

**JARDIN DE LA COMPAGNIE AND RUISSEAU DU POUCE - POLICE
PATROLS**

(No. B/1) Mrs S. Hanoomanjee (Second Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Home Affairs whether, in regard to the police patrols effected at night, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the number thereof effected, in the vicinity of the *Jardin de la Compagnie* and of the *Ruisseau du Pouce*, over the past six months, indicating -

- (a) the number of arrests effected, if any, and
- (b) if during the night of Friday 06 November 2009, between 1900 hours and midnight, any police patrol was effected and, if not, why not.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, in regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that from September 2009 to 17 March 2010, 701 night patrols have been effected by Police in the vicinity of the *Jardin de la Compagnie* and of the *Ruisseau du Pouce* next to *Jardin de la Compagnie*. These patrols were carried out by different units of the Police, including the personnel of Pope Hennessy Police Station which covers that region, the Metropolitan South Divisional Support Unit, the CID Metropolitan South and the Emergency Response Service. A total of 10 persons have been arrested in 10 different cases in the region during that period.

As regards to part (b) of the question, I am informed that on the night of 6 November 2009 between 1900 hours and midnight two patrols were effected in that specific area by a crew of the Emergency Response Service and a team of the Divisional Support Unit together with personnel of the Special Supporting Unit . During the patrols, people were stopped and questioned, but nothing unusual was detected at that time.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I just ask the hon. Prime Minister, given that this area is considered as a red light area, why is it that the Commissioner of Police does not deem it fit to have policemen at specific places regularly there?

The Prime Minister: This is what I said. There are police patrols regularly there. In fact, as I said, from the days the hon. Member mentioned, there were 701 night patrols effected.

POLICE OFFICERS – BSc POLICE STUDIES

(No. B/2) Mrs S. Grenade (Second Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Home Affairs whether, in regard to the police officers who have followed the BSc Police Studies courses at the University of Mauritius, in collaboration with the University of Portsmouth, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the number thereof, indicating those who have not yet been promoted.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, upon my initiative, an agreement was signed in October 1999 between the Government and the University of Portsmouth for the running by the University of Mauritius, of a BSc (Hons) Degree Course in Police Studies.

The course was designed to enhance the professional development of the Mauritius Police Force and with the overall aim of facilitating organisational change and reform.

A first batch of officers was enrolled for a BSc (Hons) Degree Course in Police Studies at the University of Mauritius in academic year 1999-2000 and the last batch in academic year 2004-2005. 314 Police Officers are presently holders of a BSc (Hons) in Police Studies.

Promotion in the Police Force falls under the purview of the Disciplined Forces Service Commission (DFSC) and is governed by Regulations 14 and 19 of the DFSC Regulations. For promotion to the grade of Sergeant and Inspector of Police, Police Officers are required to undergo written examinations.

Officers of specialised/technical units are promoted according to their specialist skills, knowledge and experience in their respective discipline in those particular units upon the recommendation of the Commissioner of Police.

At the present time, all police officers including those holding a degree have to go through the same promotion exercise. Out of the 314 police officers having a BSc in Police Studies, 26 have been promoted.

However, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that a new scheme is being finalised to allow entry of holders of a degree at the level of Inspector of Police. The proposed scheme provides for the creation of the post of Police Cadet Inspector, which will contribute to the establishment of a modern, accountable, efficient, effective and community focused police service.

As I mentioned when I launched the National Policing Strategic Framework on 24 February 2010, holders of BSc (Hons) in Police Studies will have the opportunity of being posted to critical positions within the service such as Divisional Staff Officers, Force Crime and Intelligence Analysts, Divisional Crime and Intelligence Analysts, Community Police Officers and Neighbourhood Officers with a view to enhancing their contribution in the organisational change and reform.

Mrs Grenade: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Prime Minister to inform the House when is the next promotion exercise? I think it was by mid-November.

The Prime Minister: It is being carried out at the moment.

Mr Dayal: Mr Speaker, Sir, the laudable initiative of the hon. Prime Minister in 1999 was very much appreciated. The prospective candidates were given a prospectus whereby the purpose of the reform was given to them and side by side they were proposed a few incentives. May I ask whether that could be looked upon?

The Prime Minister: That was the whole purpose of it and I am glad to say that not only we initiated it, but Government which came afterwards continued the process.

Mr Bérenger: Hon. Mrs Grenade has just said that 100 of Police Constables are waiting to be promoted to the post of Sergeants and Sergeants to Inspectors. For months and months they had been waiting. That very long delay - is it linked in any way to what we have just been informed concerning this scheme?

The Prime Minister: This is also the case Mr Speaker, Sir. I must say that during the last Budget, posts were created in the Budget for this precisely.

Mr Bérenger: I have been told 314 - if I heard correctly - policemen who had qualified through the BSc Police Studies course, University of Mauritius. Only 26 have been promoted in the ordinary course of events. I am sure that the hon. Prime Minister is not satisfied with such a situation, apart from promotion which, I agree, is done through the Discipline Forces Commission - it has to. But has there been any redeployment so that those who have acquired those skills are better utilised and do not feel frustrated having graduated they could, without being promoted, do this job instead of that job?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, probably some hon. Members would know that there used to be Police Cadets where you could have accelerated promotion, and that for some reason it was stopped. That is precisely why this scheme was made. First of all, it

motivates the policemen, and I agree with the hon. Leader of the Opposition that it gives motivation. When they pass the exam, they expect. I must say, in all fairness, that there were some problems with that scheme, and that is why there has been a delay. There were some problems, because it appeared to be in conflict with other regulations. But that has been sorted out, and that is why posts were created for Police Cadets in the last Budget.

Mrs Jeewa-Daureeawoo: Out of the 26 police officers who have been promoted, may I know how many are women?

The Prime Minister: It is a good question and, for the first time I must say, I have the figures; it's 22. I am sorry. I didn't mean 22 have been promoted. What I mean is that, out of them, there are 22 female who hold the BSc.

Mrs Labelle: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Prime Minister has mentioned that a new scheme is being worked upon for the BSc holders. May I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether he has an indication when this scheme will be ready? Because some years back now, I put a question and this answer was given to me, that is, a new scheme is being worked upon for the new BSc holders. May we have an indication when this scheme will be ready for these persons?

The Prime Minister: I did not want to go into the details, Mr Speaker, Sir. As I explained, there were some conflicts and there were questions about the procedure of doing this scheme. That is why there was the delay. But this scheme is being finalised. In fact, some posts have been created in the last Budget.

CONSOLIDATED FUND - MPs VOLUNTARY CONTRIBUTION

(No. B/3) Mr P. Jugnauth (First Member for Quartier Militaire & Moka) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Home Affairs whether, in regard to the voluntary contribution from hon. Members of Parliament to the National Solidarity Fund or any other fund in favour of the poor, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to the names of those who are contributing therein, indicating the amount of money collected as at to date.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I am tabling a statement giving the information requested by the hon. Member, as provided by the Clerk of the National Assembly.

I should like to inform the House that, for the period 01 July 2009 to 31 December 2009, the monthly salary of Ministers was reduced by Rs10,000 per month and that of the Prime Minister by Rs15,000, and all such deductions from the salary of the Prime Minister and the Ministers were paid into the Consolidated Fund.

MR S. M. G – DEATH - POLICE ENQUIRY

(No. B/4) Mrs A. Navarre-Marie (First Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Home Affairs whether, in regard to the Police inquiry carried out in relation to the death of one Mr S. M. G., which occurred on 13 December 2008, at the Compagnie Mauricienne de Textile Ltée., at La Tour Koenig, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to where matters stand.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that the enquiry into the death of one Mr S.M.G, which occurred on 13 December 2008, following an accident at Compagnie Mauricienne de Textile Ltée., has been completed. The Director of Public Prosecutions has directed the holding of a judicial enquiry in virtue of sections 111 and 112 of the District and Intermediate Courts (Criminal Jurisdiction) Act, and the police have already taken appropriate steps to lodge the case.

In the meantime, I am also informed that the Ministry of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment carried out an enquiry into this fatal accident, and legal proceedings have been instituted against Compagnie Mauricienne de Textile Ltée. for breach of sections 5(1) and 53(5) of the Occupational Safety and Health Act 2005. The case has been lodged at the Industrial Court on 03 December 2009 and is coming for trial on 11 May of this year.

Mrs Navarre-Marie: Mr Speaker, Sir, this unfortunate accident occurred in 2008 but, up to now, the family has not been informed about the outcome of the enquiry. Will the hon. Prime Minister see to it that, at least, the family be informed about the situation?

The Prime Minister: The case is coming to court on 11 May of this year. But, if you say that the family is not aware that the case is going to court, then they should have been.

STOLEN PROPERTY – REPORTED CASES

(No. B/5) Mr N. Bodha (First Member for Vacoas & Floreal) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Home Affairs whether, in regard to possession of stolen property, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the number of reported cases thereof, since January 2009 to date, indicating in each case, if an inquiry has been carried out thereinto and the outcome thereof.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that, for the period January 2009 to 18 March 2010, 371 cases of possession of stolen property have been established, and the outcome of these cases is as follows -

- (a) in 108 cases, the accused have been sentenced/fined;
- (b) 35 cases have been dismissed;
- (c) 114 cases are pending in front of the court, and
- (d) 114 cases are pending enquiry.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I should add that the police are relentlessly pursuing three-tier operations triggered at the Force, Divisional and Station levels aimed at combating larcenies. Through enhanced intelligence and increased crack-down operations, targeted raids and monitoring, the police have been successful in dismantling many gangs operating in various regions of the island and recovering several stolen properties.

Mr Bodha: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether there is a network of *receleurs*, a network of people who are involved in possession of stolen property, and will he agree that dismantling such networks will help a long way towards the inquiry in the larcenies themselves?

The Prime Minister: This is precisely what I said, Mr Speaker, Sir, namely that the police have been successful in dismantling many gangs who were operating in that area. I should say that this is not something that is happening now. The trend has been increasing, and I can give you the figures.

Mr Bérenger: When we look at law and order, criminal issues, I am sure the hon. Prime Minister will agree with me that the trend is very important. We are here talking about possession of stolen property. Can I know from the hon. Prime Minister what is the trend? In 2009, has the situation improved as compared to 2007/2008?

The Prime Minister: Since 2000, the trend has been gradually increasing. I believe that, with the new police three-tier operations, I think they are now being more successful in dismantling these gangs.

Mr Bodha: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether the Field Investigation Unit has been involved in this process?

The Prime Minister: I would have thought so, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Mr Speaker, Sir, stolen property also includes agricultural products. Can the hon. Prime Minister say whether he has figures from the Commissioner of Police and whether there has been traceability of stolen agricultural products?

The Prime Minister: I know that the police have been investigating for agricultural products. But as to whether it is included in that, they have not given me details of the stolen property.

Mrs Jeewa-Daureeawoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, out of the 108 offenders who have been sentenced and fined, can I ask the hon. Prime Minister how many have been re-offending?

The Prime Minister: I don't have the figures, Mr Speaker, Sir, but I can let the hon. Member have them later on.

GYMKHANA JOGGING TRACK – EXTENDING HOURS

(No. B/6) Mr S. Dayal (Second Member for Quartier Militaire & Moka) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Home Affairs whether, in regard to the Gymkhana jogging track at Vacoas, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Special Mobile Force, information as to if consideration will be given for the advisability of -

- (a) extending the opening hours thereof to the public, and
- (b) providing, wherever required, additional floodlights to enable workers who finish up late, to avail themselves of the facilities.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, as regards to part (a) of the question, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that the Vacoas Gymkhana sports grounds, including the jogging track, fall within the security zone of the Special Mobile Force. However, with a view to encouraging the practice of physical exercises, the facilities of the jogging track are opened to the public during specific hours from 06 00 hours to 10 00 hours and from 14 00 hours to 18 00 hours in winter, and from 05 00 hours to 10 00 hours and from

14 00 hours to 19 00 hours in summer. However, there have been numerous requests for the extension of the opening hours because some people feel that, by the time they reach home and they go there, the track is closed. These requests have been passed on to the Commissioner of Police who will also take into account that this is a security zone, but he is relooking at it.

As for part (b) of the question, I am informed that the Special Mobile Force is presently working on a joint project with the Ministry of Environment and National Development Unit and the Municipal Council of Vacoas/Phoenix, to review the lighting system around the Gymkhana sports grounds. The project consists of the installation of double head lamps along the road enclosing the jogging track to enhance visibility thereat and for the safety of the users. The Ministry of Environment and National Development Unit will provide additional vapour lamps, and the Municipal Council will arrange for all fittings, including brackets.

Mr Speaker: The Table has been advised that PQ No. B/7 has been withdrawn.

(No. B/7) Mr Y. Varma (First Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Home Affairs whether, in regard to the holders of the learner's licence, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the reasons why they cannot drive on the main road in Plaine Magnien and, if so, the remedial measures that will be taken, if any.

(Withdrawn)

MR S. C. - COURT CASE - DISMISSAL

(No. B/8) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Home Affairs whether, in regard to the case of conspiracy to import Subutex in Mauritius against Mr S. C. and others before the Intermediate Court which was recently dismissed, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to if, as recommended by the Director of Public Prosecutions, an inquiry has been carried out, following the refusal of witness Ms C. L. to depone therein and, if so, the outcome thereof.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that on 03 November 2009, a case for the offence of conspiracy to import Dangerous Drug, in breach of section 109(1) of the Criminal Code (Supplementary) Act coupled with sections 12 and 29(1)(a) of the Dangerous Drugs Act was lodged against Mr S.C. and one Mr P.C.S.V.

On 10 February 2010, the case was heard before the Intermediate Court. Ms M.C.L. who was the main witness for the prosecution and whose evidence was crucial for the prosecution to establish its case, refused to give evidence and to confirm the allegations she herself made in her statements to the Police. The case was dismissed by the Magistrate for lack of evidence to link both accused parties for the offence. Ms M.C.L. was inflicted the maximum fine of Rs2,000 for refusing to give evidence.

I am also informed that following the dismissal of the case, the Commissioner of Police was advised by the Director of Public Prosecutions on 15 February 2010 to enquire as to whether Ms M.C.L. had not committed an offence pursuant to section 42 of the Dangerous Drugs Act, that is, giving false statements or false evidence. In this regard, after consultation with the Director of Public Prosecutions, the Police is carrying out an enquiry into the conduct of Ms M.C.L. in Court in February, for “Giving Misleading Evidence” in Court in breach of sections 42(2)(a)(4) of the Dangerous Drugs Act.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in her judgment, the Magistrate of the Intermediate Court has made the following observations, and I quote -

“This Court cannot but view this matter with much concern and tends to believe that this sort of conduct on the part of this witness verges on a mockery of justice either by making false allegations to the Police or if the allegations were genuine ones by refusing to confirm them under oath in Court. This is a serious matter which the Court cannot take lightly in its overriding duty of dispensing justice. This sort of conduct is indeed a common occurrence in this Court and it is high time that it should be discouraged and severely dealt with and in such a manner as to deter potential offenders along those lines.”

I concur absolutely with the observations of the Magistrate and I intend, therefore, to bring necessary amendments soon to review the main provisions on “Refusing to give evidence” and “Giving false evidence”. In particular, section 128(2) of the Courts Act will be amended to increase the penalty which a Court may inflict on a person who refuses to give evidence, which it is now, from a maximum fine of Rs2,000 to a maximum fine of Rs10,000 and committal to prison for a period not exceeding seven days.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I also note that, while the offence of “Giving false statements or false evidence” in connection with a drug offence or for any purpose relevant to the Dangerous Drugs Act, is actually punishable by a fine of not less than Rs10,000 and not exceeding

Rs100,000, together with a term of imprisonment of not less than two years and not more than 10 years, the offence of “Giving false evidence” in connection with the other offences is, therefore, punishable by imprisonment for a term not exceeding two years only. Section 126(2) of the District and Intermediate Courts (Criminal Jurisdiction) Act will shortly be amended to provide for tougher penalties for such offence.

Mr Bérenger: Mr Speaker, Sir, what I have heard, I take it that the Police enquiry is looking only at whether, Ms M.C.L. made false allegations and so on. Is the enquiry by the Police looking also whether, she has been threatened or pressurized by anybody to change her stand as she did?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, that is also part of the Police enquiry, why she refused to confirm the statements she made to the Police.

Mr Bérenger: We are talking about Police enquiry and we have only one Police. Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister who is responsible for the Police, whether he is satisfied with the way the enquiry was carried out right from the onset when Ms M.C.L. was caught at the airport? According to me, it was messed right from the beginning.

The Prime Minister: I cannot completely agree with the hon. Leader of the Opposition because, in fact, through intelligence gathering the person was actually caught with these tablets of Subutex and this is what the enquiry proceeded. I cannot say for sure, Mr Speaker, Sir, whether there has been a mess up or not, but this is the situation; she came to Court, she made the allegations, she made the statements and then she refused to confirm the allegations in Court.

Mr Bérenger: The ADSU makes its intelligence work and it was successful at the airport but, from then on, it is the ordinary Police that carry out the enquiry. Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether, he has looked at the way the driver who came to pick up that lady, money movements and so on, were fully enquired into by the Police?

The Prime Minister: That was done by a specialised Police, Mr Speaker, Sir, it was done by ADSU at the time.

Mr Bhagwan: I have two questions, Mr Speaker, Sir. This issue is linked with the old Subutex Saga. This issue has been raised on several occasions in the National Assembly. Can I know from the hon. Prime Minister since we have been talking about the Subutex affairs, whether any political acquaintance trail has been effected by the Police, whether he is concerned as far as this issue of Subutex is concerned?

Mr Speaker: Can I intervene here and tell the hon. Member who has put the question that this is a very specific question concerning one particular case? Now, he cannot enlarge the question talking about Subutex generally. He can come with another question.

Mr Bhagwan: Looking into the case, can I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether the Police has conducted any political acquaintance trail and even an audit trail before and after the judgement? After *la dame a été acquittée*, whether any audit trail has been done as far as, I would say, the financial affairs of this lady is concerned?

The Prime Minister: I can tell the hon. Member that no stone is being left unturned in this case.

Mr Ganoo: Since the hon. Prime Minister has rightly identified the solution to this problem, that is, the law needs to be amended in view of the fact that every day we have drug cases being tried in all our Courts and it is a matter of urgency - because this case can set a bad precedent, in view of the fact that all witnesses can come and adopt the same attitude as this witness - can the hon. Prime Minister come as quickly as possible with the amendments which he rightly proposed in his answer, that is, next week? This is a Bill which should have carried a Certificate of Urgency because every day if witnesses start adopting the attitude of this lady, all accused parties in all our cases which are being tried today will benefit from this same refusal to answer.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker Sir, the Dangerous Drugs Act was passed a long time ago, amended again and it is not the first time that witnesses are not deponing according to their statements in Court. I also said that under the Dangerous Drugs Act already it is punishable, if you give false evidence or false statements in connection with the Drug Offence for any purpose relevant to the Dangerous Drugs Act. It is punishable by a fine of not less than Rs10,000 and not exceeding Rs100,000 together with a term of imprisonment of not less than two years and not more than 10 years for the offence of "giving false evidence" in connection with the Dangerous Drugs Act. It is felt - we discussed it with the State Law Office - that this is appropriate as it is, this is not being amended. What is being amended is the Courts Act, in fact, where somebody refuses to give evidence in spite of the fact that he has given statements. We feel that the maximum fine of Rs2,000 which the person got is not enough.

Mr Ganoo: In the Commission of Enquiry Act, somebody who fails, who refuses to depone in a matter of unlawful drugs, in fact, can be fined to Rs5 m. for the same attitude as

this lady has adopted. So, there is urgency and our law does make provision already for other pieces of legislation for witnesses who refuse to depone without sufficient cause.

The Prime Minister: I want to make it clear Mr Speaker, Sir, we are not talking about the Dangerous Drugs Act which already it is felt, it is quite severe as it is. I think it was done by the previous Government, if I am not mistaken; we have amended it later on, but we are talking about the Courts Act, where, in fact, when there is contempt of Court, somebody makes statements to the Police and then refuses to confirm the statements he made.

Mr Bérenger: Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister, we are dealing here with a case where the DPP has asked for the Police to carry out an enquiry; whenever, we are dealing with Mr S.C. it seems that extraordinary things happen. Now, is the hon. Prime Minister aware of what took place yesterday between the Police and DPP's Office, with open war before the Magistrate, where the Magistrate ordered a Police officer to come because a junior officer had been sent? The DPP's representative broke down in tears at the end of the episode and Mr S.C. was having fun at the Police officer's concern? Has the hon. Prime Minister been made aware of that and is he going to take action so that nothing of the sort happens between the DPP's Office and the Police?

The Prime Minister: In fact, I am well aware of it, Mr Speaker, Sir. The senior Police officer, who was asked to come and depone, did not come and depone because he said he had already delegated somebody junior. The DPP insisted that the senior officer would come to court; eventually he did come to court. I think the case is being taken up today as well. I have asked the Commissioner of Police, without going into the administrative works of the Police, that if the DPP has asked a senior Police officer to come and depone, I would have thought he should have come and depone in the first place.

Mr Bhagwan: Can I know from the hon. Prime Minister whether any inquiry has been effected by the Police, the ADSU or MCIT of all persons who have visited that lady in prison? Has any list been prepared?

The Prime Minister: The Police, of course, know who visits who in the prison, Mr Speaker, Sir. I don't think I should go further in that because it is Police matters.

Mr Bhagwan: Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether his attention has been drawn to the fact that *des personnes louches qui étaient en cour à chaque fois - surtout les derniers jours - que cette dame allait être présente, fixant leur regard sur elle, en train de l'intimider.*

(Interruptions)

You are laughing; this is very serious.

Mr Speaker: I think this is in Indian films.

Mr Bhagwan: But things happen in Mauritius. Members of Parliament have given VIP to that lady.

(Interruptions)

This has happened in Mauritius.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order, Order, Order! I was just joking.

Mr Bhagwan: I am not joking. This is serious. If you go in the deprived regions and you see all these poor youngsters...

Mr Speaker: The hon. Member should put his question.

Mr Bhagwan: ... whose health is being damaged by Subutex. So, I am asking the Prime Minister very seriously whether he has been made aware that *des personnes louches étaient en cour régulièrement dans les derniers jours fixant leurs regards sur cette dame.*

The Prime Minister: I was not in court to know who fixed whom, Mr Speaker, Sir. It is for the Police to do it.

Mr Guimbeau: Mr Speaker, Sir, the biggest concern for people in the House and out there is that this lady got access to the VIP with the help of a politician. Can we know from the Prime Minister, as from now, is he going to have all VIPs and VVIPs searched because the Subutex came through the VIP? I am asking the Prime Minister if he is going to have the VIPs and the VVIPs searched. Can we get the name of the politician who gave access to her?

Mr Speaker: No, no, no.

The Prime Minister: This question has already been asked. First of all, Mr Speaker, Sir, I should say that, in fact, we forget that actually the person was caught with Subutex tablets and let's not forget that. Secondly, since then, I have already given instructions - hon. Members may not like it - that hon. Members of Parliament will not get access to the State lounge, except for certain of them, like the hon. Leader of the Opposition. We have to make a distinction for persons occupying certain posts like hon. Cuttaree because he is in charge of the Audit Committee and all this. But, generally, Members of Parliament are now not going to get access to the State lounge which means they must expect to be searched, if need be.

Mr Speaker: Time is over! The Table has been informed that Parliamentary Question B/13 has been withdrawn. Questions addressed to hon. Ministers! Hon. Mrs Hanoomanjee!

PROTECTION FROM DOMESTIC VIOLENCE – LEGISLATION - AMENDMENT

(No. B/26) Mrs S. Hanoomanjee (Second Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Attorney General whether, in regard to the protection from domestic violence, he will state if Government proposes to amend the existing legislation with a view to strengthening the implementation thereof.

Mr Valayden: Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to remind the hon. Member and the House that amendments have already been brought to the Protection from Domestic Violence Act through the Protection from Domestic Violence (Amendment) Act 2007 which was passed in the National Assembly on 04 December 2007 and which awaits proclamation.

These amendments were brought in line with the Government Programme 2005-2010 which highlights the need to strengthen the enforcement mechanism of the Act.

We are awaiting proclamation because the Rules Committee of the Supreme Court has not yet finalised the draft report of the rules which pertain to the Act.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Attorney General whether in the light of new developments - because we see every day that despite protection orders, women are still being raped and battered to death – he doesn't think that there are other amendments to be brought to the Assembly so that remedial actions can be taken and that we can see results?

Mr Valayden: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Member is right. We not only have to amend, we have already amended, we are waiting the Rules Committee to sit and give us its report for it to come into operation. But, I have also asked the Law Reform Commission to look at it again so that we can bring new amendments because it is a moving post. We will not stop amending and we will continue reinforcing the mechanism in order to protect the women of this country.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Can I ask the Attorney General whether the Law Reform Commission will also include social workers, opinion leaders and other legislators as well to come and give their opinion, those who are working regularly with those people so that we may come up with something concrete.

Mr Valayden: Before the new amendment was brought into this august Assembly, there was a seminar. There were Committees with different members even Members of this House, but then I will ask the Law Reform Commission to ask people who are well-attended with the problem to come and depone so that they can take into stock before going on with certain proposed amendments so that everybody can bring their share.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE & CHILD ABUSE - AUDIT

(No. B/27) Mrs S. Hanoomanjee (Second Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Minister of Women's Rights, Child Development and Family Welfare whether, in regard to domestic violence and child abuse, she will state if an audit of the existing facilities to combat same has been carried out, since January 2007 to date and, if so, indicate the –

- (a) outcome and recommendations thereof, and
- (b) if weaknesses have been identified and, if so, the remedial measures that have been taken.

Mrs Seebun: Mr Speaker Sir, in regard to domestic violence, an Audit Report on Existing Services and Care provided in Family Support Bureaux and Shelters was launched on 25 November 2009. As concerns child abuse, a similar audit exercise will follow.

As regards part (a), I am tabling a copy of the Audit Report which acknowledges that support services offered to victims in the Family Support Bureaux are appreciated by our clients and also underlines that our institutional mechanism is fulfilling its mandate. Concurrently, the Report also makes recommendations to address identified shortcomings.

Concerning part (b), my Ministry has already taken the following measures to address some of the weaknesses identified in the Audit Report –

- (i) To achieve more effective communication campaigns in the community, in collaboration with Community Based Organisations and other stakeholders, a Strategic Planning and Capacity Building Programme to Combat Domestic Violence has already been organised for our main stakeholders, namely -
 - the Ministry of Local Government, Rodrigues and Outer Islands;
 - the Ministry of Social Security, National Solidarity and Senior Citizens Welfare & Reform Institutions;
 - the Ministry of Environment and National Development Unit through the Citizens' Advice Bureaux;
 - the Sugar Industry Labour Welfare Fund, and
 - the National Women`s Council.
- (ii) Additionally, an Open Day was organised by my Ministry on 18 March 2010 in the presence of Mrs Mary Jo Wills, Ambassador of the United States of America, to sensitise the public at large on support services given to victims of domestic violence.
- (iii) Training on Counselling Techniques was conducted for Family Counselling Officers and Family Welfare and Protection Officers of my Ministry by the University of Mauritius in November 2009. The training programme has enhanced the skills of the officers to deal with victims of domestic violence as well as abusers.

Mr Speaker: I am sorry to interrupt the hon. Minister. If you have long answers like this, you just have to circulate your answers. It takes a lot of time and finally we don't reach the end of the Question Time.

Mrs Seebun: It is almost finished.

- (iv) We have put up 6 Area Domestic Violence Committees.
- (v) We have also set up a Victim Empowerment & Abuser Rehabilitation Policy which is under way.

Finally, the hon. Member should already be aware about the Special Collaborative Programme for Support to Women and Children in Distress.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Mr Speaker, Sir, pending the fact that I take cognizance of the recommendations of the report, as one of the weaknesses identified there is a question of the Family Support Bureau because since 2005 there has been six Family Support Bureaux under the aegis of the Ministry. With the increase in the number of cases, does not the Minister think that there should have been a decentralisation of the Family Support Bureaux?

Mrs Seebun: In fact, it is already envisaged and we are having very shortly nine Family Support Bureaux for the nine different districts.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Mr Speaker, Sir, there was a sort of Joint Monitoring Committee between the Ministry and the police department regarding these cases. Can the Minister say whether this Joint Monitoring Committee is still in existence or has it already been dissolved and why?

Mrs Seebun: Already in 2006, Mr Speaker, Sir, we had set up a protocol of assistance with the police department and we are working in close collaboration.

Mr Speaker: Is it still there?

Mrs Seebun: It is still there and operational.

WOMEN – VIOLENCE VICTIMS - EMPLOYMENT

(No. B/28) Mrs S. Hanoomanjee (Second Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Minister of Women's Rights, Child Development and Family Welfare whether, in regard to women who have been victims of violence, she will state the number of cases thereof reported to her Ministry, since January 2006 to date, indicating the number thereof who –

- (a) were not in gainful employment,
- (b) have been provided training to enable them join the labour market, and
- (c) have ultimately joined gainful employment.

Mrs Seebun:, Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the hon. Member that for the past four years, a total of 7295 cases of women victim of domestic violence has been reported to the Family Support Bureaux of my Ministry, that is, an average of about 1800 each year.

Concerning parts (a) and (b) of the Parliamentary Question, as per the practice at my Ministry, unemployed women who are victims of domestic violence are immediately referred to appropriate institutions namely – National Women Entrepreneur Council (NWEC),

National Women's Council (NWC), National Empowerment Foundation (NEF), Mauritius Institute of Training and Development (MITD) and Small and Medium Enterprise Development Authority (SMEDA), for training and gainful employment.

As regards part I, since 2005, policies and programmes of my Ministry are directed towards economic independence of women, which certainly goes a long way in helping them to break the cycle of violence.

I am tabling the number of unemployed women who have been sensitized, trained, obtained employment or set up their own enterprises.

Mrs Hanoomajee: Mr Speaker, Sir, I thank the Minister, but whilst I appreciate that all the institutions which have been mentioned by the Minister cater also for all women, not specifically for women victims of violence, because she will appreciate that a woman victim of violence, her immediate need is to earn a living. What is being done specifically for these women? Has something been set up for them?

Mrs Seebun: We do believe that economic independence of women will go a long way in sorting out the problem of violence. In the past, we did not have in our intake form the element of employment and we are capturing this information as well whether the battered women are employed or unemployed and in case they are unemployed, we are doing the needful.

CEB – WORKERS – TREATMENT & COMPENSATION

(No. B/29) **Mrs S. Grenade (Second Member for GRNW & Port Louis West)** asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Renewable Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to the accident which occurred on the premises of the Central Electricity Board, on 29 September 2008, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Board, information as to the number of workers who were injured, indicating -

- (a) the number thereof –
 - (i) whose treatment have been completed,
 - (ii) having been sent abroad for treatment,
 - (iii) awaiting to be sent abroad for treatment, and
- (b) if the Board proposes to give any compensation to them.

Dr. Beebeejaun: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Member may wish to refer to the reply I made to PQ No. B/1259, wherein I informed the House that five employees sustained injuries, namely –

1. Mr Clency Bibi - Shift Foreman,
2. Mr Benjamin Moutou - Assistant Shift Foreman
3. Mr Bernard Raffa – Shift Technician
4. Mr Twafick Pooloo - Cadet Technician
5. Mr Jean Pitchen - a contractor's employee.

Mr Pitchen and Mr Pooloo have completed treatment and have resumed duty in September and December 2008 respectively. Mr Bibi resumed duty on flexi-time on medical advice at Fort Georges Power Station on 01 March 2010. As regards Messrs Raffa and Mr Moutou, they are still on injury leave and are receiving their full salary from the CEB.

Messrs C. Bibi and B. Moutou were sent to Réunion for treatment. All the medical and travel expenses of the employees and their close relatives were met by the CEB. Mr Moutou needs further treatment. In this regard a Medical Specialist of Bellepierre Hospital in Réunion would be visiting Mauritius and will examine him shortly.

I am also informed by the CEB that its employees are covered by a Group Personal Accident Insurance Policy for bodily injuries arising from accidents on and outside duty, on a 24-hour basis and worldwide. As regards compensation, it will be paid by the insurance company when the permanent/partial disability is assessed by the treating medical specialist.

SOCIAL HOUSING UNITS - CONSTRUCTION

(No. B/30) Mr P. Jugnauth (First Member for Quartier Militaire & Moka) asked the Minister of Housing and Lands whether, in regard to the social housing units, he will state the number of new units constructed by Government, since November 2007 to date, excluding those whose construction started prior to that date, indicating the –

- (a) location thereof, and
- (b) amount of money spent, as at to date.

Dr. Kasenally: Mr Speaker Sir, in regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed that in May 2009, the NHDC awarded the contract for the construction of 550 low cost housing units over 11 sites, namely Petite Rivière, Glen Park, La Tour Koenig, Camp Diable,

Plaine Magnien, Grand Bel Air, Britannia, d'Épinay, Cottage, Calebasses, and Roche Bois. Works have already started on all sites and are expected to be completed by February 2011.

As regard part (b) of the question, the total cost of the project is Rs325 m., comprising of Rs169 m. in respect of building cost to be met by the NHDC and Rs156 m. in respect of infrastructure works to be met from Government funds. As at date a total amount of Rs25 m. has been spent on the infrastructure component.

Mr Jugnauth: Mr Speaker, Sir, how many units have already been completed up to date?

Dr. Kasenally: Mr Speaker, Sir, the work has just started in May and they are going all over. It is not yet completed. It is an ongoing process just as previously we already completed construction of 533 housing units where were started just before 2005.

Mr Jugnauth: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I just get a clarification from the hon. Minister? I understand that there was a project that has been completed at La Valette, which probably falls under the Empowerment Programme Project. If the Minister has the information, how much contribution has been obtained from the Medine Sugar Estate?

Dr. Kasenally: Mr Speaker, Sir, La Valette was constructed by the National Empowerment Fund which falls under the aegis of the Ministry of Finance and Economic Corporation, but as from now on, from this Budget, my Ministry has taken over the construction of all the social units where there is a lot still under the pipeline.

Mr Dowarkasing: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister has stated that there are 11 sites. Can he table a copy of those 11 sites with the respective number of houses that are being constructed there?

Dr. Kasenally: Yes, Sir, I shall do so.

VACOAS/PHOENIX – SME INDUSTRIAL ESTATE

(No. B/31 Mr P. Jugnauth (First Member for Quartier Militaire & Moka) asked the Minister of Business, Enterprise and Co-operatives whether, in regard to the new Small and Medium Enterprise Industrial Estate constructed in Vacoas-Phoenix, he will state the exact location thereof.

The vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Empowerment (Dr. R. Sithanen): Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I shall reply to PQ B/31.

As the House is aware, initially a plot of land belonging to the SIT was identified at Belle Rive Junction along the Hermitage Road. However, this plot of land was already leased to the MSIRI for experimental purposes prior its purchase. As the acquisition of the proposed plot of land did not materialize, DBM started negotiation in April 2009 with the SLDC to acquire an appropriate plot of land owned by the latter.

However, on this new site construction works could only start after several months as basic industrial infrastructure such as 3-phase electricity, sewerage disposal system etc, was not available.

Around the same time, factory space of 25,000 ft² leased from DBM, situated not far from the previous earmarked site, was surrendered by two tenants at the Vacoas Phoenix Industrial Estate situated at Valentina, Phoenix along the road leading to Petit Camp.

Consequently, instead of constructing a new building as initially planned, DBM proceeded with the partitioning of the released industrial space in order to convert it into smaller units ranging from 1,000 to 2,000 ft² so as to accommodate the SMEs. I am informed some 13 units are available for occupancy and DBM has offered them for lease to SMEs who were on its waiting list.

Mr Jugnauth: Can I just know from the hon. vice-Prime Minister whether all the units have been occupied as at today?

Dr. Sithanen: The information I have, Mr Speaker, Sir, is that 13 SMEs were offered these facilities. I am informed as follows: two have already completed the necessary formalities and the keys of the units have been handed to them. Seven of the SMEs are completing necessary formalities; four SMEs have declined the offer for space. So, the Bank has offered the space through SMEDA to incubaties currently operating in the Business Incubator Centre at Coromandel and whose lease agreement with SMEDA has expired.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. vice-Prime Minister whether he can give us the date at which the DBM started the partitioning work on this site?

Dr. Sithanen: I don't know. I think it must be the last quarter of 2009, because it was only in the second quarter of 2009 that they realised that it will take quite a lot of time to have all the infrastructure installed on the site that was initially earmarked.

**REGISTRAR OF COMPANIES & REGISTRAR OF BUSINESS – BUSINESSES -
CESSATION OF BUSINESS**

(No. B/32) **Mr P. Jugnauth (First Member for Quartier Militaire & Moka)** asked the vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance & Economic Empowerment whether, in regard to the businesses registered by the Registrar of Companies and the Registrar of Business, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to the number thereof having ceased business, since July 2006 to date.

The vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance & Economic Empowerment (Dr. R. Sithanen): Mr Speaker, Sir, since the coming into effect of the Business Registration Act, on 01 October 2006, all persons carrying out business in Mauritius either as a company or otherwise, should be registered with the Registrar of Businesses. There were 29,000 companies existing prior to October 2006, and these companies were deemed to have been automatically registered.

As such, inclusive of these companies, since October 2006 to date, 123,730 businesses have been registered of which 43,052 are domestic companies.

Over the same period, 9,383 businesses were deregistered of which 6,260 were companies.

The House may wish to note that the Companies Act now provides for the Registrar to administratively strike-off companies for non-compliance with companies from certain provisions of the Act like non-filing of returns or non-payment of registration fees.

Consequently, under this administrative flexibility to weed out its books, out of the 6,260 companies, the Registrar struck off 4,453 from its register for not complying with the requirements of the Companies Act. On the other hand, 232 companies were wound up by the court and the remaining 1,575 companies went through voluntary winding up.

Mr Speaker, Sir, these figures do not necessarily indicate what has been the contribution to the economy. Job creation in large establishment has been well above 19,000 during the period 2006/2008. During the same period more than 16,000 jobs were created in small establishments. In 2009, in spite of the difficult situation, net job creation in small establishments has been around 7,600.

Mr Jugnauth: I am sure the hon. vice-Prime Minister is concerned about the number of cessation of businesses. Of course, as he has just explained, there are a number of factors that have contributed to those cessations, but can he inform the House whether any study has been carried out in order to know the exact causes, so that if there are businesses that have been set up and have been unsuccessful, at least, that will have to be addressed.

Dr. Sithanen: It's a fair question, Mr Speaker, Sir. We all know that for SMEs and micro enterprises, the first two years are usually difficult. I have just informed the House, Mr Speaker, Sir, that prior to 2006, there was around 29,000 companies and after that there were 123,000 companies. That's a four-fold increase. Obviously, some of them are bound not to succeed, but in the overwhelming majority of cases they are continuing to do business and that's why their contribution to GDP and their contribution to employment have increased. Now, we have both at Enterprise Mauritius and at the Ministry responsible for small business, a Unit that advises, that gives counsel to enterprises on how they should go through that painful period, Government will continue to do that job and to support enterprises during that initial period, because the evidence suggests that, very often, in that critical period of two years, it may be extremely difficult for some of the SMEs to survive. So, we will have to follow them up during that period of two years.

Mr Jugnauth: I have one more additional question. May I, again, draw the attention of the hon. vice-Prime Minister that there are a number of people who set up a small enterprise. They go and register with the Registrar and, ultimately, because there is a policy decision from local councils, for example, hawkers' licences are not granted and they end up with no possibility of going forward with that kind of business. So, if initially, at least, they are aware that in certain lines of entrepreneurship they won't be able to get any licence, would the hon. vice-Prime Minister look into that?

Dr. Sithanen: Yes, I'll do that.

PLANTERS – HARVEST LOSS – REGROUPING PROJECTS

(No. B/33) **Mr S. Dayal (Second Member for Quartier Militaire & Moka)** asked the Minister of Agro Industry, Food Production and Security whether, in regard to the small and medium planters, he will state the number thereof who are losing harvests, due to the regrouping projects.

Mr Faugoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, the project of regrouping small and medium sugar cane planters' fields, specifically referred to as the Field Operation Regrouping and Irrigation Project, the FORIP, is an important component of the sugar sector reform under the Multi Annual Adaptation Strategy (MAAS).

The basic objective of the FORIP is to reduce cost of production of the small and medium sugar cane planters and increase productivity to enhance their competitiveness. The main rationale is to enable the planter to withstand the EU price cut of sugar by 36% as a

result of the reforms of the EU Sugar Regime and also the phasing out of the Sugar Protocol. Furthermore, it is also important to keep the small and medium planters in the main stream of production. This is to enable the sugar industry to have the critical MASS in terms of cane production. Otherwise, the viability of the whole industry is at stake.

It is worth noting that the FORIP Project was first initiated in 2007 at Queen Victoria, FUEL and as at date the project has recorded a successful rate of 90%. As at date, there are some 2,000 planters on the waiting list to join the project over an acreage of 1,600 ha., and no planter has pulled out of the project so far.

Some 4,000 ha. of land have so far been regrouped and derocked. Some 2,000 planters, covering some 1,279 ha., have foregone one crop and they have been paid a cash advance of Rs 15,000 per *arpent*.

In fact, Mr Speaker, Sir, the House will note that the replantation of most of the fields were undertaken during the *Grande Saison*. This implies that the planters whose fields have been planted during the *Grande Saison* will only be able to harvest the cane in the following crop year. All the planters who have joined in the FORIP were aware of this fact as stipulated in the contract agreement. This explains the decision taken by this Government to make available a cash advance for any crop foregone in order to alleviate the cash flow problems which may arise during the prevailing year.

Under the FORIP, provision is made for the payment of a cash advance of Rs15,000 per *arpent* to planters whose fields were under sugar cane prior to joining the project and whose fields are being planted during the long season period.

I have been informed by the Mauritius Sugar Authority that 19 of these planters have lost a second crop. The Project Implementation Committee which is monitoring the implementation of the FORIP has recommended the payment of a second cash advance of Rs7,500 per *arpent* to these planters in order to ease any further cash flow problem.

It is worth noting that one of the major setbacks which has had an impact on the progress of work is the severe climatic conditions, that is, heavy rainfall prevailing during the year 2008, derocking and land preparation works and this had caused major delay in some instances.

I have also been informed that the implementation processes have been reviewed at the level of the Project Implementation Committee and the MSA. In view of shortcomings noted, corrective measures are being undertaken where appropriate.

Furthermore, the House will note that the Head of Delegation from the European Union has also shown a special interest on this project and several field visits have been organised. The last site visit was held on 18 March 2010 and I am informed that the Delegations are satisfied with the overall implementation of the project.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish also to apprise the House that the contract for the appointment of a Consultant to undertake a mid-term review of the MAAS as provided for in the Plan, is presently being finalized by the Ministry of Finance and Economic Empowerment. It is expected that any weaknesses observed in the implementation of the MAAS and in particular the FORIP, will be addressed and remedial actions will be taken accordingly.

Mr Spéville: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have several questions.

Mr Speaker: We will continue after lunch then, in one and a half hour.

At 12.59 p.m. the sitting was suspended.

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

The Deputy Speaker: The Table has been advised that PQs B/36 and B/67 have been withdrawn.

Mr Dayal: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I thank the hon. Minister for his comprehensive reply. In fact, I appreciate the work done by the previous and present Minister of Agro Industry, Food Production and Security, but I would like to bring a concrete example of planters who have lost their crops. Is the hon. Minister aware that the...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please!

Mr Dayal: ...Mohit group, as per the advice of the Sugar Authority...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please!

Mr Dayal: ...had to do premature harvesting...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please!

Mr Dayal: ...in 2007, that is, right at the beginning of harvesting when the cane was not even ripe. So, they followed the instructions allowing the Sugar Authority to start the

derocking, the land preparation and then plantation to be completed by December 2007. This group cooperated with the result that they had to lose the sucrose content. They even accepted to forego the first crop. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is the hon. Minister aware that they had forgone the 2008 and 2009 harvests also? Until today the cane has not been planted and equipment have not been installed. So, it will amount to losing a third harvest and this is creating lots of hardship to this group.

Mr Faugoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am aware of these facts pertaining to the Mohit group. As I said, in this project, we have recorded a success rate of 90%. It must surely be one of those falling under the 10%. We had some problems with this project initially; there was a delay due to non supply of electricity. This was the original problem. I am also aware that they were not able to plant in time. The cause of the delay was that there was no electricity supply. I am aware of the problem. We have taken stock of the problem. I have sent the MSA on site to take stock and to do a survey of what is happening there and they are finding a solution. Within a reasonable time this will be sorted out, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Ms Deerpalsing: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in the context of these people who are losing harvest, may I ask the hon. Minister whether he is aware of the problems that have arisen with respect to – when we are talking about derocking – the rocks of these small planters' fields because in the contract they don't have the rocks? Is he aware of the side business that is being conducted with these rocks, who is taking these rocks and who is selling to whom and at what price?

Mr Faugoo: According to the contract and according to the policy which has been formulated, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the rocks which come out from derocking are sold by the contractor to people who are ready to buy and they, in fact, predict the accounts of the MSA with the proceeds of sale. I have been told that there is indeed some lack of monitoring; there is a lack of control which I am actually looking at and I will come up with a proper sort of monitoring and control.

Mr Dayal: I thank the hon. Minister for the attention he is showing to the planters in question, but, at the same time, I would like to request him to speed up matters because of the delay in the implementation of this plantation of cane and the installation of necessary equipments. The same group cannot have access to four *arpents* of land which were under

fruit cultivation because while the derocking was done, it has damaged the water network and this is creating a lot of hardship.

Mr Faugoo: I'll look into the matter and the needful will be done.

Ms Deerpalsing: Just a follow-up question on derocking and the rocks. I thank the hon. Minister for his answer. May I request him as to whether he would look into having a complete survey of all these planters who are in regroupment projects and having a consistent and systematic survey of all these contractors who are taking rocks from their fields and selling to whoever third parties and the amount of revenue that is being credited to the MSA on their credit? Would the hon. Minister agree to have a systematic survey on that?

Mr Faugoo: I will definitely look into the matter.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Minister whether he is aware that several planters are losing their harvest because the sugar estates concerned do not have the crushing capacity? So, the cane is harvested, but it remains in the fields because of the crushing capacity of the sugar estates.

Mr Faugoo: The hon. Member can come with a substantive question, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member can do that.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, there have been several problems in this regrouping project, but I understand there was a monitoring committee at the level of the Mauritius Sugar Authority. Can the hon. Minister say whether it is the same officer who is chairing that monitoring committee or there has been a change in the chairmanship of that committee and who is chairing that committee now?

Mr Faugoo: In fact, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, there was no such monitoring committee, there was a project implementation committee and we had a lot of problems with some planters precisely because there was no monitoring committee and it is only now that I have set up a monitoring committee where the planter forms part of the committee. He and the different persons who are chairing the different committees can follow up all the actions, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

The Deputy Speaker: Last question, hon. Dayal!

Mr Dayal: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, according to the contract, the planters who had to forgo their crop, were entitled to Rs15,000 in advance per *arpent* to be reimbursed in several

instalments, but what about those planters who have had no crop, no cane plantation and no harvest? Are they supposed to pay? Because they have no harvest, so, they are not earning anything. What about them?

Mr Faugoo: As I said, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is a cash advance. So, they only pay back when they start harvesting. This is an advance which is given by the Government for the cash flow due to non-harvesting of the crop. This is given specially bearing in mind because they had to forgo one harvest, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. So, they will only have to pay back once they start harvesting.

Mr Dayal: Those who have forgone the 2008 and 2009 harvests, will they have to reimburse that because they have forgone, they have no income and no earning. Will they keep the money advanced to them or will they have to reimburse?

Mr Faugoo: I must put it on record, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that none of the planters have lost three harvests. I said out of nearly 4,000 planters, there are only 19 who have lost their second crop and, as I said, the cash advance is given to those who are losing their first crop. We are giving Rs7,500 for the second crop. But this is an advance and they will have to pay according to the terms and conditions of the contract once they start harvesting.

Mr Dayal: What is the form of compensation for those who have forgone several crops?

Mr Faugoo: There is no compensation, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

OLD-AGE PENSION - BENEFICIARIES

(No. B/35) Dr. A. Husnoo (Second Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Social Security, National Solidarity and Senior Citizens Welfare & Reform Institutions whether in regard to the old age pension, she will state if consideration will be given for making it compulsory for her Ministry to contact the eligible persons, once they have reached the age of sixty, in replacement of the present system whereby the onus is on the person to contact the Ministry.

Mrs Bappoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the old-age pension is a universal pension and it has always been the responsibility of future beneficiaries to notify my Ministry when they reach the age of 60.

According to present practice, all future beneficiaries are requested to put up their applications, at least, three months before they become entitled. If they are unable to do so

because of physical disability or for any other reasons, they may enlist the assistance of a proxy.

I wish to inform the House, that although my Ministry has a database of citizens of Mauritius above the age of 18, yet information contained in that database relating to residential addresses, cannot be relied upon as future beneficiaries do not keep my Ministry informed of any latest residential addresses. So, according to report available, we have only around 15 applications submitted with a delay of less than six months on a yearly basis of an average total of 10,000 cases. This comes, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, to around 0.14% of the total number of applications and these beneficiaries are paid their full entitlement with the required number of months of arrears. As regards to those who are late for a period of exceeding six months, it becomes to around 3% of the total number of cases and most of them relate to those who were abroad.

I wish to inform the House that my Ministry has already embarked on a new national sensitization campaign to inform members of the public of the procedures to be followed for the timely submission of their applications for the Basic Retirement Pension. A first communiqué has been issued in the press in January last and thereafter the communiqué will be issued and explained every three months in the media and in all the networks of the Ministry.

CHINESE TRADITIONAL MEDICINE – HOSPITALS & DISPENSARIES

(No. B/36) Dr A. Husnoo (Second Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether, in regard to the Chinese traditional medicine, he will state if same is practised in Government hospitals and, if not, if Government will consider its introduction thereat and in the dispensaries.

(Withdrawn)

RELIGIOUS MARRIAGE - PENSION

(No. B/38) Mr S. Mohamed (Third Member for Rivière des Anguilles & Souillac) asked the Minister of Social Security, National Solidarity and Senior Citizens Welfare & Reform Institutions whether she is aware of the cases of the 800 widows who were married only religiously during the period 1987 to 1990 and who are not receiving their widow's pension, and if so, will she state the remedial measures that Government proposes to take.

Mrs Bappoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, my Ministry does not have any record of the number of cases of widows who were religiously married during the period 1987 to 1990 and who are not receiving their widow's pension. Such information is not even available at the Civil Status Office.

However, my Ministry is fully aware of this issue and being given that it is a sensitive one, which is not solely linked to the payment of pensions, we have to tread carefully. Several meetings have been held between my Ministry and the relevant stakeholders including the State Law Office and the Civil Status Office to work out an appropriate solution to the problem.

The House may wish to note, that the National Pensions Appeal Tribunal had in its rulings given in April 1998 and August 2003 by Justice Ahnee in the case of Mrs Seckdiouman and Mrs Oozeer respectively v. the National Pension Officer upheld the decisions of the National Pension Officers not to grant the Basic Widow's Pension to the two claimants, who were religiously married during that period. So, based on these rulings, no similar cases can henceforth be entertained if appropriate changes are not brought to the Civil Status Act to give legal recognition to religious marriages celebrated during the period 1987 to December 1990. The more so as Art 228-8 and 228-10 of the Civil Code stipulate as follows. I quote –

“for a religious marriage to be governed by those articles of the Code, including the provision that a widow of such marriage may claim widow's pension, such marriages have to be registered in accordance with the Civil Status Act.”

So, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as the House can observe, this issue is not only a pension issue but it is a cross cutting one and we have thus to adopt an integrated approach with all the Ministries and stakeholders concerned.

The House may wish to note that discussions are still ongoing with all the concerned stakeholders regarding the appropriate course of action to follow.

Mr Mohamed: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have carefully listened to the answer provided for by the hon. Minister. Before I put my next question, may I just briefly explain that it seems as though between 1987 and 1990, widows who were married religiously during that period are not entitled to widow's basic pension as opposed to widows married after 1990 or as opposed to women married religiously before 1987. So, as such I am happy to note that the hon. Minister recognises that by operation of law and politicking there are two

classes of widows in Mauritius - those who are entitled to basic widow's pension and those who are not. We, at least, admit that there are two classes of widows who are not being treated equally.

The hon. Minister has also stated that there have been several meetings carried out even with the State Law Office. Is there at least a draft legislation that is being proposed to bring changes to the law in order to correct this inequality and to bring fairness to the system and to remove the two classes of widows from the system?

Mrs Bappoo: At this very stage, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, there is nothing as a draft legislation proposed by the State Law Office, but I know that we are relying on the Civil Status Office for its views, then the State Law Office maybe will be able to find the policy which needs to be implemented as far as the amendment of the law is concerned. The amendment won't be an amendment to the National Pension Act. It will be mainly amendment to the Civil Status Act. So, I rely to the legal advice to be given by the State Law Office in the near future.

Mr Mohamed: I try to understand, I don't want to be nasty or anything, but I am just trying to know. I have the impression that the answer we have obtained here is not relying on the pension issue - therefore, the hon. Minister's Ministry - but we are talking here about the Civil Status issue which is the Prime Minister's Office. I would like to draw the attention of the House to reason as follows: granted that this is an inter-ministerial issue, what does the hon. Minister propose? Meetings again, fair enough! When is the next meeting? Has there been an official request emanating from the hon. Minister's Ministry to the State Law Office or to the Prime Minister's Office requesting the need for a meeting? If that is the case, when that meeting is going to be? If the agenda for change of the law is on the notes of the meeting and, if that is not the case, why is it not? That is the problem. We want to go fast with it. Since 1987 people are suffering.

Mrs Bappoo: It is most unfortunate, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. I cannot answer on behalf of the Prime Minister's Office and the Civil Status Office. We have been stuck at the level of the Civil Status Office. I need to stand by the guidance of the State Law Office, because it is not an amendment to be brought at the level of my Ministry. The amendment will be at the level of another Ministry, of another Act which is the Civil Status Act, because that widow's pension is an issue of marriage; it is not an issue of pension. So, I am, just waiting for that. I can only inform my colleague, the hon. Member, that I can only again

request the Civil Status Office for the final views so that we can inform the State Law Office or the State Law Office to advise the Civil Status Office what is the course of action.

Mr Mohamed: One last question, with your permission, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Since this is an urgent matter and since we are talking about a class of widows who, for a period of four years, are not entitled to pension, that since it concerns the Civil Status Office and it does not only concern the State Law Office and since it concerns, from the very words of the hon. Minister, an amendment to the Civil Status Act that would bring order and equality to widows in Mauritius that they are all fitted equally, if that is the case, may I humbly request that the hon. Minister takes this up with the hon. Prime Minister since it concerns his Ministry, if she has not already done so, may I request that she formally does so in the shape of a Cabinet Paper?

Mrs Bappoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, how can the hon. Member speak about a Cabinet Paper? I cannot bring a Cabinet Paper on behalf of the Civil Status Office. My answer is so simple.

Dr. Husnoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, since we are having conflicting views from different Ministries, different legal views, would the hon. Minister consider setting up a committee under the chairmanship of the Attorney General to look at the conflicting views to sort out this problem?

Mrs Bappoo: I do appreciate that reflection of the hon. Member. I will certainly ask my colleague, the Attorney General, to give a helping hand, so that we know what will be the exact policy to be followed.

ROBINSON, CUREPIPE – CLOAK ROOM - CONSTRUCTION

(No. B/39) Mr M. Dowarkasing (Third Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the Minister of Environment and National Development Unit whether, in regard to the project for the construction of a cloak room, a kiosk and a bowling alley in the region of Robinson, Curepipe, he will state if works have started and, if so, where matters stand.

Mr Bundhoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that due to numerous problems such as encroachment from resident, presence of CWA pipes and complaints from inhabitants to the effect that the cloak room would be too close to their houses, the project has encountered long delay. I have, however, after consultations with hon. Dowarkasing, requested the consultant of the NDU to look afresh at the construction of the cloak room.

As regards the kiosk, a contract was awarded to Pointe aux Piments Agro Mechanical Cooperative Society Ltd on 01 June 2004, and the contractual starting and completion date was 12 July 2004 and 23 January 2005 respectively. The contract was terminated on 03 June 2005, because the contractor failed to complete the work due to inadequate resources deployed on site. NDU consultant, Lux Consult, was requested on 02 February 2010 to carry out a survey and submit scope of work and cost estimate for the completion of the work.

Further, the consultant would also submit scope of work and cost estimate for the following works: a parking area adjacent to the football ground, demolishing of existing base work of the cloak room, if necessary, subject to the recommendations of the consultant. A report from the consultant is expected by the end of mid April, and tendering procedure will follow. Work is likely to start afterward.

Mr Dowarkasing: Mr Speaker, Sir, I thank the hon. Minister for his reply. May I, at the same time, ask him - because this land falls under his Ministry - if he could take appropriate steps, so that all those people squatting on that particular piece of land be removed? There have been garages built on it and extension of houses. Could that piece of land be secured, so that this project can go ahead?

Mr Bundhoo: I would certainly liaise with my colleague, the Minister of Housing, and all the relevant authorities to do the needful.

EDUCATIONAL REFORMS – FORM III – NATIONAL EXAMINATIONS

(No. B/40) Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun (Third Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Minister of Education, Culture and Human Resources whether, in regard to the proposed education reform, he will state if national examinations will be introduced at Form III level and, if so, when.

Dr. Bunwaree: Mr Speaker, Sir, in the context of the ongoing educational reforms and as per the Education and Human Resources Strategy Plan 2008-2020, a recommendation has been made for the introduction of a formal assessment at Form III level. Initially, the proposal was for the assessment to take place at Form IV. However, further to consultations with stakeholders, there was unanimity, I must say, in having this examination held at Form III. This has a two-fold purpose -

- (i) it will help towards the evaluation of competencies acquired by students and identification of areas of further learning more attuned to their aptitudes and inclinations, and

- (ii) sustain a culture of achievement and commitment towards learning right from an early age.

It is proposed to carry out, this year, a simulation of the National examinations at Form III level for core subjects in the curriculum being currently followed. This simulation exercise will help students and teachers to be familiar with the new mode of assessment. The students will sit for the examinations in their respective schools. A standardised syllabus for each core subject will be considered, taking into consideration the different levels of schools. The papers will be set by the Mauritius Examinations Syndicate.

My Ministry has already started working on the technical modalities in collaboration with the MES, MIE and PSSA. Discussions would soon be held with the Federation of Unions of Managers of Private Secondary Schools to work on the operational aspects of this major reform.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we want this examination to be fully embedded in the system prior to it culminating in a National Certificate of Achievement, wherein the level attained in the core competencies will be stated and the achievement of the student will be recognised.

Mr Dayal: Mr Speaker, Sir, is the hon. Minister aware that his policy of educational reform, as proposed, does not carry unanimity of the educational stakeholders, including parents and teachers?

Dr. Bunwaree: I am not aware of this, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Dayal: Is the hon. Minister satisfied that the reform he proposes to make will respond to our economic requirement for the decades to come?

Dr. Bunwaree: Mr Speaker, Sir, this question is specifically on the examination of Form III. It is a very minute part of the reform.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister can just ask the hon. Member to come with a substantive question because he needs notice thereof.

Dr. Bunwaree: Yes. This is what I was going to say.

Mr Dayal: Educational reform.

The Deputy Speaker: The question is specific, and the hon. Minister states that he needs notice thereof.

Mr Gunness: Mr Speaker, Sir, since the hon. Minister said that there will be a simulation in all schools this year - and I presume it will be at the end of the year - can I know if this simulation exercise will be the result which the schools will take into consideration for promotion exercise in Form IV or there will be another exam as is the case every year in every school?

Dr. Bunwaree: For this year, it will just replace the examination. We won't have one examination for the school and this examination. So, this examination will be as if it was the school examination. But it's only a simulation.

QUALITY ASSURANCE OFFICERS - RECRUITMENT

(No. B/41) Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun (Third Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Minister of Education, Culture and Human Resources whether he will state if his Ministry has now recruited Quality Assurance Officers and, if so, indicate the number thereof.

Dr. Bunwaree: Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to refer the hon. Member to my reply to PQ B/751, wherein I stated that the scheme of service for the various posts in the Quality Assurance cadre were being prescribed. In line with existing procedures, the draft scheme of service is currently being considered at the level of the Federations of Civil Service Unions. Eight posts of Quality Assurance Officer have been created and, as soon as the scheme of service is prescribed, the vacancies would be filled.

In the same reply, I further stated that my Ministry was in the process of recruiting, on contract, one Project Manager (Quality Assurance), and six Quality Assurance Officers under the Capacity Building Programme.

It has not been possible so far to recruit Quality Assurance Officers on contract under the Capacity Building Programme as proposed, because procedures for recruitment under this programme are also being revised.

In the meantime, arrangements have been made at the level of my Ministry for the Quality Assurance and Inspection Division to be manned by one Acting Director, one Adviser on Quality Assurance and Inspection Matters, and four Pedagogical Inspectors.

I wish to reiterate that quality assurance is a priority concern for my Ministry for dispensing quality education to our children. It will help in aligning our schools with new

trends and developments in education and also with latest standards and benchmarks that are being adopted in educational systems worldwide.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister whether he is aware about the urgent need for pedagogical inspection in schools presently? I do appreciate that there are works going on, but still it is important to ensure that pedagogical issues are treated in a proper manner in the 200 secondary schools of the island.

Dr. Bunwaree: In fact, the hon. Member knows, because it is the second time we are coming with the same question. As I explained, we are having some administrative delays but, in the meantime, we have set up a Division with at least one Ag. Director and five other people to help us in the work we are doing. I appreciate the difficulty that the hon. Member is raising in the House. In fact, it is one; we hope that very soon we will be able to get the schemes of service and have a full-fledged Division set up.

PLAINE MAGNIEN - JHUMMUN LANE – PUBLIC ROAD

(No. B/42) Mr Y. Varma (First Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Local Government, Rodrigues and Outer Islands whether, in regard to the road adjoining the housing estate, commonly known as Jhummun Lane, along the Cemetery Road in Plaine Magnien, he will state the reasons why it has not yet been declared as public road and, if so, the remedial measures that will be taken, if any.

Mr Aimée: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Grand Port/ Savanne District Council that the Jhummun Lane has not been tarred nor declared public because there was no request made to that effect by the inhabitants of the area and the users of that road.

Mr Varma: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, can I kindly request the hon. Minister to check the information because according to us, elected MPs, there are petitions which have been sent to the Grand Port/Savanne District Council to that effect? Can I humbly request him to check the information again?

Mr Aimée: I will do so, Sir.

RAILWAY ROAD, QUARTIER MILITAIRE – DRAIN WORKS

(No. B/43) Mr S. Dayal (Second Member for Quartier Militaire & Moka) asked the Minister of Environment and National Development Unit whether, in regard to the Railway Road, Quartier Militaire, he will state when drain works thereat will start, indicating the expected date of completion thereof.

Mr Bundhoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in reply to PQ B/1304 on 01 December 2009, I informed the House that subject to all way leave issues being resolved, the Works Order for the project at Quartier Militaire would be issued some time in March 2010. The way leave issues are still being sorted out with the Water Resources Unit and Road Development Authority.

Furthermore, the NDU's Consultant has submitted its proposal and subject to all way leave issues being sorted out, bids for the project are expected to be floated by the end of April 2010 and the works are likely to start by July 2010. The duration of the works is expected to be around six to seven months and is expected to cost some Rs20 m.

Mr Dayal: I would like to request the hon. Minister to try to speed up matters and liaise with the relevant authorities so that matters are sped up, because it is really creating much hardship to the inhabitants.

Mr Bundhoo: I will surely do that before the election, Sir.

DAGOTIERE – ROAD - UPGRADING WORKS

(No. B/44) Mr S. Dayal (Second Member for Quartier Militaire & Moka) asked the Minister of Environment and National Development Unit whether, in regard to the upgrading works being carried out on the road, from the Dagotièrè Mosque leading up to the residence of one Mr S., he will state when they will be completed.

Mr Bundhoo: Mr Deputy Speaker Sir, I am informed that upgrading works on the road from the Dagotièrè Mosque leading to the residence of Mr S. have been delayed due to problems of alignment, which had to be addressed. I am glad that NDU Consultants have already sorted out the issue and submitted a revised scope of works. Works are expected to start soon and be completed by end of June 2010.

MARINE ENVIRONMENT – PROTECTION

(No. B/45) Mr M. Dowarkasing (Third Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping whether, in regard to the marine environment, he will state if the shipping department of his Ministry has carried out any activity for the protection thereof and, if so, give details thereof.

The Minister of Environment and National Development Unit (Mr L. Bundhoo):

Mr Deputy Speaker Sir, with your permission, I will reply to this question. I beg your indulgence as it might be a little bit lengthy.

I am informed that the Shipping Department of the Ministry of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport & Shipping is participating in the implementation of a Regional Marine Highway Project. The objective of the project is to increase the safety and efficiency of navigation and thus protect marine resources and ecosystems from major oil spill and other marine pollution. The project to the tune of USD 26 m. started in May 2007 and will end in June 2011. The countries involved are: Comoros, Kenya, Madagascar, l'Ile Maurice, Mozambique, Seychelles, l'Afrique du Sud et Tanzanie.

During the first phase of the project, a maritime highway is being developed in the Mozambique Channel whereby ships navigating in the channel will be encouraged to be equipped with appropriate electronic navigational equipment to prevent navigational accident, and thus eliminate all chemical spill risks. Hydrographic surveys are under way in the Mozambique Channel to achieve this objective. Hydrographic surveys will also be carried out in participating States, including Mauritius, for preparation of navigational charts which is a vital tool for safety of navigation and prevention of accidents and associated pollution.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the House will appreciate that Mauritius being a small island and given its topography, an inland activity has an impact on the coastal zone and, hence, the marine environment. The major source of marine pollution come from land-based activities and if the marine environment has to be protected, then land-based activities need to be controlled. My Ministry has thus formulated policies and strategies which are, *inter alia*, meant to reduce the pollution load entering the marine environment. The main ones are the National Environment Policy 2008 and the National Environmental Strategy (NES).

Moreover, the following activities have been carried out -

- (i) cleaning/desilting of rivers: solid wastes as well as silt that accumulate in rivers are removed. In this way siltation of the lagoon is minimised;
- (ii) under the Western Indian Ocean project for addressing Land-Based sources of Marine Pollution eight grids have been placed in the rivers in Port Louis area in order to minimise entry of solid wastes within the Port waters and an incinerator will be installed within the Port area to cater for solid wastes from ships;

- (iii) some four kms of shore has been rehabilitated to protect the shore from further degradation at Flic en Flac, Belle Mare, Le Morne, Pte D'Esny, Bain Des Dames , Rivière des Galets and Tamarin;
- (iv) lease holders in the region of Pte D'Esny and La Preneuse have been sensitised and encouraged to remove hard structures, such as groins and concrete jetties from the dynamic beach zone. Some 10 jetties are concerned in the first phase;
- (v) oil spill is one of the major threats that may significantly damage our marine ecosystem. Therefore, annual Oil spill drills are undertaken by my Ministry in collaboration with all stakeholders concerned who are sensitised on the procedures contained in the National Oil Spill Contingency Plan, and
- (vi) regular clean up of the beach and lagoons are carried out throughout the island in collaboration with NGOs and other stakeholders.

Mauritius, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is party to several marine related conventions which ensure safety of shipping, insurance and precautionary measures needed for the protection of the marine environment. A Marine Pollution Bill is being drafted with a view to controlling and avoiding marine pollution from ships.

Mr Dowarkasing: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in fact, I had addressed the question to the Minister of Public Infrastructure because this item falls under his Ministry and there is even a budget line for that item. In view of the protection of the marine environment, may we know whether we have analysed the degree of pollution that is being witnessed in the ocean around the island?

Mr Bundhoo: Yes, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, there is a laboratory for this effect in the Unit my Ministry and we do that regularly. I have the pleasure to inform the House that we are very much within limit and we can safely say, after the international index from Europe that, not only are we sixth classified worldwide with regard to the best environment practices, but with regard to marine protection we are also doing very well and the water is being monitored regularly by our equipment in our laboratory.

Mr Dowarkasing: I have a second supplementary question, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. The hon. Minister said that there are so many countries which are sitting together just to define the policy around. Can we know whether they have defined any maritime lanes along

the ocean where ships should be taking only those lanes? Have we defined those lanes as it is being done elsewhere in order not to allow ships to take the sea in any part of the ocean?

Mr Bundhoo: I am sure, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this is the reason why all these countries have grouped together in order to define these specific lines in order to avoid unnecessary pollution within the territory of the sea of the Indian Ocean.

Mr Dowarkasing: I have a last supplementary. The hon. Minister has spoken about the oil spill plan. Can we know what this plan is and how efficient this plan is in case anything happens?

Mr Bundhoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the proof of the pudding is in the eating. Unfortunately, or should I say, very fortunately...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order, order, please!

Mr Bundhoo: We have not had a major oil spill in the moment and this is why in my reply I informed the hon. Member and the House earlier that, at regular intervals, we do conduct oil spill drills in order to make sure to the best of our possibility that the drills work to actual effect when they have to be done.

Mr Bhagwan: The hon. Minister has just informed the House about the good quality of sea water. Can the hon. Minister inform the House whether regular analysis of the sea water at the public beaches, mainly at Flic en Flac and Grand' Baie, are being effected? What is actually the result as far as the water quality in Port Louis after the commissioning of the sewerage treatment plant is concerned?

Mr Bundhoo: Again, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have to assure the House that this is done regularly. But, unfortunately, I do not have the figures with me. Of course, there may be some disparities between the harbour and another area which is not within the parameters of the harbour, but I can safely say to the House that we are well beyond limit.

PARASTATAL BODIES - PERFORMANCE AUDIT

(No. B/46) Mr M. Dowarkasing (Third Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Empowerment whether, in regard

to the parastatal bodies, he will state if any performance audit has been carried out in any of them and, if so, give details thereof.

The vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Empowerment (Dr. R. Sithanen): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed I am informed that the National Audit Office (NAO) presently carries financial and value for money audit in all Ministries, Departments, Divisions and Parastatal Bodies.

Furthermore, as the House is aware, Government has moved from the traditional line Budget formulation for appropriation of resources to that of Programme-Based Budget which sets performance targets in respect of deliverables and services to be provided by Ministries and Departments with resources put at their disposal. It is therefore not enough for the Director of Audit to continue carrying out financial and value for money audits only, but it is equally important for it to now audit the service level standards as set with respect to performance indicators in the PBB.

Taking this need into consideration, the Finance and Audit Act 73 (section 16) was amended in 2008 by making provision for the Director of Audit to also carry out performance audit in Ministries, Department or Division. The objective of a performance audit will thus be to assess and evaluate as to how those entities are applying their resources and are carrying out their operations economically, efficiently and effectively with respect to the set standards.

However to be able to carry out such performance audit, the National Audit Office needs specific skills. In this respect, the National Audit Office has embarked on a capacity building programme with the assistance of the Commonwealth Secretariat, and 18 of its officers are being trained. The training is expected to end in May 2010 and as part of its training programme, the National Audit Office has carried out three issue-based performance audit assignments. On completion of the training programme, the NAO plans to carry out performance audit in Ministries, Departments and Divisions. It is envisaged that, once the Audit Office has developed the necessary competence in this area, performance audit would be extended to parastatal bodies.

However, to enable performance audit to be carried out in parastatal bodies, it is necessary for these bodies, in the first instance, to also prepare their budget estimates using the PBB. In this respect, attention of Supervising Officer has been drawn in early February this year, on the new provision of the Statutory Bodies (Accounts and Audit) Act that

requires 26 parastatal bodies to operate on the basis of PBB as from 2011 and to be naturally followed by a performance audit.

FRENCH TV CHANNEL M6 – 14.02.2010 – EMISSION “CAPITAL”

(No. B/47) **Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière)** asked the hon. vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism, Leisure and External Communications whether he is aware that the French TV channel M6 broadcasted a programme on Mauritius a few weeks ago and, if so, state whether it has created a negative impact on the reputation of Mauritius as a selective tourist destination and, if so, whether his Ministry has carried out an inquiry thereinto, indicating the -

- (a) outcome thereof, and
- (b) corrective measures that will be taken.

The vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism, Leisure and External Communications (Mr X. L. Duval): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the French TV Channel M6 featured Mauritius on 14 February 2010 during its emission entitled “Capital”. The programme purported to show in a very superficial way, that rebated rates and tariffs were being applied in hotels in Mauritius. As the House is aware, Mauritius is often portrayed in TV programmes overseas, particularly in our main market France.

Indeed only last week, the same TV channel, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, M6, carried a very popular programme entitled “*Accès Privé*”, which, this time, showcased Mauritius as a tourist paradise for the ultra rich. This is television for you.

Following the broadcast of the “Capital” programme, my Ministry issued a communiqué pointing out that the programme had completely bypassed the fact that we are in a worldwide economic crisis.

I am comforted to say, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that from feedback received from our PR representative in France, there has not been any negative impact on our destination. This is the result of the following factors -

- Firstly, the TV programmes broadcasted in the emission “Capital” are known to be controversial and provocative in nature;
- Secondly, during the past four years, we have created and consolidated a very positive image of Mauritius in France;

- Thirdly, seen from a different angle, the programme portrayed Mauritius as a “*destination de rêves*” which is now more accessible.

Finally, Mauritius has, since that programme, continued to be portrayed – as I mentioned last week - as an up-market destination in all of the French media, through, for instance, the visit of Alain Prost, Richard Virenque, Claude Lelouche to name but a few.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as regards hotel service levels, my Ministry has, for a number of years now since election, set up a Monitoring and Control Mechanism whereby there is regular monitoring by the Tourism Authority of the quality of hotel establishments.

As the result of our inspections, that particular hotel referred to in the film, some six months ago, I had a meeting with its Managing Director and the owner of the Hotel group and advised them – therefore six months ago - in strong terms, on the need for them to improve their hotel standards.

Furthermore, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, immediately after the TV Programme, new inspections were carried out. On 26 February 2010, the Tourism Authority decided to suspend the licence of the hotel. On 15 March 2010, the Licensing Committee decided to waive the suspension upon being satisfied that most of the works had been completed. The hotel is now subject to close control and monitoring.

Finally, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, my Ministry has, during the past five years, created and consolidated that image of Mauritius as an attractive tourist destination. As the House is aware, according to our Hotel Development Strategy, only 4 and 5-star hotels are authorised to be constructed in Mauritius. It is to be noted that the hotel showed in the programme was built during the tenure of the previous Government. The five hotels constructed during our mandate and four other hotels presently under construction are all of very high standard, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Furthermore, the House will note that Mauritius has recently won the World Leading Island Destination title at the recent World Travel Award.

Mr Bhagwan: Whatever action is being effected by the Ministry or the parastatal bodies falling under the Ministry - MTPA and others - the fact remains that the first film did tarnish the image of Mauritius. Even the hon. Minister had to send a rejoinder. Can I know from the hon. Minister whether the organisers contacted or discussed with the Ministry before embarking in the preparation of that first film?

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the hon. Member may not believe it, but some press are independent and these guys are independent of us and we do not control them, they come to Mauritius, but we cannot control their editorial content. Obviously, we were allowed to give our views which were right, but some press are actually independent.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order please! Thank you!

Mr Bhagwan: This is the opinion of the hon. Minister which I do not agree.

The Deputy Speaker: Please, put the question hon. Bhagwan! Thank you.

Mr Bhagwan: Can I ask the hon. Minister whether the relevant authority was sought because in that film which we have seen, one of the episodes was the Minister in a CAB office receiving the people of Quatre Bornes with other Members of Parliament. So, I do not find anything wrong personally. The hon. Minister has just stated that they are independent people; they work on their own...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order! Please address the Chair! Thank you.

Mr Bhagwan: The fact remains that that shot was not made for a promotion of the hon. Minister himself. But I am asking ...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order please! Hon. Bhagwan, would you please address the Chair? Thank you.

(Interruptions)

Hon. Members, please behave! Thank you.

Mr Bhagwan: Can I ask the hon. Minister whether his approval was sought by the M6 people for that particular shot?

(Interruptions)

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I can confirm that it was not a *caméra cachée*.

Mr Bhagwan: Can I ask the hon. Minister if he can, at least, inform the House or table copies of letters of protests which he has received at the Ministry, not only here, even in the different agencies falling under his Ministry following the presentation of that film?

Mr X. L. Duval: I do not know, if I have, it's public, I would be happy to show it. But, as I mentioned, we did actually get views from our PR agency and the views were, in fact, mitigated by the fact that -

- (i) it is known to be a controversial programme;
- (ii) the destination itself did not come under attack. Neither my receiving the public didn't come under attack.

What came under criticism was that particular hotel. The food was criticised, if you remember. In fact, nobody is unaware that there is a big financial crisis and that hotels have discounted. But it is good to know - I bring that particular figure because we have to talk about empirical facts and not just impressions - that last year 2009 the statistical office recorded a revenue loss of 13% in Mauritius whereby the number of tourists as 6.5% less. You can say that, in fact, the price effect of that is 6-7 % reduction overall. Some hotels put up their prices and some reduce their prices, but overall the Statistical Office shows that there is about 6% drop in price over the whole year compared to the previous year which is – you will agree - minimal. It does not stand what the capital showed.

TOUR OPERATOR (FOREIGN) - MAURITIUS – LOW COST DESTINATION

(No. B/48) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism, Leisure and External Communications whether he is aware that a foreign tour operator is marketing Mauritius as a low cost destination and, if so, will he state if it is being done with his Ministry's approval, and if not, the measures he proposes to take.

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that, in accordance with the Tourism Authority Act, the Tourism Authority is responsible for the regulation and control of the activities of the Tour Operators operating in Mauritius only.

Foreign Tour Operators do not fall under their aegis and we have, therefore, no control on their pricing policies.

Mr Bhagwan: Although the Ministry or the Tourism Authority has not any control, does not the Minister think that it is also the duty of the Ministry, to have an overall look at what is being done by the Tour operators.

Mr X. L. Duval: I must say, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that we are very concerned - I am going to be very frank and not have *la langue de bois* - by the activities of MARMARA, this is what we were talking about, when they came. I had myself called in the Managing Director of TUI when he was in Mauritius to talk to me and to say that this is not the image that Mauritius wants to portray. But what is the solution? We will never be able to control the pricing policies of foreign properties. If they are able to buy their rooms cheap, they will sell them cheap. The question is: how can we upgrade the hotel in Mauritius so that they don't sell rooms cheap? This is why, in fact, we spoke to this particular group which controls about 1000 rooms in Mauritius and this is why we are concerned by that group. I don't want to give the name for obvious reasons, I think people can know what it is. To be able to upgrade constantly the quality of our hotel, and this is why our Monitoring Unit of the Tourism Authority effected 650 visits in different tourist establishments last year to try and get by coercion and support to get the level to rise and obviously – there will always be one or two hotel constructions on private land. But, as far as possible, we do not allow 3- star hotels to be constructed. If we look at the history of this Government the track record is excellent: the Four Seasons, the Grand Mauritian, Intercontinental, Tamassa and the Club Med 5-Star is already operational and under construction we have the St Régis, the New Coco Beach, the Long Beach and the Trou-Aux-Biches hotels. These hotels are all excellent 4 or 5 Star hotels.

HOTEL CLUBS – FOOD - COMPLAINTS

(No. B/49) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the hon. vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism, Leisure and External Communications whether he will state if he has received complaints and feedback on the poor quality of food served in the low cost hotel clubs that are operating in Mauritius, since 2006 to date and, if so, state if an inquiry has been carried out thereinto, indicating where matters stand.

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have been informed that my Ministry has received no complaint regarding the poor quality of food served in the hotel clubs in Mauritius.

Mr Bhagwan: Can I ask the Minister whether he has taken cognizance of a letter published in "*le Routard*", by somebody who came to Mauritius and has written about the poor quality of food. He has copied the letter to the Ministry. We will send a copy to the Minister and I would advise the Minister *de s'abonner à "le Routard"*, which is an international magazine for the tourism sector.

Mr X. L. Duval: Please do send me! By all means, we are here to work. Obviously, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, taste is a question of taste. You can be from Middle East and don't like this food. This is not for us to say about the taste, but, with the help of the Ministry of Health, we carried out, as I mentioned, 650 inspections last year and we looked at the sanitary and the health conditions of the food. It is very difficult for us to say whether this curry or that pie is better than the other one. It is a question of our budget. We all know if we go to the *hotel du thé* next door or if we go to St Géran we will not get the same quality of food. I do take it, and I will certainly look at it, but again, we are limited as to the sanitary conditions and the health aspects.

Mr Bhagwan: I am talking about the poor quality of food - it is not taste - which is mentioned in that letter and which has been published by the International magazine '*le Routard*'.

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we do get about a million tourists a year. So, there will always be, but we will take it seriously, and I will look at it.

PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS – COUNSELLING UNITS

(No. B/50) **Mrs F. Labelle (Third Member for Vacoas & Floreal)** asked the Minister of Education, Culture and Human Resources whether, in regard to the counselling units of the primary and secondary schools, he will state the number thereof, if any, which are operational, indicating the -

- (a) names of the schools, and
- (b) number of psychologists or counsellors attached thereto.

Dr. Bunwaree: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the National Education Counselling Service (NECS) of my Ministry which is under the responsibility of a Senior Educational

Psychologist and supported by ten Educational Psychologists and 18 Educational Social Workers, provides guidance and counselling as well as psychological and social support services to the pre-primary, primary and secondary schoolchildren needing individual and special attention.

With regard to the primary schools, there are no counselling units as such attached specially to them, but the Educational Psychologists and Educational Social Workers are posted at the four Zonal Directorates and to cater for the individual and specific needs of school children. They respond to individual requests from Heads of School, Teachers and parents regarding specific children needing psychological support. Such requests may also come from institutions like the Ministry for Women's Rights, Child Development and Family Welfare, the Ombudsperson for Children Office or the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life in respect of schoolchildren.

Further, for children with special educational needs, the Educational Psychologists and Educational Social Workers of the NECS also conduct school visits and counselling sessions are also held on a case-to-case basis on request.

As for the secondary sector, counselling units are found in 33 State Secondary Schools that have been profiled for provision of such services. However, the pool of Psychologists and Counsellors also caters for the other schools on a cluster basis zone wise.

As far as private secondary schools are concerned, Managers of private secondary schools may avail themselves of the services of Educational Psychologists of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Human Resources who are posted to the four Educational Zones.

RICHE TERRE & TERRE ROUGE – EX-PLANTERS - COMPENSATION

(No. B/51) Mr G. Guinness (Third Member for Montagne Blanche and GRSE) asked the Minister of Agro Industry, Food Production and Security whether, in regard to the 23 ex-planters of Riche Terre and Terre Rouge who vacated their land as a result of the Jing Fei Project, he will state if Government is now prepared to reconsider the compensation to be paid to them.

(Vide reply to PNQ)

SUGAR SECTOR/TRADE UNIONS – WAGES - NEGOCIATIONS

(No. B/52) Mr N. Bodha (First Member for Vacoas & Floreal) asked the Minister of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment whether, in regard to the negotiations

between the trade unions and the sugar sector in respect to an increase in wages of the workers, he will state where matters stand.

Mr Chaumière: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed that following deadlock in the negotiations held between the Unions of Artisans of the Sugar Industry (UASI), the Sugar Industry Labourers Union (SILU), the Artisans and General Workers' Union (AGWU) and the Organisations of Artisans Unity (OAU), and the Mauritius Sugar Producers Association (MSPA) on wages and conditions of employment of workers of the sugar industry, the unions have, on 03 March 2010, reported to the President of Commission for Conciliation and Mediation, a labour dispute against the MSPA.

I am further informed that a preliminary meeting was held on 10 March 2010 at the Commission for Conciliation and Mediation. With the consent of both parties, the Commission has extended to 14 April 2010, the statutory delay for the settlement of the dispute and another meeting has been scheduled for that date.

Mr Bodha: I do not want to be unfair with the Minister, but I would like to ask him whether he is aware that serious discrepancies have been reported in the figures which have been given by the MSPA during those negotiations to explain why they can't afford or give an increase in salaries?

Mr Chaumière: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, all these matters will be taken before the Commission for Conciliation and Mediation.

Mr Bodha: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister whether the Mauritius Sugar Authority which oversees the functioning of the industry cannot be of help here to certify whether the figures which have been introduced represented by the MSPA are correct to enable things to facilitate the negotiations?

Mr Chaumière: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am not aware whether the MSPA is able or is not able to certify. As for my part, the matter being before the Commission for Conciliation and Mediation, I think we should let the Commission work upon this case.

Mr Bodha: The question I was asking, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, should the Mauritius Sugar Authority be involved to provide the figures that we need to be able to facilitate the negotiations?

Mr Chaumière: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I do not have anything to do with the Mauritius Sugar Authority.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes, hon. Ms Deerpalsing!

Ms Deerpalsing: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. When the Minister answered, he mentioned the Conciliation Committee, if I am not mistaken. May I ask him whether he would be agreeable to the Conciliation Committee providing the workers and artisans Accounting Experts? Because what is happening is that the Mauritius Sugar Producers' Association has contracted out the work of all the figures to BDO and on the other party they do not necessarily have the accounting expertise. My question is whether the Conciliation Committee takes into consideration, or will take into consideration, the asymmetrical level of expertise in accounting that would be required to have equal discourse?

Mr Chaumière: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the hon. Member does not seem to be aware that the Conciliation and Mediation Commission is an independent body and that I cannot impose whatever on the Commission. Let the Commission work on what he has got before it and then it will come with the result that it has.

Ms Deerpalsing: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Yes, this is precisely why we ask questions because we do not know. My next question would be - given that the Conciliation Committee is an independent body, as the hon. Minister has said, is the hon. Minister aware then that there is an asymmetry of expertise from both parties and whether, this can be resolved in whatever way that the hon. Minister has in his means?

Mr Chaumière: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Commission is presided over by very a competent person which is Professor Torul. So, I think we should let the Commission work serenely in order to get the best results out of all this.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Next question, please!

**FOOTBALL GROUNDS AT HERMITAGE & AT PETIT CAMP - MUNICIPAL
COUNCIL OF VACOAS AND PHOENIX**

(No. B/53) Mr S. Soodhun (Fifth Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Minister of Local Government, Rodrigues and Outer Islands whether in regard to the football grounds at Hermitage and at Petit Camp, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Municipal Council of Vacoas and Phoenix, information as to if they have been vested in the Council and, if so, indicate the measures taken for the upgrading thereof.

Mr Aimée: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Municipality of Vacoas and Phoenix that the construction of a football ground at Petit Camp funded by the National Development Unit is in progress.

I am further informed that practical completion of the works is scheduled for today and the Council will take over and maintain the football ground thereafter.

With regard to the football ground at Hermitage, I am informed that no upgrading works have started because the land has not yet been vested to the Council by the Highlands Sugar Estate.

Mr Soodhun: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Minister inform the House whether there has been any meeting to investigate whether the land can be vested to the Municipality or has there been any request from the Municipality for vesting of the land?

Mr Aimée: Yes, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Municipality of Vacoas and Phoenix had on 22 March 2005 made a request to the Highlands Sugar Estate for the vesting of the Hermitage football ground in the Council to undertake upgrading work thereat. I have got a copy of the letter that I would table afterwards. However, the Highlands Sugar Estate had on 28 April 2005 conveyed only its authorisation to the Council for carrying out upgrading works to the football ground as per copy that I would table afterwards. Consultations have, since, been held by the Council with the Highlands Sugar Estate on this request, but no reply has been received up to now.

Mr Soodhun: Can the hon. Minister use his good office to ask the Highlands Sugar Estate when this land will be vested? If the land is not vested to the Municipal Council I do not think that the Municipality will do necessary to upgrade the land.

Mr Aimée: The hon. Member can rest assured, I will deal with that particular case later on.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, next question, please!

SEWERAGE PROJECT - MESNIL AND PARISOT – HOUSES TO BE CONNECTED

(No. B/54) **Mr S.Soodhun (Fifth Member for La Caverne & Phoenix)** asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Renewable Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to the sewerage project in the region of Mesnil and Parisot, he will state when it will be implemented, indicating the number of houses which will be connected.

Dr. Beebeejaun: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Wastewater Management Authority, that the contract for sewerage project along Parisot and Riverside Roads in Mesnil was awarded on 20 January 2010. Works along Riverside Road have started this month and works at Parisot Road will start by the first week of May 2010. The works are expected to be completed by August 2011.

As regards the number of house connections, 35 houses will be connected at Riverside Road and about 155 at Parisot Road. The survey being conducted by the Contractor will confirm the exact numbers.

Mr Soodhun: Thank you, Deputy Prime Minister.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, next question, please!

NHDC HOUSING UNITS - PLATFORM, PETITE RIVIÈRE - MEASURES AGAINST FLOODING

(No. B/55) Mrs S. Grenade (Second Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Housing and Lands whether, in regard to the construction of the new NHDC housing units at Platform, Petite Rivière, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the National Housing Development Corporation, information as to if specific measures against flooding are being envisaged.

Dr. Kasenally: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with regard to all construction sites including Petite Rivière Housing Estate, it is normal procedure to provide for an adequate drainage system.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, next question, please!

POINTE AUX SABLES COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTRE - UPGRADING

(No. B/56) Mrs S. Grenade (Second Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether, in regard to the Pointe aux Sables Community Health Centre, he will state where matters stand regarding the upgrading thereof.

Dr. Jeetah: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, regarding the upgrading of the Pointe aux Sables Community Health Centre, I wish to point out that late hon. James Burty David did raise this matter with me.

I am informed that the position is as follows -

- (i) the Ministry of Housing and Lands has already vested a plot of land of an extent of 368 m², adjacent to the existing Community Health Centre, with my Ministry for its extension, and
- (ii) the Ministry of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping has already started a survey for this project. Preliminary designs will be completed by the end of May 2010 and construction works will start by the end of the year.

The existing Community Health Centre will be extended to include the following -

- (a) one Records Room;
- (b) one Pharmacy store;
- (c) one Family Planning/Ante Natal Care Clinic;
- (d) one Mess Room;
- (e) additional toilets for both patients and staff, and
- (f) an extension to the pharmacy and waiting area.

I am also informed that action has been initiated for the renting of floor space of about 1200 to 1500 sq ft to accommodate the CHC so as to ensure the continuity of the services. However, tender procedures have been unsuccessful on two occasions. A third tender exercise has been initiated and will be finalised shortly.

SALE OF THE EX-CHA HOUSES AT CITÉ EDC RIAMBEL

(No. B/57) **Mr A. Ganoo (First Member for Savanne & Black River)** asked the Minister of Housing and Lands whether, in regard to the sale of the ex-CHA houses at Cité EDC Riambel, he will state where matters stand.

Dr. Kasenally: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, there are 136 occupiers of Ex-CHA housing units who have already become owners of their houses at Cité EDC Riambel, more commonly referred to as Surinam Ex-CHA Housing Estate.

According to records at my Ministry, Surinam Ex-CHA Housing State is situated on *Pas Géométriques*. The hon. Member would appreciate that as the law stands now, portions of land found on *Pas Géométriques* form part of the *domaine public* and are inalienable and imprescriptible – in short the land on which stands the EDC Housing Units cannot be sold.

Mr Ganoo: At one time, the hon. Minister told the House, in previous questions, that advice from the State Law Office had confirmed that. Is that correct?

Dr. Kasenally: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in order to be able to sell these lands, we have to change the Constitution, which is a major task. I will give extra information. As far as these houses are concerned, only 50% of them want to buy them because the land, if at all is being sold, will cost Rs4,000 *grosso modo*. Some prefer to go on paying the Rs150, especially those people who are about 60 or 70 years old, because they say they are not going to live beyond 100 years old and it will cost them less than Rs4,000.

Mr Barbier: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, if you allow me. The question is specific to Riambel. But the problem of CHA houses on *pas géométriques* is a bit scattered across the island. May I know from the hon. Minister what is the number of CHA houses on *pas géométriques* around Mauritius which would not be able to be sold to the occupiers?

Dr. Kasenally: As far as *pas géométriques* is concerned, they are scattered over 16 sites, ranging from Anse Jonchée to Trou aux Biches. There are 896 such houses, and only 489 people have applied. As I have said, we cannot sell these houses. The houses have been sold, I think by the previous Government, ranging from Rs150 to Rs1,000.

MARE TABAC, MARE D'ALBERT, CITE PAUL LANGLOIS- PLAINE MAGNIEN, CARREAU ESNOUF AND TROIS BOUTIQUES - FLOODS

(No. B/58) **Mr Y. Varma (First Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien)** asked the Minister of Environment and National Development Unit whether, in regard to the floods caused by the recent heavy rainfalls in Mare Tabac, Mare d'Albert, Cité Paul Langlois-Plaine Magnien, Carreau Esnouf and Trois Boutiques, he will state the remedial measures that are being envisaged, indicating the time frame for implementation.

Mr Bundhoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, following the heavy rainfalls from 09 to 12 February 2010, and subsequent to a request from hon. Dr. Bunwaree and the Member of Parliament of the constituency, a site visit was carried out on the following day, that is, on 13 February 2010.

The consultant is conducting a thorough survey in the regions of Mare Tabac, Mare d'Albert, Trois Boutiques and Plaine Magnien, and will submit its proposal and cost estimates within two months. Upon receipt of the proposals, the NDU will consider the implementation of the project.

In the meantime, the consultant has advised some cleaning works along Mahebourg-Nouvelle France Road, Football Lane and Fabrique Road in Mare d'Albert, and the local authorities concerned have been accordingly advised.

Mr Varma: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is the hon. Minister aware that the natural drains that used to exist on the sugarcane plantations have been blocked recently?

Mr Bundhoo: Yes, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we are aware of that, and this is why an inter-ministerial committee has been set up under the chairmanship of the Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping, composing of the Minister of Agro Industry, Food Production and Security, the Minister of Local Government, Rodrigues and Outer Islands and myself, to precisely look into the matter. We are shortly expecting a report from the technicians of this sub-committee to advise the ministerial committee on the way forward.

Mr Varma: As regards the problems that arose in the various regions I mentioned in the question, is there a time frame for the implementation of the measures?

Mr Bundhoo: As I just explained, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the causes of the flood over the last six months with regard to mechanisation and other works within the sugarcane field and blocks of natural drains is not specific to Constituency No. 12. It is happening all over the island and in a few specific places. In fact, in Constituency No. 13...

The Deputy Speaker: But does the hon. Minister have a time frame?

Mr Bundhoo: Hon. Mohamed and hon. Peetumber, as well as Constituency No. 11...

The Deputy Speaker: No. Answer the question put, please.

Mr Bundhoo: I am afraid I cannot, at this moment in time, tell you a specific time frame because we are still awaiting the recommendations of the Technical Committee.

Mr Varma: A few days back, there was heavy rainfall and again we were faced with problems. Can I request the hon. Minister, because time is of the essence in this particular matter, to see to it that matters are taken seriously and solutions found to the problems as soon as possible?

Mr Bundhoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is precisely because of the difficulties faced by the people, because time is of the essence, because we are a sub-tropical country with heavy rains regularly, that Cabinet has set up this ministerial committee to look into timely solutions, which is durable in the long run.

MON TRÉSOR MON DÉSSERT & UNION VALE HOUSING ESTATES - PHASING OUT

(No. B/59) Mr Y. Varma (First Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Agro Industry, Food Production and Security whether, in regard to the phasing out of the Mon Trésor Mon Désert and the Union Vale Housing Estates, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Sugar Authority, information as to where matters stand.

Mr Faugoo: Mr Deputy Speaker Sir, in reply to Parliamentary Question No. B/1024 addressed by the hon. Member, I informed the House of developments taking place on the sites identified to relocate 168 camp dwellers of Mon Trésor Mon Désert and Union Vale Housing Estates. These sites are Desplaces, Trois Boutiques and Memoire, Plaine Magnien.

The situation on the three sites, as reported to me by the Mauritius Sugar Authority, is as follows -

- (i) with regard to the sites at Trois Boutiques and Memoire, water supply works have been completed in 2009. Road and drainage works, which started in January this year, are in progress and are expected to be completed by end of July 2010, as per the programme of works;
- (ii) regarding the site at Desplaces, the geo-technical study carried out by the University of Mauritius on the observation of a cavity during the cut and fill works, have been completed in December 2009. The report indicates that construction may be effected on the plots, provided additional measures are taken because of foundation related risks. The plots have been classified as follows –
 - (i) high foundation related risk;
 - (ii) medium foundation related risk, and
 - (iii) foundation related risk.

The Mauritius Sugar Authority has sought the assistance and advice of the Ministry of Public Infrastructure in January 2010 regarding measures to be taken to address the foundation related works. The Ministry of Public Infrastructure has advised the Mauritius

Sugar Authority to seek the services of a private structural engineer. Action is being taken by the Mauritius Sugar Authority accordingly.

I am also advised that the MSA had a meeting with representatives of the camp dwellers on 18 March 2010 in the presence of representatives of the sugar estate, to apprise them of the findings of the geo-technical survey carried out by the University of Mauritius and on the way forward. The MSA proposes to meet them again once the recommendation of the structural engineer is obtained.

Mr Varma: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I didn't quite listen to what the hon. Minister said. Is there a meeting that is scheduled with the inhabitants of Mon Trésor Mon Désert Housing Estate?

Mr Faugoo: In fact, they have said that they propose to meet again once the recommendation of the structural engineer is obtained. So, we will have to wait for the report. I will keep my colleague informed.

The Deputy Speaker: Next question, please.

ENHANCEMENT PROGRAMME - PRIMARY SECTOR

(No. B/62) Mrs F. Labelle (Third Member for Vacoas & Floreal) asked the Minister of Education, Culture and Human Resources whether, in regard to the Enhancement Programme in the primary sector, he will -

- (a) state the number of
 - (i) teachers and trainee teachers involved therein, and
 - (ii) the monthly financial implications thereof, and
- (a) table copy of the cursus thereof.

Dr. Bunwaree: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as regards part (a) of the question, 422 educators and 95 trainee teachers are involved in the Enhancement Programme, and the monthly financial costs which basically cover allowances amount to about Rs4 m.

As regards part (b) of the question, I am tabling a copy of the Teacher's Manual for the first term 2010, which has been prepared by the Mauritius Institute of Education (MIE).

I wish to highlight that all educational reform documents that have been elaborated over the years have stressed the need for the holistic and integrated development of the child, which is the very essence of education. Even the Convention for the Rights of the Child, to

which we are party, recognises, in Article 31, the right of the child to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child, and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts. Indeed, it is for the first time in our history that a programme has been developed along that line and concretely translates into action such an intention.

The Enhancement Programme is pupil centred and focuses on five core subject areas. It makes use of innovative pedagogical tools that are more activity based and involve hands-on experience. This is supplemented by other creative practices such as drama, sports, painting, sculpture, music and others. The overall objective, therefore, is to provide more equity in learning opportunities for all, thereby rendering the learning experience of pupils more enriching and rewarding.

The programme which was launched on 17 February 2010 has seen a level of participation of pupils of Std IV beyond expectation. Even at the very early outset, some 80% of pupils were attending the Enhancement Programme; the level of pupil participation has now reached about 85% in Mauritius, which makes it clear that the large majority of parents are strongly supportive of the programme. The programme is also being implemented in Rodrigues and Agalega, where participation has reached 90% in Rodrigues and 100% in Agalega respectively.

Mrs Labelle: Concerning the 95 trainee teachers who are involved in this programme, may I ask the hon. Minister whether is it by choice or because of lack of teachers who wish to join the programme?

Dr. Bunwaree: Both! In fact, these trainee teachers are those who are going to join the schools in the month of June. I must also inform the House that the trainee teachers have been fully involved in this mode of pedagogy. They are, I won't say better, but they are well prepared for this programme. In fact, little by little the programme is going to be extended to other classes as well.

Mrs Labelle: May I ask the hon. Minister whether he is aware or has been made aware that in many cases, above the Enhancement Programme, the pupils are having their private tuition, which means that, instead of being at school three days per week as it was the case, now the kids are having a higher burden of work?

Dr. Bunwaree: I don't think it is a minority of cases, but we are aware of it. We are following it very closely. I make an appeal to all teachers to be very careful. In fact, in

schools it is not allowed to give private tuition in standard IV and outside schools we are opening our eyes. If there are cases, please let us know.

RODRIGUES - SIR GAËTAN DUVAL AIRPORT - RUNWAY

(No. B/63) **Mr J. R. Spéville (Second Member for Rodrigues)** asked the vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism, Leisure and External Communications whether, in regard to the Sir Gaëtan Duval Airport at Plaine Corail, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Airports of Mauritius Ltd. information as to if a Feasibility Study has recently been carried out for the extension of its runway and the outcome thereof.

The Minister of Local Government, Rodrigues and Outer Islands (Mr H. Aimée): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I shall reply to this question.

The Airport of Mauritius Ltd. has no control over the Sir Gaëtan Duval Airport at Plaine Corail.

In fact, the Sir Gaëtan Duval Airport is managed by the airport of Rodrigues Ltd. which provides Air Control Tower services and other logistical facilities with the support of the Department of Civil Aviation of Mauritius and Rodrigues Regional Assembly.

I am informed that, to date, no feasibility study has been carried out for the extension of the runway in Rodrigues.

However, I am further informed that, in January 2008, it was decided that the best alternative would be to construct a new runway of 2100m adjacent to the existing runway with possibility of extension up to 3000m.

The RRA is in the process of appointing consultancy firms to undertake a feasibility study for the new runway with the financial support of the World Bank. In this regard, expressions of interest had been invited internationally and the closing date was 01 February 2010. Consequently, a number of consulting firms expressed their interests which are being evaluated by the RRA. A shortlist of firms to which detailed Request for Proposals would be sent, in line with the World Bank procedures for procurement, is being worked out.

Mr Spéville: The hon. Minister said that the consultancy firms undertook a feasibility study and the closing date for expressions of interest was 01 February. When is he expecting them to deponé their report and what step will be undertaken?

Mr Aimée: I don't have the information. I will table it later on.

The Deputy Speaker: Maybe the hon. Member can come with a substantive question.

SOLITUDE - SPORTS COMPLEX – LAND ACQUISITION

(No. B/64) Mrs F. Labelle (Third Member for Vacoas & Floreal) asked the Minister of Housing and Lands whether, in regard to the land compulsory acquired for a sports complex at Solitude, he will state if it has been sold or leased and, if so, indicate –

- (a) to whom, and
- (b) the sale price or rent payable.

Dr. Kasenally: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the land has been reserved for the grant of an industrial lease in the name of PADKAM Investment Holdings Ltd. for the setting up of an entrepreneur village. The lease agreement is yet to be signed. Rental for the leased land will be in accordance with the recommendation of the Director, Valuation and Real Estates Consultancy Services which has already been consulted.

Sir, may I also refer the hon. Member replies made to PQ B/1193 of 27 November 2007, PQ B/1136, PQ B/1369 of 11 December 2007 and PQ B/910 of 22 July 2008 on the above subject where it has /been extensively ventilated in this House.

MALHERBES - FOOTBALL GROUND

(No. B/67) Mr M. Dowarkasing (Third Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the Minister of Youth and Sports whether, in regard to the upgrading of the Malherbes Football Ground and the turfing works thereat, he will state where matters stand.

(Withdrawn)

MOTION

SUSPENSION OF S.O 10(2)

The Deputy Prime Minister: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I beg to move that all the business on today's Order Paper be exempted from the provisions of paragraph 2 of Standing Order 10.

Mr. X. L. Duval rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker: There being no statement by Ministers, I will suspend the sitting for half an hour for tea.

At 3.57 p.m. the sitting was suspended.