

MBC – EMPLOYEES - INTERDICTION

(No. 1B/219) Dr. R. Sorefan (Fourth Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications whether, in regard to the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Corporation, information as to -

- (a) the number of employees who have been
 - (i) suspended or interdicted since 2005 to-date, and
 - (ii) re-instated to their posts, and
- (b) whether any employee has not been re-instated and, if so, the number thereof and the reasons therefor.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, in regard to part (a)(i) of the question, I am informed by the Director-General of the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation that from 2005 to date, 15 employees of the Corporation had been interdicted from the exercise of their duties. Two of them were interdicted twice during that period.

In regard to part (a)(ii) of the question, six employees have been reinstated in their respective post and one employee has left the service of the Corporation.

As regards part (b) of the question, I am further informed by the Director General that eight employees have not been reinstated so far.

Six of these employees would be required to appear before a Disciplinary Committee in view of the seriousness of the alleged offences once administrative formalities would have been finalised.

In the two other cases, the matter was referred to the Police as the alleged offences were of a criminal nature. The outcome of the Police inquiry in one of these two cases has been received and the Corporation is seeking legal advice on the course of action to be followed. In regard to the second case, the outcome of Police inquiry is awaited.

RAMADAN – VISITING MAULANAS - VISA

(No. 1B/220) Ms K. R. Deerpalsing (Third Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications whether, in regard to visiting *maulanas*, he will, for the benefit of the

House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police if instead of a 30-day, a 40-day visa could be issued to them during the period of Ramadan.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, maulanans visiting Mauritius during the Ramadan period are eligible for a social visa for a period of 30 days. However, upon request, some maulanans are allowed to stay for a few more days.

I understand the point that the hon. Member is making that 30 days might not be enough – I think the hon. Member is talking about the Ramadan period. Extension of such social visas for maulanans during the Ramadan period will be looked at positively on a case to case basis and will be extended, if so requested.

Ms Deerpalsing: Mr Speaker, Sir, I thank the hon. Prime Minister for his answer. Is the hon. Prime Minister aware that the specific problem is, precisely, as he said, for the Ramadan period when the Hafiz come here to read the Quran. Then because Ramadan is exactly 30 days, the Hafiz have to leave on the very day of Eid, so they are not able to even celebrate Eid when they have stayed here for 29 days and read the Quran. Would the hon. Prime Minister see to it, as the Ramadan period is coming soon, that the Hafiz are able to stay, at least, to celebrate Eid on the day of Eid?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, the law says that you can have three types of visa. There is a tourist visa which, I think, is between two months and six months; there is a business which is up for three months, and then there is a social visa, which falls under the item social which is for one month. As the hon. Member has pointed out to us, we will extend that, especially if it falls under the Ramadan. It makes sense that we extend that period.

**PALM COURT, NHDC, PALMA & RESIDENCES BEAU SEJOUR, QUATRE
BORNES**

(No. 1B/221) Ms K. R. Deerpalsing (Third Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications whether, as announced in the Government Programme 2010-2015, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, if consideration will be given for the installation of Close Circuits Television Surveillance System (CCTV) at –

- (a) Palm Court, NHDC, Palma, and
- (b) Residences Beau Sejour, Quatre Bornes.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, Government has already implemented the Closed Circuit Television (CCTV) Street Surveillance System in the Flic en Flac region since April 2009; and in strategic positions along the St Jean Road in Quatre Bornes since December 2009. As the House is already aware, the project for the installation of a CCTV Street Surveillance System in Port Louis and Grand'Baie is under way and is expected to be completed by the end of August 2010.

Mr Speaker, Sir, Government is fully committed to ensure the safety and security of our citizens as well as of visitors. This commitment has been reiterated in the Government Programme of 2010–2015 wherein we have announced our intention to extend the CCTV to other regions, particularly in high risk areas.

In this connection, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that the Police are planning the project for the extension of the CCTV Surveillance System by taking into consideration the wider public interest and also the availability of funds.

Accordingly, the Police have prioritised the following areas where CCTV Street Surveillance System will be set up -

- (a) the towns of Beau Bassin and Rose Hill and their adjoining areas;
- (b) the tourist resort area starting from Belle Mare passing through Palmar to Trou d'Eau Douce, including Ile aux Cerfs;
- (c) the town of Curepipe and its adjoining areas and lateral areas;
- (d) the Mahebourg Waterfront and adjoining areas;
- (e) busy villages such as Goodlands, Central Flacq, Rivière du Rempart and Rose Belle which comprise market fairs and bus terminals and where socio-economic and commercial activities are on the increase, and
- (f) extension of the adjoining areas and lateral areas to the town of Quatre Bornes.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the consideration will also be given to cover the two regions of Palm Court, NHDC Complex at Palma and Residence Beau Séjour at Quatre Bornes. In fact, the Police said they could link the CCTV system of Quatre Bornes to that of Rose Hill when the system will be implemented and that will cover those areas.

Bérenger: Mr Speaker, Sir, the CCTV camera systems have for years in the UK, for example, being an important tool in combating crimes, stolen vehicles and so on. I am sure

the hon. Prime Minister is aware of matters of privacy and that is why in the UK for years now there has been an independent regulator to supervise it all. But right now, I am sure he is aware, the debate is on for strengthen governance of the whole system, what kind of evidence is kept, for how long, under whose control and so on. Legislation is being prepared right now. Has the hon. Prime Minister given consideration to the possibility of bringing in regulations or legislation to regulate the use for privacy purposes, the use of CCTV cameras?

The Prime Minister: We have to look at the two. On the one side, there is privacy which I am also very concerned with as the hon. Leader of the Opposition has said. But, on the other hand, there is the public interest that we have to look at. In fact, I was surprised, in the UK, Mr Speaker, Sir, this has come out that they want to put now microphones together with the CCTV so that they will listen to that people are saying. That goes even further than the CCTV cameras. But we will certainly have to look at this. But we will have to balance on the one side the privacy interests but, on the other hand, the public interests.

Ms Deerpalsing: Sir, may I just ask one last supplementary? In view of the answer given by the hon. Prime Minister, and because the Government Programme talks about high risk areas, would the hon. Prime Minister consider that those areas, where citizens complain about drug smuggling and so on and so forth, be given the highest priority?

The Prime Minister: In fact, that is why we consider some of the areas as priorities, because not only there are thefts, larcenies and all this, but also people possibly dealing with drugs. So, that is why we want to cover those areas as well.

VICTORIA & SSRN HOSPITALS – POST MORTEM EXAMINATIONS

(No. 1B/222) Mr S. Dayal (Third Member for Quartier Militaire & Moka) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications whether, in regard to post mortem examinations which are presently being carried out at the Victoria and SSRN Hospitals, he will state if Government is envisaging to extend these services to other hospitals.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that at present, post-mortem examinations are carried out at SSRN Hospital, Pamplemousses and Victoria Hospital, Candos. The two mortuary houses located at these hospitals, it is felt, are properly equipped with appropriate facilities for conducting autopsies in hospital and medico-legal cases.

Post-mortem examinations which used to take place also at Dr Jeetoo Hospital will resume at Dr. Jeetoo Hospital on completion of phase I of the hospital which is scheduled for December of this year.

Although it is felt, Mr Speaker, Sir, that the number of existing mortuary houses is adequate for the whole country, I understand why the hon. Member might have put that question. Consideration will be given for mortuary facilities to be made available at Jawaharlal Nehru Hospital and Flacq Hospital in due course.

AMBASSADORS & ADVISERS - ACTIVE POLITICS

(No. 1B/223) Mr C. Fakeemeeah (Third Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications whether, in regard to active politics, he will state if Ambassadors and Advisers are allowed to engage therein.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, the answer is in the negative in the context of existing policy whereby Ambassadors and Advisers are not allowed to engage in active politics while in office.

Mr Fakeemeeah: I would like to ask the hon. Prime Minister what will be his stand concerning advisers from his own office if we come forward with evidence concerning their taking part in the last general election?

The Prime Minister: The one political adviser in my office that I suppose the hon. Member is referring to is Dr. Jhurry. He resigned before the election.

MBC – EMPLOYEES - TERMS & CONDITIONS OF EMPLOYMENT

(No. 1B/224) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications whether, in regard to the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Corporation, information as to –

- (a) the number of employees employed on -
 - (i) a full time
 - (ii) part time basis
- (b) their respective posts and their terms and conditions of employment.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, the information is being compiled and will be placed in the Library.

Mr Bhagwan: I have one supplementary question for the hon. Prime Minister. Is the hon. Prime Minister aware that a Chief Executive Officer of a parastatal body is also doing part time at the MBC? Is it normal that a Chief Executive Officer of a parastatal body is engaged as part-timer at the MBC/TV?

The Prime Minister: Offhand like this, I do not see why this cannot take place, but I can look into the matter if the hon. Member will refer the names specifically to me, privately, maybe.

Mr Bhagwan: Not at a private level, Sir, but a Chief Executive Officer of a parastatal body cannot go and engage as a part-timer.

The Prime Minister: I don't know under what section the hon. Member is referring to.

(Interruptions)

Mr Bhagwan: I will tell the hon. Prime Minister where he is engaged. It is in a Hindi emission - Woh din Yaad Karo. A Chief Executive Officer of a parastatal body is engaged in that particular programme and we want to know how much is being paid to that officer?

The Prime Minister: I understand he believes he can sing very well, Mr Speaker, Sir. That's what my understanding is. I am not saying I agree with it, but I understand that he believes he can sing very well.

(Interruptions)

Whether people believe he can sing very well is another matter.

Mr Speaker: I don't think the hon. Member can stop me if I want to go and sing at the MBC.

(Interruptions)

Mr Bhagwan: You are laughing. It is our hundred rupees which pay that gentleman.

(Interruptions)

He is earning Rs200,000 monthly...

Mr Speaker: Mr Bhagwan, please!

Mr Bhagwan: But let the hon. Prime Minister inquire. He is not singing, but he is making other people sing!

(Interruptions)

The Prime Minister: I will certainly inquire into it.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

The Prime Minister: In fact, I can say to the hon. Member now that the person he is referring to is about to be replaced where he is at the moment.

WORLD ANTI-DRUG ABUSE DAY - CATHÉDRALE ST LOUIS SQUARE

(No. 1B/225) Mr A. Ameer Meea (First Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications whether, in regard to the 23rd celebration of the World Anti-drug Abuse Day by the *Mouvement Anti-Drogue* at Cathédrale St Louis Square in Port Louis, on or about Saturday 26 June 2010, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to whether the projection of a film on the Prevention Against Drug Abuse was prohibited by the Police and, if so, the reasons therefor.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that on 24 June 2010, he received a letter dated 22 June signed by Messrs I. D. and A. L. representing the "*Mouvement Anti-Drogue*", in which they sought for authorisation to hold a public gathering on Saturday 26 June of this year from 18.30 hrs to 22.00 hrs, at the "*Place de la Cathédrale de Port Louis*". The activity was to be organised in the context of the International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking.

On 25 June 2010, that is one day before, Mr A. L. called at the Metropolitan South Police Division and gave a statement in which he confirmed the organisation of the public gathering on 26 June, that is, the next day. He also stated that a public address system would be utilised as there would be addresses by social workers, a show by local artists and the projection of a film on a giant screen. He requested for Police assistance during the gathering and undertook to abide by all Police directives and obtain all necessary clearances prior to the date of the event.

On the same date, he submitted to the Police, clearances from the Municipal Council of Port Louis, the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life, the Mauritius Society of Authors

and the Cathédrale Saint Louis. However, no clearance from the Film Classification Board was produced for the projection of the film.

On 26 June 2010, the Police informed Mr A.L. of its no objection to the holding of the public gathering. However, no authorisation was granted for the projection of the film in view of the fact that no certificate of exhibition issued by the Film Classification Board in accordance with the provisions of the Films Act of 2002 had been submitted.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the “*Mouvement Anti-Drogue*” held its gathering in the private compound of “*La Cure de la Cathedrale Saint Louis*”, and publicly projected the 30 minute clip on a giant screen in spite of the fact that it had not obtained the prior approval of the Films Classification Board. The Police has, therefore, initiated an enquiry in the matter.

Mr Ameer Meea: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Prime Minister if any person has been arrested in relation to the film diffused?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, nobody is above the law in this country whoever he is and if the law has been broken the Police are enquiring, if they have to arrest, they will arrest.

Mr Barbier: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Prime Minister is stating that there is a projection of a film in the yard of the parish. Is this considered to be a public place?

Mr Speaker: The hon. Member is asking for an opinion from the hon. Prime Minister. This is not allowed.

NATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION - SEX DISCRIMINATION DIVISION – MEMBERS

(No. 1B/226) Mrs L. Ribot (Third Member for Stanley & Rose Hill) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications whether, in regard to the National Human Rights Commission and the Sex Discrimination Division thereof, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commission, information, in each case, as to -

- (a) the names of the members, and
- (b) their respective date of appointment.

(Withdrawn)

PRISONS – AMMUNITIONS AND EQUIPMENT - PURCHASE

(No. 1B/227) **Mr V. Baloomoody (Third Member for GRNW & Port Louis West)** asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications whether, in regard to the protection of Prison Officers whilst on duty, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Prisons, information as to the last time ammunitions and equipment were purchased.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Commissioner of Prisons that several equipment and ammunitions are available for use by the Prison officers for their protection in accordance with the existing protocol.

I am also apprised that equipment and ammunitions were last purchased by the Prisons Department in March 2003, to add to the existing ones. In addition, a few other equipment have been issued on loan by the Police Department in February and June of this year. The existing protective equipment are resistant to wear and tear and have a long life span.

Mr Speaker, Sir, following the events of last week at the Grand River North West Prison, I have given instruction that a comprehensive organisational audit of our Prisons should be carried out. In the light of this exercise, consideration will be given for the acquisition of such other security equipment, as may be necessary.

I should also add that a security audit, in fact, had been started on 01 March 2010, that is, before the problem arose. But the organisational audit has been requested to the Office of Public Sector Governance on 30 June 2010.

Mr Bérenger: Mr Speaker, Sir, I think I have heard the hon. Prime Minister say that no new security equipment for the Prison service has been purchased since 2003. And then, he added - if I heard him correctly – that only this year twice the Police lent equipment to the Prison services. Can I know which equipment that was?

The Prime Minister: I don't know whether it would be proper to say exactly what equipment. In fact, I have talked to President Sarkozy when he was interior Minister and he had agreed that certain equipment being used in France could be used here. Here, we find some legal impediments to, in fact, having those equipment and we are looking into that. But all the equipment were given by the Police.

Dr. S. Boolell: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Prime Minister who shall have the responsibility of the security audit on the Prisons? Is it going to be the same officers who have done it before or is it going to be an independent body?

The Prime Minister: Because it touches security, Mr Speaker, Sir, we need to have the expertise to be able to do that security audit. We are looking at not the same persons, but Police from the Police Force would be included in that.

Mr Bérenger: The question is simple. The hon. Prime Minister himself went out of his way to say that this security audit had started before the Grand River Prison mutiny. If it started before, some people have been doing the work. Can we be informed who that is?

The Prime Minister: Yes, I can give the names of who are the people. I don't have the names with me here, but I can give the hon. Member the names of who were involved in the security audit and also for the organisational audit. As I said the office of public sector governance should have a new name for it. But also perhaps in the security of audit, there has been a committee which was set up under the chairmanship of the national security adviser.

Mr Uteem: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Prime Minister, in respect to Prison officers who have contact with inmates who have AIDS, whether special equipment are being provided to protect these officers?

The Prime Minister: What equipment did the hon. Member have in mind?

Mr Uteem: Some officers have been complaining that they are being threatened by their inmates with AIDS; they use syringes and so on. I don't know whether any protection gloves could be provided to them. I would like to know whether there is any inquiry made to find out whether special equipment need to be provided to these officers.

The Prime Minister: I think this issue was raised when the hon. Leader of the Opposition was Prime Minister. If the hon. Member will remember, there was an attempt to attack Inspector Tuyau with a syringe which was contaminated. All these were linked into. That's why I asked the hon. Member what specific equipment else can be provided.

Mr Bhagwan: Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether, in the course of the audit, consideration is also given to the whole telecommunication network and the transport service within the Police department?

The Prime Minister: All this is being looked at, Mr Speaker, Sir.

INDUSTRIAL COURT – EMPLOYEES - LEGAL ASSISTANCE

(No. 1B/228) Mr V. Baloomoody (Third Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications whether, in regard to the Legal Aid Act, he will state if Government proposes to bring amendments thereto with a view to making provision for employees to benefit from legal assistance in litigations before the Industrial Court.

(Withdrawn)

PRISONS – DETAINEES – NUMBER & EXPENSES INCURRED

(No. 1B/229) Mr R. Issack (Fourth Member for Stanley and Rose Hill) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications whether, in regard to detainees in the prisons, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Prisons, information as to -

- (a) the number of male and female thereof in each prison, and
- (b) the annual average expenses incurred by the State per detainee

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Commissioner of Prisons that the prison population for Mauritius and Rodrigues, as at 01 July 2010 stands at 2,308 male and 136 female detainees in the nine Prisons and one Correctional Youth Centre as follows -

<u>INSTITUTION</u>	<u>MALE</u>	<u>FEMALE</u>
Central Prison Beau Bassin	1336	Nil
New Wing Beau Bassin Prison	233	Nil
Grand River North West Remand Prison	322	Nil
Richelieu Open Prison	84	Nil
Petit Verger Prison	256	Nil
Phoenix Prison	18	Nil
Women Prison	Nil	136

Correctional Youth Centre	32	Nil
Rodrigues Prison (Male)	27	Nil
Rodrigues Prison (Female)	Nil	Nil

In regard to part (b) of the question, I am informed that the annual average expenses incurred by the State per detainee are Rs138,733.

Mr Issack: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I know from the hon. Prime Minister how many detainees are foreigners?

The Prime Minister: There are some, but I don't have the list with me. For the foreigners, in certain countries, we have an agreement. Some countries don't want to have the agreement with us. But I can tell the hon. Member - I don't think they have given me the exact number - I have answered a question on this in the past, Mr Speaker, Sir, but I can certainly give you the number of people who are of foreign nationality and who are actually in the Prisons.

PRISON INSTITUTIONS – BOARD OF VISITORS

(No. 1B/230) **Mr A. Ganoo (First Member for Savanne & Black River)** asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications whether, in regard to the Board of Visitors for each of the prison institutions, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Prisons, information as to the number of Boards which have been established as at to date, indicating in each case -

- (a) their composition
- (b) the name of the Chairperson
- (c) the number of meetings held and the number of visits effected by the

Board to its respective institution since first January 2010 to date.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, Section 53 of the Reform Institutions Act provides for the establishment for every institution of a Board of Visitors as may be necessary. A Board of Visitors assigned to a prison shall be composed of not less than three Magistrates, a Law Officer and four other members, three of whom shall not hold public office.

Section 53(3) of the Reform Institution Act provides that a Board of Visitors assigned to a Correctional Youth Centre shall be composed of not less than eight members. Both Boards were last constituted in 2003.

I should point out, Mr Speaker, Sir, that we are in the process of setting up the National Preventive Mechanism whose main functions will be to visit places of detention so as to examine the treatment of persons deprived of their liberty with a view to ensuring their protection against torture and inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment and to make recommendations regarding the improvement of the treatment of detainees. The National Preventive Mechanism which is about to be set up will thus take over the functions of the Visiting Boards.

In this regard, a draft legislation has been prepared for the establishment of the National Preventive Mechanism and is now being finalised in consultation with the relevant stakeholders. We hope to introduce this legislation as soon as this process is over.

This is in line with the Government Programme 2010 -2015, where we have stated that, as part of our obligations under the Optional Protocol to the United Nations' Convention against Torture, Mauritius will set up a National Preventive Mechanism which will ensure that the conditions prevailing in our prisons, Police cells and other places of detention comply with the human rights obligations and the provisions of the Protocol.

I should also like to point out, Mr Speaker, Sir, that the National Human Rights Commission is also empowered to visit any Police station, Prison or other place of detention under the control of the State to study the living conditions of the inmates and the treatment afforded to them.

I am informed that the National Human Rights Commission has since 2005 to date effected 16 visits to the prisons.

Mr Ganoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, the announcement of the hon. Prime Minister of setting up this new mechanism confirms, in fact, that the other structures set up in the Reform Institutions Act has not worked properly in the past. The problem is we can set up as many mechanisms as we want to, like the ones to be found in the Reform Institutions Act, but the question is practically how will these institutions work. True it is that it is the first time that this is being announced, but in practice, if these institutions had worked in the Prisons, I don't think we would have reached that situation today. The question I am putting to the hon.

Prime Minister is: what guarantee can he give to the House that, in practice, the new mechanism that he is proposing to set up will, in fact, work?

Mr Speaker: The hon. Member knows very well that the Prime Minister has just said that he will bring a Bill to the House. The question that the hon. Member has asked goes against the rule of anticipation. I think that he will have to wait for the Bill to come to the House, and then raise that point and, perhaps, move for amendments!

Mr Ganoo: The Prime Minister has said that this body will be set up by legislation. Does he have an idea of the constitution of the body? For example, will it be made up of lawyers, magistrates?

Mr Speaker: That again infringes the rule of anticipation! Next question!

PRISONS – ACCOMODATION CAPACITY

(No. 1B/231) **Mr A. Ganoo (First Member for Savanne & Black River)** asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications whether, in regard to the prison institutions, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Prisons, information, in each case, as to –

- (a) the accommodation capacity;
- (b) the actual number of inmates;
- (c) the number of detainees on remand, and
- (d) the number of prisons officers in post.

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

Mr Speaker: Questions addressed to hon. Ministers! Hon. Seetaram!

TROU D’EAU DOUCE-BEL AIR – BUS SERVICE

(No. 1B/232) **Mr J. Seetaram (Second Member for Montagne Blanche & GRSE)** asked the Minister of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping whether, in regard to public transport from Trou d’eau Douce to Bel Air, he will state if he is aware of the hardships caused to the students and elderly persons of the region as a result of the absence of bus services thereat and, if so, will he consider the introduction of a bus service to serve that route.

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, following request from inhabitants of Trou d'eau Douce and Bel Air, the NTA was requested to look into the nature of the problems faced by them. I am pleased to inform the House that the issues raised have been addressed to the satisfaction of the inhabitants.

CAROLINE, ECROIGNARD & BRAMSTHAN - WATER SUPPLY

(No. 1B/233) Mr J. Seetaram (Second Member for Montagne Blanche & GRSE) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to water supply, he will state if he is aware of the irregularity and quality thereof in the region of Caroline, Ecroignard and Bramsthan and, if so, will he for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Central Water Authority, information as to the remedial actions that will be taken.

The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Energy and Public Utilities (Dr. R. Beebeejaun): I am informed by the Central Water Authority that the region of Caroline, Ecroignard and Bramsthan are supplied from Caroline borehole, which is operated on a 24-hour basis. I am aware that water supply in the region needs to be improved, and that some 50 houses in Upper Ecroignard do not receive adequate water supply because they are situated on high elevation, and valve operations are carried out daily to supply these consumers.

The Central Water Authority is implementing a project to pump water from Caroline borehole to the new Belle Rose Clemencia Service reservoir. Two separate pipelines will be laid from that reservoir to supply the regions in question.

I am glad to inform the House that the contract has already been awarded to Sotravac for the value of Rs69 m., and works are expected to be completed in May 2011. Upon completion of the works, water supply will be substantially improved in the region.

GLEN PARK-CUREPIPE – LINK ROAD

(No. 1B/234) Mr J. Seetaram (Second Member for Montagne Blanche & GRSE) asked the Minister of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping whether, in regard to the link road from Glen Park to Curepipe via Pont Malakoff, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Road Development Authority, information as to the expected date of completion thereof.

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, this is a new proposal, which requires a preliminary study on the proposed alignment. In addition, a feasibility study needs also to be carried out.

QUARTIER MILITAIRE – SWIMMING POOL

(No. 1B/235) **Mr S. Dayal (Third Member for Quartier Militaire & Moka)** asked the Minister of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping whether, in regard to the construction of a swimming pool at Quartier Militaire, he will state where matters stand.

The Minister of Youth and Sports (Mr S. Ritoo): Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I am going to answer to this question.

Mr Speaker, Sir, a plot of land of an extent of 8,354 m² at Quartier Militaire has been vested with my Ministry for the construction of a swimming pool. The project has so far not been implemented due to unavailability of funds.

However, I have been informed by the Ministry of Local Government and Outer Islands that this project will be funded and implemented by the Local Infrastructure Fund.

I am also informed that a geotechnical study will be carried out to assess the suitability of the land for the project. The Local Infrastructure Fund will hire the services of a specialist contractor for the study. Bids to that effect are being evaluated.

Mr Dayal: Can I know from the hon. Minister when the geotechnical study will be carried out?

Mr Ritoo: It is actually being studied, Sir.

MGSS, MOKA - FOOTBALL GROUND

(No. 1B/236) **Mr S. Dayal (Third Member for Quartier Militaire & Moka)** asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether, in regard to the project for the putting up of a football playground at Mahatma Gandhi State Secondary School at Moka, he will state where matters stand, indicating the estimated cost and the expected dates of commencement and completion of the works.

Dr. Bunwaree: Mr Speaker, Sir, the construction of a football ground forms part of the Phase IV of the construction project at Mahatma Gandhi Secondary School (MGSS), Moka, which comprises also a Dance/Music Block, Communication, Design Technology/Home Economics Block, and a Computer/Library Block.

Given that similar Phase IV of the construction projects have also to be implemented at the MGSSs at Nouvelle France, Solferino and Flacq, my Ministry and the Ministry of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping adopted a

holistic approach, with a view to harmonising the works to be undertaken and to be provided to these schools remaining facilities.

I am informed that this fourth phase of the MGSS at Moka will cost around Rs142 m. I am also informed that, presently, the MPI is working on the detailed drawings and draft bidding documents for the Phase IV works in these MGSSs. It is expected that bidding documents will be finalised in October 2010, and tenders will be launched in November 2010.

Works are expected to start in February 2011. I would like to point out that, during implementation, the football ground will be undertaken in the first part of the project. According to this time frame, the football ground could be completed by August 2011, should the tendering exercise and implementation of the project proceed smoothly of course.

MOKA BYPASS - CONSTRUCTION

(No. 1B/237) Mr S. Dayal (Third Member for Quartier Militaire & Moka) asked the Minister of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping whether, in regard to the project for the construction of the Moka bypass, from Réduit to Verdun, he will state where matters stand.

Mr Bachoo: The RDA is working on the feasibility and design of the project, which is expected to be completed in September this year.

JEAN LEBRUN GOVERNMENT SCHOOL – EXTENSION WORKS

(No. 1B/238) Mr A. Ameer Meea (First Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether, in regard to the Jean Lebrun Government School, he will state -

- (a) the cost of the phase I extension work;
- (b) when the phase II construction works are expected to start, indicating
 - (i) its duration
 - (ii) the cost thereof, and
- (c) where matters stand in relation to the upgrading of its football ground, indicating if money has already been earmarked.

Dr. Bunwaree: Mr Speaker, Sir, as regards part (a), the answer is Rs21.8 m.

Regarding part (b), works are expected to start by end of November 2010 and completed by end of July 2012. The estimated cost of works is around Rs62 m.

As regards the upgrading of the football ground, my Ministry has earmarked funds for the implementation of the project. The National Development Unit (NDU) of the Ministry of Public Infrastructure, NDU, Land Transport and Shipping, has already carried out a survey, and is now working on the design, scope of works and the cost estimates, which would be ready by next month.

STC - MILK POWDER - DESTRUCTION

(No. 1B/239) Mr C. Fakeemeeah (Third Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Industry and Commerce whether he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the State Trading Corporation, information as to –

- (a) whether the Corporation has recently proceeded with the destruction of forty-five tonnes of milk powder, brand name Oasis, at Mare Chicose, and, if so, the reasons therefor, and
- (b) whether appropriate clearances were obtained from the authorities prior to its importation.

Mr Soodhun: Mr Speaker Sir, I am informed by the State Trading Corporation (STC) that, on the recommendations of the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life, 40 metric tonnes of milk of Oasis brand were destroyed on 14 May 2010, as they did not comply with the Regulations 39(a) and (d) and 270 of the GN 173 of 1999.

With regard to part (b) of the question, I am advised that, before importation of the milk, a sample had been sent to the Food Importation Unit of the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life, and was analysed by the Government Analyst Division. The test found that the full cream milk powder complied with the Food Regulations GN 173 of 1999, and was free from vegetable fats or starch materials.

However, when the consignment was received on 13 April 2008, the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life found that -

- (i) the milk did not comply with the food regulations;
- (ii) the milk powder which was labelled “instant full cream milk” was not full cream, though it was labelled “instant full cream milk”. It was found to be *filled milk*, in which the milk fat had been replaced by vegetable fat, and

(iii) the milk packet did not mention the country of origin.

STC made a claim for refund to the supplier Qingdao United Dairy, which has agreed to refund the total cost.

Mr Fakeemeeah: Mr Speaker, Sir, can the Minister inform the House of the amount of loss incurred in purchasing and destroying this milk powder?

Mr Soodhun: Mr Speaker, Sir, I just mentioned there was no loss, and the total cost was Rs3,752,136.

RELIGIOUS, SOCIAL, CULTURAL ORGANISATIONS – FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

(No. 1B/240) Mr C. Fakeemeeah (Third Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Tourism and Leisure whether he will state if, for the period 2005 to December 2009, his Ministry has given any allowances, grants or other financial assistance to any religious, social, cultural or other organisation and, if so, give in each case, the details of the amounts and the reasons therefor.

Mr Bodha: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that the Ministry, in pursuit of its objectives to meet the population's needs for leisure and to ensure that maximum leisure opportunities are accessible to one and all, has been adopting a two-pronged approach. First, activities have been organised at local and national level and, second, sponsorship is extended to various organisations, upon request, through the provision of financial assistance, towards meeting the costs of the leisure components of activities organised by them.

Mr Speaker Sir, I am informed that, in this regard, my Ministry very frequently receives requests from various organisations, including religious, social and cultural throughout the island, to sponsor their activities or the leisure components of these activities. The Ministry examines these requests on their merits and, on being satisfied that they are *bona fide* organisations and that the activities which they propose to organise will really provide moments of leisure to the target communities, in these cases, the Ministry approves those requests either *in toto*, or partly contribute towards the costs of such activities.

Mr Speaker Sir, I am also informed that some 75 organisations throughout the island have benefited from such assistance since 2005 to-date. The amount of financial contribution depends on availability of funds, nature of the activities organised, the total costs involved, the targeted audience, the financial resources of the organisation, etc. On average, my

Ministry has disbursed around Rs400,000 annually over the past five years to support financially the leisure activities organised by various organisations. Examples of sponsorship extended are as follows -

- Defenders Social and Welfare for the organisation of Qawali night;
- Brahma Kumari Raja Yoga Centre for family health campaign awareness;
- Rotary Club of Quatre Bornes for the sponsorship of activities for employees of the Tourism Sector;
- Anglican Diocese of Mauritius for Christmas celebrations;
- Tamil Federation for the celebration of Varusha Pirappu;
- Sunnee Mosque for Eid celebration;
- Nelson Mandela Centre for African Culture for *Journée Internationale Kréol*;
- *Association Jeunesse Sud* for Regatta Festival;
- Black River & Plaine Wilhems Kovil Organisation for leisure event, and
- *L'Ombre de la Lumière* for the organisation of a concert in the context of World Women's Day Celebration.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the detailed information being requested by the hon. Member is being compiled and, with your permission, will be placed in the Library of the National Assembly.

NDU - CONSTRUCTION WORKS

(No. 1B/241) Mr C. Fakeemeeah (Third Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping whether, in regard to construction works carried out by his Ministry, he will, for each of the past five years, give a list thereof, indicating in each case-

- (a) the cost, and
- (b) if tendering procedures were followed.

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, the information is being compiled and will be placed in the Library of the House.

The tendering procedures have been followed where appropriate.

GAMBLING HOUSES – RELOCATION

(No. 1B/242) **Mr R. Uteem (Second Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central)** asked the vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to the relocation of gambling activities as announced in the Government Programme 2010-2015, he will state if-

- (a) the designated areas have already been identified, and
- (b) a timeframe has been set for the closure of gaming houses in residential and commercial areas.

Mr Jugnauth: Mr Speaker, Sir, as the House is aware, this Government is firmly committed to protecting the society at large from the harm and unintended consequences of gambling and its associated ills. To this effect, Government has set up a High Level Committee under the Chairmanship of the hon. Prime Minister to examine the proliferation of gaming houses and discotheques in the country. A Technical Committee under the Chairmanship of the Secretary to Cabinet and Head of the Civil Service has also been set up along the lines, and I am informed that it has submitted its Report for consideration to the High Level Committee.

Mr Speaker, Sir, pending the carrying out of the necessary financial, legal and social assessments as regards the specific zones to be identified for the purpose of relocation of gaming houses, all measures are being taken to ensure the strict monitoring of gambling activities in the country and the enforcement of the provisions of the Gambling Regulatory Authority Act 2007.

Furthermore, as the House is aware, no new licences for the running of gaming houses, betting shops and discotheques are being issued until further notice.

I also wish to inform the House that prior to the setting up of the Gambling Regulatory Authority, there was an established monitoring mechanism that was used to comprise at that time of the ex-VAT Department, the URB Squad and Officers from the Gaming Board, to ensure that the conditions of licences issued were being complied with. The responsibility for these activities was subsequently vested in the GRA.

In view of the pressing need to strengthen the monitoring mechanism, it is envisaged to reinforce the Inspectorate Division of the GRA to increase the frequency of inspections that are carried out for the collaboration of the relevant Authorities.

Mr Uteem: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister mentioned that new licences are not being issued. What about licences that come to expiration, are these being renewed or are these not being renewed?

Mr Jugnauth: Well, on a case to case basis, we will have to seek the advice of the SLO in order to take appropriate decisions.

Mr Bhagwan: Mr Speaker, Sir, it is a known fact that these gambling activities are causing havoc in Mauritius. We have discussed lengthily in the House, more than one year, concerning the problems raised at Quatre Bornes, Ti-Vegas, at Vacoas recently and even in my Constituency. Can we have a definite time frame from the hon. Minister? Because the people of Mauritius must know exactly the timetable of Government as far this issue is concerned, its implementation, its recommendations and when, at least, concrete action will be taken concerning Ti-Vegas, the one in Vacoas and even in Beau Bassin?

Mr Jugnauth: I have just replied, Mr Speaker, Sir, that the Technical Committee has submitted its report to the High Powered Committee and I have, in fact, the recommendations of the Technical Committee. There are few things that we have to look at further with regard to certain matters and, of course, it will have to follow its procedure. The High Powered Committee will look at all these recommendations. It will also have to go to Cabinet for approval and then we will come up with the new policy.

Mr Ganoo: Can the hon. Minister inform the House who will bear the cost of these relocation activities? Is it the State or Operators themselves?

Mr Jugnauth: It is again subject to the recommendations that have been made. In the light of these recommendations, we will analyse the implications of those recommendations and we will come up with decisions that have to be taken and then we will know.

Ms Deerpalsing: Mr Speaker, Sir, in view of the fact that the Government Programme talks about relocation and the question is about timeframe and given that the GRA is already in presence of the expiry dates of several of these gaming and gambling houses, would the hon. Minister be agreeable to table in the House the expiry dates of these licences - because the licences are not forever - and whether the relocation can be made as and when these licences expire, as the hon. Minister has said on a case by case basis? Would the hon. Minister be agreeable to table the expiry dates of all the lists of these gaming houses?

Mr Jugnauth: Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir, I have no problem with tabling the required information to the House.

Mr Bhagwan: Can the hon. Minister inform the House whether one of the areas identified by that committee for Quatre Bornes is the Ebène Area? Ebène Area is not only the Cybercity, it is also a most residential zone on the extremity of Ebène.

(Interruptions)

Let the hon. Minister reply; you are no longer a Minister!

Mr Speaker: I know that you know.

Mr Jugnauth: I do not want to pre-empt what the hon. Member is saying but, of course, again I will refer the House to the recommendations that will have to be looked at by the High Powered Committee. Whatever site identified will have to be looked at very carefully by the Committee.

Mr Fakeemeeah: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir, sometimes I am ignored because the way you sit...

(Interruptions)

Does the hon. Minister share with me my concern about students taking part in gambling activities? If yes, what action does he intend to take for that purpose? Are we going to ban, at least, gambling activities, during school hours?

Mr Jugnauth: Mr Speaker, Sir, it is precisely because the Government is concerned that there was the setting up of this High Powered Committee together with Technical Committee. As I said, it is a matter that we have to look at within the framework of the law and, therefore, we will have to act. We are all concerned about the ill effects of gambling on our youngsters.

At 12.58 p.m. the sitting was suspended.

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

The Deputy Speaker: The Table has been advised that PQ No.1B/228 has been withdrawn.

EBENE CYBERCITY - LAND LEASE – BENEFICIARIES

(No. 1B/243) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Information and Communication Technology whether, in regard to land

at Ebène Cybercity, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Business Park of Mauritius Limited (BPML), information as to -

- (a) the names and addresses of the beneficiaries thereof, indicating in each case -
 - (i) the extent of land leased;
 - (ii) rent payable;
 - (iii) the amount of deposit made and the date
- (b) the description of the project, indicating, when the approval of the Board was obtained, and
- (c) the list of cases where construction has not yet started.

Mr Pillay Chedumbrum: The question has various components which call for detailed information on land leased at the Ebène Cybercity. It requires the compilation of details about the names and addresses of beneficiaries, the extent of land leased, the rent payable, the amount of deposit made and the date such deposit was made, the description of the project and the date on which the Board approved of the lease and the proposed development as well as the listing down of all the cases where construction works have not yet started.

I have caused the relevant information to be updated and compiled, and in one week's time, it will be placed in the Library of the National Assembly.

Mr Bhagwan: Since the Minister has assumed office, has he been informed of the number of plots on which construction works have not yet started?

Mr Pillay Chedumbrum: Mr Speaker, Sir, taking into consideration the numerous components the question contains and also the number of beneficiaries involved in that project, I cannot offhand give detailed and precise information about the individual cases. But in the circumstances, if my friend had been more precise in respect to a particular case, I could have given him all the details he wanted at one go, but my friend will bear with me that on the next occasion he will get it.

Mr Bhagwan: I am sure. I know that the Minister has just assumed office, but I will advise him to have a trip there not as Minister responsible, but both in his capacity as Minister and also as a citizen of Mauritius. What is happening there?

(Interruptions)

You were in India, you were not in Mauritius all these years, so shut up!

(Interruptions)

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in this Cybercity area, in this triangle especially at the Cybercity, there are lot of problems, is the Minister aware or can he go into the files and

inquire whether there have been fictitious names used for the leasing of land and whether he is aware that the Chief Executive is actually under the scrutiny of ICAC?

Mr Pillay Chedumbrum: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am going to look into it and, in due course, I will inform the House accordingly because I don't want to mislead the House at this stage. It is only now that the hon. Member is saying that and I am going to do it in due course.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Bhagwan, I think that the Minister has explained his predicament and I allowed you a few supplementary questions to highlight to the Minister certain information that you have. I will allow you one more supplementary, but he stated that he will have to compile the information.

Mr Bhagwan: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Cybercity is a very delicate subject. I have two questions about the national interest. Is the Minister aware that a permit has been given for the construction of a filling station within the Cybercity area? Does the Minister find this normal and in the compilation of the relevant information on which he has agreed to lay on the Table of the Assembly in one week, can he let us know about the situation concerning the construction of a *station de service d'essence à l'interieur de la Cybercité* and who is the promoter? – Is it a blue-eyed boy or somebody else!

Mr Pillay Chedumbrum: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I will look into it and I will appraise you of the situation on the next occasion.

Mr Bhagwan: The nation not me!

Mr Pillay Chedumbrum: Of course, my friend!

Mr Bhagwan: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is the Minister aware of the problem within the Cybercity as far as the traffic congestion is concerned. This is linked with the portion of plots.

The Deputy Speaker: No. Here we are concerned about the beneficiaries, their names and addresses, deposits made and whether construction has just started. The hon. Member should come with a specific question.

Mr Bhagwan: Sir, there were plots reserved for the construction of parking space and none has been constructed. So, I am asking the Minister to see to it and inform the House where matters are concerning the construction of the parking space?

The Deputy Speaker: Unfortunately, we don't have the information which perhaps the hon. Member has.

Mr Bhagwan: He has agreed today that he will give the information in one week so that is why I have made another request!

The Deputy Speaker: If it is another request, then there is no problem. Next question!

FERNEY/QUATRE SOEURS – FLOODING

(No. 1B/244) **Mr M. Seeruttun (Second Member for Vieux Grand Port & Rose Belle)** asked the Minister of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping whether he is aware of the difficulties encountered by the road users in the region of Ferney and Quatre Soeurs due to flooding and, if so, will he state the actions that will be taken to address the issue, indicating the timeframe.

Mr Bachoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, work on site at Ferney has already started and it will be completed in December 2010.

The design for the bridge at Quatre Soeurs is being finalised and works are expected to start by August 2010 and completed in December 2010. The cost of the project is above Rs50 m.

NATIONAL PARKS & CONSERVATION FUND

(No. 1B/245) **Mr M. Seeruttun (Second Member for Vieux Grand Port & Rose Belle)** asked the Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security whether, in regard to the National Parks and Conservation Fund, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Fund, information as to –

- (a) the amount of money held in that Fund as at to date;
- (b) its objectives, and
- (c) the amount of money spent for each of the last four years, indicating in each case, the projects.

Mr Faugoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed that, as at 30 June 2010, an amount of Rs103,173,957.70 is available in the National Parks and Conservation Fund.

As regards part (b), the National Parks and Conservation Fund has been established under section 25 of the Wildlife and National Parks Act of 1993, and the funds therein can be used only for the payment of any expenses which may be incurred by the Director of the National Parks and Conservation Service in performing his functions under the Act.

As regards part (c), I am tabling the financial statements regarding the amount of money spent by the National Parks and Conservation Fund in respect of the projects undertaken during the last four years.

BATTLE OF VIEUX GRAND PORT - BICENTENARY CELEBRATIONS

(No. 1B/246) **Mr M. Seeruttun (Second Member for Vieux Grand Port & Rose Belle)** asked the Minister of Arts and Culture whether, in regard to the celebrations marking the Bicentenary of the Battle of Vieux Grand Port, he will state whether –

- (a) the inhabitants of Vieux Grand Port will be involved therein and, if so, how, and
- (b) the activities will benefit the region, indicating how.

Mr Choonee: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Commemoration of the Bicentenary of the Battle of Grand Port will be held from 30 July to 29 August at Pointe Canon, Mahebourg, opposite the bay where the battle took place. The inhabitants of Mahebourg and the surrounding localities are fully involved in the infrastructural works, which are being carried out at the venue since the last three months. In fact, more than 90% of the infrastructural and artistic works are being executed by the people in the surrounding area. Manpower from the same region, including Vieux Grand Port, will be recruited to service the event in different capacities such as guides, hostesses, cashiers and manual workers. The recruitment exercise is presently being finalised by the Grand Port 2010 Co. Ltd, company set up by Government to organise the event. Performing artists of Mahebourg, Vieux Grand Port and the surrounding region will occupy a prominent position in the daily programmes to be held.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (b) of the question, this important historic event will definitely put this part of the country in the limelight for one month, and will attract a great number of tourists besides Mauritians. A massive publicity campaign has already started since April on all Air Mauritius and Air France flights, to sensitise incoming tourists on the commemoration and its venue. Tourists visiting the site will also visit the historical sites of Vieux Grand Port. The Frederik Hendrik Museum at Vieux Grand Port will benefit from a huge fibre glass dodo bird as a special attraction after the event.

Tour operators who have been approached have agreed to arrange for organised trips, which will include the Vieux Grand Port region. It is expected that sales through the movement of people attending the event and visiting Vieux Grand Port will increase substantially.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would also highlight the fact that, after the event, a number of tangible outcomes in terms of permanent cultural infrastructure will remain in

Mahebourg for the benefit of Mauritians altogether and people of the region in particular. These will comprise -

- (i) a museum on the peopling of Mauritius, depicting the different stages of our history, through huge panels, *figurines* and film projections;
- (ii) a permanent *Table d'Orientation* at Pointe des Régates, showing major features of the battle in the bay of Grand Port;
- (iii) the existing basic open amphitheatre at Pointe Canon will be provided with a covered roof and latest sound and light system. It will thus become more functional and operational, and will allow the organisation of cultural and social activities, and
- (iv) 3 *arpents* of bush land at Pointe Canon, which was a real *danger public*, as it was a potential den for drug addicts, has been converted into a public garden, where the inhabitants of the region will be able to relax during their leisure time.

These cultural infrastructures are mainly tourist focused, and will increase the tourist attraction in the region of Mahebourg and Vieux Grand Port.

SOLAR WATER HEATER FINANCING SCHEME

(No. 1B/247) Mr M. Seeruttun (Second Member for Vieux Grand Port & Rose Belle) asked the vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to the Solar Water Heater Financing Scheme, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Development Bank of Mauritius, information as to -

- (a) whether the Scheme is still operational and, if so, indicate –
 - (i) the eligibility criteria
 - (ii) the amount of the grant per beneficiary, and
- (b) the duration of the Scheme.

The vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development (Mr P. Jugnauth): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have been informed by the Development Bank of Mauritius (DBM), that the first financing scheme regarding Solar Water Heater, following the 2008-2009 Budget Speech, which should have been closed on 31 December 2009 was, in

fact, extended till 31 March 2010, to enable all registered suppliers to complete all installation prior to disbursements.

However, the second financing scheme, as announced in the Budget Speech 2010, is not yet operational.

The eligibility criteria for both schemes are the same, that is, open to all households and to non-profit making residential charitable institutions, such as orphanages, shelters etc.

With regard to part (a) of the question, as regards the amount of the grant per beneficiary, I am informed that the grant for the first scheme was Rs10, 000 per solar water heater, to encourage people to switch from electricity and gas to renewable source of energy. For the second scheme, the grant per solar water heater has been brought to Rs5,000, to cater for a greater number of households.

As for part (b), Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as far as the duration of the Scheme is concerned, I am informed that the first one was for a period of 21 months, that is, from July 2008 to March 2010. But, for the second scheme, it is not time bound but limited to 50,000 beneficiaries, as Rs250 m. have been earmarked for that purpose.

MUNICIPAL COUNCILLORS - RESIGNATION

(No. 1B/248) Mr D. Nagalingum (Second Member for Stanley & Rose Hill) asked the Minister of Local Government and Outer Islands whether, in regard to Municipal Councillors, he will state the number thereof who have resigned or lost their seats since October 2005 to date.

(Withdrawn)

HOSPITALS - CEREBRAL ANGIOGRAPHY

(No. 1B/249) Dr. S. Boolell (Second Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether she will state if cerebral angiography as a major investigative procedure for person suffering from cerebral haemorrhage, is performed in our hospitals.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed that cerebral angiography can be categorised into –

- CT (Computerised Tomograph) Angiography;
- MRA (Magnetic Resonance Angiography),

- DSA (Digital Subtraction Angiography).

Computerised Tomograph and Magnetic Resonance Angiography are performed in our hospitals as screening tests in case of traumatic or hypertensive cerebral haemorrhage.

As regards Digital Subtraction Angiography, it is not presently available in our hospitals in view of the high cost of the equipment and lack of trained personnel in this field. Such cases are referred abroad for investigation and treatment.

However, with the coming into operation of a new Neurosurgery Unit at Victoria Hospital by the end of 2011, it is planned to provide cerebral angiography services to patients.

Dr. S. Boolell: Has the hon. Minister been made aware that all that is needed is a software and the human resources to be able to conduct the cerebral angiography? Many cases that actually get referred to India for treatment are returned to Mauritius, because when the cerebral angiography is performed in India, it is found they should never have been sent there in the first place.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this is not the information that I have. I have been told that cerebral angiography is something very complex. We have a Memorandum of Understanding signed with Vimhans New Delhi and Apollo Hospital Chennai, and this is where we send all our patients. Up to now, we have not had any patients who have come back and said that they have been ill-treated or not been treated well.

Dr. S. Boolell: Can I have the number of patients who actually have had cerebral angiography performed over the past two years?

Mrs Hanoomanjee: From the year 2005 to date, some 297 neurosurgery cases, including cerebral haemorrhage, have been referred for treatment overseas and, as I said, mostly to India. But we have not separated cases of cerebral angiography from neurosurgery cases.

Dr. S. Boolell: For the sake of the patients, I would be most grateful if the hon. Minister could table, eventually, the list of patients who have had cerebral angiography in Mauritius over the past - as she says - five years.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Not in Mauritius, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. As I said, we have not had these cases of cerebral angiography done in Mauritius. The cases have been referred to India.

HYPERTENSION & NEUROLOGICAL DISORDERS - PHARMACEUTICAL PRODUCTS

(No. 1B/250) **Dr S. Boolell (Second Member for Curepipe & Midlands)** asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether, in regard to pharmaceutical products, especially for non-communicable diseases such as hypertension and neurological disorders, she will state if regular inventories are carried out to ascertain the availability and to avoid any possible shortage thereof.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed that in line with established stores procedures, an appropriate Stock Monitoring System is already in place at the Central Supplies Division of my Ministry to constantly monitor the stock level of all drugs to ensure, amongst others, continuous availability in our hospitals and health centres.

In this regard, regular stock taking is carried out by officers of the Stock Control Unit of my Ministry.

Inventory reports on drugs reaching critical stock level, i.e. less than three months, are regularly submitted to the Pharmaceutical Monitoring Committee set up at the level of my Ministry. The Committee scrutinizes the reports and recommends appropriate actions to be taken for the replenishment of stocks, or for expediting supply of outstanding orders.

However, it happens at times that there are shortages of a few drugs for limited periods, mainly due to the fact that -

- (i) suppliers default because of increasing production costs, unavailability of raw materials or changes in the sources of supply;
- (ii) suppliers are late with their deliveries;
- (iii) retendering has to be resorted to where no quotes or no responsive bids are received, and
- (iv) there are unforeseen increases in the consumption of some drugs, thus resulting in depletion of stock.

Dr. S. Boolell: My question also extends to pharmaceutical products in the private sector where, very often, many products are missing, causing patients great distress for a change over to a new tablet and increasing the expenses at the level of private medicine for the changing of the therapy.

(Interruptions)

I heard a remark about this being very rare. I refuse to agree to that.

(Interruption)

The Deputy Speaker: Let the hon. Minister answer!

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have information actually on what is being done at the level of Government. If the hon. Member will provide me with information on specific items which, from time to time, are missing on the local market, I will try to find out.

LAND DUTIES AND TAXES ACT - AMENDMENTS

(No. 1B/251) Mr K. Ramano (Second Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes) asked the vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to the Land Duties and Taxes Act, he will state if Government proposes to bring amendments thereto with a view to –

- (a) re-introducing the exemption for first time buyers of bare land and built up land;
- (b) re-introducing the exemption for first time borrowers for completion of construction or loan for the purchase of built up land or apartment;
- (c) exempting Land Transfer Tax for first time sellers or maintaining a flat rate of 5% of the value of the transfer, and
- (d) exempting from Land Transfer Tax the sale of properties acquired by inheritance.

The vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development (Mr P. Jugnauth): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the hon. Member would surely appreciate that future decisions pertaining to tax policy cannot be revealed at Question Time. I would, therefore, invite the hon. Member to have some patience and to wait for the forthcoming Budget.

Mr Ganoo: I do understand and agree with what the hon. vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance has just said. But, doesn't he agree that there is an injustice in making people pay land transfer tax when they have inherited a property? Land transfer tax was instituted at a time when there was a lot of land speculation some twenty years ago. This tax

is an injustice, especially for the '*ti-dimounes*' when they have to sell their small properties and be made to pay 5% to Government, especially if they have inherited that plot of land.

Mr Jugnauth: The hon. Member has said in the first part of his question that he does understand. Therefore, I would ask him also to be patient and wait for the forthcoming Budget.

Mr Ramano: En marge du *Stimulus Package* de l'année dernière, mention a été faite du maintien exceptionnel du taux de 5%, même pour les biens qui ont été acquis avant cinq ans et ce jusqu'à fin 2010. Est-ce que je peux savoir du ministre s'il compte maintenir ce taux à 5% ?

Mr Jugnauth : I have just answered, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. What prevails now, we will see. There is a new Government, of course, we are going to review the taxes in general and decisions will be taken. I think it will be more proper to come in the forthcoming Budget.

LAND TRANSFER - SUGARCANE CULTIVATION

(No. 1B/252) **Mr K. Ramano (Second Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes)** asked the Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security whether, in regard to the Sugar Industry Efficiency Act, he will state if Government proposes to bring amendments thereto to make provision for exemption of taxes on the transfer of land under sugarcane cultivation.

Mr Faugoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, currently, there are incentives provided for the transfer of lands under sugar cane cultivation under Section 10 of the SIE Act 2001. Under Section 10 subsection (2), the rate of tax provided for such transfers, subject to conditions to be satisfied under subsection (3), stands at 5%.

As regards the issue of exemption of taxes on transfer of land under sugar cane cultivation, I would also, like my friend, the vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development, to request the hon. Member to have some patience and to wait until Budget time, maybe.

Mr Ramano: M. le président, le *Finance Act* de 2006 n'a pas su faire la différence entre les terrains sous plantation de cannes et les terrains résidentiels. Au vu de la gravité de la situation pour les planteurs de cannes, n'est-il pas temps de considérer un régime fiscal approprié pour ceux qui souhaitent vendre et éventuellement développer leurs terrains sous plantation de cannes ?

Mr Faugoo: This is a matter of policy which needs to be discussed and which will surely come back to the House, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

TRUST FUND FOR THE INTEGRATION OF VULNERABLE GROUPS - FIELD WORKERS

(No. 1B/253) **Mrs F. Labelle (Third Member for Vacoas & Floreal)** asked the vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Social Integration and Economic Empowerment whether, in regard to field workers of the Trust Fund for the Integration of Vulnerable Groups, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Trust, information as to the number thereof attached to the Citizens Advice Bureau of Vacoas, indicating their names and the date of posting thereat.

The vice-Prime Minister, the Minister of Social integration and Economic Empowerment (Mr X. L. Duval): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the House that, in accordance with the organisational framework of the Trust Fund for Social Integration of Vulnerable Groups (TFSIVG), a field worker is attached to a specific region and works under the supervision of a social facilitator. The field worker is required to identify and record requests from vulnerable families seeking assistance under the Trust Fund and determine their eligibility for such assistance.

In the process of the identification and recording of such requests from vulnerable groups, the field worker collaborates with community-based organisations and Government agencies such as Citizen Advice Bureaux (CAB).

As far as the presence of a field worker at the CAB of Vacoas is concerned, one field worker of the Trust Fund (Mrs T. D.), was posted thereat since end April 2006 on Tuesdays from 9.00 a.m. to noon until she resigned on 30 April 2010.

Subsequently, effective as from 25 May 2010, two other field workers (Mrs B. P. and Mrs M. K.), posted in the District of Plaine Wilhems, are covering the Vacoas CAB office on Tuesdays from 9.00 a.m. to noon pending the recruitment of a field worker.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the House that the organisational structure of the Trust Fund is being reviewed and will be consolidated to allow it to extend the necessary and appropriate support to the distressed and vulnerable groups, both in Mauritius and Rodrigues.

Mrs Labelle: May I ask the hon. Minister whether he is aware that there are many applications which are pending? According to my information it is because there is no field officer working right now and the poor people are just waiting for their corrugated iron sheets and so on. In view of such a situation which is prevailing, may I ask the hon. Minister if he is considering taking measures to remedy the situation to alleviate the sufferings of these people?

Mr Duval: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I think there are four vacancies of field worker. The best thing is to recruit and to fill these vacancies as quickly as possible. But, in the meantime, I'll make sure that people who are filling in for the person who has left do it regularly.

Mrs Labelle: May I ask the hon. Minister whether he will see to it that we have a time frame to process an application? According to my information, there are applications which are pending since one or even more than one year.

Mr Duval: This is a good idea, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Mr Bhagwan: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I heard the hon. Minister saying that he is going to review the structure. Is the hon. Minister taking into consideration what happened recently in Curepipe where some fictitious organisations were operating in that area? It is nearly island-wide, this racket.

Mr Duval: If the hon. Member has any information, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is his duty to provide the information either to myself or to the Police. I think it is very important to do so, because it is money destined for the poor. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, certainly part of the review will be, in fact, a better internal audit procedure.

ABBE LAVAL STREET, EAU COULEE - DRAINS/PAVEMENTS

(No. 1B/254) **Mrs F. Labelle (Third Member for Vacoas & Floreal)** asked the Minister of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping whether, in regard to drains/pavements under construction at the Abbé Laval Street, Eau Coulée, he will state if his Ministry has received a complaint from the inhabitants of the region to the effect that rain water is being made to run from these drains into a cave and, if so, the remedial measures that are envisaged.

Mr Bachoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have been informed by the Ministry of Local Government and Outer Islands that the Municipal Council of Curepipe has received a complaint to the effect that the rainwater was being made to run into an underground cave.

The works undertaken by the Municipal Council of Curepipe consist mostly of the construction of pavement along Abbé Laval Street over an existing road side drain with a view to providing security to school children and inhabitants of Abbé Laval.

The Municipal Council has taken measures to divert the drain network away from Abbé Laval Street.

I am also informed that the area of Eau Coulée is prone to the existence of caves which help in dissipating surface water and, according to the Municipal Council, no ponding occurs in the region. But, I have requested RDA to have a fresh look at the situation and to give a helping hand to the Municipality of Curepipe.

Mrs Labelle: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister has just mentioned the case of school children. In fact, we have the St Esprit RCA School in that street. When the rain water goes into that cave, there are so many overflows that the wastewater manhole is overflowed since water from Eau Coulée main road is diverted into these drains. So, may I ask the hon. Minister whether any particular measure could be taken so that such a volume of water is not diverted into this place?

Mr Bachoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as I have just mentioned, the work has been undertaken by the Municipal Council of Curepipe and I have requested RDA to have a fresh look and we will try to see what can be done.

Mrs Labelle: May I ask the hon. Minister whether he is aware that the Municipal Council of Curepipe has been requested, on several occasions, to look into the matter, particularly where the caves are concerned because of the high risks of erosions as there are houses near these caves? It seems that nothing has been done yet.

Mr Bachoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I don't think that the Municipality of Curepipe can do that work. That is the reason why I have requested the RDA to have a look because we have got engineers and they can do that work. I will look into it again.

SPORTS FEDERATIONS - SPORTS ACT - COMPLIANCE

(No. 1B/255) Mr F. Quirin (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Youth and Sports whether, in regard to Sports Federations registered

with his Ministry, he will state if they are complying with the Sports Act and, if not, why not, indicating the actions he proposes to take.

Mr Ritoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in fact, my Ministry does not register Sports Federations as such. This is the responsibility of the Registrar of Associations.

However, if the hon. Member is referring to recognition of Sports Federations, my Ministry, in compliance with Section 8 of the Sports Act, recognises Sports Federations which respect the conditions laid down in the Sports Act.

I have been informed by the Registrar of Associations that some federations registered with his office are not complying with the Sports Act, in so much as -

- (i) they have not amended their rules as required by the Sports Act, and
- (ii) they have not filed Annual Returns for the last accounting period.

I wish to reassure the hon. Member that such issues are being attended to in the proposed amendments of the Sports Act which will be presented to this August Assembly very soon.

In parallel, I have set up a committee at the level of my Ministry to collect data on the status of the various Sports Federations with a view to taking appropriate actions against those not compliant with the Sports Act.

Mr Quirin: M. le président, j'aimerais demander au ministre quelles ont été les actions qui ont été entreprises pour inciter ces fédérations, qui ne sont pas en conformité avec le *Sports Act*, de se mettre en conformité.

Mr Ritoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I just informed. In my answer, I said that I have set up a committee at the level of my Ministry to collect data on the status of the various federations with a view to take appropriate actions against those not complying with the Sports Act.

Mr Quirin: M. le président, il y a quand même cinq longues années qui se sont écoulées depuis que certaines fédérations ont eu une dérogation conditionnelle. Je pense qu'on aurait dû, au niveau du ministère des sports, inciter ces fédérations à se mettre en conformité.

Mr Ritoo: This situation has not been prevailing since the last five years, but it is like this since the last Sports Act in 2001. We have already prepared all the amendments and they will be presented in the Assembly very shortly.

Mr Bhagwan: Je peux savoir du ministre quelles sont ces fédérations qui opèrent dans l'inégalité?

Mr Ritoo: Well, out of the 32 registered sports federations, we have 23 like the swimming federation and the table tennis federation which do not comply with the Sports Act.

DIRECTEUR TECHNIQUE NATIONAL DE NATATION - CONTRACT

(No. 1B/256) Mr F. Quirin (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Youth and Sports whether, in regard to the *Directeur Technique National de Natation*, he will -

- (a) give the terms and conditions of his contract, indicating whether he is complying with same, and
- (b) table a copy of the contract agreement.

Mr Ritoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the terms and conditions of employment of the *Directeur Technique National* (Swimming) are detailed in the contract itself. I am tabling a copy thereof.

I also wish to inform the hon. Member that as at date the *Directeur Technique National* is complying with those terms and conditions satisfactorily.

Mr Quirin: Est-ce que le ministre peut dire le nombre de cours de formation que le DTN a organisé depuis son arrivée à Maurice et à qui ces cours ont été adressés?

Mr Ritoo: All DTN are recruited in consultation with the Sports Federations. I mean, the specific Sports Federations. In this case, it is the swimming federation, and he is put at the disposal of the federation which organises all the sports activities; he is supposed to submit a report every month to the Ministry of Youth and Sports with which he has signed a contract.

Mr Quirin: Quand on parle du DTN, M. le président, peut-on savoir du ministre la politique de son ministère par rapport au recrutement des directeurs techniques?

Mr Ritoo: In fact, we recruit the DTN as and when required. It depends upon the Sports Federations which require a DTN and it also depends upon the forthcoming major sports events. It is always done in consultation with the federations.

Mr Quirin: En ce qu'il s'agit justement du DTN de la natation, M. le président, pourriez-vous nous dire si on a déjà établi une présélection pour les jeux des îles?

Mr Ritoo: Well, we are reaching the Indian Ocean Islands Games in one year. So, there should be a pre-selection, of course.

DUTY-FREE ISLAND PROJECT - IMPACT ASSESSMENT STUDY

(No. 1B/257) Mr K. Li Kwong Wing (Second Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to the Duty-Free Island Project, he will state whether any impact assessment study has been carried out thereinto and, if so, state -

- (a) the estimated annual revenue losses in customs, excise and other duties as a result thereof;
- (b) estimates of other costs to Government;
- (c) the impact on the local manufacturing industry, and
- (d) if a timeframe for its implementation has been set.

The vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development (Mr P. Jugnauth): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in the 2005-06 Budget, I announced a historic decision to make of Mauritius a duty-free island. My vision was to -

- open up sustainable new economic space for development;
- create a new and unprecedented dynamism in our economy for investment, business, trade and entrepreneurial activities;
- transform Mauritius into a shopping paradise for tourists and a shopping hub for the region;
- modernise the physical fabrics of our country to position Mauritius among the leaders in sophisticated infrastructure conducive to shopping tourism and sustainable development, and

- enable Mauritian families also to benefit from a wider choice of high quality goods at lower prices.

I also mentioned that the Duty-Free Island Project would be implemented in phases over a period of four years.

A Mauritius Duty-Free Project Blue Print was thus prepared to provide a basis for initiating debates and discussions for transforming Mauritius into a duty-free island by adopting an integrated approach. This would also have involved the implementation of the '*métro léger*' project.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the duty-free island initiative was never in my mind only a mere reduction or elimination of customs tariffs as often asserted in some circles. It was an integrated socio-economic development concept that was meant to develop into an economic pillar in its own.

I can but reaffirm, in this House today, my determination and conviction that Mauritius must become a duty-free island and a shopping paradise with top class physical infrastructure. It is important that these visions are implemented concurrently. And I am also happy that I have the full support of the hon. Prime Minister on this national agenda of paramount importance for our country.

Transforming Mauritius into a duty-free island will involve costs to the treasury in terms of duty foregone. There is also the fact that the abolition of duty will remove protection for our domestic oriented enterprises.

But by developing Mauritius into a shopping paradise, we will be creating new economic space for investments, business and trade that will make up for Government revenue foregone. We have gone a long way in cutting down customs tariffs. We need to move further in that respect. However, we would ensure that we maintain a 'Residual Duty' on a very limited number of products for protecting key strategic products manufactured by our domestic industries.

Mr Speaker, Sir, for the current financial year 2010, an amount of Rs1.6 billion has been estimated in respect of customs duty. This represents some 3 per cent of the total tax revenue.

As regards parts (b), (c) and (d) of the question relating to cost to Government, the impact on the local manufacturing industry and the time frame for implementation of the

Duty Free Island Project, we are, in fact, actually updating the Blue Print that we have prepared some five years ago.

I am sure that this will take on board all the concerns of the hon. Member. This exercise will be carried out, of course, in consultations with all stakeholders.

Mr Li Kwong Wing: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this project, which has been initiated by the Minister during his term of office as Finance Minister, has clearly been put under lock and key by the previous Government and now that, so to speak, he has taken hold of the key to the project, would he consider it urgent to set up a high-powered committee or a ministerial committee to oversee the implementation of the project so that the image of the country and the image of the project do not suffer from any more credibility problem?

Mr Jugnauth: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as I have just said, I don't believe that we should have a high-powered committee. What we need right now is to update that Blue Print that was prepared some five years ago, have discussions with all the stakeholders, and get the views of as many people who are concerned and who are willing to come forward with proposals including, of course, any hon. Member of the Opposition and then we will have to move forward. Personally, I don't believe that we should have a high-powered committee on that.

Mr Li Kwong Wing: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the reason why I am putting up the suggestion of having a high-powered committee is the fact that there are various conditions for the success of this important project which, as is said, a very national, integrated development project because the project will have impact on the air access policy, on the project of *métro léger* which has also been frozen for five years and it has also a lot of implications on the visa facilities for neighbouring countries and African countries, the target market. Would the hon. Minister consider it important for an important committee of officials not only to revise or revisit the Blue Print, but also to seek the views of experts on the matter, to get qualified and expert opinion and facts and figures for a proper business and marketing plan to successfully implement the project?

Mr Jugnauth: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, of course, I do agree to the number of issues the hon. Member has raised. They would be of concern and they would impact on this project. Probably if I can just rephrase what I have just said, I don't know if there are clearer terms, it is the Government's vision to move forward with the project of making Mauritius a duty-free island, and, of course, discussions will take place with my colleague Ministers. We

will come forward as and when the project is right and we will not be able to implement it at one go, as I said last time when we fought over it, it would have taken some four years. Now I am sure the hon. Member will appreciate that circumstances prevailing at that time and circumstances prevailing today are quite different. There are a number of common factors, but there are new circumstances that have arisen, but I take the view that, as I have said, any expert advice that we can get, any views that we can get from any quarters, will be looked at and, if positive, will be taken on board.

Mr Li Kwong Wing: Another question, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. I am sure now that the Minister has taken the driving seat to drive the project forward which has been frozen, put in the frigo, can we ask the Minister what would be the approach of the Government with regard to the construction of mega malls and all the big department stores with branded products which will be on offer? These will imply the investment of big foreign groups which will be interested to invest in the project. Therefore, would there be a policy of Government to allow the acquisition of land by these foreign groups for the construction of mega malls and the big projects.

Mr Jugnauth: Well, at that time, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we brainstormed quite a lot on the issue of shopping malls. I would not like, at this stage, to disclose what the thinking was at that time, more so I have said that this Blue Print needs to be reviewed. Let me repeat again what circumstances prevailed at that time are different today. We have to look at it in the light of the new circumstances and come forward, if need be, with any incentives that can be given to foreign and local promoters for the shopping malls -as far as the shopping malls are concerned.

NATIONAL SAVINGS RATE

(No. 1B/258) Mr K. Li Kwong Wing (Second Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to the National Savings Rate, he will state –

- (a) its evolution over the years 2005 to 2010;
- (b) the measures being taken to encourage national savings, and
- (c) whether tax reliefs will be re-instated on pension contributions.

The vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development (Mr P. Jugnauth): Mr Speaker Sir, since 2005, the annual savings rate, that is the Gross National Savings as a percentage of GDP at market price, has been as follows -

17.4%	in	2005
17.1%	in	2006
21.2%	in	2007
16.7%	in	2008
13.6%	in	2009

According to the latest estimate of the Central Statistics Office, the savings rate is projected to increase slightly to around 14.2 % in 2010.

As regards part (b) of the question, the abolition of the National Residential Property Tax and of tax on interest income should increase the disposable income of the population and encourage greater household savings. Moreover, we expect that the vision we have announced in the Government Programme to stimulate investment and return the economy to its trend growth path should increase income in the economy and reverse the declining trend in the national saving rate. These policies range from enhancing global competitiveness, stimulating private investment both local and foreign, further diversifying the economic base and accelerating investment in public infrastructure. The Macroeconomic Coordinating Committee that comprises officials of my Ministry, the Bank of Mauritius and the Central Statistical Office is carrying out a study on the causes of the decline in the national savings rate and its evolution. The findings of that Committee will enable us to take further actions if necessary.

As regards part (c) of the question, as I indicated in some of my previous replies in the House, any new tax policy will be announced in the next budget.

Mr Li Kwong Wing: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, so it is clear from the figures that have been explained by the Minister that the savings rate collapsed to a thirty-year low under the previous government. Now that the new Minister of Finance is in command, I would just like to add a clarification on national savings rate. National savings rate consist of corporate savings and personal savings. Now if the savings rate has fallen nationally, but as you know corporate savings have increased because corporate savings are obtained from profits which are not distributed. As we all know, corporate profits have increased tremendously during the

last two years, so it means that personal savings have decreased generally. Would the hon. Minister not think that the policies of the previous Government have been very detrimental to savings and, therefore, need to be reversed so that we now are able to get the incentive that was given previously to encourage people to invest in life insurance products and personal pension schemes?

Mr Jugnauth: Savings is not only from households and corporates, it can be from Government also, because when you have a deficit, if the Recurrent Budget is deficitary, then they are low, but if there is a surplus, of course then we have a saving. But I have global figures. I don't have figures with respect to corporates and households. We have to look at this. I think it is an important point. We have to look at this to monitor whether with regard to the national savings rates, whether household savings has been on the decline. But it is clear, it is a fact, the figures speak for themselves that the rate of savings has been on the decline and I totally agree that we have to take a number of measures in order to motivate people for more savings.

Ms Deerpalsing: Even some of us here, on this side of the House, agree that the new Minister of Finance will do a much better job on the savings rate than the previous Minister of Finance.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Please, keep silent!

Ms Deerpalsing: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance whether with regard with the savings rate his Ministry intends to conduct a full-fledged study or survey on indebtedness? Is the hon. Minister aware that households in Mauritius - personal savings, as the hon. Member was talking about – are totally indebted *jusqu'au cou*? Will the Ministry agree to a full-fledged study on the issue?

Mr Jugnauth: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, what I can do is definitely ask the Macroeconomic Committee to set up a technical committee to look at the indebtedness of Mauritians, the households generally.

Mr Li Kwong Wing: One additional question, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. I have not heard the hon. Minister confirming whether he is going to reverse the policies concerning the withdrawal of tax relief on life insurance contribution. But anyway, the incentives are required to boost personal savings, but more than anything else, the financial planning of households needs to be beefed up and what the previous policies have done is to disrupt the

financial planning because when you plan to invest in life insurance, in pension, in taking loan from houses, you get all these tax reliefs, this part of financial planning. In addition to carrying out that study on savings behaviour, would the hon. Minister consider studying ways of enhancing financial literacy and awareness of financial planning among households, especially as the hon. Member for Quatre Bornes said there is a huge level of indebtedness of households?

Mr Jugnauth: The hon. Member must be more attentive. I have replied to part (c) of the question. I have said with regard to tax reliefs on pension, contributions on life insurance and so on, it is a question of fiscal policy. This will be looked at by Government and we will come up with new decisions in the forthcoming budget if need be. I am sure the hon. Member will appreciate, we won't be able to take piecemeal decisions on each issue of taxes.

The Deputy Speaker: We move to the next question.

***CONFEDERATION DES TRAVAILLEURS DU SECTEUR PRIVE –
COMPLAINT - ILO***

(No. 1B/259) **Mr A. Ganoo (First Member for Savanne & Black River)** asked the Minister of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment whether he is aware of the complaint made by the *Confederation des Travailleurs du Secteur Privé (CTSP)* to the International Labour Organisation (ILO) in relation to the provision of the Employment Rights Act which makes of Sunday a normal working day and state whether Government has received any recommendations from the International Labour Organisation in relation thereto and, if so, the measures Government proposes to take.

Mr Mohamed: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in answer to the question, yes, I am aware of the complaint made.

In fact, in a communication through our Mission in Geneva, the Director of the International Labour Standard Department of the International Labour Office transmitted copy of a letter dated 10 June 2009 whereby the *Confédération des Travailleurs du Secteur Privé (CTSP)* commented on the application by Mauritius of the Weekly Rest (Industry) Convention, 1921 (No. 14) and the Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29).

In its comments, the CTSP avers *inter alia* that under the Employment Rights Act of 2008 it is now an obligation for workers of the private sector to perform overtime by working on two Sundays in a month.

As requested by the ILO, Government submitted to the ILO, its comments on the points raised by the CTSP.

As regards the second part of the question, Government has received the Report on the Application of International Labour Standards for year 2010 wherein the Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations has expressed the wish that Government re-examine on the next suitable occasion, the relevant provisions of the Employment Rights Act with a view to bringing them into line with the letter and the spirit of the Convention, in full consultation with the representative employers' and workers' organisations concerned.

Government is expressing its reserve, however, on the observations of the Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations inasmuch as –

- (i) There is no provision in the Employment Rights Act compelling a worker to work on two Sundays in a period of one month. What the law does provide for, is that every worker should be entitled to a rest day of at least 24 consecutive hours in every period of seven consecutive days, and the rest day shall, at least, twice a month be a Sunday, or any other day as may be agreed between the employee and the employer.
- (ii) It is not correct for the ILO to state in its Report that the Employment Rights Act has introduced a permanent exemption of general application so that in reality the basic standard of Sunday weekly rest is for all practical purposes removed from all national legislation. The Employment Rights Act covers around 20% of the workers in the private sector, the remaining 80% - and that is of great importance to note - being covered by the provisions of the 30 Remuneration Order Regulations in force which have specific provisions regarding Sunday work based on the inherent requirements of the respective sector.
- (iii) In its observations, the Committee has itself recalled that the Convention is articulated around, *inter alia*, the basic principle of uniformity, that is, the weekly rest to be granted, whenever possible, simultaneously to all the persons concerned and to coincide, whenever possible, once again, with the traditional day of rest. An interpretation of the provision of the Convention is that it is

not mandatory that the weekly rest day be granted on Sunday which is the traditional day of rest.

The Government is already in the process of submitting further explanations to the ILO on the matter.

In conclusion to the answer that I have given to the hon. Member, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, let me summarise by trying to say the following. In actual fact when one reads the observations made by the ILO in relation to this particular issue raised by the *Confédération*, the findings of the ILO have, unfortunately, not tackled the 30 Remuneration Order regulations that are in force. They have based themselves through the provisions only of the Employment Rights Act which, as I have stated, covers around 20% of the workers in the private sector, but they have not taken into account the remaining 80%, therefore and thereby the Remuneration Order regulations and for that particular reason, we are already in the process of preparing further explanations and submissions which we will be forwarding to the ILO, because we believe that it is of utmost importance that when one comes to a finding, one does not limit oneself to the Employment Rights Act, but one also mandatorily should look at what the Remuneration Order regulations provides for.

Mr Ganoo: I have listened very carefully to the lengthy answer of the hon. Minister, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Even if we accept what the hon. Minister is saying, if Government has the political will to, in fact, make of Sunday a rest day for the working class of this country, especially of the private sector, does not the hon. Minister think that Government must review the different Remuneration Orders and revisit also - as ILO has asked Government - on the next suitable occasion the ERA to be in line with the spirit of the Convention? It depends on Government, whether it wants to do it or not.

Mr Mohamed: I have also listened to the interesting remarks of the hon. Member with much interest. Let me make it clear. The fact is that the law states in Mauritius that Sunday is indeed a rest day. That is a fact. Sunday is a public holiday. That is the law. When one looks at all the Remuneration Orders I have earlier referred to, they state it clearly. I will give an example, and here one has to be sector specific. For instance, we have the block-making constructions, stone crushing and related industries' Remuneration Order. In this particular Remuneration Order, there is restriction for performance of work on public holiday. Another example is the Attorneys and Notaries Employees Remuneration Order. In that particular Remuneration Order, once again, there is restriction for performance of work

on public holiday. The Electrical Engineering and Mechanical Workshops Remuneration Order; once again, in this particular Remuneration Order, there is a restriction. If I am to go on, there are many other Remuneration Order Regulations where there exist restrictions for working on a Sunday. For that particular reason, Government is sending new observations to the ILO for them to take into account all our Remuneration Orders, and to come to a complete finding. Once they look into the Remuneration Orders, side by side with the Employment Rights Act, they will come to a reasoned global finding. Once they come up with that finding, we will look into it and tackle it, depending what the finding says. If the finding ever says that, once again, we have to review the legislation, I can reassure the hon. Member and all Members of the House, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that we will, in no way, go against the findings of the ILO. But, to recapitulate, I believe it is important that they come up with a proper finding, taking into account 80% of what is relevant in the Remuneration Orders.

Mr Ganoo: I understand the hon. Minister is challenging what the ILO has recommended. In fact, Mr Speaker, Sir, this issue has been raised - hon. Dr. Bunwaree will remember - when the debates were on in August 2008, by hon. Soodhun, who was the mouthpiece of the MSM on labour issue. Be that as it may, I have also raised this issue in a parliamentary question, which I put to Mr Chaumière, who was the hon. Minister at that time, on this question of *le travail le dimanche*. But, in view of the fact that the Public Holidays Act states very clearly that Sunday is a public holiday, and in view of the fact that, in the new Act, the law says that 'where a worker is required to work on a public holiday other than a Sunday, it is then that he shall be paid additional remuneration', therefore, doesn't our law finally make of Sunday an ordinary working day? This is what the *confédération des travailleurs du secteur privé* is arguing, namely that we should amend our law to make of Sunday a rest day for these workers, and that it is not for the employers to decide, according to their choice, any day as a rest day for the worker.

Mr Mohamed: I am thankful to the hon. Member to come up, once again, with this question. As he said, he has put that question before to the previous Minister. That gives me the opportunity of clarifying the situation. To clarify the situation, let me just say, in addition to what I have said, that there are certain industries, for instance, the catering and tourism industry, where it is sector specific. You cannot, in those industries, come up and use the same principle, the same thought and philosophy, as opposed to other industries that have not got specificities as that of the catering and tourism industry or the Cinema Employees

Remuneration Order. If that were the case, then we would have all employees of the catering and tourism industry or the cinema industry, the bakery industry, closing shop on Sunday. We have come up with an Employment Rights Act that is, in my humble opinion, very flexible. The only difference that separates us at the moment, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is a matter of interpretation. In order to make sure that this difference *ne perdure pas*, that is precisely the reason why we are asking the ILO, as I have said earlier, to take into account the Remuneration Order. And if, once they have taken that into account, they come up with the finding that, once again, it is not in line with the Convention, we will look into the appropriate decisions to be taken. I am of the view that if they take into account the Remuneration Order, their findings would not be the same.

Mr Bérenger: I am glad that the hon. Minister chose different words right now, because before he said ‘if the ILO comes with a proper recommendation’, implying that they made improper recommendations. He has corrected himself. Fair enough! Since it is clear that the ILO said that time is of the essence, it is urgent, and they suggested that *il faut corriger le tir* at the earliest opportunity, therefore, can we know when was their report received and when it is expected that Government will make further representations?

Mr Mohamed: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in answer to the hon. Leader of the Opposition, the report was communicated to us approximately seven days after it was issued. I don’t have the exact date with me, but I am informed that it was sent to us approximately seven days after it was received, which was only approximately a month and a half ago. We are ready with our new observations, which we will send to the ILO. I have been in touch with the relevant Department of Standards of the ILO, and I am informed that they will respond to us very rapidly. I totally agree with the hon. Leader of the Opposition that it is a matter of urgency. We will act accordingly, and send the new observations for us to get a response as soon as possible. I am not saying that the observations of the ILO are flawed. What I am saying is that they should have all the information on board, in order to come with a new finding. That would be a fairer principle.

Mr Ganoo: As things are today, can the hon. Minister confirm whether an employer is entitled to request a worker to begin his week on any day, that is, on a Sunday, and that when he is performing work on a Sunday, he is not paid additional remuneration?

Mr Mohamed: With regard to work on a Sunday, section 14(5) of the Employment Rights Act provides for a mandatory rest period, as I have stated earlier on, of, at least, 24

consecutive hours in every period of seven consecutive days. Those provisions are in line with Article 2 of the Weekly Rest (Industry) Convention of 1921, (No. 14). Our law also provides and specifies that the rest day shall be, at least, twice a month; it will be a Sunday or any other day, as may be agreed upon between the worker and the employer. This provision, therefore, does not violate Article 2(3) of the Convention, and I must here also state that this flexibility is present in our law. And this is precisely the flexibility in our law which, unfortunately - I must admit here - in our first response to the ILO, was not clearly shown to the committee. This is what we are trying to show to the committee now, namely that there exists flexibility in our law.

SCHOOLS – NATIONAL EXAMINATIONS

(No. 1B/260) Mrs L. Ribot (Third Member for Stanley & Rose Hill) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether, in regard to national examinations at Form III level, he will state –

- (a) the purpose thereof;
- (b) when they will be introduced, and
- (c) the options that will be offered to students who fail thereat.

(Withdrawn)

The Deputy Speaker: Next item!

MOTION

SUSPENSION OF S. O. 10(2)

The Deputy Prime Minister: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I move that all the business on today's Order Paper be exempted from the provisions of paragraph (2) of Standing Order 10.

The vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.