Mrs L. Dookun-Luchoomun (Third Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether in regard to the non-proliferation of mosquitoes, he will state the recommendations made by his Ministry to public bodies in respect of the required measures to be taken in relation thereto.

Dr. Jeetah: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, intersectoral collaboration has always been high on the agenda of my Ministry in line with the adoption of an Integrated Vector Management Strategy to control mosquito population density in the country.

Intersectoral collaboration...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please!

Dr. Jeetah: ...involving various Ministries and Departments, as well as the private sector, was already visible during the malaria elimination programme (in the 1970s). This was even more pronounced during the Chikungunya campaign in 2006. The Action Plan, established for the purpose of eliminating the disease, has given a considerable weightage to the contributions that other Ministries and Departments and the private sector had to make.

Along the same line of action, during the recent outbreak of Dengue fever, several meetings were held with the various stakeholders, when emphasis was laid on the need to eliminate mosquito breeding places and also on the need to undertake a national sensitisation campaign. During these meetings the need to reinforce workforce to carry out chemical vector control was also highlighted.

These meetings saw the participation of the Special Mobile Force, as well as several Ministries/Departments and private sector organisations such as -

- (i) Ministry of Agro Industry, Food Production and Security;
- (ii) Ministry of Education, Culture and Human Resources;
- (iii) Ministry of Local Government, Rodrigues and Outer Islands;
- (iv) Ministry of Tourism, Leisure and External Communications;
- (v) Ministry of Social Security, National Solidarity and Senior Citizens Welfare & Reform Institutions;
- (vi) Ministry of Women's Rights, Child Development and Family Welfare, and
- (vii) PSSA, SILWP, JEC, MCCI, MEXA, AHRIM, MSPA and MCA.

Amongst others, an extensive cleaning campaign was launched by the Ministry of Local Government with the support of other Ministries and Departments.

Notwithstanding actions initiated by my Ministry, the support of the various stakeholders was also sought to mount a countrywide sensitisation campaign. In fact, officers of my Ministry, in collaboration with the abovementioned stakeholders, have been undertaking awareness sessions, media campaign through radio, T.V. and press targeting the public, in general, and various community groups including school children. Pamphlets were also distributed with the support of several Ministries

With regard to deployment of manpower, I wish to express my appreciation for the support of the Special Mobile Force for the fogging operations that were carried out in the region of Port Louis.

My appreciation also goes to the Ministry of Agro Industry, Food Production and Security and the Ministry of Environment and National Development Unit which have made available additional manpower to my Ministry for fogging and larviciding exercises.

I also wish to inform the House that my Ministry is presently finalising an emergency preparedness plan for Dengue & other mosquito borne diseases.

Mr Deputy Speaker Sir, the campaign of cleanliness is a matter of interest and concern to one and all. *C'est ainsi que mon ministère a fait appel à tout un chacun pour faire face à ce fléau et je remercie la population pour avoir répondu positivement à notre appel pressant pour une Ile Maurice propre et dépourvue d'immondices qui pourraient inciter la prolifération des moustiques.*

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would like to thank the Minister for his elaborate answer. I just wanted to ask the Minister whether among the recommendations made to the various bodies, schools, etc., one of the recommendations was to get rid of breeding places of mosquitoes by pruning trees, getting rid of lush vegetation in regions where mosquito breeding is expected.

Dr. Jeetah: Yes, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in fact, what we still need to be doing and we have to do it continuously is to make sure we don't have these breeding places. We have been able, I must say, to control dengue fever, but this should be an ongoing process given that today we are at risk of new diseases given the climatic changes and so on in the world.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: I heard the hon. Minister mention that the collaboration of the Ministry of Agro Industry was asked. May I ask him whether the Forestry Department was made aware of the recommendations made by the Ministry of Health?

Dr. Jeetah: Yes, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. In fact, we had 1600 men and women working day and night over this episode and they were fully briefed every single day. I have witnessed quite a few myself.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: May I ask the hon. Minister whether he is aware that, in schools and in institutions where trees have been pruned, officers from the forestry department are going around threatening and warning that these people would be taken to Court because of such measures taken with a view of eliminating insects and mosquito proliferation?

Dr. Jeetah: I am not aware of that, but I can certainly say that this is a different matter. There is a way to treat a tree. It is not just a question of just eliminating all trees. We have to eliminate the breeding grounds. We have to remove stagnant water, tyres and so on and definitely not clearing the whole place of trees.

Mr Jhugroo: Can I know from the hon. Minister whether these measures have been extended to the inhabitants of Agaléga?

Dr. Jeetah: I must admit that I am not aware of what is happening in Agaléga, but I'll certainly look into.

Mr Bhagwan: The Minister has informed us that actions and initiatives would be taken, but the main problem is that *l'exemple doit venir d'en haut*. People are sometimes taken to task. People are motivated to keep their country clean, mais l'exemple doit venir du gouvernement. Je le dis par expérience. Je demanderai au ministre d'utiliser l'hélicoptère du gouvernement pour se rendre compte dans quel état sont les bâtiments de l'État dans toutes les circonscriptions confondues et, par la même occasion, l'hôtel du gouvernement. L'initiative doit venir du gouvernement. Est-ce que le ministre de la santé a discuté de cet aspect avec le ministre des terres et le ministre des infrastructures publiques en ce qui concerne les hôpitaux, les bâtiments administratifs du gouvernement et surtout les *State lands* qui sont éparpillés *around the island* ?

Dr. Jeetah: That is a very valid suggestion, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, but I would like to give some comfort to the hon. Member. We have got a system which is put in place as surveillance. So once we detect that there is a mosquito that has bitten somebody who has got such and such fever, the whole team goes down and clears off the place. I would certainly look into the suggestion.

The Deputy Speaker: Last question, hon. Dookun-Luchoomun!

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: May I ask the hon. Minister whether he is ready to look into the matter? Because what I was saying is not that people should go round cutting down trees, but, at least, where people have been trying to help by eliminating breeding areas to look into the matter not to have forestry people moving around and threatening to sue to Court.

Dr. Jeetah: At the moment I am the acting Minister of Agro Industry and I will certainly look into the matter.

The Deputy Speaker: Next question hon. Dayal!

MARTINDALE, REDUIT – ROAD ACCESS

(No. B/911) Mr S. Dayal (Second Member for Quartier Militaire and Moka) asked the Minister of Local Government, Rodrigues and Outer Islands whether he is aware that six families residing at Martindale, Réduit, are having difficulties of access, as the St John's Anglicans Church has erected a block wall fencing and if so, will state if he will consider providing a road access thereat.

Dr. David: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Moka/Flacq District Council that a request was received on 12 September 2008 from the inhabitants of Martindale, Réduit for the widening of a 3 feet wide footpath as they were encountering difficulties to have access to the public road.

I am informed that there is no defined access for public use thereat except a 3 feet wide footpath with privately owned properties on its both sides.

I am also informed that the creation of a road access in that locality will imply the compulsory acquisition of private land.

Mr Dayal: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, previously, there was an access with the wall being erected and the inhabitants have been denied the access. I would like to request the hon. Minister if he could use his good offices so as to alleviate the hardship by providing an access to them even if it requires compulsory acquisition.

Dr. David: Obviously, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we cannot provide access on private land, but as far as acquisition is concerned, I'll certainly ask my colleague from the Ministry of Housing and Lands to find out what are the possibilities.

The Deputy Speaker : Next question please !

CITE CATHERINE, L'AGREMENT, ST PIERRE –

BUS SERVICE

(No. B/912) Mr S. Dayal (Second Member for Quartier Militaire and Moka) asked the Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping whether he is aware that the inhabitants of Cité Catherine, l'Agrément, St Pierre, and in the surrounding areas suffer undue hardships due to the absence of a bus service thereat and if so, will he consider providing a bus service along the route Cité Ste Catherine up to the Traffic Centre, St Pierre.

Mr Bachoo: Mr. Speaker Sir, I am informed by the National Transport Authority that Cité Sainte Catherine, which forms part of L'Agrément, St. Pierre, comprises of 66 housing units with an estimated population of 450 inhabitants. No bus service exists along L'Agrément Road which connects Cité Sainte Catherine and Bois Chéri Road.

However, regular bus services are available along Bois Chéri Road from Port Louis to St. Pierre at a frequency of every 10 minutes in both directions.

The three metre width road network within Cité Sainte Catherine which, apart from being narrow, is not provided with pavements. It is thus not convenient for bus traffic. Furthermore, there is no appropriate place for buses to reverse in the locality.

It must be pointed out that there are five taxis which operate from L'Agrément, including Cité Sainte Catherine. They are all garaged in the locality and operate as "Taxi Train".

Mr Dayal: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, buses do ply on the said road. Officers, most of the time, give erroneous information. I should like to ask the hon. Minister to effect a site visit with MPs of the region along with officials of his Ministry to see *de visu* the situation and to provide solutions accordingly?

Mr Bachoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed that they removed paths on either side of the road and this might have been the reason which has prompted my officers to prepare such statement, but I don't have any objection in conducting a site visit.

The Deputy Speaker: Next question please !

TAXPAYER – DOWNPAYMENT OF 30%

(No. B/913) Mr S. Dayal (Second Member for Quartier Militaire and Moka) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Empowerment whether, in regard to the requirement to effect a down payment of a minimum of 30% of the amount of tax payable in order to proceed with an appeal in tax cases, he will state if he will consider the waiver thereof.

Dr. Sithanen: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the provision for the tax payer to effect a down payment of 30% of the tax amount claimed for his objection to a tax assessment to be considered valid was introduced in the Income Tax Act in 1997. The requirement was extended to tax claims under the Value Added Tax Act in 2006 and the Land (Duties and Taxes) Act in 2007. The main reason for setting up of the system is to discourage frivolous objections from taxpayers.

The Income Tax Act also provides that if the taxpayer satisfies on reasonable grounds the Director-General of the Mauritius Revenue Authority that he is unable to effect the cash payment of 30% of the tax amount claimed, then he is instead allowed to submit a bank guarantee. In the event that the taxpayer again cannot comply with this alternative requirement, his objection is considered invalid and is deemed to have lapsed.

However, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the taxpayer still has a right of appeal. He can lodge an appeal with the Assessment Review Committee (ARC) against the MRA. This is applicable even in cases where strictly the 30% down payment has not been paid by the taxpayer. Accordingly, if the ARC finds that the MRA was wrong to have lapsed the objection of the taxpayer, it can refer the case back to the MRA for review.

On the other hand, if the ARC finds that the MRA was right to have considered the objection of the taxpayer to have lapsed, the taxpayer has a further right of appeal, that is to make an appeal to the Supreme Court of Mauritius.

The House may also wish to note that the Supreme Court has recently, on 17 June 2009, delivered a judgment in respect of an appeal on the constitutionality of the requirement of the law to require a down payment of 30%. The Court has ruled that it did not find the requirement unconstitutional, unfair or abusive.

The system, as it is, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is working and there are proper safeguards for the taxpayer, and also in the light of the ruling there is no reason to consider the waiver of the requirement to pay 30% of tax claimed in an assessment before any objection to the assessment is considered.

Mr Dayal: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, *il y a la loi, il y a l'esprit de la loi*. I am not disputing the legal side of it. I have received lots of representation especially from SMEs. They encounter lots of difficulties. The question I would like to put is: can the hon. Minister consider, let's say, a token amount as a deposit so as to make it possible for them to lodge their appeal.

Dr. Sithanen: I think it is a fair point that is raised by my colleague. I received many cases, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, but we have to strike a balance between flooding the system and being fair to people. Since this was introduced, there has been a lot of flexibility introduced in

the system. First, instead of actually making a deposit of 30%, in many cases the Director-General gives a flexibility of substituting for a bank guarantee which costs far less than actually depositing the money. The second flexibility that has been given, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is that once a bank guarantee is given the MRA tries to do its best to adjudicate the case within six to eight weeks and three, they pay interests on the amount of bank guarantee or on the amount of foregone income. So, we have to strike a balance.

Taxes have come down significantly, Mr Speaker, Sir, and I must say in many cases the Mauritius Revenue Authority tried to be lenient. But, we all know the Director-General of the MRA said it in an interview: given a chance, most people would not like to pay taxes, even the taxes are low. In the overwhelming majority of cases, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the taxpayer has been found not to have a valid case. I understand. Many MPs speak to me, I have given up all the discretionary power in order not to be inundated, but they have to do the job also and we will see how flexibility this can be done. We have to avoid a system where people stop paying or people use a very low level. Let me tell my hon. friend, in some countries, this amount is 50%.

Mr Bodha: May I ask the hon. Vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, how many cases have appealed for the financial year 2007/2008?

Dr. Sithanen: I don't know. If the hon. Member will come with a substantive question, I will gladly give the answer.

Mr Bodha: There are many cases where the final assessment sum was superior to 30%.

Dr. Sithanen: Yes, I think so. As I said, I don't have the specific cases, but I asked the question. In the overwhelming majority of cases, the taxpayers that lodge the claim usually do not win the case.

Mr Dayal: I have got representations that taxpayers do find this 30% very oppressive and they are in a difficult situation to find the sum. If they cannot find the sum, they cannot protest, they cannot appeal, is it so?

Dr. Sithanen: As I said, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, maybe one solution is for them to try to convince the MRA to accept a bank guarantee, then the financial burden is significantly less. Depending on the financial standing of this particular individual, a bank guarantee costs

significantly less than actually given amount, provided a case is made to the MRA that in lieu of the amount itself being deposited that the MRA can accept a bank guarantee. As I said, the second point, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have spoken to the MRA and I have told them to be flexible, especially, there are some genuine cases that it is very difficult to tell them that for each case they have to give a waiver, because then they are going to be inundated.

Mr Dayal: And leniency must be seen to be done, because it's not always the case. This is what I am given to understand.

DAGOTIÈRE – CREMATION GROUND - BRIDGE

(No. B/914) Mr S. Dayal (Second Member for Quartier Militaire & Moka) asked the Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping whether, in regard to the project for the construction of a bridge near the entrance of the cremation ground at Dagotièrè, he will state when works thereat will start.

Mr Bachoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am advised by the Road Development Authority that a survey will be carried out to determine the extent of upgrading and rehabilitation works to be carried out at the bridge situated near the entrance of Cremation Ground at Dagotièrè and the works will be included in our programme of work for this financial year.

MAURITIUS MEAT AUTHORITY – CHAIRPERSON – REMUNERATION & FRINGE BENEFITS

(No. B/915) Mrs S. Hanoomanjee (Second Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Minister of Agro Industry, Food Production and Security whether, in regard to the Chairperson of the Mauritius Meat Authority, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Authority, information as to the name of the incumbent, indicating the remuneration and other fringe benefits granted to him.

The Minister of Health & Quality of Life (Dr. R. Jeetah): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Mauritius Meat Authority that Mr Vijaydut Chummun is the Chairperson of the Authority.

Mr Chummun draws a monthly fee of Rs 21,000.

In addition to the above fee, he is paid a travelling allowance of Rs5,000 monthly and provided with a cellular phone.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Minister no doubt is aware that Mr Chummun was also Adviser to the Minister of Health and Quality of Life and he has had to resign because allegedly he is being arrested for sale of psychotrope. Does the minister think that Mr Chummun should still hold the post of Chairman of the Mauritius Meat Authority?

Dr. Jeetah: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I know this case quite well. I had some discussion with him and my Ministry decided to ask him to step down pending the inquiry. I must tell the hon. lady that he has been cleared of any misgivings or malpractices. That was an allegation made by somebody who, I think, broke into his pharmacy or some compound.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Can we know when he has been cleared?

Dr. Jeetah: I had the document with me, but I don't have the date. I can let the hon. Member have the exact date. I can let her have a copy actually of that proceeding.

The Deputy Speaker: The Table has been advised that PQ B/916 has been withdrawn.

CHILDREN – SEXUAL ABUSE – PROCEDURES IN COURT

(No. B/916) Mrs S. Hanoomanjee (Second Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Attorney-General whether, in regard to children under the age of ten and who have been abused sexually, he will state the procedures adopted for them to depone in court.

(Withdrawn)

PLAINE MAGNIEN – MUSLIM CEMETERY – “JANNAZA” PLATFORM – UPLIFTMENT WORKS

(No. B/917) Mr Y. Varma (First Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Local Government, Rodrigues and Outer Islands whether he is aware of the bad state of the “jannaza” platform of the muslim cemetery in Plaine Magnien and, if so, will he state the remedial measures that will be taken.

Dr. David: I am informed by the Grand Port/Savanne District Council that the ‘jannaza’ platform at the Plaine Magnien cemetery is at present of plain floor without ceramic tiles and is uncovered.

I am further informed that upliftment works at the platform namely placing of tiles and provision of shelter will be undertaken during financial year 2010.

AYODHYA LANE, TROIS BOUTIQUES – CONSTRUCTION

(No. B/918) Mr Y. Varma (First Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Local Government, Rodrigues and Outer Islands:-

Whether he has taken cognizance of the repeated requests made by the inhabitants of the Ayodhya Lane, Trois Boutiques, to have the said road tarred and, if so, will he state where matters stand.

Dr. David: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the National Development Unit of the Ministry of Environment and National Development Unit that the construction of Ayodhya Lane at Trois Boutiques will be undertaken during the current financial year.

STREET HAWKERS – NUMBER

(No. B/919) Mr N. Bodha (First Member for Vacoas & Floreal) asked the Minister of Local Government, Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether, in regard to the street hawkers, he will –

- (a) state if there is a national policy in regard thereto, and
- (b) for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Municipal and District Councils, information as to the number thereof operating in each of them.

Dr. David: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I wish to refer the hon. Member to the reply I made on 07 April 2009 to PQ No. B/124 on this issue.

With regard to part (b) of the question, I wish to inform the House that the information asked for is being compiled and will be placed in the Library of the National Assembly.

HYDROPONIC VILLAGES – NUMBER – AUGUST 2005 - JULY 2009

(No. B/920) Mr P. Jugnauth (First Member for Quartier Militaire & Moka) asked the Minister of Agro Industry, Food Production & Security whether, in regard to the hydroponic villages, he will state the number thereof set up, since August 2005 to date.

The Minister of Health & Quality of Life (Dr. R. Jeetah): Mr Speaker Sir, there has been one hydroponic village set up by my Ministry at Cluny, Beemanique in year 2006. Initially the project was to be set up at Belle Vue Experimental Station at Albion by FARC on 2 Acres of land with uptake of loan from DBM and renting out units to operators. However, further to a technical assessment which concluded on relatively high temperature, soil type and accessibility to planters at Albion, the project was shifted to Cluny on 14 Acres of land leased out by the Rose Belle Sugar Estate Board.

The concept of the project is based on a 'Rent and Build Model' and comprises 31 plots of 900 M² each. An Expression of Interest was launched in February 2006 whereby 37 applications were received. Following evaluation, 31 applicants were selected. As at date, the total number of plots already leased out is 22 and 9 cases are being considered at the level of my Ministry.

Currently 11 promoters have already embarked upon this project. 6 units are operational and are involved mainly in production of tomato and sweet pepper. They are assisted and supported by AREU. Five new promoters have started construction of their green houses. Electricity is available on the site and temporary arrangement has been made with the CWA for the supply of water to the current lessees. The Rose Belle Sugar Estate Board has just completed the tender exercise for drilling and testing of a borehole and the contract is expected to be awarded soon following which more promoters are expected to start the operation.

LA DIGUE, DAGOTIERE - DICKSON BRIDGE - RECONSTRUCTION

(No. B/921) Mr P. Jugnauth (First Member for Quartier Militaire & Moka) asked the Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport & Shipping whether, in regard to the project for the carrying out of works at the Dickson Bridge at La Digue, Dagotièrè, he will state where matters stand.

Dr. David: Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I shall reply to this question.

I am informed by the Moka/Flacq District Council that following the reconstruction of Dickson Bridge at La Digue, Dagotièrè, to the tune of Rs7 m., complaint was received to the effect that the water flow was still restricted due to partial obstruction of a culvert downstream at an existing old bridge which forms part of the property of Mon Désert Alma.

I am further informed that the necessary way leave has been sought on 13 January 2009 by the Council from Mon Désert Alma to enable the reconstruction of a cross drain to address this problem. The way leave is still awaited, unfortunately.

Mr Jugnauth: First of all, let me thank the hon. Minister for having done a very job in having the bridge to be built there. But in the meantime, while the other works will be done in terms of getting the way leave and so on, would the hon. Minister see to it with Mon Désert Alma that, at least, the workers can go there to unblock this place where water has accumulated and is practically stagnant?

Dr. David: I'll do that, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. But I must mention the dates. The Moka/ Flacq district council requested for way leave since 13 January. Seven months later, we are still awaiting. This cannot go on indefinitely. I'll ask Mont Desert Alma to allow the workers to go there, and then to do what has to be done. But we'll enforce on Mont Desert Alma just to give us way leave.

PUBLIC PLACES - NOISE POLLUTION

(No. B/922) Mrs M. Martin (Second Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether, in regard to the public places such as bars, halls and discotheques where music is played aloud, he will state if assessments have been made of the level of noise pollution generated thereat, and, if so, the number of such places, indicating those which have been booked in breach of the Environment Protection Act 2002, since January 2008 to date.

Dr. Jeetah: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Environment Protection (Amendment 2008) Act and the Environment Protection (Control of Noise) Regulations 2008 provide the legal framework and basis for the management of noise, and mandate my Ministry to be the enforcing agency and also empower the Ministry of Environment & NDU, the Police, the *Police de l'Environnement* and the Local Authorities to take actions against noise pollution.

The Environmental Health Engineering Unit of my Ministry has carried out noise assessment for public places such as bars, halls and discotheques in accordance with the provisions of the Environment Standards for Noise Regulations 2008 under the Environment Protection Act as amended. The number of noise monitoring exercises carried out since January 2008 to date at such places is 90.

Twelve Programme Notices have been served on contravenants so far, in accordance with the provisions of the Environment Protection Act as amended.

I am also informed by the *Police de l'Environnement* and the Police Department have established 54 contraventions from 15 July 2008 to 17 July 2009 against such places, in accordance with the provisions of the Environment Protection (Control of Noise) Regulations 2008.

Mrs Martin: I thank the Minister for his answer. May I ask him whether he has made an assessment to see how many of those public places mentioned in the question, such as bars, halls and discotheques, where music is played out loud, actually exist, since he says 90 of them have been checked?

Dr. Jeetah: I can circulate a list of establishments that have been assessed, if that could help the hon. Member.

Mrs Martin: It does not matter. It is not actually what I was asking. It is the number of existing places where music is played out loud. Anyway, may I ask the Minister on what interval is the testing being carried out?

Dr. Jeetah: I see the point. Normally, when there is a complaint, the officers go out and check the noise levels. Recently, we've had a number of complaints. We had discussions here, and I think I mentioned in an answer a while ago that we have set up a flying squad that has to stay out late because normally these noise problems occur very late at night or early in the morning. They have got a programme work to go round discotheques and so on. First of all, we are trying to let people know the noise level, and then if they don't take action, we take action through contraventions and so on.

Mrs Martin: The Minister is no doubt aware that it is not only outside the buildings that the inhabitants are being bothered, but often inside the buildings where the music is being played, as there is a real risk of people suffering from ear problems because the music is too loud. My question is whether the Ministry would consider regular assessment of noise whenever

this is necessary or required, especially in these places where inhabitants outside are complaining. Therefore, the people inside might be a little bit more in danger of having ear problems.

Dr. Jeetah: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I know this from my time, at the university, that most young adults these days can be partially deaf if they are going to discotheques. But I will have to look into the suggestion that we will have to regulate noise level inside discotheques. I don't know whether this is possible, but I certainly will ask my technicians to advise me.

Mr Dowarkasing: The hon. Minister has spoken about the flying squad. Can we know how big the squad is, what is the coverage of the island, and how many vehicles they have?

Dr. Jeetah: I did give some indication to the numbers in reply to a previous PQ, but I can certainly circulate information.

Mrs Perrier: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Minister should be aware that the motorcycles are permanent noise pollution, at night especially. Can the Minister inform the House whether the motorcycles are taken care under the Environment Protection Act 2002?

Dr. Jeetah: I will have to look into it, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. This might not necessarily fall under my Ministry, but I will have to look into it.

WORLD FOOTBALL CUP 2010 – SOUTH AFRICA – SPECIAL EVENTS

(No. B/923) Mrs M. Martin (Second Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the Minister of Youth & Sports whether, in regard to the forthcoming World Football Cup to be held in South Africa in June 2010, he will state if his Ministry is proposing to organise special events in order to boost up local football and make Mauritius participate fully in this event and, if so, give details thereof and, if not, why not.

Mr Ritoo: Mr Deputy Speaker Sir, the FIFA World Cup 2010 is an international event of historical importance to the African region. In fact, this will be the first World Cup to be hosted in Africa since the start of the competition in 1934.

In that context, Government has already set up a Ministerial Committee to look into accommodation of World Cup fans and organisation of training camps for foreign teams, so that we derive maximum benefits from the holding of the forthcoming World Cup in South Africa in June 2010.

Besides the arrangements being made by the Ministry of Tourism to attract fans who will be proceeding to South Africa to stop over in Mauritius, my Ministry is envisaging to invite two high profile football teams, which will be qualified for the World Cup finals, to train in Mauritius.

In this respect, Government has earmarked Rs15 m. to upgrade George V and Anjalay Stadia to the norms required by the FIFA. This, in itself, will be a boost for football in Mauritius. It will also be a unique opportunity to watch such prestigious teams in preparation and at play. This would generate football fever in the country.

I would certainly welcome any suggestion that the hon. Member may wish to make for Mauritius to participate fully in this unique event.

Mrs Martin: I thank the hon. Minister for his answer. The aim of my question was really to see what is being done locally, not only to accommodate foreign groups or foreign teams but what is being done to seize this occasion in order to boost the local football itself. I would like to know whether the Minister has envisaged any programme in order to go forward.

Mr Ritoo: We have an inter Ministerial Committee, and we are looking at how to boost up the local teams and football in general.

Mrs Martin: Since the Minister has mentioned this Ministerial Committee, can I ask him when the Ministerial Committee is expected to submit its recommendations?

Mr Ritoo: Very soon, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

CLEMENT CHAROUX STREET, MALHERBES, CUREPIPE – PAVEMENTS

(No. B/924) **Mrs M. Martin (Second Member for Curepipe & Midlands)** asked the Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport & Shipping whether he is aware of the difficulties faced by the pedestrians along the Clément Charoux Street, Malherbes, Curepipe, and if so, will he state if he will consider constructing footpaths along the said road, with a view reinforcing the safety of the numerous pedestrians who use this street daily.

The Minister of Local Government, Rodrigues and Outer Islands (Dr J. B. David): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I shall reply to this question. I am informed by the Municipality of Curepipe that, following request received from residents of Clément Charoux

Street, Malherbes, Curepipe, it is envisaged to construct pavements along that road during financial year 2010.

ATHLETES – HANDICAPPED - ASSISTANCE

(No. B/925) Mr R. Speville (Second Member for Rodrigues) asked the Minister of Youth & Sports whether, in regard to the athletes who have performed at national and international levels and who have become disabled or severely handicapped, following injuries sustained in accidents inside or outside the playfield, he will state -

- (a) the number thereof, and
- (b) if he is aware of the case of one Ms G. G. who had represented Mauritius in Judo at national and international levels and who is presently handicapped and, if so, if any assistance will be extended to her.

Mr Ritoo: Mr Deputy Speaker Sir, there is no records available at the Sports Medical Unit of my Ministry regarding any athlete who has become disabled or severely handicapped following participation in sports. However, I am aware of one athlete residing in Rodrigues, namely Ms Marie Noelle Ravina, who was, long back, hurt by a javelin in Rodrigues, and which was the cause of her handicap.

As regards part (b), I am aware that Ms Glorieuse Guillaume was a high level athlete who won a Gold Medal in Judo at the Indian Ocean Islands Games in 1993 and thereafter became the vice champion of Africa in the same discipline.

I am informed that Ms Glorieuse Guillaume was hurt during the Indian Ocean Islands Games in Reunion in 1998 and sustained a leg injury. After the IOIG 1998, she stopped practising Judo and was employed by the Judo Federation.

In 2003, she opted for the practice of weightlifting and even participated in the Indian Ocean Islands Games 2003 in Mauritius.

I understand that the former athlete is now disabled and is a beneficiary of financial assistance from the Ministry of Social Security.

The Office of the President has transmitted to my Ministry a letter from Father Michel Boullé, who has appealed for additional social benefits on behalf of the former athlete.

The Ministry of Social Security has been requested to favourably consider the request.

Mr Spéville: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is the hon. Minister aware that Miss Guillaume, who is now residing at Dagotière, has been living in Mauritius for the last 20 years and that she is fully handicapped? She is receiving Rs1,123 and has to pay Rs1,400 as housing. She also has to pay electricity, water, food and everything. Is the hon. Minister aware that since February 2008 this girl is living in that condition?

Mr Ritoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am aware of the case of Miss Guillaume. In fact, she is not staying at Dagotière, but at Pointe aux Canonnières. She is indebted heavily. The Ministry made an appeal to the Trust Fund for Excellence in Sports to help the athlete after she was hurt. Its Board exceptionally agreed to pay her arrears on rent for seven months to an amount of nearly Rs10,000 to the NHDC Co. Ltd., though this does not fall within its mandate and objectives.

Mr Spéville: The hon. Minister just said that Miss Guillaume is residing at Pointe aux Canonnières. In fact, last night I visited her; she is living with a friend at Pointe aux Canonnières because she is undertaking treatment at the SSR Hospital, which means that she cannot move from Dagotière which is so far. The address on the CEB bill and Water bill state; Mrs Guillaume, Résidence L'Assurance, D14, NHDC Complex Dagotière, Royal Road. That is the real address. The NHDC has just sent her a letter for the arrears as from 03 February 2009 for Rs9,240. If she does not pay that amount, they will have to entertain legal action against her. From my information, Miss Guillaume does not have this money. As I said, she has just gone to Pointe aux Canonnières, because she is actually on treatment at the SSR Hospital. So, my request - and hers also - to the hon. Minister is: is it possible for Miss Guillaume to have a carer's allowance from the Social Security, because she is staying with friends at Pointe aux Canonnières? Is it possible for her to be treated as a beneficiary of BIP (Basic Invalidity Pension), because now she is treated as a beneficiary of Social Aid of Rs1,123. She is living on her own in Mauritius; her parents are in Rodrigues. For 20 years, she has been doing sports and, as the hon. Minister just said, she has had a long career in Judo. I think Miss Guillaume is in real distress right now.

Mr Ritoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I take note of all these issues. I just want to inform the hon. Member that, in fact, she owed an amount of Rs15,000 to the NHDC. I will make a request to the Minister of the Social Security to see whether she can increase the social aid assistance and see the possibility of intervening for the loan that she is owing to the NHDC.

Mrs Labelle: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, my question was whether this lady was receiving Social Aid or BIP, because it seems that she is not actually receiving a BIP. May be the hon. Minister can confirm whether this lady is receiving a BIP or Social Aid?

Mr Ritoo: It should be Social Aid normally. I will check it.

Mr Lauthan: The Minister has been a sports person himself. This is a very sympathetic case and, maybe, under the National Solidarity Fund we can give her a one-off substantial amount.

Mr Ritoo: I have taken note. In fact, we have paid the sum that she owed previously, i.e. Rs10,000, to the NHDC. We made an appeal to the High Level Sports Unit to pay that amount. We will try to see to what extent we can intervene with the Ministry of Social Security and other Departments.

Mrs Perrier: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, does the Minister not feel that it should be the duty of the Government, through his Ministry, to help this person? She has been the pride of Mauritius for years and now she is just let down with a Social Aid. It does not fit. Will the Government look into the possibility to help these athletes who have served Mauritius, now that they are handicapped and cannot care for themselves?

Mr Ritoo: I think that is what we have been discussing so far, because even if it is through the Social Security or any Unit in my Ministry, the Government is helping her.

The Deputy Speaker: Last question, hon. Mrs Labelle!

Mrs Labelle: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. May we ask the hon. Minister whether this athlete was under a particular insurance cover, because from what I have just gathered, she has been injured while practising this sport? Was there a particular insurance cover for this athlete?

Mr Ritoo: Normally, every athlete who participates and practises any discipline is supposed to be covered through an insurance cover by the Federation. In fact, she was injured in 1997 while training at the Royal College of Port Louis and she was given all due attention through the hospital and the Medical Unit. But, she was insured.

The Deputy Speaker: Last question, hon. Spéville!

Mr Spéville: The hon. Minister just said that she was insured, but from my information, since Miss Guillaume was injured in 2007 at the gymnasium, she has not received any insurance cover and that is why she left Judo and started working on her own. And now, as I said, she is really in a mess and I am really sad for her. I am making a plea to the Minister and to the Ministry of Social Security to come to a real figure to get her out of where she is now.

Mr Ritoo: I will try to see with the Federation.

OVERSEAS TREATMENT SCHEME - MEDICAL EXPENSES

(No. B/926) Mr J. C. Spéville (Second Member for Rodrigues) asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether, in regard to medical expenses incurred for patients who had undergone surgical operations in South Africa, India and other countries, he will state the amount of funds disbursed, since January 2006 to date, indicating the number of patients, from mainland Mauritius and Rodrigues, who have benefitted from the Overseas Treatment Scheme.

Dr. Jeetah: Mr Deputy Speaker Sir, the aim of this Government is to provide quality medical care including high tech medicine to our patients. Although our hospitals have made significant progress towards tertiary health care, my Ministry still relies on internationally renowned centres to treat complex cases in such fields as cardiology, ophthalmology, neurosurgery and cancer.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed that since January 2006 to June 2009, 1,762 patients including 13 from Rodrigues have benefitted from the Overseas Treatment Scheme and an amount of Rs175 m. has been disbursed. The cost of treatment for the 13 patients from Rodrigues is around Rs1.1 m.

**NATIONAL TRANSPORT CORPORATION – RESTRUCTURING/TRANSFER
EXERCISE**

(No. B/927) **Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun (Third Member for La Caverne & Phoenix)** asked the Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping whether, in regard to the National Transport Corporation, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Corporation, information as to if an organizational restructuring or transfer exercise is being carried out thereat.

Mr Bachoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as I informed the House sometime back, a study has been carried out by the Consultant Kemp Chatteris Deloitte on the assessment of the financial situation and a review of the organizational structure of the National Transport Corporation (NTC). I have already placed a copy of the Report in the Library of the Assembly.

As far as the organizational review is concerned, the Consultant has proposed a new structure with clear reporting lines and well-defined responsibilities for each Departmental Head for allowing the Corporation to meet the challenges and exigencies of the Bus Industry.

In its restructuring plan, recommendations have been made for some of its activities to be reorganized.

The NTC has prepared an Action Plan, specifying the timeframes and the cost for implementation of the proposed measures in the short, medium and long term, which includes, *inter alia*, organisational reforms. The Action Plan is currently being studied by the Ministry in collaboration with the Ministry of Finance & Economic Empowerment.

As an immediate measure, the NTC adopted a Recovery Plan to reduce costs and generate extra revenue. In this context, a few middle management cadres have been reshuffled at depot level for improved efficiency.

I wish to inform the House that the Recovery Plan has produced positive results by bringing savings in costs to the tune of Rs7 m. for each of the months of May and June 2009.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister whether there has been any transfer of officers from the various depots of the CNT to the Head Office or elsewhere?

Mr Bachoo: I am informed that the Managers of a few depots have been transferred from the small depots and they have been sent to the main one.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: May I ask the hon. Minister whether the Depot Managers from the depot of Souillac and Rivère du Rempart have been transferred and, if so, by whom have they been replaced?

Mr Bachoo: As far as the day-to-day administration is concerned, that is the responsibility of the management and they have taken the decisions. My Ministry has been informed of the decisions and we are fully in agreement with the decisions that have been taken by the management.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: May I ask the hon. Minister whether he can give the qualifications of the officers who are now in charge of the two depots mentioned?

Mr Bachoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have to inform the House that the middle management, that is, the workers who have been toiling and moiling for the past 20, 25 to 30 years, have taken over the depot and they are doing very well. I am fully satisfied with it and I would wish that they continue to serve in this way because at the CNT, the situation is so precarious, so much in a dangerous financial situation that we have to involve everybody from the lowest down to the highest. As I have just mentioned, we have taken the responsibility of taking CNT out of the situation where it has fallen and the steps that are being taken, definitely we'll have to wait and see the result that is coming.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Do I take it from the Minister then that the two Depot Managers who have been transferred have not been operating at the level expected by the Minister?

Mr Bachoo: I am not here to pass judgment on anybody, but if the management has come forward with certain concrete plans, I have no objection so far that they are going to give us good results, but, at the same time, we are against any type of punitive transfer. I have already mentioned that earlier. I have also stated that I am going to give only directives of general nature without poking our nose in the day-to-day administration because the Deloitte Report has been clear on certain things which have occurred in the past.

Mr Guinness: The hon. Minister is mentioning the Deloitte Report quite often. I am sure he must have come across the Deloitte report where it is said that –

“There is a difference of around Rs40 m. between traffic revenue figure obtained from various depots and the accounts based on daily banking.”

Can I know whether the hon. Minister has gone through that shortfall of Rs40 m.?

(Interruptions)

It must have been Rs50 m. probably, but here it is Rs40 m. Can we know from the Minister whether any action has been taken, what has been the outcome of his own personal enquiry and what has been done in the case to recoup the Rs40 m. shortfall?

Mr Bachoo: I would request the hon. Member to come with a substantive question. It is not a shortfall; in fact, it is a surplus because certain things were not even reported, nothing has been computerised in the CNT and there has been a delay in the presentation of accounts by the officers and supervisors. So, it is a surplus rather than a shortfall. In fact, I have gone through it personally and I have seen it is a surplus, not a shortfall. Ultimately, when we have balanced the account, we have found that there is neither any shortfall nor any surplus. But the account has been duly balanced, one assurance I can give you.

Mr Jhugroo: Will the hon. Minister confirm whether the officers replacing the Depot Managers at Souillac and Rivière du Rempart are qualified to operate as Depot Managers and whether they are drawing any allowance and, if so, can we know the amount of the allowance drawn by them?

Mr Bachoo: In fact, there is no replacement; it is an interim measure because we want to get the involvement of all the workers together in order to save the corporation. No one is being paid any extra sum, but they are working with a sense of zeal and dedication. I have also mentioned that...

(Interruptions)

Mr Bachoo: Zeal, dedication and devotion at the same time. They are doing their work selflessly. I sincerely believe that if you are going to empower these workers, the net result probably may be positive.

Mr Gunness: It is mentioned in the report 'due to lack of fully qualified personnel in the Finance Department - we are talking about money - the accounts of the Finance Department of the NTC would not be prepared on a timely basis. In addition, the accounts may not be reliable for management to act upon.' Can I know from the hon. Minister what is being done in that particular case?

Mr Bachoo: I fully agree with you and we are definitely taking steps in that direction, because, in fact, the Finance Officer or the responsible officer was on leave and I do hope that he comes back. If he does not come, then we'll have to find ways and means of filling up the vacancy.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: The hon. Minister just mentioned that he is keen to empower all the officers at the CNT. May I know from him what about the officers who have been demoted? May I ask him what the Depot Manager of Rivière du Rempart is presently doing at the Head Office?

Mr Bachoo: I know that the hon. Member has got more information than me, but one thing I can tell her is that there is no demotion of any type. There has been a simple transfer and, in fact, at the centre we need plenty of workers, they have to do plenty of works. Our system is not computerised. That is the reason why we are requesting them to move to the centre and try to put a bit of order in the house.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Soodhun first!

Mr Soodhun: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. The Minister just mentioned that as a Minister he is not going to poke his nose in the affairs of the CNT. For nearly eight years, he has been Minister of that particular department before and now. So, being given where the CNT has reached now, I would like to ask him whether it is not high time for him to poke his whole body in the CNT. He refuses to poke only his nose. There are thousands of workers...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please!

Mr Soodhun: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I don't think the Minister is realising what is the situation. There are thousands of workers who have been tolerated and recruited by the own Government of this Minister. Now, they are coming with a new programme and a new structure. So, I would like to know from the Minister whether there is any redundancy with the new action plan.

Mr Bachoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, firstly, I was not Minister for eight years. Secondly, when the CNT...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order! Order!

Mr Bachoo: Will I be allowed to answer the question, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir? Firstly, I was not Minister for eight continuous years. Secondly, when the CNT was making surpluses, then nobody opened their mouth. Thirdly, CNT had been providing all types of social services. Fourthly, we had the big problem of the rise in the price of diesel. Fifthly, we have got an old fleet. And, at the same time, we have got so many routes which the CNT had to serve and almost 50% to 60%, they are non-economical.

So, we have to keep all these things in our mind and, at the same time, I have to respect the existing legislation, the law, the existing Act of Parliament through which the CNT has been created, where I cannot poke my nose in the day-to-day affairs, but having said that...

(Interruptions)

I have been empowered by Government to look into the problem that CNT is faced with. But I can assure the hon. Member that all of us are concerned with the existing situation and that is the reason why, the Minister of Finance had been kind enough to give us an advance of Rs40 m., at least, to set the house in order. That is the reason why we have to take stringent measures to see to it that every cent that we are injecting in CNT, we must find, at least, a positive answer out of it.

Mr Gunness: Can I know from the hon. Minister what is being done to reduce the stock level because the Deloitte Report laid a lot of emphasis on how there is overstocking? Stocks are sourced locally for Rs46.1 m. and we have millions of stocks which have become obsolete. I would like to know what is being done to put this house in order.

Mr Bachoo: I don't have the exact figure. The latest figure that we have has gone down by Rs15 m. It's approximately Rs31 m. and, of course, in that also we are putting some order and we will see to it that only those spare parts which we are badly in need of will be procured.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: May I know from the hon. Minister when was the transfers effected and whether it was before or after the Deloitte Report and whether the transfers were done under the instructions of the Minister himself?

Mr Bachoo: The transfers were effected, if I am not mistaken, after the Deloitte Report and, as I have just mentioned, there is no question of any type of punitive transfer. They are high level officers; they have been sent to the main office and they have to do their work.

Mr Gunness: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, had the Minister looked into the fact that the Deloitte Report stated clearly that in 2006 and 2007, on route 153, there were 500,000 students and pensioners. How is it that in 2008, on that same route, there were 5.8 million pensioners and students travelling? Can the Minister enlighten us?

Mr Bachoo: As I have just mentioned, it is not a computerised system. The officers who had been taking notes had committed plenty of blunders and mistakes. These are the only mistakes and I may call them genuine mistakes.

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

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, thank you. I'll just ask the hon. Minister, since he said that there has been no demotion ...

Mr Deputy Speaker: Order, please!

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:... and that officers have been transferred from one depot to the Head Office, could the hon. Minister inform the House on the scheme of duties of Depot Managers?

Mr Bachoo: Well, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I find it very strange. I sincerely say that there have been cases, but not a single question coming from the hon. Member. This one is not a punitive transfer; this is a transfer because we don't need the Depot Managers there and the reason is very simple, we are making too much losses in those two or three depots. That is the reason why we want to remove them from those depots so that, at least, at the end, we can balance the accounts and we have to see to it that they are break-evens. That is one of the reasons and secondly - I mention again - I maintain my point that there has not been any type of victimisation of any sort. That's all.

Mr Deputy Speaker: Time is over!

SUSPENSION OF S.O 10 (2)

The Deputy Prime Minister: 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.

Mr Valayden rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

STATEMENT BY MINISTER

NIGHT CLUBS & PRIVATE CLUBS - NUISANCES

The Minister of Local Government, Rodrigues and Outer Islands (Dr. J. B. David):
Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I would wish to make the following statement in response to the public outcry against nuisances being caused by certain night clubs and private clubs as reported in this august Assembly and in the press.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, let me right from the outset, point out that following legislative amendments brought to the Local Government Act 2003 and the Tourism Act, licences to operate night clubs are granted and regulated by the Tourism Authority since 2006. Furthermore, private clubs operating on a commercial basis, having a dance floor and selling alcoholic drinks are licensed and regulated by the Tourism Authority since 01 June 2008.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, there are three night clubs/private clubs namely the Savoy at Vacoas, the Xindix Records Ltd at Lakepoint and Chocolate City in the Manhattan Complex at Curepipe that have recently been in the limelight due to noise pollution which causes public nuisance. I have requested for an internal enquiry to be carried out on these matters.

Firstly, the Savoy at Vacoas, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Municipality of Vacoas/Phoenix that a building and Land Use Permit was issued on 08 June 2009 to Fiction Ltd to operate a private club, entertainment hall including snooker/billard in the building previously housing the Savoy Cinema hall at Vacoas. In addition to the usual condition, the following conditions were imposed –

- (i) the opening hours to be limited from 9.00 p.m to 2.00 a.m on Fridays and Saturdays and from 5.00 p.m to 10.00 p.m on the other days;
- (ii) a list of members to be submitted;
- (iii) the building to be made sound proof to the satisfaction of the Council, and
- (iv) a written guarantee to be submitted to the effect that the premises would not be used as a night club.

The company also paid a trade fee to the Municipal Council on 03 July 2009 to operate the private club. However, following complaints received on 08 July to the effect that the activities of the operator were causing noise pollution as well as traffic problem due to indiscriminate parking of vehicles, and following ex-post control effected by officers of the Municipal Council on 11 July 2009 the economic operator was on 14 July 2009, requested to stop all activities until such time that a proper license is obtained from the Tourism Authority to run the private club with dancing facilities, etc.

As regards the Xindix Records Ltd at Lakepoint, Curepipe, I am informed by the Municipality of Curepipe that Lakepoint Ltd was on 20 December 2001 granted a development permit for the construction of a commercial complex comprising a night club, restaurant, food court, shops, art gallery, skating track and offices.

On 21 September 2007, a request was made by Xindix Records Ltd for a development permit for a cafeteria, a pub, a restaurant, a private club, a place of public entertainment, an advertising agency and a night club at first floor of the Lakepoint commercial building.

On 13 December 2007, the Council acceded to the request of Xindix Records Ltd and a formal application for a Building and Land Use Permit was made by the company on 06 August 2008 to operate a general retailer (foodstuff and non foodstuff with alcohol), a victualler and a private club.

The Permit and Business Monitoring Committee of the Council approved the issue of the Building and Land Use Permit on 21 August 2008. However, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have noted with concern that the permit was issued on 07 April 2009 despite the fact that the Environmental Health Unit of the Ministry had, in a letter dated 03 February 2009, notified the Council that numerous complaints had been received regarding noise nuisance from music being played at Lakepoint, and such activities should not be allowed. The Council even granted an occasional licence to Xindix Record on 30 April 2009 for a dancing party. This is totally unacceptable.

In addition, the Municipal Council had disregarded the advice of the competent authority in the matter and issued the permit. Despite the fact that since 01 June 2008, the authority legally empowered to issue licences for private clubs with dance floors, etc was the Tourism Authority, the Council has issued such licence on 07 April 2009. The fact remains that the Council renewed the permits on 08 July 2009, disregarding public outcry on this issue.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as regards the case of Chocolate City Entertainment in the Manhattan, Curepipe, I am informed by the Municipality of Curepipe that an application was made by the company on 08 May 2009 for the conversion of part of the existing commercial unit on the second floor of Manhattan Building, Curepipe into a private club with authorisation to sell alcoholic drinks.

The Municipal Council issued a Building and Land Use permit to the company on 06 July 2009 with condition that clearance be obtained from the Mauritius Revenue Authority for the sale of alcoholic drinks without stating that the promoter must obtain a licence from the Tourism Authority in respect of the private club. As at date no trade fee has been paid to the Municipal Council, yet the club operated illegally so much so that on 18 July, the Curepipe Police has booked the company for operating without licence.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, following persistent public outcry, I intervened personally in the matter with a view to initiating appropriate action against nuisances caused by Xindix Records Ltd at Lakepoint and Chocolate City in the Manhattan Complex and yet as at this morning no action has been taken by the officers of the Municipal Council.

In these circumstances, I have requested the Permanent Secretary of my Ministry to initiate disciplinary action against all the officers who have failed in their duty.

Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

At 4.20 p.m. the sitting was suspended