

## **DRIVING LICENCE – RENEWAL – MEDICAL FITNESS CERTIFICATE**

**(No. B/1308) Dr. R. Hawoldar (Second Member for La Caverne and Phoenix)** asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether, in regard to the renewal of driving licences requiring a medical fitness certification, he will consider the possibility of –

- (a) increasing the age limit from 60 to 65 years, and
- (b) requiring such renewal to be effected every two years instead of every year.

**The Ag. Prime Minister:** Mr Speaker, Sir, in accordance with section 45(3) of the Road Traffic Act and regulation 61 of the Road Traffic Regulations, a driving licence holder who has reached 60 years requires a satisfactory medical certificate for a yearly renewal of his licence.

A Committee chaired by the Ministry of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping, has worked on a new set of regulations governing the renewal of driving licences. In this context, the Draft Road Traffic (Driving Licences) Regulations which will replace Part V (Driving Licences) of the Road Traffic Regulations 1954 have been prepared and are presently being considered by the Attorney-General's Office.

The new regulations will make the following provisions –

- (a) extension of validity of driving licences from 60 to 65 years;
- (b) after the age 65 up to the age 70, any holder wishing to renew his driving licence will have to submit an Eyesight Test Pass Certificate and a Medical Certificate valid for a period of 5 years from a Registered Medical Practitioner, and
- (c) after the age of 70 years the required Eyesight Test Pass Certificate and the Medical Certificate should be valid for a period of two years.

**Dr. Hawoldar:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I thank the hon. Deputy Prime Minister. May I ask him whether a time frame has been set as to when these regulations will be materialised?

**The Ag. Prime Minister:** We've asked the State Law Office whether we could have it in the next few weeks and the answer is that they would look into it.

## **PRIVATE TELEVISION**

**(No. B/1309) Mr E. Guimbeau (First Member for Curepipe and Midlands)** asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether, in regard to the introduction of private television, he will state where matters stand.

**The Ag. Prime Minister:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to refer the hon. Member to the reply the hon. Prime Minister made to Parliamentary Question B/1078 on 25 July 2006.

As the House is aware, in the Government Programme 2005-2010, it is stated that Government will encourage the setting up of private television channels to enhance pluralism of the media.

However, I am informed by the Director of the Independent Broadcasting Authority that the Authority has not received any application for private television broadcasting pursuant to Section 19 of the IBA Act 2000.

**Mr Bérenger:** Mr Speaker, Sir, we all know that the hon. Ag. Prime Minister is acting but, probably, we won't be meeting next Tuesday. Can I put a number of questions and request, through the Ag. Prime Minister, that the hon. Prime Minister should place answers in the Library of the National Assembly. We've just heard the Ag. Prime Minister say that no one has come forward. It's chicken and egg! No one can come forward if *un cadre n'est pas fait*. Can I ask the first question. Can I know the number of households covered by digital television as at todate and the trend that it is only 20% and, at the same time, can we have the number of households paying Rs100 à la MBC, the number of households *abonnés à Parabole et MC Vision*? I have read that analogue will be phased out by 2010-2011. Does that mean that there will be no more analogue television broadcasting?

**The Ag. Prime Minister:** Mr Speaker, Sir, quite rightly the hon. Leader of the Opposition has mentioned that the information be sought. I'll get the information and lay it on the Table of the Assembly.

**Mr Bérenger:** I think the Ag. Prime Minister can agree with me that there will be no digital private televisions if *le coût des décodeurs* does not come down and if the digital television costs much more than the ordinary television. Can we have whatever figures are available at the Prime Minister's Office?

**The Ag. Prime Minister:** Unfortunately I have no figures as such, but I will remind the House what the Prime Minister said last time he was questioned, namely that we have to look into the amendments required for the Act so as to be able to attract foreign investors. This was a point that was raised in the last Parliamentary Question.

**Mr Bérenger:** I don't know if the Ag. Prime Minister will agree me, but there will be no private television, especially digital, if the payment of Rs100 remains *obligatoire* to the MBC/TV and if there is not a cap on the amount of publicity that he states that the MBC can take. Can we have the stand of the Prime Minister's Office on that?

*(Interruptions)*

**The Ag. Prime Minister:** I can only say that what the State Law Office has mentioned will be considered. I have no idea whether it is or it is not, but we'll look into it.

**Mr Bérenger:** My last question is: as we know the law stipulates that a digital private television is a very costly business. Can we know whether Government is considering changing that part of the legislation that says that a foreign partner – we need foreign partners to have private televisions in Mauritius - cannot own more than 20% of the company concerned?

**The Ag. Prime Minister:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I hinted in my reply that this is one of the clauses that has to be amended and the State Law Office is being asked to look into it.

**Mr Bhagwan:** Will the Ag, Prime Minister agree that the request for having the new private channel is because people are fed up with the MBC?

**Mr Speaker:** Can the hon. Member use better words?

**Mr Bhagwan:** I mean people have stopped watching MBC because it is very biased. Can we have the views of the Ag. Prime Minister?

**Mr Guimbeau:** Le Premier ministre par intérim peut-il indiquer à la chambre le montant total annuel encaissé par la MBC à travers les R100 roupies prélevées sur la facture des abonnés de la CEB ?

**Mr Speaker:** The question is about private television. How can the Ag. Prime Minister answer? I do not think he has the answer. First of all, it is not relevant to the question.

**The Ag. Prime Minister:** Whatever information the hon. Member requires, I am quite willing to supply it. I am limiting myself to the question.

**Mr Guimbeau:** Can the hon. Ag. Prime Minister table the answer?

**The Ag. Prime Minister:** Yes, certainly.

### **MBC/TV – PRIVATE PRODUCTIONS – BROADCAST**

(No. B/1310) Mrs Perrier (Fourth Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation, information as to whether it is the new policy of the MBC/TV to run programmes designed to promote private companies.

**The Ag. Prime Minister:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Director-General of the MBC that the Corporation can no longer rely exclusively on licence fees and advertising revenue to meet its operational costs and honour its mandate as a national public service broadcaster. With the increase in radio and television programmes and the urgent need to invest heavily in new digital technologies, the financing of the operations of the Corporation calls for innovative marketing approaches. Hence, the decision of the MBC Board to broadcast private productions as well as sponsored local programmes. The broadcast of such programmes constitutes a new source of revenue for the Corporation.

In addition, the broadcast of private productions provides a wider diversity of programmes on the television channels besides giving an opportunity for local talents to be discovered.

Furthermore, the broadcast of sponsored local programmes have multiple benefits. Such programmes promote the plurality of cultures, for example, through song competitions in the various languages.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am advised by the Director-General of the MBC that these arrangements are in line with the practice adopted by both public and private broadcasters globally. In fact, these arrangements have been in force at the MBC for quite a long time. Hence, the policy is not new.

**Mrs Perrier:** Mr Speaker, Sir, with this new policy Courts has recently had a series of programmes on interior decoration. Can we know the cost that Courts is paying for these programmes?

**The Ag. Prime Minister:** I have no information about the cost, but I can tell the hon. Member about the sharing - the share is on advertising time and revenues also. I do not have the total amount, but it is a principle which is working and it has been in operation since 2001.

#### **HOLD-UPS – ALLEGED CASES – JAN. 2005 – DEC.2007**

**(No. B/1311) Mr S. Naidu (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière)** asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether, in regard to reported alleged cases of hold up since January 2005 to date, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the number thereof, indicating in each case –

- (a) the amount of money
  - (i) stolen, and
  - (ii) recovered, and
- (b) the number of cases disposed of.

**The Ag. Prime Minister:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the information is being compiled and will be placed in the Library of the National Assembly.

**Mr Naidu:** Can the Ag, Prime Minister confirm whether all these investigations were made by the MCIT?

**The Ag. Prime Minister:** I can't go into the details of it. I can only provide the hon. Member with that information.

#### **BUSES – ALLEGED CASES OF ASSAULT**

**(No. B/1312) Mr S. Naidu (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière)** asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether, in regard to

alleged cases of assault in public buses, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the remedial measures that will be taken.

**The Ag. Prime Minister:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to refer the hon. Member to the reply made to Parliamentary Question B/642 on 19 June 2007, by the hon. Prime Minister wherein he informed the House about the various measures taken by Police to improve security in public buses.

I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that the *Police du Transport*, which has been set up since 2006, is a key player in providing safety and security to employees of the transport sector and to commuters at bus terminals, bus stops and during their trips.

The unit is deployed in all the seven Police Divisions of the island and works in conjunction with other units of the Police, which are engaged in combating crime. The presence of the *Police du Transport* reassures bus employees and commuters and acts as a deterrent to probable offenders. It provides regular visible policing at bus terminals, along bus routes during operating hours and takes prompt action against troublemakers. Frequent patrols and surprise checks are also carried out.

I am also informed that regular awareness and sensitisation campaigns are carried out by the Crime Investigation Prevention Unit and *Police du Transport* on security issues. Bus crews are also being provided training in customer care.

Mr Speaker, Sir, there has been a decrease this year in the number of assaults in buses as compared to last year, from 39 in 2006 to 21 this year. I would like to place on record the excellent work being performed by the *Police du Transport* which works in close collaboration with my Ministry.

Additionally, special operations are carried out during weekends and on public holidays especially as regards people who, under the influence of liquor, harass bus crews or the public and refuse to pay bus fares. Furthermore the different units of the Police Force will also be deployed to cover various public areas during the end of year festivities.

Since 2002, one of the conditions for the issue of the Road Service Licence is that buses should be equipped with a safe securely affixed for the deposit of cash collected. The implementation and enforcement of this condition has been stepped up since last year.

Bus companies have been advised to install communication and alarm systems in buses operating along high-risk routes. However, the question of cost and the type of technology involved is still the subject of discussion.

**Mr Bérenger:** Can I ask the hon. Ag. Prime Minister whether, in regard to cases of assaults against the bus conductors or even drivers, he knows how many cases have reached Court?

**The Ag. Prime Minister:** The information I have is that in 2007, three members of a gang have been arrested in June and on 23 January, a perpetrator was arrested. We have four cases waiting to go to Court.

**Mr Bundhoo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to assaults, can the hon. Ag. Prime Minister inform the House whether specific regions have been identified with this kind of assault and, especially, in view of festive season - Christmas and New Year - he would kindly liaise with the Commissioner of Police to ensure reinforcement in the provisions of security to these specific regions?

**The Ag. Prime Minister:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I am glad that this matter has been raised. There has been a spate of violence, larceny with violence, assault on bus routes in the western region - Quatre Bornes, Camp Levieux, Stanley and Beau Bassin. I must say the gang which has been operating uses all sorts of devices like mobile communication and so on. They are very highly organised. But I am glad that in January and in June, as I said, both gangs were dismantled. Since then the number has gone down because vigilance is of the essence.

**Mr Bérenger:** May I ask the hon. Ag. Prime Minister whether - of course, in relation to cases of assault in public buses against bus conductors and drivers, in some rare cases - Government has received representations from trade unions with suggestions on how to better combat such cases and if due consideration is being given?

**The Ag. Prime Minister:** The answer, Mr Speaker, Sir, is yes. We have had, at least, three meetings, from my recollection, on this issue, with the trade union representatives. They have come forward again with the suggestion of having the cash box with the driver and have it secured. They also proposed that there should be a Police station in the main bus stations. We are looking into that but, more importantly, they have asked for communications between the buses and a centre. Hon. Members of the House can appreciate that high technology is involved and costly; and there has been a lot of protracted discussions on this. But so far, I would like to say that there has been the suggestion of having an alarm, (*sirene*) making a lot of noise, being installed. There are a hundred buses which have installed this alarm system making a whistling noise if there is a problem. But they have used it only once in five years, so it is not very helpful. The NTC has embarked on cameras. They have got only two installations so far, but it is coming. We hope that with time it is going to be addressed. The main issue is to get the cash out of the bus as quickly and as soon as possible.

**Mr Bhagwan:** Can I know from the Ag. Prime Minister whether the trade unions have asked that the bus conductors be provided with federal streamers like in other countries?

**The Ag. Prime Minister:** No, they have not and they will not.

### **CID, CUREPIPE POLICE STATION – EXHIBITS - LOCKERS**

**(No. B/1313) Mr N. Bodha (First 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 Central Investigation Division of the Curepipe Police Station, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to whether there is a locker thereat where exhibits are kept and, if so, who is the custodian of these exhibits.

**The Ag. Prime Minister:** Mr Speaker Sir, I wish to refer the hon. Member to the reply to PQ No. B/1238 made by the Prime Minister on 04 December 2007.

I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that exhibits at the Central Investigation Division (CID) of the Curepipe Police Station are kept in an exhibit room where there are two metallic lockers and three metallic filing cabinets. All exhibits are kept under lock and key under the responsibility of Detective Inspector who is in charge of the Curepipe CID.

**Mr Bodha:** May I ask the hon. Ag. Prime Minister whether in that particular case, it was the Superintendent who was in charge of the MCIT who had the keys for the lockers?

**The Ag. Prime Minister:** No, this is the CID. It has nothing to do with the MCIT. I have inquired into that. There is no relationship.

### **ICAC – NO. OF CASES REPORTED – JULY 2007 TODATE**

(No. B/1314) **Mr N. Bodha (First Member for Vacoas and Floreal)** asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Independent Commission Against Corruption, information as to the number of cases reported thereto since July 2007 todate.

**The Ag. Prime Minister:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that section 81 of the Prevention of Corruption Act imposes restrictions on the disclosure of information by the Independent Commission Against Corruption. Moreover, sections 59 and 61 of the Prevention of Corruption Act subject the Independent Commission Against Corruption to the supervision of the Parliamentary Committee.

It is the Parliamentary Committee which is vested with the power to make reports to the National Assembly on, *inter alia*, the manner in which the Independent Commission Against Corruption is discharging its functions and exercising its powers.

The information requested for by the hon. Member will surely be made available in the Annual Report of the Independent Commission Against Corruption.

**Mr Bodha:** Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Ag. Prime Minister whether he does not consider that the nation at large should know, at least, the number of cases which are being inquired by the ICAC?

**The Ag. Prime Minister:** Mr Speaker, Sir, superficially, I would say that the request seems to be reasonable. But, on seeking advice, I have been told that if I answer this first question, it will open the door to other questions. This is the advice I have obtained from the Solicitor-General.

**Mr Bodha:** Will the Ag. Prime Minister agree that corruption is a question of perception? The Transparency International Quotient shows that there is a worsening of the problem. My question is: whether the number of cases which have been inquired into and the number of cases which have been referred to the DPP should not be known.

**The Ag. Prime Minister:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I was on the Parliamentary Committee between 2000 and 2005 during the period ICAC was functioning and we were denied the information even at that level.

**Mr Bérenger:** May I ask the hon. Ag. Prime Minister, since he says that he has been advised - I don't know by whom - that he should not even mention the number of cases reported to ICAC, the number of cases, if any, enquired by ICAC that have reached Court and, therefore, which no longer fall under the confidentiality clause?

**The Ag. Prime Minister:** Mr Speaker, Sir, if a question is put, it will be answered.

### **MCIT – POLICE OFFICERS**

(No. B/1315) **Mr N. Bodha (First 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 Police Officers who were posted at the Major Crime Investigation Team during the period September 2005 to October 2007, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to –

- (a) the number thereof, and
- (b) if they have been transferred and, if so, the reasons therefor.

**The Ag. Prime Minister:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that from the beginning of September 2005, there were 39 Police Officers who were posted to the Major Crime Investigation Team. By the end of October 2007, the strength has increased to 43.

Transfer in the Police Force is done in the interest of the service based on appraisal and the need to enhance organisational effectiveness and efficiency. It is an operational matter which falls within the purview of the Commissioner of Police who is solely responsible for the operational control of the Force.

**Mr Bodha:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Ag. Prime Minister has given the number from 39 to 43. There has been a mobility, officers have come in, they have not been able to adapt themselves to the system at the MCIT, and they have been asked to leave. May I know whether many officers have come in and have left because they could not adapt themselves to the methods which were being used at the MCIT?

**The Ag. Prime Minister:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the answer is yes. There have been movements, but I cannot confirm whether it's a question of adaptation or otherwise. As I said, it is the Commissioner of Police who decides for whatever operational reason, and I cannot go into the details thereof.

**Mr Bérenger:** Mr Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Ag. Prime Minister whether he would care to confirm that of all the Police Officers who were there during that period of time when all sorts of allegations and accusations have been leveled against the MCIT, that none has been transferred to date?

**The Ag. Prime Minister:** I cannot confirm this. As I said, it is a matter for the Commissioner of Police, but certainly, if the information is requested, I will try to see whether it can be obtained.

**Mr Guimbeau:** Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Ag. Prime Minister table the names of the Police Officers posted at the MCIT during this period?

**The Ag. Prime Minister:** No.

### **PRISONS – PRISONERS, PRISON OFFICERS, ETC.**

(No. B/1316) **Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière)** asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether, in regard to the prisons, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Prisons, information as to –

- (a) the number of prisoners in each prison as at to date, indicating the number thereof who are on remand;
- (b) the number of Prison Officers attached to each prison, and
- (c) where matters stand in relation to the new prison project at Melrose.

**The Ag. Prime Minister:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I am tabling the information relating to parts (a) and (b) of the question.

As regards part (c), I am informed by the Commissioner of Prisons that a high security prison will be constructed at Melrose to accommodate about 750 detainees serving long sentences. In this respect, a plot of land to the extent of 37 *arpents* has already been vested in the Prime Minister's Office. An amount of Rs6 m. has also been budgeted in financial year 2007/2008 for the provision of consultancy services for the new prison which has a project value of Rs400 m.

The preliminary architectural drawings of the project have been prepared by the Architect Section of the Ministry of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping and are in the process of being finalised. The Structural Engineering and Quantity Surveying Consultants have already been appointed. The Mechanical Services Consultant and the Security Design Consultant for the project are being recruited.

I am informed that the project will be implemented in three phases. According to a tentative programme established by the Ministry of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping, construction works on Phase I are expected to start in January 2009 and to be completed by June 2010.

**Mr Dowarkasing:** Mr Speaker, Sir, concerning the prisoners at the Phoenix prison, may I know from the hon. Ag. Prime Minister where they been transferred to?

**The Ag. Prime Minister:** Prisoners from the Phoenix prison have been transferred, but I cannot tell the hon. Member more.

**Mr Ganoo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Ag. Prime Minister tell the House what use will be made now of the La Bastille Prison of Phoenix?

**The Ag. Prime Minister:** It is being considered.

**Mr Dowarkasing:** Mr Speaker, Sir, is it correct to say that the La Bastille Prison of Phoenix referred to has been closed after a report that has been submitted by the UNSPT?

**The Ag. Prime Minister:** I could not comment on that. I will ask the Prime Minister.

**Mr Bérenger:** Mr Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Ag. Prime Minister to also see with the Prime Minister whether that report could be placed in the Library?

**The Ag. Prime Minister:** Certainly, I will, Mr Speaker, Sir.

**Mr Ganoo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Ag. Prime Minister confirm to the House that in the meantime the situation is worsening? In fact, in Beau Bassin prison, four prisoners are sharing one cell, and even in the Borstal prison now things are getting as bad as it is in Beau Bassin prison.

**The Ag. Prime Minister:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I am aware of overcrowding in the prisons. It has been a long time since this issue has been raised, and, as I said, the delay of having a prison in Melrose is due to having a Security Consultant to advise on the security aspect of the design.

**Mr Bundhoo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, if possible, can the hon. Ag. Prime Minister inform the House about the distance between the village of Melrose and the land which is being identified for the construction of the prison?

**The Ag. Prime Minister:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I will find out and let the hon. Member know.

## **POLICE OFFICERS IN POST**

(No. B/1317) **Mr A. Ganoo (First Member for Savanne and Black River)** asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether, in regard to the Police Force, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the number of Police Officers in employment, indicating the number thereof attached to -

- (a) the Very Important Person Security Unit;
- (b) the Anti Drug Smuggling Unit;
- (c) the Central Investigation Division;
- (d) the Special Supporting Unit;

- (e) *the Groupement d'Intervention de la Police Mauricienne;*
- (f) the Passport and Immigration Office, and
- (g) the Traffic Branch Unit.

**The Ag. Prime Minister:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that there are at present 10,626 Police officers of different ranks in post, attached to different units as follows –

(a)	-	314
(b)	-	398
(c)	-	512
(d)	-	422
(e)	-	69
(f)	-	250
(g)	-	267

An additional 500 new recruits have reported for duty on Monday 10 December, that is, yesterday. After following intensive training, they will be available for policing duties for the end of year festivities.

#### **POLICE COMPLAINTS BUREAU – COMPLAINTS – JANUARY 2006 – SEPTEMBER 2007**

**(No. B/1318) 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 Police Complaints Bureau, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to –

- (a) the number of officers posted thereat, indicating their respective grades;
- (b) the budget allocated for its day to day running, and
- (c) the number of complaints reported thereat since January 2006 to September 2007, indicating the number thereof which have been –
  - (i) referred to the Director of Public Prosecutions, and
  - (ii) prosecuted.

*(Withdrawn)*

#### **POLICE FORCE - CHILDREN AND WOMEN PROTECTION UNITS - OPERATIONAL**

**(No. B/1319) 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

Children and Women Protection Units (CWPU) of the Police Force, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to if they are operational and, if so, indicate –

- (a) the number thereof;
- (b) their locations, and
- (c) the number of officers posted to each unit.

*(Withdrawn)*

### **ESTHER, MR CLIFFORD – GOVERNMENT OF MAURITIUS – COURT CASE AGAINST**

**(No. B/1320) Mrs A. Navarre-Marie (First Member for GRNW and Port Louis West)** asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defense & Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues and Outer Islands whether he will state if Government will consider compensating one Mr C.E. of Pointe aux Sables who was shot by the Police in 1982 in a bungalow in Black River, as a result of mistaken identity and which led him to being physically handicapped.

**The Ag. Prime Minister:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that Mr Clifford Esther and three other persons entered a case in the Supreme Court against Government of Mauritius claiming damages worth Rs2 m. for injury sustained. The case was heard and dismissed with costs on 30 June 1986.

Following a correspondence which has been sent to the hon. Attorney- General by the legal adviser of Mr Clifford Esther, the content of the letter is being studied.

**Mrs Navarre-Marie:** Mr Speaker, Sir, it would seem that Mr Clifford Esther has been taken for another person and, as a result of this, he was shot and he lost his eye and part of his body. He is physically handicapped. I don't know what is the judgment of the Court, but the fact is that Mr Esther and his family are living in abject conditions in Pointe aux Sables. Will the hon. Ag. Prime Minister, at least, cast a sympathetic eye on the situation of Mr Esther and see to it that Government provides financial damages to him?

**The Ag. Prime Minister:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I agree entirely with the hon. Member. If what is being said is correct, I think there should be something done for the family. But, let us look at the issues again, let us not prejudge.

### **RODRIGUES - ANSE RAFFIN DAM -- ALLEGED MALPRACTICE**

**(No. B/1321) Mr J. Von-Mally (Fourth Member for Rodrigues)** 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 Anse Raffin Dam in Rodrigues, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to if the inquiry conducted there into, to shed light on the alleged acts of malpractice that were reported to have taken place during the construction thereof, has now been completed and, if

so, the outcome thereof, indicating the measures that he proposes to take to seek redress from those found responsible therefor.

**The Ag. Prime Minister:** Mr Speaker, Sir, following an anonymous letter received by the Commissioner of Police on 29 October 2005, an enquiry was instituted into allegations of malpractices in the construction of the Anse Raffin Dam in Rodrigues. I am informed that enquiry is still in process.

**Mr Speaker:** The Table has been advised that Parliamentary Question B/1327 has been withdrawn. Hon. Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun, next question.

### **SC/HSC EXAMINATIONS – SUPERVISORS & ORGANISERS – SELECTION**

**(No. B/1322) Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun (Third Member for La Caverne and Phoenix)** asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether, in regard to the Supervisors, Assistant Supervisors, Organisers and Assistant Organisers appointed to conduct the Cambridge School Certificate and the Higher School Certificate Examinations, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Examinations Syndicate, information as to the criteria used for their selection.

**Mr Gokhool:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Mauritius Examinations Syndicate that the Supervisors and Assistant Supervisors as well as the Organisers and Assistant Organisers for the conduct of the Cambridge School Certificate (SC) and Higher School Certificate (HSC) examinations are selected by the syndicate essentially on the basis of seniority, that is, their respective dates of appointment as Education Officer in the Public Service. Supervisors and Assistant Supervisors are selected from Education Officers of the State sector only whereas Organisers and Assistant Organisers are selected from Education Officers of both the State and the private sectors.

The exercise of selection is done on a yearly basis and normally starts with the issue of a circular to schools in April to invite expressions of interest from those who wish to be retained to work for the conduct of the SC/HSC examinations. Obviously, those Education Officers whose wards are taking part in the examinations become *de facto* disqualified.

Thereafter, the Mauritius Examinations Syndicate undertakes the selection exercise, looking at the seniority criterion and taking into account adverse reports, if any, on the persons concerned. Normally those who have satisfactorily worked for the conduct of the SC/HSC examinations in the past are selected.

I am informed by the Mauritius Examinations Syndicate that although the existing arrangements have been working without any major problem so far, the Syndicate intends to review the whole process in the light of experience gained to render the criteria more rigorous and effective, ensure greater accountability on the part of officers and provide for a wider pool of resource persons for the conduct and organisation of examinations.

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister whether he is aware that the criterion of seniority was not applied during the examination which was held in November this year and that there are cases where officers which have never served the MES as Assistant Organisers were asked to act as Organisers in schools and centres where the Assistant Organiser had a long experience in the conduct of examinations.

**Mr Gokhool:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I have given the reply that seniority has been used and if the officer has no adverse report, these are cases which are considered.

The hon. lady is making a general statement. The procedures are there, if somebody is aggrieved, he can make a representation to the MES who will look into the matter, but as at now, I do not have any representation to that effect.

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I am not making any general statement. In fact, I am referring to a case at a particular centre where an Assistant Organiser has subsequently had to take back offer of service, because someone else without experience was placed as Organiser in the same centre.

**Mr Speaker:** The Minister has answered that the person must make representations to the MES.

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** May I ask the hon. Minister whether he is not aware ...

**Mr Speaker:** The hon. Minister has answered the question. Does the hon. Member have another question?

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** I have another question on the same issue, Mr Speaker, Sir. The Assistant Organiser in question did make representations at the MES, Mr Speaker, Sir.

**Mr Speaker:** Is the hon. Minister aware that representations have been made?

**Mr Gokhool:** I am not aware at the stage.

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister whether he is aware that, since the procedure was not well respected this particular year, some schools have had major problems during the conduct of practical examinations? One case was referred to in this Assembly. I am referring to another case where Chemistry examinations were held and solutions prepared were not proper.

**Mr Gokhool:** Again, Mr Speaker, Sir, I must say to the House that we should not generalise from one particular case. I did answer to one particular case with regard to fashion and fabric. Another case about Chemistry examination is being referred to. If the hon. lady puts a substantive question, I'll come to the House and give all the information.

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** Mr Speaker, Sir, may I also ask the Minister whether he is aware that practical Biology examinations have been postponed for a number of times because it seems that the list of Organisers was not ready until the eve of the exams?

**Mr Gokhool:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to have your guidance. The question is about the criteria for the appointment of Supervisors, Assistant Supervisors.

**Mr Speaker:** The hon. Minister should say that he needs notice.

**Mr Dookun-Luchoomun:** A last question, Mr Speaker, Sir. In fact, I am talking about the appointment of Organisers for the exams and the question is related, Mr Speaker, Sir.

**Mr Speaker:** Yes, he has said that he needs notice.

**Mr Dookun-Luchoomun:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister just stated that one of the criteria for appointment of Supervisors is that they should be public officers. May I ask why Education Officers from the private sector have not been called for to serve as Supervisors for exams?

**Mr Gokhool:** As at now the criteria is that we look for Education Officers of the public sector. I have said that this would be looked into because we want to widen the pool of Supervisors.

### **CPE 2007 – QUESTION PAPERS**

**(No. B/1323) Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun (Third Member for La Caverne and Phoenix)** asked the Minister of Education & Human Resources whether, in regard to the Question Papers for the Certificate of Primary Education Examinations 2007, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Examinations Syndicate, information as to whether errors have been noted therein and, if so –

- (a) the number thereof, and
- (b) the remedial measures that have been taken to ensure that the students be not penalized as a result thereof.

**Mr Gokhool:** Mr Speaker Sir, before I reply to the question, I wish to point out that there is a clear distinction to be made between factual errors and mistakes on the one hand and comments of appreciation and discussions on semantics on the other. This clarification is of paramount importance in view of the growing number of people who claim to be specialists in matters related to education, assessment and examinations.

Views and opinions picked up by the media can often give a distorted picture of the examination process, which should be avoided. Genuine errors and mistakes need to be addressed through institutional procedures. I need to point out that no examination system is totally free from errors and mistakes. Our examination system is no exception. I have insisted in this House that MES should work towards a zero defect, error free examination.

Having said that, I am informed by the Director of the Mauritius Examinations Syndicate that only three factual errors were noted in the Question Papers for the 2007 CPE Examinations. These involved three subjects namely: (i) History & Geography (ii) Tamil and (iii) Urdu. These errors are admitted by the Mauritius Examinations Syndicate and relate to the following –

- (i) For the “History and Geography” Paper, a typing error occurred in Section A, Question 1 A, item 4, where the letter “u” was missing in the word “mountain”. It is to be noted that as part of the inbuilt control mechanism on the computer a spell check was run, but in view of the fact that “Lion Mountain” was a proper name, the missing “u” was not disclosed and detected.
- (ii) For ‘Urdu’ paper, the symbol of the question mark was missing in three of the comprehension items at Question 4, Section B. Again, in spite of verification and moderation, the absence of the question marks were unnoticed.
- (iii) As regards the “Tamil” paper, in Question 1, section A, item 16 which was a multiple choice question, I am informed that three options seemed possible answers and that all three have been accepted as correct answers.

*(Interruptions)*

Benefit of doubt!

In all these cases the mistakes were investigated and the explanations of the officers concerned were obtained. The MES has taken necessary steps to ensure that these errors do not have any incidence on the marking of the papers. Hence, no student would be penalised.

There was no mistake in the Question Papers for the other subjects.

As regards the CPE 2007 English paper which formed the basis of a Parliamentary Question at our sitting on 20 November 2007, I need to again repeat, in spite of what has been said by the hon. Member representing Vacoas and Floreal that the paper did not contain any factual error or mistake and that the points raised are merely issues of appreciation. For example, whether OK should not have been written with a capital O and a small k instead of a capital O and a capital K as it was in the question paper?

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** Mr Speaker, Sir, on a point of order, instead of answering my question, the hon. Minister is answering the question of hon. Mrs Labelle set last week.

**Mr Speaker:** I have said I have no control on answers given by Ministers except that they must be pertinent to the question.

**Mr Gokhool:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the question is in regard to Question Papers for the Certificate of Primary Education Examinations 2007 and it relates to Questions Papers. Or whether “Black River” should not have been written instead of “Rivière Noire” as it was in the Question Paper?

Mr Speaker Sir, nearly everyone can have his or her own view about such issues, but that does not mean that he or she is right simply by stating that. What is important is that there has been no factual error or mistake in the English Paper and that the MES is satisfied that the requirements of paper setting and moderation have been fully complied with.

Although mistakes are human and do occur from time to time, the objective of the MES remains to ensure an error free examination. The MES has been requested to reinforce its processes and the system of checks and balances to avoid mistakes in Question Papers and ensure a zero defect situation.

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** May I ask the hon. Minister whether he could confirm that the misprint errors which have occurred in the papers of the Multiple Choice questions and, in spite of the fact that he says that the students will not be penalised, in an examination, especially a Multiple Choice one, this would have a negative effect on the performance of the student?

**Mr Gokhool:** The MES has got a sampling and standardisation process and such mistakes are taken into account so that students are not penalised.

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** May I ask the hon. Minister whether there is a mechanism which has been set up for the control of papers at the MES and whether the papers for CPE are printed in UK or not?

**Mr Gokhool:** Mr Speaker, Sir, there are controlled mechanisms and papers are printed in UK.

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** May I ask the hon. Minister whether there is a delegation every year which goes to England to check papers and verify any printing error?

**Mr Gokhool:** The whole process is to have a quality control and MES has this responsibility. And, if they travel to Cambridge, I am sure that they must look after this issue, because what is the purpose of travelling to UK, if they don't have to check that.

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** Can I know from the hon. Minister how many officers from the MES have gone to UK this year for the checking and verification of papers?

**Mr Gokhool:** I don't have the complete information. All I know is that the Director of MES does go to Cambridge for the purpose.

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** Mr Speaker, Sir, my information is that a delegation of officers do go....

*(Interruptions)*

Then, I am going to ask the hon. Minister whether he considers it to be proper to send the Director to check the papers when someone else has sat and written the papers and there is a whole section, the Subject Advisory Committee, and whether these people were not supposed to be those who should go and check the papers and verify correctly that no misprints or errors occur?

**Mr Gokhool:** Mr Speaker, Sir, when the Director of the MES travels, he has got other matters to address apart from looking at the examination papers, because there are so many other issues that have to be discussed.

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** May I ask the hon. Minister whether he was referring to that particular delegation which I mentioned and not a delegation to go and assess and evaluate other problems at Cambridge?

**Mr Gokhool:** What I said is that when the MES sends a delegation, whether it is the Director or others, they have to attend to a number of issues, which includes, of course, the quality control of papers.

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** Will the hon. Minister, therefore, agree that the MES has, once again, failed in the conduct of examination be it for SC and HSC or CPE?

**Mr Gokhool:** The short answer is: I do not share the opinion of the hon. lady.

### **EX-SERVICEMEN (PEACETIME) – WIDOWS – PENSION**

**(No. B/1324) Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun (Third Member for La Caverne and Phoenix)** asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to the widows of the ex-servicemen, she will state if they have been paid a pension, as announced in the 2007-2008 budget speech and, if so, the number thereof.

**The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development (Mr R. Sithanen):** Mr Speaker, Sir, following the announcement made in the 2007/2008 Budget Speech to remove the discrimination against the widows of peacetime ex-Servicemen, who did not receive any support, by giving them the same pension and benefits as the widows of wartime ex-servicemen, the Mauritius Ex-Services Trust Fund initiated in July 2007, an exercise to register the widows of peacetime ex-servicemen. The registration is being carried out through the Citizens Advice Bureau, at the Trust Fund and at its Rodrigues sub-office. The date limit for registration was 14 September 2007. However, the Trust Fund is flexible on the date limit as it continues to receive applications.

I am informed by the Trust Fund that as at 06 December 2007, some 3,600 widows of peacetime ex-servicemen have registered themselves.

The Trust Fund had to verify the appropriate documents submitted at the time of registration so as to ascertain the identity and eligibility of the applicants. I am advised that this exercise is extremely time-consuming.

As regards benefits, the House may be aware that some 1,500 widows of wartime ex-servicemen receive a yearly one-off allowance. It is this yearly one-off allowance that is being extended to widows of peacetime ex-servicemen.

In addition to this one-off allowance, they will also be entitled, as per budgetary measures for a refund of up to Rs1,250 per year in respect of medical expenses.

These measures are effective as from July 2007 and I am informed by the Trust Fund that arrangements have already been made to make payments as from next week.

**Mr Bérenger:** May I ask the hon. Minister, since he has said that the date for this payment to be effective will be 01 July 2007, are there any widows who have deceased in the meantime and, if yes, what arrangements are going to be made?

**Mr Sithanen:** I am not aware, Mr Speaker, Sir. Let me reassure the House that it has been an extremely difficult exercise because, in some cases, we had to make sure of the identity and eligibility. It is not an easy one according to the information I have from those who are carrying out this exercise. In some cases, they were religiously married, but there is no documentary evidence. In other cases, we have had to seek information from the UK to confirm that the identity is correct. In spite of that, I have requested the Ministry to make sure that those whose identity and eligibility are known, that we should start making payment as from next week. Obviously, the payment will be effective from 01 July 2007, but I'll seek the information and see how many have deceased since July 2007

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** Mr Speaker, Sir, may I know from the Minister whether it is just a one-off payment or are they going to expect a one-off payment every year?

**Mr Sithanen:** The payment for the widows of wartime ex-servicemen is a one-off payment. It is a one-off payment every year. It is not on a monthly basis, but at the end of the year. On top of that, they get the medical grant.

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** Is the medical grant on a yearly basis as well?

**Mr Sithanen:** Yes, Sir.

## **MEDICAL COLLEGE, ST. PIERRE – SETTING UP**

**(No. B/1325) Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun (Third Member for La Caverne and Phoenix)** asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Tertiary Education Commission, information as to if the Commission has received an application for a permit to operate a Medical College in the region of St. Pierre and, if so, if the permit has been granted and, if not, why not

**Mr Gokhool:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that the Tertiary Education Commission has received an application from CAYMET India Ltd. on 28 May 2007 for the setting up of a Medical College in the industrial area, near the Police station at Saint Pierre, Moka.

The institution made an application on 19 June 2007 for accreditation of Year I and Year II of an MD (Hons) programme awarded by Khazar University, Azerbaijan, which it proposes to run in Mauritius.

I am further informed that TEC has so far not been able to finalise the registration of the institution and the accreditation of the MD (Hons) programme it proposes to run in view of the application being short of the full set of documents requested for.

At time of application, applicants are informed of all the procedures as well as the documents required for registration of the institution and accreditation of programmes. I am tabling a list of such documents required. However, applicants invariably do not fulfil all the

requirements and take undue time to submit the missing documents. This causes delay in the processing of the applications.

In reply to PQ No. B/1272, on the Sri Ramachandra Medical College on 04 December 2007, I informed the House that the onus to submit a complete set of required documents lies on the applicant. This is another case where the TEC had sent a letter to the applicant on 24 August 2007 for submission of missing documents followed by two reminders on 11 September and 19 November 2007. Up to now, the documents are not forthcoming.

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** May I ask the hon. Minister whether he does not find it strange that, each time people make applications, they seem to submit the sets of documents with a few papers missing? Isn't something wrong in the way the TEC calls for these documents?

**Mr Gokhool:** On that score, I don't think so, because, the list of documents which I am tabling is available on the web site and applicants have to go through them and check which documents have been submitted. A reminder has been sent and there has been no reply.

**Mr Bérenger:** In the case of India, for example, I think that now we have an established procedure that the University Grants Commission is the correspondent of the Tertiary Education Commission, therefore, we get all the required information. Can I know how the TEC is going to get information on that educational institution which we are talking about in Azerbaijan?

**Mr Gokhool:** Mr Speaker, Sir, this university wants to tie up with Khazar University in Azerbaijan to offer courses. They have to submit the programmes to be accredited. This information should come through CAYMET India and not through any other sources. That is why we are waiting for the documents to be submitted. At this stage, it is for CAYMET India to submit the documents. When a document is submitted and it has to be verified or crosschecked, the TEC may as well refer to University Grants Commission. But, first of all, the documents must reach TEC and they have not.

**Mr Bérenger:** May we know whether we have a correspondent in Azerbaijan to get information? Can I know from the hon. Minister whether there is a local correspondent? Do we have the details of the local correspondent who is moving this project ahead?

**Mr Gokhool:** I don't know. But, I can give some additional information just to put the problem in perspective. This university tied up with Khazar University to offer programmes, and now we have received – I am just mentioning with the caution that is required – from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, International Trade & Cooperation a *note verbale* to the effect that, due to the suspension of educational medicines experts at the University of Khazar since 2006, the continuation of training of students at this high school is not possible.

**Mr Cuttaree:** Mr Speaker, Sir, do I understand from the hon. Minister that the diplomas from the said university are not recognised in Mauritius for registration to the Medical Council?

**Mr Gokhool:** I must say that I can't give that information as regards registration, Mr Speaker, Sir.

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** When the Minister replied, Mr Speaker, Sir, I got the impression that had it not been for the missing papers, CAYMET would have obtained its permit. The

Minister said that it was because of the missing papers. May I ask the hon. Minister, if the papers were there, whether he was satisfied with the set-up of a Medical College at the Industrial Estate?

**Mr Gokhool:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I think that the fact of the matter is that they have to submit all the documents and the processing will take place. I don't think we can look at the site.

*At 1.00 p.m. the sitting was suspended.*

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

## **EMPLOYMENT EQUITY COMMISSION – ESTABLISHMENT**

**(No. B/1326) Mr E. Guimbeau (First Member for Curepipe and Midlands)** asked the Attorney-General, Minister of Justice & Human Rights whether in regard to the proposed establishment of an Employment Equity Commission to assure equity and transparency in recruitment, he will state where matters stand.

**Mr Valayden:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the establishment of an Employment Equity Commission is a key component in the mandate of this Government to ensure that labour recruitment in both private and public sectors is carried out on the basis of meritocracy.

As hon. Members are aware, our Constitution already provides for independent and impartial Service Commissions for recruitment in the public sector. An important feature of these Commissions is the possibility to have their decisions subject to review by the Supreme Court in the event of any unlawful, unreasonable or irrational acts on the part of the recruiting Commission.

It is the intention of this Government that such mode of accountability and transparency should be extended to the private sector and it is in that context that the Employment Equity Commission is being considered. There are, on the other hand, legal, functional as well as budgetary aspects which have to be addressed. On the legal side, I need not remind the House that the section dealing with discrimination under our Constitution refers to acts "done by a person acting in the performance of a public function" and no mention is made as to acts carried out in a private capacity. It is believed that the non-discriminatory protection should be extended to all sectors of the economy and there should be no legal hindrance in that respect if specific provisions are provided in the legislation.

On the functional side, it is believed that the Commission should be integrated as an independent reviewing appellate body under the larger umbrella of the Equal Opportunities Commission. At the same time, Government is determined not to make the same mistake as others by ensuring that institutions do not become mere sinecures. The functions of the Employment Equity Commission would have to complement those of the existing Commissions provided under our Constitution.

The legislative Bill is being finalised. I am confident that once all these legal and policy issues are finalised, Government will circulate the Bill and will then present it in the next parliamentary session.

## CEB – SECRETARY - POST

(No. B/1327) **Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière)** asked the Minister of Public Utilities whether in regard to the post of Secretary of the Central Electricity Board, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Board, information as to if the post has been filled and, if so –

- (a) when;
- (b) if the post was advertised;
- (c) the procedure followed for the recruitment exercise, and
- (d) the name of the incumbent, indicating his terms and conditions of employment.

*(Withdrawn)*

## RIVIERE DES ANGUILLES & SOUILLAC – FOOTBALL GROUNDS – FLOODLIGHTS

(No. B/1328) **Mr S. Mohamed (Third Member for Rivière des Anguilles & Souillac)** asked the Minister of Youth & Sports whether, in regard to the installation of floodlights on the football grounds in the Constituency of Rivière des Anguilles & Souillac, as announced in the last Budget, he will state where matters stand.

**Mr Tang Wah Hing:** Mr Speaker, Sir, in reply to past parliamentary questions, I had, on several occasions, indicated to the House that, following an audit exercise on sports infrastructure carried out by my Ministry, a list was drawn as regards upgrading works to stadia and football grounds in various regions, which are managed and maintained by the local authorities and my Ministry.

In that connection, my Ministry is working closely with the Ministry of Local Government and the local authorities for upgrading works to be carried out on a priority basis and subject to availability of funds.

It is normally the practice for my Ministry to proceed with upgrading works prior to the installation of floodlights.

In that context, my Ministry has provided the required funds to the Ministry of Local Government for upgrading works at Rivière des Anguilles and Souillac.

Major upgrading works have already been carried out at Rivière des Anguilles, and those at Souillac will be completed shortly.

Provision for the installation of floodlights at both Rivière des Anguilles and Souillac will be made in the course of next year's budget.

## BEL AIR, ST. FÉLIX - IRS

**(No. B/1329) Mr S. Mohamed (Third Member for Rivière des Anguilles and Souillac)** asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism, Leisure and External Communications whether in regard to the projects for the construction of two hotels and the implementation of an Integrated Resort Scheme at Bel Air, St. Félix, he will state where matters stand.

**The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism, Leisure and External Communications (Mr X. L. Duval):** Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to refer the hon. Member to the reply made to PQ B/207 addressed to the hon. Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development at the sitting of the House on 24 April 2007 and relating to the same matter.

I am informed that the investigation being carried out by ICAC into the matter has not yet been completed and consequently action is still pending on the allocation of *Pas Géométriques* for the implementation of the project.

**Mr Mohamed:** Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Deputy Prime Minister & Minister of Tourism inform the House what is the rationale behind waiting for the investigation to be over as opposed to the great potential this project may have in creation of jobs for people of the vicinity?

**Mr X. L. Duval:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I agree with the hon. Member. It is an exceptionally beautiful site. But, unfortunately, I am not the right person to answer the question. I can provide information, but the decision rests with the Ministry of Housing & Lands.

**Mr Mohamed:** Mr Speaker, Sir, will the hon. Deputy Prime Minister consider the possibility of speaking to his colleagues with whom the decision lies, in order to impress upon them the necessity to go ahead with such a beautiful project, for the creation of employment in the area as well as the FDI aspect?

**Mr X. L. Duval:** Certainly, Mr Speaker, Sir.

## SOUILLAC – STATE LAND - ALLOCATION

**(No. B/1330) Mr S. Mohamed (Third Member for Rivière des Anguilles & Souillac)** asked the Minister of Housing & Lands whether, in regard to the proposed allocation of several plots of land of 5 perches to people belonging to the low-income group in Souillac, as announced in the last Budget, he will state where matters stand.

**Mr Dulull:** Mr Speaker, Sir, paragraph 211 of the 2007-2008 Budget Speech did indeed mention the creation of a special programme in the Empowerment Programme for the provision of sites for serviced plots by leasing lots at Glen Park, Ville Noire and Souillac for a nominal fee of Rs3,000 per year.

The Souillac site forms part of Phase II of the Sites and Services project. Under this project, which also includes sites at Glen Park and Ville Noire, bare serviced plots of State land of an extent of 5 perches will be leased for a 60-year period to beneficiaries of the lower middle income group, at the indicated annual fee of Rs3,000.

I am advised that arrangements are in hand for the tender for this project entitled “On-site Infrastructure Works for Site and Services” for 123 lots in Souillac will be floated at the earliest possible time.

**Mr Mohamed:** Mr Speaker, Sir, would the hon. Minister care to enlighten the House as regards the time frame? Fair enough, the words ‘that the earliest possible time’ have been used. Could the hon. Minister try to enlighten us or give us a more precise indication as regards the time frame, or when he expects the project not only to start but - at least, we hope - to be completed before next year?

**Mr Dulull:** Mr Speaker, Sir, hopefully, we will complete the project by next year. Last November, we did write to the CTB to get the tender floated, and we are awaiting a reply. As soon as we get a positive reply, we will start the works.

**Mr Mohamed:** Mr Speaker, Sir, in the meantime, would it be possible for the hon. Minister to, at least, carry out a survey as to who will be entitled to those plots, so that there is no delay after it is ready and the handing over to those who are entitled? At least, the survey should be carried out as from now.

**Mr Dulull:** Mr Speaker, Sir, this is a very good suggestion from the hon. Member. We will take this into consideration.

**Mr Bundhoo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Member mentioned Phase II of the project. May I ask him what are the localities, other than Souillac, that have been earmarked for Phase II of the project?

**Mr Dulull:** Mr Speaker, Sir, in my reply, I mentioned that we have Glen Park and Ville Noire.

## RIVIERE DES ANGUILLES – WOMEN’S CENTRE & GARDEN

**(No. B/1331) Mr S. Mohamed (Third Member for Rivière des Anguilles & Souillac)** asked the Minister of Housing & Lands whether, in regard to the project for the construction

of a Women's Centre and a garden in Rivière des Anguilles, he will state if he has effected a joint site visit with the hon. Minister of Women's Rights, Child Development, Family Welfare and Consumer Protection thereat and, if so, where matters stand.

**Mr Dulull:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I did in fact effect a site visit on Saturday 25 August 2007, accompanied by the Minister of Women's Rights, Child Development, Family Welfare and Consumer Protection, for the purpose of identifying appropriate plots of lands for the construction of a women's centre and a garden in Rivière des Anguilles. My colleague and I have identified two plots of private land at Rivière des Anguilles for these projects, and action has been initiated for such acquisition within legal parameters and normal practice.

**Mr Mohamed:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to know from the hon. Minister whether he would give us an indication as to the time frame that he believes, in his experience, one would have to abide to or expect things to start moving? By when things will start moving *en concret*?

**Mr Dulull:** Mr Speaker, Sir, we hope to publicise the land acquisition notice early next year.

#### **ST. FELIX LAND HOLDING – LAND LEASE**

**(No. B/1332) Dr. R. Hawoldar (Second Member for La Caverne and Phoenix)** asked the Minister of Housing & Lands whether, in regard to the lease of a plot of land, situated next to the Ananda Resorts Ltd, to the St. Felix Land Holding, he will state –

- (a) the date on which the lease agreement was signed;
- (b) the duration of the lease;
- (c) the extent of land involved, and
- (d) the amount of rent payable.

**Mr Dulull:** Mr Speaker, Sir, a lease agreement has not yet been signed in regard to the lease of a plot of land to St. Felix Land Holding. In regard to parts (a), (b) and (c) of the question, records in my Ministry indicate that a land exchange mechanism was initiated between Government and the company in 2003. The latter was granted a letter of intent on 25 November 2003 to develop land of an extent of approximately 11 *arpents* of *Pas Géométriques* plus 52 perches presently occupied by part of the coastal road for a hotel project. The company, on its part, would use 16A59 of freehold land it owns to realise the project. The lease would be for an initial period of 20 years with option for four consecutive periods of ten years each.

Rent payable is determined by the Chief Government Valuer upon the promoters agreeing to the terms and conditions of the letter of intent. Almost four years to date, after the letter of intent was issued to the company, it has not cared to reply nor has it complied to the conditions stipulated therein.

Thus, this land has remained idle for a very long time, resulting in loss of use and in the consequential loss of revenue for the State.

On 26 November 2007, my Ministry has sought the advice of the State Law Office regarding the retrieval of this land.

Indeed, Mr Speaker, Sir, Government is bent on maximising revenue from State-owned land by also ensuring optimal economic use of same.

**Dr. Hawoldar:** Mr Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Minister whether a time lag is mentioned in the letter of intent for an answer to be received within such and such a period of time?

**Mr Dulull:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Member is quite right. There is a time frame where certain conditions need to be met. Unfortunately, in this particular case, the time has already lapsed.

## MOLASSES – PRICE

(No. B/1333) **Dr. R. Hawoldar (Second Member for La Caverne and Phoenix)** asked the Minister of Agro Industry and Fisheries whether, in regard to the Committee set up by his Ministry to look into the compensation for molasses to be paid to planters, he will state if the Committee has submitted a report thereon.

**Dr. Boolell:** Mr Speaker, Sir, as we are all aware, the trade of molasses is one of the burning issues among sugar cane planters. Their main concern emerges from the fact that this commodity does not bring them sufficient revenue despite the upward demand trend.

In November 2006, I directed the Control Board to set up a Technical Committee to look into the prices of molasses payable to planters under the powers vested under section 22 of the Cane Planters and Millers Arbitration and Control Board Act.

The Technical Committee was chaired by the Solicitor-General in his capacity as Chairperson of the Control Board and the members of the Committee were as follows –

- |     |                    |   |
|-----|--------------------|---|
| (a) | Mr V. Ramharai     | Deputy General Manager and Deputy Chairman of the Divisional Manager of Cane Planters and Millers of Arbitration Control Board (Deputy Chairman of the Committee) |
| (b) | Mr U. Basant Rai   | Representative of the Control Board   |
| (c) | Mr D. Luximon      | Representative of the Control Board   |
| (d) | Dr. K. Deepchand   | Representative of the Mauritius Sugar Authority   |
| (e) | Mr R. K. Bunjun    | Representative of the Ministry of Agro-Industry and Fisheries   |
| (f) | Mr N. Basant Rai   | Representative of Mauritius Cooperative Agricultural Federation   |
| (g) | Mr Jean Luc Harel  | Representative of Mauritius Sugar Producers Association   |
| (h) | Mr J. Li Yuen Fong | Representative of Mauritius Sugar Producers Association.  |
| (i) | Mr J. C. Desvaux   | Representative of Mauritius Chamber of Agriculture  |
| (j) | Mr K. Ramdhary     | Representative of Small Planters  |
| (k) | Mr S. Roy          | Representative of Big Planters  |
| (l) | Mr D. Busgeeth     | Secretary of the Committee  |

The terms of reference of the Committee were as follows –

- (a) to look into all aspects of marketing of molasses;
- (b) to advise whether the present marketing arrangements are such that they ensure that the best prices that can be obtained are actually obtained, and
- (c) to advise on any options that would yield higher prices.

The Committee had several meetings with the stakeholders concerned including the two companies that trade molasses on the overseas market, namely Mauritius Molasses Company Ltd and Alcohol and Molasses Export Ltd. The Committee also met Tate & Lyle Ltd which is a major shareholder in the Mauritius Molasses Company Ltd and which is responsible for the export and marketing of molasses bought from that company.

Taking into account that –

- (a) there has been a long-standing trading and marketing arrangement from which the computation of the price of molasses has so far been originated;
- (b) a sudden change in the present arrangement could cause a disruption in the marketing of molasses;
- (c) molasses may not be available for export as a result of reforms being undertaken in the sugar industry;

The main recommendation of the Committee is that planters and millers negotiate the price of molasses with the trading companies and other local buyers. Negotiations have been successfully carried out and the price is expected to effectively increase from Rs1,500 to Rs1,800 per tonne. as from crop 2007.

Furthermore, in order to ensure stability in the price of molasses paid to planters, the Cane Planters and Millers Arbitration and Control Board has decided that the price chargeable to local distilleries (excluding Alcodis Ltd.) as from October 2007 would be Rs2000 or the price based on LEI index, whichever is higher. The reasoning behind the decision is that the distilleries use the molasses to manufacture value-added products such as alcoholic drinks the price of which (a) is not influenced by the LEI rates and (b) does not usually go down in spite of fluctuations in the price of molasses.

The Committee has also proposed other options to be considered in the context of the sugar reform –

- (i) optimal use of molasses to produce ethanol which would increase the revenue of planters;
- (ii) the commissioning of a study to ensure that planters obtain a fair share of revenues generated by the sugar cane industry (special sugar, electricity from bagasse and ethanol from molasses);
- (iii) participation of planters in equity share capital of flexi factories, and
- (v) setting up of an entity on the same line as the Mauritius Sugar Syndicate to market molasses.

I am tabling copy of the report.

## **PETIT RAFFRAY - FOOTBALL GROUND – UPGRADING**

(No. B/1334) **Mr R. Guttee (Third Member for Grand’Baie and Poudre d’Or)** asked the Minister of Environment & National Development Unit whether, in regard to the project for the upgrading of the football ground of Petit Raffray, he will state where matters stand.

**The Minister of Labour, Industrial Relations & Employment (Dr. V. Bunwaree):** Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission I shall reply to this question.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that in the context of regionalisation of sports infrastructure necessary action is being initiated by the Ministry of Youth and Sports to implement the project for the upgrading of Petit Raffray football ground. Preliminary designs and plans for the project are under preparation by the Ministry of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping

## **GOODLANDS - MEDI-CLINIC**

(No. B/1335) **Mr R. Guttee (Third Member for Grand’Baie and Poudre d’Or)** asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether, in regard to the setting up of a medi-clinic in the village of Goodlands, he will state where matters stand.

**Mr Faugoo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to refer the hon. Member to the reply I made to PQ No. B/439 in October 2005, wherein I informed the House that it was not envisaged to convert the Goodlands Area Health Centre into a medi-clinic.

I am aware of the existing space problem at Goodlands Area Health Centre. In this regard, my Ministry had in August 2005 requested the Ministry of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping to provide for an extension of the existing building to address this issue.

I am now informed by the Ministry of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping that the design for the extension project has been completed. The detailed drawings are currently being finalised and the tender documents will be prepared thereafter. It is expected that works would start by mid-June 2008 and completed by September 2008.

I am also informed that the extension project will be implemented in phases as the Area Health Centre cannot be vacated during construction works.

## **SOLITUDE – STATE LAND – ALLOCATION**

(No. B/1336) **Mr E. Guimbeau (First Member for Curepipe and Midlands)** asked the Minister of Housing and Lands whether, in regard to the land in Solitude earmarked for the construction of an Omni sport complex, he will state if his Ministry has issued a letter of intent to Padkam and, if so –

(a) when, and

(b) table copy thereof.

**Mr Dulull:** Sir, with your permission, I shall reply to both PQ B/1336 and PQ B/1369 as they relate to the same subject matter of allocation of a plot of State land at Solitude.

An application from PADKAM Investment Holdings Ltd was submitted to my Ministry on 17 March 2006 requesting the allocation of a plot of land of an extent of 10 *Arpents* at Solitude for setting up of an Entrepreneur village. No letter of intent as such has yet been issued to the said company, so that the question of tabling a copy of same does not arise.

In fact, only a letter of reservation was issued to the company on 27 July 2006 over a plot of State land of approximate extent of 10 *Arpents* at Solitude, which letter of reservation was subsequently amended by the reduction of the extent from 10 *Arpents* to 8 *Arpents*, and this reduction was communicated to the company on 06 October 2006.

The proposed project is for the promotion of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs).

Thus, as only a letter of reservation has been issued, the question of lease does not arise, as no lease agreement has yet been drawn up, a lease agreement being subject to the promoter satisfying all the terms and conditions specified in the letter of reservation and, subsequently, in the letter of intent.

The question of the implementation schedule also does not arise at this stage as this can only be included in the lease agreement after compliance with all conditions spelt out.

Sir, it is normal practice for Government to compulsorily acquired private land for specific purpose. It is normal practice for Government to consult the original owner in case of change of purpose to ascertain whether the original owner has any objection to the change of purpose. Government has recourse to this practice before allocating a compulsorily acquired private land to any promoter applying for the same land.

**Mr Guimbeau:** Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Minister table the letter of reservation?

**Mr Dulull:** I am tabling copies of both letters of reservation and copy of no-objection letter from Harel Frères.

#### **MON CHOISY & TROU AUX BICHES – NHDC HOUSING UNITS – BENEFICIARIES**

(No. B/1337) **Mr E. Guimbeau (First Member for Curepipe and Midlands)** asked the Minister of Housing and Lands whether, in regard to the allocation of housing units in Mon Choisy and Trou aux Biches respectively, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the National Housing Development Company Ltd, information as to –

- (a) the names and addresses of the beneficiaries;
- (b) their respective ages, and
- (c) their place of work, indicating the names of the respective employers, in each case

**Mr Dulull:** Sir, it would not be proper to give the pieces of information asked for in parts (a), (b) and (c) of the question for reasons of safety, security and privacy of persons concerned. Further, as a Fact Finding Committee has been entrusted as an exercise to establish wrongdoings, it would again not be proper to give that information. Further still, the matter is already under ICAC investigation and scrutiny.

**Mr Guimbeau:** M. le président, ce gouvernement est supposé de pratiquer la bonne gouvernance et la transparence en ce qu'il s'agit des biens de l'État. Je voudrais savoir du ministre s'il y a quelque chose à cacher dans ce dossier?

**Mr Dulull:** We've got nothing to hide. *Nous opérons dans la transparence totale, mais il y a aussi le droit des citoyens. L'île Maurice est un État de droit.*

**Mr Dowarkasing:** May I ask the hon. Minister whether there is a time-frame for that Fact Finding Committee to complete its work?

**Mr Dulull:** We don't influence nor indulge in the operation of the Fact Finding Committee; it is an independent one.

**Mr Soodhun:** Can the hon. Minister inform the House whether the report of the Fact Finding Committee will be laid on the Table of the Assembly?

**Mr Dulull:** We need to get the report first and then we can undertake whatever needs to be done.

#### **NOTRE DAME – WOMEN CENTRE**

**(No. B/1338) Mrs B. Juggoo (First Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue)** asked the Minister of Women's Rights, Child Development, Family Welfare & Consumer Protection whether, in regard to the project for the construction of a women centre at Notre Dame, she will state when construction works are likely to start.

**Mrs Seebun:** Mr Speaker, Sir, construction works for a women centre at Notre Dame has already started since December 04 last.

#### **LE HOCHET & TERRE ROUGE – SEWERAGE PROBLEMS**

**(No. B/1339) Mrs B. Juggoo (First Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue)** asked the Minister of Public Utilities whether he will state if he has received representations from the inhabitants of Le Hochet and Terre Rouge complaining of sewerage problems being encountered in the region and, if so, the remedial measures he proposes to take.

**Dr. Kasenally:** Mr Speaker, Sir, both my Ministry and the WMA have received representations from the inhabitants of Le Hochet and Terre Rouge and also from the hon. Member regarding waste water disposal problems in these regions.

I am informed by the WMA that only a part of Le Hochet is serviced by the sewer network. Additional house connections cannot be effected owing to the fact that the existing sewer is already operating at its maximum carrying capacity.

Following the representations made by the inhabitants, the WMA has carried out preliminary investigations to address the sewerage problems in the regions concerned including the adjoining areas such as Morcellement Tara and Morcellement La Vallée. According to the WMA, a full-scale waste water project would have to be implemented in the area to solve the existing sanitation problems. This project, which is estimated at around Rs750 m. would allow for 5,000 additional households to be connected to the sewer system. My Ministry is arranging for the necessary feasibility study to be undertaken at the earliest.

### **LE HOCHET & TERRE ROUGE – DRAIN WORKS**

**(No. B/1340) Mrs B. Juggoo (First Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue)** asked the Minister of Public Utilities whether he will state if there is any project for drain works to be carried out in the region of Le Hochet and Terre Rouge and, if so, when works are likely to start.

**The Minister of Labour, Industrial Relations & Employment (Dr. V. Bunwaree):** Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I am going to reply to this question as Acting Minister of Environment. Under the Land Drainage Programme of the current financial year, provision has been made for the absorption drain scheme at Veerasamy Lane, Le Hochet and the completion of the Ruisseau Terre Rouge Drain Project. The schemes form part of the package of land drainage projects to be implemented under a major drain consultancy contract. Procedures are under way to seek clearance of the Central Tender Board (CTB) for the award of the drain consultancy contract. Soon after the award of the drain consultancy contract, arrangements will be made for the implementation of the schemes.

**Mrs Juggoo:** Can the Minister consider having a capital drain project for the region as there is a low capacity of absorption by nature in the region?

**Dr. Bunwaree:** We will look into the matter, Sir.

**Mr Speaker:** Hon. Members, the Table has been informed that hon. Mrs Perrier is not in the House because she has to attend to a funeral. Therefore, I am not calling PQ Nos. B/1341 and B/1342.

### **MINISTER COUNSELLORS – POSTS - VACANCIES**

**(No. B/1343) Mrs S. Hanoomanjee (Second Member for Savanne & Black River)** asked the Minister of Foreign Affairs, International Trade & Co-operation whether, in regard to the vacant posts of Minister Counsellors and First Secretaries, he will state the number thereof, indicating –

- (a) in each case, the date on which the vacancy arose, and
- (b) if these posts will be filled and, if so, when.

**The Minister of Information Technology & Telecommunications (Mr E. Sinatambou):** Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I will reply to this question. In the grade of First Secretary at present, there is no vacancy.

As for the posts of Minister Counsellor, there are presently six vacancies which have arisen as follows –

No. of vacancies	Effective Date
2	01.07.2004
1	01.07.2005
1	11.10.2005
1	18.01.2006
1	11.04.2007
----- Total	6
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The five vacancies which existed as at July 2006 were notified to the Public Service Commission on 14 July 2006 and these were advertised by the Commission on 04 August 2006.

The process for filling the vacancies is currently underway.

With regard to the sixth vacancy which arose afterwards, it would be filled in due course subject to the availability of funds.

**Mrs Hanoomanjee:** Mr Speaker, Sir, can the Minister confirm whether candidates for the post of Minister Counsellor were interviewed as far back as October 2006 and in spite of the fact that the list of selected candidates had been submitted to the Head of Civil Service and the Secretary for Foreign Affairs, up to now, no appointment has been made?

**Mr Sinatambou:** I am not aware of this at the moment.

**Mrs Hanoomanjee:** Is the Minister, at least, aware whether promotion exercises to the rank of Minister Counsellor have been blocked because of the request of a First Secretary to the effect that the scheme of service for the post of Minister Counsellor be reviewed?

**Mr Sinatambou:** I am sure that this could not be the case.

#### **FISHING VESSELS – DEPARTURE CLEARANCE**

**(No. B/1344) Mrs S. Hanoomanjee (Second Member for Savanne & Black River)** asked the Minister of Agro Industry and Fisheries whether, in regard to the fishing vessels registered with his Ministry, he will state if the operators thereof are required to inform the Customs Department and the Mauritius Ports Authority accordingly when leaving for fishing on the banks.

**Dr. Boolell:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Mauritius Revenue Authority that all vessels for outbound trips must obtain a clearance certificate from the Customs Department. In addition, for fishing vessels leaving for trips on the banks a departure clearance is issued by my Ministry and copied to all concerned authorities including the Customs Department and the Mauritius Ports Authority.

Prior to leaving the Port, skippers of vessels have to inform the Mauritius Ports Authority, Immigration Office and National Coast Guard of their departure.

**Mrs Hanoomanjee:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I think I heard the Minister saying that they have to get the clearance of the Mauritius Ports Authority. Do they really report? Because they usually have to submit a full and complete manifest in both electronic form and hard copy to the Director-General, Mauritius Ports Authority. Do they do that, in fact?

**Dr. Boolell:** In fact, they should. There are some vessels which leave in the morning and ask for permission on the same day but, in spite of it, before they obtain all the clearances, there is need for verification of fishing licence, seaworthiness certificate, insurance certificate, etc. on board of the vessel. As to whether there is full implementation and enforcement is a matter that can be discussed. Following the recent accident, we've seen to it that there should be full compliance and we have to make sure that all the relevant authorities are informed. This is the ongoing practice.

**Mrs Hanoomanjee:** This is a very serious matter and there should be full scrutiny of ships coming and leaving the harbour because the screening is very essential. Can the Minister look into the matter and inform us accordingly?

**Dr. Boolell:** I have no problem. In fact, if the hon. lady needs to have statistics and departure clearance, I can lay all the relevant information on the Table of the Assembly.

## **CUSTOMS HOUSE BROKERS**

**(No. B/1345) Mrs S. Hanoomanjee (Second Member for Savanne & Black River)** asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance & Economic Development whether, in regard to the Customs House Brokers, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Revenue Authority, information as to -

- (a) the number thereof who have been issued with a licence to operate by the Authority, and
- (b) if there has been any adverse report against any of these brokers, indicating if inquiries have been carried out thereinto.

**The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance & Economic Development (Mr R. Sithanen):** Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that there are currently 77 persons who have been authorised to act as Customs House Brokers. Furthermore, to increase the number of brokers, the Mauritius Revenue Authority conducted an examination in September this year for persons interested to act as Customs House Brokers. The examination was carried out under the supervision of the Mauritius Examination Syndicate and 17 candidates have been

successful. The MRA is taking action to issue to these persons the necessary authorisation for them to act as Customs House Brokers.

As regards the second part of the question, I am informed that the MRA is conducting investigations in respect of three Customs House Brokers for fraud/misconduct.

**Mrs Hanoomanjee:** Can the Minister say when this inquiry will be completed because I have the impression that it has gone on for quite some time and up to now nothing has come up?

**Mr Sithanen:** Mr Speaker, Sir, in the case of the first one, the fraud was discovered on 10 November 2006 and the information I have is that the MRA is currently moving to charge the broker for misconduct under the Customs Act and a disciplinary committee is currently being set up.

For the second one, I am given to understand that after receipt of an examination of documents from ICAC, the Department requested the Director-General, MRA, to revoke his licence. Following legal advice from the State Law Office, that revocation of the broker's licence after the offence occurring in 2002. This is quite an old offence. However, today no response has been received and the broker continues to operate. I agree with the hon. Member.

The third one, following research carried out in the premises of the broker, several incriminating documents were impounded. An investigation into possible tax evasion and money laundering is under progress.

**Mrs Hanoomanjee:** Can the Minister say why is it that, in spite of the fact that there was an enquiry in the case of one particular broker who has been found guilty of misconduct, he continues to operate?

**Mr Sithanen:** I must find out, Mr Speaker, Sir. But I agree with the hon. lady that this person should not have been given the permission to continue to operate since the licence was revoked.

**Mrs Hanoomanjee:** Can the hon. Minister then give the undertaking that this matter will be taken up seriously and, in fact, he will be asked not to operate?

**Mr Sithanen:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I am being very transparent. I am reading all the information that there is. In fact, I don't want to hide anything from the House. I will request the competent Authority to accelerate the process and I will inform the House in due course as to why, in that specific case, notwithstanding the fact that the licence was revoked, the person continues to operate as a broker.

## **TRUST FUND FOR THE VULNERABLE GROUPS – FUNDS DISBURSEMENT**

**(No. B/1346) Mrs S. Hanoomanjee (Second Member for Savanne and Black River)** asked Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard

to the Trust Fund for the Vulnerable Groups, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Fund, information as to the procedures adopted for the disbursement of funds for the projects submitted by the socio-cultural organisations.

**The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development (Mr R. Sithanen):** Mr Speaker, Sir, as the House is aware, one of the objectives of the Trust Fund is to alleviate poverty through community-based projects which are identified and implemented by NGO's, including socio-cultural organisations.

So far as the procedures that have been established by the Fund for financing of projects are concerned, I am informed that these cover control and oversight processes to ensure that funds put at the disposal of the NGOs are properly utilised.

The control starts at project inception stage when the projects submitted by NGO's are worked out under the guidance of the Social Facilitators so as to ascertain that the project deliverables are, in fact, targeting the vulnerable families. The Project Manager of the Trust Fund, with the assistance of the Project Coordinator, scrutinises these projects and submits same, together with recommendations, to the Management Committee for approval.

Once a project is approved, the NGO concerned, the Project Manager, the Social Facilitator and the Finance Section of the Trust Fund are officially informed of the decision, including the amount approved.

In order to ensure that funds are being used for the purpose for which they have been approved, the Finance Section, releases funds in instalments. Before the first disbursement is effected, the Finance Section ensures that all relevant supporting documents in respect of the project have been submitted and duly endorsed by the Project Manager.

Once the Finance Section is satisfied, a crossed cheque drawn to the order of the NGO, is signed by the Chairman and another member of the Management Committee. The cheque is remitted to the designated representative of the NGO, in the presence of the Social Facilitator, responsible to monitor the particular project.

The second disbursement is effected by the Finance Section of the Trust Fund on receipt of a progress report from the Social Facilitator and on the recommendation of the Project Manager to the effect that the project is being implemented satisfactorily.

With regards to the final payment, the Social Facilitator should submit, to the Finance Section a request, together with the recommendation of the Project Manager, for the release of the remaining balance to the NGO to allow the latter to complete the project.

Once the disbursement is effected, the Finance Section issues a notice of final payment to the Social Facilitator, through the Project Manager for follow up purposes.

The Social Facilitator, who is responsible to monitor the implementation of the project, is required to submit, through the Project Manager, a Completion Report, together with the relevant supporting documents, to the effect that the project has been implemented satisfactorily.

It is only in respect to project relating to the construction of housing units for fire victims, the provision of school materials to children and implementation of minor projects that a one-off payment by cheque is made to the NGO in the presence of the Social Facilitator.

Furthermore, the Project Manager, with the assistance of the Project Coordinator, is required, in accordance with the procedure, to keep the Management Committee informed of the status of all projects being implemented.

**Mrs Hanoomanjee :** Mr Speaker, Sir, I thank the hon. Minister for this information and it seems that procedures are being done well in a transparent way. Is the hon. Minister aware that only recently, a project to the tune of Rs563,000 was approved, money disbursed and it was found afterwards that the president of that socio-cultural organisation, who signed the letter, is a staff of the Trust Fund and had been involved in the processing of these papers?

**Mr Sithanen :** Mr Speaker, Sir, I thank the hon. Member for bringing this case. There is a letter and there are correspondences. I have asked the Trust Fund to investigate into the allegations made. The enquiry continues. Obviously, if the allegations that have been made are substantiated, the matter will be referred to the Police. But let me reassure the hon. Member that the money has been returned to the Trust Fund.

Let me reassure the House, Mr Speaker, Sir, it was on the basis of projects that were submitted. The problem was that the person who was supposed to sign the project has written to say that she was not aware that she wrote the project.

Let me reassure the House, Mr Speaker, Sir, *nous serons sans pitié* for those who try to divert money intended for the poor and the vulnerable. I have checked this morning itself, Mr Speaker, Sir, to make sure that the projects were submitted. Whether what the president wrote is right, this is, obviously, the subject of an enquiry and if these allegations are founded, we are going to submit the case to the Police and disciplinary action will be taken against those who have tried to divert funds destined for poor people.

## EU/ACP COUNTRIES – INTERIM AGREEMENT

**(No. B/1348) Mr S. Dayal (Second Member for Quartier Militaire and Moka)** asked the Minister of Foreign Affairs, International Trade and Co-operation whether, in regard to the Interim Agreement between the European Union and the African Caribbean Pacific countries in relation to the Cotonou Agreement, he will state –

- (a) the conditions, if any, provided for in the agreement regarding the sugar protocol, indicating the impact thereof on the exportation of our sugar to the European Union, and
- (b) the countries which have
  - (i) signed, and
  - (ii) not signed, the agreement.

**The Minister of Information Technology and Telecommunications (Mr E. Sinatambou):** Mr Speaker, Sir, in view of the fact that the reply to this question is five pages long with six pages as annex, I propose to table them.

**Mr Dayal:** Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Minister state to the House when did Mauritius sign the Interim Agreement and if he will lay a copy thereof on the Table of the National Assembly?

**Mr Sinatambou:** My information, Mr Speaker, Sir, at this stage, is that Mauritius has only initialled the Interim Agreement and this occurred on the 04 December 2007.

**Mr Dayal:** Can we have a copy?

**Mr Sinatambou:** I endeavour to do that.

**Mr Dayal:** Mr Speaker, Sir, in view of the fact that it was known well beforehand that an agreement on the EPA will not be reached by December 31, may I ask the hon. Minister whether any discussion was engaged at the ministerial level of the ACP countries to urge the EU towards the extension of the waiver, that is, apply for an extension of the waiver, and, if not, why not?

**Mr Sinatambou:** I would need notice of that question, but the point, however, Mr Speaker, Sir, is that under Articles 36 and 37 of the Cotonou Agreement which was signed as far back as 23 June 2000, it was well agreed at the time that the new trading arrangements would have to be concluded by the 31 December 2007. It is quite some time back.

**Mr Dayal:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to know from the hon. Minister if he can inform the House when was the substantive Minister made aware of the proposal of the EU to incorporate in the clause of the Interim Agreement, that “the Sugar Protocol will no longer be in force as from September 2009”.

**Mr Sinatambou:** I will respectfully suggest that the hon. Member awaits the return of the substantive Minister.

**Mr Dayal:** Mr Speaker, Sir, because of the national importance of this issue, I would like to ask a few more questions. Can the hon. Minister inform the House whether he had consultations thereafter with all the Mauritian stakeholders as a result thereof and, if so, when and how?

**Mr Sinatambou:** I believe he must have had those consultations. He will confirm when he comes back.

**Mr Dayal:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I understand the Caribbean countries have not signed the Interim Agreement. Will the hon. Minister say whether he had consultations with the Ministers of the Caribbean countries as their position on the Interim Agreement and can the hon. Minister inform the House what was their position?

**Mr Sinatambou:** I am afraid, I need notice of the question.

**Mr Dayal:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to ask another question. Being given that only 15 out of 78 countries have signed the Interim Agreement, will he say what will be its impact on the vital aspect of the unity of the ACP countries which has underpinned its force therefrom and whether it will affect the future negotiation?

**Mr Sinatambou:** We must bear in mind that the Interim Agreement concerns six different regions and that we are now looking at the whole spectrum in a regional manner.

*(Interruptions)*

The point remains that all these agreements are in terms of regions. I suppose that the non-signature by groups does not necessarily affect the outcome for the other regions.

**Mr Dayal:** I will ask a last question, Mr Speaker, Sir, being given the issue is of national importance. Now that the German Chancellor, Angela Merkel, has officially stated that December 31 deadline was not fixed in stone and that Europe can be more flexible on trade agreements with ACP countries, will the hon. Minister now state what will be his position on the interim agreement?

**Mr Sinatambou:** Mr Speaker, Sir, first of all, I am quite sure that the statement by the German Chancellor is very wise and I think I am going to be very wise and leave it to the substantive Minister to answer what his stand is going to be.

**Mr Speaker:** Hon. Members, the Table has been advised that Parliamentary Questions B/1349 and B/1350 have been withdrawn. Hon. Varma!

#### **CEB/IPP – NEGOTIATIONS**

**(No. B/1349) Mr S. Naidu (Third Member for Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière)** asked the Minister of Public Utilities whether, in regard to the purchase price of electricity by the Central Electricity Board from existing Independent Power Producers, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Board, information as to if renegotiations of the contracts are ongoing.

*(Withdrawn)*

#### **BEAU BASSIN – NEW MARKET - CONSTRUCTION**

**(No. B/1350) Mr S. Naidu (Third Member for Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière)** asked the Minister of Local Government whether, in regard to the project for the construction of a new market at Beau Bassin, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Municipal Council of Beau Bassin and Rose Hill, information as to where matters stand.

*(Withdrawn)*

#### **RAILWAY CAMP, LE QUARTIER, MAHEBOURG – GOVERNMENT QUARTERS**

**(No. B/1351) Mr Y. Varma (First Member for Mahebourg and Plaine Magnien)** asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping whether, in regard to the occupiers of the Government quarters at Railway Camp, Le Quartier, Mahebourg, he will state if his Ministry had required them to vacate the premises and, if so, if this decision has been reviewed since.

**The Ag. Prime Minister:** Mr Speaker, Sir, Government quarters are, in principle, allocated to eligible officers while they are in employment. However, many of these quarters including those at Railway Camp, Le Quartier, Mahebourg are occupied by retired officers or their descendants.

Most of these quarters are in a bad state, in particular those at the Railway Camp and are a risk to the occupiers. In October 2006, my Ministry issued letters to illegal occupiers of Government quarters, including those at Le Quartier, Mahebourg asking them to vacate. However, following representations from some occupiers regarding their social conditions, my Ministry has set up a committee under the chairmanship of the Permanent Secretary responsible for Public Infrastructure and comprising representatives from the Ministry of Social Security, National Solidarity and Senior Citizens Welfare & Reform Institutions, the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development and the Ministry of Housing and Lands to look into measures that could be taken with regard to Government quarters, including illegal occupation.

In this context, the Ministry of Social Security, National Solidarity and Senior Citizens Welfare & Reform Institutions has been requested to conduct social enquiries in respect of all illegal occupiers of Government quarters. A decision will be taken in the light of the social enquiries.

**Mr Varma:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I thank the hon. Ag. Prime Minister for his reply. Could he look into the possibility of selling these houses at a nominal price to the occupiers?

**The Ag. Prime Minister:** We look at all the possibilities.

#### **BEAU VALLON – PLOT OF LAND – RELIGIOUS PURPOSES**

(No. B/1352) **Mr Y. Varma (First Member for Mahebourg and Plaine Magnien)** asked the Minister of Housing and Lands whether he will state if he has received any request from the *Société Jeunesse et Fraternité Musulmane de Mahebourg* for the allocation of a plot of land in Beau Vallon, in the Constituency of Mahebourg and Plaine Magnien, to be used for religious purposes.

**Mr Dulull:** Mr Speaker, Sir, records in my Ministry indicate that an application dated 24 April 2007 has been received from the Mahebourg Islamic School registered as “*Société Jeunesse et Fraternité Musulmane de Mahebourg*” for a portion of State land of about 150 - 200 *toises* at Beau Vallon for religious purposes.

I am advised that the said portion of land is situated within the Beau Vallon NHDC residential complex and is leased to the *Syndicat des Copropriétaires de Beau Vallon*.

The request is being examined to establish the suitability of the land applied for in relation to the topographical and socio-cultural factors.

**Mr Varma:** Mr Speaker, Sir, will the hon. Minister kindly inform the House as to whether there is any time-frame for the study to be completed?

**Mr Dulull:** Mr Speaker, Sir, it is being processed, and, I believe, by early next year, we should be in a position to establish whether the land is suitable for the particular purpose.

### **MAHEBOURG HOSPITAL – RENAMING**

**(No. B/1353) Mr Y. Varma (First Member for Mahebourg and Plaine Magnien)** asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether, in regard to the Mahebourg Hospital, he will state if he will consider changing the name thereof into that of the Sir Harold Walter Hospital.

**Mr Faugoo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the request of the hon. Member will be considered and appropriate consultations will be held in that connection.

**Mr Varma:** Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Minister kindly inform the House when the consultations will start?

**Mr Faugoo:** I cannot say at this stage, Mr Speaker, Sir.

### **BEAU VALLON FOOTBALL GROUND – UPGRADING WORKS & RENAMING**

**(No. B/1354) Mr Y. Varma (First Member for Mahebourg and Plaine Magnien)** asked the Minister of Youth and Sports whether, in regard to the football ground in Beau Vallon, in the Constituency of Plaine Magnien and Mahebourg, he will state –

- (a) if there is any project for the renovation thereof, and
- (b) if he will consider changing the name thereof into that of the Lutchmeeparsad Badry Football Ground.

**Mr Tang Wah Hing:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the House that upgrading works, namely, the rehabilitation of the existing chain link fencing at Beau Vallon Football Ground have been carried out, this year. Works started on 19 July 2007 and were completed on 16 August 2007.

As regards part (b) of the question pertaining to the renaming of the football ground, consideration will be given to the proposal.

### **FORM 1 STUDENTS – ADMISSION 2008**

**(No. B/1355) Mr G. Guinness (Third Member for Montagne Blanche and GRSE)** asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether, in regard to the admission of students in Form I for the 2008 intake, he will state the arrangements that have been made.

**Mr Gokhool:** Mr Speaker, Sir, as in previous years, for an integral part of the Admission in Form I exercise, a Committee has been set up at the level of the Ministry to ensure that this exercise goes on smoothly both in Mauritius and Rodrigues for the mainstream and prevocational stream. This Committee consists of all the relevant

stakeholders, including officials of my Ministry, the Mauritius Examinations Syndicate and the PSSA.

Admission will be made in the same way as last year, i.e. both on a National basis and on a regional basis in accordance with Section 10(5) of the Education Regulations, 1957, as subsequently amended.

As regards the Admission in Form I exercise 2008, a whole calendar of activities has been defined on the same line as the admission in Form I exercise 2006 and 2007. This calendar of activities includes the following procedures -

- (i) distribution of Information Pack containing materials on admission procedures;
- (ii) filling in and submission of the application forms by parents;
- (iii) issue of CPE results;
- (iv) registration exercise of students to be admitted in Form I in mainstream and the prevocational stream, and
- (v) examination of requests for transfers.

The distribution of Information Pack containing materials on the admission procedures and the filling in and submission of the application forms by parents were completed in September 2007.

The CPE results 2007 will be issued on Thursday 13 December 2007 and a common registration exercise both for students in the mainstream and prevocational stream is scheduled for Thursday 20 December 2007.

As already mentioned in the information pack issued to parents in September and as will again be mentioned in the letter of admission to be issued to parents on Thursday 13 December, consideration will be given to modify the date of registration exercise to accommodate the celebration of the Eid-UI-Adha festival, if need be.

In view of the planning and coordination in respect of both demand and supply of seats in both mainstream and prevocational stream in both State and private secondary schools, done by my Ministry in collaboration with other stakeholders, it is not expected that there will be any problem for admission in Form I exercise 2008. Allocations of seats in Form I in State schools with admission on a national basis, State schools, with admission on a regional basis and the 50% seats of private secondary schools, including the BEC schools allotted to MES, will be made by the MES. All requests for transfer in respect of Form I will be processed by the MES as from 26 December 2007 and will be completed before the resumption of studies in January 2008.

Customer Care Desks have been set up in all the 4 zones and PSSA to attend to any complaints from the general public thereto.

The situation is being closely monitored.

**Mr Guinness:** Mr Speaker, Sir, can I know from the Minister the number of seats that will be available next year for the National colleges, that is, for those getting 4A+?

**Mr Gokhool:** I have the aggregate figures for the total number of seats that will be available, that is, 20,478 and the demand is 17,224. For the National colleges, it is around 1,450, because we have added three colleges more.

**Mr Guinness:** In case the number of students getting four A+ is less than 1,450, can I know from the Minister what mechanism he proposes to adopt so as to fill the remaining number of seats that will be left?

**Mr Gokhool:** I think the MES has worked on the basis of projection taking the figures for 2006 and, of course, they have projected the number of seats, and it is on that basis that we have increased the number of colleges that would be required to accommodate the students. At this stage, I will stand by what projections have been made.

**Mr Guinness:** Can I know from the Minister whether any existing State schools running prevocational classes would stop offering pre-vocational courses?

**Mr Gokhool:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I have answered this question on many occasions in this House. All I can say to the House is that ...

**Mr Speaker:** The more so the question is not relevant. We are talking of admission of students in Form I. Prevocational is not Form I.

**Mr Guinness:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the Minister answered lengthily in his reply about the procedures of admission in Form I and prevocational classes.

**Mr Gokhool:** In fact, I have given the answer on many occasions, Mr Speaker, Sir. The gist of it is: whether seats will be available for those students who will join the prevocational classes. I have said yes, the seats will be provided to every student who has to go to a prevocational class.

**Mr Guinness:** Can I ask another question? Has the Minister received any request from private secondary colleges to stop operating prevocational classes?

**Mr Gokhool:** This is an ongoing feature, because the main purpose is to see to it that the number of seats is available, and that condition is met. It is not statutory required for all colleges to offer prevocational classes.

**Mr Mohamed:** Since the hon. Minister stated in his reply that special arrangements are being made pertaining to admissions for those students because of the celebration of Eid-UI-Adha which has been fixed to 20 December. Can the hon. Minister inform the House what special arrangements have been made pertaining to this specific issue? And if they have not been made as yet, when does he expect them to be made and communicated in advance to the parents?

**Mr Gokhool:** This has been taken into account. My colleague is informing me that it is on 20 December. If that is the case, we will take that into account and adjust the date.

**Mr Mohamed:** Mr Speaker, Sir, Eid-UI-Adha is normally celebrated over three days on which people are busy. Therefore, can I humbly suggest that the Minister considers 19

December- or even 18 December – as possible dates in order to facilitate the issue for those of the Muslim faith?

**Mr Gokhool:** I take note and will refer it to the officers who are working on this issue. I can't offhand say that this is going to happen.

### STC – DIRECTOR – OVERSEAS MISSIONS

**(No. B/1356) Mr G. Guinness (Third Member for Montagne Blanche and GRSE)** asked the Minister of Industry, Small & Medium Enterprises, Commerce and Co-operatives whether, in regard to the overseas missions undertaken by the Director of the State Trading Corporation since January 2007 to date, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Corporation, information as to –

- (a) the dates of each mission;
- (b) the countries visited;
- (c) the purpose and outcome of each visit, and
- (d) the total amount of money paid in terms of airfares and *per diem* allowances.

**Dr. Jeetah:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the information is being compiled and will be tabled as soon as possible.

**Mr Guinness:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I am sure the list is long, that is why it is being compiled. Can I know from the Minister whether all the missions that have been undertaken by the Director, including the last one with regard to the purchase of flour, have been approved by the Board?

**Dr. Jeetah:** As I said, Mr Speaker, Sir, I shall compile the information and lay it on the Table of the Assembly.

**Mr Bérenger:** Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Minister also provide not only whether all the missions were approved by the Board, but who are the other members of the different missions, if any?

**Dr. Jeetah:** Then I would have to compile further, Mr Speaker, Sir.

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Guinness:** Mr Speaker, Sir, it seems that the Minister will even lay on the Table whether missions have been approved by the Board. Can I know from him whether the newly formed company by STC has incurred any expense related to the missions undertaken by the Director so far?

**Dr. Jeetah:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I shall give this information after compilation of the information. But I would like to remind the hon. Leader of the Opposition on 18 December 2001 ...

**Mr Speaker:** This is out of order! Out of order!

*(Interruptions)*

## **SOCIAL WELFARE CENTRES – CHAIRS & TARPAULIN FACILITIES**

**(No. B/1357) Mr G. Gunness (Third Member for Montagne Blanche and GRSE)** asked the Minister of Social Security, National Solidarity and Senior Citizens Welfare & Reform Institutions whether, in regard to the social welfare centres, she will state if the members of the public are provided with chairs and tarpaulin facilities on Saturdays, Sundays and public holidays and, if not, why not.

**The Minister of Labour and Industrial Relations (Dr. V. Bunwaree):** Mr Speaker, Sir, my colleague, the substantive Minister is not present due to health reasons and I am replying to this question.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to inform the hon. Member that in regard to social welfare centers there is no change in the policy of providing chairs and tarpaulin facilities on Saturdays, Sundays and public holidays to members of the public.

If the hon. Member wishes I may mention all the facilities provided, but I can assure him that there is no change in policy. In case there have been some discrepancies or some difficulties that have been made to him as representations in his constituency or elsewhere, I would be prepared to look into it.

**Mr Gunness:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the Minister said that there is no change in the policy. Does it mean that on Saturdays and Sundays people can be provided with tarpaulin and chairs facilities in case there is a funeral?

**Dr. Bunwaree:** Yes, they can be provided with these facilities and there are arrangements which are made. I think it is until 22 00 hours.

**Mr Gunness:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I would request the Minister to check his information. In case of weddings, arrangements are made well in advance, but in case the funeral is on Saturday or on a Sunday, no tarpaulin or chairs facilities are supplied. In the case of Ecoignard, there was a funeral and the family was not provided with chairs and tarpaulins for they said that on Saturdays and Sundays they do not provide these facilities. I am sure other Members also have received these representations.

**Dr. Bunwaree:** It is not the case, according to the information that has been given to me. The hon. Member mentioned the case of Ecoignard, I will look into that, but I can tell him that, in cases of mortality, I am informed that all the facilities are provided. However, special arrangements have been made with the caretaker, the gardener, the warden and the TV operator to issue from reserved stock of equipment two tarpaulins, 25 metal chairs and 600 sq. ft tubular frames. Delivery is done between 1600 hours to 2200 hours. But if there are some specific cases, we will look into that.

**16EME MILLE – MON BOIS FODDER STATION**

**(No. B/1358) Mr M. Dowarkasing (Third Member for Curepipe and Midlands)** asked the Minister of Agro Industry and Fisheries whether, in regard to the Mon Bois Fodder Station at 16ème Mille, he will state if Government is proposing to have it closed down and transformed into a prison or any other reform institution.

**Dr. Boolell:** No, Mr Speaker, Sir.

### **ONIONS - NUN 7272 VARIETY - PRICE**

**(No. B/1359) Mr M. Dowarkasing (Third Member for Curepipe and Midlands)** asked the Minister of Agro Industry and Fisheries whether, in regard to the onions, of the NUN 7272 variety, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Agricultural Marketing Board, information as to the price mechanism established by the Board for the purchase thereof.

**Dr. Boolell:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the NUN 7272 variety is one of the five high yielding varieties recommended by the Agricultural Research & Extension Unit in view of its good storage potential, its adaptability to the main growing areas and its preference by consumers.

The purchase or floor price of onions of high yielding varieties was last revised in October 1998 from Rs8,900 to Rs9,000 per tonne. Production costs have increased significantly since that time owing to increase in cost of inputs (seeds, fertilizers, chemicals, herbicides, fungicides), in labour cost, transport, land rental, storage rental and watchmen services.

The high production costs and the fixed floor price of 1998 have discouraged planters from planting onions. In fact, production of onions has dropped from 11,000 tonnes in year 2000 to around 5,000 tonnes in year 2007 for a total annual consumption of 15,000 tonnes.

The National Onions Committee has examined this matter and has, in September 2007, recommended an increase in the floor price of high yielding onion varieties. This recommendation was approved by the Agricultural Marketing Board in October 2007 and by the Ministry subsequently.

The floor price has been increased to Rs17,000 per tonne and is effective as from 01 November 2007. The new floor price has been calculated on the basis of the following –

- (a) a weighted cost price of Rs133,000 per *arpent*;
- (b) an average yield of 11.09 tonne of onions per *arpent* in the main growing areas, and
- (c) a 40 percent mark up.

It is expected that this measure will give a boost to the production of onions and help the country to attain self-sufficiency by year 2015. In fact, the increase in the floor price will enable growers to renew their interest in onion production and encourage the emergence of new agro entrepreneurs.

Onion producers are being encouraged to modernize the production techniques with respect to curing, storage, mechanization, fertigation, etc. AREU is assisting planters to optimize

early production of onion from onion setts. Onion is being proposed for cultivation in new areas, particularly in the north under the Northern Plains Irrigation Project.

AREU has recently released two new onion varieties, namely Bellarose and Francia which are both high yielding, that is, more than 25 tonnes per hectare and with a long storage life which is more than six months under ambient condition. Consequently, the price of onion seeds is expected to be reduced significantly as a Seed Production Programme has already taken off. Furthermore, SEHDA is assisting potential entrepreneurs to set up SME in onion processing and marketing.

**Mr Dowarkasing:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I thank the hon. Minister for this reply, but still I have certain queries. Is the hon. Minister aware that, between 15 to 26 October 2007, there have been fluctuations in the price of onions from Rs17,000 to Rs12,000 a tonne?

**Dr. Boolell:** Insofar as the price of onions purchased from overseas is concerned, the price may fluctuate. As you know, the trend is on the upward because of the increase in consumption.

**Mr Dowarkasing:** Mr Speaker, Sir, let me put the question differently. On 15 October, the Agricultural Marketing Board purchased onions from planters at the rate of Rs17,000 a tonne. Between 17 and 25 October, they decreased the price and we don't know for what reason. Again, on 26 October, the price was increased to Rs17,000. May we know whether there is any explanation behind the decrease?

**Dr. Boolell:** I stated that the floor price has been increased to Rs17,000 tonne and it became effective as from 01 November 2007.

*(Interruptions)*

As to what happened in October, I cannot answer, but I can easily find out and relay the relevant information to my good friend.

**Mr Dowarkasing:** May I request the hon. Minister to find out why the AMB took that decision? In the same line, can the hon. Minister find out whether purchases from Medine Sugar Estate between 17<sup>th</sup> to 25<sup>th</sup> October, were bought at a price which was superior to Rs12,000 a tonne?

**Dr. Boolell:** This matter was reported to me by some planters, but when an investigation was carried out, it was found that such was not the case.

**Mr Dowarkasing:** Mr Speaker, Sir, one last question. Due to the fact there has been a decrease in the purchasing price between that period, can the hon. Minister say whether the market price of onions on the local market was also decreased?

**Dr. Boolell:** Mr Speaker, Sir, as I have stated, the price on the local market will be determined by market forces. I think it is to the advantage of planters. It has been the request of planters for reasons which I have highlighted. When you look at statistics, there has been a drastic reduction in production. Now, the time has come to reverse that trend and one of the ways of doing so is, precisely, to liberalise the price of onions and to encourage planters to take most of the advantage.

## BASSIN BLANC – NATIONAL PARK – SETTING UP

(No. B/1360) **Mr M. Dowarkasing (Third Member for Curepipe and Midlands)** asked the Minister of Housing & Lands whether, in regard to Bassin Blanc, he will state if his Ministry has compulsorily acquired land thereat for the setting up of a National Park and, if so, where matters stand.

**Mr Dulull:** Mr Speaker, Sir, on 21 March 2007, Government compulsorily acquired a portion of land of an extent 149Ha 6000m<sup>2</sup> belonging to the heirs of late Abdool Rajack Goburdhun, situated at Bassin Blanc in the district of Savanne in terms of a Notice under Section 8 of the Land Acquisition Act transcribed in Vol. 6527 No. 38 for the setting up of a National Park by the National Park and Conservation Service of the Ministry of Agro Industry and Fisheries.

Payment of compensation is currently being looked into by the Chief Government Valuer.

**Mr Dowarkasing:** Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister whether the claim *per arpent* that has been made by the owners has been agreed upon by the Ministry?

**Mr Dulull:** The claim has not yet been agreed, as I mentioned. The payment of compensation is being looked into by the Chief Government Valuer.

**Mr Dowarkasing:** It seems that the owners have tried to contact the Ministry on several occasions in respect to the purchase of this plot of land, but they have not been able to get any reply.

**Mr Dulull:** What the hon. Member is mentioning is not true. The matter is being looked into. As I said, the matter of compensation relates to the Chief Government Valuer and it is being dealt with at this level. As soon as we get an answer, we'll contact the owners and settled what needs be.

**Mr Bérenger:** May I ask the hon. Minister whether he would care to give us the value *per arpent* set by the Government Valuer, and whether the owners are objecting?

**Mr Dulull:** As I said, only the payment of compensation is being looked into by the Government Valuer. Once everything is finalised, the information will be made available.

**Mr Bérenger:** This is not the procedure. As you well know, the procedure is for the Government Valuer to place a value. And then, either the owner accepts or challenges. My question is: what is the value per *arpent* that the Government Valuer has put *on* this land?

**Mr Dulull:** I will look for the information and make it available to the House.

### **FUEL OIL (HEAVY) – IMPORTATION**

(No. B/1361) **Mr M. Dowarkasing (Third Member for Curepipe and Midlands)** asked the Minister of Environment and National Development Unit whether, in regard to heavy fuel oil, he will state if any norms have been established for the importation thereof.

**The Minister of Labour, Industrial Relations & Employment (Dr. V. Bunwaree):** Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that the State Trading Corporation imports heavy fuel oil based on recommendations and requirements of the Central Electricity Board and the local oil companies.

I am further informed that it is the usual practice for the STC to send samples of the heavy fuel oil abroad for laboratory analysis and for confirmation of compliance with set limits.

**Mr Dowarkasing:** May we know if the hon. Minister has the figures with regard to the percentage of sulphur and carbon residue in the heavy oil that we are actually importing?

**Dr. Bunwaree:** I can circulate the composition if the hon. Member wishes to have the details.

**Mr Bérenger:** May I ask the acting Minister, if he can't, whether he can check, if freight comes into this? Under the previous Government, Government had it that heavy fuel oil and other petroleum products would be imported only in double hulk to prevent any catastrophe. Is this still the case?

**Dr. Bunwaree:** I understand it is still the case, but I'll have to review and then if there is anything different, I'll let the House know.

**Mr Dowarkasing:** Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Minister say whether the oil that we are importing under different contents are compatible with all the conventions signed?

**Dr. Bunwaree:** I'll have to check, Mr Speaker, Sir. There is no change in policy, it is still the same. I am going to circulate the contents and look into the new aspects that have been raised.

### **MAURITIUS SUGAR AUTHORITY - MAAS DOCUMENT**

(No. B/1362) **Mr S. Soodhun (Fifth Member for La Caverne and Phoenix)** asked the Minister of Agro Industry and Fisheries whether, in regard to the preparation of the Multi Annual Adaptation Strategy for the sugar sector, he will state if the Mauritius Sugar

Authority has provided the adequate information and, if not, indicate the actions he proposes to take to review the functioning of the Authority.

**Dr. Boolell:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I shall, with your permission, reply to Parliamentary Questions B/1362 and B/1364 together as they relate to the Multi Annual Adaptation Strategy (MAAS) for the sugar sector.

The MAAS document was elaborated by a team comprising representatives of my Ministry, the Ministry of Finance & Economic Development, the Mauritius Sugar Authority and all the other stakeholders of the sugar industry. In fact, all the stakeholders of the sugar industry including representatives of associations grouping sugarcane planters, trade unions as well as the delegation of the European Commission in Mauritius were consulted. If the hon. Member can indicate which information the Mauritius Sugar Authority has withheld, I would be glad to hear from him.

The MAAS document was approved by Government in April 2006 and subsequently endorsed by the European Commission. The MAAS was welcomed by all instances in the European Commission, Member States and the European Parliament as a very bold and comprehensive document and a model one for all ACP countries.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I must point out that the MAAS document is meant for discussions and negotiations. The document provides for review and amendments, if necessary. In fact, there is an inbuilt mechanism in the MAAS at paragraph 252 which clearly specifies that, I quote -

*“The Action Plan would be reviewed in 2009 to assess the implementation and its relevance to the market environment. Modifications, if necessary, would be effected.”*

The discussions between Government and the MSPA and the subsequent agreement concluded last week are in line with the provisions of the MAAS. As I stated in my reply to the PNQ of the Leader of the Opposition last week, the Agreement is in response to the many challenges lying ahead of the sugar sector, particularly the drastic price cut arising from the EU Sugar Reform and the full implementation of the Everything But Arms (EBA) initiative as from year 2009. Mauritius has chosen to engage into a profound restructuring of its sugar sector. This reform, which is a viable option for constructing a sustainable sugar cane cluster, is also a key component for the successful economic transition of the whole economy of Mauritius. Accordingly, the Multi Annual Adaptation Strategy Action Plan 2006-2015 (MAAS), which was prepared in consultation with all the stakeholders of the industry, defines the strategic orientations and key measures that need to be undertaken.

**Mr Soodhun:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the Minister has just mentioned about the role of the MAAS. Since the Prime Minister himself had stated that the MAAS had to be reviewed and he personally conducted negotiations to bring changes to the strategy, does the Minister agree that this is a *‘motion de blâme’* against the MSA?

**Dr. Boolell:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I have highlighted very clearly in my reply that there are provisions in the MAAS for review. The Prime Minister, Mr Bianca Relli of the European Bank of Investment and other stakeholders and my good friend, the Chairman of the Commission for Democratisation of the Economy have highlighted that the MASS is a document for discussions and negotiations.

**Mr Soodhun:** Mr Speaker, Sir, is the Minister satisfied that the MSA is fulfilling its responsibilities as per its mandate.

**Dr. Boolell:** Mr Speaker, Sir, if it doesn't, it will have to bear the consequences.

**Mr Soodhun:** Mr Speaker, Sir, since one Member of his party in Government has made a public declaration about the role and the attitude of MSA, will the Minister consider setting up a completely independent body to monitor the implementation of the report in the sugar sector?

**Dr. Boolell:** Mr Speaker, Sir, this is the joy of a vibrant democracy.

**Mr Guinness:** Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to the review of the functioning of the Authority, I am sure that the Minister is aware that the Deputy Chairperson of the Democratisation Committee, hon. Ms Deerpalsing, publicly stated that this Authority must be closed down because it was a wastage of money. Does the Minister agree with that statement?

**Dr. Boolell:** Mr Speaker, Sir, she is right to say that all institutions financed by cess need to be reviewed and restructured, if their activities have to be downscaled; we'll certainly do that to ensure that the institution serves the interests of the planting community.

**Mr Guimbeau:** Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Minister state if he will also include the improvement of the benefits for workers working with sugar planters other than sugar estates?

**Dr. Boolell:** Yes, Sir.

**Mr Soodhun:** Mr Speaker, Sir, following the recent agreement reached by the Prime Minister and the MSPA, will the Minister inform the House about the number of workers who are expected to become redundant with the MAAS?

**Dr. Boolell:** They are not going to become redundant; they have a choice to opt for Voluntary Retirement Scheme. Some may retire early. The number is 7,200 to 8,000.

**Mr Soodhun:** Can I know whether the VRS 2 will be revised in order to provide additional benefits to the workers who will become redundant as the Minister mentioned well before?

**Dr. Boolell:** Mr Speaker, Sir, my good friend would recall that when we have introduced amendments to the SIE Act, we saw to it that the benefits accruing to workers under VRS 2 would be far better than it was previously.

### **SUGAR ESTATES - WORKERS - SURVEY, CONDITIONS OF WORK, ETC.**

**(No. B/1363) Mr S. Soodhun (Fifth Member for La Caverne and Phoenix)** asked the Minister of Agro Industry and Fisheries whether in regard to the seasonal and permanent workers employed by the sugar estates, he will state if –

- (a) his Ministry has carried out a survey to assess the number thereof, and

- (b) for the seasonal workers, if their conditions of work are being safeguarded, in each case.

**Dr. Boolell:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the Labour Act provides under Section 28(2) that every employer who has recourse to job contractors should on or before 31 January of every year submit to the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Labour, Industrial Relations & Employment separate returns in respect of agricultural workers and non-agricultural workers, showing in respect of the preceding year –

- (a) the number of workers employed by him as at 31 May 2001;
- (b) the number of seasonal workers employed by him, and
- (c) the number of man-days performed by the workers referred to in paragraphs (a), (b) and (c).

Furthermore, the Ministry of Labour, Industrial Relations & Employment ensures that the employers of the sugar industry submit the returns required under the law, including information on seasonal workers employed during the year.

As regards part (b) of the question, I am informed by the Ministry of Labour, Industrial Relations & Employment that its inspectorate ensures that the employers of the sugar industry are being paid wages and enjoy benefits according to the relevant Remuneration Order. I am also informed by the Mauritius Sugar Producers Association that its members respect the provisions of the Remuneration Order for agricultural and non-agricultural workers of the sugar industry.

**Mr Soodhun:** Mr Speaker, Sir, will the Minister state whether the number of the seasonal workers will increase on sugar estates?

**Dr. Boolell:** Mr Speaker, Sir, there are two possibilities since many of them are going to be reskilled and moved to other sectors of the economy. Some, of course, may come back as seasonal workers.

**Mr Soodhun:** In that case, Mr Speaker, Sir, will the Minister agree that the law has to be amended because there is specific provision in the Remuneration Order as far as the employment of seasonal workers is concerned.

**Dr. Boolell:** Mr Speaker, Sir, this is not so. The hon. Member knows it because he was a former Minister. I have here workers employed by the job contractors and I can highlight all the benefits accruing to those workers, in fact.

**Mr Guimbeau:** Can the hon. Minister inform the House whether he will carry out a survey to assist the number of seasonal workers working for small and medium sugar cane planters?

**Dr. Boolell:** That should not cause any problem.

**Mr Soodhun:** Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Minister confirm whether there has been a cost of benefit analysis of the use of seasonal workers in the sugar industry? If there has been one, can the Minister lay the report on the Table of the Assembly?

**Dr. Boolell:** We will give due consideration to that, Mr Speaker, Sir.

**Mr Soodhun:** Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Minister inform the House whether he has taken steps, especially for the seasonal workers, to ensure that the occupational safety and health aspects of the workers are given due consideration?

**Dr. Boolell:** There are provisions in the legislation, but we'll make sure that they are reinforced.

**Mr Guimbeau:** Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to seasonal workers working for planters other than sugar estates, can the hon. Minister state whether the same conditions of work will apply to them and, if not, why not?

**Dr. Boolell:** Mr Speaker, Sir, my colleague, the Minister of Labour, Industrial Relations & Employment will come with a new legislation. The hon. Member can rest assured that the benefits of workers will be safeguarded.

**Mr Guimbeau:** Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Minister see to it that there is no discrimination amongst workers?

**Dr. Boolell:** Certainly, Mr Speaker, Sir.

**Mr Soodhun:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to ask the hon. Minister whether he can see to it that the seasonal workers be governed by the *protocole d'accord* instead of the Agricultural Remuneration Order.

**Dr. Boolell:** Mr Speaker, Sir, in respect of interests and benefits to be accruing to workers as a result of all the changes happening in the sugar industry, this is being taken care of by my colleague, the Minister of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment, and new legislation will be introduced.

#### **MULTI ANNUAL ADAPTION STRATEGY - REVIEW**

**(No. B/1364) Mr S. Soodhun (Fifth Member for La Caverne & Phoenix)** asked the Minister of Agro Industry and Fisheries whether, in regard to the Multi Annual Adaptation Strategy for the sugar sector, he will state if it is being reviewed and, if so, indicate if the review will include the improvement of the benefits accruing to the workers.

*(Vide reply to PQ No. B/1362)*

#### **CITE LOYSEAU & CITE MANGALKHAN – FOOTBALL GROUNDS**

**(No. B/1365) Mr N. Bodha (First Member for Vacoas & Floreal)** asked the Minister of Youth & Sports whether, in regard to the project for infrastructural works to be carried out at the football grounds of Cité Loyseau and Cité Mangalkhan and the construction of a new football ground at Henrietta, he will state where matters stand.

**Mr Tang Wah Hing:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the House that the football grounds at Cité Loyseau and Cité Mangalkhan are managed and maintained by the Municipality of Curepipe.

With regard to Cité Loyseau football ground, my Ministry has, in June this year, provided funds to the Ministry of Local Government to assist in the implementation of the project.

I am informed that the Municipal Council of Curepipe will consider the upgrading of the football ground at Cité Mangalkhan in due course, once funds would be available.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to the construction of a new football ground at Henrietta, I wish to inform the hon. Member that an extent of land of about 3 *arpents* at Henrietta has been vested into my Ministry for the construction of a youth and sports complex.

Provision has already been made for the inclusion of a football ground in the proposed complex. The Ministry of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport & Shipping has been approached for the preparation of the project designs.

Funds have been earmarked in next year's Budget for the implementation of the project.

### **STCM LTD – EXECUTIVE & NON-EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS – ALLOWANCE**

**(No. B/1367) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière)** asked the Minister of Industry, Small & Medium Enterprises, Commerce & Co-operatives whether, in regard to the STCM Ltd, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the State Trading Corporation, information as to the terms and conditions of appointment of the Managing Director and of the Directors thereof.

**Dr. Jeetah:** Mr Speaker, Sir, Mr R. S. Soomarooah is the Executive Director of STCM Ltd, with a monthly allowance of Rs45,000. Non-Executive Directors are entitled to a monthly allowance of Rs5,000.

**Mr Bhagwan:** Mr Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Minister whether the gentleman has been assigned a car as well?

**Dr. Jeetah:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I am not aware.

**Mr Guinness:** Mr Speaker, Sir, can I know from the hon. Minister whether a civil servant is allowed to take another employment and be paid another salary?

**Dr. Jeetah:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I am sure the Board must have taken all this into consideration.

### **STC – PETROLEUM PRODUCTS – VAT – LEVY**

**(No. B/1368) Mr J. Cuttaree (Second Member for Stanley & Rose Hill)** asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to the sale of petroleum products by the State Trading Corporation, he will, for the benefit of

the House, obtain from the Corporation, information as to the amount of Value Added Tax levied thereon for each of the financial years 2004-2005, 2005-2006, 2006-2007.

**The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development (Mr R. Sithanen):** Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the State Trading Corporation that the amount of Value Added Tax levied on its sale of petroleum products were as follows -

FY 2004-2005: Rs1.18 billion

FY 2005-2006: Rs1.5 billion

FY 2006-2007: Rs1.87 billion

However, I would like to inform the House that the amount of excise duties on petroleum products has fallen from Rs2.1 billion in 2004/2005 to Rs1.9 billion in 2006/2007.

**Mr Bodha:** Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Deputy Prime Minister how he explains this fall in excise duty?

**Mr Sithanen:** Mr Speaker, Sir, for a long time, both the excise duty and the VAT were *ad valorem* taxes, which means that they were based on a percentage of the value of the CIF. Then, because the price was going up, Government took the decision to convert the *ad valorem* excise tax into a specific excise tax. So, it is a fixed amount per litre. Obviously, if it is a fixed amount per litre, the only explanation is that the consumption has fallen slightly over these two years. That's the only explanation I can give. Otherwise, it does not make sense. Or else, probably what has happened is the difference in the value of the dollar.

#### **PADKAM – LAND LEASE - SOLITUDE**

**(No. B/1369) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière)** asked the Minister of Housing & Lands whether, in regard to the application for the lease of a plot of land at Solitude to Padkam, he will state –

- (a) when was the application filed with his Ministry;
- (b) the extent of land applied for;
- (c) if the application has been approved and, if so, indicate –
  - (i) the extent of land leased;
  - (ii) the conditions of the lease;
  - (iii) if he will table copy of the lease and the letter of intent;
  - (iv) the project to be carried out thereat, and
  - (v) the implementation schedule.

*(Vide reply to PQ No. B/1336)*

#### **MILK & MILK PRODUCTS – CERTIFICATION & ANALYSIS**

**(No. B/1370) Dr. A. Husnoo (Second Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East)** asked the Minister of Industry, Small & Medium Enterprises, Commerce & Co-operatives whether, in regard to milk and milk products imported for the local market, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to if any products derived from pigs are contained therein and, if so, indicate the brands thereof.

**Dr. Jeetah:** Mr Speaker, Sir, insofar as milk and milk products are concerned, my Ministry is responsible for the issue of import permits and the calculation of market price.

I am also informed by the Ministry of Health that, before importation, samples in original containers are sent to the Government Analyst Division of the Ministry of Health for certification in respect of origin of the milk and milk products according to relevant existing standards prescribed in the regulations under the Food Act, Part 21 Regulations 253 to 306. Thereafter, and subject to compliance to above standards, a pre-market approval permit is granted for importation and sale on the local market.

I am also informed that, according to available records at the Food Import Unit of the Ministry of Health, all milk powder and milk products imported and offered for sale on the local market are from cow's milk.

I am also informed by the Ministry of Health that there is no record of any products originating from pigs.

**Dr. Husnoo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, is it possible for the Ministry to have analysis done to make sure that there is no pig product in the milk available on the local market?

**Dr. Jeetah:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the MSB has been requested to finalise a test method for the detection of gelatine in milk and milk products, according to test methods laid down by the Association of Official Analytical Chemists. I understand there have been some trials, and they are getting the test method in place.

**Dr. Husnoo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, does that include baby milk as well?

**Dr. Jeetah:** Mr Speaker, Sir, we didn't have these procedures. But, I have requested officers of my Ministry to look into the subject.

**Dr. Husnoo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, pending the result, is it possible for the Ministry to try to get the information from the manufacturers as to whether the milk includes any pig product?

**Dr. Jeetah:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I shall certainly do the needful.

**Mr Cuttaree:** Mr Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Minister whether it is possible, through the labs at his disposal, to differentiate between the various animal products within a sample of milk?

**Dr. Jeetah:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I did ask the Director of the MSB to look into the matter. If we don't have the facilities, we shall certainly look at facilities overseas to make sure that we get the information that is being sought.

## EUROPEAN UNION/MAURITIUS – SCHENGEN VISA

(No. B/1371) **Mr J. R. Spéville (Second Member for Rodrigues)** asked the Minister of Foreign Affairs, International Trade & Co-operation whether, in regard to the exemption for visa requirements for Mauritian nationals, he will state if a bilateral agreement thereon has been concluded between the European Community and Mauritius and, if so, where matters stand.

**The Minister of Information Technology & Telecommunications (Mr E. Sinatambou):** Mr Speaker, Sir, at the sitting of the National Assembly session held on Tuesday 07 August 2007, the Minister of Foreign Affairs made a statement regarding the requirement of visas to travel to the European Union for short stays, especially within the Schengen area. As indicated then, since assuming office, this Government, more particular the hon. Prime Minister, has been constantly raising with the European Union authorities and the Governments of EU member States this issue of visa requirements for Mauritian nationals entering the European Union.

The House may recall that the European Union Commission published a Regulation on 30 December 2006 amending an EC Regulation which would move Antigua and Bermuda, the Bahamas, Barbados, Mauritius, St. Kitts & Nevis and the Seychelles from the list of countries whose nationals require visas to travel to the European Union to the list of those not requiring a visa for stays not exceeding three months.

Following this decision, the European Commission (EC) needed to seek the necessary mandate from the European Council to negotiate the visa exemption agreements.

Government has, since, been constantly pursuing the matter with the EU authorities and in October this year we were advised by the Commission that it was in the process of finalizing its draft negotiating mandate for submission to the EU Council of Ministers.

However, in the meantime, a new development has taken place whereby 9 of the 10 new member States which joined the European Union in 2004 namely, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovenia, Slovakia and the Czech Republic have decided to join the Schengen Area.

The 27 Interior Ministers of the European Union at a meeting of the Justice and Internal Affairs Council on 08 November 2007 have approved the enlargement of the Schengen Area. It is now for the European Union Council of Ministers scheduled to meet on 12 and 13 December 2007 to endorse the enlargement of the Schengen Area, including the lifting of border control of new member States along the European Union's internal borders.

The process of lifting control at sea and land borders of the enlarged Schengen Area will start on 21 December 2007 and border control will be lifted at international airports with effect from the end of March 2008 onwards for the nine new Member States of the European Union joining the Schengen Area.

Our informal contacts with the European Commission have now indicated that the process regarding the negotiation of bilateral visa waiver agreements will now resume after completion of procedure for the enlargement of the Schengen Area.

On our side, Mauritius is ready to enter into the negotiation of a bilateral visa exemption agreement with the European Union as soon as the Commission signifies its readiness.

**ENTERPRISE MAURITIUS – BOARD MEETING,  
OVERSEAS MISSIONS, ETC.**

**(No. B/1372) Mrs A. Navarre-Marie (First Member for GRNW and Port Louis West)** asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to Enterprise Mauritius, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, information as to –

- (a) when was the last Board Meeting held, indicating by whom it was chaired;
- (b) if the Chairperson presently in post is attending the Board meetings and if not, why not, and
- (c) the number of overseas missions undertaken by the Chairperson thereof since his assumption of duties, indicating in each case
  - (i) the countries visited, and
  - (ii) the expenditure incurred.

**The Minister of Industry, Small & Medium Enterprises, Commerce & Cooperatives (Dr. R. Jeetah):** Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I shall reply to the Parliamentary Question addressed to the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that the last Board Meeting of Enterprise Mauritius was held under the Chairmanship of Mr L. A. Darga on 23 October 2007.

As regards part (b) of the question, I am informed that no Board Meeting has been held after 23 October 2007 in view of the fact that the tenure of office of four members had expired on 24 October 2007.

Information asked for in part (c) that the question will be placed in the Library of the National Assembly.

**Mrs Navarre-Marie:** Mr Speaker, Sir, concerning section (c) of the question, can the hon. Minister state whether these missions have been approved by the Board?

**Dr. Jeetah:** I'll have to check, Mr Speaker, Sir.

**ENTERPRISE MAURITIUS - CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER –  
OVERSEAS MISSIONS**

**(No. B/1373) Mrs A. Navarre-Marie (First Member for GRNW and Port Louis West)** asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development

whether, in regard to Enterprise Mauritius, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, information as to if Mr P. B. is still in post as Chief Executive, indicating the number of overseas missions he has undertaken since his assumption of duties, indicating in each case –

- (a) the countries visited, and
- (b) the expenditure incurred.

**The Minister of Industry, Small & Medium Enterprises, Commerce & Cooperatives (Dr. R. Jeetah):** Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I shall reply to the Parliamentary Question addressed to the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the House that Mr P.B. is still in post as Chief Executive Officer of Enterprise Mauritius.

The requested information pertaining to the overseas missions of the CEO will be placed in the Library of the National Assembly.

**Mrs Navarre-Marie:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to know whether these missions have been approved by the Board?

**Dr. Jeetah:** Again, I will have to give the same answer: I will certainly look into the matter.

**Mr Speaker:** Time is over!