

## **FREE TRANSPORT TO STUDENTS**

### **SCHOOL BUSES (PRIVATE)**

CA/D39/P07/3

#### **SCHOOL BUS OPERATORS – REPRESENTATIONS**

(No. B/1471) Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun (Third Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport & Shipping whether, in regard to the school bus operators, he will state if he has received representations therefrom in relation to the time at which they will have to pick up students from schools as from January 2009.

**Mr Bachoo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, concern was expressed by bus operators at meetings held at my Ministry and the Ministry of Education, Culture & Human Resources, regarding the extension of school hours as from January 2009.

The matter is being looked into, with a view to finding a solution.

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister whether he has received representations or not?

**Mr Bachoo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I have received a letter from the bus owners. My colleague, the hon. Minister of Education, and I had a few meetings, and we are looking into all the intricacies. But, I can assure the House that we will see to it that all our students get their bus in time.

### **MAHEBOURG/QUEEN ELIZABETH COLLEGE- SCHOOL BUS ROUTE (21/04/09)**

(No. B/312) Mr Y. Varma (First Member for Mahebourg and Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping whether he is aware of the request made for a direct school bus route from Mahebourg to the Queen Elizabeth College and back, and if so, will he, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the National Transport Authority, information as to if same has been turned down and, if so, the reasons therefor.

*(Withdrawn)*

16/12/08  
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(38)

23/6/09

**EDUCATIONAL TOURS – STUDENTS – FREE TRANSPORT**

(No. B/643) Mrs A. Navarre-Marie (First Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Education, Culture & Human Resources whether, in regard to the students, he will state if he will consider the advisability of allowing them to travel freely on presentation of a special letter issued by the management of the institution when proceeding on educational tours approved by their respective institution.

(Withdrawn)

25/6/09 (39)

**EDUCATIONAL TOURS – STUDENTS - FREE TRANSPORT**

(No. B/706) Mrs A. Navarre-Marie (First Member for GRNW and Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Education, Culture and Human Resources whether, in regard to the students, he will state if he will consider the advisability of allowing them to travel freely on presentation of a special letter issued by the management of the institution when proceeding on educational tours approved by their respective institution.

**Reply:** Free transport for students at all levels of schooling has been implemented as part of this Government's Programme since September 2005. Provision of free transport to students accordingly aims at alleviating the financial burden of numerous families, thus encouraging them to send their wards to schools.

As regards educational outings organised by schools, the institutions concerned negotiate at their own level with the bus providers for a concessionary rate.

The House may wish to note that generally, schools have an existing mechanism that takes on board the needy students not only for such outings but also for the provision of textbooks. Whenever, there is a problem of means, schools make special arrangements to provide financial support and relief to students.

## **FREE PUBLIC TRANSPORT FACILITIES – GOVT. POLICY (22/06/10)**

**(No. 1B/107) Mr S. Obeegadoo (Third Member for Curepipe & Midlands)** asked the Minister of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping whether, in regard to free public transport facilities, he will state -

- (a) if the present policy is being reviewed and, if so, the reasons therefor, and
- (b) the alternative measures that will be introduced in respect of
  - (i) old age pensioners;
  - (ii) students, and
  - (iii) other beneficiaries.

**Mr Bachoo:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as the House is aware, free transport facilities are being granted to old age pensioners, the disabled persons and students travelling by public buses since 2005. This scheme is applicable in Mauritius and Rodrigues.

The House is also aware that in the Presidential address, mention has been made to the effect that the present policy of free travel scheme will be maintained. But the mechanism for payment will be reviewed to ensure efficiency gain. In this respect, several options are being analysed.

**Mr Obeegadoo:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the hon. Prime Minister has now publicly confirmed what the MMM has been saying since 2005, regarding the lack of effectiveness of the hastily arrived at formula of 2005, that is, the wastage of public funds that have gone into this hastily arrived at formula. Will the hon. Minister agree to recommend to Government an overall assessment of the cost-effectiveness of the formula implemented since 2005 and, if not, why not?

**Mr Bachoo:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is not true to say that there has been wastage of public money, this is not the case. But, in fact, all of us know that there have been many flaws in the existing system and we have tried our level best in order to improve whatever required. For example, there have been too many problems which are created by the bus conductors, drivers, the bus proprietors and all these things have been taken care of. Despite it, we have still seen certain flaws in the system and that is the reason why Government has decided to look once again on the mode of payment. We are looking into it and, in fact, I have with me a report which was prepared by Steer Davies Gleave and I am going to lay a copy on the Table of the Assembly so that the Member can have a look at it. In fact, this has been a very interesting method which we have introduced. Unfortunately, this method has got certain flaws and that is the reason why we have instituted a Committee to look into the flaws and then to come forward with certain recommendations which we are going to implement.

**Mr Obeegadoo:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, since these so called flaws have been publicly known since five long years, would the hon. Minister tell us why Government has had to wait until now to agree to what the Opposition, the MMM, has been saying since long that there is a need to review this whole formula?

**Mr Bachoo:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in fact, we have taken steps in order to control the situation. For example, we have taken action concerning all those who have not been following the rules of the game properly. In the beginning, for example, in 2004, we received 440 complaints and last year we have received only 200 complaints. This means that actions have been taken and we have been able to obtain results.

In addition to these, we have got 100 cases where the conductors and bus drivers' licences were suspended. Even the traffic permit of the bus proprietors have also been suspended for many months. So, actions have been taken and the system that we have put in place has given results, but as I have just mentioned we have got certain flaws in any system.

Whatever we introduce, we do have certain minus points and once we have come to know that there can be better means that can be introduced, we are going to do so.

For example, the report which I have submitted is clear that there is a distinct system which is a good one. But unfortunately, we have seen the flaws; we have taken actions that need to be taken. Last year only we have forfeited Rs5.2 m. that were supposed to be paid to the bus companies, which we have not been paid, which means Government has been very strict. Now, when Government has decided to have a look at the system over again, we are going to have a look at it, that's all.

**Mr Obeegadoo:** The old people are still left waiting on the bus stop!

**The Deputy Speaker:** Time is over!

23/11/10  
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### PUBLIC TRANSPORT USERS - PROTECTION

(No. 1B/642) Ms S. Anquetil (Fourth Member for Vacoas & Floreal) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications whether, in regard to public transport users, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information, for the past five years, as to -

- (a) the number of reported cases of anti-social behaviour against,
  - (i) women,
  - (ii) students and,
  - (iii) elderly while travelling, and
- (b) actions already taken and proposed to be taken for their protection.

**The Prime Minister:** Mr Speaker, Sir, anti-social behaviour is not specifically defined as an offence in our legislation. However, in the case of passengers travelling in public transport, including taxis, the law provides for offences of assault, attempt upon chastity, insult and incivility towards passengers.

In regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that since the year 2006 up to 18 November 2010, 101 cases of the offences prescribed in the law have been reported to the Police. In 35 of these cases, victims were women, in 51 cases, victims were students and in 15 cases, victims were elderly persons.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, misbehaviour in public transport is an issue which needs to be addressed by various stakeholders including Government institutions and the public.

In this context, and in regard to part (b) of the question, the Police, through its Motorway and Traffic Field Division and its Divisional Traffic Police, ensures that complaints related to incidents in the transport sector are attended to promptly, and carries out regular patrol on a 24-hour basis, at strategic areas.

At the level of the National Transport Authority, the inspectorate carries out random checks, on a daily basis, in buses and taxis, to ensure that all passengers especially women, students and elderly persons travel as safely as possible and without any impediment.

Regarding students, in order to avoid problems which may arise when they travel by public transport, the Ministry of Education and Human Resources is making arrangements for more dedicated school buses. Currently 30% of the student population is benefiting from the dedicated school bus service provided by the National Transport Authority. Discussions are ongoing between the Ministry of Education and Human Resources and the National Transport Authority so as to extend this service to a greater number of students.

Mr Speaker, Sir, emphasis is also being laid on education and sensitisation at all levels. Several programmes and campaigns are run jointly by the Crime Prevention Unit of the Police, the *Brigade des Mineurs*, the Ministry of Education and Human Resources as well as Public Transport operators. The programmes are meant for different target groups, including school children, women, elderly persons as well as public transport drivers and conductors, and focus not only on crime prevention issues, but also on good citizenship and law abiding principles.