

Debate No. 26 of 25.07.06

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

The Table has been advised that PQ Nos. B/1072, B/1073 and B/1091 addressed to Dr. the hon. Prime Minister have been withdrawn.

POLICE WORKSHOP – EMPLOYEES - REDEPLOYMENT

(No. B/1071) Dr. A. Husnoo (Second Member for Port Louis Maritime and Port Louis East) 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 proposed redeployment of the employees of the Police workshop, he will state where matters stand.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, the closure of the Police workshop and the transfer of the staff responsible for the workshop was announced in the Budget Speech 2006/2007. A committee comprising representatives of different Ministries was set up under the chair of the Permanent Secretary of the Prime Minister's Office to look at the implementation of the above decision. The committee held a first meeting on 05 July of this year and the next meeting will be held on 26 July 2006.

There are 116 Police officers and 90 tradesmen posted at the Police and SMF mechanical workshops. The Police Officers will be posted in different Police stations to perform normal Police duties, whereas consideration is being given for the redeployment of the tradesmen, in other Ministries and Departments.

As for the SMF workshop, the Committee will take into consideration the fact that the SMF has high value equipment and plants which are vital for the security of the country and as such there are also no local aftersale servicing.

Moreover, the SMF personnel have been trained and have acquired special expertise to maintain those equipment.

MBC/MAURITIUS FILM DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION - AGREEMENT

(No. B/1072) Mrs S. Hanoomanjee (Second Member for Savanne and Black River) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation, information as to if the Corporation has recently signed an agreement with the Mauritius Film Development Corporation and, if so, the purport thereof.

(Withdrawn)

MBC – EMPLOYEE – CATERING SERVICES

(No. B/1073) Mrs S. Hanoomanjee (Second Member for Savanne and Black River) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation, information as to if one of its full-time employees is providing catering services to the Corporation.

(Withdrawn)

DRUG COMMISSIONER - POST

(No. 1074) Mr M. Dowarkasing (Third Member for Curepipe and Midlands) asks 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 post of Drug Commissioner has been filled and, if so, will he state –

- (a) the names of the appointed person;
- (b) the terms and conditions of his appointment;

- (c) the measures he has taken as at to date to combat drug trafficking, and
- (d) his achievements since he assumed office.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, the post of Commissioner, Drug Assets Forfeiture, has been filled since 01 December 2005.

With your permission, I am tabling a copy of the terms and conditions of the contract of employment of Mr Seegobin Nunkoo, Commissioner, Drug Assets Forfeiture.

With regard to part (c) of the question, Mr Nunkoo, is required by virtue of his duties to enquire into the possessions of traffickers and to report thereon to the DPP, this is provided for under the Dangerous Drugs Act. He is not required to take measures to combat drug trafficking *per se*. This is by and large the responsibility of the Police.

As regards the last part of the question, the Commissioner had to grapple with a backlog of 537 cases on his assumption of duty. For the period 01 December 2005 to date, 79 new cases have been referred to the Commissioner. The number of cases reported upon by the Commissioner to the DPP since his assumption of duty is 38. In four cases he has made recommendations for the forfeiture of the possessions of traffickers.

Mr Dowarkasing: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I know from the hon. Prime Minister whether the Drug Commissioner is complying to the circular letter issued by his Ministry regarding attendance?

The Prime Minister: Can the hon. Member clarify what exactly he wants to know?

Mr Dowarkasing: In fact, there was a circular letter that was issued to all departments regarding attendance which applied also to those being employed on contract. Being given that the Commissioner has not signed this attendance, the Secretary, Mr Ujodha, was transferred.

The Prime Minister: I am not sure whether this is the reason, but I can look into it.

DISTRICT AND INTERMEDIATE COURTS – POLICE PROSECUTORS

(No. B/1075) Mr Y. Varma (First Member for Mahebourg and Plaine Magnien) 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 respective ranks of Police Officers presently serving as Police Prosecutors in the District and Intermediate Courts and the allowances paid to them, if any.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that there are 56 Police Officers presently serving as Police Prosecutors in the District and Intermediate Courts. I am tabling the information regarding their posting and respective ranks.

The posting of the different grades of Police Officers to perform prosecutorial duties in specific Courts depends on the nature of offences dealt with in these Courts. Thus, at the Intermediate Court where major cases of crime, rape and murder are dealt with, the services of Chief Inspectors and Inspectors of Police are retained. In other Courts where minor offences are dealt with, either Inspectors of Police or Police Sergeants perform prosecutorial duties.

According to Standing Order No. 55, any Police Officer from the rank of Sergeant to Superintendent may be required to act as a Prosecutor. The promotional development training which Police Inspectors and Police Sergeants undergo includes a course on prosecution duties. In addition, in-house training on prosecutorial duties for a duration of two weeks is also held to allow them to have a better delivery in Courts. Also, on-the-job training has allowed the Police Prosecutors to acquire special skills in the field of prosecution.

Police Officers required to work as Prosecutors are paid a monthly allowance of Rs810 in accordance with the PRB Report. Out of the 56 Police Officers performing as Prosecutors, 43 are already drawing the allowance. The remaining 13 Police Officers, who have recently joined the Unit, as Prosecutors, will be paid an allowance shortly.

Mr Varma: Is the hon. Prime Minister aware that in the Intermediate Courts the Prosecutors are of the rank of Inspectors and above? But this is contrary to what is in paragraph 55 of the Standing Orders which clearly states that Chief Inspectors and above will stand in Intermediate Courts. This is not the case now. Inspectors also are being allowed to stand as Prosecutors.

The Prime Minister: My understanding is that Standing Order 55 says any Police Officer from the rank of Sergeant to Superintendent may be required to act as a Prosecutor. Maybe that is what they are using.

Mr Varma: Mr Speaker, Sir, the Standing Order is clear. If I may quote –

“Any Police Officer, from Sergeant to Superintendent, may be required to act as Prosecutor in District Courts. Chief Inspectors and above will stand in Intermediate Courts.”

This is not the situation now, Mr Speaker, Sir, at the Intermediate Court. I will request the Prime Minister to kindly look into the matter.

The Prime Minister: I will look into the matter.

MBC – PARENTHOOD EDUCATION PROGRAMMES

(No. B/1076) Mrs F. Labelle (Third Member for Vacoas and Floreal) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether he will consider the advisability of impressing upon the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation the need to broadcast parenthood education programmes on television, as a measure to prevent violence against children and within the family.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, parenthood education programmes on television already figure on the agenda of the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation. The objective of such programmes is, *inter alia*, to sensitise the public at large on subjects of interest and measures being taken by the authorities against social ills such as violence against children and within the family.

In the context of the International Day of the Child, a series of short messages on children's rights was broadcast on television from 02 to 17 June 2006. A special programme entitled "*Les Droits des Enfants*" was broadcast on 12 June 2006 with particular emphasis on violence against children. In the "Constat" programme broadcasted on 03 July 2006, special emphasis was also laid on violence against children. On 19 July 2006, the "Dossier" programme on television was entirely devoted to the rights of children and the issue of violence against children.

I wish to inform the House that the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation is working in close collaboration with the Mauritius College of the Air for the broadcast of programmes relating to prevention of violence against children and within the family. Two of these programmes, namely, "Encounter" and "Media Mirror" will be broadcast shortly.

Mrs Labelle: Mr Speaker, Sir, there is a lot of informative programmes. Giving information to the parents is one thing, but, I am talking about parenthood education which differs from the informative programmes. This is one thing. The other thing is regarding programmes broadcast by MCA. May we see to it that these programmes are being broadcast at peak hours and not at times when no one is watching television?

The Prime Minister: As for the second part, I can ask the MBC to ensure that. But, I should also have added that the MBC is working closely with the Ministry of Women's Rights, Child Development, Family Welfare & Consumer Protection with a view to sensitising parents about the need to provide better protection for children against violence and abuse. And that is what the MBC is also doing.

PRB – SALARY REVISION EXERCISE – TRADE UNIONS - CONSULTATIONS

(No. B/1077) Mr S. Naidu (Third Member for Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether, in regard to the forthcoming salary revision exercise to be carried out by the Pay Research Bureau for the public service, he will state when the consultations with trade unions will start.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, the next PRB report will be published in or around May 2008.

However, consultations with the Federations of Trade Unions have already started since Monday 17 July 2006 on the different methods, methodology and the programme of work in respect of the next pay review exercise. Preliminary meetings have been held with the following Federations –

- Federation of Civil Service & Other Unions
- State Employees' Federation
- Federation of Parastatal Bodies and Other Unions
- Mauritius Labour Congress
- Federation of Progressive Unions

PRIVATE TELEVISION BROADCASTING CHANNELS - LICENCES

(No. B/1078) Mr S. Naidu (Third Member for Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether, in regard to the issue of licences to private television broadcasting channels, he will state where matters stand.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, as I informed the House in reply to PQ IB/335 in October last year, the analogue broadcast frequency spectrum currently used in Mauritius is overcrowded and does not offer scope for expansion. Besides, analogue technology is being phased out as we all know and replaced by digital broadcasting. It is, therefore, not possible to issue any new licence for analogue broadcast.

However, Mr Speaker, Sir, in line with the Government policy, we have introduced digital terrestrial television in order to facilitate the advent of private television in Mauritius. As the House is aware, the Digital Video Broadcasting-Terrestrial platform is currently being used by the MBC to broadcast free-to-air programmes from UK, France, India and China.

I am also informed that MultiCarrier (Mtius) Ltd is considering the installation of other digital terrestrial television multiplexes in order to pave the way for the transmission of more digital terrestrial television channels licensed by the IBA.

Apart from the installation of digital television multiplexes, one factor that has so far inhibited the advent of private television is the clause in the Independent Broadcasting Act restricting the limit of foreign shareholding in a company applying for a licence to 20%. This will have to be looked at again.

MBC – GRANTS, REVENUE COLLECTED, ETC.

(No. B/1079) Mr S. Dayal (Second Member for Quartier Militaire and Moka) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation, Information as to –

- (a) the total amount received as grants, revenue collected as licence fees and from other sources, and
- (b) the percentage of its total revenue used for –
 - (i) administrative costs, including payment of salaries and other benefits, and
 - (ii) the purchase of films and other programmes.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker Sir, a lot of information is asked, I am proposing to table the information as requested.

PSC/DFSC – REFORMS AND MODERNISATION

(No. B/1080) Mr S. Dayal (Second Member for Quartier Militaire and Moka) 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 Public Service Commission and the Disciplined Forces Service Commission, he will state if Government proposes to set up a Select Committee to inquire and make

recommendations with a view to reforming and modernizing these institutions.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, the House would recall that during my previous mandate I appointed a Steering Committee on the Reforms of the Civil Service in order to raise the managerial efficiency and effectiveness of the service. Some of the recommendations of the Steering Committee concerning the reforms and modernisation of the Public Service Commission and the Disciplined Forces Service Commission were subsequently implemented by way of constitutional amendments.

During my visit to the United Kingdom last week, I had discussions with Baroness Usha Prashar regarding reforms of the Civil Service in Mauritius. Baroness Usha Prashar was the first Civil Service Commissioner between 2000 and 2005. She is now the Chairperson of the new Judicial Appointments Commission since October 2005. She has agreed to study the possibilities for technical assistance in this connection and to advise the Government. In fact, she will be here shortly.

For their part, the PSC and the DFSC have taken a series of initiatives, such as the implementation of ISO 9000 Principles, the Elaboration of Customer Charters, Online application system so as to improve the efficiency and the effectiveness of their businesses. It is, however, not envisaged to set up a Select Committee to look into ways and means of reforming and modernising the PSC and the DFSC.

However, in the Government Programme, we are committed to provide a right of appeal against decisions of the PSC and the DFSC and the Local Government Service Commission. A Technical Committee under the chairmanship of the Secretary to Cabinet and Head of the Civil Service is already looking into the matter with a view to recommending the constitutional amendments to be made for this purpose.

MAURITIAN PROFESSIONALS – AUSTRALIA AND CANADA - EMIGRATION

(No. B/1081) Mr J. Cuttaree (Second Member for Stanley and Rose Hill) 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 Passport and Immigration Office, information as to the number of Mauritian Professionals who have emigrated to Australia and Canada from July 2005 to June 2006.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that the Passport and Immigration Office does not keep records of Mauritians who have migrated to other countries.

Mauritians travelling abroad, I am told, do not state the purpose of their visit and very often Mauritians proceeding overseas decline to disclose whether they are emigrating or not. They are not under an obligation to do so in the declaration.

However, statistics reveal that for the period 01 July 2005 to 30 June 2006, 7357 Mauritians visited Australia out of whom 3544 are still abroad. For the same period 29 Mauritians visited Canada and 21 of them are still abroad.

In line with the proposals in the Budget Speech of 2006-2007, Government envisages to seek assistance from the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) of which Mauritius has been admitted as a member on 08 June of this year. At a meeting held under the chairmanship of the Senior Chief Executive of my office, from the Home Affairs Division, with Mr Hans Peter Boe, the Regional Representative of the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) in the South East African Region and Ms Sophie Monnenmacher, Programme Officer, Labour Migration, Migration Management Science in Geneva, discussions were focused mainly on that meeting on how IOM could help Mauritius to carry out a survey on the Mauritian Diaspora as well as those actually leaving the country for emigration purposes. This will enable us, Mr Speaker, Sir, to have a database and eventually create the link with them in order to invite them to be involved in the development of Mauritius and share their expertise.

Mr Cuttaree: Mr Speaker, Sir, the movement of professionals out of Mauritius has been a regular feature of our history. But the point I want to make to the Prime Minister is that being given that at this stage of our development we are trying to get foreigners to come and work here, what is more important is that we keep our people here. Therefore, the point of my question is to see if there is a possibility of trying to find out whether these

people are emigrating; in what areas they are working and the reasons why they are emigrating. This would help us to devise maybe a policy to keep these people at home.

The Prime Minister: This is the trend that has been going on for some years. This is what the purpose of our meeting with the IOM was. In fact, we want to invite the Mauritian Diaspora to come back and invest in Mauritius and share their expertise that they have in Mauritius

GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE – MACHINE MINDERS - RECRUITMENT

(No. B/1082) Dr. A. Husnoo (Second Member for Port Louis Maritime and Port Louis East) 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 the names and qualifications of the officer who has been assigned the responsibility to conduct the interviews of candidates for the recruitment of four Machine Minders in the Press Room and four Machine Minders in the bindery at the Government Printing Office.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker Sir, I am informed by the Acting Government Printer that –

- (i) 20 vacancies for the post of Machine Minder (Bindery) and 5 for the post of Machine Minder (Pressroom) were advertised to the general public on 10 January 2006, and
- (ii) the selection exercise was carried out by the Public Service Commission on 17 May 2006.

Following this exercise, 7 Machine Minders (Bindery) and 4 Machine Minders (Pressroom) were recruited on 26 June of this year. The Government Printing Department was also informed by the Public Service Commission that the post of Machine Minder needs to be re-advertised for the filling of the remaining vacancies.

GRAND'BAIE - TAXI DRIVERS - ATTACKS

(No. B/1083) Mr N. Guttee (Third Member for Grand' Baie and Poudre d'Or) 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 if there have been repeated attacks on taxi drivers in Grand' Baie at night and, if so, will he state the measures that have been taken to reinforce security in that region.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that four cases of attacks on taxi drivers in the region of Grand' Baie have been reported for the period 2000 to date. Out of these cases, three have occurred during the night and only one during the day.

As there is a high concentration of tourist activities in the region of Grand Baie, Police has always maintained a regular vigilance in that area. However, with a view to providing the taxi drivers with better security, Police has reinforced the existing measures throughout the whole island, but in particular looking at places where there are likely to be more tourists.

The local Police assisted by the Traffic Field Division, the Road Safety Unit, the Emergency Response Service, Divisional Support Unit, "*Police du Tourisme*" and the Bike Patrol provide front line policing on a 24-hour basis based on a targeted approach focusing on identified hot spots.

There are also stop and search exercises which are being carried out in remote areas, specially where there are suspected vehicles, they are stopped, searched and questioned during night time.

There are also road blocks by multi agencies, not only from the Local Police, but also from the CID/ADSU, SMF/SSU with a view to keeping an effective check on criminal elements and deter the recurrence of such attack.

Policemen in plain clothing and CID officers are also sent out to conduct surveillance to gather information and intelligence with a view to locating and identifying probable suspects and criminals, as well as at the same time providing security to motorists

Sensitization campaigns are carried out by the Crime Prevention Unit where the public, including taxi drivers, bus drivers and conductors are

regularly counselled on the crime prevention measures to be taken at their level for their own safety and security.

With the co-operation and involvement of the Public, a “Neighborhood Watch Scheme” has been developed as part of the Public Police Partnership Policing. Such programmes provide better interaction between Police, public, NGOs and other stakeholders, and during these meetings, problems are identified and preventive actions can be taken by the Police.

Police is also regularly assessing law and order situation and in light of its findings, existing arrangements are reviewed and additional measures are accordingly taken.

A “*Police du Transport*” has also been set up and is operational since 08 May 2006, with the following main objectives -

- (i) to provide safety and security;
- (ii) a faster response in dealing with incidents reported by transport operators, and
- (iii) necessary support services and crime prevention initiatives for better security and safety of all concerned.

POLICE & PUBLIC OFFICERS - RETIRING AGE

(No. B/1084) Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun (Third Member for La Caverne and Phoenix) asked Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether, following Government decision to raise the retirement age to 65 years, he will state if the number of years of service required by Police Officers and Public Officers to be eligible for full pension will be increased.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, as announced in the Budget Speech 2006-2007, the normal pension age would be raised from 60 to 65 years. I should add, Mr Speaker, Sir - because I see that some people do not realise it - that this does not start immediately. The retiring age is a gradual

process, which will start in August 2008 to achieve the target of 65 years in 2018. The computation of the amount of pension and the qualifying period to benefit for full pension would also need to be adjusted accordingly. The new scheme would apply to all employees with transitional measures to secure acquired rights.

The Pay Research Bureau would work out details of the modified Defined Benefit (DB) Scheme, as announced in the Budget Speech, for inclusion in its next Report which is due, as I said earlier, in 2008, after consultation with all parties.

LATE MINOR A. J. A - ALLEGED SEXUAL ASSAULT & MURDER

(No. B/ 1085) Mr L. Bundhoo (Second Member for Montagne Blanche and GRSE) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether, in regard to the Police inquiry in the case of the alleged sexual assault and murder of late minor A. J. A., he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to if the inquiry has been completed and if so, the outcome thereof.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that on 06 June 2006, Mrs A. A., the mother of late minor A. J. A. reported at Stanley Police Station, that on 05 June 2006, at about 13 40 hours she received a telephone call from her daughter's pre-primary school informing her that her daughter was sick and was being conveyed to Victoria Hospital. She immediately went to the hospital where she found her daughter to be unconscious in the casualty ward. Subsequently her child was admitted to the Intensive Care Unit.

According to the mother, the child's state of health was serious and she was under artificial respiration. On 06 June 2006, she was informed by a doctor that her daughter had been sexually assaulted. On 07 June 2006, the child passed away and the body was referred to the Police for autopsy. The Chief Police Medical Officer certified that the cause of death was due to "Shock following convulsive fits". He also stated that there has been sexual assault upon the victim.

An inquiry was immediately initiated by the Western Division CID. I think in the PNQ, part of that question was answered. So far, eighteen persons have given their statements and four others have given their defence, including parents, relatives, doctors, school bus crew and teaching staff of the pre-primary school. Eight persons have been interviewed by the Major Crime Investigation Team, including parents, relatives and teaching staff of the school.

The inquiry is still ongoing. On completion of the inquiry the relevant dossier will be forwarded to the Director of Public Prosecutions for advice.

Mr Bundhoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether with regard to abuses against children he would consider it advisable to request the Commissioner of Police to set up a special unit which may be termed '*Brigade pour la protection des mineurs*' in order to act effectively, efficiently, in order to ...

(Interruptions)

Can I be allowed to finish my question, Mr Speaker, Sir?

... in order to allow the Police to carry effective and efficient inquiry for the protection of children?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, this was announced in the Private Notice Question.

Mr Speaker: Unfortunately, the hon. Member did not listen to the PNQ.

I have to inform the House that the Parliamentary Question No. B/1087 will be answered by the hon. Attorney General after PQ No. B/1144.

(PQ No. B/1086 – See “Written Answers to Questions”)

(PQ No. B/1087 – See after PQ No. B/1144)

**JOOMUN, MR. F – BOOKMAKER –
FLOPPY DISCS - SEIZURE**

(No. B/1088) Mr P. Jhugroo (Third Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether, in regard to the decoding of the CD-ROMs secured in the course of the inquiry in the recent case of illegal betting in the horseracing sector, 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 decoding of ten floppy disks seized during the raid at the place of Mr Farook Joomun, bookmaker, started on 04 July 2006 by the IT Unit of the Police.

Before the retrieving exercise, each floppy disk was “write-protected” to prevent any modifications or intrusions whatsoever to the contents thereof.

The Police has so far been able to read eight out of the ten floppy disks seized. According to the Commissioner of Police, one of the floppy disks was not formatted while the data recorded on the other one was damaged.

CITE RICHELIEU - MUSICAL PERFORMANCE

(No. B/ 1089) Mrs S. Grenade (Second Member for GRNW and 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 Police, information as to if any incident was reported to have taken place during the musical performance organised

by the Black River District Council at Cité Richelieu on Saturday 16 July 2006, and, if so, the nature thereof and the actions taken, if any.

The Prime Minister: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that no incident whatsoever has been reported to the Police regarding the musical performance organised by the Black River District Council at Cité Richelieu on Saturday 15 July 2006.

However, I would suggest that if the hon. Member has any information, to communicate it either to my office or to the Police with specific information.

HORSERACING SECTOR - ILLEGAL BETTING - BOOKMAKERS

(No. B/ 1090) Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun (Third Member for La Caverne and Phoenix) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether, in regard to the Police inquiry in the recent case of illegal betting in the horseracing sector, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to if bookmakers have been requested to give statements.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have been informed by the Commissioner of Police that on Tuesday 18 July 2006 at 11 10 hours, acting upon information in respect of credit betting on horse races, the *Police des Jeux* raided a shop situated at Jummah Mosque Street, Port Louis in virtue of a search warrant.

Messrs. Mamad Ajmal Goolamy, caller at Gopaleea bookmaker and Lee Chan Yui Tze Chan also known as Guy, son of bookmaker Ah Luk Tze Tchan also known as Ah Lee Seng, were arrested for inquiry.

At 13 45 hours on the same day, Mr Goolamy was interviewed and he confessed having placed a credit bet on Saturday 15 July 2006 with bookmaker Ah Luk Tze Tchan also known, as I said, as Ah Lee Seng. He said he placed that bet on his mobile phone for the first race of the twelfth race meeting. He was released on parole after being warned to complete bail procedures on the following day.

On 20 July 2006, Mr Ah Lee Seng has, in the presence of his barrister, denied the charged levelled against him by Mr Goolamy following which he was released on parole.

On 21 July 2006 Mr Ah Luk Tze Tchan known as Ah Lee Seng, as I said, appeared before Port Louis Court on a provisional charge of ‘Allowing credit betting’; he was released on bail after having furnished a surety of Rs20,000 and entering recognizance of Rs50,000 in his own name.

The inquiry is still under way.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether any arrest has been made subsequently?

The Prime Minister: I am not aware, except that there was a provisional charge as I said, but the inquiry is still under way. Probably they are proceeding with the arrest if they feel there is need for.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: May I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether any of the betters have been arrested following the inquiry?

The Prime Minister: As I said, first of all, Mr Goolamy was interviewed and he confessed having place a credit bet on Saturday, 15 July. He was released on parole after being warned to complete bail procedures the following day, that is what he was supposed to do and that is the better that is involved.

Mr Bodha: May I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether in all these cases it would not be advisable to suspend the permits of the bookmakers, pending the inquiry?

The Prime Minister: There is a problem with the suspension, Mr Speaker, Sir. At this point, it might give the impression that the parties have been found guilty. Maybe, we have to let the inquiry finish. But, I don't think the inquiry will take that long to finish.

HORSERACING SECTOR – ILLEGAL BETTING

(No. B/1091) Mrs S. Hanoomanjee (Second Member for Savanne and Black River) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether, in regard to the inquiry in the recent case of illegal betting in the horseracing sector, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to if cases of horse race rigging are being inquired into.

(Withdrawn)

Mr Speaker: Hon. Members, I have to inform the House that PQ No. B/1092 will be replied by the hon. Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Tourism, Leisure & External Communication at the end of Question Time, time permitting.

Hon. Gunness, your question, please!

(PQ NO. B/1092 – See “Written Answers to Questions”)

- (I) CHILD A. B. – DEATH – POLICE INQUIRY**
- (II) CHILD R. B. – POLICE PROTECTION**

(No. B/1093) Mr G. Gunness (Third Member for Montagne Blanche and GRSE) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether, in regard to the death of child A. B. of Chebel, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to if the inquiry has now been completed and, if so, the outcome thereof, indicating the protection, if any, being provided to child R. B., the brother of the victim.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, on Saturday 15 July 2006, at around 1125 hours, one Mrs R. M., maid servant and residing at Beau Bassin conveyed her 3-year old daughter to Dr. Jeetoo Hospital. The child was examined by one Medical Practitioner at the hospital, who certified that she had already passed away.

The case was referred to the Police for enquiry. On the same day, the Police Medical Practitioner carried out a postmortem exercise and attributed the cause of death to shock following convulsive fits, also adding that septicemia following multiple traumatic wounds.

An investigation was immediately initiated by the Beau Bassin CID.

The mother of the child was arrested on the same day, that is, 15 July 2006. In her first statement, she accepted having beaten her daughter on a regular basis due to her misbehavior and that the last time she had assaulted her was a few days back. In a second statement she added that her daughter had fallen from the staircase since one week and injured her left arm.

On 15 July 2006, on the basis of incoherence as well as on grounds of suspicion she was arrested and a provisional charge of murder was lodged against her. She was remanded to Police cell until 24 July 2006.

On 16 July 2006, she made a third statement in which she implicated her paramour Mr S. A. T. for using violence on her two minor children. She also averred that she had not disclosed these facts to the Police in her previous statements as her son R. B. was in custody of Mr S. A. T., and she feared for his security.

On 16 July 2006, Mr S. A. T. was looked for by the Police but he had already left the residence. At about 2050 hours on the same day, the corpse of Mr S. A. T. was picked up on the new trunk road near Mayflower bridge at Pailles. A postmortem examination was carried out by the Police Medical Officer, who certified that death was due to skull fracture with brain laceration.

On 17 July 2006, Mrs R. M. appeared before the Rose Hill Court where she was remanded to Police cell up to 24 July 2006. She appeared before the same court on 24 July 2006 and was again remanded until 31 July 2006.

As regards the case of minor R. B., on 15 July 2006, he was taken over by the Child Development Unit of the Ministry of Women's Rights, Child Development, Family Welfare and Consumer Protection and was brought to Victoria Hospital where he was examined by four Medical

Practitioners. He was subsequently admitted as he had sustained injuries over his body.

On 17 July 2006, a psychological session was held with R. B. at the hospital by the Psychologist of the Ministry of Women's Rights, Child Development, Family Welfare & Consumer Protection.

On 18 July 2006, an Emergency Protection Order in favour of R. B. was issued by the District Magistrate of Rose Hill.

Minor A. B. is still admitted and upon his discharge will be placed in a shelter of the Ministry of Women's Rights, Child Development, Family Welfare & Consumer Protection. This is in accordance with the Child Protection Act. Police is also effecting regular patrols near the ward where he is admitted.

The Ombudsperson for Children has also initiated an investigation under section 6 (f) of the Ombudsperson for Children's Act 2003.

Police enquiries on the death of A. R. and S. A. T. are still ongoing. On completion of the enquiries, the dossier will be forwarded to the Director of Public Prosecutions. That is the situation at present.

Mr Speaker: Questions addressed to hon. Ministers. I have to inform the House that PQ No. B/1101 has been withdrawn.

MUSÉE DU QUAI BRANLY, FRANCE
– MAURITIAN ART WORKS

(No. B/1094) Mrs M. Martin (Second Member for Curepipe and Midlands) asked the Minister of Arts and Culture whether he will state if Mauritian art works are found at the *Musée du Quai* Branly in France and, if so, will he state the number and state if any of these objects are listed as the national heritage of Mauritius.

Mr Gowressoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that the *Musée du Quai* Branly has objects coming from four continents, namely Africa, Asia, Oceania and America.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as far as Mauritian art works are concerned, yes, there are two art works, "*Tambour sur Cadre*" (*Ravan*), which are damaged and presently kept in the reserve collection.

There are also some 88 items in the history collection related to Mauritius. They include engravings, lithographs, drawings and water colours which are also presently kept in the reserve collection.

These objects are not listed as national heritage.

The names of the donors of the two musical instruments are not known. The 88 other items have been donated by individual parties.

However, I am informed that the Mauritian art works, originated from the Musée National des Arts d’Afrique et d’Océanie and the Laboratoire d’Ethnologie du Musée de l’Homme.

Mrs Martin: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I know from the hon. Minister whether these objects form part of the permanent exhibition?

Mr Gowressoo: As I just replied, it is presently kept in the reserve collection. I have no information as to whether these objects form part of the permanent exhibition.

NATIONAL HERITAGE – GOVERNMENT POLICY

(No. B/1095) Mrs M. Martin (Second Member for Curepipe and Midlands) asked the Minister of Arts and Culture whether he will state Government policy in regard to redeeming part of its national heritage found in various parts of the world.

Mr Gowressoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, the 185 heritage sites, buildings and monuments listed as our National Heritage are all found in the territory of the Republic of Mauritius.

According to section 6(k) of the National Heritage Fund Act 2003, one of the functions of the National Heritage Fund Board is to work in collaboration with the international community to trace and recover any national heritage which may be outside the territory of Mauritius and to restore foreign heritage or to jointly manage shared heritage.

Section 16 of the Act also provides that “no person shall export, or cause to export a national heritage without the prior approval of the Board.” Furthermore, since 1978, Mauritius is a party to the 1970 UNESCO Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import,

Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property. According to this Convention, any State party undertakes to take the necessary measures, consistent with their national legislation, to prevent museums and similar institutions within their territories from acquiring cultural property originating in another State party which has been illegally exported.

It is the policy of Government to bring back to the country any item having the potential of being listed as national heritage and in case of shared heritage, to have access to the heritage for joint management and use. I have been informed by the National Heritage Fund that to date it has not received any representations in respect of items of potential national heritage found outside Mauritius.

I take this opportunity to invite Members of the House, who have any information on any such items, to forward same to the National Heritage Fund, so that relevant action could be initiated accordingly.

Mrs Martin: I thank the hon. Minister for his answer. However, may I inform the hon. Minister that some parts of our national heritage may be found abroad, especially in some of the neighboring islands. Could he inquire into the matter?

Mr Gowressoo: Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir.

**MRA – MINISTRY OF FINANCE & ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT - STAFF**

(No. B/1096) Mrs M. Martin (Second Member for Curepipe and Midlands) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, In regard to the employees from his Ministry who will join the Mauritius Revenue Authority, he will, for the benefit of the House, state -

- (a) the number thereof;
- (b) their terms and conditions of service, and
- (c) the mode of selection exercise.

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

- (a) The number of staff under the Ministry of Finance & Economic Development who have joined the MRA is 1,031, out of a total of 1,104 previously employed. In addition, there are 120 support staff on temporary loan to the MRA for a period of six months.

The terms and conditions of service are as follows—

Directors and Section Heads (Top two levels): Recruited by selection on a three-year fixed term performance contract.

Team Leaders (Middle Management): Recruited by selection on permanent and pensionable basis.

Other staff: Recruited by transfer on permanent and pensionable basis.

I wish to point out that the terms and conditions of service are, as per section 6 (4) of the MRA Act, determined by the MRA Board. The detailed terms and conditions are set out in the Human Resources Management Manual, which has been provided to the staff in bound copy, and which is also available on the intranet.

As regards part (c) of the question, I wish to refer the hon. Member to the reply given by the Ag. Minister of Finance to PQ B/982.

**27th AFRICAN JUDO CHAMPIONSHIP - ATHLETES -
TRANSPORT**

(No. B/1097) Mr P. Jhugroo (Third Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Youth and Sports whether he will state if his Ministry has received a claim of Rs50,000 from the Mauritius Judo Federation for the transportation of athletes and, if so, will he state if it is justified and, if not, if an inquiry has been carried out thereinto and the outcome thereof.

Mr Tang Wah Hing: Mr Speaker, Sir, my Ministry is not in presence of any claim of Rs50,000 from the Mauritius Judo Federation for the transportation of athletes.

In fact, for the 27th African Judo Championship for Judo held in Mauritius from 29 May to 06 June 2006, all arrangements regarding transport had been made by my Ministry. Following a tender exercise the contract for hiring of buses was awarded to the National Transport Corporation for an amount of Rs52,200.

MAURITIUS NATIONAL WRESTLING AND ALLIED GAMES ASSOCIATION

(No. B/1098) Mr P. Jhugroo (Third Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Youth and Sports whether he will state if the wrestling group which is led by Mr Dev Anand Sungawon is recognised by his Ministry.

Mr Tang Wah Hing: Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the House that my Ministry recognises a Sports Federation as an entity and as such, does not deal with a specific interest group within a federation.

In the case of wrestling, my Ministry deals with the Mauritius National Wrestling and Allied Games Association as the national governing body.

In its recent dealings with my Ministry, the Mauritius National Wrestling and Allied Games Association was represented by Mr Dev Anand Sunjawon as its president.

Mr Jhugroo: Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Minister confirm whether the wrestling team led by Mr Dev Anand Sunjawon is recognised by the Registrar of Associations?

Mr Tang Wah Hing: Mr Speaker, Sir, I cannot confirm at this stage. This is official and the hon. Member can check.

Mr Speaker: I am sorry, I should have asked the hon. Member to check the information himself. I should not have allowed this question.

Mr Jhugroo: Est-ce qu'il y a un rapport négatif de la part du CONFEJES sur ce *wrestling team*?

Mr Tang Wah Hing: So far, no.

**RICE (RATION)/FLOUR - CONSUMPTION BY TOURISTS -
SURVEY**

(No. B/1099) Mr P. Jhugroo (Third Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Industry, Small & Medium Enterprises, Commerce and Co-operatives whether he will state if any survey has been carried out to ascertain the quantity of ration rice and flour consumed by tourists visiting Mauritius since July 2005 to date.

Dr. Jeetah: Mr Speaker, Sir, the Household Budget Survey is the only survey done to ascertain consumer spending habits. However, I need to set the record straight regarding any misperception on the issue of subsidy on rice and flour as raised in the question. Prior to the reorientation of the policy on subsidy in relation to both commodities, hotels and restaurants were purchasing flour at subsidised rate for the production of a number of flour based products. Since the beginning of July 2006, hotels and restaurants are made to pay the market price of flour. The question of rice does not arise.

Mr Jhugroo: M. le président, le ministre avait mentionné que les touristes consomment le riz ration et la farine et c'est la raison pour laquelle on a enlevé les subsides. Est-ce que...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Mr Jhugroo: Mr Speaker, Sir, today he is telling that it is not true.

Dr. Jeetah: Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, let me read the reply again to the hon. Member, and I quote -

"For rice and flour, previously Government was subsidising the price of ration rice and flour to the tune of Rs500 m. including Rs100 m. by the STC. And as it has been mentioned in the Budget Speech, two-thirds of wealthiest Mauritians absorb over Rs200 m. of the subsidy. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, under conditions of scarcity of resources, we cannot think of extending subsidy to the 800,000 or so tourists that visit Mauritius annually."

Here it was mentioned that we were giving subsidy to rice. This is just his hallucination.

Mr Guinness: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I know from the Minister the total quantity used by hotels and restaurants?

Mr Speaker: Of which commodity?

Mr Guinness: Obviously, I am talking of flour.

Dr. Jeetah: I just replied, Mr Speaker, Sir, that there are surveys carried out by the Household Budget Survey. I can table this document.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Mr Guinness: Mr Speaker, Sir, can the Minister give us the total amount of flour consumed in the country and the amount consumed by hotels and restaurants?

Dr. Jeetah: If the hon. Member comes with a substantive question, I can give him the total amount consumed by all the citizens. With regard to the survey, he has to refer to the document laid.

(Interruptions)

Mr Jhugroo: Can I ask the hon. Minister when we are going to get the report of the survey?

Dr. Jeetah: I have just tabled the report.

DR. A. G. JEETOO HOSPITAL - (NEW) CONSTRUCTION

(No. B/1100) Dr. A. Husnoo (Second Member for Port Louis Maritime and Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether in regard to the reconstruction of the A. G. Jeetoo Hospital, Port Louis, he will state where matters stand.

Mr Faugoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that a loan agreement was signed by the previous Government with the African Development Bank (ADB) in August 2002 for the construction of the new Dr. A. G. Jeetoo Hospital. However, in April 2005, on the eve of the award of the contract for appointment of...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Mr Faugoo: ...consultants, for obscure reasons, the exercise was cancelled, bringing the project to a standstill.

The House would wish to note that since the signature of the loan agreement, around Rs8 m. have been paid as commitment fee to the ADB.

It is only when the present Government took office in July 2005, that action was taken to revive the project. In February 2006, the ADB expressed its concern regarding the delay in the implementation of the project and informed that it was envisaging the possibility of cancelling the loan. Subsequently, in June 2006, a team from the ADB came on mission and advised that the loan be cancelled due to the delay in implementation of the project and the commitment fee payable.

The original loan has now been cancelled by the ADB. Following negotiations, the bank has agreed in principle, to provide a grant to finance the pre-contract consultancy services. The grant will be followed by a loan for the construction of the hospital and supervision of the project. This new loan will have more advantageous terms as commitment fee will not be payable.

My Ministry has already set up a Project implementation Unit (PIU) and appointed amongst others a Project Manager. A Quantity Surveyor and a Senior Architect have also been seconded from the Ministry of Public Infrastructure to form part of the PIU.

The new hospital will have a capacity of 550 beds and will comprise the construction of new infrastructure, renovation works and re-assigning adequate space to obtain a modern hospital of high quality standard for patients, visitors and staff.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Project Implementation Unit has already finalised the pre-qualification document for the short-listing of consultants to undertake pre-contract consultancy services. The document has been submitted to the ADB and the Central Tender Board for approval.

Dr. Mungur: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Minister what was the initial cost and what will be the final cost?

Mr Faugoo: I think the loan was in the tune of Rs800 m., Mr Speaker, Sir, and the cost now would be much more higher than that.

Mr Dowarkasing: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I know from the hon. Minister what has been the outcome of the recent meeting the staff of his Ministry had with the African Development Bank recently?

Mr Faugoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, regarding the meeting which the staff of the Ministry had with the ADB, in fact, the standing loan has been cancelled by the ADB as I said. We have negotiated to get a grant instead which is not refundable. And secondly, once we have finished with the design of the project, we'll be negotiating a loan from the ADB.

Dr. Mungur: May I ask the Minister when the initial construction work will start and when will it be finalised?

Mr Faugoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, we are still at the stage of pre-selection exercise for consultants. Then, we'll be appointing the consultants for the design prior to getting the contractor itself. In fact, as I said, we have

already submitted to the ADB for the approval of the grant and to the CTB for approval of consultancy. I have a time-table which has been worked out by the...

Mr Speaker: If it is long, the hon. Minister can circulate the time-table.

Mr Faugoo: The project will be completed before end of 2010.

TAXI MARRONS REPRESENTATIVES/DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER – MEETINGS

(No. B/1101) Mr S. Hanoomanjee (Second Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport & Shipping whether he will state if he had any meetings with the representatives of the *taxi marrons*, following the demonstration they held in front of the Government House, on 12 July 2006, and, if so, the outcome thereof.

(Withdrawn)

INDUSTRIAL ESTATES, TOURIST RESORTS & HOTELS – PROPERTY TAX

(No. B/1102) Mr S. Soodhun (Fifth Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance & Economic Development whether he will state if Government proposes to introduce a property tax relating to industrial estates, tourist resorts and hotels.

The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance & Economic Development (Mr R. Sithanen): Mr Speaker, Sir, the National Residential Property Tax being introduced this year as part of the reform of the Income Tax system, as its name implies, is meant to cover only residential properties. The precise definitions and scope of the tax have been laid down in the Finance Bill already circulated.

At the same time, Mr Speaker, Sir, a Temporary Solidarity Levy has been introduced on hotels to finance the Empowerment Programme to help the most vulnerable groups help themselves. Regarding industrial estates

that house mainly EPZ enterprises, the advisability of introducing a property tax thereon must be considered in the light of the current difficulties faced by that sector.

PHARMACEUTICAL PRODUCTS – MARK-UP

(No. B/1103) Mr S. Soodhun (Fifth Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Minister of Industry, Small & Medium Enterprises, Commerce & Co-operatives whether, in regard to the proposed maximum mark-up on pharmaceutical products, he will state where matters stand as at to date.

Dr. Jeetah: Mr Speaker, Sir, the matter is still under consideration. However, the House may wish to note that Government will take appropriate steps to boost up competition in this sector.

Mr Dowarkasing: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I know from the hon. Minister what has been the outcome of the Court case that was scheduled on 29 June 2006?

Dr. Jeetah: Mr Speaker, Sir, I don't have the information. If the hon. Member comes with a substantive question, I will gladly answer.

Mr Speaker: How can the Minister be aware of a Court case? The hon. Member should put a substantive question.

Mr Dowarkasing: Mr Speaker, Sir, in reply to PQ No. B/846, the Minister said that he is waiting for the outcome of the Court case to take any decision. But, then, 29th June has lapsed and today we are in July. Can we know, in the light...

Mr Speaker: The Minister is not aware. He has been taken by surprise in the House. If the hon. Member comes with a substantive question, then the Minister may reply.

SEXUAL ASSAULTS & RAPE – VICTIMS - ASSISTANCE

(No. B/1104) Mr S. Soodhun (Fifth Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Minister of Women's Rights, Child Development, Family Welfare & Consumer Protection whether she will state the assistance that is provided by her Ministry to victims of sexual assaults and rape, indicating if any follow-up action is carried out.

Mrs Seebun: Mr Speaker, Sir, my Ministry provides psychological and legal counselling to victims of sexual assault and rape through its six family support bureaux.

However, since February 2006, we have put up our protocol of assistance to victims of sexual assault and rape. We do realise that, in the past, victims of sexual assault and rape had to undergo a great ordeal by going to the Police Station to give all statements, and sitting on a bench for long hours. This was as though undergoing through another rape.

In the light of these problems, the Police Department, the Ministry of Health and my Ministry met on two occasions, on 20 and 24 February, whereby we set up a protocol, which allows any victim just to call on our hotline 119. The Police Department would convey the victim right to the special ward.

We have five Sexual Assault Units in our five regional hospitals. The victims are driven directly to the ward, where they are given necessary care. All statements are given in a very warm atmosphere at the hospital, instead of lengthy, tiresome statements being given at the Police Stations. Once the victim is taken on board at the hospital, the care and all statements are done simultaneously.

Mrs Labelle: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I know from the hon. Minister the number of psychologists attached to her Ministry and to the Assault Unit, as well as the type of psychologists? Are they clinical psychologists or therapist psychologists?

Mrs Seebun: Mr Speaker, Sir, we have half a dozen of clinical psychologists, who can give necessary support to the victims.

PRIVATE TUITION (PRIMARY & SECONDARY) – REGULATION

(No. B/1105) Mr S. Soodhun (Fifth Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Minister of Education & Human Resources whether he will state if Government proposes to regulate the practice of private tuition to students at primary and secondary levels.

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to refer the hon. Member to PQ B/369, to which I replied on 25 April 2006.

The practice of private tuition is widespread in Mauritius and has been so for numerous decades. Ideally, private tuition should not be a general practice, but should be the avenue for students who are facing major difficulties in their schoolwork or are slow learners.

A study was carried out by the University of Mauritius in 1984 regarding private tuition at primary level. The report, although dates as far back as 1984, still holds substance, as it concluded that for any approach to succeed, it must be based on social and economic reality. It must be consistent with the desires of parents and children and with the realities of the job market. Any imposed solution which ignores these factors will be doomed to failure.

Some causes of the need for private tuition were found to be as follows –

- (i) parents considered that private expenditure on education as an investment with a high rate of return;
- (ii) raising the standard of requirements for different levels of jobs, leading to an increase in the demand for higher educational qualifications.

Some policy options were identified –

- (i) lengthening the school day;

- (ii) institution of remedial classes for slow learners, and
- (iii) enactment of legislation, imposing controls over private tuition.

At primary level, section 37 A of the Education Act prohibits the giving of private tuition to students of Standards I to III. The Ministry has established clear guidelines and criteria for the practice of private tuition. They are as follows –

- (i) school premises are not to be used for private tuition during the following periods:
 - in January and December;
 - on Saturdays, Sundays and public holidays, and
 - the last week of school holidays.
- (ii) only three days of private tuition per week during school holidays, 9.00 to 12.00 a.m.;
- (iii) no private tuition in the morning and after 5.00 p.m. on school days;
- (iv) size of private tuition group not to exceed classroom capacity;
- (v) not more than six hours of private tuition per week;
- (vi) pupils should have a break of at least half an hour between the end of regular lessons and private tuition;
- (vii) all pupils taking private tuition with class teacher on school premises after school hours are under the custody of the teachers concerned;
- (viii) the teacher may be liable for any accident that may befall on any pupil on school premises before, during and immediately after private tuition;
- (ix) tuition facilities should be extended to pupils who cannot afford to pay.

However, in order to improve conditions in which tuition is given, as well as for security reasons, teachers are permitted to use school premises for giving tuition to pupils of Standards IV, V and VI.

At secondary level, there is no legal provision which either allows or prohibits private tuition. There is no policy to encourage private tuition at secondary level, neither are schools placed at the disposal of teachers for private tuition. If there is private tuition at secondary level, it is done outside school hours and outside school premises.

As stated earlier on, it is not envisaged to unilaterally regulate or to take sanctions regarding private tuition, as the responsibility rests also with the parents. However, my Ministry has set up a team to study all the various implications of private tuition in State primary and secondary schools. The team has conducted preliminary assessments and has submitted their interim report, which is still being studied at the level of my Ministry.

Mr Soodhun: Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Minister confirm whether competition for the 1,260 seats will not, in fact, force the students to have recourse to private tuition, thus putting undue pressure upon them?

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, as I said, the practice of private tuition exists in our system. It is also the responsibility of parents to guide the students in terms of what is best for them.

Mr Varma: Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Minister kindly inform the House whether the teachers who give private tuition in Government schools pay a rent to Government?

Mr Gokhool: This is not the case, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Guinness: Mr Speaker, Sir, is the hon. Minister prepared to table copy of the interim report?

Mr Gokhool: As I said, this is an interim report, and it is being studied. Discussions with stakeholders will take place. This is not a final report, and I don't think that it is advisable to table the report at this stage.

Mrs Labelle: Mr Speaker, Sir, will the hon. Minister consider regulating private tuition for practical classes, particularly at secondary level? Because we are aware that, now, teachers give tuition for physics or chemistry practical classes. Will the hon. Minister consider looking into this aspect of practical classes?

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, as I said, at this stage, it is not proposed to regulate private tuition. But, in the light of the work that is being carried out, this point can be taken on board.

Mr Guinness: Mr Speaker, Sir, there are a few cases - I don't say that it is general - where Standard III students are having private tuition, and we know that it is illegal to do so. But in some cases because of the A + now, parents are starting giving tuition to their children.

(Interruptions)

Is the Minister prepared to put notices in schools in order to notify parents that this is illegal?

Mr Gokhool: I think the hon. Member is a very experienced parliamentarian and he should not put a question on the basis of hypothesis.

(Interruptions)

I think the whole question is based on hypothesis.

Mrs Martin: Can I ask the hon. Minister whether he has a definite time frame as to when the negotiations with the relevant stakeholders will finish?

Mr Gokhool: Well, I think I indicated the next phase is to consult those stakeholders and then as we proceed, we will have to take into account what developments are taking place. I cannot put a fixed time frame at this stage.

Mrs Labelle: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister has talked about the parents' responsibilities. Maybe in view of helping parents to take their responsibility, will the Minister consider putting clear notices that private tuition is illegal from Standard I to Standard III?

Mr Gokhool: This is a valuable suggestion which we have to take on board.

At 1.00 p.m. the sitting was suspended.

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

FIRST CITY BANK – TAKING OVER FROM DELPHIS BANK

(No. B/1106) Mr M. Dowarkasing (Third Member for Curepipe and Midlands) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to the taking over of the First City Bank, he will for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to if prior consultations have been held with the shareholders.

The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development (Mr R. Sithanen): Mr Speaker, Sir, with respect to the takeover of the Bank, I am informed that there have been consultations, and discussions and decisions taken at the Board level where the main shareholders are represented.

Mr Dowarkasing: Mr Speaker, Sir, when there was the taking over from the Delphis Bank to the First City Bank, all the shareholders' money were shifted to what we call the Central Depository and Settlement Company Ltd. Now, since the First City Bank will be taken over by another institution, can I know from the hon. Deputy Prime Minister – if he has the information - what will happen to this Company Ltd.?

Mr Sithanen: The information I have, Mr Speaker, Sir, is that the shareholding is as follows –

51.56 % DBM,
39% Global Direct Finance,
7% State Investment Corporation Ltd.

So, if we add these three, what I would call the main shareholders, it constitutes 97.56% of the shareholders. I presume the hon. Member is referring to the shareholders of the ex-Delphis Bank; and the information I

have is about 1,591 shareholders. I presume if they are selling 100%, their shares also will be sold.

Mr Dowarkasing: Eventually, there is a case in Court. The case has just been filed recently; it seems that the evaluation of the assets of the then Delphis Bank has not been made properly and it has been contested. Can I know from the hon. Minister what will happen...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: I am sorry. There is a case which is pending, it is *sub judice*; it will be difficult for the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance to answer. The case is *sub judice*. Next Question!

PLASTIC BAGS – TRADERS’ PUBLICITY

(No. B/1107) Mr M. Dowarkasing (Third Member for Curepipe and Midlands) asked the Minister of Industry, Small & Medium Enterprises, Commerce and Co-operatives whether, in regard to the sale of plastic bags in the shopping centres, he will state if it is proposed to take measures to prohibit the sale of bags bearing the publicity of these shopping centres.

Dr. Jeetah: Mr Speaker, Sir, I thank the hon. Member for drawing attention on this issue.

Following the recent tax on plastic bags, customers are now required to pay and, therefore, decide whether to buy or not. It is debatable as to whether a customer should be required to pay for a plastic bag which bears the publicity of traders. In this respect, officials of my Ministry will have consultations with all stakeholders shortly.

MAURITIUS PORTS AUTHORITY – RECRUITMENT – JULY 2005 TO JULY 2006

(No. B/1108) Mr M. Dowarkasing (Third Member for Curepipe and Midlands) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism, Leisure and External Communications whether, in regard to the persons recruited at the Mauritius Ports Authority since July 2005 to date, he will,

for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, information as to their names and addresses together with their respective titles.

The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism, Leisure and External Communications (Mr X. L. Duval): Mr Speaker, Sir, since July 2005 ten persons have been recruited at the Mauritius Ports Authority and six persons have either retired or have resigned.

With your permission, I am tabling the information requested.

All the vacancies were advertised as appropriate in the press and the most suitable candidates have been selected by the Board.

FOOTBALL MATCHES – LOCAL TEAMS – SPECTATORS

(No. B/1109) Mr Y. Varma (First Member for Mahebourg and Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Youth and Sports whether he is aware that football matches played by local teams attract few spectators and, if so, will be state the measures that he proposes to take to encourage more people to attend these matches.

Mr Tang Wah Hing: Mr Speaker, Sir, it is a known fact to everybody that football matches played by local teams attract few spectators.

However, there are positive signs that spectators are gradually coming back to the stadia. In fact, the last match of the MFA Cup attracted more than 4000 spectators, while the last League Championship match and the Republic Cup match attracted 1,100 and 1,264 spectators respectively.

More efforts are being made to encourage greater number of spectators to attend local matches. In this context, I had meetings with the Mauritius Football Association which will look into ways and means to address the problem.

Mr Varma: Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Minister kindly inform the House since when has there been a decrease in the number of spectators in our stadiums?

Mr Tang Wah Hing: Since the year 1999.

Mr Varma: Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Minister also inform the House the reason as to why from that particular year?

Mr Speaker: The reason why there has been a decline.

Mr Tang Wah Hing: We all know that at this time Mauritius had a big social problem concerning l'Amicale. This happened after that situation.

Mr Speaker: Next Question, hon. Varma!

MAHEBOURG MUSEUM - DEVELOPMENT AND REORGANISATION PLAN

(No. B/1110) Mr Y. Varma (First Member for Mahebourg and Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Arts and Culture whether, in regard to the Mahebourg Museum, he will state if his Ministry has or proposes to have a development and reorganisation plan.

Mr Gowressoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Mauritius Museums Council that it has a development reorganisation programme for the National History Museum of Mahebourg for the years 2007-2010. This programme includes *inter-alia* –

- (i) the construction of a Conservation of Laboratory;
- (ii) the construction of a new building to house the permanent exhibition for period 1875-2000 and the reserve collection;
- (iii) the restoration and re-housing of the reserve/study collections;
- (iv) the renovation of the permanent exhibition, and
- (v) the construction of a museum shop, bookshop and cafeteria.

The construction of a Conservation Laboratory and repairs of the roof of the museum will be effected during this financial year. The other projects will be implemented during the forthcoming years upon availability of funds.

Mr Varma: Can the hon. Minister kindly inform the House of the number of visitors at the Mahebourg History Museum per day?

Mr Gowressoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I do not have the information here, but I will find it.

Mr Varma: Can the hon. Minister inform the House whether there is an entrance fee which is paid at the Mahebourg History Museum?

Mr Gowressoo: As far as I know, no entrance fee is paid.

Mr Varma: Can the hon. Minister also inform the House whether this being envisaged in the reorganisation plan?

Mr Gowressoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, we have envisaged to ask for an entrance fee. The Board of the Mauritius Museum Council will decide on that.

Mr Bhagwan: Etant donné que ce site de Mahebourg est très fréquenté par les touristes et même les étudiants, est-ce que le ministre est au courant de l'état déplorable de l'enceinte de cette institution et que des actions nécessaires doivent être prises le plus rapidement possible dans l'intérêt de l'île Maurice?

Mr Gowressoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I agree with the hon. Member that the yard is in a deplorable state. I visited the museum and I informed the Ag. Director to look into this matter.

Mr Dowarkasing: Can I know from the hon. Minister what steps does he intend to take in order to promote this museum among our tourists?

Mr Gowressoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, as I have mentioned in my speech on the Budget, I want to promote cultural tourism in this country. So, I will do my level best to take care of this.

Miss Deerpalsing: Can I ask the hon. Minister whether he will consider jointly with the Minister for Tourism in the upcoming "*Semaine du Patrimoine*" to organise some events at the Museum of Mahebourg because it is part of the *patrimoine*?

Mr Gowressoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, in collaboration with the Ministry of Tourism, we have put up a project to promote cultural tourism.

Mr Varma: Is the hon. Minister aware that his predecessor informed this august Assembly that a Conservation Laboratory was being set up? That was at the beginning of last year. Can we know whether any steps were undertaken to set up that conservation laboratory by his predecessor?

Mr Gowressoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I just replied that the construction of the conservation laboratory is under way in this financial year. As for my predecessor, nothing has been done; and my Ministry is taking care of it.

Mr Cuttaree: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Minister whether he is aware that many tour operators who take tourists to visit the museum charge a fee to the tourists whereas the entry to the museum is free? And the same thing happens with the Pamplémousses Botanical Garden. Can I ask him whether he would consider making the tourists pay so that the money generated can go towards the upkeep of the museum?

Mr Gowressoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I agree with the hon. Member that this is the case at the museum. As I mentioned in my speech on the Budget, this will be organised in such a way that the tourists will have to pay.

GRAND BEL AIR, MAHEBOURG – FLOODING PROBLEM

(No. B/1111) Mr Y. Varma (First Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Environment & National Development Unit whether he is aware of the flooding problem at Joseph Street, Grand Bel Air, Mahebourg, during heavy rainfalls and, if so, will he state the remedial measures that will be taken.

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am aware of the flooding problem at Joseph Street, Grand Bel Air, Mahebourg, having visited the place in September 2005 together with my colleague, hon. Minister Bunwaree, Parliamentary Private Secretary, hon. R. Duval and the hon. Member.

Following the site visit, GIBB (Mtius) Ltd. Consultant of the NDU, was requested to carry out a survey and to make appropriate

recommendations. The survey was conducted in December 2005 and the Consultant has recommended the construction of about 20 metres masonry drain and 50 metres of concrete covered drain from the flooding area to a nearby outlet.

It has not been possible for the NDU to implement this project for the time being because of unavailability of funds. Consideration for this project will therefore be given as and when funds are available.

I am advised that the District Council of Grand Port/Savanne has undertaken, as a temporary measure, to regularly clean the absorption drain along Joseph Street and the site drain along Wan Sek Law lane to alleviate the flooding problem.

Mr Varma: Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Minister kindly inform the House whether he, in fact, received a letter dated 27 March 2006 from the inhabitants of Joseph Street, Grand Bel Air?

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am not in possession of a copy of a letter, but one thing is clear, I have been to that place. We have already had a site visit and the Consultant has already visited the place. The detail is designed already, I am just awaiting for clearance of funds and once I get it, I am going to start the project.

HIGHWAYS – TRAFFIC CONGESTION

(No. B/1112) Mrs F. Labelle (Third Member for Vacoas & Floreal) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping whether he will state if Government will consider the advisability of imposing a minimum speed limit on highways as a measure to alleviate traffic jams.

The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping (Dr. R. Beebejaun): Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that low speed is not the cause of traffic jam on the highways (Motorway M1 and M2).

In fact, traffic congestion along the highways occurs during the peak hours, the main reason being the number of vehicles travelling at the same time in the same direction.

My Ministry does not, therefore, propose to introduce minimum speed limit along the highways.

Primary School Supplementary Feeding Programme

(No. B/1113) Mrs F. Labelle (Third Member for Vacoas & Floreal) asked the Minister of Education & Human Resources whether, in regard to the Primary School Supplementary Feeding Programme, he will state if parents have been requested to fill a form and, if so, will he state the date on which this exercise was carried out and the outcome thereof.

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the House that parents were not asked by the Ministry to fill any forms. However, there have been many consultations and discussions on the matter in my Ministry with various stakeholders. The consultations and discussions are still going on in my Ministry to decide on the best approach to take regarding this issue.

Mrs Labelle: Mr Speaker, Sir, as a matter of fact, on 04 July 2006, the Minister stated that no circular was being circulated in the schools. Is the Minister aware that on the very same day, maybe at the very same time, there was a circular given to school children?

Mr Gokhool: If I heard the hon. Member correctly, the question relates to requests for filling of a form. I do not know whether the circular makes specific mention...

Mr Speaker: No, I think there is a question which has been put by the hon. Member. If the Minister wants to have clarifications, he must ask for a copy of the circular.

Mrs Labelle: Maybe I have to rephrase my question, Mr Speaker, Sir. May I ask the hon. Minister whether he is aware that on 04 July parents were requested to fill the form?

Mr Gokhool: As I said, I stick to the answer I have given.

Mrs Labelle: Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, may I table a copy of a form which has been circulated in schools on 04 July?

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, I think I would plead with you to allow me to clarify this issue because if it goes without clarification, it may create confusion.

Mr Speaker: The Minister has all the right to clarify the issue.

Mr Gokhool: The hon. Member asked whether my Ministry has asked the schools to fill a form. I have answered no. Now the hon. lady has mentioned a question about a circular. I do not know the content of the circular. I need to take cognizance of the circular...

Mr Speaker: The hon. Minister can take cognizance of the circular and thereafter make a statement.

Mr Gokhool: We should not mix issues otherwise this will lead to confusion in the minds of the public.

Mr Gunness: Mr Speaker, Sir, I think the Minister must clarify. The question is whether parents have been requested to fill in a form.

Mr Speaker: The Minister can be given the form.

Mr Gunness: The form is here.

Mr Gokhool: If the hon. Member is saying that there is a form, I'll take the pains of verifying and then I'll make a statement.

Mrs Labelle: With your permission, Mr Speaker, Sir, may I read the content of the form? Because there are only two single sentences.

Mr Speaker: Yes, please go ahead.

Mrs Labelle: It is a form from Reunion Road Government School where the circular reads as follows –

“I wish to continue/or not benefit to have a loaf of bread for my ward subject to the Primary School Supplementary Feeding Programme.

Name of pupil:..... Std:..... Signature of parent:.....”.

(Interruptions)

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, I will take cognizance of the content and I’ll make a statement.

LEBANON CRISIS – MAURITIAN CITIZENS

(No. B/1114) Mrs F. Labelle (Third Member for Vacoas & Floreal) asked the Minister of Foreign Affairs, International Trade and Co-operation whether, in view of the situation prevailing in Lebanon, he will state the measures that have been taken for the repatriation of the Mauritian citizens working in that country.

Mr Dulloo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I thank the hon. Member for this question which would enable me to give maximum information to hon. Members on this issue. Besides I intend to make a statement to the House.

Unfortunately, after the statement I made last Tuesday in the House, the situation in Lebanon has deteriorated further. In fact, there does not appear presently any sign of a ceasefire.

Early last week, we have started taking measures to ensure the safe evacuation of our citizens in Lebanon if the need were to arise.

In this connection we have requested our Honorary Consul in Lebanon and our Embassy in Cairo to closely monitor this situation and to keep us continuously informed.

According to reports received from our Honorary Consul, I should inform the House as follows –

- (i) There are approximately 200 Mauritian citizens in Lebanon.

- (ii) A number of Mauritians have moved to secure places with their employers.
- (iii) The Honorary Counsel has caused announcements to be made in the press and on radio in Lebanon to request Mauritian nationals who want to be evacuated/repatriated to contact the Honorary Consul.
- (iv) A number of Mauritian nationals do not want to be repatriated as they would not be able to take with them all their possession (luggage etc. including their money). The banks in Lebanon have imposed control on foreign currency that may be taken out of the country (maximum of 500 US dollars).

My Ministry has requested the British, French and Indian authorities for assistance to all Mauritian citizens who wish to leave Lebanon. These friendly countries have kindly accepted to assist in the process.

Our relevant Missions overseas as well as our Honorary Consul in Lebanon have been informed that arrangements have been made with the British, French and Indian authorities for the evacuation or repatriation of Mauritian nationals.

Our Consul has reported that Mauritian citizens, as I have just stated, are generally under the protection of their employers who have the means to move to safer places away from the conflict zone. He has also advised that no formal requests for repatriation have been received so far from Mauritians in Lebanon. However, he has received about thirty telephone inquiries regarding arrangements that have been made for evacuation or repatriation should the need arise.

My Ministry is working in close collaboration with the British, French and Indian authorities to ensure that our citizens in Lebanon are safely evacuated or repatriated if they so desire.

We are also working closely with relevant Ministries and Air Mauritius to assist Mauritian citizens who may need any assistance.

Mrs Labelle: M. le président, puis-je demander à l'honorable ministre s'il est au courant que notre Consul Honoraire avait fait savoir que l'évacuation jusqu'à Chypre était assurée mais à partir de Chypre, il n'y avait aucun arrangement?

Mr Dulloo : If there is need for any evacuation, instructions have been given to ensure that, wherever they would like to go facilities be put at the disposal of Mauritians so that they can reach their final destination.

PRIMARY SCHOOL INSPECTORS - APPOINTMENT

(No. B/1115) Mr S. Naidu (Third Member for Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether, in regard to the posts of primary school inspectors, he will state if there exist any vacancies and if so, the steps that are being taken to have them filled.

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the House that the staffing position of Primary School Inspectors is as follows –

No. of posts of Primary School Inspector on the Ministry's Establishment as at today	No. of Primary School Inspectors in post as at today	No. of vacancies as at today
48	47	1

My Ministry is fully aware of the important role of the primary school inspectors in providing World Class Quality Education. To this end, my Ministry has been proactive and I am pleased to inform the House that twenty-six primary school inspectors have been appointed on 21 July 2006

Mr Mohamed: May I ask the hon. Minister whether he would kindly lay on the Table of the House the names of those people who have been recruited?

Mr Gokhool: There is no problem. I'll do that.

HANDICAPPED CHILDREN – FREE TRANSPORT

(No. B/1116) Mr S. Naidu (Third Member for Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Social Security, National Solidarity and Senior Citizens Welfare & Reform Institutions whether, in regard to handicapped children travelling to school by bus and who need to be accompanied, she will state if the accompanying person equally benefits from free transport and, if not, why not.

Mrs Bappoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, the answer is yes.

AIR MAURITIUS LIMITED – MAINTENANCE & ENGINEERING DEPARTMENT – CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

(No. B/1117) Mr S. Dayal (Second Member for Quartier Militaire and Moka) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism, Leisure and External Communications whether he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from Air Mauritius Ltd., information as to if the services of one Mr Mohammed El-Bourai and/or his consultancy firm has/have been retained by the Maintenance and Engineering Department of the Company and, if so –

- (a) as from what date;
- (b) if a prior selection exercise was carried out and, if not, why not, and
- (c) the fees paid out to him and/or to his firm.

The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism, Leisure and External Communications (Mr X. L. Duval): Mr Speaker, Sir, I have, on various occasions emphasised in this House Government policy with regard to questions raised concerning the commercial transactions of Air Mauritius Ltd.

In this case the question raised deals with the relationship within Air Mauritius Ltd. and one of its suppliers, of which Mr Mohammed El-Bourai is the Chief Executive Officer. The House will note that, in addition, the relevant contract contains strict confidentiality clauses.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I have nothing more to add except to reassure my colleagues that the issue specifically raised in this Parliamentary Question has been referred to the Board of Air Mauritius Ltd. for investigation as to whether there are any unsatisfactory features. In line with this policy of good governance adopted by the present Board of Directors, I have been assured that it will give due attention to this matter and, if need be, communicate directly to the public and to its shareholders. If, on the other hand, my colleague has any additional matter to bring to my attention, I shall be pleased to meet him.

Mr Dayal: Mr Speaker, Sir, will the hon. Deputy Prime Minister confirm whether Reliance Aerospace Solution, of which Mr Mohammed El-Bourai is the Chief Executive Officer, is represented at Air Mauritius currently, and, if yes, in what capacity and since when?

Mr Duval: I am not sure I fully understand the question, Mr Speaker, Sir. At any rate, unfortunately it is not my decision not to answer, it is a Cabinet decision to treat questions on Air Mauritius in this way and, therefore, I am not able to deal with the question. However, I repeat, if the hon. Member has any information, either myself or the Board of Directors of Air Mauritius will be very happy to meet him.

SCHOOL CURRICULUM - HEALTH & PHYSICAL EDUCATION PROGRAMME

(No. B/1118) Mr S. Dayal (Second Member for Quartier Militaire and Moka) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether he will state if he will consider the advisability of introducing a health education programme in the school curriculum.

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, health and physical education is already on the time table of primary schools. The health component, in the Teachers' Guide of Standard VI, has lessons on first aid in cases of choking, bleeding, fainting and blisters, on basic facts about high blood pressure. Children are taught about good food habits, safety measures and action to be taken in cases of different injuries.

However, it should be noted that though the health and physical education appears on the time table, very few schools have, in actual fact,

taught this discipline. As from January 2007, in line with curricula reforms, we shall be working on new Standard I textbooks. Health and physical education will be on the time table and care will be taken to ensure that it is taught in all schools.

As far as the secondary curriculum is concerned, an arm of my Ministry called Health and Anti-Drug Unit, carries out activities in secondary schools to sensitise teachers, pupils and administrative staff about important health issues. Workshops have been run in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life on HIV/AIDS in 158 Private and Secondary State Schools and some 30 more schools are left to be covered. Sensitization workshops on HIV/AIDS will be carried out during the third term in these thirty schools as an exceptional measure. About 8500 teachers and administrative staff have been trained so far.

When we talk of curriculum, we also mean co-curricular activities. Heads of schools have been asked to revitalize the health clubs. In April, a week's workshop was held at Mahebourg Creativity Centre to induct health club leaders into the tasks constituting the health sensitization programme. In fact, this is a way to empower our youth to assume their responsibility. Another similar workshop for Zone 3 has just ended at France Boyer de la Giroday SSS. My Ministry has already initiated action for the setting up of a Regional Health and Education Council which will provide a holistic approach to health in schools.

Quite apart from the above, there are a series of initiatives which are taken at the level of the zones to promote health education in schools, like the early screening of pupils, talks on non communicable diseases in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life and the proposed issue of a pamphlet on HIV/AIDS.

I wish to assure the hon. Member and the House that, in the context of Quality Education, my Ministry is evolving a coherent policy on Health and Physical Education.

Mrs Labelle: Mr Speaker, Sir, since the hon. Minister has referred to health education in secondary schools, may I ask the hon. Minister whether these activities are a regular feature and, if so, what are the sequences?

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have given the details of activities that have been carried out and also the proposal to set up a regional Health and Education Council. It is in that respect that a holistic coherent policy is being developed. As a result of that, we can lay out a time-table which did not exist in the past. This is an innovative measure which my Ministry is taking.

AIR MAURITIUS LTD – AIRBUS - PURCHASE

(No. B/1119) Mr E. Guimbeau (First Member for Curepipe and Midlands) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism, Leisure and External Communications whether, in regard to the purchase of an Airbus by the Air Mauritius Ltd, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, information as to where matters stand.

The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism, Leisure and External Communications (Mr X. L. Duval): I refer the hon. Member to my reply to PQ No. B/1117. I have nothing more to add.

Mr Guimbeau: Mon but, M. le president, n'est pas de m'immiscer dans les affaires internes d'Air Mauritius. Mais vu nos bonnes relations avec les Etats Unis et la France, ne serait-il pas envisageable dans l'avenir de considerer Boeing

Mr Speaker: I am sorry, the Member is trying to question a policy of Air Mauritius. The Minister has said that this is a private company and he cannot answer questions on policy decisions taken. He said that it is an internal matter.

Mr Guinness: Mr Speaker, Sir, regarding the policy, the hon. Minister said last week that the previous Government did not answer questions on Air Mauritius. But I have 20 PQs that have been answered and I am laying these on the Table.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: I am sorry, this is not the opportunity ...

(Interruptions)

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

Mr Speaker: On what point is the Minister rising?

Mr X. L. Duval: If it is to provide some clarification, I can do it. Does the hon. Member want me to read some of the answers that the former Prime Minister, Sir Anerood Jugnauth, gave?

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker, Sir, I can quote the reply which the former Prime Minister made to PQ No. B/605.

Mr Speaker: I have stated that the Minister has said that he is not going to answer questions on Air Mauritius insofar as the day-to-day administration is concerned. If the hon. Member has any qualms about this position of the Minister, he can come and see me in my Chamber, and we will try to sort out the matter. I will see in what way the hon. Member can raise the matter. He cannot just stand up and raise a matter like this.

(Interruptions)

Mr Bodha: Mr Speaker, Sir ...

Mr Speaker: I would just remind the hon. Leader of the Opposition that no supplementary questions are allowed when the main question has not been answered. He should bear that in mind. I do not know whether he is going to raise a point of order.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Mr Bodha: The fact that the purchase of an Airbus impacts on the whole economy because billions of rupees are involved; and secondly it impacts on the foreign exchange and our foreign currency reserves I think that on such questions there should be an answer.

Mr Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition has been a Minister. I am sure he knows that it is for the Minister to decide whether he is going to answer the question or not. He has chosen not to answer the question. That is the end of the matter.

(Interruptions)

Order!

TEMPORARY SOLIDARITY LEVY - HOTEL MANAGEMENT COMPANIES & TOUR OPERATORS

(No. B/1120) Mr E. Guimbeau (First Member for Curepipe and Midlands) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to the temporary Solidarity Levy, as announced in the Budget Speech, he will consider the advisability of extending same to other organisations, including Air Mauritius Ltd, State Investment Corporation, Mauritius Telecom, Rogers, British American Insurance Ltd, Mauritius Commercial Bank Ltd and State Bank of Mauritius Ltd.

The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development (Mr R. Sithanen): Mr Speaker, Sir, I would wish, at the very outset, to point out that international best standards in taxation provide that a tax or a levy be always applied in reference to a sector or activity and not to specific companies indicated by their names.

In the Budget speech, we stated that the purpose of the temporary solidarity levy was to raise funds for the financing of our innovative and ambitious Rs5 billion Empowerment Programme. In choosing to apply that levy to profitable operators in the tourism industry only, we took into account the capacity to pay and the taxes being paid by other sectors.

Accordingly, the Finance Bill makes provision for the levy to be applicable to hotels, hotel management companies and tour operators.

Mr Guimbeau: M. le president, il est clair que le gouvernement a besoin d'argent. Pourquoi ne pas aller chercher cet argent là où il se trouve? C'est-à-dire dans les grosses compagnies commerciales, industrielles. Ceci

permettra de donner au petit peuple le temps de s'adapter à la nouvelle conjoncture, M. le president.

Mr Sithanen: Let me explain, Mr Speaker, Sir, that there are some companies that are paying 25% Corporate Tax. There are other companies that are paying no tax and there are other companies which are paying 15% on paper and the effective rate of taxation is very low. In fact, concerning all the companies that the hon. Member has mentioned, you cannot have a levy on a company by its name, but by sector. Many of these companies are already paying 25% and, in other cases, some of them are in difficulties.

Mr Guimbeau: Mr Speaker, Sir, we can find ways of how to put a temporary levy like in hotels to raise some funds for, let us say, three or four years, so as to help the needy.

Mr Sithanen: I hate to mention the names of companies, Mr Speaker, Sir. But, surely, the hon. Member would know that there is one company amongst those that he has mentioned which is a conglomerate dealing in many sectors of the economy. And those companies that operate in the hotel sector and belong to the conglomerate, obviously, are going to pay the tax.

Mr Dowarkasing: In view of the solidarity levy, may I know from the hon. Minister the rationale of putting that levy only on those involved in tourism sector?

Mr Sithanen: We have to take into account a couple of factors. One is the ability to pay. Second, we have to take into account what the other sectors are already paying. As mentioned, some of the companies that the hon. Member has mentioned are already paying 25% tax. We had to take this into account.

STATE LANDS – COASTAL REGION - LEASES

(No. B/1121) Mr E. Guimbeau (First Member for Curepipe and Midlands) asked the Minister of Housing and Lands whether, in regard to the leases on State land along the coastal region, other than the *Pas Géométriques*, he will table a list of all the beneficiaries, indicating –

- (a) the locations thereof;

- (b) their purposes and duration;
- (c) the conditions for their renewal, and
- (d) the annual rental payable.

Mr Dulull: Mr Speaker, Sir, the pieces of information requested for are being compiled and will be placed in the Library of the National Assembly as soon as they are ready.

Mr Mohamed: Mr Speaker, Sir, even though the main question deals with the State land along the coastal region other than the *Pas Géométriques*, will he consider since we are on this particular issue of those leases, laying on the Table of the Assembly also the names of the lessees of all the *Pas Géométriques*?

Mr Dulull: I will look into it.

PAS GÉOMÉTRIQUES - LEASES

(No. B/1122) Mr E. Guimbeau (First Member for Curepipe and Midlands) asked the Minister of Housing and Lands whether, in regard to the leases of State land on the *Pas Géométriques*, he will state the different categories, indicating the total number thereof in each category.

Mr Dulull: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am advised that there are the following types of State land leases on the *Pas Géométriques* –

- (i) *Campement* site lease
- (ii) Industrial site lease
- (iii) Building site lease
- (iv) Building cum commercial site lease
- (v) Commercial site lease
- (vi) Agricultural lease
- (vii) Socio-cultural lease
- (viii) Landscaping lease
- (ix) Leases for access road leading to *campement* site

Sir, regarding the total number of leases in each category, the information is being compiled and will be placed in the Library of the National Assembly as soon as it is ready.

Mr Guimbeau: Does the bungalow complex fall under the industrial lease?

Mr Dulull: The bungalow falls under the industrial lease

Mr Guimbeau: I would like to know, therefore, the difference between a bungalow and a *campement*.

Mr Speaker: I am sorry. The hon. Member is asking the Minister to express an opinion as to what is his opinion about the difference between a bungalow and a *campement*.

(Interruptions)

Is the hon. Member asking the Minister to give an opinion?

Mr Guimbeau: Mr Speaker, Sir, I want to know the difference between a bungalow complex and a *campement*.

Mr Dulull: Mr Speaker, Sir, the difference is not on the bungalow complex or the *campement* site, it's on the lease. The terms and conditions of the leases are different.

Mr Guimbeau: Mr Speaker, Sir, on the same lease, you can have a *campement* and a bungalow next door?

Mr Dulull: Mr Speaker, Sir, if it's a *campement*, it has got to have *campement* site lease, industrial lease, then you have your bungalow.

Mr Guimbeau: Therefore, Mr Speaker, Sir, can the Minister table a list of all the beneficiaries of industrial leases for hotels and bungalows?

Mr Dulull: I will look into it, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Mohamed: Mr Speaker, Sir, in the last question which was put by hon. Guimbeau, the request is that the names of all the lessees of all those different types of leases be laid on the Table of the Assembly. Will the Minister table it or will he look into the possibility of tabling it?

Mr Dulull: I will look into the possibility of tabling it if there is no confidential information ...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order, please!

Mr Dulull: If there is no legal restriction, I will be very happy to table all the names of the lessees of the different leases.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Speaker, Sir, if there are industrial leases on which there are bungalows...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Can the hon. Member address the Chair, please! I don't hear her when she turns on the other side.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: The hon. Minister has just mentioned that there are industrial leases on which you can have bungalows, and on the other hand, there are *campement* leases. People having a *campement* will have to pay the *campement* site tax and people owning a bungalow on an industrial lease will not have to pay the tax. May I ask the hon. Minister the rationale behind this particular policy?

Mr Dulull: I do agree with the comment of the hon. Member. We are looking into it; and we will make sure that everyone pays his fair share of the tax.

Mr Speaker: Taxation policy is for the Minister of Finance.

Mr Guinness: With the change in the definition of the *campement* site, can I know from the Minister how many new people will get into that trap?

(Interruptions)

Mr Dulull: Mr Speaker, Sir, it is not the intention of this Government or any Member of this Government to set trap to our honest citizens. What we are doing is to administer only the *campement* site so that each and everyone contributes his fair share to the national treasury.

Mr Guimbeau: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister talked about confidentiality. But I would like to tell him that these are State lands belonging to the State. So, I think there is no reason as to why we cannot table the names of all beneficiaries.

Mr Dulull: We will table all the names of beneficiaries under different leases.

(Interruptions)

Mr Guinness: Mr Speaker, Sir, my question is precise. Actually, the definition ...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order, please! Order!

Mr Guinness: ... of *campement* site is 81.2 metre from high water mark and having access to sea. Now, access to sea is being removed, therefore, there must be greater number of people who will be involved. Can we know from the Minister how many more people are concerned with this?

Mr Dulull: We are currently conducting a survey, and as soon as the information will be ready, we will communicate it to the House.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order, please!

Mrs Perrier: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I ask the Minister what is the annual rental for industrial site lease?

Mr Dulull: The annual rental value for the industrial site for the first and second year it is 25% of the economic rental, for the third and fourth year, it is 50% of the economic rental, for the fifth to the tenth year, full economic rental; from eleventh to the twentieth year, it is 1.5 times the full economic rental.

**NHDC –CASTING OF SLABS - GRANTS –
JULY 2000 TO JULY 2005**

(No. B/1123) Mr J. Cuttaree (Second Member for Stanley and Rose Hill) 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 the total amount paid out to beneficiaries in terms of grants for the casting of slabs for the period July 2000 to July 2005.

Mr Dulull: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am advised that the National Housing Development Company Ltd. has, for the period 01 July 2000 to July 2005, that is, for a period of five years, paid a total sum of Rs796,350,000. as grants for the casting of slabs, averaging approximately Rs159 m. per year, as compared to an average of Rs225 m. paid for the period 01 July 2005 to date, that is, for one year.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Mr Dulull: *M. le président, permettez-moi de rappeler que ce projet a été initié en 1998, sous le gouvernement du Dr. Navinchandra Ramgoolam.*

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order, order!

Mr Dulull: *Ce projet fut initié pour créer des conditions favorables à une vraie justice sociale et pour encourager et récompenser l'effort de nos concitoyens pour avoir un toit.*

Mr Cuttaree: Mr Speaker, Sir, I don't want to make politics out of that, but the Minister should check his information. And if he does not know, will you allow me to say that the issue of the casting of slabs has been with us for a very long time. In fact, it was when the NHDC was giving Rs30,000, at that time, to people who were purchasing an NHDC house that the same sum was given to those who don't buy NHDC houses for casting of slabs. Therefore, this is something which is different. Now, can I ask the hon. Minister whether the amount of money, which he says is being spent on the slabs, is not money which has been voted by the previous Government in the previous budget?

Mr Dulull: Mr Speaker, Sir, more than what has been voted has been spent.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Mr Mohamed: Will the hon. Minister consider having an inquiry into the fact that before July 2005, people were being given grants for casting of slabs based on their appurtenance of a political party?

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! I said order! Hon. Dowarkasing, this is my last call to you! Order!

Mr Dulull: I thank the hon. Member for his courage to tell the truth to the House.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: The hon. Member has asked you whether you are going to set up an inquiry. Please reply to this!

(Interruptions)

Order, order! Hon. Jhugroo, order, please! Hon. Gunness, order!

Dulull: Mr Speaker, Sir, this is a serious matter; I will consider an in-depth inquiry into the matter.

Mr Dayal: Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Minister confirm to the House whether the largest chunk was disbursed in the year 2004 to 2005 prior to the July election, and what was the amount?

Mr Speaker: There is a question, let the answer come if it is available.

Mr Dulull: Looking at the spreading of the allocations it seems to be so.

Mr Cuttaree: As a result of his answer, can the hon. Minister give to the House the detailed sums paid in each of the years 2000 and 2005?

(Interruptions)

Mr Dulull: I will, Sir.

DUCKLINGS - IMPORTATION FROM FRANCE

(No. B/1124) Mr J. Cuttaree (Second Member for Stanley and Rose Hill) asked the Minister of Agro Industry and Fisheries whether he will state if the importation of ducklings from France is prohibited and the reasons therefor.

Dr. Boolell: Mr Speaker, Sir, the importation of broiler day old ducklings from France has been banned on the recommendations of the National Committee on Avian Flu, following the outbreak of highly pathogenic Avian Influenza in a turkey farm in France on 25 February 2006.

The decision has been taken in the national interest, so as to restrict all the risks of entry of the disease in Mauritius. The massive importation of day old chicks all year round would render disease control difficult and constitute a high risk for the domestic poultry industry, which produces 30,000 tons of poultry meat annually. Furthermore, we have to take preventive measures so as to avoid any negative repercussions on other economic activities such as tourism. As a preventive measure, the national committee has recommended that the importation of raw poultry meat and *foie gras* be banned. Only canned and pre-cooked poultry products at a temperature of 70 degree are presently allowed.

I have personally met the representatives of the enterprise, which was importing the day old broilers, and have taken note of their views. They have been informed that there is no restriction on the importation of day old parent stock ducklings from France. The imported parent stocks are reared for production of eggs, which are then used for production of broiler ducklings.

As regards the ban on the importation of day old broilers from France, the World Organisation for Animal Health has reported that culling operations have been completed at the infested farm and that France was declared as a highly pathogenic avian influenza-free country on 18 June

2006. The matter is being followed closely by the National Committee, which includes technical experts and private sector representatives. The committee will make recommendations based on a proper risk assessment and the national interest.

Mr Cuttaree: Mr Speaker, Sir, I fully agree with the hon. Minister on the need to protect us from avian flu. The Minister is aware that the development of the industry of *foie gras* can be a very lucrative industry for Mauritius since it has started very well. Can I ask the hon. Minister whether he is satisfied that the measures he has taken to allow the importation of day-old chicks will satisfy the needs of the industry here.

Dr. Boolell: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Member is right to say that this is an emerging sector and certainly the sale of *foie gras* is a lucrative business. What we have done is that we have granted a licence to an hatchery-cum-enterprise and they are going to import parent stock and then there will be the production of eggs which is going to be used for the production of broiler ducklings. They are going to do it on a large scale and then interact with prospective investors in that field.

Mr Cuttaree: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have another question. In view of what the hon. Minister has said now, is he still considering, at a certain time, to allow the importation of chicks?

Dr. Boolell: That was more of an exception, because since 1978 we have taken all the precautions in respect of import of day-old chicks, precisely because we are self-sufficient and to give new boost to production of chicken farming. I have to abide and comply to advice being dispensed to us by those who have the acumen. In fact, we are also interacting with the *Organisation Internationale Epizootique*. But Mauritius being what it is, we have to tread cautiously, more so since there are many migratory birds and they come to the estuary and they interact with those who have back gardened poultry farm. So, we have to tread very cautiously. Unless and until we feel that it is safe, certainly we may give due consideration to import one-day old chicks.

CITE ROMA, RICHE TERRE – COMMUNITY CENTRE

(No. B/1125) Mrs B. Juggoo (First Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Social Security, National Solidarity and Senior Citizens Welfare & Reform Institutions whether, in regard to the construction of the community centre at Cité Roma, Riche Terre, she will state when works are expected to be completed.

The Minister of Environment & National Development Unit (Mr A. Bachoo): Mr Speaker, Sir, I shall use your permission to reply to this Parliamentary Question.

I am advised that the construction of the community centre has been completed. Site works are being finalised and were expected to be completed by the first week of August 2006.

NOTRE DAME – WOMEN CENTRE - CONSTRUCTION

(No. B/1126) Mrs B. Juggoo (First Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Women's Rights, Child Development, Family Welfare & Consumer Protection whether, in regard to the construction of the Women Centre at Notre Dame, she will state where matters stand.

Mrs Seebun: Mr Speaker, Sir, the construction of a Women Centre at Notre Dame is long overdue.

I have already expressed in this very House my Ministry's commitment towards the realisation of this project. Unfortunately, there has been a delay in implementation because the initial estimated cost of the project was Rs43 m. which included a women centre, day care centre and a family support bureau.

In light of the exorbitant cost, the Ministry has opted, at this stage, for a women centre only. Designs are being finalised. The Ministry of Public Infrastructure will be launching tenders in a month or so.

AVIAN-FLU – SIMULATION EXERCISE

(No. B/1127) Dr. R. Mungur (Second Member for Flacq and Bon Accueil) asked the Minister of Agro Industry and Fisheries whether, in regard to the measures being taken for the prevention of an outbreak of the avian-flu in Mauritius, he will state -

- (a) the number and frequency of simulated exercises carried out as at to date;
- (b) the percentage of the poultry population vaccinated as at to date,
- (c) the radius within which the surrounding poultry farms will be culled.

Dr. Boolell: Mr Speaker, Sir, one simulation exercise was carried out on 06 May 2006 to test and validate emergency operational measures. The response was prompt and effective and the exercise successful.

It is intended to carry out another simulation exercise targeting large industrial poultry farms. The date of this exercise will be determined on the recommendations of the National Emergency Preparedness Committee.

As regards our vaccination strategies for avian flu, a selective vaccination policy was adopted by the National Technical Committee, in accordance with recommendation of the World Animal Health Organisation. In this context, the following categories of poultry are being vaccinated.

- (i) all parent stock flocks of commercial farms,
- (ii) backyard poultry in risk areas vicinity of Terre Rouge estuary, port area, airport zone, and
- (iii) commercial layers

In targeted areas, 7580 backyard poultry representing 100% of the targeted poultry population have already been vaccinated. The total parent stock and layers vaccinated is 102,000. This represents a percentage of 50%.

The vaccination campaign is ongoing both at small breeder/Commercial farm levels.

The radius within which surrounding poultry farms will be culled is 03 km as recommended by the World Animal Health Organisation. In addition any vaccinated poultry flock located within 03 km radius will be screened by the Rapid Antigen Test to determine the level of protection.

Dr. Mungur: Mr Speaker, Sir, in the event of avian flu outbreak, can I ask the hon. Minister if some economic measures will be taken into consideration to rehabilitate those poultry farms which fall within the 03 km radius in case culling occurs?

Dr. Boolell: Mr Speaker, Sir, this is a difficult question to answer, because we are laying a lot of emphasis upon prevention. We have to make sure that all the necessary precautions are taken so that we keep at bay this very serious disorder or disease. Secondly, it is difficult to say whether there will be compensation at this stage. We might as well take all the necessary precautions and everything is being done. The poultry farmers are being sensitised at large. Regular visits are made and there will be simulation exercise interacting with the private sector. The national committee is meeting on a weekly basis. It would be difficult for me to give a specific reply to the question put by the hon. Member.

WASTEWATER TREATMENT PLANTS - METHANE GAS

(No. B/1128) Dr. R. Mungur (Second Member for Flacq and Bon Accueil) asked the Minister of Public Utilities whether he will consider the advisability of starting a pilot project for the siphoning off of the methane gas generated by wastewater treatment plants for domestic purposes.

Dr. Kasenally: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that methane gas is generated from the digestion of sewage sludge at St. Martin Wastewater Treatment Plant only. The St. Martin Treatment Plant provides treatment up to a tertiary level.

The average amount of sludge production monthly is of the order of 500 tonnes and produces an average of 75,000 cubic metres of methane gas.

The methane gas is used to generate electricity which accounts for about 20% of the total energy requirements for the whole plant.

The proposal of starting a pilot project for siphoning off of the gas for domestic purposes cannot be envisaged at this stage, given the small volume of sludge generated at the Wastewater Treatment Plants. Should there be any major change in the future, for example, when the whole island will be covered by sewage reticular system, consideration will be given to the proposal of the hon. Member.

NATIONAL SERVICE FRAMEWORK FOR DIABETICS

(No. B/1129) Dr. R. Mungur (Second Member for Flacq and Bon Accueil) asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether, in view of the high prevalence of diabetes, he will state if a National Service Framework for Diabetics will be formulated and, if so, when.

Mr Faugoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, diabetes is one of the most serious non-communicable diseases affecting the population of Mauritius. It is a major public health problem. It accounts for considerable human suffering in view of its associated complications, namely cardiovascular disease, cerebrovascular disease, renal failure, blindness and lower limb amputations. If diabetes is not properly managed, it will result in considerable costs both in economic and social terms. This is the reason for which the Government Programme for 2005-2010 includes the setting up of a National Service Framework for Diabetes.

In this context, a Steering Committee on Biomedical Research and Technical Innovation has been set up by the Prime Minister to, *inter alia*, work out a White Paper outlining proposals related to the setting up of a National Service Framework for Diabetes.

This Committee has set up a sub-committee, chaired by the Principal Medical Officer of my Ministry, responsible for non-communicable diseases, which is presently working on a policy paper with a view to formulating a National Service Framework for Diabetes in Mauritius. The sub-committee works in close collaboration with the officers of my Ministry and all stakeholders. The framework is expected to be ready by November of this year.

TRADERS – NEW RENTAL FEE

(No. B/1130) **Mr L. Bundhoo (Second Member for Montagne Blanche and GRSE)** asked the Minister of Housing and Lands whether he is aware that since the coming into operation of the Landlord and Tenant (Amendment) Act 2005, a large number of traders, especially in the city of Port Louis are finding it difficult to pay the new rental fees and, if so, will he state if it is proposed to bring amendments to this Act.

Mr Dulull: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am advised that there has been a strong representation made against the new rent claimed by landlords in the context of and within the legal parameters of the Landlord & Tenant (Amendment) Act 2005. These representations are being examined and the desirability and advisability of amending the law will be looked into, in consultations with all stakeholders.

Mr Bundhoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister if he could confirm to the House whether the formula that was prescribed in the Landlord & Tenant Act of 1999 was amended before July 2005, and it is this amended formula which is now causing lots of trouble and hardship to the traders?

Mr Dulull: It is the amendments brought in 2005 that are causing the hardship to the tenants.

Mr Bundhoo: May I ask the hon. Minister whether he will consider reviewing the formula?

Mr Dulull: We are considering to review it and to bring more justice and fairness to the system.

Mr Bundhoo: When the hon. Minister had representations from the Association of Traders, did he inform them about this?

Mr Dulull: Well, they were informed that the law will be reviewed to make it more equitable and fair.

(PQ No.B/1131 - See “Written Answers to Questions”)

**STATE SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS
– TRANSFER - DOCUMENTS**

(No. B/1132) Mrs D. Perrier (Fourth Member for Savanne and Black River) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether, in regard to the procedure obtained for the transfer of secondary schools students from one zone to another, he will state the documents that have to be submitted.

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that transfers from one State Secondary School to another State Secondary School in Forms II, III and IV are effected strictly on the basis of CPE results on a zonal basis. I am also informed that the following documents should be submitted along with the applications forms –

- (i) CPE examination result slip (not certificate) obtained prior to admission to Form I;
- (ii) copy of the 2005 final (3rd terms) internal examination results, and
- (iii) original of CEB and CWA bills for the three months in case of the request for transfer from one zone to another.

This exercise takes place during the month of January.

However, it does happen that some applications are made at any time of the year outside the general transfer exercises and such cases are dealt with on a case to case basis. Wherever required, additional documents (medical certificates, residential details, etc.) may also be asked for. Otherwise, applicants are invited to reapply next year.

Mr Guinness: Since the initial documents asked for, apart from the CPE examination result slip, are the CEB and CWA bills, may I ask the hon. Minister how is it that in this case, document of which I laid on the Table of the Assembly...

Mr Speaker: I am sorry, this matter has already been raised.

Mr Guinness: Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to know how is it that a case in Sodnac, a transfer from a SSS...

Mr Speaker: Yes, but that matter has been raised in the House and answers have already been given.

Mr Guinness: Mr Speaker, Sir,

Mr Speaker: Insofar as this question is concerned, the matter was raised, explanations were given by the hon. Minister and the hon. Member cannot raise it again through this Question.

Mr Guinness: From the answer which has been given, my question is whether in that case the CEB bill...

Mr Speaker: I am sorry, hon. Member. I am giving my ruling in all fairness. This matter was fully raised here in this House; answers were given. I will not allow this matter to be raised again through this Question.

Mrs Labelle: Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, may I ask the hon. Minister whether in some cases, rent books are being asked and, if so, why?

Mr Gokhool: In the second part of my answer, I have said that on a case to case basis, if it is required, other documents are requested. These documents include medical certificates and residential details.

Mrs Perrier: Si je comprends bien, le *rent book* est un document additionnel. Donc, obligatoirement, les factures du CEB et de la CWA doivent être soumises. Donc, comment se fait-il que, dans certains cas...

(Interruptions)

Comment se fait-il que, dans certains cas, seulement le *rent book* a été demandé et accepté?

Mr Gokhool: Je ne voudrais pas faire la pédagogie de l'honorable membre. Au moins, l'honorable membre doit m'écouter...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! Hon. Minister, can you please repeat the answer.

Mr Gokhool: I'll repeat the answer. There is a general transfer exercise which takes place in January. After January, there are other cases – just now I have the case of a student, who is being assaulted daily and the student has made a request to me, as Minister. Don't I react?

(Interruptions)

I have to react. This is what I am trying to tell the hon. Lady.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! Order, please!

Mrs Labelle: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister explained that, in certain cases, additional documents are needed. So, may we know from the hon. Minister whether the CEB and CWA bills, which are the initial documents required, were asked for before the request for additional ones were made?

Mr Gokhool: I'll answer by citing a concrete example. Because of the divorce of his parents, a child changes his residential address to go to another zone. I am not going to ask for any other detail, except for the residential details. This is what we do.

Mr Speaker: Or the divorce paper. Next Question!

CHITRAKOOT, VALLÉE DES PRETRES - LANDSLIDE VICTIMS - LAND ALLOCATION

(No. B/1133) Mr G. Lesjongard (Second Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Housing and Lands

whether in regard to the allocation of land to victims of the landslides at Chitrakoot, Vallée des Prêtres, he will state where matters stand.

Mr Dulull: Mr Speaker, Sir, land to the extent of 1645 m² had been identified at Morcellement Raffray, Le Hochet, for the relocation of the 13 families affected by the landslide at Chitrakoot. The concerned families were consulted and were agreeable to the proposed location. Letters of Intent to the 13 families were issued on 28 March 2006.

All the basic utilities and infrastructure are available on site.

I am advised that lease agreements for ten families have been finalised and the beneficiaries will shortly be called upon to sign same. The remaining three families have been requested to submit some missing documents to finalise their lease agreement within all necessary legal parameters.

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister when will the ten families be called to sign the lease agreement?

Mr Dulull: Mr Speaker, Sir, I mentioned in my answer that they will be called shortly.

LE MORNE - WORLD HERITAGE SITE

(No. B/1134) Mr G. Lesjongard (Second Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Arts and Culture whether he will state the progress achieved in regard to the nomination of Le Morne as a World Heritage Site by the UNESCO.

Mr Gowressoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the House that following the submission of the Nomination Dossier of Le Morne to the UNESCO World Heritage Centre in January 2006, the latter has, on 01 March 2006, informed that the Dossier was incomplete and advised that the revised Dossier should be submitted before 30 September 2006 so as to enable the centre to respond and allow the State Party to make any necessary changes before 01 February 2007.

In this context, as advised by UNESCO, a request was made to the World Heritage Centre in April 2006 for the services of an expert to work on the Nomination Dossier and the Management Plan.

On 19 July 2006, the World Heritage Centre has recommended that a South African Consultancy firm be approached for the assignment.

My Ministry is presently having necessary consultations with that firm so that an expert could be delegated to Mauritius in August 2006 so as to meet the deadline of 30 September 2006.

Mr Speaker, Sir, furthermore, the Ministerial Committee and the Technical Committee are having regular working sessions and with the arrival of the UNESCO expert, the Committee will finalise the Dossier so as to meet the deadline of 30 September 2006.

Mr Jhugroo: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Minister what does he mean when he says that the Dossier was incomplete?

Mr Gowressoo: The Dossier was incomplete, so...

(Interruptions)

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister mentioned that necessary changes should be brought to the Dossier. Can he inform the House what are those changes?

Mr Gowressoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, we are still working on it. We have got two meetings. Last week, we had a Ministerial Committee and this week also we are going to have a Ministerial Committee and a Technical Committee to process the Dossier.

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Speaker, Sir, I'll get back to the question again. Cabinet submitted the Nomination Dossier in January this year; and now, I understand from the Minister that we have to work the Dossier again because there are revisions that have been put forward and that necessary changes have to be brought in the Dossier. May I know what are those changes?

Mr Gowressoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, there are many changes. So, I will lay it on the Table of the House.

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to tabling of documents, in an answer given by the Minister on 21 March this year, he...

Mr Speaker: Can I ask the hon. Member whether it relates to this question, please?

Mr Lesjongard: Yes.

Mr Speaker: All right.

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Speaker, Sir, we are still awaiting the final report of Dr. Abungo on Le Morne since March this year. We haven't had that document placed in the Library.

Mr Gowressoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, we'll send the document shortly.

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Speaker, Sir, we need to be informed of the progress also. The Minister made some statements and now he is telling the House that changes have to be brought to a Dossier that was approved by Cabinet and submitted to UNESCO. What are those changes?

Mr Speaker: I understand the point of the hon. Member. On this question, hon. Lesjongard, the Minister has said that he is going to table the changes that he has brought. Is the hon. Member satisfied? I hope he is satisfied. Any other supplementary questions? Hon. Ganoo!

ASSOCIATION OF JEWELERS - REPRESENTATIONS

(No. B/1135) Mr A. Ganoo (First Member for Savanne and Black River) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance & Economic Development whether he will state if he has received representations from the association of jewelers following the budgetary proposals relating to the jewelry sector.

Mr Sithanen: Mr Speaker, Sir, following the budget proposal to require all jewelers, irrespective of their turnover, to be VAT-registered, we did receive representations about that proposal from the Association of Jewelers, from the Jewelers and Gold Silversmiths Associations as well as from individual jewellers.

I wish to highlight that jewellery items are subject to VAT since its introduction in 1998. However, some jewelers were not required to be VAT-registered and did not have to charge VAT on their sales, there was a significant distortion on the market.

During my pre-budget consultations with SMEs, I received complaints about that situation and proposals that all jewelers be put on a level playing field. I understand that moreover, a Working Committee on the Jewellery Sector set up at the Ministry of Industry last year, in which various associations of jewelers were represented, recommended that all jewelers, irrespective of their turnover, be VAT-registered.

The purpose of the budget proposal is precisely to create a level playing field and put everyone in that business on an equal footing, VAT-wise. And provision has been made in the Finance Bill 2006 for that purpose.

Mr Ganoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Deputy Prime Minister whether it is fair to put a small jeweller in Chamouny at the same level as Poncini?

Mr Sithanen: Except the value of the product is different. Because we can use this argument for all types of activities.

Mr Ganoo: Is it also a fact that the hon. Deputy Prime Minister's budgetary proposal will result in the fact now that there will be a 15% tax across the board, not only on the gold itself, but on stones and on all the other materials, especially in view of the fact that the price of gold has gone up by about 30% or 35% recently on the world market? So, will not all this create a lot of difficulty in this sector?

Mr Sithanen: Mr Speaker, Sir, let me again be very candid about that. There were committees that were set up in order to look into this possibility. There was a playing field that was not, in fact, fair to some parties and the committee did recommend that there must be a level playing field. Obviously, the value would be different. And you know exactly what I mean. The value of a product at Poncini is significantly higher than the value of a product from the jewellers that the hon. Member has mentioned, but we had only two options and the hon. Member knows very well. There are only two ways of levelling. Either all pay the same or all pay nothing.

Mr Ganoo: Does not the hon. Deputy Prime Minister agree that from now on the end result of his budgetary proposals would be that it would be cheaper for jewellers to import readymade jewellery from Dubai and sell them on the market so that there will be less business for jewellers. People will lose their job in that sector!

Mr Sithanen: Again, *c'est un procès d'intention*. Mr Speaker, Sir, let's see how the market operates, but we had only two options. I mean, I wish the hon. Member would tell me how we would handle that because there was a level playing field and we were requested...

(Interruptions)

According to the hon. Member, I don't.

A committee was set up when their Government was in power which lasted for a long time; they made recommendations which have been implemented.

REHABILITATION YOUTH CENTRE - INMATES – VOCATIONAL TRAINING

(No. B/1136) Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun (Third Member for La Caverne and Phoenix) asked the Minister of Social Security, National Solidarity and Senior Citizens Welfare & Reform Institutions whether she will state if any vocational training is provided to the inmates of the Rehabilitation Youth Centre.

Mrs Bappoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I appreciate the interest of the hon. Member on the Rehabilitation Programme being carried out at the Rehabilitation Youth Centre.

As mentioned in my answers to previous Parliamentary Questions, a complete programme of activities have been worked out for the Rehabilitation Youth Centre, in collaboration with various NGOs, a list of which has been circulated last week. Vocational activities such as sewing, cookery, embroidery, gardening, arts and crafts have been included in the programme, but, however, Mr Speaker, Sir, we are simultaneously looking at the possibility of enrolling both the male and the female inmates of the RYC for courses at the IVTB.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Mrs Bappoo: We are actually carrying out an aptitude identification survey to assess their fields of interest. Transport facilities will be provided by the Ministry to convey them to and from the institutions and they will be accompanied by both male and female RYC officers.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister whether they are going to be enrolled in the institutions that are already providing vocational training, and whether these courses will be professional ones and not simply hobby classes provided formerly?

Mrs Bappoo: This will depend on what the IVTB will suggest to us, Mr Speaker, Sir. We are in discussion with the IVTB on that.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun : Mr Speaker, Sir, as per the information I have, boys have the possibility of having training in fields such as

woodwork and so on, whereas for girls no such provisions were made. They were solely given courses in embroidery. The hon. Minister will agree with me that, nowadays, having in mind that Mauritius is putting itself forward as a cyber island, girls should be given chances to follow all types of courses, namely computer studies and so on and so forth.

Mr Bappoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, this also will be taken into consideration. But, we are also going according to the interests of the inmates also.

Mr Speaker: I wish to inform the House that PQ B/1137 has been withdrawn.

LA TOUR KOENIG FOOTBALL PITCH – SPORTS ACTIVITY

(No. B/1137) Mrs S. Grenade (Second Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Local Government whether, in regard to the sports activity organised at La Tour Koenig football pitch on 17 July 2006 by the Municipal Council of Port Louis, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom information as to the amount spent thereon, indicating if any other contributions were received and, if so, obtain details thereon.

(Withdrawn)

PORT LOUIS MUNICIPAL COUNCIL – WORKERS - RECRUITMENT

(No. B/1138) Mrs S. Grenade (Second Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Local Government whether he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Municipal Council of Port Louis, information as to if general workers have recently been recruited thereat and, if so, the categories involved and the addresses of the recruits.

Dr. David: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that general workers and refuse collectors have, in fact, been recruited by the Local Government Service Commission on behalf of the Municipal Council of Port Louis.

However, with your permission, Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to refer the hon. Member to the replies I made to PQs B/796 and B/1029, where I informed the House that, since appointments and promotions in the Local Government Service fall under the sole responsibility of the Local Government Service Commission, which is an independent body, it would not be proper to give the particulars of the candidates.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

**EMPOWERMENT PROGRAMME – STEERING COMMITTEE –
RODRIGUAN PARTICIPATION**

(No. B/1139) Mr J. R. Spéville (Second Member for Rodrigues) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance & Economic Development whether, in regard to the Empowerment Fund, he will state –

- (a) if a Rodriguan has been designated as a member thereof and, if not, why not, and
- (b) the areas which the Fund will cover in Rodrigues, indicating if the projects to be funded will be monitored by the Rodrigues Regional Assembly or another mechanism that will be set up in relation thereto.

The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance & Economic Development (Mr R. Sithanen): Mr Speaker, Sir, I presume the hon. Member is referring to the Steering Committee which has been constituted to implement the Empowerment Programme announced in the Budget.

As stated in my reply to Parliamentary Question B/1043, the composition of the Committee has been based on the capabilities and experience of the individuals to move forward the Empowerment Programme. The Committee has on board a large spectrum of persons both from the public and the private sectors, having a wide experience in the fields to be undertaken by the Empowerment Programme to ensure rapid implementation.

The Steering Committee is setting up action oriented sub-committees to cover each of the seven critical activities. Persons able to deliver results from all parts of the country, including Rodrigues, will be co-opted as needed.

The Empowerment Programme will cover all the essential activities listed in the Budget in all parts of the country, including Rodrigues. The Steering Committee will monitor all projects falling under the programme.

RODRIGUES - SPEVILLE, MR JOSEPH JACQUELIN – DEATH BY ELECTROCUTION - INQUIRY

(No. B/1140) Mr J. R. Spéville (Second Member for Rodrigues) asked the Minister of Public Utilities whether, in regard to the death of Joseph Jacquelin Spéville by electrocution, on or about 18 September 2005, on a high voltage line at Grande Montagne, Rodrigues, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the CEB, information as to if the inquiry has been completed and, if so, will he table a copy of the report.

Dr. Kasenally: Mr Speaker, Sir, it is a fact that one Mr Joseph Jacquelin Spéville died by electrocution on 18 September 2005 at Grande Montagne, Rodrigues. In cases of electrocution, an inquiry is carried out by the Police. In the case under consideration, the inquiry has been conducted by the Police in Rodrigues and the outcome is not yet known.

However, being given that it was a case of electrocution, the CEB has deemed it appropriate, on its part, to delegate a team on the subject site to make an assessment. The following was noted –

- The roof of the house, where the accident occurred, was covered with water;
- An iron bar was found near the site of the accident and stacked materials from the ground had been hoisted on the roof, and
- The victim had already been removed from the site of accident when the CEB team reached there.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Member may, if he so wishes, follow up the matter with the Rodrigues Administration, so that he may be informed of the outcome of the Police inquiry in due course.

PATIENT CARE SYSTEM - INTRODUCTION

(No. B/1141) Mr S. Mohamed (Third Member for Rivière des Anguilles & Souillac) asked the Minister of Health & Quality of Life whether, in regard to the medical files of patients in all hospitals in Mauritius, he will consider the advisability of introducing a system whereby those records are accessible online by a treating doctor from any hospital in the island.

Mr Faugoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, the introduction of a patient care system, whereby all information in relation to a particular patient is available online by a treating doctor is desirable.

I wish to inform the House that my Ministry has already started preliminary works in collaboration with the Ministry of Information Technology & Telecommunications for the preparation of its e-business plan, wherein the patient care system will be considered. In this connection, a consultant will be put at the disposal of the Ministry to oversee the project.

Mr Mohamed: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Minister whether, if a patient normally attending Victoria Hospital falls sick near Rose Belle Hospital and goes there at two in the morning, the medical files and the history of that patient will be available at Rose Belle Hospital at the very moment when he is being examined by a doctor?

Mr Faugoo: As it is now, no, Sir.

Mr Mohamed: Is the hon. Minister aware that, in a recent past, because a medical file was not available in Rose Belle Hospital for a patient who normally was treated in Victoria Hospital, the doctor did not know exactly what to administer to that patient as he was not aware of the history of that patient, and that woman died?

Mr Faugoo: I am not aware of this case, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Mohamed: Mr Speaker, Sir, could, therefore, the hon. Minister state whether he agrees that this is an urgent matter, and could he see to it that a whole solution be implemented nation wide at latest by the end of this year?

Mr Faugoo: This is what I said in my main answer, Mr Speaker, Sir. There is a consultant who is working on this, and then we will have to work it out within a time frame.

DWC WORKERS - REDEPLOYMENT

(No. B/1142) Mr G. Guinness (Third Member for Montagne Blanche & GRSE) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport & Shipping whether, in regard to the proposed redeployment of the employees of the DWC, he will state if –

- (a) the redeployment scheme has now been finalised, and
- (b) he had any meeting with the representatives of the DWC staff union on 19 July 2006 and, if so, the outcome thereof.

The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport & Shipping (Dr. R. Beebeejaun): Mr Speaker, Sir, the Ministerial Committee, under my chairmanship, has considered proposals made by the Ministry of Civil Service Affairs & Administrative Reforms for the redeployment of the DWC workers.

In the light of discussions held at the meeting, the Ministry of Civil Service Affairs & Administrative Reforms is reviewing the proposals.

The reply to part (b) is in the affirmative. The union representatives submitted their views and they were given the assurance that no efforts will be spared to redeploy the workers as far as possible.

Mr Guinness: Mr Speaker, Sir, there is one main concern of the union and the staff. Can the hon. Deputy Prime Minister confirm whether those aged 50 and above will be asked to pension off?

Dr. Beebeejaun: No decision has been reached so far. We are looking at all the possibilities. There is no option that has been discarded.

PRIVATE SECONDARY SCHOOLS – STUDENT POPULATION

(No. B/1143) **Mr G. Guinness (Third Member for Montagne Blanche & GRSE)** asked the Minister of Education & Human Resources whether, in regard to the sub-standard colleges having a school population of less than 175 students, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the PSSA, information as to –

- (a) the names of the colleges falling in this category, and
- (b) if any scheme has been worked out in respect of these colleges.

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to PQ B/973 at our sitting on 11 July 2006 and to confirm that, according to the PSSA, there is no private secondary school with a student population of less than 175. Consequently, the question of providing the names of the private secondary schools with less than 175 students does not arise at this stage.

As regards part (b) of the question, I wish to reiterate what I said on 11 July, namely that Government will soon be invited to issue policy guidance in respect of the future of private secondary schools whose student population may fall short of 175 in the future.

Mr Guinness: Mr Speaker, Sir, in the same answer, the hon. Minister said that he forecast that, according to the trend, there will be eight colleges with a student population of less than 175. Can the hon. Minister tell us what are these eight colleges?

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, we are examining the situation, but the question relates to the present situation, to which I have given the answer. When we come to the bridge, we will cross it.

Mr Speaker: Next Question, hon. Guinness!

Mr Guinness: The teachers are anxious since the Minister said that the trend is showing that eight colleges may fall short of 175 pupils. So, it

would be just fair that the hon. Minister states the names of the colleges which fall...

Mr Speaker: Why is the hon. Member insisting? The hon. Minister has answered that he will cross the bridge when he will reach it. The hon. Member has to wait and put the questions then. Next Question, hon. Guinness!

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! Order!

CHAMROO, MR SHEHZAAD – DEATH ON SITE OF WORK – INQUIRY

(No. B/1144) Mr G. Guinness (Third Member for Montagne Blanche and GRSE) asked the Minister of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment whether, in regard to the recent death of one Mr Shehzaad Chamroo on his site of work at Quatre Bornes, he will state if an inquiry has been carried out in the circumstances leading to the death and, if so, the outcome thereof.

Dr. Bunwaree: Mr Speaker, Sir, immediately after having been notified by the Quatre Bornes Police Station at around at 13.30 hrs on 18 July 2006 of an accident at work, officers of the Occupational Safety and Health Inspectorate of my Ministry have, within minutes that followed, started their Inquiry into the circumstances around the death of a worker, one Mohammad Shehzaad Chamroo which occurred on the construction site of the Gateway Building at Saint Jean Road, Quatre Bornes.

The inquiry is still in progress. Being given that there seems to have been no eye witness, the Occupational Safety & Health Inspectorate of my Ministry is working in very close collaboration with the Police Department for an in-depth investigation. I wish to assure the hon. Member and the House that no stone will be left unturned to determine the exact circumstances of the accident.

The House may, however, wish to note that according to an Interim Report of the Occupational Safety & Health Inspectorate, the late Mr Chamroo fell in the lift pit in the lower basement through the lift shaft. The height of the 9th floor – where Mr Chamroo was working and seems to have

fallen from - to the point where he landed after his fall is about 40 metres. Mr Chamroo was immediately taken to Victoria Hospital where he was declared having already passed away by the Medical Officer who examined him. Sir, this accident at work is, in my opinion, a real tragic one. I have met the family personally and I am following the outcome very closely.

Mr Guinness: It is a real tragic accident which has happened. Can I know from the hon. Minister whether protective equipment was provided to these workers?

Mr Speaker: I am not interfering. There is an inquiry; you should not prejudice the inquiry by putting the question.

Mr Guinness: Mr Speaker, Sir, I think this...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: The hon. Member wants the hon. Minister to answer. If the hon. Member insists, I don't know whether the hon. Minister would answer.

Dr. Bunwaree: We have to wait for the outcome of the inquiry.

“NON ASSISTANCE A PERSONNE EN DANGER” – OFFENCE

(No. B/1087) Mr A. Ganoo (First Member for Savanne and Black River) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether he will state if Government will consider the advisability of amending the law with a view to making of “*non assistance à personne en danger*” an offence.

The Attorney-General, Minister of Justice & Human Rights (Mr J. Valayden): Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I will answer this question.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the House may wish to take note that “*non assistance à personne en danger*” or “*abstention volontaire de porter secours*” is an offence provided by law in certain countries such as France

and Germany. In addition to legislative provisions, ethical or deontological codes provide for this type of assistance, more particularly in the case of the medical and para-medical professions.

In Mauritius the duty imposed on a person to provide “*assistance à personne en danger*” does exist but is confined to case of road accident.

Section 140 of the Road Traffic Act, in fact, imposed a statutory duty on the driver of a motor vehicle involved in a road accident to take all reasonable steps to render reasonable assistance to a person injured in the accident, and, if necessary, to arrange for the conveyance of the injured person to the nearest hospital for medical treatment. It is an offence, visited by a fine not exceeding Rs5000 and imprisonment not exceeding six months, for any person not to comply with section 140 of the Road Traffic Act.

There is a number of issues which will have to be considered before any eventual introduction of the offence of “*non assistance à personne en danger*”. They are namely –

- (a) the specific instances in which the duty to give assistance will arise;
- (b) the categories of person upon whom the duty will be imposed (adult, young person, old person, handicapped person, professionals) and the extent of the obligation;
- (c) whether the offence should be a strict liability offence or the mental intent of the offender should be an element of the offence, and
- (d) instances in which the duty to give assistance will not arise to the extent that “*la loi n'impose point l'héroïsme ou la témérité*”.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am proposing that the Law Reform Commission be seized of the matter - I thank the hon. Member for the question - and to make recommendations to the need and suitability of incorporating this concept on our statutory books.

Mr Ganoo: I thank the hon. Minister also for the answer, Mr Speaker, Sir. True it is, he has explained that in road traffic offences the duty to stop and assist in cases of accidents exist. This morning, in the PNQ, mention was made of the duty to protect children. I think this is the thrust, the aim of my question. May the hon. Minister liaise with the hon. Minister of

Women's Rights, Child Development, Family Welfare & Consumer Protection so that, at least, when the New Child Protection Act is presented to this House, this provision concerning duty to assist and report in cases of children who are being ill-treated be included and should, at least, be the first step in our law!

Mr Valayden: Mr Speaker, Sir, we are taking care of all the suggestions that have been brought forward here and outside this august Assembly.

Mr Speaker: Time is over!

MOTION

SUSPENSION OF S.O. 10 (2)

The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport & Shipping (Dr. R. Beebeejaun): 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.

The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism, Leisure & External Communications (Mr X. L. Duval) rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.