

Deb. No.15 of 15.11.2005

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

**(i) TEXTILE PRODUCTS – CUSTOMS TARIFF CUTS, LDC STATUS, ETC.**

**(ii) CRAIG, MR PETER - DISMISSAL**

**The Leader of the Opposition (Mr P. Bérenger)** (*By Private Notice*) 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 –

- (a) the Customs Tariff cuts on industrial and, in particular, textile products being discussed at the WTO;
- (a) our requests for LDC status under the AGOA;
- (a) ongoing discussions for a post-AGOA formula, and
- (a) the recent dismissal of Peter Graig as Trade Adviser in Washington, he will state -
  - (i) what measures are being taken to promote our textile interests in the EU, the US and locally, and
  - (ii) whether Paul Ryberg is also being dismissed as our lobbyist in Washington.

**The Minister of Foreign Affairs, International Trade & Cooperation (Mr M. Dullo)**: Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I will be replying to this PNQ.

The answer is as follows –

Mr Speaker, Sir, the WTO Agreement on Textile and Clothing which came into effect in 1995 provides for the phasing out of the Multifibre Agreement within a period of 10 years i.e. in January 2005 when textile and clothing became fully integrated into the WTO system. It was foreseen then that this would result into a surge of exports on the world market,

particularly from more competitive suppliers. The adverse implications of the phasing out of the Multifibre Agreement were re-emphasised and have been compounded with the decision taken in Doha at the fourth WTO Ministerial Conference in December 2001 to reduce or eliminate tariff peaks, high tariffs and tariff escalation on industrial products, including on textiles and clothing with the resulting adverse impact on our preferential margin. In fact, paragraph 16 of the 2001 WTO Doha Ministerial Declaration provides for the reduction or elimination of tariff peaks, high tariffs and tariff escalation on products of export interest to developing countries, including on textiles and clothing, tuna, jewellery, footwear, leather products etc.

Pursuant to the above decision taken at the Doha Ministerial Conference, several proposals have been made at the WTO by various countries and groups of countries to cut industrial tariffs, including on textiles and clothing in the context of negotiations on the Doha Development Agenda. The most important ones being that of the US, the EU and the joint Argentina, Brazil and India proposal. The adoption of anyone of these proposals would result in reduction tariffs on textiles and clothing by an average of 60% resulting into an erosion of our preferential margin by the same percentage point. It is obvious, therefore, that under such a scenario it would become increasingly difficult for our textiles companies to successfully compete on our traditional markets with low cost suppliers. Besides, over the past few years we have witnessed the serious difficulties our textile and apparel industry have gone through, including closing down of factories, delocalisation of enterprises and massive loss of employment.

As soon as this Government assumed office, we have been very active in the negotiations to ensure that our vital economic interests, particularly in the textiles sector are safeguarded both at the level of WTO and within AGOA. In this regard we have departed from the usual rhetorics to submit concrete proposals in the Non-Agricultural Market Access negotiations to identify those products that are vulnerable to preference erosion.

This strategy, Mr Speaker, Sir, is approved by the ACP and supported by the Africa Group and the LDC group in Geneva. We have also submitted that these vulnerable products should be subject to a differential treatment through tariff modulation, in other words tariffs should be reduced on them only marginally and implemented over a longer time frame to ensure the maintenance of a commercially meaningful margin of preferences both on

the US and the EU markets. We have had intensive discussions at various levels along this line. Whilst assuring all our international partners, members of the WTO, of our commitment to ensure that we have a successful outcome of the Doha Round, with a balanced, equitable and free and fair International Trade Regime, we have assured them of our commitment to ensure that all our interests, including the concerns of the ACP, that is, concerning preference erosion be adequately addressed. We must assure the House that we have received favourable responses and echoes on this issue.

So far, Mr Speaker, Sir, no decision has been reached on the formula that would be applied to cut tariffs, nor the level of the cut. We will continue to press for the adoption of modalities in the negotiations to address the problem of preference erosion both in the NAMA negotiations as well as in the forthcoming Ministerial meeting of the AU scheduled in Arusha from 21 to 24 November 2005, the ACP and the G90 Ministerial Meetings which will be held in Brussels from 28 to 30 November 2005, in order to prepare for the forthcoming 6<sup>th</sup> WTO Ministerial Meeting in Hong Kong. I also raised the concerns of Mauritius in a letter addressed to Mr Pascal Lamy, Director of the WTO and through phone conversations I had with various of my colleagues, including Mr Lamy himself. Mr Lamy has reassured me that a solution to the problem of preference erosion will have to be found as part of the Doha Package. In a letter addressed to me on the same day, Mr Lamy has indicated having taken note of the important issues raised with regard to the challenges facing Mauritius as a small vulnerable developing country and has assured that he will keep them in mind as he continues to facilitate negotiations towards the Hong Kong Ministerial Conference.

Both at various levels and at the level of bilateral talks, we have been emphasising the need for the EU and the ACP to work together at the WTO to find a solution to the concerns of the ACP and Mauritius on the erosion of trade preferences and its ensuing impact on our exports of textiles amongst others. It is to be noted that in the latest EU proposal on NAMA, preference erosion has been identified as one of the key issues to be canvassed as part of a global package in the negotiations. Other countries, including India has given us the same assurance.

With regard to promoting our textile interest in the US, I wish to inform the House that, in a reply to PQ IB/338, on 18 October 2005 the hon. Prime Minister has addressed this issue comprehensively.

Actually the central issue is to secure Third Country Fabric Derogation for Mauritius. It is unfortunate that in the past request for the derogation for Third Country Fabric provision was not made at the appropriate time and this has resulted in a substantial fall in our textile exports to the United States.

Similarly, request for extension of the derogation beyond 30 September 2005 should have been made well before July 2005.

As indicated in my reply to PQ I B/426A, Government is at present implementing an overall restructuring process at the level of the Ministry and its overseas missions in the context of a thorough review of our economic diplomacy. This process entails review of posting of staff in the diplomatic service.

Our mission in Washington is being reinforced by posting a high calibre Ambassador and a seasoned and experienced high level diplomatic officer conversant with economic and trade related matters.

All AGOA matters will be henceforth handled by the Mission supported by other relevant agencies, and will not be exclusively the domain of one single individual.

Our strategy under AGOA is being reassessed and will be reviewed if necessary and this will certainly include a post-AGOA strategy. I will shortly come to the House with a statement in this regard. Meanwhile I am awaiting a favourable response from the Parliamentary Opposition to our proposal for the setting up of a Parliamentary Committee on Foreign Affairs including on International Trade to ensure a bi-partisan approach on all the above-mentioned issues of vital interest for our country.

As regards part (ii), the question is of a hypothetical nature as no decision has yet been taken.

As regards measures being implemented locally, Government is leaving no stone unturned to strengthen the structure of its garment industry by establishing a Design and Fashion Institute which will build upon the existing capacities of the textile department of the University of Mauritius and the clothing centre. The Government of India has already agreed to

assist Mauritius in this regard. And my colleague, the Minister of Industry will, most probably, come and apprise the House of the various actions being undertaken. But, nonetheless, I can inform the House that Government has, in spite of the budgetary constraints, agreed to release an additional amount of Rs50 m for a major programme to assist the textile sector to enhance its competitiveness. The programme focuses on four main elements: capacity building and enterprise performance, enterprise strategy development, clustering and country branding. The programme will ensure greater integration of the textile sector.

Measures are also being taken to increase exports on the US Market. Enterprise Mauritius will henceforth participate regularly and proactively in the magic show held in Las Vegas. Mauritius will also target US buying offices based in Hong Kong. Government is putting a lot of emphasis on diversifying our export base. In this regard the Preferential Trade Agreement with India in the context of the CECPA will provide new market opportunities to our exporters. Already we have secured a quota of 1 million pieces of garments on the Indian market under the PTA. Negotiations are also ongoing with Pakistan and other countries for such agreement, especially for the possibility of free trade agreements.

Moreover, our liaison office in Paris will be more effectively utilised for networking and market development and following an investment promotion mission in Italy, led by my colleague, the Minister of Industry, there are prospects for promotion of joint ventures and transfer of know-how. Two Italian spinning plants and a weaving plant will be established in Mauritius. In order to promote vertical integration in the textile sector, a special tax credit on equity-investment in spinning/weaving/dyeing has been extended to knitting and the minimum equity investment for this facility has been, I understand, reduced from Rs60 m. to Rs10 m. for knitting. With all these measures, there is no doubt, our industrial base will be consolidated and diversified further and we shall be able to make the most of whatever opportunities we will have on the international market.

**Mr Bérenger:** Sir, I'll put my questions to Government through the Minister although quite a few of my questions are aimed at Government in general and not to the Minister who has replied.

This said, Mr Speaker, Sir, can I come back on the dismissal of Mr Peter Graig and ask the Minister whether he will confirm that indeed the

contract of Mr Peter Graig has been terminated; he has been dismissed. Will he confirm, as contained in the personal file 11671 dated 20 January 2005 where it is stated, in a letter addressed to Mr Peter Graig -

"Dear Sir,

Renewal of contract

I am directed to inform you that your contract of employment as Trade Adviser has been renewed for another period of one year as from 01 March 2005 on the same terms and conditions mentioned in the Ministry's letter dated 21 January 2004."

Signed by the Supervising Officer, Mr Ramkhelawon to Mr Peter Graig.

Could this be confirmed that indeed, therefore, Mr Peter Graig's contract of employment, as Trade Adviser, was to last until March 2006 has been brutally and unacceptably terminated?

**Mr Dullo:** The statement from the hon. Leader of the Opposition is totally incorrect, because in fact, the contract of Mr Peter Graig is due to terminate on February of next year and we have given him advance notice that his contract will be terminating in December of this year. The PNQ is aimed at the global vital interests of Mauritius both at the WTO and within the AGOA regime on the US market and on the European market. I have indicated how we are organising the whole Ministry, including our mission in Washington - with whose performance we are not satisfied - in order to better serve the nation.

**Mr Bérenger:** I am aware - and I hope that the Prime Minister is now aware - in what circumstances the contract of employment of Mr Peter Graig that was to last until, as I said, the 01 March 2006, has been terminated. I hope that the Prime Minister will agree with me that it is not too late to come back on that issue in spite of what the Minister will say.

As far as Mr Paul Ryberg is concerned, Mr Speaker, Sir, what disturbs me is that in a press article, in L'Express of 07 of this month, Mr Paul Ryberg has expressed his total solidarity with Peter Graig and has indeed refuted the very weak points made by the Minister that supposedly we did

not ask for this or that under AGOA, a complete rubbish and Mr Paul Ryberg rubbishes these false statements which the Minister has just ...

**Mr Speaker:** I am sorry, the hon. Leader of the Opposition is imputing motives to the hon. Minister of making a false statement in the House. I think this is out of order.

**Mr Bérenger:** Just to guide me, what motives am I supposed to have imputed?

**Mr Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Opposition imputed that the hon. Minister has made a false statement or answer to the House. I was trying to draw his attention to this.

**Mr Bérenger:** This is the first time I hear a question put in that way meaning imputing motives. This is the first time I hear that, Mr Speaker, Sir. I take notice of what has just been said. My question therefore is: since Mr Paul Ryberg has taken that attitude, do we have any indication that he is most unhappy and is there any sign of his terminating his position of lobbyist of Mauritius in Washington?

**Mr Dulloo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, unfortunately a country is not governed by the mood or sentiments of any individual. This country, Mr Speaker, Sir, is assessing its performance on various markets and also on what has happened within the AGOA negotiations. I will be the first to state to this House that I should thank Mr Paul Ryberg for his article, which I read very attentively and which I recommend all Members of this House to read and see how Mr Paul Ryberg indicates how the previous Government has failed on the question of derogation, how priority was given elsewhere but not to seeking derogation for the Third Country Fabrics for Mauritius. I stop at that; I won't make any further comments on either Mr Peter Graig or Mr Paul Ryberg.

**Mr Bérenger:** There is nothing in the articles saying anything of the sort. Quite the contrary, Mr Speaker, Sir. We are talking about a new post-AGOA formula that is being canvassed in Washington by a new association for the African Cotton and Textile Industries Federation. Can I ask the Minister whether he can give us any details on the content of this post-AGOA formula and whether he can confirm that Mr Paul Ryberg is leading the team of the lobbyists and experts, discussing this post-AGOA formula?

**Mr Dullo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, Mr Paul Ryberg is presently being paid from public funds and we have given him directives to ensure that the best interests of Mauritius be represented within the jurisdiction where he has got responsibilities. And, one of the matters that we are examining right now is not only the post-AGOA possibilities, but also within the AGOA regime itself, especially as there is the derogation provision terminating in 2007 or 2008. So, what should we do till the end of the AGOA which has been renewed again?

Mr Speaker, Sir, there are various proposals. Various possibilities are being explored and we are getting feedback on those various suggestions, various possibilities so that not only do we have to negotiate the period till the expiration of the current AGOA, but also the post-AGOA situation that will have to be managed and handled by Mauritius.

**Mr Bérenger:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the Minister made reference to proposals made, deposited by Mauritius before the Non-Agricultural Market Access (NAMA) negotiating group. Can I request the Minister if he would care to table a copy of the proposals made by Mauritius and if he has the date on which Mauritius tabled any proposal at the NAMA negotiating group?

**Mr Dullo:** I'll certainly do this, Mr Speaker, Sir.

**Mr Bérenger:** The Minister is most probably aware that on 08 November it was the last time that this negotiating group met. The Ambassador of Iceland chairs this negotiating group, if my memory serves me right. At that last meeting, two statements were put in, one by South Africa and one by Barbados. Can I ask the Minister whether we are already in presence of these two documents and whether they also can be tabled?

**Mr Dullo:** Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir. The Chairman actually is His Excellency, Mr Crawford Falconer, and he is the Chairman of the Committee on Agriculture in the special session of WTO and we have all the correspondence available. This is why I would have liked that there should be a bi-partisan approach. We will certainly allow access to the Leader of the Opposition to all those correspondences, to all those documents and I am even ready to invite also my friend, hon. Jayen Cuttaree, who was my predecessor, to come and look up the file.



**Mr Bérenger:** I made reference to the meeting of 08 November of the NAMA negotiating group. I understand that there was to be a last meeting on last Friday. Can the Minister tell us whether there has been any meeting and any development last Friday?

**Mr Dullo:** Well, I should indicate to the House that there have been various meetings held intensively during the past week. I have been in contact with all those various meetings that were being held; firstly, in London where there was the FIPs meeting, that is, the five major countries, as the Opposition knows, the US, the EU, Brazil, India and Japan. I was in constant contact till late night on Monday 07 November with what was happening there and even with colleague Ministers participating in that meeting. And the next day, Mr Pascal Lamy took the initiative to convene a meeting of a select group of countries. There also I was in contact with those Ministers who participated in those meetings as well with Mr Pascal Lamy himself. Mr Pascal Lamy was very kind to try to talk to me on the phone late in the evening. I managed to have a conversation with him in the morning. So, I was fully briefed, not only of what was happening at ambassadorial level and technicians level, but above all, at Ministerial level.

**Mr Bérenger:** As far as the Mauritius request for LDC status under AGOA so that we should benefit like the LDC countries of Third Country Fabrics where our special derogation has, unfortunately, not been renewed by Congress, can I know from the hon. Minister what is the latest situation in Congress concerning our request for LDC status, in particular whether we have been in touch with those in Congress, who are really helpful to our cause, and whether there is any change of attitude on behalf of Mr Bill Thomas, who is the biggest stumbling block in Congress, unfortunately?

**Mr Dullo:** Well, Mr Speaker, Sir, we have made it the practice not to make adverse comments on any of our international partners, especially their distinguished and respected representatives. We are in permanent contact, apart from the meetings that I have had and of which the hon. Prime Minister apprised the House. We have had phone conversations. We have exchanged correspondence and there have been directives given for follow-up purposes to our mission in Washington. We are making an assessment of the situation. I have also sent correspondence to the various Senators and Congressmen involved. The latest instruction that I have given is, apart

from trying to get the proper legislative vehicle so that the derogation amendment could be introduced within the Congress and the Senate until it is ultimately adopted, whether we should not proceed by having introduced a stand alone Bill. Therefore, I won't make any more comment on that. We are in contact with certain Senators and Congressmen to this effect and, more particularly, we are canvassing both sides of the House there, both the Democrats and the Republicans in order to ensure that this ultimately would not find opposition with the Ways and Means Committee chaired, as indicated just now, by Mr Bill Thomas.

**Mr Bérenger:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the Minister said that Government is beefing up our Embassy in Washington. Now, with the dismissal of Mr Peter Craig, can I put it to the Minister that it is not acceptable that four months after the last general elections that our Embassy in Washington - where Mr Peter Craig had been dismissed - is staffed by only two junior staff; there is no Ambassador, no senior staff and that it is unacceptable that four months after general elections and, at this point in time, that our Embassy in Washington should be in that state.

**Mr Dulloo:** I am satisfied to see the preoccupation of the Leader of the Opposition. This is the situation we have inherited.

*(Interruptions)*

He is speaking of beefing up. There is not even a skeleton on which to beef up. We are trying to set this right and we are attending to it in due time, Mr Speaker, Sir.

**Mr Bérenger:** As I said, some of the questions I put reached Government rather than the Minister concerned. There is a lot of noise being made by our textile exporters as far as monetary policy is concerned. As we know, it is essential for the country to strike the right equilibrium between inflation fighting and helping exporters, especially in the textile sector. There has been a lot of noise recently made to the effect that this equilibrium supposedly has been disturbed to the disadvantage of our textile exporters.

Can I ask, through the Minister, whether this has been taken up at Government level, although we all, I hope, respect the independence of the Bank of Mauritius, that consultations between the Prime Minister, the

Minister of Finance and the Governor of the Bank are ongoing, whether this issue has been addressed or is being addressed these days by Government?

**Mr Dulloo:** I, again, thank the hon. Leader of the Opposition for restating the independence of the Bank of Mauritius. Of course, this is a question that Government is looking into. I think it is better that this question be addressed to my colleague, the Minister of Finance, so that clear indications could be given to the House on how things are evolving.

**Mr Bérenger:** Mr Speaker, Sir, it seems that the Minister concerned is not aware of the proposal in the Presidential Address for a bi-partisan, non-partisan commission of the Select Committee or Commission of the House to deal in foreign affairs, international and regional affairs, which has been publicly welcomed by the Opposition and by myself. Therefore, can I, through the Minister, invite Government to come forward and set up such a bi-partisan, non-partisan committee of the House on international and regional affairs?

**Mr Dulloo:** Sir, we take note of the statement which is being made in the House right now.

**Mr Cuttaree:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I have two questions to the hon. Minister. As the House is aware, the preparatory negotiations in Geneva are getting to an end now because the meeting in Hong Kong is going to take place in less than a month time. On this question of negotiations of industrial tariffs where there is horse-trading now between the United States, Europe and the large developing countries, can the Minister inform the House whether there has been any proposal from the AU or the ACP which has been put to the Chair of NAMA?

**Mr Dulloo:** Sir, I just indicated in my reply that for the first time we made concrete proposals departing from the usual rhetorics. But, at the same time, I would refer my hon. friends to the speech that was made yesterday by Prime Minister Tony Blair on international trade and also to the various declarations being made by Mr Pascal Lamy and the other major players within WTO negotiations of the difficulties that all are facing up to right now. The situation is one of stalemate. We'll have to accept this. Though, as I have said, we are all committed that there should be a successful completion of the Doha Round, the big question is: successful for whom? This is why each side is trying to defend its own interest. And in

this regard, we have, therefore, to review the ambition that has been set for Hong Kong so that we have to recalibrate - the word being used - the whole thing. We should know where we are heading. Otherwise, we are heading for disaster as far as Hong Kong is concerned. Whilst maintaining the general targets for the Doha Round, that is, for next year, we are trying now to scale down the ambition as far as Hong Kong is concerned.

**Mr Cuttaree:** One last question, Mr Speaker, Sir. I note that the Minister has not answered directly my question regarding the AU and the ACP. My information is that there hasn't been any formal proposal laid in front of the negotiations group in Geneva. In fact, as the Minister himself said, they are now going to meet in Arusha and then in Brussels to finalise all these things. The Minister mentioned that the European Union has said that they are going to look into this question of preference erosion. Can I ask him whether he would personally follow this issue, because we have been conned before on this issue of preference erosion. When the European Union talks about preference erosion...

**Mr Speaker:** The hon. Member should put his question, time is running out.

**Mr Cuttaree:** ...what they mean is the tariff will go, but they will give a restructuring fund, a bit like what they are doing to us in agriculture and this is a very, very dangerous situation. What they are doing in agriculture, they will want to do exactly the same thing in textiles and we have to make sure that we fight to preserve our margin of trade preferences.

**Mr Dulloo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, it was on purpose that I referred the House to the speech made by Prime Minister Tony Blair last evening on the question of preferences. At this stage, we will not make any comment. Mr Tony Blair, as you know, is the current President of the EU and we are looking forward...

**Mr Bérenger:** Of G8 also.

**Mr Dulloo:** Of course, of G8 also, but we are talking of EU right now. And we are looking forward to have certain high level meetings. So, we would not like, at this stage, to make any comment. But I would like to assure the hon. Member that the position taken by Mauritius is fully, as I said, supported by ACP and the African Group and also by a great majority

within the G90. And, as I have said just now, I am ready to give access to the file to my hon. friend. I am also ready to try to ensure that he goes to Geneva or Hong Kong with all the courtesies in order to interact with the people there and to see what position Mauritius is taking. We are ready to welcome any Mauritian, any patriot for that matter, who will contribute in the exercise.

**Mr Speaker:** Hon. Members may wish to be informed that PQ I B/469 and I B/476 meant for the hon. Prime Minister have been transferred by the Executive to Dr. the hon. Minister of Local Government and the hon. Minister of Housing and Lands respectively and will, therefore, be replied after PQ I B/520, time permitting. Questions addressed to the hon. Prime Minister!

### **MBC - EMPLOYEES - INTERDICTION**

**(No. I B/466) Mr G. Gunness (Third Member for Montagne Blanche and GRSE)** asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation, information as to whether a journalist, a cameraman and a driver have recently been suspended and, if so, the reasons for their suspension.

**The Prime Minister:** Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I shall reply to Parliamentary Questions I B/466 and I B/468 at the same time as they relate to the same issue.

I am informed by the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation that a journalist, a cameraman and a driver were interdicted by the Corporation on 03 November 2005, for failing to provide coverage of an official function at the Prime Minister's Office on that very day.

In the light of the explanations furnished by the three employees, the MBC has reinstated them on 10 November 2005. However, the Corporation has issued a letter to each of the three employees expressing its concern on their failure to cover the event. Their attention has also been brought to the fact that in the event of any such recurrence on their part, appropriate disciplinary action will be taken. Letters expressing management's concern

at the failure to cover the function have also been sent to two responsible desk officers of the News Department of the MBC.

**Mrs Hanoomanjee:** Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Prime Minister state whether the employees were provided with the opportunity to give explanations before they were suspended?

**The Prime Minister:** Sir, I think the procedure is to suspend and then ask for explanation. I think that is the procedure.

**Mr Bérenger:** Sir, since the Prime Minister himself said at a press conference that when this happened, he was very angry and he phoned the MBC, can I ask him whether he would care to let us know to whom he talked at the MBC? Because clearly there has been overreaction on behalf of the MBC.

**The Prime Minister:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I know hon. Members don't know and a lot of people in the press who have written also do not know all the facts. They would be surprised to learn that it is the fifth time that this has happened. It is not the first time, not the second time, but the fifth time. In fact, twice before I had a communication team at my office, then after the communication team was at the office, again it was the third time that this happened. So, I think I was entitled to ask for an explanation. In fact, in the past explanations that have been asked, they have answered by a letter that there was a problem in the e-mail server or the traffic or this and that. This is the fifth time. And we had a distinguished guest who wanted to give a present and he wanted Mauritians to see what it was. It was a picture of a goddess which has been done by the people in his State. In fact, we told him that it would be better that the MBC filmed it; the MBC was told in the morning that this would be required. When he came in, when he was going to show the picture, we waited for the MBC, but there was no MBC team and it was a bit embarrassing. I think I was entitled to ask what had happened. I was angry. I can't say I wasn't.

**Mr Bérenger:** I asked to whom the Prime Minister talked at the MBC.

**The Prime Minister:** I talked to the Director-General of the MBC.

**Mr Jugnauth:** Sir, the hon. Prime Minister told us that a letter was sent by the Corporation. We all know that it is the Board of the MBC that takes the necessary decision, particularly in hiring, firing or suspending the employees. May we know who signed the letter, and whether there is a Board actually at the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation?

**The Prime Minister:** Sir, as you know, the Board is being set up. The letter was signed by the Director-General, because he had to take some action to ensure that this would not be repeated. As I said, it is the fifth time that this has happened.

**Mr Guinness:** Mr Speaker, Sir, in the case of the journalist, it seems that she was present to attend the meeting, but she phoned at the MBC and her superior asked her to come back because the cameraman was not present in the office. Am I right in stating that?

**The Prime Minister:** I understand that it seems to be the case. What is surprising is that if, for example, a newspaper sends somebody to cover an event and the photographer does not come, at least, there must be some coverage, whereas in that case, there was no coverage.

**Mr Guinness:** Can I know from the hon. Prime Minister whether it is the same superior who wrote the report against the three members of the staff?

**The Prime Minister:** I cannot say, because I don't look at what happens at the MBC. From what I see, letters were also sent to the responsible desk officers.

**Mrs Martin:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Prime Minister said that it is the fifth time that this kind of thing happened. I would like to ask him whether it was the same journalist and team that were involved in the five mentioned times, and why action has been taken only on this issue.

**The Prime Minister:** In fact, I cannot say whether it is the same journalist, because they did not turn up for some reasons. It is the fifth time that this has happened. I cannot say whether it is the same journalist and responsible desk officers.

## INDIA – LINE OF CREDIT TO MAURITIUS

(No. I B/467) Mr G. Gunness (Third Member for Montagne Blanche & GRSE) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether he will state if part of the proceeds from the line of credit obtained recently from India is meant to finance the free transport scheme for students and senior citizens.

**The Prime Minister:** Mr Speaker Sir, with your permission, I propose to answer Parliamentary Questions I B/467, I B/470 and I B/473 together.

The Government of the Republic of India has agreed to offer Mauritius a line of credit of US\$100 m. of which US\$75 m. is on soft terms and US\$25 m. as a grant.

I would like to inform the House Mr Speaker, Sir, that the decision to provide free transport scheme for students and senior citizens was taken and implemented before my State visit to India. The scheme is being financed from our own financial resources and cannot in any case be financed from the line of credit.

The line of credit will be used to finance the following projects that have been identified so far -

- The construction of a third Cyber Tower and the implementation of the school IT project that would contribute towards capacity building for the development of knowledge based industries.
- Development of the SME sector of Mauritius, which would help in job creation and democratisation of the economy.
- Assistance in the development of renewable energy and infrastructure in Mauritius.
- Purchase of an Advanced Light Helicopter (ALH), an Offshore Patrol Vessel (OPV) and a Coastal Surveillance Radar System, in order to strengthen the naval and air surveillance capabilities of the Mauritian security forces.



- Construction of a new building to house the Supreme Court of Mauritius
- The procurement of Electronic Voting Machines.
- These are the main items that are going to be financed by this line of credit.

As for the composition of the delegation of Government and private sector, this is being tabled. But I wish to point out that the private sector met all expenses relating to its participation in the mission.

**Mr Guinness:** Mr Speaker, Sir, can I know from the hon. Prime Minister why, in a public function on the occasion of Divali, where he rightly treated his agents as *rodère boute*, he also added that now...

**Mr Speaker:** Can I ask the hon. Member what this has to do with the main question?

**Mr Guinness:** He also added that now he has got the money for free transport. Can I know why he made such a statement when he knows that this was not meant for free transport?

**The Prime Minister:** The *rodère boute* are the *carapates* which are inside, from the MSM and others. This is what I was referring to by *rodère boute*. In fact, I was surprised when I saw this in the newspaper. Only one newspaper made reference to that, while the others did not. I, in fact, took the initiative of ringing the Editor in Chief of that newspaper, to tell him how could such a gross mistake be put as a sub headline in the paper. I don't want to repeat what he said, but he stated that he would try to correct it. I cannot say whether he corrected it or not; maybe I missed it. In fact, it is not true. I suppose the reporter mixed up issues, because it cannot even be done.

**Mr Dowarkasing:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Prime Minister stated in his answer that part of this sum will be used for the purchase of an helicopter and a vessel. May I know which type of vessel it is? Is it a war vessel or a vessel used for patrol?

**The Prime Minister:** I don't think we are in a position to go to war with anyone! It is an offshore patrol vessel, which is bigger than the ones that we have. It is well equipped to be able to do the work that it has to do, and has a longer range.

### **MBC EMPLOYEES - INTERDICTION**

**(No. I B/468) Mrs S. Hanoomanjee (Second 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 MBC, information as to whether a journalist, a cameraman and a driver have recently been suspended and, if so, the reasons for their suspension.

*(Vide reply to PQ No. I B/466)*

**PQ No. I B/469 – see after PQ No. I B/520**

### **GOVT/PRIVATE SECTOR - VISIT TO INDIA – DELEGATION - COMPOSITION**

**(No. I B/470) Mr P. Jhugroo (Third Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue)** asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether he will give the composition of the delegation, both from the Government and from the private sector, which accompanied him during his recent visit to India.

*(Vide reply to PQ No. I B/467)*

## **POLICE RIDERS – SELECTION EXERCISE**

**(No. I B/471) Mr M. Dowarkasing (Third Member for Curepipe & 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 recent selection of Police Riders, he will, for the benefit of the House –

- (a) obtain from the Commissioner of Police information as to the procedures followed for their selection, indicating whether any examination was held, and
- (b) table a list of candidates short-listed and the candidates selected.

**The Prime Minister:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that, following a request of the Officer-in-Charge of the Traffic Branch for additional manpower, the following procedures were followed for the selection of Police Riders -

- (a) a note was published on 18 August 2005, in the Routine Orders of the Force, inviting applications from Police Officers who wish to be posted to the Traffic Branch as riders;
- (b) 34 applications were received. A Selection Board comprising the under-mentioned officers was set up by the Commissioner of Police -
  - (i) the Deputy Commissioner of Police (traffic) – Chairman;
  - (ii) the Superintendent of Police (traffic) – member;
  - (iii) the Inspector in Charge, Traffic Field Division – member, and
  - (iv) an officer from the Police Head Quarters – secretary; and

(c) all the applicants were convened before the Selection Board for an interview on 06 September 2005, and they were assessed on the following criteria –

- (i) qualifications;
- (ii) experience;
- (iii) personal attributes and communication skills,  
and
- (iv) general awareness.

Prior to attending this Selection Board, all the applicants were required to undergo a practical test on motorcycles with a view to ascertaining their capability of riding motorcycles.

Only 32 applicants attended the interview, and after the selection exercise, 18 officers were retained from the 32 applicants.

I do not think it is proper for me to table such a list.

#### **GOVT./PRIVATE SECTOR - VISIT TO INDIA – MEMORANDA OF UNDERSTANDING**

**(No. I B/472) Mr M. Dowarkasing (Third Member for Curepipe & Midlands)** asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether he will state if during the recent official visit to India any bilateral agreement was signed between our private sector and the business community in India and, if so, will he consider the advisability of giving details thereof.

**The Prime Minister:** Mr Speaker, Sir, two Memoranda of Understanding were signed during the visit, namely -

- (i) A Memorandum of Understanding was signed on 25 October 2005 between the Apollo Hospitals Group and the British American Insurance Investment Company to set up a multi speciality 200 bed hi-tech hospital in Mauritius. The hospital will also house a training institute, which will run nursing and paramedical courses.

- (ii) Apollo Hospital, whose Chairman is Dr. Reddy, was the first in India to obtain a Joint Commission accreditation and is equipped with state of art facilities. The hospital also operates a telemedical network which enables it to link up with its regional hospitals across India. When we met His Excellency the President of India, he also mentioned about the linking up, through satellite, of different regions, including Mauritius. That is one of the pet projects that he wants. We will also be able to use that facility here. Apollo Hospital has also set up such hospitals in Colombo, Dhaka and is operating radiology and laboratory services in the Middle East. This is a private agreement between two companies, which will invest about 25 million US Dollars for the project.
- (iv) The Mauritius Chamber of Commerce and Industry (MCCI) and the Seafood Exporters Association of India (SEAI) signed on 27 October 2005 a Memorandum of Understanding for co-operation on the development of the marine product business between the two countries. The MoU provides for the following –
- The development of aquaculture of shrimp and other marine species in Mauritius.
  - Development of fishing activity on the Mauritian coast.
  - Development of infrastructure for processing of marine products in Mauritius.
  - Extending technical help and support in setting up latest testing facilities including modern laboratories, for facilitating exports of high quality and hygienic marine products from Mauritius.
  - Exchange of visits between the members of the two trade associations.
  - Promoting investment in the marine product industry in either country, to their mutual benefit.

### **INDIA – LINE OF CREDIT TO MAURITIUS**

**(No. I B/473) Mrs F. Labelle (Third Member for Vacoas & 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 line of credit obtained during his recent official visit to India, he will state –

- (a) the amount thereof;
- (b) the terms and conditions attached thereto, and
- (c) the projects which will be financed therefrom.

*(Vide reply to PQ No. I B/467)*

**SACHS REPORT – COSTS, TERMS OF REFERENCE,  
RECOMMENDATIONS, ETC**

(No. I B/474) Mr Y. Varma (First Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether, in regard to the Report of the Commission on Constitutional and Electoral Reforms, commonly known as the Sachs Report, he will state –

- (a) the cost thereof;
- (b) the reasons for not implementing its recommendations, and
- (c) the follow-up action, if any, which is envisaged.

**The Prime Minister:** Mr Speaker Sir, the Commission on Constitutional and Electoral Reforms comprised Justice Albie Sachs, member of the South African Constitutional Court, as Chairman, and Messrs B.B. Tandon, Electoral Commissioner of India, and Robert Ahnee, former Judge, as members.

The services of Justice Albie Sachs were provided by the Commonwealth Secretariat, and those of Mr B.B. Tandon by the Indian Government. The total amount spent in respect of the members of the Commission was Rs1,016,451. I don't think I should go in the details about the different aspects, but let's say that this represented air fares, hotel accommodation and *per diem* in respect of Mr Tandon, and there was also an honorarium for Mr Ahnee. All expenses in respect of Justice Sachs were borne by the Commonwealth Secretariat. Moreover, administrative costs, i.e., secretarial support, etc., incurred in connection with the Commission, amounted to about Rs250,000.

- (a) The Terms of Reference of the Commission were to –
  - (i) review of the role of the Electoral Supervisory Commission and make recommendations on how it can be strengthened and its responsibilities extended to uphold the democratic fundamentals of the Mauritian society, in particular to ensure free and fair elections;

- (ii) to review all practical aspects relating to the holding of elections and make recommendations for greater transparency and for securing a level playing field for competing parties;
  - (iii) to propose a draft Public Funding of Political Parties Bill;
  - (iv) to make proposals regarding amendments to be made to the Constitution of Mauritius so as to consolidate and strengthen the democratic system, including additional powers to be given to the President of the Republic, in the light of the constitutional experience of the Republic of India;
  - (v) to make proposals regarding representation in Parliament on a proportional basis within the existing electoral system;
  - (vi) to make proposals for the prohibition of communal or religious political parties;
  - (vii) to review the composition of the Judicial and Legal Service Commission;
  - (viii) to separate the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court from other divisions, and
- (ix) to report on any matters that are incidental or conducive to the attainment of the above objectives.

Two Select Committees of the National Assembly had been appointed to examine the recommendations of the Commission, as follows -

- (a) the first on the public funding of political parties in order to elaborate further on these recommendations and make further recommendations on the subject of funding of political parties, and
- (b) the second -
  - (i) to examine further the Commission's Report and the recommendations in the matter of the introduction of a measure of proportional representation in our electoral system, and
  - (ii) to make recommendations, without prejudice to the existing best loser system, regarding the modalities for



the implementation of the Commission's recommendations that the National Assembly should be composed of 62 members as at present and a further 30 members chosen proportionally from parties having obtained more than 10% of the total number of votes cast at a general election.

The Select Committee relating to the introduction of a measure of Proportional Representation chaired by Mr Ivan Collendavelloo submitted its report in February 2004. The Select Committee on the Funding of the Political Parties submitted its report in October 2004. From information available the former Government did examine the recommendations of the Select Committee on Funding of the Political Parties and decided to set up a Cabinet Committee to further review the recommendations and legislative amendments proposed in the Report of the Commission, examine the report of the Select Committee and make recommendations thereon. There is no record available to indicate whether any action had been initiated on the Report of the Select Committee chaired by Mr Collendavelloo.

As regards to the electoral reforms, consultations had been held with the Electoral Supervisory Commission and the Electoral Commissioner, and amendments to the relevant legislation had been prepared, I am informed, but I do not have any information as to why the former Government did not proceed with the amendments.

As regards the review of the Judicial and Legal Service Commission, the former Government had consultations with the Judiciary but no consensus appeared to have been reached.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the recommendations that had been implemented pertain to amendments of the Constitution to give additional powers to the President. Sections 28, 57, 64 and the third Schedule of the Constitution were amended in 2003.

As regards part (c) of the question, I propose to chair a High Powered Committee on the Sachs Report and propose recommendations for the implementation of the recommendations contained therein and in the process I will have consultations with the hon. Leader of Opposition and other persons concerned.

**Mr Varma:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Prime Minister has just stated that the former Government prepared amendments, but no follow-up action was taken. Can I know from the hon. Prime Minister whether this Government plans to go ahead with the amendments which were prepared by the former Government with regard to Sachs Report?

**The Prime Minister:** Sir, I think what I said was that we will have a High-Powered Committee which I will chair and will look into all these aspects.

**Mr Bérenger:** Sir, I would like to ask the Prime Minister whether in fact, he did not say that the Electoral Commissioner had prepared amendments, not the Government.

**The Prime Minister:** Sir, what I said is that consultations had been held with the Electoral Supervisory Commission and the Electoral Commissioner and amendments to the relevant legislation had been prepared.

**Mr Varma:** Mr Speaker, Sir, there has been a statement made by the Leader of the Opposition with regard to the setting up of a Select Committee on Electoral Reforms. Can I know the position of the Government concerning the Select Committee?

**The Prime Minister:** It is one of the pet subjects of the hon. Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance. He knows it very well. I thank the Leader of the Opposition to have mentioned it. But, as I said, I think we should proceed instead of going back to a Select Committee. Maybe we should proceed. It would be quicker.

## **SOUILLAC - POLICE STATION - RESTORATION**

**(No. I B/475) Mr S. Mohamed (Third Member for Rivière des Anguilles and Souillac)** asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether, in regard to the Police Station in Souillac which is presently undergoing renovation, he will, in view of the historical importance of the site, consider the advisability of -

- (a) not making use of that building for a Police Station;
- (b) having the said building restored to its original state, and
- (c) moving the Souillac Police Station to a new site.

**The Prime Minister:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that the building housing the Souillac Police Station was declared a National Monument in 1985. The site is ideal for the Police to cover the Southern region and it serves as Sub-Divisional Headquarters where various units other than the Regular Police Force such as the CID and the ADSU are also housed.

The renovation works at the building are ongoing since 2002 and are scheduled to be completed by mid-November 2005. The works have been approved by the National Monuments Board which has requested that the building be restored to its original state except for the part of the building housing two old cells which is covered with corrugated iron sheet instead of teak shingles.

In view of the ideal location of the building, and the heavy investment effected by the Police Force in the renovation works, it is felt not advisable now to move the Souillac Police Station to another location.

**(PQ No. I B/476 – see after PQ No. I B/520)**

### **STUDENTS - FREE TRANSPORT – SCHOOL HOLIDAYS**

**(No. I B/477) Mr G. Guinness (Third Member for Montagne Blanche and GRSE)** asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport & Shipping whether he will state if students will continue to benefit from free transport during school holidays and, if not why not.

**The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport & Shipping (Dr. R. Beebeejaun):** Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to remind the hon. Member that the free travel scheme is applicable to students travelling from home to school and back during school days exclusively.

**Mr Guinness:** Can I know from the Minister how much is paid to the bus companies per trip during school days and when schools are on holidays?

**Dr. Beebeejaun:** The agreement was to pay on school days.

**Mr Guinness:** Is the hon. Minister prepared to table the Memorandum of Understanding between the bus companies and the Government?

**Dr. Beebeejaun:** We have done so. A PNQ was asked and we tabled all the agreements.

### **PORT LOUIS - TRAFFIC CONGESTION - 31 OCTOBER 2005**

**(No. I B/478) Mr G. Guinness (Third Member for Montagne Blanche and GRSE)** asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport & Shipping whether he will state if, on or about 31 October 2005, there was traffic congestion in Port Louis during practically the whole day and, if so, the reasons thereof and the measures that have been taken to prevent such recurrence.

**The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport & Shipping (Dr. R. Beebeejaun):** Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that a serious traffic congestion occurred on Monday 31 October 2005 in Port Louis as a result of a number of factors and events.

During that week starting 31 October there were three public holidays, that is, on Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday. Because of the reduction of working days in that week, many more people, including economic operators came down to Port Louis on 31 October for their business and other operations.

This unusual increase of motor vehicles in and out of Port Louis coupled with the queue at the NTA Examination Centre caused a major bottleneck at both the entrances and affected the normal flow of traffic within the arteries of the central business area of the city.

The traffic congestion occurring on 31 October was therefore a one-time event associated to the large number of people and vehicles converging to a same place almost during the same hours.

**Mr Guinness:** Was it as a result of the ICAC at the NTA that the traffic congestion was caused?

**Dr. Beebeejaun:** I don't want to go into long details, but quite apart from what happened on 31 October, we are looking at issues to improve both the NTA and the NTA Fitness Centre. We have taken a large number of measures and if it will help the Member, I will send him a copy or give it to the House whichever he wants. But there are many measures that will really address the issue of both fitness testing and the NTA.

**REHABILITATION YOUTH CENTRE (FEMALE SECTION) -  
INCIDENT - 04 NOVEMBER 2005**

**(No. I B/479) Mrs S. Hanoomanjee (Second Member for Savanne and Black River)** asked the Minister of Social Security, National Solidarity and Senior Citizens Welfare & Reform Institutions whether she had been made aware that an incident occurred at the Rehabilitation Youth Centre (Female Section) during the night of 04 November 2005 and, if so, will she state -

- (a) the nature thereof;
- (b) whether an inquiry had been carried out thereon, and
- (c) the remedial action taken.

**Mrs Bappoo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, in reply to the question from the hon. Member regarding the incidents at the Female Section of the Rehabilitation Youth Centre, I wish, with your permission, Mr Speaker, Sir, to proceed by way of a statement at statement time as it will enable me to provide more information to the House than what the reply would have, in fact, revealed.

**DWC - STUDY BY MAB**

**(No. I B/480) Mrs S. Hanoomanjee (Second Member for Savanne and Black River)** asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport & Shipping whether he will state if the

Management Audit Bureau has carried out a study on the Development Works Corporation and, if so, will he state whether the Bureau has recommended the closure of the Corporation.

**The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport & Shipping (Dr. R. Beebeejaun):** Mr Speaker, Sir, the Management Audit Bureau has in fact, carried out a study on the future orientation of the Development works Corporation, and submitted its report to my Ministry on 03 November 2005.

The recommendations contained in the Report are being examined by my Ministry, in consultation with other Ministries concerned and subsequently Government will be invited to take a decision.

**Mrs Hanoomanjee:** Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Minister say in case the DWC will close down, whether the employees will be redeployed or be laid off? Has this been considered?

**Dr. Beebeejaun:** I can give the assurance to the House. It's not the first exercise about the future of the DWC. Over the years - it's probably the fourth in a matter of seven years - there has been concern about the performance of the DWC. No decision has been taken yet. The DWC is functioning fully at the moment with Rs500 m. worth of project. So, I don't want to say anything that will upset this very delicate situation, but for sure the interest of the employees will rank first amongst our concern.

**Mr Dowarkasing:** Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister whether he is prepared to table a copy of that MAB Report?

**Dr. Beebeejaun:** I think it is a bit premature, but I will, in due course.

### **APOLLO GROUP OF INDIA/ BRITISH AMERICAN INSURANCE COMPANY - HOSPITAL PROJECT**

**(No. I B/481) Mrs S. Hanoomanjee (Second Member for Savanne & Black River)** asked the Minister of Health & Quality of Life whether there is a project for the construction of a hospital by the Apollo Group of India and the British American Insurance Company of Mauritius and, if so,

will he state if Government proposes to invest in same and the amount of such investment.

**Mr Faugoo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I refer the hon. Member to PQ I B/472 answered by the hon. Prime Minister this morning.

I just wish to add that the project between the Apollo Group of India and the British American Insurance Company of Mauritius is a private venture. There is no Government participation in the project.

**Mrs Hanoomanjee:** Mr Speaker, Sir, can the Minister say whether this hospital will be a private one and whether this is the first step towards privatisation of public health?

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Order! Order!

**Mr Faugoo:** I said in very clear terms, Mr Speaker, Sir, it is a private concern between two private companies and it has nothing to do with Government.

**TRUST FUND FOR SPECIALISED MEDICAL CARE -  
CHAIRMAN, BOARD MEETINGS, ETC.**

**(No. I B/482) Mr P. Jhugroo (Third Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue)** asked the Minister of Health & Quality of Life whether, in regard to the Trust Fund for Specialised Medical Care, he will state -

- (a) if any chairperson has been appointed and, if so, his name and the date of his appointment, and
- (b) the number of sittings held by the Board since 01 July 2005 to date.

**Mr Faugoo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the Senior Chief Executive of my Ministry has been appointed to act as Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Trust Fund for Medical Care since he assumed office in July 2005.

As regards part (b) of the question, I am informed that a Board meeting under the chairmanship of the Senior Chief Executive was held on 28 October 2005.



## SENTENCES - REMISSION

(No. I B/483) **Mr P. Jhugroo (Third Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue)** asked the Attorney-General, Minister of Justice & Human Rights whether, in the light of Government decision to amend the Reform Institutions Act to provide for remission of sentences, he will state what measures, if any, are being proposed to prevent offenders benefiting from such remission from committing other criminal offences.

**Mr Valayden:** Mr Speaker, Sir, let's be honest. No Government can prevent any person from committing other criminal offences, once he is released from prison on remission or otherwise.

Government firmly believes, however, that its proposed criminal justice and sentencing policy, including its policy on remission, will ultimately lead to a decrease in the crime rate and deter prisoners from re-offending upon their release, for the following reasons -

- (a) penalties for particularly heinous crimes and sexual crimes are to be increased in the coming weeks. This will convey the abhorrence of society of such crimes and send a strong signal to would-be offenders;
- (b) the proposed policy on remission envisages the release on remission of a prisoner only if the latter has been of satisfactory behaviour throughout his period of detention. This will provide an incentive for prisoners to reform themselves during the period of detention and will also ensure that only prisoners who are fit to be released on remission are so released;
- (c) the proposed amendment envisages that any person who has been sentenced to imprisonment for a period exceeding three years and is released on remission will remain under the supervision of a Probation Officer for the balance of his sentence and is liable to be recalled if he fails to comply with a condition set by the Probation Officer. An offender, who commits another offence whilst he is under supervision, will not only be arrested straightaway and detained for the balance of his original sentence, but will also be prosecuted for the second offence;

- (d) we propose to reinforce our rehabilitation, resocialisation programmes for prisoners before and after release, on remission or otherwise.

I would wish to emphasise nevertheless that Government does welcome the constructive views of the Opposition and all on this very sensitive matter.

I also pray that all Members wait for the full plethora of reforms before making any comment which might be destructive to the Mauritian nation.

**Mr Varma:** Mr Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Minister whether the Probation Officers have been trained to deal with such prisoners?

**Mr Valayden:** Sir, I have just informed the House that we will have to wait for the full plethora of reforms that are being brought before making any comment because the Probation Officers will also be formed and there will be necessary programmes.

**Mr Ganoo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I perfectly understand the complex nature of the subject matter, but can the hon. Minister give us an indication of the time frame for the intended legislation? When does he think that it will be brought before the House?

**Mr Valayden:** Sir, the legislation will have to be discussed prior in the Cabinet and then will be circulated. I would say that we are now putting the finishing touch. Therefore a time frame of five weeks might be envisaged at this stage.

**Mr Bérenger:** I am sure the hon. Minister is aware that what has disturbed the whole debate is his statement to the effect that a single regime of remission will be extended to every person's sentence including certain heinous crimes for which the penalty is supposedly going to be increased. Can I request the Minister not to go into that kind of statement which complicates the whole issue and creates a lot of confusion until we've seen the whole picture?

**Mr Valayden:** Mr Speaker, I understand the anxiety of the Leader of the Opposition, but never did I state in such a way. The problem is more complex than one would believe. Therefore, there will be not only the issue of remission, there will also be the question of earned remission, there will be an independent Monitoring Board and also the Judiciary will take a full part in the whole process. I am saying that because at the moment it is not even for the Judiciary to give us a guidance on that issue as each case stands on its own, therefore the Judiciary will also give a sort of direction to the Board.

**Mr Bérenger:** The same way that the law provides for different penalties, offences, can I ask the Minister whether consideration is being given to different regimes of remission according to different offences?

**Mr Valayden:** We will go on conditional questions and answers. I will beg the Leader of the Opposition to wait for the full plethora of reforms being brought as we will take into consideration what is being said by the Opposition and then we'll have a very instructing debate in the House.

**Mrs Perrier:** Je voudrais savoir si le ministre est conscient que les condamnés d'abus sexuels sur les enfants et sur les handicapés sont des gens qui souffrent d'un dysfonctionnement psychique et méritent d'être soignés et non pas remis en liberté. Est-ce que le ministre va accompagner ces mesures et revoir dans son intégralité la façon de l'incarcération de ces personnes accusées d'abus sexuels sur enfants et sur handicapés? En fait, c'est un mauvais signal car ces enfants qui sont abusés sexuellement, souvent par des proches....

**Mr Speaker:** The question has been put. Let the Minister answer.

**Mr Valayden:** M. le président, comme je viens de répondre, il faut attendre qu'on apporte tous les amendements qui vont être proposés et ensuite nous aurons un débat. Je dois attirer l'attention de la représentante de la circonscription Savanne/Rivière Noire que tel n'est pas le cas actuellement. Le problème n'a jamais été attaqué à la racine même. C'est maintenant qu'on va essayer de le faire après plusieurs délibérations.

**Mr Bérenger:** Indeed the files are there that the previous Government went a long way in reviewing the whole issue of remission and of sentencing policy.

**Mr Valayden:** Mr Speaker, Sir, there is a big difference between having a committee and then sit on the problem whereas we are taking actions.

**Mr Bodha:** To come to the different regimes of remission, in the United Kingdom in specific cases, persons, benefiting from a remission, were subject to electronic tagging. Is this measure being considered to be implemented?

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Order!

**Mr Valayden:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I will again ask my friend to wait, but on that issue of tagging, Mauritius has a history where we had bracelets in the legs of our forefathers' slaves. Therefore, as it has been said in a report published.....

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Order!

**Mr Valayden:** My friend has not even read the last report that has been circulated in England on that question of remission. There is only one general idea. I am not imputing motives to my friend, but I am saying that we will have to look at all dimensions of the problem before coming with such a proposal.

## **DUBAI - MAURITIAN NATIONALS – REPRESENTATIONS**

**(No. I B/484) Mrs F. Jeewa-Daureeawoo (Third Member for Stanley and Rose Hill)** asked the Minister of Foreign Affairs, International Trade and Co-operation whether he will state if he has received verbal or written representations from Mauritian nationals working in Dubai and wishing to return to Mauritius on the grounds of their being exploited and of the inhumane treatment meted out to them by their foreign employers and, if so, will he state what remedial measures are envisaged.

**Mr Dulloo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, following the representations received at the Ministry of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment after the death of a Mauritian worker in Dubai on 07 October 2005, and the statement made by his brother, our Ambassador in Cairo has spoken to the Ambassador of the United Arab Emirates in Cairo and has conveyed the complaints of the Mauritian workers employed by the Metropolitan Resort and Beach Club.

Our Embassy in Cairo has also contacted the Metropolitan Resort and Beach Club which has confirmed that there are 32 Mauritian nationals presently working at the said hotel. Mr André Leung, Assistant Human Resources Manager at the Metropolitan Resort and Beach Club, has informed the Embassy as follows –

- (i) out of 32 Mauritian nationals, only 4 or 5 of them are presently not satisfied with their conditions;
- (ii) forty nationalities constitute the total of 800 workers employed at the hotel;
- (iii) it is not possible to meet the specific needs and requirements of each and every nationality in terms of food, entertainment, etc;
- (iv) the management has no objection to the dissatisfied Mauritians returning to Mauritius, but they should reimburse the recruitment cost and pay their own return ticket;
- (v) the management is studying the possibility of meeting the cost of the air tickets in respect of those Mauritians who desperately wish to return.

Our Embassy in Cairo is following the situation, Mr Speaker, Sir, and my Ministry is keeping track of developments in this matter.

**Mrs Jeewa-Daureeawoo:** Could the hon. Minister please state the name of these persons who have made complaints up to now?

**Mr Dulloo:** Well, we have received complaints through the Ministry of Labour and Industrial Relations as I have stated. And then, of course, I referred to the death of the Mauritian worker there. His brother made a statement in this regard.

**MAURITIAN CITIZENS – GULF COUNTRIES  
- CONTRACTS OF EMPLOYMENT**

**(No. I B/485) Mrs F. Jeewa-Daureeawoo (Third Member for Stanley and Rose Hill)** asked the Minister of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment whether he is aware that Mauritian citizens working in certain Gulf countries are victims of abusive clauses in their respective contracts of service and, if so, what measures, if any, he proposes to take for their protection.

**Dr. Bunwaree:** According to records available at my Ministry, Mr Speaker, Sir, 232 Mauritians have been placed in the hotel and catering sector in the United Arab Emirates from January 2004 to date.

As regards their contracts of employment, they are governed by the United Arab Emirates labour law. It has indeed been observed that the clauses of the contracts of a few of the Mauritian workers appear to have some shortcomings.

I wish to apprise the House that the process of recruitment of Mauritian nationals for employment in the Gulf countries, specifically the United Arab Emirates, started in early 2002 following a visit of the then Minister responsible for Employment to Dubai. The Ministry has then been acting as facilitator in the process. I am informed that criteria and modalities governing such recruitment were established, including one requiring that the contract of employment between the Mauritian worker and the foreign employer be vetted by my Ministry. This criterion was, however, never complied with.

I was apprised of the shortcomings of the contracts of employment and of the complaints of Mauritian workers in the Gulf countries only recently following the death of one worker in Dubai last month.

As we have no means of ensuring that adequate facilities are provided to these workers, I am reviewing the role of the Ministry. For the time being - and until we have found some light in the problem that cropped up - we are not encouraging further recruitment of Mauritians for employment in the Gulf countries.

As regards those already working in the Gulf countries, although we cannot do much regarding their conditions of employment, given that their contracts are governed, as I said, by the labour laws prevailing there, we shall provide such advice and protection as we can. To that effect, a Special Cell has been set up in my Ministry to establish a line of communication with these workers and their families and extend advice and assistance as appropriate. The Cell will work in close collaboration with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, International Trade and Cooperation and our Embassy in Egypt given that we have no diplomatic representation in the Gulf countries.

**Mr Jhugroo:** May I ask the hon. Minister whether these Mauritian workers are covered by a medical scheme?

**Dr. Bunwaree:** Well, in fact, some are and some are not. As I said, there were some difficulties in certain contracts where there were some loopholes. We are looking into that.

**Mr Varma:** Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister, out of the 232 people working in the United Arab Emirates, that is, in Dubai, how many of the contracts have been vetted by the Ministry of Labour?

**Dr. Bunwaree:** As I said, Mr Speaker, Sir, it was the intention of the then Government to allow the Ministry to vet the contracts, but this has not been done. I believe that they realised afterwards that there were difficulties because the contracts were going to be governed by the laws of the other country.

**Mr Varma:** As Mauritian citizens working in certain Gulf countries are victims of abusive clauses in their contract of employment, can I request the Minister to lay on the Table of the Assembly a copy of the contract that is being used actually to recruit the Mauritian nationals?

**Dr. Bunwaree:** There is not one contract. There are various contracts. There are certain points that have been noted by my Ministry as being not acceptable. We are looking into the matter and then we will inform the House.

**DEBT SERVICING/RECURRENT EXPENDITURE  
- FOREIGN CURRENCY LOANS**

**(No. I B/486) Mr M. Dowarkasing (Third Member for Curepipe and Midlands)** asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether he will state if it is proposed to raise loans in foreign currency either for debt servicing or for meeting any recurrent expenditure and, if so, will he give details thereof.

**The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance (Mr R. Sithanen):** Mr Speaker, Sir, a budget deficit is financed either from local or foreign sources. To the extent that the recurrent budget is in deficit, part of the borrowing of Government goes towards financing recurrent expenditure. As the balance on the recurrent budget has been negative over the last five years, this has had to be financed by borrowing from local sources, both from the banking and the non-bank sectors.

Generally, loans in foreign currency are not used to finance recurrent expenditure. This has been the case as external financing has been much less than capital expenditure. This also applies to the current financial year. This principle will be maintained. Thus, it is not proposed to raise loans in foreign currency either for debt servicing or for meeting any recurrent expenditure. In this context, I would ask the hon. Member to refer to the statement I made recently to this Assembly where I emphasised the need for greater fiscal responsibility and the importance of the golden rule whereby Government should borrow only for its investment spending and not for recurrent expenditure.

**Mr Dowarkasing:** In view of the fact that there were contacts made with the World Bank and the *Banque Arabe pour le Développement Économique en Afrique*, may I know in details what were those contacts meant for and what types of loan were being discussed?

**Mr Sithanen:** Mr Speaker, Sir, BADEA lends to finance capital projects and the same thing applies for the World Bank. I just mentioned in my response that we don't use loans from the World Bank, BADEA or the African Development Bank to finance recurrent expenditure. These are usually used for financing capital expenditure.



**RODRIGUES - COCOS ISLANDS - MIGRATORY BIRDS -  
AVIAN FLU - PREVENTIVE MEASURES**

(No. I B/487) **Mr J. C. Leopold (Third Member for Rodrigues)** asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether, in regard to migratory birds which land at Cocos Islands in Rodrigues and which might be potential carriers of the pathogenic virus causing the bird flu, he will state

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- (a) the appropriate preventive measures presently being taken in terms of monitoring, detection and screening of these birds;
- (b) the nature of the tests performed in relation thereto;
- (c) by whom these tests are being carried out, and
- (d) what measures have been taken for the elimination of birds in

**The Minister of Agro Industry & Fisheries (Dr. A. Boolell):** Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I will reply to this question.

As regards to part (a), at the very outset I must say that the preventive and the monitoring measures outlined in my reply to PQ No. I B/411 are applicable generally to the whole of Mauritius, including Rodrigues and the islets around it.

Specifically in regard to Rodrigues, on 26 October 2005, 20 kits for collection of faecal swabs from migratory birds were dispatched to the resident Veterinary Officer.

The latter collected the samples from migratory birds and sent them to Mauritius on Sunday 30 October 2005 for analysis. All samples were negative for highly pathogenic avian flu virus.

In addition, a technical team comprising the Divisional Veterinary Officer and one Veterinary Officer was in Rodrigues from 08 to 11 November 2005 to carry out a clinical and analytical surveillance of both domestic and wild birds, including free range poultry and migratory birds.

Preliminary results of their survey and investigation of additional faecal swabs collected during this mission from migratory birds in Rodrigues and islets, again show absence of the highly pathogenic avian flu virus. Blood samples have also been taken for serological examination at the Animal Health Laboratory in Réduit and are being analysed. Furthermore, the team, in a one hour radio programme informed Rodriguans of the precautions necessary, in the remote possibility of the virus being introduced on the island. The negative result of the previous tests were also made public. The resident Veterinary Officer and his technical staff have been trained on how to detect the virus, and advised on establishment of preventive surveillance and greater vigilance at the airport of Plaine Corail and the seaport of Port Mathurin, to prevent any illegal entry of animals and animal products in Rodrigues.

A country wide clinical surveillance is ongoing in Rodrigues since January 2005.

Furthermore, the health of live chicken exported from Rodrigues to Mauritius are closely monitored by the resident Veterinary Officer.

As regards part (b) of the question, antigen tests have been carried out and all samples tested were found to be negative for the highly pathogenic avian flu virus.

As regards part (c), all tests are carried out at the Animal Health Laboratory of my Ministry in Réduit.

As regards part (d), the same operation plan as proposed for Mauritius will be applied to Rodrigues in the event of suspected pandemic. I am willing to lay copy of the operation plan on the Table of the Assembly.

Mr Speaker, Sir, may I end by informing the House that we are also tapping FAO support, and have requested this organisation to include Mauritius in its proposed programme of assistance to countries of Eastern Africa, to strengthen the surveillance on wild and domestic birds and improve laboratory capacities for early detection of any bird flu outbreak.

**Mr Leopold:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I thank the hon. Minister for his reply. Being given that birds from Cocos Islands also move inland, mainly at a

place called Baie Diamant, can I know from the hon. Minister what is the stock of Tamiflu drugs presently available in Rodrigues?

**Dr. Boolell:** Mr Speaker, Sir, as you are aware, a sum of Rs75 m. was earmarked for the purchase and acquisition of Tamiflu drugs. Of course, when we refer to Rodrigues, we also mean Mauritius. The Ministry of Health will see to it that the drugs will be made available to Rodrigues.

*(Interruptions)*

A sum of Rs75 had already been earmarked and released by the Ministry of Finance.

**Mr Leopold:** Mr Speaker, Sir, can I know how much is specifically available for Rodrigues and whether any arrangement has been made to have an isolation room in any hospital in Rodrigues in case people are infected?

**Dr. Boolell:** There is a Crisis Cell Committee which will meet if and as when required. Otherwise, there is a committee which meets on a regular basis and it is chaired at the level of the Ministry of Health. Over and above, all the necessary measures and precautions have been taken and I am willing to lay the operation plan on the Table of the Assembly.

### **ANJALAY STADIUM - CULTURAL SHOW - 29 OCTOBER 2005 - LIGHTING SERVICES - TENDER**

**(No. I B/488) Mr S. Naidu (Third Member for Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière)** asked the Minister of Arts and Culture whether, in regard to the cultural show held at the Anjalay Stadium on 29 October 2005, he will state to whom the tender for the provision of lighting services was awarded and the cost thereof.

**Mr Gowressoo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the tender for the provision of stage lighting was awarded to Pro Global Concept Ltd. for an amount of Rs694,876. I wish to inform the hon. Member that -

- (i) on 14 October 2005, my Ministry launched tenders according to specifications provided by the Manager of Sonu Nigam to

eleven stage light contractors for the provision and operation of stage lighting effects for the National Divali celebrations held at Anjalay Stadium on 29 October 2005;

- (ii) on 20 October, closing date for the receipt of offers, only two contractors, namely, Royal Class Event and Pro Global Concept Ltd. had responded to the tender exercise. Royal Class Event did not submit any quote stating that its equipment were already rented out. Pro Global Concept Ltd. quoted for an amount of Rs694,876;
- (iii) on the same day, the offer from Pro Global Concept Ltd. was submitted for evaluation to a Technical Committee comprising technicians of my Ministry and the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation. After evaluation, the Technical Committee recommended that the contract may be awarded to Pro Global Concept Ltd.
- (iv) however, as there was only one quote and the price appeared to be on the high side, my Ministry launched another tender exercise on the same date. Tenders were launched to three other potential suppliers.
- (v) on 24 October, closing date for the receipt of offers for this second tender exercise, only one supplier, namely, Seven Amps Ltd submitted an offer for an amount of Rs810,092.20.
- (vi) the offer from Seven Amps Ltd. was submitted to the Technical Committee on the same day. The Technical Committee recommended that the contract may be awarded to Seven Amps Ltd.
- (vii) the Departmental Tender Committee of my Ministry examined the two evaluation reports of the Technical Committee and decided to award the contract to the lower bidder of the two tender exercises, that is, to Pro Global Concept Ltd. for an amount of Rs694,876.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to add that Sonu Nigam and his technical team had expressed their full satisfaction on the quality of the technical

arrangements provided for the show by my Ministry. Moreover, all those who had watched the show agree that it was of a very high level with technical back-up of international standard. The public which stood at more than 20,000 and all the press articles vouch for that. In fact, this is the first time that a show of such *envergure* has been organised by my Ministry and with such resounding success.

**Mr Naidu:** Mr Speaker, Sir, will the hon. Minister say for the benefit of the House who are the shareholders of Pro Global Concept Ltd. and will he also table the tender documents issued by the Ministry?

**Mr Gowressoo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I am not aware who are the shareholders of that company. I will table the tender documents.

**Mr Naidu:** Will the Minister be able to table the names of the shareholders as well?

**Mr Gowressoo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I cannot table the names of the shareholders of any company.

**Mr Speaker:** May I remind hon. Naidu that according to the Standing Orders, if these are available on official documents, the question is not allowed.

**Mr Jhugroo:** May I ask the hon. Minister the amount spent for the provision of sound systems and whether there have been any tender procedures?

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

*On resuming at 2.35 p.m. with Mr Speaker in the Chair.*

### **SMEs – ENTERPRISES SET-UP, JOBS CREATED, ETC.**

**(No. I B/489) Mr S. Naidu (Third Member for Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière)** asked the Minister of Industry, Small & Medium Enterprises, Commerce and Co-operatives whether, in regard to Small and Medium Enterprises, he will –

- (a) give the number of such enterprises set up and the jobs created in that sector since July 2005, and
- (b) for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Development Bank of Mauritius Ltd., information as to –
  - (i) the number of enterprises which have benefited from loan facilities offered by the Bank, and
  - (ii) the total amount disbursed to them by the newly created Empowerment Fund.

**Dr. Jeetah:** Mr Speaker, Sir, over the period July to October 2005, some 1,228 persons have called at the SEHDA offices for information and guidance, counselling, facilitation services regarding granting of licences and permits, business plan project and submission of applications for registration. Over the same period, some 129 enterprises have been registered, out of which 46 are new concerns proposing to create some 155 jobs.

I also need to point out that the profile of new enterprises registered during this period relates to the food and beverage sector, wood and furniture, paper products and printing, craftsmanship, jewellery and related items, fabric metal products, trade and commerce and business support services amongst others.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to point out at this point that the number of registered enterprises from July 2005 to date is higher than the figures for the whole of each of the years 2001, 2002, 2003 and 2004, and at this rate the figures will double those in 2004.

My Ministry is moreover engaging in a national information campaign to sensitise the population on entrepreneurship, the services offered to Small and Medium Enterprises and the assistance provided by Government and other support institutions to both potential and existing entrepreneurs.

Let me add here that information available from the Local Authorities for the period July 2005 to date indicates that over 2,200 trade licences have been issued. And here, the credit goes to hon. David, the Minister of Local Government, for his dynamism and personal involvement. Most of them

were for SMEs. Efforts will be sustained to provide all support and assistance to potential and existing entrepreneurs and to promote the sector.

Government, as the House already knows, is fully committed to the development of the SME sector. Towards this end, my Ministry has adopted a multi-pronged approach through -

- (a) the streamlining of its process of registration of enterprises by reducing the time taken to issue a registration certificate from three months to two days, Mr Speaker, Sir;
- (b) a review of the operations of the Business Counselling and Facilitation Unit;
- (c) the decentralisation of its activities by setting up regional offices, that is, desks at Goodlands, Rose-Belle and Flacq since October 2005;
- (d) the implementation of an outreach programme by enlisting the assistance of all Government agencies to promote entrepreneurship throughout the island. For this purpose, some 76 officers of Citizens Advice Bureaux, Employment Information Centres, Women Centres and Youth Centres have been trained to better assist potential entrepreneurs, existing entrepreneurs or any member of the public calling at their offices, in quest of self employment opportunities or information

And further, some 400 points where members of the public call, including post offices, social security offices, social welfare centres, community centres, area health centres, community health centres have been identified as distribution centres for handy pamphlets and brochures in order to stimulate general interest in entrepreneurship.

With respect to part b (i ) of the question, I am advised that the DBM has approved 1,167 loans for SMEs for an aggregate amount of Rs82.2 m. from July 2005 to date.

As regards part (b) (ii) of the question, the aim of the Empowerment Fund, as announced by the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance

and Economic Development, is to provide both debt and equity finance to SMEs on flexible terms, with further support in terms of mentoring and close follow-up of the projects. The modalities for the Fund, which will be jointly managed by the DBM and SIC, are being worked out.

**Mr Dowarkasing:** Mr Speaker, Sir, may I know from the hon. Minister whether the SME Consultancy Services Scheme has been already put in place?

**Dr. Jeetah:** At the moment we have a SEHDA desk at the Ministry. We have officers who give all the advice required to set up businesses, to create business plan etc. and we take it upon our Ministry to ensure that all the permits are obtained within a reasonable period of time.

**Mr Dowarkasing:** May we know, Mr Speaker, Sir, from the hon. Minister what amount has been put at the disposal of those SMEs?

**Dr. Jeetah:** I just answered the question, Mr Speaker, Sir. I said that the DBM has approved 1,167 loans for SMEs for an aggregate amount of Rs82.2 m. from July 2005 to date.

**Mr Dowarkasing:** Will the Minister consider the possibility of decreasing the rate of interests for the SMEs as promised?

**Dr. Jeetah:** Well, obviously, the hon. Member has to ask the question to the right Minister. I can't answer on behalf of the Minister of Finance.

### **LA CHAUMIERE, ROSE HILL - ROAD WORKS PROJECT**

**(No. I B/490) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière)** asked the Minister of Environment and National Development Unit whether, in regard to the road works projects at La Chaumière, Rose Hill, he will state –

- (a) when was the contract awarded and to whom;
- (b) the scope of the works, and
- (c) the expected date of commencement and of completion.



**Mr Bachoo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that the contract was awarded on 06 May 2005 to Gamma Civic Ltd for the sum of Rs2 m.

The works consisted of road widening, felling of trees, open drains over a length of 150 metres, cleaning of existing open drains and relocation of four electric poles.

The scheduled commencement and completion dates were 09 May 2005 and 30 September 2005 respectively. My Ministry decided to shelve the project for the time being pending reprioritisation of NDU projects.

**Mr Bhagwan:** Mr Speaker, Sir, may I request the Minister to look actively into this question of La Chaumière? Because there are families of about 60 planters using the road. Especially, with the coming of the rainy season, there might be some problems of security.

**Mr Bachoo:** I will look into this matter.

### **RODRIGUES - ANSE RAFFIN DAM PROJECT**

**(No. I B/491) Mr J. Von-Mally (Fourth Member for Rodrigues)** asked the Minister of Public Utilities whether he is aware that there is a difference in the initial and the final cost of the Anse Raffin Dam Project in Rodrigues and, if so, will he give the quantum thereof, indicating if an inquiry will be carried out to establish the cause of the difference.

**Dr. Kasenally:** Mr Speaker, Sir, during the period 1997 to 2000, safety analysis of dams was carried out for six dams in Mauritius and three dams in Rodrigues. The Consultant, Messrs Consulting Engineering Services (India) Ltd, submitted the final report of the safety analysis for the three dams in Rodrigues, namely Anse Raffin, Solitude and Cascade Graviers in January 2000. The study recommended that a new dam be built for storage of water.

In November 2001, the Rodrigues Division of the then Ministry of Local Government and Rodrigues floated tenders for the construction of a dam in Anse Raffin. The contract for the construction of the dam was awarded to the joint venture Colas and Allied Builders Ltd for the sum of

Rs71,005,468.04 inclusive of 15% VAT. The contract period was 12 months.

Meanwhile, the responsibility for the project was transferred to the Rodrigues Regional Assembly.

M/s Gibb (Mtius) Ltd. in association with Water and Power Consultancy Senior (India) was awarded the consultancy services.

Immediately after the commencement of work, it was discovered that the existing topography of the project area did not match the one as expected by the consultants who undertook the study.

The following discrepancies were found –

- (i) the length of the dam which was 77metres turned out be actually 107metres, that is, an additional of 30 metres;
- (ii) excavation for the approach channel to the spillway was not accounted for initially;
- (iii) increase in the length of the diversion channel with the associated earth works;
- (iv) realignment of spillway to suit actual site conditions;
- (v) substantial increase in excavation/fill quantities;
- (vi) increase in quantities for the items of works associated with the dam due to increase in the dam length, and
- (vii) inadequate provision for the treatment plant, pipeworks and access road;

Mr Speaker, Sir, as one can see, this was a work which was badly done and shows gross incompetence of the appropriate consultant. As a result of the above, the contract price was increased to Rs134,915,895 after obtaining the approval of the Central Tender Board, which was most

unhappy and particularly concerned about such increase in cost. In fact, there was an increase of 90%.

Given that the Ministry of Public Utilities was acting as the employer of the supervising consultant, it was then, at the time, about two years ago, requested to have an inquiry carried out. But for reasons, which I am not aware of, and which is unknown, this has never been done. Since then, Mr Speaker, Sir, I have been bombarded with all sorts of queries, some of them genuine, some of them are anonymous which I cannot trace, that there has been considerable maldonne. I have, therefore, requested that an inquiry be done appropriately and it was only this morning that the Police cornered me while I was coming out my office to ask for all documents which I am going to hand over to them tomorrow.

**Mr Von-Mally:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I thank the hon. Member for the answer. Being given the dramatic increase in funds, can I know, just for a matter of clarification from the hon. Minister, whether the retention money was calculated from the initial sum or the final cost?

**Dr. Kasenally:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I have gone, of course, through all the information which have been given to us. The Tender Board even requested information from the appropriate authorities, but they were not forthcoming. But from information I have gathered, apart from the official one, there are gross discrepancies which cannot be accounted for and which will never be sanctioned by our financial regulations.

### **MAURITIUS RESEARCH COUNCIL - REPORT ON SUICIDE**

**(No. I B/492) Mr S. Lauthan (Third Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East)** asked the Minister of Social Security, National Solidarity and Senior Citizens Welfare & Reform Institutions whether she will, for the benefit of the House, consider the advisability of tabling a copy of the recent report of the Mauritius Research Council on the issue of suicide.

**Mrs Bappoo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the report of the study was submitted in May 2005 and was released in October last. I am hereby tabling copy of the report in the National Assembly for the benefit of all Members.

**HIV/AIDS & SUBSTANCE ABUSE –  
DR. SURESH KUMAR - REPORT**

**(No. I B/493) Mr S. Lauthan (Third Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East)** asked the Minister of Social Security, National Solidarity and Senior Citizens Welfare & Reform Institutions whether she will state if Dr. Suresh Kumar, UNDP Expert, has submitted a report on the study he carried out on the issue of substance abuse and HIV/AIDS and, if so, will she -

- (a) indicate the main recommendations thereof, and
- (b) consider the advisability of tabling a copy of the report.

**The Minister of Health and Quality of Life (Mr S. Faugoo):** Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I'll answer this PQ.

In view of the escalating number of new HIV/AIDS cases among the Injecting Drug Users (IDUs) over the last three years, my Ministry has approached United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and UNAIDS for technical assistance. Consequently, the services of Dr. S. Kumar, a consultant of international repute, were hired with the main objective of making recommendations to reverse the trend of HIV infection among the IDUs. Dr. S. Kumar was in Mauritius from 03 to 14 October, 2005 and has submitted his report to my Ministry where a committee has been set up to study the recommendations made and the implications thereof.

With regard to part (b) of the question, Government needs to be apprised of the report in the first instance.

**Mr Lauthan:** Mr Speaker, Sir, from information gathered from people who participated in the workshop, Dr. S. Kumar and, in the same line, the Head of AIDS Unit, are very anxious of the urgency of perpetuating and prolonging the outreached work whereas the new Chairman of the NATReSA - who is a friend of mine - said that there is no urgency at all regarding the drug users, etc. Can I ask the Minister to impress upon her colleague so that we do not take this issue very lightly?

**Mr Faugoo:** I must say, Mr Speaker, Sir, that we are equally anxious. I cannot answer for the Chairman of NATReSA. As far as I am concerned,

it is a matter of concern for everybody in this country, including the Government.

**Mr Bérenger:** It is not just a matter of concern, but it is urgent. Can I ask the Minister whether this report from Dr. S. Kumar is going to be handed over to the National Co-ordinating Committee when it next meets and whether Government has taken a decision as to who will chair the National Co-ordinating Committee where this issue has been debated recently?

**Mr Faugoo:** In fact, the National Committee on AIDs has been fixed for Thursday. I have spoken to the Prime Minister on this issue and he is agreeable to continue to chair the Committee.

### **SUICIDE PREVENTION UNIT - CASES, PSYCHOLOGISTS, ETC.**

**(No. I B/494) Mrs F. Labelle (Third Member for Vacoas and Floreal)** asked the Minister of Social Security, National Solidarity and Senior Citizens Welfare & Reform Institutions whether she will state the number of psychologists attached to the Suicide Prevention Unit of her Ministry, indicating the monthly average number of cases referred to that unit.

**Mrs Bappoo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, since a few years now, the Ministry of Social security has been having the services of only one psychologist on session for both the Suicide Prevention Unit and the Reform Institutions falling under the responsibility of the Ministry. The recent incident which occurred at the female section of the RYC is a clear indication that the number of psychologists attached to the Ministry is by large insufficient. I may state the same for the Suicide Prevention Unit of the Ministry, which is facing lots of difficulties to provide a professional counselling service precisely because of the lack of a full-time psychologist.

The House may wish to note, Sir, that since the setting up of the "We Care for You Unit" in 1990 and the change in name to the Suicide Prevention Unit in 2001, no concrete measures have been taken to provide the Unit with adequate and qualified staff to meet the ever increasing challenges in that sector.

It was only in July 2004, that a selection exercise was carried out for the recruitment of two additional psychologists on session. Offers were made to the three best-qualified candidates, but unfortunately they have all three declined the offer.

In view of the fact that employment of psychologists on session does not attract candidates, necessary action has been taken at the level of the Ministry for the creation of two posts of psychologist on the establishment of the Ministry. Clearances from the respective Ministries are presently being sought.

However, following the incident, which occurred at the female section of the Rehabilitation Youth Centre, few unemployed psychologists, who have recently been qualified, have shown an interest to provide their services to the Ministry. We are, therefore, contemplating the possibility of proceeding with a fresh exercise for the recruitment of psychologists on sessions pending the creation and the filling in of the two posts.

According to information provided by the Suicide Prevention Unit, the monthly average number of cases referred to that Unit is 20. This figure is quite alarming for a population like ours. Thus, there is an urgent need to better staff the Unit.

**Mrs Labelle:** Mr Speaker, Sir, in view of the lack of psychologists and the increasing number of suicide cases, will the Minister consider providing a special and intensive training to officers who work in this Unit?

**Mrs Bappoo:** Training is one of the main priorities of the Ministry and this is one of the main causes of problem, because those who are there don't have sufficient training.

**Mrs Labelle:** May I know from the Minister whether there is a particular training, which is scheduled, and when this will start for these officers?

**Mrs Bappoo:** We have another question and that is part of the answer to the next question.

**Mr Jhugroo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister for what reason the two psychologists declined the offer?

**Mrs Bappoo:** I have just explained in my answer. They are not interested with the conditions, wages, etc. The hon. Member did not listen to my answer.

### **REHABILITATION YOUTH OFFICERS – RECRUITMENT**

**(No. I B/495) Mrs F. Labelle (Third Member for Vacoas and Floreal)** asked the Minister of Social Security, National Solidarity and Senior Citizens Welfare & Reform Institutions whether, in regard to the Rehabilitation Youth Officers appointed in April 2003, she will state whether these officers have been confirmed in their post and, if so, when and, if not, why not.

**Mrs Bappoo:** Sir, in April and June 2003, twenty candidates were enlisted as trainee Rehabilitation Youth Officers for the boys' section of the Rehabilitation Youth Centre. The traineeship was for a period of one year. I have been informed that no recruitment has so far been effected for the girls' section. Procedures are underway and the scheme of service is now being finalised.

Among the twenty candidates who were recruited in April and June 2003, two of them left before completing one year. I am also being informed that the 18 others were due for appointment in April and June 2004. However, recommendations for their appointment were made to the Public Service Commission only in February 2005.

The approval of the Public Service Commission was obtained in September 2005 and 13 of the officers were confirmed in their posts in November 2005 (just recently) with effect from April and June 2005. One has not been confirmed yet, because of a heavy record of absences and the remaining one, being a former Prison Officer was already confirmed in the service.

**RIVIERE DUBOIS STREET/LA PIPE LANE, MIDLANDS  
- ROAD TARRING**

(No. B/496) Mrs M. Martin (Second Member for Curepipe and Midlands) asked the Minister of Environment and National Development Unit whether he is aware that planters in the region of Rivière Dubois Street/La Pipe Lane off Leal Bridge, Midlands, face difficulties, especially for the transportation of their cane during the harvest season, due to the poor state of the road thereat and, if so, will he state if it is proposed to tar the damaged road.

**Mr Bachoo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Ministry of Agro-Industry and Fisheries that four kms of road from La Pipe to Rivière Dubois has been tarred. However, four kms from La Pipe to Chemin Français needs to be tarred.

The resurfacing of the said road will be considered subject to availability of funds.

**STC – AMUL MILK (POWDER) – IMPORTATION**

(No. I B/497) Mrs M. Martin (Second Member for Curepipe and Midlands) asked the Minister of Industry, Small & Medium Enterprises, Commerce and Co-operatives whether, in regard to the AMUL brand of powdered milk, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the State Trading Corporation, information as to –

- (a) the amount imported by the Corporation;
- (b) when the product was launched on the local market and its current selling price, and
- (c) the name of the local distributor.

**Dr. Jeetah:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the State Trading Corporation that 75 M.tons of AMUL full cream milk powder has been ordered, out of which 45 M.tons have already been received on 29 October 2005.



The product was launched on the local market on 07 November 2005 and its current retail selling price is Rs92.50. Funny Flour Rice Co. Ltd. is the local distributor of the product.

**Mrs Martin:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to know from the Minister what was the primary objective in introducing a new brand of milk on the local market?

**Dr. Jeetah:** I have answered this question a number of times.

*(Interruptions)*

I will answer it again. Originally, importers were charging up to 41% mark-up on this product and this was considered as exaggerated.

*(Interruptions)*

For some brands of milk, Mr Speaker, Sir, the price of milk has been reduced by Rs70 for a packet of 750 grms.

**Mrs Martin:** Mr Speaker, Sir, if I understand the Minister quite well, it was to stimulate competitiveness. I suppose that was the aim for introducing the new brand of milk. I would like to know whether this objective has been attained.

**Dr. Jeetah:** Mr Speaker, Sir, AMUL, if I may say, is the leading brand and best quality full cream instant powder milk in India. This milk can only be compared with other comparable brands from other countries. It should be compared with the type of milk occupying 70% share of the market in Mauritius and it is being sold at a price which is 10% lower than the market leader in Mauritius.

## **INDIVIDUAL BUS OPERATORS - ALLOWANCE**

**(No. I B/498) Mr S. Naidu (Third Member for Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière)** asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping whether, in regard to the provision of free transport to students and senior citizens, he will state –

- (a) the number of private bus owners to whom –
- (i) the monthly allowance is due, and
  - (ii) the monthly allowance has been paid, and
- (b) the amount disbursed to date.

**The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport & Shipping (Dr. R. Beebeejaun):** Mr Speaker, Sir, as at date I am informed that only four individual bus operators have not yet been paid. The reasons underlying the delay are that two of them have provided incorrect bank account numbers. In the case of the remaining two, a dispute exists as to the ownership of the buses. The NTA is carrying out an inquiry to the matter so as to determine the rightful beneficiary of the allowance.

As there are 851 individual bus operators, the NTA has already effected payment to 847 of them.

An amount of Rs102,204,200 has been paid to date to all bus operators, including bus companies.

**Mr Jugnauth:** Mr Speaker, Sir, can we know from the hon. Deputy Prime Minister when was payment effected?

**Dr. Beebeejaun:** For the first instalment there was a lot of information required from the individual bus operators and that created a delay, but subsequently at the end of the first week of each month they are being paid.

**Mr Jugnauth:** The hon. Deputy Prime Minister just said that certain information were missing and that they were waiting for the required information. But why is it that for the number of bus owners who had everything cleared, payments were not effected to them?

**Dr. Beebeejaun:** As I have said, it is a matter of dealing with everybody, to get all the data before payment is made. You can't just pay out public money.

## **BEL AIR STATE SECONDARY SCHOOL – FLOODING PROBLEM**

**(No. I B/499) Mr L. Bundhoo (Second Member for Montagne Blanche and GRSE)** asked the Minister of Environment and National Development Unit whether he is aware of the flooding problem at the Bel Air State Secondary School during the rainy season and, if so, will he state what immediate remedial measures are envisaged.

**Mr Bachoo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I understand that the Water Resources Unit of the Ministry of Public Utilities has advised that the school building is constructed on a marshy area bordering Rivière Sèche where the water table is near the ground surface. During heavy rains, there is a high surface runoff and water from the springs converges to the school.

The Water Resources Unit has further advised to take contingency measures during periods of heavy rainfalls and to ensure that the nearby river is cleaned of all obstructions to allow a free and smooth flow of water. The Living Environment Unit of my Ministry will be carrying these works.

As a long-term solution, I am proposing to carry a detailed survey of the site to identify alternative solutions to the problem. This might entail dredging and realignment of the existing river.

**Mr Bundhoo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister when he proposes to start the survey?

**Mr Bachoo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, tomorrow at 1.00 p.m. I am giving a *rendez-vous* to my hon. colleague and other Members for a site visit and thereafter we are going to decide.

## **GRAND RIVER SOUTH EAST GOVT. SCHOOL - PTA - COMPLAINTS**

**(No. I B/500) Mr L. Bundhoo (Second Member for Montagne Blanche and GRSE)** asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether in regard to the Government school located at Grand River South East, he will state if he has received from the Parent-Teachers Association -

- (a) any complaints in regard to the dilapidated state of the corrugated iron sheet roof and the false ceiling, and
- (b) a request for the construction of a children's corner and a volleyball cum basketball pitch and, if so, will he state what action has been initiated in respect thereto.

**The Minister of Local Government (Dr. J. B. David):** Mr Speaker, Sir, yes, complaints have been received since 24 November 2004 and no appropriate action was taken.

The remedial works, that is, the replacement of the corrugated iron sheet roof and of the false ceiling, are programmed for the third week of November 2005 and expected to be completed before the resumption of studies in January 2006. The works will be entrusted to the DWC. Quotations from the DWC have been received by the MPI and are presently being assessed.

As regards part (b) of the question, the NDU had, on its own initiative, started in July 2004, preliminary procedures and submitted the project to the Ministry of Education and Human Resources in September 2004 for approval and confirmation of funds. The Ministry of Education will review anew the project in the light of its priorities and its budget allocation, taking into consideration that it was estimated at more than Rs500,000 at the time.

### **SIR SATCAM BOOLELL GOVT. SCHOOL – PTA - COMPLAINTS**

**(No. I B/501) Mr L. Bundhoo (Second Member for Montagne Blanche and GRSE)** asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether he will state if he has received any complaints from the Parent Teachers Association of the Sir Satcam Boolell Government School at Sebastopol, in regard to -

- (a) office and classroom requirements;
- (b) repairs and maintenance, and
- (c) extension of the school yard and, if so , will he state what actions have been initiated in respect thereof.

**The Minister of Local Government (Dr. J. B. David):** Mr Speaker, Sir, yes, a request was received on 15 September 2005. The request is only additional to the standard requirements obtained each year from the Head Teacher.

With regard to part (a) of the question, I am advised that the Ministry of Education and Human Resources has already examined the request and initiated the necessary procedures for the procurement of those items which are deemed acceptable.

Regarding part (b) of the question, I am informed that works have started and are expected to be completed during the November/December 2005 vacation.

As for part (c) of the question, the Ministry of Education and Human Resources will consider acquiring additional land adjoining the school. Furthermore, the backyard will be fenced so as to release space.

### **SSRN HOSPITAL - PATIENTS - DIALYSIS TREATMENT**

**(No. I B/502) Dr. R. Mungur (Second Member for Flacq and Bon Accueil)** asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether in regard to patients presently undergoing dialysis treatment being dialysed at the Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam National Hospital, Pamplemousses, he will -

- (a) state the number thereof from the region of Flacq and its surroundings, and
- (b) consider the advisability of providing additional dialysis machines at the Dialysis Centre of the Flacq Hospital.

**Mr Faugoo:** Sir, I am informed that 29 patients from Flacq region are being referred for dialysis to the centres in Pamplemousses out of which 11 are being dialysed at SSRN hospital and the remaining 18 are presently being referred to a private dialysis centre in Pamplemousses.

As regards part (b) of the question, I wish to inform the House that tender procedures have been initiated for the purchase of 26 dialysis machines. Ten of these machines have been earmarked for Flacq Hospital.

After installation of 10 additional dialysis machines there will be 20 machines available at Flacq hospital which would cater for around 120 patients which means no patients will have to be referred to SSRN Hospital or other centres.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the ultimate objective of my Ministry is to fully integrate the dialysis services within the public health institutions with a view to reducing costs as the Ministry is presently disbursing a sum of around Rs60 m. yearly to meet the cost of dialysis in private clinics.

**Dr. Mungur:** Mr Speaker, Sir, can I know from the hon. Minister what is the average cost of dialysis per session in the public and private sector?

**Mr Faugoo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the cost of one dialysis patient is around Rs1,550 per session. The patient needs three sessions weekly which comes to Rs4,650. And on a yearly basis it costs Government Rs241,800 per patient.

### **PRE-SCHOOL TRUST FUND - SUPPLY TEACHERS**

**(No. I B/503) Dr. R. Mungur (Second Member for Flacq and Bon Accueil)** asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Pre-School Trust Fund, information as to -

- (a) the number of supply teachers currently being employed on a temporary basis, and
- (b) whether the Fund proposes to retain their services on a permanent basis.

**The Minister of Local Government (Dr. J. B. David):** Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the House that recruitment of supply teachers by the Pre-School Trust Fund (PSTF) is resorted to in order to palliate for temporary shortage of teachers in the pre-school units. These supply teachers are employed on a temporary basis and are paid according to the number of days in attendance.

I am informed that, as this date, there are no supply teachers employed by the Pre-School Trust Fund (PSTF) as they were, on 28 October 2005, notified of the termination of their employment with effect from 11 November 2005 - the last day of the third term. There were 28 supply teachers who had been recruited in January and May 2004.

For academic year 2006, the PSTF has already advertised for the recruitment of 20 Pre-School teachers in January 2006. The supply teachers whose employment was terminated may apply for these posts and they will be considered along with other eligible applicants.

**Dr. Mungur:** Mr Speaker, Sir, can I know what is the age bar of the officers who are going to be recruited very soon?

**Dr. David:** Mr Speaker, Sir, from the notice of vacancy, I can see that the age limit is 45.

**Dr. Mungur:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to know again if the hon. Minister will give due consideration to those officers who are actually in service, but may not qualify for the age bar of 45.

**Dr. David:** Well, Mr Speaker, Sir, I will pass on that request to the Minister of Education and Human Resources.

## CONGOMAH - BOREHOLE

**(No. I B/504) Mrs B. Virahsawmy (First Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue)** asked the Minister of Public Utilities whether he is aware that a borehole in Congomah has, for the past five years, not been connected to the water supply system and, if so, will he state what remedial measures are being envisaged for its connection with a view to ensuring a regular supply of water to the inhabitants of the region.

**Dr. Kasenally:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the CWA that the latter did not go ahead with the exploitation of the borehole during some five years because it was considered not economical at that time to operate. Besides, the operation of the borehole has to be viewed in the perspective of a master plan.

However, given the current difficulties which are now being encountered by the inhabitants as a result of the relatively dense development of that area recently, I have instructed the CWA to consider the operation of this borehole as a matter of urgency, to improve the water supply in the region pending the master plan. And I shall see to it that it is done promptly.

### **CAMP DOMAINGUE, PETIT RAFFRAY - WATER SUPPLY**

**(No. I B/505) Mr R. Guttee (Third Member for Grand' Baie and Poudre D'Or)** asked the Minister of Public Utilities whether he is aware that the inhabitants of Camp Domaingue, Petit Raffray, are not being provided with a regular water supply for the past five years and, if so, will he state what remedial measures are being envisaged.

**Dr. Kasenally:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by CWA that the inhabitants of Camp Domaingue, Petit Raffray are supplied from Mon Loisir Rouillard reservoir which in turn is fed from Poudre D'Or balancing tank and Nicolière treatment plant via Piton reservoir respectively.

Camp Domaingue receives 10 hours of water supply daily, that is, between 4.00 a.m. to 8.00 a.m. and from 3.00 p.m. to 9.00 p.m.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in order to improve the water supply in this region, the CWA is embarking on a project to lay a separate pipeline from Mon Loisir Rouillard reservoir to Petit Raffray over a length of 2.5 km. The estimated cost of the project is Rs10 m. and I am made to understand that funds permit, the work will be undertaken as soon as possible, but in any case not later than during the next financial year.

Besides, Mr Speaker, Sir, there is also a project of extending the Grand' Baie treatment plant with a view to further improving the quality of water which we get from the sewer to ensure that we can get more water for irrigation and in this way it will have a sparing in effect and this will leave water to be distributed further to Petit Raffray.

### **VALE - ROADS TARRING**



**(No. I B/506) Mr R. Guttee (Third Member for Grand' Baie and Poudre D'Or)** asked the Minister of Environment and National Development Unit whether following his recent visit in the constituency of Grand' Baie and Poudre d'Or, he will state where matters stand concerning the tarring of roads in the village of the Vale.

**Mr Bachoo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, works order will be issued soon.

### **GRAND' BAIE AND POUFRE D'OR CONSTITUENCY - TAXI LICENCES - BENEFICIARIES**

**(No. I B/507) Mr R. Guttee (Third Member for Grand' Baie and Poudre D'Or)** asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping whether he is aware that taxi licences were issued to people in the Constituency of Grand' Baie and Poudre d'Or on the eve of the last general election and, if so, will he state the number of beneficiaries -

- (a) who were already in employment;
- (b) who were the holders of a driving licence for a lesser period of five years, and
- (c) who were physically disabled.

**The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping (Dr. R. Beebeejaun):** Mr Speaker, Sir, the information is being compiled and will be placed in the Library.

### **WORLD HINDI SECRETARIAT ACT 2002 - PROCLAMATION**

**(No. I B/508) Mr Y. Varma (First Member for Mahebourg and Plaine Magnien)** asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether in regard to the World Hindi Secretariat, he will state -

- (a) when the World Hindi Secretariat Act 2002 will be proclaimed;
- (b) whether he is aware that the foundation stone was laid in Phoenix by a then Senior Minister of the Republic of India;
- (c) whether there has been any follow-up action and, if not, why not, and
- (d) his Ministry's policy in regard thereto.

**The Minister of Local Government (Dr. J. B. David):** Mr Speaker, Sir, as regards part (a) of the question, the World Hindi Secretariat Act 2002 was proclaimed under this Government on 12 September 2005.

As regards part (b), I am informed that the foundation stone of the Secretariat was laid on 01 November 2002 by the hon. Murli Manohar Joshi, the former Minister of Human Resource Development of the Government of India.

As regards part (c), I am informed that the following has been done -

- (i) the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between India and Mauritius on 21 November 2003;
- (ii) in September 2005, the Indian side has been requested to make arrangements for the Executive Board member from the nodal Ministry in India to be in Mauritius in December 2005 to discuss and finalise modalities of operation of the Secretariat;
- (iii) arrangements for the Governing Council to hold its first meeting in India in February 2006, and
- (iv) Mr Speaker, Sir, it is worth recalling that the idea for the setting up of a World Hindi Centre was mooted by Sir Seewoosagar Ramgoolam, Father of the nation, at the first World Hindi Conference held in 1975 in Nagpur, India, and this project took the form of a resolution, and the second conference was held in Mauritius in 1976. In 1996, after the advent of the Government led by Dr. Navinchandra Ramgoolam, a World Hindi Secretariat Unit was set up in the Ministry of Education and, since then, a number of initiatives were taken, pre-eminent among them being the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between India and Mauritius on 20 August 1999, outlining the objectives, functioning and the financing of the Secretariat.

It is but fitting for the Government led by the present Prime Minister to be in power again, to materialise such an ambitious project, which has, as objective, to promote Hindi as an international language and to further the

cause of Hindi towards its recognition at the United Nations as an official language.

**Mr Varma:** Mr Speaker, Sir, can I know from the hon. Minister whether a Secretary was appointed to the World Hindi Secretariat in 2002?

**Dr. David:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I won't be able to provide the answer. But, as from my reply, you have noted that the Act voted in 2002 was proclaimed only on 12 September 2005. These are facts and figures that cannot be challenged, even by the Leader of the Opposition.

**Mr Varma:** Mr Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Minister whether he is aware that Mrs Sarita Boodhoo was appointed Secretary to the World Hindi Secretariat in 2002?

**Dr. David:** I will look into it, Mr Speaker, Sir.

**Mr Varma:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the foundation stone has been laid for the World Hindi Secretariat. Can we know from the hon. Minister when the building will be erected?

**Dr. David:** Mr Speaker, Sir, when the Minister of Education comes back, I will ask him when the building will be erected.

### **RISHI DAYANAND ROAD, PLAINE MAGNIEN - WIDENING**

**(No. I B/509) Mr Y. Varma (First Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien)** asked the Minister of Environment & NDU whether he is aware that the inhabitants of Plaine Magnien have requested that the Rishi Dayanand Road aligning the wall of the Burrenchobay Government School be slightly widened and, if so, will he state –

- (a) whether site visits have been carried out by technicians of his Ministry;
- (b) why work has not yet started, and
- (c) the steps he proposes to take for the implementation of the project which will facilitate both the school children and the inhabitants of the locality.

**Mr Bachoo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I am advised that the Rishi Dayanand Road at Plaine Magnien at its junction represents potential danger to pedestrians and to vehicular traffic. Consequently, I have instructed that the relevant works be carried out immediately.

**Mr Varma:** Mr Speaker, Sir, is the Minister aware that a technical officer, one Mr Ramgoolam, conducted a survey at the site and circulated a letter dated 19 October 2001? I would like to know whether the Minister is aware of that letter.

**Mr Bachoo:** I don't have this information with me, but I am aware that on 15 October, the then Ministry of Education & Scientific Research was informed that land was required from the compound of the school for the enlargement of the street.

**Mr Varma:** Mr Speaker, Sir, is the hon. Minister aware that, way back in 2001, it was stated that, owing to the narrowness of the road, there may be a problem of traffic congestion and security for the children? This was way back in 2001 and, for the past four years, nothing was done.

**Mr Bachoo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, it was only in March 2003 that the then Ministry of Education was requested to release a plot of land, and it was in August that the plot of land was released. This is another reason why I have given instructions that works be carried out urgently.  
CA/D15/P14/3

### **DES PLACES VILLAGE, PLAINE MAGNIEN – BUS SHELTERS & LAY-BYS**

**(No. I B/510) Mr Y. Varma (First Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien)** asked the Minister of Environment & NDU whether he will state if it is proposed to construct, as a matter of priority, a shelter at the bus stop in the village of Des Places in the Constituency of Plaine Magnien and Mahebourg.

**The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport & Shipping (Dr R. Beebeejaun):** Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I shall reply to this question.

Following a joint recommendation by the NTA and the Traffic Management & Road Safety Unit, my Ministry approved in October 2002 the resiting of the two bus stops and construction of two lay-bys with shelters to accommodate both bus stops at Des Places Village, Plaine Magnien.

However, as the land required for the construction of the proposed lay-by and bus shelters were privately owned, the Ministry of Housing & Lands was requested on 07 October 2002 to initiate action for acquisition of same before the Road Development Authority could implement the project.

My Ministry will take up the matter with the Ministry of Housing & Lands to expedite the land acquisition process.

**Mr Varma:** Mr Speaker, Sir, can I know from the hon. Deputy Prime Minister when the contact with the Ministry of Housing & Lands will be carried out?

**Dr. Beebeejaun:** Mr Speaker, Sir, it has taken three years already to get the approval. We will get it within a short time.

### **CUSTOMS DEPARTMENT – EXEMPTIONS - REVENUE FOREGONE**

**(No. I B/511) Miss K. R. Deerpalsing (Third Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes)** asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance & Economic Development whether he will state –

- (a) the amount of annual revenue foregone as a percentage of total revenue collected at the Customs Department through exemptions, and
- (b) the number of departments or agencies through which exemptions are granted.

**The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance & Economic Development (Mr R. Sithanen):** Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed as follows

—

The annual revenue foregone as a percentage of total revenue collected at the Customs Department through exemptions was 45.2% for the financial year 2004/2005. For the avoidance of doubt, total revenue collected in 2004/2005 amounted to Rs18.6 billion, while the revenue foregone stood at Rs8.4 billion. Out of this, about 21% represents exemption to the EPZ and Freeport sectors and 12% exemptions provided in the schedules to the Customs Tariff Act, Excise Act and Value Added Tax Act. the remaining 12% of exemptions comprise duty concessions in respect of charitable institutions, religious bodies, handicapped persons, hotel sector, small and medium enterprises and importation of sugar and fuel oil by the CEB.

As regards the second part of the question, applications for exemption of duties are normally made to the Ministry of Finance, but, often, such exemptions are recommended by other Ministries, Departments and agencies. However, exemptions are granted only by the Ministry of Finance.

Furthermore, under Parts II and II A of the First Schedule to the Customs Tariff Act and Part I A of the First Schedule to the Excise Act, duty concessions are granted to different categories of bodies. In some of these cases, the exemptions are granted on the recommendations of different Ministries, Departments or agencies. I am tabling a list of those Ministries, Departments and agencies, which recommend the grant of exemptions. I understand the number is 19 Departments and agencies.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in view of the significant amount of revenue foregone through exemptions, I am proposing to carry out a review for rationalising duty exemptions. Furthermore, my Ministry will be meeting shortly the various agencies, Departments and Ministries to devise policy guidelines and procedures for the grant of concessions provided for in the Customs Tariff Act and the Excise Act.

**Mr Bérenger:** Mr Speaker, Sir, can I ask the Deputy Prime Minister & Minister of Finance whether he has the figure for the value of the exemption to the CEB?

**Mr Sithanen:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I don't have the exact figure for the CEB, but I will find it out and circulate it to Members of the House.

### **PALMA ROAD, QUATRE BORNES – ROAD WORKS**

**(No. I B/512) Miss K.R. Deerpalsing (Third Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes)** asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport & Shipping whether he will state if consideration will be given for expediting the current road works at Palma Road, Quatre Bornes, so that these works could be completed sooner than the planned date.

**The Minister of Public Utilities (Dr. A. Kasenally):** Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I shall reply to this question.

In the context of the Plaine Wilhems Trunk Sewer Project, relocation of telecommunication cables, CWA pipelines and manholes are being presently undertaken. The civil works are being carried out by the Wastewater Management Authority contractor, and the laying of new telecommunication cables and CWA pipelines is being done by the contractor of the Mauritius Telecom and the CWA respectively. Excavation works across Palma road for the trunk sewer will start after the works for the replacement of the telecommunication cables and CWA pipelines would have been completed.

I am also informed that, according to the work schedule of the WMA contractor, the works in respect of the main trunk sewer will be completed by 20 December 2005. I perfectly understand the gross inconvenience these works are causing to the inhabitants of the region, and also to the economic operators who have registered a significant decrease in their commercial activities. Because of that, I have impressed upon the contractors that the timely completion of these works is imperative.

However, this work should also depend on the nature of the ground where the excavation works are to be carried out. With a view to abating the inconveniences faced by road users, the contractor and economic operators the contractor is being requested to complete the work within the least possible time by working beyond normal working hours, if possible.

**Miss Deerpalsing:** What happens is that many constituents have said that the workers leave the site of work before 3 o'clock, well before normal working hours. In view of the fact that we are in summer time and there is daylight till late, can we ask the workers to work till the end of daytime?

**Dr. Kasenally:** This is the mentality which has been pervading. But as we say with the new Government "*bizin changement*" and I am going to see to it that these people are working. The contractors themselves are having problems, but I am setting up a team to ensure that there is change in their mentality and the work is done to ensure the least inconveniences. This is in the name of progress, but we shall ensure that that the inconveniences are as little as possible.

**Mr Ganoo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the Plaine Wilhems Sewerage Project is, in fact, the most important project that our generation might know of. It will cost about Rs4 billion. This is just the beginning of a long drawn and protracted process of public works. In terms of public relation exercise, can I ask the hon. Minister of Public Utilities whether the Ministry and the contractor have devised any programme for informing the public about the duration of works and so in terms of relations exercise what is being done so that people might be aware of the situation? Because we are just talking of Palma, Quatre Bornes and La Louise right now, but in a few weeks and months the whole district of Plaine Wilhems will suffer the same inconvenience.

**Dr. Kasenally:** Sir, I agree with my colleague and former Minister. In fact, it is going to cause tremendous chaos, but the problem is the chaos would have been even worse had it not been for realignment. We could imagine what would have happened if the trunk between La Louise and La Caverne would have been totally blocked. This was not acceptable and I, therefore, have arranged that there is a new realignment so that we do not have to close this important artery between Vacoas and Quatre Bornes. I agree with the hon. Member that public relation exercise is deficient. In fact, it has been deficient so much so that I have impressed upon the WMA to stop wasting money and get on with the job and have an efficient public relation exercise which is vital because basically the people will understand, and they will understand better if they are told exactly that this is being done in order to improve the environment of this whole country; the work has to be done. I agree entirely with my colleague.



**Mr Ganoo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, at one time there was the suggestion that the Minister of Public Utilities himself should preside over a multi-sectoral committee, including the Police, the municipalities and all the competent authorities to monitor this project which, I repeat, will cause so much inconvenience to the inhabitants of the Plaine Wilhems district. I am sure the hon. Minister has already taken the necessary measures.

**Mr Speaker:** The hon. Member should put the question.

**Dr. Kasenally:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I am taking upon myself to monitor the situation and since it is in my constituency No. 15, I am also ensuring that the people ...

*(Interruptions)*

By extension, of course, it is for my colleagues. We are ensuring that people are informed. I agree with my colleague that it is a matter to be considered very seriously. We have multi-sectoral committees, but committees sit down and sometimes the decisions are not transferred into realities and I want to make sure that we do things properly.

**Miss Deerpalsing:** Mr Speaker, Sir, may I request the hon. Minister to see if there is a possibility of the workers working on Saturdays?

**Dr. Kasenally:** If need be, we'll make them work on Sundays as well.

### **MALEFILLE AND LAPEYROUSSE AVENUES, QUATRE BORNES - ACCIDENTS**

**(No. I B/513) Miss K. R. Deerpalsing (Third Member for Belle Rose and Quatre Bornes)** asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport & Shipping whether he is aware that the number of accidents at the junction of Malefille and Lapeyrousse Avenues in Quatre Bornes is on the increase and, if so, will be state what preventive measures are being envisaged

**The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport & Shipping (Dr. R. Beebeejaun):** Mr Speaker, Sir, I am

informed that the number of reported accidents at the junction Malefille and Lapeyrouse Avenues is as follows –

- 2004: 2 minor
- 2005 (as at 11 November): 1 minor

Nonetheless, the Traffic Management and Road Safety Unit of my Ministry will carry out a site visit at the junction to evaluate the situation and come up with proposals for implementation of different traffic calming and road safety measures.

### **PALMA/LA SOURCE - ROTIN NO. 1 ROAD - WATER SUPPLY**

**(No. I B/514) Miss K. R. Deerpalsing (Third Member for Belle Rose and Quatre Bornes)** asked the Minister of Public Utilities whether he is aware that residents of Rotin No. 1 Road and the surrounding neighbourhood in Palma/La Source are facing problems due to frequent interruptions in the water supply and, if so, will he state what remedial measures are envisaged.

**Dr. Kasenally:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I informed by the Central Water Authority that Rotin No. 1 road and the surrounding neighbourhood in Palma/La Source is supplied from Holyrood borehole station.

Presently, the yield of Holyrood borehole has decreased from 19,000 cubic metres daily to 14,000 cubic metres; which is a common feature at the start of the dry season. Consequently, the supply has been re-adjusted and now run from 4.00 a.m. to 9.00, that is, a total of 17 hours daily.

I am also informed, as I mentioned, that major sewerage works are presently undertaken by the Wastewater Management Authority in the above regions. These works also include renewal and realignment of the CWA pipe where needed and these interventions sometimes result in a disruption of supply.

According to the work schedule of the WMA contractor, the works would be completed by March 2006. In any case, measures are being applied to minimise any inconveniences to the inhabitants of the area.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as you may have noticed, week-in, week-out, I am being called upon to answer questions about deficiency in water supply. May I point out that the basic problem in all our water supply is the reticulation...

**Mr Speaker:** Can I stop the hon. Minister here, please? The Minister should confine his answers to the point which has been raised in the question, he should not make a general statement of policy on a particular question.

*(Interruptions)*

Order! Order! Next question!

### **CPE EXAMINATIONS (2004) - STUDENTS – PERFORMANCE**

**(No. I B/515) Mr S. Dayal (Second Member for Quartier Militaire and Moka)** asked the Minister of Education & Human Resources whether, in regard to the CPE Examinations and in the light of the Report of the Mauritius Examinations Syndicate regarding the performance of students at the 2004 CPE Examinations who did not attempt at composition writing, he will state -

- (a) what steps he has taken or proposes to take, and
- (b) if he will consider the advisability of further splitting grading at CPE into A+, A, B+, B, etc and make a statement thereon.

**The Minister of Local Government (Dr. J. B. David):** Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission I shall reply to this question.

Mr Speaker, Sir, regarding part (a) of the question, I wish to inform the House that I have read with much concern the report of the Mauritius Examinations Syndicate which was issued in May 2005 regarding CPE Examinations and unfortunately, the recommendations have not received due consideration. The Ministry of Education and Human Resources is reconsidering the inspection strategies to monitor practices and motivate the pupils to increase their interest and improve their performance in composition writing.

As regards part (b) of the question, the Ministry of Education and Human Resources does not propose, at this stage, to make major changes in the grading system as review of the current system will have to be undertaken in a holistic manner after consultation, with all the stakeholders concerned and any change to assessment requires concurrent action in various fields, namely: the syllabus, the format of the CPE question papers, the marking/grading system, the teacher's workbook and above all prior notice of at least one academic year will have to be given to candidates.

**Mr Dayal:** Mr Speaker, Sir, is the hon. Minister aware that composition markers have expressed their worries regarding ...

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Order!

**Mr Dayal:** ...a large number of candidates who simply did not attempt question No. 6, that is, the composition? Let me read one sentence from that report -

“Composition markers were worried by the large number of candidates who made no effort to even attempt the question. Most involved in the marking had the feelings that the candidates had been told not to attempt the question.”

Can I know what is being done to redress this situation?

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Order!

**Dr. David:** Well, in fact, hon. Dayal has raised an important issue and I would like, Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, just to read one or two sentences and show how telling it is in terms of standard and performance of CPE candidates.

The report has been submitted by the MES to the Ministry -

"Composition markers for the English Paper -

Composition markers were worried by the large number of candidates who made no effort to even attempt the composition question. It is indeed very worrying that after six years of schooling a great number of students are not able to write coherent sentences, let alone composition".

As regards French essays, this is what the examiners have to write in the report -

*"Constat très alarmant. 49% des candidats ont obtenu zéro, ce qui révèle que les élèves mauriciens, en général, éprouvent beaucoup de difficultés à rédiger en français. Toutefois, on déplore qu'un bon nombre de candidats n'ont même pas essayé de faire la rédaction. Il est important de rappeler aux futurs candidats qu'ils doivent impérativement répondre à toutes les questions du questionnaire."*

After having made their remarks, which I have mentioned, are very telling as they show the poor performance of the students, they write -

"The examiners would like to end by proposing yet again..

which means it has been proposed before, but nothing was done.

"...yet again that intensive workshops be carried out with standards IV, V and VI teachers on the teaching, reading and writing strategies".

This is, in fact, what the Ministry of Education is, at present, doing, but unfortunately we've seen the very low performance of the students.

### **ST JULIEN D'HOTMAN/ALMA - ROAD ACCIDENTS**

**(No. I B/516) Mr S. Dayal (Second Member for Quartier Militaire & Moka)** asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport & Shipping whether he is aware that the volume of traffic at St Julien d'Hotman and at Alma is increasing thereby leading to an increase in road accidents thereat and, if so, will he urgently consider taking necessary remedial measures.

**The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport & Shipping (Dr. R. Beebeejaun):** Mr Speaker, Sir, it is a

fact that there has been a considerable increase in the volume of traffic on most of our roads and in the areas mentioned. The fleet of vehicles has increased from 180,884 in 1994 to 301,853 as at 30 September 2005 representing an increase of 66.8%.

As regards the number of accidents, I am informed that there had been an average of 19 and 31 accidents per year at St Julien d'Hotman and Alma respectively for the period 2000 to 2004.

Different types of road safety furniture already exist at these two villages. However, with a view to further improving the safety of pedestrians and motorists, my Ministry proposes to convert a pedestrian crossing into a signalised crossing at Alma.

As regards the village of St Julien d'Hotman, it is proposed to provide a flat top humped pedestrian crossing together with a bus lay-by near the primary school of the locality.

My Ministry has also requested the Police to carry frequent patrols and speed checks along these two villages.

The Traffic Management and Road Safety Unit is being requested to monitor the road safety situation at these villages closely and to report to my Ministry.

**Mr Dayal:** Sir, I would like to request the hon. Deputy Prime Minister to consider the advisability of having pedestrian crossings, traffic lights and pavements along with handrails at strategic places. I should like also to deplore the fact that bus stops are being moved to and fro at the whims and caprices of some officers of his Ministry.

**Dr. Beebeejaun:** I will certainly look at the suggestion that the hon. Member has made.

#### **ST PIERRE - VICINITY CHURCH/STATE BANK - BRIDGE**

(No. I B/517) **Mr S. Dayal (Second Member for Quartier Militaire & Moka)** asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport & Shipping whether, in regard to the narrow

bridge located at St Pierre in the vicinity of the Church and the State Bank, he will state if it is proposed to construct a new bridge thereat and, if so, when and , if not, why not.

**The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport & Shipping (Dr. R. Beebeejaun):** Mr Speaker, Sir, the bridge which has a span of 11.0 m and 6.0 m wide is located at a double bend on Bois Chéri Road (B 47) and needs to be upgraded.

The design will be prepared after completion of a survey. The scope of work will comprise the following -

- (a) reconstruction of the bridge;
- (b) realignment of the road, and
- (c) provision of footpaths on both sides.

As the project is not included in the programme for this financial year, it will be considered for the next financial year.

### **TELFAIR GARDEN - SUB-OFFICE/STORES – RELOCATION**

**(No. I B/518) Mr S. Mohamed (Third Member for Rivière des Anguilles & Souillac)** asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport & Shipping whether he will consider the advisability of relocating the sub-office and stores situated next to the District Court in Souillac so that the land is made available to the public as an extension of the Telfair Garden.

**The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport & Shipping (Dr. R. Beebeejaun):** Mr Speaker, Sir, the buildings found within the Telfair Garden are being used by the Engineering Section and by the Road Development Authority as offices for the Inspectorate Staff and as stores for the whole district of Savanne. Eleven officers are posted there and about 65 manual workers report to this location every day before proceeding to their sites of work.

The relocation of the sub-office and store will be subject to the availability of an alternative site.

## **BRITANNIA - PUBLIC TRANSPORT FACILITIES**

**(No. I B/519) Mr S. Mohamed (Third Member for Rivière des Anguilles & Souillac)** asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport & Shipping whether, in regard to the public transport situation in Britannia, he will consider the advisability of providing additional public transport facilities thereat.

**The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport & Shipping (Dr. R. Beebejaun):** Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that seven bus routes of the National Transport Corporation pass through the village of Britannia throughout the day in the directions of Curepipe, Rose Belle, Port Louis, Camp Diable, Bénares, Rivière des Galets and Chamouny.

Over and above these services, there are dedicated services from Britannia towards Port Louis and Curepipe at specific times during the morning and afternoon peak hours.

Being given that Britannia is an intermediate locality along the itinerary of existing bus routes and that there could be transport problems when buses pass through fully loaded, I have requested the NTA to carry out a survey and to beef up, if need be, the dedicated services for the locality especially during peak hours.

## **ENVIRONMENT APPEAL TRIBUNAL - CASES PENDING**

**(No. I B/520) Mr A. Ganoo (First Member for Savanne & Black River)** asked the Minister of Environment & National Development Unit whether he will give a list of the cases presently pending before the Environment Appeal Tribunal, indicating in each case the names of the parties and the dates the respective cases have been fixed for hearing.

**The Attorney-General, Minister of Justice & Human Rights (Mr R. Valayden):** Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I will answer the question. A list of pending cases before the Environment Appeal Tribunal is being tabled.



Case No. 20 is awaiting judgment, the other cases need to be started anew or simply to be heard as stated on the list.

**Mr Ganoo:** Sir, can the hon. Minister say how many cases are pending before the Tribunal?

**Mr Valayden:** We have 22 cases. One case is pending judgment. We have 14 cases which have to be started anew and the others have to be put for mention.

**Mr Bhagwan:** Can I ask the hon. Minister whether he has gone through the list of appeals which have been brought before the Appeal Tribunal? Can he indicate to the House whether there is one person who has referred cases to the Tribunal for filthy reasons? I won't mention the name as the hon. Minister knows who was that lawyer, with the same handwriting on all cases. Can he inform the House of the name of the person and the appellant?

**Mr Valayden:** Mr Speaker, Sir, unfortunately, according to the list that I have before me, there are names of appellants, but I do not have the name of the person referred to by the hon. Member.

**Mr Ganoo:** Can the Minister inform us whether a full-time Chairman has been recruited?

**Mr Valayden:** Mr Speaker, Sir, there are so many problems as there is the time frame to deliver the judgment. Now we are trying to reduce the time frame and my office is working on that. Then there is the *locus standi* of people coming, then there is the EIA itself. We have also the problem of whether the Tribunal can issue injunctions. We are reviewing the whole thing as well as the question of a full-time Chairperson and whether we'll have a Tribunal as it stands now or to have a mega Tribunal instead of having many Tribunals and spending the taxpayers' money.

**Mr Varma:** Can I ask the hon. Minister why 14 cases have to be started anew before the Tribunal?

**Mr Valayden:** Mr Speaker, Sir, it is due to the fact that we had at one moment a Chairperson on contract which is running out. We will have to restart anew.

### **HAWKERS PALACE PROJECT**

**(No. I B/469) Mr P. Jhugroo (Third Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue)** asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether, in regard to the Hawkers Palace Project, he will state if it has been cancelled and, if so, will he give the reasons therefor and, whether there is any alternative.

**The Minister of Local Government (Dr. J. B. David):** Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I shall reply to this question.

I am informed by the Municipal Council of Port Louis that at its meeting held on 26 October 2005 the Council had decided that the Hawkers Palace Project should be modified. This decision is being communicated to the DBM Properties Ltd.

The House would wish to note that DBM Properties Ltd is a private company that has been set up to implement the Hawkers Palace Project. The shareholders of the company are the Development Bank of Mauritius, the Municipality of Port Louis and the consultants involved in the project.

The project comprises 2 basements for 120 parking slots, 3 floors for 972 hawking units, top floor for 144 food courts and 10 floors of 500 sq metre each for office space. This project is being funded by 50% equity and 50% loan.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the House would wish to note that whilst going through records available, I have come across some disturbing facts. The company was formed on 06 May 2005. The letter of award for this project was issued on 20 May 2005, that is, well after the dissolution of the National Assembly. Works started on 03 June 2005 on the eve of general elections. the then Lord Mayor also happened to be the Chairperson of the DBM Ltd. during the implementation stage of the project.

Moreover, the manner in which the company has been formed and shares allocated is a matter of great concern in view of the fact that the consultants have become shareholders of this company. The defunct Government which claimed to be the champion of good governance - *le pays le mieux géré au monde* - has allowed incestuous relationship between the company and the consultant on one part and the Municipal Council during the tenure of office of the then Lord Mayor and the company on the other, thus giving rise to blatant conflicts of interest.

More disturbing is the fact that instead of the consultants bringing their share capital to the company's equity upfront, DBM Properties Ltd had agreed that it would be in the form of deduction from their claimable fees. It is worth mentioning that the project value is Rs550 m and the consultants are to be paid 10% of that value. It is equally important that there is no indication at all whether a tender exercise was carried out for the selection of the consultants. How can one accept such a reprehensible and unethical procedure, the more so when public institutions and public funds are involved?

Mr Speaker, Sir, taking into consideration all these disturbing facts, I am strongly in favour of the setting up of a Fact Finding Committee to shed light on this matter.

**Mrs Virahsawmy:** Mr Speaker, Sir, can the Minister inform the House who were the consultants and by whom they were represented?

**Dr. David:** I won't like to give the name of the consultant in this House.

*(Interruptions)*

Why? The hon. Member wants me to give names. At times, he says we should not give names, because they are not here to defend themselves.

*(Interruptions)*

I don't take orders from the hon. Member.

**Mr Speaker:** Hon. Minister, address the Chair, please.

**Dr. David:** I'll address the Chair, but this is a very shady matter and this is why, Mr Speaker, Sir, I intend to go ahead with the Fact Finding Committee and then the truth will come out.

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Order!

**Mr Varma:** Can I ask the hon. Minister whether, pending the findings of the Fact Finding Committee, the works on the Hawkers Palace will stop?

**Dr. David:** The Council has taken a decision recently which I mentioned and the Council will certainly contact the majority partner, which is the DBM; and from then on certainly the Municipality will take the right decision, I am sure.

**Mr Barbier:** Mr Speaker, Sir, can the Minister confirm to the House whether the actual Lord Mayor was, while this decision was taken, a Municipal Councillor? He was part of the Council. He was participating in all Council meetings. Why, at that time, nothing was said on the manner the work was conducted?

**Dr. David:** Mr Speaker, Sir, one thing I know is that the then Lord Mayor was Chairman of the DBM.

## **LAND RESTITUTION COMMITTEE - REPORT**

**(No. I B/476) 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 he will state –

- (a) if he has taken cognizance of the Report of the Land Restitution Committee chaired by former Justice Ahnee, and
- (b) whether Government intends to take any measures in favour of victims who complained that their ascendants have been dispossessed of their land by sugar estates and other parties

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

I am informed that no Land Restitution Committee has been set up so far.

However, in October 2004, the then Government did agree, in principle, to the setting up of a Land Restitution Committee based on the South African model with the aim of assisting persons who had serious claims of ownership over land and who, because of financial or other reasons, did not have recourse to Court.

In this context, a four-member team led by the former Judge, Mr R. Ahnee proceeded on mission to South Africa from 28 February to 02 March 2005 to study the legal and administrative framework put up in that country to redress injustices in connection with land dispossession during the apartheid period. Thereafter a report was submitted, but it is regretted to note that no action was taken for the implementation of the recommendations therein.

However, in line with the philosophy of this Government to ensure justice at all levels, I am having fresh consultations with all stakeholders on how best the recommendations could be put into practice.

As regards part (b) of the question, my Ministry is not in the presence of any formal representation made by any persons complaining that their ascendants have been dispossessed of their land by sugar estates and other parties, and I am, therefore, not in a position to make any statement on complaints which may have been made informally elsewhere. However, should there be any such complaints, these would be dealt with all the seriousness they deserve.

**Mr Ganoo:** Nothing was done by the previous Government because - I am sure the Minister will confirm – the report was laid ten days before the dissolution of the Assembly.

**Mr Dulull:** Again when the report came late, it is a clear manifest of wrong planning of the previous Government

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Order!

**Mr Bérenger:** Petty politics should be behind us on issues like that. May I ask the Minister ....

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Order!

**Mr Bérenger:** May I ask the Minister whether he has discussed with the Prime Minister - because there are copies of that report at the Prime Minister's office – in making public that report?

**Mr Dulull:** The recommendations have not been implemented like I mentioned, it is because of very poor planning of the previous Government.

**Mr Bérenger:** Shall I make the Minister understand that we are not talking about the recommendations that are made in the report? That is a matter for Government to review and take decisions on that. But I am sure it is in the interest of the country as a whole, everybody concerned, especially those who have lost land in the past, to have a copy of that report. Can I appeal to the Minister to liaise with the Prime Minister - and, surely, there cannot be anything wrong - in making that report public?

**Mr Dulull:** As a Government that means business, we will study the report and make it known to the public because we operate in all transparency.