

Debate No. 33 of 14.11.2006**ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS****MBC EMPLOYEES – SPECIAL ALLOWANCE**

(No. B/1347) Mrs S. Hanoomanjee (Second Member for Savanne and Black River) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether he is aware that the six Executive Members of the Mauritius Broadcasting Service Association (MBSA) are paid allowances by the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation (MBC) and, if so, will he, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the MBC, information as to the amount thereof and the reasons justifying same.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation that the Mauritius Broadcasting Service Association does not exist.

I take it that the hon. Member is referring to the Mauritius Broadcasting Service Staff Association (MBSSA), which is a trade union recognized by the MBC.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am further informed by the MBC that the new management of the Corporation has undertaken a reorganization of the different departments to effectively achieve its objectives. In the process, new responsibilities and specific assignments have been entrusted to employees in different grades. As a consequence thereof, the Corporation is paying *ad hoc* allowances to these employees for shouldering higher responsibilities.

I should say, Mr Speaker, Sir, that it is customary in the public service to pay *ad hoc* allowances to officers who shoulder higher responsibilities.

The *ad hoc* allowance being paid to the executive members of the MBSA is not linked in any way in to the trade union activities. They are

drawing the allowance, like any other employee, for shouldering higher responsibilities.

The Human Resource Effectiveness exercise undertaken by Edge Consulting Ltd. has been completed. The implementation of the recommendations contained in the report will enable the MBC to revisit its current practices and actions among others, in respect of payment of allowances.

With your permission, Mr Speaker Sir, I am laying on the Table of the Assembly, a statement giving the information called for by the hon. Member.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to ask the hon. Prime Minister whether he is aware that the president of the union has been on two official missions in Rodrigues to carry out an audit of the accounts of the MBC when there is already an official auditor at the MBC who is drawing his salary and an allowance at the same time. What is the logic and justification to send another officer who is not an auditor to carry out an exercise of audit on the accounts of the MBC with allowances being paid to him for 15 days?

The Prime Minister: I am not aware that the officer went specifically for an audit exercise, but I'll look into it.

Mr Bérenger: May I ask the hon. Minister since when are those six Executive Members of the trade union who are employees, drawing this special allowance?

The Prime Minister: Basically, one of them is drawing it since 2003 and the others since 2005 and 2006.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether he is aware that there are members of the union who are drawing allowances at the rate of Rs7,000 per month, which is equivalent to about 10 increments, to carry out a job which is already done by another officer?

The Prime Minister: Well, as I said, different assignments are being given to them. For example, if the hon. Member is referring to the specific case of the person who is drawing an allowance of Rs7000, he is a Principal

Finance Officer who has been assigned duties of Chief Finance Officer to check cash receipts and bank lodgments on a daily basis, to monitor closely advertising and other related revenues specially from Rodrigues, to arrange for proper collecting of TV licence fees from the CEB, from the hotels, etc. to monitor closely overseas and local purchase of films, and also to monitor budgetary control and to collaborate in this audit exercise.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Referring to this specific case, I would like to draw the attention of the Prime Minister to the fact that there is already a Chief Finance Officer in place who is drawing an allowance. He is in place, he is drawing an allowance and there is a Principal Finance Officer who is acting in a post which does not exist.

The Prime Minister: It's not a post that does not exist. He is being given additional responsibilities because there is a lot of work to be done. He is being given this *ad hoc* allowance because of that.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: I would also like to draw the attention of the hon. Prime Minister to the fact that there is already an incentive scheme at the MBC which covers overtime work and regularity at work.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, what I am saying is that he is being given additional works as Principal Finance Officer. I mentioned the different works that he has to do additionally. One person cannot do everything.

Mr Bhagwan: Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister, who is responsible for the MBC/TV, to see to it that this issue of allowances is not handled in such a way that it is causing frustration and even a policy of *deux poides deux mesures*? Can the hon. Prime Minister give the assurance to the House that he will have a fresh look at this issue of allowances and inform us whether these allowances were approved by the Board of the MBC/TV?

The Prime Minister: It has been approved by the Board. In fact, it has been a standard practice for the MBC/TV to do it; it is not the first time. I must tell the hon. Member that every time you give an allowance to somebody, there is somebody else who is unhappy. It happens all the time. Even when the hon. Member was in Government it happened. But what I did say is that after the Human Resource Effectiveness exercise undertaken

by Edge Consulting Ltd. has completed the exercise, they will revisit the current practices among which, in respect of payment of allowances.

DEED OF TRANSFER - NATIONAL IDENTITY CARD

(No. B/1348) Mr L. Bundhoo (Second Member for Montagne Blanche and GRSE) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether he is aware that citizens of Mauritius who have emigrated, in the sixties and seventies, face difficulties when disposing of their property due to their inability to produce a National Identity Card as required and, if so, will he state the remedial measures that will be taken.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, in fact, it is a good question and we are well aware that citizens of Mauritius who have emigrated in the sixties and seventies have been facing difficulties when disposing of their property due to their inability to produce a National Identity Card. That is why the Business Facilitation (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2006, which came into operation on 01 October 2006, has amended section 36 of the Registration Duty Act so that a deed of transfer no longer has to contain the identification number of the National Identity Card of every party to the deed.

Now, the deed of transfer has to contain only the full names of the party to the deed in order to be registered. They do not need to have their identity cards.

SUZANNE, MR JEAN – ADVISER TO PMO

(No. B/1349) Mr S. Naidu (Third Member for Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether he will state if the Prime Minister's Office has retained the services of Mr Jean Suzanne as Adviser and, if so, since when, indicating -

(a) the terms and conditions of his contract, and

(b) whether he is a resident of Mauritius.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, yes, Mr Jean Suzanne has been employed as Senior Adviser on Information Technology matters in my Office since August 2005. He is still in post.

I am tabling the details of the terms and conditions of his contract.

With regard to part (b) of the question, Mr Suzanne is the holder of a Mauritian passport since 1979. He has also been issued with a Mauritian National Identity card on 28 August 1990.

Mr Naidu: Mr Speaker, Sir, doesn't the hon. Prime Minister think that there is a conflict of interest between the position of Mr Suzanne as adviser in IT matters and his position as director of a company like Infinity BPO?

The Prime Minister: Neither! In fact, I took him as an adviser, precisely, because he has a lot of knowledge in that area. That is why he is an adviser.

BLUE BAY - POLICE POST

(No. B/1350) Mr Y. Varma (First Member for Mahebourg and Plaine Magnien) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether he is aware that the Police Post at Blue Bay in Mahebourg closes at 23 00 hrs and, if so, will he -

(a) for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the reasons thereof, and

(b) use his good offices to impress upon the Commissioner of Police the need to have the post open on a twenty-four hour basis.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that the Blue Bay area falls under the geographical responsibility of Mahebourg Police Station and the latter is responsible to provide policing coverage in that area.

The Blue Bay Police Post was set up in June 2004 with the specific objectives of providing protection to the Marine Park of the Blue Bay area against illegal fishing and pollution, and for providing policing cover to visitors coming to the Blue Bay public beach, especially the tourists. The Police post is under the direct supervision of the Chief Inspector of Police in charge of Mahebourg Police station.

Since June 2004, the Police post has been operating from 0730 hours to 1900 hours, but with effect from 18 March 2006 the opening hours have been extended up to 2315 hours daily.

The Mahebourg Police station provides normal patrol both during the day and night in the Blue Bay area. During the night, the following cover is provided by the different units of the Police in that area, and in addition to the Blue Bay Police station, that is the -

- (i) the Emergency Response Service;
- (ii) the combined CID/Special Regular Service;
- (iii) the Special Divisional Operations comprising local Police/CID and SSU during weekends;
- (iv) the Divisional Support Unit, and
- (v) the special patrols on Saturdays.

However, in view of the fact that Blue Bay being a tourist resort area, I have, in fact, talked to the Commissioner of Police and we are looking into the advisability of converting the Blue Bay Police post into a full-fledged Police station.

Mr Varma: Is the hon. Prime Minister aware that the region of Blue Bay is prone to burglaries and other crimes?

The Prime Minister: This is why I have requested the Commissioner of Police to look into the advisability of converting it into a full-fledged Police station.

Mr Bhagwan: Concerning policing in general, is the hon. Prime Minister aware or has his attention been drawn to the fact that there is an acute problem of breakdown of Police vehicles these days? We, Members of Parliament, are being called very often upon this state of affairs and in my own constituency there is an acute problem of vehicles, either there are problems of breakdown or there is a bad planning. Can the hon. Prime Minister have a look at this very serious matter?

The Prime Minister: In fact, this has been drawn to my attention and we are looking at it.

PRISONERS - HIV POSITIVE CASES

(No. B/1351) 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, in regard to prisoners, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to –

- (a) the number thereof who are HIV positive;
- (b) if data is available as to how they have contracted same, and
- (c) if some of them have refused to undergo the test for the purpose of detecting if they are HIV positive and, if so, the measures that are being envisaged to address the issue.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Commissioner of Prisons that presently there are 363 detainees who are HIV positive.

As regards part (b), it cannot be established with certainty, Mr Speaker, Sir, as to how the detainees have contracted the virus although it must be said that most of them are intravenous drug users.

Regarding part (c) of the question, I am informed that about 10% of the detainees decline to undergo the HIV test.

A comprehensive sensitisation programme would be delivered by a multi disciplinary team comprising medical and paramedical staff, social

workers and discipline officers. Moreover, a professional screening programme that would include pre and post test counseling on HIV/AIDS would be introduced. It is envisaged, in fact, to have specialist doctors from the AIDS Unit posted. We are looking at the possibility of posting them permanently in the prisons.

Mr Varma: Mr Speaker, Sir, could the hon. Prime Minister kindly inform the House as to how prisoners are selected for HIV testing? Can we know what is the criteria?

The Prime Minister: The criteria is that they have to consent first of all. We cannot do it if they are not consenting.

Mr Bérenger: Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether all the HIV positive detainees are under antiretroviral treatment?

The Prime Minister: Is the hon. Member asking whether all those who have been tested positive are actually having treatment? I understand that it is not necessarily the case, but I will have to look into that to give you further details. I think it depends on the stage.

Mr Bérenger: Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether the HIV positive detainees are still kept separate from non-HIV positive detainees?

The Prime Minister: In fact, there was a report that was made which recommended that they should not be kept with the HIV positive detainees. In fact, the NGOs, I believe, also have said that they should not be and in the report that Sir David Ramsbotham submitted in 2004, he stated that the decision to keep separately the HIV positive detainees in the new wing of the Central Prison was a wrong one. Now they are not segregated except, I must say, for some of them, depending on their behaviour, if they want to attack other detainees, they are put separately, but in the yard, they are together.

Mr Varma: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Prime Minister as to what is being done to ensure that there is no sharing of needles in the prisons?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, the Commissioner of Prisons has told me that constantly they are doing spot checks and constantly they do find, I must say.

Mr Bérenger: The question just related to syringes, but there are other ways – I would not go into details - that HIV is transmitted from one HIV detainee to a non-HIV positive detainee. Can I know, now that they are no longer segregated, what special measures, what precautions are being taken for that not to take place?

The Prime Minister: In fact, they are actually not being segregated, but some of them are kept separately for better supervision and those who have special treatment and all this.

Mr Lauthan: The question of inaccessibility to antiretroviral treatment by detainees is not in line with the WHO. They cannot be deprived because they are detainees, whereas other citizens outside are benefiting from these facilities.

The Prime Minister: No, Mr Speaker, Sir. I don't know why the hon. Member is saying that. I never said that. I understand that some of them, depending on the stage they are, get their treatment.

Mr Lauthan: Can I understand then that all those who have been tested positive are benefiting from the facilities?

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Hon. Mrs Labelle, your question please!

(Interruptions)

Order!

Mrs Labelle: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether it is a fact that those who are HIV positive are refused access for detoxification sessions?

The Prime Minister: I am not aware. I should tell the hon. Member, maybe he misunderstood, that those who are at a stage where they need treatment for antiretroviral treatment are getting it.

Mr Bodha: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Prime Minister how many prisoners have reached the stage of full-blown AIDS?

The Prime Minister: The number is 34.

Mr Bérenger: Mr Speaker, Sir, amongst the HIV positive detainees, are there women?

The Prime Minister: I have been told that there are 9, in fact.

Mr Jugnauth: Just to clear matters, Mr Speaker, Sir. The antiretroviral treatment is given to only full-blown AIDS cases.

Mr Speaker: Last question, hon. Mrs Labelle!

Mrs Labelle: Mr Speaker, Sir, I was talking about the Lotus Programme in the prisons. According to my information, those who are HIV positive have been refused access to the Lotus Programme. That's what I would like to know from the hon. Prime Minister.

The Prime Minister: I am not aware whether they have been refused access. I will look into it.

CENTRAL PRISONS, BEAU BASSIN – INCIDENTS – OCTOBER 2006

(No. B/1352) Mrs F. Jeewa-Daureeawoo (Third Member for Stanley and Rose Hill) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Prisons, information as to whether in or about October 2006, some incidents involving detainees occurred at the Central Prisons of Beau Bassin and, if so, if an inquiry has been carried out thereinto and the outcome thereof?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Commissioner of Prisons that in the month of October 2006, there have been

minor indiscipline acts by detainees, which have been controlled by prompt action, taken by the Central Prison Administration and Intelligence Unit.

I must say, Mr Speaker, Sir, since the new Management took over the Central Prisons on 13 July 2006, there is better discipline in the prisons. Effective searches are made to find out prohibited articles as the hon. Member has just made reference to. The staff also are being searched vigorously in order to prevent the introduction of any prohibited articles in the prison.

The Prisons Authorities are laying much emphasis on proper discipline. In this context, the central prison has been divided into zones and a staff structure is put in place to ensure safety, welfare of detainees, accountability of staff and continuous improvement within the infrastructural development.

Mrs Jeewa-Daureeawoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I know from the hon. Prime Minister what is the reason for such incidents?

The Prime Minister: There is a long list every month. It has not changed, but the position is improving. Every time there are small incidents, for example, somebody brings in a Sim card, suddenly you find a mobile telephone in their room and things like that. These are the kinds of incidents. Somebody threatens to commit suicide. These are the incidents I am referring to.

Mr Lesjongard: The Prime Minister has mentioned mobile phones. May I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether the phone jamming device is operational at the prison?

The Prime Minister: I am not aware if it is in operation at this point in time.

Mrs Jeewa-Daureeawoo: May I ask the hon. Prime Minister if anybody has been injured during the same incident on that particular date?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Member did not say which particular date. She asked for October 2006. There are some people who got injured from time to time.

CORRECTIONAL YOUTH CENTRE/REHABILITATION YOUTH CENTRE – MINORS

(No. B/1353) Mrs F. Jeewa-Daureeawoo (Third Member for Stanley and Rose Hill) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Prisons information as to the number of minors who are serving sentences in the Correctional Youth Centre and the Rehabilitation Youth Centre.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Commissioner of Prisons that presently one inmate is undergoing sentence and seventeen inmates are on remand at the Correctional Youth Centre. There are twenty-four inmates serving sentences and eleven inmates on remand at the Rehabilitation Youth Centre.

One baby boy born from one inmate who is staying with his mother at the Rehabilitation Youth Centre (Girls Section). There is also one inmate who is undergoing treatment at Dr. A. G. Jeetoo Hospital since 31 October 2006.

Mrs Jeewa-Daureeawoo: Can the hon. Prime Minister inform what special measures have been taken to ensure that they are well surrounded and for their rehabilitation in society ?

The Prime Minister: Well, in fact, all the measures that have been taken in the past are continuing except the Board of Visitors which has been established under the Reforms Institution Act. It meets at least once every month and inquire into the conditions of the inmates.

CAMP LEVIEUX – POLICE STATION – CONSTRUCTION

(No. B/1354) Mrs F. Jeewa-Daureeawoo (Third Member for Stanley and Rose Hill) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence &

Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether, in regard to the construction of a Police Station at Camp Levieux, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to where matters stand.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that the contract for the construction of a new Police Station at Camp Levieux was awarded to the DWC on 28 November 2004.

However, the DWC did not complete the works within the contractual period. Despite several reminders from the Ministry of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping to the DWC, no major progress was noted.

On 01 September 2006, the contract with the DWC was terminated in view of the proposed closure of the DWC. By that date, the DWC had completed only 80 percent of the works. Procedures have been initiated to carry out the outstanding works through private contractors.

The tender documents for the outstanding works have already been vetted by the Central Tender Board and tenders are expected to be launched shortly.

Mrs Jeewa-Daureeawoo: May I ask the hon. Prime Minister what is the cost of the project?

The Prime Minister: Construction of the new Police station at Camp Levieux was awarded for a sum of Rs10,376,612.25. That includes the contingencies sum of Rs400,000 plus VAT at 15%. That was at that time.

Mrs Jeewa-Daureeawoo: Can the hon. Prime Minister...

Mr Speaker: I must inform hon. Members that when they have put questions, they have a priority of two questions as it is obtainable in India. After that, they must catch the eyes of the Speaker. Hon. Bérenger!

Mr Bérenger: I am sure the hon. Prime Minister is aware that the situation is very urgent there. There is a temporary Police station in a block

of apartments under the others next to the other apartments with no way out at the back. In the past, during the February 1999 events, the policemen were trapped inside and threatened. They could have even lost their lives. Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister to see to it that this goes ahead as rapidly as possible?

The Prime Minister: I am sure when the hon. Member himself was Prime Minister must have tried to push things, but, as I said, the DWC did not complete the work. Now I understand that they have been asked to complete it and, in fact, as I said, the tender documents have already been vetted by the Tender Board and the tenders are expected to be launched shortly. I understand also that the completion of the work will take about four months.

FERNEY VALLEY – NATURE RESERVE

(No. B/1355) Mr S. Soodhun (Fifth Member for La Caverne & 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 the Ferney Valley, he will state if Government is proposing to have it declared a natural reserve.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, as the House is aware, despite protests from several Conservation Organisations, both local and international, on the environmental impacts of the project and a report from the Environmental Monitoring Committee indicating that a number of critically endangered plant species and birds would be affected, the former Government decided to proceed with the project and to maintain the original alignment of the highway through the Ferney Valley. On my personal intervention, we decided that this project would stop because I was convinced that this, in fact, would not be good for the nature park, for example, the rare birds, the trees and all this.

Mr Speaker, Sir, following my personal intervention, the Indian Government deputed an ITEC expert to evaluate the potential of setting up a nature park at Ferney Valley. The expert congratulated Government for its decision to cancel road construction works within the Ferney Valley. In fact, to use his words, he said it would have been an environmental disaster.

Based on the recommendations of the expert and in view of the intrinsic beauty and the high biodiversity value of Ferney Valley, this Government has decided to convert the site into a nature reserve with access to the public.

Mr Speaker, Sir, discussions are currently underway with representatives of Ferney Ltd, to finalise the modalities.

Mr Soodhun: Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Prime Minister confirm that the access to the public will be free?

The Prime Minister: It will not be free. In fact, a fee will be paid because a lot of work will have to be done and we have to finance it.

Mr Lesjongard: Can the hon. Prime Minister confirm whether the project for upgrading the coastal road is still on?

The Prime Minister: We are not doing the same project, but we are, in fact, looking at the upgrading of the coastal road as well. This is being looked into.

Mr Bundhoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, being given the fact that the general public will be given access to the natural reserves parks, can I ask the hon. Prime Minister what measures will be taken in order to ensure that members of the public themselves do not endanger further the park?

The Prime Minister: In fact, there will be a control access. It is a good point because sometimes we do not want people to go and spoil the environment.

PALLAGAMES CASINO, GOODLANDS – INCIDENT – 05.11.2006

(No. B/1356) 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 he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to whether a case was reported regarding an incident which took place at the Pallagames Casino in Goodlands on or about 05 November 2006 and, if so, if an inquiry

has been carried out thereinto, indicating if any arrests have been effected in connection therewith

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, on 05 November 2006 at 1700 hours, an incident occurred at Pallagames Casino, Goodlands where it was reported that about 10 persons had gathered in front of the Casino, armed with metal pipes and sticks and had damaged about 18 gambling machines and four other '*roulette*' machines.

Subsequently, at around 1800 hours, about 150 persons had gathered anew in front of the said building and threw stones and 'cocktail Molotovs' inside the building. The value of the damages was reported by the owner to be around Rs6.6 m.

Up to now, three persons have been arrested in connection with the case.

One of them has denied the charge leveled against him and is being detained at Poudre d'Or Police cell. The second one has confessed having thrown stones and damaged panes of glass, but has denied having thrown 'cocktail Molotovs'. The third person, when charged, elected to remain silent.

The last two are detained at Terre Rouge Police Station pending completion of the inquiry.

I wish to inform the House, in fact, that we are looking at the whole policy with regard to the issue of licences to gaming houses to make the conditions more stringent and to look at the locality.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Sir, may I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether he is aware that there has been undue delay between the time of reporting to the Police Station and the coming of the officers on the site?

The Prime Minister: In fact, there are no reports stating that there has been undue delay. I can look into it.

PQ No. B/1357 – see after PQ No. B/1413

DETAINEES – RELEASE ON BAIL/PAROLE

(No. B/1358) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether, in regard to detainees who have been released on bail or on parole during the weekends since August 2005 to date, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police information as to the number thereof, district-wise.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, there is no release on bail during week-ends. However, a person who is likely to spend Saturday or Sunday in custody for minor offences may be released on parole after authorisation from a Police Officer not below the rank of an Assistant Superintendent as provided under the Bail Act 1999.

Prior to 1999, persons who were arrested on a Friday were likely to spend the weekend in custody. The amendment brought to the Bail Act in 1999 has brought fairness and citizens are no more deprived of their liberty for a longer time that is called for.

I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that since 2005 to date, 554 persons have been released on parole.

Mr Bhagwan: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Prime Minister has just stated that persons arrested for minor offences are released during week-ends on parole. Has the attention of the hon. Prime Minister been drawn to the fact that regularly *récidivistes* who are being caught for serious offences by the Western Division of Rose Hill, are being released because of undue pressure from Members of Government, particularly, one Member of Government....

(Interruptions)

Yes, I know...

Mr Speaker: If the hon. Member has somebody in mind, he has to go according to the Standing Orders and come with a motion against him.

Mr Bhagwan: Has the attention of the Prime Minister been drawn to the fact that pressure is being put on the senior officers of the Western Division by the Attorney-General to have people released on Saturdays...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: I am sorry, hon. Bhagwan. I will request you to withdraw that part of the question where you have accused the hon. Attorney-General.

(Interruptions)

You have to withdraw. If you do not withdraw, I am going to take action...

(Interruptions)

The fact that you are challenging my ruling, I am suspending you for the rest of today's sitting.

(Interruptions)

You cannot challenge my ruling. This is the Standing Order you have to respect it. Unless you withdraw that part, otherwise I will take action.

Mr Bhagwan: I have not made any allegations...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: I am sorry. You refuse to comply. I suspend you for the rest of the sitting of the House.

(Interruptions)

Order! Order!

(Interruptions)

Order, I said.

(At this stage hon. Bhagwan left the Chamber)

Mr Speaker: Time is over. Hon. Members, I wish to inform the House that the hon. Minister of Public Utilities is still suffering from his ailment of last week and has asked me that he be allowed to answer his

questions with some priority. I propose to have the questions addressed to the hon. Minister be called now. Hon Dowarkasing!

CWA – PRIVATISATION - DISCUSSIONS

(No. B/1376) 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 Water Authority, information as to whether the Board has had discussions on the privatisation of the Authority.

Dr. Kasenally: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that the Board of the CWA has never had any discussion on the privatisation of the CWA during the last fifteen months.

Mr Bérenger: I am sure the hon. Minister must be aware of statements made by the Chairperson of the Board in favour of privatisation of the Authority. May I ask whether the hon. Minister has been aware of that and whether the Chairperson had the green light of the Board before speaking in that direction?

Dr. Kasenally: It has never been the policy of Government, Mr Speaker, Sir and I have had a friendly chat with the General Manager of the Board on that issue.

CWA – GUNNESS, MR I. - COMPLAINTS

(No. B/1383) Mr G. Lesjongard (Second Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Public Utilities whether he has received any complaint to the effect that one Mr I. Guinness is being harassed by the Central Water Authority and, if so, will he, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Authority information in relation thereto.

Dr. Kasenally: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have not received any complaint to the effect that Mr Guinness is being harassed by the Central Water Authority. However, I have received a complaint to the effect that he has been transferred without justification.

Mr Lesjongard: May I ask the hon. Minister, Mr Speaker, Sir, whether the CWA had had to pay Mr Gunness Rs50,000 fine for harassment?

Dr. Kasenally: Mr Speaker, Sir, there has never been any case of harassment as far as the CWA is concerned. In fact, there was a case lodged by Mr Gunness against the CWA as far back as August 1993. Mr Gunness is a Senior Clerk. He entered a civil case against the CWA before the Supreme Court. He averred to be subjected to harassment and unfair treatment. The Supreme Court delivered its judgment in that matter on 20 October 2006. It is to be noted that in the ultimate paragraph, no element of harassment has been proved, except a case of unfair treatment. There are a lot of things in the judgment which I would prefer not to speak about because it would be unfair to Mr Gunness himself. However, I am prepared to let the hon. Member have access to that document.

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Speaker, Sir, this is a public document. May I know from the Minister what are the fees that have been paid to the legal advisers of the CWA for this case?

Dr. Kasenally: I don't have the details, Mr Speaker, Sir, but I will look at it and let the hon. Member know.

(Interruptions)

Mr Lesjongard: May I ask the hon. Minister whether there are two Senior Clerks at the office where Mr Gunness is posted?

Dr. Kasenally: Mr Gunness has been transferred as a general rule of the rotation of staff. This is a regular feature at the CWA. Such an exercise is carried out at all levels. The objective of this rotation was to enhance the personal development of officers. It involves about forty officers. Mr Gunness was transferred from one office in Port Louis to another one. There have been so many complaints and if we have to rescind all these transfers, the institution will not be able to function properly.

Mr Lesjongard: May I ask the hon. Minister whether on the establishment of the CWA office at Decaen, there is one Senior Clerk and presently, there are two Senior Clerks being posted in that office?

Dr. Kasenally: I don't have the details, Mr Speaker, Sir. But Mr Guinness was transferred from Decaen to another station in Bell Village.

FURNITURE (IMPORTED) - CUSTOMS DUTY

(No. B/1366) Mrs S. Hanoomanjee (Second Member for Savanne and Black River) asked the Minister of Industry, Small & Medium Enterprises, Commerce and Co-operatives whether, in regard to imported furniture, he will state the reasons as to why customs duty thereon have been increased since August 2006

The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development (Mr R. Sithanen): Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I shall reply to this question.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the rate of customs duty on furniture was lowered in the 2006 Budget from 65% to 30%. And let me remind the House that 30% is the new top rate in the tariff book, except for chairs and tables, which were reduced to 15%.

We received representations from the Furniture and Joinery Manufacturers Association and Enterprise Mauritius to temporarily review upward the rate of customs duty on chairs and tables so as to give time for accompanying measures by Enterprise Mauritius to become effective.

After examination, the rate of customs duty was raised temporarily to 30% on chairs and tables, except for office desks, computer tables and swivel chairs which remained unchanged at 15%.

This change, Mr Speaker, Sir, will provide the local furniture industry, mainly SMEs, a better opportunity to restructure with assistance from Enterprise Mauritius so that they can survive and thrive as we move towards a duty-free island. The higher level of tariff protection will provide the sufficient breathing space for the implementation and operationalisation of a support plan and accompanying measures. The higher protection is thus temporary and will be revisited in due course.

I am informed that Enterprise Mauritius has worked out an Action Plan for the furniture sector. The main elements are –

- (i) to increase competitive supply capacity of SMEs for supplying the local market and developing potential to export;
- (ii) to give specialised technical assistance for product design and development;
- (iii) to develop tailor-made training schemes in collaboration with the IVTB;
- (iv) to provide financing schemes under the Empowerment Fund, and
- (v) to provide adequate expertise to enhance efficiency and productivity of SMEs.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Can I ask the hon. Minister why then that the arguments of the local manufacturers were not taken into consideration before he announced the measures in the Budget?

Mr Sithanen: Mr Speaker, Sir, this is a very tricky issue. I am sure the hon. Member would appreciate that there are so many reforms that have taken place in the tariff. I mean many thousands tariffs, you know, have been brought down and, in some cases, eliminated. This is a tricky one and there is always a trade-off to be made between protecting the interests of the local manufacturers and opening up the economy so that consumers can benefit from it. On this specific case, Mr Speaker, Sir, there has been a request made by the local manufacturers. Let me inform the hon. Member - I am sure she is aware of the facts and figures – that there are about 4,500 small and medium enterprises operating in that sector employing - if my information is correct - around 10,000 people.

(Interruptions)

Of course, we have done the homework! I think what they have requested is that adequate time is given for Enterprise Mauritius to implement some of the measures that have been announced and, in fact, the hon. Member would know that a private company has been set up precisely with that objective in mind.

Mr Bérenger: May I ask the hon. Minister of Finance whether there was no change as far as the 30% margin is concerned? Was that 30% not raised again in any case?

Mr Sithanen: The measures that have been taken are specifically after the request made by the small and medium enterprises. We have temporarily raised from 15% to 30%; except for the items that I have mentioned, Mr Speaker, Sir, which are computer tables, office desks and swivel chairs which remain unchanged at 15%. This is the information I have.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: May I ask the hon. Minister whether there has not been any pressure exercised on him for such a measure and whether he can confirm that this measure was announced in the Budget only for an *effet d'annonce*, but it turned out to be negative?

Mr Sithanen: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have been very nice in my response. I can also make a lot of noise.

Mr Speaker: Better not!

Mr Sithanen: What I am saying is that the hon. Member must be responsible. There are many measures that have been announced where the margin is a tricky one. The hon. Member knows that very well. There are many Members in this House, Mr Speaker, Sir, know that, as we bring down the tariff, there will be these marginal cases between protecting the domestic industry and giving them some time and, at the same time, opening up the economy so that everybody can benefit from lower tariff.

COMMERCIAL COURT – SETTING-UP

(No. B/1367) Mr L. Bundhoo (Second Member for Montagne Blanche and GRSE) asked the Attorney-General, Minister of Justice and Human Rights whether he will state if Government proposes to set up a Commercial Court as a Division of the Supreme Court, in line with the recommendation of the Mackay Report and, if so, when and, if not, why not.

Mr Valayden: Mr Speaker, Sir, Government has already agreed to the restructuring of the Supreme Court into a High Court and a Court of Appeal, as recommended by Lord Mackay in 1998 and reviewed in 2006.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Mr Valayden: Mr Speaker, Sir, the High Court is to consist of four Divisions, including a Commercial Division which will hear bankruptcy, insolvency and corporate law matters.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! Order!

Mr Valayden: Government will see to it that the Commercial Division of the High Court comes into operation as a matter of priority.

Mr Speaker: Order, please!

(Interruptions)

Order, I said! Order!

Mr Soodhun: On a point of order, Mr Speaker, Sir, you don't listen when you have to. It is a shame for the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance & Economic Development.

Mr Speaker: Order! Order! Hon. Soodhun, I am not in a position to hear all that is being said in the House, especially from Members in a sitting position. What is your point of order?

(Interruptions)

Mr Soodhun: I hear unparliamentary words. *C'est très grossier!*

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order, I said! Hon. Soodhun, this is not a market. Order! What did you say?

Mr Soodhun: I know that the Deputy Prime Minister & Minister of Finance has used unparliamentary words. Do you want me to repeat what he has said?

Mr Speaker: I don't know.

Mr Soodhun: I am very embarrassed to say it.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: I am on my feet. Sit down! Order, please! Hon. Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, I did not hear what you said. Have you used any unparliamentary word?

(Interruptions)

Order, I said! If you have said something which is unparliamentary, I will request you as a gentleman to withdraw.

(Interruptions)

Hon. Bundhoo, order! Order, hon. Soodhun! Hon. Dr. Boolell, order!

(Interruptions)

I am suspending the House for one and a half hours for lunch.

At 1.00 p.m. the sitting was suspended.

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

Mr Speaker: Hon. Members, the Table has been advised that PQs B/1391 and B/1392, B/1401, B/1402, B/1403 and B/1404 have been withdrawn. Before moving further, the House will deal with PQ B/1367 which was not fully answered.

Mr Valayden: Mr Speaker, Sir, Government has already agreed to the restructuring of the Supreme Court into a High Court and a Court of Appeal, as recommended by Lord Mackay in 1998 and reviewed in 2006. The High Court is to consist of four Divisions, including a Commercial Division which will hear bankruptcy, insolvency and corporate law matters.

Government will see to it that the Commercial Division of the High Court comes into operation as a matter of priority. The establishment of a Commercial Court as a Specialist Court is yet another step that Government is proposing in order to modernize our legal framework and create a conducive business environment both for domestic and overseas investors.

Draft legislation is already being prepared for that purpose and will be introduced after consultation with the judiciary.

Mr Bundhoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister made mention of draft legislation. Can I know when it will be ready and circulated?

Mr Valayden: Mr Speaker, Sir, according to our timetable, it would be ready by mid January 2007.

RETIREMENT PENSIONS - BENEFICIARIES

(No. B/1368) Mr D. Rucktooa (Second Member for Grand' Baie and Poudre D'Or) asked the Minister of Social Security, National Solidarity and Senior Citizens Welfare & Reform Institutions whether, in regard to pensions, she will state –

- (a) the number of beneficiaries to date of the
 - (i) basic retirement pension;
 - (ii) basic widow's pension, and
 - (iii) basic invalidity pension, and
- (b) the amount earmarked for the financial year 2005-2006

Mrs Bappoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, the reply is being tabled.

ST FELIX SUGAR FACTORY – LAND ALLOCATION & CANES MILLING

(No. B/1369) Mrs S. Hanoomanjee (Second Member for Savanne and Black River) asked the Minister of Agro Industry and Fisheries whether, in regard to the closure of the St Félix Sugar Factory, he will state if –

- (a) land to be allocated to the workers have already been identified and, if so, the locations thereof, and
- (b) alternative arrangements have been made for the milling of canes of the planters of the region.

Dr. Boolell: Mr Speaker Sir, as regards part (a) of the question, land for allocation to workers of St Félix Sugar Factory has already been identified at Bel Air in the factory area of St Félix from fields Nos. BA 57, BA 58, part of BA 59, part of BA 63, BA 66 and BA 67.

As regards part (b) of the question, arrangements have been made as from crop 2006 for -

- (i) all canes from the factory area of St Félix area to go to Société Usinière du Sud, namely Union St Aubin with cascading of canes to Savannah, Mon Trésor Mon Désert and Riche-en-Eau. This measure is currently being implemented;
- (ii) all the infrastructure for cane weighing, testing and unloading to be kept in full operation condition at the two cane reception sites of St Félix and Union St Aubin as at present;

- (iii) planters to leave their canes either at St Félix or Union St Aubin, whichever is closer, and
- (iv) cane delivery quota, in respect of planters currently prevailing at St Félix sugar factory to be maintained.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Mr Speaker, Sir, with the closure of St Aubin in 2008, the canes of small planters will go to Savannah. Can I ask the Minister what will happen if Savannah Sugar Estate has a major breakdown?

Dr. Boolell: Mr Speaker, Sir, let me remind the hon. lady that the object is to ensure that there is proper cascading and that besides Savannah, the canes can be cascaded to Mon Trésor Mon Désert and Riche-en-Eau.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Mr Speaker, Sir, according to the Blue Print, the compensation of workers is paid by the receiving mill. Has SIDS agreed to pay the compensation or will such costs be met from funds received from the European Union?

Dr. Boolell: The costs, of course, will be partly met from accompanying measures and partly by the miller.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Mr Speaker, Sir, if such an exception is made for St Felix, will same apply in the context of other factory closures?

Dr. Boolell: Precisely, as I have stated on several occasions, the amount earmarked will go towards a compensation to be paid to workers and planters of the sugarcane industry.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Mr Speaker, Sir, if I am not mistaken, the funds from the European Union is meant to be spent for small planters. Can we understand that now, instead of the funds being geared towards small planters, they are being given now to SIDS, which is a *compagnie sucrière*?

Dr. Boolell: The hon. lady has got it completely wrong. When we obtain the funds, they will be disbursed in respect of preconditions and performance indicators. We know the amount that would be paid in January in respect to those preconditions and performance indicators. The authorising body would be the Ministry of Finance. We have already worked out the package as to the funds that would go into emerging sectors,

but the bulk of it would go into the reform of the sugar industry to ensure that there is competitiveness and enhanced sustainability of the sugarcane industry.

SOUILLAC HOSPITAL – DIALYSIS TREATMENT

(No. B/1370) Mrs S. Hanoomanjee (Second Member for Savanne and Black River) asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether he will state if Government proposes to provide the Souillac hospital with equipment for dialysis treatment.

Mr Faugoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, the House may wish to note that the new Souillac hospital was inaugurated in May 2005 just before the general elections of July 2005, is still not yet fully operational.

I wish to point out that the contract which was awarded for an initial amount of Rs158 m. has gone up to Rs235 m., i.e. an increase of over 50% in the initial cost. Let me give one vivid example of poor planning which has characterized the implementation of this project. It is while the new hospital was under construction, that a decision was taken to fix a laminar flow system at the cost of around Rs5 m. in two operating theatres without taking into consideration the height of the ceiling of these theatres. As a result, the operating theatres cannot be utilized until further major modifications and removal of the laminar flow, thereby entailing additional cost.

The completion date of the project which was initially scheduled for January 2003 was extended up to February 2005, that is, after a total extension period of 26 months.

It is most unfortunate, Mr Speaker, Sir, that when the building was inaugurated in great haste in May 2005, only part of it, I am informed, is less than 25% of the overall surface area of the building, had been commissioned. This part of the hospital can merely accommodate limited services comparable to those provided in an area health centre.

In fact, Mr Speaker, Sir, when this Government took office, it had the intention of making optimum use of the space and develop appropriate plans for a range of services to be offered there.

In this respect, in a reply to PQ. No. B/65 on 21 March 2006, I informed the House that although the facilities for the setting up of a dialysis unit was not included in the plans initially in the Souillac hospital, as a responsible and caring Government, we were considering and envisaging to provide such facilities over there.

However, the continued delay in the final handing over of the remaining part of the building due to structural defects is hampering the setting up of a dialysis unit over there.

I must inform the House, Mr Speaker, Sir, that not later than 25 October this year, a team of officers from my Ministry effected a site visit at the hospital regarding amongst other things the setting up of a dialysis unit over there. But, they were surprised to be informed that there was a recurrent accumulation of water, the cause of which is still unknown, on the floor of the room identified for that purpose, therefore, further impeding the implementation of the setting up of a dialysis unit.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the House that a technical committee has been set up at my Ministry together with the MPI to make recommendations on the range of services which may be provided to make optimum use of the hospital infrastructure.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Is the hon. Minister aware that in the region of Choisy, Surinam, Chemin Grenier, Rivière des Anguilles and even Camp Diable, there are about 50 patients who have to travel all the way to Rose Belle Hospital for dialysis treatment?

Mr Faugoo: There are 31 patients - I don't know where the hon. Member gets the number she mentioned – both in private and public sector altogether which cover the catchment area of Souillac Hospital. They are following treatment at Rose Belle Hospital and a transport is being provided to them.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Is the hon. Minister aware that these people leave their home usually as from seven o'clock in the morning and after undergoing treatment at around 12.00 or 12.30 p.m., they have to wait sometimes till two o'clock to get an ambulance to bring them back home and

this is creating hardship to these patients? Can the hon. Minister say what arrangements can be made to alleviate this hardship?

Mr Faugoo: As I said, Mr Speaker, Sir, when the new hospital project was conceived, all these facts should have been taken into account, because there were quite a number of patients. There is one transport which caters for those people living in that area; they have to come in the morning for treatment and then go back in the afternoon. There are certain practical problems which may be looked into.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Mr Speaker, Sir, this is not a problem only for Rose Belle Hospital. It concerns all the hospitals where patients are undergoing dialysis treatment.

Mr Faugoo: As I said, it is a practical problem which we need to look into.

Mr Hawoldar: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister of Health whether it is true that the Souillac Hospital is the only hospital in the world where in a female ward you have got a male toilet and

Mr Speaker: No, no! That question does not arise from the original one.

MAURITIUS TELECOM - DIVIDENDS

(No. B/1371) Mr S. Naidu (Third Member for Beau Bassin and Petite Riviere) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Telecom, for the year 2005, information as to the amount of dividends paid to –

(a) France Telecom, and

(b) the Government of Mauritius.

The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development (Mr R. Sithanen): Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I shall reply to PQ. Nos, B/1371 and B/1372 together.

For the year 2005, Mauritius Telecom paid dividends amounting to Rs646 m. to the shareholders in proportion to their shareholding as follows -

	Rs (Million)
(a) RIMCOM (Subsidiary of France Telecom)	258.4
(b) Government of Mauritius	222.6
(c) National Pensions Fund	42.3
(d) State Bank of Mauritius	<u>122.7</u>
	<u>646.0</u>

Mr Speaker, Sir, France Telecom has made a request for a distribution of the reserves of the company amongst the shareholders. The position of Government is that reserves should be put to the most productive use.

In this connection, the Board of Mauritius Telecom has requested management to work out a Strategic Plan with a view to moving Mauritius Telecom to the forefront in the development of Mauritius as a cyber island, using the technological expertise of France Telecom, the strategic partner, and to identify viable development projects. In the light of the development plans, the capital expenditure and investment requirements of the company over the next years will be assessed. The Board of Directors will then take a decision regarding the use of the reserves.

Mr Bérenger: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance whether he has given thought, or is being provided with information, as to how this request from France Telecom through its subsidiary tally with the original plans of expanding together Mauritius Telecom and France Telecom in the region?

Mr Sithanen: Mr Speaker, Sir, when I was provided with the answer, I asked that specific question precisely because the reserves of Mauritius Telecom have grown considerably. I understand that the reserves are approximately Rs6 billion and that because they don't have viable expansion plan in the region for a series of reason, that this request has been made France Telecom to use part of the reserves to distribute as dividend. So, they have set up this committee that will look into possibilities for investment in the region, but also for investment in Mauritius itself in activities that are related to the telecommunication sector.

Mr Bérenger: The original idea, amongst others, was the state-of-the-art technology, but also expansion in the region. Has France Telecom become part of the problem – it was supposed to be part of the solution to expand regionally? Has it been helpful in expanding regionally, or on the contrary?

Mr Sithanen: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have asked the same question and I have asked for a paper on this specific issue because when this strategic partnership was entered into, one of the plus point of Mauritius Telecom was to help Mauritius Telecom to penetrate the African region, but not much has happened since then. We are looking into ways and means of how to go round the system, because very often they can be seen as a partner, but they are also a competitor to Mauritius Telecom in some of these countries in the region. And which interest will prevail? Is it the company where France Telecom has 100%, or is it the company where France Telecom is in

strategic alliance with Mauritius Telecom to the tune of 40%? But, up to now, not much has happened as far as expansion is concerned in the African region.

Mr Dowarkasing: Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance give an idea as to what has happened to the one percent of shareholding promised to the workers?

Mr Sithanen: It has been agreed, Mr Speaker, Sir, since a long time. The discussion, I understand, hinges on whether the one percent should go to a Trust or to the individual employee. I understand that there was a request from the previous Government that this goes into a Trust. I don't think this is fair, so we have taken the decision that the shares should go direct to the employee of Mauritius Telecom. This will be done as soon as possible.

MAURITIUS TELECOM - FRANCE TELECOM - REQUEST

(No. B/1372) Mr S. Naidu (Third Member for Beau Bassin and Petite Riviere) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Telecom, information as to whether France Telecom has made a request for the reserves of the company to be distributed amongst shareholders and, if so, will he state the position of Government on this issue.

(Vide reply PQ, No. B/1371)

ALBION – HYDROPONIC VILLAGE

(No. B/1373) Mr S. Naidu (Third Member for Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Agro Industry and Fisheries whether he will state where matters stand in regard to the setting up of a hydroponic village at Albion?

Dr. Boolell: Mr Speaker, Sir, the setting up of a hydroponic village at Albion was announced in the 2005-2006 budget and this project was to be executed by the Food & Agricultural Research Council (FARC). The project value was Rs18 m. with the DBM providing a loan to FARC

to the tune of Rs15 m. FARC was expected to set up the infrastructure for hydroponic units and lease them to operators.

My Ministry decided to re-appraise the Albion project in September 2005 and accordingly modify it, in the light of technical observations made by the Agricultural Services, AREU and FARC.

The decision was taken to shift from Albion to Cluny, Beemanique on lands belonging to Rose Belle Sugar Estate. The rationale behind such a decision is as follows -

- (a) A much larger area was made available: 14.3 Arpents at Cluny compared with a maximum of 3 Arpents at Albion. Thus, it would be possible to offer hydroponic units of 500m² compared to 200 m² at Albion. Furthermore, some 31 units would be available at Cluny as compared to only 10 at Albion;
- (b) the climate at Cluny was more suitable, compared to the relatively high temperature at Albion that would exclude the production of some crops such as lettuce and strawberry, while reasonably limiting that of others such as tomato and sweet pepper between December and March, and
- (c) the soil at Albion being of the Dark Magnesium Clay type is prone to water logging, hence could lead to a drainage problem.

The other change brought in the project was that it was decided to go for a 'Rent and Build' model whereby land would be leased on an 'as is where is' basis to planters who would set up their own infrastructure.

My Ministry is not proceeding with the setting up of the hydroponic village at Albion for the time being.

Mr Naidu: **Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like the Minister to tell us whether the transfer from Albion to where he is proposing to do it is just a matter of coincidence.**

Dr. Boolell: **Mr Speaker, Sir, it is not a matter of coincidence, but a matter based on empirical and sound scientific evidence.**

(Interruptions)

MISCARRIAGES – DEATH CASES

(No. B/1374) Mr Y. Varma (First Member for Mahebourg and Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether in regard to women who are reported to have died in hospitals of subsequent complications following miscarriages, he will state, for the past five years –

- (a) the number thereof;
- (b) if any of these cases are suspected abortion, and
- (c) the actions taken, if any, in relation thereto.

Mr Faugoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that over the last five years, there has been one death which occurred on 07 February 2004 at Jawaharlal Nehru Hospital as a result of complications following miscarriage.

The late patient was diagnosed on her admission on 04 February 2004 for suspected abortion. As such, when she passed away, her corpse was referred to the Police Medical Officer for autopsy and, subsequently, for inquiry by the Police. The case against a doctor is pending before the Intermediate Court for involuntary homicide and also for abortion.

Mr Bérenger: Mr Speaker, Sir, I addressed this question to the Minister of Women's Rights, Child Development, Family Welfare & Consumer Protection last time, but she said that it should be put to the hon. Minister of Health and Quality of Life. Can I put, therefore, the question to the hon. Minister of Health as to whether in State hospitals, in spite of the existing law being what it is, abortions are being carried out by doctors in the public service when the life of a mother is in danger?

Mr Faugoo: That is so, Mr Speaker, Sir. In very exceptional cases where there is a panel of medical professionals who are of opinion that the risk is high and the life of the mother is at high risk, we do it.

Mr Bérenger: Can I ask the hon. Minister whether he has checked with the State Law Office and so on whether, as the law exists, this is legal or not?

Mr Faugoo: I am informed that prior to 1997, each and every case where there was a request for such an act, it was referred to the State Law Office for advice and they were giving advice on a case to case basis on the merits of the case and since November 1997, we have an advice tendered to the Ministry that, on the advice of the panel, we can give green light to abortion being carried out in circumstances which I said, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Varma: Mr Speaker, Sir, if that is the case, is the hon. Minister envisaging to amend the law to cater for these cases?

Mr Faugoo: We have to think about this, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Varma: Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to know from the hon. Minister whether his Ministry has an idea of the medical practitioners in private practice and private clinics who carry out abortions.

Mr Faugoo: I am not aware of any specific case except those which I have read in the papers, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Bérenger: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am referring to the second question which I had put to the hon. Minister for Women's Rights, Child Development, Family Welfare & Consumer Protection. Can I put it to the hon. Minister of Health? Has the hon. Minister checked with the State Law Office again whether under the existing legislation, the after the day or the night pill, *la pilule d'après* is illegal?

Mr Faugoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, in fact, I have got the details here. There are many women who come to hospital following complications of miscarriage, but the fact remains that they never say what happened. They

always say it was spontaneous, that they had a fall or any other reason, but they don't implicate anybody. So, the issue of legal or illegal does not arise. It is only when there is somebody who complains, who makes an official declaration that we can start an inquiry.

TROIS BOUTIQUES – BUS SERVICE

(No. B/1375) Mr Y. Varma (First Member for Mahebourg and Plaine Magnien) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping whether he has received a letter dated 11 October 2006 from representatives of the inhabitants of Trois Boutiques and the adjoining villages complaining about the buses operating along route 137 from Curepipe to Carreau Accacia and *vice versa* and along route 99 from Mahebourg to Carreau Accacia via Carreaux Esnouf, Des Places, Mon Trésor Mon Désert, Camp Carol, Le Bouchon and *vice versa* and, if so, will he state –

- (a) the nature thereof, and
- (b) the remedial measures that will be taken, if any.

The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping (Dr. R. Beebeejaun): Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that a letter dated 11 October 2006 from inhabitants of Carreau Esnouf has been received at my Ministry, making representations that bus operators along Routes 137 and 99 were not operating in accordance to the approved time table and more importantly, they were not complying with their approved routes.

Following receipt of the letter, the National Transport Authority -

- (a) carried out checks during morning peak hours on 30 October, the 03 and 07 November, and
- (b) is convening a meeting on 20 November with the relevant bus operators in the presence of the representatives of the Village Council to discuss about the issues raised, including the need for an additional bus along route 99 to supplement the existing bus operations.

NTC – CHAIRPERSON – APPOINTMENT, ALLOWANCES, ETC.

(No. B/1377) Mr M. Dowarkasing (Third Member for Curepipe and Midlands) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping whether he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from National Transport Corporation, information as to whether the Chairperson of the Board has been appointed and, if so –

- (a) the name of the incumbent;
- (b) the date of his assumption of office, and
- (c) the allowances and other benefits drawn.

The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping (Dr. R. Beebeejaun): Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that Mr Ram Brizmohun has been appointed Chairperson of the National Transport Corporation as from 18 October 2005.

As Chairperson, he is drawing a monthly fee of Rs14,250 and a car of the Corporation has been put at his disposal for official purposes.

Mr Dowarkasing: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I know from the hon. Deputy Prime Minister whether Mr Ram Brizmohun is an employee of the NTC?

Dr. Beebeejaun: Yes.

Mr Dowarkasing: Can I know from the Deputy Prime Minister therefore, whether he can confirm if he has obtained a 5-year leave with pay to assume the post of Chairman of the NTC?

Dr. Beebeejaun: No, Mr Speaker, Sir, this is not correct. He is employed on the same terms as previously was the case at NTC.

Mr Dowarkasing: Therefore, Mr Speaker, Sir, the fact that the actual Chairman is an employee of the NTC and he is chairing the Board, isn't it a breach of section 5 of the NTC Act?

Dr. Beebeejaun: No, Mr Brizmohun is on leave with pay as Depot Manager.

(Interruptions)

As I have said, this has been the practice in 1987 for three years. We gave him exactly the contract that was prevailing in 1987. They know that.

(Interruptions)

Yes, of course!

Mr Dowarkasing: I did not get the hon. Deputy Prime Minister correctly on the last part of my question. The fact that he is already an employee, isn't it a breach of the Act? The only employee who can sit on the Board should be elected by all the employees and he has been *de facto* on the Board as a Chairman. Isn't it in breach of section 5 of the NTC Act?

Dr. Beebeejaun: Mr Speaker, Sir, I repeat: he is employed on the same terms and conditions as the previous one in 1987.

MAURITIUS SPORTS COUNCIL – CHAIRMAN - ALLOWANCES

(No. B/1378) Mr M. Dowarkasing (Third Member for Curepipe and Midlands) asked the Minister of Youth and Sports whether he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Sports Council, information as to whether its Chairman has recently benefited from an increase in the allowances paid to him and, if so, the reasons thereof.

Mr Tang Wah Hing: Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I would like to reply to both questions B/1378 and B/1409 at the same time as they are related.

The Chairman of the Mauritius Sports Council had since long made a request for an increase in the monthly allowance payable to him as a result of his increased responsibilities.

Apart from chairing the Council's Board Meeting, he has to make site visits on different sports infrastructure which are managed by the Council.

Presently the Council is managing 42 sports infrastructure spread on different parts of the island. These additional responsibilities include management of conflicts with regard to utilization of the sports facilities by the sports federations, sports clubs and the public. Additionally, the Council is implementing the project relating to providing to the public, sports federations and sports clubs greater access to sport facilities in State secondary schools.

After examining the request, it was found that there was sufficient justification for increasing the monthly allowance payable to the Chairman of the Council.

Accordingly, approval was conveyed to the Council for increasing the monthly allowance of the Chairman from Rs12,000 to Rs25,000 taking into account his increased responsibilities.

Mr Dowarkasing: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I know from the hon. Minister what changes in the scheme of duties have taken place with respect to the former Chairman and this Chairman that he is being allowed more than a 100% increase in his salary?

Mr Tang Wah Hing: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have already said it is because of the increased responsibilities, because before, there were only 34 sports infrastructure and now there are 42.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order, please!

.../

Mr Dowarkasing: Can the hon. Minister confirm whether this gentleman is the same person who has ordered a mobile phone worth more than Rs20,000 whereas PPS of the Government were asked to use their same cellular phones as their predecessors?

Mr Tang Wah Hing: I am sorry, I am not aware about that.

Mr Dowarkasing: May I know from the hon. Minister whether it is the same person who has requested a new car as soon as he was appointed as Chairman?

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! Let the Minister answer.

Mr Tang Wah Hing: I am not aware, Sir.

Mr Jhugroo: Le ministre peut-il nous expliquer comment peut-on demander à la population de faire des sacrifices alors que l'allocation du président subit une augmentation de 108%?

Mr Tang Wah Hing: Je vais demander à l'honorable membre de ne pas faire de la politique.

MTPA – FAIRS, EXHIBITIONS ETC. – EXPENDITURE

(No. B/1379) Mr M. Dowarkasing (Third Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism, Leisure & External Communications whether, in regard to the fairs, exhibitions, workshops and roadshows organised by the Mauritius Tourism Promotion Authority since July 2005 to date, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, information as to a breakdown of expenditure incurred thereon.

The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism, Leisure & External Communications (Mr X.L. Duval): Mr Speaker, Sir, I am arranging for the information required by the hon. Member relating to expenditure incurred in connexion with fairs, exhibitions, roadshows and workshops organised by MTPA since July 2005 to date to be compiled and provided to the House as soon as it is ready.

Mr Dowarkasing: Mr Speaker, Sir, as the information has already been compiled and will be tabled, I just want to draw the attention of the hon. Minister to the fact that according to the figures that have been tabled, we see that as from July 2005 to March 2006 the sum of Rs39,162,000 has been spent on those items relating to my question. Can the Minister give a breakdown of all these expenses?

Mr X. Duval: I do not know where the hon. Minister has obtained his information. I presume that he wants it broken down between each and every mission. This is what we are going to do. We'll give him the information and he can check it

Mr Dowarkasing: Mr Speaker, I am just referring the hon. Minister to PQ No. B/368 which I myself have put to this House and the reply was being tabled. Can the Minister, therefore, state why is it that the report of the MTPA for the last three or four years has not been tabled in this House yet?

Mr X. Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, we were ourselves in the Opposition. In fact, it is a good question...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order, please!

Mr X. Duval: In fact, it symbolises the problem that we have at the MTPA in various agencies. The MTPA operates in the hotel sector, the salaries are extremely high and, therefore, it is very hard, Mr Speaker, Sir, to have experienced people to work where there is such competition for experienced people. One of the things that I'll be proposing to Government – we are working on it - is to remove MTPA from the requirements of the PRB so that we can get decent people. In fact, this has been the situation well before me and the hon. Member knows very well that there has been this problem of accounting at the MTPA and, hopefully, as this has been raised recently, I understand at the Public Accounts Committee, we should do it quickly. I have no problem with this.

Mr Dowarkasing: The hon. Minister is well aware of the problem as he has said it himself. Since his appointment at the head of this Ministry, the MTPA has appointed a Financial Director or Manager. May I know whether the criteria as set out in the PRB Report have been respected?

Mr X. Duval: Mr Speaker, I understand that the Finance Manager – whatever term it is – has recently been appointed by the MTPA.

Mr Lauthan: Mr Speaker, Sir, if you will allow me, apart from the exhibitions, fairs and roadshows etc., can the hon. Deputy Prime Minister inform us whether the Authority has any strategic programme in the light of frequent aggressions on tourists because of the adverse effect on the industry and on the economy?

Mr Speaker: If the hon. Member reads the question, it is about the fairs, exhibitions, workshops and roadshows. This supplementary question is not according to Standing Orders relevant to the main question. He can come with a substantive question.

Mr Dowarkasing: Since his assumption of duty as Minister, can I ask him whether he has taken necessary steps to know whether internal control procedures have been introduced at the MTPA so far?

Mr X. Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, this is part of the role of the Board of Directors of the MTPA. It is not my role to go and look personally into the internal control as there is a Board of Directors to look into this. As I mentioned there is a chronic problem of human resources in many Ministries including the MTPA and this has to be looked at as a major issue. I must also mention to the House that one of the major roles of the MTPA is to attend fairs, exhibitions etc. The question here relates to fairs, exhibitions, workshops and roadshows organised by the MTPA which is different to “attended” by the MTPA. The hon. Member must get his question right. Maybe the sum of Rs39 m concerns all the fairs, exhibitions etc. For example, there is a team going to China tomorrow morning and this is part and parcel of the work of the MTPA and it should do this because Chinese tourists are doubling over this year. There may be a fair in USA and officers of the MTPA travel to fairs all over the world. That is the point. This question relates to fairs, exhibitions, workshops etc. organised by the MTPA and that is what we are prepared to answer.

ECONOMY - PERIODICAL STATEMENTS

(No. B/1380) Mr S. Dayal (Second Member for Quartier Militaire & Moka) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance & Economic Development whether he will consider the advisability of making periodical statements in the House on the performance and evolution of the economy following the budgetary proposals for the current financial year.

The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance & Economic Development (Mr R. Sithanen): Mr Speaker, Sir, the reply is yes. We are going to provide the information on a quarterly basis.

INTERNATIONAL AIDS DAY – ACTIVITIES – 01.12.2006

(No. B/1381) Mrs F. Jeewa-Daureeawoo (Third Member for Stanley & Rose Hill) asked the Minister of Health & Quality of Life whether he will state the activities which Government proposes to organise in the context of the International AIDS Day to be observed on 01 December 2006.

Mr Faugoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, World AIDS Day is observed worldwide every year on 01 December. The theme for this year is “Stop AIDS – Keep the Promise”. To mark this event, an Open Day has been planned with the collaboration of different Ministries, NGOs and other stakeholders. Its aim is to raise awareness on HIV/AIDS in the community and to appeal for stronger commitment and action in the fight against the disease and also to eliminate stigmatisation and discrimination against people affected by HIV/AIDS and their families.

An Open Day will be held at St. François Xavier Stadium, Port Louis on 01 December 2006. It will comprise, *inter alia*, an exhibition on services provided by my Ministry, other Ministries and NGOs on HIV/AIDS prevention, control and treatment. Voluntary counseling and testing services will also be provided on that occasion.

In addition to the Open Day –

- (i) The ongoing media campaign on the subject – HIV/AIDS – will be intensified during the period;
- (ii) A power point presentation competition, a “*cyclo rallye*” and a youth camp will be organised by the Ministry of Youth and Sports;
- (iii) A film show focusing on HIV/AIDS will be screened at Serge Constantin by the Ministry of Women’s Rights, Child Development, Family Welfare and Consumer Protection;
- (iv) Sensitisation talks will be delivered by NATReSA for the benefit of members of the Plantation Workers’ Union, and

- (v) A dedicated website will be launched on the occasion along the lines of the educational website on diabetes, just launched on Sunday 12 November 2006.

Mr Speaker, Sir, apart from participating in the Open Day, I am informed that all NGOs involved directly or indirectly with HIV/AIDS prevention control treatment and education, will be organising a series of activities of their own on the occasion of the World AIDS Day.

Mr Bérenger: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister has given us the activities which Government propose to organise on 01 December. Is there any chance of the HIV Prevention Bill being ready to be launched on that occasion?

Mr Faugoo: Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir.

DBM – COMPUTER LOAN SCHEME

(No. 1382) Mr G. Lesjongard (Second Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to the loan scheme for the purchase of a computer, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Development Bank of Mauritius Ltd., information as to whether –

- (a) changes have been brought, and
- (b) a processing fee is now being charged.

Mr Sithanen: Mr Speaker, Sir, in October 2005, the Development Bank of Mauritius Limited increased the ceiling of the loan under the Personal Computer Loan Scheme from Rs25,000 to Rs35,000. The other conditions of the loan have remained the same with interest rate at 3% per annum payable monthly and repayment period of five years.

The House may wish to note that, as per the Bank's policy, a processing fee of 0,6% is charged for all loans exceeding Rs25,000 while for loans of up to Rs25,000, the Bank charges a flat processing fee of Rs50.

CITÉ LA CURE – SQUATTERS – LETTERS OF INTENT

(No. B/1384) Mr G. Lesjongard (Second Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue) **asked the Minister of Housing and Lands whether, in regard to the squatters of Cité La Cure, he will state if –**

- (a) their situation have now been regularised and, if not, why not, and**
- (b) they have been provided with essential services and, if not, why not.**

Mr Dulull: **Mr Speaker, Sir, in regard to part (a) of the question, I am advised that letters of intent for the regularisation of squatters at Cité La Cure were issued in 2004.**

With regard to part (b) of the question, I am advised that the issue of the provision of services was not addressed at that material time. The services included electricity, water, waste water disposal.

Since it took over in July 2005, this Government, in line with its prime commitment of putting people first, reviewed with sympathy the case of the regularised squatters with a view to seriously looking - in consultation with the concerned service-providers namely CEB, CWA and WMA – into the provision of such services. The caring search for those services will inevitably need to take into consideration all infrastructural costs, and the ready availability of funds. This matter continues to receive due consideration.

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Speaker, Sir, the Minister says that letters of intent were issued in 2004 and almost two years have elapsed now. May I know from the Minister when will those squatters of Cité La Cure be able to sign their lease agreement?

Mr Dulull: I mentioned in my answer that this matter continues to receive due consideration.

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Speaker, Sir, two years have elapsed and these poor families are waiting for that lease agreement to be able to move ahead for the construction of their houses. Will the hon. Minister at least inform the House after two years whether there is one month, two months or one year left for them to sign their lease agreement?

Mr Speaker: Is the hon. Minister prepared to answer?

Mr Dulull: I have already answered, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Speaker, Sir, I don't agree with this answer. This is not only in Cité La Cure. It is all over the island, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker: I am sorry, hon. Member. You are fully aware of the provisions of the Standing Orders. You have put a question, the Minister has answered and he refused to answer. The House will judge the answer given by the Minister.

(Interruptions)

VOLUNTARY RETIREMENT SCHEME

(No. B/1385) Mr S. Soodhun (Fifth Member for La Caverne and Phoenix) asked the Minister of Agro Industry and Fisheries whether, in regard to the plots of land to be allocated to workers under the Voluntary Retirement Scheme, he will state if he has received, from the Mauritius Sugar Producers Association, a request for the producers to be exempted from the obligation to submit applications for land conversion to the Land Conversion Committee and, if so, if a decision has been taken.

Dr. Boolell: Mr Speaker, Sir, there has been no request received from the MSPA, however experience of the VRS exercise has shown that a large number of workers, who have retired under the VRS as far back as 2001, have still not obtained their land. This is causing undue hardship to these people and steps need to be taken to review procedures to speed up the grant of the land.

Mr Speaker, Sir, it is the declared intention of the Government to review all procedures that cause delay in the processing of applications, and it is in this spirit that in November 2005, we debated, in this House, the SIE (Amendment) Bill, whose object was to exempt small land owner of up to 1ha from the need to apply for land conversion permit under certain conditions. This has had a very positive effect and already, the number of applications for Land Conversion Committee has, on average, been reduced from 35 to 20 monthly.

In order to address the delays referred to above, my Ministry is now envisaging to take the facilitation process one step further by offering certain facilities in respect of land that will be offered to employees in the context of the phasing out of camps, Voluntary Retirement Schemes and closure of factories.

When a final decision is taken, the House will, of course, be fully apprised.

Mr Soodun: Mr Speaker, Sir, the Minister has just mentioned that he has the intention to amend the Act. As the hon. Minister is aware, the Land Conversion Committee is composed of the officers from different Ministries.

Once they get rid of this Committee, does the hon. Minister has the intention to introduce a mechanism which will have a control on the land which is going to be allocated to the poor workers of VRS? Will the Land Conversion Committee be scrapped and replaced by another mechanism?

Dr. Boolell: There is no mention of scrapping the Land Conversion Committee. We want to expedite, but there will be checks and balances. If the hon. Member is pro-worker, pro-poor, we have to facilitate matters otherwise we know what will happen. Since 2001, the applications have not been processed with the consequences that costs go up and we know how this impacts badly upon the livelihood of the poor workers.

END-OF-YEAR BONUS - PAYMENT

(No. B/1387) Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun (Third Member for La Caverne and Phoenix) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether he will state if Government is proposing to continue with the payment of an end of year bonus to Mauritian workers.

Mr Sithanen: Mr Speaker, Sir, under current legislation and the last PRB Report, all Mauritian employees in the private and public sectors are entitled to an end of year bonus. The system is being maintained.

PLAZA THEATRE – PRIVATE/PUBLIC PARTNERSHIP

(No. B/1388) Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun (Third Member for La Caverne and Phoenix) asked the Minister of Local Government whether, in regard to the renovation of the Plaza Theatre, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Municipal Council of Beau Bassin – Rose Hill, information as to whether a decision has been taken to have recourse to a private-public partnership.

Dr. David: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that the Municipal Council of Beau Bassin/Rose Hill is considering the possibility of having

recourse to a private-public partnership for the renovation of the Plaza Theatre. In this respect, the *Fondation Spectacles et Culture* has proposed its collaboration to the Municipal Council to safeguard the theatre.

The initiative of the *Fondation Spectacles et Culture* is a laudable one, and the Municipal Council has been advised to seek all the necessary clearances prior to proceeding with the fund raising activities.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Will the hon. Minister consider tabling all the prerequisites of this private-public partnership?

Dr. David: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Member should have listened. I said ‘is considering the possibility’.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: In case this is settled, Mr Speaker, Sir, will the hon. Minister....

Mr Speaker: This is a hypothetical question.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask from the hon. Minister while entertaining such a policy, has he seen with other stakeholders – non professional theatre workers – whether they are willing to accept such a policy?

Dr. David: Mr Speaker, Sir, the Municipal Council of Beau Bassin/Rose Hill is considering that possibility. This does not mean that all the other possibilities would be close.

LANDLORD AND TENANT ACT - ASSOCIATION OF TENANTS, TRADERS AND PROFESSIONALS – PROPOSED AMENDMENTS

(No. B/1389) Mr S. Dayal (Second Member for Quartier Militaire and Moka) asked the Minister of Housing and Lands whether, in regard to the Landlord and Tenant Act, he will state if he has received a letter dated 04 October 2006, from the Association of tenants, traders and professionals proposing amendments thereto and, if so, will he state where matters stand.

Mr Dulull: Mr Speaker, Sir, I confirm having received a letter dated 04 October 2006 from the association of tenants, traders and professionals wherein several suggestions/proposals and recommendations have been made, including proposals/suggestions for amendments to be brought to the

Landlord and Tenant Act 2005. Likewise proposals have also been made by some landlords.

These are being looked into. If need be, the Landlord and Tenant Act will be amended with a view to striking a right balance in the interests of both landlords and tenants.

Sir, I also wish to refer to the hon. Member to the reply made to Parliamentary Question B/1130 of 25 July 2006.

Mr Dayal: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Minister whether the security of tenure of the tenant will be abolished by this law as from the year 2012?

Mr Dulull: Mr Speaker, Sir, according to the law, yes.

Mr Dayal: Mr Speaker, Sir, is the hon. Minister aware that the amendment brought to the Landlord and Tenant Act just before the general election of 2005, in the wake of creating a duty-free island, will severely penalise the small and medium enterprise, namely, the small businesses?

Mr Dulull: Well, one of the points raised by the tenants is in line with what the hon. Member said. The tenants' proposal is that the Landlord and Tenant Act 2005 is abusive and they have requested for an amendment to ease it and make matters easy for them. We are looking into it to give satisfaction to both parties.

Mr Bérenger: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Minister whether, among the representations made by the association, any representation relates to the workings - satisfactorily or not - of the Fair Rent Tribunal? And if yes, what is the representation?

Mr Dulull: Mr Speaker, Sir, they have made several representations, and one of them is that the tenants envisage to dispute before the Fair Rent Tribunal, and the valuer involved in the determination of the market value of premises.

Mr Dayal: Mr Speaker, Sir, is the hon. Minister aware that in 1999, the Landlord and Tenant Act was amended ...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: The Minister has answered that he is looking into the matter. There is no need to press further on that.

IRON BARS – PRICE - MINISTERIAL COMMITTEE

(No. B/1390) Mr A. Ganoo (First Member for Savanne and Black River) asked the Minister of Industry, Small & Medium Enterprises, Commerce and Co-operatives whether he will state if, following the request for the increase of the selling price of iron bars, a Ministerial Committee has been set up and, if so -

- (a) when;
- (b) its composition;
- (c) the number of meetings it has held as at to date, and
- (d) if a decision has now been taken by the Committee.

The Minister of Labour, Industrial Relations & Employment (Dr. V. Bunwaree): Mr Speaker, Sir, a Ministerial Committee under the chairmanship of hon. Xavier Luc Duval, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Tourism, Leisure and External Communications has been set up on Friday 03 November 2006. It has as Members hon. Valayden, Attorney General, Minister of Justice and Human Rights and hon. R. Jeetah, Minister of Industry, Small & Medium Enterprises, Commerce & Cooperatives.

The committee held its first meeting on Friday 03 November 2006 and considered all the facts and issues surrounding the supply and the price of iron bars. Moreover, at the request of Desbro (International) Ltd., a second ministerial meeting consisting of hon. Valayden and myself as Minister assigned the responsibilities of Industry, Small and Medium Enterprises, Commerce and Cooperatives was held on 13 November 2006. Desbro (International) Ltd came to enlighten us further on certain issues and clarify certain points. No decision has been taken yet.

Mr Ganoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, is the setting up of this Ministerial Committee not *camoufler* a motion of censure against the substantive Minister who has mishandled the whole case of the iron bars?

Dr. Bunwaree: I don't think it is fair, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Ganoo: Can the hon. Minister tell us whether there will be an increase in the price of iron bars?

Dr. Bunwaree: Mr Speaker, Sir, the matter is under consideration and a decision will be taken very soon

ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT - CREATION

(No. B/1391) Mr J. Cuttaree (Second Member for Stanley and Rose Hill) asked the Minister of Foreign Affairs, International Trade and Co-operation whether, in regard to the negotiations between the EU and the ACP for the creation of Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs), he will state where matters stand.

(Withdrawn)

SALLY, DR RAZEEN – CONFERENCE – 12.10.2006

(No. B/1392) Mr J. Cuttaree (Second Member for Stanley and Rose Hill) asked the Minister of Foreign Affairs, International Trade and Co-operation whether, in regard to the conference given by Dr. Razeen Sally on or about 12 October 2006, he will state if it was organised by his Ministry and, if so, the reasons therefor.

(Withdrawn)

CYBER VILLAGE – ROSE BELLE – LAUNCHING

(No. B/1393) Dr. R. Hawoldar (Second Member for La Caverne and Phoenix) asked the Minister of Information Technology and Telecommunications whether, in regard to the launching of the Cyber Village of Rose Belle, he will -

- (a) state if meetings were held by the then Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, indicating when and the names of the persons who attended those meetings, and
- (b) for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Business Parks of Mauritius Ltd, information as to the costs incurred.

Mr Sinatambou: Mr Speaker, Sir, I take it that the hon. Member is actually referring to the Business Parks of Rose Belle.

With regard to part (a) of the question, I am advised that meetings must have been held at the Ministry of Finance because instructions regarding the launching of the Business Park of Rose Belle came from there. I am informed that the Business Parks of Mauritius Ltd, whose core responsibility is to set up and manage the business park, was not party to the decision to organise the function. Instead, instructions were issued to the Business Parks of Mauritius Ltd by the then Senior Adviser of the then Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance to organise the launch, that is, the laying of the foundation stone ceremony.

The date of the ceremony as well as the inscription on the commemorative plaque were equally decided by the Ministry of Finance.

I am also informed that invitation cards were printed by the Business Parks of Mauritius Ltd, but were collected for distribution by one of the then Advisers of the then Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance. No invitation was made by BPML.

As regards part (b) of the question, Sir, I am informed by the Business Parks of Mauritius Ltd that the total costs incurred for the launch, i.e. the laying of the foundation stone of the Business Park of Rose Belle, held on 06 June 2005, amounted to Rs109,620.

Mr Hawoldar: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Minister what then was the role of the BPML apart from printing invitation tickets?

Mr Sinatambou: Mr Speaker, Sir, by the way things were being done, quite clearly, decisions were such that the BPML was only a funding agency.

CYBER TOWER PROJECT – LANDSCAPING, PALM/SHADE TREES - CONTRACT

(No. B/1394) Dr. R. Hawoldar (Second Member for La Caverne and Phoenix) asked the Minister of Information Technology and Telecommunications whether, in regard to the Cyber Tower Project, he will,

for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Business Parks of Mauritius Ltd, information as to the name of the company or individual -

- (a) to which/whom the contract for landscaping was awarded, and
- (b) responsible for the buying and planting of the palm/shade trees.

Mr Sinatambou: Mr Speaker, Sir, as regards part (a) of the question, I am informed by the Business Parks of Mauritius Ltd that contracts for landscaping works for a total amount of Rs35,392,380.78 were awarded as follows –

- (a) to the joint venture Nundun Gopee Co Ltd – Inscape Landscape Architect India for Rs15,092,380.78, and
- (b) for the joint venture Larsen & Toubro Ltd – Shapoorji Pallonji Co. Ltd for Rs20,300,000.

With regard to part (b) of the question, Sir, I am informed that, under the terms of the contract, the joint venture Nundun Gopee Co. Ltd – Inscape Landscape Architect India were solely responsible for procurement of all the trees. There is no evidence as to whether some works were subcontracted. But cyber village is certainly different.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! Order! Order, please! Order, I said!

CONSEILLERS TECHNIQUES REGIONAUX - APPOINTMENT

(No. B/1395) Mr J. R. Spéville (Second Member for Rodrigues) asked the Minister of Youth and Sports whether, in regard to the *Conseillers Techniques Régionaux* (CTR) for Judo, he will state -

- (a) the criteria laid down for their appointment;
- (b) their duties and conditions of service;
- (c) the number in post in mainland Mauritius, and
- (d) if the Mauritius Judo Federation has recently sought his approval for the appointment of a CTR to be posted in Rodrigues and, if so, where matters stand.

Mr Tang Wah Hing: Mr Speaker, Sir, the Mauritius Judo Federation has since September 2006 elaborated a programme for better coordination and development of Judo in different regions. The Federation has in this context designated six coaches to act as “*Conseillers Techniques Régionaux*”, including one for Rodrigues.

The “*Conseillers Techniques Regional*” is not an established post but refers rather to additional responsibilities assigned to a coach to supervise the promotion and development of Judo in a specific region. Their main duties among others include –

- (i) general supervision of the regional senior team, “*Centre de Formation*”, and clubs;
- (ii) control of licences issued by the federation and “*Passage de rang*”;
- (iii) promotion and coaching of judo in schools and in the region;
- (iv) submission of reports on beneficiaries of allowances by high level athletes, and
- (v) liaison between the regional committee and the federation.

Regarding part (d) of the question, I would like to inform the House that the Mauritius Judo Federation informed my Ministry on 12 September 2006 of the designation of the six “*Conseillers Techniques Régionaux*”, including one for Rodrigues. The federation had at the same time requested my Ministry to recommend to the Rodrigues Regional Assembly that the “*Conseiller Technique Régional*” for Rodrigues, who is presently under the establishment of the Works Department be transferred to the Sports Department and be based at Malabar gymnasium. My Ministry has supported the request.

I am now informed that the Commission for Arts and Culture, Youth and Sports of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly is waiting for the views of the Rodrigues Judo Regional Committee.

Mr Spéville: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Minister whether the appointment of a “*Conseiller Technique Régional*” in Rodrigues is not duplicating the work of the “*Conseil de Comité Régional de Judo*”, which is actually in place and doing the same job that the federation is trying to put forward for a “*Conseiller Technique Régional*”?

Mr Tang Wah Hing: Certainly not!

RÉDUIT TRIANGLE - STATE LANDS – BENEFICIARIES

(No. B/1397) Mrs A. Navarre-Marie (First Member for GRNW and Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Housing and Lands whether, in regard to the State lands in the Réduit Triangle (ex-Illovo Land), he will state the names of the beneficiaries and the extent thereof in each case.

Mr Dulull: Mr Speaker, Sir, before coming to the names of the beneficiaries of the State land in the Réduit Triangle and to the extent thereof in each case, it is a matter of great significance that I place the Réduit Triangle into its proper context.

Under the Illovo deal, Government became the owner of different plots of land, including the 65A of land in the Réduit Triangle.

The House may wish to note that the first proposals for the allocation of land at the Réduit Triangle were made mostly for Non-Governmental Organisations (NGO’s) and socio-cultural entities having limited or modest financial means. The site at Réduit is still underdeveloped, without any infrastructural facilities. To be able to implement their projects, the initial beneficiaries would have had to contribute significantly to meet the costs of putting up the required infrastructure. The latest estimates, as submitted by Consultants Mega Design, are Rs237 m. This would have put a heavy burden on the beneficiary NGO’s as no provision has been made by the then Government for meeting the cost of the infrastructural works. This constitutes a clear case of land distribution to NGO’s without due consideration being given to their own relatively limited financial resources, and, to the impossibility for them to invest even partly in infrastructural

works. Added to this fact is the reality that most, if not all, NGO's depend on voluntary donations and financial contributions, grants-in-aid to be able to achieve their objectives.

Thus, and prior to 2005, an initial planning layout was prepared following applications, including one from the Mauritius Sanatan Dharma Temples Federation received for land in the Réduit Triangle. The layout comprised mainly NGOs and socio cultural entities having very little financial means. However, the request from Mauritius Sanatan Dharma Temples Federation was not entertained without any valid reason at that material time.

Government, after taking stock of the situation prevailing in the Réduit Triangle, and, following a thorough study of the best use that can be made of the land in that Triangle, decided in its wisdom, in July 2006, to review allocation of land thereat, taking into consideration future development projects in the area. Government also decided to allocate land to the Ministry of Social Security, National Solidarity and Senior Citizens Welfare & Reform Institutions for the construction of a NGO Resource Centre and a NGO Academy which will cater for the needs of NGO's, other than those with specific land requirements.

The proposed land development in the Réduit Triangle also provides for a fairly extensive green space and takes on board economic development projects.

The hon. Member will see from the list of beneficiaries of land allocated in the Réduit Triangle that some 5A have been earmarked, or allocated, as at to date for the Mauritius Sanatan Dharma Temples Federation, some 1A50 for the Marathi Cultural Centre, some 11A70 to Greenfield Apollo Hospital Ltd., some OA40 for the Trade Union Trust Fund and some 19A for nine Government Bodies and Parastatals.

Mr Speaker, Sir, arrangements are being made to place in the Library the information asked for by the hon. Member together with a layout plan.

Mr Cuttaree: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Minister, since he has given land to many people, why he has cancelled the reservation made in favour of the Tamil Cultural Centre and of the Indo Mauritian Cultural Association which he, himself, knows are poor associations and which do not have the funds to do the work?

Mr Dulull: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Member has not listened to my answer.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! Order, please! Order! Hon. Cuttaree!

Mr Dulull: The hon. Member is trying to play cheap and petty politics. He has not listened to my answer. In my answer, I have said that we have reserved land for NGO Resource Centre and NGO Academy. We have provided spaces for all those who want to set up NGO's. There are lands there for all those who want to come for future development.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! Order, I said!

Mr Sayed-Hossen: Mr Speaker, Sir, regarding land around the Réduit Triangle, will the hon. Minister confirm that the then Government agreed to rezone 1,200 arpents without the payment of land conversion tax?

Mr Speaker: This does not arise out of the question. Next question, please!

SUGAR INVESTMENT TRUST

– LAND ACQUISITION – ILLOVO DEAL

(No. B/1398) Mrs A. Navarre-Marie (First Member for GRNW) asked the Minister of Agro Industry and Fisheries whether, in regard to lands acquired by the Sugar Investment Trust under the Illovo deal, he will, for the

benefit of the House, obtain from the SIT, information as to their locations and the extent thereof in each case.

Dr. Boolell: Mr Speaker Sir, I am glad that the hon. Member is reminding the House of a deal clinched on the stroke of midnight enabling a selective consortium of five entities to make a massive profit on land speculation. Contrary to advice given by the State Law Office, the then Government allowed the consortium to be exempted from fiscal responsibilities.

In fact, the consortium acquired land at less than Rs50,000 per arpent, which they speculated and sold to the Sugar Investment Trust (SIT) and State Land Development Property (SLDP). Thus, SIT purchased land from a consortium at a very high premium (Rs125,000 per arpent), exclusive of VRS cost, estimated at Rs126.3 m. and standing cane of 7,000 arpents representing Rs108 m., thereby subsidizing the five entities.

Not only that, the consortium was even allowed to sell prime agricultural land and was exempted from land conversion tax to the tune of Rs1.8 billion for 1200 arpents prime land. At that time, it was estimated that the land could be resold at a price higher than Rs4 m. per arpent.

I am advised by the SIT that the SIT Holdings Ltd, a subsidiary of the SIT, had acquired 7,006 arpents of land under the Illovo deal, and it was used precisely to subsidize the deal as I said earlier. The location of the lands and their extents are as follows -

<u>Location</u>	<u>Extent (arpents)</u>
Mon Trésor factory area	2,983
Britannia factory area	3,557
Highlands factory area	466

I wish to draw the attention of the House that the SIT has debts amounting to Rs861 m. raised, amongst others, to finance the land

purchased. Furthermore, 22 per cent of the land comprises road, sugar cane tracks, river reserves, drains and canals. Other drawbacks include poor agricultural land quality, water rights reserved by Mon Trésor Mon Désert, poultry and pigsty as well as squatting in certain areas.

Mr Varma: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have one supplementary question. Can the hon. Minister state whether advice that was tendered by the SLO...

Mr Speaker: I am sorry, this is not relevant to the question.

Dr. Hawoldar: Mr Speaker, Sir, being given that the whole Illovo deal was about 22,000 arpents of land, would the hon. Minister confirm that the SIT for the value of 7,000 arpents of land paid the equivalent of half the amount paid totally for the total amount of 22,000 acres of land?

Dr. Boolell: Mr Speaker, Sir, not only 22,000 arpents, but two hotels, three sugar factories and ...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Next question!

SIT – SALE OF LAND – AGRICULTURAL AND RESIDENTIAL PURPOSES

(No. B/1399) Mrs A. Navarre-Marie (First Member for GRNW and Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Agro Industry and Fisheries whether, in regard to lands acquired under the *Illovo deal*, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Sugar Investment Trust, information as to –

- (a) the names of the persons to whom plots of land have been sold for agricultural purposes, indicating in each case their locations and extent, and

(b) the extent and locations of land sold by the Trust for residential purposes, indicating the number of plots for each site.

Dr. Boolell: Mr Speaker Sir, in respect of part (a) of the question, the information sought is being compiled.

Regarding part (b), the extent and locations of land sold for residential purposes by the SIT are as follows -

- (i) 709 plots totaling 133.23 arpents at Wooton, Curepipe, and
- (ii) 150 plots totaling 18.45 arpents at Union Vale, Trois Boutiques

I am informed that a total of 2,724 arpents has been sold at Beau Climat, Bois Chéri, Deux Bras, La Flora and Mare D'Albert.

Mrs Navarre-Marie: Will the hon. Minister agree that this has been so far the best case to illustrate land democratisation?

(Interruptions)

STATE LAND DEVELOPMENT COMPANY – SUGAR CANE CULTIVATION

(No. B/1400) Mrs A. Navarre-Marie (First Member for GRNW and Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Agro Industry and Fisheries whether he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the State Land Development Company, the extent of land under sugar cane cultivation under the Illovo Deal falling under its control.

The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance & Economic Development (Mr R. Sithanen): Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I am replying to this question.

I am informed by the State Land Development Company that the effective area under sugar cane plantation under the Illovo deal falling under its control is around 2,150 Arpents.

POINTE BROCUS CEMETERY – PARKING – ALLOCATION OF LAND

(No. B/1401) Mr S. Mohamed (Third Member for Rivière des Anguilles and Souillac) asked the Minister of Housing and Lands whether he is aware that the Hayat-Ul-Islam of Royal Road, Rivière des Créoles, submitted an application to his Ministry dated 07 November 2002 for the allocation of a plot of land to be used for parking purposes at the cemetery of Pointe Brocus and, if so, will he state where matters stand.

(Withdrawn)

**MINISTRY OF SOCIAL SECURITY, NATIONAL SOLIDARITY
AND SENIOR CITIZENS WELFARE & REFORM INSTITUTIONS –
MEDICAL PRACTITIONERS – TERMINATION OF SERVICES**

(No. B/1402) Mr S. Mohamed (Third Member for Rivière des Anguilles and Souillac) asked the Minister of Social Security, National Solidarity and Senior Citizens Welfare & Reform Institutions whether she is aware that the services of the medical practitioners which were retained by her Ministry to serve in the southern part of the island, have now been terminated and, if so, will she state the reasons therefore.

(Withdrawn)

TOURIST VILLAGES – SETTING UP

(No. B/1403) Mr S. Mohamed (Third Member for Rivière des Anguilles and Souillac) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism, Leisure and External Communications whether in regard to the project for the setting up of tourist villages announced in the last Budget Speech, he will state if sites have now been identified and, if so, the locations thereof.

(Withdrawn)

RIVIERE DES ANGUILLES – MARKET – CONSTRUCTION

(No. B/1404) Mr S. Mohamed (Third Member for Rivière des Anguilles and Souillac) asked the Minister of Local Government whether in regard to the proposed construction of a new market place in Rivière des Anguilles, he will state where matters stand.

(Withdrawn)

COMMERCIAL ACTIONS - ARBITRATION MECHANISM – SETTING UP

(No. B/1405) Mr L. Bundhoo (Second Member for Montagne Blanche and GRSE) asked the Attorney-General, Minister of Justice and Human Rights whether in regard to commercial actions, he will state if Government proposes to set up an arbitration mechanism as an alternative to the dispute mechanism resolution method.

Mr Valayden: Mr Speaker, Sir, in line with Government's objective to modernise the legal and administrative infrastructure for conducting business in Mauritius, the Attorney-General's Office is working, in collaboration with the Mauritius Chamber of Commerce and Industry, on a regulatory framework as an alternative to Court's litigation in commercial matters.

Works on arbitration mechanism as an alternative for resolving commercial disputes have reached an advanced stage.

I wish to inform the House that Lord Mackay recommended the setting up of arbitration as an alternative to the present system of resolving commercial disputes. Arbitration provides for a speedier, cheaper, less costly and more flexible method of dispute settlement as opposed to lengthy, protracted and costly Court's litigation.

ST. PIERRE - INCINERATOR

(No. B/1406) Mr S. Dayal (Second Member for Quartier Militaire and Moka) asked the Minister of Local Government whether he will state if Government proposes to provide an electric or gasoline propelled incinerator in the region of St. Pierre.

Dr. David: Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I wish to inform the House that incinerators are presently available in the regions of Les Salines, Palma, Phoenix, Bigara and Belmont. Moreover requests have been received at my Ministry from socio-cultural organisations of various regions, including St. Pierre for the provision of facilities of electric or gasoline propelled incinerators in their regions.

My Ministry proposes to make available one incinerator in each local authority area.

However, in view of the high capital investment for installation of one such incinerator which is around Rs10 m. and its annual running cost of Rs1.2 m. and taking into consideration the prevailing economic situation, it will be difficult at this stage to accommodate all these requests.

STATE LANDS – CONSULTANT M. C. B. RICHARD ELLIS - REPORT

(No. B/1407) Mr E. Guimbeau (First Member for Curepipe and Midlands) asked the Minister of Housing and Lands whether in regard to State lands, he will state if a study was recently carried out by the Consultant M. C. B. Richard Ellis and, if so, will he state if he has submitted his report, indicating if a copy thereof will be tabled.

Mr Dulull: Mr Speaker, Sir, the services of Consultancy firm C. B. Richard Ellis were enlisted on 09 January 2006 to carry out a review of Government owned land and to make recommendations for an improved State Land Lease Policy with a view to maximizing Government revenue from State land leases. The Consultant submitted its final report entitled “A Review of Government-owned Land in Mauritius” in May 2006, and Government after studying the report, has set up a high-powered ministerial committee to look into the implementation of the recommendations contained therein. The question of tabling a copy of the report which is still under scrutiny will be considered.

CAMPEMENT SITE LEASES – BENEFICIARIES

(No. B/1408) Mr E. Guimbeau (First Member for Curepipe and Midlands) asked the Minister of Housing and Lands whether in regard to campement site leases which have either been converted into or transferred to other types of leases since 1980, he will table a list of the beneficiaries thereof, indicating in each case the location and extent of each site and the use to which the sites have been put.

Mr Dulull: Mr Speaker, Sir, the information requested for is being compiled. I am advised that this exercise is time-consuming and has already reached a fairly advanced stage. Once the exercise is completed, the pieces of information will be placed in the library.

Mr Guimbeau: Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Minister see to it that the information be placed in the library in a reasonable time. As regards my previous questions, the replies have not been laid yet.

Mr Dulull: We'll look into it and make sure that it is done in a reasonable time.

MAURITIUS SPORTS COUNCIL – CHAIRPERSON – ALLOWANCE

(No. B/1409) Mr P. Jhugroo (Third Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Youth and Sports whether he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Sports Council, information as to whether the monthly allowance paid to its Chairperson has been increased from Rs12,000 to Rs25,000 and, if so, the reasons therefore.

(Vide Reply to PQ No. B/1378)

DWC – EMPLOYEES - REDEPLOYMENT

(No. B/1410) Mr P. Jhugroo (Third Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping whether in regard to the proposed closure of the Development Works Corporation, he will state where matters stand as to the redeployment of the employees working thereat.

The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping (Dr. R. Beebeejaun): Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I am replying to Parliamentary Questions Nos. B/1410 and B/1413 at the same time as they relate to the same issue.

Following the announcement of the closure of the DWC, Government had set up a Ministerial Committee under my chairmanship to look into the implementation of the decision. The Committee has consulted the DWC unions on several occasions to discuss issues relating to redeployment of employees and to listen to their proposals and solicit their collaboration in the smooth implementation of the decision.

Maximum effort has been made to identify possibilities of redeployment in the public sector for the 391 employees on the permanent establishment of the DWC. Circulars have been issued by the Ministry of Civil Service and Administrative Reforms and the Secretary to Cabinet and Head of Civil Service respectively inviting Ministries/Departments and parastatal organisations to report vacancies in the similar grades. Possibilities of redeployment in public companies such as Air Mauritius, Cargo Handling Co. Ltd., Mauritius Ports Authority, Mauritius Telecoms and Mauritius Shopping Paradise have also been explored.

In view of the limited opportunities identified and practical problems, redeployment of employees had to be restricted to those below the age of 50. A redeployment strategy has, therefore, been worked out by the Ministry of Civil Service and Administrative Reforms for employees of the DWC below the age of 50.

Besides the DWC employees, there are 155 leading hands who our public officers posted to the DWC. They will remain on the establishment of my Ministry pending redeployment.

Government is proposing the following package of incentives to employees retiring on ground of abolition of office or to those who decide to retire voluntarily –

- (i) payment of normal retiring pension and an additional pension under the Pensions Regulations together with an additional compensation equivalent to 1.5 months' salary for each remaining year of service up to a maximum of five years;
- (ii) employees will also be paid all their accrued benefits standing to their credit at the date of retirement such as vacation leave, accumulated sick leave, passage benefits, etc.;
- (iii) Government will also assist the employees, including those on contract to obtain job in the private sector either directly or through the Empowerment Programme. A special desk will be set up to direct the employees;

- (iv) The employees will be provided with training to integrate the labour market;
- (v) Employees who are interested to form small companies in the construction sector will be given assistance in the formation of these companies through the Small Enterprise Handicraft Development Authority (SEHDA) and capital for these companies will emanate from the Empowerment Programme and the Development Bank of Mauritius. They may also obtain the equipment of the DWC on favourable terms;
- (vi) To help workers set up small companies, Government will make a one-off grant towards equity representing the difference between 1½ and 2 months of additional compensation;
- (vii) Government will also provide assistance to these small companies in obtaining sub-contract works from large construction companies.

The proposals of Government have already been communicated to the DWC unions.

Mr Bérenger: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Deputy Prime Minister, since the package of incentives which he has just referred to was communicated to the unions and so on in written form on 01 November, whether it's the final say of Government and how many employees are concerned by this package of incentives?

The Deputy Prime Minister: The package is being offered to those above 50 to all the DWC employees. It is also being offered to the leading hands and anyone below 50 who opts for this retirement package. Today the State Law Office has advised how to draft the letters and they are being sent soon so that each employee can choose his own option.

Mr Bérenger: Reference has been made in the document and today to an additional pension under the Pensions Regulations. Can we have more details and what does that mean?

The Deputy Prime Minister: I do not have the full information, but it was on the same terms as was done previously.

Mr Bérenger: The hon. Deputy Prime Minister has also referred to an additional compensation equivalent to 1.5 month's salary for each remaining year of service up to a maximum of five years. When we are talking about the remaining years of service, are we talking about 60 or 65?

The Deputy Prime Minister: 60.

Mr Bérenger: The hon. Deputy Prime Minister has also said – it is in the document, I think it was said - that those who will not be redeployed may also obtain the equipment of the DWC on favourable terms. Can I ask the hon. Deputy Prime Minister who will fix those terms and how will the whole matter be handled? Is it on the basis of first come, first served because the risk is big?

The Deputy Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I agree with the hon. Member. The risk is big, the difficulties are enormous, but until the workers have decided who are going to retire, who are going to opt for this package, it will be difficult for us to get the details, but the idea is there, not make big companies, but four or five small companies made up of the workers who will opt for this package. The details have not been worked out, but the opinion in Government is that we should offer them the best possible terms with one proviso that it should be serious and working.

Mr Bérenger: The hon. Deputy Prime Minister has told us that letters are getting out offering that package of incentives. Can I ask the hon. Deputy Prime Minister when will the next meeting between Government/Ministers and others and the trade unions, the other stakeholders, be held?

The Deputy Prime Minister: As soon as we get a response to the letters, we'll convene the unions again. Informally the unions are getting in touch with us and telling us the mood. I understand how painful it is for the workers, but the decision has been taken and Government will see to it that the best possible conditions are offered, but more importantly, redeployment, not necessarily in the Government sector, but in the private sector, takes place. We have every hope that this will work.

Mr Soodhun: Mr Speaker, Sir, a lot of confusion is going on. Is it not proper that the Deputy Prime Minister calls a meeting with the workers? We have witnessed yesterday how all the workers had gathered and were looking for a Minister to negotiate and they have turned to the Attorney-General. Is it not proper that the Deputy Prime Minister calls a meeting with all the workers and clears all the confusion?

The Deputy Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, we have had a meeting with the representatives of all the unions concerned and I must say that there was an atmosphere of willingness on both sides to solve the problem. A meeting with 500 or 600 employees is not going to solve anything. The problem, as we see it today, concerns those employees of the DWC who are over 50. As I said, the key word has been redeployment and the question is the redeployment in private or public sector. I hope that with willingness on both sides, we will be able to look after the interest of all these workers.

Mr Bérenger: Can the Deputy Prime Minister say whether this package of incentives is offered also to the contract workers? I am given to understand that some 150 leading hands who choose to be redeployed would all be redeployed, but can I know what will happen to some 140 staff members?

The Deputy Prime Minister: We are dividing them into three categories. Those who are leading hands will all be redeployed, there is no doubt about that. Those who are employees of the DWC and are under 50 will be redeployed. We are looking for redeployment in the private sector for all the contract workers.

Mr Naidu: May I ask the hon. Deputy Prime Minister how many employees above the age of 50 who are not going to be redeployed?

The Deputy Prime Minister: There are about 193 DWC employees who are above 50.

LEISURE PARK, RICHELIEU - MAINTENANCE WORKS

(No. B/1411) Mrs S. Grenade (Second Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Local Government whether, in regard to

the Leisure Park at Richelieu, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Black River District Council, information as to whether it has been handed over to the Council and, if so, when maintenance works were last effected thereat.

The Minister of Environment & National Development Unit (Mr A. Bachoo): Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I shall reply to this question. The Leisure Park at Richelieu has not yet been handed over to Black River District Council as some additional works, namely the steel bridges are being executed and will be completed by the end of November 2006.

My Ministry will thereafter make arrangement for the handing over of the Leisure Park to the Ministry of Local Government. Maintenance works are being undertaken by the contractor.

RICHELIEU - HANDBALL/VOLLEYBALL PITCH

(No. B/1412) Mrs S. Grenade (Second Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Youth & Sports whether he is aware of the bad state of the handball cum volleyball pitch at Richelieu and, if so, will he state the remedial measures that will be taken, if any.

Mr Tang Wah Hing: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that the handball cum volleyball pitch at Richelieu falls under the purview of the Black River District Council which is presently responsible for the maintenance and management of the compound.

I am also informed by the Council that the handball/volleyball pitch is in a good state except for the synthetic lining which is likely to deteriorate shortly due to misuse by a group of persons who play football and ride bicycles thereon.

In this context, the Black River District Council has referred the matter to the attention of the Police Department and the Richelieu Village Councillors. The District Council has also replaced the locks of the gate on three occasions and all attempts by the Richelieu Village Councillors to bring these persons to reason have so far been unsuccessful.

My Ministry will liaise with the Ministry of Local Government, the Black River District Council and the Police Department to take remedial action as appropriate for the better utilisation of the pitch.

Mrs Grenade: M. le president, je voudrais attirer l'attention du ministre sur le fait que ce site est très important pour les habitants de l'endroit car très souvent il y a des bagarres en raison de la présence des drogués – j'avais justement posé une question ce matin concernant le *drug trafficking* à Cité Richelieu. Je demande au ministre d'accorder une attention spéciale à ce *volleyball pitch*.

Mr Tang Wah Hing: Sir, action will be taken.

DWC – EMPLOYEES - REDEPLOYMENT

(No. B/1413) Mr A. Ganoo (First Member for Savanne and Black River) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping whether, in regard to the proposed closure of the Development Works Corporation, he will state where matters stand as to the redeployment of the employees working thereat.

(vide P.Q. No. 1410)

Mr Speaker: P.Q. No. B/1357 put by hon. Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun, No. B/1357 is going to be answered

NATIONAL RESIDENTIAL PROPERTY TAX - COMMITTEE

(No. B/1357) 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 the Committee set up to review the National Residential Property Tax, he will state if any sittings have been held as at to date and, if so, the recommendations made, if any.

The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development (Mr Sithanen): Mr Speaker, Sir, the Committee on the National Residential Property Tax has so far met three times. The work of the Committee is still ongoing and no recommendations have been made at this stage.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: May I ask the hon. Minister whether he thinks that any recommendations, that would come forward, would be fairer or....

Mr Speaker: This is hypothetical.

Mr Ganoo: Is the hon. Minister agreeable to allow Members of the Opposition to come and depone before this Committee?

Mr Sithanen: I don't know whether it is possible to depone, but what I would welcome is that if any Member has got any proposal to make, he can send me this proposal. I can arrange for the Committee to meet any Member of the House who would like to make suggestions and recommendations.

Mr Ganoo: The proposal of the Opposition is to get rid of it.

(Interruptions)

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Can the hon. Minister inform the House when he expects the Committee to complete its work?

Mr Sithanen: Mr Speaker, Sir, I will reply to hon. Ganoo, All of us would like to give everything free. All of us would like not to charge any tax to anybody. The hon. Member has been in the House sufficiently a long time to know what is the intention. To answer the question of hon. Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun, we have given a task to a committee and I indicated last time that this piece of legislation will come into effect only in September 2007, we have plenty of time to complete the work.

**MOTION
SUSPENSION OF S.O 10 (2)**

The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport & Shipping (Dr. R. Beebeejaun): Sir, I beg to move that all the business on today's Order Paper be exempted from the provisions of paragraph (2) of Standing Order 10.

The Minister of Local Government (Mr J. B. David) rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.