

Debate No. 10 of 30.05.2006**ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS****LAW & ORDER**

The Leader of the Opposition (Mr N. Bodha) (*By Private Notice*) 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 the situation of law and order in the country, he will state -

- (a) the figures as from July 2005 to date relating to assaults, rape and other sexual offences, larceny with violence, child prostitution and drug related offences;
- (b) the figures as from 15 March 2006 to date relating to murder and manslaughter;
- (c) the specific measures adopted to curb such cases, and
- (d) any measures other than those already implemented and announced.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (a) of the question, I am laying on the Table of the National Assembly a statement giving the information requested.

As regards part (b) of the question, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that as from 15 March 2006 to date, 11 suspected cases of murder/manslaughter have been reported.

With regard to part (c) of the question, I wish to refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to PQ No. B/269 on 18 April last. I had indicated then that Government was adopting the following measures –

- (i) setting up of a National Criminal Intelligence Service to deal exclusively with intelligence relating to criminal matters;
- (ii) installation of closed circuit television surveillance systems in commercial and high risk areas;

- (iii) introduction of CC TV street surveillance system to cover the central parts of Port Louis;
- (iv) a more targeted training to members of the Police Force to enhance their professional development;
- (v) assistance sought from friendly countries such as UK, France, United States of America and India to assist in law enforcement and training of personnel.
- (vi) a '*Police du transport*' has been launched since 12 May 2006, and
- (vii) surveillance and monitoring by the MCIT has also been stepped up in certain regions.

I have just enumerated these because the question says apart from others that have already been mentioned before otherwise the reply would be very long and hon. Members won't have time to put supplementary questions.

I wish to inform the House that action has already been initiated to implement these measures. Besides, policing is also about putting the law abiding citizens first so that decisions are taken and services are designed with the involvement of the public to ensure that their needs as citizens are met. A citizen focused approach will improve public reassurance and confidence in Police and also increase satisfaction amongst those who will come into contact with the Police service, especially victims and witnesses. These are being achieved by -

- (a) neighbourhood policing;
- (b) effective engagement with the public;
- (c) a real say for the public in how they are policed, and
- (d) an organisational change to bring about increasingly responsible service feedbacks from the frontline staff and the public which is used to continuously improve them.

As regards part (d) of the question, a number of legislative measures have already been taken since last year. The Child Protection (Amendment) Act 2005 aimed at better protecting children; the Firearms Act aimed at better regulating the use of firearms. We are also shortly coming to Parliament with the Criminal Code (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill aimed at stiffening penalties for various offences

including, in particular drug trafficking, gang rape and murder for which a maximum of 60 years penal servitude will be provided. We will also consider the offences for which no remission would be possible, but bearing in mind that there is a need also not to make the prisons unmanageable due to the frustration of inmates having no hope of an early release due to unavailability of remission. Legislation pertaining to compulsory taking of DNA samples from suspects for the better and more accurate detection of crime is also being prepared.

Mr Bodha: Mr Speaker, Sir, I thank the Prime Minister for the reply. May I just refer to the figures which have been presented by the Prime Minister. For serious larceny and violence: 2,894 cases, for drug related offences: 3,169 and for sexual offences under 16: 109 cases. The number, Mr Speaker, Sir, shows *qu'il y a une recrudescence de violence sous toutes ses formes*, but the gravity of it is the atrocity, the nature of the offences, the heinous nature of the crime that we are witnessing. May I ask the hon. Prime Minister what he intends to do to address this aspect of the problem?

The Prime Minister: First of all, let me tell the Leader of the Opposition that I always maintain – I am sure he also agrees – that law and order should not be a partisan issue. No Prime Minister, whoever it is, will want to have a breakdown of law and order except some very sick minds which exist in this country, who are wishing that there should be a breakdown of law and order. Generally the public and I am sure responsible Members of the Opposition would not wish so. Let me say also, Mr Speaker, Sir, that when you look at these figures, the pattern is still the same. I have the figures here from 2000 to 2005, if you see those three figures that the Leader of the Opposition has mentioned and you quote these to say that there has been an increase in the number of these serious crimes, if you look at serious larcenies with violence which figure is 2,894. In 2004, that figure was 3,117 and the figures for the other years is more or less around the same, slightly less or slightly more. For drug related offences, the figure this year is 3,169, the figure for 2003 was 3,361. Last year it was 3,115 and it goes on like this. It is more or less on the same pattern. For sexual offences under 16, this year it is 109; in 2004, it was 111 and in 2003 it was 115. Just to put things in their perspective that there is no increase as such, but as I have always said, one crime is a crime too many. So, we have to tackle those problems; not even one should be on that list. I agree on that issue. That is why I am saying that we are doing a few things at the same time.

In 1998 when I was Prime Minister, I made a speech at Grand'Baie, telling people what are the problems we have identified and what we think should be the solutions. At least, we are trying to address these problems. I must say that these

plans of reform are back again. They were put on a back burner for some reasons and some of the reforms were even reversed. Now we are going back to that and that is why I am asking the assistance of foreign friendly countries like India, France, UK and USA to help us re-organise the Police, look at the equipment that we need and give more training to our Police Force. For the Police to be able to do its work, it needs to earn the respect of the people of this country and they need to have accountability and also a customer friendly sort of training. We know there are problems in certain areas; in certain stations, for example, people complain about the way they have been treated by the Police. All this is being looked into. Apart from that, we are toughening the laws as I have mentioned. Many laws have to be toughened, unfortunately. I know that some people are of the view that the law should not be toughened, but I am not of that view, I think laws should be toughened.

Mr Bodha: Mr Speaker, Sir, relating to public confidence in the Police Force and the functioning of the Police Force, we know that *les relations ne sont pas très bonnes entre le Premier ministre et le Commissaire de Police. Il y a eu des transferts abusifs, par exemple, à l'ADSU, il y a eu des bavures policières*. For example, when there was the rape in Sebastopol, the Police people came there and asked the lady to rest instead of having her statement and helping her. May I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether the Commissioner of Police today has the authority and the trust he deserves to enforce law and order and to restore public confidence?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I just want to let the Leader of the Opposition know. I think he mentioned 'Sebastopol', in fact, it was 'Bel Air' as far as I remember. I must tell him, as I said last time to hon. Guinness who put the question, action has been taken against these suspected Policemen, who did not, in fact, do their duty immediately. Precisely, because of this, action was taken; similarly after what happened at Le Réduit, someone came with a 4 x 4 and went through without a bullet being fired! There is no justification for this. Everybody has to assume his responsibility.

As for the Commissioner of Police, I must say that I have very good relations with him; and I'll remind the House that I am the one who actually appointed him, but he had to be in an acting capacity because Mr Feillafé had not completely retired, he had taken leave prior to retirement. That is the only reason. But I must say, I am emphasising with him that he must make sure that these reforms, that we want to do, do go through.

Mr Bodha: Mr Speaker, Sir, let me come to the issue of investigation and one of the units – the MCIT. There have been three damning reports against the MCIT and the gentleman who is at the Head of the MCIT. We have the report from the CCID, the one from the Judicial Inquiry and the one from the Commissioner of Human Rights. May I ask the hon. Prime Minister why this unit has not been disbanded and why the Head has not been taken to task?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I take it that the hon. Leader of the Opposition is making specific reference to Chief Inspector Raddhoa. I must say I have looked at the Human Rights Report, which is not a damning report. It does say that there is lacunae in the way things are being done. There are complaints. Don't forget we have a Police Complaints Authority, which we are, in fact, revising as I said last time in Parliament to make sure that it is completely independent as it is even in the UK now. What we want also is to have results. I am not saying you should go and attack suspects in prisons and bully them or whatever. As the Leader of the Opposition knows, he is a barrister himself, evidence, which has not been properly secured, will fail in Court. We all know this and I know all the barristers here know sometimes this is the issue that has come. In fact since one or two cases, everybody is saying that there is Police brutality. Everybody has become a Saint suddenly. Everybody is saying: "Ah! There is Police brutality". That is not the case and we must look at the results also. I must say in all fairness to Mr Radhooa that he does get results. In fact, I have got lots of letters and emails of people saying: "Please, do not listen to X, Y, Z because we want him to remain in our quarters". In fact, everybody is asking that he should be in control of their region. Of course, we must balance the interests. As the hon. Leader of the Opposition knows, I am one of those who believe strongly in civil liberties and the rights of a suspect. Therefore, these things would have to be looked into.

Mr Bodha: Mr Speaker, Sir, there has been proof of foul play. I don't agree at all with the Prime Minister, but let me address another issue, the bail issue – the Bail Act. We have had recently the judges from the Privy Council and we have had a certain number of decisions taken by the Courts and we are seeing situations which have raised social problems. I am going to take two examples, Mr Speaker, Sir, before asking the question. We have a self-confessed killer from Belle Vue, who said he killed his wife, who was released on bail. He is attending lectures at the University. You have serial rapists who have been freed and who are in the same locality as the victims. May I ask the Prime Minister whether the law is going to be amended and whether the Attorney General considers this as a matter of great urgency?

The Prime Minister: In fact, the Attorney General has said in the past, as far as I remember, that he considers this as a matter of urgency and we have to look into it. In fact, I must say to his credit, after the judgment, on the very next Cabinet meeting, which I think was on the same day or the next day, he immediately informed Cabinet and he took some stand because we were worried about this. As the hon. Leader of the Opposition knows, there was this judgment of the Privy

Council, and I think here there has been a misinterpretation personally. The Privy Council never said that we should not consider the other conditions of bail. Seriousness of the offence is one of the things that we should be considering, but not just the one. It has to do with the whole picture of the conditions to put bail. And I think that is what we need to ensure also, that this is not misinterpreted. I feel there is a misinterpretation of the judgment of the Privy Council.

Mr Dayal: Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether he will ask the Commissioner of Police to conduct an audit in the Police Force with a view to making maximum utilisation of Police officers?

The Prime Minister: This is, in fact, something that we are also looking into – the review of the Police Force. I must say to the hon. gentleman that we do not wish to start doing some changes until the arrival of this expert, which is imminent. After having talked to the French Minister of Interior, I have written to him to say that we need to have these persons to help in the reorganisation of the Police. I am looking also at previous people who had done reports on what the organisation of the Police should be - I have not asked them yet - but, maybe, I am going to ask them also to come back to look at this.

Mrs Jeewa-Dawreeawoo: M. le Premier ministre, êtes vous d'accord que la meilleure des lois seulement ne va pas résoudre le problème de la violence dans son ensemble et qu'il faudrait qu'il y ait réhabilitation de nos prisonniers en même temps? Parce que bien souvent, quand ces prisonniers sortent de la prison, ils récidivent. Si c'est oui, c'est pour quand la réhabilitation de nos prisonniers?

The Prime Minister: I must say, I agree totally with the first part of what the hon. Member has said – it is not just a question of the Police or the prison officers, of Members of Parliament. It is a question of the whole of society. We should not just shift all the blame on politicians or the Police. But also, for the rehabilitation, I must say personally that I find that there is a need for toughening of laws - I know some people don't agree with this – while also, at the same time, looking at rehabilitation. Because what we want eventually is to have most of these people go back into society as good citizens of society. This is where rehabilitation has to be looked into. That is why I said when I answered the first part of the question about remission. If, in all cases, there is no remission at all, there is

unlikely to have peace in the prisons. Because the people feel they are going to be there for sixty years with no chance of coming out again, they are going to create havoc in the prisons. We have to look at the management of the prisons as well. In that respect, we are also looking at rehabilitation of the prisoners.

Mr Dayal: Can I again ask the hon. Prime Minister whether he will consider the advisability of appointing a High Powered Commission with a view to assessing, restructuring and reforming the Police Force and also looking into the conditions of service of Police officers?

The Prime Minister: I don't want to appoint a High Powered Commission at this point because as I have said, we are getting people from abroad. We are looking at the reorganisation of the Police. I think the Leader of Opposition's question was also about conditions of service in the Police, that is very important, Mr Speaker, Sir. I must say still now, not just in the past, there are some Police officers who feel that they are stuck where they are. There is no prospect. The prospect for their future, for their career development is not clear and not transparent. That is an issue we have to look at as well.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to ask the hon. Prime Minister whether he does not consider that the stand that the Attorney-General sometimes takes, regarding issues such as the age of consent for sexual relationships, remission or the depenalisation of the use of cannabis, will send wrong signals to the population, making people believe that the society is becoming more and more permissible and everything is now accepted. I think that if we really want to remedy the situation, this should not be the case. Can I know from the hon. Prime Minister what he thinks about such issues?

The Prime Minister: I must say that the Attorney General is now Member of the Government. I don't know what he has said in the past. I must tell you that there are debates in a lot of very developed countries, including Europe, America on certain of these issues that the hon. Member has just mentioned. As a Government we have said it many times, we are for the toughening of the laws.

Mrs Jeewa-Daureeawoo: Does the Prime Minister agree that pornographic through video clips and movies on cellphones are having an adverse impact on our youth and provoke an increase in sexual offences in Mauritius nowadays?

The Prime Minister: I agree. But I do not want to go into the details. There are limits; we are subject to the new technologies. It is very difficult, for example,

to prevent somebody from sending a pornographic film through the phone. What I hear - believe it or not – is that sometimes people themselves take pride in sending films. How can you control this?

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Will the Prime Minister say whether there are mechanisms which have been put in place to identify potential perpetrators of rape, murder and manslaughter?

The Prime Minister: It is difficult to find out potential perpetrators. We do not want people to start fingering people and say that that person is a potential perpetrator. I think we have to look at the record and whatever complaints there are. I must confess it is very difficult to look at potential perpetrators.

Mr Dowarkasing: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Prime Minister would recall that, in February last, he referred to a report published by the United Nations stating that Mauritius is number one in the consumption of hard drugs, that is, heroin. Can I know what course of action does he intend to take, or he has initiated already, to do away with this perception or fact?

The Prime Minister: If I may remind the hon. Member that the perception was made when I was in the Opposition. As he said, there is a perception sometimes. But it is not so, in fact. I must say that we are not the number one country in the world. I do not know whether the former Prime Minister answered back to them to say that we are not the number one. I think everybody knows that we are not number one. Sometimes there are exaggerations also. If we look at what is happening in the world, we can still say that Mauritius is far from being the worst country in the world. I think we have to propagate that image. Because we are a small country, every case get publicised and known by everyone and, therefore, people think that this is the case. If the hon. Member looks at the figures that I have given, he will see that the pattern is still the same.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! Hon. Soodhun, do you have a point of order to raise? Or do you have anything to say?

(Interruptions)

If you have anything to say, you should stand up, because I do not hear you when you say it from a sitting position.

Mr Dayal: Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister to consider the advisability of requesting the Commissioner of Police to select well-built Police officers to do patrols? And can I ask him also whether he is satisfied with the patrol done by the Police, especially in high-risk areas?

The Prime Minister: As the hon. Member knows, I can give general policy directions to the Commissioner of Police according to the Constitution, but the control and the responsibility for determining the use of his Police Force rests solely with the Commissioner of Police. But I think it is a point that the Commissioner of Police must have noted, namely, that we need to have people who are able to deal with things.

Mr Bodha: I would like to come back to the issue of drugs, Mr Speaker, Sir. Is the Prime Minister aware that amongst those who have been given permits to operate in the fishing Port – one point of entry of drugs – there are two notorious drug traffickers?

The Prime Minister: In fact, this was brought to my attention, Mr Speaker, Sir. When I inquired, it was not the case. In fact, that case was brought to my attention.

Mr Bodha: Is the hon. Prime Minister also aware that, in some cases, at the Brown Sequard Hospital, some offenders are being granted the possibility of staying in the hospital in order to evade Courts' trial?

The Prime Minister: I must ask for a clarification from the Leader of the Opposition. Is he saying, therefore, that the doctors are giving false medical certificates? If that is the case, then, the doctors have to take their responsibilities. This is a very serious offence. There is a risk of being struck off from the Medical Council. That is why doctors have to take their responsibilities. In fact, I will look into that matter.

Mrs Hanoomajee: Mr Speaker, Sir, when I said perpetual perpetrators, everybody laughed. But does not the hon. Prime Minister think that those *qui ont été en prison, qui ont purgé une peine et qui sortent*, they are perpetual perpetrators of assaults?

The Prime Minister: I agree with what the hon. Member is saying now. That is not what she said in the first instance. In the first instance, she said 'potential'. If they are known perpetrators, then, of course, I agree with the hon. Member.

Mrs Martin: The hon. Prime Minister referred to asking help from friendly countries in order to increase the level of security, law and order in our country. I would like to know from him whether these requests have been translated into concrete measures or offers as yet.

The Prime Minister: In fact, we have made a detailed request and we have to wait. We need people to go back to this reform and training of the Police, including of having the equipment.

Mrs Hanoomajee: With regard to child prostitution, the Prime Minister mentioned tight legislative measures. Can I ask him what are the other measures that have been taken to prevent child prostitution?

The Prime Minister: A series of measures have been taken by the Minister of Women's Rights and Child Development and there is also the aspect of education and sensitising people. As I said, apart from toughening the law, we are looking also - this is something which perhaps the hon. Member had in mind - about people who have in the past been found guilty of certain crimes, including this crime, to be able to be put on a separate list.

Mrs Jeewa-Daureeawoo: Je voudrais demander au Premier ministre si le gouvernement a l'intention de revoir la définition de viol et, en même temps, définir le viol collectif?

The Prime Minister: Yes, that is the case. We want to toughen the law on rape, especially gang rape.

Mr Bodha: I will round up, Mr Speaker, Sir, with an incident which occurred in the Constituency of the Prime Minister in Triolet where there was somebody who was withdrawing cash money from an ATM and was assaulted and this led to an incident in Cité Mère Teresa. We know that serious incidents can lead to flaring up of law and order. What does the hon. Prime Minister intend to do to see to it that serious incidents do not, in fact, cause the flaring up and breakdown of law and order as has been the case in the past?

The Prime Minister: In fact, I shall reply later on to a question on security at banks, especially where people withdraw cash out of the ATM. We are, in fact, encouraging the banks concerned to have better protection at these places. This is one of the measures. This problem is not found only in Mauritius, but it happens in other countries also. I know, for example, in the UK they are putting also cash machines inside the banks. These machines, of course, would be operational when the banks are open. It diminishes the possibility of being assaulted when one is inside the bank.

The third thing that they are doing is putting surveillance cameras everywhere. That is something that I want to encourage the local banks to do.

Mr Bodha: The Prime Minister did not answer the question concerning serious incidents which later on can lead up to the flaring up of the situation as was the case in Cité Mère Teresa.

The Prime Minister: I thought I was answering the question. That is one incident which happened in my Constituency and I am well aware of it where somebody has taken the money and ran away. That person felt that he wanted to get his money back. The problem in this country is very often that a small incident – an incident, nevertheless – flares up into a situation with the dimension that we know. What measures can we take? People have to use their head, keep their head on their shoulders and not get involved into communal issues when, in fact, it is a question of theft. That is the plea I am making to the people: not to communalise, but everything is communalised in this country, unfortunately.

Mr Speaker: Time is over. The Table has been advised that Parliamentary Questions B/627 and B/633 addressed to Dr. the hon. Prime Minister will now be replied by the hon. Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism, Leisure & External Communications after PQ B/700, time permitting, of course. Questions addressed to the Prime Minister!

POLICE – POWERS OF ARREST

(No. B/626) Mr Y. Varma (First Member for Mahebourg and Plaine Magnien) 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 in a number of cases, Police has been arresting people unreasonably and on unfounded allegations over the years and, if so –

- (a) is he aware that prejudice has been caused to these people, and
- (b) whether he will consider bringing about necessary amendments in our legislation to remedy the situation.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that since January 2000 to June 2005 six cases have been reported to the Police Complaints Investigation Bureau where persons have made allegations that they have been unreasonably arrested. However, as from July 2005, only one such case has been reported. All the cases have been investigated into. Five cases have been classified and two are still under inquiry.

As regards part (a) of the question, any person, as the hon. Member knows, who feels that prejudice has been caused to him or her, may seek redress in a court of law, including a claim for damages. Redress can also be sought from the National Human Rights Commission. A person unlawfully arrested and detained may also apply for a writ of habeas corpus to a Judge of the Supreme Court for the Judge to order his release (sections 185 to 190 of the Criminal Procedure Act).

Police has legal powers to effect arrests within a well defined legal framework supported by established procedures and guidelines. As the hon. Member knows, they can arrest with or without a warrant. I suppose the hon. Member is referring mainly to cases without a warrant, where they just go and arrest people.

As regards part (b) of the question, I have stated many times that I am very attached to civil liberties and consider that the fundamental rights of every person should be respected. The fundamental right to liberty is one of them, protection of reputation is another, protection of privacy is another. I also consider deprivation of personal liberty to be a very serious matter and I am sure many Members will agree with me. The time when somebody is arrested, that is the time where the personal freedom ends, it stops there and then. Therefore nobody should be arrested lightly, or on a mere allegation. There must be reasonable grounds and the law provides for it. There should be reasonable grounds for suspecting guilt for arrest.

In case there is an excessive use of powers of arrest or a violation of the fundamental rights – as I said there are legal restrictions imposed on the Police and there are also civil actions that can be taken, including a claim for damages. I have just listed the various things that you can do.

I have also requested the Commissioner of Police to ensure that members of the Police, in line with the human rights policies of Government, are made to realize the importance of liberty of the citizen, and ascertain that there must be reasonable grounds for effecting any arrest.

However, I must tell the hon. Member that I am prepared to look at the existing legislation in the review. We are looking at the review of fundamental rights generally, Mr Speaker, Sir. In that context, I am prepared to look at the existing legislation, with a view to reviewing if needs be.

Mr Varma: Mr Speaker, Sir, is the hon. Prime Minister aware that as the situation is now, once an allegation is levelled against a person, he is arrested, provisionally charged and then the inquiry is conducted?

The Prime Minister: I am told, unfortunately, that in some cases at least, that has been the case, and that is something that is quite unacceptable. That is why I have stressed to the Commissioner of Police that he must ensure that there must be reasonable grounds. You cannot just go and arrest on mere allegations. Very often, the person who makes an allegation will certainly not make an allegation against his friend, he will make an allegation against somebody he does not like. You cannot, on that kind of allegation, just go and arrest somebody. That is why I say, I am very attached to personal liberty. That is something that has to be relooked at.

Mr Ganoo: The solution, Mr Speaker, Sir, is for the Police officers to exercise restraint once an allegation is made against somebody. Could the Commissioner of Police use his good offices to see to it that the Police officers, in charge of the dossier, should exercise restraint whenever an allegation has been made against somebody before, as the hon. Member has said, arresting him and then provisionally charging him.

The Prime Minister: I have told that to the Ag. Commissioner of Police because the Commissioner of Police is not in Mauritius at this time. In fact, I have stressed on that importance that he cannot, just on a mere allegation, without any kind of investigation, no reasonable cause, go and arrest somebody.

Mr Ganoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, my question is about the Public Officers Protection Act. As the hon. Prime Minister should know - I am sure he knows - the law provides a prescription period to sue any public officer, including a Police officer. It was two years before and, now, I think, the period has been reduced to six

months. Can we think of the possibility of removing this prescription period altogether so that any member of the public can sue a public officer once he feels he is aggrieved against the decision of that officer so that there is no time bar?

The Prime Minister: I am not sure if you have no time bar at all, it will be a good thing because then somebody can sue, after twenty years somebody goes and tells something else. I think there should be a time bar but maybe we should review the length of the period.

Mr Varma: Mr Speaker, Sir, would the hon. Prime Minister also inform the Commissioner of Police that in cases of mere allegation, there is a special need for corroboration as well, not only reasonable grounds, but also corroboration?

The Prime Minister: Yes, when I meant to do some investigation, I meant also including that.

(PQ No. B/627 – see “Written Answers to Questions”)

DRUG TRAFFICKING – LAW - AMENDMENT

(No. B/628) 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 state if Government proposes to amend the law with a view to making provision for the offence of drug trafficking to be visited with imprisonment for a term not exceeding sixty years without remission.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, in relation to the offence of drug dealing cum trafficker, under sections 30 and 41 of the Dangerous Drugs Act, the mandatory sentence of 45 years, which is actually the case, will be replaced by a maximum sentence of 60 years. The question of remission is going to be studied when this is being done.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I must say that Government is considering the introduction of legislation to amend the existing law in order to provide for the following –

- (a) mandatory sentences, including life sentences, we have to look at whether we are going to replace them by maximum sentences so that the Court will, in all cases, retain its sentencing discretion and inflict sentence in the light of the specific circumstances of the case.

This is in line with the judgement of *Khoyratty v State* in which the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council reasserted the principle that “the power to determine responsibility for a crime and punishment for its commission is a function which belongs exclusively to the courts”. In that respect we are going to look at that because we have to look also what the Privy Council has done.

- (b) Various offences under the Criminal Code and other laws will also be visited by stiffer penalties and the maximum penalty for the most serious offences will be a penal servitude for a term of 60 years such as, as I have said, gang rape and others.

Mr Varma: Mr Speaker, Sir, as regards the criminal case, is the Government envisaging to reintroduce the death penalty in certain cases?

The Prime Minister: We are not looking at that although there is an outcry, I must say. Sometimes when you look at this – as one hon. Member has just mentioned the heinous crime that has been perpetrated in the country - you wonder whether this is not something that we should debate at least, but, not at this point in time.

MR T.B. – DEATH – STATEMENTS TO POLICE BY MRS R.R.

(No. B/629) Mrs F. Labelle (Third Member for Vacoas and Floreal) 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 in the case of the death of T. B. which occurred on 14 May 2006, the suspect R. R. gave statements to the Police between 1994 and 2001 against T. B. and, if so, if an inquiry has been carried out thereinto.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that no complaint has been made by one Mrs R. R. against one Mr T.B. since the year 1994 to date, except for the incident, which occurred on 14 May 2006 and the Police inquiry is still under way.

PUBLIC OFFICERS - POSTING

(No. B/630) Mr S. Naidu (Third Member for Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether, with a view to economizing on transport costs, he will consider the advisability of posting public officers closer to their place of residence.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that it has always been the practice to try to have public officers posted, as far as possible, as I said, near to their place of residence.

There is unfortunately a limit to the number of officers who may be posted in local offices out of the city centre, as most Government offices are concentrated in and around Port Louis.

However, as I stated in my reply to PQs B/85 and B/551, the Government is envisaging different options, including the eventual construction of a new administrative city, for the relocation of Government offices away from the Port Louis area. Then, it would be possible to look at the possibility of putting greater number of public officers closer to their place of residence.

FLACQ REGION - BANKS – CASES OF ATTACK

(No. B/631) Mr G. Guinness (Third Member for Montagne Blanche and 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 Commissioner of Police, information as to the number of cases of attack on people withdrawing money from banks reported during the last six months to the Flacq Police Station and the other stations within the Flacq region, indicating the measures taken.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, for the last six months, three cases of attack upon people withdrawing money from the banks have been reported to the Flacq Police Station and other stations within the Flacq region. For the period 2001 to date, fourteen such cases have been reported to the Police. With a view to keeping such crime at bay, Police vigilance has been increased. In this context, a 24-hour Police presence is provided near banks, but we can't do it for all the banks at this point in time, but near the banks generally and other financial institutions. Moreover, Police Officers in plain clothing together with other CID officers are also

placed within the vicinity of these institutions to conduct surveillance and intelligence so as to locate and identify probable suspects.

I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that from time to time he does snap road blocks to try to help in that area, especially during night time.

Mr Speaker, Sir, fighting against such crime, as I said, does not only concern the Police. The service provider should also be involved. To this end, I am impressing upon the bank authorities and other financial institutions on the need for the installation of security equipment and reinforcing security measures on their premises.

I have also been informed by the Bank of Mauritius that Commercial Banks will be distributing a brochure to their customers, setting out security measures to be taken by them as well as adoption of an overall strategy for security by the banks to protect their customers at their premises.

Mr Guinness: Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to ask the hon. Prime Minister - I do not know if he has the information - how many cases of attack on people withdrawing money over the counter, not from the ATM machine. It seems that these days, in the Flacq region, people who have been withdrawing money over the counter have been followed and attacked farther.

The Prime Minister: The question refers to cases of attack on people withdrawing money from the banks. I thought the hon. Member was mainly referring to cash from the ATM, but if he is saying over the counter, I will have to look into the matter and come back.

Mr Guinness: Can I know from the Prime Minister, out of the 14 cases that he mentioned, if there has been any arrest up to now?

The Prime Minister: I can go to the cases one by one, but it is going to be a long procedure, Mr Speaker, Sir. But I know that in most of them the inquiry is under way. In some cases, there have been arrests by the Police. I can give all the details later on.

Mr Guinness: I would like to ask another question to the hon. Prime Minister, but if he does not have the information, he can let me have it later on. I would like to ask the Prime Minister what are the amounts involved in each of the cases that he mentioned. It seems that huge sums are involved.

The Prime Minister: I think there is a limit, which you can withdraw from the ATM machine and it is otherwise over the counter. But this country is a unique country, there has been an attack in the vault of the Mauritius Commercial Bank and up today we do not know what amount has been lost. So, how will we know when there is a small amount?

Mr Jugnauth: Mr Speaker, Sir, we have heard from the Prime Minister that actually it is the Government that is sending Police officers patrolling as far the ATM machines are concerned. Banks are institutions that are making huge profits from customers' money. I would like to ask the hon. Prime Minister if it is not for the Government to come up with a legislation to protect the customers by asking the banks to provide certain security.

The Prime Minister: I totally agree with the hon. Member and that is why I said that the service provider should take its part of responsibility. The Police can patrol on the streets. The banks make plenty of money and they should provide their own security.

Mr Jugnauth: This is what I am telling the hon. Prime Minister that the banks are not providing such security. Is it not for the Government to come with a legislation to compel them to provide security for the customers?

The Prime Minister: There is in fact security in many banks. What I am saying is that the bank also should take responsibility including cameras and all these things.

Mr Jugnauth: After closing hours.

The Prime Minister: Some banks do provide security after closing hours, but sometimes they ask the Police for patrols and other things that we do.

Mr Dowarkasing: On the same issue, Mr Speaker, Sir, the Commissioner of Police was supposed to discuss this matter with the Mauritius Bankers Association. Is the hon. Prime Minister aware of the progress achieved in this discussion?

The Prime Minister: That is a question that I would have to ask the Commissioner of Police. I know that the Bank of Mauritius has been replying to him on certain issues that I mentioned earlier.

**MBC - CHAIRPERSON & DIRECTOR GENERAL –
CARS PURCHASED**

(No. B/632) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation, the following information in regard to cars purchased for the Chairperson and the Director General -

- (a) date of purchase,
- (b) type and make, and
- (c) the price paid, indicating the amount of duty remitted, if any.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation that two new cars were purchased for use for the Chairman and Director General on 06 March 2006 and 10 April 2006.

The car for the Chairman was purchased with the approval of the Board at its meeting held on 09 February 2006 in view of the fact that the car that was being used by the Chairman had met with an accident and declared a total loss.

The other information requested is being circulated. **(Appendix)**

(PQ No. B/633 see 'Written Answers to Questions')

**ADVISERS - SEPTEMBER 2000/JULY 2005 -
NUMBER, SALARIES, ETC.**

(No. B/634) Dr. R. Hawoldar (Second Member for La Caverne and Phoenix) 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 advisers employed by the previous Government during the period September 2000 to July 2005, he will state the total –

- (a) number,
- (b) amount paid in terms of salaries, allowances and gratuities,
- (c) amount paid for telephone bills,

- (d) the number of Government vehicles placed at their disposal, and
- (e) number of duty free cars purchased by them.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that the total number of Advisers recruited from September 2000 to July 2005 was 278.

With regard to part (b), the amounts paid in term of salaries, allowances, and gratuities stood at Rs324,557,449.

The total amount paid as telephone bills was Rs11,684,704.

As regards part (d), five Advisers had each been allocated a Government car from the pool. They were all attached to the former Prime Minister.

Regarding part (e), I am informed that 137 Advisers were granted duty free facilities during the period in question.

Mr Guinness: Mr Speaker, Sir, the Prime Minister gave precise information from 2000 to 2005. I would like to put a question about the number of advisers from August up to now ...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: I am sorry, hon. Guinness, this is not a relevant question. The hon. Member can come with this question at another occasion.

Mr Jugnauth: Mr Speaker, Sir, there are different types of advisers. There are political advisers and, if I take, for instance, the Ministry of Health, all those doctors who come to work, are also known as advisers. I would like to know whether the Prime Minister is including all these advisers together in the answer he has given or is he talking only of political advisers?

The Prime Minister: I am hoping that I have taken all advisers on board otherwise I cannot see how it will be only 278. It might be even more. The hon. Member just gave the example of doctors. But, even, in the Prime Minister's Office, there are some people who are not advisers, but they have to be termed advisers. This is something, perhaps, with the concern of the Opposition, we should relook at.

Mrs Perrier: Est-ce-que le Premier ministre peut confirmer à la Chambre si, entre 1996 et 2000, n'y avait-il pas 334, et même peut être plus, d'advisers sous le gouvernement travailliste?

The Prime Minister: I doubt this, but I can look into it.

Mr Bundhoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I ask the Prime Minister to clarify something? If I understand correctly, he mentioned Rs380 m. Is it for a year or for two and a half year?

The Prime Minister: In fact, I said Rs324,557.449. The question was the period 2000 to 2005.

Mr Bundhoo: Secondly, Mr Speaker, Sir, can I ask the Prime Minister what was the number of advisers employed at the Prime Minister's Office over the period 2000/2005 and what was the amount of money paid to these advisers?

The Prime Minister: Unfortunately, I do not have the details, but I answered the question last week. I can say that for the Prime Minister it was 20 to 21 advisers compared to 15 to 16. I must tell the hon. Member that some of my advisers were also people who had been nominated by the previous Government that I have kept.

HOMOSEXUALITY - GOVERNMENT POLICY

(No. B/635) Mr A. Ganoo (First 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 he will state Government policy in regard to homosexuality.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, homosexuality is a highly sensitive issue which has aroused, as the hon. Member knows, a lot of controversy and passion in many countries around the world, not just here. There are a number of judicial developments that are taking place before the European Court of Human Rights in recognizing the sexual orientation of a person as a fundamental right. And some jurisdictions have gone as far as giving legal recognition to marriage between homosexuals.

My Government has kept an open mind on this issue. Only recently the Commissioner of Police granted permission to an organization for the holding of a

march in favour of homosexuality in Rose Hill. Furthermore, the Government is actively considering a proposal under the Equal Opportunity Act that there shall be no discrimination against a person on the ground of his or her sexual orientation.

Given the sensitivity of this issue, I think any future policy should be determined after extensive and wide consultations have been held.

Mr Ganoo: May I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether Government or, he, himself, has received representations from any organisation to grant legal recognition to marriages between same sex partners?

The Prime Minister: I am speaking offhand, but I know that some time back when I just assumed Office as Prime Minister, there was a request from a foreign country as to whether we would allow marriages between people of the same sex in this country. I must say that we did not encourage it, because I wanted it to be an issue that is dealt with the Mauritian public.

Mrs Perrier: Le gouvernement veut-il rendre légal le mariage entre homosexuels?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have just answered that question.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Next question, hon. Mrs Virahsawmy!

**ABERCROMBIE POLICE STATION – POLICE
OFFICERS, VEHICLES, ETC.**

(No. B/636) Mrs B. Virahsawmy (First Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue) 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 there are problems at the Abercrombie Police station due to shortage of Police officers and lack of vehicles and, if so, the remedial measures that will be taken.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have indeed received representations to the effect that various problems exist in several Police stations, including Abercrombie.

The attention of the Commissioner of the Police has been drawn to these problems and to the need and urgency for immediate corrective actions. I will personally ensure that prompt and effective actions are taken to improve the situation in Police stations and make them more responsive to the community. But, I agree with the hon. Member that we have identified some problems, including at Abercrombie.

Mrs Virahsawmy: Mr Speaker, Sir, being given that Constituency No. 4 is known to be *un quartier chaud*, it would be nice to know if the hon. Prime Minister could liaise with the Commissioner of Police so that this area is reinforced immediately as some 15 cases are reported per day, regarding violence, larceny, attempt of larceny and many other violent cases?

The Prime Minister: I will tell the Commissioner of Police to do the needful.

Mr Jugnauth: Since this morning, the hon. Prime Minister has been saying that we need to have an efficient Police Force, yet there are shortages of Police officers, maybe not only at Abercrombie Police station, but at a number of other Police stations also.

May we know from the hon. Prime Minister, firstly, where the Police officers are since a number of Police officers have recently been recruited? Secondly, whether it is compatible with what the Government has said to the effect that there would be no recruitment in the Police Force for some years?

Can we know from the hon. Prime Minister what is his stand on that?

The Prime Minister: It is obviously a falsehood. Nobody has said that there would be no recruitment in the Police Force. Nobody! Ever! What has been said is that we have to look in the public service generally, but not the Police Force. The Police Force is something completely separate that we cannot do otherwise.

Last time, there was a campaign to the effect that we have stopped recruiting after I took Office, I think, as Prime Minister in 1996. It was a campaign that was based on a completely misunderstanding of the situation. I can go to length to

explain why this was done. I explained as to why this was done in my speech in Grand Baie in 1998. Because, according to information I got at that time from the Home Secretary...

(Interruptions)

Mr Shattock was not somebody I saw on the street and to whom I said: come and help us in Mauritius. It was done through the Home Secretary, who was Mr Jack Straw at that time. He gave us the name of that gentleman, who was highly qualified. When he came to have a look, and in view of the report that he made - I don't want to give words to the report that he made to me personally - there was a need to stop immediately, because we needed to have a proper training programme. And that was what we did. And then, after the training programme that was put in place, recruitment had restarted again, as the hon. Member probably knows.

(Interruptions)

That is the case! We are recruiting, but we want to ensure that there is a proper training for the new recruits.

Mr Ganoo: Can the hon. Prime Minister tell us why he was not present when the last batch of recruits was issued their certificates?

(Interruptions)

It was rumoured that it was because they were recruited under the previous Government. Can the hon. Prime Minister clear this issue?

The Prime Minister: The Prime Minister has a lot of things to do, apart from going and standing in a parade and saluting Police officers...

(Interruptions)

It is not the first time that I have not gone. In the past, when I was Prime Minister, I did not see the need to go every time; from time to time, I did go.

Mr Ganoo: The hon. Prime Minister should have been there, if at all to boost up their morale!

The Prime Minister: Well, to boost up their morale, I'll have a meeting with the top *échelon* in the Police Force and tell them what I expect them to do.

Mr Speaker: Questions addressed to hon. Ministers! The Table has been advised that PQ. Nos. B/641, B/653, B/666, B/667 and B/668 have been withdrawn. Next Question, hon. Varma!

EUTHANASIA – GOVERNMENT POLICY

(No. B/637) Mr Y. Varma (First Member for Mahebourg and Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether he will state Government policy in regard to euthanasia.

Mr Faugoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, euthanasia is not legal in Mauritius and as such is not practiced by doctors in hospitals. In fact, euthanasia is a topical and sensitive subject. As such, the issue of euthanasia is a highly complex one, with many different sides: medical, legal, political, individual and practical as well. There are also religious and academic considerations attached to the subject.

The question of a policy on the subject at this stage does not arise. In fact, there may be need for extensive discussions, consultations and debates at all levels on the matter.

Mr Varma: Mr Speaker, Sir, is the hon. Minister aware that in many cases, medical treatment is withdrawn from terminally ill patients, either on the requests of their parents, or medical practitioners? Is the hon. Minister aware of that fact?

Mr Faugoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am not aware as to whether doctors withhold or take away treatment which is given to patients, even if the patients are going to die, or are about to die, or whose death is imminent.

What I am aware of - in practice which happens in hospitals - is that parents and responsible parties of patients often, voluntarily, discharge the patients so that these patients can have a peaceful death in their immediate surroundings or in their homes.

This is what happens in practice, Mr Speaker, Sir. There is no direct action by doctors with regard to practicing euthanasia as a voluntarily or involuntarily action.

Mrs Martin: Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to ask the hon. Minister whether he proposes to engage into discussions regarding euthanasia?

Mr Faugoo: I am in favour of having a debate on that subject, Mr Speaker, Sir. We will have to work out the modalities and discuss it at Cabinet level, which will be the proper forum to discuss the subject matter.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

Mr Jugnauth: Mr Speaker, Sir, it is a subject which is being discussed worldwide actually. This is why I would like to impress upon the hon. Minister to open discussions in this country as well.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Varma! Put your question, please!

Mr Varma: Mr Speaker, Sir, as the Minister just stated, the moment a medical treatment is withdrawn, isn't that to be considered as euthanasia?

(Interruptions)

Mr Faugoo: As I said, Mr Speaker, Sir, no doctor deliberately withholds or takes away medical treatments. What happens in practice is that parents or responsible parties of patients voluntarily ask for the discharge of the patients, maybe on some advice from some quarters to take patients away so that they can die peacefully in their homes or immediate surroundings.

MAHEBOURG/BEAU VALLON – SAND EXTRACTORS - COMPENSATION

(No. B/638) Mr Y. Varma (First Member for Mahebourg and Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Housing & Lands whether, following the decision to ban sand extraction, he will state –

- (a) the number of persons in the region of Mahebourg and Beau Vallon who have been affected by this decision;
- (b) if any compensation has been paid out to them, and
- (c) if any training has been given to them for their redeployment.

Mr Dulull: Sir, in regard to parts (a) and (b) of the question, I am informed that there are 109 persons in the regions of Mahebourg and Beau Vallon who have

somehow been affected by the ban of sand extraction, and for which a compensation to the tune of Rs200,000 has been paid to each of them.

With regard to part (c) of the question, I am informed that about 120 ex-sand miners and 25 boat owners have followed different courses at the IVTB, ranging from learner driver course, basic food production, domestic pipe & electrical installation and basic bar service.

Mr Varma: Mr Speaker, Sir, could the hon. Minister inform the House when was the decision taken to ban sand extraction and whether there has been any sand extraction from that date?

Mr Dulull: Mr Speaker, Sir, a decision was taken some time in March 2001. An exercise was carried out and from then I have to look whether there has been further sand extraction in the regions.

Mr Varma: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I inform the hon. Minister that there has been sand extraction in the region of La Prairie since that date? Is the Minister aware that it was previously stated that a DBM Loan Scheme would be provided to the boat owners?

Mr Dulull: Yes, there has been a Scheme set up for boat owners. Some 303 boat owners are included in the list.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Mr Speaker, Sir, can the Minister state whether he proposes to review the policy with regard to sand extraction?

Mr Dulull: Mr Speaker, Sir, I'll look into the matter.

Mr Varma: Mr Speaker, Sir, is the hon. Minister aware that the boat owners have invested in their business? I know that the boat owners and the sand extractors have been given the same compensation. Can we know the basis of that decision?

Mr Dulull: Mr Speaker, Sir, a committee was set up and it came up with recommendations. The ex gratia payment made to boat owners and sand extractors amounted to Rs214 m. and there are payments of Rs5,000 made on a monthly basis to sand extractors.

Mr Rucktooa: Mr Speaker, Sir, during the exercise of compensation to sand extractors, there were many genuine sand extractors who have been deprived of their

rights. Is the hon. Minister thinking of doing something positive? Is he contemplating to do something for those people who have been left behind?

Mr Dulull: Well, I understand that those who feel that they have been deprived of their rights, have made representations and have referred the case to the Court. We have two cases at the Supreme Court and 132 at the Intermediate Court.

Mr Varma: Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Minister inform the House how many of the persons who have been re-skilled have obtained employment as a result of the training they have received?

Mr Dulull: Well, I will look into it and come...

Mr Speaker: The hon. Minister needs notice of the question.

Mr Dulull: I need notice of the question.

Mrs Jeewa-Daureeawoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister whether the compensation paid is following a judgment of the Supreme Court or is it an amicable arrangement between parties?

Mr Dulull: Mr Speaker, Sir, there has been a committee set up to look into the question of compensation.

Mr Bhagwan: Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Minister confirm whether the committee was chaired by ex-Justice Forget?

Mr Dulull: Yes, it was chaired by ex-Justice Forget.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Speaker, Sir, since the Minister is saying that he is going to look into the matter regarding reviewing the policy of Government on sand extraction, I would ask him, what would happen now considering the fact that compensation has already been paid to a number of extractors.

Mr Dulull: I have not said I am going to review the policy concerning compensation.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I know what has induced the Minister to look into the matter again when a policy was already there?

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Let the Minister answer first!

Mr Dulull: If there has been a request made, then we will look into it.

Mr Cuttaree: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Minister whether he is allowing sand extraction to start again?

Mr Dulull: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have never said or mentioned that we'll allow sand extraction again. The issue was about the compensation.

Mr Speaker: Last question!

Mr Varma: Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Minister confirm whether the sand extractors have received any stipend during the time they were following courses at the IVTB?

Mr Dulull: I'll look into it.

MARE D'ALBERT - SOCIAL WELFARE CENTRE

(No. B/639) Mr Y. Varma (First Member for Mahebourg and Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Social Security, National Solidarity and Senior Citizens Welfare & Reform Institutions whether she is aware that the building housing the Mare d'Albert Social Welfare Centre is small, and if so, will she state whether it is proposed to shift it to a more appropriate place.

Mrs Bappoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, the Mare d'Albert Social Welfare Centre is located on the main road in a rented building of around 1200 square feet.

The Social Welfare Centre can accommodate only 50 to 60 persons whenever group activities are held. This is a very unfortunate situation as we all know that a Social Welfare Centre is considered to be a focal point where all age groups are keen to attend and take part in various social activities.

It is to be noted that for the time being the social welfare centres work in collaboration with the various existing social facilities namely -

- (i) the village hall;

- (ii) the women's centre, and
- (iii) the community health centre

for the organisation of major community activities.

I am, however, been informed that a request was made by the Ministry to the NDU on 21 April 2005 for a new building to house the Social Welfare Centre within an integrated project, but the project has not been materialised as the identification of the plot of land was not successful. The Ministry is, therefore, still pursuing matters for the identification of a proper plot of land. Once this has been identified, the request will again be transferred to the NDU for the construction of a new building pending, of course, availability of funds.

Mr Varma: Mr Speaker, Sir, is the hon. Minister aware that the issue of transferring the request to the NDU, was made way back in 1997? And if I may quote from a question asked by Mr Soburrun then, it was stated that the project is on the priority list of the NDU and once land is vested with the NDU, action will be initiated. There were two attempts, that is, one in 1997 and the other one in 2005. I would like to inform the hon. Minister that there is land available next to where the swimming pool is being constructed. Can I ask the Minister whether action will now be taken?

Mrs Bappoo: What I have been informed so far, Mr Speaker, Sir, is that it seems that there has not been a consensus or agreement on that particular plot of land. So, again they are trying to negotiate for a more appropriate, if I should say, plot of land.

Mr Varma: Mr Speaker, Sir, can the Minister confirm whether instead of building a new community centre, a bigger place can be rented somewhere to house the social welfare centre?

Mrs Bappoo: This possibility has already been investigated, Mr Speaker, Sir. But if the hon. Member can also help in trying to identify a proper one, he can certainly do so.

KYOTO PROTOCOL - MEASURES TAKEN

(No. B/640) Mr M. Dowarkasing (Third Member for Curepipe and Midlands) asked the Minister of Environment and National Development Unit

whether he will state when Mauritius became a party to the Kyoto Protocol, indicating the measures that have been taken since then.

Mr Bachoo: Sir, Mauritius acceded to the Kyoto Protocol on 09 May 2001. However the Kyoto Protocol became operational only as from 16 February 2005.

Mauritius as a developing country has no commitment to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions under the Protocol which provides only for developed countries to do so.

However, as a small island developing state, Mauritius is particularly vulnerable to the effects of climate change, global warming and sea level rise. In this context, mitigative and adaptation measures which are in line with the protocol objectives are being taken such as -

- Coastal protection works, mangrove propagation programme, monitoring and protection of coral reefs

For example: Coastal protection works -

- (a) Flic en Flac: beach fill and dunal restoration is being proposed over 600 metres of coast from Pearle Beach towards the limekiln;
- (b) Rivière des Galets: a sloping rock revetment is being proposed over the existing gabions to provide for long-term effective protection;
- (c) Petit Sable, Bambous Virieux and Grand Sable: a sloping rock revetment and some refurbishment works (lighting, walkways, parking) are being implemented;
- (d) Roches Noires: The ex sand landing place at Roches Noires has been partly rehabilitated;
- (e) Belle Mare: the restoration of the dune and the beach will be undertaken shortly to remedy the erosion problem. Provision of parking spaces is also being made.

Mangrove propagation has been undertaken on the east coast mostly, for example, at Quatre Soeurs, Bambous Virieux and Petit Sable.

Monitoring of coral reefs is being undertaken on a regular basis at 12 sites around the island, for example, Trou aux Biches, Pointe aux Sables, Belle Mare, Trou d'Eau Douce, Ile aux Bénitiers, Bel Ombre, Poudre d'Or amongst others.

- Sensitisation and promotion of the use of solar water heaters through provision of soft loan by DBM up to a ceiling of Rs25,000 at 6% interest rate for the purchase of solar water heater for private households.
- In a view to promoting energy conservation and efficiency the Government of Mauritius, in collaboration with the UNDP/GEF, has prepared a Medium Sized Project proposal on "Removal of Barriers to Energy Efficiency and Energy Conservation in Buildings in Mauritius." The financing being applied from GEF is to the tune of US\$ 975,000. The contribution of the Government of Mauritius will amount to US\$975,000 both in cash and in-kind
- Encouraging vehicle owners to shift from the use of petrol to liquefied petrol gas (LPG) through the provision of soft loan by DBM up to a ceiling of Rs16,000 for purchase of retrofitting kit.
- Promotion of the production of energy through renewable sources. In fact a Memorandum of Understanding has been signed with India to this effect.
- The Second National Communication which is a document to be submitted as part of our obligation under UNFCCC is presently under preparation. Apart from providing an inventory for greenhouse gas emission, it will also identify adaptation measures which will be submitted to funding agencies including the GEF and Adaptation Fund.
- The Clean Development Mechanism Office of the Ministry is being revitalised, with a view to identifying and preparing potential CDM projects.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to highlight the relative complexity and high technicality of such projects. In this respect, technical assistance from international agencies or through bilateral co-operation is being sought for capacity building and to bring the process forward.

Mr Dowarkasing: Mr Speaker, Sir, since the commitment period is getting closer and closer, may I ask the hon. Minister whether, besides all these measures, Government has elaborated any specific plan that has to be submitted to be in line with the Kyoto Protocol?

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, we have already adhered to the Kyoto Protocol. As I have just stated, we don't have any specific commitment, but, despite this, we have already prepared all our documentation, which will be submitted very soon.

Mrs Martin: Mr Speaker, Sir, the Minister has mentioned several mitigative measures that have been implemented in Mauritius. Do these include as well the Outer Islands, such as Rodrigues and Agalega?

Mr Bachoo: These measures include Rodrigues as well as other islands.

Mr Ganoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister has talked about renewable energy. Indeed, the Protocol encourages the use of renewable energy, and the reduction of the use of fossil fuel. Accordingly, the countries that make use of renewable energy would be granted carbon credits. Since an important fraction of our energy mix is derived from bagasse, Mauritius is, therefore, entitled to carbon credits. Can I ask the hon. Minister whether we have already been granted any compensation for the use of bagasse, which is a source of renewable energy?

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, this is a question that is directly linked with the Ministry of Public Utilities. But, despite this, one thing I can say is that, in the past, an attempt was made. For example, there was a proposal from the French Government, but, unfortunately, the matter was so complex that we could not go through. The case with the Belgium Government, which came forward, was similar and through which we could not go. Now, they are trying to simplify the matter, and I do hope that in the months to come we can start thinking in terms of making applications for any type of concession that we can get.

Mr Bhagwan: Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to the climate change Action Plan, followed by the PMO, especially by the Meteorological Services, can we know from the hon. Minister whether this is being updated and if there is any follow-up by the Ministry of Environment?

Mr Bachoo: The answer is in the positive, Mr Speaker, Sir. In fact, it has been updated, and we are definitely following all the decisions which were taken as well as the recommendations that are made to us.

Mr Cuttaree: Mr Speaker, Sir, since the Minister himself said at the start of his answer that being given we are a developing country, we have no commitments as regards the measures. My hon. friend has just suggested to him to study this issue

of the carbon credit. But, first, he should find out what it is and second, in what way we can benefit from this.

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, as I have just mentioned, it is a complicated issue, in particular the Adaptation Fund. In the beginning, it was very difficult for us to know, but now things are getting clearer. As the Minister of Finance himself is saying, now we are submitting our proposals.

Mr Bhagwan: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I know from the hon. Minister whether Mauritius was present at the last conference of parties and whether we represented the SIDS and made our voice heard?

Mr Bachoo: Yes, of course, we were present at the Montreal meeting. We represented the SIDS group. I was the representative of the SIDS group and intervened on behalf of them.

Mr Dowarkasing: Mr Speaker, Sir, despite the fact that we are not directly involved, may I know from the hon. Minister whether a study has been carried out, at least for us to know about the greenhouse gas emission in the country?

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, in fact, a committee is working on that, and we have not yet come to any conclusion. As I just said, it is a very complex issue. There are many technical issues, and that's why I stated in my reply that we are also trying to seek the support of technicians from international agencies.

Mr Bhagwan: We all know the problem of beach erosion, which is linked to the climate change effect. Can we know from the hon. Minister whether he has made a loud plea with his colleague, the Minister of Finance, to have the necessary funds, especially for the region of Flic en Flac, where there is a serious problem of beach erosion?

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, we have already overspent by Rs407 m. I have made a request of Rs70 m. for the reinstatement of the Flic en Flac beach.

Mr Cuttaree: Mr Speaker, Sir, while talking about the fight against erosion, the hon. Minister made reference to what he has been doing in the East. Can I ask him, after the next Budget is voted, to forget a little bit about the East and to look also at the West?

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have just mentioned that Rs70 m. have been earmarked for the upgrading of Flic en Flac beach, and as far as Belle Mare is concerned, it is only Rs5 m.

Mr Dayal: Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Minister state to the House what is the progress achieved in the elimination of CFC?

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, we have started a thorough campaign, and we are trying to sensitise all the people who utilise this gas. That's what we have done so far.

SUGAR GUARANTEED PRICE – EU COMPENSATION

(No. B/641) Mr M. Dowarkasing (Third Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the Minister of Agro Industry & Fisheries whether, in regard to the compensation to be paid by the European Union in the form of accompanying measures following the 5% decrease in the guaranteed price of sugar this year, he will state –

- (a) the amount in Mauritian rupees;
- (b) the mechanism to be set up to manage and distribute this sum, and
- (c) the percentage of this sum that will be allocated to small planters to alleviate their conditions.

(Withdrawn)

TOUT-COURT LANE, CONVENT STREET, CUREPIPE – UNDERGROUND NETWORK

(No. B/642) Mr M. Dowarkasing (Third Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the Minister of Public Utilities whether he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the CEB, information as to whether there is any project to develop an underground network to replace the existing network in the vicinity of Tout-Court Lane, Convent Street, Curepipe and, if so, will he state when works are likely to start.

Dr. Kasenally: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the CEB that the existing network in the vicinity of Tout-Court Lane, Convent Street, Curepipe, is linked to the 66/22 kv Wooton substation.

The Wooton substation is among the oldest of CEB's substations and is prone to faults, thus requiring frequent maintenance. In addition, the limited space available in this locality does not allow for the installation of the new 22 kv feeders to cope with the additional load demand.

To minimise on maintenance costs and to do away with the ageing 22 kv equipment, the CEB is constructing a new indoor 22 kv substation at Wooton. Works have started in April 2006 and are expected to be completed by October 2006.

In order to find room for the erection of the new outgoing 22 kv feeder for the new 22 kv indoor substation at Wooton, part of the existing 22 kv overhead network has to be undergrounded. The network found at Tout-Court Lane, Convent Street, Curepipe, shall also be undergrounded in the wake of this development.

This will enable five to six families who have acquired land in the area, where there was the overhead 22 kv cable, to construct their houses.

The underground works are due to start in November 2006 and are expected to be completed by early 2007.

**MORCELLEMENT ANTELME, FOREST SIDE, CUREPIPE –
BUS LAY-BY & FOOTPATH**

(No. B/643) Mr M. Dowarkasing (Third Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport & Shipping whether he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the RDA, information as to whether it has received a request for the construction of a bus lay-by at Morcellement Antelme, Forest Side, Curepipe, with a view to improving the traffic flow and, if so, will he state where matters stand.

The Minister of Environment & NDU (Mr A. Bachoo): Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that there was a request to improve traffic flow and safety along Mahebourg-Phoenix Road (A10), from Pont Carbonel towards Morcellement Antelme at Forest Side, Curepipe. The works required involve –

- (a) construction of a footpath on the left hand side of the road, after Pont Carbonel in the direction of Morcellement Antelme, for the safety of pedestrians;
- (b) provision of a bus lay-by near Morcellement Antelme.

The construction of the footpath has been completed, and the drawings for the construction of the bus lay-by are ready.

Since the works involve land acquisition, the lay-by will be completed after finalisation of the land acquisition procedures.

Mr Dowarkasing: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I draw the attention of the hon. Minister to the fact that land has already been identified? According to my

information, it is already State land. So, I don't see the problem of land acquisition taking place. May I impress upon him to see to it that this project gets moving on?

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, according to the information that I have, the survey will be done in June 2006. I will take it up with my colleague, the substantive Minister, when he comes back.

STATE LANDS – ALLOCATION (AUGUST 2005 – MAY 2006)

(No. B/644) Mrs S. Hanoomanjee (Second Member for Savanne and Black River) asked the Minister of Housing & Lands whether, in regard to socio-cultural organisations, institutions and other associations which have been allocated State lands since August 2005 to date, he will give a list thereof, indicating their respective location.

Mr Dulull: Mr Speaker, Sir, I thank the hon. Member for this question, as I understand her concern regarding the allocation of State lands. We certainly share this concern and the more so as State lands form part of the wealth of our nation and Government is the trustee and guardian of such wealth. They cannot be allocated without careful consideration being given to their usage.

I am given to understand that there had been numerous cases of misappropriation and misallocation of State lands under the previous Government. It is common knowledge that State land was given to “*maîtresse*”, while some of our prestigious *Pas Géométriques* were allocated on a very selective basis to “*cousins/cousines*”.

(Interruptions)

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Mr Speaker, Sir, on a point of order...

Mr Speaker: There is a point of order.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Mr Speaker, Sir, on a point of order. Can I ask the hon. Minister to reply to my question which is straightforward, giving the facts?

(Interruptions)

Mr Sinatambou: On a point of order, Mr Speaker, Sir...

Mr Speaker: The hon. Minister cannot raise a point of order on another point of order. As I have pointed out earlier, I have no control on the answers given by Ministers. But Erskine May says that answers must be relevant to the question that has been put.

(Interruptions)

Mr Dulull: I am coming to the answer, Mr Speaker, Sir. I wanted to give the philosophy of this Government.

(Interruptions)

Such practices instead of being firmly condemned were condoned by those who, before us, occupied a seat of power and authority. Fortunately, with the assumption of office of this Government, such practices have come to an end, and all applications of State lands, including *Pas Géométriques*, are studied in-depth and with all the seriousness and objectivity they deserve. I can thus assure the hon. Member that since August 2005, the allocation of State lands has been made after in-depth study, and the information requested by her is being compiled and will be placed in the Library as soon as it is ready.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Minister whether he can give the assurance to this House that the list will effectively be placed in the Library?

Mr Dulull: I can assure the hon. Member that the needful will be done.

At 1.00 p.m. the sitting was suspended.

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

**MINISTER OF INDUSTRY, SMALL & MEDIUM ENTERPRISES,
COMMERCE & CO-OPERATIVES/
CO-OPERATIVE SOCIETIES – MEETINGS**

(No. B/645) Mrs S. Hanoomanjee (Second Member for Savanne and Black River) asked the Minister of Industry, Small & Medium Enterprises, Commerce & Co-operatives whether, in regard to the co-operative societies, he will for the period July 2005 to date, state the number of –

- (a) meetings he has had with these societies, indicating the outcome thereof, and
- (b) youngsters trained in the co-operative movement.

Dr. Jeetah: Mr Speaker, Sir, for the period July to date, I have had several meetings with Co-operative Societies as well as Federations at –

- (i) their respective seats;
- (ii) the conference Room of my Ministry;
- (iii) regional Co-operative Centres;
- (iv) in my office, and
- (v) other venues.

So far I have had around 30 formal meetings and some 50 informal ones such as talks and visits.

Furthermore, I have had meetings with all Co-operative Federations as well as the Mauritius Co-operative Union (MCU). There are in all 12 Federations of Co-operative Societies. Following representations received from the Federations, monthly meetings are being organised to take stock of their problems and for follow-up action. The next meeting is scheduled for 08 June 2006.

I have also put up a permanent Co-ordination Committee to keep abreast of problems in the sector and also to find solutions. A Co-ordination Committee with the Mauritius Agricultural Marketing Co-operative Federation Ltd. is being organised for 01 June 2006 regarding problems of inadequate sugar estate land provided to the Agricultural Marketing Co-operative societies. Various stakeholders such as the sugar estates, the Agricultural Marketing Co-operative Societies, the Mauritius Sugar Authority and Mauritius Chamber of Agriculture would be present.

With regard to outcome of meetings, I have to say that this is a permanent process –

- with an attempt to sensitise the co-operators on the benefits of working together, self-help and the need to increase the turnover, surplus and membership base, as well as,
- to listen to the views and problems of each Federal Body and close monitoring of the proposals and activities of the respective federations.

I must further add that a Steering Committee on the re-engineering of the co-operative consumer sector had been set up under my personal initiative and its proposals are being presently studied by all stakeholders.

Furthermore, consultations have also led to identification of various loopholes in the Co-operatives Act 2005. Amendments proposed by the Co-operative Community on the Co-operatives Act 2005 have been compiled and which I am presenting to the National Assembly today itself.

With regard to part (b) of the question, I must say that particular attention is being given to encourage new membership at primary levels. Also various courses and talks have been organised to educate and sensitise youngsters and employees of different organisations over the advantages and benefits of forming co-operative societies.

As at date around 22 organisations have been reached and some 600 participants, including around 300 youngsters have been sensitised. Some organisations where such sensitisation talks and promotional activities have been held are –

- The State Trading Corporation;
- The Mauritius College of the Air;
- The Agricultural Marketing Board
- Axess;
- Iframac Ltd.;
- The Municipality of Port Louis;
- Various hotels, and
- Various secondary educational institutions.

Moreover, we are targetting school children to be initiated to co-operative principles of thrift and savings and prudential financial management at both primary and secondary levels.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Besides the sensitisation of youngsters, can the hon. Minister say whether there has been any sort of formal training given to youngsters in the co-operative sector?

Dr. Jeetah: Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir, I did mention that. We are talking to them. This is what the training is about. We are teaching them about the principles of the

co-operative movement. I must also say that we have an institution called NICE, where training is being offered. I don't have the list of the people, who actually have the chance to put up the training programmes, but yes, in short, it is an ongoing programme.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: The previous Government had initiated some sort of formal training where youngsters were trained in project management, how to monitor the co-operative societies and all these. Can I know whether this sort of formal training is still on or it has been dismantled?

Dr. Jeetah: As I said, Mr Speaker, Sir, we are starting from the base. There used to be a time when there were some sort of savings schemes in schools and this is what we are starting. In fact, there is a school in Quatre Bornes where process is well under way and we would like to have a national initiative after we learned from this experience in Quatre Bornes.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister has not replied to my question. Can the Minister give the number of co-operative societies which have been registered from July 2005 to date?

Dr. Jeetah: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am afraid I don't have this information, but certainly if the hon. Member puts a substantive question, I will look into the matter.

Mr Speaker: Next question, hon. Lesjongard!

ANAHITA IRS PROJECT – FISHERMEN/PROMOTERS

(No. B/646) Mr G. Lesjongard (Second Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue): asked the Minister of Agro Industry & Fisheries whether, in regard to fishers who are concerned with the Anahita Integrated Resorts Scheme Project, he will state where matters stand.

The Minister of Industry, Small & Medium Enterprises, Commerce & Co-operatives (Dr. R. Jeetah): Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission I will answer this question.

My colleague, Dr. the hon. Arvin Boolell, has already replied to a question on the Anahita IRS Project in April this year, giving details on action by the Ministry of

Agro Industry and Fisheries to resolve conflict between fishermen and the promoters of the project.

During a joint site visit effected in March 2006 on work being carried out in order to delimit the working area as per the EIA licence granted to the promoter on 23 March 2000, an encroachment was noted. In order to regularize the situation, the promoters have applied to the Ministry of Housing and Lands for the grant of an industrial lease to cover the encroached area.

I am informed that the Ministry of Housing and Lands has no objection in principle to consider the grant of an industrial site lease over the reclaimed land of an extent of 25,700m² including the encroached area of about 2000 m² to CIEL properties Ltd. subject to the following conditions –

- (a) any development proposed on site should be in compliance with the planning policy guidance and all the conditions imposed in the EIA licence;
- (b) prior to undertaking any development on site clearance should be sought and obtained from the Ministry of Housing and Lands, and
- (c) any proposed development should also comply with any mitigating measures likely to be imposed by the Ministry of Environment and the Ministry of Agro Industry and Fisheries, that is, the Fisheries Division.

A meeting was held on 20 April 2006 at the Ministry of Environment where representatives from different Ministries and the promoters were present. After discussions, it was decided that the promoters would submit a fresh EIA report with the different variances in the project. Subsequently, a report has been submitted by the promoters to the Environment Division of the Ministry of Environment & National Development Unit for consideration. A joint site visit comprising officers of the Ministry of Environment was effected on 26 May 2006 prior to considering the new EIA application and the issues pertaining to the proposal would be discussed at the next EIA committee meeting.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in order to bring an end to the conflicts between the fishers and the promoters, the promoters have agreed to provide a sum of Rs5 m which would be credited into a Fund known as the “Anahita Fishermen Solidarity Fund” to

assist the fishers in their fishing activities. The fishermen were invited to register themselves with the Fund from 24 April to 05 May 2006.

Under the “Anahita Fishermen Solidarity Fund”, each of the 220 registered fishermen concerned would be entitled to Rs22,000 payable in two installments between 02 May and 15 December 2006, upon presentation of invoices/quotations relating to fishing items purchased, repairs and maintenance of boats and engines.

The Fund which is now operational is managed by representatives of fishermen (3), CIEL Group (2) and a representative from the Ministry of Agro Industry & Fisheries as an observer. So far, out of 220 fishermen concerned, 15 have signified their intention to benefit from this Fund.

Mr Speaker Sir, I am also informed of the following –

- (i) a meeting was held on 17 May 2006 at the boardroom of Beau Champ Sugar Estate in connection with modalities of payment to fishermen who have agreed to be compensated;
- (ii) at another meeting of the Committee of “Anahita Fishermen Solidarity Fund” held on 25 May 2006, at Beau Champ S.E. Conference Room, payment was effected to eight fishermen to the tune of Rs85,800 who presented their receipts/invoices for fishing items purchased, and
- (iii) the committee has agreed that future meetings will be held on request from fishermen concerned.

Finally, I wish to apprise the House that I have been informed that the fishermen who were not agreeable to take advantage of the “Anahita Fishermen Solidarity Fund” are contemplating legal action against the CIEL Group.

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the Minister whether it was promised to the fishermen that the report that is being undertaken by the Ministry of Environment regarding the land reclamation of *Ile aux Chats* will be submitted to them and that they will take cognizance thereof?

Dr. Jeetah: Sir, I will pass the question to the substantive Minister.

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the Minister whether he is satisfied that out of 220 fishermen concerned with the Anahita project and the Anahita Solidarity Fund, only eight have benefited from that Fund?

Dr. Jeetah: Mr Speaker, Sir, as I have replied, there are 15 who have signified their intention to benefit from this Fund and I presume that once they present their receipts they will obtain their cash. With regard to the rest, as I said, they are contemplating legal action against the CIEL Group.

Mr Guinness: Mr Speaker, Sir, can the Minister confirm whether a new EIA has been submitted to the Ministry of Environment? Is it concerning the two southern additional metre square that have been filled by CIEL Group?

Dr. Jeetah: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Member should listen. I said at the very beginning that there is an extent of 25,700 square metres which had been reclaimed and the Ministry of Housing and Lands is agreeable to that, subject to certain conditions, and this is one of them.

Mr Guinness: Mr Speaker, Sir, this is my question. I heard well the Minister because I myself put the question. They have already filled 2,000 metre square, is it now that they are asking for an EIA?

Dr. Jeetah: Mr Speaker, Sir, this is the present case and this is one condition for them to be able to continue with the development.

Mr Guinness: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I ask the Minister another question. I don't know whether the Minister knows. Last time I asked the substantive Minister about the independent socio-economic survey which was to be carried out by CIEL Group. The Minister answered that the survey was limited only to Trou d'Eau Douce and he himself being an elected member of Deux Frères and Quatre Soeurs, like the hon. Minister of Industry himself, he promised that he is going to impress on CIEL Group to give a time frame. Can I know now whether we have got the time frame as to when the independent survey will be completed?

Dr. Jeetah: Mr Speaker, Sir, I think the hon. Member will have to be patient, but I can assure him, whatever has been promised will be done.

Mr Lesjongard: One supplementary question, Mr Speaker, Sir. May I ask the Minister what form of assistance was provided by either his Ministry or the Ministry of Agro-Industry to help the fishermen to prepare projects to be submitted to the Anahita Solidarity Fund?

Dr. Jeetah: Sir, I do not have the exact information. The hon. Member will have to come with a substantive question and we would answer.

Mr Lesjongard: I do not think I'll come with a substantive question because one question is addressed to the Minister responsible for small and medium enterprises...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Has the Minister received any request

Dr. Jeetah: Exactly. Well, if the hon. Member wishes, I can give him a list of what we are doing at the level of my Ministry....

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker, Sir, this is against Standing Orders. The hon. Member cannot come up with such questions, but I am prepared to answer....

Mr Speaker: The question was two-fold, one addressed to you as substantive Minister and one addressed to the Minister of Agro Industry and Fisheries. If the hon. Minister cannot answer for the Minister of Agro Industry, he can answer for himself.

Mr Lesjongard: Sir, if you will allow me, I withdraw the other three questions and wait for the substantive Minister to come, then I'll put my questions.

BANK FISHERS – WINTER ALLOWANCE

(No. B/647) Mr G. Lesjongard (Second Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Agro Industry & Fisheries whether he will state if Government is proposing to grant a winter allowance to bank fishers for the months of June, July and August and, if so, will he give the quantum, indicating if any discussions were held with the fishers in this respect.

(Withdrawn)

VESSEL MONITORING SYSTEM

(No. B/648) Mr G. Lesjongard (Second Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Agro Industry & Fisheries whether he will state if the vessel monitoring system is fully operational, indicating the number of vessels and fishing boats which are equipped to be tracked by the system.

(Withdrawn)

CHIKUNGUNYA CAMPAIGN - FOGGING – FAUNA & FLORA

(No. B/649) Mr G. Lesjongard (Second Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Agro Industry & Fisheries whether he will state if any exercise has been carried out to assess the impact of fogging, in relation to the anti-chikungunya campaign, on the fauna and flora.

(Withdrawn)

GAMING HOUSES & BETTING SHOPS - LICENCES

(No. B/650) Mr S. Dayal (Second Member for Quartier Militaire & Moka) asked the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to gaming houses and betting shops, he will –

- (a) give a list thereof, district-wise;
- (b) state if he has received a letter from the Sanatan Dharma Temples Federation objecting to the grant of gaming and betting licences, and
- (c) review the policy of granting such licences including the withdrawal of licences from those who have already been licensed.

The Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and Economic Development (Mr R. Sithanen): Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission I am tabling the information requested in part (a) of the question. I wish to point out that the licences have been issued in accordance with the policy which was approved by the preceding Government in April 2005. I am also informed that the licences are issued after Police clearance.

As regards part (b) of the question a copy of a letter dated 27 April 2006 addressed to my colleague, the hon. Minister of Local Government, was received by the Gaming Control Board from the Mauritius Sanathan Dharma Temples

Federation. The Federation proposes that no further licences be issued by the authorities for casinos and betting places.

Regarding part (c) of the question, the views of the Federation have been noted by the Gaming Control Board and the Horse Racing Board. I wish to inform the House that under the Gaming Act and the Horse Racing Board Act, there are provisions empowering the Minister of Finance to limit the number of licences that may be issued. This power, however, is being exercised on the recommendations of the licensing authorities. The Acts also provide for the suspension or revocation of the licence if the terms and conditions attached to its issue are not satisfied by the licensee.

Mr Dayal: Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to ask the hon. Deputy Prime Minister whether, in the national interest and for the safeguard and preservation of the family unit and family life, Government will consider removing these licences even at the expense of granting them a compensation?

Mr Sithanen: Mr Speaker, Sir, the answer is no. Let me be very candid and frank about this. Government has issued what should be the policy with regard to licences. There are different types of licences, Mr Speaker, Sir – casino, gaming house A, B & C and betting shops. Let me inform the House that the policy today is that a maximum of two gaming houses are allowed in big villages with an adult population of 10,000 persons or more. However, in a tourist resort village, where two gaming houses A are already in operation, a casino licence may also be granted. Gaming house C may be operated anywhere in the island and there is no limit for the number of licences. But as I said, if we go according to the procedures that were laid down in April 2005, Mr Speaker, Sir, there would have been 48 premises, but, in fact, there are only 20 gaming houses A, B, C. Again, I think we have to strike a fair balance between providing these facilities to the locals and also to the tourists and ensuring that it does not do what the hon. Member is stating. It is not an easy solution. In fact, we are trying to see whether the policy can be changed in order to meet the requests of the hon. Member. It is an exercise that is quite complicated. I think that what we can review the conditions in residential areas. We should review the conditions that are attached to the granting of licences to gaming houses A, B or C. I don't think, Mr Speaker, Sir, it would be in the interest of everybody that we just cancel and revoke everything. I personally, Mr Speaker, Sir, would be in favour of regulations, not only in that particular sector, but also in other sectors. I don't think the solution is to cancel everything and not to grant licences. The solution across the world - even in a country like Singapore - is basically for regulations.

Mr Dayal: Mr Speaker, Sir, I appreciate that the Minister has gone through this letter circulated by a very respectable organisation. My question is: will the Deputy Prime Minister agree that the surge in the number of gaming houses is becoming a major social problem that is affecting the family and the social fabric?

Mr Sithanen: Mr Speaker, Sir, it is very difficult to lay the blame for the problems that we have in our society on one specific issue. Let us be very fair and very candid about it. I could have told the hon. Member –

‘we will consider it’, and then in three or four months’ time, the hon. Member comes back with another question and he sees no change. As I said, as the regulations are today, we could have given more. In fact, let me reassure the hon. Member that since July 2005, there have not been many new licences that have been allocated. I don’t think it would make sense just to remove them. There are many areas, Mr Speaker, Sir, that we would discuss in this House where some people would say ‘no, let’s close everything’ and others would say ‘let’s liberalise everything’. As usual in these cases, the solution is in the middle and we need to regulate. Probably what we need to do is to enforce the regulations. What is warranted probably is to vary the conditions of granting these licences so as to mitigate the evils allegedly caused by such gaming houses.

Mrs Perrier: Le ministre, je suppose, est conscient, puisque cela existe dans sa propre circonscription, qu’un *gaming house* entraîne d’autres activités telles que la prostitution. Est-ce qu’il peut s’assurer avec le Premier ministre et les autorités concernées qu’il y ait un contrôle strict autour de ces *gaming houses*?

Mr Sithanen: In fact, I thank the hon. Member for that question. My colleagues, the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Tourism and Miss Deerpalsing and I, often speak to the Commissioner of Police to make sure that Police enforce regulations. In fact, we are talking about regulations. I agree with the hon. Member, regulation is probably the best course of action. Now, the other thing that we have to be very careful with, Mr Speaker, Sir, let me be very honest about it. In many areas where we ban it, it goes underground, it becomes illegal. Then, it is more difficult to control and to manage. We have seen that in many countries in the world. In fact, there are many countries that are very, very conservative, I can cite the name of many of them. What they have done is to regulate and to enforce these regulations. I agree with the hon. Member that, basically the solution is that we need to regulate, we need to make sure that there is security so that other activities are not carried out on these premises.

Mr Varma: Is the hon. Deputy Prime Minister aware that wherever these gaming houses operate, there is a proliferation of other social evils like prostitution, like the case in his own constituency with the Ti Vegas which has been granted such a licence?

Mr Speaker: I think the hon. Deputy Prime Minister has just answered a question on that same specific point.

EDF – COUNTRY’S STRATEGY PAPER & REGIONAL STRATEGY PAPER

(No. B/651) Mr S. Dayal (Second Member of Quartier Militaire and Moka) asked the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether he will state if the country’s strategy paper and the regional strategy paper for the 10th European Development Fund have already been submitted to the European Commission and, if not, where matters stand in regard to the preparation of both documents.

The Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and Economic Development: Mr Speaker, Sir, my Ministry is currently preparing the Country Strategy Paper as per the provisional guidelines of the European Commission. The preparation of the CSP has reached an advanced stage and the paper will be submitted to the European Commission by the deadline of end July 2006, which has changed; I think it is going to be end August now, Mr Speaker, Sir.

As regards the Regional Strategy Paper, I can inform the House that, for the combined COMESA-EAC-IGAD-IOC region, which is under the IOC Secretariat, the Inter Regional Coordinating Committee (IRCC) has started preparation of the document. A first draft of the RSP is expected by September 2006.

Mr Bodha: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Deputy Prime Minister whether the funds earmarked for the 9th EDF for Mauritius have all been used?

Mr Sithanen: Mr Speaker, Sir, I think there are three ways of looking at this. There are funds that are earmarked, funds that are committed and funds that are disbursed. In fact, Mauritius is one of the few countries that has already earmarked the totality of the funds under the 9th EDF. We have also recently done an exercise, Mr Speaker, Sir. We were in Brussels and we met Commissioner Michel. We have agreed that all the *reliquats* of the previous EDF prior to the 9th EDF also will be monitored. We have done this exercise and we are committing the resources. The reason for this is very simple because there is a new regulation. If they are not committed, we will lose them in two years’ time.

Mr Speaker: Before the next question is called, I would like to inform the House that PQ No. B/685 set by hon. Dr. Hawoldar has been withdrawn and PQ No. B/677 set by hon. Mrs Grenade has been withdrawn. Next question.

**MATHEMATICS, SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY SUBJECTS
TEACHING IN SCHOOLS**

(No. B/652) Mr S. Dayal (Second Member of Quartier Militaire and Moka) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether he will state if his Ministry has any plan to encourage and promote the teaching of Mathematics, Science and Technology in our schools and, if so, where matters stand.

(Withdrawn)

AFRICA REGION - REGIONAL ECONOMIC COMMUNITIES

(No. B/653) Mr S. Dayal (Second Member of Quartier Militaire and Moka) asked the Minister of Foreign Affairs, International Trade and Co-operation whether he will state if negotiations and/or discussions have started at the level of the different Regional Economic Communities (RECs) in the Africa Region with a view to their rationalisation and, if so, where matters stand.

(Withdrawn)

LA RUE LARGE & VICINITY - ELECTRICITY CUT – 06.05.2006

(No. B/654) Mrs F. Jeewa-Daureeawoo (Third Member for Stanley and Rose Hill) 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 in the evening or the night of 06 May 2006 there was an interruption in the supply of electricity at La Rue Larga or its vicinity, Port Louis and, if so, the reasons therefor.

Dr. Kasenally: Mr Speaker, Sir, there is no such street to my knowledge of 'La Rue Larga'. I presume that the hon. Member meant 'La Rue Large'.

I am informed by the CEB that, on the 06 May 2006 at 2144 hours, a fault occurred on a switch on the 66kV Saint Louis feeder line at Dumas substation. The protection system was activated automatically and the faulty part of the network was isolated.

The regions affected by the fault were Forges Tardieu, Cité Martial, Ste Croix, part of Terre Rouge, Vallée des Prêtres and part of Plaine Verte.

After isolation of the faulty switch, the supply restoration process was initiated at 21.56 hours, that is, about ten minutes afterwards and completed at 22.03 hours with immediate restoration in the regions of Forges Tardieu, Sainte Croix, Terre Rouge and Vallée des Prêtres. Supply in Cité Martial was restored two minutes later and seven minutes later for the whole affected region of Plaine Verte.

I am informed by the CEB that an investigation to determine the cause of the fault is ongoing with the assistance of a consulting engineer from Plantec, South Africa who is in Mauritius since 24 May 2006. A detailed report on the fault will be submitted by early June 2006.

As I mentioned, the supply restoration process was initiated at 21.56 hours in the regions of Forges Tardieu, Sainte Croix, part of Terre Rouge and Vallée des Prêtres. Supply was restored at 21.58 hours and the rest of the regions at 22.03 hours.

BEACH AUTHORITY – RECRUITMENT EXERCISE & CERTIFICATE OF MORALITY

(No. B/655) Mrs F. Jeewa-Daureeawoo (Third Member for Stanley and Rose Hill) asked the Minister of Local Government whether he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Beach Authority, information as to whether any recruitment exercise has been carried out thereat since January 2006 and, if so, if applicants were required to produce a certificate of morality.

Dr. David: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that the Beach Authority has carried out recruitment exercises since January 2006 for the filling of various existing vacancies and that the production of a certificate of morality was not one of the selection criteria.

Mr Speaker, Sir, it is also worth pointing out that the Beach Authority had, under the previous regime, filled 28 vacancies since its coming into operation in June 2002 but, at no time, a certificate of morality was required to be qualified for appointment to any post at the Authority.

Mrs Martin: May I know from the hon. Minister how many people have actually been recruited?

Dr. David: If the hon. Member comes with a substantive question, I will answer. I have given the reply to the main question.

Mrs Perrier: May I know from the hon. Minister who is the Chairperson or the Director of the Beach Authority?

Dr. David: Mr Seeruttun.

Mrs Perrier: Is he the same person who has had problems at the *Casino de Maurice*?

Dr. David: Mr Speaker, Sir, he has been appointed at the Beach Authority and there has been no problem whatsoever. I can mention a list of ex-chairmen under the previous Government who had had a lot of problems. They will then learn who they appointed.

Mr Jugnauth: May I ask the hon. Minister whether the production of a certificate of morality is a criterion?

Dr. David: It has never been a criterion - not before, not now and it will not be.

HOSPITALS - RAPE CRISIS CENTRES

(No. B/656) Mrs F. Jeewa-Daureeawoo (Third Member for Stanley and Rose Hill) asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether he will state if rape crisis centres have been set up in hospitals and, if so, will he give a list thereof, indicating how these centres are managed.

Mr Faugoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, there is no rape crisis centres as such in the hospitals. However, following Government's approval in March 2006, my Ministry has set up a Sexual Assault Unit in each of the five regional hospitals, that is, Dr. Jeetoo Hospital, SSRN Hospital, Flacq Hospital, Jawaharlal Nehru Hospital and Victoria Hospital.

Appropriate accommodation has been earmarked in relevant wards in each hospital to cater for children, female adults as well as male adults, victims of sexual assault.

Each ward is managed by a Ward Manager/Charge Nurse and a protocol of assistance to victims of sexual assault has been established and is being implemented whilst dealing with cases of sexual assault. The protocol defines the role and responsibility of each stakeholder, including the Police, the Ministry of Women's Rights, Child Development, Family Welfare and Consumer Protection as well as the medical and paramedical staff in the management of cases of assault.

Furthermore, according to the protocol, a victim is seen on a fast track basis at the hospital for emergency treatment. He/she is referred to the specific ward designated for the purpose where he/she is seen by the Police Medical Officer as well as other officers such as a psychologist, a gynaecologist and a medical social worker for appropriate support.

As regards children who are victims of sexual assault, they are treated in the presence of their mother/close female relative.

NELSON MANDELA CULTURAL CENTRE - CONSTRUCTION

(No. B/657) Mrs F. Labelle (Third Member for Vacoas and Floreal) asked the Minister of Arts and Culture whether, in regard to the construction of a building to house the Nelson Mandela Cultural Centre, he will state where matters stand.

Mr Gowressoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to refer to the reply made on 11 April 2006 to PQ No. B/223 by the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping whereby the House was informed that the construction of a building at La Tour Koenig for the Nelson Mandela Centre for African Culture is being examined by the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development in the context of the forthcoming Budget.

Mrs Labelle: Mr Speaker, Sir, in reply to PQ No. B/145 the hon. Minister stated that a sum of Rs15 m. had been provided in the current financial year and, since we are on the eve of the end of the financial year, may I know from the hon. Minister whether this sum has been used and, if so, for which purpose?

Mr Gowressoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I agree with the hon. Member that a sum of Rs15 m. was earmarked for the renovation of the General Post Office building and we decided to implement this project at the initial place at La Tour Koenig in August

2005. But in December 2005 we have been advised by the SLO to issue a fresh tender exercise for this project.

Mrs Labelle: Mr Speaker, Sir, I agree with the Minister as far as the first part of the question is concerned. But he also mentioned last time that this sum of Rs15 m. will be used for the implementation of the project at La Tour Koenig. This too forms part of the question. That is why I asked, further to his reply, whether this sum of money has been used for the implementation as he, himself, stated in reply to PQ No.B/145.

Mr Gowressoo: I have informed the House that the tender exercise has been launched in December 2005.

Mrs Labelle: Has the Minister stated that the tender exercise was launched in December 2005

Mr Gowressoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, we received advice from the SLO in December 2005 to the effect that a fresh tender exercise needs to be launched.

Mrs Labelle: Has the tender been launched?

Mr Gowressoo: It is the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Public Infrastructure who replied last time to PQ B/223. We have to wait for the approval of the design.

Mrs Labelle: May I take it from the hon. Minister that he is not aware as to whether the tender has been launched and that he has to consult the Minister of Public Infrastructure?

Mr Gowressoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Public Infrastructure replied in PQ B/223 that the tender was launched and they are waiting for the design to be approved.

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the Minister whether he has found the *maquette* of the centre which was lost?

Mr Gowressoo: Will the hon. Member repeat the question, please?

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the Minister whether he has found the *maquette* of the centre which was lost? Because he said that he was looking for the *maquette*.

Mr Gowressoo: I need notice of the question.

LAND RESTITUTION – CLAIM – COMMUNIQUE

(No. B/658) Mrs F. Labelle (Third Member for Vacoas and Floreal) asked the Minister of Housing and Lands whether he will consider the advisability of issuing a *communiqué* to inform members of the public who have a claim for land restitution that his Ministry will look into their cases.

Mr Dulull: Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Dayal: Mr Speaker, Sir, I should like to know from the hon. Minister whether he considers the advisability of appointing a permanent committee of legal experts to receive any claim for land restitution and advise the claimant as per the legal provision existing in Mauritius, more particularly, the Constitution of Mauritius and the law relating to acquisitive prescription.

Mr Dulull: Mr Speaker, Sir, we will consider this.

Mrs Labelle: Mr Speaker, Sir, by the time I take my seat, I think the Minister has answered and I haven't heard anything about his answer. With your permission
....

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: But what was the original answer?

Mrs Labelle: The original answer.

Mr Dulull: It was "yes".

Mr Speaker: The hon. Minister said "yes".

Mrs Labelle: Now, the Minister think they can answer from a sitting position. All right! Mr Speaker, Sir, may I know from the Minister when and how he is going to issue the *communiqué*?

Mr Dulull: The question is about whether I am going to issue a *communiqué*. I said “yes” in the form of a *communiqué*, I will inform and secondly in due course.

MANGALKHAN, FLOREAL – SEXUAL ABUSE CASE

(No. B/659) Mrs F. Labelle (Third Member for Vacoas and Floreal) asked the Minister of Women’s Rights, Child Development, Family Welfare & Consumer Protection whether, in regard to the cases of –

- (a) Master E.D. aged five, and
- (b) Master K.F. aged eleven, both living at Mangalkhan, Floréal, she will state the date on which the Child Development Unit was informed thereof, indicating what actions were taken, if any.

Mrs Seebun: Mr Speaker, Sir, as regards part (a) of the question, the case of minor E.D. was reported to the Child Development Unit of my Ministry at Floreal on 09 December 2005 by the minor’s mother, as one of sexual abuse.

On the same day, a psychologist of my Ministry attended to the case but could not interact with the child properly...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order, order, order! The hon. Member has put a question, let the Minister answer. I am asking all Members to keep quiet.

Mrs Seebun: ...the latter being boisterous and hence difficult to handle. The mother also gave a statement at Floreal Police Station on the same day.

On the next day, that is on 10 December, the child was examined by the Police Medical Officer and was referred to Brown Sequard Hospital for psychiatric treatment.

Follow-up visits were subsequently made by the Child Welfare Officers of my Ministry on 07 February, 06 March, 03 April and 03 May of this year. The child has

been uncooperative and violent and her responsible party was advised to take him for treatment at Brown Sequard Hospital.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as regards part (b) of the question, the case of minor K.F., on 07 April 2006, a teacher of Espitalier Noel Primary School reported to the Child Development Unit of my Ministry at Floreal that the minor had confided to her that she had been hurt in her private parts.

Minor was interviewed on the same day by officers of the CDU Floreal and Police Constable attached to that unit. However, the minor denied any alleged sexual abuse and stated that she had injured herself during her bath. The statement was confirmed by the mother.

The mother and minor were given an appointment for a psychological session but they never turned up.

The child is being followed by an educational psychologist at the school level.

Mrs Labelle: Mr Speaker, Sir, regarding child E.D., may I ask the hon. Minister - she mentioned that the case has been referred to CDU - whether the child is still in this environment of drug and prostitution and the alleged sexual aggressor?

Regarding the case of child K.F., may I ask the Minister why the officers of CDU have not thought it fit to get this child examined by a Medical Practitioner to ensure the nature of the injury sustained by the child?

Mrs Seebun: Mr Speaker, Sir, as regards the first part of the hon. Member's question, I am going to look into it myself and I am going to contact the parents and see whether the child is in the same environment and is dangerously exposed. We are going to do the needful.

As regards the second case, Mr Speaker, Sir, I want the hon. Member to realise if the parents themselves do not assume their responsibilities, how far can the Ministry intervene? I would like the hon. Member to help me by asking the mother to contact us and accept that this has been the case because if the parents themselves are denying that any sexual assault has been committed, what can my Ministry do? At this point in time, I would ask parents to have more parental responsibilities and not to hide any such misbehaviours. The parents must be cooperative towards the Ministry.

When my officers go to them, they have to reveal the truth so that we can intervene and help those kids, and not hide and protect the culprits.

Mrs Labelle: Mr Speaker, Sir, I do agree with the hon. Minister that parents have to take their responsibilities. But does not a Government have the responsibility to protect children whose parents do not take their responsibilities? When we have the case of a child whose parents do not take their responsibilities, is it not the responsibility of Government to care for this child? So, if this child has said that she has not been aggressed and we have some doubts, can't we do something? We just say that the parents should take care of?

Mrs Seebun: Mr Speaker, Sir, if the hon. Member is carefully following up, we are intervening. Whenever we have doubts that children are victims and parents are hiding such facts, we are taking the risk of sending our officers, who are sometimes assaulted and ill-treated, but we are taking very bold actions of removing those children from those unprotected zones where children are exposed to such a risk. We are certainly doing it.

Mrs Labelle: Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, must I take it from the Minister that in the case of child K.F., her Ministry does not have a single doubt about the injury sustained by this child?

Mrs Seebun: I do not say we do not have a single doubt, but I would like to repeat that, when the mother herself, who is the first person responsible for protecting the child, has come forward and said that nothing of that sort has happened to that child. Nevertheless, I am giving this case the benefit of doubt and I'll personally go and see whether anything of that sort has happened.

PUBLIC HOSPITALS – SURGICAL OPERATIONS – WAITING LIST

(No. B/660) Mr S. Naidu (Third Member for Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether he will table the waiting list, if any, for surgical operations in public hospitals since January 2006 to date.

Mr Faugoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, the information asked for is being compiled and will be tabled in due course.

Mr Naidu: Mr Speaker, Sir, will the hon. Minister consider having those waiting lists made public at public hospitals?

Mr Faugoo: The list has been compiled and will be tabled in due course.

CIRCONSTANCE, ST PIERRE – COMMUNITY CENTRE – CONSTRUCTION

(No. B/661) Mr A. Jugnauth (First Member for Quartier Militaire and Moka) asked the Minister of Environment and National Development Unit whether, in regard to the construction of the Community Centre at Circonstance, St Pierre, he will state if works thereat have stopped since July 2005 and, if so, the reasons thereof, indicating the remedial measures that will be taken.

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, there has been no stoppage of works regarding the construction of the Community Centre at Circonstance, St Pierre.

In fact, the project started in May 2004 and was completed in November 2004, following which the Community Centre was handed over to Sugar Industry Labour Welfare Fund. The site works comprising the construction of the boundary wall and grass planting were completed in July 2005. The National Development Unit has, therefore, fulfilled all its obligations as far as this project is concerned.

Mr Jugnauth: Mr Speaker, Sir, I would invite the Minister to go and see for himself. My friend, hon. Dayal, knows about it, the community centre of Circonstance is in a state of abandonment. It's just like Lallmatie, white horses and women in white saris are jumping up and down! It's in a state of abandonment. People from Circonstance have talked to me and most probably have talked to our friend, hon. Dayal also. I would invite the Minister to go and see what is happening in Circonstance. All works have stopped.

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, the information available with me is very clear. We have handed over the centre to the Sugar Industry Labour Welfare Fund. It was already handed over under the previous Government. Secondly, the Sugar Industry is in the process of recruiting required staff and procuring necessary amenities following which the hall will become operational. In addition to this, there might have been some works which should be done before opening and I will look into it.

MSPCA – RECRUITMENT EXERCISE

(No. B/662) Mr A. Jugnauth (First Member for Quartier Militaire and Moka) asked the Minister of Agro Industry and Fisheries whether he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, information as to whether any recruitment exercise was recently carried out thereat and, if so –

- (a) the date the posts were advertised;
- (b) the qualifications required for the posts;
- (c) the number of applicants;
- (d) the dates the interviews were held, and
- (e) the names of the recruits, indicating their address.

The Minister of Industry, Small & Medium Enterprises, Commerce & Cooperatives (Dr. R Jeetah): Mr Speaker, with your permission I will answer this PQ. The management of the Mauritius Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals is vested in its Council as set up under section 10 of the Mauritius Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1982. The issue of recruitment and termination of employment of personnel, therefore, rests solely on the MSPCA.

For the benefit of the House, the information sought is being tabled.

Mr Jugnauth: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I know from the Minister how many people have been recruited?

Dr. Jeetah: Mr Speaker, Sir, there are a number of people who have been recruited but I will have to table this so that we can actually calculate.

Mr Jugnauth: Mr Speaker, Sir, according to my information, about 20 people have been recruited. Can I know from the Minister whether all these people have been recruited within the vicinity of Rose-Belle?

Dr. Jeetah: Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to share a piece of information just to refresh the hon. Member's memory. I read – the number of persons who were offered appointment as Health Care Assistant, prior to July 2005 was 101 out of 388 from Constituency No. 8.

(Interruptions)

Mr Jugnauth: This has nothing to do with the question that I have asked.

(Interruptions)

If the hon. Minister cannot answer, he better says so.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order, Order!

Mr Jugnauth: Can I ask the hon. Minister whether these posts were advertised and interviews carried out?

Dr. Jeetah: That is a fair question. Let me just read the first page: officers recruited following public advertisement. First, concerning the post of Clerical Officer, the date advertised was between 13 and 18 October 2005 in L'Express. There were 61 applicants. The interview was held on 27 October 2005. Second, we had 102 applicants for the post of Receptionist/Cashier; third, 4 applicants for the post of Purchase and Supplies Officer; four, 8 applicants for the post of Store Officer and, fifth, 52 applicants for the post of driver. Let me read from where they are recruited. No. 5 from Roche Bois, No. 4 - it has not been filled. No. 3 from Quatre Bornes; No. 2 from Balisage Street, again from Roche Bois and No. 1 from Rose Belle and another one from Quatre Bornes.

Mr Speaker: Next question, please.

CHIKUNGUNYA DISEASE -TOURIST INDUSTRY - IMPACT

(No. B/663) Mr A. Jugnauth (First Member for Quartier Militaire and Moka) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism, Leisure and External Communications whether he will make a statement on the impact of the chikungunya disease on the tourist industry with special reference to -

- (a) job losses, and
- (b) shortfall in monetary terms, indicating the measures that have been taken to reverse the negative trend.

The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism, Leisure and External Communications (Mr X. L. Duval): Mr Speaker, Sir, it is a fact that chikungunya

disease has had an impact on the tourism industry. This is evidenced by the dramatic fall in tourist arrivals from France, our main market which has recorded in April 2006 a fall of 42.7% compared to April 2005. From January to April 2006, this market has witnessed a decrease of 13.1% as compared to the same period in 2005. In our second source market, Réunion Island, the situation is similar.

However, Mr Speaker, Sir, we have been able to compensate the negative impact of the crisis in our main markets thanks to the success of our diversification strategy into new and emerging markets such as India, Italy, Russia, Germany, CIS countries and Australia, as evidenced by the remarkable performance recorded from these markets in terms of tourist arrivals. In a way, the chikungunya crisis has helped to underline our over dependence on the French market supporting the request by Government to the private sector for greater diversification of markets.

Therefore, Mr Speaker, Sir, overall and in spite of chikungunya we have recorded a growth rate of 6.5% in tourist arrivals for the period of January to April 2006 as compared to the corresponding previous period.

Furthermore, tourist receipts according to the Bank of Mauritius during the period of January to April 2006 were Rs11,449 m. as compared to Rs8,967 m. for the same period last year, representing a growth rate of 27.7% and an increase of Rs2,482 m.

As far as employment is concerned, I am informed that a survey carried out by AHRIM has revealed that there have been no job losses in hotels. However, hotels have been reluctant to expand their workforce pending the return to normalcy. I am also informed that investments in the hotel industry are proceeding as normal.

With regard to shortfall in revenue, we can only talk of revenue loss compared to what otherwise would have been the case, given that a very strong growth was expected this year, after the success of the new Government's policies. As I stated above, overall revenue has increased compared to last year, but obviously individually, some hotels may be suffering more than others. Our national carrier Air Mauritius has also suffered a loss in revenue, mainly on its main market, France.

Mr Speaker, Sir, concerning the measures being taken to reverse the negative trend, my Ministry, through the MTPA, has embarked on an extensive programme of market diversification as well as an aggressive campaign in France, which has suffered most.

I would like, therefore, to refer the hon. Member to the reply I made to PQ B/366 at our sitting on April 25, 2006, where I gave details of the promotional campaigns being carried out in France.

Furthermore, we will accelerate our diversification strategy, by carrying out aggressive promotional campaigns in the new and emerging markets such as India, Italy, Russia, CIS countries and Australia.

Finally, Mr Speaker, Sir, it should be clear to one and all that persistent outbreaks of chickungunya will, over the long term, do considerable damage to the tourism industry. I would, therefore, like to appeal to all our citizens to redouble their efforts to ensure the long-term success of measures taken by Government to combat this disease.

Mr Dayal: Can I ask the hon. Deputy Prime Minister whether he will inform the House of the measures he is taking in collaboration with the Ministry of Health to prevent a re-occurrence of the disease in the scale it occurred this year?

Mr Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, apart from being spearheaded by the Minister of Health, there is also a committee chaired by the Deputy Prime Minister, Dr. R. Beebeejaun, on this issue. For our part, the Tourism Authority has purchased some fogging as well as larviciding machines and is doing some fogging as well as talking to various operators on the need to carry out regular fogging and other preventive measures, not only in the hotels, but also in the community at large.

Mr Cuttaree: Can I ask the Deputy Prime Minister to inform the House whether this problem we are having in France concerning the chickungunya is due to the fact of the region being a problem or has any case been mentioned of having been found in Mauritius?

Mr Duval: Most probably in France. Firstly, our information shows that outgoing tourists have fallen in France by a fair percentage given the internal problems that the French Republic is having. The second problem is, no doubt, that Réunion Island being a French department and where the disease has been given great publicity and, of course in France, with two visits of the Prime Minister of France there, has had this negative impact on the French market. We think that it is basically because of the impact of the Réunion crisis on France that the market has fallen so much. It should also be borne in mind that about 30% of our tourists come to Mauritius after having gone to Réunion. So that has added to the problem.

Mr Dayal: Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to ask the Deputy Prime Minister whether he will consider an expert study on the technical aspect of the disease and the practical way of combating it?

Mr Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, I do not think I should reply in the place of the Minister of Health, but there are obviously various measures being taken.

Mr Ganoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, is the hon. Deputy Prime Minister satisfied that the intense campaign that he has led in France will bear its fruits and when does he think things will pick up again?

Mr Duval: I am told that the campaign in France has been very innovative and has been very well accepted by the French public. To say that immediately this will give rise to an increase in demand, well we hope so. But at least, we think it will have stabilised the situation and people are unanimous that whatever the actual short-term impact of the campaign, everybody is happy that it was a good campaign and it was necessary in the situation.

Miss Deerpalsing: Mr Speaker, Sir, with respect to the measures to take to reverse the trend, may I know from the hon. Deputy Prime Minister what is the significance of the contribution by the private hotel groups in this whole campaign?

Mr Duval: I must say that generally we do not do anything except in collaboration with the private sector. We are happy as far as collaboration is concerned on various markets. But I think we need to stress also to the hotel operators on the very great need to diversify. Sometimes this is not understood by everybody because there is a lot of concentration on the French market and this current problem has shown that we do need to diversify. Generally we are happy, Mr Speaker, Sir.

VOILE D'OR HOTEL COMPLEX - SALE PRICE, PURCHASER, ETC.

(No. B/664) Mr A. Jugnauth (First Member for Quartier Militaire and Moka) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to the recent sale of the Voile d'Or Hotel complex, he will -

- (a) for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to -

- (i) the sale price,
 - (ii) the name of the purchaser, and
- (b) state the amount of duties and taxes paid and of the exemptions, if any.

The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development (Mr R. Sithanen): Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed there was no sale and purchase of Voile D'Or Hotel.

The transaction was structured as an increase in capital and a redemption of shares.

Kingdom 5-KR-188 Ltd, a foreign company whose president is His Royal Highness, Prince Alwaleed bin Talal bin Abdulaziz Alsaud has subscribed 216505 ordinary shares in Salt Lake Resorts, which owns Voile D'or Hotel complex, for a total consideration of USD 27 million.

Concurrently with the subscription of share of Kingdom Ltd, the previous shareholders of Salt Lake Resorts redeemed their shares in the company.

Mr Speaker, Sir, no duties and taxes are payable on subscription and redemption of shares. Therefore, the question of exemptions does not arise.

Mr Jugnauth: May I know from the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance whether there are any local people who are partners with this foreign company?

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: I am sorry! If this is a local company, it must have been registered with the Registrar of Companies. According to our Standing Orders, the hon. Member cannot put that question, he has to verify from the Registrar himself.

Mr Jugnauth: Mr Speaker, Sir, this issue of redemption of shares and subscription of shares, etc. is it not a way of bypassing the duties and taxes, etc. which have to be paid?

Mr Sithanen: Mr Speaker, Sir, I must say that the hon. Member has a point and I am looking into ways and means of plugging the loopholes. In fact, I must say, as per the Companies Act of 2001, there is no tax and duty on subscription of

shares and redemption of shares. In fact, under normal circumstances what would have happened was that they would have had to pay the registration duty. Again, let me very candid to the House. When a transaction of such an order takes place, they invariably seek for exemption from the Ministry of Finance. In that specific case, they have just made use of the fine prints in the Companies Act, in order not to be liable to duties and taxes.

Mr Bodha: Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance enlighten the House as to the total number of shares?

Mr Sithanen: The total number of shares is exactly the same. And, this is the "trick"!

(Interruptions)

It is a legal "trick" that they have used. In fact, I asked the question to the officers of my Ministry this morning. Apparently, this type of transaction has been 'constructed' in the minds of some 'good lawyers'. There are two transactions that have been done on that basis. What they do is that they have ordinary shares and before the transaction is concluded, they convert the ordinary shares into redeemable shares. I think, in this transaction, it was done within one month. So, for the incoming shares, which is a subscription, they don't pay any duty and concurrently to that, they redeem the shares that were converted from ordinary shares to redeemable shares. And this is the "trick" that they have used in order to circumvent the payment of duties.

Mr Ganoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, has the hon. Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance given thought to the possibility, whenever there is a sale, transfer or new subscription of shares or whatever "trick" or "stratagem" being used when, in fact, ownership is being changed, to consider the possibility of making the new owner contribute the Rs25 m. to the Tourism Fund?

Mr Sithanen: I don't know whether it should be Rs25 m. But, the point that I am trying to make is that there should be some contribution. I agree with the hon. Member. But the law, as it is now, does not provide for that. One solution is, probably, to plug in the loophole and then when they ask for exemption, to say that, instead of paying a huge amount - because let's be honest also, very often, Mr Speaker, Sir, this happens to the EPZ sector - because, if the tax is too high, it may inhibit the one who is taking over the industry basically from carrying out the

transaction and then jobs are lost. I think we need to have a flexible formula where basically some contribution is made to a particular Fund.

Mr Bodha: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance whether the Development Bank of Mauritius was owner of some of the shares and whether the Bank did not benefit from any appreciation of the value of the shares since the beginning?

Mr Sithanen: Mr Speaker, Sir, the Development Bank of Mauritius as such was not a shareholder, but indirectly it owns shares through the National Equity Fund and the State Investment Company also had shares in it. And, basically, what has happened is that SIC had invested Rs50m. After all the transactions were cleared, they got Rs70 m. So, there is a net benefit of Rs20 m. But, obviously, you have to take into account that these shares were held for 'X' number of years and that under the previous Government, in fact, it was a loss making situation.

In fact, I am trying to be fair. They made Rs20 m. It depends how you count, whether it has been a profit or not. But, at least, they have been able to salvage the money and there was no dividend being paid for the last three years, neither to the National Equity Fund nor to the SIC.

Mr Speaker: Next Question!

PRIMATES – USE IN LABORATORIES

(No. B/665) Mr D. Boodhoo (Second Member for Piton and Rivière du Rempart) asked the Minister of Agro Industry and Fisheries whether he will give a list of companies engaged in the export of primates for use in laboratories.

(Withdrawn)

ST. FELIX SUGAR ESTATE – CLOSURE – COMPENSATION TO EMPLOYEES

(No. B/666) Mr P. Jhugroo (Third Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Agro Industry and Fisheries whether, in regard to the proposed closure of the St. Félix Sugar Estate, he will, for the benefit

of the House, obtain information as to the compensation to be offered to the employees.

(Withdrawn)

REGIONAL HOSPITALS MEDICAL CONSULTANTS – TRANSFER

(No. B/667) Mr P. Jhugroo (Third Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether he will state if most medical consultants from different units of all regional hospitals were on Saturday 06 May 2006 transferred to other regional hospitals with effect from 08 May 2006 and, if so, the reasons therefor.

(Withdrawn)

KARO KALIPTIS, BATTERIE CASSÉE – SITE VISITS

(No. B/668) Mr P. Jhugroo (Third Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Housing & Lands whether he will state when he effected site visits at Karo Kaliptis, Batterie Cassée, giving the date, time and name of officers of his Ministry and of the Police Force who accompanied him.

(Withdrawn)

RICE (RATION) – QUALITY, STOCK AVAILABLE, ETC.

(No. B/669) Mr G. Guinness (Third Member for Montagne Blanche and GRSE) asked the Minister of Industry, Small & Medium Enterprises, Commerce and Co-operatives whether, in regard to ration rice, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the State Trading Corporation, information as to –

- (a) the date and the quantity of the last consignment;
- (b) the stock available to date;
- (c) the country of origin, and

(d) if quality checks have been carried out thereon.

Dr. Jeetah: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the State Trading Corporation (STC) as follows. With regard to part (a) of the question, the quantity of the last consignment of ration rice, which arrived on 04 May 2006, was 1,500 metric tons.

With regard to part (b), the stock available as at 25 May 2006 was 3,447 metric tons.

With regard to part (c), Pakistan is the country of origin for ration rice.

With regard to part (d), I am again informed that, as a general rule, quality checks are carried out by an inspection agency, that is, the Bureau Veritas in Pakistan, before loading of each consignment. After loading and unstuffing of the cargo in Port Louis, another quality check is performed by the Mauritius Standards Bureau. STC also undertakes regular fumigation as and when required in terms of pest control.

Mr Guinness: Can I know from the hon. Minister whether he has been made aware of the very bad quality of ration rice actually being sold on the market?

Dr. Jeetah: I am not aware, but if the hon. Member wishes to apprise the STC of the information, I'll definitely look into the matter.

Mr Guinness: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have brought a sample of the ration rice. I'll lay it on the Table so that the Minister can have a look and take the appropriate measures.

Dr. Jeetah: Mr Speaker, Sir, I would request the hon. Member to present his receipt from where the ration rice was purchased and to hand it over to the STC....

(Interruptions)

We will look into that!

Mr Guinness: The hon. Minister can rest assured; it is not from "Top Shop"!

Mrs Perrier: Etant donné la qualité du riz "ration" qui est vendue sur le marché, le ministre peut-il déposer le rapport du Bureau Veritas de Pakistan et celui du Mauritius *Standards Bureau*?

Dr. Jeetah: Mr Speaker, Sir, I don't have any of the reports with me, but I'll definitely lay copies of the Reports on the Table of the Assembly.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Members, before calling the next question, I would like to inform the House that PQ. B/665 has been withdrawn.

SUGAR INDUSTRY – VRS (NEW) – INTRODUCTION

(No. B/670) Mr G. Guinness (Third Member for Montagne Blanche and GRSE) asked the Minister of Agro Industry and Fisheries whether he will state if a new Voluntary Retirement Scheme for workers of the Sugar Industry is under preparation and, if so, will he state the changes that will be brought to the existing Scheme, indicating –

- (a)** if the trade unions were consulted, and
- (b)** the proposed implementation date.

The Minister of Industry, Small & Medium Enterprises, Commerce and Co-operatives (Dr. R. Jeetah): With your permission, Mr Speaker, Sir, I'll reply to this Parliamentary Question.

The introduction of a second Voluntary Retirement Scheme has been proposed on the road map and the Multi Annual Adaptation Strategy, after consultations with the stakeholders, which includes trade unions.

The new VRS will be implemented after approval of the Multi Annual Adaptation Strategy by the European Union Commission. In fact, I am informed that a meeting is scheduled today between the EU Commission delegation in Port Louis with the Ministry of Agro Industry and Fisheries.

Mr Guinness: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am sure the hon. Minister will agree that my question was: What has changed from the existing VRS to the new VRS? The hon. Minister has not answered the question.

Dr. Jeetah: I don't see that question in this present question.

Mr Guinness: Can I read it for the hon. Minister? Whether he will state if a new Voluntary Retirement Scheme for workers of the Sugar Industry is under

preparation and, if so, will he state the changes that will be brought to the existing Scheme (...)?

(Interruptions)

Dr. Jeetah: Mr Speaker, Sir, the question here is whether the trade unions were consulted and the answer is "yes". As far as the proposed implementation date is concerned, I replied to that as well. I said: "even as at to date discussions are being held." I am answering the question.

Mr Gunness: Mr Speaker, Sir, I'll just put a last question to the Minister. Since the question is based on changes and whether unions were consulted, the Minister must, therefore, know. When I asked him whether he has consulted the unions, he said "yes". I am asking him what are the changes.

Dr. Jeetah: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Member has to put a proper question. I have replied to what was asked.

NHDC - CHAIRPERSON/MANAGING DIRECTOR – CARS - PURCHASE

(No. B/671) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Housing and Lands whether he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the National Housing Development Company Ltd., the following information in regard to cars purchased for the Chairperson, Managing Director and other members of its management -

- (a) date of purchase;
- (b) type and make, and
- (c) the price paid, indicating the amount of duty remitted, if any.

Mr Dulull: Mr Speaker, Sir, no car has been purchased for the Chairman despite he is entitled to a car of up to 2000 cc and despite the Board has already approved the purchase, yet no car has been purchased for the Chairman.

I am advised that the NHDC Ltd. has purchased two cars, one for the use of the Managing Director, and the other one for the Chief Operations Executive. The car was purchased in February 2006. It is a Mercedes Benz model 200k, 4 cylinder petrol engine, of capacity 1796 cc. The cost is Rs2,962,990, inclusive of duties and taxes.

PLAZA THEATRE/SALLE DES FETES - RENOVATION WORKS

(No. B/672) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Local Government whether he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Municipal Council of Beau Bassin-Rose Hill, information as to the action that has been initiated for the renovation of the Plaza Theatre and the "*Salle des Fêtes*", indicating when -

- (a) works are scheduled to start, and
- (b) they will become operational.

Dr. David: Mr Speaker, Sir, one should not forget that the Plaza Theatre is a legacy of the MMM Administration of the Municipality of Beau Bassin/Rose Hill.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! Order!

Dr. David: It is in a derelict state and needs urgent renovation. Moreover, I am informed by the Municipality of Beau Bassin/Rose Hill that the renovation of the Plaza Theatre was on the list of priority projects of the former Government, but it was another case of "*effet d'annonce*" which has to date, remained unimplemented.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Dr. David: In fact, consultancy was carried out as far back as September 2002 and the project cost was estimated at Rs150 m. In October 2003...

(Interruptions)

...the former Government agreed to the Municipal Council of Beau Bassin/Rose Hill raising a long term loan of Rs150 m. under Government guarantee to finance the renovation work as well as to provide additional funds to service the loan until such time that the Municipal Council would be able to raise funds to repay the loan itself.

(Interruptions)

However, during the period November-December 2004, the Council brought in major changes in the project proposal which inflated the cost to Rs246 m. by May 2005. In view of the fact that the project cost had almost doubled, I had a meeting with the former Mayor in September 2005 and requested the Council to submit a cost estimate of the urgent remedial works that needed to be undertaken. Mr Speaker, Sir, I was utterly surprised to note that the cost of the urgent remedial works was estimated at Rs150 m. which was the same as the initial project value.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Plaza Theatre is classified as a national heritage site and as such this Government being responsible is duty bound to restore the complex. Accordingly, despite difficult financial situation, I have on 05 May 2006 requested the Council to explore the possibilities of effecting works in a phased manner to give a cost estimate for the renovation of the "*Salle des Fêtes*" in the first instance. I am informed that the consultants are currently working on this issue.

Mr Bhagwan: I knew the Minister was going to play politics on that, Sir. *Le Plaza appartient à l'île Maurice. Ce n'est pas ni au ministre ni à moi-même.*

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! Order! I said.

(Interruptions)

Everything is going on well since this morning!

(Interruptions)

Order! The hon. Member should put his question.

Mr Bhagwan: Mr Speaker, Sir, we are proud of what we have done at the Municipality of Beau Bassin/Rose Hill.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: I am sorry, hon. Bhagwan. I am asking the House to keep quiet, please. Since this morning everything has gone on well, I don't see any necessity for any provocation from both sides of the House.

Mr Bhagwan: They can't provoke me, Mr Speaker, Sir. I'll react.

Mr Speaker: Please, put the question!

Mr Bhagwan: Mr Speaker, Sir, can the Minister inform the House that there was an initial document prepared by Mr l'Eveillé who everybody knows was the architect of the Plaza. He was the town engineer first. Mr l'Eveillé was the one who prepared the initial estimates of some millions. And secondly, there was a second consultant, Ramphul Associates who was appointed through tender by the Tender Board who made a full survey afterwards at the request of Government so as to reach the figure of Rs215 m. Can the Minister inform the House whether he has been given that report from Mr l'Eveillé, he has been made aware of the proposals made to the Council by the Consultant Mr Ramphul who is still working for the municipality?

Dr. David: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am certainly aware of all the reports, but the crude fact is...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! The Minister is answering the question. When the hon. Member was putting the questions, the Minister was quiet.

Dr. David: The hon. Member is completely upside down, that's always the problem with him. Mr Speaker, Sir, as I said, I am totally aware of all the reports, but the crude fact is that the previous regime had made a big fuss about the...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Dr. David:...renovation of the Plaza Theatre, but apart from the *effet d'annonce*, absolutely nothing was done. Costs were inflated year in year out and when they left office, not a single nail has been put in that Plaza Theatre.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Mr Bhagwan: Mr Speaker, Sir, can the people of Mauritius and Beau Bassin/Rose Hill know when the hon. Minister will give a nail to the municipality to start work?

Dr. David: Mr Speaker, Sir, not even a *clou broquette* has been nailed at the Plaza Theatre.

(Interruptions)

That's the crude fact. *Irresponsable!*

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! Next question!

(Interruptions)

Order! Order!

Mr Cuttaree: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Minister whether he is aware that the building of the Plaza is a building which is made of wood and that it is not possible - I say that to him now - for anyone at the start of the works to be able to tell you how much this work is going to cost? Therefore, let's not play politics with it, let us all see how we can save that building.

Dr. David: Mr Speaker, Sir, that was not a question, but, however, I am going to react to that. The hon. Member is giving a piece of advice. Well, this is taken into consideration. One thing I would like to say - whatever they are now advocating in Parliament gloriously and pompously, they did nothing when they were in power. That's the bare fact.

Mr Speaker: Next question, hon. Bhagwan!

CWA – CHAIRPERSON & GENERAL MANAGER – CARS

(No. B/673) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Public Utilities whether he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the CWA, the following information in regard to cars purchased for the Chairperson and the General Manager –

- (a) date of purchase;
- (b) type and make, and

(c) the price paid, indicating the amount of duty remitted, if any.

Dr. Kasenally: Mr Speaker, Sir, two diesel powered Mercedes cars of 2148 cc – equivalent to 1800 cc petrol engined car were purchased on 24 January 2006 at the cost of Rs3,319,969.55 each, including VAT. No duty was remitted.

The car purchased for the General Manager is in compliance with existing regulations in force in the public service and in accordance with the terms and conditions of appointment to that grade. As regards the car purchased for the chairperson, it is to be pointed out that it replaces a relatively old car, which was originally purchased in 1998 for the then Executive Chairman of the CWA. It had, thereafter, been put at the disposal of the previous Chairman. The vehicle was breaking down regularly and had to be replaced, because the regular mechanical problems were beyond economic repair.

I must point out, Mr Speaker, Sir, that the vehicle, though used by the Chairperson, still remains an asset for the CWA and will probably last for another ten years.

Miss Deerpalsing: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister whether any of these cars had any extra options and, if so, what were they?

Dr. Kasenally: The car did not have any extra option. It was standard. It had no mini bar, no DVD, no television, no sunroof or any heated front or back seat, or any ejector seat.

GROUND-BASED AIR NAVIGATION AIDS

(No. B/674) Mrs L.D. Dookun-Luchoomun (Third Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism, Leisure & External Communications whether he will give a list of ground-based air navigation aids, indicating –

- (a) the date of purchase and commissioning of each item, and
- (b) the manufacturer's recommended lifespan.

The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism, Leisure & External Communications (Mr X.L. Duval): Mr Speaker, Sir, I am obtaining the information sought from the Department of Civil Aviation, and this will be placed in the Library.

I am also informed by the DCA that these equipment do not, for practical reasons, have a definite and pre-determined lifespan. In compliance with ICAO's requirements, all navigational aids are regularly maintained and checked, in order to ensure that they meet operational safety standards. The latest check was carried out on 24 May 2006. A complete ICAO audit inspection is scheduled in 2008.

I am also informed that some of these equipment will be gradually phased out with the implementation, in due course, of the global satellite-based system, in accordance with a phased calendar.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister whether he would confirm that presently the equipment being used do not get spare parts, as they are no longer being produced by the manufacturers?

Mr X.L. Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have inquired obviously after this question and this is not the information I got. The information I got is that some of the equipment may be quite old, but they are in perfect working order and are being regularly and expertly maintained. But, I will have a look at this.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Will the Minister, therefore, confirm that there has been no risk to air safety till now?

Mr X.L. Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, obviously the Government would not accept any risk to air safety.

INTERNATIONAL CIVIL AVIATION ORGANISATION - SATELLITE-BASED AIR NAVIGATION SYSTEM

(No. B/675) Mrs L.D. Dookun-Luchoomun (Third Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism, Leisure & External Communications whether he will state the time frame set by the International Civil Aviation Organisation for the establishment of a satellite-based air navigation system.

The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism, Leisure & External Communications (Mr X.L. Duval): Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Director of Civil Aviation that the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) has developed a global programme for a new satellite-based communication, navigation,

surveillance/air traffic management system to be implemented in three phases by all contracting States by the year 2017.

Mr Speaker, Sir, ICAO initially recommended that the global programme plan be implemented by the year 2010 and all contracting States were urged to equip themselves for such transition. However, during the last ICAO Planning and Implementation Group Meeting for the region of Africa and Indian Ocean held in September 2005, it was decided that the deadline for the implementation of the satellite navigation communication and surveillance system in the African and Indian Ocean region be extended to 2017.

The project will be implemented on a region-wise basis and the department of Civil Aviation is working closely with ICAO, in order to enable a safe transition to the new system within the set time frame.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Speaker, Sir, would the Minister, therefore, tell us what are the present safety devices in place, awaiting 2017 for the establishment of the satellite-based air navigation system?

Mr X.L. Duval: There are various systems in place at the airport, and they have been in place for many years basically, for example, vertical signals to be given to the planes and lots of things which are there. There are two types of systems. One is the ground-based system that we have at the moment, and the other one is a satellite-based system. We are moving from the ground-based system to the satellite-based system. Obviously, there are various pieces of equipment that are there.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: The Minister has just stated in an earlier question that all the equipment that we have are gradually phasing out, and we are expecting the establishment of the satellite-based system by 2017. We still have quite a long time before this establishment. I would like to know whether the Minister could ensure that air safety would not be jeopardised during this period.

Mr X.L. Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, it is so important especially as we are, in fact, expecting more and more planes to come to SSR airport. There are three phases in the ICAO plan. The first phase is up to 2005, the second phase will be to 2011 and the third phase to 2017. This does not mean that the existing equipment that we have is not going to be replaced. In fact, some will be replaced next year and so on and so forth. The replacement will be there. It is just that the whole system will be eventually phased out for a new satellite-based system.

Mr Dowarkasing: May I ask the hon. Minister whether South Africa is still helping us in that endeavour?

Mr X.L. Duval: Which endeavour?

Mr Speaker: Next question.

13-YEAR OLD CHILD – DEATH AT VICTORIA HOSPITAL

(No. B/676) Mrs L.D. Dookun-Luchoomun (Third Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Minister of Health & Quality of Life whether, in regard to the death of a 13-year old child who was admitted at the Queen Victoria Hospital at Candos with high fever and vomiting on 14 May 2006, he will state if an inquiry has been carried out therein and, if so, will he give the outcome thereof, indicating whether similar cases have been reported to the Ministry.

Mr Faugoo: I am informed that a 13-year old male patient was treated for viral fever on 12 May 2006 as an outpatient at the Accident & Emergency Department at Victoria Hospital. After examination, in addition to paracetamol, Amoxyl and mixture of Magnesium Tricyclate tablets, the child was also prescribed Indocid suppository.

On 13 May, the patient was admitted with a history of vomiting. The patient suffered from gastro-intestinal bleeding and, despite treatment, the child passed away on 14 May 2006. The case was referred to the Police Medical Officer, who confirmed that death was due to shock because of gastro-intestinal bleeding.

A departmental inquiry carried out by the Medical Superintendent of Victoria Hospital has confirmed the findings regarding the child. However, I have caused the matter to be referred to the Medical Council of Mauritius for an independent inquiry, to investigate whether there has been any mismanagement of the case.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I request the hon. Minister to give to the Assembly the exact cause of the intestinal bleeding? Was it related to the treatment or was it a new form of viral infection?

Mr Faugoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, when the patient passed away, the Police Medical Officer performed autopsy upon the body, and all he has said is that death was due to shock because of gastro intestinal bleeding. How the bleeding was

caused is not known. This is why I referred the matter to the Medical Council for further investigation, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Could the hon. Minister inform the House whether there has been any other such cases reported to the Ministry?

Mr Faugoo: There are no such cases reported so far, apart from this present case, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mrs Labelle: Mr Speaker, Sir, pending the findings of the inquiry, will the hon. Minister ensure that drugs like Indacin not be given to kids less than 14 years old, as one of the contra-indications is that such a drug should not be given to children less than 14 years old?

Mr Faugoo: I take note of the request of the hon. Member and I will talk to the medical people at the level of the Ministry.

BALACLAVA – STATE LAND LEASE

(No. B/677) Mrs S. Grenade (Second Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Agro Industry & Fisheries whether he is aware of the prejudice caused to the small vegetable planters holding a land lease at BalACLAVA following the decision to implement the two hotel projects on that site and, if so, will he state the measures he proposes to take.

(Withdrawn)

RABINDRANATH TAGORE INSTITUTE – DRAMA ACTIVITIES – CO-ORDINATOR

(No. B/678) Mrs S. Grenade (Second Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Education & Human Resources whether he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Rabindranath Tagore Institute, information as to whether a co-ordinator for drama activities has recently been recruited thereat and, if so –

- (a) the qualifications required for the post;
- (b) the salary attached to it, and
- (c) the qualifications of the selected candidate.

The Minister of Local Government (Dr. J.B. David): Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that the MGI/RTI has enlisted the services of a suitable person as co-ordinator for drama activities at the RTI on a contractual basis for an initial period of one year. The offer was made on 24 May 2006, and the person is about to assume duty at any time.

I am also informed that the services of the said person have not been enlisted on the permanent and pensionable establishment but on contract. Drama is a field where academic qualifications cannot be insisted upon because one can have very high qualifications but is a poor performer. What the MGI/RTI required was a talented and competent person who could develop drama activities for the benefit of students and the population at large. In this respect, the person has extensive experience in the field of drama and has been awarded best actor and best director in youth drama festivals organised by the Ministry of Arts & Culture. He has also considerable international exposure.

The co-ordinator for drama activities will be remunerated at the rate of Rs29,000 per month plus salary compensation at the approved rates.

(Interruptions)

Did I hear a whistle? Go and find out what Desveaux had as allowance. That coordinator is called Mr Balraj Ramphul, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Lesjongard: May I ask the hon. Minister whether there is a travelling allowance attached to that salary?

Dr. David: Mr Speaker, Sir, from information I have from the Ministry of Education, yes, it's either a travelling allowance or a mileage at the rate of Rs3.65 per kilometre.

Mr Lesjongard: He is drawing a salary of more than Rs30,000. May I know the duties of that gentleman at the Institute?

Dr. David: Mr Speaker, Sir, he has been nominated on a contractual basis as a coordinator for drama activities. I am sure that the hon. Member must know what drama is...

(Interruptions)

he is such a poor actor! But he should be taught what drama is.

(Interruptions)

Mrs Martin: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I know from the hon. Minister how many hours of work is that person required to do per week?

Dr. David: Mr Speaker, Sir, let me say one thing about the hours of work for a drama coordinator. Certainly, there is no fixed time. Somebody who teaches drama...

(Interruptions)

That's right! But this is what drama is about.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Dr. David: But one thing, I must underline, Mr Speaker, Sir...

(Interruptions)

Can you translate that into French, Madam? Translate that into proper French, then I will understand. I was just saying, Mr Speaker, Sir, that this person has been appointed on a contractual basis as drama coordinator with all what it implies.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

Mr Lesjongard: One more supplementary, Sir. Can the Minister confirm that among the duties of that gentleman, he has to prepare and train students of the Mahatma Gandhi Secondary School and Rabindranath Tagore Secondary School to participate in the National Drama Festival?

Dr. David: Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir.

LEPTOSPIROSIS DISEASE – PREVENTIVE MEASURES

(No. B/679 Mrs S. Grenade (Second Member for GRNW and Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether he is aware that a man aged 42 and residing at Bassin Road, Quatre Bornes, passed away recently and that the cause of death was reported as being leptospirosis and, if so, the preventive measures that have been taken with regard to this disease.

Mr Faugoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that there has been no case of death reported due to leptospirosis.

However, I wish to inform the House that on 07 March 2006, a male patient aged 62 years, residing at La Source, Quatre Bornes, was admitted in the Intensive Care Unit of Victoria Hospital with a history of fits. He had also a past history of alcoholism. In the morning of 10 March, his general condition deteriorated and went into a Hepatorenal failure. He subsequently passed away in the afternoon on the same day.

A complement fixation test for Leptospire Antibodies was also carried out on the patient and the result was negative. As such, the question of preventive measures mentioned in the second part of the question does not arise.

HORSE RACING & FOOTBALL – ILLEGAL BETTING

(No. B/680) Dr. R. Hawoldar (Second Member for La Caverne and Phoenix) asked the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether he will state if any strategy has been devised to fight illegal betting on football in Mauritius.

The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance & Economic Development (Mr R. Sithanen): Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that the Police Department has set up a special unit, the “*Police des Jeux*”, to specifically target illegal betting throughout the island. The Police operations are intelligence-driven and executed against specific targets that are suspected to be carrying out the business of taking illegal bets on horse racing or football matches and currently, I presume, World Cup matches.

Furthermore, it is proposed to address this issue in the new Gaming Bill, which is proposed to be introduced, after consultation with stakeholders, in the near future.

RIVERS & DRAINS – POLLUTION – PENALTIES

(No. B/681) Dr. R. Hawoldar (Second Member for La Caverne and Phoenix) asked the Minister of Environment & National Development Unit whether, with a view to protecting the environment, he will state if Government proposes to amend the existing legislation to provide for tougher penalties for offences related to the pollution of rivers and the obstruction of drains.

Mr Bachoo: My Ministry is in the process of reviewing the Environment Protection Act to strengthen control of pollution of rivers and drains. This will include fixed penalties applicable in general to littering.

In February 2006, I have set up a Technical Advisory Committee on rivers to make recommendations on developing the appropriate institutional and legislative mechanisms for effective management of rivers. An interim report for short-term measures is expected in a month's time. The hon. Member may also wish to refer to my reply to PQ B/572.

Mr Speaker: Time is over. I will allow you an additional supplementary question.

Mr Dowarkasing: The question relates also to obstruction of drains. I have not heard the hon. Minister stating anything about how does he propose to amend the existing legislation with respect to obstruction of drains which is a very pertinent issue.

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have just mentioned that we are going to strengthen the laws and all those who are trying to obstruct drains, definitely legal action will be taken against them, even now the *Police de l'Environnement* is investigating into hundred of such cases. I can give you a few examples, at Baie du Tombeau where the drains have been obstructed and now we are trying to take legal action against those who are obstructing drains.

Mr Speaker: Question Time is over! Next item.

