

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS**AIR MAURITIUS LTD – CARGO AIRCRAFT - LEASE**

(No. B/542) Mrs S. Hanoomanjee (Second Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from Air Mauritius Ltd, information as to whether –

- (a) a cargo plane was recently leased by that company from a South African company;
- (b) if this cargo plane is lying idle on the tarmac for some three weeks and, if so, the reasons therefor.

Reply (The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism, Leisure & External Communications (Mr X. Duval): I wish to refer the hon. Member to the reply made by the substantive Minister to PQ B/280, whereby he informed the House that Air Mauritius Ltd is a company incorporated in accordance with the Companies Act and quoted under the Port Louis Stock Exchange.

As such, matters relating to leasing of cargo aircraft, which concern the normal day-to-day operations of the company, fall under the direct responsibility of its Management and its Board of Directors.

FISHING VESSELS – DRUGS

(No. B/554) Mr M. Allet (Second Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the measures that are being taken to prevent drugs from entering Mauritius by ships and along the coast.

(Vide reply to PQ B/548)

PRISONS – DRUG - DETECTION

(No. B/555) **Dr. R. Mungur (Second Member for Flacq and Bon Accueil)** asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether, in regard to the detection of drugs in prisons, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Prisons, information as to –

- (a) the frequency at which sniffer dogs are used, and
- (b) the number of urine tests performed on detainees during the last twelve months and the outcome thereof.

Reply: One of the main recommendations of the High Powered Committee on Prisons is the purchase of sniffer dogs for the Prisons Department. This is being considered as one of the top priority issues in order to curtail drug trafficking in the Prisons.

My office has already approached the South African High Commission to obtain contact details of potential suppliers of quality specialist sniffer dogs. Arrangements are underway with the South African authorities.

For the time being, only one sniffer dog is available at the Prisons Department. It was donated by the British Government in 1998.

As regards part (b) of the question, the Commissioner of Prisons has reported that the number of urine tests for drugs performed on detainees during the last twelve months was as follows -

Le Roseau, Women Prison	34
Lotus Centre, Beau Bassin Prison	11
Richelieu Open Prison	293

All the tests were negative. It is also proposed to extend the drug testing programme to Petit Verger Prison and New Wing. Drug testing kits have already been purchased for that purpose.

CENTRAL PRISONS – FEMALE WARD - INCIDENT

(No. B/556) Mr J. C. Barbier (Third Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Prisons, information as to whether an incident occurred at the female ward of the Central Prisons, Beau Bassin on Sunday 14 May 2006 and, if so, will he give the reasons therefor and the corrective measures if any, that have been taken.

Reply: I am informed by the Commissioner of Prisons that on Sunday 14 May 2006, at approximately 0740 hours, six female detainees forced their way out of the residential building and scaled to the roof. They remained on the roof until 8 50 hours when officers successfully persuaded them to come down.

When questioned on their behaviour, the female detainees reported that they had accessed the roof in order to see and communicate with their male detainee husbands/partners located in the Central Prison. The Central Prison and the Women Prison are adjacent and separated by a security wall.

This problem of roof scaling has emerged since the closure of the New Wing at the end of February this year. Since then, the following corrective measures have been taken by the Commissioner of Prisons -

- (i) the security wall adjoining the residential building and an association yard has been raised from 8 feet to 12 feet;
- (ii) removal of the concrete sill found in the new association yards of convicted and untried detainees;
- (iii) expanded metal and iron sheets have been fixed in places where the detainees have easy access to the rooftop;
- (iv) officers are performing regular patrol along the inner walls and in between the double security walls;

- (v) daily searches are carried out by Prison Security Squad (PSS) Officers early in the morning;
- (vi) access from the laundry to the Hindu temple has been closed;
- (vii) a permanent PSS patrol on Edouard Yee Cheong Street is now taking place from sunrise to sunset. Police Officers from Barkly Police Station are also effecting regular patrol on Edouard Yee Cheong Street;
- (viii) female officers are posted in the association yards at all times;
- (ix) all detainees have been warned to avoid scaling roof top, otherwise severe disciplinary action will be initiated against them;
- (x) officers are lectured on parade to be vigilant and alert; and
- (xi) female PSS officers are assisting in the Women Prison, and are deployed at the punishment unit.

Following the incident on 14 May, further reinforcement to the existing structure has been carried out, namely razor wire is being fixed on roof edges and the external covering on the staircase. It is expected that this measure will deter female detainees from accessing the roof of the building.

SECOND MEMBER FOR CONSTITUENCY OF BEAU BASSIN & PETITE RIVIERE – POLICE OFFICER – SECURITY DUTIES

(No. B/557) Mrs D. Perrier (Fourth Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether he will state if the hon. Second Member for the Constituency of Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière has been provided with the services of official bodyguards and, if so, will he give the reasons therefor.

Reply: No VIPSU personnel has been attached to the hon. Second Member for the constituency of Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière.

However, following threats made against his person, a Police Officer from the Port Louis (South) Division is performing security duties with the hon. Member.

The hon. Member has also received serious threats through an anonymous letter. I must say that it is a matter of regret that some people can stoop so low as to resort to such disgraceful tactics to intimidate an hon. member of this Assembly who does not share their political views. The security arrangements will, therefore, be maintained as long as it is necessary.

BAMBOUS - NHDC COMPLEX – DRUG RELATED OFFENCES

(No. B/558) Mrs D. Perrier (Fourth Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether he is aware that a gang involved in prostitution and drug related offences is presently operating at the NHDC complex at Bambous and in the vicinity of the Black River District Council causing disturbance of public peace and, if so, will he impress upon the Commissioner of Police the need for urgent remedial action.

Reply: I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that there is no indication that a gang involved in prostitution and drug related offences is presently operating at the NHDC complex at Bambous and in the vicinity of the Black River District Council.

Only one drug related case has been reported in the region of the NHDC Complex in Bambous and vicinity of Black River District Council during the period January 2006 to date. No case of prostitution has been reported to Police in that specific area during the same period.

However, I would like to inform the House, that an unsigned letter, presumably from the residents of NHDC Complex has been addressed to the Commissioner of Police regarding disturbance of public peace by some anti-social elements in the region.

Police has already taken remedial action and the area around the NHDC complex and the vicinity of the Black River District Council are being patrolled round the clock. Moreover, Police is holding frequent Police Public partnership meetings with the residents of the NHDC Complex at Bambous with a view to providing guidance and necessary assistance.

Necessary instructions have been given to the Commissioner of Police to reinforce vigilance in the region.

LICENSING & DRIVING TEST CENTRE – LINE BARRACKS

(No. B/559) Mr Y. Varma (First Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether, in regard to tests for obtaining a driving licence, he will state –

- (a) if he is aware that the premises currently used for driving tests at the Line Barracks, Port Louis are inadequate and, if so, will he say what remedial measures are envisaged, and
- (b) whether he will impress upon the Commissioner of Police the need to regulate the practice of driving lessons in the centre of Port Louis at specified times so as not to hamper the traffic flow.

Reply: The Licensing and Testing Centre is presently located at Line Barracks amidst various other units of the Police Force and is in use since 1921. It has served its purpose. With the ever-increasing number of vehicles and motorcycles as well as the consequential number of driving tests each year, the existing infrastructure is under enormous pressure and has become inadequate.

It is now envisaged to construct a new Licencing and Driving Test Centre away from the city-centre where a more spacious driving circuit will provide for modern testing facilities. Tenders have also been launched inviting proposals for consultancy services for preparation of an e-business plan for the Traffic Branch of the Police Force.

With regard to part (b) of the question, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that there are 142 registered driving instructors, including 40 in Port Louis, which operate on public roads, and an average 60

call daily at Line Barracks with their candidates to undergo driving tests. This activity certainly has an impact on the already congested Port Louis

A committee will be set up to examine the whole issue and come up with appropriate recommendations.

DR. IDRICE GOOMANY CENTRE – SENSITISATION CAMPAIGNS

(No. B/560) Mr S. Lauthan (Third Member for Port Louis Maritime and Port Louis East) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms, Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to whether he has received representations to the effect that attempts of intimidation have been made by the relatives of a notorious drug trafficker and other drug dealers against the social workers of the Dr. Idrice Goomany Centre who with the support of Maulana Haroon are conducting sensitisation campaigns against substance abuse and HIV/AIDS and, if so, the measures that have been taken.

(Withdrawn)

AIRPORT OF MAURITIUS LTD – RECRUITMENT

(No. B/561) Mr S. Lauthan (Third Member for Port Louis Maritime and Port Louis East) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism, Leisure & External Communications whether, in regard to the recruitment exercises effected since July 2005, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Airport of Mauritius Ltd., information as to –

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

(Withdrawn)

DIRECTOR - MAURITIUS OCEANOGRAPHY INSTITUTE - SELECTION EXERCISE

(No. B/603) Miss K. R. Deerpalsing (Third Member for Belle Rose and Quatre Bornes) asked the Minister of Education & Human Resources whether, in regard to the post of Director of the Mauritius Oceanography Institute, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Institute, information as to whether a selection exercise was carried out and, if so –

- (a) when;
- (b) the outcome of the exercise;
- (c) whether the present Director was appointed following this exercise, and
- (d) his performance as Director.

Reply (The Prime Minister): I am informed that the post of Director, Mauritius Oceanography Institute (MOI), was advertised on 17 August 2000. In response to the advertisement, three candidates were shortlisted for interview. The interviewing panel at that time, did not find any one of these candidates fully capable of performing the duties of the post of Director. Subsequently, the post of Director was advertised overseas in July/August 2001. An Indian national was recruited on a contract basis for a period of two years with effect from 14 February 2002.

In September 2003, a Committee under the chairmanship of the former Secretary to Cabinet and Head of the Civil Service reviewed the work of the expatriate Director and unanimously agreed that his contract should not be renewed beyond 13 February 2004, among others, for poor performance.

The Committee recommended that Dr. Mitrasen Bhikajee, Associate Professor of the University of Mauritius, who was interviewed in August 2000, be recruited on a short term basis to understudy the Indian expatriate and to eventually take over the latter's work on his departure in February 2004. Among the three candidates interviewed, Dr. Bhikajee was the only one with a scientific background. Dr. Bhikajee was thus recruited in October 2003 with the concurrence of the then Prime Minister.

On 16 March 2004, the Board of the MOI offered a one-year contract appointment as Director to Dr. Bhikajee to take effect on 01 April 2004.

On 19 May 2005, the Board of the MOI, with the concurrence of the Prime Minister, offered Dr. Bhikajee appointment as Director of the MOI in a substantive capacity.

With regard to part (d) of the question, I am informed that the Board of the MOI is not aware of any adverse report on the performance of Dr. Bhikajee.

SALARY COMPENSATION (2006)

(No. B/620) Mrs D. Perrier (Fourth Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to the salary compensation to be paid to workers, he will state how the threshold of Rs2,700 as monthly salary has been reached for payment of full compensation at the rate of five percent.

Reply: As explained in reply to the PNQ on this subject last week, various factors are taken into account for awarding salary compensation. Apart from the increase in the Consumer Price Index for the preceding year, we have to bear in mind the economic and financial situation of the country, the ability of enterprises and Government to pay the salary compensation, and the need to protect those who are at the lowest rung of the income ladder.

I would like to inform the House that payment of full compensation on the basis of a threshold is not new. Prior to FY 1990/91, the lower income group was awarded salary compensation based on the increase in the CPI only. Other income groups were awarded graduated increases.

In 1990/91, a new parameter was introduced, that is, the level of salary on which a fixed amount - higher than the rate of compensation - was granted. This salary level was set at around Rs950 or less. The parameter was, however, not used thereafter for a number of years. It was reintroduced in 1997/98. The threshold salary level was set at Rs1,560, then broadly corresponding to the basic salary in the EPZ sector. This threshold was increased to Rs1,830 in 1998/99, Rs1,880 in 1999/00 and Rs2,000 in 2000/01. Thereafter, it was kept fixed at Rs2,000. In 2003/04, the level of salary was increased to Rs2,350 and in 2004/05 to Rs2,500. Last year, it was increased to Rs2,700.

In view of the difficult economic situation and taking into account the need to alleviate the hardship of the lowest rung of the income ladder, Government made a special effort this year to award a full salary compensation for the lower income group and the threshold of Rs2,700 was thus maintained.

SIC – CASINO COMPANIES – BAR CONTRACTORS

(No. B/621) Mr A. Ganoo (First Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the State Investment Corporation, a list of the licencees presently running the bars at each of the casinos where the Corporation is either the owner or a shareholder, indicating the dates as from which they were granted the right or the lease to operate.

Reply: The information requested is being placed in the Library.

POINTE AUX SABLES – POWER PLANT PROJECT – LETTER OF INTENT

(No. B/622) Mr A. Ganoo (First Member for Savanne and Black River) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to the Power Plant Project at Pointe aux Sables, he will state –

- (a) if the Board of Investment has already issued a letter of intent to a foreign company and, if so, the date on which the letter was issued;
- (b) if any request for proposals or any form of tendering process took place prior to the issue of the letter of intent, and
- (c) details of the project.

Reply: The Board of Investment issued, on 21 April 2006, a letter of intent to the (Mauritius) C.T. Power Limited incorporated in Mauritius.

With regard to part (b) of the question, the Letter of Intent was issued by the Board of Investment under Section 13 of the Investment Promotion Act 2000, after consulting the different parties concerned, such as the Central Electricity Board (CEB). The Letter of Intent was issued on the strength of a project proposal filed in by the company to the Board of Investment. The question of launching any Request for Proposal or tendering process does not arise. It needs to be pointed out that the Letter of Intent spells out a series of conditions which have to be fulfilled by the promoter. These include the conclusion of a Power Purchase Agreement between the company and CEB.

As regards part (c) of the question, the project relates to the setting up and the operation of a 3x50 MW coal power plant at Pointe aux Caves/Montagne Jacquot spread over the period 2009-2012.

NHDC CO. LTD. – TENANTS – LATE PAYMENT

(No. B/623) Mrs D. Perrier (Fourth Member for Savanne and Black River) asked the Minister of Housing and Lands whether he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the National Housing Development Company Ltd., information as to if notices to vacate have been served on the tenants who are late in settling their monthly payment.

Reply: I am advised that, as at 31 March 2006, there were some 2277 clients who owed Rs42,695,774 to the NHDC Ltd. According to established procedures, any house buyer who fails to effect payment for two consecutive months is sent a reminder informing him of his arrears and requesting him to effect payment as soon as possible. If payment is not received, a second reminder is sent. If payment is still not effected, legal action is initiated but a final letter of caution is sent to the defaulter informing him of consequences of legal action and again inviting him to settle his arrears or negotiate an arrangement.

Notices are served to house buyers who are late in their settling of their monthly payment, when all possibilities of an amicable settlement have been exhausted and where all legal procedures have been followed. The House may wish to know that no injustice is being made. When a housing unit is evacuated it is subsequently awarded to an equally socially vulnerable person who satisfies the eligibility criteria. Justice must not only be done to these people, but must be seen to be done as well.

NICHOLAS BAUDIN ST./ROCHES BOIS ROUNDABOUT – TRAFFIC LIGHTS

(No. B/624) Dr A. Husnoo (Second Member for Port Louis Maritime and Port Louis East) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping whether, in view of the heavy traffic along Nicholas Baudin Street between the Freeport and the Roches Bois Roundabout, he will consider –

- (a) having the traffic lights at the pedestrian crossing near *Tabagie* Texas repaired, and

- (b) provide for double yellow lines to be painted to prevent heavy goods lorries from parking thereat.

Reply: The traffic lights mentioned by the hon. Member have been extensively damaged and as such cannot be repaired.

Consideration will be given to the installation of a new set of traffic lights at that location next financial year. In the meantime, a normal pedestrian crossing will be set up very shortly.

As regards the provision of double yellow lines, the Traffic Management and Road Safety Unit will carry out a site visit in the course of this week to evaluate the situation and come forward with proposals.

MAURITIUS FILM DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION
– EMPLOYEES DISMISSAL

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(No. B/625) **Dr. R. Hawoldar (Second Member for La Caverne and Phoenix)** asked the Minister of Arts and Culture whether he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Film Development Corporation, information as to whether on Monday 15 May 2006, the Chairman verbally prevented eight employees from attending duty requesting them to remove their personal effects and to come back on the next day to collect their pay and dismissal letter and, if so, the reasons therefor.

(Withdrawn)