

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

SALE BY LEVY SOLIDARITY FUND – MONEY DISBURSED

(No. B/428) Mr S. Naidu (Third Member for Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether, in regard to the Rs100 m. earmarked for the Sale by Levy Solidarity Fund, he will state how much has been disbursed as at to date, indicating the details of how same has been spent.

(Withdrawn)

AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT BANK - AGRICULTURAL LOAN

(No. B/470) Dr. R. Mungur (Second Member for Flacq and Bon Accueil) asked the Minister of Agro Industry & Fisheries whether, he will state if he will consider making use of the credit being offered by the African Development Bank which is increasing its agricultural loan portfolio, with a view to supporting Government in response to the growing food crisis.

Reply: On 05 May 2008, the President of the African Development Bank has announced that the ADB will increase its agriculture portfolio by USD 1 billion to bring it to a total amount to 4.8 billion, as part of a short term action to help address the food crisis in its regional member countries.

The ADB is among the main development partners along with the European Union, the *Agence Française de Développement* and the World Bank for the implementation of Government reform programme initiated in Financial Year 2006/2007 through direct budget support.

In fact, the ADB has supported Mauritius in various sectors of the economy through different loans. Presently, the ADB is part financing the development of irrigated agriculture in the Phase II of the Northern Plains Irrigation Project which comprises derocking and land preparation, installation of irrigation infrastructure and technical assistance.

The Bank has also approved the establishment of African Fertilizer Financing Mechanism Special Fund, given the strategic importance of fertilizer in achieving the African green revolution. Emphasis has also been made on development of rural infrastructure which will enable access to wider markets, attracting greater revenue for small farmers and drastically reducing post harvest losses. These new measures will enhance regional food security and facilitate agricultural investments in the African region.

Mauritius has already embarked upon development of food security programme at both local and regional levels. Once bankable projects would be finalised in consultation with all partners, the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development would be approached for Mauritius to benefit from this ADB source of funding.

LA FERME AND RIAMBEL – CROPS CULTIVATION - LEASES

(No. B/471) Mr A. Ganoo (First Member for Savanne and Black River) asked the Minister of Housing and Lands whether, in regard to persons cultivating food crops on small plots of State land, especially in the areas of La Ferme and Riambel, he will state if he will consider granting them with leases, on a yearly basis, with a view to encouraging them in vegetable cultivation.

Reply :(The Minister of Agro Industry & Fisheries): Agricultural State land of a total extent of 66 A 20 in the region of La Ferme falling under the control of my Ministry, has been leased and earmarked for leasing as follows –

- (i) 13 A 70 of Moona land settlement leased to planters for vegetable production;
- (ii) 12 A 50 of part State land La Ferme to farmers for food crops/livestock production, and
- (iii) 40 A in Saint Martin earmarked for pig breeding activities.

I am informed by the Ministry of Housing and Lands that an extent of 24 A 34 at La Ferme has been parcelled into 15 lots which are being leased to 15 farmers for cultivation and mixed farming. The lease is on a year to year basis with a rental of Rs1,500 per annum. I am also informed that there is no other uncommitted State land at La Ferme for lease to farmers.

As concerns Riambel region, according to the Ministry of Housing and Lands, no lease of land has been given for cultivation of crops. Moreover, my Ministry has also no land under its control in the region of Riambel for lease to farmers.

CASTING OF SLABS SCHEME – GRANT

(No. B/472) Mr G. Lesjongard (Second Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to the Casting of Slabs Scheme, he will state if he will consider increasing the grant therefor, in view of the recent increase in the price of cement, iron bars and other building materials.

Reply: As the House is aware, as from the financial year 2007/08, the maximum amount of grant per beneficiary under the Casting of Roof Slabs Scheme was increased from Rs 55,000 to Rs 60,000.

Insofar as the Housing Sectors are concerned, it is currently being reviewed by my Ministry and any new policy measure would be considered in the context of the forthcoming Budget.

FOSTER CARE ALLOWANCES - COMPLAINT

(No. B/473) Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun (Third Member for La Caverne and Phoenix) asked the Minister of Women's Rights, Child Development, Family Welfare & Consumer Protection whether, in regard to the monthly payment of the Foster Care allowances, she will state if she has received any complaint from the foster parents and, if so, the remedial measures she proposes to take.

Reply: With regard to the monthly payment of the Foster Care allowances, my Ministry received a complaint in October 2007 to the effect that there were delays in the payment of same.

Following that complaint, necessary action has been taken by my Ministry to streamline the procedures so that foster parents are paid the allowances at latest by the 15th of the following month. Once a Court Order is obtained, approval is sought and conveyed for payment up to expiry of the order instead of seeking approval on a monthly basis.

I wish to remind the House that Foster Care is based on the principle of voluntarism and the capability to cater for both physical and emotional needs of a child in distress. My Ministry ascertains that foster parents enjoy social, mental and economic stability before registering them. The monthly allowance given to foster parents is but a token. Nevertheless, I have given due consideration to the request for increase in the quantum and same is being taken up in the coming budgetary exercise.

MAHEBOURG AND PLAINE MAGNIEN – FISHERMEN

(No. B/474) Mr Y. Varma (First Member for Mahebourg and Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Agro Industry and Fisheries whether, in regard to the fishermen of Mahebourg and Plaine Magnien, he will state where matters stand as to the measures proposed to solve the problems they are facing, in the exercise of their trade.

(Withdrawn)