

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

SMF – RECRUITS – TRAINING – RESIGNATION

(No. B/420) **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 recruits who, during the last five years, have left the Special Mobile Force within their initial period of training.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker Sir, all new recruits posted at the Special Mobile Force are requested to undergo a six-month Recruit Cadre Training, conducted by professional trainers, to prepare them to shoulder their future duties and responsibilities.

I am informed that for the period 2000 to 2005, 124 Trainee Police Constables have left the Special Mobile Force during their initial training period.

Mr Lauthan: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the hon. Prime Minister would agree that there is a high number of recruits who have left the service. Does the hon. Prime Minister have any information as to the reasons they gave for leaving the service in the light of what has happened recently with the case of Mr Chunurmun, with the question of insult, torture, etc. It would be good to know if they have left for these reasons.

The Prime Minister: In fact, I disagree with the hon. Member that there is a high number. That number is for five years. I can give you the numbers. For 2000, in the first batch there was 20 who resigned out of 144. In the second batch, out of 100, seven resigned. In April 2001, out of 196, 34 resigned. On the batch of 31 October 2001, there was 14 who resigned out of 233. In May 2002, there were 317 recruits, 20 resigned. In 2004, there were 205 recruits, 17 resigned. In 2005 up to June, out of 104, twelve resigned. When you add these numbers it comes to 124. the main reason

given by the Commissioner of Police is either to take up employment at other Government departments or parastatal bodies or private sector or else to pursue higher studies. According to my information, it is also a fact that at the Special Mobile Force, the training is a paramilitary training based on conventional military tactics with emphasis on internal security operations which require more physical and strenuous exercises. That is probably the reason also.

**MR R. G. & HON. MRS GRENADE -
LINE BARRACKS POLICE STATION - DECLARATION**

(No. B/421) Mr Y. Varma (First Member for Mahebourg and Plaine Magnien) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to whether on or about 21 April 2006 one Mr R.G. and the hon. Mrs Grenade made a declaration at the Line Barracks Police Station and, if so, against whom the said declaration was made and the reasons therefore.

The Prime Minister: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I propose to answer PQ Nos. B/421 and B/431 together as they relate to the same subject.

In fact, it is on 22 April 2006, at 00 50 hours, that one Mr R. G. reported a case of ‘assault’ at Bain des Dames Police Station.

In his statement, Mr R. G. declared that on 22 April 2006, at 00 15 hours, at Coastal Road, Bain des Dames, while in the company of some MSM activists, taking stock of the situation following an incident with MMM activists regarding the sticking of posters for the forthcoming meeting of the Labour Day, he saw a private car driven by one hon. Member Mr J.C.B, with six male and one female passengers on board. They were followed by a white van with some twenty-five male passengers, driven by one Mr L.I., a resident of La Tour Koenig. According to his statement, the occupants of the van were armed with *sabres* and metal bars. He was talking to them when all of a sudden, a man unknown to him, whom he could identify, punched him. Thereafter, the assailant went away in the van. Mr

R.G. was injured at the right eye and nose and attended treatment at Dr Jeetoo Hospital.

On the same day at 01 30 hours, hon. Mrs Grenade reported a case of 'larceny' at the same Police Station. She made a declaration on the same lines as Mr R.G. She added that Mr R.G.'s assailant also snatched her cellular phone.

Police carried out an inquiry and on 27 April 2006, one L.S.J. was arrested and brought to Bain des Dames CID where he confessed having assaulted Mr R.G. to prevent him from assaulting his friend. He, however, denied having stolen the cellular phone. He was released on parole on 27 April 2006, at about 17 30 hours with condition to call on 02 May 2006 for bail procedure. He was released on bail on 02 May 2006 and the Police inquiry is still under way.

MRS K. K. – BEL AIR/RIVIÈRE SÈCHE – SEXUAL ASSAULT

(No. B/422) Mr G. Guinness (Third Member for Montagne Blanche and GRSE) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether, in regard to the incident which took place around 2200 hrs on 20 April 2006 during the course of which one Mrs K.K. of Gandhi Road, Pont Lardier, Bel Air/Rivière Sèche was allegedly raped by a group of persons, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to whether an inquiry has been carried out and, if so, the outcome thereof?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I propose to answer PQ Nos. B/422 and B/433 together as they relate to the same subject.

The Commissioner of Police has reported that, on 21 April 2006 at about 1005 hours, Mrs K.K. called at Bel Air/Rivière Sèche Police Station to make a formal declaration on an incident which occurred on 20 April 2006, at about 2200 hours.

The victim stated that on that date six persons called at her residence, damaged her house and two male persons among them raped her by force. She related the incident to the Police Officers who arrived on the spot in the course of a regular patrol and she was advised to stay at home while they would search for the culprits.

Following the Police inquiry into this case, four persons, including two minors aged 14 and 17 years, were arrested and have been remanded to Police Cell, the Rehabilitation Youth Centre and the Correctional Youth Centre up to 18 May 2006. Two children aged 9 and 10 years respectively, who were on the scene of the crime, have given their statements in the presence of their mother on 05 May 2006, but they were allowed to leave in view of their age.

On completion of the inquiry, the case will be forwarded to the Director of Public Prosecutions for advice.

I would also like to inform the House that following the statement given by the victim, the three Police officers, who were on the patrol, have been interdicted from duty since the 05 May 2006 for gross neglect of duty.

Mr Guinness: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Prime Minister inform the House whether he checked with the Commissioner of Police why, on the same day, when the Police came, they did not, at least, protect that lady, because the suspects were still not arrested? I had met the lady and I am told the Minister of Women's Rights met her too. She was really in a trauma. Why, on that particular day, that lady was not brought to the station? Why was she not protected instead of leaving her? The next day, it is the employer of that lady who brought her to the Police station.

The Prime Minister: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this is what I said that the Police Officers who were on patrol on that day have been interdicted from duty since 05 May for gross neglect of duty.

PUBLIC OWNED COMPANIES AND PARASTATAL BODIES – CHAIRPERSONS - INTERFERENCE

(No. B/423) 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 he has received representations to the effect that part time chairpersons of parastatal bodies and public owned companies are interfering in the day-to-day running of these organisations and, if so, will he state what action, if any, has been taken.

The Prime Minister: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have not received any such representation, but I wish to inform the House that clear instructions have been given to Ministers to ensure that Chairpersons of Boards and Committees of parastatal organisations or Government owned enterprises under their jurisdiction do not interfere in the day-to-day management of the institutions. This instruction is in line with the Code of Corporate Governance which, *inter-alia*, defines the role and functions of a Chairperson.

Mr Bhagwan: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have two or three supplementary questions. Has the attention of the Prime Minister been drawn concerning certain parastatal bodies which I am mentioning? The IVTB, for example, which has been largely advertised concerning the interference of the part-time Chairman. The Mauritius Film Development Corporation, recently the Pre-school Trust Fund, and the last one at the MBC/TV. Is it normal for a part-time Chairman to climb ladders and give instructions to technicians? We all know whom I am talking of. He is a friend of mine. I think it's not the duty of a part-time Chairman to go at the MBC/TV every day and look at the films. He is a friend of mine, I know him since long, but it's not the duty of a part-time Chairman to act like this. It is most shameful.

The Prime Minister: As I said, if the hon. Member has any information, he can give it to me and I will look into the matter.

TELEPHONE TAPPING

(No. B/424) **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 is aware that the practice of telephone tapping is resorted to in Mauritius and, if so, will he make a statement thereon.

The Prime Minister: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would like to refer the hon. Member to a reply to PQ B/164 made by the former Prime Minister to the House at the sitting of 13 April 2004. In fact, precisely, more or less the same question was put to him and I can tell the hon. Member that the established parameters referred to in that reply are still being strictly adhered to.

I am also informed that the Information and Communication Technologies Authority has neither made any recommendation to authorise telephone tapping under Section 3(2) of the Information and Communication Technologies Act nor has it been referred any message from any operator, for written directions under Section 32(5)(b) of the Act.

I should add also that as regards the Prevention of Terrorism Act, no direction has been given to any communication service provider under Section (25) of the Act.

Mr Bhagwan: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have gone through the reply mentioned by the Prime Minister. Can the hon. Prime Minister give the firm undertaking to the House that no Member of Parliament, no journalists or Ministers who are afraid to talk these days, would be subject to telephone tapping?

The Prime Minister: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I think the former Prime Minister is in agreement with me on that line, because I have seen some of the statements and speeches he has made in the National Assembly. At least, I can say for myself, but I get the impression that he also agrees

that we are very concerned about civil liberties and privacy in this country. Telephone tapping would be a clear violation of fundamental rights of free speech, except under certain very specific situations, where it is rightly provided by our laws for security reasons. Also, we have the United Nations International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. In fact Article 17(1) to which we are a party states -

“No-one shall be subject to arbitrary, or unlawful interference with his privacy, family, home or correspondence.”

According to the United Nations Human Rights Committee, States have an obligation under this Article to adopt measures to prohibit such interferences. In fact, in some democracies, they have gone even further. I must say to the hon. Member that, being so concerned - and I have mentioned it many times - about privacy, defamation, fundamental rights, I am looking at ways and means to strengthen our civil liberties laws, including all those that I have mentioned in line with Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights.

Mr Bhagwan: Again, without being personal - it is being said outside - can the hon. Prime Minister at least deny or confirm that one Mr Leong Son, specialist in IT or telephone tapping, has been employed as Senior Adviser? This is the rumour in Port Louis. The abnormal noises we hear on our cellualars, on our telephone ...

(Interruptions)

There is cause for concern, especially during the first of May meetings, we have been hearing it every minute. Can the Prime Minister, at least, confirm to the House that this Senior Adviser is not, I would say, looking into telephone tapping?

The Prime Minister: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, let me reassure the hon. Member. That gentleman that he is mentioning has been before also a Security Adviser. He knows him personally. He knows that he is not somebody who would go and tap the telephone. He is certainly looking about CCTV, cameras, alarms and all the security. We have to make sure places are secured, and also to check that no bugs have been put where they should not be.

(Interruptions)

I must tell the House that it has happened before. When I became Prime Minister in 1995, I have found a bug in Clarisse House and I have got some experts to have a look at it. I am not going to go into that detail, but let us say that he has no ability also to do it, because you need apparatus to do that. You can't just do it like this.

Mr Bhagwan: Can the Prime Minister confirm to the House that prior to the election of 2000, several IT equipment were purchased? Rightly, it might be for telephone tapping of drug traffickers. But can the Prime Minister confirm to the House that equipment was purchased and it is being used for the right purpose?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Member would be surprised to learn that when I became Prime Minister in 1995, I dismantled all the equipment for telephone tapping. If the hon. Member wants me to go into the detail, I will do it, but I made sure that the equipment was dismantled because I am a believer in fundamental rights...

(Interruptions)

Afterwards, there were circumstances as the Sabapathee case, L'Amicale case and, later on, the riots. When the Police complained that they were not able to intercept any kind of communication that was going on about those people who were trying to destabilise the country, therefore, on their requests, I agreed that the equipment be bought, but I ensured that it will go together with a law such as the Interception of Communications Act as you have in UK. That is, in other words, not even the Prime Minister or any Minister can ask for a telephone to be tapped. That is what I had in mind.

However, when the new equipment came in batches just prior to the election, they were never used. They only became operational in May 2001.

(Interruptions)

That equipment is still there.

DRIVING LICENCE – WALLET SIZE CARD

(No. B/425) Miss K.R. Deerpalsing (Third Member for Belle Rose and Quatre Bornes) 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 it is proposed to replace the driving licence in its existing format by a wallet size card in line with international practice.

The Prime Minister: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, a Committee, under the aegis of the Ministry of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping is working on the implementation of a new card type driving licence to be in line with the international practice. An implementation plan prepared by the Central Informatics Bureau is being considered by the Committee.

(PQ No. B/426 – see “Written Answers to Questions”)

ILE AUX BENITIERS – OWNERSHIP

(No. B/427) 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 state if he has received a letter from one Mr Gérard Bernard of Baie du Tombeau, on behalf of a Mauritian family residing in Australia, claiming that they are the lawful owners of Ile aux Bénitiers and, if so, when and if any inquiry in regard thereto has been carried out.

The Prime Minister: Yes, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, on 04 October 2005, my Office received a letter from one Mr Gérard Bernard, residing at Trou aux Biches, writing on behalf of one Mr Spéville, who is residing in Australia, claiming that Ile aux Bénitiers is the private property of heirs of Mr Pierre Spéville in virtue of a concession made by the French Government to one comtesse Anne de Mouialles. But, he has not submitted any documentary evidence to substantiate his claim.

The Ministry of Housing and Lands was requested to carry out an inquiry into the matter. It is confirmed that Ile aux Bénitiers was acquired on 12 July 1859 from Mrs Frichot (Delle Fayot) as evidenced by the title deed drawn by notary Guimbeau dated on 02 August 1859. An indemnity of 400 pounds was paid for the acquisition of the islet.

The Government of Mauritius is, therefore, the lawful owner of Ile aux Bénitiers since 02 August 1859 to date.

In 1927, following a public auction exercise, the islet was leased to Mr Soolaman Nubheebucus for a period of thirty years.

Any party therefore claiming ownership over Ile aux Bénitiers may have recourse to legal action, but that is the situation.

POLICE DEPARTMENT - HELICOPTER - PURCHASE

(No. B/428) 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 Commissioner of Police, information as to whether the Police department will soon be equipped with a new helicopter and, if so, when, indicating the source of funding.

The Prime Minister: Mr Deputy Speaker Sir, during my visit in India in October last, I had discussions with the Indian authorities regarding the procurement of an Advanced Light Helicopter for the Police Department. It was agreed that such purchase would be effected.

The matter was further discussed during the visit of the Indian Defence delegation in Mauritius on 18 January 2006. Following those discussions, the specifications for the Advanced Light Helicopter have been finalised. The Indian Commission has submitted accordingly a draft agreement for the purchase of the equipment and the draft Agreement has been looked into by the Police Department, which has proposed some amendments. Same have been sent to the Indian High Commission.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is imperative to procure an additional helicopter to enhance the operational capability of the Helicopter Squadron. The new helicopter is a twin engine capable of offering a larger scope of operations in terms of seafaring ability, which enables it to reach St Brandon and Rodrigues with adequate reserve of fuel, that is, it does not have to refuel. It will thus be possible to carry out major operations within our Exclusive Economic Zone.

DRUGS - SEIZURE

(No. B/429) 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, in regard to seizure of drugs, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to -

- (a) whom these drugs are entrusted, and
- (b) the number of cases of drugs reported missing whilst in custody since July 2005, indicating if inquiries have been carried out therein, and the outcome thereof.

The Prime Minister: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, there are well established procedures as spelt out in the Police Standing Orders and Section 58 of the Dangerous Drugs Act 2000, to handle all drugs seized.

These drugs are entrusted to the Officer-in-Charge of the Exhibit Room who also records the particulars in the Exhibit Register and keeps them under lock and key.

As regards part (b), no case of missing drug from Police custody has been reported since July 2005.

Mr Lauthan: Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether he has any information about the purity of these drugs seized in terms of heroine content? This is important to the Police because the purer it is in terms of heroine content, the closer is the recipient's link to the drug barons in other countries. It is just to explain the linkage between the local traffickers and

the foreign drug barons. If it is not pure, it means that the drug has gone through several hands. Does the hon. Prime Minister have the information?

The Prime Minister: I am not sure that what the hon. Member is saying is right. It sounds far-fetched to me because some traffickers deal in very pure matters and some in impure matters.

Mr Jhugroo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, if I may ask the hon. Prime Minister what measures have been taken to ensure that the weight of drugs seized are destroyed?

The Prime Minister: I think that there are set procedures under the Police Standing Orders to take care of this problem.

(PQ No. B/430 - see 'Written Answers to Questions')

MR R. G. - INCIDENT ON 15.04.06 - BAIN DES DAMES

(No. B/431) Mr G. Lesjongard (Second Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to whether any incident occurred on Friday 15 April 2006 at Coastal Road, Bain des Dames during the course of which one Mr R. G. was injured and, if so, will he state if any inquiry has been carried out and the outcome thereof.

(Vide reply to PQ No. B/421)

(PQ No. B/432 - see 'Written Answers to Questions')

MRS K.K. - SEXUAL ASSAULT – POLICE STATEMENT

(No. B/433) **Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun (Third Member for La Caverne and Phoenix)** asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether in regard to an incident which occurred at Bel Air on or about 20 April 2006 in the course of which a woman was sexually assaulted in the presence of her daughter, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to whether, following that incident, when she called at the Police Station, Police Officers refused to record her statement and she was advised to come back on the following day to make her statement.

(Vide reply to PQ No. B/422)

MISS J. M. - ALLEGED ASSAULT AND KIDNAPPING

(No. B/434) **Mr M. Dowarkasing (Third Member for Curepipe and Midlands)** 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 alleged case of kidnapping on the person of one Miss J. M., he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to -

- (a) the date and time the mother of the alleged victim called at the Police Station and the time her statement was recorded;
- (b) if any arrest has been effected, and
- (c) if the inquiry has been completed.

The Prime Minister: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am advised by the Commissioner of Police that on 27 April 2006, at 1630 hours one Mrs E.R, called at the Phoenix Police Station and requested the Police for assistance for an alleged case of assault and kidnapping of her daughter one Miss J.M.

The Police reacted promptly and proceeded to the residence of the alleged assailant at Phoenix and to Curepipe Police Station to check the veracity of the information.

Thereafter, at 1930 hours, the sister of the victim gave a statement at the Phoenix Police Station in connection with the incident.

As regards part (b) of the question, one Mr I. H. was arrested on 02 May 2006 for an offence with a minor. He was detained and was bailed on 04 May 2006, after having furnished a surety of Rs10,000 and a recognizance of Rs20,000 and the Police inquiry is still in progress and is expected to be completed.

**MR D. L. - ADVISER - MINISTRY OF INDUSTRY, SMEs,
COMMERCE AND CO-OPERATIVES - POLICE ARREST**

(No. B/435) 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 one Mr D. L., Adviser to the Minister of Industry, Small and Medium Enterprises, Commerce and Co-operatives, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to whether -

- (a) he was arrested on or about 29 April 2006, and
- (b) any charges have been retained against him.

The Prime Minister: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as regards part (a) of the question, the answer is in the affirmative.

On 02 May 2006, he appeared before the Mapou District Court where a provisional charge of "Opposing an agent of Civil Authority in the performance of his duty" was lodged against him. He has been released on bail upon furnishing a surety of Rs5,000/-.

On completion of the inquiry, the dossier will be forwarded to the Director of Public Prosecutions for advice.

Mr Bérenger: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the hon. Prime Minister must have been made aware of information made public to the effect that the Police Officer Tuyau who was in charge of the inquiry of the matter has been transferred to somewhere else in the Police. Has the hon. Prime Minister looked into that?

The Prime Minister: Yes, I have looked into the matter. In fact, the *Police des Jeux*, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am told, is under the charge of Mr Padiachy. Detective Inspector Tuyau was assisting SP Padiachy who was on mission to Tanzania in connection with the drug importation case. Mr Padiachy is now back and, therefore, Mr Tuyau has returned back to where he was, that is, at the Anti-Piracy Unit.

Mr Bhagwan: Mr Deputy Speaker, for the sake of transparency, can the Prime Minister give the undertaking to the House that such thing never happened? One of the person who was arrested stated clearly: "*Nou pu faire toi transfer bientôt. To pu conné qui senne-là qui mari, pouvoir dans nu la main.*"

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: No, no. Order!

(Interruptions)

Mr Bhagwan: It is not me! This has been said. Can we know from the Prime Minister whether this term "*pouvoir dans nu la main*" has not been used?

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Bhagwan, I am sorry, you cannot read extracts from the newspapers.

Mr Guinness: Can the Prime Minister confirm whether this gentleman has a previous case and is on bail since 2003 for the same illegal betting?

The Prime Minister: There are two things, Mr Deputy Speaker, if you allow me. If the hon. Member quotes from the papers, it is the same gentleman whom Mr Collendavelloo treated as "*Zacot*".

(Interruptions)

In fact, Inspector Tuyau went as far as putting an entry into the Entry Book, complaining that Mr Collendavelloo treated him as a "*Zacot ki pas conné cotte sorti, ki pas conne narien, péna CPE, pé déclare mari*".

(Interruptions)

It is the same Inspector Tuyau. If the hon. Member is quoting, I can quote as well!

(Interruptions)

It is the same Inspector Tuyau that the hon. Member is quoting. So, anyone can quote from the papers! One can make any allegation as it was reported. This is not making allegations.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order, order, please!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Bhagwan, sit down! Hon. David! Hon. David, please!

(Interruptions)

Please ask your question, hon. Bhagwan!

Mr Bhagwan: Mr Deputy Speaker, we are talking of somebody who was on the point of being appointed as Adviser to the Minister. Can the Prime Minister confirm, concerning that gentleman, whether there were cases of larceny night breaking, attempt at larceny by skinning and wounds and blows upon his father? Can such person be appointed as Adviser? Can the Prime Minister inform the House whether he is aware of the previous case of this gentleman?

The Prime Minister: Mr Deputy Speaker, since the hon. Member likes to make demagogy in Parliament, I will tell him whether it is a coincidence that this gentleman had all sorts of trouble when he was campaigning for hon. Jeetah in the by-election. He was offered Rs500,000 so that he can change sides, because he was an influential member. He was

offered money, bribes and when he refused the money, he was immediately arrested the next day.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please!

The Prime Minister: I'll tell you something which is to the credit of the former Prime Minister. The case was taken and sent to the DPP and the DPP, in May 2005 - he was Prime Minister, it was not me - decided to file a *nolle prosequi* on that particular charge.

(Interruptions)

The implication is that the Prime Minister intervenes. I am saying no, there is the case in 2005.

The Deputy Speaker: One last question!

Mr Bérenger: In the first part of his answer, the hon. Prime Minister said clearly that Mr Tuyau had gone back to the job he was at before, that he was acting in the absence of the person responsible. That was the first part of the answer. And then reference was made to previous events and so on. Clearly, it is very bad for Police Officer Tuyau. Can I ask the Prime Minister: is it a case of going back to a previous job, full stop, or is it a punitive transfer?

(Interruptions)

The Prime Minister: It is a fair question, I will answer it. In fact, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is not the first time that this has happened. I'll go back to when the *Brigade des Courses et des Jeux* was set up. It was in May 2002. It was to monitor betting activities and to prevent and detect offences dealing with illegal bettings. It was then operating under the overall supervision of Mr Sunnuchurra, Assistant Commissioner of Police, and Mr Soddeen, Superintendent of Police, and it was based at the time of the Flying Squad in the Line Barracks.

On 21 April 2003, the *Brigade des Jeux* was based at the Central CID under the command of Deputy Commissioner Seerunghun. So, it was

changed, it went under the command of Deputy Commissioner Seerunghun. Chief Inspector Monvoisin was in charge of the investigation and operational matters. Then, on 15 September 2005, Chief Inspector Monvoisin was moved and was replaced by Mr Raddhoa, Superintendent of Police, at the Head of the *Brigade des Jeux*. It was still under the overall supervision of Deputy Commissioner of Police Seerunghun. On 15 April, the *Police des Jeux* was placed under the responsibility of Mr Sooroojebally, Deputy Commissioner of Police, ADSU. It is now based at the ADSU under the charge of Mr Padiachy, Superintendent of Police. And the *Police des Jeux*, as I said, was under the charge of Mr Padiachy and Detective Inspector Tuyau who was at the Antipiracy Unit, was assisting Superintendent Padiachy when he was away, in other words, in his place. Mr Padiachy was on mission, as I said, to Tanzania, in connection with the drug importation case. He is now back and he is now assisted by Detective Inspector Mohesh, again temporarily, Detective Inspector Seebaluck who is actually on a mission to Comoros Island will, on his return to Mauritius, which is expected to be around mid June, take over second in command in the place of Detective Inspector Mohesh. Therefore, as I said, Inspector Tuyau will remain at the Head of the Antipiracy Unit.

The Deputy Speaker: Time is over. Next item "Questions addressed to hon. Ministers".

ROCHE BOIS - DUMPING GROUND - HEALTH HAZARD

(No. B/436) Dr. M. A. Husnoo (Second Member for Port Louis Maritime and Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Local Government whether he will state if the dumping ground at Roche Bois constitutes a health hazard to the inhabitants in the immediate vicinity thereof, indicating the measures that are being taken thereat to prevent it from becoming a breeding ground for the chikungunya vector and the frequency at which these measures are being carried out, stating if similar actions are being taken at the different landfills throughout the island.

Dr. David: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the House that under normal circumstances, temporary dumping grounds are opened only after cyclonic periods to receive green and bulky wastes with a view to

avoiding a glut at the transfer stations, thus hampering normal scavenging services. In view of the exceptional circumstances following chikungunya, it was decided to effect special cleaning campaigns and therefore my Ministry decided to open the temporary dumping sites. The opening of those temporary dumping sites has enabled an efficient collection and disposal of green and bulky wastes (including metallic wastes and used tyres) through the campaigns.

The temporary dumping ground of Roche Bois currently being used for the stacking of wastes is adjacent to the transfer station. In order to control the proliferation of mosquitoes at the site, the used tyres are being immediately carted away while the other wastes are being transferred to the landfill on a daily basis.

Similar measures are being taken at the four other dump sites, namely at SODIA, Poudre D'Or, La Martinière and La Laura to prevent these sites from becoming breeding grounds for the chikungunya vector.

Dr. Husnoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in view of the recent epidemic of chikungunya that we've had, can the Minister tell us whether any entomological studies are being carried out regularly on these sites?

Dr. David: Well, this should be addressed to the Ministry of Health, but we are helping at the same time.

COMMUNITY SERVICE ORDER - CONVICTS

(No. B/437) Mr. S. Lauthan (Third Member for Port Louis Maritime and Port Louis East) asked the Attorney-General, Minister of Justice & Human Rights whether he will state the number of persons convicted of minor offences who have benefited from the community service order to date.

Mr Valayden: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the hon. Master and Registrar, Supreme Court, that, as at March 2006, 574 persons convicted of minor offences have benefited from community service order. Out to the 574 convicted persons, 534 are male offenders.

Mr Lauthan: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Attorney-General and Minister of Justice to find out, according to the established criteria in the Act, how many people who go to Court, would qualify? It seems that there is a large number of people who would qualify, but they are not even informed of it. Consequently, civil servants and other people are losing their jobs because of a couple of days of imprisonment. There is a need for continued sensitisation.

Mr Valayden: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, there is a very defined procedure to follow by the Judiciary as per Section 4 of the Community Service Order Act 2002 which makes it very clear. But I will take on board what has just been stated by the hon. Member and we'll try to sensitise more and more people.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister is referring to vulgarisation.

Mr Valayden: Yes, of course.

RIVIERE DU REMPART - MARKET (NEW) - COMPLETION

(No. B/438) Mr D. Boodhoo (Second Member for Piton and Rivière du Rempart) asked the Minister of Local Government whether in regard to the new market at Rivière du Rempart, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Pamplemousses and Rivière du Rempart District Council -

- (a) the reasons for the delay of its completion, and
- (b) the expected date of its opening.

Dr. David: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I wish to refer the hon. Member to the reply I made to Parliamentary Question IB/415 wherein I had pointed out that in view of the serious allegations levelled on this issue, the matter had been referred to the Police and ICAC for appropriate action. I have also informed the House that the delay in the completion of the new market was due to the fact that additional works were identified during a site visit and had to be carried out on the first floor which was not included in the initial scope of works.

I am now informed that the outstanding works have been completed and the opening of the new market is scheduled for early June 2006.

Mr Boodhoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister whether the process of allotment of stalls have been completed to date?

Dr. David: Not yet, Sir.

Mr Boodhoo: Can we know when?

Dr. David: Well, the market is scheduled to be opened in early June 2006. When the exercise is over, certainly, the Member will be kept informed.

Mr Boodhoo: Can the hon. Minister tell us about the inquiry carried out by the Police and ICAC?

Dr. David: Well, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would not know. The matter has been referred to the Police and to ICAC because of very serious allegations which landed on my desk.

SUGAR INDUSTRY - *PROTOCOLE D'ACCORD*

(No. B/439) 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 context of the restructuring of the sugar industry, he has received any representations from employers of the Sugar Industry to delete Part V of the Labour Act, indicating if it is proposed to review the existing *protocole d'accord* between the representatives of employees and those of the employers.

Dr. Bunwaree: No, Sir, I have not received any such representations. In any case, the hon. Member must be aware that the *protocole d'accord* is between the MSPA and the unions. If ever there is any such question, it has to be taken up between the parties themselves in the first instance.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order! Order!

Mr Soodhun: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Minister just mentioned that he did not receive any request from the employers. But, according to my information, there has been a request from the employers of the sugar industry. Can the hon. Minister confirm whether a technical meeting has been fixed this week at his own Ministry to consider the request of the employers to amend section 5 of the Labour Act, that is, to satisfy the employers to recruit 100% seasonal workers instead of 20%? Is that true?

Dr. Bunwaree: That's part of the main question, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. I can inform the House that the question has been raised at the level of the Ministry of Agro Industry, which is looking into the implementation of the roadmap. This is a very particular aspect and not a question of doing away with this Section V altogether. It concerns only that point which has been mentioned by the hon. Member, and it is being looked into.

DIGITAL COURT RECORDING SYSTEM

(No. B/440) Mr Y. Varma (First Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Attorney-General, Minister of Justice & Human Rights whether he is aware that microphones have been installed in the District and Intermediate Courts for the recording of Court proceedings and, if so, will he state –

- (a) the date of their installation;
- (b) the cost thereof;
- (c) if they are currently being used and, if not, the reasons therefor,
and

(d) the measures that will be taken to remedy the situation.

Mr Valayden: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Master & Registrar of the Supreme Court that –

- (a) digital Court recording system was installed in the year 2000;
- (b) the cost of installation of the system, including hardware and software equipment, amounted to Rs26,800,000;
- (c) the system is fully operational at the Intermediate Court.

I am informed, however, that, in view of shortage of staff, it has not been possible at times to operate the digital Court recording system.

As regards the operation of the system at District Courts and at the Court of Rodrigues, it is envisaged to amend the Courts Act in order to extend the use of the system to the District Courts and to the Court of Rodrigues.

In my view, it is imperative, however, to recruit and to train additional staff, in order to make the system fully operative at all Court levels.

Mr Varma: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I believe the hon. Attorney-General has been misled, in that the Court recording system is not fully operational at the Intermediate Court. I'll urge the hon. Attorney-General to look into the matter.

Mr Valayden: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the only way I can look into the matter is to liaise with the Master & Registrar because if not, the saying will be that the Attorney-General has intruded into the independence of the Judiciary.

Mr Varma: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, could the hon. Attorney-General inform the House the number of digital recorders actually working in our Courts?

Mr Valayden: I don't have the information with me. I will have again to go through the Master & Registrar, unless I go there to plead a case.

LE BOUCHON MAIN ROAD - WIDENING

(No. B/441) Mr Y. Varma (First Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport & Shipping whether he is aware that the main road at Le Bouchon in the constituency of Plaine Magnien and Mahebourg is a two way road with a single lane, thereby causing inconveniences to the road users and the inhabitants of the locality and, if so, will he indicate the remedial measures he proposes to take.

The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport & Shipping (Dr R. Beebeejaun): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the road starting from Ah Koon shop, Camp Carol, leading to Le Bouchon public beach, is a non-classified road falling under the jurisdiction of the Grand Port/Savanne District Council. The width of the road is approximately 3.05 metres and found in built-up area. Due to its narrowness, vehicles cannot circulate along this road easily.

In order to enlarge the road, there is need to compulsorily acquire private land bordering this road. I propose to request my colleagues, the Minister of Local Government and the Minister of Environment & NDU to address the problem with a view to proposing feasible solutions.

Mr Varma: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is the Deputy Prime Minister aware that Mr Haton, who was at the time a Member of Parliament, raised the issue in year 2000? Could the hon. Deputy Prime Minister inform the House what has been the progress from the year 2000 to date?

Dr. Beebeejaun: Obviously, there has been no progress whatsoever, since the problem remains whole. But, I will look into it. As I said, it is more of a problem of two other Ministries, but I will liaise with them.

SSR INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT – PASSENGER TERMINAL - EXTENSION

(No. B/442) Mr Y. Varma (First Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism, Leisure & External Communications whether, in regard to the SSR International Airport, he will state if there is any project for its extension and, if so, where matters stand.

The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism, Leisure & External Communications (Mr X.L. Duval): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we have in the Government Programme 2005-2010 taken the commitment to continue the upgrading of our airport facilities, so as to support and sustain growth in passenger and aircraft movements as well as freight volumes.

The House may wish to note that the situation regarding passenger and aircraft movements over the past five years is as follows –

- (i) peak period air traffic has increased from 500 departing passengers per hour to current level of 1,100 departing passengers per hour;
- (ii) passenger throughout has escalated from 1.6 million to over 2 million per annum;
- (iii) the total number of aircraft movements has increased from approximately 15,000 to approximately 20,000 in 2005, and
- (iv) latest air traffic forecasts indicate a steady growth in passenger traffic in the coming years with traffic reaching 3.1 million in 2012.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, against this background, a proposal for an extension of the existing passenger terminal is being currently examined.

Mr Varma: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is the hon. Deputy Prime Minister & Minister of Tourism aware that actually a study has been carried out and a plan has also been drawn up concerning the extension of the SSR International airport?

Mr X.L. Duval: Relevant technical documents have been opened and now we are going to look at the financial tenders.

ST. HILAIRE & ST. HUBERT HOUSEHOLDS – ALLOCATION OF LAND

(No. B/443) Mrs S. Hanoomanjee (Second Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Minister of Agro Industry and Fisheries whether he is aware that the inhabitants of St. Hubert and St. Hilaire have not yet obtained their plots of land from the Cie Sucrière de Beau Vallon and, if so, will he, for the benefit of the House, ascertain the reasons thereof.

Dr. Boolell: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as the hon. Member is aware, the allocation of land to the 238 households of St. Hilaire and St. Hubert was announced in the previous Budget, without any previous administrative or legal arrangements for its implementation.

The Finance Act was enacted subsequently, amending the SIE Act, to allow for the allocation of the land by the sugar estate to the households at a nominal value. However, negotiations were held with the owner of the land that is, Compagnie Sucrière de Beau Vallon, after the enactment of the legislation and it was found that the company required a compensation amounting to Rs8.2m. The State Land Development Company was then brought in to provide approximately 5A at Belle Terre, adjacent to the land which was earmarked for those who adopted for VRS, to the Compagnie de Beau Vallon in exchange of the 8A 57p and 20A 77p to be allocated to the households of St. Hilaire and St. Hubert respectively.

I am advised by the Mauritius Sugar Authority and the State Land Development Company that the land conversion permit has been approved, the survey has been completed and title deeds are being finalised. It is expected that the title deeds will be handed over in June.

MAURITIUS SUGAR AUTHORITY – PROJECT MANAGER

(No. B/444) Mrs S. Hanoomanjee (Second Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Minister of Agro Industry and Fisheries whether he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Sugar Authority, information as to whether a Project Manager has been appointed for the Free Derocking Scheme and, if so –

- (a) whether the post was advertised, and
- (b) giving the details of the selection process and the name and qualifications of the person recruited.

Dr. Boolell: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am advised by the Mauritius Sugar Authority that Mr Khem Narain Baguant has been appointed on a contract basis as Project Manager since 09 August 2005 for the free derocking project.

He holds a Bachelor's degree in Agricultural Engineering from Harper Adams Agricultural College, United Kingdom, and Agricultural Engineering with specialisation in Mechanisation, Management and Irrigation at Cranfield University, United Kingdom. He is a member of the Institute of Agricultural Engineers of United Kingdom and Europe. He has four years' experience with private companies in mechanisation and derocking, and five years' experience in irrigation systems and extension services for the farming community.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Minister why that post has not been advertised? Because similar expertise exists outside.

Dr. Boolell: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, there was no need. In fact, if I refer to past practices, the practice has been always to recruit the best, the person who has the acumen and the person who can deliver. Under the circumstances, he was the best person.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: May I ask the hon. Minister how do we know that there is no better expertise outside if the post has not been advertised? There is no way of knowing that there is no better expertise outside.

Dr. Boolell: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as I have stated in no uncertain terms, the gentleman was the best; he is doing a good job as a member of the Task Force, and the process has been moved forward.

TAMARIN – ROUNDABOUT - CONSTRUCTION

(No. B/445) Mrs S. Hanoomanjee (Second Member for Savanne and Black River) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport & Shipping whether, in regard to the newly built roundabout at Tamarin, he will state if it was erected following a request made by a particular company operating a supermarket in the region and, if so, will he, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Road Development Unit, the Traffic Management Unit and other relevant authorities, information as to –

- (a) the dates on which approval was conveyed to carry out the works, and
- (b) who was awarded the contract.

The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport & Shipping (Dr. R. Beebeejaun): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed that the Black River District Council submitted an application to the Road Development Authority for a proposed multipurpose commercial centre along the Black River Road A3, Tamarin on 12 July 2004 in favour of Société R. Jhuboo & Co. Ltd.

The proposal for an entrance and exit into Black River Road was approved on 23 September 2004 by the Technical Committee comprising representatives of the RDA, TMRSU (Traffic Management Road Safety Unit) and Traffic Branch of Police Department. On 15 October 2004 the District Council of Black River issued the development permit.

In a letter dated 15 August 2005, the promoter submitted a proposal to reconsider the access to his development through a Traffic Impact

Assessment Report. It comprised the construction of a roundabout to give access not only to the multipurpose commercial complex, but also to the future development of the areas around on the other side of the road.

The feasibility of a roundabout was also raised from a road safety point of view. Furthermore, being given that the supermarket would generate additional traffic, the roundabout was considered to be the most appropriate to slow down vehicular movements.

On 25 August 2005, the Technical Committee approved the TIA report with the following main conditions, among others -

- (i) engineering details to be submitted for approval by the RDA and TMRSU;
- (ii) all costs for the construction of the roundabout and associated works to be borne by the promoter;
- (iii) proper traffic diversion schemes during construction stage should be submitted and approved by TMRSU;
- (iv) methodology of construction to be approved by the RDA and TMRSU;
- (v) the works to be executed by a Grade A Road Contractor, and
- (vi) no works to start prior to the approval of the engineering details by the RDA.

On 03 October 2005, the consultant of the promoter submitted a drawing to the Technical Committee which showed a roundabout, meeting the minimum standard requirements.

On 18 October 2005, the promoter was given the approval for the construction of the roundabout by the Technical Committee.

On completion of the works by the promoter, the roundabout was unfortunately opened to traffic without prior knowledge of the Road Development Authority. On 30 January 2006 the RDA received an oral

complaint from the District Council of Black River, reporting that a long vehicle was having difficulties to negotiate the roundabout and a site visit was carried out on 31 January 2006. Subsequently, the promoter was convened to an urgent meeting where the latter was requested to carry out modifications to the roundabout. The works started on 09 February 2006 and have been completed at 80%. The outstanding works are being closely monitored by the RDA.

The construction of the roundabout was financed by the promoter and the contract was awarded by the promoter to Building and Civil Engineering Co. Ltd.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Mr Speaker, Sir, if I understand the sequence of the dates of approval, it means that all approvals were received before the construction works started. How is it then that specifications were not respected?

Dr. Beebeejaun: The problem, as I have mentioned, is that the approval was given for what was the minimum requirement and I think that was a mistake. It should have included the longest vehicle possible running in Mauritius. And this is where there has been a fault on the technical side and this has been corrected.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Can I ask the hon. Deputy Prime Minister who was awarded the contract for the construction of this roundabout?

Dr. Beebeejaun: I have already replied to this question.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Deputy Prime Minister has already replied to that question.

CPE EXAMINATIONS - NOVEMBER-DECEMBER 2005 – PERCENTAGE PASS RATE

(No. B/446) **Mr G. Guinness (Third Member for Montagne Blanche and GRSE)** asked the Minister of Education & Human Resources whether, in regard to the November-December 2005 CPE Examinations, he will state the percentage –

- (a) pass rate;
- (b) pass rate subject-wise;
- (c) pass rate with an “A” subject-wise;
- (d) pass rate with a “B” subject-wise, and
- (e) failure in the English language

Mr Gokhool: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with regard to the November-December 2005 CPE examinations -

- (a) the overall percentage pass rate was 62.24%;
- (b) statistics pertaining to percentage pass rate subject-wise, the percentage pass rate with “A” subject-wise, and the percentage pass rate with a “B subject-wise is being tabled;
- (c) the percentage failure in the English language was 25.6%

Mr Guinness: Since the hon. Minister is tabling the document, I am sure he must have the information; I don't have it. Can the Minister confirm that since 1998, exception made to year 2001, the 2005 result pass rate with an “A” in all subjects, including English, is higher?

Mr Gokhool: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, if we look at the statistics, it is true that the pass rate is slightly higher over all the years that have been mentioned by the hon. Member.

Mr Guinness: When I say, exception made to 2001, can the hon. Minister say, at that point in time, what were the marks for an “A” in 2001, and what were the marks to be obtained to get an “A” in 2005?

Mr Gokhool: The hon. Member is going back to 2001. I have for 2002 and 2003, and I have to check the marks. But all I am saying is that, if we look at the statistics, there has been a slight improvement, and if the hon. Member is looking at the statistics for English, even there, the improvement has not been very significant.

Mr Guinness: What the hon. Minister said on the education reform, he based himself on the supposedly failures, that is, the down trend in English and other subjects. Now that the results are out, we see that this is not true. As I said, since 1998, the best result has been in 2005. Can the Minister now confirm that the education reform that we have brought is now bearing the fruits?

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, if we look at the analysis made by the MES over the last few years, even during the time when the previous Government was in power, the results have not improved significantly. The overall result has been around 70% and the failure rate is around 30%. Apart from the MES report, it would be interesting for the hon. Member to know that, at the last ADEA Conference in March, where my predecessor was present, a scientific report was presented by Dr. Sukon on the performance over the past few years. I will read an extract from the report because education is a national issue and we should look at it as such. This report should be available to my predecessor. I quote an extract from the report -

“The reforms don’t seem to have helped the schools to do better.”

Because, as a matter of fact, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, 70%, 30% have not moved the statistics. We should go beyond statistics and look at the quality of performance to which we are addressing. Let me read out the extract –

“The reforms don’t seem to have helped the schools to do better. What is even more surprising is the grade distribution at CPE level as shown in Figures 1-5.”

I am going to table this document.

“The “U-Shape” shows a trend which is exactly opposite to that of a normal curve which governs the distribution of intelligence.”

I am not a statistician, but if the hon. Member knows a little bit of statistics, he can make out what has happened over the last few years.

Mr Guinness: I know statistics.

(Interruptions)

Mr Gokhool: I am here to teach you any time!

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order! Order, please!

Mr Guinness: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, how can we see whether there has been an improvement? I don't agree with the hon. Minister. When it serves his purpose, he uses statistics, he uses percentage. When it does not serve his purpose, he does not use it. We agree today that the 2005 result has been the best since 1998.

Mr Gokhool: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the vision of this Government is to improve the quality of education. This is what we are trying to do. I can also inform the hon. Member that if we look at the CPE examination papers, there are two sections - the Essential Learning Competencies and the Desirable Learning Competencies. This is where the problem lies because most students

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Please, resume your seat, hon. Minister! I won't tolerate Members making remarks from a sedentary position.

(Interruptions)

The hon. Member should stop. He should not debate with me. He has to stop for the peace of mind of everybody in the House.

Mr Gokhool: What I was saying, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is that it is true that there has been a slight improvement, but a large number of students have not acquired the higher order skills tested in section (b) of question papers. Let me also add for the benefit of the House, that only yesterday the British Council presented a preliminary report on the level of English. I can tell you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that there is a lot of concern about the level of English. Once the final report is there, we will inform the country

about the level of English which has been going down and these are issues that we have to address.

At 1.00 p.m. the sitting was suspended.

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

SOUTH EASTERN HIGHWAY PROJECT

(No. B/447) Mr G. Guinness (Third Member for Montagne Blanche and GRSE) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport & Shipping whether, in regard to the South Eastern Highway Project, he will state if a new scope of works has been submitted to the African Development Bank for its approval and, if not, why not.

The Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping (Dr. R. Beebeejaun): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in October 2005, Government decided to cancel the construction of the road section within the Ferney Valley between Ferney and Kewal Nagar to preserve the biodiversity within the valley.

The African Development Bank which was subsequently informed in December 2005 of the reduced scope of work, has programmed a mission from 01 July to 08 July 2006 to reappraise the project.

Mr Guinness: Is the hon. Deputy Prime Minister in a better position to tell us what will be the cost of the upgrading works in that coastal region?

Dr. Beebeejaun: I would ask the hon. Member to come with a substantive question and I'll reply to it. There is no problem.

Mr Guinness: Is the Deputy Prime Minister prepared to lay on the Table of the Assembly a copy of the scope of work which has been submitted to the ADB?

Dr. Beebeejaun: There is no problem there. Let them come in July and we will lay the full details on the Table of the National Assembly. The hon. Member will be better informed.

Mr Guinness: If I understand well the Deputy Prime Minister, the scope of work has not been submitted to ADB up to now.

Dr. Beebeejaun: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the African Development Bank was informed of the reduced scope of work in December 2005. They have been informed, but they have not reacted so far. They will come from the 01 to 08 of July 2006 to review the project.

Mr Guinness: This is where I would like to be enlightened. The Deputy Prime Minister said in a reply to PQ No. I B/384 of 25 October 2005, I quote -

‘As agreed with the African Development Bank delegation, Government will submit a comprehensive proposal to change the scope of works by 15 November 2005 to the Bank for review’.

This is my question. Has the proposal been submitted on 15 November 2005 to the ADB?

Dr. Beebeejaun: As I just said, it has been done in early December.

Mr Guinness: If this has been done, my question is whether the Deputy Prime Minister is prepared to lay on the Table of the Assembly a copy of the document which has been submitted to the ADB?

Dr. Beebeejaun: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have no problem with it, but we would rather have the full details as and when it arises.

MEDICAL COUNCIL – MEDICAL PRACTITIONERS – REGISTRATION

(No. B/448) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether he will state the number of medical practitioners registered with the Medical Council and operating in the public and private sectors as at the end of August 2005, indicating the number of local and foreign medical practitioners.

Mr Faugoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed that there were 1263 medical practitioners registered with the Medical Council of Mauritius and operating in the public and private sectors as at the end of August 2005. the figure of 1263 includes 1105 Mauritian doctors and 158 expatriates doctors.

CARDIAC CENTRE, PAMPLEMOUSES – PROFESSOR AKCHURIN, R. – OBSERVATIONS

(No. B/449) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether he is aware of the observations made recently by Professor R. Akchurin, Consultant of the Cardiac Centre at Pamplemousses, run by the Trust Fund for Specialised Care, and if so, will he state the measures he proposes to take to provide additional facilities in regard to cardiac surgeries and if Government proposes to set up a modern specialised High-Tech Cardiac Centre.

Mr Faugoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have not been made aware of any observations made by Professor Akchurin during his recent visit to Mauritius. As such, the second part of the question does not arise.

Mr Bhagwan: Somebody of the calibre of Professor Akchurin - I have gone through the press and it is public knowledge – has made some positive and negative remarks on the Cardiac Centre which I think the Minister has to take note...

Mr Faugoo: On a point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, if the hon. Member is referring to a press article, I am not supposed to know anything about press articles. I am not going to answer.....

(Interruptions)

...to any question if the hon. Member is referring to any press article. I have not taken cognizance of any press article.

Mr Bhagwan: Unlike other Members of the House, we have appreciation for what is being done at the Cardiac Centre. I think it is in the interest of one and all that we see to it that this Centre be provided with all the facilities and that all shortcomings be taken care of.

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

(Interruptions)

Order, once again!

Mr Bhagwan: Can the hon. Minister inform the House whether additional space will be put at the disposal of the Cardiac Centre? Professor Akchurin states that it is like a *hangar*. Nobody wants our Cardiac Centre to be like a *hangar*. Can the hon. Minister inform the House what is being contemplated for the future?

Mr Faugoo: I have said it before, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. It is the style of the MMM. They provoke, they ask people to put things in the press and then they come and put questions in the House. I won't answer to any question.....

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: This is no time for arguing. Order, please!

Mr Faugoo: I am prepared to answer. I must say, for the sake of the record, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that the Trust Fund for Specialised Medical Care – the Cardiac Centre - was put up in 1998 when the Labour Party was in Government. We had provided....

(Interruptions)

The hon. Member should let me answer to his question. The Cardiac Centre had a capacity of 60 beds, two wards and one ICU for 10 beds. For the period 2000-2005, the only thing which has been added to the Cardiac Centre is one extra operating theatre and one machine for angiography. That is all, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. I will remind the House, especially those people who are sitting over there, that for four years nothing was done and in the Budget Speech last year, there was a big declaration...

(Interruptions)

They should go and check! There was a big declaration by the then Minister of Finance.

The Deputy Speaker: Order!

Mr Faugoo: It was said that there was a portion of land of two acres given by one of the barons of land in the North. Nothing was given! Even today, I can inform the House that nothing was given. It was just a false statement.

(Interruptions)

Nothing was given! There is no land which is attached to the Cardiac Centre, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. We are trying now. We are starting now. I can vouch in the House, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that we will see to it and we are going to do it.

(Interruptions)

SCHOOLS AND HOSPITALS – 2001-2005 – CONSTRUCTION

(No. B/450) Mrs K. R. Deerpalsing (Third Member for Belle Rose and Quatre Bornes) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping whether, in regard to expenditure incurred with respect to the construction of Government

buildings for new schools and hospitals during the periods 2001 to 2005, he will state if –

- (a) there were significant cost variations and, if so, by how much in each case;
- (b) all the sites are in perfect running conditions, and
- (c) if it is proposed to undertake a complete financial as well as a full technical audit to ascertain that the “value for money” principle was respected.

The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport & Shipping (Dr. R. Beebeejaun): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, thirty-six new schools and four new hospitals have been constructed during the period 2001 to 2005. There have been increases on five school projects, including one in Rodrigues, ranging from a minimum of about nine hundred thousand rupees to a maximum of about seven million rupees on individual projects. The overall increase on the school projects amount to Rs27.5 m. Generally, the schools, I quote, “are in good running conditions except for leakages which are being attended to.”

The four major hospital projects are the New Souillac District Hospital, the Outpatient Department at Victoria Hospital at Candos, the new Psychiatric Hospital at Beau Bassin and the building to house the Magnetic Resonance Image and CT Scan at SSRN Hospital.

With regard to the construction of the New Souillac District Hospital, the original contract value of the project was Rs158.3 m. and the revised project value is Rs190.9 m., that is, an increase of Rs32.6 m. The project which was initially scheduled to be completed in January 2003 was delayed, amongst other causes given, because of modifications to the original design during the course of construction.

A further increase of Rs19.9 m. has been forecasted by the Construction Manager. Furthermore, the contractor has submitted a claim of about Rs100 m. representing costs incurred by him for staying longer on site. The contractor has moved for an arbitration on this matter. On the other hand, the Construction Manager has claimed Rs18 m. as additional fees and has also moved for arbitration. The building was handed over and

became operational in April 2005. Snags have been noted during the maintenance period with the sewage disposal, internal water supply and air-conditioning system with breakdowns. These, together with other snags, are being attended to by the main contractor and the final handing over of the building will be effected on satisfactory completion of the works which will be around mid-July 2006.

As regards the new Psychiatric Hospital at Beau Bassin, the original project value was Rs268.2 m. The final account is still under preparation. I am informed it will be consequently more.

(Interruptions)

I am informed there might be an increase of more than Rs20 m. The contractor has submitted claims of Rs112 m. which, according to him, represent costs incurred by him for staying longer on site.

The building is in use since June 2005. Minor defects appearing during the maintenance period of one year will be remedied by the main contractor except for damages caused by a fire in August 2005 to a female security ward for which a new contract will be awarded.

With regard to the New Outpatient Department, Victoria Hospital, the original project value was Rs161 m.

In July 2003, in the course of construction, the client Ministry, that is, the Ministry of Health, decided to carry out major variations of work.

(Interruptions)

This has disrupted the whole implementation of the project and has also resulted in -

- delay in the completion of the project;
- contractual claims to the tune of Rs68 m. which is under consideration, and
- additional consultancy claims of around Rs5 m. also under consideration.

Finally, with regard to the MRI and CT Scan at SSRN Hospital, the contract value was increased from Rs9.4 m. to Rs11.5 m. due to adjustments to provisional sums for four nominated sub-contractors.

As regards part (c), consideration is being given for the setting up of an Audit Team reinforced with appropriate technical staff for a full audit (technical and financial) on some projects, where it is considered necessary.

Details of what I have given will be placed in the library.

Miss Deerpalsing: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I thank the Deputy Prime Minister for his answer. May I urge the Deputy Prime Minister – we know, we have heard how much wastage of funds was going on with public funds in the previous Government?

(Interruptions)

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, may I request the Deputy Prime Minister ...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please! Order, Mrs Labelle!

Miss Deerpalsing: May I request the Deputy Prime Minister to ensure that in future projects as well we conduct financial and technical audits so that public funds are not wasted and also, more importantly, that we get value for money for every rupee spent?

Dr. Beebeejaun: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, one of the priorities of this Government is that there should be no waste of public funds. Waste of public funds come from the client Ministries not deciding what they want from the beginning. I have issued instructions to client Ministries to decide before they start any project, what the project is going to be, how it is going to be implemented. There is no point going on site and deciding to change projects in the middle of construction. This is why we are paying Rs200 m. more than the initial project values.

(Interruptions)

Mr Guinness: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I did not hear what the Deputy Prime Minister said. Can I know how many schools were constructed from the year 2001 to 2005?

Dr. Beebeejaun: As I have said, there are schools under construction. As the hon. Member knows, there are virtual schools which do not exist.

(Interruptions)

There are 36 schools.

SVR GOVERNMENT SCHOOL - SPEED BREAKER

(No. B/451) Miss K. R. Deerpalsing (Third Member for Belle Rose and Quatre Bornes) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping whether he will state if he has received a petition from the residents of Sodnac Avenue for the installation of a speed breaker in the vicinity of the Sir Veerasamy Ringadoo Government School and, if so, will he state where matters stand.

The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping (Dr. R. Beebeejaun) Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, a petition from the inhabitants of the Sodnac Avenue requesting for speed breakers in the vicinity of the Sir Veerasamy Ringadoo Government School was received at my Ministry on 18 April 2006.

Following a survey by the Traffic Management and Road Safety Unit, my Ministry proposes to convert the existing zebra crossing in front of the Sir Veerasamy Ringadoo Government School into a flat top hump pedestrian crossing. The works will be carried out shortly.

MONSEIGNEUR LEEN AVENUE, QUATRE BORNES - DRAIN INSTALLATION WORKS

(No. B/452) Miss K. R. Deerpalsing (Third Member for Belle Rose and Quatre Bornes) asked the Minister of Environment and National Development Unit whether, in regard to drain installation works carried out

immediately prior to July 2005 along Monseigneur Leen Avenue, Quatre Bornes, he will state if he is aware that the slabs have not been properly laid or fixed and are now fractured and loose thereby causing inconveniences to the inhabitants of the neighbourhood and, if so, what remedial measures are envisaged as a matter of priority.

The Minister of Health and Quality of Life (Mr S. Faugoo): With your permission, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I shall reply to this PQ.

The National Development Unit is aware that there is a problem with the drain along Monseigneur Leen Avenue, Quatre Bornes.

The cause of the problem is the existence of a gap between the walls of the drain and the covered slabs at some specific places. The movement of vehicles on these slabs gives rise to a rocking noise, which is causing inconvenience to the inhabitants.

The matter has been reported to the consultant some two weeks back and the latter has issued instructions to the contractor to take appropriate remedial measures. The remedial works will not entail any additional costs, as they will be undertaken within the defect liability period.

LA CHARTREUSE TO DUBREUIL - ROAD RESURFACING

(No. B/453) Mr E. Guimbeau (First Member for Curepipe and Midlands) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping whether he is aware of the bad state of the road leading from La Chartreuse to Dubreuil and, if so, will he state when resurfacing works will be carried out.

The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping (Dr. R. Beebeejaun): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed that the road from La Chartreuse to the end of Dubreuil Village was classified in January 2004.

The length of the road is 3.3 km. I will request the Road Development Authority to look into the possibility of resurfacing the road in the next financial year.

SMEs - INDUSTRIAL ZONES - SETTING UP

(No. B/454) Mr E. Guimbeau (First Member for Curepipe and Midlands) asked the Minister of Industry, Small & Medium Enterprises, Commerce and Co-operatives whether, in regard to Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), he will state if it is proposed to set up industrial zones with necessary infrastructure with a view to encouraging entrepreneurs of this sector.

Dr. Jeetah: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is the policy of my Ministry, in line with the Government Programme 2005/2010, to set up specialised zones for the benefit of SMEs with the appropriate support in each district.

I am advised by the DBM that it is planning to construct small industrial parks for SMEs with basic industrial infrastructure at low cost in different regions to serve SMEs. The first low cost industrial park will be put up at Terre Rouge.

As regards industrial buildings owned by BPML, I am advised that following the closure of some garment factories, it is now sub-dividing the vacant space to house SMEs whose demand varies from 2000 sq ft to 7000 sq ft. These buildings are located at Surinam, Tyack, Beau Vallon, Pamplemousses, Bel Air, Bambous, Forest Side and L'Escalier and they have already basic infrastructural facilities.

On the other hand, SEHDA is assisting entrepreneurs by disseminating information regarding the availability of industrial space by other institutions namely DBM and BPML. SEHDA has also invited expression of interest, via press advertisement, from owners of industrial and commercial buildings interested to rent their buildings to existing and potential entrepreneurs.

WOOTON/LA VIGIE BUS STOPS - SAFETY RISK

(No. B/455) Mr E. Guimbeau (First Member for Curepipe and Midlands) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping whether he is aware of the high risk of accidents for bus users alighting at the Wooton and La Vigie bus stops and who have to cross the highway and, if so, will he state the remedial measures that will be taken as a matter of priority.

The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping (Dr. R. Beebeejaun) Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I thank the hon. Member for having drawn my attention that there could be a safety risk for pedestrians at the Wooton and La Vigie bus stops.

When I became aware of the Parliamentary Question, I immediately asked the Traffic Management and Road Safety Unit of my Ministry to carry out a comprehensive survey to assess the situation.

A pedestrian count has started since Thursday 04 May at the locus in question.

In light of the survey, relevant road safety measures will be proposed for enhancing the safety of pedestrians.

Mr Guimbeau: Je voudrais attirer l'attention du ministre que cela représente un danger parce que le bus stop fait face aux *handrails*. *I think it will help if the Ministry puts up light overpass structure for pedestrians to cross the highway.*

Dr. Beebeejaun: I am grateful to the Member for drawing my attention. When the reply first came, it was said that there was no death. I said that was not the issue. The issue is safety and we are addressing the problem. We will look into the best possible measures at low cost to try to remedy the situation.

ROBINSON ROAD, CUREPIPE - DRAIN

(No. B/456) Mr E. Guimbeau (First Member for Curepipe and Midlands) asked the Minister of Environment and National Development Unit whether he will state if there is any project for the construction of a drain at Robinson Road, Curepipe and, if so -

- (a) where matters stand, and
- (b) when works are likely to start.

The Minister of Health and Quality of Life (Mr S. Faugoo): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed that the project for the construction of a drain at Robinson Road, Curepipe, figures on the list of drain projects submitted by the Municipal Council of Curepipe in March 2006 to the National Development Unit for consideration by the Land Drainage Co-ordination Committee.

The drain projects submitted by the Municipal and District Council will be examined by the Land Drainage Co-ordination Committee in due course and a priority list of projects will be established and an implementation programme worked out.

(PQ Nos. B/457 & B/458 see 'Written Answers to Questions')

GANDHI SQUARE, RIVIERE DU REMPART - EMBELLISHMENT WORKS

(No. B/459) Mr D. Boodhoo (Second Member for Piton and Rivière du Rempart) asked the Minister of Environment and National Development Unit whether, in regard to the embellishment works being carried out in the vicinity of Gandhi square, Rivière du Rempart, he will state -

- (a) the progress achieved so far, and
- (b) the expected date of completion of the works.

The Minister of Health and Quality of Life (Mr S. Faugoo): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed that the embellishment works in the vicinity of Gandhi Square, Rivière du Rempart, are 95 percent completed and are expected to be fully completed by end of May 2006.

(PQ Nos. B/460 to B/462 - see 'Written Answers to Questions')

FLACQ HOSPITAL - MESSES - MAINTENANCE WORKS

(No. B/463) Dr R. Mungur (Second Member for Flacq and Bon Accueil) asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether he is aware that the messes used by officers of the physiotherapy Unit, the Occupational Therapy ward, the Instrumental Curator Office, the Nursing Supervisors Office and by the nurses, drivers and servants of the Flacq hospital are in a bad state and, if so, will he state what remedial measures he proposes to take.

Mr Faugoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am aware that most of the messes for the staff of Flacq Hospital are located in old wooden buildings with roofs made up of corrugated iron sheets and shingles and are in a bad state.

Since end of last year, I have instructed the maintenance team of that hospital to carry out maintenance works such as laying of tiles, vinyl and carpets as well as minor repairs and painting of the mess rooms for the general welfare of the staff.

I have also requested the Ministry of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping to carry out a survey of all the wooden buildings to assess whether upgrading works could be carried out. This survey is expected to be completed by the end of this month. Appropriate action will be taken in the light of the outcome of the survey.

Furthermore, I wish to inform that the project for the extension of the Flacq Hospital, which is being implemented, will include mess facilities for the staff.

CAMP ITHIER - MAIN ROAD - REPAIRS

(No. B/464) Dr. R. Mungur (Second Member for Flacq and Bon Accueil) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping whether he is aware that the main road of Camp Ithier is in a bad state and, if so, will he state what remedial measures he proposes to take.

The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping (Dr. R. Beebeejaun): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed that the improvement of the main road at Camp Ithier (Trou d'Eau Douce Road B26) started in February 2005 and so far the following works have been completed -

- (i) improvement of vertical and horizontal alignment at five locations;
- (ii) widening of roads;
- (iii) construction of footpath - 1.2 km;
- (iv) construction of masonry walls, and

- (v) construction of drains

Consideration will be given to resurface the main road in the programme of works for the next Financial Year.

In the meantime the road surface is being maintained by patching of pot holes so as to avoid inconvenience to road users.

LAND BASED OCEANIC INDUSTRY PROJECT

(No. B/465) Dr. R. Mungur (Second Member for Flacq and Bon Accueil) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to the Land Based Oceanic Industry project, he will state if it will be based on a public or a private enterprise model, indicating -

- (a) the cost, and
- (b) the implementation phase of the project.

The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development (Mr S. Sithanen) Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, Government proposes a three-pronged approach with regard to the Land Based Oceanic Industry.

The first one relates to the provision of a facility which will be operated by a new entity and will encompass the various activities involved in accessing and making available deep sea cold water for industrial development purposes. More specifically, this entity will be responsible to manage the Land Based Ocean Park, to pump the water from sea to land and to distribute the water to other operators for processing.

The second aspect consists in creating a regulatory entity, which will supervise, monitor, control and guarantee the highest standards of quality of the products to be developed. It will set the norms and standards, effect the relevant tests, issue permits and licences, and charge a fee to all operators. Government, through its agents, will create the facilities and play an enabling role for private sector entrepreneurs.

The third aspect relates to commercial exploitations. There is a whole arsenal of products that could be exploited. These include desalinated bottled mineral water, air conditioning, seaweed culture, pearl culture and spin-offs from the water pumped such as refined salt, aquaculture, i.e. salmon, trout, oysters, crabs, aquaponics, pharmaceuticals, cosmetics and health care products and products related to tourism such as thalassotherapy. Commercial exploitations of the various applications of the water would be done by the private sector.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, tests carried out confirm that -

- (a) the quality of the water,
- (b) the temperature of the water, and
- (c) the nutrients value are conducive to the development of a Land Based Oceanic Industry in Mauritius.

The tests comprised physical, biological, bacterial and chemical analyses. Tests on the age of the water are also being carried out. Further, bathymetric surveys will be required for pipe laying design.

With regard to part (a), the final cost estimates will be available on completion of the full-fledged engineering and feasibility study.

With regard to part (b), work is progressing at the level of the Task Force. A phased approach is proposed. Subject to the findings of the feasibility study which Government is commissioning, it is expected that implementation will start within the second quarter of 2007. Meanwhile, steps are being taken in parallel to set up the Authority, which will own and manage the infrastructure to pump the deep sea water.

PAMPLEMOUSSES/RIVIERE DU REMPART DISTRICT COUNCIL - CADASTRAL SYSTEM

(No. B/466) Mr D. Rucktooa (Second Member for Grand' Baie and Poudre D'Or) asked the Minister of Local Government whether he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Pamplemousses and Rivière du Rempart District Council, information as to whether a detailed

map showing all the plots of land falling within its boundaries is available thereat.

Dr. David: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Pamplémousses/Rivière du Rempart District Council that in the absence of a cadastral system, it does not have a detailed map showing every single plot of land falling within its area of jurisdiction.

Mr Rucktooa: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, if a detailed map is not available at the District Council, will the Minister confirm that there does not even exist the names, that is, the ownership of many plots of land?

Dr. David: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, cadastral systems are prepared so as to be able to collect general rates and tenants taxes, but, in rural areas, this is not the case. Consequently, I go according to what the hon. Member is saying that there could not be a detailed plan. There are boundaries, but not detailed plans because there is no cadastral system.

Mr Rucktooa: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is the hon. Minister thinking of trying to get a detailed map? That is the only way that we can declare many plots of land to be no man's land.

(Interruptions)

Dr. David: As I said, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, there are boundaries, but, for the moment, there is absolutely no plan to get detailed outlines.

TAXPAYERS (EARNING UP TO RS25,000) - INCOME TAX EXEMPTION

(No. B/467) Mr S. Naidu (Third Member for Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance & Economic Development whether in regard to the proposed exemption from payment of income tax for people earning less than Rs25,000 he will now state where matters stand.

The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance & Economic Development (Mr R. Sithanen): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would like to

refer the hon. Member to the statement made by the hon. Prime Minister in reply to a Private Notice Question put by the Leader of the Opposition on this same subject at our sitting on 30 August last year.

AMUL POWDERED MILK - ORDERS AND SALE

(No. B/468) Mr S. Naidu (Third Member for Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Industry, Small & Medium Enterprises, Commerce and Co-operatives whether in regard to powdered milk brand AMUL, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the State Trading Corporation, information as to -

- (a) the number of orders placed and the dates of the respective orders, and
- (b) the different quantities ordered and sold on the local market.

Dr. Jeetah: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed that the State Trading Corporation has placed two orders for the importation of Amul Full Cream Milk Powder on 13 September 2005 and 27 October 2005 respectively.

The first order of 75 metric tons of Amul Full Cream Milk Powder which was received in two consignments of 45 metric tons and 30 metric tons on 28 October 2005 and 14 November 2005 respectively has already been sold.

As regards the second order of 81 metric tons of Amul Full Cream Milk Powder, the consignment was received on 03 December 2005. As at 02 May 2006, 17.7 metric tons of Amul Full Cream Milk Powder has been sold.

I need to stress that the decision to import Amul milk powder was taken at a time when there was a serious threat of milk shortage on the market. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the current price is among the most competitive ones.

Mr Naidu: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, can the Minister advise what is the market share of Amul milk today?

Dr. Jeetah: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I don't have the information, but I did give...

(Interruptions)

In case the hon. Member wishes to know, this is not the only brand that the STC has imported. The STC has also imported milk from Australia.

Mr Jhugroo: Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister what is the expiry date of these two consignments of milk?

Dr. Jeetah: Sir, I will have to check. It is just like any normal milk.

(Interruptions)

I think it is within a year, Sir, but I'll have to check.

Mr Dowarkasing: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, may I know from the hon. Minister whether the State Trading Corporation has made profit or loss on the importation of Amul milk?

Dr. Jeetah: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, if the hon. Member comes with a substantive question, I will answer.

(Interruptions)

The STC deals with a range of commodities. If the hon. Member puts a substantive question, I will answer.

(Interruptions)

Mr Bodha: Will there be a change in price for the new consignments?

Dr. Jeetah: It all depends on the market forces, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. It all depends what price is offered by the suppliers.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please! How can I rule on a question if I can't hear what is being said?

Miss Martin: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister just mentioned that there was a threat of shortage of milk. Can I know when was it?

Dr. Jeetah: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I don't have the exact dates, but there was a possible threat.

(Interruptions)

I don't have the exact date, but I can give the dates when it was purchased and it must have been during that time which was 13 September and 27 October.

(PQ NO. B/469 - See "Written Answers to Questions")

STC - UNLOADING OF RATION RICE - CONTRACT

(No. B/470) **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, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the State Trading Corporation, information as to the number of persons recruited for the unloading of ration rice in the port, indicating -

- (a) the date of the creation of these posts;
- (b) the number of posts created, and
- (c) the date these posts were advertised.

Dr. Jeetah: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed that the State Trading Corporation has presently a contract with Scott & Co. Ltd for the unloading of ration rice in the port. The contract will expire in June 2006. After June 2006, the STC will ensure the unloading of rice by using its existing manpower. Consequently, the question of creation of post and recruitment does not arise.

Mr Jhugroo: M. le président, est-ce que je peux demander au ministre s'il a eu des rencontres avec le syndicat des travailleurs du port et, si tel est le cas, combien de fois?

Dr. Jeetah: M. le président, ces personnes sont employées par Scott & Co. Ltd. I think, there has been a request.

(Interruptions)

But speaking of...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please!

Dr. Jeetah: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, can I just mention that in the supposed name of good governance, the last Government has lost a lot of money. The original amount of rice on which the contract was made was

48,000 tonnes and now the existing amount is 24,000 tonnes. That's the reason why this decision has been taken.

(PQ NOS. B/471 - B/476 - See "Written Answers to Questions")

AAPRAVASI GHAT TRUST FUND - LOSS OF SOFTWARE AND HACKING

(No. B/477) Mrs L. Dookun-Luchoomun (Third Member for La Caverne and Phoenix) asked the Minister of Arts and Culture whether in regard to the reported case of loss of software and hacking at the Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund, he will state -

(a) where matters stand, and

(b) if any attempt was reported to have been made with a view to stop the investigations.

Mr Gowressoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have been informed by the Police that -

(a) the Police inquiry is still in progress, and

(b) there has been no attempt to stop the investigations.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, can I ask the Minister whether he is aware of the fact that there has been a request made by certain members of the Board to get the investigations stopped?

Mr Gowressoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am not aware.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Would the hon. Minister try to find out from the Board members whether this was the case?

Mr Gowressoo: I'll find out, Sir.

VEGETABLE GROWERS – DEFENCE LAND, VACOAS – LEASE

(No. B/478) Mrs L.D. Dookun-Luchoomun (Third Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Minister of Housing & Lands whether, in regard to the vegetable growers who are presently cultivating the plot of land situated at Vacoas, commonly known as “defence land” and in the vicinity thereof, he will consider the advisability of renewing their lease in respect of these plots of land.

Mr Dulull: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am advised that there are 31 vegetable growers who are presently cultivating on the plot of land situated at Vacoas, commonly known as “Defence Land”. They have each received a letter of intent since 1971 authorising them to carry out food crop cultivation on a year to year basis, which is automatically renewed at the expiry date. No formal lease agreement has been drawn up so far. Therefore, the question of renewing their lease agreements does not arise.

I wish to reassure the House that, as a caring Government, the vegetable growers will definitely be allowed to occupy the land until there is any major Government project requiring that the Ministry resumes possession of the land.

Government is entitled to resume possession of land or part thereof for the implementation of Government projects. Advance notice will be given in such cases.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is the hon. Minister aware that this land was previously leased to these people and was taken back from them, thinking that the Police Department intended to set up its quarters there? Recently, in reply to a PQ, we were informed that the Police did not intend to proceed with this project. I would like to know whether, following this decision, the land will be returned to these planters who are still working there and have been given a lease.

The Deputy Speaker: What is the question?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: I am asking the Minister whether he will see to it that the land be returned to these farmers, as they have been

requested to move to some other site previously, thinking that the land was going to be used for the Police Headquarters.

Mr Dulull: I beg to inform the hon. Member that the land has never been requested from the vegetable growers. There has been a request from the Commissioner of Police to build the Police Headquarters, and notices were given to eight vegetable growers. Further, three vegetable growers were also given notice that the Office of the vice President would be constructed there, but none of them has been given an eviction order and they are still occupying the land.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am aware of the fact that they are still occupying the land. But, I am asking the hon. Minister whether he will see to it that these people get back the land, as they were formerly informed that they had to move to Côte d'Or.

Mr Dulull: The previous agreement still holds true. The year to year lease basis is still valid.

ULCERS – PERFORATED PEPTIC & DUODENAL - INCREASE

(No. B/479) **Mrs L.D. Dookun-Luchoomun (Third Member for La Caverne & Phoenix)** asked the Minister of Health & Quality of Life whether he will state if there has been an increase in the number of cases of perforated peptic and duodenal ulcers since the beginning of the year and, if so, the number of patients who have passed away whilst being in treatment.

Mr Faugoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed that there has been an increase in the number of cases of perforated peptic and duodenal ulcers since the beginning of the year.

The number of patients who passed away since the beginning of January, this year, whilst being on treatment, is ten.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, may I ask the Minister to repeat the answer please? I could not hear him.

Mr Faugoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have given the figures. We are trying to carry out an exercise at the level of the Ministry to see for what reasons this is so, and we will have to take necessary actions.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Would the hon. Minister confirm that there has been an increase in the number of peptic ulcers? Could the Minister inform the House whether there has been any link made between these patients and the chikungunya disease? Were those persons also suffering from chikungunya?

Mr Faugoo: Out of the ten patients who passed away due to the ulcers in question, one was chikungunya positive. Nine of them were not, but they could have had chikungunya before. At the time of death the virus was not present. Secondly, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, among the ten cases that were registered at the hospital, no cause to be factor could be definitely identified. All the patients were, in fact, operated for the ulcers. As to whether this could have a bearing with the virus of chikungunya, there could have been. My information is that there could have been an abuse of non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs, which may have caused complications to the patients who already had the ulcers.

SAMLO-KOYENCO STEEL CO. LTD – AMOUNT DUE TO CEB

(No. B/480) Mr M. Dowarkasing (Third Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the Minister of Public Utilities whether, he will for the benefit of the House, obtain from the CEB, information as to whether the Samlo-Koyenco Steel Co. Ltd owes to the CEB any amount of money and, if so, state the amount thereof and the actions taken, if any, to recover same.

Dr. Kasenally: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed that, as at 05 May 2006, Samlo-Koyenco Steel Co. Ltd owes an amount of Rs692,455 to the CEB.

On 09 March 2006, Samlo made a request to the CEB for payment facilities in respect of an outstanding amount of Rs2,077,360. Given that the monthly bill of Samlo is quite significant, an average of about Rs2 m. per month, the CEB has opted for a staggered settlement, thus avoiding loss of revenue. The customer took a firm commitment to settle the outstanding

amount in three instalments payable on 20 April, 02 May and 22 May, this year. I am informed that the first two instalments, including surcharges, have already been paid. The last instalment will become due for payment on 22 May, this month.

I wish to point out that CEB provides similar payment facilities to domestic and industrial consumers on request.

Mr Dowarkasing: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Minister confirm whether, as at 11 April 2006, Samlo Koyenco owed the CEB Rs2.5 m., and whether a disconnection order was given?

Dr. Kasenally: The policy of the CEB under this new Government is not to disconnect either people at home or industries, for the very simple reason that we do not want factories to close down and people be thrown out. Secondly, we do not also want poor people in the vulnerable group who cannot pay to have their electricity disconnected. The policy is to get the money in as much as possible, while getting industries running and get people be in comfort with their life.

Mr Dowarkasing: In the light of the reply given by the hon. Minister, will he agree to table the report of the inspector?

Dr. Kasenally: It is an internal matter, which is controlled, and I don't see any reason to table the document, because we are getting the money. This is the most important thing, and this is not the only industry. There are many other industries which have problems of cash flow and they negotiate with the CEB. It is a win win situation for everybody.

CEB – COMPLAINTS – NUMBER, CALL CENTRE, ETC.

(No. B/481) Mr M. Dowarkasing (Third Member for Curepipe and Midlands) asked the Minister of Public Utilities whether, he will for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Central Electricity Board, information as to –

- (a) the number of complaints dealt with, and

- (b) if the CEB is having recourse to any call centre to deal with the complaints and if so the amount paid per complaint call.

Dr. Kasenally: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as regards part (a), I am informed by the CEB that 43,911 complaints, mostly from domestic consumers, have been dealt with for the period December 2005 to April 2006, averaging to 7,678 complaints monthly and with a peak of 13,198 complaints in March 2006 owing to cyclone Diwa.

As regards part (b), I am also informed that, part of the ongoing effort to improve customer service delivery, the CEB has introduced a hotline which operates through a call centre, namely Call Services Ltd, a subsidiary of the Mauritius Telecom for the reporting of faults. The single 3-digit number of 130 is now available to customers island-wide for any fault reporting. The call centre registers complaints on a 24-hour basis and channels these complaints to the CEB emergency teams for appropriate prompt action. The agreed service rates are Rs7.00 per inbound call and Rs4.00 for cut-off information service which relates to calls that the CEB receives from customers, especially when there is a planned outage or interruption of electricity supply or the CEB is proceeding with maintenance or other works.

CEB – PALCO WATERPROOFING CO. LTD. – CONTRACTS

(No. B/482) Mr M. Dowarkasing (Third Member for Curepipe and Midlands) asked the Minister of Public Utilities whether, he will for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Central Electricity Board, information as to whether the CEB has allocated any contract to Palco & Co. Ltd and if so, give the details of the contract.

Dr. Kasenally: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, no contract has been awarded to Palco & Co. Ltd. However, I am informed that the CEB has, over the period of July 2003 to February 2006, awarded seven contracts for waterproofing works to a company called Palco Waterproofing Co. Ltd. I am, with your permission, laying a list of such contracts with details in the Library.

I am also informed that whenever the need for waterproofing works arises, quotations are called for from at least ten bidders and the contract is awarded to the lowest bidder after a proper evaluation exercise.