

## ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

### MBC – MR N. P. – CHIEF NEWS EDITOR - ARREST

(No. B/1) Mr P. Jhugroo (Third Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Home Affairs whether, in regard to Mr N. P., he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to if he was arrested on or about Monday 06 January 2009 and, if so –

the reasons therefor, and  
the charges lodged against him, if any.

**The Ag. Prime Minister:** Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission I shall reply to PQ Nos. B/1, B/2 and B/4 at the same time as they relate to the same subject.

I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that Mr N.P., Chief News Editor/Desk Coordinator of the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation, was arrested by the Central CID on 05 January 2009, on a charge of “Using a Telecommunication Service for the Purpose of Causing Annoyance, Inconvenience and Needless Anxiety to any Person” in breach of Section 46 (h) (ii) of the Information and Communication Technologies Act of 2001.

Mr Speaker, Sir, an anonymous call was received at about 20.13 hours on 01 January 2009 by a Police Officer on duty at the Prime Minister’s Residence. The caller stated “*dire Navin Ramgoolam qui mo pas croire dans so speech ditout parcequi line detruire moi*”. When the caller was asked about his identity, he replied “*pas bizin ou conné qui sanla mo nek dire li sa*” and he hanged up.

Any caller using a telecommunication service and causing annoyance, inconvenience and needless anxiety to any person is investigated by the Police. Accordingly, an enquiry was initiated by the Police. It revealed that the call was made from a mobile phone allotted to Mr N. P., by the MBC.

Mr N. P. eventually surrendered to the Police in company of his Bar-at-Law after 14 00 hours on Monday 05 January 2009.

The recording of the statement of Mr N.P. was completed late in the evening on that date. As the Commissioner of Police considered that the nature of the offence committed by Mr N.P. was an arrestable one, Police decided to arrest him and he was detained until he was brought to Court the next day.

On 06 January 2009, a provisional charge for that offence had been lodged against him before the District Court of Curepipe. He was released on bail upon furnishing a surety of Rs10,000 and entering into a recognizance for the sum of Rs100,000 in his own name.

On the 06 January 2009, following a report received from the Commissioner of Police, the Director-General of MBC interdicted Mr N.P. from duty. The Corporation thereafter, instituted a Disciplinary Committee comprising the Chairperson of the MBC Board, a member of the MBC Board and a representative of the Prime Minister's Office to investigate into the following charges which had been levelled against Mr N.P -

- (i) unlawfully using the mobile telephone allocated to him by the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation for uttering disturbing words of such a nature as to cause annoyance, inconvenience and needless anxiety, and
- (ii) communicating to the press without prior authorisation from the employer in breach of MBC Rules and Regulations.

A meeting of the Disciplinary Committee fixed for Friday 27 February 2009 had been postponed as the Attorney of Mr N.P. had lodged an Interim Order for an injunction where parties were called in Chambers by the Judge on 26 February 2009 at 1000 hours. The case has been postponed to be heard on 12 May 2009.

**Mr Bérenger:** Mr Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Ag. Prime Minister - he has told us - under what charge supposedly the gentleman was arrested? In the press we read that the Police had arrested him because himself and his lawyer had insulted the Police, denied by the lawyer and by the gentleman concerned. *No mise au point* from the Police! Can I know from the Ag. Prime Minister whether it was asked from the Commissioner of Police why there was no *mise au point* and why this piece of information was allowed to rest?

**The Ag. Prime Minister:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I was not in the country for a week and I am not aware of what the hon. Leader of the Opposition is saying. But having said that, I would not rely on anything that the press said all the time.

**Mr Guinness:** Mr Speaker, Sir, can I know from the Ag. Prime Minister whether the phone used by Mr N.P to phone the Prime Minister, whether it is the first time this gentleman used the phone to phone the Prime Minister or he has done it before several times?

**The Ag. Prime Minister:** I would not know.

**Mr Varma:** Mr Speaker, Sir, could the hon. Ag. Prime Minister inform the House what is the stage of the Police inquiry?

**The Ag. Prime Minister:** As I said, it is ongoing; it has been to Court and it is for the Court to decide.

**Mr Guinness:** The Ag. Prime Minister has said that the gentleman has been interdicted on the charge. Can I know whether there is a *politique of deux poids, deux mesures* at the MBC? Because there is a cameraman, S.B...

**Mr Speaker:** No, no, the hon. Member cannot refer to cases. The hon. Member should talk on this case.

**Mr Guinness:** Because in some cases, damaging property by band, people are still working, a cameraman, and here, in this case, he has been interdicted.

**The Ag. Prime Minister:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I think it will be unfair for me to make any comment on this question, because there are many other issues which the House may not be aware of and I don't think it is in the interest of anybody to go into all these issues.

#### **MBC – MR N. P. – CHIEF NEWS EDITOR – SUSPENSION**

**(No. B/2) Mr P. Jhugroo (Third Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue)** asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Home Affairs whether, in regard to Mr N. P., Chief Editor at the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Corporation, information as to if he has been suspended and, if so, the reasons therefor.

*(Vide reply to PQ No. B/1)*

#### **STATE - INDIVIDUALS/COMPANIES – DAMAGES**

**(No. B/3) Mrs S. Hanoomanjee (Second Member for Savanne & Black River)** asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Home Affairs whether, in regard to cases in which the State has been advised that damages be paid to individuals/companies following decisions taken by the Police, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, for the period January 2006 to date, information as to damages proposed to –

- (a) the reasons therefor, and
- (b) the amount in each case.

**The Ag. Prime Minister:** Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I am tabling the information requested by the hon. Member.

**Mrs Hanoomanjee:** Mr Speaker, Sir, in spite of the fact that the information is being tabled, I would like the hon. Ag. Prime Minister to say whether in each of the cases where the court has given its judgment, whether a special inquiry is carried out at the highest level of the Police to go to the root of the problems so that there is no recurrence?

**The Ag. Prime Minister:** The answer is definitely yes. I think the issues of arresting people where there is no justification had been addressed and is being

addressed.

**Mrs Hanoomanjee:** Mr Speaker, Sir, very often people go to court after they have observed that their complaints have not been satisfactorily attended to. Can the hon. Ag. Prime Minister say where matters stand with regard to the independent body which was to be set up by Government on this issue?

**The Ag. Prime Minister:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I need notice of this question, but I will ask the Prime Minister to communicate to the House the information requested.

**Mr Varma:** Mr Speaker, Sir, could the Ag. Prime Minister inform the House in how many cases inquiries have been conducted and, if so, have actions been taken against the Police officers who have acted *ultra vires* or taken wrong decisions?

**The Ag. Prime Minister:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I only have the information requested. There are 10 cases and I can say out of these 10 cases, around three unwarranted arrests and there is also questioning in the absence of Counsel, failing to provide information to a company. There are different reasons. It is not only a Police procedure, but there are others as well.

**Mr Bodha:** May I ask the Ag. Prime Minister what are the criteria which are used to decide on the quantum of damages being paid to each of those cases?

**The Ag. Prime Minister:** I cannot answer this question, but a quantum is often reached after a lot of discussions between the two parties and they come to a satisfactory conclusion.

**Mr Jugnauth:** Can I ask the hon. Ag. Prime Minister that in cases where Police have been found to be at fault and damages have been given, in how many cases have there been an inquiry and in how many cases there has been any conclusion to that inquiry at the highest level?

**The Ag. Prime Minister:** I can assure the House that in each and every case of these misdoings, the Police has a mechanism to follow up and see: (a) that it does not recur, and (b) to take action appropriately with the officers concerned.

**Mr Lesjongard:** Can the hon. Ag. Prime Minister confirm to the House whether Government has recently received a letter or representation from the wife of late singer Kaya to start a new inquiry into the death of singer Kaya?

**The Ag. Prime Minister:** I am not aware but, if there is, I will inform the hon. Member eventually.

**Mrs Hanoomanjee:** The hon. Ag. Prime Minister has just said that inquiries are carried out at the highest level and it is the Police inquiring on the Police. Can we know who forms part of that committee, if ever the Ag. Prime Minister has the information?

**The Ag. Prime Minister:** I do not have the information, but I know that the Prime Minister has in mind to have a special Police Complaints Unit to look into the complaints against the Police, but I am not aware of the details.

**MBC – MR N. P. – CHIEF NEWS EDITOR – ARREST**

**(No. B/4) Mr G. Gunness (Third Member for Montagne Blanche & GRSE)** asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Home Affairs whether, in regard to Mr N. P., he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to if he was arrested in the month of January 2009 and, if so, indicate –

- (a) the reasons therefor, and
- (b) the charges lodged against him, if any.

*(Vide reply to PQ No. B/1)*

**LE HOCHET, TERRE ROUGE – MINOR D. H. - ACCIDENT**

**(No. B/5) Mr G. Lesjongard (Second Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue)** asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Home Affairs whether, in regard to the accident which occurred on Wednesday 25 February 2009 at Le Hochet, Terre Rouge, in which minor D. H. was involved, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to if an inquiry has been carried out thereto, and, if so, the outcome thereof.

**The Ag. Prime Minister:** With your permission, I shall reply to PQ B/5 and B/10 together as they both relate to the same issue.

I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that, on 25 February 2009, at around 0730 hours a road accident occurred at a bus stop at Le Hochet, Terre Rouge, involving a bus operating along Route 21 and one D.H., aged 11 years, student at London College. It appears that the student fell down and was injured while boarding the bus. She was taken to the SSRN Hospital where she had to undergo a surgery on the same day and her left lower limb had to be amputated.

The case was reported to the Police on the same day. The bus driver and the conductor were arrested in connection with the accident.

On 26 February 2009, both of them appeared before the Pamplemousses District Court and they were provisionally charged of “Involuntary Wounds and Blows by Imprudence”.

The driver was released on bail on the same day upon furnishing a surety of

Rs10,000 while the conductor was released on bail upon furnishing a surety of Rs5,000 on 27 February 2009.

Both of them would appear again before the Pamplémousses District Court on 12 May 2009.

The Police inquiry is still under way.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to take this opportunity to convey once again my deepest sympathy to the victim of this tragic accident and to her parents. May I add that Government is providing all possible assistance to Miss Halloomun and her parents. In this regard, the National Solidarity Fund under the aegis of the Ministry of Social Security, National Solidarity and Senior Citizens Welfare & Reform Institutions has provided a financial assistance of Rs25,000 to the family of the student. Action has already been initiated to provide the student with the following additional support:

- (i) the National Council for the Rehabilitation of Disabled Persons has agreed to provide a stipend of Rs500 monthly as from February 2009 up to the year in which the student will complete her S.C. examinations;
- (ii) provision for especial transport facilities to attend school is being provided as required;
- (iii) the student as well as the accompanying parent will also be eligible for refund of equivalent bus fare to attend school, and
- (iv) bus pass will also be provided to her for travelling on any day at any time, including weekend.

Other assistance such as wheelchair, prosthesis and social/carer's allowance will be provided depending upon medical recommendation.

Mr Speaker, Sir, further financial assistance is also being considered under the Prime Minister's Relief Fund. Moreover, the Ministry of Women Rights, Child Development and Family Welfare is providing psychological support to the family and to her and the Ministry of Education, Culture and Human Resources is looking into the possibility of having the student transferred to a Secondary School nearer to her place of residence should she so wish. This is being discussed with the parents of the student.

**Mr Lesjongard:** This is, indeed, a sad case *où une fille venant d'une famille ouvrière a vu ses rêves brisés parce qu'elle rêvait de devenir hôtesse de l'air*, Mr Speaker, Sir, Je mettrai cela sur le dos du transport gratuit, M. le président. May I ask...  
(Interruptions)

**Mr Speaker:** Order!

*(Interruptions)*

Order! Order please! Order! I was expecting a question from the hon. Member.

**Mr Lesjongard:** Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Ag. Prime Minister why was it that it was only after family members of that girl and inhabitants of that locality staged a protest in front of the Terre Rouge Police Station that the driver and the bus conductor were arrested?

**The Ag. Prime Minister:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I will not go into the details of the sad case. What I did learn is that they both went on their own account to the Police Station where it was considered that they were safe. Concerning the remarks of putting it on free transport for the students, I think this is not possible.

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** You have made your point, hon. David! Quiet now!

**Mr Lesjongard:** Mr Speaker, Sir, will the hon. Ag. Prime Minister confirm whether when Police Officers went on the site of the accident, the bus was still there?

**The Ag. Prime Minister:** I cannot provide all the details, but the description of the accident is such that I have reason to believe that the bus was there and the child had been removed.

**Mrs Navarre-Marie:** Mr Speaker, Sir, is the Ag. Prime Minister aware that it is regular practice for conductors and drivers to leave passengers at the bus stop and refuse to pick them?

**Mr Speaker:** It does not arise out of this question. Next question!

**Mr Lesjongard:** One last question, Mr Speaker, Sir. Can the hon. Ag. Prime Minister confirm whether he has information about the number of passengers on that bus?

**The Ag. Prime Minister:** Sir, I do not have the information whether the bus was full, whether the bus did anything that was untoward, but the NTA is going to inquire as soon as they have any representation.

#### **AIR MAURITIUS LTD. – FINANCIAL SITUATION**

**(No. B/6) Mr G. Lesjongard (Second Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue)** asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Home Affairs whether, in regard to the financial situation of the Air Mauritius Ltd., he will state if he has had meetings with the representatives of the Trade Unions of the Company and, if so, the outcome thereof.

**The Ag. Prime Minister:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I have been informed by the hon. Prime Minister that he did not meet the representatives of the Trade Unions of Air Mauritius Ltd. as he had already mandated the hon. Vice Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism, Leisure & External Communications, to look into the matter and report to Government, as appropriate.

I am given to understand that the hon. Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism, Leisure & External Communications, has had consultations with the stakeholders of Air Mauritius Ltd., including the representatives of the Trade Unions and the Association of Managers. The management on its part is conducting regular meetings with the staff members, as a result of which a number of misunderstandings are being dispelled and relations between Management and the Trade Unions have shown signs of improvement.

**Mr Lesjongard:** Mr Speaker, Sir, before I put my question, may I draw the attention of the House on a communiqué which was issued ...

**Mr Speaker:** I am sorry. A question is a question. Is the hon. Member standing on a point of order on this issue?

**Mr Lesjongard:** Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir.

**Mr Speaker:** What is the point of order?

**Mr Lesjongard:** The point of order is that a communiqué was issued whereby mention is made of the office of the Vice-Prime Minister, hon. Xavier-Luc Duval. We have voted a piece of legislation in this House...

**Mr Speaker:** No, I am sorry, this is not a point of order...

*(Interruptions)*

Order! Let me do my work! This is not a point of order. This is a question which does not necessitate any supplementary question. If the hon. Member has anything to say he can raise the matter at Adjournment time.

**Mr Ganoo:** Sir, let me put it to the Ag. Prime Minister whether in the course of that meeting, the Vice-Prime Minister....

*(Interruptions)*

I am talking about the Vice-Prime Minister, hon. X.L. Duval in the course of the meeting. Can the Ag. Prime Minister inform the House whether hon. X.L. Duval gave a guarantee ....

**Mr Speaker:** That question should be addressed to the hon. Vice-Prime Minister.



There are opportunities which will come later on and the hon. Member can put the question.

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

**(No. B/7) Mr M. Dowarkasing (Thrid Member for Curepipe & Midlands)** asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Home Affairs whether, in regard to the 2000 Lisbon Summit, he will state the measures and initiatives taken by Government to implement the European Union-Africa Strategic Plan of Action.

*(Withdrawn)*

### **SEXUAL OFFENCES – REPORTED CASES**

**(No. B/8) Mrs F. Jeewa-Daureeawoo (Third Member for Stanley & Rose Hill)** asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Home Affairs whether, in regard to sexual offences, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the number of reported cases thereof, since March 2008 to date.

**The Ag. Prime Minister:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that, since March 2008 to date, 401 cases of sexual offences have been reported out of which –

- I. 7 have been classified;
- II. 349 are under inquiry;
- III. 36 have been sent to the DPP;
- IV. 8 are pending trial in Court, and
- V. in one case, the offender has been convicted.

**Mrs Jeewa-Daureeawoo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, may I know from the Ag. Prime Minister where are we with the Select Committee on Sexual Offences?

**Mr Speaker:** Question is not admissible.

**Mr Varma:** Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Ag. Prime Minister inform the House whether the figure is on the increase or decrease compared to other available statistics?

**The Ag. Prime Minister:** Sir, we have to interpret statistics carefully. The figure has increased and my information is that there is a lot of awareness and women are more willing to come forward with their grievances.

**Mrs Martin:** Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Ag. Prime Minister whether out of those 401 cases, all the victims have obtained psychological support?

**The Ag. Prime Minister:** Yes, and I must say that we have very strong psychological support team at the Ministry of Women's Rights.

**Mrs Labelle:** Sir, may I ask the hon. Ag. Prime Minister whether he has the information as to the number of cases relating to minors?

**The Ag. Prime Minister:** For minors under 16, there are 147 cases.

**OFFENCES - KNIVES, SABERS AND CUTTERS - REPORTED CASES**

(No. B/9) **Mrs F. Jeewa-Daureeawoo (Third Member for Stanley & Rose Hill)** asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Home Affairs whether, in regard to offences in which knives, sabers and cutters have been used, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the number of reported cases thereof, since January 2006 to date, indicating if the law will be amended to provide for tougher penalties.

**The Ag. Prime Minister:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that since January 2006 to date, cases of offences in which knives, sabers and cutters were used have been reported as follows -

YEAR	NO. OF CASES
2006	486
2007	747
2008	677
January 2009 to date	121

As regards the second part of the question, I wish to refer the hon. Member to the reply to PQ No. B/964 made by the hon. Prime Minister on 29 July 2008. The Prime Minister then stated that he had requested the Attorney-General's Office to review the relevant legislation in order to increase the fine and the term of imprisonment in cases where offenders had been found in possession of an offensive weapon without lawful authority or reasonable excuse.

In this respect, I am informed that the Judicial Provisions Act 2008 which was enacted in December 2008 provided, *inter alia*, for heavier penalties in respect of certain offences, such as -

- (i) For larceny with aggravating circumstances, the term of imprisonment increased from a period between five and fifteen years to a period of up to thirty years;
- (ii) For possession of an offensive weapon while taking part at an unlawful assembly, the fine increased from Rs5,000 to Rs50,000 and the term of imprisonment increased from one year to two years;
- (iii) For rogue and vagabond (which includes being in custody of an offensive weapon), the fine increased from Rs25,000 to Rs100,000 and the term of imprisonment increased from five years to ten years;

- (iv) For sale or offer of offensive instrument in the open, the fine increased from Rs2,000 to Rs25,000 and term of imprisonment increased from one year to ten years, and
- (v) For sale or offer of offensive instrument to a person under 12 years, the fine increased from Rs2,000 to Rs25,000 and term of imprisonment increased from two years to four years.

**Mr Varma:** Mr Speaker, Sir, could the Ag. Prime Minister inform the House in how many of these cases offensive weapons have been seized by the Police?

**The Ag. Prime Minister:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I take it that the weapons have been seized for every case where there has been an arrest.

**Mr Bodha:** Sir, as regards knives and cutters, will the Ag. Prime Minister enlighten the House as to the number of cases where school children or minors are involved?

**The Ag. Prime Minister:** Unfortunately, I do not have the figures, but the point is taken and I understand there is an increase.

#### **TERRE ROUGE - MINOR D.H. - ACCIDENT**

**(No. B/10) Mrs F. Jeewa-Daureeawoo (Third Member for Stanley and Rose Hill)** asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Home Affairs whether, in regard to the recent accident which occurred at a bus stop in Terre Rouge, involving one D. H., a college student, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to if an inquiry has been carried out thereinto and, if so, indicate the outcome thereof.

*(Vide reply to PQ No. B/5)*

#### **DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN – REPORTED CASES**

**(No. B/11) Mrs F. Jeewa-Daureeawoo (Third Member for Stanley & Rose Hill)** asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Home Affairs whether, in regard to domestic violence against women, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the number of reported cases thereof, since January 2008 to date.

**The Ag. Prime Minister:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that since January 2008 to 25 March 2009, the number of cases of domestic violence against women that has been reported to the Police is as follows -

- January to December 2008 - 1,933

- January 2009 to 25 March 2009 -  $\frac{406}{2,339}$  cases for the time being.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in the reply given to PQ No. B/1237 on 04 December 2007, the Prime Minister elaborated on the full range of measures contained in the National Action Plan to combat Domestic Violence launched by the Ministry of Women's Rights, Child Development and Family Welfare in November 2007.

The National Action Plan to combat Domestic Violence spells out the roles and responsibilities of all stakeholders concerned to combat domestic violence and contains five strategic objectives -

- improving legislation on Domestic Violence and strengthening of the Justice System and other agencies response;
- providing appropriate, accessible, timely, coordinated multi-agency responses and support to all victims and children who need it;
- sensitise and change attitudes to prevent domestic violence from happening in the first place;
- promote responsible reporting, advocacy, sensitisation and provision of a forum by media specialists to encourage the community at large to discuss domestic violence, and
- undertake research and studies on domestic violence, strengthen capacity building and set up appropriate mechanisms for monitoring and evaluation of the National Action Plan to Combat Domestic Violence for the promotion of best practices.

I am also informed by that Ministry that 50% of the recommended actions in the Action Plan have already been implemented in 2008 (that is nine of eighteen).

The Ministry of Women's Rights, Child Development and Family Welfare also has ongoing activities and projects with Community Based Organisations, and other partners such as Zero Tolerance Clubs, Pre-Marital Counseling and Marriage Enrichment Programmes.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am also informed that the Police Family Protection Unit offers a wide range of services to victims of domestic violence such as counseling to victims, as well as perpetrators; making agency referrals for psychotherapy, legal advice, rehabilitation, social aid etc. Further, Police regularly carries out sensitisation programmes on domestic violence.

**Mrs Jeewa-Daureeawoo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, from the figure given, may we know from the hon. Ag. Prime Minister how many battered women have lost their lives?

**The Ag. Prime Minister:** I do not have the figure, but....

**Mr Varma:** Mr Speaker, Sir, could the hon. Ag. Prime Minister inform the House, as regards the case of domestic violence which has been mentioned, how many cases of protection order were issued?

**The Ag. Prime Minister:** I do not have the information, but I know that all of them have been told just now that protection orders have been issued.

**Mrs Labelle:** Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. My question is whether he has the number of women who were victims of violence while under the protection order?

**The Ag. Prime Minister:** Yes, I do not have the actual number. The answer is yes. There are cases where, while under Police protection, there have been further violence. Mr Speaker Sir, I have some figures here which may be of use. Breach of Protection Order - 418 cases have been reported.

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** May I ask the hon. Ag. Prime Minister who has just mentioned that measures have been taken to sensitise people and change attitude, how many of the perpetrators have been subjected to psychological support and have been given some psychological follow-up?

**The Ag. Prime Minister:** As I said, the objective is to get the perpetrators as well as the victims for psychological support. I think both are very important, otherwise, as I just mentioned, you get recurrences.

**Mrs Martin:** Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. We know that in several cases mention was made that the perpetrators as well as the victims have to go to follow psychological courses, but very often the perpetrators themselves do not attend. Is it not time to revise the way that we apprehend this matter especially regarding perpetrators and the follow up with the psychological courses? If yes, what are the measures that are being envisaged?

**The Ag. Prime Minister:** I think that has been pointed out. It is a difficult problem. It is a problem of society, a problem of family being involved and I am sure that if there are any suggestions, the Minister will be only too happy to help. I must add, Mr Speaker, Sir, that while I had a visit with a Minister from Australia yesterday, he was praising the Minister of Women's Rights for the care which is being given.

**Mr Jhugroo:** Can the hon. Ag. Prime Minister confirm whether any case involving Members of the National Assembly has been reported?

**The Ag. Prime Minister:** I don't think Members of the National Assembly are classified as such.

**Mr Speaker:** Time is over. The Table has been informed that PQ No. B/22 has been withdrawn. I suspend for one and a half hour.

*At 1.10 p.m. the sitting was suspended.*

*On resuming at 2.40 p.m. with Mr Speaker in the Chair*

**Mr Speaker:** Questions addressed to hon. Ministers! The Table has been advised that PQ Nos. B/37 and B/85 have been withdrawn.

### **FINANCIAL SECRETARY – TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF EMPLOYMENT**

**(No. B/24) Mr P. Jhugroo (Third Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue)** asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Empowerment whether in regard to the Financial Secretary, he will state –

- (a) his present terms and conditions of employment , and
- (b) the different Boards on which he sits, indicating in each case –
  - (i) in which capacity, and
  - (ii) the fees to which he is entitled.

**The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Empowerment (Dr. R. Sithanen) :** Mr Speaker, Sir, the Financial Secretary is employed on a contract basis. Since he took office only his salary, car benefits and travelling and gratuity have been revised in the wake of the PRB report as per PRB recommendations. The other terms and conditions have remained the same. These are being tabled.

With respect to (b) (i), he usually sits on boards in his capacity as Financial Secretary. Insofar as part (b) of the question is concerned, the information is being compiled and will be tabled.

**Mr Jhugroo:** Can the hon. Vice-Prime Minister confirm whether the Financial Secretary sits on the Board of Air Mauritius?

**Dr. Sithanen:** Yes, he does!

**Mr Jhugroo:** Can I ask the hon. Vice-Prime Minister whether the Financial Secretary submits reports of Board meetings of Air Mauritius?

**Dr. Sithanen:** It has been the practice for the Financial Secretary to sit on so major Boards where Government is the majority shareholder. There is nothing new in that, Mr Speaker, Sir. This applies to Mauritius Telecom and also for the State Bank if my memory serves me right. Usually, his duty in the Company law, Mr Speaker, Sir, is to

the company unless there is a major decision where the views of the shareholders are required.

**Mr Varma:** Mr Speaker, Sir, could the hon. Vice-Prime Minister & Minister of Finance inform the House about the qualifications of the Financial Secretary?

**Dr. Sithanen:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I do not have his exact qualifications, but let me tell the hon. Member that he is one of the rare Mauritian, who has excellent academic qualifications from two of the best universities in the world. He also has a lot of experience from the World Bank, IMF, EU. I am not sure I have understood exactly what the hon. Member was coming up, but he does not get it right. Nobody gets it right all the time, but I think he is very qualified and he also has a lot of professional expertise.

**Mrs Hanoomanjee:** Mr Speaker, Sir, can the Vice-Prime Minister confirm whether when Mr Mansoor sits on the Board of Air Mauritius, he does so in his individual capacity or in his capacity as Financial Secretary?

**Dr. Sithanen:** I am not sure about this. Strictly speaking, when you are appointed, according to the company law you have to represent the interests of the company, but it is abundantly clear that he owes his nomination in his capacity as Financial Secretary just as the Secretary for Cabinet, he is a member of the Board, just as the Attorney-General is a member of the board, just like the PS of the Ministry of Tourism is a member of the Board. Now, where do you draw the fine line between the interest of Government and the interest of the company, obviously it is anybody's guess...

**Mr Jhugroo:** Thank you Mr Speaker Sir. Can I ask the hon. Vice-Prime Minister whether he was aware of the decision of the Board of Air Mauritius to carry out hedging transactions at Air Mauritius?

**Dr. Sithanen:** The question doesn't arise. But if the hon. Member wants me to give an answer it's no, no, no, no.

**Mr Speaker:** I think there is a question on hedging at Air Mauritius. Hon. Dulloo.

**Mr Dulloo:** The hon. Minister talks of subtlety, but is he not there to represent the interests of Mauritius, the Government of Mauritius? Because Government has got its stakeholder in Air Mauritius. And, at the same time, is he not the representative of his Ministry?

**Dr. Sithanen:** Sir, I am sure the hon. Member would know. Once you are appointed, according to the Companies Act, your fiduciary responsibility is to the company.

**Mr Speaker:** Next question!

**Mr Dulloo:** Is he not also the representative of the shareholders? Because there are shareholders who appoint directors on the Board of Directors? Therefore, he should safeguard the interests of the majority of the minority shareholders he represents.

**Dr. Sithanen:** I have said very clearly what is the legal position on that, Mr Speaker, Sir.

**Mr Speaker:** Hon. Soodhun, last question!

**Mr Soodhun:** Concerning the Financial Secretary, can the hon. Vice-Prime Minister inform the House whether there is any additional power vested to him regarding the package issued to him compared to the former Financial Secretary?

**Dr. Sithanen:** I don't think that there is any additional power. I think we have to understand the context, Mr Speaker, Sir.

**Mr Speaker:** The Vice-Prime Minister means to say that he is more efficient.

**Dr. Sithanen:** No, what I am saying, Mr Speaker Sir, is that he comes from outside. So, obviously we must have a package. Let me say two things to the House. He gets far less that he was getting outside and, in fact, even here he is getting far less than some people who report to him. I don't want to mention the names of those people who report to him, Mr Speaker, Sir.

**Mr Bodha:** May I ask the hon. Vice-Prime Minister whether part of the remuneration of the Financial Secretary comes from the World Bank?

**Dr. Sithanen:** No, in fact to be fair he resigned from the World Bank.

**Mr Speaker:** Next question.

#### **SURINAM SPORTING CLUB – LAND LEASE**

**(No. B/25) Mrs B. Hanoomanjee (Second Member for Savanne & Black River)** asked the Minister of Housing and Lands whether he will state if he has received a request from the Surinam Sporting Club for the lease of State land to build a club house and, if so, where matters stand.

**Dr. Kasenally:** Sir, a request has been received from the Surinam Sporting Club since January 2005 for a lease over a plot of State land at Riambel for the construction of a club house.

However, the Club has been occupying the abovementioned plot of State land of an extent of 120m<sup>2</sup> for many years and is still occupying same. On the plot of land stands



a corrugated iron sheet building which is being used as a club house by members of the Sporting Club.

Consideration is being given to the request. I also wish to point out that my Ministry receives significant numbers of similar requests, and one of the main issues is whether the applicant has got the necessary resources to build and maintain a club house.

**Mrs Hanoomanjee:** Mr Speaker, Sir, can I just inform the Minister that this club house is found in African town in Surinam which is a deprived area and the president of the club has taken the laudable initiative to group youngsters so that they are not a prey to social ills. Can I just ask the Minister whether he can expedite matters for the Surinam sporting club?

**Dr. Kasenally:** Mr Speaker Sir, I will bow to the request of the hon. lady and I will do my best to see that their project come to fruition.

**Mr Speaker:** Next question.

#### **RIVIERE NOIRE & ST MARTIN/BEL OMBRE – CEMETERY**

**(No. B/26) Mrs B. Hanoomanjee (Second Member for Savanne & Black River)** asked the Minister of Housing and Lands whether, in regard to the request made to his Ministry for the lease of land to construct a second cemetery in Rivière Noire and St Martin/Bel Ombre, he will state where matters stand.

**Dr. Kasenally:** Sir, in January 2008, the Black River District Council made a request to my Ministry to identify and allocate a plot of State land in between the region of Tamarin up to Bel Ombre for the creation of a new cemetery.

Two sites were identified, one at La Gaulette and the other one at Coteau Raffin. However, upon consultation with all the stakeholders concerned, these sites were not found to be suitable for the project.

My Ministry is liaising with all stakeholders, including the Black River District Council to identify an appropriate site for the proposed cemetery.

**Mr Speaker:** Next question.

#### **ADDITIONAL STIMULUS PACKAGE**

**(No. B/27) Mrs S. Hanoomanjee (Second Member for Savanne & Black River)** asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Empowerment whether, in regard to the Additional Stimulus Package, he will state –

- (a) the amount disbursed as at to date, and
- (b) the conditions applicable for Government interventions.

**The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Empowerment (Dr. R. Sithanen)** Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission I shall reply to PQs Nos. B/27; B/35; B/73, B/75 and B/78 as they all relate to the same subject matter.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the G-20 and the IMF have called for Timely, Targeted and Temporary Stimulus Packages. The Additional Stimulus Package is additional to the actions we implemented as far back as May 2008, in the 2008/09 budget and decisions in October 2008 with respect to -

- I. the setting up of 6 funds;
  - II. the full payment of the PRB in one instalment;
  - III. the creation of a contingency of Rs1.8 billion, and
  - IV. the coordinated policy measures with the Monetary Policy Committee of the Bank of Mauritius to ease monetary policy in order to support fiscal stimulus.
- The Stimulus Package, Mr Speaker, Sir, consists of seven components -

First, it is targeted, flexible and temporary and will be put in place over the two-year period ending 31 December 2010;

Second, it purports to save jobs and protect workers by supporting vulnerable businesses to continue operations during the difficult transition. We have entered into a Social Contract with the private sector to ensure that employment protection is given the highest priority whenever firms restructure to meet the crisis. A number of measures are being implemented for Tourism, Textiles/Clothing, Sugar, Construction, Financial Services, Freeport, Seafood and ICT;

Third, the National Empowerment Foundation will enhance its efforts on re-skilling, retraining and returning retrenched workers to productive employment;

Fourth, Government is providing protection to the population during the period of the international crisis by protecting jobs and purchasing power by ensuring that price decreases are passed on.

Fifth, it aims at significantly increasing public sector investment during the two-year period through end December 2010 by fast tracking and front-loading infrastructure projects;

Sixth, it deals with bottlenecks to boost private investment and where possible accelerate projects, and

Seventh, it prepares the country for a quick bounce back once the world economy recovers.

Mr Speaker, Sir, let me make it very clear. Government is supporting the additional stimulus package through five main financing channels -

- i) tax revenue foregone as a result of the reduction or suspension of around 10 taxes and the easing of cash flow of companies;

- ii) new Investment in public infrastructure to support the building and construction industry via the upgrading of the road network including the Triolet by-pass, the Goodlands by-pass and adding lanes where necessary so the dual carriageway motorway will extend all the way from Mahebourg to Grand Baie;
- iii) infrastructure development in local authorities and Rodrigues;
- iv) infrastructure improvement in health, education, the environment and sports, and
- v) support to vulnerable sectors to face the challenges of the global recession. This includes burden sharing amongst shareholders, management, creditors and Government to provide additional financial support to sectors like textiles/clothing, manufacturing, SME and Tourism. These could be in terms of technical assistance and grants to SMEs and equity, liquidity, working capital and asset purchase, swap and lease back to companies.

In fact, it is these measures, together with policies implemented earlier, that are helping us to protect jobs in a very difficult global economic environment.

The Rs10.4 billion Additional Stimulus Package, equivalent to about 3.8 per cent of GDP, covers all the 5 interventions, some with immediate impact and others which will take some time to put in place. Together, the package should unlock an extra 1 to 1.5 percent growth annually over the 24 month period January 2009 through December 2010.

The Package, Mr Speaker, Sir, is only in its third month. Moreover, as with any programme there is a time lag between launching the programme and getting to cruising speed that typically requires about 6 months. That is why we are planning to publish a Progress Report every 6 months on implementation, direct beneficiaries, results and outcomes.

I am pleased to report that our interventions under the Mechanism for Transitional Support have already saved 1,700 jobs at World Knits under the Mauritius Approach. And for every job we save there are other indirect jobs that are also saved for which we do not have an estimate. The Mauritius Approach relies on Bankers and shareholders/managers to come up with a plan in which they finance half of the additional financing with Government covering the other half to protect jobs.

In addition to World Knits, another 10 companies have already submitted applications for assistance. A further 9 companies have contacted the Help Desk at Enterprise Mauritius, but have not yet submitted their applications. These firms, taken together, account for some 5,200 jobs and are collectively seeking additional financing of

some Rs800m. Under the burden sharing rules of the Additional Stimulus Package, shareholders and creditors will need to provide at least half of this amount and it is only the balance that may have to come from Government.

Of the 10 companies, one has been turned down because shareholders and creditors were unable to come up with a viable restructuring plan. Of the remaining 9, a financial restructuring plan has been agreed for a second company and is in process to be formalised shortly. Also, Government has committed to support a plan for yet another company with Rs10 m. to give the time to save jobs by selling the company as a going concern. This approach is necessary as the current shareholders are unwilling to inject fresh capital. If liquidation cannot be avoided, Government is in first position to recover the funds it is committing. The process of review has also been engaged for another 2 companies and should be concluded soon. Two more are at an early stage of consideration and 3 are new applications which will be considered as from next week.

The Mechanism for Transitional Support can and will save jobs, will save viable enterprises that need help to preserve jobs during the transition until the World Economy recovers from the crisis. In the case of World Knits, the shareholders have come up with additional equity of Rs20 m., the banks with fresh financing of Rs40 m. and Government is taking up debentures worth Rs40 m. at 5 percent interest. Thus, we are not only saving jobs, but also safeguarding taxpayers' interests.

Mr Speaker, Sir, it is not possible to save all firms. The one enterprise that has closed faced structural and not transitional problems related to the crisis. In the absence of a credible restructuring plan from shareholders, the creditors were unwilling to inject fresh capital and Government could not step in. However, to save jobs we are focusing on efforts to redeploy the workers from these firms that may close down due to severe structural problems. A special job fair has been organised specifically for these workers. About 250 workers out of a total of 336 laid off by the enterprise registered. The list of these persons has been submitted to many employers. Follow-up on individual basis is underway by the Ministry of Labour. Officers of the Labour Division also made presentations on the operation of the Workfare Programme to the concerned workers.

As I have just mentioned the Mauritius Approach, whilst important and having proved its worth already, is only one part of the Additional Stimulus Package.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as I explained earlier, the package includes acceleration of and new investment in public infrastructure, local authorities and Rodrigues. It also contains tax suspensions for the period of the crisis that are designed to save jobs in Tourism, Construction and the Freeport.

In addition, the package provides for investment in Human Resources to relax implementation constraints and accelerates expenditure under the six Funds created last May.

Finally, it supports vulnerable sectors through various instruments of which the

Mauritius Approach is one only. In addition, we are implementing programmes to support SMEs and action to support the Seafood Sector.

Enterprise Mauritius has committed Rs144.5 m. to 26 SMEs with three projects already completed. In addition, six project financing schemes have been launched for which 351 applications have been received by the closing date of 25 March. 154 are from textiles enterprises and 197 in other sectors. These are for capacity building geared to increased competitiveness, resilience and for supporting export orientation and market penetration. SEHDA has also committed Rs122.5 m. for 6 project financing schemes that are already operational and for which 82 applications have been received to date and 14 have been approved for implementation by the National Women Entrepreneurs Council.

Small and medium size enterprises in the tourist sector are also covered by the Additional Stimulus Package, and Government is reviewing submissions for five projects with a total project value of Rs15.9 m.

We have also committed an additional Rs97 m. to market Mauritius as a tourist destination with a focus on consolidating the short haul market and developing new markets from the Middle East.

Taking all the interventions together so far, some Rs3 billion have been committed under the Additional Stimulus Package and around Rs400 m. have been injected into the economy through the four channels I mentioned earlier. In addition, there are works that have started, for which payments have not yet been processed.

The Additional Stimulus Package is also about unlocking private investment. Six projects have been completed under the RES scheme with another three in progress. Concerning the beneficiaries of the Additional Stimulus Package, it is not possible to identify all of them, given the wide range of interventions that touch many sectors of the economy. Some programmes, however, are more focused such as the interventions in support of SMEs and under the Mauritius Approach. As I indicated, we will compile and publish such information every six months, starting at the end of June. We can only provide information on cases which have been completed to avoid adverse market reactions.

Rodrigues is also benefiting from the Additional Stimulus Package. Public investment under the Package explicitly provides for projects in Rodrigues. In the case of the tourism sector, Rodrigues should benefit from the campaigns of the MTPA. SMEs are being supported via the National Empowerment Foundation, and they can also apply to Enterprise Mauritius and SEHDA for assistance through the Mechanism for Transitional Support.

First time home buyers are also covered by the Additional Stimulus Package. In fact, all citizens purchasing a house within a project approved by the MRA under the Package are exempted from payment of registration duty.

Mr Speaker, Sir, companies benefiting from Government support should meet several criteria. The company making the request for support must have a viable business plan. There must be burden sharing between commercial banks, the shareholders and Government. There should be a commitment to preserve employment. There can be no dividend payment until all preference shares or debentures held by Government are paid. Government may appoint a representative to the Board where it deems this helpful. There is an obligation for regular reporting to a Committee.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Additional Stimulus Package is in line with international best practice and, due to careful advanced planning, it has avoided some of the pitfalls reported in the international press in packages across the world. Our early pre-emptive actions have not only preserved employment, but been welcomed by international experts and the markets. As more and more countries need emergency support, our economy continues to perform above the international average. However, Mr Speaker, Sir, vigilance is required, and we need to intervene on a broad front via the five instruments across the seven types of intervention that cover substantially all the population. However, although our actions have made Mauritius resilient, Mr Speaker, Sir, caution and continued reforms are necessary, since we are not immune to the ever worsening global crisis.

**Mrs Hanoomanjee:** Mr Speaker, Sir, regarding direct beneficiaries, can the Minister say whether any Government official has been appointed so far to scrutinise their account?

**Dr. Sithanen:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the first one is the tax foregone. This applies to everybody who are benefiting from a tax foregone. It can be in terms of tax on land, it can be for hotel, the suspension of special levy and also the suspension of the tax on environment. We will only know this at the end of the period. With respect to the enterprises in the EPZ, this is the one that has been more documented. The way it takes place is that they make an application to Enterprise Mauritius, and then we appoint an independent consultant that helps them prepare a business plan. There are 11 subcommittees that work across sectors. If this subcommittee believes that it is possible to save the job, but the problem is *conjuncturel et non-structurel*, then we bring the banks and the shareholders together and start discussing the details of how we can save it. In some cases, we believe it is possible to do it. For instance, in one case, there was unanimity among all the people taking the decision, and it was not possible to save it. We also have the responsibility not to throw good money after bad money, and this is the way it is proceeding.

**Mr Von-Mally:** Mr Speaker, Sir, being given that the different taxes on the air tickets between Mauritius and Rodrigues amount to about Rs3500, is the hon. Minister contemplating the possibility of removing these taxes in order to boost the tourism industry there?

**Dr. Sithanen:** Mr Speaker, Sir, we have presented a stimulus package that covers many sectors, and Rodrigues is included in them. Rs50 m. have been earmarked for Rodrigues in the context of development of infrastructure, and also Rs187 m. in the context of food security, Mr Speaker, Sir. If any enterprise in Rodrigues feels that it requires support within the framework of what has been defined, we will accept. Let's implement the package that we have agreed upon, and if there is need to revisit them – as you know, there are two Budgets this year - we are going to do so.

**Mr Lesjongard:** Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Vice-Prime Minister whether he could give us the exact amount disbursed under the Manufacturing Adjustment & SME Development Fund which was broadened to include the export of services?

**Dr. Sithanen:** As I mentioned, there is the case of World Knits. It costed 100 million - 40 million, 40 million and 20 million. There are three cases that have been agreed upon and then I stated how much money has been earmarked under the Manufacturing Fund and also under the SME. I gave the figures of Rs400 m. in total. This also includes the foregone taxes, because these taxes would have been paid on a monthly basis. In fact, I keep telling my officers that a rupee forgone in tax is the same as a rupee spent on a particular project. This also has to be taken into account, because the very objective of the forgone tax is to stimulate the economy to protect jobs.

**Mr Dowarkasing:** Mr Speaker, Sir, may I know from the hon. Minister whether SMEs are direct beneficiaries or whether they will have to be financed by a consortium of banks after a plan has been put up by Enterprise Mauritius? If this is the case, why is there this inequality in terms of addressing the problem of SMEs and big companies?

**Dr. Sithanen:** Mr Speaker, Sir, this is because there is no one size that fits all. The problem of SME that relies on the domestic market, that needs to go on the regional market is very different from the enterprise exporting to the UK, where it has suffered a double blow. Demand has fallen considerably in UK compared to France, and they have taken a big hit on the currency. That's why - I explained that many people - there cannot be one size that fits all. Even in tourism, the French market is resisting much better than others. We cannot have an umbrella solution for everybody. In the case of SMEs, there are two sets of solutions. One of them is that we are giving them grant – '*Cadeau*' for enhancing the technology for market penetration. For instance, we are going to support those who want to penetrate the regional market in terms of airfare, of market access. So, we cannot treat the problem of one SME that is facing problem domestically and wants to move to the region to one that would benefit under AGOA and wants to export to the US.

This is the difficulty that we are facing, namely that there is no one size that fits all. We need to tailor the solution to the specific problem encountered by these enterprises.

**Mr Dulloo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister should know that one of the direct impacts of the current financial crisis is on trade finance, especially Mauritius being export-oriented, a trading nation. He has announced the measures. But what about the line of credit and trade guarantees for those who are already in production? To support them, and give new technologies is a good thing. But, currently, with regard to financial and banking institutions, what sort of line of credits and trade guarantees are being given to those concerned?

**Dr. Sithanen:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Member is right, as far as the big G20 countries are concerned. There has been a drying up of trade finance.

In the case of Mauritius we are fortunate that our banking sector is well capitalised, our banking sector is well regulated and well supervised and the result of that in the balance sheet they have not been infected by the toxic assets. Having said that, there are some that are facing difficulties and that is why I just indicated in response to the question by hon. Dowarkasing that there is provision for all liquidity support to some of these enterprises. I got a firm order, but I have a trade finance problem. What I'm saying is that, Mr Speaker, Sir, we provide equity, we can provide the debenture, we can provide swap of assets and we can also provide a trade financier. But it seems to me, Mr Speaker, Sir, from the information that we have every week, I have not seen many companies that are facing trade finance even though if the situation deteriorates some of our line of credits in our commercial banks used to get from foreign banks may be affected.

**Mr Guimbeau:** Mr Speaker, Sir, did the hon. Vice-Prime Minister say he was going to give the names of the companies which have benefited or will benefit from the package?

**Dr. Sithanen:** That is what I've said. I indicated in my reply, Mr Speaker, Sir, that we are only three months in this process and we are going to submit its report to Parliament on a six monthly basis giving the details of where it is possible. In some cases it will not be possible for those who are benefiting from taxation it's everybody the suspension of the environmental tax would benefit everybody. The suspension of the special levy will benefit everybody. The suspension of land registration will benefit everybody that meets the threshold of Rs15 m. in a development project that is purported to support the construction sector. So, wherever it is possible we will do it.

**Mr Ganoo:** Will the Ag. Prime Minister inform the House whether Air Mauritius has benefited from the package and, if so, to what extent?

**Dr. Sithanen:** Not from the Stimulus Package itself Mr Speaker, Sir. However, let me be very fair, some of the money for Air Mauritius may have to come from the Contingency that we have provided for in the Budget. That is what the Contingency is for. But up to now what we have done for Air Mauritius - I am sure my colleague with



give the answer later on - is to give guarantees to those people who are supporting Air Mauritius.

**Mr Dowarkasing:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister would concur with me that one of the components of this Additional Stimulus Package is that special purpose vehicle. Can we know from the hon. Minister whether Government will acquire shares in some of the enterprises? Can we know from the hon. Minister in which companies so far this has been put into practice?

**Dr. Sithanen:** Mr Speaker, Sir, as I mentioned there are many types of intervention. One of them is equity and it is going to be straightforward. Government itself is not going to intervene and we are going to do it through the SIC which is the investment arm of Government. The second one is debenture. Debenture also can be done by the SIC. The reason for that special purpose vehicle, Mr Speaker, Sir, is that there are some enterprises that are asset rich but cash poor and it seems to me that it is not fair to put *l'argent du peuple* when we can convert their asset into cash. I said it very clearly that it is not the purpose of Government to take the assets of these people. This is not our business. However, what we suggesting is that we are going to quote a special purpose vehicle that will buy their assets and lease it back to them and after a period of time, they can buy back the assets at a price that is going to be agreed upon. This is the specific purpose of the vehicle that is being created in order to buy their asset in case of a company that is asset rich, but cash poor. There are some of them that are very asset rich and cash poor.

**Mr Dulloo:** We will have certainly ample opportunities to debate all this next week, but at this point in time, I would like to draw the attention of the hon. Minister and question him on this regarding direct support to production. This seems to be one of the weaknesses because there is, of course, the topic on food security, that is, giving support to the food production sector. I mean direct support to production is one way of trying to negotiate this crisis of production for the local market as well as those small and medium enterprises that have found niche market even to the United States to give them support for direct support to production.

**Dr Sithanen:** As I said Mr Speaker, Sir, the platform that we have created is multifunctional and I don't know what the hon. Member means exactly by direct support. Our objective Mr Speaker, Sir, is to try our best to save the maximum amount number of jobs. It may not be possible to save all the jobs, but this is basically the objective of Government and we are making some head way.

**Mr Dulloo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, when the Vice-Prime Minister presented the package he mentioned that commercial banks will be providing additional facilities worth at least 500 millions under the manufacturing adjustment and SME development. Can we know whether there has been any disbursement of those facilities to those SME's?

**Dr Sithanen:** It was a very tricky negotiation Mr Speaker, Sir, because in many cases we don't have one commercial bank, but we have many commercial banks. And if

one of these commercial banks is a foreign one, it becomes more difficult because what is happening now is that most of the decisions are being taken in the headquarters. We have to discuss with all the participants to reach a code of conduct - if you understand what I mean - for them to intervene. World Knits was a case and we agreed and, in fact, a commercial bank has supported it to the tune of Rs14 m. and we are under the process of negotiating with other commercial banks to rescue the firm that I have just mentioned in my original reply.

**Mr Nancy:** Mr Speaker, Sir, sometimes the procedures to have access to these measures in Rodrigues are very complicated. Could the hon. Vice- Prime Minister and Minister of Finance make it more flexible in Rodrigues so that SMEs and other sectors may have access to them and sometimes the information about the measures in the package are not quite clear?

**Dr Sithanen:** The point is well taken and we are doing our best for the various institutions, Enterprise Mauritius, SEDHA in order to inform people about the possibility that exists. But I have another responsibility also Mr Speaker, Sir, and this is very clear. This is becoming very clear also in Europe also there is a big fight this morning ahead of the G20 meeting between President Sarkozy and President Obama. Basically this is public money and I have to make sure that this public money is well utilised and it is not my money. We have to make sure that the money is used for the purpose which it is intended. There are some people who come to see us and say "look, give money, give money, give money". We cannot do that also, we have to strike a fair balance between accountability, use of the money and genuinely saving jobs that can be saved during a painful and transition period.

**Mrs Hanoomanjee:** Mr Speaker, Sir, maybe I can have some clarification from the Minister. I don't know whether I well understood the mechanism when he talked about the liquidity support. Can I ask the Minister, in these cases, whether there is any specific condition which is imposed on the direct beneficiaries who refund after the situation would have improved? Since it is public money, can I know whether there is any mechanism for them to refund?

**Dr Sithanen:** Mr Speaker, Sir, this is a very fair question. We spent out time every week trying to make an informed judgment. I can tell the hon. Member that it is the first time that we are doing this in this country. They present a plan, this is public money, they go for it and when they do so, there is a risk that probably they may not save it. We hope that we are going to save it. Secondly, Mr Speaker, Sir, we don't know how long the recession will last, we do not know how deep it is going to be. Maybe Rs100 m. is good for one year, maybe if it is more than one year, they may need additional stimulus. Now we put some conditions. The first thing that we do Mr Speaker, is to have an independent report to evaluate whether the company has long term viability, whether it is structurally sound and then we try to help them. Let me make it very clear, in some cases we are probably going to lose some money. But if you don't do anything, you are

criticised, you do something and there is a risk also that there will be some abuse in the system. Up to now, I think the conditions are being respected, for instance we've said that if they turn around the company, they cannot declare any dividend to themselves before they pay Government its money. We are not telling them that they should not because I think some people in business have misinterpreted what I have said and what the Prime Minister and my colleague, hon. Dr. Boolell, have said. We did not tell them that they cannot get rid of people, but what we have told them that if they are benefiting from public funds, they have to talk to us before you lay off people. We realise that there is nobody in the world that can prevent the lay off of people. My colleague said this morning that 26 million people have lost jobs in China.. Only in the month of February 540,000 have lost jobs in America. We are trying our best. So, that's why there appears to be some contradiction as hon. Jugnauth said this morning. We are not saying that they cannot lay off people, but what we are saying is that if a company gets support from Government – it has a responsibility to talk to Government before they make a decision. Let's sit together! If it is possible to save these jobs, we will save it.

**Mr Dowarkasing:** Mr Speaker, Sir, despite all the measures that have been announced by the hon. Minister and saving of a lot of jobs, the Governor of the Bank of Mauritius has a different view. He is saying that we need, at this stage, another Stimulus Package. Can we know from the hon. Minister whether this is the situation actually?

**Dr. Sithanen:** Mr Speaker, Sir, there are two things. What has happened until December 2008 - and I think this is exceptionally positive - the growth figure will be higher than what we estimated. And the reason for this is very simple because we have generated more jobs than I said to this House. We were expecting to create 10,800 jobs in 2008, Mr Speaker, Sir. In fact, the final figure is out. We have created 16,900 jobs in 2008. So, as a result of this, it seems to me that the rate of growth will be slightly higher than 5.2. However, for this year, the downside risk to the economy has aggravated and it is very clear that the next projection will show a lower growth rate than previously initiated. Today, before I came here, I was reading the expected debate on G20. Today, the OECD released a new forecast. Two months ago, they said that growth in OECD would be -0.4%, today it is -3.6%. The Prime Minister of Singapore gave a press conference two weeks ago. He said that Singapore will experience a recession of -10% this year. So, things are deteriorating. Now, if it continues to deteriorate, because we are integrated in the global economy, it will have impact on tourism, on textile, on clothing, on global business and on FDI. Let me be very candid to the House. If we have a combination of all these three together, a sharp decline in tourism, a drastic fall in textile and a huge decrease in FDI, we are in for a rough ride. And this is what I have called the black swan phenomenon. For the moment, we are resisting. I have just checked the figures for the first two months. We are doing slightly better than we projected. The projection was worse for some sectors. But for the economy, in general, it is very clear that the next forecast will be lower than 4%.

## **MAURITIUS TELECOM – TRADE UNIONISTS – REINSTATEMENT**

**(No. B/28) Mr G. Gunness (Third Member for Montagne Blanche and GRSE)** asked the Minister of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment whether in regard to the two Trade Unionists of the Mauritius Telecom who were dismissed, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Telecom, information as to if they have now been re-instated and, if not, why not.

**Mr Chaumière:** Mr Speaker, Sir, as PQs B/28, B/40 and B/64 relate to the same issue, I wish, with your permission, to reply to them at the same time.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the House will recall that in a reply to PQ B/1247 and B/1269 in November last year, I informed the House that I personally intervened with the Mauritius Telecom for the reinstatement of the two trade unionists but Mauritius Telecom was not agreeable.

A Ministerial Committee was subsequently set up to look into the matter. The Committee assigned Professor Torul, President of the Commission for Conciliation and Mediation, the task of carrying out conciliation meetings between the parties with a view to finding modalities for the reinstatement of the two dismissed trade unionists.

Professor Torul came up with four proposals. The Ministerial Committee considered these proposals and came to the conclusion that the reinstatement of the two trade unionists should be unconditional. Cabinet approved the recommendation of the Ministerial Committee to that effect on Thursday last and has instructed that the Government representatives on the Board of Mauritius Telecom should implement the decision.

**Mr Varma:** Mr Speaker, Sir, could the hon. Minister inform the House when did Professor Torul come up with his recommendations?

**Mr Chaumière:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I don't have this information with me, but it was about two weeks ago.

**Mr Bérenger:** Can I ask the hon. Minister whether he can let us know why did it take so long for Cabinet to take a stand?

**Mr Chaumière:** Mr Speaker, Sir, as I mentioned, Cabinet did put it on the Ministry to try to find out whether we could bring positions between Mauritius Telecom and the trade unionists together, Mr Speaker, Sir. That's why we had long protracted discussions, but, at the end of the day, Mr Speaker, Sir, we had to come out with a decision. That's why the Ministerial Committee was appointed and when the Ministerial Committee was in presence of the proposals of Professor Torul, we decided upon.

**Mr Bodha:** Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister whether he is aware that now that the Government has taken a stand that it will take another month before the representatives of Government on the Board will be able to take that stand because the Board is supposed to meet at the end of April? Can he confirm that date?

**Mr Chaumière:** We have done our part of the job, Mr Speaker, Sir. I have heard the same thing, but I cannot pre-empt and say that it is going to be like that, Mr Speaker, Sir. I mean, those Government representatives will convey the message to the Board, then we'll see.

**Mr Guinness:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I come back with the same question. Can I know whether the Minister has conveyed the message to MT that Cabinet has taken the decision and whether MT has replied to the Ministry about when the Board will meet and when these two workers will resume duty?

**Mr Chaumière:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Member has been a Minister himself and knows quite well that when there is a decision which has been taken, it has to be implemented. In that case - and I must be very forceful on that - we have taken the right decision and it is up for the MT now to implement this decision.

**Mr Ganoo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I have with me a communiqué of a Cabinet meeting decision which was held on 12 September last year. I then took the decision "to ask the Minister of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment to see that at the level of the Conciliation and Mediation Division, that his Ministry ensures that international conventions to which Mauritius has adhered are respected." Indeed this is clearly a Human Rights issue, Mr Speaker, Sir. We all want that this ping pong game be put to an end to! Can the hon. Minister make sure because, this is what is being alleged that there are five members on Government side on the Board against their four French counterparts and in all the past meetings, only four Government representatives have been attending the Board meeting. Can he make sure, therefore, that at the next Board meeting which, unfortunately, will be held at the end of this month as Mr Sarat Lallah told us on the radio yesterday that all the members representing the Mauritian Government should be present and follow the line and implement the decision of Government?

**Mr Chaumière:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Member knows quite well that Mauritius Telecom is a company and that it has got shareholders, it has got a Board and one of the shareholders is France Telecom. So, it is up to them to take the decision.

*(Interruptions)*

Mr Speaker, Sir, at our end, Cabinet has already taken the decision that it had to. Now, the decision is at the level of the Board of Mauritius Telecom.

**Mr Speaker:** Hon. Soodhun, last question!

**Mr Soodhun:** Mr Speaker, Sir, since Cabinet decision has already been taken in favour of two trade unionists and this has already been communicated to the Board. Can we know from the hon. Minister whether they are going to receive one month salary?

**Mr Chaumière:** Mr Speaker, Sir, when I was talking about unconditional reinstatement, it is unconditional reinstatement.

**Mr Ganoo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister talks about unconditional reinstatement and it is the right thing to do and we congratulate the Minister for that, but why is it that Mr Raghoonath was forced to give up the struggle and apparently coerced to say that he wanted to reintegrate even on certain conditions, that is, reintegrate on a new basis. This is what was announced! How did the hon. Minister allow this?

**Mr Chaumière:** Mr Speaker, Sir, we have taken the right decision. We cannot go back on whatever has happened before.

**Mr Speaker:** I think we have had enough discussion on this issue. Next question, hon. Guinness.

### **PETROLEUM PRODUCTS - HEDGING**

**(No. B/29) Mr G. Guinness (Third Member for Montagne Blanche & GRSE)** asked the Minister of Business, Enterprise and Cooperatives whether, in regard to the hedging transactions on petroleum products carried out by the State Trading Corporation, he will –

for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Corporation, information as to –

- (i) the total amount of loss incurred as at to date
- (ii) the provision for hedging losses included in the price structure of petroleum products
- (iii) the total amount of hedging losses being passed on to customers on a monthly basis and

table copy of the contract agreement between the Mangalore Petroleum Products and the State Trading Corporation.

**Mr Gowreesoo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that the State Trading Corporation has taken hedging commitment in hedging transactions since October 2004 following approval of the then Government obtained in November 2002.

In regard to part (a)(i) of the question, the total amount paid to counter parties from October 2004 to date stands at Rs2.9 billion.

In regard to part (a) (ii) of the question, the provision for hedging included in the price structure of petroleum products (Mogas and Gas Oil) as per Regulations was –

- (i) 10 cents per litre included under STC expenses from April 2004;
- (ii) Rs1.50 per litre included under provision for hedging from January 2008 to 31 October 2008;
- (iii) Rs3.00 per litre as from November 2008 to date.

In regard to part (a) (iii) of the question, the total amount of hedging losses being levied on customers under the item 'Gain/Loss' on Hedging as per Regulations is as follows -

	<b>Rs Million</b>
December 2008	115.5
January 2009	74.0
February 2009	Nil

In regard to part (b) of the question, it would not be ethical to reveal the details of an agreement reached between 2 State-owned enterprises. In fact, since the creation of the STC, a commercial contract entered by the latter has never been made public.

However I am prepared to allow any Member of the House to take cognizance of the contents of the contract at the seat of the STC upon mutual arrangement as to date and time.

**Mr Guinness:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the Minister himself said that, in the first quarter, it was Rs1.50 up to the third quarter, and now it is Rs3 per litre for hedging losses. Can I know from the Minister why has this figure doubled in October and December?

**Mr Gowreesso:** Mr Speaker, Sir, at that time, there was fluctuation in the price of petroleum products and in forex.

**Mr Ganoo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, in reply to a previous PQ, the hon. Minister stated that the hedging commitment at the STC was taken without the Board's approval. The Board's approval was obtained *ex post facto* and even the Ministry of Finance was also not in the know. Doesn't the Minister think that, in the future, the Board should be made aware of the important hedging exercises or even the Ministry of Finance should be consulted?

**Mr Gowreesso:** Mr Speaker, Sir, this is a regular practice since 2004, and there is an officer from the Ministry of Finance who is on the Board.

**Mr Varma:** Mr Speaker, Sir, will the hon. Minister agree that there is a serious governance issue in this case? The decision was taken and then the Board was made aware of that decision. Could he inform the House whether it is envisaged to review that way of proceeding at the STC?

**Mr Gowreesso:** That is why, Mr Speaker, Sir, I have reviewed this system and have dismantled the Hedging Committee. Now, we have set up an inquiry regarding the hedging transactions. Let me inform the House that we have asked advice from Mr Dobson, a hedging consultant. He is making recommendations, and we will have the report in two weeks.

**Mr Bérenger:** The hon. Minister has just talked about an inquiry, and I take it that a thorough inquiry is being carried out on the losses in hedging. Before, profits were being made through hedging, and this time it's massive losses. Can we know who is carrying out this inquiry?

**Mr Gowreessoo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the Ministry has set up an inquiry regarding the losses through hedging. There is only one case where we have lost so much money, Mr Speaker, Sir and that is why we have appointed Mr John Dobson to inquire.

**Mr Gunness:** Can the hon. Minister confirm that, from January 2008 to December 2008, the consumers for Mogas and gas oil had already paid Rs700 m. to the State for the hedging losses?

**Mr Gowreessoo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I don't have the figures, but it is a normal practice.

**Mr Jugnauth:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I have just heard the Minister say that he has dismantled the Hedging Committee. Is there any other institution or anybody looking into that matter?

**Mr Gowreessoo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, as I explained to the House, at that time, there was a decrease in the price of petroleum products and that is why we have lost such a big amount on this hedging transaction. That is why the Hedging Committee has been dismantled. Later, when the price will increase, we will come with a new system to set up this Hedging Committee.

**Mr Bodha:** Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask a three-barrelled question to the hon. Minister? First of all, what is the duration of the present hedging contract? Second, what is the amount of losses which has been contemplated during that contract and, third, I would like to know whether the STC envisaged the possibility to review the hedging contract as has been the case for Air Mauritius?

**Mr Gowreessoo:** Regarding the contract, Mr Speaker, Sir, for Mogas, it has already been paid and for gas oil we have up to June 2009 to pay. But Mr Speaker Sir, I cannot say the exact amount of losses that we can make, because the price fluctuates.

**Mr Gunness:** Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Minister again confirm, while reaching the basic value of the petroleum products, that, apart from the hedging losses, there is Rs2.38 for net interest paid for the month of November 2008?

**Mr Gowreessoo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I will have to check.

**Mr Bodha:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the contribution per litre for the customer for the hedging fee has been Rs3 lately. Is there a possibility that the Rs3 could be increased for the next exercise?

**Mr Gowreessoo:** No, Mr Speaker, Sir, it's a provision.

#### **AIR MAURITIUS LTD – CONTINGENCY FUND - BAILING OUT**

**(No. B/30) Mr G. Lesjongard (Second Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue)** asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic



Empowerment whether, in regard to the bailing out operation of the Air Mauritius Ltd., he will state –

- the amount of money disbursed by Government, and
- (b) if the Support Plan has exceeded the provision under the contingencies and reserves and, if so, since when.

**The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism, Leisure and External Communications (Mr X. L. Duval):** Mr Speaker Sir, with your permission, I shall reply to this question as well as to PQ No. B/38 addressed to the Vice-Prime Minister & Minister of Finance and PQ No. B/63 altogether, as they relate to the same issues.

Mr Speaker Sir, the House would appreciate that Air Mauritius is not only a company incorporated under the Companies Act but is also a listed company quoted on the Mauritius Stock Exchange. As such, it is subject to the provisions of the Companies Act as well as to the regulations of the Stock Exchange, in particular Listing Rule 11.3 which requires that all sensitive information liable to affect the share price should be given in priority to the Stock Exchange. This is further supported by section 87 of the Securities Act.

It is against this background, therefore, Mr Speaker, Sir, that I will provide information within the limits imposed by law.

Mr Speaker Sir, I am informed that:-

Government has issued a guarantee of USD 135 m. to the hedge counter parties and to the bankers of Air Mauritius. Government has also agreed to issue shortly a further guarantee to the tune of EUR 35 million.

The House should note that no cash and no funds have been disbursed by Government to or in favour of Air Mauritius.

Therefore, part (b) of both PQs B/30 and B/38, does not arise.

Mr Speaker Sir, I am further informed by Air Mauritius that the figures for the realised losses incurred by the company on its hedging contracts for the nine months ended 31 December 2008 amounted to EUR 20.5 million. This information is as disclosed to the Stock Exchange on 12 January 2009. I am unfortunately unable to update this information as at 15 March, as requested, as it is not legally in order.

As regards the unrealised losses on unexpired hedging contracts maturing up to August 2010, and once again as disclosed by the company's unaudited accounts published in mid February and based on the fuel price as at 31 December 2008, the projected unrealised loss is estimated at EUR 136.6 m.

As regards collaterals, I wish to inform the House that the company has posted a total sum of EUR 117.9 m. as collaterals to hedge counterparties in various forms up to end December 2008.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am further informed by Air Mauritius that the accounts to end of March are under preparation and are expected to be released by June at the latest.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to inform the House that Air Mauritius has appointed Lazzard Frères, a well-known investment bank, to assist the company to restructure its hedge contracts.

### **SUMMER TIME – ENERGY CONSUMPTION**

**(No. B/31) Mr G. Lesjongard (Second Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue)** asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Renewable Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to summer time, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Central Electricity Board, information as to the decrease as at to date in –

- the maximum demand for energy, and
- the energy consumption in respect of
- the consumers
- the commercial consumers, and
- the industrial consumers

**The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Renewable Energy and Public Utilities (Dr. R. Beebejaun):** Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission I will reply to questions B/31, B/45 and B/84 together.

As I informed the House in my previous replies on this subject, summer time was introduced on a pilot basis for a period of five months from Sunday 26 October 2008 to Sunday 29 March 2009.

A working group, comprising representatives of my Ministry, the Ministry of Finance and Economic Empowerment, the Central Electricity Board, the Joint Economic Council, the *Maurice Ile Durable* Fund, the Mauritius Employers Federation and the Mauritius Chamber of Agriculture, was set up to oversee the implementation process.

The summer time has just ended on last Sunday, and I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Mauritian population, the Civil Service and private sector organisation for their cooperation during this pilot project.

The working group met yesterday, and is carrying out an analysis for the impact of summer time not only on energy consumption but also on the major sectors of the economy. Though we have some preliminary but incomplete data from the CEB, we have to be very cautious in our analysis, given that there are many variables involved. Thus, I should point out that the CEB's evaluation of energy consumption and peak time demand would be based on comparative data before and after the summer time period. CEB is, therefore, monitoring the situation to assess a change in energy consumption after summer time. The Mauritius Research Council is equally carrying out a survey of the social impact of summer time.

A comprehensive report will be submitted to Government shortly. I propose to inform the House of the outcome of the pilot project through a statement in due course.

**Mr Lesjongard:** Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Ag. Prime Minister tell us what has been the maximum demand recorded by the CEB, at least during the past six months?

**Dr. Beebeejaun:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I have just made it quite clear, and I have replied to the hon. Member on different occasions on this issue. He has asked a question on summer time. There are other variables as well, and we have to remove the effect of summer time and the effect of bulbs and other issues. We have just to be cautious and to look at the projections that we have made. It is too easy to quote figures. But, in the end, we have to be responsible and give figures that we can rely upon.

**Mr Lesjongard:** Mr Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Ag. Prime Minister what is the mechanism that the Central Electricity Board has put into place to differentiate between those consumptions, that is, consumption from the domestic point of view, the commercial point of view and the industrial point of view?

**Dr. Beebeejaun:** I have s that in my reply.

**Mr Dullo:** It's true that we should not just go by figures. We should consider the impact that this has had on the life of people. This time change is the only change that Government could bring about, but which has caused untold miseries to the people. And I believe the hon. Deputy Prime Minister knows with what relief the reestablishment of normal time has been welcomed by the population at large. Therefore, will he seriously consider repealing this legislation once and for all?

**Dr. Beebeejaun:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I go along with some of the statements that have been made. As I said, we started on a pilot project. It came to the House and it was a decision of five months. At some time, there was a request as to whether we could shorten it, and it was considered inadvisable in view of the commitments we have with other nations. We cannot change things week after week. There would have been more changes if we had decided to shorten it. So, let us not prejudge. I will come to the House, and I will say, month by month, what has been the effect, whether it has been beneficial or not. I know there are lots of feelings about it, especially the last two months, February and March. I will go along with that. But, at least, let's look at it dispassionately. We have gone through this exercise; we have been subjected to this sort of experience. So, let's be honest about it. I am not on the defensive. I am not going to defend the CEB, I am not going to defend anything. We will be honest, and we will come with the facts and take decisions accordingly.

**Mr Jhugroo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Ag. Prime Minister confirm whether the summer time will be carried on this year?

**Mr Speaker:** No, the question has been answered! Next question, hon. Mrs Labelle!

### **EMPLOYMENT RIGHTS ACT 2008 – EMPLOYEES - LAID OFF**

**(No. B/32) Mrs F. Labelle (Third Member for Vacoas & Floreal)** asked the Minister of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment whether, following the promulgation of the Employment Rights Act 2008, he will state the number of employees who have been laid off, in each sector.

*(Vide reply to PNQ)*

### **SECONDARY SCHOOLS - TIMETABLE**

**(No. B/33) Mrs F. Labelle (Third Member for Vacoas & Floreal)** asked the Minister of Education, Culture and Human Resources whether, in regard to the secondary schools, he will state if a general timetable has been communicated thereto and, if so –

- (a) since when, and
- (b) table copy thereof.

**Dr. Bunwaree:** Mr Speaker, Sir, it has never been the practice for my Ministry to issue or communicate timetables to schools. In fact, each school has to work out its own timetable subject to the guidelines and parameters set by my Ministry. In this respect, my Ministry has already communicated broad guidelines to the State Secondary Schools. I am informed that the PSSA has done the same for the grant-aided private secondary schools.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the question makes mention of a general timetable. I don't know what is meant by this. I am prepared to table the guidelines that have been set.

**Mrs Labelle:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I was referring to a master timetable where the main subjects are included, and I wanted to ask the hon. Minister whether the proposed extra-curricular activities have been included in this master timetable sent to schools. The hon. Minister has also mentioned that the PSSA has sent the guidelines, and I would like to know when.

**Dr. Bunwaree:** The guidelines were sent on 02 March, Mr Speaker, Sir, and I am going to table them. In fact, the activities period which takes care of the extra-curricular activities are mentioned in there.

**Mrs Labelle:** Mr Speaker, Sir, may I know from the hon. Minister whether it is the general practice for the PSSA to send these guidelines at the beginning of March?

**Dr. Bunwaree:** We had a special problem this year because of the activities period that was introduced in January, and the extended school hours till 3 o'clock afternoon that had to be brought back to 2.30 hours while we maintained the activities period.

**Mr Guinness:** Mr Speaker, Sir, at a point in time, the PSSA was planning to ask schools to have staff meetings on a fortnight basis at two o'clock on a uniform basis. Can I know whether this is still on or whether the PSSA has already back-pedalled on that?

**Dr. Bunwaree:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the guidelines that have been sent, in fact, mentioned that it has to take place once every fortnight. But, there is flexibility for the schools to organise, to choose the days, and so on.

### **TEACHERS – PRE-VOCATIONAL SECTOR - CONTRACTS**

**(No. B/34) Mrs F. Labelle (Third Member for Vacoas & Floreal)** asked the Minister of Education, Culture and Human Resources whether, in regard to the teachers working on a contractual basis in the Pre-Vocational sector, he will state the number thereof, indicating the average number of years of service reckoned by each of them.

**Dr. Bunwaree:** Mr Speaker, Sir, my Ministry is resorting to the services of 49 supply teachers in the prevocational sector. These teachers have been enlisted on a temporary basis since January 2004 to palliate shortages pending recruitment in the grade of teacher (Secondary Prevocational).

Supply teachers are, however, not employed *per se* on a contract basis but are employed on a temporary basis as and when required during the academic year. It is a recurrent feature of my Ministry to have recourse to supply teachers as a contingency measure to address the problem of shortage in scarcity areas, and also to replace educators (Secondary) proceeding on sick leave, maternity leave, long vacation leave, study leave and leave without pay.

I also wish to inform the House that vacancies in the grade of teacher (Secondary Prevocational) are being reported to the Public Service Commission. This has been a long outstanding issue which has taken time to regularise in view of the creation of the posts on the establishment of my Ministry, the prescription of the scheme of service, and particularly the *mise en demeure* served by the Technical School Management Trust Fund Employees' Union to the Public Service Commission and my Ministry in July 2005 as they were not agreeable to the scheme of service.

The case has been set aside in October 2007 following which the PSC proceeded with the filling of 70 vacancies in the grade of Teacher (Secondary Prevocational) in 2008 under the first intake note of the scheme of service, i.e appointment of the Technical

School Management Trust Fund employees. The remaining vacancies will now be filled from among candidates outside the service

**Mrs Labelle:** The hon. Minister has mentioned that there are 49 supply teachers working in the pre-vocational sector. May I know from him whether these teachers who are actually working have been working since 2004?

**Dr. Bunwaree:** According to my information, yes, Mr Speaker, Sir.

**Mrs Labelle:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the pre-vocational sector is a difficult one. Does the hon. Minister think that keeping nearly 50 teachers in this uncertainty will help them to carry out their work? Since the four years, at the end of the year, they are being said there is no job. In January, they are called to work and this uncertainty creates anxiety. Will this help them to carry out their work?

**Dr. Bunwaree:** I understand the anxiety of the hon. Member which is also mine. But, as I have explained, Mr Speaker, Sir, we are respectful of institutions as well and there has been a case that was lodged in court, we had to wait when it is finished; there was also contestation of the scheme of service. But, as I have said, now we are proceeding with the appointment of the teachers.

#### **ADDITIONAL STIMULUS PACKAGE – MONEY DISBURSED**

**(No. B/35) Mr M. Dowarkasing (Third Member for Curepipe & Midlands)** asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Empowerment whether, in regard to the Additional Stimulus Package, he will state the amount of money disbursed, indicating the name of the beneficiaries thereof.

*(Vide to PQ No. B/27)*

#### **COASTAL EROSION – REPORT - BAIRD AND ASSOCIATES**

**(No. B/36) Mr M. Dowarkasing (Third Member for Curepipe & Midlands)** asked the Minister of Environment and National Development Unit whether, in regard to coastal erosion, he will state if he has taken cognizance of a report thereon submitted by the Baird and Associates in 2003 and, if so, indicate the measures taken as at to date.

**Mr Bundhoo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the Baird and Associates Report submitted on ‘Study on Coastal Erosion in Mauritius ‘recommends, among others –

- (a) implementation of a beach/lagoon/reef restoration plan;
- (b) monitoring of the coastal systems;
- (c) need to regulate the opening and closure of passes;
- (d) address over-fishing and destructive fishing practices;
- (e) establish more marine protected areas, and
- (f) implement policy on setback for construction of hard structures.

My Ministry chairs an Implementation Committee with inter-sectoral stakeholders to follow up on these recommendations. So far, the following has been implemented -

- (a) restoration at Petit Sable and Bambous Virieux by the placement of a sloping permeable rock revetment over some one km;
- (b) restoration at Rivière des Galets comprising renewal of gabions and the construction of an inland wall over some 450 mts have been completed in the year 2008;
- (c) restoration of the Flic-en-Flac beach through restriction of vehicular access and reprofiling of the beach with continuous maintenance and monitoring;
- (d) restoration at Belle Mare public beach through the reprofiling of the beach slope and continuous monitoring, and
- (e) the gradual removal of hard structures within the dynamic beach zone including groins and concrete jetties and walls at Pte d'Esny.

Furthermore, with the collaboration of the Beach Authority, the following have been implemented –

- (a) restoration at Pointe- aux-Sables, and
- (b) restoration at Trou aux Biches.

Mr Speaker, Sir, my Ministry conducts continuous monitoring and assessment of the status of coastal erosion around Mauritius. On the basis of the findings, coastal protection works are devised and implemented in consultation with relevant stakeholders.

I also wish to inform the House that specific provisions have been made in my Ministry's budget for 2008-2009 for the preservation and rehabilitation of beaches. Work will continue to be carried out in line of the Baird & Associates Report as well as on the basis of new observations.

**Mr Dowarkasing:** Mr Speaker, Sir, among one of the recommendations of that report is the creation of a sand bank and even places like sudan bank in the north of the island was proposed for the sucking of sand to create a sand bank so that we can replenish those beaches affected by erosion.

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Order! Order now!

**Mr Bundhoo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, unfortunately, there is no blood donation at the moment. With regard to the sand bank, on an *ad hoc* basis, for example, at the Caroline Hotel, we did use sand available near Caroline Hotel to replenish part of the beach next to

Caroline Hotel. As and when required, we do build up a bank to replenish where it is required and, in particular, the Grand Bay one which I thought the hon. Member mentioned. These projects are, at the moment, ongoing in order to - if I can use the word - refurbish the part with regard to Grand Bay with the collaboration of the SPDC.

**Mr Dowarkasing:** Mr Speaker, Sir, my second question relates to the other recommendations of that report which is the installation of breakwaters. May I know whether the Ministry is going ahead with this project, if not, may we know the reasons why?

**Mr Bundhoo:** From the report that I have, Mr Speaker, Sir, some have been done, but they are not giving the required results and we are reviewing them.

**Mr Varma:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister has spoken about works which have been undertaken following coastal erosion. Could the hon. Minister inform the House what are the preventive measures that are being undertaken to prevent coastal erosion?

**Mr Bundhoo:** This is exactly what had been done over the last five years to prevent it.

**Mr Guinness:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I heard the hon. Minister saying that one of the recommendations of the report is to remove concrete buildings on the beaches. Can I know from the hon. Minister how he reconciles the fact that, last year, on the public beach of Trou d'Eau Douce, tuck shops have been constructed in concrete, and how does he reconcile this with the statement that he made?

**Mr Bundhoo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, can I assure the hon. Member, that among the recommendations I read, no mention was made about the removing of concrete building, but nonetheless, whenever there is any concrete building which has been erected on a public beach, it has to be dealt with the Beach Authority.

**Mr Dowarkasing:** The other concern of the report was also the state of our coral reefs which are about 80% in the red zone. Can we know from the hon. Minister what are the concrete measures that have been taken up by his Ministry in relation to this problem?

**Mr Bundhoo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I have to thank the hon. Member for drawing the attention of the House and the population at large also. What is happening to our coral reef is due to over-fishing activities, to men's activities and also to the increase in climate with regard to the sea temperature. But quite unfortunately other than sensitising the population and reversing all the activities that are affecting the coral reef, there is nothing much we can do. But, nonetheless, we have already organised a sensitising campaign with regard to all stakeholders in order to prevent any further degradations of our coral reef and, at the same time, implementing measures trying to revert it.



**Mr Varma:** Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Minister inform the House whether the recommendations of the Baird Report have been transmitted to local authorities so that these are taken into consideration when development permits are being granted?

**Mr Bundhoo:** I have to assure the hon. Member that, yes, this is the case and that particularly all hotels which are now going to be provided with an EIA are requested by law to have a setback of the high water marks of at least 50 metres from the high water marks.

#### **ALIMONY – NON-COMPLIANCE - COMPLAINTS**

**(No. B/37) Mr M. Dowarkasing (Third Member for Curepipe & Midlands)** asked the Attorney-General whether he will state if he has received complaints from the public, especially mothers, for non-compliance with arrangements in respect of alimony and, if so, indicate the measures he proposes to take.

*(Withdrawn)*

#### **AIR MAURITIUS LTD – RESCUE PLAN – MONEY DISBURSED**

**(No. B/38) Mrs F. Labelle (Third Member for Vacoas & Floreal)** asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Empowerment whether, in regard to the rescue plan of the Air Mauritius Ltd, he will state the amount of money –

- (iv) given as guarantee, and
- (v) disbursed in favour of the company.

*(Vide reply to PQ No. B/30)*

#### **EMPLOYMENT RIGHTS ACT 2008 – EMPLOYEES - LAID OFF**

**(No.B/39) Mr G. Gunness (Third Member for Montagne Blanche & GRSE)** asked the Minister of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment whether he will state the number of employees who have been laid off since the promulgation of the Employment Rights Act 2008.

*(Vide reply to PNQ)*

#### **MAURITIUS TELECOM - TRADE UNIONISTS – RE-INSTATEMENT**

**(No. B/40) Mr M. Allet (Second Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière)** asked the Minister of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment whether, in regard to Mr R. R. and Mr. I. C., two trade unionists of the Mauritius Telecom who were dismissed, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Telecom, information as to if they have been re-instated and, if not, why not.

*(Vide reply to PQ No. B/28)*

### **CARGO HANDLING CORPORATION - RECRUITMENT**

**(No. B/41) Mr M. Allet (Second Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière)** asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism, Leisure and External Communications whether, in regard to the recruitment of the staff members and manual workers at the Cargo Handling Corporation, since July 2005 to date, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Corporation, information as to the number thereof, indicating

- (a) their names, addresses and respective posting and
- (b) if the posts were advertised and, if so, when, in each case.

**The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism, Leisure and External Communications (Mr X. L. Duval):** Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I wish to refer the hon. Member to the replies I made to PQ Nos. B/738 and B/1062, which relate to the same issue.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to reiterate that the Cargo Handling Corporation Ltd is a Limited Company incorporated under the Companies Act. As such, the responsibility for the recruitment of employees and other staff is vested in its Board of Directors. I am therefore not in a position to provide the information required at parts (a) and (b) of the question nor to answer to any supplementary question thereon.

**Mr Allet:** M. le président, les renseignements que j'ai reçus de la Cargo Handling est que ce n'est pas la direction de la Cargo Handling qui embauche les travailleurs du port mais bien le ministre de tutelle. Pouvez-vous me le confirmer ou pas?

**Mr X. L. Duval:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I don't know whether the hon. Member is looking for any job, but I assure him that I cannot help him.

### **MAURITIUS PORT AUTHORITY – RECRUITMENT**

**(No. B/42) Mr M. Allet (Second Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière)** asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism, Leisure and External Communications whether, in regard to the recruitment of the staff members and manual workers at the Mauritius Port Authority since July 2005 to date, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Authority, information as to the number thereof, indicating

- (a) their names, addresses and respective posting and
- (b) if the posts were advertised and, if so, when, in each case.

**The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism, Leisure and External Communications (Mr X. L. Duval):** Mr Speaker Sir, in my replies in the House to PQ Nos. B/737 and B/1062, I had the opportunity to explain in an elaborate manner the

established policy of the Mauritius Ports Authority regarding the recruitment of employees. I am informed by the MPA that there has been no change in that policy as yet. Furthermore, the information at parts (a) and (b) of the question is being compiled and will be placed in the Library of the National Assembly.

**Mr Allet:** M. le président, pourrais-je savoir quelles sont les qualifications requises pour être embauché à la *Mauritius Port Authority*?

**Mr Duval:** I think everybody will know, Mr Speaker, Sir, that it depends on what post you are looking for. If you're looking for a post of handyman, that is one, accountant is another one, Director is another one. It's different qualifications.

**Mr Lesjongard:** Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister how many manual workers have been employed on a contractual basis at the Mauritius Port authority?

**Mr X. L. Duval:** I would wait Mr Speaker, Sir, for the information to be tabled. We are not going to do like the previous Government and never table it. We have tabled it before; we will table it again, and that information will be there. I don't know if any has been, but if there have been, they will be on that sheet.

#### **PQ No. B/43 – See “Written Answers to Questions”**

#### **CWA – WATER LOSS**

**(No. B/44) Mr Dayal (Second Member for Quartier Militaire & Moka)** asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Renewable Energy & Public Utilities whether, in regard to potable water, he is aware of the difficulties being faced by the public due to the faulty water reticulation system and, if so, will he -

- (a) for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Central Water Authority, information as to the percentage of water loss in the distribution system and
- (b) state the remedial measures that have been or are being taken.

**The Ag. Prime Minister:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I refer the hon. Member to the reply made to PQs B/440 and B/1167 of 2008. Difficulties of providing potable water arise not only from defective reticulation systems but also due to other factors such as limited capacity of treatment plants and service reservoirs, clogging of filters, increase demand due to new residential and commercial settlement, and dry season.

The water distribution in Mauritius covers 99% of the population. However, 25% or thereabouts of pipes are old, some dating back to more than 100 years which, apart from leakages, burst frequently with the Mare aux Vacoas and Port Louis systems the worse affected.

Various baseline estimates of non-revenue water and its various components have been made over the years and the latest estimate for leakage is around 37%. This

estimate was determined by consultant Severn Trent Water International which has also produced an Action Plan to address the non-revenue water problem. Based on the report of STWI, the CWA is implementing the non-revenue water project in an integrated manner in six distribution zones comprising some 30 localities which cover about 15% of CWA customers. The work been undertaken by the CWA is not limited to repair of leaks but also includes replacement of meters, detection of illegal connections, disconnection of supplies for non-payment of water charges and the monitoring of water production and distribution in each zone. This pilot phase will be completed in December 2009 following which phase II of the non-revenue water project will be implemented island wide.

The House may wish to note that under phase II of the project, it is envisaged to undertake a major programme for replacement of old pipes and meters, construction and repairs of service reservoirs and other associated works. These works would be implemented under the supervision of a private sector operator to be appointed under a Performance Based Management Services contract. In this regard, I wish to inform the House that the pre-qualification document for the appointment of the private sector operator will be issued shortly.

**Mr Dayal:** Mr Speaker Sir, can I ask the Ag. Prime Minister whether he is aware that potable water provided to the following regions of my constituency namely, Vuillemin, Valetta, Quartier Militaire, Dagotiere, L'avenir and Nouvelle Decouverte among other regions, Alma itself, is carried by an asbestos pipe over a distance of 9 kms from the reservoir of Camp Fouquereaux to the reservoir of Alma, which is hazardous to the health. Therefore, can I ask the Ag. Prime Minister whether he will direct the CWA to have the Asbestos pipe replaced forthwith, as he is empowered to do so under section 6 of the Central Water Authority Act in the matter of public interest - and this is of course a matter of public interest - as it is a hazard to public health?

**The Ag. Prime Minister:** Mr Speaker, Sir, how can I not be aware of this problem when the Member himself has raised it so many times? I would not try to minimise the problem of asbestos, but asbestos has been with us for many, many years and, in reply to previous questions, we have pointed that it is not a health hazard in the water system. I want to reassure the population, unless we get new data on this, which I don't have. Having said that, there are extensive works to be done in the region mentioned. We have already planned the implementation; we are waiting for allocation of budget in that sense. I thank the hon. Member for pointing it out, and I think it is one of the urgent problems that we have to address.

**Mr Dayal:** May I press on the hon. Ag. Prime Minister to place it high on his list of priorities? Because pipes burst every day in that region, and people are penalised from having potable water.

**The Ag. Prime Minister:** I take good note, Mr Speaker, Sir.

**Mr Bérenger:** The hon. Ag. Prime Minister he has given us details of the remedial measures that are being taken or will be taken. Remedial measures like other measures cost money. Is it a fact that the funding agencies are not happy at all with the situation concerning wasted water at the CWA? Is it a fact, as in the case of the

Wastewater Authority, the European Union and the European Development Investment Bank are not happy at all with performance at the CWA?

**The Ag. Prime Minister:** Mr Speaker Sir, it is quite right that there is a problem with the European Investment Fund. It concerns one of the consultants that was appointed to look after the six pilot projects of the region that I have already mentioned. Unfortunately, based on the results which have been underlined before, at the end of one year there was no result or appreciable improvement in the performance and, when informed accordingly, the European Investment Bank has reacted to ask for more information. As it is today, we appointed one consultant from the European Investment Bank to supervise the whole project and, at the end of one year, which is about a few months ago, we could not find any appreciable improvement. So, the contract was not renewed, thus creating this state of affairs between the CWA and the EIB.

**Mr Bérenger:** May I ask the Ag. Prime Minister whether he is satisfied that, in fact, it's the fault of the consultant that results have not come? Because how many times have we heard the CWA say that results will come within the next year! So many times, consultants have changed, but leaks have not decreased. Is the hon. Ag. Prime Minister satisfied that it is the consultant who is at fault or rather others at the CWA?

**The Deputy Prime Minister:** I would go along and say that responsibilities are shared. But I think the next step with the private sector operator would be the solution because we tried so many times myself from the past 10 years in 1999 when I was Minister I think in 2000-2005; this has been tried and I must say that we must address and see to it that the problem of water very seriously for the next decade or two otherwise we are going to find ourselves in a very seriously water scarce situation. So, I go along; I think the CWA should be looked into and whatever changes there need to be will be brought.

**Mr Guinness:** Mr Speaker, Sir, concerning these pipes, I have seen in some places where the broken pipes are removed and are left by the side of the road, and I think it is very dangerous. Therefore, can the Minister ensure at least that the CWA or the contractor dispose them off as it must be instead of leaving it by the side of the road and children playing with that?

**The Deputy Prime Minister:** Yes, certainly. I would take good note of that and I make sure that it is properly disposed of.

## **SUMMER TIME – ENERGY CONSUMPTION**

**(No. B/45) Mr S. Dayal (Second Member for Quartier Militaire and Moka)** asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Renewable Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to summer time, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Central Electricity Board, information as to the amount of savings made in terms of –

- (a) energy consumption, and
- (b) money.

*(Vide reply to PQ No. B/31)*

### **PRIMARY SCHOOLS – STANDARD I – ADMISSION – CUT OFF DATE**

**(No. B/46) Mr S. Dayal (Second Member for Quartier Militaire & Moka)** asked the Minister of Education, Culture & Human Resources whether he is aware that there is a substantial drop in the intake of students in Standard I at the primary level and if so, will he consider changing the cut off date of attaining the age of five on 31 December of the previous year to 31 March of the intake year so that children born on or before 31 March of that year be eligible for admission.

**Dr. Bunwaree:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I am indeed aware that intakes in standard one has over the past decades followed declining trend although it has remained more or less steady since 2003. This is mainly due to demographic reasons for the current school year standard one intakes stands at 17,876. As regards the proposal of the hon. Member to amends the regulations to the cut off dates 31st December be pushed to 31st March, I am informed that there have been attempts in the past namely in 1982 and 2001 to amend the regulations to change the cut off dates regarding age of admission to standard one. However, both amendments were repealed afterwards for administrative and pedagogical reasons.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the question is, however, pertinent and I agree that not withstanding the fact that the past two attempts of 1982 and 2001 have not been conclusive we should continue to reflect on the matter so that we can eventually come with a more acceptable formula for admission after consultation with all the stakeholders.

### **MINISTRY OF HEALTH – GLUCOMETERS – NORMS & QUALITY**

**(No. B/47) Mrs A. Navarre-Marie (First Member for GRNW & Port Louis West)** asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether, in regard to the recent procurement of glucometers by his Ministry, he will state if he is aware of any allegations made in respect of the norms and quality thereof and, if so, indicate if an inquiry has been carried out thereinto and the outcome thereof.

**Dr. Jeetah:** Mr Speaker Sir, I am informed that my Ministry is not in presence of any allegations made in respect of the recent procurement of glucometers.

I am also informed that tenders for the supply of glucometers and test strips for determination of glucose in the blood were floated in May 2008. The bids were received

and evaluated at the Central Procurement Board which approved the award of the contract to Messrs Bikspharma Ltd.

Consequently, a letter of intent was issued to the recommended bidder.

Thereafter, one of the unsuccessful bidders challenged the award of the contract as approved by the Central Procurement Board. The matter was subsequently referred to the Independent Review Panel (IRP) in accordance with the provisions of the Public Procurement Act 2006.

The Independent Review Panel highlighted certain discrepancies and recommended that the intention to award the contract for the supply of glucometers and the strips be reviewed.

The matter was referred to the Central Procurement Board, which after a fresh evaluation exercise, maintained its previous approval on Messrs Bikspharma Ltd.

In the circumstances, my Ministry has referred the matter to the State law Office for advice.

**Mr Speaker:** Next question!

### **TROU AUX BICHES – GILL-NET PERMITS**

**(No. B/48) Mrs A. Navarre-Marie( First member for GRNW and Port Louis West )** asked the Minister of Agro Industry, Food Production and Security whether, in regard to gill-net permits, he will state if same have been recently delivered in the region of Trou aux Biches and, if so, indicate –

- (a) since when and
- (b) the number of beneficiaries thereof, indicating their names and Addresses in each case.

**Mr Faugoo:** Mr Speaker Sir, a gill net licence was issued by my Ministry under section 30 of the Fisheries and Marine Resources Act 2007 to Aspire Multipurpose Cooperative Society on 9 March 2009 for use within the limit of Pamplemousses district and not a specific to Trou aux Biches.

I am advised that Mr Georges Armand Virassamy, a registered netfishermen, is responsible for the operation of the gill net.

With regard to parts (b) and (c), the beneficiary is the Aspire Multipurpose Cooperative Society whose registered address is Mahatma Gandhi Street, Triolet.

## PORT LOUIS NORTH & MONTAGNE LONGUE – ALLEVIATION OF POVERTY SCHEME

(No. B/49) Mr P. Jhugroo (Third Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Empowerment whether, in regard to the Alleviation of Absolute Poverty Scheme, he will state the total amount of money spent for the Constituency No. 4, Port Louis North and Montagne Longue, since its implementation to date, indicating in each case, the quantum disbursed, region-wise.

**Dr. Sithanen:** Mr Speaker, Sir, one of the main objectives of the Trust Fund for Social Integration of Vulnerable Groups is to alleviate poverty in the deprived areas through Community-based projects, initiated and implemented by Non-Governmental Organizations and Community-based Organisations.

As such, these organizations submit projects which cover the pockets of poverty in their locality and not necessarily in terms of constituencies. Thus, the implementation of a project from such organisations may overlap constituencies.

With regard to poverty alleviation programme, the Trust Fund has since July 2005 up to March of this year implemented some 22 community based projects geared towards alleviating poverty in the region of Port Louis North/Montagne Longue. These projects were initiated through NGO's and were monitored by the staff of the Trust Fund. The Trust Fund has to date approved the disbursement of a total sum of Rs15.7 Million of which Rs14 million was for the construction of 265 housing units and Rs1.7 million for the provision of school materials for needy children in terms of uniforms, school bags, shoes & socks as well as stationery.

In addition, Mr Speaker, Sir, as already announced in the Budget Speech last year, a national Programme, known as Eradication of Absolute Poverty has been set up which focuses on the 229 pockets of absolute poverty. The aim is to adopt an integrated approach within identified pockets of poverty in partnership with the private sector, government agencies and NGO's with a view to combating absolute poverty.

As a first measure, the EAP Committee, set up to manage the Programme, has developed a scheme to ensure that no child of Pre Primary school age from vulnerable families is left out of school. In this connection, following a survey conducted by the Trust Fund last year in September, it was noted that some 544 children living in the pockets of poverty were not attending pre-primary schools. Accordingly, the EAP Committee with the collaboration of the NGO's and Private sector offered on a pilot basis a package of incentives to encourage them to attend school. This year, out of the 544, some 315 children are still going to pre-primary school. These children are being provided with free meal, school fees, transport as well as school materials. The NGO's are also collaborating, through follow up (*politique d'accompagnement*) of the children



and families and are also ensuring that the children are attending school regularly. The annual average expenditure per child, excluding transport amounts to Rs12,000. In the district of Port Louis some 70 children are being supported under this Programme.

As far as Montagne Longue and neighbouring localities are concerned, the survey carried out by the Trust in September 2008 revealed that Pre-Primary school age children are all attending school. However, those children coming from vulnerable families require assistance in terms of school materials. Accordingly, three projects for provision of such materials have been implemented in these regions in January of this year.

### **ROCHE BOIS – MARKET FAIR – LAND ACQUISITION**

**(No. B/50) Mr S. Lauthan (Third Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East)** asked the Minister of Housing and Lands whether, in regard to the compulsory acquisition of a plot of land in Roche Bois, near the flyover, for the implementation of a market fair, he will state if financial clearance has been obtained and, if so, where matters stand.

**Dr. Kasenally:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that at the request of the former Minister of Housing and Land necessary provision has been made for the implementation of the said market fair in the programme of works to be undertaken by the National development unit. Necessary arrangements are being made for the compulsory acquisition of the said plot following financial clearance which are given.

**Mr Lauthan:** Mr Speaker, Sir, should I understand that final financial clearance has not been obtained three months after the previous PQ on the same issue?

**Dr. Kasenally:** I have just said that following clearance of the financial clearance, it has been obtained.

**Mr Lauthan:** Mr Speaker, Sir, a proper market fair should be put up *digne de son nom* because given the topology of the place, when it rains a lot of water is retained and it takes days for the water to dry off. Can there be a proper tarring?

**Dr. Kasenally:** I shall impress upon the National Development Unit and my colleague to ensure that there is proper drainage and, as the hon. Member say, elevation, so that the people of Roches Bois can enjoy the benefit of a modern market fair.

### **MADAGASCAR – POLITICAL CRISIS – DIPLOMATIC INITIATIVES**

**(No. B/51) Mr Y. Varma (First Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien)** asked the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade

whether, in regard to the political crisis in Madagascar, he will state the diplomatic initiatives taken by Mauritius with a view to finding a solution thereto.

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

Mr Speaker, Sir, Mauritius has actively supported and is part of the initiative of the International Community including the United Nations, the African Union, Indian Ocean Commission (IOC) and SADC, to find a peaceful solution to the crisis and has encouraged the two parties to engage in a constructive dialogue towards peace.

Our Ambassador has been involved in the efforts of the Diplomatic Corps in Madagascar to get the concerned parties to resolve the crisis.

Moreover, the I.O.C delegated a mediation mission to Madagascar that included former President Karl Offman to facilitate the dialogue between President Marc Ravalomanana and Mr Andry Rajoelina with a view to resolve the crisis. Further, the Government of Mauritius joined the International Community to condemn the transfer of power as an unconstitutional action.

Hon. Boolell, Minister of Foreign Affairs, has also discussed the situation in Madagascar with Mrs Glamini Zuma, Minister of Foreign Affairs of South Africa, during his trip to Cape Town in February, and most recently, with the Secretary General of the UN during his trip in New York last week.

Mauritius also participated at the highest level in the SADC Extraordinary Summit which met in Swaziland on 30 March 2009 to discuss the political situation in Madagascar. The Extraordinary Summit has suspended Madagascar from all community institutions and organs until the return of the country to constitutional order.

Mauritius proposes to participate in the 25<sup>th</sup> Council of Ministers of the Indian Ocean Commission to be held in Moroni, the Comoros on 04-05 April 2009. The situation in Madagascar is on the agenda.

**Mr Varma:** Mr Speaker, Sir, could the hon. Minister inform the House whether Mauritius recognizes President Rajoelina as in that capacity?

**Dr. David:** Mr Speaker, Sir, Mauritius aligned itself on SADC, and a communiqué has been issued today.

## **COURT USHERS & COURT OFFICERS - RECRUITMENT**

**(No. B/52) Mr Y. Varma (First Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien)** asked the Minister of Civil Service and Administrative Reforms whether, in regard to the vacancies for the posts of Court Ushers and Court Officers, he will state the number thereof, in each case, as at to date, indicating if measures are being taken to fill same.

**Mr Hookoom:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that there are at present 20 and 35 vacancies in the grade of Court usher and Court officer respectively. Following the recommendations of the Pay Research Bureau in its 2008 Report in respect of qualifications for entry grades, the recruitment exercises could not be undertaken as the

relevant schemes of service had to be amended. However, in view of an urgent need to recruit trainee Court officers and to fill the vacancies in the grade of Court ushers, my Ministry agreed in November 2008 that recruitment in the two grades concerned be made on the basis of the existing scheme of service.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am given to understand that a written examination is scheduled for 04 April 2009, and this will lead to the recruitment of the Court ushers. Insofar as enlistment of trainee Court officers is concerned, the exercise is underway.

**Mr Varma:** Mr Speaker, Sir, could the hon. Minister inform the House when the recruitment will take place? Is there a time frame? Is it in two months, three months?

**Mr Hookoom:** Mr Speaker, Sir, it will be done in due course.

### **DES PLACES & CARREAU ESNOUF VILLAGES – ROAD TARRING**

**(No. B/53) Mr Y. Varma (First Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien)** asked the Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping whether, in regard to the tarring of the road linking the villages of Des Places and Carreau Esnouf, he will state where matters stand.

**Mr Bachoo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, RDA will proceed the resurfacing of the road, once it is declared public.

**Mr Varma:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I know that the hon. Minister has given due attention to that problem. But can I request him to liaise with his colleague, the Minister of Local Government, to see to it that this road is declared public as soon as possible?

**Mr Bachoo:** I'll look into it, Mr Speaker, Sir.

### **LE BOUCHON – COMMUNITY CENTRE - CONSTRUCTION**

**(No. B/54) Mr Y. Varma (First Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien)** asked the Minister of Environment and National Development Unit whether, in regard to the proposed construction of a Community Centre in Le Bouchon, he will state where matters stand.

**Mr Bundhoo:** Mr Speaker, Sir I would like to inform the House that an extent of land of 1082.93 sq mts has already been vested in my Ministry.

Consequently, I have already requested the consultant Servansingh Jadav & partners Partners to effect a site visit and to prepare the design, scope of works and tender documents, which is expected to be submitted shortly.

**Mr Varma:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister has spoken about shortly. Is there a timeframe actually for the project to be implemented?

**Mr Bundhoo:** In due course!

## **TOPIZE, JOSEPH REGINALD (KAYA) - MONUMENT**

**(No. B/55) Mr J. C. Barbier (Third Member for GRNW & Port Louis West)** asked the Minister of Education, Culture and Human Resources whether, in regard to the 10th anniversary of the death of Joseph Reginald Topize, also known as Kaya, he will state if Government will consider the advisability of erecting a monument in his memory for his contribution to the development of our local music and the creation of the Seggae Music.

**Dr. Bunwaree:** Mr Speaker, Sir, we fully recognize the contribution of Joseph Reginald Topize, also known as Kaya, in the promotion of our local music. I am thankful to the hon. Member for the question and wish to inform him that, in fact, my Ministry has received several suggestions, both locally as well as from Mauritians abroad, for honouring this prominent Mauritian artist who is renowned as the pioneer of Seggae music.

In the wake of the construction of the Nelson Mandela Centre for African culture, we have envisaged to include an element to give due recognition to the artist.

Moreover, my Ministry is giving serious consideration to the work and contribution of Kaya and to explore the best way to recognize the life and work of the artist. I would welcome all suggestions from any hon. Member to that effect. Of course, Mr Speaker, Sir, this will be done in consultation with the family of the artist.

**Mr Barbier:** Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister whether there is a timeframe, whether a committee has been...

*(Interruptions)*

**Dr. Bunwaree:** As short can be.

**Mr Barbier:** Will the hon. Minister also consider the advisability of putting to contribution the MASA?

**Dr. Bunwaree:** I have mentioned all the stakeholders.

## **FISHING BOATS - ACQUISITION**

**(No. B/56) Mr J. C. Barbier (Third Member for GRNW & Port Louis West)** asked the Minister of Agro Industry, Food Production & Security whether, in regard to the project for the acquisition of fishing boats which was discussed at a meeting chaired by the then hon. Minister of Agro Industry and Fisheries on 12 September 2008, he will state where matters stand.

**Mr Faugoo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, at a meeting held on 12 September 2008, it was decided that the Fisherman Investment Trust and the Mauritius Export Association,

MEXA, would each invest equally in the acquisition of six boats for fishermen to operate around the fish aggregating device fishery. The objective of the project is to encourage fishers to divert their fishing activities from the lagoon to the more productive off shore areas particularly around the fish aggregating devices. MEXA subsequently informed my Ministry that because of the financial crisis, it was not in a position to fulfil its obligation and would limit its financial involvement only to the acquisition of one boat. In view of this unexpected development, I had consultations with the Fisherman Investment Trust to ensure that the project is not jeopardized. As a result of these consultations, the Trust agreed to release funds for the acquisition of four boats instead of three, as initially planned. This proposal was approved by the Board of the FIT on 27 February 2009. Moreover, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed between FIT and MEXA on 11 February 2009, which *inter alia*, provides for the setting up of a new entity, “*Les Pêcheurs Réunis, Limited*” to implement the project. Modalities for the registration of the new company and the eventual purchase of boats are being finalised.

**Mr Barbier:** Mr Speaker, Sir, initially, it was question of the acquisition of 26 boats, and six were to be finalised at latest December 2008. We are nearly in April 2009, and we are still waiting for the boats which were to be purchased on a pilot basis to start the operation. Now we hear that only four boats are going to be purchased. May I know whether only four boats are going to be purchased or is it only on a pilot basis and more boats are coming afterwards? We need clarification.

**Mr Faugoo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the question specifically relates to the meeting which was held on 12 September with regard to the purchase of five boats. I am only referring to those five boats. As far as the acquisition of boats is concerned, maybe the hon. Member can come with a substantive question.

**Mr Barbier:** Within the same meeting, Mr Speaker, Sir, it was question of 26 boats but six on a pilot basis. That's why I'm asking the Minister whether the four which he just mentioned are going to be on a pilot basis or whether more are coming afterwards. I want this to be clear.

**Mr Faugoo:** According to the agreement between FIT and MEXA, it was a question of six boats. It has now been reviewed to five boats, four by FIT and one by MEXA because of the financial crisis. And the rest of the boats are being taken care of under the Food Security Fund.

**Mr Barbier:** Can I know what funds are going to be disbursed by MEXA and FIT for the pilot project?

**Mr Faugoo:** I understand that it is about Rs7 m. altogether, and there was an additional sum of Rs50 m. which has been voted or earmarked under the Food Security Fund, Mr Speaker, Sir.

### **BAMBOUS VIRIEUX - FISHING INVESTMENT TRUST**

**(No. B/57) Mr J. C. Barbier (Third Member for GRNW & Port Louis West)** asked the Minister of Agro Industry, Food Production and Security whether, in regard to the fish-farming project in the southern region, he will, for the benefit of the House,

obtain from the Fishermen Investment Trust, information as to if the Trust will invest therein and, if so, give details thereof.

**Mr Faugoo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that the Fishermen Investment Trust (FIT) is piloting a fish-farming project with the participation of fishers of Bambous Virieux area. This project will be implemented under the food security programme which was launched by my Ministry in January 2009. A sum of Rs15 m. has been earmarked under the Food Security Fund to that effect. The feasibility study has been completed with the technical assistance of ReCOMaP (Regional Programme for Sustainable Management of the Coastal Zones of the Indian Ocean Countries) which is an entity of the Indian Ocean Commission. The feasibility study has been approved by the Board of FIT in February 2009. The site recommended for the project is *EST Pointe Bambous* which is one of the fish farming zones prescribed by law. The FIT is currently endeavouring to fulfil two requirements for the project, namely the Environmental Impact Assessment and the Social Impact Assessment. I would like to inform the House that I had the opportunity to discuss this project with La Ferme Marine de Mahebourg during a recent visit on Thursday last. La Ferme Marine de Mahebourg which is a pioneer in fish cage culture, has given an undertaking to assist the fishers of Bambous Virieux and FIT through the provision of technical assistance and the supply of juvenile fish for the project.

**Mr Barbier:** May I know whether Government is having the full support of the fishers of Bambous Virieux for this project?

**Mr Faugoo:** I had several meetings with the fishers and also with the organizations they belong to and they are agreeable to it.

**Mr Barbier:** May I take it from the Minister that there has been no objection so far concerning the participation of the fishers in the project?

**Mr Faugoo:** I am not aware of any objections so far, except for one or two members within the association. They have voiced out their feelings, but it is not as if they are against the project as a whole.

**Mr Barbier:** The business plan was to be finalised and discussed with the fishermen before going ahead with the project. May I know whether this has been done?

**Mr Faugoo:** I have to look into it and ask SIT whether this has been done.

**Mr Barbier:** It was also a question of training. A training programme was attached to that project for fishers who were to participate in this project. May I know whether this training programme has been set and, if not, where matters stand?

**Mr Faugoo:** The training component is still on the agenda, Mr Speaker, Sir. It is being taken care of under the Food Security Fund.

## **SCHOOL PREMISES – SPORTS FACILITIES**

**(No. B/58) Mrs S. Grenade (Second Member for GRNW & Port Louis West)** asked the Minister of Education, Culture and Human Resources whether, in regard to the practice of sports, he will state if the sports infrastructural facilities on school premises are still being put at the disposal of the people of the localities thereof, after school hours and, if so, indicate if they are being charged a fee for same.

**Dr. Bunwaree:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the reply is in the affirmative. I understand that the Ministry of Youth and Sports is impressing the need to develop the sports culture and is taking measures to enable the public to have greater access to Government-owned sports infrastructure.

It is to be noted that my Ministry was already putting at the disposal of the public the sports facilities available in the State Secondary Schools through the educational zones and against payment of a monthly fee. This practice is still ongoing.

In addition and in furtherance of the policy of Government to open up, as far as possible, the sports facilities available in our schools to the public, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed in September 2006 between my Ministry and the Ministry of Youth and Sports to allow sports associations, organized groups of members of the public and the public at large to have access to sports infrastructure in ten State Secondary Schools after school hours and non-school days, but through the Ministry of Youth and Sports and the Mauritius Sports Council. These facilities are granted against the payment of a nominal fee except for Saturdays, between 8 and 11 hours when the Sports Federations are allowed to use such facilities free of charge.

**Mrs Grenade:** May I know when this fee was asked to be paid and when this was decided?

**Dr. Bunwaree:** I think this was decided as soon as the implementation started after the memorandum of understanding.

**Mrs Labelle:** May I ask the hon. Minister whether he has an idea of the fee being claimed by the different sport federations?

**Dr. Bunwaree:** Well, there are two things: one for the general public which is Rs25 per month, which is not much. In fact, we are starting to review this. For the memorandum of understanding, 10 schools are involved because many sports infrastructure are put at the disposal of the institutions that I have mentioned. The fees are for week days, between 16 and 21 hours; Rs35 per sport facility per hour. On Saturdays: Rs35 per sport facility per hour between 8 and 18 hours; between 18 and 22 hours: Rs50s per sport facility per hour.

**Mrs Labelle:** Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister whether he is aware that there is a public secondary institution which is asking for Rs200 per hour?

**Dr. Bunwaree:** I have to look into this. In fact, this falls outside the categories that I have mentioned. But, in some cases, there have been cases where "*il y a eu des dégâts*" and maybe this could explain that. But, I am going to look into that.

**Mrs Labelle:** Because it is a small club, a small village and they have been asked to pay Rs200 per hour and, of course, they can't afford it. I am going, Mr Speaker, Sir, to table a copy of this letter.

**Dr. Bunwaree:** I am going to look into that, Mr Speaker, Sir.

**Mr Gunness:** The Minister mentioned a Memorandum of Understanding. There are 8 to 10 State schools. Can we have the list of the 10 schools?

**Dr. Bunwaree:** In fact, I have the list with me, Mr Speaker, Sir: La Tour Koeing SSS, Pointe-Aux-Sables, Prof. Hassan Raffa SSS, Terre Rouge, Ramsoodur Prayag SSS, Rivière Du Rempart, Rajkumar Gajadhur SSS, Flacq, Indira Gandhi SSS, Quartier Militaire, Marcel Gabon SSS, Beau Bassin, Sir A. R. Osman SSS Phoenix, Vivekananda SSS, Souillac, Sangilly SSS Surinam and Bissondoyal SSS, Rose Belle.

**Mr Jugnauth:** With regard to the secondary school at Quartier Militaire, I have a slightly different information than what hon. Mrs Labelle just mentioned, that the fee has been increased. With regard to the football ground, I am informed that the fee has, in fact, been substantially increased and the criteria is according to member of the team. Would the Minister confirm whether that is correct?

**Dr. Bunwaree:** Officially I have given the figures as they ought to be. In fact, they have to be like that. But I have just got the information that things have been changed here and there. I am going to look into the matter seriously.

**Mr Varma:** Mr Speaker, Sir, could the hon. Minister inform the House whether all States Secondary Schools are made available to members of the public?

**Dr. Bunwaree:** Not all, but wherever the sports facilities can be made available.

**Mr Jhugroo:** M. le Président, maintenant je vois pourquoi on n'a pas eu des bons athlètes dans ce pays.

*(Interruptions)*

On ne peut pas demander de l'argent aux jeunes pour pratiquer le sport. Et maintenant, vous voulez qu'on ait de bons athlètes dans ce pays ! Moi je crois qu'il faut cesser de demander de l'argent à tous ces clubs et à ces jeunes pour venir pratiquer le sport dans ce pays. Il faut que cela cesse ! Si on veut avoir de bons athlètes, il faut .....

**Mr Speaker:** The hon. Member has made his point.



**Dr. Bunwaree:** L'honorable membre pourra nous dire comment on va maintenir l'infrastructure, d'autant plus qu'il y a des casseurs aussi parmi eux.

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Order!

**Mrs Martin:** Can the hon. Minister tell us whether it is envisaged to increase the number of schools where those facilities could be used by more people?

**Dr. Bunwaree:** In fact, this is being done, Mr Speaker, Sir, and we are going to improve the sports infrastructure for the students themselves.

**Mr Speaker:** Last question, hon. Guinness!

**Mr Guinness:** May I know from the hon. Minister, apart from the football ground and the volleyball ground, whether the gymnasium is put at the disposal of the public?

**Dr. Bunwaree:** Yes, on payment of Rs25 per month.

#### **NELSON MANDELA CENTRE FOR AFRICAN CULTURE – CONSTRUCTION**

**(No. B/59) Mrs S. Grenade (Second Member for GRNW & Port Louis West)** asked the Minister of Education, Culture and Human Resources whether in regard to the project for the construction of a building to house the Nelson Mandela Centre for African Culture, he will state where matters stand.

**Dr. Bunwaree:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I am advised that a first tendering exercise for the construction of the building to house the Nelson Mandela Centre for African Culture at La Tour Koenig was carried out in August last year.

The exercise was unsuccessful as by the closing date of 03 October 2008, only one bid was received for the project and the price quoted was around 72% more than that estimated by the Ministry of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping.

Taking into account the big difference between the estimated price and the bid price and the fact that it was not possible to really assess the competitiveness of the bid as there was only one submission, the Central Procurement Board recommended that a re-tendering exercise be carried out.

Tenders have been launched anew in March 2009. The closing date for the submission of bids is 07 April 2009.

#### **HOSPITALS - SURGICAL OPERATIONS – AWAITING PERIOD**

**(No. B/60) Mr S. Dayal (Second Member for Quartier Militaire and Moka)** asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether in regard to surgical operations, he will state –

- (a) the number of patients awaiting same in each hospital and indicate the different areas of specialisation;
- (b) the steps taken or to be taken to shorten the awaiting period, and
- (c) any remedial action taken to improve information and communication between the patients and the medical authorities regarding date of surgical operations.

**Dr. Jeetah:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the House may wish to note that all cases requiring emergency surgery in the different areas of specialisation are operated upon immediately.

As regards part (a) of the question, with your permission, Mr Speaker, Sir, I am tabling the information required.

Regarding part (b) of the question, the following steps have been taken to remedy the situation –

- (i) we are starting with extra surgery sessions this week after normal working hours at Victoria Hospital, J. Nehru Hospital and Moka Eye Hospital;
- (ii) Optometrists have been employed on a sessional basis to do refraction at Moka Eye Hospital to allow the ophthalmologists to do more surgery sessions;
- (iii) action has been taken for the creation of two posts of optometrists on my Ministry's establishment;
- (iv) procedures have been initiated for the setting up of a new operating block at Victoria Hospital and at Moka Eye Hospital respectively;
- (v) 21 foreign medical teams visited Mauritius from January 2008 to February 2009. 436 complex surgeries have been effected in the different specialities, namely ophthalmology, cardiology, paediatric cardiology, paediatric urology, plastic surgery and orthopaedics;
- (vi) patients requiring surgery in specialities where expertise is not available locally are referred to Centres of Excellence abroad in accordance with set criteria on an Overseas Treatment Scheme. Over the last three years, 1,532 patients have been referred overseas for treatment, and
- (vii) we have intensified our Public Health Strategies. For instance, my Ministry has embarked on a more aggressive sensitisation campaign on the prevention and control of NCDs through the Mobile Clinics. Regulations governing smoking and alcohol misuse have been made public and are being enforced.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as far as part (c) of the question is concerned, my Ministry is putting a lot of emphasis on communication in general between the medical and paramedical staff and patients. Training sessions on communication have started with a view to improving upon delivery of services.

Patients are accordingly informed of the appropriate date of their planned operation at the consultation stage. They are also told that in the event of any change of their conditions, they should contact the relevant unit for prompt action.

**Mr Dayal:** Mr Speaker, Sir, will the hon. Minister agree that we should put in place a mechanism of checks and balances to ensure that operations are already fixed and are not postponed on flimsy grounds and that the patients be explained the reason thereof?

**Dr. Jeetah:** I have explained, Mr Speaker, Sir, that we are putting emphasis on communication. I think we can gain in this field by training.

**Mr Varma:** Could the hon. Minister inform the House in which field of specialisation is the waiting list the longest?

**Dr. Jeetah:** Mr Speaker, Sir, it is in ophthalmology and the second item would be general surgery.

**Dr. Ramloll:** Mr Speaker, Sir, my question pertains to two situations: one is when the patient is already abroad because a lot of time is taken for disbursement of the sum and due to emergencies the families somehow manage to take the patient abroad for surgery. I know cases where when they come back, they don't get the reimbursement. The second situation is: patients who are waiting for surgery somehow go on a trip, I don't know how, in group tours and they fall sick; and I know recently of a case in Delhi where the person had to undergo emergency cardiac surgery. They spent almost a million and they are still striving to have some part of it refunded. Can these issues be reviewed by the Ministry of Health?

**Dr. Jeetah:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I am not willing to discuss any patient's case, but I shall certainly look into the procedures to make sure that we provide a better service.

**Mr Varma:** Mr Speaker, Sir, could the hon. Minister inform the House of the number of patients who are on the waiting list for eye surgery?

**Dr. Jeetah:** It is 1,990.

**Mr Jhugroo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, can we know from the hon. Minister which foreign medical teams are undergoing surgical operations at the Cardiac Centre actually?

**Dr. Jeetah:** I do not have the list, Mr Speaker, Sir, but I know that we have a wide range...

**Mr Speaker:** The hon. Member must come with a specific question on this. Time is over! The Table has been advised that PQs B/67, B/68, B/69 and B/77 have been withdrawn.

*At 16.45 the sitting was suspended.*

