

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

**MINISTRY OF HEALTH - PERMANENT SECRETARY -
INTERDICTION**

(No. B/483) **Mrs S. Hanoomanjee (Second Member for Savanne and Black River)** asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether, in regard to the interdiction since last year of the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life, he will state where matters stand.

(Withdrawn)

**FORENSIC SCIENCE LABORATORY -
DNA INVESTIGATIONS**

(No. B/484) **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 Forensic Science Laboratory is not adequately equipped to carry out DNA investigations and, if so, will he –

- (a) for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the extent to which, if available, such investigations would help in the elucidation of criminal offences, and
- (b) state if it is proposed to provide such facilities to the Police Force.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker Sir, in my reply to PQ B/76 at the sitting of 04 April 2006, I indicated that the Management of the Forensic Science Laboratory was making arrangements for the acquisition of a new and more sophisticated DNA equipment.

I am now informed that the equipment has been received and will become operational in June 2006. Training of personnel is ongoing.

The FSL has been conducting DNA testing to assist Police investigations as from July 2004. Since then, the FSL has performed around 2000 DNA tests on samples submitted by Police for inquiry purposes in various cases.

According to information received from the Police, DNA testing has helped in the reorientation of Police investigation in several cases among which seven high profile ones and also led to the elucidation of one case.

Mr Speaker, Sir, however, it is felt that there is a growing need for a complete overhaul of the existent DNA profiling facility at the FSL. It is in this context that, I have approached the French Government to send us a high calibre consultant to carry out this assignment.

As regards part (b) of the question, the FSL was detached from the Police Department in July 2000 with a view to ensuring its independence of action. The Police Department has since then been responsible for the Scene of Crime Office, whilst the FSL examines, analyses and interprets the results. So far, the collaboration between these two services is working satisfactorily.

Mr Varma: Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to ask the hon. Prime Minister whether he is aware that with the previous DNA equipment, there was a problem that the personnel was not trained before the purchase of the DNA equipment. Are we not being faced with the same situation, namely, that the personnel has not been trained before the purchase of this new equipment?

The Prime Minister: In fact, I was looking through the file. When we were in Opposition, the Minister of Agro-Industry and Fisheries, hon. Boolell, has asked many times questions in Parliament as to why the then former Prime Minister did not realise that people had been trained, but they were not bonded. As soon as they were trained, they left the country and did not come back. That was the problem. But training has been ongoing, and with the new equipment, obviously, there are some changes in the training that is going on.

Mr Dowarkasing: Mr Speaker, Sir, in a recent PQ, the hon. Prime Minister answered that he is considering the possibility of changing the law because there are some impediments for bringing those tests to the Court. Can we know where matter stands?

The Prime Minister: In fact, the FSL is working with the State Law Office and the draft for the DNA legislation is being prepared and, as soon as it is ready, it will come to Parliament.

Mr Varma: Can the hon. Prime Minister kindly inform the House whether he is aware that DNA samples have been sent abroad to be analysed and why this is the case when there are facilities available in Mauritius?

The Prime Minister: Very often, samples have been sent abroad.

DELTA VISION CO. LTD - TOXIC & POISONOUS PRODUCTS

(No. B/485) Mr A. Jugnauth (First Member for Quartier Militaire and Moka) 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 some 2 tons of highly toxic and poisonous products are lying on the premises of the Delta Vision Co. Ltd., a company which is in receivership, at St Pierre, without any security measures and, if so, will he state the remedial actions he proposes to take.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker Sir, first of all, I would like to thank the First Member for Quartier Militaire and Moka who drew my attention to the presence of a highly toxic and poisonous product on the premises of Delta Vision Ltd. last Tuesday, 09 of May. This company is involved in the manufacture of organic lenses and has been in operation since 1985. It is under receivership since 29 April 2006. The closing is scheduled for 19 May 2006.

The company imported about 5,000 kg of Isopropyl Chloroformate, which is a dangerous chemical, in 2001 and presently has a stock of 2100 kg. According to information received from the Ministry of Industry, Small

& Medium Enterprises, the company did not apply for an import permit in respect of the Isopropyl Chloroformate.

As soon as my attention was drawn to the existence of this highly dangerous chemical, I requested the Commissioner of Police to look into the matter. A site visit was effected on the same day by the Officers of the Ministry of Environment and National Development Unit, Police Department and *Police de L'Environnement*.

I must reassure the House, that although the matter was not reported to the relevant authorities, precautionary measures to keep the chemical under a constant temperature between -10°C and 0°C in a cold room, had already been taken by the company.

However, in view of the potential danger associated with its storage, the Dangerous Chemical Control Board which is responsible for the control of dangerous chemicals, is taking the lead, with the collaboration of other authorities, to co-ordinate actions for the disposal of the chemical. The following remedial measures were taken -

- (a) Police has cordoned off the area and the cold room has been sealed. Besides private security arrangements which are already there, police is guarding the factory premises on a 24-hour basis;
- (b) the Fire services have been made aware of this potential risk;
- (c) the Central Electricity Board, although there is a standby generator which is available, the Central Electricity Board is ensuring a continuous supply of electricity. But, as I said, in the event of any interruption there is also a standby generator;
- (d) as the Company is in liquidation, the Receiver Manager who is responsible for the safe storage and disposal of the product, has been instructed to take early measures for the safety of the chemical. They have also been requested to contact the supplier "*Société Nationale des Poudres Explosives*" from France for the possibility of destruction and disposal of the product;

- (e) foreign expertise is being sought for an early and safe disposal of the chemical in keeping with international norms and practices. In this context, the possibility of availing the services of Appave Sud, a French Laboratory which has expertise and international experience of neutralising isopropyl Chloroformate, is being explored, and
- (f) access to the store is being strictly monitored.

The relevant authorities are closely monitoring the situation.

Mr Jugnauth: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have a few supplementary questions. I must, from the very outset, say that I am not doing politics. There are about 4000 to 5000 people who are working in that industrial zone and we have to handle this problem with a lot of care. Can I know from the hon. Prime Minister why, as at today, neither he nor his Government has the faintest idea of how to dispose of this highly toxic substance?

The Prime Minister: First of all, let me remind the hon. Member that these chemicals were imported in 2001 without an import permit. Let us ask ourselves the question: why were such dangerous chemicals allowed to come into the country without an import permit? Secondly, the company itself does not have a clue as to how to get rid of the product. They imported the product, but they did not have a clue as to how they would get rid of it. The Receiver Manager has been told that he has to look into ways and means and we are also looking at ways and means. I mentioned, in fact, that a French lab, which has the expertise and international experience of neutralising the product, has been contacted and we are exploring ways of doing it. But we want to be very careful because this is a dangerous product, as the hon. Member has rightly pointed out, and this is the situation at the moment.

Mr Jugnauth: Mr Speaker, Sir, before I lose my trend of thought, let me ask these questions in order to clear matters so that the Prime Minister can use what I am saying to facilitate matters. Mr Speaker, Sir, these days the hon. Prime Minister has been talking of a responsible Opposition and so on and so forth. But is it responsible on behalf of Government Ministers to go and visit the company and then stated that everything is in order, that there is no problem as far as this substance is concerned when, in fact, there

are a number of shortcomings that I am going to tell the Prime Minister?
First of all ...

(Interruptions)

That is what I am saying: whether it is responsible for Government Ministers to say that there is no problem when, in fact, there are four problems that exist there and I am going to state them.

Mr Jugnauth: First of all, the hon. Prime Minister has talked about..

Mr Speaker: The hon. Minister should put it in a question form.

Mr Jugnauth: I have put the question. Is it responsible on the part of Government Ministers to come and say that everything is in order and that there is no problem in spite of the fact that there are problems? Let me mention these problems. First of all, the Prime Minister spoke about electricity and generator. Fair enough, it exists! But does the hon. Prime know that it contains only one compressor and that the norm for these dangerous chemicals is to have, at least, two compressors? If the electricity and the generators are on, but the compressor fails, there would be a problem.

Secondly, I have been told that this substance melts quicker than other substances which are supposed to be kept under that temperature. Thirdly, the ball has been sent back to the Receiver Manager by Dr. Sibartie. And fourthly, the Receiver Manager, on his part, says that he cannot do anything about it, and only ordinary Police Officers have been sent there for sentry when there is a team of bomb experts at the SMF. Why have they not been sent there? In spite of all these flaws, why a Minister has come and told the people that everything is in order?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, first of all, let me correct the hon. Member. I did not talk of responsible Opposition. The Leader of the Opposition was there and, in fact, I have talked to the *Rédacteur en Chef* of "*Le Mauricien*". I was shocked to see the headline that they have put. I said that I invited the Opposition to be responsible and not to be demagogic which is very different from what I said. But, obviously, everybody here reads the papers and believe what the papers say. Unfortunately, it is the Bible!

Secondly, the hon. Member is talking about compressors. He seems to have a degree in engineering, I don't know!

(Interruptions)

We have to ask ourselves: how was it that, in 2001, this substance was allowed to come in? Hon. Bhagwan, if I am not mistaken, was the Minister of Environment. Why was it then that they did not look at whether it had one or two compressors? That is the second thing.

(Interruptions)

But, as the hon. Member said, I am also looking forward. We don't want to look backwards, we want to look forward.

Thirdly, I think it was right that Minister Bachoo, Minister Kasenally and Minister Faugoo went to show their concern and to ensure that everything was all right. As I said, there is no immediate problem, because we are assuring, first of all, that the CEB ensures that there is no interruption of electricity. Secondly, as I said, the Receiver Manager says that they have already put a standby generator. That is why Mr Sibartie sent the letter to him. He has to take his responsibility as well. He has a responsibility. He is the Receiver Manager, he is in the shoes of the Directors of the company. He cannot shrink from his responsibility and leave it for Government to do it. They imported, they have also to face their responsibilities.

Mr Jugnauth: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Prime Minister is saying that the Receiver Manager has to do his work. But I am asking the hon. Prime Minister, particularly in such a circumstance whether it would not have been better for the Government to take over, sending a notice to the Receiver Manager who is representing the Mauritius Commercial Bank. It is important for the Government to take the lead and the expenses met by the Receiver Manager. The Receiver Manager is representing no less than the Mauritius Commercial Bank.

The Prime Minister: Perhaps the hon. Member is not aware, I should have mentioned it. A formal notice has already been sent to the Receiver Manager. Secondly, we do not want to shift responsibility. He has to take his responsibility as the Government is doing. Experts have gone there

which the hon. Member doesn't seem to know, to evaluate the situation and that is the results of their evaluation.

Mr Dayal: Mr Speaker, Sir, is the hon. Prime Minister aware that one and a half to two years ago, officials and technicians of the Ministries of Health and Environment effected a site visit there and nothing was done? I would like to know from the hon. Prime Minister why is it that the previous Government did nothing.

(Interruptions)

The Prime Minister: Why they went there and did nothing? It is not within my immediate knowledge. Why they went there and did nothing? I am not aware!

Dr. Ramloll: Mr Speaker, Sir, the former Minister of Health was there for four and a half years together with the Minister of Environment and it is only yesterday that this Government is taking the responsibility of...

Mr Speaker: What is the hon. Member's question?

(Interruptions)

Dr. Ramloll: My question is: why they did not take such decisions then?

The Prime Minister: I said, Mr Speaker, Sir, that the dangerous chemicals were imported without an import permit in 2001. It is surprising. Although hon. Jugnauth has drawn my attention to it, it is surprising that this state of affairs was allowed.

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Prime Minister has stated that experts have already made an assessment of the situation. Has a buffer zone been delimited around the factory in case there is any problem?

The Prime Minister: If the hon. Member goes there, he will see what are the difficulties concerning a buffer zone in that area, but, as I said, it has been cordoned off.

(PQ No. B/486 - See after PQ No. B/541)

AIRPORT OF MAURITIUS LTD. - RECRUITMENT

(No. B/487) Mr. S. Lauthan (Third Member for Port Louis Maritime and Port Louis East) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether in regard to the recruitment exercises effected since July 2005, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Airport of Mauritius Ltd., information as to -

- (a) the number of persons recruited for in each category, indicating their names, and
- (b) whether these posts were advertised.

(Withdrawn)

RESIDENCE KENNEDY, QUATRE BORNES - DRUG TRAFFICKING

(No. B/488) Mrs D. Perrier (Fourth 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 of a recrudescence of drug trafficking in the vicinity of Residence Kennedy, Quatre Bornes, specially in Avenue de l'Espérance and, if so, will he state the measures he proposes to take in connection thereto.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, Residence Kennedy is known to be a drug prone area and it is a hot spot for drug related activities. In fact, there have been some 290 drug-related cases detected in that area, including 83 at Avenue l'Espérance from year 2000 to 11 May 2006. 290 persons have been arrested in this connection. It includes cases related to heroin, gandia, sedatives and money laundering connected with drugs.

The following measures have been taken by the Commissioner of Police to combat drugs proliferation in this region -

- The personnel of Quatre Bornes Police Station performs patrols on a 24-hour basis. They are backed by the ERS and the Divisional Support Unit (DSU).
- The Anti-Drug and Smuggling Unit provides permanent coverage and carries out searches and checks on a regular basis.
- The local Police and the ADSU have working arrangements with the '*Forces Vives*' of the locality. Any information received concerning drug activities, is treated confidentially and acted upon.
- Moreover, the local CID, Police and ADSU respond promptly to any call for assistance from the residents of the locality.

NATReSA has, on its part, organised several workshops on the issue of substance abuse and HIV/AIDS as well as training of social workers at Cité Kennedy under the Family Project.

Mr Ganoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Prime Minister has answered very lengthily on the issue. May I ask him whether he can use his good offices to ask the Commissioner of Police to have an ADSU Unit at the Quatre Bornes Police Station which is very close to Cité Kennedy. That might perhaps help since Cité Kennedy is, indeed, a very hot spot area, as the hon. Prime Minister himself said in his answer.

The Prime Minister: I just want to clarify the question. The hon. Member is asking whether the...

Mr Ganoo: To have an ADSU Unit at the Quatre Bornes Police Station.

The Prime Minister: From the information I have, they provide permanent coverage and carry out searches, but I will talk to the Commissioner of Police.

**RAPE - ALLEGED CASES - JULY 2004-APRIL 2005, JULY 2005-
APRIL 2006**

(No. B/489) Mrs F. Labelle (Third Member for Vacoas and Floreal) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether in regard to the alleged cases of rape for the periods July 2004 to April 2005 and July 2005 to April 2006, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to –

- (a) the number thereof;
- (b) the number of alleged victims aged 40 years and above, and
- (c) the number of alleged victims aged less than 18 years.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker Sir, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that the number of alleged cases of rape reported for period July 2004 to April 2005 stands at twenty-six and for period July 2005 to April 2006, the number stands at twenty-seven.

As regards part (b), the number of alleged victims aged 40 and above for period July 2004 to April 2005 is two and for period July 2005 to April 2006, the number of alleged victims is three.

As regards part (c), the number of alleged victims aged less than 18 years for period July 2004 to April 2005 is eight while for period July 2005 to April 2006, it is twelve.

I would like to inform the House that Government intends to introduce legislation, as I said, which is practically ready, I should say, to render the punishment for murder and rape more severe, including increasing imprisonment for rape which is at the moment 15/16 years to a maximum of 60 years without remission.

However, I would like to make an appeal to Members of the House not to adopt a partisan approach to the problem of law and order in the country. In fact, as we know, society as a whole - not just in this country,

but abroad also - has a problem of erosion of social values, and our social institutions have not been able to deal effectively with the problem of degradation of social and moral values. It is a worldwide phenomenon, as I said, and it is a problem that should be solved in collaboration with each and every Mauritian, giving whatever collaboration we can to play the respective role.

Mrs Labelle: Mr Speaker, Sir, I do agree, because it is not a question where we can be partisan. That's why I would like to ask the hon. Prime Minister whether, despite the repressive measures, his Government is considering to have preventive measures to address this problem. I do believe that we have to put some preventive measures.

The Prime Minister: As I said, it is a problem of society as a whole. In that sense, we have to use preventive measures, but we also have to give a strong signal that this will not be tolerated.

Mr Speaker: I have to inform the House that Parliamentary Questions B/500, B/502, B/503, B/523, B/526, B/528, B/529, B/530 and B/531 have been withdrawn.

(PQ B/490 – see after PQ B/486)

IDRICE GOOMANY CENTRE – SOCIAL WORKERS – ATTEMPTS OF INTIMIDATION

(No. B/491) Mr Lauthan (Third Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether he has received representations to the effect that attempts of intimidation have been made by a notorious drug trafficker against the social workers of the Idrice Goomany Centre who, with the Maulana Haroon, are conducting sensitising campaigns against drug abuse and HIV/AIDS and, if so, will he state the measures that have been taken, if any.

(Withdrawn)

**MAURITIUS SUGAR TERMINAL CORPORATION –
RECRUITMENT - JULY 2005 – 16.05.06**

(No. B/492) Mrs S. Hanoomanjee (Second Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Minister of Agro Industry & Fisheries whether he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Sugar Terminal Corporation, information as to the number of persons recruited thereat, either on a permanent or a temporary basis since July 2005, indicating –

- (a) if the posts were advertised, and
- (b) the localities from which the recruited persons come from.

Dr. Boolell: Mr Speaker, Sir, the information sought will be laid on the Table of the Assembly.

MUNICIPAL COUNCIL OF CUREPIPE – DRIVERS

(No. B/493) Mr M. Dowarkasing (Third Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the Minister of Local Government whether he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Municipal Council of Curepipe, information as to the number of –

- (a) persons employed as lorry/truck drivers and their respective date of appointment, and
- (b) other drivers, indicating their names and respective posting.

Dr. David: Mr Speaker, Sir, the information asked for is being placed in the Library of the National Assembly.

**MUNICIPAL COUNCIL OF CUREPIPE - SPORTS GALA NIGHT –
EXPENDITURE & LIST OF QUOTATIONS**

(No. B/494) Mr M. Dowarkasing (Third Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the Minister of Local Government whether, in regard to the organisation of the sports gala night by the Municipal Council of Curepipe, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom –

- (a) information as to -
 - (i) the expenses incurred, giving a breakdown thereof, and
 - (ii) how the different contracts were awarded;
- (b) a list of the quotations and table a copy thereof.

Dr. David: Mr Speaker, Sir, the information asked for is being placed in the Library of the National Assembly.

MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, INTERNATIONAL TRADE & CO-OPERATION – OFFICIAL TRIPS - EXPENDITURE

(No. B495) Mr M. Dowarkasing (Third Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the Minister of Foreign Affairs, International Trade & Co-operation whether he will table –

- (a) a list of the number of official trips he has undertaken abroad since he has taken office, giving a breakdown in terms of cost of air tickets, *per diem* and other allowances, and
- (b) a report on each of these trips.

The Minister of Local Government (Dr. J.B. David): Mr Speaker, Sir, the information is being compiled and will be placed in the Library.

MAURITIANS – MIGRATION – NUMBER & COUNTRIES

(No. B/496) Mr Y. Varma (First Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Foreign Affairs, International Trade & Co-operation whether he is aware that a number of Mauritians have migrated to different countries during the past five years and, if so, will he state –

- (a) the number thereof, and
- (b) the countries of migration.

The Minister of Local Government (Dr. J.B. David): Mr Speaker, Sir, the information is being compiled and will be placed in the Library.

**RAMNARAIN, DOOLAR, KARAN & GOORDIN LANES –
CARREAU MANIOC, MAHEBOURG – ONE WAY ROAD**

(No. B/497) Mr Y. Varma (First Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport & Shipping whether he is aware that the Ramnarain Lane, the Doolar Lane and the Karan Lane found in Carreau Manioc, Mahebourg, are each a two way road with a single lane, thereby causing inconveniences to the road users and to the inhabitants of the locality and, if so, will he indicate the remedial measures he proposes to take in each case.

The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport & Shipping (Dr R. Beebeejaun): Mr Speaker, Sir, my Ministry has approved in January 2006 the conversion of the lanes mentioned by the hon. Member as well as the Goordin Lane at Mahebourg into one way road. This will improve traffic flow, minimise traffic conflicts and inconveniences to road users and to the local inhabitants.

I am informed that the contract for the supply of reflectorised traffic signs has been awarded on 05 May, and these will be installed by the end of this month.

PLAINE MAGNIEN VILLAGE MARKET

(No. B/498) Mr Y. Varma (First Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Local Government whether he is aware that the place where the Plaine Magnien market is held is inadequate for the growing population of Plaine Magnien and of its neighbouring villages and, if so, will he consider the advisability of either restructuring or relocating the market.

Dr. David: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Grand Port/Savanne District Council that the Plaine Magnien Village market, which was built some 28 years back, can no longer sustain the demand of the growing population of Plaine Magnien and the neighbouring villages.

I am further informed that it will not be possible to restructure the market in view of the contiguity of the land on which stands the market. Furthermore, the relocation of the market will require the mobilisation of substantial financial resources, estimated at Rs35 m., for the acquisition of land and the construction of the building.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I thank the hon. Member for raising this issue and I propose to hold consultations with all stakeholders, with a view to find a solution to this problem.

Mr Varma: Mr Speaker, Sir, could the hon. Minister inform the House when the consultations will take place?

Dr. David: Mr Speaker, Sir, as early as possible, but it would not go beyond next week.

MUNICIPAL COUNCILS - VACANCIES

(No. B/499) Mrs M. Martin (Second Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the Minister of Local Government whether he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the five Municipal Councils, information as to whether there are any job vacancies thereat and, if so, will he state –

- (a) in which grades, and
- (b) if it is proposed to fill up these posts, indicating when.

Dr. David: Mr Speaker, Sir, the information is being compiled.

CULTURAL CENTRES – MINISTERIAL COMMITTEE

(No. B/500) Mrs M. Martin (Second Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the Minister of Arts & Culture whether he will state the date on which the Ministerial Committee on the cultural centres last met, indicating when it proposes to submit its report.

(Withdrawn)

OLD AGE PENSION SCHEME – REFORM

(No. B/501) Mrs S. Hanoomanjee (Second Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Minister of Social Security, National Solidarity & Senior Citizens Welfare and Reform Institutions whether she will state if Government proposes to review the old age pension scheme in the near future with a view to excluding a certain category of old age pensioners and, if so, the reasons therefor.

The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance & Economic Development (Mr R. Sithanen): Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission I would like to reply to PQ B/501 and B/516 together, as both cover the same issue.

The reply to the specific question contained in PQ B/501 is no. However, work on reform of the old pension system continues, and has reached an advanced stage.

In fact, the various working groups set up to work on pension reforms, including the BRP and old age pension, have submitted their recommendations. These are being examined by an inter-Ministerial Committee. It is the intention of Government to adopt a holistic approach rather than go on a piecemeal basis.

As the House is aware, the main issue underlying the Basic Retirement Pension (BRP) is its sustainability in view of the demographic transition that is taking place. With the ageing of the population, the 60+

population is expected to treble over the next 40 years to more than 360,000. The observed trend of increasing life expectancy coupled with a decline in the fertility rate is expected to continue into the future. Consequently, a relatively smaller working population will have to support the growing and larger number of elderly persons who will be entitled to the BRP.

With the projected fall in the pensioner support ratio from 6.9 in 2005 to 2.3 by 2045, the increasing BRP costs will also give rise to serious fiscal concerns and will constrain economic growth. It is, therefore, important to address the economic and political risk inherent in the pension system. On the other hand, redistributive concerns have to be attended to, as it is important to ensure adequate financial resources for the elderly.

Mr Speaker, Sir, it is our duty to address pension reform issues and implement measures which are fair, equitable and sustainable.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Mr Speaker, Sir, since the Minister of Finance has said that the answer is categorically 'no', can I ask him whether he is taking a commitment that there will be no review in Government's policy in the next Budget and that for the rest of the mandate of the Government, there will be no review in the Government's policy?

Mr Sithanen: Mr Speaker, Sir, it depends what they mean by review...

(Interruptions)

Mr Sithanen: Give me the chance to reply! Mr Speaker, Sir, there are many issues that affect pension. My understanding – the hon. lady has not mentioned it – is that the hon. Member was referring to a specific case. On that specific case, I have given a specific answer. But, the other issues about pension will have to be addressed.

Mr Jugnauth: Mr Speaker, Sir, as far as the second question is concerned, namely PQ B/516, recently the hon. Prime Minister has talked about reviewing the old age pension. He said that if somebody is earning Rs100,000, why should he earn the Rs2,100. In fact, the last Government proposed this sort of targeted approach. Can I ask the hon. Deputy Prime Minister & Minister of Finance how does he tally what he is saying with what the hon. Prime Minister said?

Mr Sithanen: Mr Speaker, Sir, I think we need to understand very clearly what the Prime Minister said. Obviously, all of us would like those who are exceptionally rich not to take this pension.

(Interruptions)

Let me explain! Let me give a reply, my friend!

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Mr Sithanen: Why doesn't the hon. Member listen?

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Mr Sithanen: The hon. Member went on TV to ask for mercy! What is he talking about? Hon. Bérenger had to say 'sorry' to the population. What is he talking about? *Zotte roder pou nanien. Reste tranquille, écouter!* I am sorry, Mr Speaker, Sir. Because we can hit also! Does the hon. Member think he is the only one who can hit?

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Mr Sithanen: Mr Speaker, Sir, let me be very clear and candid about that. However, we have to make sure that the administrative costs...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Mr Sithanen: Mr Speaker, Sir, concerning the previous reform that was made, I'll ask the previous Minister, hon. Lauthan, to go and read the reply he gave to this House. The then Leader of the Opposition, now Prime Minister, as well as hon. Dr. Boolell and hon. Dr. David asked questions.

He was proud to say that there is no financial saving from the package for two reasons - And then, we added a third reason – namely because, first, the number of people that would be affected was few, and, second, he was proud to have reinvested into a new group and was redistributing it. So, this is not a question about financial sustainability. When we were in the Opposition, we asked a question. He said that the saving was so small for the headache it was causing, in addition to the cost of administration. I would request the hon. Member to go and read the answer that he gave to the PNQ of the then Leader of the Opposition. And he was proud to say that there is no saving! If there is no saving, Mr Speaker, Sir, why are we talking about financial sustainability?

(Interruptions)

Mrs Hanoomanjee: The reply of the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance seems to be ambiguous. Can I ask the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance whether he proposes to come with a targeted approach with regard to pension?

Mr Sithanen: Mr Speaker, Sir, in fact, I chose my words very specifically. I said that as regards to the specific question raised by the hon. lady, at that question, the answer is a specific “no”.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Quiet, please! Order!

HAJJ PILGRIMAGE – JANUARY 2006 – COMPLAINTS

(No. B/502) Mr S. Soodhun (Fifth Member for La Caverne and Phoenix) asked the Minister of Arts and Culture whether, in regard to the January 2006 Hajj pilgrimage, he will state if he has received complaints from the pilgrims against the Hajj organisers and, if so, whether he proposes to institute an inquiry thereinto.

(Withdrawn)

HAJJ PILGRIMAGE – JANUARY 2006 – VACCINATIONS

(No. B/503) Mr S. Soodhun (Fifth Member for La Caverne and Phoenix) asked the Minister of Arts and Culture whether, in regard to the January 2006 Hajj pilgrimage, he will, for the benefit of the house, obtain from the Hajj Committee, information as to the vaccination requirements imposed by the Saudi Authorities, indicating which local company performed the vaccinations

(Withdrawn)

KARO KALIPTIS – FAMILIES – RELOCATION

(No. B/504) Mr G. Lesjongard (Second Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Housing & Lands whether he will, for the benefit of the House, state the number of families still living at Karo Kaliptis todate and whether Government is favourably considering their relocation.

Mr Dulull: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that, as to date, there are 59 families still living at Karo Kaliptis. The House may wish to know that the situation of squatters at Karo Kaliptis is a dynamic one, and this situation keeps on changing. So far, some 17 families who have been allocated a building site lease elsewhere have already moved out, and the other families have moved in. For all intents and purposes, the land at Karo Kaliptis is being used as transit station and the issue needs to be looked into in all its aspects. The said land is earmarked for the construction of a sports complex.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the whole issue of squatters throughout the island is being closely and deeply looked into, and a policy decision on their relocation and regularisation will be taken following this close and deep scrutiny.

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the Minister of Housing and Lands when the survey was carried out?

Mr Dulull: The survey for the families has been carried out some time ago and we have identified two of them.

(Interruptions)

Out of the 59, we have identified two of them as new squatters post July 2001.

Mr Lesjongard: May I know from the Minister what is being done to prevent the proliferation of squatting in Karo Kalyptis and in the country in general?

Mr Dulull: As I have already said, we will come soon with a new policy and we will address the issue soon.

Mrs Martin: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister has just mentioned that some families were moving in as some were moving out. May we know how many families have moved in since?

Mr Dulull: Some 17 families have been allocated a building site lease elsewhere and others have taken their place.

Mr Lesjongard: May I know from the hon. Minister how many families there were at Karo Kalyptis?

Mr Dulull: As I have said at the beginning of my answer, there were 59 families.

Mr Jhugroo: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister how many times he has visited Karo Kalyptis?

Mr Dulull: I have been there several times.

Mr Speaker: Last question, hon. Lesjongard.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Mr Lesjongard: May I ask the hon. Minister whether, when the families are moving out from the houses at Karo Kalyptis, these houses are pulled down by the families or by Government?

Mr Dulull: These houses are like merely shelters. It's not in our policy to go and destroy shelters.

Mr Lesjongard: That's where the problem is Mr Speaker, Sir. If they don't pull down the houses, people will come and stay in the houses, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker: Next question, hon. Lesjongard!

ROCHE BOIS – FIRE VICTIMS – ASSISTANCE

(No. B/505) Mr G. Lesjongard (Second Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Housing & Lands whether he will state if Government proposes to allocate a plot of land to the families of Roche Bois who have lost their houses in the course of the fire outbreak of 07 May 2006.

Mr Dulull: Mr Speaker, Sir, I thank the hon. Member for this question. At the very outset, I wish to lay stress on the fact that this Government is very sensitive to the plight of victims of fire outbreak and victims of natural disasters as the case may be and is committed to providing necessary assistance to these victims so that their normal living conditions are not disrupted. It is, therefore, a matter of priority for this caring Government to provide assistance not only in the form of a plot of land, but also through a global and integrated approach. The objective is to ensure that the families resume their daily routine, in an improved manner, the soonest possible.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am advised that the Ministry of Social Security, National Solidarity and Senior Citizens Welfare & Reform Institutions and the Municipality of Port Louis have already provided financial assistance as well as assistance in kind to the victims in accordance with the prevailing schemes.

As regards to the issue of accommodation, I wish to inform the House that on Monday 08 May 2006, that is on the very day following the fire outbreak at Roche Bois, my Ministry convened an urgent and priority

meeting with the representatives of the Ministry of Social Security, National Solidarity and Senior Citizens Welfare & Reforms Institutions and the National Housing Development Company Ltd. in order to consider and take emergency decisions to provide alternative housing accommodation to the fire victims.

Several options, including the grant of a building site lease and the allocation of NHDC housing units were examined. In view of the socio-economic conditions of the victims of fire outbreak, the priority of consideration is being given to the allocation of a building site lease. Another option is being looked into the implications of providing assistance for the construction of housing units on the same site.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I have myself met the six concerned families on three occasions, and visited the site of the fire on Sunday 07 May 2006. A site at Bois Marchand has been identified as an appropriate building site, and the advisability and possibility of issuing a letter of intent to the six families is being seriously considered.

Meanwhile, the six families, are being sheltered by a willing NGO.

M. le président, si je peux me permettre de faire un appel solennel à certains membres de notre Opposition fragmentée...

(Interruptions)

à ne pas faire de la basse politique ...

(Interruptions)

Mr Soodhun: On a point of order, Mr Speaker, Sir, I think that it is not fair. You have appealed to us to be cool, but it is not the case.

Mr Speaker: I will invite the hon. Minister not to use a provocative language.

(Interruptions)

The Minister has not finished to answer. Let him finish!

Mr Dulull: ... à ne pas faire de la basse politique sur le malheur et la souffrance de nos concitoyens victimes des calamités.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as the House realises, we wasted no time in addressing the problem caused by the fire outbreak. With due respect, the present Parliamentary Question No. B/505 has been overtaken by events.

Mr Lesjongard: *M. le président, le ministre vient de dire qu'il comprend la souffrance des petites gens.* May I ask the Minister whether consideration that has been given to fire victims in Constituency No. 3 will be extended to all other constituencies?

Mr Dulull: I have already replied to this question. I have said that we will consider on a case-to-case basis.

Mr Lauthan: *M. le président, le ministre vient de parler de différentes options. Je voudrais savoir s'il a proposé comme une option à ces pauvres victimes de les loger dans des containers.*

(Interruptions)

Mr Dulull: *M. le président, je tiens à faire ressortir à l'honorable membre que je suis membre d'un gouvernement où je suis ministre du logement ...*

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! I will invite the hon. Member to withdraw the word '*menteur*'.

(Interruptions)

Order! Order, I said! I'll ask the hon. Member to leave the House.

(Interruptions)

At this stage, hon. S. Lauthan left the Chamber.

Mr Dulull: M. le président, je voudrais faire ressortir au membre de l'Opposition qui vient de sortir que je suis ministre du logement et non pas ministre de *containers*! Je n'ai jamais promis à qui que ce soit de le loger dans des *containers*!

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: The hon. Minister mentioned a case-to-case basis. Would he inform the House what are the criteria used for giving the support to these families?

Mr Dulull: We do have different schemes. For example, to be eligible for a plot of State land, you need not be owner of any other land. The Ministry of Social Security has got different criteria to allocate a sum of money and the Municipality also has a set of criteria. When the criteria are fulfilled, they are given the necessary assistance.

Mr Lesjongard: May I ask the Minister whether the same criteria that are applicable for the granting of a building site lease are the same for fire victims?

Mr Dulull: I would request the hon. Member to repeat the question.

(Interruptions)

Mr Dowarkasing: The hon. Member has to withdraw it.

Mr Speaker: The hon. Member has to raise the matter first.

Mr Dowarkasing: Mr Speaker, Sir, on a point of order, the hon. Minister has just mentioned the words '*voleur la terre*'; he has to withdraw!

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order, I said. What is the point of order?

Mr Dowarkasing: The hon. Minister has referred to our colleague sitting on the Opposition side as '*voleur la terre*', he should be asked to withdraw it.

Mr Speaker: Has the hon. Minister used these words? As a gentleman, I would ask him to withdraw them.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order, I said.

Dr. David: Mr Speaker, Sir, I elegantly withdraw the words.

CRÈVE COEUR/MALENGA LINK ROAD – PROJECT VALUE

(No. B/506) Mr G. Lesjongard (Second Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping whether he will state if Government has approved a new alignment of the Crève Coeur-Malenga Link Road, and, if so, will he state its project value.

The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping (Dr. R. Beebeejaun): Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to refer the hon. Member to the reply I made to PQ No. B/48.

As already stated, the original alignment of the Malenga-Crève Coeur road was reviewed as problems were identified which made it unsuitable.

The new alignment, which starts at Terre Rouge, bypasses the villages of Notre Dame and goes through Ripailles to join Verdun. It will eventually be linked to Ebène. The estimated cost is R550 m excluding land acquisition.

GEETANJALI SANATAN DHARMA SABHA – LAND ALLOCATION

(No. B/507) Mr G. Lesjongard (Second Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Housing and Lands whether he will state if Government has retrieved a plot of land formerly allocated to the Geetanjali Sanatan Dharma Sabha for the construction of a shivala and a social hall and, if so, will he give the reasons thereof.

Mr Dulull: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am advised that a plot of land of an extent of 2129 m² was allocated to Geetanjali Sanatan Dharma Sabha on 04 November 2004 at Le Hochet, Terre Rouge. However, the members of the aforesaid Sabha were dissatisfied with the site allocated, it being far from their residence. As per letter received on 16 June 2005, the President of the Sabha, vibrantly appealed for a new site to be allocated in the vicinity of Ste Croix, where it would be more convenient to its members.

My Ministry has, on 08 March 2006, retrieved the said plot of land with a view to identify an alternative site to be allocated to the Sabha.

Mr Lesjongard: May I ask the hon. Minister whether payment was effected for that lease?

Mr Dulull: I am not aware whether payment was effected, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Dowarkasing: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I know from the hon. Minister whether another plot of land has already been identified?

Mr Dulull: We are in the process of looking for an alternative site.

Mr Lesjongard: May I ask the hon. Minister whether he is aware that the Geetanjali Sanatan Dharma Sabha is against any other site?

Mr Dulull: I can table a copy of the letter sent by the President of the Sabha where it is said that they are not satisfied and they are looking for an alternative site. It is mentioned, I quote –

‘My members were not satisfied because it is far from our residents. We have to walk about 2 miles’

MAURITIAN NATIONAL FOOTBALL TEAM – INTERNATIONAL COMPETITIONS - PERFORMANCE

(No. B/508) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Youth and Sports whether, in regard to the poor performance of the Mauritian National Football Team at recent

international competitions, he will state the remedial actions he proposes to take.

Mr Tang Wah Hing: Mr Speaker, Sir, as everybody, I am concerned by the performance of our national football team at the recent international competitions, particularly, the COSAFA Castle competition held in Lesotho in April 2006, where we were severely defeated by Angola.

In this context, I had a meeting on 11 May 2006 with the Managing Committee of the Mauritius Football Association to review the whole situation.

At that meeting, I was informed that several factors have impacted on the performance of our national team, such as –

- (i) our players had difficulties to adapt to high altitude where the matches were played, and
- (ii) some of our best players, who are playing under contract in foreign clubs, have not been able to obtain timely release to join our national team.

On the other hand, it may be noted that Angola is one of the three best teams of the African continent, having qualified to participate in the World Football Cup to be held in Germany next month and most of its players play in the European Leagues.

Following discussions held with the Mauritius Football Association at that meeting, the following corrective measures have been identified to improve the situation –

- (i) designation of only one coach at the head of Club M and same for the various categories of selections;
- (ii) training of more goalkeepers of higher standards;
- (iii) providing high level training to coaches to enhance their skills;
- (iv) close monitoring of the operation of the newly set-up “*Centres Techniques Régionaux*”;

- (v) review the operation of “*Écoles de Foot*” so as to provide effective coaching to promising young players;
- (vi) revamp inter-college competitions in football, and
- (vii) consolidate the structure of “football *féminin*”.

I must reassure the House, that as a facilitator, my Ministry will continue to provide all support and the necessary assistance for football to progress further.

I consider that the Mauritius Football Association must take its responsibility as far as the technical side of the game is concerned. As a matter of principle, my Ministry does not, in accordance with the Sports Act, interfere in the internal affairs of sports federations. However, the Mauritius Football Association has agreed to my proposal to have further meetings with all stakeholders concerned with a view to monitoring the situation closely.

Mr Bhagwan: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister has mentioned the question of having one trainer. We all know that the performance varies depending on temperature and the region. In fact, Mr Dorasamy had done quite a good job at a certain period of time. Can I ask the Minister of the question of having recourse to a foreign trainer was been discussed at that meeting?

Mr Tang Wah Hing: The suggestion was made, but we did not arrive to a decision.

Mr Bhagwan: Coming back to football, Sir, some time back the Minister informed the House that there was a Task Force which has been set up *pour revoir la relance du football*. Can we know from the hon. Minister who are the Members of the Task Force? How many times did that Task Force meet? Since it met last time, had a report been produced?

Mr Tang Wah Hing: They are coming with a report in a few weeks' time.

Mr Bhagwan: The hon. Minister has not replied to my questions. May we know who are the members of the Task Force, how many times did it meet and when was the last time that it met?

Mr Tang Wah Hing: Mr Speaker, Sir, I need notice of the question.

Mr Bhagwan: Mr Speaker, Sir, the Minister has not replied again. May we know who are the Members of the Task Force?

Mr Tang Wah Hing: There are hon. Rama Valayden, hon. James Burty David, hon. Etienne Sinatambou and representatives of federations.

Mr Bhagwan: Mr Speaker, Sir, in view of the forthcoming Indian Ocean Islands Games, can the hon. Minister say whether - apart from what he has stated in the House - there are other concrete measures which are being envisaged as far as the preparation of the national team is concerned?

Mr Tang Wah Hing: If the hon. Member comes with a substantive question, I will give the reply.

At 1.00 the sitting was suspended.

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

CONO CONO AND CO LTD – RESTAURANT PROJECT –

FLIC EN FLAC

(No. B/509) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière) asked the hon. Minister of Environment and National Development Unit whether, in regard to the project submitted by the Cono Cono and Co. Ltd for a proposed restaurant at Flic en Flac, he will –

(a) give details of the site and location thereof, and

(b) in regard to the application for a Preliminary Environmental Report (PER), indicate -

- (i) the date of the application;
- (ii) if the views of the Ministry of Local Government, the Beach Authority, the NGOs and other *Forces Vives* were sought and obtained, indicating when, and
- (iii) if the PER has now been approved and, if so, when.

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, as regards part (i), the proposed site is of an extent of 1593 m² and constitutes State land which has been leased on 21 May 2003 to the promoter by the Ministry of Housing and Lands for the period 21.05.03 to 30.06.22 for the construction of an industrial building to be used solely as a restaurant.

The subject site is located at Flic en Flac and has been deproclaimed and excised from the public beach following two deproclamations in July and September 2002 respectively. It is, in fact, sandwiched between the public beach and the site which has been allocated for the development of a nautical centre.

The construction of a restaurant is not a scheduled undertaking requiring a PER approval. However, in view of its nature and its location, the proposed development was declared as an undertaking requiring the approval of a Preliminary Environmental Report under Section 17 of the Environment Protection Act 2002 on 22 July 2004.

The application for the PER approval for the proposed restaurant project by Cono Cono and Co. Ltd was submitted on 16 November 2004.

The following Ministries/Authorities were consulted for their views –

- Ministry of Local Government
- Beach Authority
- Black River District Council
- Ministry of Housing and Lands
- Wastewater Management Authority

- Ministry of Fisheries
- Ministry of Health and Quality of Life

As regards part (ii), the procedure for the processing of a PER application does not provide for any consultation with the NGOs or the *Force Vives* and the public.

However, joint representations were made against the deproclamation of the public beach, when hon. Paul Bérenger was the Prime Minister, including the proposed restaurant project by the *Force Vives de Flic en Flac* and the Village Council of Flic en Flac on 20 November 2003.

The Ministry of Local Government did not submit any views while all the other Ministries and Authorities, except the Black River District Council, agreed to the project with conditions.

As regards part (iii), the PER Committee considered the application on 03 February 2006 and recommended the project for approval. The PER approval was granted on 08 February 2006 with 14 conditions. In case the proponent is found to have misled the Ministry, the Minister can revoke the approval.

Mr Bhagwan: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have a few supplementary questions. As regards the site situated within the District Council area, does the Minister find it normal that a PER certificate be granted without the final approval of the District Council?

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Member was Minister of Environment before me and he knows very well that of all the Members that constitute the Board, it is the Board that takes the decision. It's not an individual decision taken by one member of the Board. It was a decision which was collectively taken with only one body against it. We cannot, on the basis of the objection raised by one District Council, reject it. The PER was recommended and it was approved.

Mr Bhagwan: Can the Minister inform the House whether the Integrated Coastal Zone Management Committee rejected this application?

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, the ICZM does not form part of that committee which is legally constituted.

Mr Bhagwan: Mr Speaker, Sir, I think it is of paramount importance. Being given that this project is on the coastal zone, it is in the public interest that the views of the ICZM Committee be taken into consideration before approval is obtained.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, at first, when the land was leased to that company, the PER was not asked for. There were objections on the part of the Ministry of Environment and the Black River District Council as well as the ICZM which also raised objections and they put certain conditions. It was at that time that the Ministry decided to go for a PER. When everything was submitted to the PER, they came with recommendations which were finally accepted by the Board.

Mr Bhagwan: The public beach of Flic en Flac is a - I would say - *plage privilégiée des mauriciens. Est-ce que le ministre considère que c'est normal qu'on enlève le privilège aux mauriciens d'utiliser cette partie de Flic en Flac?*

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Mr Bhagwan: *Vu l'ampleur de ce projet, est-ce que le ministre peut informer la Chambre s'il a eu l'approval du conseil des ministres ou du gouvernement avant d'approuver ce PER?*

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, this question should have been asked at the time when that plot of land was being deproclaimed by the then Government, when people objected. There were objections, but the then Prime Minister rejected them and he approved it. They have already leased out the land and on the PER, we cannot raise such objections. They have taken the decision and we have to abide by it.

Mr Bhagwan: As per the PER, does the Minister have the powers to approve or not to approve?

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, firstly, this matter was kept in abeyance for so long and secondly ...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! Order! Hon. Bhagwan, you have put a question, let the minister answer. You will have time to make your point later on.

Mr Bachoo: The fact is that the land was already leased for a specific purpose and, secondly, Mr Speaker, Sir, I cannot read the mind of members who form part of that committee. Thirdly, I do not exercise pressure or political pressure. Fourthly, I do not want members of the Board to be politically motivated, be it the MMM or MSM, and fifthly, I am not interested in the eternal squabble between political parties.

Mr Bhagwan: The Minister has not replied whether he has obtained, before approval on 08 February, Cabinet or Government approval on this particular application? I am tabling a copy of the approval.

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, even in the past, it was never the case for a Minister to seek Cabinet's approval once the application for a PER has been accepted.

Mr Speaker: Last question, please.

Mr Bhagwan: Mr Speaker, Sir, being given that the Minister has the powers to reconsider an application on an environmental ground, can the Minister ...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! Order!

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! Order!

Mr Bhagwan: Being given that the Ministry of Local Government, the Beach Authority, NGOs are against this project, can the Minister give an undertaking to the House to reconsider the application of this restaurant?

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, the fact that the previous Government had already given the land for that specific purpose ...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Mr Bachoo: Being given that the land was already given by the previous Government, I had already mentioned in my answer that if the proponent is found to have misled the Ministry, the Minister can revoke the approval. I can give the undertaking to the House that if the conditions are not met, I am definitely going to take the necessary decisions and, at the same time, I am liaising with the Ministry of Local Government to see to it if there is a possibility of revoking it.

PRE-SCHOOL TRUST FUND - CHAIRPERSON

(No. B/510) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether he will, for the benefit of the House, state if he has recently received representations in regard to the conduct of the Chairperson of the Pre-School Trust Fund and, if so, will he state the actions he proposes to take.

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the hon. Member that I have received two anonymous letters and one letter from the President of the Mauritius Union of Pre-School Educators against the Chairperson of the Pre-School Trust Fund (PSTF).

The Union's letter related to representation against the participation of a PSTF officer in a course to be held in Réunion Island. However, the Union subsequently informed the Ministry that they no longer had objection to the participation of the officer in the said course. The hon. Member may also wish to note that the proposed course was later cancelled by the organiser and thus no officer actually took part in the course.

As regards the anonymous letters, it is not the policy of my Ministry to deal with anonymous letters. However, we have taken note of the nature of the allegations and if there is any need for inquiry, same will be conducted.

Mr Bhagwan: Mr Speaker, Sir, on 05 April his Ministry requested the Chairman of the Pre-School Trust Fund to submit his views on this anonymous letter. Can we know from the Minister whether he has received the views of the management of the Pre-School Trust Fund concerning the point raised in the contention made by the public?

Mr Gokhool: This is an internal administrative matter, Mr Speaker, Sir, and the normal procedure is that my Ministry will write to the body concerned to get their views.

Mr Bhagwan: Can the Minister inform the House whether, following the reply made by the hon. Prime Minister concerning *l'ingérence* du part time Chairman in the day-to-day management of the Board, he met the part-time Chairman on that Trust Fund, to inform him of the Government policy concerning the day-to-day management and his duties as part-time Chairman?

Mr Gokhool: Concerning the first part of the statement of the hon. Member, I do not agree that there is *ingérence* or whatever. As regards meeting the Chairman, this is the normal practice for any Minister to meet and brief the Chairperson or the Chairman of bodies to discuss the policy of Government.

Mrs Perrier: M le président, est-ce-que le ministre peut nous préciser quand il a reçu la lettre des syndicalistes informant qu'ils étaient d'accord pour que cet officer aille à la Réunion?

Mr Gokhool: I cannot remember the date, but all I have said is that a representation was received and, thereafter, another letter was received where the unions withdrew their representation.

Mrs Perrier: Can the Minister table the letter?

Mr Gokhool: I do not have a copy of the letter with me, but I can table a copy to the House.

Mr Bhagwan: Can the Minister confirm to the House that there is no mismanagement and that he is satisfied with the day-to-day running of this organisation through the part-time Chairman and the actual management?

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, if there is any representation by any employee, employees or officers to my Ministry, we will look into it.

Mr Bhagwan: Mr Speaker, Sir, representations have been made. Everybody knows what is happening there. I leave it to the Minister. I have done my job. I have raised the issue here and I hope the Minister will take the necessary decision.

Mr Gokhool: I have taken note, but I cannot consider anonymous representations.

PLANTERS (SMALL) - PROJECTS

(No. B/511) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Agro Industry and Fisheries whether, in regard to the compensation paid by the European Union following the reduction in the price of sugar, he will state the other projects, besides the derocking and irrigation projects, which are being proposed in favour of the small planters.

Dr. Boolell: The reply will be tabled, Mr Speaker, Sir.

HSC EXAMINATIONS 2005 - GENERAL PAPER SCRIPTS - REVISION EXERCISE

(No. B/512) Mr G. Guinness (Third Member for Montagne Blanche and GRSE) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether he will state if the recent revision exercise carried out by the Cambridge University in regard to the General Paper scripts of the students who sat for the Higher School Certificate Examinations of 2005 will have any consequences on the results of other students.

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to this question, I have the detailed information, but I will not read that part. I will be tabling my reply, but I would like to refer the House to the part which concerns the consequences on the results of other students

Mr Speaker, Sir, Cambridge has confirmed that the overall grades of 44 candidates, 39 candidates from RCC and 5 private candidates, have changed.

Cambridge has confirmed that the ranking of all centres other than the Royal College, Curepipe is accurate. No other paper and no other examination centre is concerned, because the problem is linked to the marking of one examiner who experienced a breakdown due to family circumstances, and this concerns only the examination centres at RCC, as already mentioned. A press communiqué was issued by MES on 02 May 2006, to explain the situation to the public.

With the proclamation of laureates following the issue of HSC results, a list of top-ranked candidates is also issued - the first 32 boys and the first 32 girls for the Science side, the first 25 boys and the first 25 girls for the Economics and Technical side, and the first 15 boys and the first 15 girls for the Art side.

Candidate Naresh Rughooputh who was previously ranked in the sixth position has now moved to the second position, becoming eligible for a State of Mauritius Scholarship (Science side). He was awarded a scholarship under the 'Additional Scholarship' Scheme. The candidate who was listed in the sixth position in the original list has already been awarded a State of Mauritius Scholarship, rather than the 'Additional Scholarship' for which he would now qualify, since he is now sixth in the list.

In these circumstances, student Rughooputh is deemed to have secured a State of Mauritius Scholarship (Science side).

The position of four other RCC candidates in the rank order list has also changed, but even with the change they are not entitled for a State scholarship. A fifth candidate, namely Kamlesh Sreekissoon, who was not originally on the rank order list is now in the 16th position on the Science side.

Mr Guinness: Mr Speaker, Sir, I take the example of one candidate, namely, Kamlesh Srikeesoon, whose results have changed from "D" to "C" after the revision of the General Paper, although the marks of his papers remained the same, that is, 13 and 8. Has the Minister sought explanation in that particular case?

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, I think the review was about some changes and the grade has changed from "D" to "C", as the hon. Member said. I can't go into the technicalities of how this is computed, but I can seek the information from the MES.

Mr Guinness: Mr Speaker, Sir, the pupils met and expressed that opinion. I think the pupils need to be enlightened on that point. How can it be that the marks for each paper have not changed, but despite that, the overall grading, for example, from "D" to "C", has changed? I think they need an explanation.

Mr Gokhool: I think when a paper is marked, there are different sections and the sections are given different marks. The overall mark is converted into a grade. I believe this is how the paper is marked, but I can check that. I know that this is how it is done. You have got a paper which have different marks.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Speaker, Sir, will the Minister consider to ask the MES whether it would provide the opportunity to other parents desirous to have their wards' General Paper scripts remarked or rechecked to be able to do so in spite of the fact that the deadline for such reassessment has expired?

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, this point has been taken care of. There have been other representations which have been made and these have been channeled to Cambridge and the deadline for review has been extended.

Mr Guinness: Mr Speaker, Sir, apart from the State scholarships, we have other scholarships which are offered by friendly countries and because of the previous results, before the revision, it seems that some students have been penalised. I have a few cases of students who have come to see me. With their previous results, they have been penalised. Can I know from the Minister how this situation can be remedied? Because the scholarships have

been granted, but now, after the revision, these students should have been eligible for that scholarship from friendly countries.

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, all scholarships are not offered on the basis of academic qualifications. There are certain scholarships which are offered purely on the basis of academic qualifications whereas for other scholarships, you have to take into account interviews by donor countries. There may be cases where students whose cases have been considered on academic qualifications may have suffered some prejudice, but there are procedures which exist and, on that issue, they can appeal to Cambridge.

Mr Guinness: Mr Speaker, Sir, can the Minister inform the House, since this very serious matter happened, whether he does not deem it fit to meet the students? There was even a group of students who went to the press. Did the Minister deem it fit to meet these students and to clear the air for the parents and for all the pupils in the country?

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, as you know, the MES acts independently of the Ministry and I think it is a better idea to let the MES handle this issue, which it has done to the satisfaction of most parents.

INDIVIDUAL BUS OWNERS - BUS COMPANIES' RECOVERY ACCOUNT - COMPENSATION

(No. B/513) Mr G. Guinness (Third Member for Montagne Blanche and GRSE) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping whether in regard to the refund to individual bus owners with a view to compensating the rise in the price of diesel, he will state -

- (a) the number of beneficiaries thereof;
- (b) the amount of money disbursed to date, and
- (c) the amount of money still owed to date, indicating the reasons therefor.

The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping (Dr. R. Beebeejaun): Mr Speaker, Sir, the answer is as follows -

As regards part (a) of the question, 726 individual bus operators, including 42 in Rodrigues, are beneficiaries of the compensation under the Bus Companies' Recovery Account since October 2005.

As regards part (b), to date an amount of Rs18 m. has been disbursed.

This amount represents payment effected to 522 individual bus operators for the quarter October to December 2005 and 596 operators for the period January to February 2006. Payment for the month of March has been finalised by the NTA and beneficiaries will get their compensation by the end of this week.

It should be pointed out that payments are made on the basis of monthly returns submitted by bus operators to the NTA. The returns contain information such as the number of days of operation of the buses, the number of kilometres run and the amount of diesel used, which are determinants of the compensation.

As regards part (c) of the question, payments have not been effected where the operators have either not submitted their monthly returns or their returns were not properly filled in. Thus, in the absence of relevant information, the amount owed cannot be ascertained.

Mr Guinness: Mr Speaker, Sir, can the Deputy Prime Minister inform the House how many individual bus owners are in this particular case who have either wrongly filled in their returns or have not submitted their returns?

Dr. Beebeejaun: Mr Speaker, Sir, the answer to this question is in the reply I have given. If the hon. Member takes the total number and subtracts, he will get the reply.

Mr Guinness: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I know from the Deputy Prime Minister whether he is aware that when some of the owners admitted that they had submitted their returns late. Previously there was a penalty which was being levied for late submission of returns. But now they are not being paid when they are submitting their returns late. Can the Minister confirm whether this is the situation?

Dr. Beebeejaun: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am not in possession of this information. But if this is the case, I'll correct it. I can assure the hon. Member that there will be no penalty and that they will be paid. But I will make an appeal to the individual bus operators to submit their claims in time and with the proper information.

VAT - REVENUE COLLECTED

(No. B/514) Mr S. Dayal (Second Member for Quartier Militaire and Moka) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance & Economic Development whether in regard to Value Added Tax, he will state the total revenue collected for -

- (a) the financial year 1999-2000;
- (b) the financial year 2003-2004, and
- (c) the financial year 2004-2005

The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance & Economic Development (Mr R. Sithanen): Mr Speaker, Sir, as regards part (a), for financial year 1999-2000, it is Rs5.60 billion.

As for part (b), for financial year 2003-2004, it is Rs11.19 billion.

As regards part (c), for financial year 2004-2005, it is Rs12.53 billion.

Mr Dayal: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I ask the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance whether when the VAT was increased from 10% to 12% and, subsequently, to 15%, it was extended to apply to other items which were not vatable initially?

Mr Sithanen: Mr Speaker, Sir, as I said this morning in my reply to the PNQ of the Leader of the Opposition, not only there was an increase in the rates, but there was also a broadening of the base. In the first Budget of 2001/2002, the rate was increased from 10% to 12% and, subsequently, it was raised from 12% to 15% making a compounding increase of 50% and some services that were not vatable before became vatable in 2001/2002.

Mr Dayal: Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Minister state to the House whether he is in a position to give the number of items which were brought under the VAT net when the VAT was increased?

Mr Sithanen: I don't have the exact list, Mr Speaker, Sir, but if the hon. Member would come with a substantive question, I'll give it to him.

Mr Guinness: Can the Deputy Prime Minister tell us when the first time the VAT was introduced - from sales tax to VAT - was it revenue neutral?

Mr Sithanen: If the hon. Member comes with a substantive question, I'll give him the answer.

CHATEAU VAL ORY, MOKA - HEALTH HAZARD

(No. B/515) Mr S. Dayal (Second Member for Quartier Militaire and Moka) asked the Minister of Foreign Affairs, International Trade and Co-operation whether he will state if he has ascertained that the vacant and abandoned state of the land on which is found the Chateau Val Ory at Moka constitutes a health hazard to the inhabitants in the immediate vicinity thereof and, if so, the measures he proposes to take with a view to preventing it from becoming a breeding ground for the chikungunya vector.

The Minister of Local Government (Dr. J. B. David): Mr Speaker, Sir, in reply to PQ No. I B/553 on 22 November 2005, the substantive Minister informed the House that the Chateau Val Ory at Bois Cheri Road, Moka is a private property acquired by the Islamic Republic of Iran in 1972. It has since then been left vacant and is in an abandoned state.

A representative of the Iranian Government assigned to the Indian Ocean Rim - (IOR-ARC) Secretariat has been entrusted by the Iranian authorities to look after the property. His attention has been drawn on several occasions to the poor state of the premises and he has been urged to ensure its proper maintenance. However, no substantial maintenance work has been undertaken.

I wish also to inform the House that the Secretary for Foreign Affairs took up the matter with the Deputy Foreign Minister for Economic Affairs of Iran in the margin of the IOR-ARC Ministerial Meeting held in Teheran recently.

The Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister is presently in Mauritius, in the context of Iran presidency of IOR-ARC, and I am proposing to take up the matter with him for a long-term solution when he calls on me tomorrow.

Meanwhile, in line with the Government national campaign to combat chikungunya, the Ministry of Local Government in collaboration with the Ministry of Environment and National Development Unit and the District Council are taking appropriate action for cleaning of the premises in the interest of the inhabitants of the immediate vicinity.

OLD AGE PENSION SCHEME – REFORM

(No. B/516) Mr A. Jugnauth (First Member for Quartier Militaire & Moka) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether he will state if Government proposes to review its policy in regard to the old age pension scheme.

(Vide reply to PQ B/501)

SC & HSC EXAMINATION FEES – FIRST TIMERS

(No. B/517) Mr A. Jugnauth (First Member for Quartier Militaire & Moka) asked the Minister of Education & Human Resources whether he will state if Government proposes to meet the full examination fees for students taking part in the Cambridge School Certificate and the Higher School Certificate Examinations for the first time and, if so, indicate when.

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to PQ B/326 at our sitting on 18 April 2006, which fully addresses the issue raised by him.

As I have said previously, the current policy of providing 50% subsidy on SC and HSC examination fees for first timers is being maintained for the time being. However, I would like to add that, in the context of the Budget 2006/2007, the request of the hon. Member together with other proposals have been noted and are being looked into.

ZEP SCHOOLS – BREAD DISTRIBUTION

(No. B/518) **Mrs D. Perrier (Fourth Member for Savanne & Black River)** asked the Minister of Education & Human Resources whether, in regard to the distribution of bread to students attending the *Zone d'Education Prioritaire* schools, he will state if the scheme is still operational and, if so –

- (a) the price per bread paid to the suppliers, and
- (b) the date of the last agreement signed between Government and the suppliers.

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the House that the scheme for the distribution of bread to students attending the ZEP schools is still operational.

Contracting out for the food supply for ZEP students is done at the level of the ZEP school through the Head Teacher and the School Development Unit. Thus, each school has its own supplier and its own agreement with the suppliers. Replies to parts (a) and (b) of the question are, therefore, being tabled.

Mr Dayal: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Minister whether there has been malpractice in tendering procedures in the past?

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, as I said, the purchase and distribution of bread is being done at the level of the schools, with the help of the School Development Unit, as a result of a lot of malpractice which was brought to the attention of the House in the 2003-2004 Director of Audit's Report.

Mrs Perrier: Le ministre peut-il nous dire s'il est au courant du prix, *on average*, que payent les différentes écoles pour chaque pain?

Mr Gokhool: The information is contained in the document I am going to submit. The range is from Rs1.50, Rs1.55. These are the figures which are mentioned.

Mrs Perrier: Can the Minister confirm when this agreement has been signed by the different parties?

Mr Gokhool: There are a number of suppliers, and agreements have been signed at different dates. That's why I am tabling the information.

Mrs Perrier: What about the latest one?

Mr Gokhool: I will have to check, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mrs Labelle: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister whether the question of each school taking care of the supplies was not a temporary measure pending the approval of suppliers?

Mr Gokhool: Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir. This is being looked into, and we will have to change the system, whereby we can co-ordinate the supply at the level of the Ministry.

Mrs Perrier: Le ministre vient de dire que le *average* était entre R 1.50 et R 1.55. C'est pour cela que je demandais à quelle date a été signé le dernier *agreement*, parce que depuis le 07 janvier il y a eu une augmentation du pain à R 1.65. Donc, si les *suppliers* peuvent livrer aux écoles à R 1.50, comment peuvent-ils justifier l'augmentation du pain à R 1.65?

Mr Gokhool: This is a matter which is dealt with at the level of the schools with the suppliers, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mrs Labelle: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I know from the hon. Minister what are the mechanisms put in place to ensure the quality of food being supplied in the different schools?

Mr Gokhool: This is supervised by the ZEP Project Manager and the cluster co-ordinators, together with the help of the liaison officers who work in this sector, Mr Speaker, Sir.

MASA – ROYALTIES COLLECTED - FYS 2003-04, 2004-05

(No. B/519) Mr J.C. Barbier (Third Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Arts & Culture whether he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Society of Authors (MASA), information as to the amount of money collected locally and abroad in terms of property of rights for the last two financial years, indicating how it was distributed.

The Minister of Information Technology & Telecommunications (Mr E. Sinatambou): Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I shall reply to this question. I am informed by the MASA that royalties were collected and distributed over the last two financial years as follows –

For Financial Year 2003-2004, the Society has collected an amount of Rs13,712,991 locally, and it has received an amount of Rs1,872,638 from sister foreign societies.

Of these, Rs7,446,301 were distributed to local artists and Rs731,450 to foreign artists.

For Financial Year 2004-2005, an amount of Rs12,976,792 has been collected locally and a sum of Rs439,138 has been received from sister foreign societies.

Of these, Rs7,918,656 were distributed to local artists and Rs1,946,121 to foreign artists.

Mr Barbier: Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Minister lay on the Table of the Assembly a copy of the amount of money collected locally from each organisation – MBC and others – for the two mentioned financial years?

Mr Sinatambou: Mr Speaker, Sir, I cannot say that I will, because those figures are with the society itself. However, what I can assure the hon. Member is that, from those figures, there is indeed a difference between what is collected and what is actually remitted. But, you will note, Mr Speaker, Sir, that, after collection of the fees, there is a percentage which is deducted for administrative cost, and this is done in accordance with guidelines of the World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO) and also from the *Confédération Internationale des Sociétés d'Auteurs et Compositeurs*. One will note that 30% have been deducted from this quantum and the rest remitted, as I have just elicited.

Mr Barbier: Mr Speaker, Sir, we are aware of that. What I want to have is a breakdown of what is collected inland for the two financial years. I would like to know whether this information is available or not. Maybe the Minister can lay it on the Table of the Assembly at the next sitting.

Mr Sinatambou: Mr Speaker, Sir, as I said, if I can obtain those from the Society of Authors, I will certainly do so.

ST. FRANCOIS – AGRICULTURAL LAND/IRRIGATION ZONE PHASE II - RESIDENTIAL BUILDINGS

(No. B/520) Mr D. Rucktooa (Second Member for Grand' Baie & Poudre d'Or) asked the Minister of Local Government whether he is aware that many residential buildings have been put up on agricultural land and/or irrigation zone phase II in the region of St. François without permit and, if so, will he state the measures he proposes to take.

Dr. David: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Pamplémousses/Rivière du Rempart District Council that development permits had been issued in respect of residential buildings that have been constructed in the late eighties on agricultural land and/or irrigation zone phase II in the region of St. François, near Anse la Raie, with conditions that the prior clearances being obtained from the then Ministry of Agriculture & Natural Resources and relating to either land conversion permits and/or irrigation zoning exemption.

I am further informed that the Council has not been made aware of any illegal residential building having been put up on agricultural land and/or within the irrigation zone in that region.

Mr Rucktooa: Mr Speaker, Sir, does there exist at the District Council, North, a team or field officers - by whatever name we can call it - who are responsible to go around and check whether buildings being erected comply to the regulations?

Dr. David: Mr Speaker, Sir, yes, there does exist. But, I will go one step further. Being given that the hon. Member has shown interest and raised the question in Parliament, I will ask the District Council to carry out a survey and, if ever there has been any illegal building, you can count on me.

16^{ÈME} MILLE FOREST SIDE – SCHOOL PROJECT

(No. B/521) Mr E. Guimbeau (First Member for Curepipe and Midlands) asked the Minister of Education & Human Resources whether he will state if there is a project for the construction of a new school at 16^{ÈME} mille Forest Side and, if so, will he state where matters stand.

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, it is not clear from the question whether the hon. Member is referring to a primary or a secondary school. However, on the assumption that this is a primary school, I am advised that in April 2005, the previous Government had decided that a new primary school would be put up at 16^{ÈME} mille, Forest Side in the course of the financial year 2005-2006. No funds were specifically allocated to the project.

In July 2005, my Ministry carried out a school mapping exercise as a result of which a new priority list for new primary school constructions was drawn up. It took into account the fact that the pupils in 16^{ÈME} mille area are all being channelled to the two nearest primary schools, Midlands Government School and James Toolsy Government School in Curepipe where spare capacity existed. Moreover, the pupils being directed towards

Midlands Government School, 81 in number, benefit from transport arrangements provided by my Ministry.

In the light of the above, the need for a new school at 16^{ème} mille is not felt for the time being. The hon. Member may rest assured that, as soon as the need arises, the matter will be looked into.

MIDLANDS – COMMUNITY CENTRE – CONSTRUCTION

(No. B/522) Mr E. Guimbeau (First Member for Curepipe and Midlands) asked the Minister of Environment & National Development Unit whether he will state if there is a project for the construction of a community centre in Midlands and, if so, will be state if land therefor has already been acquired and when construction will start.

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that the National Development Unit made a request to the Ministry of Housing & Lands in October 2003 for the purchase of a plot of land in Midlands for the construction of a community centre.

The land has been identified and procedure for its acquisition is going on.

TRUST FUND FOR THE SOCIAL INTEGRATION OF VULNERABLE GROUPS – BOARD MEETINGS

(No. B/523) Mr S. Lauthan (Third Member for Port Louis Maritime and Port Louis East) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance & Economic Development whether, in regard to the Trust Fund for the Social Integration of Vulnerable Groups, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom information as to –

- (a) the number of Board Meetings held todate, and
- (b) the number of applications for funds presented to the Board and approved, indicating when funds will be released in each case.

(Withdrawn)

PRE-VOCATIONAL EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS – REGISTRATION

(No. B/524) Mrs F. Labelle (Third Member for Vacoas and Floreal) asked the Minister of Education & Human Resources whether, in regard to the pre-vocational educational institutions, he will state the procedures that are obtained for their registration.

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, the question of the hon. Member refers to pre-vocational education.

As far as pre-vocational education is concerned, the current policy, as put in place by the previous Government, is that all pupils who have failed CPE twice or have failed CPE once, but are over-aged to repeat, are offered a seat in a pre-vocational class in either a State Secondary School or a grant-aided private secondary school. The system provides parity of esteem to academically disadvantaged students who are able after a three-year course to join the IVTB for the NTC Foundation Course which prepares them to some extent for the world of work developing skills needed in specific fields.

This is also in line with the policy of free compulsory education up to the age of 16. Any pupil who has completed primary education is offered a seat in either Form 1 (mainstream) or Form 1 (pre-vocational) in a publicly funded school.

Consequently, in the present context, the question of registering private pre-vocational educational institutions does not arise.

However, I wish to remind the hon. Member of what I have said before, namely that pre-vocational education is being revisited in the context of giving new orientations to technical and vocational education and training, as per Government Programme 2005-2010.

Mrs Labelle: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am sure that the Minister is quite aware that there are institutions which are providing pre-vocational courses. Must I take it from the Minister that, as far as these existing institutions are concerned, the question of their registration does not arise if they want to get registered?

Mr Gokhool: I think, Mr Speaker, Sir, I have explained that the policy of the Government is to provide pre-vocational education to all pupils in the primary schools and this is catered for by Government policy, which was approved by the previous Government. We are continuing with the policy, but we are going to bring about changes in the context of revisiting technical and vocational education. If pre-vocational schools in the private sector were to be registered, this would be in contradiction to Government policy which has been approved by the previous Government.

Mrs Labelle: Mr Speaker, Sir, I fail to understand the Minister. He is aware that there are NGOs which give private pre-vocational education and he does not oppose to it. Is it to say that it is out of question for these centres, which are catering for those most needy children, to get recognition from the Ministry? Is that what the Minister wants us to know?

Mr Gokhool: As per Government policy, these children are being provided pre-vocational education free of charge by Government. If we were to consider registering private pre-vocational schools, this would be in contradiction to Government policy. If we were to change Government policy, this can be looked into in the context of the changes which are being proposed by Government.

Mrs Labelle: Mr Speaker, Sir, allow me to insist on one point. I am not talking about new centres. I am talking about centres which are on the market since ten years. Let us take the centres administered by ANFEN. Maybe the Minister is not aware, but during the past three years, out of 190 pupils who attended these centres, 100 have successfully completed the CPE, which represents more than 52%. These centres are at service to the society. Why can't they get recognition? Which contradiction are we talking about?

Mr Gokhool: The hon. lady has canvassed this point on previous occasions. I have explained that there is a Government policy of providing free education to pupils in the primary schools under certain conditions. If we were to register the private pre-vocational schools, this would be in contradiction with Government policy. What I have said is that Government is looking into the matter.

Mr Guinness: Mr Speaker, Sir, if I understand well the Minister, does it mean that those private institutions which are actually running pre-

vocational classes - I am not talking of private colleges and State colleges – are operating in an illegal situation?

Mr Gokhool: I can't say that they are operating in an illegal situation, but if pupils or parents, out of choice, don't want to avail themselves of the facilities that Government is offering, we can't debar them from going elsewhere.

Mr Speaker: Last question, please!

Mr Guinness: Is the Minister satisfied that all students as at now are offered a seat in available State and private colleges where pre-vocational classes are available?

Mr Gokhool: I have already answered this question in a previous PQ and I will refer the hon. Member to it.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Next question! I said last question. The hon. Member can raise the matter at Adjournment Time.

CAMP LEVIEUX – NHDC SQUATTERS – ALLOCATION OF HOUSING UNITS & LANDS

(No. B/525) Mrs F. Labelle (Third Member for Vacoas and Floreal) asked the Minister of Housing & Lands whether, in regard to the ex-NHDC squatters of Camp Levieux, he will –

- (a) for the benefit of the House, obtain from the National Housing Development Company Ltd., information as to -
 - (a) the number thereof who have been allocated a housing unit, and
 - (b) the number thereof who have been allocated a plot of land with the necessary infrastructure.

Mr Dulull: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have on several occasions pointed out that the problem of squatting which occurred on the eve of the last general election at various NHDC Housing Estates, including Camp Levieux, is the result of the incompetence and act of irresponsibility of the previous Government.

(Interruptions)

This Government, upon its assumption of office, under the Prime Ministership of Dr. hon. Navin Ramgoolam, has shouldered its responsibility to the satisfaction of each and everyone.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am advised that there were 126 squatters at the NHDC units at Camp Levieux. 31 families, who have been found to be hardship cases, have each been allocated a plot of land at Bambous.

In regard to part (b) of the question, arrangements have been made with the service providers for the supply of necessary amenities on the site. The Trust Fund for the Social Integration of Vulnerable Groups has already made available funds to the CEB and CWA to the tune of Rs4 m. for the supply of water and electricity to the sites earmarked for the relocation of all NHDC squatters. In addition, the Trust Fund is providing a sum of Rs12 m. to the beneficiaries for the construction of the houses. The assistance would be in the form of building materials up to a maximum of Rs40,000 for each beneficiary.

The Trust Fund has been given the clearance on 01 December 2005 that it may start providing assistance to the beneficiaries for the construction of their houses. The issue of corrugated iron sheets houses by the Trust Fund to the beneficiaries has taken some time being given that the *forces vives* have expressed anxiety about the buildability of the area. The issue has now been settled and the Trust Fund has informed my Ministry that it has assured the beneficiaries that the site is safe for construction.

**HAJJ PILGRIMAGE - JANUARY 2006 – VACCINATION –
BIOCOM LTD.**

(No. B/526) Mr S. Lauthan (Third Member for Port Louis Maritime and Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Arts and Culture whether, in regard to the January 2006 Hajj pilgrimage, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Islamic Cultural Centre, information as to if, prior to their departure, the pilgrims were vaccinated thereat against payment in favour of the Biocom Ltd.

(Withdrawn)

CHILDREN - VACCINATION

(No. B/527) Dr A. Husnoo (Second Member for Port Louis Maritime and Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether he will state if Government will consider the advisability of supplying influenza vaccines free of charge to all children suffering from chronic respiratory and cardio vascular diseases.

Mr Faugoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, Mauritius follows the recommendations of the World Health Organisation regarding vaccination of children against infectious diseases. In fact, the World Health Organisation has not recommended the introduction of the influenza vaccine in the Expanded Programme of Immunization to its member States. The Expanded Programme of Immunization for Mauritius consists of vaccines against diseases affecting children which are, as follows –

Tuberculosis;
Diphtheria;
Pertussis;
Tetanus;
Hepatitis B;
Haemophilus Type B, and
Measles, Mumps & Rubella

Dr. Husnoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, in view of the Government policy of vaccinating the old people, can the influenza vaccine be given to children who suffer specifically from respiratory and cardio-vascular problems. This group of children are very vulnerable in winter.

Mr Faugoo: We will have to compile the data of the number of such children who are affected yearly and then it can be considered.

**MORCELLEMENT LA VALLÉE, CITÉ LA CURE
- SEWERAGE PROBLEMS**

(No. B/528) Mrs B. Virahsawmy (First Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Public Utilities whether he is aware that the inhabitants living near the Masjid Gulzar-E-Madina in Morcellement La Vallée at Cité La Cure are encountering sewerage problems and, if so, will he state the remedial measures he proposes to take as a matter of priority.

(Withdrawn)

PÈRE PIVAUT STREET, STE CROIX - DRAINAGE WORKS

(No. B/529) Mrs B. Virahsawmy (First Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Environment and National Development Unit whether he is aware that the drainage works at Père Pivault Street, Ste Croix are incomplete, thereby causing the proliferation of mosquitoes due to stagnant water and, if so, will he state the remedial measures he proposes to take.

(Withdrawn)

LONG MOUNTAIN HOSPITAL - MEDICAL PRACTITIONERS

(No. B/530) Mrs B. Virahsawmy (First Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether, in regard to the Long Mountain hospital, he will state if he is aware that there is a lack of medical practitioners, especially in the evening thereby causing inconveniences to the patients and, if so, will he state the remedial measures he proposes to take.

(Withdrawn)

**LONG MOUNTAIN HOSPITAL – MEDICAL PRACTITIONERS –
WORKING CONDITIONS**

(No. B/531) Mrs B. Virahsawmy (First Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether, in regard to the Long Mountain hospital, he will state if he is aware of the number of patients attending thereto and the conditions in which medical practitioners are operating thereat and, if so, will he state the immediate remedial measures he proposes to take.

(Withdrawn)

ST JULIEN VILLAGE COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTRE - REPAIRS

(No. B/532) Dr. R. Mungur (Second Member for Flacq and Bon Accueil) asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether, he will state if he has received a letter dated 22 October 2004 from the administrators of the Flacq hospital to the effect that Mr Baruth, the owner of the building housing the St Julien Village Community Health Centre, has agreed to undertake a series of works for the extension thereof and, if so, where matters stand.

Mr Faugoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that since 1954, the Community Health Centre of St. Julien village is located in a rented building of 628 sq ft. As far back as 1995, the owner was requested to carry out repairs to the leaking roof of the building and to attend to other urgent upgrading works, but has so far failed to do so.

It is to be noted that the Community Health Centre caters for a population of 3320 persons. The present building is no longer adequate and does not allow us to provide the desired range of services to the inhabitants.

I am also informed that, in view of the above, the Ministry decided, in February 2004, to look for another building of around 1500 sq ft to accommodate the Community Health Centre. This decision was also supported by the inhabitants of St. Julien Village in a petition dated 27 February 2004. The tender exercise was almost finalised when for no apparent reason, a decision was taken in November 2004 not to proceed further therewith. In order not to penalise further the inhabitants of St. Julien, the Ministry decided in January 2006, to relocate the Community Health Centre. The procedures are now being finalised and the St. Julien Community Health Centre will shortly be accommodated in a more spacious building.

Dr. Mungur: Is the hon. Minister aware that there is a fresh complaint from the inhabitants of the said locality that they are against the relocation of the Community Health Centre.

Mr Faugoo: I am aware, Mr Speaker, Sir, that there was a lot of complaints from inhabitants to say that it has to be delocated because of the

size. In fact, the basic requirement for a full-fledged health centre should be, at least, 1500 sq ft and this one is only 628 sq ft. It dates back to 1954. We have had a lot of representations made by the inhabitants. But every time we go for tender exercise, there is a group of people who could be pro that particular person, who is actually renting the building and he asks them to write. But we cannot take this into account. We have to go according to the requirements of the people over there.

CEB –ELECTRICITY LOSS

(No. B/533) Dr. R. Mungur (Second Member for Flacq and Bon Accueil) asked the Minister of Public Utilities whether he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Central Electricity Board, information as to –

- (a) the global average transmission loss of electricity;
- (b) the percentage transmission loss of electricity, and
- (c) the measures he proposes to take to minimize such losses.

Dr. Kasenally: Mr Speaker, Sir, the losses on a power system are classified into technical and non-technical losses. The technical losses are –

- transmission losses;
- high voltage distribution losses, and
- low voltage distribution losses.

They are in form of heat and are dependent upon the current and the resistance. The formula is $P=I^2R \times R$.

The non-technical losses, on the other hand, are caused by actions external to the power system and are difficult to measure, thus no record is available. The causes of non-technical losses are –

- electricity theft – which happens sometimes in the CEB;
- non-payment;
- metering errors, and

- inaccurate estimation of non-metered supplies.

I am informed by the CEB that, with regard to part (a), the total average monthly losses over the period April 2005 to March 2006 is 18.17 GWh.

As for part (b) of the question, I am informed that the percentage of losses over the same period is 10.9% based on the total amount of energy sent out during that period.

As regards part (c), to minimise the losses, I am informed that the CEB is applying the following measures –

- construction of new 66 kV transmission lines from
 - (i) Henrietta to Le Morne;
 - (ii) Combo to Union Vale, and
 - (iii) Champagne to Union Vale

- installation of additional reactive power compensation at new sub-stations, such as Sottise and Amaury;
- rehabilitation of distribution networks and optimal siting of transformers, and
- tracking of non-technical losses.

Mr Lesjongard: May I ask the hon. Minister whether those technical losses include losses encountered within transmission stations falling under independent power producers?

Dr. Kasenally: Mr Speaker, Sir, once the electricity comes on the grid, it is only those technical losses incurred by the CEB. The independent power producers, have to take account of their own losses. The CEB does not come in that.

ADOLESCENTS –OBESITY PREVALENCE

(No. B/534) Dr. R. Mungur (Second Member for Flacq and Bon Accueil) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether he will state if there is a prevalence of obesity among adolescents in Mauritius and, if so, will he consider the advisability of banning high sugar soft drinks and junk foods in the school compounds.

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, I understand there is a study on obesity by the Ministry of Health where mention is made of the problems of obesity amongst adolescents. I cannot, at this stage, comment on the prevalence of obesity among adolescents in Mauritius. However, there is a worldwide trend towards obesity among youngsters and we have to be cautious in order to protect our students against this trend.

At present, the Ministry of Health already regulates the operation of school canteens by setting out sanitary norms and providing guidelines as to the foodstuffs and drinks which can or cannot be sold in canteens.

I will be tabling a copy of the guidelines which are currently operational.

There is certainly need to improve the process and strengthen the measures taken so far. In this respect, I have already arranged for the setting up of a Health and P.E. Coordination Committee at my Ministry to strategically look at how we can encourage our students to develop a healthy life style. Further, I will seize this opportunity to request my colleague, the Minister of Health, to arrange for a specific survey to be

undertaken regarding obesity among adolescents and to come up with recommendations as to the preventive measures to be taken. A national strategy to deal with the problem of obesity among the Mauritian population can also be envisaged.

Meanwhile I assure the hon. Member that my Ministry will give due attention to the proposal made.

CHEBEL - NHDC HOUSING ESTATES - COMPLETION

(No. B/535) Mr M. Allet (Second Member for Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Housing and Lands whether, in regard to the NHDC complex at Chebel, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the National Housing Development Company Ltd., when will the housing units be delivered.

Mr Dulull: Sir, I refer the hon. Member to the reply to Parliamentary Question No. B/224 of 11 April 2006, whereby I confirm to the House that the housing units at NHDC Housing Estates at Camp Levieux, Chebel, Pte aux Sables, Cité la Cure and Riche Terre were illegally occupied only days before the appointed date for the last general election and substantial damages were caused to some 648 housing units.

I am advised that repair works at NHDC complex at Chebel, which comprises of 104 housing units, have already started and are expected to be completed by early June 2006. The delivery of 104 housing units will follow soon after.

Mr Bhagwan: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have some supplementary questions. Can the Minister give the assurance to the House that these houses will be delivered to needy people who have made their application in due form, for example, cases of fire victims, of vulnerable groups, and that there won't be any interference by anybody?

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order, order!

(Interruptions)

Mr Bhagwan: I have not yet finished.

Mr Speaker: Order, order! Let the Member put the question!

Mr Bhagwan: Can the Minister ...

(Interruptions)

Eta batchara!

Mr Speaker: The hon. Member will have to remove the word 'batchara'.

Mr Bhagwan: I withdraw it, Mr Speaker, Sir.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: It is such a simple question and there is so many interruptions.

(Interruptions)

Mrs Labelle: On a point of order, Mr Speaker, Sir, is it parliamentary that a Member shouts to a lady parliamentarian that someone has made 'un bébé dans mon dos?'

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Is the hon. Member withdrawing it?

Mr Allet: Yes, I withdraw, Sir.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Has the hon. Member already put his question? The hon. Minister will answer. There will be no interference in the disposal of the answers.

Mr Dulull: As opposed to the previous Government, ...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order, order!

Mr Dulull: As opposed to the previous Government, I believe the hon. Member is referring to past practice, to what happened during the last years.

(Interruptions)

I can give the guarantee to the hon. Member that the houses will be given to the needy and *la politique des petits copains* will not have its place.

Mr Bhagwan: Can the Minister give assurance to the House that nobody will have a list and walk around with...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order, order! Hon. Bhawan, this is the last time I am calling you to order! Hon. Bhagwan, if you don't stop, I will suspend both of you for the rest of the sitting of the House! This is the last warning I am giving!

(Interruptions)

Order, order! Hon. Bhagwan! I am telling both of you that the next time there is any disturbance, I am going to suspend both of you for the rest of the sitting of the House. Don't laugh!

FREE TRANSPORT SCHEME – PRIVATE TECHNICAL INSTITUTIONS

(No. B/536) Mr M. Allet (Second Member for Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether, in regard to the free transport scheme, he will state Government policy in respect of students attending private technical institutions registered with the Mauritius Qualifications Authority.

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, there is, at present, no Government policy on the issue of whether students attending Mauritius Qualifications Authority Registered Institutions should benefit from free travel scheme.

I am informed that the National Transport Authority has been requested to hold working sessions with the MQA with a view to looking into the advisability of students attending MQA registered institutions to benefit from free travel scheme.

The report of the National Transport Authority is still awaited.

I would like to refer the hon. Member to the reply to the Parliamentary Question B/312 on 18 April 2006 and also as regards the Technical and Vocational Institutions, I would refer him to the press communiqué issued by the National Transport Authority on 19 October 2005. I am tabling a copy of the press communiqué.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order, order! Members can go out and discuss!

(Interruptions)

YOUNGSTERS – CIVIC EDUCATION

(No. B/537) Mr M. Allet (Second Member for Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière) asked the hon. Minister of Education and Human Resources whether he will state if Government has any project in regard to the civic education of youngsters.

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to refer the hon. Member to the reply which my colleague, the Minister of Local Government gave in his capacity as Minister of Education and Human Resources to PQ B/129 at the sitting of the National Assembly on 04 April 2006.

Citizenship Education is supposed to have been introduced by the previous Government in the primary schools but although the subject was on the timetable, it was not actually taught in class. Textbooks which have been written at heavy costs have remained unused, because they were found to be inappropriate for the pupils.

The curriculum reforms which I have set in motion will take into consideration the teaching of Civic Education to our youngsters both at primary and secondary levels and appropriate time-tabling arrangements will be made.

My Ministry is also envisaging the introduction of Humanitarian Law and Human Rights into the secondary curriculum. This will give a broader view of our responsibilities as citizens in a global context. In this connection, appropriate training programmes will be put in place by my Ministry.

SUGAR EFFICIENCY (AMENDMENT) ACT (NO. 30 OF 2005) BENEFICIARIES

(No. B/538) Mr A. Ganoo (First Member for Savanne and Black River) asked the Minister of Agro Industry and Fisheries whether, in regard to the Sugar Efficiency (Amendment) Act (No. 30 of 2005), he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Morcellement Board, information as to -

- (a) the number of small planters who have benefited from the provisions of the above Act, and
- (b) the number of letters of intent issued by the Board to land owners who have applied for same after the coming into force of the Act.

The Minister of Housing & Lands (Mr M. Dulull): Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission I shall reply to this question.

With regard to part (a) of the question, I am advised that 91 owners of agricultural land not exceeding 1hectare have benefited from the provisions

of the Sugar Industry Efficiency (Amendment Act No. 30 of 2005), as at 30 April 2006.

With regard to part (b) of the question, I am advised that the number of letters of intent issued by the Morcellement Board to land owners who have applied for same after the coming into force of the Act, is 112 as at 30 April 2006.

Mr Ganoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, when this Bill was passed in Parliament, the hon. Minister of Agriculture mentioned the figure of 22,400 small planters who would be potential beneficiaries after the adoption of this law. Is the Minister satisfied that for the past six months less than 100 of them had taken advantage ...

(Interruptions)

Can the Minister give an explanation for this?

Mr Dulull: Well, the law has just been proclaimed. As and when the need would be felt, applications will be made to the Ministry.

Mr Ganoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister of Agriculture will also remember that the point was raised so as to enable as many small planters to benefit from this law, that the Planning and Development Bill should have to be proclaimed. The SIEA Act is restricted only to planters who own land within permissible zone of development. The other law has to be proclaimed. I have just checked and I don't think the proclamation has been made so far. Can the Minister tell us when will this Act be proclaimed?

Mr Dulull: We are looking into it and we will proclaim the PDA Act as and when required.

Mr Bodha: Can the hon. Minister tell us what is the area concerned for those, whose application has been approved?

Mr Dulhull: I will request the hon. Member to come with a substantive question.

AMUL MILK - STOCK, EXPIRY DATE, ETC.

(No. B/539) **Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun (Third Member for La Caverne and Phoenix)** asked the Minister of Industry, Small & Medium Enterprises, Commerce and Co-operatives whether he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the State Trading Corporation, information as to whether -

- (a) the stock of AMUL milk thereat is still proper for consumption and the expiry date of the present stock and the expiry date of the present stock, and
- (b) the sale of AMUL milk has proved to be profitable to the Corporation and, if not, if any loss has been incurred.

Dr. Jeetah: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the State Trading Corporation that AMUL milk powder is still being sold and consumed. The expiry date of the product is October 2006.

The House will recall that STC had imported milk powder from Australia and India. From information obtained, I am given to understand that as at date, STC has not incurred any loss on the sale of milk powder.

Moreover, Mr Speaker, Sir, I must also add that I am very happy that hon. Members are showing great interest on the subject of milk powder, most particularly the genuine brands imported by STC.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Speaker, Sir, can the Minister give us information as to the amount of milk that is still in stock and whether the expiry date is close or not?

Dr. Jeetah: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have already answered a number of questions and, specifically, on the issue that the hon. Member has raised, and last week I gave the answer on the quantity.

(Interruptions)

I have just answered that the expiry date is October 2006.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Speaker, Sir, since October last, we have received a stock from what the Minister mentioned of around 81 metric tons and, till today, from the last answer of the Minister we are aware that there are only 17.5 metric tons that have been sold. I wonder whether, from

this date on to October 2006, they will be in a position to sell the whole stock.

Dr. Jeetah: Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Gunness: Mr Speaker, Sir, can the Minister tell us, since October last up to now, 16 tons have been sold from a stock of 71 metric tons, what he is doing in order to make sure that the rest of the stock is sold up to October 2006 and that the STC does not incur loss?

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Please, wait for the answer of the Minister!

(Interruptions)

Yes, hon. Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun! You should not repeat the question.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Speaker, Sir, my question is whether the Minister will confirm that there are around 65 metric tons of AMUL milk still in stock at the STC and whether he is aware that letters emanated from the STC to the hon. Deputy Prime Minister and the Prime Minister by people working there stating that there is risk that this particular stock will no longer be suitable for consumption if necessary measures are not taken to sell it or to distribute to people are who are needy?

Dr. Jeetah: Mr Speaker, Sir, there are two aspects in the question. Firstly, with respect to 65 metric tons, I think the hon. Member is wrong, because I did give all the details last week, but I could not tell what was the difference between the weight and the sale.

Concerning the second part of the question, I am not aware of any letter. I have not been sent any, but if the hon. Member has it, she could let me have a copy, and I will take necessary action.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Speaker, Sir, if 65 metric tons is not the amount left, what is the actual amount left?

Dr. Jeetah: Can I refer the hon. Member to last week's PQ No. B/468 where I gave the answer?

Mr Jhugroo: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the Minister what is the mark-up on AMUL milk and how long it has taken to sell 16 tons of AMUL milk?

Dr. Jeetah: There are two aspects in the question. For the first one, the maximum mark-up for this type of milk was 14% and then it was increased. I must recheck those figures. For the second part, I have already answered. The hon. Member is repeating the question.

Mr Guinness: Mr Speaker, Sir, can the Minister give an undertaking to the House that up to October to 2006 ...

Mr Speaker: The Minister has already answered this question.

(Interruptions)

Mr Guinness: I have not even formulated my question, Mr Speaker, Sir. As usual, the Minister says 'yes' before the question is put. Can the Minister give an undertaking that the STC will not be making any losses from the sale of AMUL milk up to October 2006?

(Interruptions)

Dr. Jeetah: Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to give a guarantee that we are doing our most best, but this is a commercial venture, there are risks associated.

(Interruptions)

But, as I said, everything that has been bought so far has been sold and it is going on. The hon. Member wanted to know whether there is a profit or loss. I know that he wants to see us making losses, but losses have not been made! The sale is on.

(Interruptions)

Mr Bodha: Mr Speaker, Sir, in the previous question, the Minister had said that a second consignment had been ordered. May I ask him why there was a second consignment when the first one had not been sold out?

Dr. Jeetah: Once again, the Leader of the Opposition is wrong. They do not listen!

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker, Sir, I know that this is against Standing Orders' rules, but I will read the answer for the hon. Leader of the Opposition. They do not do their homework! This is what I said in my previous answer -

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

(Interruptions)

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Would the hon. Minister state then, if there has been a third stock imported, the amount that is left today? Because the Minister has been stating that the Opposition has not done its homework, I would like the Minister to come here today with the answers that were expected from him, if he has done his homework!

Dr. Jeetah: Mr Speaker, Sir, I must say I am losing my patience!

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! Order!

(Interruptions)

Dr. Jeetah: I have answered that question, last week. They ought to listen.

Mr Speaker: Next question, hon. Ganoo.

(Interruptions)

Order! Order! Hon. Jhugroo, do you know that you have no right to do this in the House? You are breaching the Standing Orders.

CEB - ENERGY GENERATED & CONSUMED -

JANUARY 2005 - APRIL 2006

(No. B/540) Mr A. Ganoo (First Member for Savanne and Black River) asked the Minister of Public Utilities whether he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Central Electricity Board, information as to -

- (a) the volume of energy generated for each of the months of January 2005 to April 2006, and
- (b) the volume of energy consumed by the domestic sector for each of the above months.

Dr. Kasenally: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have got a problem here in answering this question as far as volume is concerned. I will try to answer the question because electricity amount cannot be expressed in cubic meters or cubic litres. It is in kilowatts hours or gigawatt hours. I have compiled it in gigawatt hours for my hon. friend and, with your permission, Mr Speaker, Sir, I am laying a copy of the document containing the information asked for by the hon. Member in the Library of the National Assembly.

FREE TRANSPORT SCHEME - BUS COMPANIES - PAYMENT

(No. B/541) Mr M. Dowarkasing (Third Member for Curepipe and Midlands) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping whether, in regard to the free transport scheme, he will state the rate per passenger at which bus companies and private bus operators are being paid per month.

The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping (Dr. R. Beebeejaun): Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I am circulating the reply. (**Appendix**).

Mr Dowarkasing: Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Deputy Prime Minister state to the House whether consideration has been given to the length of the different routes while taking into account the rate per bus?

Dr. Beebeejaun: I will recommend my friend to read the reply. I have made it a point in answering it fully. He will have all the details there, including what he asked.

**MINISTRY OF AGRO-INDUSTRY & FISHERIES - ADVISER,
APPOINTMENT, SALARY, ETC.**

(No. B/486) **Mrs D. Perrier (Fourth 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 and Outer Islands whether, in regard to the Adviser to the hon. Minister of Agro-Industry and Fisheries, lately involved in an alleged case of rape, he will state -

- (a) his date of appointment;
- (b) the salary and other fringe benefits attached to the post, and
- (c) the time at which he clocks in and out of office.

The Minister of Agro-Industry and Fisheries (Dr. A. Boolell) Mr Speaker, Sir, the Adviser referred to was offered employment on a contract basis as Adviser to the Fisheries Division of the Ministry of Agro Industry and Fisheries on 14 September 2005 for a period of one year with a monthly salary of Rs35,000 plus approved compensation. His present contract will expire on 13 September 2006.

With your permission, I am tabling the fringe benefits attached to the status.

The normal attendance of the Adviser is from 08.45 hours to 16.00 hours. However, he usually comes in before 09.00 hours and leaves after 16.00 hours.

Mrs Perrier: Concernant l'allégation, l'*Adviser* a lui-même reconnu avoir visité cette dame un jeudi après-midi à 13.30. Donc pendant ses heures de travail! Est-ce que le ministre ne pense-t-il pas que c'est du gaspillage que de payer un *Adviser* R 35,000 alors que le gouvernement est en train de demander à la population de serrer la ceinture et le Premier ministre a demandé à tous ses ministres...

Mr Speaker: I will not allow the hon. Member to make a statement. I will allow her to put the question.

Mrs Perrier: Est-ce que le ministre ne considère pas que cet *Adviser* est inutile et que c'est un gaspillage que de lui payer R 35,000 par mois alors qu'il n'est pas en train de faire son travail?

(Interruptions)

Dr. Boolell: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am satisfied with the work being done by the Adviser.

Mr Bhagwan: Can I ask the hon. Minister whether on that famous day, the Adviser was on leave or on official duty?

Dr. Boolell: He was on duty.

Mrs Perrier: Puisque le ministre est en train de dire qu'il était *on duty*, peut-on savoir quel *kind of duty and what kind of advice he is giving to the Minister? Does he need that kind of advice?*

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Dr. Boolell: Mr Speaker, Sir, we cherish the advice dispensed by the Adviser.

Mr Soodhun: Can I ask the hon. Minister what type of advice does he receive from the Adviser since he has been employed? According to our information, the Minister is wrongly advised.

Mr Speaker: Last question, hon. Mrs Hanoomanjee!

(Interruptions)

Order!

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Since the Minister has said that the Adviser was on duty on that particular day, can we know whether any disciplinary action has been contemplated against him?

(Interruptions)

Dr. Boolell: Mr Speaker, Sir, there was no need for any disciplinary action.

Mr Speaker: Next question, hon. Guinness!

REDCO - BOARD - COMPOSITION, MEETINGS, ETC.

(No. B/490) Mr G. Guinness (Third Member for Montagne Blanche and GRSE) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether in regard to the REDCO, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, information as to -

- (a) when the Board was constituted;
- (b) the composition of the Board;
- (c) the number of Board Meetings held to date, and
- (d) if a manager has been appointed thereat.

The Minister of Education and Human Resources (Mr D. Gokhool): Mr Speaker, Sir, with your kind permission, I shall reply to this question. I am informed the following -

As regards part (a) of the question, the REDCO Board was last constituted in January 2002.

With regard to part (b) of the question, in terms of the articles of the company, the Board comprises a Chairman, two representatives each from my Ministry and the Commission for Education, Rodrigues and one representative each from the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development, the Ministry of Rodrigues, the State Investment Corporation Ltd and the PSSA. I am tabling the detailed composition of the Board as at now.

As regards part (c) of the question, the Board has met on twenty-six occasions from January 2002 to date.

As regards part (d) of the question, the post of Manager is vacant since April 2002, but the then Chairman was acting as Manager until his resignation in July 2005. Since then, one of the representatives of my Ministry on the Board is acting as Manager and is handling the administrative issues of the company.

Mr Guinness: Can I know from the Minister who is actually the Chairman of the Board?

Mr Gokhool: We don't have a substantive Chairman because the Chairman resigned in July 2005.

Mr Guinness: If I understand well the Minister, the Board was constituted in 2002. The Chairman has resigned and one year has lapsed and no Chairman has been appointed up to now for the REDCO Board. Does it seem normal for a Board to function without a Chairman?

Mr Gokhool: Let me correct the hon. Member. What I said is the Chairman resigned in July 2005.

(Interruptions)

But then, Government came with a decision to change the status of REDCO and, thereafter, there were representations from the Rodrigues Regional Assembly and these discussions have been going on and we have not yet reached a final decision.

Mr Guinness: Can I know from the Minister how many times the Board met since July up to now?

Mr Gokhool: The Board met on 26 occasions from January 2002 to date.

Mr Guinness: Can we know whether the Board has ratified the appointment of the acting Manager?

Mr Gokhool: The post of the Manager is still vacant. It is the Permanent Assistant Secretary of the Ministry who stands in as Manager for the time being. Once the Board is properly constituted, the post will be filled.

Mr Guinness: I don't know who is the person who is acting as Manager. It seems that the Board has not ratified the appointment of that person as Manager. Is it legally in order?

Mr Gokhool: In fact, in the previous situation, the Chairman was Chairman and Manager as well. The PAS of my Ministry sits on the Board of REDCO and, therefore, the Board nominates a Chairman if there is business to transact, and the Chairman acts also as the Manager. I don't think there is anything wrong with that. This is what has been going on in the past.

Mr Guinness: Since one year, no Manager has been appointed. I think it is time to appoint a Manager. Can we know when the post will be advertised?

Mr Gokhool: As I said, once the issue of ownership is finalised and the Board is properly constituted, the Manager will be appointed and this is going to happen very soon.

Mr Speaker: The Minister has replied that he does not have a timeframe.

Mr Gokhool: We don't have a timeframe.

Mr Guinness: Mr Speaker, Sir, I think the question of ownership does not arise, because in a Parliamentary Question put by hon. Bérenger, and for which, we got a written answer, it is said that everything is back as it was before the election, that is, the Rodrigues Regional Assembly has got back the 51% shares. Everything is back as previously.

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, what I said is that there was a decision of Government to take control of REDCO and then there were representations made by the Rodrigues Regional Assembly. These discussions have been going on and a decision will be finalised very soon.

Mr Guinness: Mr Speaker, Sir, I think the House needs to be clarified on this issue. There was a first PQ which I, myself, asked the Minister. He said that the Government of Mauritius will take back the management of REDCO. Two weeks ago, hon. Bérenger asked the same question and we got a written answer where it is said that it has been back as it was before the

election. The House has to know where matters stand. Either the Government of Mauritius has taken back REDCO or it is still with the Rodrigues Regional Assembly!

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, there have been discussions between Rodrigues Regional Assembly, my Ministry and the State Law Office. This decision has not been finalised yet. But, as I said, it will be done very shortly and I'll inform the hon. Member.

Mr Speaker: Time is over!