

**FREE TRAVEL SCHEME - COMPANIES/INDIVIDUAL OPERATORS  
(10/05/11)**

**(No. B/287) Mr A. Ameer Meea (First Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East)** asked the Minister of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping whether, in regard to the Free Travel Scheme, he will -  
(a) give a breakdown of the amount of money paid to each of the bus companies/individual operators, since its implementation to date, in each financial year, and  
(b) state if Government proposes a review thereof.

**Mr Bachoo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the relevant information regarding part (a) is being laid in the Library of the National Assembly.

As far as part (b) is concerned, the review of this scheme is not on the agenda, as in overall terms the current approach based on payments to operators is cost effective and offers significant advantages over other alternatives that were explored. We have also improved upon the current scheme, which has generated substantial efficiency gains.

In my reply to PQ No. B/229 on 19 April 2011, I had stated the different measures of control put in place to sustain the effectiveness of the scheme.

**Mr Ameer Meea:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the formula that has been put in place has never been revised since its introduction. Is the hon. Minister aware that for payment to buses for students who travel, on many occasions, students don't go to school and even then, the bus operators are being paid for? Is this not a case of wastage of public funds?

**Mr Bachoo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, we have gone through different systems and, as I have just mentioned, this is the best system which is available to us. On an average, we have been working upon 75% of attendances. Secondly, there was a consultant, Mr Andrew Mellon from International Development Partners who was appointed in 2006. He has, himself, concluded that this is the best method available to us. But if we can have a better method than this, definitely we are going to explore into it. But for the time being, this method is working very well.

**Mr Ameer Meea:** Mr Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Minister if this report can be made public?

**Mr Bachoo:** I will have a look at it. I don't have any problem in making it public.

**Mr François:** Mr Speaker, Sir, in Rodrigues, during any mechanical breakdown, bus owners are confronted with the problem of obtaining rapidly spare parts which are not available on local markets. In their first contract, they were given 10 days to remedy the problem. Now, they are fighting to have, at least, five days to remedy the problem but in

vain. Will the hon. Minister see to it with the concerned authority to reach an agreement on that issue to avoid conflicts at the time of payment?

**Mr Bachoo:** We have got a table, in fact, which has been approved by Government and if any amendment needs to be brought, I have to make the request to the NTA to have a look at it.

**Mr Uteem:** Mr Speaker, Sir, may I know from the hon. Minister whether the payment mechanism to all the operators are reviewed on an annual basis, quarterly or every two years?

What is the frequency of review and on what basis?

**Mr Bachoo:** Normally, it is definitely based on the cost of living, that is, whenever tariffs are revised, at the same time, we have to revise the payment that we have to make to the companies. And on a yearly basis, we have to sign the Memorandum of Agreement between Government and the bus companies. For this year, in fact, we have just signed it a few weeks ago.