

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

**TOURISTS – ALLEGED ASSAULTS – SEPTEMBER 2005-
SEPTEMBER 2006**

(No. B/1207) Mrs S. Hanoomanjee (Second Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defense & Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer islands whether, in regard to cases of alleged assaults and thefts on tourists over the period September 2005 to September 2006, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to –

- (a) the number of reported cases;
- (b) the number of arrests in connection therewith, and
- (c) the additional measures taken, if any, to combat such acts.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that for the period of September 2005 to September 2006, there have been 851 cases of alleged assaults and thefts on tourists as follows -

No. of cases which have been detected and are awaiting prosecution	108
No. of classified cases	479
No. of cases still under enquiry	264
TOTAL	851

I am further informed that 119 persons have been arrested in connection with these cases.

As far as section (c) of the question is concerned, in addition to the normal policing practices such as the usual patrol by the different units of the Police, reactive policing and response to calls, there has been a series of measures that have been put in place in order to combat thefts and reinforce safety of tourists. The additional measures that have been taken include -

- (a) The responsibilities of the *Police du Tourisme* have been redefined and it is now called upon to, *inter alia* -
 - (i) protect tourist life and property;
 - (ii) provide safety and security to tourists;
 - (iii) deal with enquiries, claims and complaints from tourists;
 - (iv) investigate tourist related cases and prosecute offenders;
 - (v) carry out patrols on beaches, hotels and places which are regularly visited by tourists;
 - (vi) provide escorts to tourists in case of need and emergency;
 - (vii) protect tourists from harassment from beach hawkers and operators;
 - (viii) enforce the objects of the tourism authority, and
 - (ix) handling all tourist reports, so that they can ensure there is a proper follow-up on all cases reported by tourists.

The *Police du Tourisme*, based at the Tourism Authority, has provided a hotline, available on a 24-hour basis to register complaints from tourists and tourist operators.

- (b) Taking into consideration the short stay of the tourists, officers of the *Police du Tourisme* have been selected to participate in training sessions in order to upgrade their skills in investigating cases involving tourists, thus allowing them to attend to the grievances and complaints on the spot. This also includes training in foreign languages whereby interaction with the tourists is greatly facilitated.

- (c) Officers of the Police du Tourisme are also working in collaboration with different stakeholders, such as the Ministry of Tourism and External Communications, AHRIM, hotel managers and hotel security officers to sensitise tourists on precautions that need to be taken and the areas that they need to avoid.

- (d) A 24-hour counter service is available at the airport terminal to provide tourists with the contact details of the Police and other emergency services.

- (e) Regular patrols and joint operations are carried out by the different units of the local Police, the Divisional Support Unit, CID, ADSU, SSU, SMF, the Police Bike Patrol Unit and the National Coast Guards in areas which are usually visited by tourists.

- (f) A database of potential offenders and criminals involved in cases where tourists are concerned is being compiled for use in future investigations.

I am also informed that the Ministry of Tourism, Leisure and External Communications has coordinated activities related to security issues for

tourists by holding meetings with the different stakeholders, namely AHRIM and the *Police du Tourisme*. This has resulted in aggressive sensitisation programmes being carried out by the Tourism Authority and other stakeholders on measures to be taken to improve security in hotels and extensive patrols and roadblock checks in tourist regions, such as Le Morne, Flic en Flac, Grand' Baie, Trou aux Biches and Belle Mare. I am just giving a few examples.

Mr Speaker, Sir, following the reply I made to PQ B/276 at the sitting of the House on 18 April 2006, I should add that a plot of land, situated at Pereybere, has already been vested in the Police Department for the construction of a Police Station. The Ministry of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport & Shipping is working on the plan of the proposed Police Station.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: In spite of all the measures that have just been mentioned by the hon. Prime Minister, can the Prime Minister say whether he is satisfied that the *Police du Tourisme* is very active in all tourist areas? I am sure that the Prime Minister must be aware that only last week Mauritius was discredited by a tourist who had been victim of aggression in a bungalow in Trou aux Biches and who even questioned the fact as to whether Mauritius is a country of *Tonton Macoute*.

The Prime Minister: This is not the first case. I should tell you that the *Police du Tourisme* has been reinforced. We have increased the personnel. I have given a list of the new things that have been added to the responsibilities the *Police du Tourisme*. Their objective also has been redefined. I should tell you that they have now four vehicles and four motor-cycles attached to the unit. So, we have increased the number of duties that they have to do so that we can get better results.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: The Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Tourism, or Government for that matter, is speaking now in terms of two million tourists' arrival for the next five years. Doesn't the Prime Minister think that the whole strategy has to be worked out with all those concerned to minimise tourist risks?

The Prime Minister: Of course, we have to do it. This is not a political matter. It is a question of the country and we have to make

everything, whichever Government is there, to ensure that tourists are protected; and that is what we are doing.

Mr Bérenger: I am sure that the hon. Prime Minister agrees with me that the figure of assaults and thefts against tourists is very disturbing. Does the hon. Prime Minister have the figure for cases of assaults or thefts against tourists that have ended up in Court? Because we know that part of the problem is that tourists are here for a short holiday, they are not prepared to stay behind, to be in Court and so on. Can I have the number of cases that have ended up in Court and if it is very low – and I suspect it is – what measures are going to be taken for matters to get to Court fast?

The Prime Minister: I agree with the hon. Member that we have to ensure that most of the cases go to Court. In that case, out of the 851, 108 cases are waiting for prosecution, but 479 have been classified and 264 are still under inquiry.

Mr Bérenger: Cases in Court?

The Prime Minister: Some of the cases are still awaiting for prosecution, and for some, procedures have already started. In 119 cases, people have already been arrested.

Mr Bérenger: I think new measures should be taken for the inquiries to be carried out very fast for the matter to go to Court, because a tourist who has gone back to France or U.K., will not pay a ticket to come here and be a witness in Court. Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether there also, something does not need to be done?

The Prime Minister: We have now changed some of the responsibilities so that things can go quicker. For example, the investigation for tourist related cases and the prosecution offences, the *Police du Tourisme* can do that and they can also handle all the tourist reports themselves so that they can ensure that things go quicker.

Mr Bérenger: Does the Prime Minister agree that penalties should be toughened, especially as from the second offence?

The Prime Minister: I fully agree. In fact, we are working on this. There was a suggestion that we separate tourist cases, but we have decided

the advice was not to make two categories, but I totally agree that we have toughened penalties.

Mrs Jeewa-Daureeawoo: Est-ce que le Premier ministre est d'accord qu'avec une situation économique très difficile et un coup de la vie qui monte en flèche, cela a des répercussions très graves sur la sécurité générale dans le pays?

The Prime Minister: If you look at the previous figures, there is an increase but not that much difference. In some areas, I'll give you an example, in Port Louis North and Port Louis South, in fact, the numbers have decreased, but they have increased in the western area and also in the eastern area it has decreased. So, it is not increasing; and if we look at the figure for last year the total was 796.

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Speaker, Sir, doesn't the hon. Prime Minister agree that statements where Mauritius is compared to as *île de Tonton Macoute* by tourists are detrimental to the industry and that the concerned Ministry should react whenever such statements are made?

The Prime Minister: I can give you examples when they were in Government, the same kind of things have been said....

(Interruptions)

In fact, the Minister of Tourism is looking at responding.

Mr Cuttaree: Following the question, which has been asked by the First Member for Rose Hill and Stanley, on the issue of the attacks on tourists, I think the hon. Prime Minister will agree that one of the points is that perpetrators feel that there is not going to be a prosecution. I think this is one of the main reasons why people with impunity attack tourists. The Prime Minister has talked in terms of awaiting prosecution. Can I draw the attention of the Prime Minister to the fact that, even in District Court cases, now after a case has been lodged in Court, it takes about nine months for the case to be heard for the first time. If you go to the Intermediate Court it takes years. Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether it is not possible, after discussions with the Chief Justice, to get a special arrangement whereby these types of cases are given top priority by the Courts?

The Prime Minister: It is a good point raised by the hon. Member; hon. Bérenger also talked about it; I should perhaps have mentioned it. In fact, we had long discussions with Lord Mackay and I also had discussions with the hon. Chief Justice, including the cases of attacks on tourists because they go back to their country and people think that there will not be prosecutions. That also has been taken into consideration when we will be coming with the laws.

MBC - HUMAN RESOURCE AUDIT

(No. B/1208) Mrs S. Hanoomanjee (Second Member for Savanne and Black River) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether, in regard to the recent Human Resource audit carried out by the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, information as to its –

- (a) objectives, and
- (b) outcome.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the MBC that the Corporation has commissioned a Human Resource Effectiveness exercise with a view to assessing the manpower requirements of the organisation, evaluating the current state of human resources as well as streamlining its recruitment procedures.

The consultancy firm has submitted an interim report on 29 September, 2006 and the final report has been handed over to the MBC Board, I am told just recently. The report will be examined at the level of the Board shortly.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister who was conferred the responsibility to carry out this audit and when the contract was allocated?

The Prime Minister: The Board decided to entrust the exercise to Hedge Consulting Ltd. which is an independent HR Consulting firm and they have made an interim report. The Board held its meeting on 10 May to

consider potential candidates, and there were four candidates. They decided to entrust the exercise to Hedge Consulting Ltd. They had worked before for the Government and that is why they were given this exercise.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Can the hon. Prime Minister say what were the costs of that audit?

The Prime Minister: The consulting fee is Rs322,000, that is, VAT inclusive, there is a down payment of 40% and then 60% upon completion of the project.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: How does the hon. Prime Minister reconcile the fact that, on one hand, a Human Resource audit is being carried out and, on the other hand, the management of the MBC, during the same period, has recruited more than 80 employees?

The Prime Minister: In fact, the MBC has to recruit whenever it feels it has to recruit, but I must tell you that the whole idea of the exercise is to see what needs to be done. I must say that they also carried out a review of the organisational structure in terms of conditions of service and all this. As I said, they have given an executive summary. One of the main recommendations is to have a proper human resource intervention I am told and a phased approach has to be adopted.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Since an audit had started, doesn't the Prime Minister think that the management of the MBC should not have recruited during that period?

Mr Speaker: I think that the hon. Prime Minister has already answered this question, hon. Hanoomanjee.

Mrs Martin: May I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether all the eighty people that have been recruited.....

(Interruptions)

The hon. Prime Minister mentioned that one of the recommendations of the consulting firm was to recruit more people in the Human Resource Department. Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether all the people, who

have been recruited, have been recruited for this Human Resource Department in that case?

The Prime Minister: I am not aware whether all the people have been recruited for one department.

Dr. Mungur: Mr Speaker, Sir, the Human Resource Audit is a tool to assess the present, is a blueprint for the future and is a commitment to excellence. May I ask the hon. Prime Minister when a similar exercise was conducted at the MBC and to what effect?

The Prime Minister: I am not aware that a similar exercise was carried out, but I can find out.

MBC – MISSION IN FRANCE - LOSS OF CAMERA

(No. B/1209) Mrs S. Hanoomanjee (Second Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation, information as to whether a camera was lost, during an official mission in September 2006 in France, by a journalist and a cameraman of the Corporation and, if so –

- (a) the circumstances thereof, and
- (b) if an inquiry has been carried thereinto and its outcome.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I shall reply to Parliamentary Questions B/1209 and B/1211 at the same time as they relate to the same subject matter.

I am informed by the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation that on Wednesday 13 September 2006, a camera belonging to the Corporation was stolen while the MBC crew was checking out from a hotel in Paris. The crew had left the camera next to the reception counter along with other luggage and the theft occurred while the crew members were settling their hotel bills.

The matter was immediately reported to the nearest Police Station in Paris. Our Mission in Paris was also informed of the theft.

I am further informed that the management of MBC has caused a departmental inquiry to be carried out. The findings of the inquiry will be submitted to the MBC Board to see if any action can be taken.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Mr Speaker, Sir, does the Prime Minister have information on when the loss was reported to the management of the MBC?

The Prime Minister: In fact, I am told when the theft occurred in Paris, not only there was a report made to the Police Station, but also to the MBC so that they can relay the matter. I suppose the MBC must have been informed within the next 24 hours.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: In fact it was reported on the day following the arrival of the crew to Mauritius. Wasn't it the bounded duty of the crew to report immediately the loss to the management of the MBC?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, in fact, I am told that all the documents, including the Police report have to be handed over to the insurance. I suppose they waited until they came. I don't know whether it was reported at the same time, maybe they did not do all the inquiries, but the department inquiry had to be done once they were in Mauritius.

Mr Guinness: Can the hon. Prime Minister tell us about the cost of the camera and whether it was covered by an insurance policy?

The Prime Minister: Sir, the camera was covered worldwide under the whole risk insurance cover.

Mr Guinness: Can we know the cost?

The Prime Minister: The cost of the camera is Rs416,500.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Can we know from the hon. Prime Minister whether there have been recorded video tapes which have been lost together with the camera?

The Prime Minister: There is no evidence. It was in a box, here it is said battery and a camera.

**PRIME MINISTER – MISSIONS TO CUBA, NEW YORK,
BUCAREST & LONDON - DELEGATION**

(No. B/1210) **Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière)** asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether, in regard to his recent missions, to Cuba, New York, Bucarest and London, he will –

- (a) state the composition of the delegation which accompanied him and the duration of each mission;
- (b) give a breakdown of expenditure incurred in respect of each member of the delegation in terms of airfares, per diem and other allowances. and
- (c) state the total expenditure incurred.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission I propose to reply to PQB/1210 and PQ B/1218 together.

I am tabling a statement giving the information requested.

Mr Bhagwan: Sir, may I ask a supplementary question pending the circulation of the reply. Can we know how many persons formed part of the delegation?

The Prime Minister: It depends on the mission.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Mr Bhagwan: Can we know the total expenditure incurred? It is only one figure to have an idea...

Mr Speaker: I think the Prime Minister has said that he will be tabling the answer.

Mr Bhagwan: Pending the circulation, Sir. It takes time.

Mr Speaker: It has already been prepared.

(Interruptions)

Order! The Prime Minister will circulate the information. He is not taking time to compile it.

Mr Bhagwan: Can we know when we will get the reply?

The Prime Minister: It will be laid on the Table of the National Assembly.

Mr Guinness: Mr Speaker, Sir, can we know from the Prime Minister how many Members of Parliament accompanied him for his mission to New York? And why did MPs have to accompany him?

The Prime Minister: It is a tradition which some Prime Ministers have used and some have not. They have taken an MP with them. In fact, in certain cases, there have even been more and this has started since the days after independence. With me, there was one MP this time, there was an MP last time as well.

Mr Bhagwan: Can we know from the hon. Prime Minister whether attempts were made by certain hon. Members to correct his speech?

Mr Speaker: This is irrelevant to the question. The hon. Member should come up with a substantive question.

Mr Jhugroo: Will the hon. Prime Minister inform us how many official overseas missions does he intend to undertake from now until...

Mr Speaker: This does not arise out of the original question.

Mr Guinness: Sir, I heard well the Prime Minister say that it depends on the Prime Minister whether to bring an MP with him or not and it seems that in the past no MP accompanied Prime Ministers. As the country is

facing difficult times, does he not seem it good not to make himself accompanied by MPs?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, when it comes to the national interest, when we think we need to look at the national interest, I am not going to look at petty politics like this. In fact, you might want to know – if you talk about this – I have a list here of 33 missions that have actually turned down.

(Interruptions)

MBC – MISSION IN FRANCE - LOSS OF CAMERA

(No. B/1211) Mr G. Gunness (Third Member for Montagne Blanche & GRSE) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation, information as to whether a camera was lost during one of his recent overseas missions and, if so, if an inquiry has been carried out thereinto and the outcome thereof.

(Vide Reply to PQ No. B/1209)

SALE BY LEVY VICTIMS

(No. B/1212) Mr S. Naidu (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether he will state if he has received representations from the association representing the victims of the sale by levy and, if so, the actions that have been initiated, if any, and the progress achieved so far.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! Hon. Bhagwan, order!

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the House that as early as 21 July 2005, Cabinet agreed to the Attorney-General's

office to examine the recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry on sale by levy chaired by Sir Victor Glover and to propose appropriate amendments to the legislation as recommended in the report. Since August 2005 my colleague, the Attorney-General, has had several meetings with victims of sale by levy.

Following these meetings a Draft Credit Facilities Bill was prepared and submitted to a Steering Committee for their views and comments. The Steering Committee comprised representatives of the Attorney-General's Office and Ministry of Finance and Economic Development. The Committee met representatives of several associations representing the victims of sale by levy, the Mauritius Bankers Association, DBM, NHDC and MHC among others. It completed its work in March 2006 and made the following recommendations -

- (a) the proposal for the establishment of a Commission on Indebtedness under the Credit Facilities Bill will hinder rather than facilitate credit (that was one of the recommendations);
- (b) the recommendations of the Report on the Commission of Inquiry on sale by levy in relation to individual bankruptcy should be incorporated in the new Insolvency Bill;
- (c) any disguised transaction between an unlicensed moneylender and a borrower in the form of a notarial deed shall be invalid and of no legal consequences;
- (d) there was a need for certain borrowers to insure against payment default;
- (e) no matrimonial residence should be offered as a guarantee to a loan without the consent of both spouses.

Following representations I received from victims of sale by levy at a meeting held in my office on 30 August 2006, I immediately gave instructions for the setting up of a special desk at the Police Headquarters to register all complaints relating to sale by levy. One of the complaints that

these people were making was that when they go to the Police Station, they were not properly cared for. That is why we need a special desk immediately.

I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that out of 217 complaints registered as at to date, 183, which have a direct bearing with sale by levy are being investigated by the Land Fraud Squad. For this purpose, the staff at the Land Fraud Squad has been strengthened. A similar desk has been set up in Rodrigues and up to now ten cases have been referred to the Land Fraud Squad.

Prior to the setting up of the special desk, four persons had been arrested in connection with land fraud. These four cases are now under inquiry at the level of the Central CID.

Government also decided not to proceed with the 'Sale by levy' exercise in respect of NHDC housing units and to have a socio-economic inquiry carried out by the Ministry of Social Security in each of the cases which had already been referred to court for Sale by Levy. The report of the inquiry is being awaited – I am told, it's nearly ready - and a decision will be taken in the light thereof.

Following the recommendations of the Steering Committee and in the light of the meetings it had with various stakeholders, Government is now proposing to pass the Borrowers Protection Bill in order to provide better safeguards to borrowers and sanction unscrupulous practices. The object of the Borrowers Protection Bill is to protect borrowers of loans from perpetual debt in order to avoid seizure and sale of their mortgaged property. In that context, a Commissioner for the Protection of Borrowers for the purpose of overseeing and where appropriate, regulating the drawing up and implementation of contracts for the grant of credit facilities to individuals will be appointed.

The Insolvency Bill for its part will contain provisions for the making of arrangements, outside of bankruptcy, providing for supervised debt repayment on the part of individuals.

Finally, Mr Speaker, Sir, the Bill also provides that all hardship cases reported to the Police and in respect of which there is a notice of seizure on the immovable property of a borrower shall be referred to the Commissioner for the Protection of Borrowers.

Mr Bérenger: Since the hon. Prime Minister has confirmed reports to the effect that he has ordered the NHDC to freeze all cases of sale by levy involving NHDC residences, can I know from the hon. Prime Minister how many such cases there were and how does he compare that with the total number of NHDC residents who are paying what they owe the NHDC every month?

The Prime Minister: In fact, what we have done is not to stop everything, but those who are actually going to Court for the seizure of property. There are sixty-three cases and it seems that twenty-nine cases are clearly cases that we have to look at.

Mr Bérenger: I thought I heard the hon. Prime Minister say, in his main reply, that all cases of sale by levy involving the NHDC have been frozen, but, in his supplementary reply, he no longer says that. Can we know what is the situation exactly?

The Prime Minister: I thought what the hon. Member was aiming at is whether we have frozen the payments of loans that people have at the NHDC. Obviously when this happened, some people thought they could stop paying completely, which is not the case. What we have done is to look at cases where the procedures for sale by levy were going to take place and the properties were going to be seized.

Mr Naidu: In spite of the measures, meetings, and recommendations the Prime Minister mentioned, it seems that the problems are lingering. Does not the hon. Prime Minister think that setting a Truth Commission will once and for all look into the situation and find a solution for those poor victims?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, the Commission of Inquiry which was set up by the previous Government and chaired by Sir Victor Glover, I must say in all fairness, was a very good inquiry. All the things that you want to know are in it. He said things that have to be done, have to be acted upon and that is what we are trying to do. I think that is how we should proceed.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: May I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether, apart from the NHDC, other financial institutions such as MHC and DBM have taken similar measures?

The Prime Minister: In fact, no because the NHDC looked at people who are at the lower level and were having great difficulties. It is out of a gesture of compassion that we did this.

DRUGS (FAKE) – FREEPORT AREA - TRANSIT

(No. B/1213) Mrs F. Jeewa-Daureeawoo (Third Member for Stanley and Rose Hill) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to whether any case has been reported in regard to the transit of fake drugs through Mauritius to the African countries and, if so, whether an inquiry has been carried out thereinto, indicating –

- (a) by whom, and
- (b) the outcome thereof.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I shall reply to Parliamentary Question Nos. B/1213 and B/1221 together as they relate to the same issue.

I am informed that, following reports in the media about the possible transit of fake drugs in the Freeport Area, an investigation was initiated by the Director of Customs on 12 October 2006.

Eleven companies known to deal in pharmaceutical products in the Freeport Area were visited by a team of Customs Investigation Officers and Government Pharmacists of the Ministry of Health & Quality of Life.

During the joint investigation, it was found that one, Mail Master Proprietary Limited, a pharmaceutical company operating with a Freeport licence granted on 27 August 2004 and represented by a Seychelles national, did not possess a valid export and import authorisation as provided for under section 12 of the Dangerous Drugs Act 2000.

On 13 October 2006, ADSU secured the following psychotropic drugs at the premises of the company which were held in contravention, therefore, of the law. There were four such drugs -

- | | | |
|-------|--|---------------|
| (i) | Xolnox (Zolpidem) - 10 mg. | 123,860 pills |
| (ii) | Tramadol-Biotram (tramadol) – 10 mg | 29, 990 pills |
| (iii) | Zolp (zolpidem) | 25,800 pills |
| (iv) | Tramadil (tramadol) | 10 pills |
| (v) | One computer software + data and documents relating to the above exhibits. | |

The seizure was effected in the presence of the Seychelles national, the Office Manager at the company. She was arrested and released on parole

after enquiry. On 16 October 2006, she appeared in Court on a provisional charge of “Possession of Dangerous Drugs” and was bailed out upon furnishing a surety of Rs10,000.

Samples of the drugs found at the premises were sent for analysis at the Forensic Science Laboratory, which confirmed that the drugs contained Tramadol and Zolpidem which are listed in Schedule III of the Dangerous Drugs Act of 2000. Samples of other drugs have been sent for analysis abroad.

Another pharmaceutical company, ACDS Ltd, operating with a Freeport licence granted on 05 April 2005, and represented by a South African national, was investigated and it was found that the operator had not carried out any import/export transaction for the past four months and the business was left largely abandoned and not adequately secured. In fact, persons, not directly related to the business, were present on the site when the inspection was carried out. Moreover, large stocks of expensive drugs were lying dormant in the stores and were nearing their expiring date. Samples of the drugs have been taken at the premises of the company and have been sent for analysis abroad. The laboratory results are still being awaited. So far, there has been no evidence that the drugs are fake ones.

The two companies have been sealed off by the Customs Department after consultation with the Police and the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life. The operations of those two companies have been suspended pending the completion of the inquiry.

In order to ensure that no such situation arises again, measures have been taken by the Board of Investment, the Customs and Exercise Department and the Ministry of Health & Quality of Life to improve current controls over pharmaceutical companies operating in the Freeport.

Mr Bérenger: I am sure the hon. Prime Minister is aware that estimates are to the effect that 60% of the drugs sold in Africa are fake. This is a very, very serious matter. Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether, and if not why, the assistance of Interpol and the World Health Organisation – they both have specialised departments for that issue – has been sought?

The Prime Minister: I cannot see anything that says that their assistance has been sought, but I think what they are doing is to finish the preliminary inquiry. They will probably seek the assistance, but the inquiry is still at the local inquiry level.

Mr Cuttaree: May I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether any of these companies, involved with this matter, are actually trading on the island of Mauritius?

The Prime Minister: For example, the Mail Master Proprietary Ltd was the holder of a free licence. In fact, it had a licence, but it did not have a licence for the import and export of dangerous drugs. So they were trading in other drugs, but also, they did not have a licence for the import and export of dangerous drugs. The other company, for the last four months, seems to have been abandoned.

Mr Lauthan: The hon. Prime Minister has mentioned that eleven companies have been involved, but he has given details on only three or four. May we have the full list of the companies, which have been involved in this traffic?

The Prime Minister: In fact, to ensure that the hon. Member does not get me wrong, it is not eleven companies which have been involved in any kind of transaction. The eleven companies were known to deal with pharmaceutical products in the Freeport area in total. They were visited by customs and investigation officers. Out of these eleven, two have been found to be improperly dealing with these.

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

IRON BARS – PRICE

(No. B/1226) Mrs S. Hanoomanjee (Second Member for Savanne and Black River) asked the Minister of Industry, Small & Medium Enterprises, Commerce and Co-operatives whether, in regard to the price of iron bars, he will state if there has been an increase in August 2006, and if so, will he state –

- (a) the reasons thereof, and
- (b) if any study was carried out immediately prior to the increase.

Dr. Jeetah: Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the House that the prices of iron bars of size above 6 mm, that is, 8 mm, 10 mm, 12 mm, 16 mm, 20 mm and 24 mm are under price control.

Mr Speaker: Can the hon. Minister speak up? Nobody hears what he is saying.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Dr. Jeetah: The prices of these iron bars have not been revised since July 2004.

Parts (a) and (b) of the question, therefore, do not arise.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: I understand that right now the Minister is in presence of a request for an increase in the price of locally manufactured iron bars. Can the hon. Minister give an undertaking that in the near future there will be no increase in the price of locally manufactured iron bars?

Dr. Jeetah: Mr Speaker, Sir, I will reply to the question if the hon. Member puts a substantive question.

(Interruptions)

Mr Bérenger: Can I ask the hon. Minister whether, in fact, in the last Budget the customs tariffs were reduced or removed and whether there has been a reincrease since?

Dr. Jeetah: If the hon. Member comes with a substantive question, I will give the answer.

Mr Guinness: Can the hon. Minister confirm to the House that actually there is no shortage of iron bars on the market?

Dr. Jeetah: Mr Speaker, Sir, I must inform the House that Desbro has started since September this year an upgrading of its production unit and the manufacturing of iron bars has been affected by this process. The same company has informed my Ministry that it has a stock of 4,500 tonnes of billets and another 200 tonnes of iron bars. I am also informed that the company expects to receive another 6,000 tonnes from India in the coming two weeks.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in October this year, Murray and Roberts have imported 4,000 tonnes of iron bars and another consignment of the same volume is expected to arrive in February next year. I am also given to understand that this company is keen to set up a plant in Mauritius.

Mr Bundhoo: May I ask the hon. Minister when and why only the 6 mm iron bar prices were liberalised?

Dr. Jeetah: From the information that I have, Mr Speaker, Sir, the price of 6 mm of iron bars was liberalised in July 2004 and the then price used to be Rs19.85 and it went up to between Rs42 and Rs45.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Dr. Jeetah: The price increased by 111%.

Mr Ganoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, the population, the *contracteurs* and everybody in the building industry want to know whether there would be an increase in the price of iron bars in the coming days. Can the Minister say 'yes' or 'no'?

Dr. Jeetah: The hon. Member ought to know that I cannot discuss matters of increase in price here.

Mr Bodha: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister to enlighten the House as to the tariffs and different duties which apply to iron bars?

Dr. Jeetah: I have already answered the question, Sir.

(Interruptions)

Mr Bundhoo: May I ask the hon. Minister whether he intends to liberalise the prices of other iron bars, namely, 8 mm, 10 mm and 20 mm?

Dr. Jeetah: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have just announced that the liberalisation of price of 6 mm led to an increase of 111%. This is something that we have to look into and I do not think this is acceptable.

Mr Guinness: Mr Speaker, Sir, the Minister more or less confirmed that there will be a shortage of iron bars on the market. Can I know from the Minister what precaution his Ministry is taking to prevent black market?

Dr. Jeetah: Mr Speaker, Sir, I never said that there was going to be a shortage ...

Mr Speaker: I cannot hear the Minister. Is the microphone working?

Dr. Jeetah: The hon. Member is putting words in my mouth.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Dr. Jeetah: I never said whatever the hon. Member had in mind.

Mr Bundhoo: May I ask the hon. Minister whether he intends to bring price control for 6 mm in line with 8 mm, 10 mm and 20 mm of iron bars?

Dr. Jeetah: I will look into the matter.

**ASSIRVADEN, MR P. – CHAIRPERSON, CEB – OVERSEAS
MISSION**

(No. B/1227) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Public Utilities whether, in regard to the recent mission of Mr Patrick Assirvaden, the Chairperson of the Central Electricity Board to France and Switzerland, he will state –

- (a) if the air ticket was paid by a CEB supplier, namely ABB;
- (b) if he is aware that a case has been reported to the Independent Commission Against Corruption by Mr Jack Bizlall in connection therewith;
- (c) if an inquiry has been carried out by his Ministry and the outcome thereof, and
- (d) if he has considered the advisability of requesting Mr Assirvaden to step down pending the conclusion of the inquiry by the ICAC.

Dr. Kasenally: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the CEB that Mr Patrick Assirvaden, the Chairperson of the Central Electricity Board, was on official mission in France from 23 August to 02 September 2006 to attend the CIGRÉ Exhibition and Customer Event in Paris, held from 28 August to 01 September 2006 on the invitation of ABB Zurich.

As regards part (a) of the question, the air ticket, equivalent to one economy class return ticket, was borne by ABB Zurich and amounted to Rs29,488. The ticket was paid by the CEB in the first instance and a refund was effected by ABB Zurich through its local representative.

As regards part (b), the answer is no. I have not received any formal communication informing me that the matter has been referred to ICAC. However, like my hon. friend and any citizen, I read of it in the press.

As regards part (c), the answer is no. My Ministry has not carried out an investigation into the matter as I have been made to understand that ICAC is looking into the matter.

As regards part (d), on the basis of information which has reached me up to now, I do not consider that I should ask the Chairman to step down. Once I get all the facts, I shall examine them, dissect them and take whatever appropriate action, if any.

Mr Bhagwan: May I know from the hon. Minister whether it is the practice at the CEB for the Chairperson to go on overseas technical missions paid by the suppliers of the CEB? Was it the case for the former Chairpersons?

Dr. Kasenally: If the hon. Member puts a substantive question, I will give the information.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Dr. Kasenally: Going back to only two Chairpersons, they have not done so. But there have been many missions on which the officers of the CEB have gone. I would review the whole policy concerning missions

overseas. In fact, we are cutting down on all missions in view of the fact that the financial circumstances of the CEB require us to do so.

Mr Bhagwan: M. le président, ce n'est un secret pour personne, toute l'île Maurice ainsi que tous les employés du CEB savent ce qui s'est passé en ce qui concerne cette visite en France. Est-ce que le ministre peut informer la Chambre la raison pour laquelle le CEB a payé un billet de *business class* alors qu'on a empoché R 29,000 pour un *economic class*.

Dr. Kasenally: As I replied to my hon. friend I have not made a full-fledged inquiry since this is being carried out by ICAC. Once I get the information I shall revert back to him.

Mr Bérenger: Is the hon. Minister aware that ICAC looks into corruption and money laundering? It is not a case of money laundering or corruption. It is something which cannot be done by a Chairperson of one of the most important parastatal bodies. Why does not his Ministry carry out an additional inquiry?

Dr. Kasenally: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have been advised by the CEB that we shall await the inquiry in case there is some conflict. But the House can rest assured that all the facts will be brought and the truth and everything will come out. I shall be very transparent about it and I will inform the House accordingly. *Patience et longueur de temps font plus que force.*

Mr Bundhoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Minister inform the House whether the ABB invitation was specific to the Chairman or to somebody else?

Dr. Kasenally: I have not gone into all the details. As I have said, Mr Speaker, Sir, I will look into all the aspects.

Mr Speaker: One last question, hon. Bhagwan!

Mr Bhagwan: Can we know from the hon. Minister why the Chairman and not a technician went on that mission? Can he inform the House – I know that an inquiry is being effected – as to why the Chairperson who had received allowances to go to Switzerland, has, in fact, not gone to Switzerland?

Mr Speaker: He will carry out the inquiry.

Dr. Kasenally: I have no details about the invitation which was launched to the CEB. As I have said, be patient, I will get all the facts and I will revert back.

Mr Bodha: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister whether he is aware that there is a civil case where the CEB is suing the ABB, and that in these circumstances, it is so unethical for the Chairman to accept that ticket?

Dr. Kasenally: Currently, there are so many civil cases going on at the CEB. I am not particularly aware that the ABB is being sued.

ENTERPRISE MAURITIUS – CHAIRPERSON – TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF EMPLOYMENT, OVERSEAS MISSION, ETC.

(No. B/1228) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Industry, Small & Medium Enterprises, Commerce and Co-operatives whether, in regard to the Chairperson of Enterprise Mauritius, he will state –

- (a) the terms and conditions of his employment;
- (b) the number of overseas missions he has effected, indicating the countries visited and the costs incurred in each case, and
- (c) if he has received any complaints from the members of the personnel concerning daily harassment by the Chairperson in the performance of his duties and, if so, the remedial actions taken, if any.

Dr. Jeetah: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that the chairperson of Enterprise Mauritius draws a monthly remuneration of Rs50,000.

I wish to inform the House that, as Chairperson of Enterprise Mauritius, the latter is fully involved in matters relating to Regional and International Trade and discussions at the level of committees of the World Trade Organisation.

I am tabling a copy of the information requested in part (b) of the question. Regarding part (c), I have received no complaint regarding any alleged case of harassment.

I seize this opportunity to add that the Chairperson, since his nomination, has been very proactive in helping the manufacturing sector, including textile and clothing to reengineer itself. The growth rate for the textile and clothing is expected to be positive this year, compared to -12.3% last year.

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Minister confirm whether there are any other fringe benefits attached to the Rs50,000?

Dr. Jeetah: Not that I am aware of, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Bérenger: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I know from the hon. Minister how many staff members have left or have been made to leave since the new Chairman has been appointed?

Dr. Jeetah: In fact, from memory, Mr Speaker, Sir, I know that there are two members who have left. There was one who used to be a teacher at the University of Mauritius. He has gone back to his position. And, actually, there are two who left on their own. As for the third one, I am not too sure.

(Interruptions)

Mr Bérenger: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I know from the hon. Minister whether he has taken the trouble to check whether there is no conflict of interests to that gentleman being appointed Chairperson and having other business interests?

Dr. Jeetah: I can guarantee the House, Mr Speaker, Sir, that there is no such conflict of interests?

Mr Bhagwan: Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Minister inform the House that the Chairperson has diverted many technical works and sensitive information of Enterprise Mauritius to Stra Consult Ltd, where Mr Darga is one of the founder member and he has direct interests? Can the hon. Minister inform the House whether he has dared to check and make an investigation on the activities which small SMEs are being asked to carry

out? The SMEs are asked to go to Stra Consult for their projects. This is what is being done to small SMEs, Sir.

Dr. Jeetah: The hon. Member is making very serious allegations
(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Let the Minister answer, please!

Dr. Jeetah: If the hon. Member feels that ...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! The hon. Member has asked the Minister for information, he should give him the information.

Dr. Jeetah: If the hon. Member feels aggrieved, I would request him to go to the Police and to ICAC.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order, order!

Mr Bhagwan: Mr Speaker, Sir, can the Minister inform the House - and I will mention names - one Dr. Dinesh Hurryram, Mr Arvin Radhakrishna, Mr Witman, Mr Mallam Hassam, Manager, one Mrs D'Arifat.

(Interruptions)

They have given me authority to mention names.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order, order!

(Interruptions)

Mr Bhagwan: *Bouffon! Raciste!*

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Mr Bhagwan: *Communaliste, raciste! To croire nous peur toi nous, nous pas peur toi nous.*

Mr Speaker: I said order, hon. Bhagwan! I think the hon. Minister must go and read the Standing Orders. When the names are important to make the question intelligible, then he can mention them.

Mr Bhagwan: I have asked authority from these persons ...

Mr Speaker: What is the question now?

Mr Bhagwan: All these people, Mr Speaker, Sir, have been harassed by the Chairperson, Mr Darga, and those – I can say it in Parliament - who dare to think and talk, there is a climate of fear installed at this office. Can the Minister inform the House whether he has received an e-mail? I'll send copy to the Prime Minister.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Let the hon. Minister answer now! There is no need to make comments.

(Interruptions)

Order!

Mr Bhagwan: He is lying in Parliament.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: The hon. Member should withdraw the words.

Mr Bhagwan: I'll withdraw the words, but I'll circulate the paper.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: No, the hon. Member should withdraw unequivocally. Order now! The hon. Member wants an answer, let the hon. Minister reply!

(Interruptions)

Order! Hon. Bhagwan, let the hon. Minister answer!

(Interruptions)

Order, please!

Dr. Jeetah: Mr Speaker, Sir, for the last four years, our industry has been ...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Dr. Jeetah: Mr Speaker, Sir, for the last four years, our industry has gone through some very difficult times. Last year, we had a negative growth of -12.3%. There is a lot of pressure on the people serving this agency to deliver. Mr Speaker, Sir, we have shown results. The results speak for themselves. It's the first time that we are going to get a positive growth in the EPZ exports, the furniture sector...

Mr Speaker: I am sorry. There is a simple question. According to the Standing Orders and Erskine May, the answer must be relevant to the question which has been put.

Dr. Jeetah: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am trying to answer. I understand there is a lot of pressure in Enterprise Mauritius. There is a vast majority who are actually doing a very good work.

Mr Speaker: Time is over! I am going to suspend for one and a half hour.

At 1.00 p.m. the sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 2.30 with Mr Speaker in the Chair

ASSOCIATION MAURICIENNE DE VOLLEYBALL – GENERAL ASSEMBLY

(No. B/1229) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Youth and Sports whether, in regard to

the *Association Mauricienne de Volleyball*, he will state if a general assembly was scheduled, on or about 24 September 2006, and, if so, if it has been cancelled, indicating –

- (a) the reasons thereof, and
- (b) the number of the members of the Executive Committee prior to the cancellation.

Mr Tang Wah Hing: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that, on 27 August 2006, the “*Association Mauricienne de Volleyball*” had convened a National General Meeting on 24 September 2006. The purpose of the meeting was amongst other things to fill three vacancies at the level of the Managing Committee of the Association.

However, I am informed that, on 31 August 2006, the Association had received a common letter signed by four members submitting their resignation, including one member whose office had already been declared vacant by the Association.

On 19 September 2006, the president of one member club of the Association, claiming to write on behalf of a majority of club members, sent a letter to the “*Fédération Internationale de Volleyball*” informing -

- (i) of the intention of a large majority of clubs to set up a caretaker committee with a view to calling for the election of a new Managing Committee as a result of chaotic situation prevailing at the level of the Association.
- (ii) that the president of the Association did not have the support of club members to manage the affairs of the Association in Mauritius, and
- (iii) invited the president of the “*Fédération Internationale de Volleyball*” to delegate a representative to supervise the forthcoming election of the new Managing Committee.

On 20 September 2006, the president of the “*Fédération Internationale de Volleyball*” informed the president of the “*Association Mauricienne de Volleyball*” that the National General Meeting scheduled on 24 September 2006 be postponed till after December 2006 so that the

International Federation could hold an inquiry about internal problems at the level of the Association.

Accordingly, the “*Fédération Internationale de Volleyball*” delegated Mr Tubby Reddy, vice-president of the “*Confédération Internationale Africaine de Volleyball*” as its representative to Mauritius from 22 to 25 September 2006 to investigate into the internal conflicts of the “*Association Mauricienne de Volleyball*”.

During his stay, Mr Reddy met with the different parties concerned with the conflict at the Association, as well as the President of the Mauritius National Olympic Committee and myself. On 23 September 2006, he submitted a report, recommending -

- (i) the cancellation of the National General Meeting scheduled on 24 September 2006, be maintained pending the holding of a properly constituted general assembly by end of March 2007 at latest;
- (ii) the individuals who had left the Managing Committee for whatever reason to rejoin the Committee in order to manage the affairs of the Association until the next General Assembly, and
- (iii) appoint one member by the Minister of Youth and Sports to serve on the Managing Committee to play a monitoring role to ensure that the Committee functions following due democratic process.

Subsequently, two members have rejoined the Managing Committee on 25 and 26 September 2006, respectively, so that the Committee now comprises seven members out of a maximum of 11 members. On the other hand, I have appointed Mr Nuvin Proag to serve on the Managing Committee as observer.

With regard to part (b) of the question, I am informed that the number of members of the Executive Committee of the “*Association Mauricienne de Volleyball*” was 5 prior to the cancellation of the General Assembly.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I must point out that, as a matter of principle, my Ministry does not interfere in internal matters of Sports Federations which are autonomous bodies. However, it is important

that every effort be made to ensure the smooth running of Sports Federations in the interest of our athletes.

In any event, in the present case, I understand that the “*Fédération Internationale de Volleyball*” has made this temporary arrangement pending the holding of the General Assembly by March 2007 at latest.

Mr Bhagwan: I would like to thank the hon. Minister for the reply. He has rightly stated that it is not the responsibility of the Ministry to indulge into the day to day affairs of federations; and it should be like this. But from what we hear and see everyday - and what is happening at the Volleyball federation - is the Minister satisfied that day to day business matters are being run in a transparent way at the level of the federation? He has stated that there is one officer who is posted at the level of the federation. Is the Minister agreeable to inform the House regularly pending the general assembly on the progress achieved at the level of the federation?

Mr Tang Wah Hing: I will, of course, inform all Members, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Bhagwan: Mr Speaker, Sir, we have taken note on Sunday last concerning the utilization of the gymnasium. The Chairperson of the Mauritius Sports Council has given instruction that the gymnasium should not be used by *certain petits copains*. He has even instructed that an inquiry be carried out rapidly. Can the hon. Minister inform the House what has really happened and whether this inquiry has been set up?

Mr Tang Wah Hing: I am not aware of this situation, Mr Speaker, Sir, but I'll check.

Mr Bhagwan: Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to quote from a report which has been prepared by Mr Reddy of the *Fédération Internationale* –

“A commission of inquiry will be instituted and process will be given by the FIVB and CAVB concerning the running of the federation (...)”

Can we know from the Minister whether this Commission of Inquiry has been instituted and, if not, when will it be instituted by the *Fédération Internationale*?

Mr Tang Wah Hing: This concerns the internal affairs of the federation, but I can assure the hon. Member that all consideration will be given to it.

Mr Bhagwan: Although the Minister is saying that this concerns the internal affairs of the federation, but the funding of the federation come from public funds and the International Federation has given a report where they are not satisfied at all. There are malpractices according to the report and I am sure that the hon. Minister has a copy. Can the hon. Minister see to it that pending the renewal of the new committee, as pointed out by the federation, no major policy decisions will be taken at the level of the federation where approval of the Ministry is warranted? Can the Minister give assurance to the House that at his end, through his officer, he will see to it that there is no major decision taken especially concerning the utilization of funds and the utilization of the gymnasium which is a public property?

Mr Tang Wah Hing: I thank the hon. Member. I will look into it, Mr Speaker, Sir.

SSR MEDICAL COLLEGE BELLE RIVE – FOREIGN STUDENTS

(No. B/1230) Mrs B. Juggoo (Third Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam Medical College Belle Rive, information as to whether foreign students are not allowed to register directly in Mauritius for a seat at the college and, if so, the reasons thereof.

The Minister of Education and Human Resources (Mr D. Gokhool): Mr Speaker Sir, with your permission, I will reply to this question.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Hon. Bhagwan, this is the last time that I am calling you to order.

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, the information has been obtained from the SSR Medical College and the answer is as follows -

- (i) Foreign students are not allowed to register directly in Mauritius for a seat at the college but have to enroll through the following overseas recruitment offices/centres of the college –
 - (a) New Delhi office (for Indian students)
 - (b) Durban office (for African students)
 - (c) Kuala Lumpur office (for South East Asian students), and
 - (d) Dubai office (for students from United Arab Emirates and Gulf countries).
- (ii) The major reason for the college to have recourse to such practice is for administrative convenience as the results of qualifying examinations for the entry to the programme run by SSR Medical College are published at different times in different countries and it is therefore difficult to organise a common registration exercise. Furthermore, such an arrangement ensures that proper information and advice are provided to potential students in their home country.
- (iii) The SSR Medical College claims all fees in US dollars, irrespective of the nationality of the students, for the sake of uniformity, as is the practice.

Mrs Juggoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister if he could refer to clause 4B at page 7 of the Prospectus, where it is mentioned, I quote –

“Indian students can obtain and submit the completed admission form at SSR Medical College, Mauritius, or Delhi office.”

I'll lay a copy on the Table of the National Assembly. Can the hon. Minister confirm this?

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, I'll check this information. But, as I just stated this is the information which was provided to me.

Mrs Juggoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, apart from the school fees that are being paid by the students in India specifically, can the hon. Minister confirm whether there are any other fees to be paid?

Mr Gokhool: I think the question related to the registration, not specifically to the fees. If a substantive question is put, I'll look into the whole fees structure which is claimed from students.

**PANDIT SHARMA RADHAY GOVERNMENT SCHOOL,
CONGOMAH – COMPUTER ROOM**

(No. B/1231) Mrs B. Juggoo (Third Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether he will state if he has received representations from the Pandit Sharma Radhay Government School, Congomah, in regard to the computer room and, if so, will he state the remedial actions that will be taken.

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, Sir, I have not personally received any representation from the Pandit Sharma Radhay Government School at Congomah regarding the computer room. However, I am informed that in November 2005, the Head Teacher of the said school addressed a request to the zone director, in respect of a series of school infrastructural issues, including the need for a computer room.

Some of the demands contained in the request of the Head Teacher were attended to, but the question of the computer room remained outstanding for lack of space.

Alternatively, the computer room has been accommodated in the library of the school as a temporary measure.

The request for a computer room was again raised in the course of a meeting which officials of my Ministry had with the hon. Member on 05 July 2006 and it has been agreed that the matter would be looked into in the context of new proposals for the next financial year.

Computer classes will continue to be held in the library until such time that a new computer room will be constructed.

Mrs Juggoo: May I ask the hon. Minister if he is aware that the staff room is being used as a store and the computer room right now?

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, my information is that the library is being used as a computer room, but I'll check what the hon. Member is saying.

UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF DESIGN OF MYSORE, INDIA - RECOGNITION

(No. B/1232) Mrs B. Juggoo (Third Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Professional Architects Council, information as to whether the University School of Design of Mysore is recognised by the Council, and if not, why not.

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker Sir, I am advised that the Tertiary Education Commission which is responsible for the recognition and equivalence of post secondary educational qualifications contacted the Professional Architects Council of Mauritius and the answer is in the negative as –

- (1) The University School of Design of Mysore, India, is not recognised by the Commonwealth Association of Architects (CAA) as provided for under the Professional Architects Council Act 1988.

- (2) Furthermore, from the academic point of view, the University School of Mysore is not recognised by the University Grants Commission (UGC) of India and All India Council of Technical Education (AICTE), India, is also not accredited by the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) of India.

Mrs Juggoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, since 2002/2003, the University of Architecture and Design of Mysore has been recognised. It is also recognised by the Indian Council of Architecture. If the hon. Minister could please look into this case, because there are many students from Mauritius who are studying there, they have been granted a student visa and for the past three years they have spent money to study there. Now they are left with two years; they are coming back and the degree will not be recognised by the Architects Council of Mauritius. Can the hon. Minister look into the matter and see to it that these Mauritian students are being protected?

Mr Gokhool: I'll look into the matter, Mr Speaker, Sir, but as the hon. Member should know, the Indian High Commission provides advice and guidance to all students. This matter is taken care of by the Indian High Commission, but I'll look into the case of the students which have just been mentioned.

COLLEGE TECHNIQUE SAINT GABRIEL – STUDENTS – CONCESSIONARY BUS FARES

(No. B/1233) Mrs B. Juggoo (Third Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping whether, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the National Transport Authority, information as to whether the students of the College Technique Saint Gabriel were issued with a Student Identity Card to travel at concessionary rate.

The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping (Dr. R. Beebeejaun): Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that students of College Technique Saint Gabriel have already been issued with student identity cards on 16 October 2006.

This will allow them to benefit from concessionary fares during school holidays, weekends and public holiday and free travel during school days.

PRIVATE SECONDARY SCHOOLS – GRANTS ALLOCATION - CRITERIA

(No. B/1234) Mr G. Guinness (Third Member for Montagne Blanche and GRSE) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Private Secondary Schools Authority, information as to whether it is proposed to review the criteria laid down for the allocation of grants to private secondary schools.

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I would like to reply to PQs B/1234 and B/1256 at the same time as they both deal with the same issue.

The allocation of grants to private secondary schools is based on a formula recommended by the Management Audit Bureau (MAB) since 1989. The aim thereof is to facilitate the running and management of private secondary schools and at the same time to enhance the quality of education in these schools by providing them the required financial means.

All schools which meet the criteria of the PSSA for registration as a school accordingly obtain grants for their operation, management and maintenance. The information regarding the criteria for the allocation of grants to private secondary schools is being tabled.

The formula is revised every three years on the basis of cost increase, achievement, and new policy orientations. The last MAB Report on the review of the grant formula for period 01 July 2003 to 30 June 2006 was released in May 2004 and was implemented retrospectively from 01 July 2003. The exercise for the review of the formula for period 01 July 2006 to 30 June 2009 is presently being carried out by the MAB.

As regards the specific point as to whether it is proposed to review the criteria for allocation of grants, it is premature at this stage to reply in a

definitive manner to the question as the MAB has not yet submitted its final report on the review of the Comprehensive Grant Formula. However, I understand that in the course of its current exercise, the MAB has made some proposals, which it is presently discussing with all stakeholders, including the Federation of Unions of Managers of Private Secondary Schools. It appears that the Managers have interpreted the preliminary proposals of the MAB as final ones. Unfortunately, the Managers walked out of the meeting without giving the MAB an opportunity to explain its proposals.

I wish to add, Mr Speaker, Sir, that the Federation of Unions of Managers has asked for an increase of 67% .

Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to draw the attention of hon. Members that the exercise for the review of the Comprehensive Grant Formula is carried out independently by the MAB and that my Ministry has been apprised of the preliminary proposals made by the MAB only on 10 October.

I have requested the MAB to resume discussions with the Federation of Managers and to reach a consensus thereon. I plan to inform the Cabinet on the issue and I shall, in due course, meet the Managers to explain to them the favoured option. In this respect, Government will examine the request of the Managers in the context of the ongoing educational reforms but also taking into account the present economic context as well as the fact that the present formula dates back to 1989, some 17 years back.

Mr Guinness: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister said that preliminary proposals were submitted to his Ministry on 10 October. Can we know from the preliminary proposals whether the incentive grants, which were given to Managers of schools for infrastructure, will be abolished? Can the Minister confirm whether this is true?

Mr Gokhool: I can't go into the details at this stage because I have requested the MAB to go for further discussions. So, it won't be appropriate at this time to go into the details.

Mr Guinness: The Minister must be aware that the main contention of the Managers, who are, in fact, threatening for a lockout in January, is that the revised grant formula, that is, the proposal which has been submitted to

his Ministry takes into account, the student population and the performance of the students only. These are the only criteria. Is it true?

Mr Gokhool: I think I replied that the whole exercise is taking into consideration the views expressed by the Managers as well as those of all the stakeholders. Besides, I also mentioned that the proposal of the Managers is for an increase of 67%. So, in the light of all this information, the discussions are going on and I think it is premature at this stage to go into the details of what formula is being proposed, but I will certainly inform the House at the right time when the formula is agreed upon.

Mrs Martin: Mr Speaker, Sir, the Minister has mentioned that he asked the MAB to reconvene meetings with the federation of Managers to resume discussions. Does he have any specific dates onto which this meeting is scheduled?

Mr Gokhool: I have already asked the MAB a week ago, but the Managers - as the colleague of the hon. Member mentioned - said that they will go for a lockout. There is some communication to be done before they come to the negotiating table and this is being done. My information is that they have not yet come back to the negotiating table yet.

Mr Guinness: Can we know from the Minister whether he himself convened the union of Managers for any meeting to sort out matters?

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, as I informed, this particular exercise is specific to MAB, otherwise I have been meeting the union of Managers very regularly and I strongly believe that we should maintain the partnership between the private secondary schools and the Government schools.

Mr Guinness: The Minister keeps on hammering that the Managers are requesting a 67% increase. Can the Minister tell the House whether he has the detailed proposal that the Managers have submitted to the MAB?

Mr Gokhool: I do not have the detailed proposal, but I have a picture of what they are looking for. As I said, we have to look into it in terms of new policy orientations, the economic situation and, at the end of the day, I think we should see – and my hon. colleague will agree with me – the educational interests of the students. That should be the bottom line. Other things can be discussed and agreed upon.

Mr Guinness: Can the Minister tell the House if the MAB comes, in fact, with the abolishing of the incentive grant formula...

Mr Speaker: This is a hypothetical question.

Mr Guinness: Let me rephrase my question, Mr Speaker, Sir. The Managers have said that the incentive grant formula is a must for them because this brings improvement. Therefore, what will be the position of the Minister...

Mr Speaker: That is also a hypothetical question.

The Table has been advised that PQ B/1262 has been withdrawn.
Next question hon. Guinness!

TROU D'EAU DOUCE – PLEASURE CRAFT OPERATORS – LICENCE

(No. B/1235) Mr G. Gunness (Third Member for Montagne Blanche and GRSE) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism, Leisure and External Communications whether in regard to pleasure craft operators in Trou d'Eau Douce, he will state –

- (a) the number of licensees, and
- (b) if a survey has been carried out to assess the number of those operating without a licence and, if so, indicate the remedial measures taken, if any.

The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism, Leisure and External Communications (Mr X. L. Duval): Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed that 13 private pleasure crafts and 42 commercial pleasure crafts are licensed to operate in Trou d'Eau Douce. Additionally another 53 commercial pleasure craft operators are licensed to operate at neighbouring Ile aux Cerfs.

Concerning part (b), I am advised that the Tourism Authority has been carrying out regular spot checks in Trou d'Eau Douce area. During the latest spot checks carried out on 10 and 26 October 2006 respectively, 15 cases of licensed pleasure crafts operating outside their base of operation were found and no craft operating without a licence was detected. Written warnings have been issued to the offenders. Furthermore, I am advised that the National Coast Guard at Trou d'Eau Douce has, since January 2006, booked 30 pleasure craft operators for operating outside the approved base of operation. 13 of them have already been fined and the remaining 17 cases are under inquiry.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the House that when I took office in July 2005, a number of pleasure craft operators were operating in total disregard of the law without even respecting the minimum security norms at sea. This situation created an adverse impact on the image of Mauritius as a safe destination. I have consequently, requested the Tourism Authority to take necessary measures to remedy the situation.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the following measures have already been undertaken –

- (i) in view of the high density of pleasure crafts operating in the Trou d'Eau Douce area, there is now a moratorium on the issue of new commercial licences for pleasure crafts in the region stretching from St. Géran to Grand River South East, except in well-defined exceptional cases;
- (ii) in order to prevent speculation on the transfer of commercial licences, such transfers are no longer authorised;
- (iii) new regulations have been promulgated to provide for two categories of pleasure crafts, that is, those authorised to operate outside the lagoon and those restricted to inside the lagoon;
- (iv) three additional surveyors have been recruited, bringing the number employed by the Authority to five and they will shortly undergo a specialised training course. Surveys by outside surveyors are no longer accepted;
- (v) since July 2005 the Tourism Authority has trained 1,386 pleasure craft skippers who have passed the relevant competency test, compared to only 213 when I took office.
- (vi) a review of the maximum authorised passenger carrying capacity of pleasure crafts is presently under way, which has resulted in reductions in the carrying capacity of the number of crafts;
- (vii) a hotline has been installed at the Tourism Authority, to enable any complaint or incident to be reported and attended to. The service operates on a 24-hour, 7 days a week basis. The phone number is 8910;

Mr Speaker, Sir, although as can be seen, there have been many improvements, I am still not satisfied with the situation. In the new Tourism Bill, which we hope to introduce in the National Assembly before the end of this session, tougher measures will be provided for to discourage illegal

activities, as well as undesirable and dangerous behaviour and conduct by pleasure craft operators.

The Bill will provide for skippers operating a pleasure craft under the influence of alcohol and drugs to be severely punished.

Activities of canvassers will also be regulated.

Mr Speaker, Sir, since I took office, the Tourism Authority has revoked 8 commercial pleasure craft licences, whereas no such action had previously been taken. This is a clear indication that the Tourism Authority now means business.

Mr Guinness: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am sure that the Minister will agree that Trou d'Eau Douce has now become a saturation point. We can no longer allow people who do not have their base of operation there. Can I know from the Minister whether no new licence has been granted in Trou d'Eau Douce since July 2005 up to now?

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, as I said, there is now a moratorium on the issue of licences. There may be one or two exceptional licences, but there is a reason for each one of these.

Mr Guinness: In fact, two licences have been issued. This is the big problem in Trou d'Eau Douce. When Trou d'Eau Douce has become saturated, people can't understand how Government can grant two new licences over there.

Mr X. L. Duval: In fact, the moratorium, Mr Speaker, Sir, is our doing. There was no moratorium before. So, now there is a moratorium because, in fact, it is totally saturated. But there are cases and there will always be cases. For example, if a hotel sets up and there is a boathouse, they will need a licence. Some people had a special permission which has been put in order. There are always cases like that. You can't just look at 150 families operating in an area and say that's it, nothing more will happen. There are always a few cases, but as far as it can be done, we'll ensure that these are exceptional cases with good reason.

Mr Bérenger: Mr Speaker, Sir, since the Minister has said that he has implemented a moratorium, is he prepared to give all the details, the names and the reasons why these two licences were granted?

Mr X. L. Duval: I have got no problem. If the hon. Member comes with a substantive question, I'll provide the answer.

NATIONAL RESIDENTIAL PROPERTY TAX – REPRESENTATIONS

(No. B/1236) Mr G. Gunness (Third Member for Montagne Blanche & GRSE) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance & Economic Development whether, he will state if Government is proposing to amend the Income Tax Act, in regard to the National Residential Property Tax.

The Deputy Prime Minister & Minister of Finance (Mr R. Sithanen): Mr Speaker, Sir, we have set up a committee to consider representations that have been made that could make the National Residential Property Tax (NRPT) more effective in meeting its objectives.

Mr Speaker, Sir, let me remind the House that the income threshold above which the tax is payable exempts 90% of all households in Mauritius from this tax. This means that the tax concerns only 10% of households.

As the hon. Member is no doubt aware, any tax system may need fine tuning to ensure its objectives can be more effectively attained. This is a continual process, especially with a new tax such as the NRPT. Indeed, I previously explained to the House that we will need to refine it over time.

The committee will make appropriate and practical recommendations that take account of representations while ensuring that the overall incidence of taxation is fair and equitable and allows those with ability to pay to do so and make their fair contribution to the national adjustment efforts.

The committee comprises officers of the Ministry of Housing & Lands, the Valuation Department, the Mauritius Revenue Authority, the Ministry of Finance and a former Chief Government Valuer, Mr Ramrekha.

A decision will be taken in light of the findings and recommendations of the committee and any amendment deemed necessary will obviously be

brought to the Income Tax Act in due course. I wish to remind the House that the National Residential Property Tax will not become due before September next year.

Mr Bérenger: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Deputy Prime Minister must be aware of the statements made by the hon. Prime Minister as to how exactly amendments are going to be brought. Can I ask him whether he has discussed the issue with the Prime Minister and whether matters are now clear?

Mr Sithanen: Mr Speaker, Sir, I just gave the reply that a committee has been set up. There are various ways and means of doing that. Let the committee work in full independence and submit its recommendations to Government.

Mr Cuttaree: Being given that this issue was canvassed thoroughly by the Opposition, can I ask the hon. Deputy Prime Minister why he waited until there is a public uproar on this issue to come up with this committee?

Mr Sithanen: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Member has been in this House for a very long time. He knows very well the circumstances in which this was done. In fact, we can go into the debate about what is fairness, what is equity; whether it is fair for someone who earns a small income in a particular place of the country to pay a property tax and whether it is unfair for someone who has a big house in another part of the island not to pay. So, we have set up this committee - just like on other issues also there are standing committees, because we have brought many reforms. Let the committee work, and let's wait for its recommendations.

Mr Ganoo: But the impression that the Prime Minister gave when announcing the setting up of this committee was that Government would come back on the decision to introduce that measure.

Mr Sithanen: It's the impression of hon. Ganoo. He has so many impressions! I cannot prevent him from having impressions.

Mr Guinness: Mr Speaker, Sir, can the Deputy Prime Minister state in clear terms whether the Government is prepared to do away with this tax?

Mr Sithanen: Mr Speaker, Sir, let me be very candid about this. Everybody knows that we need to generate future source of income, so as not to rely on only one source of revenue in the long term. Let's try to be realistic. There are some people outside and inside this House who are saying that they are going to abolish income tax, corporate tax, import duties.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! Order!

Mr Sithanen: Mr Speaker, Sir, let me make a confession. I have not had the privilege to go to the same schools as them. I only attended Cassis Government School. How will they finance all Government expenditures if they abolish taxes?

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! Order, please!

(Interruptions)

Mr Sithanen: I am replying to the question. Mr Speaker, Sir, if...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! Order!

Mr Sithanen: Mr Speaker, Sir, if they come and say that they are going to abolish income tax, corporate tax, they are going to accelerate *le démantèlement* of import duties, they should tell us how much they are going to increase VAT, and how much *licenciements* they are going to make. Otherwise, as the French are fond of saying: '*le compte n'est pas bon*'.

Mr Cuttaree: Mr Speaker, Sir, to come back to the question that has been asked by hon. Ganoo, the impression – if the hon. Minister will go and read what the Prime Minister said – the Prime Minister gave was that this measure, as presented, is unfair. Therefore, what I am asking the hon. Deputy Prime Minister is why, in spite of all the criticisms brought against

this unfair measure, he maintained his Finance Bill and it is only now that he is trying to backpedal?

Mr Sithanen: Mr Speaker, Sir, let me tell hon. Cuttaree – because he likes to play politics. We are talking about a tax that exempts 90% of the people of this country. Let me be very honest about it; let's not play politics about it. From the 30,000 people who will pay this tax, many can pay it, Mr Speaker, Sir. Hon. Cuttarree knows; he travels across the country also. He comes from a constituency where people with low or middle income have to pay property tax. He knows how many people in other places of the country, in the constituency of hon. Ganoo, can pay this tax. Let's also be fair to these people also.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Deputy Prime Minister whether he agrees that the idea of tying up the National Residential Property Tax to income was a wrong decision and has to be reviewed?

Mr Sithanen: Obviously, we never said that, Mr Speaker, Sir.

IRA & NATIONAL WAGES COUNCIL

(No. B/1237) Mr S. Soodhun (Fifth Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Minister of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment whether he will state if Government is proposing to introduce a new piece of legislation to replace the Industrial Relations Act and, if so –

- (a) when, and
- (b) if it will provide for the setting up of a National Wages Council.

Dr. Bunwaree: Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to refer the hon. Member to my replies made to PQ IB/582 and B/108 on 06 December 2005 and 04 April 2006 respectively.

I wish to inform the House that, on 28 July 2006, Cabinet examined the proposals of my Ministry on the new legal framework which is to replace the IRA and agreed to the setting up of a High Powered Committee chaired by the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport & Shipping to examine the proposals made and make appropriate

policy recommendations in the context of the new economic environment. The matter is still being considered by the High Powered Committee which has met on 24 August, 07 September and 13 September 2006.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the House will appreciate that, at this stage, it would be difficult for me to indicate a date by which the new pieces of legislation will be finalised.

As regards part (b) of the question, I wish to inform the House that the setting up of a National Wages Council is being considered by the same High Powered Committee.

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH & SAFETY ACT – PROCLAMATION

(No. B/1238) Mr S. Soodhun (Fifth Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Minister of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment whether, in regard to the discussions held by his Ministry with the Ministry of Civil Service and Administrative Reforms, with a view to proclaiming the Occupational Health & Safety Act, he will state where matters stand.

Dr. Bunwaree: Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to refer the hon. Member to my reply made to PQ B/26, wherein I informed that the main reason for the non-proclamation of the Occupational Health & Safety Act was due to the inability of the Ministry of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms to recruit the required number of Safety and Health Officers, as there was a dearth of qualified candidates.

I have been informed that the Ministry of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms has recruited three additional Safety and Health Officers as from September 2006.

Furthermore, two officers of the general service who are presently following the part-time Diploma in Occupational Safety & Health have been posted to the Occupational Safety & Health Unit of the Ministry of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and are already supporting the existing Safety and Health Officers.

The unit has now six fully qualified Safety and Health Officers and two officers who are following the diploma course in Occupational Safety & Health.

After discussions, it was also agreed that the Ministry of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms should also conduct a risk assessment exercise to identify the number of high risk places of work in the Civil Service with a view to giving priority attention to them in the first instance with the limited number of Safety and Health officers.

This exercise is presently being carried out and on completion of the exercise, the Ministry of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms would be in a position to find an acceptable solution to ensure compliance with the Act, pending recruitment of the required number of staff.

Mr Soodhun: Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Minister confirm that this Bill has passed in the National Assembly in September 2005, and that it is high time, after one year to have it proclaimed?

Dr. Bunwaree: I agree, Mr Speaker, Sir. I gave the information. I don't want the Civil Service not to be taken on board. The other reason is that this Act allows us to proclaim clauses, but not all of them. I'll give a few weeks more to the Civil Service to come in line with the new legislation.

WORKERS - ACCIDENTS AT PLACE OF WORK – JULY 2005 - 31 OCTOBER 2006

(No. B/1239) Mr S. Soodhun (Fifth Member for La Caverne and Phoenix) asked the Minister of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment whether, in regard to cases of accidents met by workers at their place of work since July 2005 to date, he will state –

- (a) the number thereof, and
- (b) if all the inquiries that have been initiated thereinto have been completed.

Dr. Bunwaree: Mr Speaker, Sir, 277 cases of accidents met by workers at their place of work have been reported at the Occupational Safety and Health Inspectorate of my Ministry since July 2005 to date. The House

will be pleased to know that the number of fatal accidents has significantly come down from 22 in 2003, 18 in 2004 to 6 in 2005 and 5 from January 2006 to present date.

As regards inquiries, they have already been completed in 254 of these cases and action taken wherever necessary. Prosecution was instituted in 50 cases for breaches of legislation.

As regards the remaining 23 cases, inquiry is still in progress.

CEB – RETIRED EMPLOYEES – PENSION BENEFITS

(No. B/1240) Mr S. Naidu (Third Member for Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Public Utilities whether he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Central Electricity Board, information as to whether a decision has now been taken to adjust the pension benefits of retired employees, following the last salary exercise revision of the Board.

Dr. Kasenally: Mr Speaker, Sir, in my previous replies to Parliamentary Questions on this matter, I informed the House that, in the wake of the Compensation Review, consideration was being given to the adjustment of pensions payable to retired CEB employees.

I am informed that despite the fact that pension adjustment was never part of the defined terms and conditions of the employment of CEB staff, the Board has, in the past, favourably entertained request for such an adjustment. Unfortunately, despite all efforts, the present precarity of the financial situation of the CEB does not so permit.

HOSPITALS – SPECIALISTS – SHORTAGE

(No. B/1241) Mrs F. Jeewa-Daureeawoo (Third Member for Stanley and Rose Hill) asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether he is aware that there is a shortage of specialists in the different fields of medicines and, if so, will he state the measures Government is proposing to take or has already taken to –

- (a) ensure recruitment of same, and

- (b) encourage Mauritian medical practitioners presently undergoing specialisation courses abroad to come back after completing same to serve the country.

Mr Faugoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am aware of the shortage of specialists in the different fields of medicine. This has been the case for the past 15 years or so.

Out of an establishment of 232 specialists, we have body-wise 207 specialists in post which means that there is an actual shortage of 25 specialists. In fact, the following measures have been taken to palliate the shortage of specialists –

- 19 Mauritian doctors with a specialist qualifications have been assigned specialist duties;
- 23 Mauritian and 19 expatriates have been employed on a contract basis;
- 4 specialists have been employed on a month to month basis, and
- 5 specialists employed on a sessional basis.

The shortage of 25 would be further reduced next month with the availability of 12 specialists returning from sponsored training from abroad.

To palliate the shortage in certain fields like anaesthesia and general medicine, in addition to the recruitment of retired local doctors, action is being taken by my Ministry for the recruitment of more expatriates on a contract basis. The approval of the Public Service Commission is being sought.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the post of Specialist/Senior Specialist was advertised on 02 December 2004 for the different specialities. However, on 23 December 2004 the Medical Council drew the attention of the Public Service Commission that the qualifications mentioned in the fields of General Medicine, Obstetrics & Gynaecology, Paediatrics, Psychiatry and Pathology were not recognised as specialist qualifications if obtained after 30 June 2000. As such, the selection exercise for the specialities mentioned above was not carried out. The Ministry was left with the options of either amending the scheme of service or amending the Medical Council Act. This explains the non-filling of vacancies in a substantive capacity.

In terms of training, Mr Speaker, Sir, I have to point out that 16 doctors are presently receiving specialist training in France, eight in India, two in China and 15 Medical and Health Officers will be proceeding to France shortly for training.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (b) of the question, all doctors sponsored for specialist training are bonded and have to complete the course and return to Mauritius to continue serving the country for a period of at least seven years. For those who are self financing, very few are coming back in spite of the fact that Government has since April 1998 reintroduced the grant of private practice to specialists. However, even some of those few specialists who have returned to serve the country, have met with various impediments. In this connection, I have to point that it is most unfortunate that the amendment which was brought to the Medical Council Act in 2002 regarding the definition of specialist, resulted in the non-recognition by the Medical Council of certain postgraduate qualifications, especially those from United Kingdom. Thus Mauritian doctors possessing these qualifications have been discouraged from returning to Mauritius and those with such qualifications in service presently, are not assigned duties as specialist.

To address this problem, I am proposing to amend the Medical Council Act with a view to reviewing the recognition of specialist qualifications.

I have no doubt that all these measures will help to ease the current situation, Mr Speaker, Sir.

QUEEN VICTORIA HOSPITAL - POWER CUT – 02.10.06

(No. B/1242) Mrs F. Jeewa-Daureeawoo (Third Member for Stanley and Rose Hill) asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether he is aware that during the first week of October 2006, there has been a power cut at the Queen Victoria Hospital, Candos, and, if so, will be state –

- (a) if the generator at the Casualty Ward was out of order, and
- (b) the measures that have been taken to ensure that vital units of the hospital are provided with a continuous and uninterrupted power supply.

The Minister of Public Utilities (Dr. A. Kasenally): With your permission, Sir, I will answer to this question.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as regards part (a) of the question, I am advised that there was a power cut affecting the Victoria Hospital, Candos, at about 20.15 hours on Monday 02 October 2006, due to the failure of a CEB transformer which had been commissioned on the eve.

In accordance with the existing protocol, an Energy Services Division's (ESD) Electrician is always on call to cope with emergencies. Immediately, when solicited, the ESD staff reported on site. It was found that the stand-by generator had failed to start automatically. The generator was manually started and power supply restored to essential loads after some forty five minutes from the time of fault.

As regards part (b) of the question, the problem with the generator was diagnosed to be a burnt contactor and a faulty relay in its automatic change over panel, probably due to a transient over voltage. The necessary repairs were carried out and the generator was made operational the next day.

Owing to the problems encountered following the commissioning of the additional 500 KVA transformer, the load has been shifted to the old 500 KVA transformer and the situation is back to normal. The CEB has been requested to install one 1000 KVA transformer as originally requested instead of the two 500 KVA transformers. This should prove to be a definite solution to the problem.

Mr Bérenger: I am sure the hon. Minister will agree that there has been loss of light in a case like that. Can I ask the hon. Minister, since he has replied to the question, who was in charge of the maintenance - and I'm sure checking at regular intervals - whether the automatic generator was in shape and who is going to check that this does not happen again?

Dr. Kasenally: The Electrical Services Division of my Ministry is responsible for that. There is a protocol that everyday they check this switch over. As a matter of fact, Mr Speaker, Sir, that very morning they did check it and it was working. However, I wish to point out that the whole system of electrical wiring, not only at Victoria Hospital, but other hospitals need to be reviewed. To that effect, I understand there has been a substantial amount of

money voted to upgrade the panel at Victoria Hospital. However, there has been a litigation with the coming of the new out-patient department and the cardiac unit; the whole thing would have been overhauled to avoid this problem. But, however, there has been a litigation and, apparently, the contractor just left the place and the work has been stopped. However, I have requested the ESD to be doubly vigilant because we do not want to have power cuts in the hospitals. Fortunately, in these circumstances, the hospital theatres and the cardiac unit were not affected. However, there was one delivery room which was affected, but, fortunately there are automatic lights which come out immediately and there was a fairly straightforward delivery which was carried out without any hitch. The story that went around that a woman *était accrochée à une bougie pour un accouchement* is not correct, because when a woman or a patient is delivering she is already given oxygen and under that circumstance nobody would bring in *la bougie*, because there might be an explosion.

(Interruptions)

But, I agree with Members of the House, I am as concerned as all Members of this House to ensure that such things should never ever happen.

Mrs Jeewa-Daureeawoo: The hon. Minister is surely aware that this is not the first time that there is a power cut at Victoria Hospital. Same did occur in February 2006, this year. So, how does he explain that up to now nothing has been done?

Dr. Kasenally: Mr Speaker, Sir, it is not that nothing has been done. I have explained. In fact, there was another power cut a week afterwards, but the automatic generator took off. We have three automatic generators and that's why we have established a protocol that every day in the morning the generator is put on automatically and it is all recorded in a log book. The supervisor of the Electrical Services Division has given strict instructions to them to make sure that they go and check.

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister whether he has a report on the fault which occurred on the transformer which he himself stated was commissioned the day before and failed the next day and the reasons of that failure?.

Dr. Kasenally: I have made my own inquiries and apparently there had been a leak. I do not know whether there was an over voltage, but I am not aware of the precise technical details. I have asked a full inquiry to be done and I have also asked the CEB to ensure that the quality of equipment which they are ordering is of the highest quality.

Mr Lesjongard: This is very technical, Mr Speaker, Sir. This is what we call a foolproof system where we have an automatic change over switch, a transformer and a generator. If both fail, there must be a human responsibility. It is not because of the machines, that is, either the generator or the transformer. Will the Minister agree to that?

Dr. Kasenally: I could not agree much more than that, but you know this is a fail safe machine, but even double machines fail. This is why we asked a technician to be on call. I am seriously thinking whether the technician should not be resident as well; obviously this will cost a bit more money, but the life of somebody is more important, you'll agree with me, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Naidu: Mr Speaker, Sir, we are talking here about a generator, it could have been another critical life saving equipment, I would like to ask the Minister whether they intend to have a maintenance contract between the supplier and ...

Mr Speaker: The question does not arise. We are talking here of a specific problem that arises and supplementary questions must relate to that question.

BAICHOO MADHOO GOVT. SCHOOL – STD V TEACHER - REPRESENTATIONS

(No. B/1243) Mrs F. Labelle (Third Member for Vacoas & Floreal) asked the Minister of Education & Human Resources whether he will state if he has received a petition from some parents of the Baichoo Madhoo Government School, requesting that a teacher working with a Standard V class be transferred and, if so, will he state –

- (a) the reasons supporting the request, and
- (b) the actions taken, if any.

Mr Gokhool: Yes, Sir. My Ministry received formal representations from some parents of pupils of Std V Green of Baichoo Madhoo Government School against the class teacher on two occasions, namely on 17 September and 25 September 2006 respectively.

The representations related to -

- (i) pedagogical issues like lack of motivation and deterioration in performance of pupils with poor grading subject wise and
- (ii) strained relationships between some parents and teachers due to lack of proper communication.

Earlier in March and May 2006 respectively, some parents had made verbal representations with the Head Teacher of the school. The matter was dealt with at school level and the Head Teacher arranged for a meeting with the teacher concerned and some of the parents to clarify the situation. It then appeared to the Head Teacher that the matter had been settled.

However, from what I understand, some parents were still not satisfied with the performance of the teacher neither were they satisfied with the explanations or clarifications provided to them.

As regards the formal representations made, these were given due consideration and the following actions were taken –

- (i) firstly, there was a meeting between the Head Teacher and the pedagogical inspectors to verify the validity of these complaints and to monitor the performance of the teacher in the last week of September 2006;
- (ii) secondly, the inspectors carried out a pedagogical inspection in the same class. The inspections revealed no major shortcomings except for a few and the inspectors recommended remedial action to be taken;

- (iii) the Zone Director personally had a meeting with the Head Teacher, the parents and the incriminated teacher to clarify the situation.

In the light of the meeting it was again confirmed that most of the parents had nothing against the pedagogical performance of the teacher and the real issue was one of absence of communication between the two parties.

Consequently, it was agreed that the teacher concerned would continue with his class and advice has been given to him to improve communications with the parents. The Head Teacher was also requested to monitor the situation closely.

Although, primary school is almost over – they are on holidays - I understand that the situation is back to normal.

Mrs Labelle: May I ask the hon. Minister whether he is aware of the criteria used by the parents to complain about the pedagogical performance of the teacher?

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, I said there were pedagogical issues and there is a report by the Inspectorate. There were low performance and the children were not motivated in the class and also the communication between the teacher and the pupils was not good. These are some of the main findings that the Inspectorate put before the Ministry.

Mrs Labelle: Mr Speaker, Sir, is it not a fact that parents were complaining that their wards did not receive what they consider as satisfactory grades, that is, the A⁺?

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, I think you will allow me to clarify one point. I expected the hon. Lady to bring in the A⁺. Mr Speaker, Sir, the A⁺ grading is but one initiative of the overall reform agenda and in this case, the A⁺ relates to the CPE examinations. I understand the point of view of the hon. lady and the Opposition...

(Interruptions)

They are against. In fact, the question asked by the hon. lady gives an indication. I checked personally, I read the report and parents spoke to me.

They said: “Mr Minister, just improve the communication and things will go on”. We have to bear in mind that it was September, the last month of the semester. I am appealing to the Members of the Opposition, they have made their point about A⁺. The public knows about it. I ask them not to overdo it. Let the students go on with their education smoothly, let’s calm down the situation.

(Interruptions)

Miss Deerpalsing: Mr Speaker, Sir, I think I know the case of the teacher we are talking about. I would like to ask the hon. Minister whether the teacher – this is where we should not mix issues – we are talking about in this question is the one on whom there were complaints from parents to the Head Teacher concerning physical violence on children?

Mr Gokhool: In fact, Mr Speaker, Sir, some of the complaints were related to the relationship, but I am not sure about what the hon. Member is saying concerning physical violence. It is in terms of the language that was used...

(Interruptions)

This is serious. I take it very seriously. If the hon. Member has evidence to the fact that physical violence was used, I will certainly look into that. I checked my information and what I was told is that the language was harsh and could lead to problems.

Mrs Labelle: May I ask the hon. Minister whether, following the incident at Bachoo Madhoo Govt. School, his Ministry has given instructions to all schools so that grade A⁺ is not being put on the results?

Mr Speaker: I am sorry. The hon. Member should come with a substantive question.

Mrs Labelle: Maybe if you want, I am going to rephrase my question, Mr Speaker, Sir. Will the Minister say whether one of the actions is to ask schools not to put A⁺ on the result of the students?

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. lady is reading too much. There is no connection whatsoever. I have said that.

NATIONAL DETOXIFICATION CENTRE – BEAU BASSIN

(No. B/1244) Mrs F. Labelle (Third Member for Vacoas and Floreal) asked Minister of Social Security, National Solidarity and Senior Citizens Welfare & Reform Institutions whether, in regard to the new Detoxification Centre of Beau Bassin, he will state if it has started its operations and, if so –

- (a) when;
- (b) the number of patients admitted, and
- (c) the number of patients who have completed the in-patient treatment.

Mrs Bappoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission I will reply to both Parliamentary Questions Nos. B/1243 and PQ B/1263 together.

The National Detoxification Centre at Barkly, Beau Bassin started its operations on 27 September 2006 in spite of its inauguration on 20 June 2005, a few days before the general election, due to the fact that –

- (i) the infrastructural facilities needed in the building were not yet completed;
- (ii) no furniture and office equipment had been procured;
- (iii) only 10% of the medical supplies were available, and
- (iv) no *modus operandi* had been finalised.

The Centre is run on a 14-day in-patient basis according to the existing Tri-codeine Solco protocol. It can accommodate a maximum of 20 patients. But to start with, only 15 drug addicts are admitted on a referral system. So far 43 patients have been admitted, and, as at date, 15 drug addicts have already completed their in-patient treatment and 13 others are undergoing treatment.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am advised that whereas -

- (i) a first batch of 15 drug addicts was admitted on 27 September; one patient left the Centre on his own accord the next day after signing the necessary papers. Five other patients, who were very violent, threatened and verbally abused the medical, paramedical and administrative staff. After several unsuccessful attempts to redress the situation, they were requested to leave the Centre on 02 October accompanied by their social workers. The remaining 9 patients completed their detoxification programme;

- (ii) the second batch of 14 drug addicts was admitted on 11 October 2006. Five days later, on 16 October, 8 among them turned again unruly, more violent and even threatened to harm the personnel with needles. When the attempts to calm them down proved vain, they were also asked to leave the premises accompanied by their respective social workers. The treatment continued smoothly for the remaining 6 addicts;
- (iii) a third batch of 14 patients was admitted on 25 October but one of them was admitted to Dr. Jeetoo Hospital for other health problems and the rest are still undergoing treatment.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the medical and paramedical staff did encounter some problems in dealing with substance abusers as it is so much normal to expect some teething troubles given the profile of the patients at the very beginning of the opening of the centre. It is worth noting that a few of the medical and paramedical staff had hands-on experience in dealing with drug addicts at ward 13 of Brown Sequad Hospital where a similar service is provided. However, the House may wish to know that there has been no reported case of any physical violence at the Barkly Centre. All the problems that have occurred have been dealt with promptly and tactfully because the safety and security of the personnel is of paramount importance in such an environment.

With regard to the role of the NGOs, I have to inform the House that the patients are screened, motivated and prepared psychologically at their respective treatment centres before being admitted for medical detoxification. They also receive counselling and support from the social workers during their medical detoxification phase at the Barkly Centre. After detoxification they return to their respective treatment centres for follow-up, rehabilitation and after-care.

The Treatment and Rehabilitation Centres have been properly briefed on what is expected from them. I have personally met all the Directors and Chairpersons of all the NGOs concerned to request them to be more vigilant in the screening exercise and the preparation of the patients prior to their being referred to the centre for medical detoxification. The treatment centres and the social workers are, Mr Speaker, Sir, key players just like the medical and paramedical personnel. They are involved in the pre-treatment, per-treatment and post-treatment phases.

This consultative exercise with the NGOs has yielded positive results as, for the time being, no problem has occurred with the third batch of substance abusers. The centre is now running smoothly and I do hopefully expect that we will achieve our objectives.

Mrs Labelle: Mr Speaker, Sir, I thank the hon. Minister for her long answer, but even though I would like to have additional information. Regarding the first batch, is it a fact that the incident arose since one of the patients suffered an acute withdrawal symptom firstly; and secondly, the other patients were complaining about the uncleanliness of the toilets and bathrooms?

Mrs Bappoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, as for the first part of the question, I have to refer back to the medical staff of the centre so that I can give the correct answer to it. But as to the cleanliness or uncleanliness of the centre, Mr Speaker, Sir, I just said, at the very beginning of my answer, we have inherited a centre which had nothing as infrastructure or toilet facilities. We had to disburse Rs1 m partly from the UNODC project and partly from the officers to put up and to start with a centre, which is a full-fledged centre. Due to the behaviour and attitudes of the inpatients, at times these were the problems, but nothing as uncleanliness and nothing as it was reported in the press because of jam, the whole thing was stopped - that's purely nonsense.

Mr Lauthan: The hon. Minister is misleading the House in saying that there was no protocol. What she has been saying is...

Mr Speaker: Can you address the Chair, please?

Mr Lauthan: What she has elaborated about the treatment protocol are in the files with the help of the NGOs' accompaniment and then after-care treatment. Can the hon. Minister inform the House about a conflicting declaration of the Chairman who said, following these incidents, that the patients would no longer go through the NGOs. They would be referred directly by psychiatric private practice. Can we have the stand of the hon. Minister?

Mrs Bappoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, first, the hon. Member is himself misleading the House about the opening of this centre. We inherited a building which was not completed. Many facilities like office space were lacking; no furniture were yet procured in the building. At the inauguration

time, the then Minister decided to borrow furniture and beds from the Rehabilitation Youth Centre just for the purpose of

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Mrs Bappoo: Now, as far as the NGOs are concerned, I have just explained. We have appealed to the NGOs for the proper screening exercise and conditioning these patients before coming to the treatment. This existing protocol is being used. This is the way we are continuing and it is running on smoothly.

Mr Lauthan: Can we know from the hon. Minister the proportional ratio of paramedical staff, who have past experience in dealing with drug addicts?

Mrs Bappoo: Two members of the staff, scheduled for this centre, posted by the Ministry of Health have got training and experience because they were attached to ward 13 of the Brown Sequard Hospital.

Mr Lauthan: Out of how many?

Mrs Bappoo: It is good, Mr Speaker, Sir, to inform the House that the Ministry of Health had hundred percent collaborated with the Ministry and the Centre and has provided all the staff, be they medical, paramedical and even those who are supposed to help such as the psychiatrists who come once a week on a session basis, even driver and ambulance round the clock. We have one medical officer on a twenty-four hour basis and all the others are from the Ministry of Health. Two of them were attached to ward 13 of the Brown Sequard Hospital.

Mr Lauthan: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister has not replied to my question.

Mr Speaker: The hon. Member has asked about the ratio.

Mr Lauthan: Precisely, these incidents are the consequences of those inexperienced paramedical staff.

Mrs Bappoo: There is only one doctor on a 24-hour basis. This concerns the medical staff. There are two other ...

(Interruptions)

But the others have anything to do with the in-patients. As far as the implementation of the protocol is concerned, there are already two experienced officers from Ward 3 of the Brown Sequad Hospital. We know that training is very important for those responsible of such a centre and as from 07 to 11 November we are having Dr. Ryan, a consultant from U.K., who will be running a full course training for the medical and paramedical staff.

PREVOCATIONAL TEACHERS – EDUCATION OFFICERS - APPOINTMENT

(No. B/1245) Mrs F. Labelle (Third Member for Vacoas and Floreal) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether, in regard to prevocational teachers who have completed the Teachers Diploma (Prevocational), he will –

(a) for the benefit of the House, obtain from -

- (i) the Mauritius Institute of Education, the number thereof to date;
- (ii) the Private State Secondary Authority, the number thereof who have subsequently been appointed as Education Officer, indicating since when, and

(b) state the number thereof, in the public sector, who have subsequently been appointed as Education Officer, indicating since when.

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (a) (i) of the question, the answer is 52.

As regards part (a) (ii) of the question, 34 of the 52 teachers who had completed the Teacher's Diploma Pre-Vocational Programme were from

private schools. Of these 34, 29 were appointed as Education Officers during the period December 2004 to September 2005, namely –

26 as from December 2004
1 as from 17 January 2005
1 as from 01 August 2005
1 as from 29 September 2005

As regards part (b) of the question, none of the 18 who were teaching in the pre-vocational stream of State Secondary Schools and had completed the Teacher's Diploma (Pre-Vocational) have been appointed Education Officer to date.

Mrs Labelle: May I know from the Minister whether those in the public sector will be appointed as has been the case for their colleagues in the private sector who followed the course?

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, I did reply to a Parliamentary Question relating to this issue and I did say that the recruitment exercise was delayed because there was a *mise en demeure* put against the Ministry as regards the scheme of service. The matter was referred to the State Law Office for advice. Subsequently, the posts of Education Officer Pre-vocational and Teacher Secondary Pre-vocational were advertised by the Public Service Commission on 07 September 2006 and the closing date for submission of the application was 27 September 2006. However, following an injunction filed by the Technical School Management Trust Fund Employees Union, my Ministry has been summoned to appear before the honourable Judge in Chambers on 30 October. The case has been postponed to 16 November 2006.

Mrs Labelle: Will the hon. Minister inform the House whether the advertisement which he has just mentioned has been amended three times and the last amendment excludes these prevocational teachers from applying for the post of Education Officers?

Mr Gokhool: I do not think this is correct because the schemes of service are approved by the PSC. I do not think this is correct.

Mrs Labelle: Is it not a fact that the last amendment on the advertisement mentioned that those with the Teacher's Diploma (Pre-vocational) will not be considered for this present intake?

Mr Gokhool: There is a logic. I think this is the crux of the problem. People who hold a diploma want to be appointed as Education Officers and this is where the *litige* is. It is a matter which is before the Court.

Mr Speaker: If the case is *sub judice* I think we have to be very careful.

SMALL PLANTERS WELFARE FUND - REGIONAL OFFICE - TRANSFER

(No. B/1246) Mrs F. Labelle (Third Member for Vacoas and Floreal) asked the Minister of Agro industry and Fisheries whether he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Small Planters Welfare Fund, information as to whether its office has been transferred from Royal Road, La Marie, Vacoas and, if so –

- (a) where is it now located, and
- (b) the amount of rent that –
 - (i) was paid at its former location, and
 - (ii) is being paid at its new location.

The Minister of Industry, Small & Medium Enterprises, Commerce and Co-operatives (Dr. R. Jeetah): Mr Speaker, Sir, as regards part (a), I am advised that the regional office of the Small Planters Welfare Fund for the centre of the country has been transferred from La Marie Road, Vacoas to La Croisée, Glen Park, Vacoas since February 2006, following a tender exercise.

As regards part (b), the rental per square feet of the new building amounts to Rs3.33 as compared to Rs10 for the previous building.

SQUATTERS – BAMBOUS & CAMP LEVIEUX - RELOCATION

(No. B/1247) Mr G. Lesjongard (Second Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Housing and Lands whether, in regard to the relocation of the squatters in the regions of Bambous and Camp Levieux, he will state where matters stand.

Mr Dulull: Mr Speaker, Sir, I refer the hon. Member to my replies to PQ No. B/525 on 16 May 2006 and PQ Nos B/559 and B/580 on 23 May 2006 regarding the relocation of ex-NHDC squatters.

I confirm that 76 families have each been granted a building site lease at Bambous.

I am advised that further consideration is being given under the Empowerment Programme to assist the beneficiaries in constructing their houses in the context of an Integrated Social Housing Programme.

Mr Ganoo: May I know what type of houses is going to be built at Bambous?

Mr Dulull: Under the Empowerment Programme we will help the beneficiaries to construct their own houses.

Mr Ganoo: What type of housing is going to be constructed.

Mr Dulull: It is going to be social housing.

Mr Ganoo: Is it going to be in concrete or corrugated iron sheets?

Mr Dulull: Formerly, the Trust Fund used to give iron and wood. But we want concrete houses.

Mr Cuttaree: May I know whether these people will have to purchase the land?

Mr Dulull: Under the Empowerment Programme we will give site and services. We want to empower the people to take their own destiny. *Ce n'est pas dans notre programme de créer une nation d'assistés.*

Mr Lesjongard: In a statement made to the House in August, the hon. Minister had given assurance to the House that those 76 hardship cases that he mentioned would be taken care of. He said in the days to come services would be made available on site to those families.

Can I ask the Minister whether those services are now present on site?

Mr Dulull: We are in the process of providing the services.

Mr Bérenger: Can I ask the hon. Minister - since emphasis is always put on the fact that tourism is a major engine for economic development – whether he has received representations about the kind of eyesores that are going to be developed and are already being built between a cemetery and the highway leading to tourism areas? Can I ask the Minister whether he has received representations and how this is going to be improved for the sake of these people as well as for the tourism development?

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Mr Dulull: I totally agree with the hon. Member, but I wish to remind the hon. Member that the current eyesores are the consequences of the way in which the previous Government was managing the country.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! Order!

(Interruptions)

I said order! Order, please!

Mr Dulull: We have taken the commitment to eliminate that sort of eyesore. We want to manage the country in more decent ways not as was being done before.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! Order, please!

Hon. Bhagwan, I am telling you that I am losing patience with you.

(Interruptions)

You can't interrupt the proceedings of the House like that every time.

(Interruptions)

Order, I said! Are you challenging my ruling?

(Interruptions)

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the Minister whether he can confirm that these 76 families have been without electricity supply or water supply since July 2005?

Mr Dulull: We wanted to relocate the ex-squatters of the NHDC and with our means we want to give them a decent way of living. I rest assured that the struggle for the elimination of poverty is one of our major concerns.

Mr Lesjongard: The hon. Minister has not answered my question. Does he agree that among those families, there are children who have had to go and sit for the CPE exams without electricity supply in those houses?

Mr Speaker: Does the Minister have an answer?

Mr Dulull: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have already answered and I said that we will look into the matter.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Speaker, Sir, can the Minister confirm to the House that all the houses whose keys he has delivered recently, were constructed by the previous Government?

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! What is the answer? Does the hon. Minister have an answer?

Mr Dulull: Mr Speaker, Sir, we have delivered houses which we completed under our mandate.

KARO KALIPTIS, BATTERIE CASSEE – SQUATTERS - SURVEY

(No. B/1248) Mr G. Lesjongard (Second Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Housing and Lands whether, in regard to the squatters of the region of Karo Kaliptis Batterie Cassée, he will state -

- (a) if a survey has been carried out to ascertain the number thereof and, if so, if it has been completed, and
- (b) if a decision has been taken for their relocation and, if not, why not.

Mr Dulull: Mr Speaker, Sir, I refer the hon. Member to my reply to PQ No. B/504 on 16 May 2006 regarding the situation of squatters at Karo Kaliptis, Batterie Cassée.

In regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed that in accordance with the last survey carried out on 27 October 2006, there are 50 families still living at Karo Kaliptis, Batterie Cassée.

Regarding part (b) of the question, I wish to inform the House that a Multi-Sectoral Committee has been set up to come up with a comprehensive report on the issue of residential squatters around the island. I am advised that the Report is being finalised for submission to Cabinet for its consideration.

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Speaker, Sir, about five months have elapsed now and no concrete decision has been taken regarding the squatters of Karo Kaliptis. At least the Minister should go for a second visit and see the conditions in which those families are staying there.

Mr Dulull: I wish to remind the hon. Member that the situation at Karo Kaliptis is not from the last months, it's from the previous five years, and nothing has been done.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

PERE LAVAL PILGRIMAGE – WORKS UNDERTAKEN

(No. B/1249) Mr G. Lesjongard (Second Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Local Government whether, in regard to the recent pilgrimage of Père Laval, he will state if capital works were carried out in connection therewith, and, if so, will he –

- (a) state the amount of money spent by Government, and
- (b) for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Municipal Council of Port Louis, information as to the amount of money it has spent.

Dr. David: Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the House that Government attended to all – I would like to underline the word “all” - requests from the *Paroisse Père Laval* for assistance in the context of the recent pilgrimage to the shrine of Père Laval which pertained *inter-alia* to –

- (i) placing of additional handrails in the inside alley leading to the ‘*Caveau*’;
- (ii) a new entrance in the low block fencing to facilitate access and ensure security;
- (iii) podium and sound system;
- (iv) wide display screen, and
- (v) public lighting

All the above works were carried out by in-house labour and were cost effective.

The House may, therefore, wish to note that there had been no request for capital works.

The House may also wish to note that Father Raymond Zimmermann of *Paroisse Père Laval* has, in a letter dated 20 September 2006, thanked

Government for having put in place all the necessary infrastructure and for making the pilgrimage a success.

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask if the Minister is aware of the condition of the road leading to Père Laval church?

Dr. David: Mr Speaker, Sir, we had, prior to the pilgrimage, several meetings chaired by the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism, Leisure & External Communications on which were represented members of the Church, several Ministries, the Ministry for Tourism, my Ministry, including the Municipalities, the NDU and the Ministry of Information Technology. All of them were present including representatives of the parish. Submissions were made and fulfilled. Secondly, we had several site visits as well, and the church representative was totally satisfied with what has been done.

Mr Lesjongard: May I inform the Minister that he should ask or request the Municipality of Port Louis to go and have a look because this is important, Mr Speaker, Sir, there are potholes in the roads leading to the Church. Can the Minister confirm whether *la Route des Pamplémousses* was asphalted in context with the pilgrimage of Père Laval?

Dr. David: Mr Speaker, Sir, I would not have read it, but may I inform the House of a letter which we have received by the Church itself. La lettre a été adressée à moi –

“M. le ministre, par ces quelques mots, je viens vous exprimer ma profonde gratitude pour l’aide et le soutien que vous nous avez accordé ...”

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Dr. David: You won’t cover my voice!

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Dr. David: “... à l’occasion de la fête du Père Laval. Grâce à la

*bonne coordination entre les divers ministères toutes les infrastructures requises pour le bon déroulement du pèlerinage ont été mises en **place...**"*

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Dr. David: *"Recevez, M. le Ministre, mes sentiments les plus respectueux."*

*Signé Père Raymond Zimmermann,
Directeur du centre Père Laval.*

Mr Lesjongard: My question is a very direct question. I want to know from the Minister whether *la Route des Pamplémousses* was asphalted in the context of the pilgrimage of Père Laval. This is a very simple question.

Dr. David: Whatever was requested was done.

Mr Speaker: Next question, hon. Lesjongard. Stop arguing!

LE MORNE – CORE AND BUFFER ZONES

(No. B/1250) Mr G. Lesjongard (Second Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Arts and Culture whether, in regard to Le Morne, he will state –

- (a) if new core and buffer zones boundaries have been delimited, and
- (b) if Government is proposing to take actions to retrieve the State lands granted thereat and, if so, the extent of land that will be retrieved.

Mr Gowressoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, in September 2005, Dr. Abungu, who was delegated by UNESCO to prepare the nomination dossier of Le Morne, defined the core and buffer zones. The World Heritage Centre found the dossier to be incomplete.

UNESCO subsequently recommended that we contact Dr. Odendaal to complete the dossier. Dr. Odendaal came to Mauritius in August 2006 and prepared a revised draft nomination dossier.

Dr. Odendaal will come to Mauritius in December 2006 to finalise the nomination dossier as well as the management plan of Le Morne before the deadline of 01 February 2007.

Thus, the issue raised in part (b) of the question does not arise at this stage, as the dossier has not yet been finalised.

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the Minister whether he has received strong representations regarding the Management Plan?

Mr Gowressoo: As I have mentioned, we are waiting for Dr. Odendaal to come to Mauritius in December 2006.

Mr Lesjongard: No. Whether in the meantime he has received strong representations from stakeholders regarding the Management Plan?

Mr Gowressoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am still maintaining that we are waiting for Dr. Odendaal to finalise the nomination dossier.

EMPOWERMENT PROGRAMME – PROJECTS

(No. B/1251) Miss K. R. Deerpalsing (Third Member for Belle Rose and Quatre Bornes) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to the Empowerment Programme, he will consider publishing on the internet, on a quarterly basis, the details of the projects and their related expenses.

The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development (Mr R. Sithanen): Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I shall reply to PQ 1251 and PQ 1255 together as they both relate to the Empowerment Programme.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as the House is no doubt aware, the Empowerment Programme is a key pillar of the Economic Reform Programme. It is a tool to democratize the economy and return the country to growth by helping our citizens help themselves. The Programme aims at a Mauritius where everyone participates and chances are created for every citizen. It will galvanise the economy by broadening the circle of opportunities open to each and every of our citizen.

To ensure early crystallization of the relevant projects to be submitted by organisations and individuals and for their speedy implementation, the Steering Committee, set up for the successful implementation of the Empowerment Programme, has constituted six sub-committees as follows -

- land for social housing
- land for small entrepreneurs
- A workfare programme for training and reskilling of the unemployed
- Special programmes for unemployed women
- Tourism villages and
- Assistance to vulnerable households, and
- Support for the development of new entrepreneurs and SMEs (i.e technical assistance, financial assistance and infrastructure and provision of infrastructure)

To encourage rapid implementation the Chairpersons of the sub-committees have been given the flexibility to co-opt relevant supervising officers of Ministries/top officials of institutions concerned as well as appropriate NGOs.

The Steering Committee has developed a framework for the Empowerment Programme setting out the modus operandi. This framework

provides a coherent approach and ensures accountability and transparency in the submission and the processing of the projects, including the disbursement of funds.

I would also wish to inform the House that the Empowerment Programme Framework is on the web-site of the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development. I am also, Mr Speaker, tabling one copy to the House for circulation.

The functioning of the programme rests on implementing agencies, usually within Government. In addition to channelling the funds to contracting partners for implementation of projects, the implementing agency focuses on programme, on performance via agreed indicators.

The contracting partners agree with the implementing agency for delivery of projects and meet the needs of the beneficiaries who will be individuals, NGOs and small and medium entrepreneurs.

Mr Speaker, Sir, let me reassure the House that we have developed a fully transparent framework to ensure accountability and judicious use of the funds.

Let me also take the opportunity to inform the House that the Empowerment Programme is seeking applications from organizations/individuals for projects that conform to the framework. In particular, the programme is currently targeting projects that –

- (i) assist the unemployed to upgrade their skills so that they can move to better paying jobs, and
- (ii) empower our citizens by encouraging entrepreneurship.

We have set the minimum criteria to ensure success. The project manager applying on behalf of beneficiaries should have -

- stable and sufficient sources of finance to maintain the activity throughout the period during which the action is being carried

out and to manage effectively the resources used to fund the project;

- the ability, as indicated by the experience of the organization/individual and the assigned principal employee(s), to manage actions of the scale of that for which a grant is requested.
- should have met the specific requirements for each sub-committee as defined in the framework of the Empowerment Programme.

Moreover a system with clear procedures and specific criteria to be followed for any project prior to and after the disbursement of funds has been set up. The steps are as follows -

- (i) submission of the application from organisations /individuals for projects to the Secretariat;
- (ii) the evaluation of the projects by the relevant sub-committees based upon specific indicators set by the Empowerment Programme framework;
- (iii) approval of the project by the sub-committee;
- (iv) approval of the project by the Steering Committee;
- (v) a contractual agreement between Government and the implementing agency through a Memorandum of Understanding. The MoU sets out the obligations of the implementing agency towards the beneficiaries who are individuals and SME. Performance indicators for each project which has been discussed and agreed with the implementing agency are integrated in the MoU.

Mr Speaker, Sir, up to now the Empowerment Programme has financed one project with Enterprise Mauritius as the project implementing agency. The Empowerment Programme will disburse some Rs15 m. for Enterprise Mauritius to assist some 40 existing textile and clothing enterprises in areas of material sourcing and marketing. This project will also help these enterprises grow and increase exports, hence creating more jobs.

Mr Speaker, Sir, now that we have developed a comprehensive framework, we are expecting many other projects. Indeed, several project proposals are already in the pipeline that I can mention for the benefit of the House -

- (i) Training project from “Chemin Sud Multipurpose Cooperatives Society for 63 unemployed women who lost their jobs following the closure of EPZ firms in that region. The Steering Committee has already approved the training programs to be conducted by IVTB to help them to become self-employed.
- (ii) Provide an interactive information platform of supply/demand of labour.
- (iii) The VCILT(Virtual Centre for Innovative Learning Technology) is providing an interactive platform of supply/demand for labour. The objective is to identify training needs, including on-the-job training, that has to be carried out in the different sectors of the economy, including tourism, textile, ICT and construction industry. The focus is to identify jobs where demand is growing. The updated list reveals that there are some 20,000 unemployed at to date who have registered for the programme.
- (iv) Training and reskilling of the unemployed. As a start, hotels in the Bel Ombre and Balaclava regions have agreed to offer on-the-job training to some 200 unemployed. In addition, some 500 workers can be absorbed by the construction sector by January with another 500 vacancies to be filled over the next year. There are also proposals to develop training and reskilling programmes for the textile sector for about 200 initially and more subsequently.
- (v) Developing the Entrepreneurial skills of unemployed graduates. A profiling of unemployed graduates is being undertaken who will be encouraged to set up consultancy

services to assist new entrepreneurs and existing SMEs. These graduates will follow an induction course organized by the University of Mauritius in collaboration with DBM, EM and SEHDA.

- (vi) Training of graduates. Unemployed graduates who want to obtain on-the-job training are required to register with the Employment Information Centre of the Ministry of Labour and Industrial Relations. A monthly stipend ranging between Rs5000 and Rs10,000 with the Empowerment Programme contributing 50% will be paid to the registered graduates by employers offering them on-the-job training.
- (vii) Work is also ongoing on some other projects that will take time to crystallize. These include tourism villages, land for social housing and formulation of an Integrated Development Programme for the most vulnerable families to help the next generation out of poverty by emphasising education while providing decent housing and reskilling opportunities.

Mr the Speaker, Sir, in the interest of transparency we will do our level best to publish on the internet on a quarterly basis the details of the projects and their related expenses.

Miss Deerpalsing: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I thank the hon. Deputy Prime Minister for his answer and may I ask him whether he is prepared to publish these details on the statement of expenditure on a priori basis rather than on a posteriori basis?

Mr Sithanen: Mr Speaker, Sir, we are at the beginning of the programme and up to now experience on the ground show that it is demand-driven. There are also some projects that will bear some early harvest whereas some others will need more time for taking off. So, our strategy is that for the first year let it be demand-driven and once the programme reaches its cruising altitude, maybe what is being suggested by the hon. Member can be taken into account.

Mr Speaker: The Table has just been advised that PQ Nos. 1253 and 1258 have been withdrawn. Time for answers to PQs is now over.

