

CRIMINAL CASES - INVESTIGATION

(No. B/68) Mr P. Jhugroo (Third Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Home Affairs whether, in regard to criminal cases committed since 2008 to date and being investigated into by the Major Crime Investigation Team, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the number thereof which have not yet been elucidated.

The Prime Minister: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that 62 criminal cases in 2008, 47 criminal cases in 2009 and 10 cases up to 25 March 2010 have been referred to the Major Crime Investigation Team for investigation. Out of these cases, 117 have been elucidated, and 2 cases are still being investigated.

Mr Jhugroo: Can I know from the hon. Prime Minister whether the DNA testing equipment is fully utilized?

The Prime Minister: I must say to the hon. Member in all fairness, I am not totally happy with the way the Forensic Lab is working. We are not getting enough evidence and we are looking at ways of improving this, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

DISCOTHEQUES & GAMING HOUSES - ASSAULTS

(No. B/69) Mr P. Jhugroo (Third Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Home Affairs whether, in regard to alleged cases of assault, disturbance, murder and larceny committed in the vicinity of *discothèques* and/or gaming/betting houses, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the number thereof, district-wise, since 2008 to date.

The Prime Minister: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that the number of cases of assaults, disturbances, murders and larceny committed district-wise since 2008 to 25 March 2010 in the vicinity of nightclubs and gaming/betting houses are as follows -

SN	DISTRICT	ASSAULTS	DISTURBANCES	MURDERS	LARCENY
1.	PORT LOUIS	9	-	-	5

2.	PAMPLEMOUSSES	6	-	-	10
3.	RIVIÈRE DU REMPART	34	2	-	8
4.	FLACQ	5	1	-	3
5.	MOKA	-	-	-	1
6.	PLAINES WILHEMS	19	2	2	11
7.	BLACK RIVER	11	7	-	5
8.	GRAND PORT	4	1	-	-
9.	SAVANNE	-	1	-	-
	TOTAL	88	14	2	43

Mr Jhugroo: May I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether he considers to review the security norms within the premises of *discothèques* and gaming houses?

The Prime Minister: Yes, in fact, we are doing this. I did mention to the House that at Cabinet level we have taken a decision to put a committee. There is a high level committee which has been working on this. They have made some suggestions that we can do and we can take some measures. These are being looked at because they might involve some legal problems, that is why the State Law Office is looking at that but, in the meantime, no applications are being entertained in residential areas.

LARCENY CASES – JANUARY 2009-MARCH 2010

(No. B/70) Mr P. Jhugroo (Third Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Home Affairs whether, in regard to cases of larceny with violence in public, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the –

- (a) number thereof reported, since January 2009 to date, indicating the number thereof in which there have been arrests, if any, and
- (b) the measures taken to avert the commission thereof.

The Prime Minister: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in regard to part (a) of the Question, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that, during the period January 2009 to 26 March 2010, 590 cases of larceny with violence were committed in public and were reported to the police. 181 persons have so far been arrested in these cases. Out of the 590 cases, 327 cases are still under enquiry, 122 have been classified, 40 cases have been disposed of by the Court and 101 are pending before Court.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we are sparing no efforts to continuously implement measures to modernise the Police Force, reinforce its institutional and operational effectiveness to combat criminality in general. Recently, we have taken a series of additional measures to deal with the problem of crime, and again I should say these include -

- The restructuring of the Central CID and its mode of operation to ensure effective crime investigation and detection.
- The decentralisation of the activities of the Scene of Crime Office, to ensure a better response to scenes of crime, because once a crime happens, you have a limited time to get the evidence from the scene of crime. That is why we have decentralised the activities of the Scene of Crime Office.
- The use of modern techniques by the police. We are grateful to the French Government. I was surprised that we didn't have a "photo-robots" computer-assisted identification kit. This has been provided by France, and this has helped already to arrest certain persons. We also have video recording of interrogations, new fingerprint and body-fluids search tools.
- I have also mentioned, I think, the implementation of the Crime Occurrence Tracking System project, which consists of the automation of all processes, and the computerisation of the functionalities of the Mauritius Police Force. I should have mentioned it earlier; when we passed the new Firearms legislation in 2006, we also had the central firearm index database which was provided for. This is now operational and we hope it will improve control of firearms.
- I should again mention the installation of the first CCTV cameras. As we have heard, in Flic en Flac the crime rate has been reduced by 80% of cases. We are doing similar systems already in Quatre Bornes, in the region of St Jean and Candos. We are now going to implement the same system in the region of Caudan, Port Louis and also Grand' Baie.

- There is a new Digital Radio Communication System. The analogue system, which was 25 years old, is being replaced with a new system. This again will improve communication.

In order to tackle the problem of larceny with violence in public, the Commissioner of Police has taken the following specific measures -

- He has put up a joint mobile patrol scheme, which involves the Special Mobile Force, the Special Support Units, elements of the regular police and members of the CID.
- There are also daily special motorcycles patrols involving again Divisional Support Units, CID, ERS and Field Intelligence Officers.
- Road Blocks, as I have mentioned, and Stop and Search Operations with special vigilance are carried out in certain areas. There is no knowledge that there will be a road block. Snap road blocks are being done.
- Special policing are deployed in certain areas, for example, near filling stations, financial institutions, commercial institutions, especially during closing time and at the end of the month. This is where there is an increase.
- Special deployment is undertaken if there are major events, such as race meetings.
- ERS, Divisional Support Unit and the CID personnel also, as I said, carry out mobile patrols.
- Covert surveillance and intelligence gathering; this is very important, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. This, especially on habitual offenders, is being undertaken with the support of Field Intelligence Officers and CID personnel.
- There is also an awareness and sensitisation activities on crime prevention and 'Victim Support'. This is being carried out by the Crime Prevention Unit. Since January 2009, the Crime Prevention Unit has carried out 1,641 campaigns, targeting 153,877 participants, and has distributed 91,500 crime prevention publications, consisting of leaflets and booklets. This is to educate and make people aware of the campaign.
- At Station level, daily mobile and foot patrols are carried out on a 24-hour basis to cover station area by again Station personnel, and community policing is being promoted as well, to identify local problems and encourage sharing of

information between the community and the police. That is also very important, as I said, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir,

Finally, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the National Policing Strategic Framework, which was launched last month, will reinforce policing measures by creating a new mindset, culture and policing strategies to fight criminal offences, especially those involving violence.

I have always stated, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that matters relating law and order is a national issue, requiring at all times society's vigilance and support. It should be addressed by the society in general as well.

Mr Jhugroo: Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether he will consider installing a CCTV Surveillance System within the vicinity of Abercrombie Police Station and St Croix?

The Prime Minister: The only thing is that they cost money. For example, we have an agreement with the Chinese Government. It has taken so long, because they have also the administrative procedures, and only now we are able to install these cameras in the Caudan area. But, wherever we feel there should be in areas, we will do it.

The Deputy Speaker: Next question please!

POLICE FORCE – PROMOTION

(No. B/71) **Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière)** asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Home Affairs whether, in regard to the examinations for promotion in the Police Force from the grade of Constable to Sergeant, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to when the results thereof will be proclaimed.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I wish to refer the hon. Member to my reply to Parliamentary Question B/944 on 20 October 2009, wherein I spelt out the procedures regarding the promotion of police officers in the grade of Sergeants to that of Inspectors. I mentioned, *inter alia*, that the promotion exercise would be finalised upon completion of a screening, aiming at verifying whether any police officer who has passed the examination is not under suspension, has not committed any serious offence or has not – this is also now added - shown gross negligence in the exercise of his or her duty.

I wish to point out that the same procedures apply for the promotion from the grade of Constable to Sergeant.

The House will appreciate, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that such screening exercise is absolutely essential and needs to be carried out with due care and caution, to ensure that apart from merely passing the promotion examination, the Constables are morally and physically fit to shoulder higher responsibilities.

Having said that, it is my understanding that this exercise is practically completed, and the results will be proclaimed shortly.

Mr Bhagwan: Although we agree on the procedures which are being adopted, has the attention of the Prime Minister been drawn to the fact that there is a lot of frustration among the Constables with regard to the duration of this exercise? Can the Prime Minister, at least, give an indication, through the Commissioner of Police, that not much time will be taken for the exercise to be complete?

The Prime Minister: The Commissioner of Police is well aware of this, but he wants to do it properly. As I said, I believe this exercise is practically over and is being done.

GAMING HOUSES & DISCOTHEQUES – HIGH LEVEL COMMITTEE

(No. B/72) **Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière)** asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Home Affairs whether, in regard to the High Powered Committee set up to review matters concerning gaming houses, he will state if –

- (a) the Committee has already completed its work and, if so, when, and
- (b) Government has approved new guidelines and, if so, when same will be implemented.

The Prime Minister: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as the House is aware, in July last, the Government set up a High Level Committee - as I just mentioned - under my chairmanship to examine the proliferation of gaming houses and discotheques in the country. Government has also set up a Technical Committee to advise the High Level Committee on the matter.

The Technical Committee has recently submitted its report, in which it has made numerous recommendations to mitigate the unintended consequences of gambling activities in the country.

Consultations are now being held with the State Law Office for the implementation of these measures.

In the meantime, I should say again, no new licences for gaming houses and discotheques are being issued.

In my address to the nation on the occasion of the National Day Celebrations, I stated that Government is actively looking into the possibility of relocating and circumscribing gaming houses in specifically designated areas, that is, away from residential and commercial areas.

Furthermore, the licence of existing gaming houses, which constitute a threat to public order, would not be renewed.

Mr Bhagwan: Can I know from the Prime Minister whether any screening is effected by the police concerning the Security Officers, the bouncers who work in these gaming houses? Because, recently, we had a case at Ti-Vegas in Quatre Bornes, where one of the bouncers was a habitual criminal with lots of previous records.

The Prime Minister: The law will be applied in all its rigour. I can tell the hon. Member that this is being done, and this is why we need to consult the State Law Office. They will run the risk of having their license removed.

Mr Bhagwan: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, one of the main problems is that there are too many authorities who are responsible for giving these permits which result ultimately in a lot of mess and *cafouillages*. In the process of reviewing the guidelines, can the Prime Minister give the assurance to the House that there will be much control concerning these licence permits?

The Prime Minister: I must say I tend to agree with the hon. Member. The problem is that there are too many. You get land permission from there and then there are other authorities which get involved. We will be trying to streamline this, but in the meantime no licences are being given.

Mr Bhagwan: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, last time the Prime Minister stated unequivocally that he will not tolerate any intervention from any Government Member interfering with the Police. Can the Prime Minister give the assurance to the House that no Members of Government will be interfering with local authorities or parastatal bodies as far as the permits and other conditions of these gaming houses are concerned?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I may say, in the past, not just this Government or not just anybody, I am not pointing figures, but Members of Parliament

themselves have tended to say: you know, I know Mr X or Mr Y. This is a fact in Mauritius. But I can give a guarantee to the hon. Member that no interference is being done on the part of Members of the Government concerning these permits. I can give a guarantee. In fact, I keep telling, not just the Commissioner of Police but, the Senior Police Officers who come with him that no such intolerance would be tolerated.

ELECTORAL BOUNDARIES COMMISSION - REPORT

(No. B/73) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Home Affairs whether, in regard to the Report of the Electoral Boundaries Commission on a Review of the Boundaries of the Constituencies 2009, he will now state when a motion in regard thereto will be introduced in the House

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, in my reply to a PNQ on this matter in November last, I emphasised the fact that the recommendations contained in the Report of the Electoral Boundaries Commission have raised complex legal and administrative issues and that we would have to tread carefully on this sensitive matter. We must, above all, ensure that no electors are disenfranchised in the process.

Discussions are still ongoing between the Electoral Commissioner and the State Law Office on the issues which have proved to be more complex than initially thought. I also mentioned that the suggestion that we might have to have constitutional amendments, this is more complicated than it looks. We are looking for constitutional expert advice on the matter.

PQ No. B/74 – See “Written Answers to Questions”

ABERCROMBIE POLICE STATION - INCIDENTS

(No. B/75) Mr G. Lesjongard (Second Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Home Affairs whether, in regard to the incidents which occurred at the Abercrombie Police Station at Ste Croix on 13 March 2010 whereby Police Officers were injured, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to if an inquiry has been carried out thereinto, indicating the outcome thereof.

(Vide Reply to PNQ)

SHAKERS CLUB HOUSE, VACOAS - INCIDENT

(No. B/76) **Mr G. Gunness (Third Member for Montagne Blanche & GRSE)** asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Home Affairs whether, in regard to the incident which took place at the Shakers Club House in Vacoas, during the night of Saturday 20 to Sunday 21 March 2010, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to if an inquiry has been carried out thereinto, indicating the outcome thereof.

(Vide Reply to PNQ)

MBC – MR D. R. K- OVERTIME ALLOWANCE

(No. B/77) **Mr G. Gunness (Third Member for Montagne Blanche & GRSE)** asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Home Affairs whether, in regard to Mr D. R., an employee of the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Corporation, information as to the amount of monthly overtime allowance paid to him since the appointment of the new Director General, indicating if he is entitled to a company car.

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

But I must tell the hon. Member that I am also informed by the MBC that Mr D.R. is not entitled to a company car.

Mr Gunness: The Prime Minister says that he is not entitled to a company car. Can the Prime Minister check whether this gentleman takes the car of the MBC every weekend, goes to his residence and then return it on Monday? Can the Prime Minister check this information?

The Prime Minister: I can simply check the information, Mr Deputy Speaker, and I am also aware that he has been assigned additional duties. Whether he sometimes takes the car to go back to the MBC, I can't say, but I'll check the information.

Mr Gunness: I know that the information is being compiled, but can I know from the Prime Minister whether at any point in time, his monthly overtime allowance exceeds Rs25,000 - more than his salary?

The Prime Minister: I know that the figure is being compiled, but I would not be surprised because I am told he has been assigned additional duties, so it would well be.

Mr Guinness: Mr Deputy Speaker, I do not think it is because of the additional duty. I would ask the Prime Minister to check again during week-ends. According to my information, the gentleman comes to clock in at seven, then disappears from the site of the MBC, comes back at five supposedly to work up to 21hrs and to check what work has to be done the next day. That is how the overtime bill is becoming so high. Can the Prime Minister check this information?

The Prime Minister: If this is true, this is something that we have to check, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Mr Bhagwan: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Prime Minister will surely remember that last year several issues were raised concerning the MBC/TV and it ended up the Pepsi Hungama Saga.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Bhagwan, please!

Mr Bhagwan: I am coming with my question.

The Deputy Speaker: I want it to be specific to Mr D. R. thank you.

Mr Bhagwan: I would like to draw the attention of the Prime Minister that as Members of the Parliament we raised issues that there was going to be an audit or MAB report and we found that what was said was true. Can the Prime Minister give assurance to the House that with the new management of the MBC he won't tolerate any *politique de deux poids deux mesures* as far as the schedule of duties and overtime are concerned?

The Prime Minister: The new Director General of the MBC assured me that this is being done, but it is very difficult for me to go and check each one, but this is accordingly being done.

TRIOLET – 3-DAYS GOSPEL FESTIVAL - INCIDENT

(No. B/78) Mr E. Guimbeau (First Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Home Affairs whether, in regard to the incident which occurred at the 3-days Gospel Festival of the Light Ministries International in Triolet on the occasion of the 42nd Independence Anniversary, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to if a Police inquiry has been carried out thereinto and, if so, will he state if any suspect has been arrested, indicating –

- (a) their names, and
- (b) the charges lodged against them, if any.

(Vide Reply to PNQ)

RIVIERE DES ANGUILLES POLICE STATION –

DETAINEE J.P.C. - DEATH

(No. B/79) Mr A. Ganoo (First Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Home Affairs whether, in regard to detainee J.P.C who died in Police cell in November 2009 at the Rivière des Anguilles Police Station, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to –

- (a) the date of his arrest and length of detention;
- (b) if at the time of death his body bore marks or injuries, and
- (c) if any inquiry is being carried out to determine the cause of death.

The Prime Minister: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in regard to part (a) of the Question, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that Mr. J.P.C¹, an inhabitant of Baie Du Cap, was arrested on 01 November 2009 in the yard of a private residence. He was detained at the Rivière des Anguilles Police Station for questioning in connection with several other cases of larceny. As per Standing Order 120 of the Mauritius Police Force which relates to the safe custody of detainees, the latter was searched and was found to bear a dressing at his right tibia and a scratch mark on his left hand.

On 03 November 2009, a provisional plaint of ‘Larceny’ was lodged against him and he appeared before the District Magistrate of Savanne Court. He was remanded to Police cell. The same day, at 18 00 hours, during a sentry check, two Police Officers found that he had hanged himself in his cell.

Concerning part (b) of the Question, according to the report of the autopsy performed by Dr Gungadin, Principal Police Medical Officer in the presence of Dr Gujjalu, private practitioner, whose services were retained by the relatives of the deceased, the body of Mr. J.P.C. bore several injuries.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as regards part (c) of the Question, I am informed that Police enquiry has been completed and the case has been sent on 15 March 2010 to the Director of Public Prosecutions for advice.

In addition, in line with established procedure in cases of death in Police custody, the National Human Rights Commission was informed of the above case. It has initiated an enquiry on its own and carried out a site visit on 06 November 2009. Its investigation into the matter is still underway.

Mr Ganoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this is not the first case where a prisoner is found hanged in his Police cell. The National Human Rights Commission in its last report has made several pertinent recommendations about the responsibility of the Police when a suspect is detained in Police cell. Can the hon. Prime Minister look into the matter and give the necessary instructions to the Commissioner of Police so that in the future detainees do not suffer? How is it possible that somebody in a Police cell, near Police officers, get hanged? And Police officers are supposed to keep watch over the cells regularly.

The Prime Minister: This is something that happens not just in Mauritius as the hon. Member is well aware. There was a recent case in the UK again and I heard of another case recently abroad. These are cases that happened unfortunately, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, but the Police do try their best. They can't keep a patrol on a 24-hour basis but they do routine patrol. The case is going to Court.

Mr Bérenger: There is suspicion that there has been a case of Police brutality in that case. The Prime Minister told us that the doctors who performed the autopsy found that there were marks, wounds and so on and earlier on he had told us that the Police took note of the scene. Is there a record where the Police note that down as he comes to the Police station or has this been done up later on?

The Prime Minister: There is a record of the Police and that is how they found the bandage around the tibia and the scratch marks before. I am even told that some of the marks were six to seven days prior to the death of the person.

Mr Ganoo: How long was he detained in Police cell before he was discovered hanged?

The Prime Minister: I stated that he appeared before the District Magistrate of Savanne on 03 November and remanded to police cell. On the same day at 18 00 hrs, he was found to have hanged himself in his cell.

Mr Ganoo: On what day was he arrested?

The Prime Minister: I think I mentioned it, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. He was arrested two days previously, that is, on 01 November 2009.

JAN PALACH BUS STATION – INCIDENTS

(No. B/80) Mrs M. Martin (Second Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Home Affairs whether, in regard to cases of incidents reported to have occurred at Jan Palach Bus Station, Curepipe, since January 2009 to date, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the number thereof, indicating the –

- (a) nature of offences committed thereat, and
- (b) number of cases in which young people under the age of 18 were involved.

The Prime Minister: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that, from January 2009 to 26 March 2010, 11 incidents which occurred at Jan Palach bus station have been reported to Curepipe Police Station. In regard to part (a) of the Question, these incidents comprise seven cases of larceny, three cases of assault, and one case of bearing offensive weapon.

In regard to part (b) of the Question, no accused in these cases was under the age of 18. However, one of the victims of larceny was a 15 year old male.

Mrs Martin: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, does the hon. Prime Minister have any information concerning the frequency of police patrols which are effected at Jan Palach bus station?

The Prime Minister: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, my understanding is that they have increased the frequency of patrols in this area.

Mrs Martin: The hon. Prime Minister is no doubt aware that Jan Palach bus station is divided into two parts, namely the northern part and the southern part. May I ask him whether the police patrols extend equally to both parts of the station?

The Prime Minister: In fact, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I can give the details. The police deploy two police officers from 06 15 to 14 30 hrs to the north area of Jan Palach, and two police officers to the south area of Jan Palach. Then, from 13 00 hrs to 21 00 hrs, again two police officers are sent to both north and south areas.

Mrs Martin: Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether he is aware that, especially at rush hours, when the students come from school, there is very often a tension? Because children push each other in order to enter the buses and, sometimes, that results in brawls as well between rival groups of students. Cases have often been reported to the police, but nothing has been done with regard to that. Can the hon. Prime Minister say whether there is any dissuasive measure that can be taken in order to make the situation less difficult for the students as well as for the general public?

The Prime Minister: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this is also a question of education. The parents as well as the teachers should have a responsibility. I must say that this kind of incident is not new. I can give the numbers from 2000 to date. For example, in 2003, it went up to 13 such cases, in which four juveniles were involved. So, what I can ask is for the police officers to go to the schools and give lectures to the students.

ROAD BLOCK OPERATIONS – ARRESTS

(No. B/81) Mr N. Bodha (First Member for Vacoas & Floreal) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Home Affairs whether, in regard to road blocks, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the number thereof which have been set up month-wise for the past twelve months, indicating the number of arrests of suspects involved in criminal offences as a result thereof.

The Prime Minister: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, road block operations form part of the police strategy for the prevention and detection of criminal offences. Such operations are carried randomly at strategic points island-wide in the seven Police Divisions by the members of the Special Mobile Force and the Special Supporting Unit, with the support very often of the personnel of Police Stations and other specialised units.

I am informed, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, by the Commissioner of Police that, from March 2009 to February 2010, a total of 2,369 road blocks has been carried out, whereby 43,659 vehicles were stopped and checked.

During these operations, eight persons were arrested for possession of dangerous drug, one for possession of offensive weapon, and one for possession of a syringe.

Police have also established 1,212 contraventions in relation to offences under the Road Traffic Act.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am tabling the breakdown of the road blocks carried out on a monthly basis.

Mr Bodha: I thank the hon. Prime Minister for the answer. May I ask him whether this process is going to be intensified in areas like Grand' Baie, Flic en Flac and some strategic areas?

The Prime Minister: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this is part of the police operating procedures. They are doing what they think they should do. I can pass on that message to the Commissioner of Police.

The Deputy Speaker: Time is over! The Table has been advised that Parliamentary Questions No. B/91, B/97, B/119 and B/125 have been withdrawn.

BLUE BAY MARINE PARK – ILLEGAL & SPEAR FISHING

(No. B/85) Mrs S. Hanoomanjee (Second Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Minister of Agro Industry, Food Production and Security whether he is aware of illegal fishing and spear fishing activities in Blue Bay Marine Park and, if so, will he state the action taken so far.

Mr Faugoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Blue Bay Marine Park, proclaimed in 1997, covers a sea area of 353 hectares. Fishing is permitted within a specific zone in the Park to holders of a permit subject to a number of conditions, particularly with regard to fishing techniques. In fact, fishing is allowed with pole and line and basket trap in the Multiple Use Zone, and with pole and line along the shore within the permissible strip of the Conservation Zone and Strict Conservation Zone B. I am tabling a copy of the map of the Blue Bay Marine Park, showing the different zones of the park.

I am informed that illegal fishing in the Blue Bay Marine Park has been a recurrent feature over the years despite the control exercised by the Fisheries Protection Service of my Ministry. The number of illegal cases reported from 2003 to date are as follows -

2003	11
2004	17
2005	29
2006	26
2007	23
2008	19
2009	16
2010	3

Out of the 19 cases reported from 2009 to date, four relate to carrying out underwater fishing and possession of fish caught by spear fishing; one relates to fishing with net, and the remaining 14 relate to picked up cases comprising three basket traps, one spear gun and other underwater fishing equipment such as masks, fins, tuba, elastic bands and spears.

Except for the picked up cases, nine contraventions were established comprising four cases of underwater fishing, four cases of possession of fish caught by spear fishing, and one case of fishing with net.

Out of the nine contraventions, one person was found guilty after prosecution in 2009, and paid a fine of Rs2,000 plus cost. The other contraveners are being prosecuted.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as the park covers an area of 353 hectares, the following measures are being taken to ensure a better control -

- (i) the officers of the Fisheries Protection Service are carrying out regular coast, foot and afloat patrols. Besides, the Fisheries Protection Officers carry out afloat patrols jointly with the Flying Squad covering the area;
- (ii) the assistance of the National Coast Guard (NCG) and the police officers of Blue Bay is also sought to deter potential contraveners;

- (iii) regular coast, foot and afloat patrols are also carried out by the National Coast Guard to, amongst others, enforce the marine park regulations. The National Coast Guard has thus established three contraventions for illegal fishing in the park in 2009, and reported two picked up cases of illegal nets;
- (iv) action has been taken for the filling of vacancies in the Fisheries Protection Service;
- (v) a 24-hour control has been put in place, and the number of officers increased from four to 10.

These measures will be further consolidated by the construction of a Marine Park Centre, which will start this year, for a better management of the Park. Funds have been provided for this project in the Budget. The Centre will cater for the following -

- (i) facilities, such as a jetty and a slip way for more rapid intervention against contraveners;
- (ii) a look-out post, which will give a better overview of the whole park, and
- (iii) facilities to accommodate a larger number of officers.

In addition, one speed boat would be purchased to cater for rapid patrol and intervention in the Park.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I thank the hon. Minister for his reply. But, can I know whether there has been any mechanism set up between his Ministry, the Ministry of Environment and the NCG, to see to it that illegal fishing and spear fishing is not carried out? Has there been any meeting between these three parties? Because I have been given to understand that the NCG office which was there has been moved, and that the office which was for the Ministry of Environment has disappeared – it is no longer there.

Mr Faugoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, there is a Committee which has been set up to control illegal fishing. I know that it comprised of the NCG; there is also the Police Force and my Ministry, but I don't know if Environment forms part of the team. To answer the question of transfer of officers, there is a problem with the building which accommodates the officers in Blue Bay. They have been temporarily shifted to Mahebourg and we are actually looking for premises to be rented for the time being.

Mr Dowarkasing: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this site has been listed as a Ramsar site. Since this site has been listed, can we know whether the new regulations and the new rules to

be abided by the Ramsar guidelines have been adhered to and, if so, can the hon. Minister give us some of the measures that have been undertaken?

Mr Faugoo: It was declared a Ramsar site since 2008, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, and we are observing all the regulations pertaining to this.

BLOOD – SALE - CLINICS

(No. B/86) Mrs S. Hanoomanjee (Second Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether he will state if a special fund has been set up to cater for money received from the sale of blood to private clinics and, if so, indicate how the money collected will be used.

Dr. Jeetah: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, there is no question of sale of blood to private clinics. Therefore the setting up of a special fund or account for that purpose does not arise. I wish to refer the Hon. Member to the statement I made on Tuesday last during the Second Reading of the Mauritius Blood Service Bill when I clearly stressed on the fact that the fee presently charged for processing of blood, in respect of patients attending private health institutions, is to recover the cost of processing, for example collecting, testing and fractionating blood. This will enable the upgrading of the blood service in terms of modern equipment, consumables and new technologies. I wish to emphasize on the fact that all patients attending public health institutions are being provided blood and blood products free of user cost and they will continue to enjoy this privilege.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I appreciate that there are costs involved in the transportation of blood from the hospitals to the private clinics. But, I believe, the hon. Minister must have worked out as well, the cost per patient per day in a hospital. When you weigh the cost of a patient per day in a hospital, that is, a patient who has to undergo a blood transfusion, you weigh the cost of transportation on the other site, I am sure that the cost of transportation is much less. Can we know from the hon. Minister whether when blood donors give their blood, they do give their blood free of charge? So, where is the leverage?

Dr. Jeetah: First of all, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we don't charge patients in public hospitals.

(Interruptions)

We don't charge patients for blood in public hospitals. So, I don't see the issue.

The Deputy Speaker: I think the hon. lady should put her question again.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I think the hon. Minister misunderstood what I said. The hon. Minister said that there is a cost of transportation when patients in private clinics need blood. There is a cost involved, whereas patients in hospitals they do get this blood free of charge. But the hon. Minister must have worked out what is the cost of accommodating a patient in a hospital per day. What is the cost compared to the cost of that transportation of blood to the private clinics?

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order!

Dr. Jeetah: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, if the hon. Member would come with a substantive question, I can give her all details including the cost of transportation. The list includes incentives, pamphlets, refreshments, staff costs, consumables, wages, depreciating charge, equipment, servicing of equipment, transportation including fuel, contingences, computerization, etc. If the hon. Member requires further importation regarding the cost, I can circulate it to the House.

The Deputy Speaker: I think I can see where the hon. lady is coming from. I suggest that she raises the matter with the hon. Minister privately and then I think this could help to clear up matters.

Mr Jhugroo: Since October 2009, I think, the hospitals are charging private clinics Rs1,500 per pint of blood; this blood is being charged by private clinics to patients at some Rs1,700. Can the hon. Minister let us have a breakdown as to how the Ministry has come to Rs1,500 per pint of blood? If the hon. Minister does not have the information at hand, he can table it later on. Because, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, according to my information, this amount seems very high.

Dr. Jeetah: I don't have any problem with tabling the information, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Mrs Martin: This cost of transport is charged to clinics but the donation of blood is normally free, may we know from the hon. Minister why the clinic charges the patient over and above the transport cost for the use of that free blood?

Dr. Jeetah: There are two aspects of the question, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is not only transportation cost; I gave a list of items. Secondly, Government does not control prices

of private clinics. If the hon. Member has any substantive question with regard to private clinics, please do so and I'll look into the matter.

Mrs Labelle: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, according to my information, most of the clinics charge the price of Rs1,500, because it is the price that is being paid to the laboratory. It is for the processing and treatment of blood, because the transportation is another fee. But, this Rs1,500 is being paid to the Ministry. May I ask the hon. Minister whether he will review this amount, because many persons who go to private institutions for a surgical intervention, very often are not that rich. It is a question of urgency and so on and they have to make the sacrifice needed to go and have this intervention at a private clinic. So, knowing that one patient will need, maybe, up to five pints of blood, will the hon. Minister reconsider the cost of processing and treatment of blood which presently is Rs1,500?

Dr. Jeetah: I can answer to part of the question. The hon. Member needs to understand that it is a question of choice. This matter was debated in this House. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, a policy decision is being finalized to grant exemption to the following categories of patients who are in need of processed blood –

1. Patients requiring regular blood transfusion support for their survival throughout their lives. For example, thalassemia and other hereditary anaemias will not be charged.
2. Patients requiring massive transfusions as a result of medical complication will be charged for a certain number of blood units.
3. Regular blood donors and their immediate relatives will be exempted for a certain number of blood units.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: I have one more supplementary question. Just as a point of clarification, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I raised that question because we do not want a sort of commercialization of blood. I am asking the hon. Minister whether he would just look at the mechanism to try to see whether the private clinics are charging much more to the patients than hospitals are charging to the private clinics, also to set up a sort of mechanism whereby there is control on the sale of blood and that there is no commercialization of this issue.

Dr. Jeetah: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I need to make this clear. Blood is not for sale, it is not being sold. But, I'll definitely look into the matter. If the hon. Member has any information, she should please let us know. I think the clinics know that we are charging for the items that I have mentioned.

Mr Jugnauth: May I know from the hon. Minister whether there is any objection for private clinics to collect blood just in the same way as the hospitals do?

Dr. Jeetah: Mr Deputy Speaker, we passed on a Bill sometime back whereby blood services would be State controlled to prevent what the hon. lady has been mentioning.

The Deputy Speaker: I'll suspend the sitting for one and a half hours for lunch.

At 1.00 p.m. the sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 2.34 p.m. with the Deputy Speaker in the Chair.

The Deputy Speaker: The Table has been advised that Parliamentary Question B/116 has been withdrawn.

CHARGE NURSE – PROMOTION - REQUIREMENTS

(No. B/87) **Mrs S. Hanoomanjee (Second Member for Savanne & Black River)** asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether in regard to actingship and promotion to the post of Charge Nurse, he will state if there are different requirements for male and female nurses.

Dr. Jeetah: Mr Deputy Speaker Sir, our health institutions are serviced by male and female nurses. On their enlistment as Student Nurse, candidates, both male and female, need to have the same entry requirements and they undergo the same training programme. On successful completion of their training course, they are eligible for appointment as Nursing Officers.

However, female Nursing Officers are required to obtain a Certificate of Competency in Midwifery during their service. On obtention of this certificate, female Nursing Officers are granted one additional increment. The reason for this requirement is to ensure that proper midwifery and obstetric care are made available to female patients at any given time in our health institutions.

Moreover, our health system is such that a maternity block comprising prenatal, labour, delivery and post natal wards should be headed by female Charge Nurses and female Ward Managers supported by Midwives and Senior Midwives.

Accordingly, female Nursing Officers possessing a Certificate in Midwifery, in addition to the required number of years of service, become eligible for acting appointment or promotion to the post of Charge Nurse.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Minister whether he doesn't think that there is a discrimination in the manner promotions are being done for male officers and for female officers since female officers have to get that Certificate in Midwifery before they are promoted, whereas male officers are not, they are just promoted without any examination?

Dr. Jeetah: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I did mention that there is an extra increment that is offered to midwives. The nature of the job is such that we need ladies to take care of ladies. This is the culture here in this country. I suppose with time things would change, but this is the current situation in Mauritius and that's the state of affairs which I understand has been so since 1958 when the nursing school was opened.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: I don't think that female nursing officers should be penalised because it is said that female nurses should take care of female patients as we all know now the modern trend in Mauritius is that all ladies go to gynaecologists for treatment and gynaecologists are male and female. So, I think that the trend has to be changed.

Dr. Jeetah: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have had a meeting with the Nursing Association and I have requested my Ministry to set up a technical committee chaired by the Director, Health Services (Curative) to look into the matter. I can only go by recommendations and current practice in this field.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Can the hon. Minister say whether these courses in Midwifery are held regularly or it is because there are not enough midwife educators the courses are being delayed and the promotion of these female nurses are also being delayed?

Dr. Jeetah: I do not have this information, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, but I can certainly look into it.

Mrs Labelle: If you would allow me, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, a similar question was put to the then Minister of Health in 2006 who replied that he guessed the criteria must be the same. I have the reply of that Parliamentary Question. I am glad that today the hon. Minister has given additional information on this issue. However, in view of the Equal Opportunities Act that this very House has voted, does not the hon. Minister think that we have to review this situation more so that a female nurse can be a Charge Nurse in other departments? Could we create a particular type of Charge Nurse for a particular department, then, we can ask for a particular qualification?

Dr. Jeetah: I take the point, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. That is a valid point, but we have to be careful, we have to make sure that we have a sufficient number of midwives. As I said, there is a technical committee that is going to be chaired by the Director, Health Services (Curative). I'll have to let the technicians sit and discuss and try to find the best way forward, but I'll have to make sure that the service is provided.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: One last question, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Can the Minister confirm that there will be no discrimination whatsoever between male charge nurses and female charges? The hon. Minister just said that they get one additional increment whereas on promotion the male nurses get three increments.

Dr. Jeetah: Mr Deputy Speaker, we should not view an extra training as discrimination. In fact, these ladies are being offered one extra year of training as opposed to only three years for male nurses, but I will have to check the point raised by the hon. lady.

GLOBAL SCHOOL-BASED STUDENT HEALTH SURVEY - RECOMMENDATIONS

(No. B/88) Mrs S. Hanoomanjee (Second Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether, in regard to the Global School-Based Student Health Survey, he will state the –

- (a) outcome thereof, and
- (b) recommendations, indicating the measures taken for their implementation.

Dr. Jeetah: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I wish to inform the House that the Global School-based Student Health Survey (GSHS) was initiated in 2001 by the World Health Organisation in collaboration with UNAIDS, UNESCO and UNICEF and with technical assistance from the US Centre for Disease Control. The survey was meant to generate data on important health risk behaviours and protective factors amongst students.

I wish to highlight, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that some countries had already started the Survey as from 2003. In Mauritius, this Survey was conducted by my Ministry for the first time in 2007 among students aged 13 to 15 years. The final report was available in 2009. The survey has provided us with data and other important information on critical health behaviours and protective factors established during adolescence and which are related to significant causes of morbidity and mortality during youth and adulthood.

The detailed findings of the survey are available on the web site of the World Health Organisation since January 2009 and are now also available on the website of my Ministry.

The data generated will now serve as a baseline to evaluate interventions and health promotion activities focused on changing behaviours for reducing the burden of non communicable diseases in Mauritius.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as regards part (b) of the question, the main recommendations of this survey and the measures being taken are as follows –

- (a) Firstly, it is recommended that intersectoral collaboration between the Ministry of Education, Culture and Human Resources and my Ministry be established so as to develop a comprehensive and integrated approach to health promotion in schools. In this respect, Education and Health Councils, comprising representatives of both Ministries and other stakeholders have already been set up and are operational.
- (b) Secondly, the survey recommends the preparation of an Action Plan against violence and injuries in children and adolescents. A workshop with all stakeholders concerned was held on 25 March, 2010 to prepare good practice guidelines against violence and injuries in children and adolescents.
- (c) Thirdly, the survey proposes an increase in the number of physical education classes in all schools. I am informed that this has already been initiated by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Human Resources. In addition, my Ministry is currently finalising a National Action Plan on Physical Activity and one of its components will address physical activity in adolescents.
- (d) Lastly, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the other recommendations concern actions to reduce the use of tobacco, alcohol and drugs in schools. In fact, the Public Health (Restrictions on Tobacco Products) and Public Health (Prohibition on Advertisement, Sponsorship and Restriction on Sale and Consumption in Public Places of Alcoholic Drinks) Regulations 2008 have been promulgated and are being enforced as from last year with a view to addressing problems of tobacco and alcohol use on school premises amongst other things. I have to inform the House, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that following the enforcement of these Regulations, the consumption of –

- (i) Spirits (i.e. whisky, rum and compounded spirits) have decreased from 17.758,092 litres, that is, 17.7 million litres in 2008 - a few more if you will allow me, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir - to 13.4 million litres in 2009;
- (ii) Fruit Wine has decreased from 6.083 million litres in 2008 to 5.28 million litres in 2009, and
- (iii) Beer has decreased from 36.1 million litres in 2008 to 36.09 million litres in 2009, that is, it has stabilised, at least, it has not increased.

Furthermore, the import of cigarettes for the months of January and February 2010 has decreased to 166 million sticks as compared to 290 million sticks for January and February, that is from a high of 290 million sticks, it has come down to 166 million sticks over the period January to February 2010.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, let me say that the carrying out of this survey itself is a very laudable initiative. Can the hon. Minister say whether mobile clinics still go to primary and secondary schools to detect cases in secondary schools alcoholism, in primary schools of serious handicaps for children and at what frequency do they do so?

Dr. Jeetah: I am afraid not, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Mobile clinics are here for *dépistage*, for early detection of NCDs as well as breast and cervical cancer in women. We are also enforcing good eating practices and we are encouraging people to have a healthy lifestyle. We have also initiated another dental mobile clinic where we carry out dental check up. But I take the point, once again, a very valid point and we will try to see in what way we can collaborate with the Ministry of Education to try to enforce this further.

Mrs Labelle: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister whether there was a particular reason why the core questionnaire which contains nine questions relating to the sexual behaviours that contribute to HIV infection, other STI and unintended pregnancy module have been reduced to only two? There was nothing regarding questions which could have helped us to collect the database regarding the sexual activity of our adolescents.

Dr. Jeetah: I do not have an answer to that question, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, but I think the good thing is that, at least, now we have a basis for policy making. I am sure with the next survey we can consider all these issues.

Mrs Labelle: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am sure the hon. Minister is aware of the problem of teenage pregnancy in our country which is on the increasing trend. So, we have missed an opportunity to collect data regarding this activity of our youth. Is he prepared to look into that? Is there something else that is going to be done so that we can have such data, so that we can implement measures to help decreasing this problem that we are facing?

Dr. Jeetah: There are two points, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. This survey was initiated in 2001. It is my predecessor who initiated this study in 2007. So, I think we have to congratulate my predecessor who has started the work. I am informed now that hon. Mrs Seebun who is in charge of the Ministry of Women's Rights, Child Development, Family Welfare & Consumer Protection is looking into the subject.

Mr Jhugroo: Can I ask the hon. Minister whether he will consider undertaking a systematic screening exercise in view of detecting any medical abnormalities at the level of primary and secondary students?

Dr. Jeetah: I think that my colleague is going to answer that question. My colleague, the Minister in charge of Education, Culture and Human Resources, has some very ideas in order to tackle this, being a medical practitioner himself. But, once again, these are very valid suggestions that we are working on.

SECONDARY SCHOOL HEALTH PROGRAMME – STUDENTS - SCREENING

(No. B/89) **Mrs F. Labelle (Third Member for Vacoas & Floreal)** asked the Minister of Education, Culture and Human Resources whether, in regard to the Secondary School Health Programme, he will state the number of students who have been screened –

- (a) in 2008, and
- (b) since January 2009 to date, indicating the number of tests effected.

Dr. Bunwaree: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Secondary School Health Programme is being implemented jointly by the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life and my Ministry since February 2007. The objective of the Programme is for the early detection of Non-Communicable Diseases and their risk factors amongst students and to create awareness and sensitise students on good nutrition and healthy lifestyle.

The numbers of students who have been screened as well as the number of tests carried out are as follows –

Year	Number of students screened	Number of tests carried out
2008	24,012	4,593
2009	23,552	5,531
2010 (to date)	2,771	Figures are being compiled

Tests carried out were especially in respect of -

- (1) Blood Pressure Measurement
- (2) Vision Testing
- (3) Fasting Blood Glucose

In addition, Medical Officers carry out clinical examination with special attention to -

- heart/lungs/abdomen
- skin for any dermatological problem
- deformities/congenital abnormalities
- any other abnormalities

Counselling and health education are also provided. Relevant advice is also given regarding health and dietary related issues.

Mrs Labelle: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Minister give us the names of the secondary schools where these screening have been effected and during which period?

Dr. Bunwaree: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I can circulate the list.

Mrs Martin: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, since the hon. Minister has mentioned the figures of the different years and of the number of students who have been screened, may we know what percentage this represents with regard to the total population of students during those years?

Dr. Bunwaree: It is difficult for me to say the percentage right now, but if a proper question is put I can reply. I can say that I am not very satisfied with the way it is being carried out, but we are presently continuing along the same trend. We started two years ago,

the idea in which line we want to go is that every school child must have a screening at least once every two years. This is the direction in which we want to go.

Mrs Martin: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, on the same wavelength, can the hon. Minister say whether there is a follow-up programme which will, in fact, make it compulsory or, at least, ask the students in order to be able to be equipped with information so that they could inform other students and make it as a rippling effect?

Dr. Bunwaree: There is a follow-up programme for the screened cases. Of course, once the cases are discovered, they are channeled to the relevant medical units. Then, as I said, if we go in line with what I have mentioned, that is every child is screened once every two years, the follow-up will be an automatic one.

LA CHAPELLE ROAD, QUARTIER MILITAIRE – DRAINS

(No. B/90) Mr S. Dayal (Second Member for Quartier Militaire & Moka) asked the Minister of Environment and National Development Unit whether he is aware that the drain works at La Chapelle, l'Espérance, Quartier Militaire from the poultry farm to the residence of one Mr D., which dates back to 2002 overflows during rainfall and, if so, will he state the remedial measures that will be taken.

Mr Bundhoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as I informed the House some time last year with regard to PQ No. B/289 of hon. Dayal, the construction of a drain along La Chapelle Road, l'Espérance, Quartier Militaire was delayed due to way-leave issues.

I am pleased to inform the House that after our consultant's visit and subsequent recommendations, it is proposed that the drain be extended by some 250 metres which entails crossing the road and canalising the water into River Française.

I would like to inform the House that NDU has invited bids for appointment of zonal contracts for drain works. Once the contractor of drain works is appointed, which is quite soon, the project will be executed on a priority basis.

NATIONAL WOMEN'S COUNCIL – WOMEN - EMPLOYMENT

(No. B/91) Mr S. Dayal (Second Member for Quartier Militaire & Moka) asked the Minister of Women's Rights, Child Development and Family Welfare whether, in regard to the women employed on a sessional basis at the National Women's Council, since 1998 to dispense courses on -

- (a) Basic Home Economics
- (b) Floral Arrangement
- (c) Weight Management
- (d) Healthy Eating
- (e) Motherhood and Child Care, and
- (f) Agricultural Courses amongst others, she will state if it is proposed to employ them on a full-time basis and, if so, when.

(Withdrawn)

SCHOOLS – KREOL MORISIEN – INTRODUCTION

(No. B/92) Mrs F. Labelle (Third Member for Vacoas & Floreal) asked the Minister of Education, Culture and Human Resources whether, in regard to Kreol Morisien in schools, he will state the actions that have been initiated or are being contemplated by Government for the introduction thereof as an optional subject and medium of instruction, indicating the timeframe for its implementation.

Dr. Bunwaree: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in my reply to PQ No. B/823 on 14 July 2009, I pointed out that the use of Kreol Morisien can be resorted to by teachers as an aid to help overcome serious learning difficulties in the classroom as well as to facilitate better understanding and communication.

I wish to remind the House that, in January this year, I made a policy statement whereby Kreol Morisien can be used as a support language to facilitate teaching and learning at all levels, whether at primary or secondary school. The House will realize that this a very significant step forward that has been taken to effectively recognize the value and place of Kreol Morisien in school set up as a tool to facilitate assimilation of concepts.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the use of any language as a medium of instruction carries a number of implications which include national acceptance and international recognition,

parental consent, training of teachers as well as a review of the school curriculum. These implications are being carefully examined and studied, however, keeping in mind that, being insular, our outlook has to be exogenous and outward looking.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, our multicultural and multilingual entity makes it important to give due respect and recognition to languages brought by our ancestors. This explains why Asian languages and Arabic have found their rightful place in the school curricula.

One would wish to have a similar recognition of and value added to Kreol Morisien with its introduction as an optional subject. This has already been announced publicly by the hon. Prime Minister and we are going in this direction. But this in itself, has implications regarding the production of curriculum materials, recruitment and training of teachers and especially nationally accepted and standardized written form of the language. The whole exercise is part and parcel of an ongoing and evolving process.

In this context, my Ministry is embarking on a national consultation process, involving all stakeholders, whether these be members of the academia, researchers, pedagogues, linguists as well as those who, in one way or another, can contribute to the debate. The overall aim is to build up a national consensus on the issue. As an initial step towards the enterprise, we are going to invite all parties wishing to bring their contribution to make submissions very soon. These inputs will be central to the discussions and deliberation of a national forum to be organised soon.

Mrs Labelle: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, when I heard the hon. Minister mentioned that following PQ No. B/823, he mentioned that the Creole language can be used as a support language and this is a very important step that we have done, I feel very sad because the hon. Minister is aware that this is the case since 1957. So, there is no big progress. According to section 43 of the Education Regulation of 1957, it is the case. So, saying that we have just done a huge step, I don't think it is a correct statement.

The Deputy Speaker: Put your question, please!

Mrs Labelle: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, may we know what other steps have been initiated after the statement of the hon. Prime Minister on 01 February 2010?

Dr. Bunwaree: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would answer the first part of the question. In fact, I informed the House, at that time, but the hon. Member is still coming with the same argumentation. In fact, what she says is true, but for Standards I, II and III only, the Education Act mentions that only for the primary schools. But Creole language, as a support

language, is not allowed in any other class legally. We have said, and I mentioned it in my reply that it has been allowed now, as a policy measure for all classes in all pre-primary, primary and secondary schools whenever it is needed. I hope this is once and for all very clear in the minds of all the hon. Members.

The second thing is: *qu'est-ce qu'on a fait depuis? On a fait beaucoup de choses. On va organiser un forum dans deux à trois semaines pour mettre tout le monde ensemble, comme j'avais dit tout à l'heure dans la réponse, parce qu'on a décidé de faire du créole une langue optionnelle. Quand on dit une langue optionnelle, cela va être dans les écoles, bien entendu, mais il y a des petites choses à régler. Plus j'entre dans les détails, plus on voit des problèmes, comme cela arrive souvent. Il y a le problème de la grammaire, de l'orthographe et de la graphie harmonie qui est une graphie. Mais, de là, à faire le vocabulaire et l'entraînement des professeurs, tout cela prend du temps. J'ai décidé de mettre tout le monde ensemble - je pense avant la fin d'avril on va réaliser ce forum - et on va décider ensemble what is the best way forward to make creole an optional language in our school system.*

Mrs Labelle: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister has mentioned about a technical committee that has been set up - if I got him right. May I know when the committee met and when the next meeting is being scheduled?

Dr. Bunwaree: The committee is meeting very often, once every week I must say, and sometimes, I myself chair the committee. But what I have said is important, we have to get this forum where all the stakeholders will be brought together because together we have to define the way forward.

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, since the hon. Minister has also mentioned the various implications for the introduction of Kreol Morisien as an optional subject, can he inform the House whether he has a specific time frame for completing that job and whether it is in the coming weeks or months?

Dr. Bunwaree: J'ai répondu indirectement à cette question pour dire que si ce n'était que moi, j'irais très vite et j'aurais proposé janvier de l'année prochaine. Mais plus j'entre dans les détails plus je vois qu'il y a des choses à faire. On me dit que la grammaire risque de prendre beaucoup plus de temps. C'est pour cela que je veux voir tout cela dans le forum et on va décider *what is the best way forward*.

The Deputy Speaker: Last question hon. Mrs Labelle!

Mrs Labelle: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister whether he will let the House know who are the members of the technical committee that he has just set up?

Dr. Bunwaree: This technical committee is at the level of the Ministry. Of course, I have no objection to let the House know but then this committee is preparing the forum which is the most important thing.

MANGALKHAN, FLORÉAL - STATE LAND - BENEFICIARIES

(No. B/93) Mrs F. Labelle (Third Member for Vacoas & Floreal) asked the Minister of Housing and Lands whether, in regard to the lease of State land, he will –

- (a) state the number of persons who, since January 2006 to December 2009, have been granted a plot of land in the region of Mangalkhan, Floréal, and
- (b) table a list of the beneficiaries thereof.

Dr. Kasenally: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed that two persons have been granted a plot of land in the region of Mangalkhan, Floréal. I am tabling the names of the two beneficiaries.

Mrs Labelle: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, there are more than two persons who are building small houses now. May I ask the hon. Minister whether he will try to find out whether the lease has already been granted or whether these persons are just taking the lands to build there?

Dr. Kasenally: As far as records are concerned, there are only two. Maybe the others are squatting if they are building. I will certainly send my surveyors to check and see what the situation is.

WOMEN & CHILDREN IN DISTRESS - SPECIAL COLLABORATIVE PROGRAMME

(No. B/94) Mrs F. Labelle (Third Member for Vacoas & Floreal) asked the Minister of Women's Rights, Child Development and Family Welfare whether, in regard to projects approved and financed under the Special Collaborative Programme for women and children in distress, she will table a list thereof, indicating if an evaluation and monitoring mechanism has been set up to assess the impact thereof on the direct beneficiaries and, if so, give details of such mechanism.

Mrs Seebun: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, following a first call of project proposals launched in August 2009, 17 projects to the tune of Rs20 m. have been approved by the Steering Committee and financed under the Special Collaborative Programme. I am tabling the list.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, for the purpose of close monitoring and evaluation of projects, a Programme Coordinator is recruited and the services of five Programme Facilitators have been made available to my Ministry. I am tabling a pro-forma of the Monitoring Report which is being used for that purpose.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I also wish to inform the House that the duration of each project falls within a span of 6-24 months. A project cycle comprises different phases requiring different levels of monitoring whilst an impact assessment on the final outcome thereof on the direct beneficiaries is conducted at the completion of the programme. I am also tabling the pro-forma.

Mrs Labelle: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I think I heard the hon. Minister mention that a Programme Coordinator is recruited. Must I take it that it is in the process of being recruited or has it already been done?

Mrs Seebun: It is almost done because we have already received three bids which we are analysing currently.

Mrs Labelle: Moreover, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister mentioned that the duration of the projects is from 6 to 24 months. Must I take it that there are some projects which have already been completed and, if so, whether there has been an evaluation of those projects and if she could inform the House of her findings?

Mrs Seebun: I wish to inform the hon. Member that funds have been disbursed in December for the 16 projects and for 1 project it was on 08 March this year. The monitoring will begin now as the funds have recently been disbursed.

The Deputy Speaker: So, it's too early for evaluation.

Mrs Labelle: May I ask the hon. Minister whether she intends to make a regular monitoring and evaluation or will she wait for the mid or end of the projects, what is the time scheduled for evaluation?

Mrs Seebun: The monitoring will be done on a monthly basis for some and for others on a 3-month basis, but, the impact assessment will be done at the completion of the projects.

SALE BY LEVY - VICTIMS – AMOUNT DISBURSED

(No. B/95) Mr S. Dayal (Second Member for Quartier Militaire & Moka) asked the vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Empowerment whether, in regard to the Rs100 m. earmarked for the victims of Sale By Levy, he will state the amount thereof that has been disbursed as at to date.

The Minister of Education, Culture and Human Resources (Dr. V. Bunwaree): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I shall reply to this question. As the House is aware, following announcement made in the Budget Speech of 2007/2008 to set up a Sale by Levy Solidarity Fund, an amount of Rs100 m. was earmarked to financially assist deserving families, who have lost their only residence through sale by levy, to acquire a house.

Furthermore, in reply to a number of questions on this issue, my colleague, the substantive Minister of Finance had earlier informed the House of the eligibility criteria that such families should meet to benefit from assistance from the Sale by Levy Solidarity Fund. Indication was also given as to the process that had to be followed in order to identify the potential beneficiaries.

In this respect, I am informed that following an initial exercise that was carried out from September 2007 to January 2009, and a second one from May 2009 to November 2009, 481 applications were received but only 49 were found eligible.

To date, disbursement to the tune of Rs12.4 m. has been effected in respect of 36 out of the 49 eligible families identified and an amount of Rs6.5 m. has been earmarked for the remaining 13 beneficiaries. For these beneficiaries disbursement will be made once the negotiations for the acquisition of their respective houses would have been completed and deeds of sale finalised by the notary.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the House may wish to note the assistance from Sale by Levy Solidarity Fund was extended in year 2009 to also cover cases of families with a household income of less than Rs7,500 per month and who were facing difficulties in servicing their loans either following the death or serious incapacity of the income earner.

In this regard, the National Solidarity Fund did launch a call for applications in May 2009, following which 47 applications were received. 35 applications failed the eligibility criteria, and as at date, disbursements amounting to Rs467,000 have been made in respect of 2 beneficiaries. The remaining 10 applications are currently being examined by the National Solidarity Fund Board.

NTC – BUSES – PURCHASE

(No. B/97) **Mr P. Jhugroo (Third Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue)** asked the Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping whether, in regard to buses purchased by the National Transport Corporation, for the last five years, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Corporation, information as to the number thereof, indicating in each case, the costs thereof in terms of –

- (a) repairs, and
- (b) spare parts.

(Withdrawn)

SEA LEVEL RISE – MONITORING

(No. B/98) **Mr M. Dowarkasing (Third Member for Curepipe & Midlands)** asked the Minister of Environment and National Development Unit whether, in regard to the rise in sea level due to climate change, he will state the measures that have been taken or mechanism put in place by Government for the monitoring thereof.

Mr Bundhoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed that the Meteorological Services have four gauge stations for sea level rise monitoring. Two tide gauge stations are in operation in Mauritius namely at Trou Fanfaron and Blue Bay. The two other tide gauge stations are located in Rodrigues and Agalega respectively.

There is modern equipment with extra sensors comprising various weather elements including sea water temperature. Data are transmitted by these stations every 15 minutes through satellite links to the World Data Centre and the Mauritius Meteorological Services.

Monitoring result obtained so far have revealed that the sea level has been rising at 3 mm per year which is comparable with the international findings of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

Mr Dowarkasing: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, can we know since when these two apparatuses are in operation?

Mr Bundhoo: The one in Port Louis since 1986; for Rodrigues it is since November 1986; for Blue Bay it is November 2008 and Agalega since November 2008.

Mr Dowarkasing: Will it, therefore, be possible for the hon. Minister to table the gradual report on a yearly basis of the progression of the increase in the rise in sea level?

Mr Bundhoo: I have already stated in my reply, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that monitoring result obtained so far has revealed that the sea level has been rising at 3mm per year which is comparable with the international findings. Therefore, it is already there.

The Deputy Speaker: Next question please!

ABOLITION - DISABLED PERSONS - BASIC INVALIDITY PENSION

(No. B/99) Mr M. Dowarkasing (Third Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the Minister of Social Security, National Solidarity and Senior Citizens Welfare & Reform Institutions whether, in regard to the Basic Invalidity Pension to disabled persons having reached the age of 60, she will state the rationale behind the abolition thereof.

Mrs Bappoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Basic Invalidity Pension that's the BIP is meant to provide an income to persons aged between 15 and 59 years who suffer from a disability of at least 60 % and are thus unlikely to earn their living through employment. The BIP is, therefore, meant to partly replace the income they could have earned through employment.

So, upon reaching the age of 60, such persons with a BIP start instead to draw the Basic Retirement Pension that's the BRP. It is to be noted that the rate for the BRP is currently Rs3,048 a month and is higher than that of the BIP which is Rs2,745 a month.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, both the BIP and the BRP are for the same purpose and are non-contributory pensions. In accordance with section 6 (1) of the National Pensions Regulations 1977, a person cannot draw more than one non-contributory pension.

However, if that person is so disabled to an extent of not less than 60% and requires constant care and attention, he/she is granted a carer's allowance to the tune of Rs1,921 per month in addition to his/her pension.

Mr Dowarkasing: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I thank the hon. Minister for the reply. I think there is some logic behind it. I would request the hon. Minister if she could look into the possibilities of amending those regulations because everybody at the age of 60, disabled or not, are privileged to that Basic Retirement Pension. For those who are permanently disabled I would ask the hon. Minister to consider them as a separate case and look into the possibility of amending the regulations so that they could benefit both from the BIP and the Basic Retirement Pension.

Mrs Bappoo: I do not think that it would be a wise decision for a person to benefit two non contributory pensions. If the person has a permanent disability and he earns a BRP, he applies for a carer's allowance and he is being given the carer's allowance on the top of the BIP, it is like this. The hon. Member may wish to know that from 2005 up to date now there has been an increase of about 35%, 38%, increase on their pension. From 2005 to 2010, there has been an average of 35%, 36% increase and on top of that comes the carer's allowance.

There are three categories. First, it is a person receiving a BIP, but without any carer's allowance. Second, it is a person in receipt of a BIP with a temporary carer's allowance, so after the one year expiration of that allowance, the person is rewarded and if the medical doctor sees that he is qualified again for a carer's, he will have it and the third category is those with a disability on permanent basis and the carer's goes on permanently.

Mr Dowarkasing: I have one more suggestion. Can I impress upon the hon. Minister if she could see the possibilities of improving the carer's allowance for cases of permanent disability? They are earning roughly Rs1,500 as carer's allowance. But the hon. Minister would concur with me that the sum is not enough for those with a permanent disability. They need a car to vehicle them, they can't use the facilities of free bus transport like others as an example. So if the hon. Minister could review the carer's allowance for those with permanent disabilities.

Mrs Bappoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, at hand I do not have the list of budgetary measures that have been taken these three last years. Additional budgetary measures to care for person with severe disability, in spite of free transport for those who can travel, but there have been various budgetary measures all along during the three last Budgets, to cater more funds to persons with severe disability. It goes on increasing because the three Budgets has been Disable Friendly Budget.

Mrs Labelle: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, actually those who received the carer's allowance - I am talking about old age pensioners - are also entitled to receive medical visit at home. But, very often, old persons do not have that percentage of disability, so they don't receive the carer's allowance and they are not asking for that. They are just asking for a medical visit. Sometimes they just can't go. Is there something that can be done, even though that they do not receive carer's allowance, but they are not that much well to go to hospitals? Can they be favoured with visits of doctors at their place?

Mrs Bappoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the regulations make provision for anyone as from 90 years old to benefit a medical visit at home, what we called a DV, *visite à domicile*. This is compulsory to anyone as from 90, being ill or not being sick. Then as from 75 years, if in case that person is disabled, he is bedridden, he also benefits from *une visite à domicile*. Below 75 years, if there is any case to case that needs to be given attention, the Director of the Medical Unit does take care.

Mrs Perrier: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, some time ago in this House the hon. Minister mentioned that the Government is agreeable to review the criteria of 60% for invalidity. Where matters stand for that?

Mrs Bappoo: I think the hon. Member is confused on that. I never said, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that Government is ready to review the 60%. I did mention that there are other countries who are giving BIP to people with disability more than 60%. We cannot go beyond that, but at the same time there is the social protection review, which is being taken place at the level of the Ministry of Finance and all these issues are being taken in the whole package of reviewing social protection for the most vulnerable people.

The Deputy Speaker: The next and last supplementary question!

Mrs Labelle: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the fact that we put together the medical visit and the carer's allowance for those aged less than 75 and if the person is suffering from, let say 55 incapacity, this person is not entitled according to our regulation to the carer's allowance, I am not arguing about that. But, at the same time, this person has difficulty to go to hospitals or to the health centres. Can these cases be considered only for the medical visit, not for carer's allowance? This was my question.

Mrs Bappoo: I have just said, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that the Director of the Medical Unit does consider special cases where the person really is in a bad position, in order to move for the medical assessment at the level of the local office and this is being entertained by the doctor.

The Deputy Speaker: There can be case to case applications.

Mrs Bappoo: And if the hon. Member has any case she can just submit to my office.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, next question!

SUGAR CANE PLANTERS TRUST - DISSOLUTION

(No. B/100) Mr M. Dowarkasing (Third Member for Curepipe & Midland) asked the Minister of Agro Industry, Food Production and Security whether, in regard to the Sugar Cane Planters Trust, he will state if it has been dissolved and, if so -

- (a) state the reasons therefor, indicating if that decision was taken through a general assembly, and
- (b) table copy of the audited accounts of the Trust as at to date.

Mr Faugoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, section 14 of the Sugar Cane Planters Trust Act provides that the Trust may, with the approval of the Minister, be dissolved by unanimous decision of the Board.

The Board of the Trust had unanimously decided on 26 April 2007 to dissolve the Trust. That decision was approved by the then Minister on 25 July 2007. All procedures for the dissolution of the Trust have been followed as per advice tendered by the State Law Office.

I am advised that the decision to dissolve the Trust was motivated by the following factors -

- (i) decline in the production of sugar cane from 5,478 tonnes on a harvested area of 77 hectares in 2000, to a mere 443 tonnes on a harvested area of 31 hectares in 2006, i.e, from 71 tonnes per hectare to a mere 14 tonnes per hectare;
- (ii) a Technical Committee, comprising the Mauritius Sugar Industry & Research Institute and Farmers Service Corporation set up to evaluate the proposal for cane replantation after the sixth year of ratoon in 2006, had recommended that net returns were too low to allow sustainable sugar cane production, and
- (iii) a survey subsequently carried out among the beneficiaries to seek their views on the future of the Trust revealed that 70% of them had signified their intention not to continue with the project.

According to the Act, there was no necessity for the decision for dissolution to be taken by the general assembly.

Regarding part (b) of the Question, I am tabling the audited accounts of the Trust for the year ended 30 June 2007. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, a Bill for the repeal of the Sugar Cane Planters Trust Act is on the agenda of this Assembly today, and it will be debated later on.

Mr Dowarkasing: Can the hon. Minister confirm to this House whether the audited accounts or the financial reports for the years 2001-2002, 2002-2003 and 2003-2004 have been tabled?

Mr Faugoo: I am not aware. If this needs to be done, I have no problem.

LANDSCAPING – HIGHWAYS - CONTRACTS

(No. B/101) Mr G. Lesjongard (Second Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism, Leisure and External Communications whether he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Tourism Authority, information as to if for the period 2008-2009, it has awarded contracts for landscaping of the highways and, if so, indicate in each case the -

- (a) names of the companies to which the contracts have been awarded;
- (b) contract value thereof, and
- (c) past experience of the companies in the field of landscaping.

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed that, for the period 2008-2009, the Tourism Authority has, following formal tender procedures, awarded contracts for landscaping of the highways to two companies, namely –

- (i) Gros Cailloux Ltd (a member of United Basalt Products Ltd) for a total contract value of Rs994,217, out of which the supply, planting and maintenance of plants for an amount of Rs195,434, exclusive of VAT in connection with embellishment works on the highway at Roche Bois, and
- (ii) My Landscapes Ltd, for a total contract value of Rs387,208, exclusive of VAT, for the supply, planting, maintenance and irrigation for a period of three months in connection also with embellishment works along the central motorway at Roche Bois.

Both companies have considerable experience in landscaping work.

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, may I ask the vice-Prime Minister whether there has been a change in policy with regard to responsibility of highways, especially with

regard to upgrading or embellishment of highways? Does it fall under his Ministry or under the Road Development Authority?

Mr X. L. Duval: What falls under my Ministry, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is the responsibility to make of Mauritius the most beautiful place, so that tourists can come, and this has been shown in the surveys that we do and the awards that we win. We work in collaboration with many other authorities, including the RDA, and this is done with the collaboration of the RDA, which is a road development authority.

Mr Lesjongard: There was a question with regard to past experience after contractors were selected. Can we know the past experience of Gros Cailloux Limited and My Landscape in the field of landscaping?

Mr X. L. Duval: With pleasure, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Gros Cailloux has got lot of experience; landscaping works at Villa Tamarina, Centre Culturel Français at Ébène, RES projects, a number of hotels, Riverside project at Rivière du Rempart. My Landscapes also, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, has a lot of experience; working for Medine Sugar Estate, Tamarina Golf Club, Villa Tamarina, Watertech Limited, and a lot of work for General Construction and such other private companies. So, they are both experienced companies, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Mr Lesjongard: May I ask the vice-Prime Minister whether the experience acquired by My Landscape was before the award of the contract or after the award of the contract?

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

RESTAURANT 'LE GOUT DU LARGE' – LAND LEASE

(No. B/102) Mr G. Lesjongard (Second Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Housing and Lands whether he will state if Restaurant Le Goût Du Large holds a lease on the *Pas Géométriques* at Grand' Baie and, if not, indicate -

- (a) the name of the lessee of the land on which the restaurant stands;
- (b) the type of lease, and
- (c) if a request was made for a change of purpose of the lease and, if so, by whom.

Dr. Kasenally: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Restaurant *Le Goût du Large* does not hold a lease on *Pas Géométriques* at Grand Baie, but the land of an extent of 1,772.76 m² or

42p, on which stands the restaurant, was originally leased to one Mr Joseph Jean Planteau de Maroussem for a period of 60 years, as from 23 December 2008 to expire on 22 December 2068, for use as campement/s for residential purposes.

As per the provision of Article 5 of the lease agreement, the lessee has transferred the leasehold rights on the same terms and conditions as from 30 July 2009 to Société GaMa, represented by Dr. Mohammad Gaffoor Bholah, by virtue of a notarial deed.

The lease agreement in the name of the new lessee, Société GaMa, has not been signed.

Regarding part (c), no request has been made at my Ministry for the change in purpose.

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister if there has been no request for a lease or any lease granted to the person mentioned? Can he explain how come a restaurant is operating on that plot of land?

Dr. Kasenally: The reason is simple. It is illegal, and my Ministry is initiating steps to take appropriate corrective measures.

Mr Lesjongard: May I then ask the Minister whether a permit was allocated to those operating the restaurant at Grand Baie?

Dr. Kasenally: My Ministry does not issue any permit for anybody to operate a restaurant. This is the business of the local authorities.

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

SCHOOL MATERIALS – NEEDY STUDENTS - DISTRIBUTION

(No. B/103) **Mr G. Lesjongard (Second Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue)** asked the Minister of Education, Culture and Human Resources whether he will state if the distribution of school materials to children of eligible families in Constituency No. 4, Port Louis North and Montagne Longue, has been completed and, if not, why not.

Dr. Bunwaree: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I am replying to this question. I am answering this question addressed to me as Minister of Education, Culture and Human Resources and as Ag. Minister of Finance and Economic Empowerment.

As the House is aware, the main objective of the Trust Fund for the Social Integration of Vulnerable Groups is to alleviate poverty through the funding of projects/schemes, and ensure their smooth integration in mainstream society. This is also done with the active participation of NGOs, as they have closer outreach and can facilitate quicker assistance to those needy and vulnerable families. In this respect, the Trust Fund finances projects from NGOs that assist needy school children through the provision of the school materials, namely uniforms, school bags, shoes, copybooks and other related stationary.

It is to be noted that NGOs in general do not submit projects to the Trust Fund on a constituency wise basis, but according to localities in which they provide coverage. The Trust Fund also receives requests for basic school materials from PTAs, community leaders, vulnerable families themselves, as well as from its field staff.

All requests are processed at the level of the Trust Fund, and it is the direct responsibility of the social facilitator of the Trust Fund to ensure that the needy children meet the established criteria which are namely that -

first, the monthly household income of the family does not exceed Rs5,000, and

second, the child is attending school: pre-primary, primary, secondary, pre-vocational or vocational.

Insofar as the regions encompassing Port Louis North and Montagne Longue are concerned, I am informed that requests for a total of 2,225 children for school materials were received for this year. These requests have been processed at the level of the Trust Fund, subsequent to which, the families concerned were visited by the field workers of the Trust Fund to ascertain whether the applicants do meet the established criteria that I have mentioned earlier. After the completion of this screening exercise, meetings were held by the Social Facilitator concerned with the NGOs submitting the project proposals to validate the assessment and finally to ensure that the projects would be monitored and implemented in accordance with the parameters established by the Trust Fund. Obviously, the scrutinizing of requests, ensuring compliance, having meetings with NGOs, and validating the assessment till finally the distribution of the school materials is a time-consuming exercise.

Out of the 2,225 requests, 1,607 children were found to be eligible for such assistance. As to date, 1,484 children have already received their school materials for a total amount Rs2.4 m. and a batch of 123 children will be receiving school materials by the end of

this week. The distribution of school materials are being made in a phased manner as from December 2009 to ensure proper monitoring.

I am also informed, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that requests for a total of 518 children were received from community leaders, NGOs, individuals and heads of schools in the region of Montagne Longue and Crève Coeur during the months of December 2009 and January 2010. Visits effected by field workers revealed that a significant number of families were drawing more than Rs5,000 monthly and they were not eligible for assistance. The screening process is expected to be finalised this week and those who are eligible will receive school materials by mid-April 2010.

Furthermore, additional requests for school materials have been received on 25 March 2010 from Ramnarain Government School for needy pupils in the region of Terre Rouge and Cité Briquetterie. Screening will be carried out as from this week to determine their eligibility.

Mr Bhagwan: The fact that we are talking about the distribution of school materials, can I know from the hon. Minister whether, there is any criteria for allowing hon. Members of Parliament to get into contact with schools for the distribution of '*biscuits sorbet*', pencils or pens? Is there any criteria, because these are school materials? In the past, we have seen their '*cinéma*'...

The Deputy Speaker: We have heard your question!

Mr Bhagwan: This is very serious. I would like to know whether there is any criteria as to how to proceed?

The Deputy Speaker: I have heard your question! Thank you hon. Bhagwan! Yes, hon. Minister.

Dr. Bunwaree: The best thing for the hon. Member of Parliament is to join the NGO.

Mr Bhagwan: Going through the NGO or going through your Ministry?

Dr. Bunwaree: They can always inform the Zone Director that there is this problem and then the Zone Director can transmit it to the Trust Fund.

Mr Guimbeau: Just recently we saw hon. Ms Deerpalsing giving...

The Deputy Speaker: No! Please sit down when I am on my feet! We are having questions on Constituency No. 4 and materials, not about hon. Ms Deerpalsing. I will not allow any reference to hon. Ms Deerpalsing. You may come with a substantive question if you want to.

Mr Guimbeau: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, still concerning distribution of school materials, is it proper for a Member of Parliament to have distributed in schools...

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Guimbeau, I will not allow that question! Come with a substantive question!

CAMP FOUQUERAUX/ALMA - WATER PIPES - COST

(No. B/104) Mr S. Dayal (Second Member for Quartier Militaire & Moka) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Renewable Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to the replacement of water pipe from Camp Fouqueraux to Alma, he will state where matters stand, indicating the cost thereof.

The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Renewable Energy and Public Utilities (Dr. R. Beebeejaun): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Central Water Authority that on 17 March 2010, tenders were launched for the replacement of 13.6 km of old pipelines from Camp Fouqueraux to Alma Reservoir. The closing date for the submission of bids at the Central Procurement Board is 29 April 2010.

It is expected that the contract will be awarded by August 2010 and the works completed by early 2012.

The cost of the project is estimated at around Rs250 m.

ASSEMBLEE DE DIEU DE MAURICE – INCORPORATION - LEGISLATION

(No. B/105) Mr E. Guimbeau (First Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the Attorney General whether, in regard to the legislation for the incorporation of the *Assemblée de Dieu de Maurice*, he will state where matters stand.

Mr Valayden: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the draft Bill will be ready in about 10 days and then will be circulated.

Mr Guimbeau: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would like to know whether the hon. Attorney General met Pastor Blackburn recently?

Mr Valayden: As I said about a fortnight ago, after robust consultation, I did meet Pastor Blackburn and two others from the *Salut et Guérison*.

Mr Guimbeau: Can we have an idea when the Bill is going to be passed?

Mr Valayden: I just stated to the House, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that in about 10 to 15 days, the Draft Bill will be ready and then it will be circulated. It will then go to the Cabinet and then will come to the House.

Mr Guimbeau: I just wish this is going to come true because it has been five years now. I would like also to table the Act of Parliament conferred to a religious group. So, what I am asking the hon. Attorney General is, not to discriminate against *l'Assemblée de Dieu*.

Mr Valayden: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this is an insinuation because the hon. Member is saying that I will discriminate. I do not know any form of discrimination; I am not a Member to discriminate. I am an honourable Member and, especially on the case of discrimination, I have never discriminated.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you!

Mr Ganoo: Will the hon. Attorney General agree...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order! Order!

Mr Ganoo: Will the hon. Attorney General agree that this Bill has taken a long time before it is coming in front of this Assembly?

Mr Valayden: First of all, let us say that for the first time I had before me a draft Bill. In the Bill that was supposed to be circulated by - which has been proposed before this House - one hon. Member, there is a lot of inconsistency. For example, on the objective, on the Superintendent, on the schedule, on the definition, there is not even the definition of Superintendent and the Superintendent is supposed to manage. I do not think it will be proper for me to continue to comment on the Bill.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you!

Mr Ganoo: Is the hon. Attorney General aware also that the Bill has to be gazetted before it comes before the Assembly?

Mr Valayden: This is, of course, basic.

Mr Guimbeau: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, after what happened in Triolet all the Pencotists have formed a Council. We would just like to know if the hon. Attorney General is going to give the same treatment to the Pencotists Council?

Mr Valayden: I am not a person who discriminates.

The Deputy Speaker: So, we know that, we can proceed with the next question please!

SPORTS COMPETITION - FITNESS TEST

(No. B/106) Mrs S. Grenade (Second Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Youth and Sports whether, in regard to sports competition, he will state if his Ministry ensures that prior to participating therein, participants are made to undergo a fitness test.

Mr Ritoo: Mr Deputy Speaker Sir, it has always been the policy of my Ministry to ensure a close medical follow-up of our athletes.

In fact, all athletes, licensed by the National Sports Federations that are recognised under the Sports Act are required to undergo a Medical Fitness Test at the Ministry's Sports Medical Centre, situated at Vacoas, before participating in any international sports event.

Moreover, at the request of the sports federations, the Medical Centre also carries out fitness tests on all athletes participating in national sports events.

Mr Bhagwan: May we know if all athletes of high level participating in international games are covered with an insurance policy whenever they travel abroad and whether there has been any request from any international athlete who has suffered health problems, asking for refund of his or her medical expenses which the Ministry has not catered for?

Mr Ritoo: All athletes participating in high level games are covered by an insurance policy and this has been the policy all the time.

Mr Guinness: Can I know from the hon. Minister whether he has advised his colleague, the hon. Minister of Education, for example, in schools - because we know of the sad event which occurred in a secondary school in the East – to ensure that before children do participate in any sport activity they undergo a fitness test?

Mr Ritoo: Yes, in fact, with regard to sports competition organised by colleges and schools, following the death of a student participating in a cross country, I think the Ministry

of Education has stated that he will ensure that students undergo cardiac medical check up before any game takes place. It will be practically impossible for my Ministry - I mean our Sports Medical Unit with one Medical officer and three Para-medical officers - to cater for 20,000 to 30,000 students participating in sports days and inter-college games, but we will ensure that the Ministry of Education now requests for a medical check-up.

Mrs Martin: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, beyond going just for sports competition, has the hon. Minister liaised with his colleague of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Human Resources in order to see whether the screening of students who participate in normal sports activities - because this is done on a regular basis in schools as well - can be done at this level so as to detect it before they go into sports competition?

Mr Ritoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I think that is what I just answered. The hon. Minister of Education, Culture and Human Resources is now making a request to the Medical Unit of my Ministry to have the medical check-up of students who are going to participate in the inter college sports days and games.

HOSPITALS & DISPENSARIES - CHINESE TRADITIONAL MEDICINE

(No. B/107) Dr A. Husnoo (Second Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether, in regard to the Chinese traditional medicine, he will state if same is practised in Government hospitals and, if not, if Government will consider its introduction thereat and in the dispensaries.

Dr. Jeetah: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the provision of traditional medicine in Mauritius is regulated by the Ayurvedic and Other Traditional Medicines Act of 1989. This legislation also makes provision for the delivery of Chinese traditional medicine. To date Ayurvedic medicine is available both in public and private sectors. With the interest shown by the public in general in traditional medicine, my Ministry is in the process of expanding the traditional medicine sector through the introduction of the Chinese traditional medicine in our hospitals.

In this respect, in December 2009, I met a delegation from Guangdong, headed by the Deputy Director General, Health Department of Guangdong Province with a view to enlisting its collaboration for the introduction of Chinese Traditional Medicine within our health services and discussions are still ongoing.

Additionally, I met Dr. Lindsay Cabon, a Specialist in Acupuncture and Homeopathy, Sports Medicine and Aerospace Medicine. Dr. Cabon is a Mauritian doctor settled in France.

Dr. Cabon has agreed to train our doctors in Acupuncture and has confirmed his forthcoming visit to Mauritius around mid April 2010 to organise a training programme in collaboration with my Ministry.

Mrs Martin: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister whether he is aware that there is an association of acupuncture practitioners here in Mauritius and whether his Ministry has been in contact with them in order to see in what way they can be included in the process as well?

Dr. Jeetah: I am aware, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that there is, at least, one private clinic that offers service and there are other private practitioners, but we haven't had discussion, I must admit, since we haven't had any interest from any party, but my Ministry is open to any suggestion or any collaboration in this field.

The Deputy Speaker: Maybe, they could write to the hon. Minister. Thank you, next question, please!

IAN PALACH BUS STATION - CONSTRUCTION

(No. B/108) **Mrs M. Martin (Second Member for Curepipe & Midlands)** asked the Minister of Local Government, Rodrigues and Outer Islands whether, in regard to the proposed demolition of the Ian Palach Bus Station in Curepipe, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Municipal Council of Curepipe, information as to where matters stand.

Mr Aimée: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Council of Curepipe that it had on 03 February 2010 received an unsolicited expression of interest from a private company for a project "Curepipe Bus Station and Market Redevelopment".

I am further informed that the Council, after taking cognizance of the proposal, decided that it would be best to proceed with an open advertised exercise to enlist maximum proposals. In the event, there should be a decision of the Council to redevelop the Ian-Palach Traffic Centre. I further informed that the Ian-Palach Traffic Centre consists of two parts namely, Ian-Palach North and Ian-Palach South. The Ian Palach South is already vested in the Council in virtue of the land exchange concluded with the Government. As for the Ian Palach North which is not vested in the Council, the latter has made a request to the Ministry of Housing and Lands for the vesting of the State Land in question.

Mrs Martin: May I ask the hon. Minister whether he has liaised with his colleague from the Ministry of Housing and Lands to see whether the negotiations have started in view of vesting the land to the Municipality?

Mr Aimée: The Municipal Council has made an application to the Ministry of Housing and Lands for the vesting of the State Land on 08 March 2010.

Mrs Martin: Can I ask the hon. Minister whether he has any information as to whether the demolition and proposed new bus station will be at the same place or delocated?

Mr Aimée: In fact, we are waiting for the Ministry of Housing and Lands to vest the land in the Council, then a decision will be taken.

NATIONAL LOTTERY, IT UNIT - *BRIGADE DES JEUX* - ACCESS

(No. B/109) Mr N. Bodha (First Member for Vacoas & Floreal) asked the vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Empowerment whether he is aware that the *Brigade des Jeux* was not given access to the Information Technology Unit of the National Lottery for the last draws and, if so, will he, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Gambling Regulatory Authority, information as to the reasons thereof, indicating the remedial measures that are being envisaged to address the issue.

The Minister of Education, Culture and Human Resources (Dr V. Bunwaree): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed that the representative of the Mauritius National Lottery had, at a hearing before the Board of the Gambling Regulatory Authority on 25 March 2010, indicated that the *Loterie Nationale* had no intention whatsoever to deny access to officers of the *Police des Jeux* during the draw of 20 March 2010. However, it had to comply with the approved Control Procedure as provided for in section (80) of the Gambling Regulatory Authority Act regarding authorised persons who can have access to the IT Room.

In this respect, failure to comply with the Control Procedure approved by the Gambling Regulatory Authority by allowing access to the officers of the *Police des Jeux*, would have resulted in a breach of the Gambling Regulatory Act and would have been liable to pay a fine not exceeding Rs1m.

I have also been informed by the GRA that the combined effect of sections (111) and (113) of the GRA Act, does, in fact, allow a representative of the *Police des Jeux* to have access, at all reasonable times, to any part of the premises of a licensee, including the *Loterie*

Nationale, for the purpose of ensuring that the GRA Act is being complied with. Therefore, there has been some confusion.

In order to avoid any confusion in the future, the Gambling Regulatory Board has decided to amend the Control Procedures of the *Loterie Nationale* so as to allow officers of the *Police des Jeux* to have access to the premises of the *Loterie Nationale*, including its IT Room.

Mr Bodha: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister whether on that particular Saturday, an offence has been committed?

Dr. Bunwaree: I cannot reply offhand, but I will transmit the question to my colleague, the substantive Minister who will look into it and inform the House.

Mr Bodha: May I ask the hon. Minister whether he considers that an enquiry should be carried out and remedial measures taken in view of the fact that each draw involves, at least, Rs10 m.?

Dr. Bunwaree: Yes, of course, I'll see that there will be no problem in the future, but for this particular case enquiry is on.

Mr Bodha: Can I ask the hon. Minister whether it is being intended to amend the legislation if there is some sort of confusion as regards to the interpretation of the existing law?

Dr. Bunwaree: This is already taken care of. I am informed that the procedures are already done and there is the publishing of the information.

Mr Bodha: May I ask the hon. Minister whether it will not be advisable to see how this is done abroad? Because in most countries now you'll have a National Lottery and it will be very interesting to see what are the measures taken for transparency to be there in view of the fact that the amount of money which is involved, as I said, is a minimum of Rs10 m. every week.

Dr. Bunwaree: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as I said, if we look into the Act there is no problem because the *Police des Jeux* can go at any time to any part of the compound of the *Loterie Nationale*. The problem is that the Control Procedures approved did not mention that and the company was going strictly according to these rules.

HENRIETTA, CITE LOYSEAU & CITE MANGALKHAN –

FOOTBALL GROUND

(No. B/110) **Mr N. Bodha (First Member for Vacoas & Floreal)** asked the Minister of Environment and National Development Unit whether, in regard to construction of a football ground at Henrietta and lighting facilities at the football grounds at Cité Loyseau and Cité Mangalkhan, he will state where matters stand.

Mr Bundhoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed that the Municipal Council of Vacoas Phoenix is constructing a football ground and a leisure park at Henrietta on a plot of land of an extent of 14,666.72 m² vested with the Council under the Land Conversion Scheme.

Works started on 18 November 2009 and are expected to be completed hopefully by the end of April this year.

As far as lighting facilities of the football grounds at Cité Loyseau and Cité Mangalkhan are concerned, my Ministry has already initiated action and invited bids and it is expected that the contract will be awarded soon.

Mr Bodha: May I ask the hon. Minister, on your behalf as well, how soon is soon?

The Deputy Speaker: Not on my behalf! I am aware how soon is soon.

Mr Bundhoo: I must say, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that hon. Mrs Bappoo, hon. Chaumière and yourself have all shown interests to enlighten Cité Loyseau and Cité Mangalkhan. May we be blessed by the light as soon as possible!

SUBRAMANIA BHARATI EYE HOSPITAL – EYE OPERATIONS – WAITING

LIST

(No. B/111) **Mrs M. Martin (Second Member for Curepipe and Midlands)** asked Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether, in regard to eye diseases necessitating surgical interventions and operable in Mauritius, he will state the –

- (a) number of patients operated since January 2009 to date, and
- (b) average waiting period for a patient necessitating surgery, indicating the number of patients awaiting to undergo operation.

Dr. Jeetah: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I shall reply to Parliamentary Questions B/111 and B/112 together as both of them relate to the same subject matter.

I wish to state that the Subramania Bharati Eye Hospital is the only public specialised eye hospital in Mauritius which provides quality ophthalmic care and services to the population. A wide range of eye treatment, including surgeries is performed at the centre.

From January 2009 to 25 March 2010, 8,216 patients were operated upon. This figure includes 4,881 patients above the age of 50 who have undergone cataract operations.

As regards part (b) of question B/111, 2,257 patients are waiting for eye operations and the average waiting time is 12 weeks. My Ministry has taken the following measures to reduce the waiting time.

With regard to short term measures -

- The service of two Optometrists has been enlisted on a sessional basis.
- The Public Service Commission is presently conducting a selection exercise for the filling of four existing vacancies. Furthermore, the vacancies have been advertised in India and 58 applications have been received. This exercise will be finalised after the one being carried out by the PSC.
- As announced by the vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance in the last Budget Speech, funds have been provided to the tune of Rs200 m. to allow my Ministry to implement, *inter alia*, a scheme to reduce the waiting list for ophthalmological non-emergency surgeries at the Moka Eye Hospital.
- Extra sessions for eye surgeries are carried out after normal working hours during weekdays and Saturdays. From July 2008 to December 2009, 500 extra sessions were carried out and 2,516 eye surgeries performed.
- Special allowances are paid to the eye specialists and the Nursing Officers and a sum of Rs3.6 m. has been spent for extra sessions for eye surgeries from July 2008 to December 2009.

- For the last two years i.e from January 2008 to December 2009, 10 foreign teams from Geneva, Pakistan and France have operated upon 343 complex vitreo retinal cases, thus allowing my Ministry to save some Rs70 m.

With regard medium to long term measures, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir -

- Six Government Medical Officers are following specialised training in Ophthalmology organised in collaboration with the “Université Victor Segalen Bordeaux II”, under a Scholarship Scheme and these doctors are expected to complete their training by the year 2014.
- A new “State-of-the-Art” Operating Theatre will be set up shortly in collaboration with Lions Club International.
- A project for the extension of Subramania Bharati Eye Hospital at the cost of Rs156 m. including construction of a new OPD, two wards and additional units and parking facilities will be implemented soon.
- In line with Government Policy to make of Mauritius a Medical Hub -
 - investors are encouraged to set up medical institutions comprising specialised services in Ophthalmology, for example the setting up of the Dr. Agarwal Eye Hospital at Baie du Tombeau.
 - We are also actively converting our hospitals into teaching hospitals and we already have D. Y. Patil which has taken over Nehru to be an institution to have post graduate studies in the medical field.

Mrs Martin: I thank the hon. Minister for his answer. I have no doubt that with the developments that are announced, things are going to go better and better. Initially, my question was one question and it is good that the Minister answered it altogether. But he said that there is a waiting time of 12 weeks for people who need to be operated from cataract, but people who have got 50 years old, and most of them are still working, are in a precarious position, because they are suffering from this eye problem. Can I ask the hon. Minister whether the waiting period could be revised, because it causes them a quite lot of problems? Either they are not working and they are on their own and it is quite inconvenient for them. Otherwise they are working, but then they are in a precarious condition, because if they stop at the age of 50, they stop working for quite a while, they lose their jobs and it is difficult for

them to find another job because of their age period. Is it possible for the Minister to, at least, see and revise the waiting period so that these persons are not penalised?

Dr. Jeetah: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I did provide information with regard to short of measures as well as medium to long term. I cannot, as a politician, go and interfere with the medical practitioners to dictate which patients should be seen first or as a matter of priority. But I can assure the hon. Member that I am in the presence of information whereby the medical practitioners are working very hard to reduce the waiting list and they have been able to bring it down to 12 weeks, putting every effort possible. If there are certain genuine cases that might have probably been ignored, I will ask them to have a look into it.

Mrs Martin: Then, if the hon. Minister says that he cannot control the medical practitioners, which is the priority cases, can he say, therefore, what is the procedure for them to choose who is going to be operated first? Is it on a first come first serve basis?

The Deputy Speaker: I will not allow this question. The hon. Member can come with a substantive question.

Mrs Jeewa-Daureeawoo: For those who are waiting surgical operations, does Government envisage to start night sessions operation? Maybe this will be one of the measures where we can diminish those waiting to be operated.

Dr. Jeetah: I have already replied, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. I did mention that there have been a number of extra sessions. I did mention that there have been 500 extra sessions where we have treated 2,516 patients and these extra sessions are outside normal working hours.

Mr Jhugroo: Can I ask the hon. Minister whether there is any shortage of *ophthalmologie* at Bharati Eye Hospital in Moka?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister has answered this question already.

Dr. Jeetah: Sorry! Can I answer, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir?

The Deputy Speaker: If the hon. Member wants to answer again.

Dr. Jeetah: I will have to take it from the beginning. In this country 50% of the population suffer from diabetes or are likely to become diabetics because of the wrong way that we eat and the lack of physical exercise and this is the basic problem. We recently had a survey on NCDs and now we see that more than half of the population is either obese or overweight. So, we would put in a lot of efforts on preventive measures with our mobile

clinics, talking to people, legislating and on what people drink and eat and so on. I think everybody should be concerned. Whatever resources you put into the health system is never enough. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, my budget has increased from Rs3.7 billion in 2004/2005 to Rs7.5 billion, just for Recurrent. I have been given an extra Rs800 m. for infrastructure. Now, the question is how much more I can ask the hon. Minister of Finance. I think Government is doing whatever it can with the limited resources that we have, but it is part of the people's responsibilities as well to look into the amount of sugar, oil and salt that we consume, given that we have this predisposition to get diabetes. We all know that diabetes is directly linked to our eyes. This is a sorry state of affairs. I did give some figures. In this country, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we consume more than a billion cigarettes a year. In 2008, the Mauritian population consumed Rs13 billion of alcohol and cigarettes. So, I think everybody needs to take his or her destiny in his hands. I think, if we all put our heads together, we would be in a situation where we can reverse this trend, but, at the moment, we have got a major challenge.

The Deputy Speaker: I think the hon. Minister has made the point very well. Last question!

Mr Jhugroo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, before 2005, there was a project of making Bharati Eye Hospital become ISO 9000. Can I know where matters stand regarding this project?

Dr. Jeetah: I think it is a question of weeks to have this good news. Probably, it would be one of the first departments in my Ministry to obtain this ISO certificate - amongst others, I must say. We have got a plan to ensure that all the units in the public health sector get ISO certified.

SUBRAMANIA BHARATI EYE HOSPITAL – EYE OPERATIONS

(No. B/112) Mrs M. Martin (Second Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether, in regard to patients suffering from cataract, he will state the number thereof above the age of 50, who have undergone operations at the Bharati Eye Hospital, Moka, since January 2009 to date.

(Vide reply to PQ No. B/111)

MAURITIUS/INDIA – DOUBLE TAXATION TREATY

(No. B/113) Mr P. Jugnauth (First Member for Quartier Militaire & Moka) asked the vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Empowerment whether, in regard to the Double Taxation Treaty signed between Mauritius and India, he will state if there has been a request for a review thereof by the Indian side and, if so, indicate where matters stand.

The Minister of Education, Culture and Human Resources (Dr. V. Bunwaree): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, over the last ten years or so, issues relating to the Indo Mauritian DTA have been raised on a number of occasions, and Mauritian authorities have taken a number of measures to address various concerns raised by India.

The Financial Services Commission and the Securities and Exchange Board of India signed a MoU on exchange of information. This provides an additional channel for exchange of information between the two countries to the one existing under the DTA between the Mauritius Revenue Authority and the Indian Revenue.

The law has been amended to allow Indian auditors to practise in Mauritius. Mauritian Global Business companies may appoint Indian auditors to have their accounts audited for Mauritian regulatory purposes.

The Financial Services Commission has introduced licensing conditions to ensure that Indian sourced funds are not re-invested in India through Mauritian entities.

Mauritian authorities have repeatedly assured Indian authorities that the FSC will investigate any breach of the above licensing conditions, should the Indian authorities report any case of round-tripping. However, no such report has been received.

The House may wish to note that, in 2000, following challenges from revenue officials, the Indian Central Board of Direct Taxes issued Circular 789 which reaffirmed the conclusiveness of Tax Residency Certificates issued by Mauritius, thus supporting the provisions of the Treaty. Following the quashing of this Circular in a public interest litigation before the Delhi High Court, the Government of India appealed to the Supreme Court of India to support the stance of the Central Board of Direct Taxes. The Indian Supreme Court, in a landmark decision given in 2003, decided in favour of the Government of India and held that, as claimed by the Government of India, the Tax Residency Certificate issued by Mauritius is sufficient to qualify for benefits under the India-Mauritius Treaty.

I am advised that, in a ruling given last week, the Advance Ruling Authority of India has once again stated that the provisions of the Treaty apply to entities to whom a Tax Residency Certificate has been issued by Mauritius.

Furthermore, in August 2006, a Joint Working Group, comprising senior officials from both India and Mauritius, was set up to work on two important issues, namely -

- (i) putting in place adequate safeguards to prevent misuse of the India Mauritius DTA without prejudice to the economic interests of either country;
- (ii) strengthening the mechanism for the “Exchange of Information” under the India Mauritius DTAA.

The Joint Working Group has met on six occasions.

In view of the excellent friendly relationships between India and Mauritius, we will pursue the dialogue with India on matters relating to investment flows between our two countries.

Mr Jugnauth: The hon. Minister has mentioned about the recent ruling of the Advanced Ruling Authority, where they have upheld the exemption for capital gains. But the Authority has also stated that they have very strong reservations as for the pursuance of this Treaty for the future. In the light of what has been announced by the hon. Minister of Finance of India, Mr Pranab Kumar Mukherjee, of the coming into force of the direct tax code in 2011, I think it is clear that the advantages of this capital exemption under the Double Taxation Avoidance Treaty is coming to an end. So, may I know what actions have been initiated by the Government with regard to the coming into force of that direct tax code?

Dr. Bunwaree: The matter is being very seriously considered at the level of the Ministry between the two Governments. In fact, my colleague, the hon. Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade, is also taking the matter very seriously. We are aware of this, and we are taking all precautions. We will take all necessary steps that should be taken, to see to it that the advantages of Mauritius are maintained, and see to it also that we don't have any problems in the future.

Mr Jugnauth: I'll just insist, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, because I think it is now very clear that, with the application of this direct tax code, the companies will no more be in a position to benefit from that advantage, and it is clear that Mauritius tends to lose a lot in terms of money that was coming into the country. I know that Government is looking into

that with great concern. But, may I know if, for example, the hon. Minister of Finance – I know he has been in India recently – has had high level talks with his counterpart or other people in India?

Dr. Bunwaree: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the point that has been raised is, in fact, being taken on board very seriously. As I said, my colleague went to India and he has taken up the matter. He is also discussing through the Foreign Affairs Ministries of the two countries. Of course, it is a very serious issue. My colleague has been Minister of Finance, and he knows how it goes. Items are raised from time to time, but here it is becoming more serious than we ever thought before. We have to take all this into consideration.

Mr Bodha: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, at one point in time, there was a decision by the Indian Government to send a high official here to supervise offshore transactions. Has this measure been implemented?

Dr. Bunwaree: I have to look into this. I am not aware, because I am replacing my colleague. But if that decision had been taken, I believe that the officer must have been here.

FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS – INTEREST RATES

(No. B/114) Mr P.Jugnauth (First Member for Quartier Militaire & Moka) asked the vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Empowerment whether, in regard to the gap that exists between the interest rates paid on savings and deposits and those charged on loans by financial institutions, he will state the actions, if any, being taken to correct same.

The Minister of Education, Culture and Human Resources (Dr. V. Bunwaree): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as the House is aware, the interest rates paid by financial institutions and the rates charged by them for the lending operations are fully liberalised and, consequently, are determined by the financial institutions themselves. The Bank of Mauritius does not set interest rates nor regulates them. However, the banks and financial institutions generally adjust their deposit and lending rates to changes in the Key Repo Rate determined by the Bank of Mauritius and the bank's Monetary Policy Committee.

Within this non-intrusive framework, the bank has taken the following actions to ensure that deposit and lending rates are competitive -

- (1) A joint technical committee, consisting of representatives of the bank and the MBA, periodically monitors the spread, and shares information;

- (2) In the absence of a prescriptive regime, price determination is left to the market forces. However, imperfection in information dissemination can undermine market's ability to determine the right price. With a view to enabling banks' customers to take informed decisions and make the right choice, the Bank, in October 2008, instructed banks to provide information about their interest rate and fees structure on a standard template devised by the Bank of Mauritius. This information is available on each bank's website and can be accessed through a link provided on the Bank's website.
- (3) The banks' management were requested to moderate their lending rates/fees and charges, particularly at the height of the global economic crisis in forums like the quarterly Banking Committee meeting chaired by the Governor and attended by chief executives of all banks and also in public speeches of the Senior Management of the Bank.

Mr Jugnauth: I asked this question because recently the substantive Minister had publicly stated that he is very concerned, because the gap between the interest on savings and that charge for loans is really wide. Unfortunately, I know that the substantive Minister is not present, but may I know if any action has been initiated in order to try to see to it that this gap is not as wide as it has been the practice, not now, but throughout so many years?

Dr. Bunwaree: The statement of my hon. colleague, the substantive Minister has been taken on board and the Bank of Mauritius and the other stakeholders have to look into that.

GOVERNMENT OF MAURITIUS – FOREIGN BORROWING

(No. B/115) Mr P. Jugnauth (First Member for Quartier Militaire & Moka) asked the vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Empowerment whether, in regard to foreign borrowings by Government, he will state the amount thereof, since January 2009 to date, indicating in each case, the -

- (a) names of the institutions involved;
- (b) conditions attached thereto, and
- (c) projects being funded therefrom.

The Minister of Education, Culture and Human Resources (Dr. V. Bunwaree): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as the House is aware, Central Government debt had been on a

steadily rising trend for many years due primarily to the large budget deficits prior to 2005. Over the period June 2000 to June 2005, the Central Government debt increased from 49.1% of GDP to 57.1% of GDP. Since July 2005, Government has embarked on a policy of reducing overall debt as a percentage of GDP.

As a result of our policy reforms, the Central Government debt to GDP which was 57% in the year 2005, fell to 51% as at the end of fiscal year 2009, representing a decrease of 6 percentage points compared to the year 2005. Similarly, the public sector debt to GDP which was 69.6% in 2005 was brought down to 60% as at end of Fiscal Year 2009 that is, a fall of nearly 10 percentage points.

In the international front, the economic crisis is leaving deep scars in fiscal balances, particularly in the advanced economies. This year, the average debt-to-GDP ratio in the wealthiest countries is projected to reach levels that prevailed in 1950 in the aftermath of World War II. In the wake of the financial crisis, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the IMF has been urging countries to tighten their fiscal needs across the world. Developed countries with big budget deficits have been requested to further belt-tightening.

Even if we assume that fiscal stimulus programmes are to be withdrawn in the next few years across the world, the average debt-to-GDP ratio is projected to rise to 110 percent by the end of 2014, from 75 percent at the end of 2007. The ratio is expected to be closer to or exceed 100 percent for 5 members of the G7 countries, namely Britain, France, Italy, Japan and the US by 2014.

Insofar as Mauritius is concerned, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in line with the international best practice, our policy is to lengthen the maturity structure of our debt so that we gradually increase the share of foreign borrowing in the overall debt profile. By improving the mix of debt, local and foreign and lengthening debt maturity structure, we should effect savings in our interest bill that would confer immediate benefits in terms of more fiscal space for social programmes, poverty reduction strategies, building public infrastructure and investing in human capital.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, since January 2009, Government has signed 12 loan agreements for an aggregate amount of USD 1,303 million with international financing agencies and foreign governments. The loans are long term with maturities of 15 to 20 years with grace periods of 5 years, and the terms and conditions are very attractive.

The loans that have been raised from the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, the African Development Bank, The *Agence Française de Développement*, International Fund for Agricultural Development and OPEC Fund for International Development. At bilateral levels loans were from the People's Republic of China.

Insofar as parts (b) and (c) of the question are concerned, details in respect of each of the 12 loans are being tabled. The House may, however, also wish to note that copies of all loan agreements are regularly tabled in the National Assembly as and when these are signed as required under the Public Debt Management Act.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, these loans have been raised to finance capital development projects in the aggregate amount of USD 65.57 million and for General Budget Support amounting to USD 1,037.5 million. The disbursement for these loans is as per requirements of the budget and the drawdown is spread over three financial years.

It is also to be noted when the loans were being negotiated there were uncertainties with respect to the likely improvement in the world financial environment which could impact adversely our economy which had so far been resilient. Availability of budget support in terms of availability of foreign exchange had to be assured in case accelerated drawdown would have been warranted.

However, to date, an amount of USD 81.5 million has been drawdown. The proceeds of the loans drawn have mainly been used for financing capital development projects under the General Budget Support financing. A list of the projects that have been financed is also being tabled.

Mr Jugnauth: Can I have confirmation from the hon. Minister that, out of the figures of USD 1.03 billion which he has mentioned, whether it also includes the computation of the ADB loan of USD 700 million?

Dr. Bunwaree: I need notice of this question, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

STATE TRADING CORPORATION – PETROLEUM PRODUCTS – HEDGING LOSSES

(No. B/116) Mr P. Jugnauth (First Member for Quartier Militaire & Moka) asked the Minister of Business, Enterprise and Co-operatives whether, in regard to the hedging losses encountered on petroleum products, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the State Trading Corporation, information as to if the Corporation is still

charging consumers therefor, through the Automatic Pricing Mechanism, and if so, indicate the –

- (a) amount being charged, and
- (b) total amount cashed as at to date.

(Withdrawn)

KENYA, CAMP CAROL - STATE LAND – TITLE DEEDS

(No. B/117) Mr Y. Varma (First Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Housing and Lands whether, in regard to the occupiers of State land at Kenya, Camp Carol, in Constituency No. 12, he is aware of the difficulties they are encountering to obtain their title deeds in respect thereof and, if so, will he state if his Ministry has undertaken steps to enable them to take possession of their title deeds and, if so, where matters stand.

Dr. Kasenally: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I refer to the reply made to PQ No. B/338 on 29 April 2008 on the same subject. According to records, there were some 129 lots of State land in the region of Camp Carol, out of which one had been allocated for the Village Council, 50 occupiers held lease agreements and 25 held letters of intent since 1985, but had not signed their lease agreements and the remaining lots were being occupied without authorisation.

Before the leases could be renewed, it was found that there had been new squatters coming in the area. The disorderly occupation of the sites by squatters have resulted in encroachment upon their neighbour sites, access roads, and even an illegal wall had also been constructed on a major access road, thus necessitating the review of the layout plan on several occasions for the whole area of Camp Carol.

In April 2008, an Inter-Ministerial Committee comprising of the then Minister of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment, the Attorney General and my predecessor was set up to look into the case of the occupiers of State land at Camp Carol. It was decided to conduct a survey of the whole area anew in view of the disorderly development.

Officers of my Ministry found that there was complete chaos prevailing in Camp Carol, resulting in illegal encroachment and some of them had even constructed on major proposed access roads and on their neighbours land with boundary stones found in the middle of a sitting room in one case. Thereafter, a major survey of all the plots had been undertaken

involving meticulous examination and evaluation of each and every portion of land squatted upon and redefining the various plots which would be allocated.

The problem was compounded by new squatters who encroached over freshly demarcated State lands and sometimes extending on private property which is not under the control of my Ministry.

The painstakingly, long and arduous surveys resulted in redefining 130 plots. 86 of which have so far been fully surveyed.

Out of these 86, only 20 have submitted appropriate documents and their lease agreements will be finalised shortly. My Ministry is still awaiting documents from the remaining families.

Despite repeated reminders, they have not been forthcoming. Further, officers of the Survey Division of my Ministry had been at the doorstep of these occupiers and pressing upon them to submit the relevant documents but to no avail.

The surveys of the remaining 44 lots are well underway and will be submitted for preparation of the new layout for allocation of land. In parallel, my Ministry had identified the present occupiers and they are being asked to prepare the appropriate documents, so that once technical issues have been cleared, their lease agreement could be promptly finalised.

I have impressed upon my staff to make due diligence to expedite matters. I also call upon the hon. Members of Parliament of Constituency No. 12 to do the same with their constituents.

The Deputy Speaker: Time is up!

MOTION

SUSPENSION OF S.O. 10(2)

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

Mr X. L. Duval rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

At 4.22 p.m. the sitting was suspended.

