

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

IAN PALACH NORTH & SOUTH BUS STATIONS – FATAL ACCIDENTS

(No. 1B/16) Dr S. Boolell (Second Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications whether, in regard to the Ian Palach North and South bus stations in Curepipe, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the number of fatal accidents which have occurred thereat during the past five years, indicating the remedial actions that have been taken.

Reply: I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that since 2005 to 10 June 2010, two cases of fatal accidents have occurred at Ian Palach North bus station in Curepipe in which 3 persons lost their lives.

I am also informed that the Police is deployed at the Ian Palach bus station from 0700 hours to 2100 hours to perform duties such as traffic control, linking up with stand regulators, ensuring security of passengers, attending to request from travellers, preventing larcenies and other anti-social behaviour as well as illegal activities.

I am further informed that a series of measures have been taken to make Ian Palach bus station more secure, such as installation of handrails, traffic lights and the provision of pedestrian crossings, footpaths and road markings.

The Police have also carried out sensitisation campaigns with bus crews and at educational institutions of the Curepipe region to enhance the road safety awareness of the users of the bus station.

LONG MOUNTAIN POLICE STATION – INCIDENT – INQUIRY

(No. 1B/17) Mr G. Lesjongard (Second Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications whether he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of

Police, information as to if an incident occurred at the Long Mountain Police Station on 8 May 2010, indicating –

- (a) if the police station was damaged as a result thereof, and
- (b) if an inquiry has been carried out thereinto and, if so, if the inquiry has revealed whether the person involved is a political activist.

Reply: I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that on 8 May 2010 at 18.30 hours, Mrs. S.A. called at Long Mountain Police Station accompanied by her brother-in law Mr. B.A to report a case of assault. While the statement of Mrs S.A. was being recorded, one Mr. T.B. entered the Station. He removed a piece of wood which was concealed under his T-shirt and started to assault Mr. B.A.

Two Police Officers called Mr. T.B. to order but he instead turned hostile and violent. He again tried to assault Mr. B.A. and the two Police Officers. He then rushed outside and damaged six window panes and two door panes of the Station. The Police tried to arrest him but he managed to run away. Reinforcement was sought from the Divisional Operations Room, Piton to search for Mr. T.B. The Police tried to trace out the latter on 8 and 9 May 2010 but he could not be found.

On 10 May 2010, Mr. T.B. called at Long Mountain Police Station, accompanied by his lawyer. He was arrested and after enquiry, was brought before the Pamplemousses District Court on the same day. A provisional charge of “Damaging Government Property” was lodged against him. He was granted bail on the same day after furnishing a surety of Rs3000 and Rs100 costs.

I am informed that Mr T.B., a Caretaker of the Sugar Industry Labour Welfare Fund, has been interdicted.

I am further informed that Mr. T. B. will be prosecuted for the offence of assault. Police enquiry is still in progress.

Police is not aware whether the accused is a political activist, but that is irrelevant in any case. Anyone who breaks the law must expect to face the full rigours of the law.

GOVERNMENT PUBLICITY – MONEY PAID – JANUARY - MAY 2010

(No. 1B/31) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to Government Publicity, he will state the amount of money paid to each daily and weekly on a monthly basis for the period of January to 31 May 2010.

Reply (The Prime Minister): This matter is *sub judice* and therefore it would not be proper for me to give the information requested.

GOVERNMENT HOUSE – RENOVATION WORKS – ASBESTOS

(No. 1B/64) Dr. R. Sorefan (Fourth Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether, in regard to the Government House presently undergoing renovation works, he will state if –

- (a) traces of asbestos have been detected therein, and, if so, indicate the measures that have been taken for the protection of the public and the employees of the contractor, and
- (b) the product has been disposed of and, if so, when and how.

Reply (The Prime Minister): In regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed that on 03 May 2010, a site inspection was carried out by representatives of my Office, the Ministry of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment, the Ministry of Civil Service Affairs and Administrative Reforms and the National Assembly at the Old Parliament House where renovation works are currently being undertaken by the firm Ireko Construction Ltd. During that inspection, materials suspected to contain asbestos were found in the false ceiling of the second floor of the building. The National Assembly immediately contacted the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life regarding measures to be taken in such cases. The latter subsequently submitted a series of recommendations, including a Protocol on Precautionary measures to Protect Workers

at Work with Asbestos. It also advised that action be initiated by the contractor for the samples to be taken for analysis to confirm the presence and type of asbestos.

I am informed that the samples have been sent to the Mauritius Standard Bureau and results are currently awaited.

However, in the meantime the recommendations made by the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life have already been implemented and the provisions of the Protocol are being followed by the contractor. In fact, the whole working area has been enclosed and isolated. Areas under the scaffolding have been demarcated and secured. Access to the building and to its premises is prohibited to the public. Warning tapes and safety signs have been installed.

Workers have also been provided with the appropriate masks, disposable overcoat, safety helmet and shoes.

In addition, medical examinations of the employees of the contractor have been carried out and results are awaited.

As for part (b) of the question, I am informed that the suspected materials, a total of 4.3 tonnes, were removed on 08, 09 and 10 May and stored in a room which was sealed off without access to anybody. They were subsequently put in double plastic bags and in raffia bags, and disposed of at the Mare Chicose landfill on 27 and 28 May 2010.

I wish to add that a complete survey of the building has been undertaken by the Contractor and no other materials suspected to contain asbestos have been identified.

RING ROAD PROJECT

(No. B/55) Mr R. Uteem (Second Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Housing and Lands whether, in regard to the ring road project, he will state if his Ministry has carried out a study to ascertain -

- (a) the residential areas which will be affected
- (b) the number of houses which will have to be demolished
- (c) the number of residents who will have to be displaced, indicating if any assessment has been made on the social impact of their displacement, and
- (d) if, in the affirmative, will he table a copy of the report.

Reply: The main residential area of Vallée Pitot will not be affected by the proposed Ring Road Project.

However, a total of 85 families are currently illegally occupying two areas of State land situated directly on the proposed Ring Road alignment, thus requiring to be relocated. These families have decided, on their own, to illegally occupy these areas in spite of being aware that this land is reserved for the Ring Road Project. Out of the 85 squatters, 18 families occupy state land near Military Road and the remaining occupy state land near the Eid Gah. Over and above the 85 squatters, there are 6 families who hold valid residential leases. These are squatters who have been regularised.

So far, a plot of land of about 4A00 at Military Road has already been identified for the relocation of some of the squatters. My Ministry is in the process of identifying additional land for the relocation of the remaining ones.

My Ministry is also discussing with the Ministry of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping regarding the possibilities to reduce to a minimum the number of families who need to be relocated. In the process, all implications of the relocation exercise including the social ones are being looked into.

Consultations will also be held with all stakeholders.

STC – PETROLEUM PRODUCTS – HEDGING TRANSACTIONS

(No. B/56) Mr R. Uteem (Second Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Industry and Commerce whether, in regard to hedging transactions on petroleum products, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the State Trading Corporation, information as to -

- (a) the total amount of losses incurred as at to-date, indicating if the Corporation is still carrying out hedging transactions;
- (b) if an inquiry has been carried out regarding the losses incurred through hedging, and, if so, table a copy of the report, and
- (c) if any sanction has been taken against any officer or officers responsible for the hedging losses.

(Vide reply to PNQ)

STC – PETROLEUM PRODUCTS - PURCHASE

(No. B/57) Mr R. Uteem (Second Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Industry and Commerce whether, in regard to petroleum products, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the State Trading Corporation, information as to -

- (a) the amount of petroleum products purchased, if any during the electoral campaign, indicating the cost thereof;
- (b) the amount of losses, if any, suffered by the Corporation as a result thereof, and
- (c) whether approval from Board for the said purchase was sought and obtained.

Reply: I am informed that the STC had purchased five consignments of petroleum products during the period 02 April 2010 to 06 May 2010. I am tabling a statement indicating the volume and value of Petroleum Products purchased per vessel and the arrival date thereof.

In regard to part (b) of the question, I am further informed that no loss was incurred on the purchase of the products. The purchases were done in the normal course of business.

In regard to part (c) of the question, the importation of 28,687MT of petroleum products which arrived in Mauritius on 22 April 2010 was approved by the Board of Directors of STC on 07 April 2010.

CENTRAL MARKET - HAWKERS

(No. B/58) Mr R. Uteem (Second Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Local Government and Outer Islands whether, in regard to the hawkers operating within the 500 metres of Port Louis Central Market, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Municipal Council of Port Louis, information as to the measures that are proposed to be taken to find an alternative location for them to operate.

Reply: After the street hawkers have been ordered to stop plying their trade within a radius of 500 metres from the Port Louis Central market, I have personally met their representatives in order to see how, on humanitarian grounds, they could be relocated elsewhere so that these hawkers are not deprived of the means of subsistence both for themselves and their families.

I have personally visited a few alternative locations in Port Louis where the hawkers could possibly be relocated. I have also had a meeting with the Acting Lord Mayor of the Municipality, the Chief Executive, the Acting Chief Health Inspector and officers of my Ministry to study how best the hawkers could be relocated. I am pursuing my investigation together with the support of the Municipality of Port Louis and I hope that a solution can be found very soon.

STC – PETROLEUM PRODUCTS - TENDERS

(No. B/59) Mr A. Ganoo (First Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Minister of Industry and Commerce whether, in regard to petroleum products, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the State Trading Corporation, information as to whether the purchase agreement between the Corporation and the Mangalore Refineries and Petrochemicals Ltd -

- (a) has not been renewed and, if so, the reasons therefor;
- (b) the Corporation has decided to float international tenders for the purchase thereof, and
- (c) whether he will now table a copy of the agreements signed between the Corporation and Mangalore Refineries and Petrochemicals Ltd for the supply of petroleum products since 2006.

(Vide reply to PNQ)

TIANLI - LEASE

(No. 1B/60) Mr G. Lesjongard (Second Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Housing and Lands whether, he will inform the House if,

following the transfer of the lease between Tianli and Jin-Fei, his Ministry has written off any amount owed as rental by Tianli and, if so, indicate the amount.

Reply (Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development): I will reply to PQ 1B/60 addressed to my colleague the hon. Minister of Housing and Lands and to PQ 1B/66 addressed to me at the same time since they relate to the same subject.

As the House is aware, the Jin-Fei Zone is one of five economic zones that the People's Republic of China is supporting in Africa. It is the outcome of intense lobbying by the Prime Minister during the Sino Africa Summit held in Beijing in 2006 for Mauritius to be part of the Africa development strategy by the Chinese Government.

I wish to inform the House that I am not in a position to table the Framework Agreement as there is a confidentiality clause which provides that the parties to the Agreement should ensure strict confidentiality on the Agreement.

However, I am pleased to provide information on essential aspects of the project. Government succeeded in convincing the Chinese promoters to choose Mauritius over other African countries by offering a package that includes the provision of off-site infrastructure with a contribution of Rs100 m. from the promoters, a tax platform of 15% applicable to all investors, leased land at concessional rates on a similar basis to what has traditionally been offered to investors in new sectors, including on *Pas Géométriques* and on industrial zones, and passports for a limited number of investors, namely one passport for every USD 500, 000 of investment.

Regarding the lease of land, a portion of land of 211 hectares has been earmarked for the Tianli project. Government had planned to release the land in two stages since 160 hectares were still under occupation of the planters of the Terre Rouge Land Settlement.

A first lease agreement was signed between Government and the Tianli Enterprise Group for a portion of 51 hectares of land on 12 July 2007. The lease agreement for the second portion of land of 160 hectares was not signed as the land could not be released in totality until December 2008.

Following representations from Tianli, Government approved, on 26 March 2009, an amendment of the first lease agreement to provide for the addition of the remaining 160 hectares, to be effective as from 12 February 2009. The deed of amendment was prepared but was not signed by Tianli because of ongoing discussions among the Chinese promoters.

Following an overhauling of the shareholding structure of the company and its renaming into Mauritius Jin-Fei Economic and Trade Cooperation Zone Company Ltd, a revised implementation schedule was agreed for the project and the project implementation started on 16 September 2009. Thus the Chinese side namely Jin-Fei signed the amended lease agreement in respect of the 211 hectares only on 16 September 2009. Regarding the lease rentals for the 160 hectares of land for the period up to the date of the signature of the lease agreement, Government agreed to waive the dues since the land was encumbered.

Investment in the Jin-Fei Project is estimated at USD 750 million. This project will assist Mauritius to realize its ambitions of becoming a bridge between Asia and Africa.

RODRIGUES - INTERNET AND BANDWIDTH CONNECTION

(No. 1B/61) Mr J. F. François (Third Member for Rodrigues) asked the Minister of Information and Communication Technology whether, in regard to the internet and bandwidth connection in Rodrigues, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Telecom, information as to –

- (a) if it has any priority project for operational plan under the Universal Service Fund, and
- (b) the number of persons awaiting to be connected to ADSL.

Reply: The Mauritius Telecom Ltd has identified four priority projects, which are intended to increase the broadband penetration in Rodrigues over the short term. These projects are:

- (1) an upgrade of the fixed line facilities to provide for additional fixed lines;
- (2) extension of broadband network to cover all existing MT Exchange Areas;
- (3) extension of the Internet Protocol (IP) Core to Rodrigues with the introduction of a new IP router at Mont Vénus and Port Louis by end of 2010, and
- (4) migration of all ATM-based services to IP with the new router at Mont Vénus by 2010 and the deployment of a new 10 Megabits per second IP satellite link between Mauritius and Rodrigues.

The Mauritius Telecom Ltd has approached the Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) Authority with a request that the implementation of these projects be

financially supported by the Universal Service Fund. These projects will involve a significant level of investment as well as relatively high annual operating costs when weighed against their commercial viability. The request is currently under examination at the level of the ICT Authority.

As regard part (b) of the question, the Mauritius Telecom Ltd has informed that the number of pending applications for ADSL in Rodrigues as at end of May 2010 is 216.

TOLL TAX

(No. 1B/62) Dr. M. R. Sorefan (Fourth Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Minister of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping whether, in regard to toll tax, he will state if his Ministry has already taken a decision for the imposition thereof and, if so, indicate the roads which have been identified.

Reply: In view of the colossal investment of Rs26 billion involved in the Road Decongestion Programme, Government has approved that the project be implemented under a Public Private Partnership (PPP). Part of the investment will have to be recouped by way of a toll system.

The roads identified under the feasibility study undertaken by South African Consultant, SPP Projects Solutions Ltd are -

- (i) the Harbour Bridge;
- (ii) Port Louis Ring Road;
- (iii) Terre Rouge-Verdun-Ebene Link Road;
- (iv) A1-M1 Bridge; Belle Etoile/Soreze ;
- (v) Motorway M1 from Phoenix to Port Louis, and
- (vi) Motorway M2 from Terre Rouge to Port Louis.

Road users will have the choice to use alternative roads which will not be tolled. Public transport buses will be exempted from payment of tolls on tolled roads.

(No. 1B/63) Dr. M. R. Sorefan (Fourth Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Minister of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport & Shipping whether, in regard to the proposed putting up of a supermarket at St Pierre by the Winners Group, he will state if he has received any complaint from the Promoters with regard to undue delays by the Road Development Authority for the granting of the Traffic Impact Assessment and, if so, whether an inquiry has been carried out thereinto, indicating where matters stand.

Reply: I wish to inform the House that my Ministry has not received any complaint from the promoters with regard to undue delays by the RDA on the Traffic Impact Assessment.

In fact, I am informed that it is not the RDA, but the TMRSU which is dealing with the promoters on traffic and road safety issues.

I am further informed that several correspondences have already been exchanged between the TMRSU and the promoters and the matter is still under consideration.

NHDC FLATS – SYNDIC - MAINTENANCE

(No. 1B/65) Dr. M. R. Sorefan (Fourth Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Minister of Housing and Lands whether, in regard to NHDC flats, he will state if Government proposes to set up a Government Fund to help the NHDC syndic in the maintenance of the apartments and more particularly the sewerage plants thereat.

Reply: Inhabitants of the high rise NHDC apartments are co-owners of their housing units and are as such bound to constitute a “*syndic*” to look after the maintenance and upkeep of “*les parties communes*” in accordance with the “*règlement de copropriété*” as provided for in Article 664 of the Civil Code.

However, we are all aware that syndics, still not in the “*moeurs*” of our fellow citizens, have so far been a failure.

It is a fact that in most cases either the required “*syndic*” has not been set up at all, or if set up is not working properly. I am informed that to date, syndics are operational and functional in only 10 housing estates. The main reason reported is that residents are reluctant to contribute financially to the “*syndic*”. The monthly contribution to “*syndic*” ranges usually from Rs200 to Rs400/- depending on the housing estate.

Rather than instituting a Government Fund, my Ministry and the NHDC will continue to advise the inhabitants on their collective responsibility and encourage them to join the “*syndic*”.

To that effect, I have already convened the 10 syndics which are operational and impress upon them to continue their good work. My Ministry and the NHDC will undertake a PR exercise and try to get the owners of the NHDC apartment to regroup into “*syndic*”.

With particular regard to sewerage plants, I wish to inform members of the House that, with the collaboration of the Wastewater Management Authority, procedures for the rehabilitation of sewerage plants in NHDC estates have already started. Thereafter, the WMA, which is the competent authority and which has the necessary expertise will take over these sewerage plants.

In the meantime, whenever the need arises, the NHDC arranges for the desludging of sewerage plants and foots the bill as well.

JIN-FEI PROJECT - FRAMEWORK AGREEMENT

(No. 1B/66) Mr E. Guimbeau (First Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to the Jin-Fei, ex-Tianli project, in Riche Terre, he will now consider tabling the Framework Agreement and, if not, why not.

(Vide reply to PQ 1B/60)

ANSE LA RAIE - PRESIDENT'S BUNGALOW - LEASE

(No. 1B/67) Mr E. Guimbeau (First Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the Minister of Housing and Lands whether, in regard to the President's bungalow located on the *Pas Géométriques* at Anse La Raie, he will state if the lease has been transferred to a private promoter and, if so, state -

- (a) the name of the promoter;
- (b) the purpose of the lease, indicating the extent of the land leased; and
- (c) the terms and conditions indicating the annual rental and premium to be paid, and
- (d) the amount of taxes, fees and levies paid to Government.

Reply: The reply is in the negative

CUREPIPE MARKET - RENOVATION WORKS

(No. 1B/68) Mr E. Guimbeau (First Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the Minister of Local Government and Outer Islands whether, in regard to the Curepipe market, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Municipal Council of Curepipe, information as to if the renovation works have been completed and, if so, indicate -

- (a) the amount quoted by each tenderer;
- (b) the scope of the works, and
- (c) whether the deadline for the works was met and, if not, the amount of penalties paid, if any, and the final cost of the renovation works.

Reply: I am informed by the Municipal Council of Curepipe that the renovation works at the Curepipe market have been partly completed and the market was re-opened to the public on 12 April 2010. The Curepipe market is an old building which was inaugurated in 1978. Renovation works had to be undertaken in a phased manner, particularly in the face of financial constraints.

With regard to parts (a), (b) and (c) of the question, the relevant information is being compiled and it will be placed in the Library.

SALE BY LEVY - VICTIMS - AMOUNT DISBURSED

(No. 1B/69) Mr Guimbeau (First Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to the Rs100 m. earmarked for the victims of sale by levy, he will state the amount disbursed as at to-date and the names of the beneficiaries.

Reply: Following the setting up of the Sale by Levy Solidarity Fund to financially assist deserving families who have lost their only residence through sale by levy to acquire a house, an initial exercise to determine potential beneficiaries was carried out from September 2007 to January 2009 and a second one from May 2009 to November 2009.

Out of a total of 421 applications for assistance received, only 49 families satisfied the eligibility criteria for financial assistance under the Fund.

I am informed that to date, disbursements to the tune of Rs12.9 m. have been effected in respect of 38 out of the 49 eligible families qualifying for assistance. As regards the remaining 11 beneficiaries, an amount of Rs5.5 m. has been earmarked and will be disbursed once negotiations for acquisition of their houses will have been completed and the deeds of sale finalised at the notary.

In 2009, decision was taken to extend financial assistance from the Sale by Levy Solidarity Fund to cover cases of families with a monthly household income of less than Rs7,500 and who were facing difficulties to service their loans following the death or serious incapacity of a wage earner.

In this context, a call for applications was launched in May 2009. 47 additional applications were received, out of which 35 did not meet the income and death/incapacity criteria. As at date, disbursements to the tune of Rs467,000 have been made in respect of 2 beneficiaries. The remaining 10 applications are currently being examined.

It would not be appropriate, as requested by the hon. Member, to reveal the names of either the beneficiaries or of those who have been found not to be eligible for financial assistance under the Sale by Levy Solidarity Fund.

