

Debate No. 04 of 11.04.06**ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS****BEL AIR SUGAR ESTATE IRS PROJECT - INQUIRY**

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 allegation of fraud and corruption against the hon. Minister of Housing and Lands concerning the Bel Air Sugar Estate IRS Project, he will state if –

- (a) he has requested that an inquiry be carried out into the matter and the progress achieved so far;
- (b) the project involves the lease of State land and a social component, and
- (c) any third party is involved in the matter.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, first of all, let me congratulate the new Leader of the Opposition for his new functions.

Mr Speaker, Sir, let me say that, first of all, as soon as I was made aware of this electronic mail exchanged between one Mr A. and another Mr P.R., I immediately instructed the Commissioner of Police to start an inquiry without even telling the hon. Minister. It is only afterwards that I informed him that I have started an inquiry on the matter. Four persons have been questioned and their statements recorded by the Central Crime Investigation Division, and probably one more has been questioned in the meantime, that is, yesterday.

The inquiry has been entrusted to the Central CID and, as I said, so far statements have been recorded from four persons yesterday and now, it is actually seven persons. One person has been arrested and provisionally charged.

I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that, yesterday 10 April 2006, the Enquiring Officer recorded statements of the Permanent Secretary

of Ministry of Housing and Lands and the Confidential Secretary of the hon. Minister. Both the Permanent Secretary and the Confidential Secretary have remitted to the Police relevant documents for the purpose of the inquiry.

I have also been given to understand that the Police intend to interview a number of persons who are still overseas. The Police have already contacted them and they will be interviewed once they return to Mauritius.

The Commissioner of Police has received a letter from the lawyers representing the hon. Minister who have informed that the Minister will fully collaborate with the Police for the purpose of the inquiry. They will be welcomed to ask any question they want to ask.

Mr Speaker Sir, as regards part (b) of the question, Bel Air Sugar Estate submitted a first application for hotel and international 18 inches hole championship golf course in April 2001. Thereafter a number of meetings and consultations were held with the officers of the Ministry of Housing and Lands and the BOI.

The final project proposal as submitted by the promoter in October 2004 relates to the request for the lease of two contiguous plots of *Pas Géométriques* at Bel Air and Rivière des Anguilles, totalling 104 Arpents for the implementation of –

- (i) up to two 5-star luxury village type hotels, including a spa and wellness centre, with an 18 inches hole international championship golf course and associated with high-class amenities, and
- (ii) some 60 prestigious villas, a practice golf course, as well as ancillary facilities, including a low rise business park, within the context of the integrated resort scheme.

That was in 2004. The whole project was to be implemented, according to the final project proposal, that is, the one submitted by the promoters on 01 October 2004, on the 104 *arpents Pas Géométriques* and on freehold land. The social components of the proposals submitted by the promoters as detailed in two correspondences dated 17 February 2005 and 04 March 2005 respectively are as follows –

- (i) contribution of Rs10 m. for the upgrading of the Hotel Training School at Surinam operating under the aegis of the then Ministry of Training, Skills Development and Productivity;
- (ii) the creation of suitable access roads from Rivière des Anguilles village to the public spaces, estimated at Rs30 m.;
- (iii) embellishment of public spaces and provision of amenities thereupon estimated to cost Rs5 m.
- (iv) the development of jogging paths and a '*parcours de santé*' at a cost of Rs3 m.
- (v) the setting-up of a sports complex at an expected cost of Rs5 m.
- (vi) donation to Government of some 10 hectares of freehold land at Tyack or Rivière des Anguilles estimated at Rs25 m. for other development projects;

So, the total estimated value of the social components amounted to Rs78 m.

As regards part (c) of the question, Mr Speaker, Sir, the Police enquiry, currently underway, will have to determine whether there was an attempt at committing a criminal offence and if so, who were the parties involved. I cannot pre-empt the Police enquiry at this point by stating at this stage whether there was any third party or not - what we read in the papers. But as to who were the parties involved, the Police inquiry will have to determine this, and in case there was an attempt at committing a criminal offence.

This Government holds our institutions in highest regards and I think it would be improper, or even to be construed as an unlawful interference with the Police enquiry and the judicial process, if there is one, to comment at this stage on parties involved.

Mr Bodha: Mr Speaker, Sir, I thank the hon. Prime Minister for his reply. When the e-mail was forwarded to him may I ask him why he did entrust the inquiry to the Commissioner of Police and not to the ICAC. Because this matter relates more to corruption than to any other elements.

The Prime Minister: In fact, Mr Speaker, Sir, I must say that the reason I asked the Police to start an inquiry first of all is to establish whether there is a *prima facie* case. I put the level of truth lower, I am asking if there was a *prima facie* case. They must start something and, of course, the Commissioner of Police can refer it to ICAC, if he wants to.

Mr Bodha: In cases the ICAC can in fact intervene just with a simple letter. In that case, should the ICAC not have been the inquiring and investigating institution?

The Prime Minister: We need to establish first of all whether there is any ground. Of course, we could have sent it to ICAC, but I thought it would be right for the Police to start the investigation. I must tell you the other matters that are unknown to the public at this point. For example, Mr Rountree had said, in the past, that he was very relieved that nobody wanted any kind of commission. He was very relieved when he said that. So, he himself said that he was very relieved when he was told, in no uncertain terms, from the Prime Minister's Office that he should not give money to anyone. He was very relieved about this. So, we have to ask the question: if he was very relieved about this, how come then somebody has managed to ask the money through him? This is why we want to establish whether there is a case in the first place, and if there is a case, the Commissioner of Police is absolutely free, as you know, section 45 (2) of the Prevention of Corruption Act says very clearly and I quote -

"where in the course of a Police inquiry it is suspected that an act of corruption has been committed and the Commissioner of Police is of the opinion that the matter ought to be investigated by the Commission, the Commissioner of Police may refer the matter to the Commission for Investigation."

Mr Bodha: The hon. Prime Minister will remember that, in the past, when there was an allegation against a former Minister, the case went directly to the ICAC. When we see all the elements, which have already been revealed, may I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether there is a *prima facie* case of corruption in this particular matter?

The Prime Minister: I do not want to prejudge the issue, that is why the Police inquiry has been started, they will have the evidence and they will decide whether there is any *prima facie* case or not.

Mr Bodha: Mr Speaker, Sir, don't we see here a mega-scandal unfurling when we see the seriousness of the allegation and the evidence which has so far been displayed? What is the Prime Minister considering to do when he comes to the evidence which is already here - the data, the e-mails, the proceedings, the minutes? And can the Prime Minister assure the House that all the evidence that we have will be taken into account and there will be no cover up?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Leader of the Opposition knows my track record on this. I do not think that I have to justify it. But let me say one thing. The hon. Leader of the Opposition is talking of evidence and we have to be very careful, Mr Speaker, Sir. There is a lot of hearsay, in fact, there is double hearsay as well. That is why I say to let it pass the evidential test to see whether there is any kind of evidence and then we will see from there.

Mr Bodha: Let me come to the social component of the project. The hon. Prime Minister has been apprised of this project, he has chaired two meetings of the Fast Track Committee and two meetings of the Cabinet, which relate to this project. May I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether there was any commitment of the promoter to provide funds for a social commitment and when was this commitment taken?

The Prime Minister: In fact, Mr Speaker, Sir, I chaired the Fast Track Committee and in fact there is another question on the Fast Track Committee and I want say it here maybe that there seems to be a misconception of what the Fast Track Committee is supposed to do. The Fast Track Committee is not there to approve any project. The Fast Track Committee is there to overcome the hurdles that might be in the way, if people feel that things are getting blocked or whatever, because sometimes you need a policy decision at that instance, but it still has be approved by the BOI.

I must say when the Fast Track Committee, which I chaired and which the Leader of the Opposition was referring to, there were lots of other people there and other Ministers, not just me. I must say that I do not have the details of any social commitment, although somebody, I think, mentioned that there are other things that they would be able to do.

I must tell the Leader of the Opposition something else, that the Fast Track Committee did not decide in favour of that project, including later on

in the Cabinet, which I do not want to disclose at this point in time, Mr Speaker, Sir. There was no decision to give the two plots to them. But the correspondence clearly shows that there were social components when the proposals were made as far back as October 2004 and in correspondences in writing in February and March 2005. It is on paper the proposals for social components of the projects that they are proposing and it comes to a total amount of Rs78m.

Mr Bodha: The Prime Minister was personally aware of the social component. Is he aware that a third party has stated that he was the go-between to arrange for the social component of this project at a meeting with the hon. Minister?

The Prime Minister: This is what I said, Mr Speaker, Sir. Mr Speaker, Sir, I draw your attention to the fact that there is another question relating to the same matter which I am answering together. It is Question No. B/180.

I drew the attention to the fact that when these social correspondences about the social projects were made it was in February and March 2005 and, of course, then I was occupying the same post that the Leader of the Opposition is occupying now. So, I was not there.

Mr Bodha: Mr Speaker, Sir, the social component was raised as an issue by the third party that explained his presence at the meeting between the promoter and the hon. Minister. Is the Prime Minister aware of this?

The Prime Minister: That is why I want the Police inquiry to establish what exactly the third party was involved with. But as I say there were correspondences about social components as far back as 17 February 2005. In fact, my understanding is as far back as October 2004, but in correspondences on 17 February and 04 March 2005. This was already detailed on papers. What the alleged third party did, why was he there, why was he brought and by whom, that the Police inquiry will have to establish.

Mr Bodha: Mr Speaker, Sir, when it comes to the inquiry, can the Prime Minister assure the House that we will have a full-fledged deep-probing inquiry into the matter to see that the whole truth comes out of what we see as a mega-scandal unfurling? Can the Prime Minister also assure the House that this will be done as diligently as possible?

The Prime Minister: Of course, I can, but I must tell the hon. Leader of the Opposition that we should refrain from making comments for it is too easy for somebody to come and say "I have told X this, I have told Y that". We need the evidence; we need evidence that will stand up in Court; we need evidence that is not based on hearsay; and once this is done, I can guarantee - and I have a track record to prove it - that there will be no interference. I said the other day to a reporter from the radio that some people are going to talk to X, Y and Z and try to see whether you can inculcate X, Y and Z. All this happens. But what we need is the evidence and I can guarantee the hon. Leader of the Opposition that no interference from any side - whatever side - will be tolerated and that the truth will have to come out, whatever it is.

Mr Bodha: Mr Speaker, Sir, in view of the gravity of the allegation, in view of the fact that the elements that have been revealed so far tend to show that there is a *prima facie* case, will the Prime Minister request ...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! Order!

Mr Bodha: .. to step down, to see to it that the inquiry is carried out in all transparency and without interference?

(Interruptions)

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, let us be clear about one thing. The hon. Leader of the Opposition has been a Minister and others in the Opposition today have been Ministers in the past. I am not going to prejudge the evidence on the enquiry of what is happening. I must tell the hon. Leader of the Opposition that in the case of two of my ex-Ministers, I, myself, asked them to step down.

Let me just go through this. When there was an allegation against these two Ministers, I asked for the inquiry to be started, then I called the Ministers. And I must tell you that one of the Ministers - I don't want to name him, but I am sure you can guess who of the two it must have been - when he came to see, he had his letter of resignation in his pocket and he said to me: Prime Minister, I can give you my letter of resignation now. And I said: no, I don't want you to give your letter of resignation now. It is not because there is an allegation against one Minister that I have therefore

to ask him to step down. You can imagine what can happen easily, especially in this country, especially when you have trial by the press, that 'X' makes an allegation on 'Y', 'Y' makes an allegation and so on, and then all the nineteen Ministers have to step down. And then you would say that the Prime Minister, himself, has to go! No! What I said to them is that I don't want them to resign at this point, because nothing has been established as a *prima facie* case. But, I did tell them that once I am satisfied, I am told that there is a *prima facie* case, then they will have to step down; and this is exactly what I did. Once it was established that there was a *prima facie* case, I asked both Ministers to step down.

Mr Bodha: Mr Speaker, Sir, in the past, when there was an allegation, the Minister did step down...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Mr Bodha: ... and the inquiry was carried out. In this case, in view of the fact that the allegation is not frivolous, ...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Mr Bodha: and in view of the fact that the allegation is very serious and in view of the fact that one third party is under a provisional charge, can the Minister still remain in his office, when the Police is inquiring and collecting all the data and evidence which is necessary? Does the Prime Minister not believe that the hon. Minister should step down, at this point in time, to allow the inquiry to be carried out in the best circumstances?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, let us look at an hypothetical situation. Somebody outside makes an allegation against one Minister and the Police are inquiring, so the Minister has to step down. We know Mauritius what it is about allegations. We should see what some people write in their own personal propaganda unit...

(Interruptions)

They don't ask for small sums, but huge ones. Sometimes you ask yourself: if people get that kind of sum what are they doing here? But, allegations are

made. Suppose, allegations are made against every Minister, so then I ask every Minister to step down? We have to establish.

(Interruptions)

We are a law-abiding country. There are institutions, there are laws. In fact, since the Opposition is saying a few things, let me remind them of a few things. There were similar cases when they were in Government....

(Interruptions)

Yes! And what happened? Do they want me to tell them? There was the Apalsamy case. If you remember the case was widely reported in the press. He alleged in an affidavit – widely reported in the case – that a certain person called Iqbal Muthy asked for money on behalf of one of the Ministers. I don't want to mention the name. What happened? Did somebody step down? Nothing happened! No action was taken.

(Interruptions)

And what happened to Minister Choonee? They forced him on not enough evidence - he was arrested. He was put behind bars and had to resign behind bars and then what happened? Who said there was nothing against him? Who reinstated him?

(Interruptions)

It is a case that you have to answer yourself! There are other similar cases. There was a statement at ICAC by Mr Harry Sookun and one Mr Abu Meghoo and he gave a lot of details. There is a statement at ICAC. But did somebody step down then? They were in Government then! Why didn't they ask somebody to step down? Nobody stepped down! Because they believed that these were probably not enough to ask somebody to step down. So, what is sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander.

Mr Bodha: Mr Speaker, Sir, we don't have a mere allegation here. We have three statements from the promoter, the PRO of the company. The three statements are clear; we have three statements against the Minister.

(Interruptions)

And on the seriousness of the allegations, again, I am asking the Prime Minister whether it is not time for the hon. Minister to step down, to see to it that the enquiry takes place as it should take place now?

The Prime Minister: As I said to the hon. Leader of the Opposition, we have lots of hearsay evidence at the moment.

(Interruptions)

The Leader of the Opposition is a lawyer, so he knows there are lots of hearsay evidence at the moment. I cannot ask a Minister to step down just because somebody says that he has taken this or that amount. We have to have *prima facie* evidence. Once there is *prima facie* evidence, you will have my past record to see; unlike others, I ask people to step down.

Mr Bodha: I don't want to enter into a legal argument, Mr Speaker, Sir.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Mr Bodha: What I am saying is: the fact that there have been three statements...

Mr Speaker: Hon. Leader of the Opposition, I am sorry. I think this question has already been put and the Prime Minister has answered and there is no need for any repetition on the same issue.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! Order, please!

Mr Bodha: The Prime Minister has vouched the support of Cabinet to the Minister. Can I ask him on what he based himself to give his support at this point in time?

The Prime Minister: Again I say, don't believe anything you read in the press. Never at any point! The Minister explained and I think he had a

duty to explain to enlighten his colleagues of what has happened. He explained and then we carried on with our business. But, I must tell you, Mr Speaker, Sir, - and I say again - those who are trying to throw stones, remember what they did in the past themselves. Don't make big, big comments at this point! And let me tell you something else, Mr Speaker, Sir, that the hon. Leader of the Opposition is saying that there are three statements, but there can be ten statements from the same person. It does not matter. What we need is evidence! Any Tom, Dick and Harry can go and make any statement they want, but we need evidence. We cannot go without evidence. That is what we are looking for.

Mr Bérenger: The hon. Prime Minister has taken on the responsibility of throwing doubt on one of the witnesses to come, Mr Paddy Rountree by suggesting, it was clear, that he has contradicted himself because from what the Prime Minister said, at one point, Mr Paddy Rountree said that he was fully satisfied that there was no request for funny money and then the implication was that that changed. Can I know from the hon. Prime Minister the date on which Mr Paddy Rountree is supposed to have made that statement and to whom?

The Prime Minister: In fact, I am not casting doubt on any person, Mr Speaker, Sir. Far from it! All I am saying is it looks a bit strange that the person who is supposed to be asking money from the promoter and the promoter himself comes and says that he is satisfied and he is relieved. I'll tell you the date. The date actually is 23 February at 2.00 p.m. Mr Paddy Rountree was accompanied by others, including Mrs - I suppose it is Mrs, I don't know - Elizabeth Rountree, Mr David Bening and Mr Peter Hanley, Senior Vice President of Raffles. He then referred to the meeting that my Chief of Staff had with somebody and he again said that he was relieved of the stand that the PMO had taken. Mr Speaker, Sir, I can go even more precise, in fact, he said that he was relieved of the stand of the Prime Minister.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Mr Speaker, Sir, the Prime Minister just said that we shouldn't believe everything that we read in the press and that the Cabinet never gave its support to the Minister. Why is it then that on such an important matter there hasn't been any communiqué to say that the Cabinet didn't give its support to the Minister?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I must tell the hon. Member that if the Cabinet or myself - I am the one who appoint Ministers, not the Cabinet - felt that there was a need to ask the Minister to step down at this point for whatever reason, that I had enough evidence, I would have done so. This is clear, if I have not asked him that he has the confidence of the Government to continue until if we find a *prima facie* case against him.

Mr Bodha: Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Prime Minister assure the House that if a *prima facie* case is established, the hon. Minister will step down to see to it that the inquiry is carried out?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I can give a guarantee again to the hon. Leader of the Opposition and I'll ask him to look at my track record. In fact, I have put money where my mouth is. I have done it in the past and I am a man who has always observed those principles and I am not about to change those principles. If there is a *prima facie* case, if there is evidence, it will certainly happen.

Mr Dowarkasing: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether he is aware that the promoters met his Chief of Staff on several occasions, and, if so, can he state the nature of the discussions?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I just mentioned that they met my Chief of Staff and they drew the attention of the Chief of Staff to apparently agents interfering and this is why my Chief of Staff told him, on 23 February, what is the stand of the Prime Minister and he said he was relieved to hear of the stand of the Prime Minister. They had already heard of this before.

Mr Speaker: Time is over! The Table has been informed that PQ B/183 with regard to red tapism in the Civil Service addressed to Dr. the hon. Prime Minister will now be replied by the hon. Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism, Leisure & External Communications time permitting. Questions addressed to the hon. Prime Minister! Hon. Bhagwan!

**OBADIA, MR LAURENT - MAURITIAN EMBASSY IN PARIS -
APPOINTMENT**

(No. B/171) **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 state if Mr Laurent Obadia has been offered appointment at the Mauritian Embassy in Paris and, if so, in what capacity and the terms and conditions attached to the post.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker Sir, Mr Laurent Obadia has been offered employment on a contract basis, as Senior Trade Adviser at the Mauritian Embassy in Paris.

I am tabling the terms and conditions attached to the post.

Mr Bhagwan: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I know from the hon. Prime Minister whether there was such a post before at the Embassy?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am not aware whether there was such a post. There might have been, but I am not aware, but what I can say is that we are reorganising all our Embassies, not just the one in Paris. We need to reorganise all our Embassies and focus on the economic aspect of things. In fact, we are thinking of merging some of the different components that we have. For example, we have three offices, I think, in London; we don't need three offices. All can be done probably under one office at the High Commission and that is what we are doing.

Mr Bhagwan: Mr Speaker, Sir, can we know from the hon. Prime Minister whether this gentleman is involved in other business activities linked with companies in Mauritius and even in Europe?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am sure he must be working to be able to feed his wife and children. He must be involved in some activities.

Mr Bhagwan: Mr Speaker, Sir, can the Prime Minister inform the House whether this gentleman declared his activities and his interest in companies to the Prime Minister of the Government of Mauritius concerning

past businesses and businesses in which he is actually involved in departments of Government and parastatal bodies?

The Prime Minister: At the moment he is not involved in any parastatal or Government bodies and he is working for himself. But obviously he has worked in the past.

Mr Bérenger: This is a very serious matter. I think, it is the first time that the State of Mauritius will be appointing a foreigner as Adviser in one of our Embassies. I put the question to the hon. Prime Minister. Has this foreigner been involved in business with any business group active in Mauritius? Yes or no?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am amazed at this statement that it is the first time. In fact, under the previous Government for the first time in Mauritius foreigners were appointed not as Advisers, but as seniors of different departments.

(Interruptions)

They know, this is what they have done in Mauritius itself. Foreigners have come here and have taken over the jobs. They have appointed foreigners to head departments here, as seniors of Customs and prisons. I can give you the names of those foreigners. So, why is the hon. Member talking about an Adviser in our Embassy? He has, of course, worked in the past, but he has a network with different people in industry and commerce in France. He has been very helpful and that is why we have appointed him.

Mr Jhugroo: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Prime Minister what is the connection between Mr Laurent Obadia and Mr Dawood Rawat?

The Prime Minister: Well, you can ask about connections of all sorts of people. I can mention a lot of people and what are their connections with Rogers and IBL. Why pinpoint this person? Everybody has the right to do business and everybody has the right to earn a living in this country.

**ARCON, SOUTH AFRICAN COMPANY - AGALEGA ISLAND -
DEVELOPMENT PROJECT**

(No. B/172) **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 state if the South African company ARCON has submitted a development project on the Agalega Island and, if so, when, indicating where matters stand.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, the South African company ARCON has submitted a preliminary development proposal to establish a themed and private island estate on the island of Agalega. The project consists of the creation of 153 sites to be sub-leased to third parties for the development of residential lodges.

The total project investment will be \$324 million, that is, roughly Rs9.7 billion and is expected to create 350 direct jobs and 750 additional jobs during the development phase.

A presentation on the development concept was made to the fast track committee on 18 February 2006. The promoters were requested to produce a detailed feasibility study including the environmental impact of the proposed project for consideration by the Board of Investment.

Mr Bhagwan: Can we know whether the company has a local agent?

The Prime Minister: In fact, there is a Mauritian who is the Director of ARCON.

Mr Cuttaree: Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether he would recall that when he was Leader of the Opposition, there was one project for villas which was presented by Ireland Blyth Ltd. and how this project was being shot down...

Mr Speaker: I am sorry, this does not arise from the question.

(Interruptions)

I would like to inform hon. Members that supplementary questions must relate to elucidate the answers which have been given by Ministers. This question does not arise from the answer.

Mr Cuttaree: Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister why this present project from the South African company which is more denser than the original project submitted by Ireland Blyth is considered as acceptable to the Government whilst the other one was considered to be a sale of the island to a Mauritian company?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, that is what we felt it was at that time. This project is very different I must tell you. Probably the hon. Member does not know, but I must tell him again - and I want to emphasise this - that there is a misconception that the fast track committee is approving projects. The fast track committee does not approve projects. It is the BOI.

In fact, they asked for certain elements where they needed to have clarification. That is why we have asked for a detailed feasibility study, which has not yet been provided. As I said, the project is different from what was proposed before.

Mr Ganoo: Can the hon. Prime Minister recall that, when the Outer Island Development Corporation Bill was being debated in this House, he himself opposed to the previous project? I have a copy of his speech where he said that 'you might destroy the ecosystem in Agalega'. He was all against any type of development project in Agalega. How does he reconcile what he said at that time and what he is saying now?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Member is not quite right in what he is saying. In fact, he quotes me, but I didn't say that there should be no project at all in Agalega. I said that we should be careful about the environment, that there is a risk. In fact, we have asked the promoters to give us an EIA on what this project will entail. We need to have this. Otherwise, there will be no project.

Mr Bérenger: Can the hon. Prime Minister give us the name of the company or individual who is the local contact of the South African company ARCON?

The Prime Minister: His name is Mr Sylvio Madanamootoo.

Mr Dowarkasing: May I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether he is giving the right signal to local investors by rejecting a project that was being promoted by local investors in favour of foreign investors?

The Prime Minister: I have just said that there is a local investor involved in this project. He is a Mauritian and is the Director. What we are saying is that the project will have to satisfy the norms that we have set. This project is different from the other project in many aspects.

Mrs Martin: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I know from the hon. Prime Minister whether this project involves any social component and, if yes, what is the amount earmarked?

The Prime Minister: First of all, we have to think of the people who are actually living there. That must be our priority. Whatever project is done, it must not destroy their way of life, we must make sure that they have jobs and that the environment is protected.

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Prime Minister what is the land requirement for that project?

The Prime Minister: I don't have the details of the land requirement for the project, but I have given the details of the number of sites that they want to put up there.

Mr Ganoo: Can the hon. Prime Minister confirm that, in fact, ARCON is not a developer but rather a firm of architects and *ingénieurs conseil*?

The Prime Minister: Yes, it is a firm that has developed property in South Africa itself.

MBC – RADIO STAFF MEETING – REMARKS BY FREE-LANCER

(No. B/173) Mr S. Dayal (Second Member for Quartier Militaire & Moka) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether he will, for the benefit of the House,

obtain from the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation, Information as to whether, on or about 25 March 2006, at a meeting of the radio staff, a free-lancer employed by the Corporation made unbecoming remarks with regard to the Bhojpuri language and, if so, will he state whether any action has been taken.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Director-General of the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation that, during a meeting of radio staff on 25 March 2006, a free-lancer made unwanted and unbecoming remarks with regard to the Bhojpuri language.

She was immediately asked to withdraw the remarks and apologise. On return of the Director-General from mission, she was informed that her services were no longer required by the MBC.

CENTRAL PRISON – CELLULAR PHONES & ARMS

(No. B/174) Mr J. C. Barbier (Third Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) 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 Prison, information as to whether cellular phones and arms were recently seized inside the Central Prisons and, if so, whether any Prison Officer has been suspended, interdicted or arrested as a result thereof, indicating the corrective measures that have been taken.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Commissioner of Prisons that a wide search was conducted by the Prison Security Squad and the Special Mobile Force at the Central Prison, Beau Bassin, in the morning of 25 March 2006. As a result, three mobile phones, two kitchen knives, one automatic dagger, one cutter, one screwdriver, one razor blade and six pieces of sharpened metal were discovered.

There was no evidence linking the prohibited articles to any Prison Officer.

Following the search, the Commissioner of Prisons has taken the following corrective measures -

- (a) The staffing structure has been re-organised to ensure greater accountability and responsibility. Two Assistant Superintendent of Prisons have been entrusted the direct responsibility for security and searching at the Central Prison.
- (b) Searches on all staff and visitors on entry to prisons have been tightened. I must say that there are already searches, but they have been tightened.
- (b) A system of intelligence to detect those staff who are involved in trafficking has been put in place. This system has shown to be effective and three officers, one of whom was involved in trafficking of drugs, have been arrested.
- (d) Regular patrols external to the walls of Prisons have been increased to deter members of the public from throwing prohibited articles inside the prisons.
- (e) Prisons Security Squad Officers are now located in all Prisons gates and are responsible for searching officers as well as members of the Public.
- (f) There is to be installed at the Central Prison shortly a jamming system for cell phones.
- (g) Portable metal detectors will be purchased and put up there.
- (h) The metal detector portables at Central Prison and GRNW Prison are being used to control all staff of the Prison.
- (i) The assistance of the High Commission of South Africa has been sought for the purchase of sniffer dogs.

Mr Barbier: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I know from the hon. Prime Minister what is the time frame for the implementation of all the measures he just mentioned?

The Prime Minister: Some of the measures have already been implemented. For example, the staffing structure has been reorganised. Two

Assistant Superintendent of Prisons have already been entrusted with this direct responsibility for security and search at the Central Prisons. Search on staff and visitors have been tightened. This has already taken place. The system of intelligence has been put up and has been successful. As I said, three officers have been arrested, one of whom was involved in drug trafficking. The prison officers themselves say that people throw things from behind the wall. There are CCTV cameras in the area; they have heightened the walls, so that people cannot throw things. At the same time, they have increased the regular patrols external to the walls of prisons. Prisons Security Squad Officers are now located at all prisons gates and they search the public as well as the officers. The cell phones jamming system and the portable metal detectors are being ordered. We have to go through the procedures.

Mr Barbier: May I know whether the inquiry has been carried out in relation with the findings of the search? As we all know, the circumstances in which relatives of prisoners visit the prisoners, it is very difficult for these relatives to bring phones or anything else. Most probably, it comes from the prison officers. Has any inquiry been set up and, if yes, who is carrying out this inquiry?

The Prime Minister: In fact, the Commissioner of Prisons had an inquiry done straightaway. But, he said that they could find no evidence linking the prohibited articles to any prison officer. That's what the inquiry revealed, unfortunately. That is why I emphasised on the restructuring of the staffing. Somebody has to be responsible. That is why two Assistant Superintendent of Prisons have been entrusted with the direct responsibility for that.

Mr Varma: Mr Speaker, Sir, could the hon. Prime Minister inform the House whether cellular phones and arms have been seized at the GRNW and Richelieu prisons as well?

The Prime Minister: I have to look at the details, Mr Speaker, Sir. The question was specific, but I can give the hon. Member the details later.

OFFENDERS (YOUNG) – ACTS OF AGGRESSION & VIOLENT CRIMES

(No. B/175) Mr S. Lauthan (Third Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) 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 acts of aggression and of violent crimes committed by minors acting in groups or gangs during the past three years.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that there were 11 acts of aggression and violent crimes committed by minors acting in groups or gangs during the year 2003. In 2004, there were two cases and in 2005 five cases.

Mr Varma: Mr Speaker, Sir, could the hon. Prime Minister kindly inform the House whether the Government intends to propose fast track punishment for persistent young offenders by halving the time it takes between arrest and sentencing?

The Prime Minister: I know that is something the Attorney-General has taken up with the Judiciary. We need to make things happen quicker, and not only for this. We cannot have cases hanging on for years. As we know, if it is delayed, it is delayed justice. I know that is what the Attorney-General has been emphasising with the Chief Justice.

Mr Lauthan: Mr Speaker, Sir, in spite of these figures we noted, this is not specific to Mauritius alone, it is a worldwide trend that crimes are being committed by young people in groups or gangs. It is with this in mind that the previous Government set up the project of “*Educateurs des Rues*” just to go and meet these people where they are. And fortunately, these young people have been trained; we have spent a lot of money on their training. They have been informed that their contract has been terminated.

Mr Speaker: Put the question, please.

Mr Lauthan: The Minister of Finance promised that he would support these young street educators. Can I appeal to the Prime Minister also?

Mr Speaker: What is the question?

(Interruptions)

Mr Lauthan: The question is whether the Government is going to support these young educators who have been doing quite a good job. It has been unanimously recognised ...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: The question has been put. Let the Prime Minister answer. Whether Government is going to support the project which was set up by the previous Government.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I will have to examine this point, but we want to support people to bring them into the mainstream of society. That is very important, but also people must know that if they break the law they will be punished and punished severely.

Mr Dayal: I should like to ask the Prime Minister whether any study has been carried out as to the social background of the minors and whether the social background has anything to do with the crimes committed?

The Prime Minister: Well, in fact, I know that the Child Development Unit, the different NGOs and the stakeholders have looked into different requests, but I am not aware of any full-fledged or psychological inquiry, which the hon. Member mentioned.

POLICE OFFICERS – RECRUITED AND RETIRED - 1995-2005

(No. B/176) Mr S. Lauthan (Third Member for Port Louis Maritime and Port Louis East) 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 Police Officers –

- (a) recruited by Government, and
- (b) who have retired during each of the calendar years 1995 to 2005.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I am tabling the information requested.

**LADY SUSHIL RAMGOOLAM SSS –
FLAG RAISING CEREMONY**

(No. B/177) Mrs S. Grenade (Second Member for GRNW and Port Louis West) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to whether any incident occurred at the flag raising ceremony he attended at the Lady Sushil Ramgoolam State Secondary School on 19 March 2006 and, if so, whether it was reported to the Police and, if any arrest has been effected

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I was a bit surprised at that question. In fact, I asked the Commissioner of Police who told me that there is no record of any incident having occurred at the flag raising ceremony at Lady Sushil Ramgoolam State Secondary School, Triolet, on 19 March 2006. Therefore, the question of arrest or whatever does not arise.

Mrs Grenade: Can the hon. Prime Minister state that a labour agent caused a lot of disturbance at this function and was taken away by the Police?

The Prime Minister: I can assure the hon. Member, I was there myself; I did not see any disturbance at all. I suppose that this is another invented story.

(Interruptions)

It's not true, but these things can happen. I am not saying that it can't happen.

(Interruptions)

These things can happen. But believe me, there was no incident; this is why I was surprised. I asked the Commissioner about it, in case I did not see something, but he told me that there was no such incident.

**GOVERNMENT ADVERTISEMENTS –
DAILIES AND WEEKLIES – BENEFICIARIES –
JANUARY 2006 TO APRIL 2006**

(No. B/178) 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, in regard to Government advertisements in dailies and weeklies, he will for the period January 2006 to date, table a list of –

- (a) the beneficiaries;
- (b) the dailies and weeklies which are entitled thereto, and
- (c) those which are excluded and the reasons thereof.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, for part (a) of the question, I am tabling a list of the beneficiaries.

I must inform the House that the policy stated in the answer given by the Acting Prime Minister to Parliamentary Questions B/561 and B/571 on 06 December last on the issue of Government advertisements is still the policy and this has not changed

Mr Bhagwan: Can the Prime Minister confirm if it is for political reasons that certain newspapers have been restricted ...

(Interruptions)

An Opposition newspaper, the main Opposition newspaper?

The Prime Minister: Can the hon. Member tell me which Opposition newspaper he is talking about?

(Interruptions)

Mr Bhagwan: There is only one Opposition which has only one newspaper; it is "*Le Militant*", nobody else.

The Prime Minister: Newspapers which are more fiercely opposed to the Government than "*Le Militant*"? I find "*Le Militant*" to be moderate compared to the others. There are two things. We are relooking at the whole matter because we have to make sure that there is fairness...

(Interruptions)

but at the same time, there is no abuse. You can't go on, day in day out, publishing false information and expect to get advertisement from the Government! That you will not get.

Mr Bhagwan: I know that "Sunday Vani" has received *deux malheureux publicités*. *Est-ce qu'on peut savoir pourquoi?*

(Interruptions)

The Prime Minister: I know the hon. Member is a close friend to the owner, but at least he is helping their policy day in day out. I know he is a friend and he has at least got two. What's the complaint?

**ADVISERS (MID-AUGUST 2005) - NAMES,
QUALIFICATIONS, ETC.**

(No. B/179) Mr G. Gunness (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, in regard to the advisers recruited by Government since mid-August 2005, either on a full-time or a part-time basis, he will state their names, qualifications, respective salaries and conditions of service.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, the information is being compiled and will be placed in the library as soon as it is available.

**MINISTER OF HOUSING AND LANDS - ALLEGATION OF
FRAUD AND CORRUPTION**

(No. B/180) Mr G. Gunness (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, in regard to an allegation of fraud and corruption against the Minister of Housing and Lands, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to whether –

- (a) any statement has been made to the CCID, and
- (b) an inquiry has been carried out and, if so, the results thereof.

(Vide reply to PNQ)

MBC – PURCHASE, DATE OF DELIVERY, ETC

(No. B/181) Mr P. Jhugroo (Third 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 Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation, a list of the items of equipment purchased during the present financial year, indicating

when the orders were placed, their date of delivery and the amount spent thereon.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I am laying on the table of National Assembly, a statement giving the information requested.

DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC PROSECUTIONS – MODE OF APPOINTMENT

(No. B/182) Mr S. Mohamed (Third Member for Rivière des Anguilles and Souillac) 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 it is proposed to change the mode of appointment of the Director of Public Prosecutions and, if so, when and, if not, why not.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker Sir, the Director of Public Prosecutions is a public officer and, as we know, is appointed by the Judicial and Legal Service Commission under section 72(1) of the Constitution. And it says clearly that -

“No person shall be qualified to hold or act in the office of the DPP unless he is qualified for appointment as a Judge of the Supreme Court.”

The Judicial and Legal Service Commission, which appoints the DPP, consists of the Chief Justice who is the Chairperson, the Senior Puisne Judge, a Chairperson of the Public Service Commission and an “appointed member” who usually is a Judge of the Supreme Court, that are also provided for by the Constitution.

There is a delicate balance. There was a debate when, we ourselves, were in Opposition, we were asking whether this should be looked at with a cool mind, whether it should be one person who decides and whether we should look at this. I must say also that Lord Mackay and Professor Sachs have made comments on these. But the appointment of the DPP must be made by persons whose independence is constitutionally guaranteed. I think it is dangerous if we go outside that and that is why we think, at this point, it

would be unwise to, unless we look at the whole matter at some point whenever we have time.

Mr Mohamed: May I ask the hon. Prime Minister, as he seems to be well aware as usual of all those matters, which are raised within this House, and since he considers this matter to be important, does he not also consider this matter to be urgent? And since it is a matter that will require a lot of work, does he not believe that, reform, if there should be, should start immediately, and for it to be sooner than later?

The Prime Minister: Yes, we want to have reforms whenever there is need for reforms. I must say that Lord Mackay, in his report, said that we should reconsider the membership of the Judicial and Legal Service Commission and that the DPP should have a Department of his own within the SLO, with people who are appointed there, not be moved from there to somewhere else, but they should be working there for at least three to four years. That is one suggestion. I think Professor Sachs also has mentioned a different approach, that perhaps the President in consultation with whoever he thinks fit should be appointing the members of the Judicial and Legal Service Commission. But what we need be very careful is not to get people who could be involved in the Executive to be involved in the appointment of the DPP.

Mr Ganoo: Last year, Government voted a new Law Reform Commission Bill, I don't know whether this Bill has been proclaimed or the members of the Commission have been chosen. But isn't this a fit and proper subject to be referred to the Law Reform Commission so that the Law Reform Commission can, at least, give its opinion on such a difficult and complex matter?

The Prime Minister: I think that the law has been proclaimed and if I am not mistaken, Mr Ollivry is the Chairperson of that Commission.

Mr Ganoo: What about the idea of referring it to the Law Reform Commission?

The Prime Minister: We certainly can refer it to the Commission and they can have a look at it.

Mr Mohamed: Is the Prime Minister aware that at this particular moment and for many years since we have had our Constitution, the Judicial and Legal Service Commission has as majority members of the Judiciary, them acting within the JLSC, for the appointing of the DPP, is, in fact, a violation of the separation of powers which is guaranteed under our Constitution. Therefore, wouldn't the hon. Prime Minister consider that it would be urgent, not necessarily to refer ...

Mr Speaker: There is no need for any statement. Could the hon. Member put his question?

Mr Mohamed: My question is being put.

Mr Speaker: I have already understood your question. Could you put your question?

Mr Mohamed: Wouldn't the hon. Prime Minister consider that since this is a present and serious danger of violation of the separation of powers that this should not be referred only necessarily to the Law Reform Commission, but referred to a Body that can do this job in a more urgent matter, like a Committee set up especially for that?

The Prime Minister: Perhaps I have a slight disagreement with the hon. Member. I don't know whether it is a violation. In fact, we don't want interference from other people outside. I understand what the hon. Member is saying that perhaps it is a click in other words – very courageous in saying that. In the Police Department we find Police protecting Police, in the medical profession you have doctors protecting and with the lawyers as well it is the same thing, they are no different.

(Interruptions)

Otherwise, Mr Speaker, Sir, that is something that I will take up when we look at it.

ALCOHOL – SALE - LEGISLATION

(No. B/184) Dr. A. Husnoo (Second Member for Port Louis Maritime and Port Louis East) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative

Reforms, Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether he is aware of the high prevalence of alcoholism in Mauritius and, if so, will be consider reviewing the relevant legislation regarding the sale of alcohol with a view to –

- (a) imposing more stringent conditions attached to the issue of a licence for the sale of alcohol, and
- (b) provide for harsher penalties leading to the cancellation of the licence in cases of breach of the law regarding the sale of alcohol.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am perfectly aware of the problems linked with the high prevalence of alcoholism, as well as the increase in the number of premises selling alcohol. In fact, in February this year, I made a public declaration to the fact that this state of affairs can no longer be tolerated, and that the relevant laws will have to be amended to provide for harsher penalties and for the cancellation of licences. I have requested, in fact, the Attorney General to consult all the stakeholders and bring necessary amendments to the law and I think that is what he is already doing.

Mr Varma: Mr Speaker, Sir, will the hon. Prime Minister kindly inform the House whether it is proposed to regulate the number of on and off licences or off licences operating in a particular area?

The Prime Minister: Yes, Sir.

Mrs Navarre-Marie: Mr Speaker, Sir, will the hon. Prime Minister see to it that no alcohol is sold to minors in accordance with the Child Protection Act and that legislation is strictly applied to those who infringe the law?

The Prime Minister: I totally agree with the hon. Member. It is very important that we make sure that minors do not get access to alcohol. At one point we say this and, at the same time, there is advertising of alcohol. We must also relook at the advertising of alcohol also.

Miss Deerpalsing: Mr Speaker, Sir, is the hon. Prime Minister aware that following European directives, in other countries, the advertising of

alcohol is either restricted or banned? Will Government consider such a policy here because it would be in contradiction?

The Prime Minister: In fact, that is why, I just mentioned that we have to look at the possibility of banning the advertising of alcohol as well.

Mrs Labelle: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether he will consider making compulsory the fixing of notice at every alcohol shop stating that alcohol is not being sold to minors?

The Prime Minister: It is a good suggestion that should be taken on board.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Will the Prime Minister consider the advisability of having some dry days during the week so as to reduce the amount of alcohol consumption?

The Prime Minister: I do not know whether to have dry days will be constitutionally right. I am not sure about that. The former Prime Minister is already complaining...

(Interruptions)

I do not think that it will be right. I think we have to be strict with the laws.

EEZ – SURVEILLANCE SYSTEM

(No. B/185) 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 is aware that the present surveillance system of our exclusive economic zone is inadequate and, if so, will he state what remedial measures will be taken.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, our Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) extends over an area – we have a huge EEZ – of 1.9 million square kilometres.

Surveillance of such a vast expanse of the ocean requires long-range patrol vessels and fixed wing aircraft. It is felt that the present pool of fixed wing aircrafts of the National Coast Guard is adequate at the moment, but a big lacuna exists in the capability of the presently available patrol vessels of the NCG. The existing single offshore patrol vessel, namely CGS Vigilant with a history of recurrent breakdown is completely unsuitable and whenever we need it, at the very time we need it, it is not able to be used. It is unsuitable to ensure a proper surveillance of our EEZ. It has a very limited role in its scope and is very restrictive, sometimes only on emergency sailings, sometimes not even that. Moreover, the CGS Guardian which has undergone major repairs in Mumbai has a limited range, but it is, in fact, coming back to Mauritius this very month, I think, if I remember, on 18 April.

Government is seriously contemplating to modernise the fleet of ships of the NCG. In fact, during my official visit, Mr Speaker, Sir, discussions were held with the Indian Authorities for the procurement, on affordable terms, of an offshore patrol vessel, as well as an advanced light helicopter for the surveillance of our EEZ. We feel, for example, that our advanced light helicopter is essential. We had so many cases, we have had one recently of people getting lost in the sea. This is one helicopter than can go directly from island to island because these do not need refuelling or whatever and the offshore patrol vessel that we have looked at is a vessel that actually the helicopter can go on it as well. In addition, discussions have been held with the Indian authorities for the installation of an electronic coastal surveillance system for Mauritius and the outer islands in order to reinforce our capability in monitoring our EEZ. Consideration is also being given to the acquisition of these equipment under the line of credit of \$100 million that we obtained from the Government of India.

Mr Varma: Will the hon. Prime Minister kindly inform the House of the number of Police officers who are actually posted at the National Coast Guard in Mauritius, Rodrigues, Agalega and St. Brandon?

The Prime Minister: Sir, I will look for the information and give it to the hon. Member.

Mrs Martin: Sir, there were talks about not only India, but also France and China giving us a hand in the surveillance of our EEZ. I would like to know what is Government stand on this issue.

The Prime Minister: In fact, all friendly countries help whenever they can. We did not ask specifically for the coastal vessel and the helicopter. This was asked during my visit to India.

Mr Dowarkasing: Is the hon. Prime Minister aware that only 30% of the total number of flights of the Dornier is scheduled for surveillance purposes and, if so, will he correct that?

The Prime Minister: I do not know whether I can correct it or not. I can do a lot of things, but I do not think I can correct what the Dornier is not able to do! We certainly say that....

(Interruptions)

It means that we have to cut off something else that it is doing. That is what we have to look at. It is felt by the Police that they do not have a problem on aircrafts, but it is on the vessels that there is a big problem.

Mr Varma: Mr Speaker, Sir, is the hon. Prime Minister aware that in reply to a Parliamentary Question on 24 April 2001, the then Prime Minister stated that a coastal surveillance system was to be set up. Can the hon. Prime Minister kindly inform the House whether anything has been done in that respect?

The Prime Minister: In fact, I must inform the hon. Member that during my first Premiership when I went to India, the question of coastal surveillance system was discussed with the Indian Government. After the elections, I think the then Prime Minister also mentioned it, but, in fact, nothing much has been done and this is why I retook the matter with the Indian authorities and now we are making sure that this is done.

Mr Varma: Sir, will the Prime Minister inform the House whether his predecessor visited the state-of-the-art company producing state-of-the-art radars, and other equipment during their visits to India and whether these will be implemented or installed within the years to come?

The Prime Minister: In fact, I visited the Bharat Industries the first time I was Prime Minister. They made an exposition of what they are doing again. That is why we want to ensure that this is done very quickly.

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

**CONSTITUENCY NO. 3 – FIRE VICTIMS –
LAND ALLOCATION**

(No. B/188) Mr S. Lauthan (Third Member for Port Louis Maritime and Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Housing and Lands whether he will state the measures taken for the allocation of plots of land to victims of fire in the Constituency No. 3, indicating if these measures will be extended to victims of fire throughout the island.

Mr Dulull: Mr Speaker, Sir, as a responsible and caring Government, we are very much sensitive to distressed families,.....

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! Order!

Mr Dulull:and extend our humanitarian assistance to families, victims of calamities, including fire victims, irrespective of where they reside. The nature and extent of the assistance are decided upon a case to case basis.

Subsequent to a fire which broke out in October 2005 at Rajpaul Street, Port Louis, my Ministry has approved in principle in November 2005 the grant of building site leases at Cité la Cure to three heads of families whose houses were destroyed completely by fire, subject to their being found eligible for such grant.

Furthermore, in line with this Government policy of putting people first, my Ministry has not limited its assistance to families victims of fire only. Recently, my Ministry extended assistance by allocating plots of land to families, victims of landslides at Vallée des Prêtres...

(Interruptions)

which have been pending for the last eighteen months.

Mr Speaker: Order!

Mr Lauthan: The Minister, through inexperience, promised these people a plot of land - and he was accompanied by TV - and a sum of Rs50,000 was promised by his colleague, the Minister of Social Security. Only yesterday, I met these people and absolutely nothing has been done in terms of land and the Rs50,000.

Mr Dulull: What is the question, Mr Speaker?

Mr Speaker: The question – he said is that he met the victims, but nothing has been done.

(Interruptions)

Order!

Mr Dulull: It is only a statement made by the hon. Member and he assumes his responsibility. The information is that three letters were issued to the families; Mrs Ameena Bibi Chamroo; Mrs Nazma Bibi Bhayjoo; Mr Rehman Dookhy.

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Speaker, Sir, since they are putting people first, why can't this policy be extended all over the island to other fire victims?

Mr Dulull: As I have mentioned in my reply, it is a case-to-case basis and we have given land not only to fire victims, but landslide victims at Vallée des Prêtres. There are thirteen families whose requests have remained unattended for the last eighteen months.

ICT SECTOR – WORKING CONDITIONS – LEGISLATION

(No. B/189) Mr S. Soodhun (Fifth Member for La Caverne and Phoenix) asked the Minister of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment whether he will state if it is proposed to introduce legislation with a view to regulating the working conditions in the ICT sector.

Dr. Bunwaree: Yes, Sir.

Mr Soodhun: Mr Speaker, Sir, does the Minister intend to propose a minimum wage for the ICT sector as it is in other sectors?

Dr. Bunwaree: Mr Speaker, Sir, the Bill is in preparation, I cannot reveal anything at this time.

ICT SECTOR –FOREIGN SOFTWARE ENGINEERS

(No. B/190) Mr S. Soodhun (Fifth Member for La Caverne and Phoenix) asked the Minister of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment whether, in regard to the ICT sector, for the period July 2005 to February 2006, he will state the number of foreigners issued with a work permit as software engineer and software developer, indicating the organizations in which they are working and the salary and other benefits they are drawing.

Dr. Bunwaree: Mr Speaker, Sir, from July 2005 to February 2006, my Ministry has issued work permits to 55 foreign workers to take up employment as software engineer in 15 companies. As regards the position of software developer, work permits were issued to 11 expatriates for employment in 5 companies during the same period.

The list of companies where these 66 expatriates are employed is being tabled.

As far as the salary and other benefits drawn by the expatriates are concerned, as the hon. Fifth Member for La Caverne and Phoenix is aware, my Ministry does not request for such information when processing applications for work permits.

Mr Naidu: Mr Speaker, Sir, with respect to foreign software engineers, will the Minister inform the House whether they have satisfied the criteria set down by the Mauritius Council for the Registration of Professional Engineers before they are allowed to practise in Mauritius?

Dr. Bunwaree: Generally yes.

Mr Lesjongard: Sir, as per the legislation governing engineers in Mauritius, they have to undergo two years training, do these foreign engineers undergo such training in Mauritius?

Dr. Bunwaree: Two years in Mauritius? I am not sure, but they must have been trained somewhere.

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Speaker, Sir, the two years' training should be undergone in the country?

Dr. Bunwaree: I'm not sure, but I'll look into the matter, Mr Speaker, Sir.

SUGAR INDUSTRY - REMUNERATION ORDERS

(No. B/191) Mr S. Soodhun (Fifth Member for La Caverne and Phoenix) asked the Minister of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment whether he will state if, in the light of the restructuring of the sugar industry, it is proposed to review the Sugar Industry Remuneration Orders.

Dr. Bunwaree: Mr Speaker, Sir, as the House will be aware, Government is presently in the process of finalising a Strategic Plan for the Sugar Cane Cluster for the period 2006-2015. I understand that this plan will include a number of measures which the industry would need to implement to ensure that it remains viable, contributes to the national economy and, more importantly, that it be a major player in shaping and consolidating the multifunctional role of the cane industry.

Any review of the Remuneration Orders for the Sugar Industry will depend on whether there would be need for any amendment to existing legislation or for enactment of new legislation for the sugar industry in the context of the implementation of this Strategic Plan.

Mr Soodhun: Could the Minister state whether he has received any proposal from the employers to scrap the Remuneration Order?

Dr. Bunwaree: I think the proposal was made when the hon. Member was in my place. It is no longer on the agenda.

**MAURITIUS TELECOM LIMITED
– FOREIGN ENGINEERS & PROFESSIONALS**

(No. B/192) Mr S. Soodhun (Fifth Member for La Caverne and Phoenix) asked the Minister of Information Technology and Telecommunications whether he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Telecom Ltd, information as to the number of foreign engineers and professionals employed thereat, since July 2005, together with their salaries and other fringe benefits, indicating –

- (a) if the vacancies were advertised and, if not, why not, and
- (b) the procedures that are followed for the filling of the posts.

Mr Sinatambou: As opposed to previous trends, Mr Speaker, Sir,.....

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! Order, please!

Mr Sinatambou: As opposed to previous trends, Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Mauritius Telecom Ltd. that it has not employed any foreign engineer or professional since July 2005.

MADAGASCAR – DENGUE FEVER

(No. B/193) Mr J. Cuttaree (Second Member for Stanley and Rose Hill) asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether he is aware of the outbreak of the dengue fever in certain coastal areas of Madagascar and, if so, will he state what preventive measures have been or will be taken to protect the citizens of Mauritius from the disease.

Mr Faugoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that there was an outbreak of dengue fever in certain coastal areas of Madagascar.

Dengue fever is transmitted both by the mosquito *Aedes Aegypti* which is not present in Mauritius and also by the mosquito *Aedes Albopictus*, the vector of chikungunya disease.

As the local vector of dengue fever is the same as that of chikungunya, preventive measures for control of dengue fever are the same as those taken for chikungunya. These include the following –

- (i) surveillance of passengers from endemic areas at port and airport;
- (ii) vector control measures namely larviciding and fogging operations, and
- (iii) health education and community participation for social mobilisation to eliminate mosquito breeding grounds.

TEXTILES & APPAREL – TURKEY PROPOSAL

(No. B/194) Mr J. Cuttaree (Second Member for Stanley and Rose Hill) asked the Minister of Foreign Affairs, International Trade and Cooperation whether, in regard to the proposal of Turkey for apparel and textiles to be treated differently from other industrial sectors in the negotiations on the Doha Round, he will state the position taken by Mauritius at the World Trade Organisation.

Mr Dooloo: Sir, I would like, first of all, to refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to PQ No. B/51 on the 21 March 2006 where I dwelt at length on the question of sectoral initiative, including in the apparel and textile sectors.

Turkey has now come up with a proposal for a sectoral initiative on textiles and clothing in an informal meeting at the WTO on the 23 March. Basically the proposal is aimed at treating the textiles and clothing sector in the WTO negotiations on its own. More specifically, Turkey is proposing a “harmonisation approach” which would allow to cut tariff by a lower rate for certain textiles and apparel products and by a higher rate for others. The proposal therefore is outside the scope of the traditional sectoral approach which normally aims at greater liberalisation of the sectors concerned. Turkey has not provided many details on how the proposal would actually operate, asserting that it was still at a conceptual stage and agreed to revert back with more precisions at a later stage.

Many delegations, but mostly exporters of textiles and clothing products such as China, Hong Kong China, Pakistan and India strongly opposed the proposal in the informal meeting, claiming that it was going against the mandate by excluding a whole sector out of the formula for a lesser tariff cut.

Mauritius pointed out that the textiles and clothing sector was a sensitive one and therefore had to be considered on its own merit, the more so since the dismantling of the MFA.....

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! Order, please!

(Interruptions)

Let the Minister answer.

Mr Dulloo: Some dirty words are being used in the House, Mr Speaker, Sir. Everybody heard them.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order, please!

Mr Dulloo: Sir, may I again refer to the position that has been taken by Mauritius. We pointed out that the textiles and clothing sector was a sensitive one and therefore had to be considered on its own merit, the more so since the dismantling of the MFA has had adverse implications for many small and vulnerable countries. However, Mauritius indicated that it would examine it carefully before taking a formal stand. Mauritius has specifically sought clarifications on four issues -

- (i) the level/rate of harmonisation being envisaged;
- (ii) the products that would be subject to the higher and to the lower cuts;
- (iii) the criteria for participation by other members in the initiative, and

(iv) the actual mechanism of the proposal.

The Turkish delegation stated that it would revert back with explanations on these points. Turkey is yet to present the proposal in a formal plenary meeting of the Negotiating Group on Non-Agricultural Market Access.

From the Mauritius perspective, the proposal should be approached carefully. May I, for the benefit of the House, reiterate our position as already indicated -

"I have inquired about the possibility of safeguarding our interest in textiles and apparel through a sectoral initiative. However, I was advised that Mauritius has so far resisted a sectoral approach in the NAMA negotiations, including in textile and apparel, since a sectoral approach is aimed at faster liberalisation of trade. This would mean the complete erosion of our preferential access and it would therefore have devastating consequences for our economy.

The sectoral initiative so far has been understood to mean greater tariff cut in certain sectors than would otherwise be the case when applying the formula."

The negative reactions from some members during the meeting of 23 March when Turkey made its informal proposal already demonstrate the difficulty that the proponent would face in rallying the support of all the members. In anyway, a sectoral approach, be it zero-for-zero or harmonisation is still highly controversial at this stage in the negotiations. The Turkish harmonisation proposal, after all, is also aimed to cut tariff peaks and possibly in certain categories where Mauritius could be actually enjoying the highest margin of preference.

It has to be noted that Mauritius along with other ACP members have tabled a proposal which tend to approach the issue of preference erosion from a different angle – vulnerability index and certain criteria to identify vulnerable products to preference erosion. Most of the products on the list are actually textiles and clothing products. Many members have already indicated, although not expressly supporting it, that they were much more comfortable with such an approach, that is, the approach of Mauritius,

coupled with a solution of longer transition period for tariffs reduction on affected products.

At this stage, Mr Speaker, Sir, it may be prudent to study the Turkey proposal, get more details from the proponent on some of the elements mentioned above and wait for the definitive reactions of other delegations including the US and EC before taking any stand thereon.

Mr Cuttaree: Mr Speaker, Sir, obviously, I am not going to ask any question which might prejudice our position in Geneva. But I must tell the hon. Minister that I agree with the last part of his answer and I am happy that he has changed his position concerning the ideological position he was taking regarding the question of sectoral. Being given the fact that in Geneva today, there is so much pressure to conclude a round by asking the developing countries to accept a lowering of tariffs on industrial goods, can I ask the hon. Minister whether this will not spell danger to us unless a special initiative is taken as far as textiles are concerned? If the big powers decide that they want to have a successful round, then the compromise will be agriculture on one side and industrial tariffs on the other side. When this happens the pressure on textiles will be very strong unless a special initiative is taken in favour of textiles.

Mr Dulloo: I explained this fully in my reply on 21st March, Mr Speaker, Sir. There are two strong currents and we should be careful that we are not swept away by any of these. On the one hand, you have the United States of America, the EC, etc. and these are our preferential market. On the other hand, there are the major emerging developing countries that would like to protect their market, but also to have an inroad on our own preferential market. We have to balance our position in such a way. There was no ideological position that was taken. The sectoral initiative so far means fast track process to dismantle all tariffs and we know what this can spell for Mauritius. But there were various initiatives that were taken, being given there were so many conflicting interests involved as far as the textile and apparel sector is concerned. As I pointed out, there was the attempt by the group of textile lobby with which my friend is very familiar, the Global Textile alliance, to push sectoral initiative in the textile and clothing, that is, to treat this sector separately and not implying, from what we understand, the traditional sectoral initiative. Therefore, we have to be very careful and see what position would be more beneficial to Mauritius and would also

provide the traditional period we are all asking for to protect our interests on our preferential market.

Mr Cuttaree: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister talked about the preferential proposal which has been put on the table of the WTO on behalf of the ACP by Mauritius itself. Can I - maybe in a friendly, if I may use that word, comment - ask the hon. Minister to be extremely careful with what is happening in Geneva? He knows the position of Peter Mandelson on the issue of preferences. He has expressed himself about this here in Mauritius and the hon. Minister knows the position of the European Union regarding industrial tariffs. Can I ask him to keep a special eye on this issue of maintenance of preferences and not to put all our eggs in this basket?

Mr Dulloo: I can assure the hon. Member and the House that this is what we are doing. We know fully well that even concerning sugar, the European Union was not too forthcoming in trying to protect our preferences. This is why we are trying to see how best to protect our interests in the agricultural sector and the industrial sector, especially as far as textiles and apparels are concerned. This is why sometimes you need to have urgent strategic, but, at least, tactical alliances, being given the various interests at stake at a certain point in time. I can inform the House that this week the African Union Ministers of Trade are meeting in Nairobi where some of the major players will be present, including Mr Pascal Lamy, and we are going to make sure that our interests will be taken on board in the negotiations. As far as the modalities are concerned, the deadline is end of April. Everybody is impatient and we are not sure to be able to reach that deadline. This is why some of the major players have already been indicating the other scenario that they are contemplating in this eventuality.

At 1.05 p.m. the sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 2.35 p.m. with Mr Speaker in the Chair.

BREAD – PRICE STRUCTURE - REVIEW

(No. B/195) Mr J. Cuttaree (Second Member for Stanley and Rose Hill) asked the Minister of Industry, Small & Medium Enterprises, Commerce and Co-operatives whether, in regard to the selling price of bread, he will state if Government has approved a further increase of ten

cents after the price increase which became effective in January 2006 and, if so, the reasons thereof.

Dr. Jeetah: Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I will reply to Parliamentary Questions B/195 and B/227 together as they both concern the price of bread.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the committee specially set up to review the price structure of bread has completed its assignment and Government is yet to take cognizance of the recommendations and a decision will be taken in the light thereof.

Mr Cuttaree: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Minister whether he read the question before he answered? Because there has been an increase in the price of bread.

(Interruptions)

The hon. Member has to get some more experience from his bench. He will speak when his turn comes.

(Interruptions)

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

(Interruptions)

Was the second question which was put by the hon. Member a supplementary question?

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: The question was put on the increase in the price of bread. Let us listen to the question first. Stop talking! Keep quiet! Let us hear the question first!

Mr Cuttaree: The question I am asking is a very simple one. Can the hon. Minister give the reason why there has been an increase of 10 cents in the price of bread, after a few weeks before we had another increase?

Dr. Jeetah: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have just answered. I will read the answer again for the benefit of the House.

“The Committee specially set up to review the price structure of bread has completed its assignment and Government is yet to take cognizance of the recommendations and a decision will be taken in the light thereof.”

Mr Cuttaree: Do I take it, therefore, from the answer of the Minister that there has not been any increase in the price of bread yet?

Dr. Jeetah: Mr Speaker, Sir, would the hon. Member like me to read the answer again? I have just answered that. He has to listen carefully.

Mr Cuttaree: My question is a very simple one. There has been an increase of 10 cents in the price of bread. I am asking the hon. Minister why. He says that there is a committee which is studying and all these things. Therefore, is the Minister saying that the Government approved the increase in the price of bread without any reason and now they are going to find the reason? This is the question.

Mr Speaker: May I inform the hon. Member that I cannot force the Minister to answer the question.

Dr. Jeetah: Can I get back to the original question again, Mr Speaker, Sir? The hon. Member is asking about a “further increase of 10 cents”. He does not even know what he is talking about.

(Interruptions)

Mr Cuttarree: Can I ask the hon. Minister to continue reading the sentence “whether he will state if Government has approved a further increase of 10 cents after the price increase which became effective in January 2006 (...)”. I am not going to go into an explanation on that.

Dr. Jeetah: Let me remind the hon. Member that the *Association des propriétaires des boulangeries* made a request as far back as October 2004 – and may I remind the hon. Member that they were in power then - to increase the price of bread of 100 grams by 90 cents, that is, from Rs1.35 to Rs2.25. And after scrutinising all figures and after taking into account the

increase in the price of flour on 07 January, that is, from Rs250. to Rs330. per bag of 50 kg, my Ministry reached the conclusion that a 30 cents increase in the price of bread of 100 grams was justified. I think this is the bit that is missing, Mr Speaker, Sir. Consequently, the price increased from Rs1.35 to Rs1.65 with effect from the same day, that is, 07 January 2006. And here I would like to point out that there was an increase of 50 cents only on the price of bread. The other 15 cents was the increase on the price of flour. After that *l'Association des propriétaires des boulangeries* expressed its dissatisfaction on the price increase by Government. It even threatened to stop making bread by disrupting the very conduct of life in this country because we all know that this is an essential commodity.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! The hon. Member has put a question, let the Minister answer. We have to listen to him carefully.

Dr. Jeetah: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir! Government did not give in to this threat, but requested the Management Audit Bureau to carry out an in-depth study of the issue and to come up with recommendations. Subsequent to that, I have answered this to the hon. Member.

Mr Cuttaree: I am asking a very simple question. The hon. Minister himself says that there was a price rise of 30 cents. Subsequent to that, he said that *l'association des boulangeries* protested and made a request for a further increase. The Management Audit Bureau studied the case and an increase of 10% has been given. The question I am asking him is very simple. On what basis has this 10 cents increase been done?

Dr. Jeetah: This is ridiculous, Mr Speaker, Sir! I have just told the hon. Member that there has been a request and we gave it to the MAB. Nothing has been approved yet. This is what I am saying.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Hon. Dowarkasing!

Mr Dowarkasing: I just want to ask the hon. Minister whether it is a responsible way of, firstly, increasing the price of bread, then afterwards

putting a committee to look into, whether the price of bread has to be revised or not.

(Interruptions)

Is it a way of doing things? The hon. Minister has not failed?

(Interruptions)

Dr. Jeetah: Let me remind the hon. Members of their responsibility. The request was made as far back as October 2004.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Hon. Dowarkasing, please listen!

Dr. Jeetah: The request was made as far back as October 2004. We did our job as we ought to do. There was a request of 90 cents. We gave a 15 cents increase and they made certain representations. We listened to them. What's wrong in that?

Mr Ganoo: Now that the Government is in presence of the report, can we know when will the Government take a decision?

Dr. Jeetah: Mr Speaker, Sir, I will just say it again - this Government got this request as far back as October 2004. We will do it in due time.

Mr Bodha: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister is saying that he has referred the matter to the MAB for an in-depth analysis. Why was not the in-depth analysis made before the first increase?

Mr Speaker: The hon. Minister has already answered the question.

EDUCATION SECTOR - REFORM

(No. B/196) Mr M. Dowarkasing (Third Member for Curepipe and Midlands) asked the Minister of Women's Rights, Child Development, Family Welfare and Consumer Protection whether she will state if the reform being proposed in the education sector, with the creation of national and regional colleges, is in conformity with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The Minister of Education & Human Resources (Mr D. Gokhool): Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I shall reply to this PQ and I would like to state the following.

I would like to refer the hon. Member to the reply I made to PNQ of 21 March 2006 whereby I asserted that this Government has already democratised access to free education at all levels and provides equal opportunities to one and all. Admission on a national and regional basis to State Secondary Schools forms part of a comprehensive programme and the philosophy behind it is: equity, ethics and social justice. This mode of admission promotes equal opportunity among children living in all regions of Mauritius, near and remote. Education is free and compulsory up to the age of 16. Moreover, at primary level, children are provided with free textbooks and at secondary level, needy students enjoy the same facilities. This is in conformity with Article 28 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the child which recognises the right of the child to education.

Government's philosophy is also to look after the needs of children with special needs. In this connection, the needs of children with physical handicaps are being catered for by the Special Education Needs Unit whereas low performers living in deprived areas are taken care of in the context of the *Zone d'Education Prioritaires Programme*. CPE failures after two attempts are absorbed by the pre-vocational classes.

Furthermore, to improve access to education and provide equality of opportunities, Government has introduced free transport facilities.

Each child in the Republic of Mauritius is taken care of according to his/her needs.

I want to assure the hon. Member that every effort is being made by my Ministry to "ensure that the proposed reforms secure access to free and compulsory secondary education for all children regardless of their social status and ethnic background" as recommended in the Second National Report on the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Mr Dowarkasing: Mr Speaker, Sir, if you allow me, I have got three supplementary questions. The hon. Minister has just stated that this reform is in line with the Convention on the Rights of the Child. In fact, my question was addressed to the hon. Minister of Women's Rights. He quoted

in his answer Article 28 based on education. Article 28 states that everything in education should be done on the basis of equal opportunity to all children. Making the difference between national and regional schools, how does the Minister reconcile the fact that this Article is in conformity to this Article of the Convention?

Mr Gokhool: I think I have indicated to the hon. Member that we are introducing comprehensive reform programmes and the access is just one aspect of the programme. We have to look at the reform programme in its totality and then we can appreciate if equal opportunity is provided or not.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister has just mentioned that he is taking care of the special needs of the children, can I ask him whether the needs of gifted children have been taken care of in his project?

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, as I have explained to the House, in any system we have children with different potentials, different capabilities and the system should cater for all children. That is one of the reasons why we have introduced access on a regional/national basis, particularly to care for children who are high performing children; and this is one aspect of taking care of children who are talented and gifted.

Mr Dowarkasing: I am just referring the hon. Minister to Article (2) of the Convention. Article (2) states very clearly and I quote, if you allow me, Mr Speaker -

"State party should take all appropriate measures to ensure that the child is protected against all form of discrimination."

On this question of national and regional colleges is discrimination not being done to most of the children sitting for the CPE exams.

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, when you allow children to access to schools on the basis of merit and no other criteria, is this discrimination?

Mrs Labelle: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister has just mentioned that he has to take care of talented and gifted children. May I know from the hon. Minister what has been put in place to differentiate what he calls "gifted and talented" children?

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, as I have explained that the reform programme is a long process and we are now at the early phase of the reform programme. We are taking measures to address the needs of all children; we have addressed the issue of children with special education needs; we are addressing the question of children who have difficulty in coping with mainstream education in the pre-vocational area. We are also taking care of children who are high performing so that they can also access to those schools where they are to be found.

With regard to the issue that has been raised, this is being looked into and other measures will be taken to address the issue raised by the hon. Member.

Mr Dowarkasing: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have one more question. Can the hon. Minister clearly state to the House how his reform reconciles with the Article (3) of the Convention?

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, as I said, the programme of reform is based on a few basic principles - democratising access, equity, social justice and these principles are embedded in all measures we are taking. So, we cannot make a selective reading of the reform programme. This is what I have been telling.

Mrs Labelle: Mr Speaker, Sir, the Minister has emphasised on the fact that he is only at the beginning of the reform. Must I take it that since he is at the beginning of the reform, he has not yet put in place structures which are going to differentiate the gifted and talented children?

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, a reform programme is an ongoing programme. And as I have indicated, we are right at the beginning of the initial phase of the reform programme. We have to wait; we have to see how the reform programme is moving along, then we can make final conclusions about the reform.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to ask the hon. Minister whether he considers allowing special students who are gifted to be in the same institution in the national colleges sufficient to cater for their needs?

Mr Gokhool: We are not modifying the system, which has existed. We are just introducing measures to democratise access on the basis of merit. This is what we are doing.

Mrs Navarre-Marie: Mr Speaker, Sir, in January, this year, the Ministry of Women's Rights deponed before the UN Committee on children in Geneva where the issue of the counter reform on education has been raised with concern. Can we, therefore, know the reaction of the Mauritian delegation at the Committee?

Mr Sinatambou: Mr Speaker, Sir, on a point of order, I am afraid, when the hon. Member is mentioning the word "counter reform", she is expressing an opinion. I think this is not allowed.

Mr Speaker: What "counter reform" is the hon. Member talking about? Can the hon. Member rephrase her question?

Mrs Navarre-Marie: I was saying that in that committee the issue of proposed reform in education was raised with concern. I would like to know the reaction of the Mauritian delegation at that committee?

Mr Speaker: Will the Minister answer?

Mr Gokhool: May I just read for the benefit of the hon. Member in the House what the Committee has recommended. In the first part of its recommendation, the Committee says, I quote -

"The Committee acknowledges the remarkable improvement made in the field of education including the ongoing reforms of the education system".

This is part of the recommendation.

(Interruptions)

The other part of the recommendation is that -

"The Committee expressed concern that the proposed reform may introduce ..."

(Interruptions)

This is not affirmative, this is not conclusive; it is a matter of opinion and we cannot take that to base ourselves to draw a conclusion out of it.

Mrs Martin: Mr Speaker, Sir, I would just like to know from the Minister when the remark that he just mentioned was actually made?

Mr Gokhool: I cannot say the date, but it was during the Convention when discussions were held on the reform on the education sector, Mr Speaker, Sir.

CIVIL SERVICE, PARASTATAL BODIES & LOCAL AUTHORITIES - VACANCIES

(No. B/197) Mr M. Dowarkasing (Third Member for Curepipe and Midlands) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether he will state if his Ministry has given instructions to freeze the filling of vacancies in the civil service, parastatal bodies and local authorities and, if so, will he give the reasons therefor.

The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development (Mr R. Sithanen): Mr Speaker, Sir, my Ministry has not given instructions to freeze the filling of vacancies in the Civil Service, parastatal bodies and local authorities. What has been requested of Ministries and Departments is to reinforce fiscal discipline. I am tabling copies of the Circular letter No. 51 of 2005 of the Ministry of Civil Service and Administrative Reforms and the Circular letter No. 2 of 2006 of my Ministry. In the latter Circular letter, it was clearly indicated that, I quote –

“As the scope for filling of vacancies and the creation of additional and new posts is limited, Supervising Officers are requested to critically examine such proposals and comply with establishment of guidelines and procedures issued by the Ministry of Civil Service and Administrative Reforms in its circular letter No. 51 of 2005.”

In a nutshell, Mr Speaker, Sir, Ministries, parastatal bodies and local authorities have been instructed to fill existing vacancies only if there is a need to do so. Before vacancies are filled, it must be ascertained –

- (i) whether the objectives they purport to meet are still valid;
- (ii) in case of promotional posts whether the structure is still the appropriate one, and

- (iii) whether the work may not be carried out by other means and ways such as re-allocation of duties, redeployment of staff, improvement of work methods and/or contracting out.

Ministries, parastatal bodies and local authorities have also been requested to avoid -

- (i) multi-layering, that is, the creation of grades without taking into account the scope of the work and levels of responsibility involved;
- (ii) creation of supervising posts for the mere sake of giving promotion, and
- (iii) creation of permanent posts to meet temporary needs.

Furthermore, Ministries have been requested to review vacant posts, which have remained unfilled for the last three years and are no longer useful to the organization.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in the statement to the National Assembly in August last year, on “Setting the Stage for Robust Growth”, I emphasized the need for keeping expenditure under control as part of the overall strategy to reduce heavy pressures that are building up on the budget and maintain public debt within sustainable levels. In view of the various challenges confronting us, we cannot allow the budgetary situation to get out of hand. This is why we have set up an Inter-Ministries Expenditure Review Committee to come out with proposals for reallocating expenditures from lower to higher priorities, reducing wastage, minimizing cost overruns in project implementation and improving the effectiveness and efficiency of expenditure. That is also why we are strengthening the mechanisms for monitoring implementation of the recommendations of the Director of Audit.

**BUSINESS PARKS OF MAURITIUS LTD.
– COMPANIES, RENTING SPACE, ETC.**

(No. B/198) Mr M. Dowarkasing (Third Member for Curepipe and Midlands) asked the Minister of Information Technology and Telecommunications whether he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Business Parks of Mauritius Ltd., information as to –

- (a) the number of companies that are presently renting space at the cybercity for their operations;
- (b) how the rent has been calculated, and
- (c) whether any of these companies are in arrears regarding rental or other fees and, if so, will he give the list thereof, indicating the amount due.

Mr Sinatambou: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that 81 companies are presently renting space within the cybercity – 33 are renting land at the cybercity *per se*, whereas 48 are renting space within the Cyber Tower.

I am informed, Mr Speaker, Sir, that originally several scenarios were apparently examined for the computation of rental charges within the cybercity, based on the valuation of land in the cybercity by no less than the Chief Government Valuer himself at Rs10 m. per acre or an annual rental of Rs400,000 per acre.

In September 2001, a two-part pricing policy, consisting of a one-off capital payment and an annual rental, was adopted as follows –

- for Business Zone a one-off payment of Rs2 m. per acre;
- for Commercial Centre a one-off payment of Rs2.5 m. per acre, and
- for a Knowledge Centre a one-off payment of Rs1 m. per acre.

Although the valuation of the land had been put, as I said earlier, Mr Speaker, Sir, by the Chief Government Valuer to Rs10 m. per acre.

The annual rental worked out in this two-part policy was to be around Rs200,000 to Rs250,000 per acre per annum. However, the rates actually fixed under the outgoing Government were –

- for the Business Zone a fixed payment of Rs2 m. per acre and an annual rental of Rs200,000 per acre, and

- for the Knowledge Centre a fixed payment of Rs1 m. per acre and rental of Rs100,000 per acre per annum.

However, with regard to the Commercial Centre, the promoter is charged only Rs200,000 per acre annually and there was no one-off capital payment.

As a matter of fact, Mr Speaker, Sir, with the land rental policy elaborated under the previous Government, which does not appear to be based on any sound financial or economic rationale, it is not surprising that the financial situation of Business Parks of Mauritius Ltd. is now in the red by over a billion rupees. The amount received for rental is much lower than the interest paid on the loan contracted only for infrastructural works by nearly 200%. This is how rent was calculated under the previous Government, Mr Speaker, Sir.

You will please note, Mr Speaker, Sir, that the one-off payment now stands at Rs5 m. per acre and the rental fixed to Rs300,000 per acre every year.

With regard to the rental of space within the Cyber Tower, I am informed, Mr Speaker, Sir, that it is based on the competitiveness of Mauritius *vis-à-vis* competing locations, namely India, France (especially the provinces), Morocco and Tunisia.

The initial rental for period July 2004 to February 2005 was of US\$ 1.00 per sq. ft per month based on rates prevailing in competing locations. In March 2005 and March 2006 the annual rental was revised to US\$ 1.10 per sq. ft and US\$ 1.15 per sq. ft respectively. The increase was made with a view to increasing the income of the company which is, as we all know now, heavily indebted.

With regard to part (c), seven companies are in arrears regarding rental and other fees. The list of companies together with the amount due in rental and other fees, is being finalised and will be placed in the Library of the National Assembly by tomorrow at the latest.

Mr Dowarkasing: Can the hon. Minister confirm whether among the seven companies that haven't settled their rent now, Infinity is one of them?

Mr Sinatambou: As I said, the list of companies together with the amount due in rental and other fees is being finalised and will be placed in the Library of the National Assembly by tomorrow at the latest. If my friend would be patient enough, in 24 hours' time it should be placed in the Library.

Mr Varma: Could the hon. Minister kindly inform the House whether all the companies, which are renting space at the cybercity, are operating in the ICT sector?

Mr Sinatambou: I am afraid I don't have the reply to that question, but I will certainly look into the matter and give the answer to my hon. friend.

BAQUII UNIVERSITY, KARACHI, PAKISTAN – MEDICAL SCHOOL – SETTING UP IN MAURITIUS

(No. B/199) Mr M. Dowarkasing (Third Member for Curepipe and Midlands) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether he will state if the Baquii University from Karachi, Pakistan has submitted an application to operate a medical school in Mauritius and, if so, will he state where matters stand.

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, an original proposal for the setting up of a Medical University/Teaching Hospital in Mauritius was submitted to the then Ministry of Education and Scientific on behalf of the Baquii University Foundation of Pakistan in October 2004 by Sir Djamil Fareed in his capacity of Adviser to the then Minister of Health.

The promoters themselves submitted a project proposal to the Board of Investment on 28 January 2005. Same was referred to the Ministry and the Tertiary Education Commission for views.

Given that at that time, the Ministry of Education and Scientific Research was embarking on defining its criteria for the setting up of brand name institutions in Mauritius in the context of developing Mauritius into a Knowledge Hub and a Centre of Higher Learning, it could not make any

recommendation on the proposal straight away. Its interlocutor and the Board of Investment were informed on various occasions of the difficulties in doing so in the absence of a clear-cut policy paper on the issue.

The Knowledge Hub Report was released in June 2005 only a few days prior to the holding of the general election.

In September 2005, the promoters from Baquii came to Mauritius and made a presentation of their project to a High-Powered Committee chaired by the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping whereby I was also present.

The promoters were subsequently requested by the Board of Investment to submit additional information and documentary evidence pertaining to their original submission. I am given to understand by the Board of Investment that these have not been received so far. Consequently, the project is kept in abeyance at their end.

Mr A. Jugnauth: May I ask the Minister whether when Sir Djamil Fareed deposited the application to the BOI, he did it in his capacity as Adviser to the Minister of Health?

Mr Gokhool: No, no. He was Adviser to the Minister of Health.

Mr Varma: Could the hon. Minister kindly inform the House whether the Baquii University is the first and largest Medical University operating in the private sector in Pakistan?

Mr Gokhool: I understand that this is a University operating in Pakistan. I cannot say whether it is the largest.

**DPM, MINISTER OF TOURISM, LEISURE & EXTERNAL
COMMUNICATIONS - MISSIONS OVERSEAS**

(No. B/200) **Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière)** asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism, Leisure & External Communications whether in regard to the overseas missions he has effected to date, he will give -

- (a) a list of the countries visited;
- (b) the composition of the delegation, if any, in each case, and
- (c) the details of expenditure incurred either by Government or the Mauritius Tourism Promotion Authority in each case.

The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism, Leisure & External Communications (Mr X. L. Duval): Mr Speaker, Sir, when we took office in July last year, the new Government inherited a stagnant tourism industry as a result of the inappropriate policies of the outgoing Government.

The new Government quickly realised the need to boost up the tourism industry taking into account the huge potential that it represented especially in the face of the impending threats and challenges facing the traditional sectors of our economy.

I consequently decided that a programme of aggressive promotional campaigns be carried out in our traditional as well as emerging markets in order to enhance the visibility of Mauritius as an attractive safe tourist destination.

Mr Speaker, Sir, a reasonable amount of travelling and participation in international tourism events are indeed essential in order to showcase Mauritius and promote further our destination among foreigners.

During my missions, I proceeded to the following countries -

1. France to participate in the Top Resa Fair in Deauville.
2. Reunion Island to discuss joint promotional campaigns with a view to promoting the combined destination of Reunion and Mauritius.
3. Switzerland to participate in the Travel Trade Workshop (TTW) in Montreux.
4. United Kingdom to participate in the World Travel Market in London.
5. India to participate in road shows in Mumbai and Delhi.
6. Italy to participate in the BIT Fair in Milan.

7. Germany to participate in the ITB Fair in Berlin, the world leading tourism fair.

I also took the opportunity of my visits...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Mr X. L. Duval: ... in the above-mentioned countries to enhance the visibility of our destination in these markets through interviews to the press, TV and the radio and specialised magazines thus enabling Mauritius to obtain publicity on the international scene.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the promotional campaigns that have been carried out have started to reap dividends. We have even achieved a record growth rate of 16.3% for the month of December as compared to the corresponding period of last year. The months of January and February 2006 have also witnessed double digit increase of 18% and 15.1% respectively as compared to their corresponding periods of last year.

With regard to parts (b) and (c) of the question, the information is being tabled.

Finally, Mr Speaker, Sir, the House may wish to note that up to now I have travelled only on six occasions whilst my predecessor...

(Interruptions)

...hon. Bodha at that time, has travelled fifteen times during the same period of nine months.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! Order, please! The hon. Member should put his question.

Mr Bhagwan: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I know what is the amount spent?

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, as is the common practice, I am tabling the information for the hon. Member.

Mr Jhugroo: Mr Speaker, Sir, can the Deputy Prime Minister inform the House about the amount of money spent with regard to the press coverage of the MTPA events overseas?

Mr X. L. Duval: I don't know, but if the hon. Member wants the information, he can come with a substantive question, I'll be happy to answer.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Next question, hon. Cuttaree!

STC - PETROLEUM PRODUCTS - PROFITS

(No. B/201) Mr J. Cuttaree (Second Member for Stanley and Rose Hill) asked the Minister of Industry, Small & Medium Enterprises, Commerce and Co-operatives whether he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the State Trading Corporation, information as to the profit realised on the sale of petroleum products for the period 01 July 2005 to 01 April 2006 for use by aircrafts and shipping vessels.

Dr. Jeetah: Mr Speaker, Sir, the State Trading Corporation is the trading arm of Government. It deals with various products of prime necessity and of strategic importance. The accounts of the State Trading Corporation is prepared and presented in a consolidated form as is the normal accounting practice. As such, the State Trading Corporation has incurred an accumulated loss of Rs1.687 billion as at 31 March 2006, inclusive of surpluses and deficits incurred on the various items. The gain on international sales of petroleum products has been used to cross-subsidise the price of flour and rice. As such we cannot talk of profit on one item.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to remind the House that the non-application of the Automatic Pricing Mechanism in July 2005 by the previous Government caused the Corporation to suffer a heavy deficit which reached Rs668 m. as at December 2005 and, Mr Speaker, Sir, the overall deficit would have reached around Rs3 billion, had this Government not intervened by way of different measures to reduce same.

Mr Cuttaree: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am sure that the hon. Minister is interested on the trade in petroleum products and I am sure he must have been looking at the accounts to find out what is the price of the products, how much we paid for the importation and what is the revenue we received from the sale. My question is very simple. Concerning the supply of petroleum products to aircraft and to shipping vessels, which is different from what happens when we are selling to the public, can I know whether he has been interested to find out on these sales what is the position in terms of profit and loss?

Dr. Jeetah: In this Government we are very serious in our business and we have...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Dr. Jeetah: The action taken by this Government has reduced the deficit to Rs1.687 billion which would have been Rs3 billion. I would like to answer this again for the hon. Member that the way the accounts are presented are in the form of a consolidated manner. It speaks for itself.

Mr Cuttaree: Mr Speaker, Sir, obviously I am not asking about official accounts, if not I would have just gone through the report of the STC and found it. I am in Parliament here and I am asking the Minister how much profits or losses have been made on the sale of these two products imported by the State Trading Corporation.

Dr. Jeetah: The gain on international sales of petroleum products - I'll read the answer again - has been used to cross-subsidise the price of flour and rice. As such we cannot talk of profit on one item.

LATE MR RAMLOGUN - WIDOW - COMPENSATION

(No. B/202) Mrs F. Labelle (Third Member for Vacoas and Floreal) asked the Attorney-General, Minister of Justice & Human Rights whether he will state if any compensation has been paid to the widow of late Mr Ramlogun who died in Police custody and, if so, when and the amount thereof.

Mr Valayden: Mr Speaker, Sir, this is a very sensitive issue to which my Ministry is fully alive.

No compensation has been paid to the widow of late Mr Ramlogun. The case is still *sub judice*. We are looking on a general formula. Once the formula is worked out, I will make a statement to the House.

PUPILS - CPE, ADMISSION TO PREVOCATIONAL CLASSES, ETC.

(No. B/203) Mrs F. Labelle (Third Member for Vacoas and Floreal) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether he will give -

- (a) for the year 2005, the number of pupils who -
 - (i) have failed the CPE twice;
 - (ii) are above 12 years of age and have failed CPE for the first time;
- (b) are admitted in prevocational classes in January 2006, and
- (c) the percentage of students eligible for prevocational classes and who joined these classes in 2005 and 2006 respectively.

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, the answer is as follows -

- (a) (i) 4047 pupils have failed the CPE twice in the year 2005;
- (ii) for the same year, 115 pupils above the age of 12 failed the CPE for the first time;
- (b) 3811 pupils were admitted in pre-vocational classes in January 2006, and
- (c) the percentage of students eligible for pre-vocational classes and who joined these classes in 2005 and 2006 is as follows -

• 2005	-	100%
• 2006	-	92%

It is to be noted that the figures for 2005 also include students from the previous year, that is, 2004.

Mr Speaker, Sir, compulsory education has been introduced up to the age of 16, but as indicated in my reply to PQ B/161, the legislation was introduced without a proper mechanism for its enforcement and its monitoring to identify who do not register and the reasons for same as well as the number of dropouts.

I also indicated that my Ministry will, in collaboration with stakeholders, work out a suitable mechanism.

The process is under way.

I wish to point out that all students eligible to pre-vocational classes were offered a seat by Government. It is a matter of concern that some have not availed of this opportunity.

I wish to add that there now exists other providers and many of the students may well have opted to go to other institutions of their choice.

My Ministry is envisaging to put in place a Parenting Programme to sensitise parents and the public on the importance of education and the need to take advantage of all opportunities provided by Government.

ROSE BELLE SUGAR ESTATE - SALE OF LAND - TENDERS

(No. B/204) Mrs S. Hanoomanjee (Second Member for Savanne and Black River) asked the Minister of Agro Industry and Fisheries whether he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Rose Belle Sugar Estate, information as to whether fresh tenders for the sale of land to recoup costs for the VRS have been issued after July 2005 and, if so, the outcome thereof.

Dr. Boolell: Mr Speaker, Sir, in August 2005, the Board decided to cancel the previous exercise carried out in April 2005 as proper procedures and instructions given by the Ministry to have the bids examined by an Ad hoc Technical and Evaluation Committee and an Ad hoc Finance Committee had not been followed.

A new tender exercise was carried out by Rose Belle Sugar Estate for the sale of 3 sites in October 2005 as the sites were considered appropriate to obtain maximum return from sale. The Board did not consider the bids as they were on the low side. On 28 March 2006, the Board has decided to proceed with the tenders for the sale of the land to recoup costs according to transparent and correct procedures, with an independent evaluation committee, including a representative of the Government Valuation Office to assess the bids.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Minister whether he is aware that with regard to the tender exercise for three lots of land in Rose Belle, which was carried out before July 2005, there was a quotation of Rs97 m. which was received, and that for the fresh tender exercise which was carried out again by Rose Belle S.E. for those same three lots of land, a quotation of only Rs61 m. has been received?

Dr Boolell: No, Mr Speaker, Sir. If I am going to disclose everything, the hon. lady would be treading on a very, very slippery ground.

(Interruptions)

However, let me remind the hon. lady that, in fact, there was a first tender exercise which was carried out following tenders published by Rose Belle S.E. The three bids offered were examined by a valuation committee, chaired by the Chief Government Valuer, officers from the Valuation Office and the Ministry of Housing & Lands. But, two other bids were not considered by the Board, and the Board was chaired by the hon. Member herself.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Dr. Boolell: Over and above that, Mr Speaker, Sir, basic guidelines were not adhered to. Let me remind what the guidelines were. Mr Speaker, Sir,...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Dr. Boolell: There was a letter at the time the hon. lady was Permanent Secretary at the Ministry of Finance, and in spite of advice dispensed by the then Finance Committee, when my good friend, the present Leader of the Opposition, was Minister of Agriculture - Let me remind what was impressed upon the Board. This is what Mrs Beegun said –

“In this connection, I have consulted my internal auditor, who advised me that the correct procedures are as follows (which were not adhered to). There should be an ad hoc technical and evaluation committee (there was no ad hoc and evaluation committee) comprising of members with appropriate expertise should be set up to examine and evaluate the bids, and make appropriate recommendations to the Board. An ad hoc finance committee, comprising of, *inter alia*, representatives of the Government Valuation Office, should be set up to examine the bids and also make appropriate recommendations to the Board. On the basis of the recommendations of the above committee, the Board should take the appropriate decision”.

None was adhered to, let alone the basic guidelines, Mr Speaker, Sir! Mrs Beegun impressed upon them the following –

“You are kindly requested to act accordingly”.

None of the procedures had been followed, with the end result that, instead of going through the Board, all the bids were submitted to the notary, Mr Speaker, Sir. I am not going to drop the name of the person. I have a lot of respect for the notary. This was the sad state of affairs.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Can I ask the hon. Minister why he is talking of an ad hoc committee when there was a permanent technical committee to evaluate bids? Why was there a need to have an ad hoc committee? There was a permanent committee to examine the bids!

Dr. Boolell: Let me remind the hon. Member what the representative of the Ministry of Finance stated, Mr Speaker, Sir. The Ministry stated that there was no compliance and all procedures were wrong. Do I have to drop the name of the officer in charge? He stated that the matter should have even been referred to the Cabinet of Ministers, which they failed to do, Mr Speaker, Sir!

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Can I ask the Minister who said that the matter had to be referred to Cabinet? Because as far as I can recall, I was the representative of the Ministry of Finance on that committee.

Dr. Boolell: Let me remind the hon. Member that she even discussed with a company which submitted the bids, Mr Speaker, Sir.

(Interruptions)

All the documents are there. I will lay them on the Table of the Assembly, Mr Speaker, Sir.

(Interruptions)

Mrs Hanoomanjee: I would like to ask the Minister whether he can prove that I did discuss with a private company. I would have wished the Minister to disclose...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Dr. Boolell: The hon. Member is treading on very slippery ground, Mr Speaker, Sir. I don't intend...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! Order!

Mr Bundhoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister to state whether the highest bidder is in receivership?

Dr. Boolell: Yes, Sir. In fact, the company, known as Alphamix Company, was already in receivership when it submitted the bid. It obtained six contracts out of the 11 bids!

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Can I ask the Minister to table the documents in this Assembly?

Dr. Boolell: I will extend the pleasure to the hon. Member and I will do so.

Mr Bundhoo: May I ask the hon. Minister if he could state whether proper guidelines for tendering procedures have been followed in this specific case?

Dr. Boolell: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have highlighted that basic guidelines were not adhered to.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Can I then ask the hon. Minister what those basic guidelines should have been according to him?

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Dr. Boolell: Mr Speaker, Sir, one of the basic guidelines is that there should have been no collusion. In fact, the hon. Member was colluding with one of the bidders, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Mr Speaker, Sir, I think the hon. Minister is now making allegations against me.

Mr Bundhoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister to inform the House whether a technical or a financial committee was set up before recommending any specific company?

Dr. Boolell: I have highlighted what the Ministry recommended when the Leader of the Opposition was the Minister of Agriculture. At that time, the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Agriculture were at loggerheads. We know what was going on, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Bundhoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I will insist...

Mr Speaker: The hon. Member cannot insist upon an answer.

Mr Bundhoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like the hon. Minister to state whether a financial evaluation committee was established before awarding the contract.

Dr Boolell: All the bids went through the notary.

Mr Speaker: I will allow a last question.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Since the hon. Minister has made false and malicious allegations against me, can I ask him to withdraw these allegations?

Dr. David: On a point of order, Mr Speaker, Sir. The hon. Member cannot say that the Minister is making false and malicious allegations to the House. She must withdraw or else withdraw from the House.

Mr Speaker: What is the point of order? Can I hear the point of order again? Under which section of the Standing Orders is the hon. Minister raising the point of order?

Dr. David: The hon. Member cannot cast aspersion, saying that the Minister is making malicious allegations. She has to withdraw what she has said.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Mr Speaker, Sir, I think it is the Minister who is casting aspersions.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! Order! I think, in all fairness, the hon. lady cannot accuse the Minister of making false and malicious allegations. I would have stopped the Minister if the answers related to a Member of this House. That would have been against our Standing Orders. But, unfortunately, the lady was wearing a different hat at that time, and if the lady, as a Member of the House, wants to come with an explanation to the House, she is free to do so.

(Interruptions)

There is a point of order, asking the hon. lady to withdraw what she said. In the meantime...

(Interruptions)

...the hon. Member has to withdraw the words 'false and malicious allegations', and then come with a point of explanation.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I know whether the Minister...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! Hon. Member, I have given a ruling. I think the hon. lady will have to comply with my ruling first, and then raise another point if she wants.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: I will come with a personal explanation.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! Order! I heard very clearly the hon. Member using the words 'false and malicious allegations'. She has accused the Minister of making false and malicious allegations. I think, as a gentle lady, she will have to withdraw these words and then come with her explanation.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: I withdraw, pending the statement then.

MAURITIUS SUGAR TERMINAL CORPORATION – GENERAL MANAGER - APPOINTMENT

(No. B/205) Mrs S. Hanoomanjee (Second Member for Savanne and Black River) asked the Minister of Agro Industry and Fisheries whether he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Sugar Terminal Corporation, information as to whether the post of General Manager has been filled and, if so –

- (a) whether the vacancy was advertised and if not, why not, and
- (b) the terms and conditions of employment of the present holder.

Dr. Boolell: Mr Speaker, Sir, the post of General Manager has been filled on a contract basis by the Board of the Mauritius Sugar Terminal Corporation since 15 February 2006.

The Board made the appointment directly as was the case for the appointment of the two previous General Managers in 2002 and 2004.

The terms and conditions of employment of the present holder are as follows –

- basic salary of Rs47,500;
- provision of a chauffeur driven car with petrol allowance at approved rates;
- 25% gratuity in lieu of pension on completion of 12 months service;
- passage benefits of 5% of basic salary;
- extra duty allowance of Rs10,000, entertainment allowance of Rs 3,000, telephone allowance of Rs 3,000 monthly, and
- sick and casual/vacation leave as prescribed by PRB.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Will the Minister state what was the previous salary given to the previous General Manager and its terms and conditions?

Dr. Boolell: As far as basic salary was concerned, it is one and the same, Madam.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: The benefits?

Dr. Boolell: Additional benefits with extra duty allowance of Rs10,000 and entertainment allowance of Rs3,000.

Mr Jhugroo: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister, whether it is the same person who was involved in the misuse of Government fax machines in the year 1995 to 2000? Is it the same person? Yes or no?

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! I'll ask the hon. Member not to shout in the House, please. He has put his question, he must wait for the answer to come.

Dr. Boolell: Mr Speaker, Sir, it's certainly not the same person who inherited Rs45 m.!

(Interruptions)

Mr Dowarkasing: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I know from the hon. Minister whether the same person is drawing travelling allowances, driver's allowance and at the same time using the Corporation's car?

Dr. Boolell: Mr Speaker, Sir, he is entitled to a car and a chauffeur-driven car. Unlike some of the people on the other side who were abusing on the existing system.

Mr Dowarkasing: I think the hon. Minister has not answered my question. My question was very clear. Is he drawing travelling allowances, driver's allowances and using the Corporation's car? I want a straight answer.

Dr. Boolell: Mr Speaker, Sir, the question has been answered. I have stated what is basic salary, what has been the provision of a chauffeur-driven car, with petrol allowances, 25% gratuity, pension etc.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister is not replying to the question. We are asking him a precise question as to whether the General Manager is using the Corporation's car in spite of the fact that he is drawing a driver's allowance and that he is pocketing the driver's allowance, using the Corporation's car and the Corporation's driver.

Dr. Boolell: Mr Speaker, Sir, the car does not belong to the Manager. The car is for the Corporation and he is entitled to a chauffeur-driven car and this is the car that he is entitled to with petrol allowance at approved rate. I have replied to the question.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Fair enough, Mr Speaker, Sir! He is entitled to a chauffeur-driven car, but he cannot at the same time pocket a driver's allowance and use the Corporation's car. Those are not the terms and conditions.

Dr. Boolell: I have spelt out very clearly what are the terms and he is complying fully to the terms; these are the privileges attached to his status and he has to comply fully to the privileges attached to his status.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Mr Soodhun: Can the hon. Minister confirm that he has received a petition from the workers of the same Corporation against the General Manager for mismanagement?

Dr. Boolell: I have received a petition when a former Chairman was managing the Sugar Bulk Terminal, but not from this one.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: The Minister must have been mis-briefed concerning this issue. Can the Minister confirm whether he will check that the General Manager is using the Corporation's car when he is not entitled to use it, that he is pocketing the driver's allowance, that he is pocketing a car allowance at the same time?

Dr. Boolell: I have replied to the question and I can safely say that he is adhering to principles established in respect of corporate governance.

Mr Soodhun: Mr Speaker, Sir, it was against the Board decision that the Minister recommended for casual workers to be recruited by the General Manager and at the end of the day ...

Mr Speaker: I am sorry, this does not arise from this question. Next question!

ST FELIX SUGAR ESTATE – CLOSURE

(No. B/206) Mrs S. Hanoomanjee (Second Member for Savanne and Black River) asked the Minister of Agro Industry & Fisheries whether in regard to the proposed closure of the St Felix Sugar Estate, he will state whether the provisions of the Blueprint on the Sugar Industry would apply.

Dr. Boolell: Mr Speaker Sir, the hon. Member may wish to refer to my reply to Parliamentary Question No. B/103, wherein I informed the House that the provisions of the Blueprint on Centralisation will apply in the case of St. Felix Sugar Factory.

ZEP SCHOOLS - PARENT MEDIATORS – SALARIES

(No. B/207) Mrs F. Labelle (Third Member for Vacoas and Floreal) asked the Minister of Education & Human Resources whether he will state if the “*Parents Médiateurs*” are still in employment in ZEP schools and, if so, will he give the dates on which they received their salaries for each of the months of January, February and March 2006.

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, five Parent Mediators were recruited on a part-time basis for an initial period of one year with effect from 02 July 2003. Thereafter, the contracts of employment of the five Parent Mediators were renewed yearly up to December 2005, after seeking the necessary clearances from the Public Service Commission, the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development and the Ministry for Civil Service Affairs and Administrative Reforms.

Prior to July 2005, the ZEP project was being implemented without the involvement of the Directorate, and as soon as I assumed office, I held a series of meeting with stakeholders with a view to aligning our objectives to sustain the socio pedagogical aspect of the project and to consolidate this social project within the Ministry. Thus, in order to give a new orientation to the ZEP project, including a review of its management and staffing structure, and its integration and consolidation within the Ministry.

However, in December 2005, in order to ensure that the ZEP project is not jeopardized, it was proposed that the five Parent Mediators on contract be retained for a further period of one year from January 2006 to 31 December 2006. In January 2006, the Ministry initiated action for the obtention of the necessary clearances from the authorities concerned. The approval of the Public Service Commission was sought on 14 February 2006 to -

- (i) renew the contracts of employment of the five Parent Mediators for another period of one year as from 01 January 2006, and
- (ii) to carry out the selection exercise for the recruitment of four additional Parent Mediators.

Subsequently, on 13 March 2006, the approval of the Public Service Commission was obtained, subject to establishment and financial clearances.

The establishment and financial clearances have been obtained on 06 March and 07 April 2006 respectively.

Meanwhile, one Parent Mediator has resigned from her post as from 01 February 2006, and another one has stopped performing duties of Parent Mediator since 01 January 2006, pending the renewal of her contract of employment. To date, only three Parent Mediators are in post.

The letters of appointment on contract have been issued to four Parent Mediators and payment of their salaries has been effected.

As regards the recruitment of four additional Parent Mediators, an interview exercise of the eligible candidates has been carried out last week by the selection panel, set up by the Ministry with the approval of the Public Service Commission. The report of the selection panel will, in due course, be forwarded to the Public Service Commission for approval. Thereafter, an offer of employment will be made to the four successful candidates, in order of rank as per merit list.

Mrs Labelle: Will the hon. Minister confirm that it's only today 11 April at 10 in the morning that the *Parents Médiateurs* have been paid their salaries for the months of January, February and March?

Mr Gokhool: The fact of the matter is that the salaries have been paid and I have explained that a number of clearances had to be obtained and this has taken some time, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mrs Labelle: Mr Speaker, Sir, if I heard the Minister well, he mentioned that in December the decision was taken to retain the services of the *Parents Médiateurs*. Does he think it's correct to make people work for months without paying their salaries? It's only today at 10 in the morning that they have received their salaries. In the meantime, of course, one has left because she was unable to sustain.

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have explained the circumstances leading to the decision in December and then we have to initiate action to obtain the necessary clearance.

PALMAR STATE LAND – LEASE

(No. B/208) Mr G. Guinness (Third Member for Montagne Blanche & GRSE) asked the Minister of Housing & Lands whether, in regard to the plot of State land situated at Palmar, opposite Le Filao complex, he will state –

- (a) the area;
- (b) the date the lease was granted;
- (c) the name/s of the lessee/s, and
- (d) the purpose for which the lease has been granted.

Mr Dulull: Sir, I am advised that, according to records available, and information obtained from Belle Mare and Trou d’Eau Douce Police Stations, there is no complex at Palmar which is known under the name of “Le Filao” as such.

If the hon. Member has in mind a plot of land of extent of 5637m² being Lot No. 7583 of Quatre Cocos Village and part of *Pas Géométriques* Palmar, which is found opposite “Le Cilaos Beach Resorts Ltd. occupied by “Les Badamiers Co. Ltd”., the hon. Member will wish to know that a lease was granted to “Les Badamiers Co. Ltd.,” for a period of 20 years running from 03 January 2003 to 30 June 2022. The purpose of the lease is for the construction of bungalows of high standard for tourists.

Mr Guinness: Sir, can I know from the Minister whether this plot of land was previously agricultural land or irrigation land?

Mr Dulull: I need note of this question.

Mr Guinness: Can the Minister give to the House the names of the Directors or the shareholders of Les Badamiers Co. Ltd.?

Mr Dulull: The name is Les Badamiers Co. Ltd. c/o Mr R. Seedheeyan.

Mr Guinness: Can the Minister inform the House whether these officers have checked whether the bungalows which have been constructed are really of a high standard?

Mr Dulull: The construction on site is nearing completion.

Mr Guinness: Is the Minister satisfied with the supposedly high standard bungalows?

Mr Dulull: Well after the construction, we will, of course, check the standard of the bungalows...

(Interruptions)

Mr Gunness: Is the Minister satisfied that it is in order that after the completion of the bungalows, he will check whether they are really of a high standard?

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Mr Dulull: We lay down the obligation and it is only after the completion that we check the whole project, but not each specific room.

Mrs Martin: Mr Speaker, do I understand that it is just after the completion that he will be checking the bungalows? What is he going to do in case the buildings are not done?

Mr Dulull: We lay out the planning obligations and then the permits are delivered by the different authorities...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Next question, please.

NDU PROJECTS - CONTRACTS AWARDED - AUGUST 2005

(No. B/209) Mr G. Gunness (Third Member for Montagne Blanche & GRSE) asked the Minister of Environment & National Development Unit whether, in regard to the projects for which contracts have been awarded by the National Development Unit since August 2005, he will give a list thereof, constituency-wise, indicating the contract value in each case.

Mr Bachoo: Sir, the information is being compiled.

Mr Guinness: The Minister says that the information is being compiled, but can I know - just for comparison sake - how much has been spent in Constituency No. 10 compared with Constituency No. 9, for example?

Mr Bachoo: I will ask the hon. Member to be a bit patient. Once the information is made available, he will obtain it.

Mr Guinness: I am sure the Minister must have the information. I take a specific project - lighting of volleyball pitches. Can I know how many tenders have been floated throughout the island?

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, I am not in a position to say exactly how much. That's why I am requesting the hon. Member to be a bit patient, but I can assure the hon. Member that we are launching tenders for the lighting of volleyball pitches.

Mr Guinness: Can I know whether it has already been launched in Constituency No. 9 since months ago?

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, one thing I am sure is that for the last five years, there has not been any volleyball pitch where tenders were invited by the previous Government.

PROVIDENCE, QUARTIER MILITAIRE – CHILDREN'S PLAYGROUND/FOOTBALL PLAYGROUND – FOOTPATH

(No. B/210) Mr S. Dayal (Second Member for Quartier Militaire & Moka) asked the Minister of Environment & NDU whether, in regard to the project for the construction of a footpath between the children's playground and the football playground at Providence, Quartier Militaire, he will consider the advisability of extending same to the nearest inhabited part of the village.

The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport & Shipping (Dr. R. Beebeejaun): Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I will answer this question.

I am informed that the NDU is presently undertaking works regarding the upgrading of boundary walls at the children playground at Providence, Quartier Militaire and the project for the construction of a footpath between the children's playground and the football playground is also being implemented by the NDU.

I am advised that the extension part that the hon. Member wishes to be considered falls within the jurisdiction of the RDA. Such being the case, I have requested the RDA to carry out a survey for the extension of the footpath with the nearer inhabited part of the village and thereafter include the work in the programme for financial year 2006-2007.

Mr Dayal: Mr Speaker, Sir, I should like to appeal to the hon. Deputy Prime Minister to speed up matters and thank him for the survey that is being carried out.

UPPER DAGOTIERE – ROADS – TARRING

(No. B/211) Mr S. Dayal (Second Member for Quartier Militaire & Moka) asked the Minister of Environment & NDU whether he will state if it is proposed to have the main road and the lateral roads of Upper Dagotière tarred and, if so, when and, if not, why not.

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, the main road at Dagotière is a classified road and falls under the jurisdiction of the RDA. I have been advised by the RDA that the road will be resurfaced during the next financial year.

With regard to the lateral roads, my Ministry will consider the possibility of effecting resurfacing works along these roads on a priority basis probably before the end of this financial year.

DAGOTIERE GOVT. PRIMARY SCHOOL – SCHOOL YARD – MAINTENANCE

(No. B/212) Mr S. Dayal (Second Member for Quartier Militaire & Moka) asked the Minister of Education & Human Resources whether he is aware of the bad state of the school yard and the roof of the Dagotière

Government Primary School and, if so, will he state what appropriate remedial measures he proposes to take.

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that the yard of the school which is officially known as Ramsomeer Government School was, in fact, in an unsatisfactory state owing mainly to dense vegetation in the backyard. However, the backyard was sprayed last week to avert potential problems from mosquitoes.

Further, instructions have been issued to the zone to ensure that regular maintenance of the schoolyard be undertaken. I am informed that the PTA is also collaborating with the head of the school to deal with this problem.

With regard to the roof of the school, my Ministry is aware that two of the three school blocks need repair works. To this end, a preliminary survey was carried out by a technical team of my Ministry on 28 March 2006 and the works have been estimated at around Rs2 m for both blocks.

According to the existing procedures for the implementation of projects costing more than Rs1 m, the project was referred to the Ministry of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and shipping on 06 April 2006. That Ministry will have to carry out a detailed survey and subsequently draw up a scope of works before tendering out the works.

My Ministry will liaise closely with the Ministry of Public Infrastructure for the works to be carried out during the most appropriate period for the school taking into consideration any contingency arrangements that may have to be made for the pupils in order to minimise any disruption to their studies.

BUCKLAND, MR STEPHAN – CASH PRIZE

(No. B/213) Mrs S. Grenade (Second Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Youth & Sports whether he is aware that the cash prize to which Stephan Buckland was to be rewarded for his performance at “*Les Jeux de la Francophonie*” in 2005 has been frozen and, if yes, state the reasons thereof.

Mr Tang Wah Hing: Mr Speaker, Sir, Stephan Buckland never participated in the “*Les Jeux de la Francophonie*” held in Niamey, Niger in December 2005. Therefore, the question of payment of a cash prize to him does not arise.

Mrs Grenade: Mr Speaker, Sir, in fact we should read “*Le championnat du monde d’athlétisme*” à Helsinki rather than “*Les Jeux de la Francophonie*”, but still it concerns our national hero, Stephan Buckland...

(Interruptions)

Je peux terminer, M. le président.

Mr Speaker: Order!

Mrs Grenade: Je m’adresse à M. le président. Je peux terminer...

(Interruptions)

Referring to a Cabinet decision dated 19 August 2005...

Mr Speaker: Can the hon. Member tell us what she is driving at, please?

Mrs Grenade: Mr Speaker, Sir, in fact, I do agree that it should not have been “*Les Jeux de la Francophonie*”, but I want to know whether there has been a Cabinet decision on 19 August 2005 regarding a cash prize to be awarded to Stephan Buckland. I would like to ask the Minister if this decision has been implemented and, if not, why not?

Mr Tang Wah Hing: I presume that the hon. Member is referring to the participation of Stephan Buckland at the World Athletic Championship held at Helsinki held in August 2005, but the hon. Member should know, according to the existing cash prize, only medal winners are eligible to a cash prize.

Mrs Grenade: Yes, I do agree, Mr Speaker, Sir, but I just said that at a Cabinet decision dated 19 August 2005, there has been.....

(Interruptions)

The hon. Member can know also if

Mr Speaker: Hon. Member, address the Chair please!

Mrs Grenade: It has been agreed that an award would be given to Stephan Buckland, our national hero, because of his performance at the Helsinki games. Why has this decision not been implemented?

Mr Tang Wah Hing: The hon. Member should understand my position....

Mr Speaker: I'll ask the hon. Minister to answer the question and address the Chair please!

(Interruptions)

Order, please! Order! Order!

Mr Tang Wah Hing: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Member should know that Cabinet decisions cannot be revealed in this House.

(Interruptions)

Mr Dowarkasing: Mr Speaker, Sir, understanding well the position of the hon. Minister, may I just ask him whether there is any reward, outstanding in favour of our national heroes, which has not been implemented?

Mr Speaker: Can the hon. Minister reply to the question or does he need notice of the question?

Mr Tang Wah Hing: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am in charge of the Ministry of Youth & Sports. The policy which is decided does not come from me.

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Speaker, Sir, when Cabinet takes decisions there are official communiqués. There is an official communiqué dated 19th August 2005 where it is stated –

“Cabinet has agreed to the award by Government of a cash prize to Mr Stephan Buckland for his outstanding performance at the World Athletic Championship held in Helsinki, Finland, from the 06 to 14 August 2005 and where he reached the finals at the 200m race”

Why is it the cash prize has not been awarded to him?

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! There is no need to clap your hands. There is a question which has been put, let the hon. Minister answer, please.

Mr Tang Wah Hing: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Member must wait because, as from tomorrow, Stephan Buckland will be rewarded for his participation at the World Athletic Championship.

Mr Speaker: One last question.

Mr Lesjongard: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. This is the case where hon. Mrs Grenade said that we are talking of a national hero. The Cabinet decision dates back August 2005...

Mr Speaker: What is the question, please?

Mr Lesjongard: We are in April this year and he has not yet been paid his cash prize, Mr Speaker, Sir. This is the way athletes are treated in this country!

(Interruptions)

Mr Cuttaree: Can the hon. Minister inform the House whether the non payment of Buckland’s prize last year was not due to the fact that he was a candidate of the PMSD and his payment today is because the PMSD has joined Government?

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

Mr Speaker: What is the point of order, hon Sinatambou.

Mr Sinatambou: The substantive question is related to “*Les Jeux de la Francophonie*”, I would be most grateful if we could stick to it.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

**CHAMPIONNAT DU MONDE DE LA BOXE FRANÇAISE
– MAURITIAN ATHELETES – REWARD**

(No. B/214) **Mrs S. Grenade (Second Member for GRNW and Port Louis West)** asked the Minister of Youth and Sports whether he is aware that the athletes G eraldo Thomasso and Riley Rose have not yet been rewarded with the cash prize for their performance at the *Championnat du Monde de la Boxe Fran aise* held on 03 December 2005 and, if yes, state the reasons thereof.

Mr Tang Wah Hing: Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to inform the House that the athletes G eraldo Thomasso and Riley Rose have already been awarded their respective cash prizes for their performance at the *Championnat du Monde de la Boxe Fran aise* held in December 2005. As already previously scheduled, relevant payment of cash prizes to these athletes has been effected yesterday along with other athletes who had won medals at recent major international sports events.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Hon. Soodhun, please allow the House to continue with its proceedings.

Mrs Grenade: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am glad to hear that my question has prompted this reward.

Mr Dowarkasing: May I ask the hon. Minister whether this how this Government is putting people first?

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Next question, please.

PLAINE VERTE - MEDICLINIC

(No. B/215) Dr. A. Husnoo (Second Member for Port Louis Maritime and Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Housing and Lands whether he will state if a plot of land has been identified for the building of a mediclinic in Plaine Verte and, if so, where it is situated, indicating if it has been vested in the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life and if not, why not.

Mr Dulull: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am advised that a plot of land on which stands a building has been identified for a mediclinic. The plot of land of an extent of 2743m² at Nyon street, Port Louis, was compulsorily acquired.

I have already initiated consultations with my colleague, the hon. Minister of Health and Quality of Life, on the advisability of using this building for the purposes of a mediclinic. Following agreement, action will be taken to vest the land in the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life.

Dr. Husnoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I would appreciate if the Minister can inform us where exactly the plot of land is situated, please?

Mr Dulull: The plot of land is situated at Nyon street near the bridge.

CHIKUNGUNYA DISEASE – NATION-WIDE FOGGING SCHEDULE

(No. B/216) Mr S. Naidu (Third Member for Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether, in regard to the outbreak of chikungunya disease, he will state if a nation-wide fogging schedule has been established.

Mr Faugoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the House that a nation-wide fogging programme has been established. In fact, fogging activities are carried out by officers of my Ministry posted at thirteen health offices throughout the island in areas where clusters of chikungunya cases have been reported. This is in line with the recommendations made by the WHO team and consultants from Singapore who came to Mauritius to advise

inter alia on vector control measures. A cluster is where two or more new cases are reported in a radius of 100 metres in a locality.

Mr Dowarkasing: The hon. Minister has admitted that this nation-wide fogging schedule has already been prepared. Is he agreeable to table a copy of the programme of action for each locality?

Mr Faugoo: I'll do so, Mr Speaker, Sir.

CREMATION GROUNDS – UPGRADING

(No. B/217) **Mr S. Naidu (Third Member for Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière)** asked the Minister of Environment and National Development Unit whether, in regard to the project for the upgrading of the cremation grounds around the island, he will state where matters stand.

The Minister of Local Government (Dr. J. B. David): Mr Speaker, Sir, I am not quite sure what the hon. Member means by upgrading of cremation grounds. If upgrading means cleaning and provision of basic amenities, I wish to inform the House that such facilities are already provided and that the local authorities ensure the regular maintenance of the cremation grounds falling under their jurisdiction.

If the hon. Member is referring to the provision of incinerators at cremation grounds, I wish to inform the House that incinerators are already operational at the following places –

- | | | |
|-------|--------------------|------------------------|
| (i) | Les Salines | as from 01 August 2005 |
| (ii) | Palma | as from December 2005 |
| (iii) | Phoenix | as from July 1998 |
| (iv) | Bigara | as from 2001 |
| (v) | Belmont, Goodlands | as from November 2000 |

Following consultations held with the Local Authorities, a list of 23 new incinerators was established with financial implications of Rs230 m. i.e Rs10 m. per incinerator. However, in view of the heavy investment and taking into consideration financial constraints, it was decided in the first

instance, to install one incinerator in a centrally located region of the following Local Authorities where such facilities are not available -

- (i) St Martin
- (ii) Beau Bois
- (iii) Bambous
- (iv) Rose Belle

In this context, the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development has already been approached for the provision of funds to the tune of Rs40 m. required by the Local Authorities for this project.

Mr Naidu: Mr Speaker, Sir, I appreciate that incinerators are being installed, but my question referred to the traditional cremation ground. I will refer to a reply to a PQ last November by the Minister of Environment and National Development Unit. If you allow me, I'll quote -

"During my visits throughout the island, I was shocked to note the bad state of our cremation grounds. Consequently, I have instructed that top priority be given to their upgrading. The cremation ground at Chebel has been included in the priority list."

I would like to ask the Minister whether he can table a list of all the cremation grounds which have been upgraded and a timetable for those which are going to be upgraded.

Dr. David: Mr Speaker, Sir, I do not know whether the question is addressed to the Minister of Local Government or to the Minister of Environment. But to whoever it is addressed, a list of these cremation grounds will be laid.

CULTURAL CENTRES - MINISTERIAL COMMITTEE

(No. B/218) Mr S. Naidu (Third Member for Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Arts and Culture whether he will state if a Ministerial Committee was set up in August 2005 to look into the issue of cultural centres and, if so, where matters stand.

Mr Gowreesoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, the answer is 'yes'.

The issue of cultural centres is of a sensitive and complex nature and is of national importance. The Ministerial Committee is therefore considering all the possible options before submitting its recommendation to Government.

Mr Dowarkasing: Does the hon. Minister still abide by what he stated in a reply to a PQ, namely, that these cultural centres swallow money?

Mr Gowreesoo: I meant to say that they spent money instead of 'swallow money'.

Mrs Martin: Mr Speaker, Sir, we all heard what the hon. Minister said on that day. The Minister said that the national committee is looking into this matter. When is the report due to be submitted?

Mr Gowreesoo: I said 'ministerial committee' and not 'national committee'. It will be submitted very soon.

Mr Ganoo: In December of last year, when the same question was asked to the Minister, he said the same thing, that is, the ministerial committee will submit its report to Government very soon.

Mr Gowreesoo: As I said, the issue of cultural centres is of a sensitive and complex nature and is of national importance. The Ministerial Committee is considering all possible options before submitting its recommendations to Government.

Mr Naidu: Mr Speaker, Sir, in December last, the hon. Minister said -

"The Committee has almost completed its work and its report will be submitted to Cabinet (...)"

Mr Speaker: The hon. Member should put his question.

Mr Naidu: My question is: how soon is soon?

Mr Speaker: The hon. Minister has already answered the question.

Mr Cuttaree: When was the last time that the Committee met?

Mr Gowreesoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, the last time that the Committee met was yesterday.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order, please! I think the Minister was serious when he said that it was yesterday. Order, please!

Mr Varma: Mr Speaker, Sir, could the hon. Minister kindly inform the House who is the chairperson and who are the members of the ministerial committee?

Mr Gowreesoo: I am the chairperson of the committee and the members are hon. Bachoo, hon. Dr. Kasenally, hon. Dr. Bunwaree, hon. Valayden, hon. Dr. David and hon. Mrs S. Bappoo.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order, please!

Mr Bhagwan: Can the Minister inform us whether a draft report has been circulated? Secondly, how many cultural centres he has visited?

Mr Gowreesoo: I need notice of the question.

Mr Bérenger: May I ask the hon. Minister, apart from himself, who was present among the Ministers yesterday?

Mr Gowreesoo: All of them were present.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order, please! Members should listen to the question.

Mr Dowarkasing: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I request the hon. Minister to table a copy of the minutes of proceedings of the committee that was held yesterday?

Mr Gowreesoo: I will ask the hon. Member to be patient.

STC - FUEL PRICE STRUCTURE - MONEY COLLECTED

(No. B/219) Mr S. Naidu (Third Member for Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to the item Contribution to Road Development Authority in the fuel price structure, he will state the total amount of funds collected under that item during the last quarter of 2005 and the first quarter of 2006.

The Minister of Industry, Small & Medium Enterprises, Commerce & Cooperatives (Dr. R. Jeetah): Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I am going to reply to this question as it concerns money collected by the State Trading Corporation.

I am informed by the State Trading Corporation that a total amount of Rs28,180,358 was collected for the last quarter of 2005 and Rs50,046.098.40 for the first quarter of 2006 under the item contribution to Road Development Authority.

RICHELIEU - LEISURE PARK PROJECT

(No. B/220) Mrs A. Navarre-Marie (First Member for GRNW and Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Local Government whether he will state when the leisure park at Richelieu will be inaugurated.

Dr. David: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have been informed by the Ministry of Environment and National Development Unit that the Leisure Park Project at Richelieu will be handed over to the Black River District Council by end of May 2006. It is only after the handing over that the District Council can arrange for the inauguration of the leisure park.

LE MORNE - BUFFER & CORE ZONE BOUNDARIES - GRAZING LEASES

(No. B/221) Mr G. Lesjongard (Second Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Housing and Lands

whether he will state if, following the gazetting of the Le Morne buffer and core zone boundaries, procedures have been initiated to retrieve the grazing leases granted thereat.

Mr Dulull: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am advised that the boundaries of the Le Morne buffer and core zones on the World Heritage list were gazetted on 26 January 2006.

I am further advised that no procedures have been initiated so far to retrieve the grazing leases granted thereat. However, should the necessity to retrieve the grazing leases be established, appropriate action will be taken accordingly.

Mr Lesjongard: The hon. Minister stated if it is required to retrieve back the land, but it is understood that if we gazetted the core and buffer zone, Government has the obligation to retrieve back the land.

Mr Dulull: Mr Speaker, Sir, anyhow appropriate action will be taken in due course.

LE MORNE - BUFFER AND CORE ZONES – STAKEHOLDERS - CONSULTATIONS

(No. B/222) Mr G. Lesjongard (Second Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Arts and Culture whether he will state if all stakeholders were consulted before the gazetting of the Le Morne buffer and core zones.

Mr Gowressoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, consultations were held with stakeholders before the designation of Le Morne as national heritage although there is no such provision in the National Heritage Fund Act.

In the process of the preparation of the Nomination Dossier of Le Morne for inscription on the World Heritage List, the UNESCO Expert Dr. Abungu met with the owners of property falling within the core zone. They were thus informed of the delimitation of the core and buffer zones before the gazetting of these two zones.

Regarding the buffer zone consultations will be held with the stakeholders in the preparation of the final Management Plan to be submitted to UNESCO.

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the Minister whether the final co-ordinates of the core and buffer zones were sent to Dr. Abungu before it was gazetted?

Mr Gowressoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have stated that consultations were held with stakeholders before the designation of Le Morne as national heritage.

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Speaker, Sir, why I am asking whether there was an approval prior to the gazetting of the core and buffer zones because there was a cabinet decision where it is stated that the Government is going by the recommendation of Dr. Abungu and it is stated in the preliminary recommendation that Dr. Abungu was waiting for the final co-ordinates from Government. That's why I am asking whether the final co-ordinates went to Dr. Abungu and when was it? May I know the date, Mr Speaker, Sir?

Mr Gowressoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I will communicate it to the House in due course.

NELSON MANDELA CENTRE FOR AFRICAN CULTURE – CONSTRUCTION – TENDERS

(No. B/223) Mr G. Lesjongard (Second Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping whether he will state if tenders for the construction of the building to house the Nelson Mandela Centre for African Culture have already been launched and, if not, why not.

The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport & Shipping (Dr. R. Beebeejaun): Mr Speaker, Sir, following the decision of this Government to construct the Nelson Mandela Centre for African Culture at La Tour Koenig instead of the general Post Office and the decision to launch fresh tenders for the consultancy for design upon advice from the State Law Office, the Ministry of Arts and Culture has

consulted the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development and the matter is being examined in the context of next year's budget.

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Speaker, Sir, in a reply the Minister of Arts and Culture stated that there was an amount of Rs15 m. budgeted for the General Post Office building which is going to be used at La Tour Koenig Project. Will this amount be used before the end of this financial year?

Dr. Beebeejaun: I think we better wait for the design to be approved first.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order, order please! Next question!

**CAMP LEVIEUX, CHEBEL, POINTE AUX SABLES, CITE LA
CURE AND RICHE TERRE HOUSING ESTATES –
HOUSING UNITS**

(No. B/224) Mr G. Lesjongard (Second Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Housing and Lands whether he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the NHDC, information as to whether –

- (a) works have been completed on the housing estates at Camp Levieux, Chebel, Pointe aux Sables, Cité La Cure and Riche Terre, and
- (b) if the housing units on those sites have already been delivered.

Mr Dulull: Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (a) of the question it is public knowledge that the housing units at the NHDC housing estate at Camp Levieux, Chebel, Pointe aux Sables, Cité La Cure and Riche Terre were illegally occupied only days before the appointed date for the last general election, and substantial damages were caused to some 648 housing units.

The NHDC Ltd, subsequently, carried out a survey of these housing units and it was assessed and established that “squatting” had a major negative impact on the ongoing infrastructure works, and that, the housing

units would need to be rehabilitated before they were ensured as being suitable for occupation.

I am advised that the cost of repairs is estimated to be around Rs22.4 m., and that remedial works and repairs, as appropriate, have already been completed at Riche Terre while works at Chebel, Camp Levieux, Pointe aux Sables and Cité La Cure are expected to be completed by June/July 2006.

With regard to part (b) of the question, the 74 housing units at Riche Terre have been delivered in July 2005, while the housing units on the other housing estates will be delivered as soon as the remedial works and repairs have been completed.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Members, I have to inform the House that PQs B/225, B/226, B/255 and B/256 have been withdrawn. Next question, hon. Mrs Navarre-Marie!

SIC – CHAIRMAN – TERMS & CONDITIONS OF SERVICE

(No. B/225) Mr P. Jhugroo (Third Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to the Chairman of the State Investment Corporation, he will –

- (a) for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom the terms and conditions of his service, and
- (b) give a list of all boards where the Chairman is a member, indicating the emoluments and other benefits to which he is entitled

(withdrawn)

SIC – CHAIRMAN – OVERSEAS MISSIONS

(No. B/226) Mr P. Jhugroo (Third Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of

Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to the Chairman of the State Investment Corporation, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom a list of all overseas missions undertaken by him, indicating in each case the reasons thereof and the amount of allowances paid.

(withdrawn)

BREAD – PRICE

(No. B/227) Mr P. Jhugroo (Third Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Industry, Small & Medium Enterprises, Commerce and Co-operatives whether he will state if it is proposed to review the selling price of bread and, if so, by how much.

(vide reply to PQ B/195)

MUNICIPALITIES – COMMUNITY RADIO STATIONS

(No. B/228) Mrs A. Navarre-Marie (First Member for GRNW and Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Local Government whether he will state if it is proposed to set up community radio stations at the level of Municipalities and, if yes, where matters stand and, if not, why not.

Dr. David: Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the House that the Municipal Councils have unanimously stated that, at this stage, they do not intend to set up community radio stations. I am further informed that such a project is not in their priority list.

Mrs Navarre-Marie: Are we, therefore, to understand, Mr Speaker, Sir, that community radio stations will suffer the same fate as the Municipal Police promised during the electoral campaign?

Dr. David: Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to be kind and gentle and say that this is not on the priority list of Municipal Councils. Whenever there is any submission coming from them, we will certainly be open to conviction.

GRANARY CO. LTD – EMPLOYEES – LAYING OFF

(No. B/229) Mrs A. Navarre-Marie (First Member for GRNW and Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment whether he is aware that about 50 workers at the granary section of Scott Ltd have been laid off following the non renewal of a contract for the unstuffing of containers and stacking of rice between the State Trading Corporation and the Granary Company Ltd and, if so, will he state what measures he proposes to take in favour of those workers.

Dr. Bunwaree: Mr Speaker, Sir, in fact, as per requirement at section 39(2) of the Labour Act, the Granary Co. Ltd notified me, in a letter dated 28 February 2006, of its intention to terminate the employment of its 57 employees as a result of the decision of the State Trading Corporation not to renew its contract with the company for the unstuffing, stacking and delivery of staple food, that is, rice, sugar and flour, on expiry of the present contract on 30 June 2006.

The 57 employees are still in employment. I have been informed by the company that, on 23 March 2006, the employees were given notice of termination of employment for 30 June 2006.

Pursuant to section 39(3) of the Labour Act 1975 (as amended), I have, on 17 March 2006, referred the matter to the Termination of Contracts of Service Board for consideration.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as is the practice, the employment service of my Ministry will take all necessary steps, in due course, to try to place these employees in other enterprises or facilitate their training or multi-skilling, as the case may be, and also provide them with necessary counselling and information to enable them to set up micro-enterprises, if they so wish.

MORCELLEMENT REY, POINTE AUX SABLES – TRANSMISSION TOWER

(No. B/230) Mrs A. Navarre-Marie (First Member for GRNW and Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Local Government whether he will state if he has received any representations or petitions from the residents of Morcellement Rey, Pointe aux Sables, concerning nuisance caused by a

transmission tower which has recently been erected there and, if so, will he state what measures he proposes to take.

The Minister of Information Technology & Telecommunications (Mr E. Sinatambou): Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that the Minister of Environment and National Development Unit has received a correspondence dated 10 February 2006 from “*Le Mouvement Civique de Pointe aux Sables*” regarding the setting-up of an antenna in their locality. Copies of the correspondence including annexes were also sent to the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life, the Ministry of Local Government, and the information and Communication Technologies Authority, that’s as far as I know, Sir. “*Le Mouvement Civique de Pointe aux Sables*” has expressed concerns about possible risks that radiation emanating from the antenna might have on human health.

The ICT Authority has looked into the representations and, in order to enlighten the Group on the issue, has forwarded to the Secretary of *Le Mouvement Civique de Pointe aux Sables*, a fact sheet by the World Health Organisation entitled, I quote –

“Electromagnetic fields and public health: mobile telephones and their base stations”.

I am also informed by the ICT Authority that, worldwide, there has been no case of health hazard related incidence reported due to the transmission of electromagnetic radiation. The only direct source of danger is the structure of the tower itself, especially during cyclones, and the eventual grant of a development permit for the establishment of the structure would imply that the latter complies with the strict civil and engineering requirements for such a safety-net, notwithstanding any *force majeure*.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am advised by the ICT Authority that it grants frequency/spectrum licences for the emission of electromagnetic waves and, as a matter of fact, that it stands guided by the recommendations of the International Telecommunications Union (ITU). According to the ICT Authority, Mr Speaker, Sir, the transmitters used by MTML are within the required specifications.

Mr Barbier: Mr Speaker, Sir, according to the Local Government Act, they are supposed to make a display informing people of the locality of

the project, but in this case this was done after they started construction. Can the Minister say why?

Mr Sinatambou: Obviously, at least, we know that there is sign posted there. I cannot say to the House, Mr Speaker, Sir, when it was actually posted there. At least, we know there is one there.

Mr Barbier: The Minister will agree with me that if this has been done, the inhabitants would have had the opportunity to make their complaints before the project started and this was not the case. May I know from the Minister whether necessary actions will be taken to pull down this antenna. Because it has not been done within existing legal parameters.

Mr Sinatambou: I can inform the hon. Member, Mr Speaker, Sir, that a stop notice dated 21 February 2006 has been issued by the Municipal Council of Port Louis in relation to that particular development.

Mr Lesjongard: Can I ask the Minister whether the installation of such a transmission tower requires an EIA licence?

Mr Sinatambou: I am informed, Mr Speaker, that this is not the case.

Mr Speaker: This is over.