

05-12-00

**SECONDARY**  
**EXAMINATIONS**

**SC AND HSC EXAMINATIONS - FEES**

(No. B/400) Mr A.K. Gungah (Second Member for Grand'Baie and Poudre d'Or) asked the Minister of Education and Scientific Research whether, in regard to the examination fees payable for the School Certificate and Higher School Certificate examinations he will state -

- (a) the fees payable per subject;
- (b) whether his Ministry contemplates a reduction thereof;
- (c) the facilities granted to parents with low incomes, indicating whether these facilities will be re-studied to alleviate their financial load, and
- (d) if, in view of the fact that the fees are payable in February/March while the examinations are held in October-December, he will consider the advisability of having these fees paid in 2 or 3 instalments.

**Mr Obegadoo:** Sir, I am advised that the fees payable per subject are as follows

	(Rs)
SC	463
HSC	938 (for subjects at principal level)
	576 (for subjects at subsidiary level) .../..

There is also an initial entry fee, which is Rs597 for SC and Rs587 for HSC.

With regard to part (b), I wish to inform the House that the fees are prescribed by Cambridge and that the present policy of 50% Government subsidy to first timers still holds good. The question of reduction therefore does not arise.

With regard to facilities to parents with low income, the House may wish to know that the Ministry of Social Security operates a scheme whereby the remaining 50% fees payable for SC and HSC examinations is taken care of for

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wards of beneficiaries of social aid.

With regard to part (d), the fees have to be remitted to Cambridge immediately after collection. It is, therefore, not possible to have payment by installments.

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23 APRIL, 2002

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**HSC STUDENTS (3<sup>RD</sup> YEAR) - GCE 'A' LEVEL EXAMINATIONS**

(No. B/221) Mrs F. Labelle (Second Member for Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Education and Scientific Research whether he has been made aware of cases of 3<sup>rd</sup> year HSC students who have been forced to take GCE 'A' level examinations instead of HSC examinations and, if so, will he make a statement thereon.

*(Withdrawn)*

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22/6/04  
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CA/D20/P07/1

### HSC STUDENTS – ART SYLLABUS

(No. B/543) Dr. R. Bebeejaun (Second Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Education & Scientific Research whether, in regard to the new art syllabus for HSC students as compared to the old one, he will make a statement on –

- (a) its content;
- (b) the examination mode;
- (c) the candidates' choice;
- (d) the facilities available to Mauritian students to comply with all the examination components, and
- (e) the steps his Ministry is taking to ensure parity between all the categories of students.

**Mr Obeegadoo:** Sir, I am informed as follows –

(i) the University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate does review the syllabuses for HSC "A" level subjects from time to time. As a matter of fact, the syllabuses for all subjects at HSC "A" level were reviewed and the new syllabuses were examined in 2002, except for the subjects of Computing and Art which necessitated more time for teachers to prepare themselves for the proposed changes. The new syllabus for Art will be examined this year under the appellation of Art and Design. I will have a copy of the new syllabus placed in the Library of the National Assembly;

(ii) Under the previous syllabus, the examinations consisted of six components, comprising five papers of 3 hours duration each and a coursework to be undertaken during two years. Candidates were required to sit either for three papers or for two papers plus the coursework assessment. The new Art and Design syllabus consists for its part of four components, comprising one paper of 15 hours duration and two assessments based on coursework, and one related project, all of which are compulsory.

I am further informed that in the new syllabus, candidates do have a large variety of choices and options within each of the components, as more fully described in the syllabus, which is being placed in the Library of National Assembly.

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CA/D20/P07/2  
(No. B/543) (Contd)

I am advised, with regard to parts (d) and (e) of the question, that all the examination centres are equipped with facilities in terms of logistics and pedagogical support, to enable all school going candidates to comply with the examination requirements and all students enjoy the same facilities. Further, all teachers concerned have been trained in the requirements of the new syllabus and exemplars of work in each of the components were made available during the training and at any time on demand.

As regards private candidates, the coursework assessment is, I am informed, not applicable to them as they do not have the required pedagogical support. Consequently, they will have to take three compulsory papers under a special syllabus.

I am also informed that students who sat for the HSC for a first time in 2003 and who are at their second attempt this year, had made a request that they be allowed to take the examinations on the basis of the previous Art Syllabus, but Cambridge was not in favour of two different syllabuses for school going candidates.

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*unrevised*

**MEDIUM TERM EXPENDITURE FRAMEWORK  
- STUDENTS - SUCCESS RATE**

(No. B/695) **Dr. R. Jeetah (First Member for Piton and Rivière du Rempart)** asked the Minister of Education and Scientific Research whether, in regard to the Medium Term Expenditure Framework, he proposes to lower the success rate of students with distinction in English, Chemistry, Physics and Biology at SC in Zone 4 for the year 2004 and, if so, will he give the reasons thereto.

**The Minister of Training, Skills Development and Productivity and Cooperatives (Mr S. Fowdar):** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is not proposed to lower the success rate of students as alleged in the question. However, inasmuch as the Medium Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF) deals with the private secondary schools and the State secondary schools separately, it is not understood whether the question of the hon. Member refers to the private schools, the State sector or both.

Be that as it may, the MTEF has indeed made projections up to 2006 as to pass rates in respect of a number of indicators. In regard to the specific indicator and subjects referred to in the question the success rate of students with distinction in English, Chemistry, Physics and Biology in Zone 4, I am tabling the relevant MTEF projections. What comes out is that -

- (i) for the State sector, the 2004 projected pass rates with distinction in respect of English, Chemistry and Physics show an increase as opposed to the 2003 rate whereas for Biology it is almost static, that is, 22.9% for 2003 and a projection of 21.8% for 2004, and
  - (ii) for the private secondary schools, the projected pass rates for 2004 in respect of the same subjects indicate a decrease as opposed to the
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(P.Q. No. B/695 ctd/...)

- (iii) 2003 results as follows -
- (i) English from 8.7% to 6.2%;
  - (i) Chemistry from 26.7% to 17%;
  - (ii) Physics from 24.9% to 15%, and
  - (iii) Biology from 17.3% to 11.8%.

However, as already pointed out, these are mere projections based on 2004 first term results. It is a known fact that schools experience fluctuations in performance, but such fluctuations remain within a reasonable bracket as long as the efforts to maintain the efficiency of the school and the effectiveness of teaching and learning are maintained. It is premature at this stage to believe that performance patterns will change drastically towards a downward trend.

**Dr. Jeetah:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister is wrong.

*(Interruptions)*

This whole document shows up to 100 instances where this Government wishes to reduce the exam results. Would the hon. Minister confirm whether these figures are right or not?

**Mr Fowdar:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, these are mere projections as described by the MTEF. It is not the intention of the Government.

**Dr. Jeetah:** Would the hon. Minister confirm that this Government is projecting to fail more and more students? This is here all on paper.

**Mr Fowdar:** These projections are based on results, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. It is not our intention. It is based on the first term results. It is a mere projection.

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## HSC EXAMINATIONS - INCIDENTS

16/11/84

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(No. B/810) **Dr. R. Jeetah (First Member for Piton and Rivière du Rempart)** asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Home Affairs whether he is aware of certain problems that arose recently during the HSC examinations and, if so, will he state what remedial measures he has taken or proposes to take in that connection.

**The Minister of Education and Scientific Research (Mr Obegadoo):** Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I shall reply to this question.

Since its setting up in 1984, the Mauritius Examinations Syndicate has obtained islandwide recognition and is considered as a reliable and efficient institution in the organisation and conduct of examinations. It also has international linkages through collaborative arrangements with a number of renowned international organisations.

However, in spite of proper planning, adequate training of staff and close monitoring, errors and mistakes do sometimes inevitably occur in the conduct of examinations, not only in Mauritius, but everywhere else in the world. At times, these errors and mistakes emanate from the University of Cambridge Local Examinations

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Syndicate itself, but sometimes they also occur as a result of the failings on the part of individual officers at one stage or another in the examinations process.

Insofar as this year's HSC examinations are concerned, I am informed by the MES that there have been a few reported incidents which have been dealt with instantly in order not to cause prejudice to pupils or students. In most cases, remedial action has been taken and the University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate has been informed accordingly so as to ensure that no single candidate is penalised as a result of such incidents.

I wish to reassure the House that the MES has been requested to report on each alleged incident and I will, in due course, make a statement to the House concerning the conduct of HSC examinations this year.

**Dr. Jeetah:** Can the hon. Minister inform the House of how many students affected with examination problems this year?

**Mr Obeegadoo:** I am sorry, Sir, I would not have this information. There are several reports of incidents involving students. If a substantive question is put, I could try and provide the information.

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**ART AND DESIGN EXAMINATIONS - HSC SYLLABUS**

(No. B/858) **Dr. R. Beebeejaun (Second Member for Port Louis South and Port Louis Central)** asked the Minister of Education and Scientific Research whether, in regard to the HSC Art and Design examinations, he will state if public school and private candidates are examined on the same syllabus and, if not, will he -

- (a) give the reasons thereof, and
- (b) state the implications of such disparity generally and especially in relation to scholarships, application for university seats and jobs.

**Mr Obeegadoo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to refer the hon. Member to the reply I made to PQ B/543 at our sitting on 22 June 2004 and to repeat that -

- (i) it is the practice for the University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicates (UCLES) to periodically review syllabuses;
- (ii) insofar as Art and Design at HSC "A" level is concerned, prior to the 2004 Exams, all candidates whether school-going or private, were examined on the basis of an identical syllabus numbered 9289. The examination paper comprised six optional papers out of which candidates had to choose any three except for candidates competing for the State of Mauritius Scholarships who compulsorily had to take Paper 6 entitled "Craft B".
- (iii) as from 2004, school-going candidates are examined under a new syllabus No. 9704. The examinations consists of one controlled written test of 15 hours duration, two assessments based on coursework and one related study/project all of which are compulsory, and
- (iv) private candidates are examined under a separate syllabus coded No. 9287 which consist of three compulsory written papers. The difference between the syllabus of the schooling-going candidates and that of the private candidates is that for the latter, coursework, which is done under the supervision of a school teacher, is not applicable to them for obvious reasons.

As regards the last part of the question as to the implications, if any, in the disparity between the two syllabuses, I am informed by the MES that there is none and that to all intents and purposes HSC and GCE "A" level are of comparable standard and are generally recognised as such whether it is for award of scholarships, application to university or for employment.

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## SC RESULTS - YEAR 2004

(No. B/69) **Dr. R. Beebeejaun** (Second Member for Port Louis South and Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Education and Scientific Research whether, in regard to the results of the School Certificate examination for the year 2004 he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Examinations Syndicate the date on which the results were -

- (a) received, and
- (b) released to secondary schools.

**Mr Obeegadoo:** Sir, I am informed by the Mauritius Examinations Syndicate (MES) that as in past years, the MES was in a position to access the secure site of the University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate (UCLES) on Friday 21 January 2005 at about 3.00 a.m. to take cognizance of the relevant Form V results, that is, results subject wise without any mention of pass or failure according to specific School Certificate criteria and without computation of aggregates.

The MES staff immediately set to work to print the statement of results of each of the 19,056 candidates, which process ended on the same day at 4.00 p.m. Thereafter, the printed results were checked for mistakes, classified schoolwise and, in parallel, placed in individual envelopes. That exercise, I am informed, lasted till 11 p.m. on Friday 21 January 2005.

I am further informed by the MES that the results were distributed to officers in charge of secondary schools as from 6.30 a.m. on Saturday 22 January 2005 whereas they were made available for collection by private candidates on the same day between 10 a.m. and 5 p.m.

Hence, all information relevant to lower VI admission was available to students and the Ministry of Education alike as from 22 January 2005.

**Dr. Beebeejaun:** Is what the hon. Minister has just described to the House a departure from previous procedures?

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**Mr Obeegadoo:** I still can't understand the question. What is a departure from previous procedures?

**Dr. Beebeejaun:** The impression one gets from the public is that the results arrive and are published the same day, so is it a departure from previous?

**Mr Obeegadoo:** Before the reforms in education, there were no VI<sup>th</sup> form colleges and what used to happen was that Mauritius waited until February for publication of formal School Certificate results. It came by air transport, went to the MES; the MES called the Heads of colleges; they came, collected and distributed. Now, what we do is that in January, we access what could be termed 'O' level results, that is, results subject wise without mention of 'pass', 'fail' or 'aggregate'. It boils down to the same thing. We download such information from the secure site of Cambridge and that is why this procedure has been adopted for several years now. As I explained, within 48 hours, the results, once classified, are distributed.

**Dr. Beebeejaun:** Are the results published on that particular Saturday final or will there be modifications as far as the Minister knows?

**Mr Obeegadoo:** They are final, but several weeks later through the normal procedure, by air transport, come the formal SC results with the results slip and the mention 'pass', 'fail', 'aggregate' and so on. But that becomes a mere formality and this year, those were distributed to the students together with HSC results on 07 February.

**Dr. Beebeejaun:** I take it from the Minister that he has no reason to believe that there would be any modifications of result subsequent to Saturday's results.

**Mr Obeegadoo:** I have no reason to believe that would be the case and I have received no complaints so far either this year or in preceding years

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11/4/06 (8)

## STUDENTS - FORM I TO FORM IV - TERM TESTS

(No. B/236) Mr D. Rucktooa (Second Member for Grand'Baie and Poudre d'Or) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether he will consider the advisability of introducing term tests at national level for all students of Form I to Form IV.

**Reply:** It is not considered advisable at this stage to introduce term tests on a national basis for students of Form I to Form IV because of the trauma generally associated with exams and the need to dedramatise examinations and to focus rather on acquisition of competencies and recording of achievement generally. In this respect, it should be noted that already formal assessment, though not standardised, exists at the end of each term from Form I to Form IV.

In State Secondary Schools these include a continuous assessment at the end of each term and a formal exam at the end of the year at the level of the school. Each school is allowed to prepare its tests in a flexible manner on the basis of the percentage of the syllabus covered. In addition, continuous assessment and regular assignments constitute an integral part of the overall assessment of students' performance.

**YEAR**

**2006**

## **SC/HSC EXAM FEES – EXEMPTION (18/04/06)**

(No. B/326) Mrs A. Navarre-Marie (First Member for GRNW and Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether he will state if he proposes to exempt students from the full payment of the examination fees of the School Certificate and the Higher School Certificate.

**Reply:** I wish to remind the House that it was under the Labour Government who in 1999 decided to grant 50% subsidy on fees payable by school going Mauritian students for the School Certificate (SC), Higher School Certificate (HSC) and the General Certificate of Education (GCE) examinations run by Cambridge in November/December, irrespective of the income level of the parents in an attempt to alleviate the financial burden of these parents. This measure applies only to school going candidates taking

these examinations for the first time to encourage the students to do their best at the first attempt. The Ministry of Social Security, National Solidarity and Senior Citizens Welfare & Reform Institutions is already providing financial assistance to the tune of 50% for first timers and 100% to second timers who come from poor families benefiting from social aid. The Employee Welfare Fund also has different loan assistance schemes whereby parents can take loans for the payment of examination fees.

However, let me remind the House and particularly the hon. Member that the previous Government of which she was a Member had decided to target the subsidy on SC and HSC examinations only to those students whose family income did not exceed MUR 30,000 per month.

I am surprised that, now in the Opposition, she is asking to exempt students from the full payment. I cannot understand this incoherence except that it smacks of political demagoguery at the expense of our students.

In view of the current financial constraints the present arrangements for 50% subsidy will be maintained. If in future the need arises to review the whole scheme, same will be considered.

### **SC & HSC EXAMINATIONS – ORGANISATION (18/04/06)**

**(No. B/331) Mr D. Rucktooa (Second Member for Grand' Baie & Poudre d'Or)** asked the Minister of Education & Human Resources whether he will consider the advisability of introducing the 'O' level and the 'A' level examinations for Mauritian students under the aegis of the University of Mauritius with the collaboration of the MIE, the MES and the University of Mauritius.

**Reply:** National external examination at the end of secondary schooling serves two purposes –  
(i) to certify that secondary education has been completed at a satisfactory level of achievement, and  
(ii) to select young persons for higher education, professional training and ultimately for the world of work.

As these examinations are internationally recognised, they exert a powerful influence over the nature and content of schooling and of performance and achievement.

'O' level and the 'A' level examinations, namely SC and HSC



examinations, have been organised since 1940 under the Cambridge International Examination Syndicate. This, in fact, was a general practice adopted by all countries belonging to the Commonwealth as it conferred a uniform system of standardisation and recognition in certification.

The Cambridge International Examination Syndicate has over time withstood its reputation of being a reliable, internationally recognised and world-class benchmark in the organisation and certification of examinations. Because of their status and international currency, these qualifications have been the main authority for most students in Mauritius to access tertiary education throughout the world and enter the world of work without seeking for equivalence of qualifications.

Over the years, there has been more consultation between Mauritius and Cambridge in connection with syllabus content and assessment arrangements. For instance, the syllabuses for French, Agriculture, Asian Languages etc..., have been developed with strong input from Mauritius. new syllabuses, such as travel or tourism have been designed in consultation and in response to the needs of Mauritius. At SC/‘O’ level, 16 subjects and around 30 components are now marked locally. The markers have been fully trained in the marking criteria and this has a positive backwash effect on the teaching/learning process.

It is not proposed, for the time being, to introduce local ‘O’ level and ‘A’ level examinations.

However, in the context of the curriculum reforms, my Ministry will examine the whole issue of assessment of students and will come up with proposals and recommendations.

### **HSC EXAMINATIONS 2005 - GENERAL PAPER SCRIPTS - REVISION EXERCISE (16/05/06)**

**(No. B/512) Mr G. Gunness (Third Member for Montagne Blanche and GRSE)** asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether he will state if the recent revision exercise carried out by the Cambridge University in regard to the General Paper scripts of the students who sat for the Higher School Certificate Examinations of 2005 will have any consequences on the results of other students.

**Mr Gokhool:** Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to this question, I have the detailed information, but I will not read that part. I will be tabling my reply, but I would like to refer the House to the part which concerns the

consequences on the results of other students

Mr Speaker, Sir, Cambridge has confirmed that the overall grades of 44 candidates, 39 candidates from RCC and 5 private candidates, have changed.

Cambridge has confirmed that the ranking of all centres other than the Royal College, Curepipe is accurate. No other paper and no other examination centre is concerned, because the problem is linked to the marking of one examiner who experienced a breakdown due to family circumstances, and this concerns only the examination centres at RCC, as already mentioned. A press communiqué was issued by MES on 02 May 2006, to explain the situation to the public.

With the proclamation of laureates following the issue of HSC results, a list of top-ranked candidates is also issued - the first 32 boys and the first 32 girls for the Science side, the first 25 boys and the first 25 girls for the Economics and Technical side, and the first 15 boys and the first 15 girls for the Art side.

Candidate Naresh Rughooputh who was previously ranked in the sixth position has now moved to the second position, becoming eligible for a State of Mauritius Scholarship (Science side). He was awarded a scholarship under the 'Additional Scholarship' Scheme. The candidate who was listed in the sixth position in the original list has already been awarded a State of Mauritius Scholarship, rather than the 'Additional Scholarship' for which he would now qualify, since he is now sixth in the list.

In these circumstances, student Rughooputh is deemed to have secured a State of Mauritius Scholarship (Science side).

The position of four other RCC candidates in the rank order list has also changed, but even with the change they are not entitled for a State scholarship. A fifth candidate, namely Kamlesh Sreekissoon, who was not originally on the rank order list is now in the 16th position on the Science side.

**Mr Guinness:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I take the example of one candidate, namely, Kamlesh Srikeesoon, whose results have changed from "D" to "C" after the revision of the General Paper, although the marks of his papers remained the same, that is, 13 and 8. Has the Minister sought explanation in that particular case?

**Mr Gokhool:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I think the review was about some changes and the grade has changed from "D" to "C", as the hon. Member said. I can't go into the technicalities of how this is computed, but I can seek the information from the MES.

**Mr Guinness:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the pupils met and expressed that opinion. I think the pupils need to be enlightened on that point. How can it be that the marks for each paper have not changed, but despite that, the overall grading, for example, from "D" to "C", has changed? I think they need an explanation.

**Mr Gokhool:** I think when a paper is marked, there are different sections and the sections are given different marks. The overall mark is converted into a grade. I believe this is how the paper is marked, but I can check that. I know that this is how it is done. You have got a paper which have different marks.

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** Mr Speaker, Sir, will the Minister consider to ask the MES whether it would provide the opportunity to other parents desirous to have their wards' General Paper scripts remarked or rechecked to be able to do so in spite of the fact that the deadline for such reassessment has expired?

**Mr Gokhool:** Mr Speaker, Sir, this point has been taken care of. There have been other representations which have been made and these have been channeled to Cambridge and the deadline for review has been extended.

**Mr Guinness:** Mr Speaker, Sir, apart from the State scholarships, we have other scholarships which are offered by friendly countries and because of the previous results, before the revision, it seems that some students have been penalised. I have a few cases of students who have come to see me.

With their previous results, they have been penalised. Can I know from the Minister how this situation can be remedied? Because the scholarships have been granted, but now, after the revision, these students should have been eligible for that scholarship from friendly countries.

**Mr Gokhool:** Mr Speaker, Sir, all scholarships are not offered on the basis of academic qualifications. There are certain scholarships which are offered purely on the basis of academic qualifications whereas for other scholarships, you have to take into account interviews by donor countries. There may be cases where students whose cases have been considered on

academic qualifications may have suffered some prejudice, but there are procedures which exist and, on that issue, they can appeal to Cambridge.

**Mr Guinness:** Mr Speaker, Sir, can the Minister inform the House, since this very serious matter happened, whether he does not deem it fit to meet the students? There was even a group of students who went to the press. Did the Minister deem it fit to meet these students and to clear the air for the parents and for all the pupils in the country?

**Mr Gokhool:** Mr Speaker, Sir, as you know, the MES acts independently of the Ministry and I think it is a better idea to let the MES handle this issue, which it has done to the satisfaction of most parents.

### **SC & HSC EXAMINATION FEES – FIRST TIMERS (16/05/06)**

**(No. B/517) Mr A. Jugnauth (First Member for Quartier Militaire & Moka)** asked the Minister of Education & Human Resources whether he will state if Government proposes to meet the full examination fees for students taking part in the Cambridge School Certificate and the Higher School Certificate Examinations for the first time and, if so, indicate when.

**Mr Gokhool:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to PQ B/326 at our sitting on 18 April 2006, which fully addresses the issue raised by him.

As I have said previously, the current policy of providing 50% subsidy on SC and HSC examination fees for first timers is being maintained for the time being. However, I would like to add that, in the context of the Budget 2006/2007, the request of the hon. Member together with other proposals have been noted and are being looked into.

### **CITY AND GUILDS INTERNATIONAL – EXAMINATION FEES – 2002 TO 2005 (30/05/06)**

**(No. B/686) Mr M. Allet (Second Member for Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière)** asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Examinations Syndicate, information as to whether examination fees for the

period 2002 to 2005 are still due to the City and Guilds London and, if so, will he give the reasons therefor and state the arrangements that have been made for the payment thereof.

**Reply:** May I, at the very outset, inform the House that the Mauritius Examinations Syndicate conducts examinations on behalf of City and Guilds International and not City and Guilds London. Examinations on behalf of City and Guilds are conducted in two sessions per year; June and December and fees for each examination session are transferred to City and Guilds International in two instalments.

This being said, according to the records of the Mauritius Examinations Syndicate, the total examination fees for June and December examinations for the years 2002, 2003 and 2004 due to the City and Guilds International have already been settled in full by the Syndicate.

As for the year 2005, examination fees for June have been settled. For the December examinations, a part settlement of £20,000 has already been effected and the remaining balance of £5,180 will be settled upon receipt of all the outstanding invoices and credit notes from City and Guilds International.

### **SC/HSC EXAMINATION FEES – NEEDY STUDENTS- SUBSIDY (20/06/06)**

**(No. B/804) Mr G. Guinness (Third Member for Montagne Blanche and GRSE)** asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether, in regard to the proposed change in the scheme for the payment of the School Certificate and Higher School Certificate Examination fees, he will state the criteria that will be used to determine who is a “needy student” in order to benefit from the exemption of the payment of either half or full examination fees.

**Mr Gokhool:** Mr Speaker, Sir, further to the reply I gave to the PNQ this morning, I wish to add that one of the key objectives of the budget 2006/2007 is to increase support to those who need it most. In line with this philosophy of greater solidarity and support towards the neediest members of the community, we are ensuring that all needy students obtain not 50% but 100% of subsidy on SC/HSC exam fees.

The present scheme under the social aid is being maintained. The scheme is as follows –

Recipients of social aid and unemployment hardship relief (UHR) which are means tested schemes de facto qualifies for refund of SC/HSC Exam fees. They are needy and destitute persons. Payment of exam fees is effected to beneficiaries in receipt of basic retirement pension, basic invalidity pension, basic widow's pension and basic orphan's pension (which are universal benefits and not means tested) only if they would have qualified for social aid, were they not in receipt of these basic pensions. An inquiry is carried out into their financial circumstances to determine their eligibility.

Further, my Ministry, in conjunction with the Ministry of Social Security, National Solidarity and Senior Citizens Welfare and Reform Institutions has also taken into account that there may be other cases in need of support. Both Ministries are working out a set of criteria which will be applied on a case to case basis.

**Mr Guinness:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the Minister has not given anything new. Recipients of social aid, unemployment benefits, BRP, orphans pensions were already getting the refund, since years. The Minister says "on a case to case basis", this is unacceptable. Either we have a clear-cut policy on income based, or we put an income threshold. But we cannot go on a case to case basis. Therefore, can I know from the Minister what are the other modalities that are being worked out?

**Mr Gokhool:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I have explained that we are going to address the case of needy students. These needy cases will have to be referred to the Ministry of Social Security and a scheme is being worked out.

**Mr Guinness:** What the Minister defines as needy students are those who receive social aid, unemployment benefits, BIP, BRP ...

**Mr Speaker:** The hon. Minister has said that there are other criteria that are being worked out.

**Mr Guinness:** How can we announce a measure without knowing what are the other criteria?

**Mr Gokhool:** Mr Speaker, Sir, even for those students who go to the Ministry of Social Security, it's not automatic; there are certain procedures which are in place. Then these students are provided with the fees. If there are other cases of students who need that support, that will be dealt with.

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the Minister



whether he does not consider that the sum of Rs72 m. which is normally spent on the SC/HSC examination fees is very small in comparison to the sum of money allocated to the budget of the Ministry of Education? So, would he not consider reviewing this particular facility given to students?

Because, otherwise, our objectives would become self-defeating. We give free education, free transport to school and it might not lead to our objective if examination fees are not subsidised.

**Mr Gokhool:** I have already answered the question in the morning. The general policy orientation is given in the budget and explained. The subsidies are being redirected.

**Mrs Martin:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I have a question for the hon. Minister. I would like to know from him whether he has already identified the number of students that qualify...

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Listen to the question, please!

**Mrs Martin:** I would like to know if he has already identified the number of students that qualify as needy students.

**Mr Gokhool:** Mr Speaker, Sir, this is for students who feel that they have a problem, they need their support, they will make the case.

**Mrs Labelle:** Does not the Minister think that we have to come with clear criteria to define...

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** I am sorry! The Minister has just said that he is working on the criteria. I think, after some time, you can come with the question and ask whether the criteria have been defined or not. Next question, please!

### **PRIMARY SCHOOLS SUPPLEMENTARY FEEDING PROJECT AND SC AND HSC EXAMINATIONS FEES (20/06/06)**

**The Leader of the Opposition (Mr N. Bodha)** *(By Private Notice)* asked the Minister of Education & Human Resources whether, in regard to Government decision to rethink its priorities in social protection to the

needy, as announced in the Budget Speech, he will state the number of –  
(a) school children and schools benefiting from the Primary Schools Supplementary Feeding Project, and  
(b) beneficiaries under the subsidy for the School Certificate and

Higher School Certificate Examinations Fees Scheme;  
indicating, in each case, the estimated expenditure for the financial year 2005-2006

**The Minister of Education & Human Resources (Mr D. Gokhool):**  
Mr Speaker, Sir, the overall philosophy of the Labour Government has always been supportive of vulnerable sections of the population. In line with this philosophy, Government has set up the Welfare State, which is still thriving today.

In the present Budget, Government is further consolidating the concept of the Welfare State, with the clear objective of providing better support to the most under-privileged members of the Community.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance has said it in very clear terms in his Budget Speech that every rupee of the taxpayer money will be spent judiciously. In almost every area of public spending there is scope for improvement. And this Government is not saving money by cutting on the delivery of services. Nor is it putting into question the need to support the needy and the vulnerable groups. On the contrary what it is seeking to do is to reorient its social programmes so that those who are really in need receive yet greater and more effectual support from Government money.

It is obvious that our social net today comprises unfocused programmes that provide generous benefits for many that do not need them but fails to support many that do. The distribution incidence of such a policy is, therefore, largely regressive.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we are attaining the noble objective of helping the vulnerable but in a very costly way. Our present system of social net is dysfunctional and ineffectual. And most of all unfair to the neediest of our citizens.

Mr Speaker Sir, two thirds wealthiest Mauritians absorb over Rs200 m. more than half the benefits of the rice and flour subsidy programme that is meant for the needy. They also receive three quarters of the subsidy on SC and HSC examination fees. And the primary school feeding programme is

also known for a certain amount of wastage and inequity. What is wrong with reorienting, the money spent on these programmes to increase the support given to the most needy? What is wrong with reorienting taxpayer money from where it is wasted and not needed to where it meets the needs of the neediest of our citizens and improves their welfare?

As stated in the Budget Speech, now is the time to stop irrationality that has characterised some of the programmes in our social safety net system for years and spend taxpayers' money in a way that really achieves our noble objectives. Now is the time to muster the courage, to reallocate these expenditures in ways that bring greater benefits to those who need government support the most.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as I said in my reply to PQ B/306, prior to the 1990s, primary school children were receiving milk, a loaf of bread, cheese and dried fruits in the context of the World Food Programme, which was introduced in 1970 by the then Labour Government to combat malnutrition and to improve school attendance and performance. However, with the gradual phasing out of this programme, after the year 1990, only a loaf of bread and milk were distributed to school children.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in 1989, the then Government agreed to the proposal of an Evaluation Mission of the World Food Programme to phase out gradually the project in view of increasing demands on the World Food Programme reduced development resources by more needy countries.

The World Food Programme definitely ceased its assistance to the School Feeding Project in Mauritius in December 1996. Government, consequently, decided to take over at its own cost the supply of bread to primary school pupils. Under this School Feeding Project, a bread is distributed to each primary school student.

As regards the number of schools which receive bread, I have the figures. The number of schools benefiting from Primary School Supplementary Feeding Project is as follows –  
Mauritius - 233  
Rodrigues - 12  
Agalega - 2  
The total number of schools is 247.

The number of pupils benefiting from Primary Schools Supplementary Feeding Project is as follows –  
Mauritius - 19,913

Rodrigues - 4,649

Agalega - 51

Total number of schools is 14,613.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Budget provision for the School Supplementary Feeding Project for 2005-2006 was Rs26 m. The actual expenditure was Rs16.9 m approximately. This is the figure. So, this is with regard to the number of schools, the number of pupils and the Budget for the Primary School Supplementary Feeding Project.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (b) of the question which relates to School Certificate and Higher School Certificate fees, I wish to remind the House that the previous Government had already decided - I hope that this reminds the Leader of the Opposition of the Budget Speech of 2004-2005 – to target the grant of 50% subsidy on SC and HSC exam fees.

*(Interruptions)*

The decision was there....

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Order!

**Mr Gokhool:** We are talking about SC and HSC examination fees. This meant that at the end of the day only a particular category of students would have been eligible to the 50% subsidy. So, the targeting idea was already there in the minds of the previous Government.

Mr Speaker, Sir, one of our key objectives is to provide support to those who need it most. The philosophy of the Government is to provide support to those who are most in need of that support. In line with the philosophy of the Budget for greater solidarity and support towards the neediest members of the community, we are ensuring that all needy students obtain not 50%, but 100% of subsidy on SC and HSC students...

*(Interruptions)*

As stated in paragraphs 154 and 157 of the Budget Speech, I quote – Paragraph 154 –

“Since our objective is to increase assistance to those who really need it as from 01 July, we will provide them with a monthly income

support payment of Rs225, representing a 15% bonus.  
Paragraph 157 -

“In addition, the scheme to pay half the SC and HSC examination fees will be discontinued except for the needy students. Government will continue to pay the other half of the fees for these needy students. Henceforth, the fees of these students will be paid in full by the Ministry of Social Security.”

Mr Speaker, Sir, as concerns the number of students who will be concerned with regard to 2005-2006, for SC the figure is 13,000, for HSC, the figure is 6,500 and the subsidy which was earmarked was Rs72 m.

**Mr Bodha:** Mr Speaker, Sir, this is called *taillé, rasé!*

*(Interruptions)*

May I ask the Minister of Education whether this is not the unkindest of all the cuts in the social net? Are we not refusing a poor child a loaf of bread every day and a young student a passport for a better life?

**Mr Gokhool:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I have explained the philosophy of the Labour Party and Labour Government has always been to protect the neediest. The Leader of the Opposition is talking about care. I would refer him to the previous Government which, in the context of this project, had already decided that this feeding project should be targeted. To enlighten the hon. Leader of the Opposition, may I ask him to refer to a Parliamentary Question which was set to the then Minister of Education by hon. Mrs Labelle on this issue. To enlighten the House I would just like to quote - that was in 2002 - with your permission -

“At present, all pupils of primary schools are receiving a daily loaf of bread and this is financed from funds available under the “Primary School Supplementary Feeding” vote of my Ministry. It is feared, at the level of my Ministry that the distribution of a loaf of bread is not serving the purpose of the School Feeding Project which is meant for (...).”

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Order! Order please!

**Mr Gokhool:** Hon. Bérenger was saying that....

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Order!

**Mr Gokhool:** I have not finished. Let me add...

*(Interruptions)*

So, the previous Government, looking at the project, stated that it was not serving the purpose of the School Feeding Project for which it was meant and, therefore, decided on a scheme. A scheme was therefore being worked out to target resources to pupils who are in dire need of supplementary...

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Order!

**Mr Gokhool:** They were targeting the project...

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Order! Let the Minister finish.

**Mr Gokhool:** With regard to the SC and HSC examination fees, again the Leader of the Opposition is trying to imply that we do not care and we are not a caring Government. Let me remind the Leader of the Opposition what his leader had to say about the SC and HSC fees.

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Order!

**Mr Gokhool:** Let me quote from the Budget Speech 2004-2005, par. 295-296 –

“A second fundamental reform that this Budget introduces is the targeting of Government transfers. Government transfers are simply not sustainable if they are universal and open-ended. This puts a limit on our capacity to do more for the poorer segment of the population. I believe that this is an issue that calls for a bold decision”.



The intention was there, but they did not have the courage to go and deal with the problem and provide the support to those who were in need.

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Order!

**Mr Gokhool:** This is what the leader of the MSM said...

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Order!

**Mr Gokhool:** Mr Speaker, I have not finished. Let me add what the Leader of the MSM had to say...

**Mr Gokhool:** This is what the ex-Minister of Finance stated – ‘targeting will also be extended .....

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Order, I said.

**Mr Gokhool:** Truth hurts, that is why they are not listening. Mr Speaker, Sir, this is what the ex-Minister of Finance had to say about fees.

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Order, please! Listen to the answer.

**Mr Gokhool:** This is what he said - targeting will also be extended to the subsidy on SC and HSC Exam fees, which means that the idea of targeting was already there in the programme. The students were benefiting from a 50% grant in respect of the examination fees, irrespective of the income level of the parents.

**Mr Bodha:** Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister whether he knows how many children were denied a loaf of bread yesterday. Because, in some schools, this was not distributed.

**Mr Gokhool:** Mr Speaker, Sir, let me inform the Leader of the Opposition that, yesterday, I went to two schools - Lady Ringadoo Government School and Vuillemen Government School. In my presence, the

bread was distributed.

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Order! Order!

**Mr Gokhool:** I don't know about the information of the Leader of the Opposition because the programme of bread distribution goes up to 30th June.

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Hon. Cuttaree, please! If the hon. Member has a question to put, he can put it later on. I don't know why people are so excited and there is so much heat in this House.

**Mr Bérenger:** It is because there was no distribution of bread yesterday.

**Mr Speaker:** The hon. Minister is answering. Let him answer.

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Bodha:** Mr Speaker, Sir, may I inform the House that yesterday at Bambous Virieux Government School, there was no bread for the children.

**Mr Speaker:** Is the Minister aware that there was no bread yesterday at Bambous Virieux Government School?

**Mr Gokhool:** I am not aware of this, Mr Speaker, Sir.

*(Interruptions)*

How do I take it that what the hon. Leader of the Opposition is saying is a fact? I am not aware, Mr Speaker, Sir.

**Mr Bodha:** Mr Speaker, Sir, why is it done when the Budget has not yet been voted?

**Mr Gokhool:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I think the Leader of the Opposition should know, there are so many suppliers; there may have been a problem of supply, but as far as the distribution is concerned, it is going on.

**Mrs Labelle:** Mr Speaker, Sir, is the hon. Minister aware that on Thursday last, schools received calls from his Ministry stating that there would be no bread distribution as from Monday 19th June, that is, yesterday.

**Mr Gokhool:** If the hon. Lady is referring to calls that were made by my Ministry, I am not aware of these. But all I know is that the bread distribution programme goes up to 30th June.

**Mr Gunness:** Mr Speaker, Sir, can I know from the hon. Minister whether he has a report from his officers about the bread distribution yesterday?

**Mr Gokhool:** This is not a regular practice that we have daily reports. If there is any problem, then the schools will report through the Zone Directors and then we intervene and we take corrective measures. If the hon. Member is asking right now whether there is any report, I cannot say. I'll have to check.

**Mr Cuttaree:** May I ask the hon. Minister whether he has been made aware that in certain schools, especially in deprived areas, there were problems yesterday as a result of the fact that no bread was distributed? I'll give the example of my Constituency at Camp Levieux where the poorest of the people live. There was no bread distribution and school children spent the whole day without having even a bite of bread.

**Mr Gokhool:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Member is talking about the children who don't receive the bread. I have explained the philosophy. The project is being re-oriented.....

**Mr Speaker:** The question is a very direct question, hon. Minister: "are you aware that, in deprived areas, there was no bread yesterday?" This is straightforward.

**Mr Gokhool:** I cannot agree with the hon. Member because I am not aware of this.

**Mr Dowarkasing:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the aim of this school feeding project was to combat under nourishment in the schools. How would the hon. Minister guarantee that the income support payment that is effectuated, in fact, will be benefiting the children in terms of food items?

**Mr Gokhool:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the idea of the food income support is meant for all the needs of the family, including bread. This is how we have

provided for the support so that the bread part is taken care of the income support which is provided.

**Mr Cuttaree:** Can I ask the hon. Minister whether he has inquired from social workers and been informed that the issue of the children going to school without any bread is very often – if not most of the time, due to the fact that the mother, often single parent family, leaves the house at 6 o'clock and the children go to school without any food. I hope that the hon.

Members, on the other side, realise that I am talking of a humanitarian problem. I am not doing politics about that because they, themselves, in their own Constituency, have this problem. Has the Minister been made aware that a situation happened in the schools whereby....

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Please keep quiet!

**Mr Cuttaree:** ....children don't have any food and that in....

**Mr Speaker:** The hon. Member should put his question. What is the question?

**Mr Cuttaree:** ...certain cases, for example, in the Camp Levieux Government school, the teachers pooled their money together to buy bread and *du beurre pistache* to give to the children. If he is not aware, he should go and ask the Attorney General.

**Mr Speaker:** OK, is the hon. Minister aware?

**Mr Gokhool:** Mr Speaker, Sir, Camp Levieux is a ZEP school and, as far as the ZEP schools are concerned, the food programme is continuing. There is no problem with that. In fact, the hon. Member does not know.

**Mr Speaker:** Order!

**Mr Cuttaree:** May I ask the hon. Minister whether he is aware - I'll say it again and he checks it from the Attorney General, I am not used to lie in the House....

**Mr Speaker:** What is the question of the hon. Member?

**Mr Cuttaree:** ....that there was no bread in the school.

**Mr Speaker:** I am sorry, the hon. Minister has already answered this question. Order!

**Mrs Grenade:** Est-ce que le ministre veut nous faire comprendre, qu'en privant nos petits enfants d'un pain, cela pourrait renforcer les caisses de l'État et est-ce que le ministre n'est pas en train de taxer l'appétit de nos petits enfants?

**Mr Gokhool:** I have already said, Mr Speaker, Sir, that our policy is to direct subsidies support to those who are neediest. This is our point.

**Mr Bodha:** Mr Speaker, Sir, was such hardship worth a saving of only Rs16 m? This is my question to the Minister.

**Mr Gokhool:** In fact, this is not correct, Mr Speaker, Sir. Whatever is being saved will go to the Empowerment Fund. We are redirecting the income support to the Empowerment Fund to help those people who are unemployed, those who are jobless, those who want to start a small enterprise. We are helping them to stand on their own feet. This is what we are doing. We are giving them the means to earn their living and this is what we are doing.

**Mrs Martin:** In fact, by going to the Empowerment Fund, it is not serving the purpose that the school feeding programme is actually meant for, that is, feeding poor children. My question is: whether any study has been carried out, Mr Speaker, Sir, to determine the number of children who are really in need and how can we ascertain that they are, at least, guaranteed a meal a day now that the school feeding programme is being removed?

**Mr Gokhool:** As I have stated, as far as the ZEP schools are concerned, the food programme is continuing; and I have already explained the purpose of redirecting the subsidies to the income support and also to the Empowerment Fund.

**Mr Bodha:** Mr Speaker, Sir, let me come to SC and HSC exam fees. The philosophy of the 2005/2006 Budget was that money should not be a barrier to education. Can the hon. Minister enlighten the House as to the exam fees for somebody sitting for SC and somebody sitting for HSC? I mean the full fees. Can he enlighten the House about that?

**Mr Gokhool:** I don't have the exact figures because, Mr Speaker, Sir, the fees change.

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Order!

**Mr Gokhool:** The fees vary from one year to another.

**Mr Bodha:** Can the hon. Minister inform the House that, for the SC exam fees it is Rs9,000 and for the HSC exam fees, it is Rs16,000? The majority of the students are going to pay, Mr Speaker, Sir. Can I ask the hon. Minister what is going to be the budget allocated by Government for the payment of SC and HSC exam fees in the current budget 2006/2007 and for how many students will benefit in each case?

**Mr Gokhool:** Mr Speaker, Sir, as regards the issue of exam fees, they vary from year to year, depending on the number of subjects that students take.

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Guinness:** Can I know from the Minister whether the children of a sugar industry labourer or a machinist working in a textile factory earning Rs5,000 to R6,000 will benefit from the payment of fees?

**Mr Gokhool:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I was going to answer a PQ, but I think it will be included in this PNQ. We have provided for 100% of fees being paid to those who are entitled to it. As a Government which is concerned with the students welfare, there are cases of students who are needy, we have set up a mechanism between the Ministry of Social Security and my Ministry to look at those cases which will be considered on a case to case basis.

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Order! There are only two minutes left.

**Mr Bodha:** My one before the last question, Mr Speaker, Sir, is whether the Minister is aware that the payment of the SC/HSC fees is a one-off payment given in a deadline of 10 days and that it is going to be an undue hardship on about 80% of students sitting for SC and HSC.

**Mr Gokhool:** We have taken steps to ensure that these difficulties do

not arise.

**Mr Speaker:** Last question from the Leader of the Opposition.

**Mr Bodha:** Mr Speaker, Sir, we are talking about 4A+. Nous allons nous retrouver avec une catastrophe ...

**Mr Speaker:** 4A+ is not relevant to the question.

**Mr Bodha:** Est-ce que cela n'est pas une éducation à deux vitesses pour quelques privilégiés, contraire à l'esprit de l'éducation gratuite de Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam?

**Mr Gokhool:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the Leader of the Opposition is referring to l'éducation *à deux vitesses*. I am not sure whether he knows that our education system is characterised by diversity. We have different types of schools and systems.

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Time is over. Order! Next item, 'Questions addressed to the hon. Prime Minister'!

15

20/6/06

SC/D18/P14/04

**SC/HSC EXAMINATION FEES – NEEDY STUDENTS-  
SUBSIDY**

(No. B/804) Mr G. Guinness (Third Member for Montagne Blanche and GRSE) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether, in regard to the proposed change in the scheme for the payment of the School Certificate and Higher School Certificate Examination fees, he will state the criteria that will be used to determine who is a "needy student" in order to benefit from the exemption of the payment of either half or full examination fees.

**Mr Gokhool:** Mr Speaker, Sir, further to the reply I gave to the PNQ this morning, I wish to add that one of the key objectives of the budget 2006/2007 is to increase support to those who need it most. In line with this philosophy of greater solidarity and support towards the neediest members of the community, we are ensuring that all needy students obtain not 50% but 100% of subsidy on SC/HSC exam fees.

The present scheme under the social aid is being maintained. The scheme is as follows –

Recipients of social aid and unemployment hardship relief (UHR) which are means tested schemes de facto qualifies for refund of SC/HSC Exam fees. They are needy and destitute persons. Payment of exam fees is effected to beneficiaries in receipt of basic retirement pension, basic invalidity pension, basic widow's pension and basic orphan's pension (which are universal benefits and not means tested) only if they would have qualified for social aid, were they not in receipt of these basic pensions. An inquiry is carried out into their financial circumstances to determine their eligibility.

Further, my Ministry, in conjunction with the Ministry of Social Security, National Solidarity and Senior Citizens Welfare and Reform Institutions has also taken into account that there may be other cases in need of support. Both Ministries are working out a set of criteria which will be applied on a case to case basis.



SC/D18/P14/05  
(PQ NO. B/804)

**Mr Guinness:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the Minister has not given anything new. Recipients of social aid, unemployment benefits, BRP, orphans pensions were already getting the refund, since years. The Minister says "on a case to case basis", this is unacceptable. Either we have a clear-cut policy on income based, or we put an income threshold. But we cannot go on a case to case basis. Therefore, can I know from the Minister what are the other modalities that are being worked out?

**Mr Gokhool:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I have explained that we are going to address the case of needy students. These needy cases will have to be referred to the Ministry of Social Security and a scheme is being worked out.

**Mr Guinness:** What the Minister defines as needy students are those who receive social aid, unemployment benefits, BIP, BRP ...

**Mr Speaker:** There are other criteria that are being worked out.

**Mr Guinness:** How can we announce a measure without knowing what are the other criteria?

**Mr Gokhool:** Mr Speaker, Sir, even for those students who go to the Ministry of Social Security, it's not automatic; there are certain procedures which are in place. Then these students are provided with the fees. If there are other cases of students who need that support, that will be dealt with.

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the Minister whether he does not consider that the sum of Rs72 m. which is normally spent on the SC/HSC examination fees is very small in comparison to the sum of money allocated to the budget of the Ministry of Education? So, would he not consider reviewing this particular facility given to students? Because, otherwise, our objectives would become self-defeating. We give free education, free transport to school and it might not lead to our objective if examination fees are not subsidised.

**Mr Gokhool:** I have already answered the question in the morning. The general policy orientation is given in the budget and explained. The subsidies are being redirected.

SC/D18/P14/06  
(PQ NO. B/804)

**Mrs Martin:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I have a question for the hon. Minister. I would like to know from him whether he has already identified the number of students that qualify...

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Listen to the question, please!

**Mrs Martin:** I would like to know if he has already identified the number of students that qualify as needy students.

**Mr Gokhool:** Mr Speaker, Sir, this is for students who feel that they have a problem, they need their support, they will make the case.

**Mrs Labelle:** Does not the Minister think that we have to come with clear criteria to define...

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** I am sorry! The Minister has just said that he is working on the criteria. I think, after some time, you can come with the question and ask whether the criteria have been defined or not. Next question, please!

**YEAR 2007**

PNQ

(16)

5

Debate No. 01 of 24.01.2007

ORAL ANSWER TO QUESTION

- (I) CPE CANDIDATES (2007) – NATIONAL COLLEGES – SEAT ALLOCATION
- (II) SC AND HSC EXAMINATIONS FEES SCHEME - IMPLEMENTATION

**The Leader of the Opposition (Mr N. Bodha)** (*By Private Notice*) asked the Minister of Education & Human Resources whether, in regard to the declared policy of Government to provide access to, and achieve, a world-class education, he will state –

- (a) if Government will, for the sake of transparency, undertake to publish the names and the detailed results of all the CPE candidates who have been allocated a seat in a national college for the January 2007 intake, and
- (b) how the School Certificate and Higher School Certificate Examinations Fees Scheme will be implemented this year, as compared to last year.

**Mr Gokhool:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to refer the hon. Leader of the Opposition to the replies I gave to PNQs at our sittings of 21 March 2006 and 28 November 2006, as well as the replies to PQs B/19, B/152, B/1299 and B/1308 at our sittings of 21 March 2006, 04 April 2006 and 07 November 2006 respectively, where the subject of admission on a national basis to State colleges have been dealt with.

In line with the philosophy of the present Government concerning educational reforms as laid down in our Government Programme 2005-2010, we are pursuing a new vision of a World Class Quality Education accessible to all. Consequently, the reforms we are implementing are comprehensive, holistic and inclusive.

As a first step towards our goal, we reinstated the Form I to VI Colleges, first of all by converting seven Sixth Form Colleges into Form I to VI Colleges as from January 2006 and the remaining 9 as from January 2007. Secondly, we provided for a refined grading system, which is fairer and more equitable as it is based on merit. On the basis of this refined grading system admission to schools admitting students on a national basis is made on the basis of grade aggregate, relative performance and parental choice. Whereas admission on a regional basis is made on the basis of residence, grade aggregate and in case of tie, on the basis of proximity of residence as has been the case since 2003.

I have to say, Mr Speaker, Sir, that the whole CPE Examinations 2006 and the admission exercise in Form I have been carried out smoothly and without any major problems.

As regards the question of publishing the detailed results of all CPE candidates who have been admitted to schools on a national basis, I wish again to repeat what I have said in the past in the replies to numerous PQs and PNQs on the issue.

Mr Speaker, Sir, since the existence of the CPE, even at the time of ranking, it has never been the policy nor the practice to disclose detailed individual results of CPE candidates. I am also informed that according to best practices worldwide, it is neither desirable nor proper to disclose individual results of students both at primary and secondary levels. It is precisely for this reason and also to respect the privacy of candidates that the MES Rules and Regulations governing CPE examinations clearly stipulates that marks shall not be disclosed.

Consequently, my Ministry and the MES are satisfied that transparency has all throughout prevailed and that the lists of candidates admitted to schools on a national basis are available at the school level.

The new system was widely publicized and the schools admitting students on a national basis were gazetted. In term of procedures, parents are advised to fill in an application form prior to the CPE exams to indicate their preference in regard to the schools in which they wish their child to be admitted. Consequently, parental choice is as important as the other criteria of grade aggregate and relative performance for schools admitting students on a national basis. Similarly, for admission on a regional basis, parental



choice is again as important as the other criteria of residence and grade aggregate.

It is to be noted that as regards schools with admission on a national basis, all the criteria of admission have been respected, namely performance, grade aggregate and parental choice. On the basis of the exercise carried out, any student who has obtained a maximum grade aggregate of 24 and 23 for girls and a maximum grade aggregate of 24, 23 and 22 for boys with best performance, have been admitted to a school with admission on a national basis, where the parents have so opted. There are still a few vacancies in the three schools admitting students on a National basis, namely John Kennedy College, Sookdeo Bissoondoyal College and Mahatma Gandhi Institute and my Ministry has invited applications for the filling of these vacancies, which will be filled essentially on the criteria of performance.

Further, for the sake of transparency, all parents who felt aggrieved by the results for the admission of their wards have, on request, been provided with the plausible explanation as to why his or her ward has not obtained an expected school. Indicatively, if a student with a maximum grade aggregate of 24 has not obtained admission in a school on a national basis, it will be simply because the parents did not opt for a college on a national basis.

Consequently, Mr Speaker, Sir, it has never been in the policy of Government to publish the detailed results of students, nor will it be the practice in future.

As regards part (b) of the PNQ, again the matter has been amply dealt with in my reply to the PNQ of the Leader of the Opposition, at our sitting of 20 June 2006. I need to remind the House that the overall philosophy of the Labour Government has always been supportive of vulnerable sections of the population. In line with this philosophy, Government has set the Welfare State which is still striving today.

In the present Budget, Government has further consolidated the concept of the Welfare State, with the clear objective of providing better support to the most needy of the community.

Every rupee of the taxpayer's money should be judiciously spent and should be directed towards the most vulnerable group and the most needy of our citizens.

It may be recalled that the previous Government had, in its Budget Speech of 2004/05, introduced a system of targeting whereby the subsidy on SC and HSC examinations fees would be limited to those children whose family benefited from social aid.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as the House is aware from the Budget Speech 2006/07, Government has modernized the approach to social protection to ensure fairness and make sure that we can increase support to those who need it most. The House will recollect that before reform two thirds of the wealthiest Mauritians received three quarters of the subsidy on SC and HSC examinations fees.

The new policy ensures that Government assistance will be focused on those who need Government support the most. That is why the Ministry of Social Security will pay the full fee for the SC and HSC exams for students from families whose income is below Rs7,500 per month. Because children from such families may sometimes require a second chance, Government will also pay in full the exam fees for first time repeaters whose parents' income does not exceed Rs7,500 per month.

Qualifying households will be invited through communiqué in the press and radio to call at the Social Security Office of their locality with relevant documents, to submit an application for payment of exams fees. It is expected that payment will be effected within a period of two weeks from the date of application.

In line with this Government's philosophy to target aid to the needy, the Ministry of Social Security is also working on a scheme to provide assistance to other genuine cases needing assistance and the policy will be in place before the exam fees are due in March 2007.

Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

**Mr Bodha:** Mr Speaker, Sir, in view of the fact that 16,000 students applied for a seat in the national colleges - and there were very limited seats - may I ask the hon. Minister how many students did get a 4 A<sup>+</sup>?

**Mr Gokhool:** Well, I don't have the details of how many obtained the 4 A<sup>+</sup>, but, Mr Speaker, Sir, the fact of the matter is all students who got the 4 A<sup>+</sup> have been provided with a seat in the colleges.

**Mr Bodha:** My second question to the Minister, Mr Speaker, Sir, is: how many students who have got a 4 A<sup>+</sup> did get a seat in a national college and how many did not get a seat?

**Mr Gokhool:** Mr Speaker, Sir, as I said, all students who got 4 A<sup>+</sup> were provided with a seat. Whether they availed of the seat or not is a different matter. But they were provided with a seat. The number which was provided with a seat was 1,050 and those who availed of the seats which were provided was 999. 1,050 who got A<sup>+</sup> were provided with a seat and 999 took advantage of the seats which were provided.

**Mr Bodha:** Let me take these figures, Mr Speaker, Sir. The hon. Minister is saying that 999 students did take the seat, so, we are left with 51 seats. Today, in the press, we have an official document saying that there are only 27 seats. May I ask the hon. Minister where the other 24 seats have gone?

**Mr Gokhool:** Mr Speaker, Sir, we provided for 1,260 seats initially and we also explained that because of ties that occur, we increased the number of seats from 1,260 to 1,337 which means that officially there were 1,260 seats, but because of the ties we had to accommodate the students. Now, in certain colleges, for example, Sookdeo Bissoondoyal, the last admitted student with a grade aggregate...

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Order! Order! Order!



**Mr Gokhool:** Mr Speaker, Sir, we provided for 1,260 seats, but because of ties, 1,337 seats were provided to students. Now, we have made a check of how many vacancies are available and these vacancies have been advertised. The official number of seats was 1,260 and the number we have offered was 1,337. We have adjusted because we don't really have to offer all the seats being given that the official number of seats available was 1,260.

**Mr Bodha:** Mr Speaker, Sir, according to the figures presented to the House by the hon. Minister, we have 287 additional seats because the final number is 1,337. Can he confirm that among those 287 seats, there are students with 3 A<sup>+</sup> plus one A and 3 A<sup>+</sup> and a B who have been allocated a seat? My question is now: how many students did get a 3 A<sup>+</sup> and an A and how many of them did get a national college and how were they chosen?

**Mr Gokhool:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the scheme, as it is implemented, is on grade aggregate so that a student who gets 4 A<sup>+</sup> will get the maximum grade aggregate of 24. Now, if a student gets a 3 A<sup>+</sup> plus one A, the grade aggregate will be 23. If a student gets 2 A<sup>+</sup> plus 2 A, the grade aggregate will come to 22. The basis of the admission is on the grade aggregate. Therefore, if we have the number of students with 4 A<sup>+</sup>, that is, a grade aggregate of 24, the seats are offered to them, if they apply for a seat. But if the number of those who are admitted is less, then we go to the next aggregate, that is, 23 and this is how we admit 3 A<sup>+</sup> plus one A or even 2 A<sup>+</sup> plus 2 A which will be 22 marks. And this system has been used by the MES to offer admission.

**Mr Bodha:** The whole issue of transparency is very important, Mr Speaker, Sir, because the CPE students are spending 50 hours every week to run this unacceptable race for a seat in a national college. The QEC is offering only 140 seats. My question is: some students with 3 A<sup>+</sup> and an A, that is, an aggregate of 23, have obtained a national college, I want to know how many were there and how those who got a seat at the national college were chosen. That is the question.

**Mr Gokhool:** I can provide the breakdown of candidates with 4 A<sup>+</sup>, 3 A<sup>+</sup> plus one A, 2 A<sup>+</sup> plus 2 A. These statistics can be made available. This is not a difficulty. We can make the statistics available. But the question of the hon. Leader of the Opposition is: why is it that somebody with a 4 A<sup>+</sup> may

not have got a seat, but somebody with a 3 A<sup>+</sup> plus one A has got a seat. As I said, it is a parental choice. If the parents, for example, do not opt for admission to a national college, such candidates will not be considered for a national college.

*(Interruptions)*

Let me explain! If a parent whose child has got a grade aggregate of 24 – and we have the option of a national college - and he does not want his child to go to a national college, that student will not get a seat. And that will explain why somebody with a 3 A<sup>+</sup> plus an A, a grade aggregate of 23 might get a seat in a national college, whereas somebody with a 4 A<sup>+</sup> may not get a seat because of the choice. It is parental choice.

**Mr Bodha:** It is an issue of transparency, Mr Speaker, Sir, because people are making representations and they are complaining. My other question is: are there students with 3 A<sup>+</sup> and a B who have obtained a seat in a national college while a student with 5 A<sup>+</sup> has not had a seat?

**Mr Gokhool:** I think the hon. Leader of the Opposition should follow. If a student ...

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Order!

**Mr Gokhool:** I repeat my answer. If a student has got 4 A<sup>+</sup> which is 24, but the parent did not opt for a college on a national basis, that student will not get a seat on the national basis, but will get a seat in the regional college because the parent did not opt for it. And that will explain how when the exercise is carried out, the possibility is there that somebody with a 3 A<sup>+</sup> with one A or 2 A<sup>+</sup> with 2 A will get a seat. The MES has looked at those cases where a student may have got 4 A<sup>+</sup> and has not got a seat. Representations have been made and explanations have been given and parents are satisfied that because they didn't opt for a college on a national basis, they didn't get the seat.

**Mr Bodha:** Mr Speaker, Sir, parents are not satisfied. May I ask the hon. Minister whether he agrees that an aggregate of three A<sup>+</sup> and one B is

the same as two A+ and two A. How is the choice made then? That is why we are asking for the detailed results.

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Order!

**Mr Bodha:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I am asking him whether, for those cases, the border line cases...

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Order!

**Mr Bodha:** When there was the system of ranking, a girl...

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Order!

**Mr Bodha:**... did not get a seat at the QEC because of a difference of  $\frac{1}{4}$  of a mark. This is a very delicate and sensitive issue. My question is: whether the Minister is aware that when we go on the aggregate, somebody having three A and one B has the same aggregate as somebody having two A+ and two A. How do you choose? That's why I am asking why he does not...

**Mr Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Opposition has put the question. Let the Minister answer.

**Mr Bodha:** The question is: why he does not publish the list of all students, in each school, with the detailed results, so that there is transparency? There should be faith in a system! We need to have faith in a system!

**Mr Gokhool:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the Leader of the Opposition has canvassed this point in the past. We are in the logic of grading and not ranking. If we go with the logic of ranking, then you have to compute the marks. We are in the logic of grading. So, the starting point is grade obtained by the candidate. The candidate who has obtained grade A or four A+ would obtain 400 marks. If the lower range is 90, this means it is 360. I have presented the scheme of the range of marks that will allow the MES to carry out the selection exercise. The range of marks is important and not the absolute marks. We are not using the absolute marks.

**Mr Bodha:** May I ask the hon. Minister whether the refined grading was used in all cases or whether, in certain cases, the raw scores were used?

**Mr Gokhool:** I stand by what I said. The refined grading system, as it has been devised, was used.

**Mr Bodha:** Can the Minister confirm that the raw marks were never used?

**Mr Gokhool:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I am saying that the range of marks was used for the admission of candidates.

**Mrs Labelle:** Mr Speaker, Sir, remaining in the logic of grading, as the hon. Minister stated, may I ask him whether he is in a position to inform the House how many pupils got a grade aggregate of 23 and how many were admitted in national schools, and how this choice has been made?

**Mr Gokhool:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I have the figures. For Maurice Curé, 152 candidates were offered a seat and they all had grade aggregate 24; Droopnath Ramphul, 116 with grade aggregate 24, and 24 with grade aggregate 23; Gaëtan Raynal, 67 with grade aggregate 24 and 91 with grade aggregate 23; MGI, 72 with grade aggregate 24...

*(Interruptions)*

The hon. Member should, at least, listen. Out of courtesy, she should listen! She will have her turn to put questions.

*(Interruptions)*

I am replying! This is the hon. Member's interpretation! QEC...

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** There is a point of order. Let me listen to it.

**Mrs Labelle:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I think the hon. Minister is giving information that I did not ask for. He is not replying to my question.

**Mr Speaker:** This is not a point of order. I have no control on the answer of the Minister. However, I would request the Minister to be relevant.

**Mr Gokhool:** QEC, 163 with grade aggregate 24; MGI, 72 and the overall grade aggregate admitted was 24; John Kennedy, 41 with grade aggregate 24 and 100 with grade aggregate 23; Mahatma Gandhi, 70 with grade aggregate 24; Royal College Curepipe, 147 with grade aggregate 24; Royal College Port Louis...

**Mr Speaker:** If the hon. Minister is going to be long, I will request him to circulate the figures.



**Mr Guinness:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I heard the Minister say that, for parents who have opted for national colleges, a seat must have been given. I am in presence of a case where a student with five A+ from Montagne Blanche opted for the national colleges and even opted for MGI, where today we see that vacancies exist. I am laying the document on the Table of the Assembly. How does the Minister explain the fact that this student has not been given a seat in a national college?

**Mr Gokhool:** The parents must have made a proper representation to the MES. Otherwise, as I explained, we have admitted a certain number of students on the grade aggregate 24. But the number of applications and those who obtained 24 was much larger. That's where the range of marks was used by the MES to give to those who are the best. This is simple!

**Mr Bodha:** Mr Speaker, it is clear that they advocate a fairer and more equitable system, but that they are not for transparency.

Let me come to the second part of the PNQ. May I ask the hon. Minister how many students are sitting for the SC and the HSC exams this year, and how many are going to benefit from a subsidy from Government this year as compared to last year?

**Mr Gokhool:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I have the figures for last year. The number of students who sat for SC exams was 20,229 and 9,929 for HSC exams. The students have yet to fill forms for sitting for the exams for this year.

**Mr Bodha:** Could the hon. Minister please give the figures of those who benefited from full subsidy from the MSM/MMM Government and the number of students who benefited from a 50% rebate on the full fees, which meant that they paid around Rs3,000 for SC and around Rs9,000 for HSC?

**Mr Gokhool:** The figure is 1,600, Mr Speaker, Sir.

**Mr Bodha:** Mr Speaker, Sir, does that mean that 1,600 students for SC and HSC included, are going to benefit from a subsidy from Government this year?

**Mr Gokhool:** The figures are for last year. The exercise is being done. A communiqué will be published, and those who need help will have to go to the Ministry of Social Security, where their cases will be studied and processed.

**Mr Bodha:** Mr Speaker, Sir, may I remind the hon. Minister that the last Budget provided for Rs72 m. in terms of subsidy? May I ask the hon. Minister what is the figure for this year?

**Mr Gokhool:** Mr Speaker, Sir, as I have indicated, the cases that will be eligible will be attended to by Government.

**Mr Bodha:** It is clear that Government is not aware of the number of cases who are going to benefit from social aid. May I ask the hon. Minister whether he is aware that, this year, SC exam fees are going to be increased by at least 25%, first because of an annual increase and second because of the devaluation of the rupee, and that the fees of the HSC will be about Rs10,000? Can he imagine the burden on a certain number of parents? May I ask him what the Government intends to do?

**Mr Gokhool:** Mr Speaker, as I have indicated, the Ministry of Social Security will implement the policy of paying the full fee for those who will qualify. On top of that, we will also provide assistance to those cases which are genuine ones and which may not be covered by the existing scheme. This will be looked into by the Ministry of Social Security.

**Mr Bodha:** Mr Speaker, Sir, my question is: how genuine is genuine? How will we know that there is a genuine and rewarding case?

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Order! Order!

**Mr Gokhool:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the parents will have to make a case and provide all the information that will be required to study the case on a case to case basis. The other question we are examining is how to alleviate the difficulties of some parents. I have asked the MES to look into the possibility of paying the fees by instalments. This is being looked into.

**Mr Nancy:** Mr Speaker, Sir, concerning the local examination fees, may I ask the hon. Minister whether the same policy will apply for Rodrigues or whether additional special consideration will be given to Rodrigues, as in the recent case of free books in all schools in Rodrigues?

**Mr Gokhool:** As it is applied in Mauritius we also apply it for Rodrigues.

**Mr Dayal:** Can the hon. Minister confirm to the House that despite several claims and requests from all stakeholders and Union people no detailed results of the students, their place of residence and the schools they were allotted were published during the last five years? Why? What about transparency then?

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Order! Order!

*(Interruptions)*

Order I said! Hon. Dowarkasing, order! Hon. Guinness, order!

*(Interruptions)*

Order!

**Mr Gokhool:** The exam fees...

**Mr Speaker:** If the hon. Minister does not want to answer, I can't force him to answer, but if he is answering let me listen to the answer.

**Mr Gokhool:** Mr Speaker, Sir, hon. Dayal has put a question and I would like to answer the question.

**Mr Speaker:** The hon. Minister has already answered the question in his main reply.

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Bodha:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the examination fees have many components. There is an entry fee, there is a subject fee and there is a local fee. May I ask the hon. Minister whether Government can consider that the local fee be subsidised or abolished so that the fees paid by the parents are less than the 25% that they are going to pay because of the devaluation of the rupee?

**Mr Gokhool:** I have already stated the policy of Government with regard to the payment of fees.



**Mr Bodha:** Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask this Government, through the hon. Minister and through the hon. Prime Minister, to come back to the former policy of providing 50% grant...

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Order!

**Mr Bodha:** ... to all those who are going to sit for the SC and HSC examinations this year?

**Mr Gokhool:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I will answer that question. The population has given us a mandate to carry out our Governmental Programme. They will have to wait for their turn.

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Last question, hon Bundhoo!

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Bundhoo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to the refined grading system, can the hon. Minister of Education state the number of complaints received this year as compared to last year and would he make a statement on the refined grading system itself?

**Mr Gokhool:** Mr Speaker, Sir, there have been very few cases. In fact, I myself was pleasantly surprised - because of the outcry that was raised in certain quarters - that there have not been many cases.

**Mr Speaker:** Time is over!

*(Interruptions)*

Order! Order!

**MOTION****SUSPENSION OF S.O. 10(2)**

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

**The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport & Shipping (Dr. R. Beebeejaun)** rose and seconded.

*Question put and agreed to.*

PNQ

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CA/D03/P01/1

Debate No. 03 of 23.02.07

ORAL ANSWER TO QUESTION

SC & HSC EXAMINATION FEES – SUBSIDISATION –  
GOVERNMENT POLICY

**The Leader of the Opposition (Mr N. Bodha)** (*By Private Notice*) asked the Minister of Education & Human Resources whether, in regard to the School Certificate and Higher School Certificate Examinations to be held in November and December 2007, he will, in each case, state –

- (a) the fees payable, and
- (b) whether Government has revised the initial measures and schemes envisaged to help students taking these examinations and, if so, the number of beneficiaries.

**Mr Gokhool:** Mr Speaker, Sir, this issue of subsidisation of SC & HSC examination fees has been amply dealt with in the previous replies I gave to two PNQs at our sittings of 20 June 2006 and 24 January 2007.

Since the hon. Leader of the Opposition has come back on this issue, I would like to inform the House, once again, that this issue of subsidisation of SC & HSC examination fees has to be placed in the context of the new policy of this Government which takes into account –

- (a) the present difficult economic situation;
- (b) the challenges on the international front, including the triple shock, and
- (c) the need to offer better protection to the most needy of our citizens.

Mr Speaker, Sir, it must be clear to the House and the public at large that Government is adhering to a pro-poor policy by offering better protection to the most needy of the society. The House will recollect that, before the reforms, two-thirds of the wealthiest Mauritians received three quarters of the subsidy on SC and HSC examination fees, as mentioned at paragraph 157 of the Budget Speech 2006/2007. In other words, the majority

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of our citizens who could afford to pay were benefiting from that subsidy to the detriment of those who were more in need. The new policy ensures that Government assistance will be focused on those who need Government support the most.

Coming to part (a) of the question, according to the latest information obtained from Cambridge, the total examination fees for a student taking part in the SC examinations will be in the range of MUR 6,388 to MUR 9,403 depending on whether the student takes six, seven or eight subjects while for HSC, it will cost MUR 10,831. I am tabling a copy of an MES document setting out the details regarding initial fee and subject fee at SC and HSC levels both for school going and private candidates. I would like to inform the House that, for last year, there were 19,927 students for SC and 9,461 at HSC level, making a total of 29,388. The number of beneficiaries will be known only when entries from all schools will have been received at MES. According to the schedule prepared by MES, heads of schools will collect documents at MES on 07 March and will submit entries in the last week of March together with details of the number of subjects entered for, and the fees payable. In any case, the projected figures of beneficiaries of 100% subsidy, that is, those from the vulnerable group, will be higher.

As regards part (b) of the question, where the hon. Leader of Opposition is referring to "initial measures", it is presumed that he is in fact referring to the measures announced by the Minister of Finance in his Budget Speech of 2006/2007, which reads as follows at paragraph 157 thereof -

"In addition, the scheme to pay half the SC and HSC exam fees will be discontinued except for needy students. Government will continue to pay the other half of the fees for these needy students. Henceforth, the fees of these students will be paid in full by the Ministry of Social Security."

I wish to make it clear that, as a caring and sensitive Government, we have taken note of the representations made by the public and we have improved these initial measures to the maximum we could in the present economic situation.

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It is, therefore, clear that Government remains inkeeping with its declared policy of reorienting its resources towards the most needy segment of the population and pursuing its pro-poor policy.

The details of the new schemes of Government subsidy in respect of SC & HSC examination fees are as follows -

- (a) Government will meet the full cost of the examination fees of students whose parents' monthly income is up to MUR 7,500, including repeaters. This measure means that 15% of households are covered, whereas previously only 6% of households were covered, and
- (b) in the case where two or more students in a household will be sitting for SC or HSC examinations, including repeaters, Government would meet 50% of the cost of examination fees for school going students, provided that the monthly income of the household is between MUR 7,500 and MUR 10,000.

Government has also negotiated with banking institutions, and they have agreed to offer loans with preferential rates of interests with a repayment period of 18 to 24 months for the payment of SC and HSC examination fees to households whose monthly income is between MUR 7,500 and MUR 10,000. Public sector companies, parastatal bodies, as well as SICOM, MEPZA, EWF and the Mauritius Civil Service Mutual Aid Association, are putting similar loan schemes to assist their employees in the payment of examination fees of their wards at preferential rates. SICOM, Mutual Aid and EWF have also agreed to provide similar loan schemes to their clients.

It has also been decided that public sector employees, including employees of parastatal and local authorities, will be able to use their passage benefit entitlements to meet the payment of SC and HSC examination fees for their ward. Government has also requested...

*(Interruptions)*

l...



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This is an example of national solidarity. The hon. Member has to learn about it!

Mr Speaker, Sir, Government has also requested private sector companies to consider extending such facilities to their employees.

I have also been informed that a number of EPZ companies already operate educational schemes to assist children of their employees. Some of these companies like CMT have even gone to the extent of paying the full examination fees of the children of their employees. Those which do not have such schemes, have set up loan schemes to support their employees in the payment of SC and HSC examination fees for their children. These enterprises, *inter alia*, are Beldiam Co. Ltd, Star Knitwear Ltd, Aquarelle Ltd, Tara Knitwear Ltd, Rossana Textiles Ltd, Chancery Shirts Co. Ltd, St Anne Clothing, RS Fashion Ltd, Mklen Fashion, Tee Sun Ltd, Consolidated Fabrics Ltd, Esquel Mtius Ltd, Prosimex Ind. Co. Ltd, R. T. Knits, World Knits and Floreal Knitwear Ltd.

With the previous scheme, where 50% of the subsidy was granted to every student, 75% of the subsidies went to 2/3 of the wealthiest households. The total expenditure under that item for financial year 2005/2006 was MUR 72.2 m., out of which some MUR 54 m. went to the wealthiest household and only MUR 18 m. went to the poorest.

Under the new scheme, the policy aims at providing more assistance to those in need by redirecting resources to them, with the result that 15% of that group would benefit from the payment of the full cost of SC and HSC exam fees, instead of just 5.5%, as was the case under the previous policy. The Government grant to those earning up to MUR 7,500, together with the loan scheme provided to those earning between MUR 7,500 and MUR 10,000, would cover 25% of the school population taking part in SC and HSC examinations. Assistance to the vulnerable group is increasing by almost 60% from MUR 26 m. in the previous year scheme to MUR 41 m. now. This policy would relieve those who are most in need. Government is now able to spend 60 % more on the most needy, including deserving repeaters. This policy is in line with Government's philosophy of empowering the weakest section of the population.

/...

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(PNQ cont'd)

As stated before, the policy should not be seen in isolation from other reforms that Government is implementing, for example, lowering income tax rate to 15%, removal of more than 40,000 persons at the bottom of the income groups out of the tax net, provision of free transport to all students and the elderly.

*(Interruptions)*

The hon. Member should come with a question and I'll give the answer.

In addition, the money saved from this policy is being re-oriented partly to improve transfers to the vulnerable groups and mostly to finance the Empowerment Programme with the ultimate objective of achieving full employment and eradicating poverty. I am tabling examples of those measures taken for better social protection.

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Government has done the maximum in the present critical economic situation, I wish to reiterate that, in no uncertain term, that Government has not suppressed the subsidy. This has been a campaign in the media and I would like to strongly denounce that campaign...

*(Interruptions)*

...and also by the Opposition, because the subsidy is not being suppressed. The subsidy is being redirected towards the most needy.

The successive huge budget deficits over the years have led to a huge debt stock with the large interest payment. Public debt servicing currently amounts to MUR 13 billion, of which interest payment of MUR 9.5 billion accounts for about 21% of recurrent expenditure and 22% of recurrent revenue. Total debt servicing eats up 30% of the recurrent revenue. If efforts are not made to curb the budget deficit, the interest repayments will further aggravate and leave less room for expenditure on development projects and social programmes.

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(PNQ cont'd)

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It should be noted that external support is conditional on a reduction of budget deficit and in budget spending. External donors support a policy of assisting those who really need help. Thanks to the credibility of our reform programmes, external donors are willing to provide support to the tune of MUR 3.9 billion for the current financial year, of which grants will constitute MUR 1 billion and loans will total MUR 2.9 million. Without external support, recurrent spending would have to be reduced by more than 9%. We cannot afford to jeopardise assistance from our external partners.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to reassure most solemnly the House and the public at large, we hold at heart the interest of the poorest section of the population.

*(Interruptions)*

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**Mr Speaker:** Order! Order!

**Mr Gokhool:** And this is the testimony of this Government for our solidarity towards the poorest section of the population.

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Order! Order!

**Mr Bodha:** Mr Speaker, Sir, my first question is: the hon. Minister raised the issue of re-orientation and he said, at the same time, that savings will be made. I want to know which is which? Is the Government spending, at least, the same amount that we spent in the former Budget?

**Mr Gokhool:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I have already explained that there is a policy of re-orienting subsidies towards people who are most in need and that we are increasing that sum by 60%.

*(Interruptions)*



JG/D03/P02/3  
(PNQ cont'd)

UNREVISED

**Mr Speaker:** Order!

**Mr Gokhool:** I think the hon. Leader of the Opposition should note that, in the previous scheme, as I explained, two third of the wealthiest were benefiting from three quarter of the subsidies. We consider that this is unfair in the present economic situation. And that's why we have decided to put more money for the benefit of the poorest and we have increased that by 60%, from Rs26 m. to Rs41 m.

**Mr Bodha:** My question is simple, Mr Speaker, Sir. Can I know from the hon. Minister whether Government is spending less this year than what was spent last year?

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Order!

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**Mr Gokhool:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Leader of the Opposition should have listened to my reply very carefully. We cannot look at the measure in isolation. We have to look at the measure in the context of a Budget and the philosophy of the Budget, which is to bring about economic development, deal with problems of debt, employment creation, Empowerment Programme. All these have to be taken into account. That's why I am saying that we are giving more support to the poorest section; and I need to say that I am happy that the majority of the population have understood the situation.

**Mr Bodha:** There was a cyclone warning class I on the street yesterday.

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Hon. Bhagwan, I am asking you to keep quiet.

JG/D03/P02/4  
(PNQ cont'd)

UNREVISED

**Mr Bodha:** Mr Speaker, Sir, it is clear that Government is spending less this year. Let me take the figures of the Minister of Education from the figures which have been given by the MES. He said that a student, sitting for the SC examinations, would pay between Rs6,000 and that figure is incorrect, Mr Speaker, Sir. May I ask him, if we take the figures given by the MES, whether for somebody sitting at SC for seven subjects, it is not going to be Rs11,305? The MES did not say whether there is a local fee; we have the initial entry fee of Rs1,215 and the fee per subject is Rs1,457 for SC, but we don't have the local fee. If we add the local fee, can the hon. Minister confirm that for somebody sitting for seven subjects, it will be above Rs12,000 for SC and above Rs14,000 for HSC?

**Mr Gokhool:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I have the figures. The figures given by the hon. Leader of the Opposition are not correct; I am going to say why.

**Mr Speaker:** Address the chair, please!

**Mr Gokhool:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the difference for SC is Rs2,010 and for HSC it is Rs2,699. The initial fee for SC is Rs1,363 and the subject fee is Rs1,005. These are the figures which have been provided by MES. I don't know what figures the hon. Leader of the Opposition is quoting.

*(Interruptions)*

But these are figures from the MES.

**Mr Bodha:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister said, in a *communiqué* which was issued on 12 February that 25% of the school population taking part in the SC and HSC exams will benefit from some sort of subsidy. 25,000 out of 30,000 sitting for the exams mean 25%, it means that 7,500 students will benefit from some sort of subsidy. Can the hon. Minister confirm that this Government is doing nothing for 22,500 students sitting for SC and HSC exams this year?

*(Interruptions)*

JG/D03/P02/5  
(PNQ cont'd)

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**Mr Gokhool:** On one count the hon. Leader of the Opposition is right, we are doing more in terms of those who are below 7,500, we are giving 100%. Previously the ceiling was Rs3,000 to Rs4,000 for, it was those who were receiving social aid. We have increased the ceiling to Rs7,500, which means that more people, who are in that range, will receive the subsidies. I can't understand the logic of the hon. Leader of the Opposition. Is the hon. Leader of the Opposition saying that those people who can afford - and they are two third of the wealthiest - should continue receiving the subsidies? Is it what the hon. Leader of the Opposition is arguing for?

*(Interruptions)*

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**Mr Speaker:** Order, please!

**Mr Bodha:** The hon. Minister has confirmed that 22,500 students sitting this year will obtain nothing from this Government. The second thing, Mr Speaker, Sir, and my question is: all the schemes that have been announced in the Assembly, now and in the past, cater only for people getting at least or at most Rs10,000. Can the hon. Minister confirm that this Government is doing nothing this year for all the parents who earn more than Rs10,000 per month?

*(Interruptions)*

Two parents! Can the hon. Minister confirm that, Mr Speaker, Sir? He is talking about...

*(Interruptions)*

D03/IF/P03/1

Pnq (contd.)

**Mr Gokhool:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the Opposition should not forget that they have left a catastrophic economic situation....

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Order! Order!

*(Interruptions)*

I said order. Hon. Guinness and hon. Mrs Labelle, order! A question has been put, let the Minister answer.

**Mr Gokhool:** Mr Speaker, these people have been responsible for gross economic mismanagement...

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Order! Order! It is the last time that I am calling the House to order, otherwise I am going to suspend the sitting.

**Mr Gokhool:** Mr Speaker, Sir, as I said, we should not make abstraction of this measure. I am saying that over and over again because this is a measure which was part of a Budget and it has got a pro-poor philosophy. We want to support the poor.

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Order, please! Next question.

**Mrs Hanoomanjee:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the Minister is saying that we should not see things in isolation and that it is part of the philosophy of Government. How can the Minister reconcile then the fact that with regard to free transport, all students are benefiting, irrespective of the fact that they are rich or poor whereas for examination fees which we consider primordial *et une priorité*, the policy of targeting is applied?

D03/IF/P03/2

**Mr Gokhool:** Sir, I would like to inform the hon. lady that this Government has its priorities right. We have our priorities right...

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Order please! Order!

**Mr Gokhool:** Mr Speaker, Sir, it is absolutely important for a child to have access to education and free transport...

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** I said order. We won't be able to continue with the sitting. The Minister has not finished with his answer yet. Let him reply.

**Mr Gokhool:** I think those who understand educational philosophy should recognise that the child has to go to school first, then he can sit for examinations....

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Cuttaree:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister ...

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Hon. Jhugroo, do you have a question to put? Please keep quiet. This is the last time I am calling you to order.

**Mr Cuttaree:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister has, in recent weeks, behind the safety of the MBC camera, been accusing the Opposition of playing politics with this issue. Can I ask the hon. Minister whether he remembers that when he was campaigning in the general election, one of the ten priority measures canvassed by the Opposition was that they were going to pay 100% exam fees of the students. This again is *une trahison* of their promises.....

*(Interruptions)*

In fact, they have swindled the people at the elections.



D03/IF/P03/3

**Mr Speaker:** Order, I said! Hon. Bhagwan, I am calling you to order for the last time. Order!

**Mr Gokhool:** Sir, hon. Cuttaree and his colleagues, the Leader of the Opposition and his party, they have been taking a lift on the back of innocent students....

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Order!

**Mr Cuttaree:** You have no courage to answer because you know you are swindling the people...

**Mr Speaker:** Order! Hon. Cuttaree! This is not a political...

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Bundhoo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister whether he can inform the House when was the subsidy to SC/HSC examinations introduced and whether there was any statement made in this House in 2004 with regard to targeting and, if yes, by who and when?

**Mr Gokhool:** Mr Speaker, Sir, in fact, in a spirit of supporting the students, it was the Labour Party which introduced it in 1998. In 2004/2005, the MSM/MMM Government wanted to target subsidies.

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** It seems to be a very sad day today because on the day on the anniversary of the Labour Party, Government decides to withdraw this facility. My question is: will the Minister confirm whether he considers anyone whose family income is above Rs10,000 to be well-off, not needy and not requiring any sort of support from Government for the payment of examination fees?

**Mr Gokhool:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the Labour Party is a great party and the Labour Party does not have to learn lessons...

D03/IF/P03/4

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Order! Order, please!

**Mr Gokhool:** As regards the figure of Rs7,500, let me inform the hon. lady...

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Order, please! Can I just tell the hon. Members that the hon. Minister has the right to change his opinion after....

*(Interruptions)*

Order, order, please!

**Mr Gokhool:** Mr Speaker, Sir, poverty level can be determined as one or two dollars per day, but we have taken what is statistically acceptable, that is, Rs7,500 which is generally accepted as representing the poorer section and this is around 12% to 15% of the population.

**Mrs Labelle:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister has mentioned several times that two-third of the subsidy went to the wealthiest people. Will the Minister confirm that household earning Rs10,000 are among those wealthiest people he is talking about?

UNREVISED

mr/003p04  
{PNQ cid/...}

**Mr Gokhool:** Mr Speaker, Sir, in fact those, who are between Rs7,500 and Rs10,000, are going to benefit 50% of the subsidy. This is where the 50% of the subsidy comes in. I have not considered them as rich people.

**Mr Dayal:** Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Minister confirm to the House that the previous Government was coming to the point of targeting the subsidies of SC and HSC fees and to what effect? Why?

**Mr Gokhool:** This is true.....

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Cuttaree:** On a point of order, Mr Speaker, Sir.

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**Mr Speaker:** Let me hear the point of order.

**Mr Cuttaree:** The hon. Member is misleading the House with his question because he comes to say that the previous Government was "about to come". This is wrong. He should not impute matters which are false.

**Mr Speaker:** What was the question?

**Mr Dayal:** My question is, Mr Speaker, Sir, whether the Minister can confirm to the House that the previous Government was contemplating....

**Mr Speaker:** This is hypothetical.

**Mr Dayal:** I'll put my question differently.

*(Interruptions)*



ml/d03p04.02  
(PNQ end/...)

UNREVISED

**Mr Speaker:** Order! The hon. Member should rephrase his question.

*(Interruptions)*

Order! Order!

**Mr Dayal:** Can the hon. Minister confirm to the House whether there is documentary evidence to the effect that the previous Government was reorienting the subsidies of 50% of SC and HSC exam fees?

**Mr Gokhool:** Mr Speaker, Sir, it is very simple, in the previous system there was hundred per cent subsidy – 50% by the Ministry of Education and 50% by social aid. Now, the measure they were going to introduce....

*(Interruptions)*

It is there.

*(Interruptions)*

It is an extract of the Budget Speech. I am quoting from the extract of the Budget Speech 2004/2005.

'all students benefit from a 50 percent grant in respect of examination fees, irrespective of the income level of their parents. This grant will henceforth be limited to those with family income (...)'

UNREVISED

mrl/d03p04-03  
(PNQ end/...)

**Mr Speaker:** Order! Last question!

**Mr Bodha:** I have two questions, Mr Speaker, Sir. The first one is: is the Minister aware of the huge outcry outside? My second question is: *il a déclaré, M. le président:*

*'nous avons fait le maximum. C'est pourquoi nous demandons à la population de comprendre la situation'.*

He said so in the papers. *Est-ce que moi, je peux demander à ce gouvernement de comprendre le malheur et le fardeau de la population? Ce n'est pas, M. le président, une question d'amour propre, c'est une question d'amour pour les étudiants et pour leur avenir.*

**Mr Speaker:** This is a statement.

**Mr Gokhool:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the Leader of the Opposition has given a concrete example of political opportunism and they have been trying to take a lift on the back of innocent children.

**SC/HSC**

### **EXAMINATION FEES – SUBSIDIES (27/03/07)**

**(No. B/20) Mr G. Gunness (Third Member for Montagne Blanche and GRSE)** asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether in regard to the new scheme of subsidies for the SC and HSC examinations fees, he will state if he has received a letter from the *Plateforme Nationale* and, if so, will he state if he proposes to bring any changes thereto.

**Reply:** Yes, I have indeed received a letter from the *Plateforme Nationale*. However, I considered it more appropriate to meet the parents and students as they are the ones who are directly concerned with the issue. I have always favoured dialogue and

it is in this spirit that I met them for an exchange of views. I heard their concerns and apprehensions and on my side I explained to them the rationale behind the new scheme which takes into account -

- (a) the present difficult economic situation;
- (b) the challenges on the international front including the triple shock, and
- (c) the need to offer better social protection to the most needy of our citizens.

As the House is aware, the Government has given due consideration to the arguments of the parents and students and agreed, in spite of the very difficult economic situation, that exceptionally for this year, 25% of the cost of the examination fees would be paid by Government for the students not already benefiting from a subsidy under the new policy.

The system for this year would, therefore, be as follows - Government would meet -

- (a) the full cost of examinations fees of students whose parents are beneficiaries of social aid, Unemployment Hardship Relief and Basic Pensions and those whose monthly income is up to Rs7,500;
- (b) 50% of the cost of examination fees of the students in cases where more than one student in a household would be sitting for SC or HSC examinations provided that the monthly income of the household is between Rs7,500 and Rs10,000, and
- (c) 25% of the cost of examination fees for other students.

The cost of subsidising the SC and HSC examination fees this year would be between Rs140 m. and Rs150 m. This would be financed by a reallocation from the budget on tourism promotion and from contribution from the Hotel and Banking Sector.

### **SC & HSC EXAMINATION FEES – SUBSIDIES – ELIGIBILITY (27/03/07)**

**(No. B/41) Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun (Third Member for La Caverne & Phoenix)** asked the Minister of Social Security, National Solidarity and Senior Citizens Welfare & Reform Institutions whether, in regard to the subsidies on SC and HSC examinations fees, she will state the criteria laid down by her Ministry to determine the eligibility of an applicant –

- (a) where he is a self employed without any documentary evidence of his income being less than Rs7,500 per month, and
- (b) where he earns a basic salary of Rs7,500 per month plus overtime allowance.

**Mrs Bappoo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the answer is as follows -

(a) Where a person is self-employed and has no documentary evidence regarding his income -

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(i) an indepth social enquiry is carried out by my officers comprising site visit to the residence and where necessary to the place of work of the applicant, to ascertain the veracity of the information provided and also to secure firsthand information on the activity carried out by him, and

(ii) a statement is secured regarding the average weekly or monthly income of the applicant, his nature of employment and the average number of days worked per week or per month.

Where the enquiring officer and the senior officer are satisfied that the income does not exceed Rs7,500 or Rs10,000, the claim is approved for payment and the applicant is informed accordingly. A certificate addressed to the Rector of the College is then issued to the applicant.

However, I have to stress, Mr Speaker, Sir, that the criteria laid down for determining the eligibility of any benefit under the Social Aid Act for a self-employed person or those persons who do not have any pay slip are the same that have been applied over the past years by the Ministry of Social Security. The same practice is being applied in the above cases claiming payment for examination fees.

(b) Where an applicant earns a basic salary of less than Rs7,500 or Rs10,000 per month, plus overtime allowance, on a regular basis, the applicant is asked to produce documentary evidence from his employer of overtime received over a period of five months preceding the month in which the claim is made. In order not to cause hardship to the applicant, the average monthly income is calculated by taking into consideration income derived over those three months during which the earnings were on the lower side. This computation is deemed to be more equitable to the applicant.

It is to be pointed out also that, according to Social Aid Regulations 1984, "income" means income derived from any source. Therefore, it is

clear that the monthly income also comprises overtime.

Mr Speaker, Sir, therefore, I suppose that my Ministry is not inventing any new wheel.

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister if she would be ready to lay copy of that list of criteria being in use for the past five years on the Table of the National Assembly?

**Mrs Bappoo:** I have already given all the details about the criteria.

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** Then, may I know from the hon. Minister how is the assessment made? Because from what she has just mentioned, the inspectors will go and find out about the weekly income of the persons.

I would like to know whether it is going to be solely based on wages and weekly income or the inspection will involve other assessments on other criteria as well?

**Mrs Bappoo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I have already stated what is the definition according to the regulation of 1984. It means income derived from any source.

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** I am not talking about the income, Mr Speaker, Sir. My question is: the hon. Minister mentioned that the list of criteria being used for the assessment is the same that has been used for the past five years. I am asking her whether she will be ready to lay a copy of the list of criteria on the Table of the National Assembly

**Mrs Bappoo:** The list of criteria is here, Mr Speaker, Sir. I have just read the details of the criteria. It is in the reply. It will go on record.

**Mr Lesjongard:** Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister how many such applications her Ministry has received, and how many applicants have been found eligible?

**Mrs Bappoo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I can give the reply to the question. But, there is another question which will put on that issue and I'll have to answer.

**Mr Barbier:** Mr Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Minister why her Ministry is categorically refusing to give the subsidy to taxi owners? Because, in some quarters, some taxi owners may be well-off whilst in

others, some may not.

**Mr Bappoo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like the hon. Member to table the list of the taxi owners who have got the subsidy.

**Mrs Perrier:** M. le président, la ministre peut-elle nous dire comment le plafond de R 7,500 a été fixé, alors que récemment le bureau des statistiques a déclaré que le minimum vital pour une famille de deux enfants s'élève à R 10,300 ?

**Mrs Bappoo:** Mais, la dernière fois, c'était R 3,000 !

*(Interruptions)*

Oui! Ne mélangez pas les chiffres! *Don't mix issues!*

**Mrs Perrier:** Je voudrais savoir comment le seuil de R 7,500 a été fixé, alors que récemment le bureau des statistiques a déclaré que le seuil vital pour une famille de deux enfants est, aujourd'hui, de R 10,300.

**Mrs Bappoo:** Our vision, Mr Speaker, Sir, is to meet the needs of the most vulnerable people. This is what we are doing.

**Mrs Labelle:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister has given us the definition of income. May I know from her whether her officers take into consideration the assets, be it an old car or a house, to arrive at their conclusion?

**Mrs Bappoo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I made this clear in my reply when I referred to site visits. Of course, they have a look at the house or any asset...

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Order!

**Mrs Bappoo:** There are so many people coming to the Ministry of Social Security *et qui pé essaye ène ti séké pou gagne ène ti chance*. And when an inspection is carried to their place, you can, of course, see a storey building, two vehicles. These are practical ways of carrying the test.

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** I must give the floor to hon. Members who have had no



opportunity at all to put questions. Hon. Ganoo, please!

**Mr Ganoo:** I come to this question of overtime, Mr Speaker, Sir. The hon. Minister has replied that overtime is included in the definition of income, but this is a regulation. The hon. Minister can change the regulation. Can the hon. Minister consider the possibility of excluding overtime allowance by changing the regulation?

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Order!

**Mrs Bappoo:** We are going on the same criteria as for any pension or benefit given under the Social Aid Act. This is the way income is being calculated.

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** I will allow a last question from hon. Gunness.

**Mr Gunness:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I am coming with the site visits. The hon. Minister said for self-employed, social inquiries are carried by site visits. Can we know whether the officers have a set of guidelines or else different officers can have different assessments? Can we know the guidelines that each officer has when he goes on site visits?

**Mrs Bappoo:** The Commissioner for pension is doing his duty according to the set of guidelines, and criteria that have been established since long years back and we haven't changed anything.

*(Interruptions)*

The criteria have been given and the guidelines are set.

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** I said last question! I think the issue has been fully dealt with.

**SC & HSC EXAMINATIONS FEES – REFUND PAYMENT -  
NUMBER (27/03/07)**

**(No. B/46) Mr G. Gunness (Third Member for Montagne Blanche and GRSE)** asked the Minister of Social Security, National Solidarity and Senior Citizens Welfare & Reform Institutions whether, in regard to the refund of payment of SC and HSC examinations fees by her Ministry, she will state the number of applications received and the amount of money disbursed to date.

**Mrs Bappoo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, as from mid-February 2007, following a press communiqué issued by the Ministry of Social Security and the information campaigns undertaken in the media by officers of my Ministry, applications for payment of SC and HSC examination fees have been received at the various Local Social Security Offices.

As at yesterday, Monday 26 March 2007, around 10,235 persons had applied for payment of examination fees for SC and HSC and out of which 8,383 applicants have been found to be eligible for payment of the examination fees as follows -

(i) 7,945 are eligible for full payment of examination fees because their aggregate income does not exceed Rs7,500 or they are beneficiaries of Social Aid, Unemployment Hardship Relief or a Basic Pension (who would have qualified for Social Aid in the absence of that basic pension);

(ii) 438 are eligible for 50% of the payment of exam fees given that they have more than one child sitting for the exams and their aggregate income is in the range of Rs7501 – Rs10000.

779 cases are still outstanding because of missing information. Some 1,073 cases have been rejected on grounds of income.

Regarding disbursement of money by my Ministry, I wish to draw the attention of the House that, in previous years, every eligible applicant was issued with a voucher to be cashed at the Post Office of his locality.

However, as from this year, the applicant is being issued only with a certificate, indicating the amount to which he is entitled, to be produced to the college. Following consultations with the Ministry of Education and Human Resources and the Mauritius Examination Syndicate, it has now been agreed that payment will be effected by the Ministry of Social Security directly to Mauritius Examination Syndicate.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I can only communicate to the House the exact amount of money to be disbursed to the MES once the whole exercise is being completed.

**Mr Guinness:** Mr Speaker, Sir, this question was raised previously.

Can we know from the Minister whether taxi owners ...

**Mr Speaker:** No, I will not allow this question; it was fully debated.

**Mr Guinness:** Mr Speaker, Sir...

**Mr Speaker:** Could the hon. Member please collaborate with the Chair? All these issues were debated on the previous question. We cannot make repetition.

**Mr Guinness:** If you allow me, Mr Speaker, Sir, it concerns the 173 rejected cases. I want to know whether all taxi owners are in that rejected cases.

**Mrs Bappoo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the taxi owner himself has revealed to the Ministry of Social Security that he is earning some Rs15,000 monthly, but he has loans to reimburse and rents to pay, etc. This is not an issue of the scheme.

**Mr Guinness:** I hope it is not the case for all taxi owners. When all expenses are deducted, we have the net income of the taxi owner.

**Mrs Bappoo:** It is the income, as I have described, in the previous question. It does not concern any deduction.

**Mr Guinness:** Do I understand then that all taxi owners' income is more than Rs7,500?

**Mrs Bappoo:** I cannot go further to the answer that I have given, Mr Speaker, Sir.

**Mr Barbier:** Mr Speaker, Sir; does that mean that the turnover of the taxi owners is considered to be their income? Is it what the hon. Minister is stating?

**Mrs Bappoo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, taxi owners is not an issue. I have already explained about the income ceiling.

**Mr Guinness:** Can I know from the hon. Minister when will be the last date of the application?

**Mrs Bappoo:** MES has informed us that the last date will be the 09 of next month. If there is anyone coming, we are going to entertain it, but most of them have already been registered.

### **SC/HSC EXAMINATION FEES – SUBSIDIES (27/03/07)**

**(No. B/50) Mr Y. Varma (First Member for Mahebourg and Plaine Magnien)** asked the Minister of Education & Human Resources whether, following the decision of Government for the reorientation of the subsidies on the SC and HSC examinations fees, he will state if he has met the representatives of students councils and parent teachers associations to explain the reasons thereof and, if so, the number of such meetings, indicating the names of the councils and associations.

**Mr Gokhool:** Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to the reorientation of subsidies on SC/HSC examinations, I wish to state that the matter has been amply communicated to the public at large since the decision was taken in the 2006/07 Budget Speech. The measure formed part of debates on the Budget Speech and the debates were reported in the media. Further, I have made several press conferences on this issue whereby I have explained to parents and the general public at large the philosophy behind the reorientation of subsidies on SC and HSC examinations fees and the mechanisms put in place by Government to help the most needy. I have also personally raised and discussed the issue in other fora making it a point to provide all explanations on this issue, whenever asked for.

During my regular visits to schools and colleges, I have also informed the education community, including Students Councils and PTAs and the public at large about Government's policy on subsidies for SC/HSC examinations.

**Mr Varma:** Mr Speaker, Sir, my question was specific. Did the Minister convene any meeting involving Students Council and Parent Teachers Associations?

**Mr Gokhool:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I have replied to the question which is "whether I have met." The reply has been given: "I have met on various occasions."

**Mr Varma:** I want to know whether any meeting was convened, Mr Speaker, Sir.

**Mr Gokhool:** Sir, I have replied as per the question set, but if the hon. Member is asking the question, if requests are made to me to meet Students Councils and PTAs, I am always open to meet them. There is no problem about that.

**Mr Varma:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister has stated that during his visits to particular colleges, he has met with representatives of Students Councils. Could he inform the House which are the colleges he visited and which Students Councils he met specifically?

**Mr Gokhool:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I think in the school system, when you go to a school, you meet the administration, the Students Council and the PTA and I can table a list of the colleges where I went to meet representatives during this period. There is a total of 24 public and private colleges. I met them.

*(Interruptions)*

Yes. I mean not specifically on that issue, but ...

*(Interruptions)*

When I go to a college or a school, I have to talk about matters of public interest or interest of the student community, which I do.

**Mr Varma:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister has stated that he met members of the press, that is, he addressed press conferences. In the same way that he convened the press to explain the Governmental decision, why did he not think proper to convene a meeting specifically to explain to the main stakeholders of the education sector the reason why the decision was taken?

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Order, please!

**Mr Gokhool:** Mr Speaker, Sir, that is an opinion of the hon. Member. Concerning the way the whole decision has been communicated, I have said various media have been used to communicate and if I consider that this is the media where the decision can be best communicated, I'll use the media.

**Mr Varma:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Prime Minister did what the hon. Minister did not think proper. The hon. Prime Minister met

representatives of students, teachers and also of the common platform. Does he not consider, Mr Speaker, Sir, that he didn't communicate effectively with the major stakeholders of the education sector on this particular issue?

**Mr Gokhool:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I strongly disagree with the opinion of the hon. Member; that's his opinion. I think comparing the meeting of the hon. Prime Minister and mixing up issues – I have met the Students Councils and PTAs on various occasions and I meet them regularly. This is the job of the Minister to talk about problems and issues which concern the sector. Is the hon. Member implying that I have tried to ignore this issue when I met the student community or the education community?

**Mr Speaker:** Time is over! May I inform the House that PQ B/55 has been withdrawn.

**CAMBRIDGE SCHOOL CERTIFICATE EXAMINATIONS  
– SCRIPTS – MARKED LOCALLY  
– (10/04/07)**

**(No. B/100) Mr Y. Varma (First Member for Mahebourg and Plaine Magnien)** asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether, in regard to the scripts for the subjects of the Cambridge School Certificate Examinations which are marked locally he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Examinations Syndicate, information as to –

- (a) the list of subjects involved, and
- (b) the cost involved, indicating its method of computation.

**Mr Gokhool:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by MES that –

- (a) 16 out of 46 subjects are marked locally at School Certificate level. For the Higher School Certificate, all the 53 subjects are examined and marked by Cambridge. Only the course work component for subjects such as Computing, Design & Technology, and Food Studies are marked in Mauritius. The list of subjects marked locally at School Certificate level is being tabled.
- (b) the sum for marking of scripts amounted to MUR 7,208,663.67 last year and includes fees paid to examiners, markers, and other support staff at approved rates. It is to be noted that there is no uniform cost structure and the cost of marking varies from subject to subject.

**Mr Varma:** Mr Speaker, how will the hon. Minister compare the costs of marking locally with that done in Cambridge?



**Mr Gokhool:** As I said, Mr Speaker, Sir, there are a number of factors that we have to take into account in arriving at the costs for marking a particular paper and they are not uniform.

**Mr Varma:** Mr Speaker, Sir, will the hon. Minister explain how the computation is made for a student who takes seven subjects, four of which are marked locally and three are marked at Cambridge, with that of a candidate whose seven papers are marked at Cambridge?

**Mr Gokhool:** Mr Speaker, Sir, as I said, when we compute the costs, we have to take into account a number of factors. For example, the local context and specificities, the Mauritius only paper or is it on international paper, the availability of logistics and human resources and the number of candidates involved. The MES takes all those factors into consideration to arrive at the cost structure. It is not easy for me to give the figures at this point, but if a case is given to me, I'll ask the MES to compute the figures.

**Mr Varma:** Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Minister confirm whether it costs less to mark a paper locally than to mark a paper at Cambridge?

**Mr Gokhool:** Mr Speaker, Sir, that will depend, if it is an international paper which is being marked locally, it may happen that the cost is lower. But if it is a paper which has got a local content and has local input and logistics have to be deployed for the marking of the paper, that paper may cost more than the international paper.

**Mr Varma:** Mr Speaker, Sir, how can the hon. Minister reconcile the fact that all students pay more or less the same fees for the SC examination?

**Mr Gokhool:** As I said, Mr Speaker, Sir, when we correct a number of papers locally, the cost structure is worked out and an amount is arrived at. Therefore, the papers which are marked locally have got a fee as well as the papers which are marked externally. The two are taken together and the total cost is arrived at.

**Mr Varma:** I have a last supplementary, Mr Speaker, Sir. Is the hon. Minister planning to review this whole procedure whereby some students will be made to pay less for the SC examination?

**Mr Gokhool:** This is a complex issue, Mr Speaker, Sir. The MES is studying the issue and will come with recommendations.

**SC/HSC EXAMINATIONS FEES 2003-2007 – SUBSIDIES (10/04/07)**

**(No. B/136) Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun (Third Member for La Caverne and Phoenix)** asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether, in regard to the examinations fees for the School Certificate and the Higher School Certificate for each of the years 2003 to 2007, he will –

- (a) for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Examinations Syndicate, the number of students who entered for those Examinations, and
- (b) indicate the amount of subsidies disbursed by his Ministry

*(Withdrawn)*

**SC/HSC EXAMINATION FEES 2007 – SUBSIDIES (10/04/07)**

**(No. B/137) Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun (Third Member for La Caverne and Phoenix)** asked the Minister of Social Security, National Solidarity and Senior Citizens Welfare & Reform Institutions whether, in regard to the payment of examination fees for the School Certificate and the Higher School Certificate for the year 2007, she will state the amount of money disbursed as subsidies by her Ministry.

*(Withdrawn)*

**SC/HSC EXAMINATION FEES – 2003 TO 2007 – SUBSIDIES  
(17/04/07)**

**(No. B/173) Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun (Third Member for La Caverne and Phoenix)** asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether, in regard to the examination fees for the School Certificate and the Higher School Certificate for each of the years 2003 to 2007, he will –

- (a) for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Examinations Syndicate, the number of students who entered for those examinations, and
- (b) indicate the amount of subsidies disbursed by his Ministry.

**Mr Gokhool:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the deadline for the payment of fees for SC and HSC examinations was initially on 09 April 2007 for students from State/Grant Aided Private Secondary Schools and 10 April 2007 for fee paying secondary schools. Upon requests from many schools, additional

entries would be collected by the MES up to 19 April 2007 without penalty, in view of the fact that more and more students are showing interest to take part in these examinations on account of the Government subsidy.

I am informed by the MES that it is only after the whole exercise is over that it will be possible to indicate the position of the number of students who have entered these examinations. I am tabling the information available as at now for years 2003 and 2007.

As regards the second part of the question, Mr Speaker, Sir, the amount of subsidies disbursed for SC and HSC by my Ministry in respect of 50% subsidy on examination fees for school going candidates sitting for the first time for financial years 2003, 2004, 2005 and 2006 is being tabled.

In 2007, it is to be noted that, under the new scheme the Ministry of Social Security will meet –

- the full cost of examination fees for those students coming from households earning less than MUR 7,500, and
- in the case where two or more students in a household would be sitting for SC or HSC examinations, it will meet 50% of the cost of examination fees for students provided the monthly income of the household does not exceed MUR 10,000.

As regards the other school going students sitting for the SC and HSC examinations for the first time, 25% of the cost of these examination fees will be borne by my Ministry through a transfer of fund to the MES, in due course. The exact amount will be known only when the whole exercise of registering students for these examinations is completed. Indicatively, the total Government subsidy for the SC and HSC examination this year will be in the range of MUR 140 m and MUR 150 m.

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** May I ask the hon. Minister, since he cannot give the final number of students who have entered for the exams, the percentage of students who have already paid for the SC exams up to date?

**Mr Gokhool:** I cannot give the figure in percentage. The absolute figures are 18,428 for SC and 8,418 for HSC.

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** May we know from the Minister what was the number of students for these two categories who had entered exams last year?

**Mr Gokhool:** I can give the figure for that year. For 2006, the number

of students for SC was 19,371 and for HSC, it was 8,862. However, I need to add that the figures for 2007 do not include those who will pay the fees and then I'll be able to give the total figures.

**SC/HSC EXAMINATION FEES – YEAR 2007 – SUBSIDIES  
(17/04/07)**

**(No. B/174) Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun (Third Member for La Caverne and Phoenix)** asked the Minister of Social Security, National Solidarity and Senior Citizens Welfare & Reform Institutions whether, in regard to the payment of examination fees for the School Certificate and the Higher School Certificate for the year 2007, she will state the amount of money disbursed as subsidies by her Ministry.

**Mrs Bappoo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, as to date, my Ministry has made a payment of Rs73,587,589.50 to the Mauritius Examination Syndicate with regard to students eligible for the 100% and 50% payment of examination fees for School Certificate and Higher School Certificate.

**Dr. Hawoldar:** May I ask the hon. Minister how many students are getting the facility of full payment of fees for the year 2007 and how many students had full facilities for the year 2006? I would like to know the approximate number of students.

**Mrs Bappoo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, there is a total number of students eligible on this new scheme which amounts to 8,620. Out of this, 7,852 are eligible under the criteria of 100% and 768 under the criteria of 50% compared to 2006 where there were only 1,828 and money was disbursed at the tune of only Rs8 m.

**SC/HSC EXAMINATIONS 2007 – STUDENTS – NUMBER (24/04/07)**

**(No. B/258) Mrs S. Grenade (Second Member for GRNW and Port Louis West)** asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Examinations Syndicate, information as to the number of students who have entered for the School Certificate and the Higher School Certificate for the year 2007.

**Reply:** I wish to refer the hon. Member to the reply I made at our sitting of 17 April 2007 in respect of PQ B/173.

The MES has informed that 19,652 school going candidates will sit for the Cambridge School Certificate and 9224 for the Cambridge Higher School Certificate examinations in 2007, as opposed to 19,371 for SC and 8,862 for HSC in 2006. These figures for 2007 exclude the entries for the four colleges in Rodrigues, which are yet to submit them.

As regards amount of subsidy to be disbursed by my Ministry, the final figures will be known only by mid May 2007. Indicatively the Ministry of Social Security has disbursed MUR 73.6 m in respect of subsidies for SC and HSC examinations for those entitled to 100% and 50% subsidy up to now. As regards my Ministry, it is estimated that it will have to disburse around MUR 55 m in respect of the 25% subsidy.

## SC & HSC EXAMINATIONS FEES – REFUNDS

(No. B/484) Mr G. Guinness (Third Member for Montagne Blanche and GRSE) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether, in regard to the School Certificate and Higher School Certificate examinations fees, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Examinations Syndicate, information as to if all refunds in connection therewith have now been made and, if not, why not.

**Reply:** There are 2 different types of refund namely the following –

- (i) students having paid their fees in toto and who were subsequently found to be eligible to either a 100% subsidy or a 50% subsidy by the Ministry of Social Security, and
- (ii) Students having paid their fees in toto and who subsequently became eligible for 25% subsidy in the light of the latest decision of Government to grant a 25% subsidy to all school going candidates sitting for the SC and HSC examinations for the first time.

In regard to the first category, I am informed by the MES that there are not many cases of refund as most of them have been cleared by the Ministry of Social Security before payment. A few cases are being taken care of as and when approval is obtained from the Ministry of Social Security.

As regards the second category of those being eligible to a 25% refund, I am informed by the MES that out of around 22,085 students sitting for the SC and HSC examinations, for the first time, there are around 5,300 students who would be eligible for refund, out of which 1,703 have already been refunded to date.

The process for the refund started immediately after the closing date for payment of SC and HSC examinations fees on 09 April 2007. The schools were requested to submit the list of candidates to be refunded as well as their particulars and the Bank Account No of their parents.

The process for refund has not yet been completed.

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## **HSC 2007 – STUDENTS – NUMBER (29/05/07)**

(No. B/550) Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun (Third Member for La Caverne and Phoenix) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether, in regard to the School and Higher School Certificates, he will state the number of students –

- (a) enrolled in Form V and Upper VI classes in January 2007, and
- (b) who have entered for the examinations to be held in November/December 2007.



*(Withdrawn)*

**SSS – HSC – SUBJECT COMBINATIONS (10/07/07)**

**(No. B/735) Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun (Third Member for La Caverne and Phoenix)** asked the Minister of Education & Human Resources whether, in regard to the Higher School Certificate, he will give a list of the State Secondary Schools which offer Chemistry, Physics and Biology as subjects' combination at principal level.

**Mr Gokhool:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that only two State Secondary Schools offer the subject combination of Physics/Biology/Chemistry at Lower VI in 2007, namely the Mahatma Gandhi Institute and Dr. Régis Chaperon SSS. There is, at present, no vacancy in this subject combination at the above schools as these seats have been filled either by the students of the school itself (own students) or by the MES during the transfer exercise.

Six other State Secondary Schools had also offered this subject combination at the beginning of the year but, given that there was no demand, the option was finally removed from the time table.

There are very few students who choose this subject option as most prefer to opt for Mathematics, Chemistry and one science subject in view of better educational opportunities.

I wish to remind the hon. Member that the low number of students taking science at SC/HSC is not something new. In fact, I inherited the situation, but I am committed to change this. In this respect, in the context of the ongoing reforms, my Ministry is working towards making science a compulsory subject at SC level for those students who will not opt for any pure science. In addition, a comprehensive program of construction of science laboratories in the State Secondary Schools, in order to boost up the teaching and learning of science, is under way.

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** May I know from the hon. Minister which colleges have offered this subject combination and have not received candidates for this combination?

**Mr Gokhool:** I don't have the list, but there are six secondary schools. I can submit the list to the House.

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** May I ask the hon. Minister whether he is

aware that, in all these medical colleges and even in engineering colleges, the option of three science subjects is presently required for admission and Mauritian students are facing many problems in getting seats in such institutions?

**Mr Gokhool:** Seats were provided; the students did not opt for them. But we are looking at the issue of science globally and this will take some time.

### **SC EXAMINATIONS – SUBJECTS (10/07/07)**

**(No. B/739) Mr D. Rucktooa (Second Member for Grand' Baie and Poudre D'Or)** asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether, in regard to the Cambridge School Certificate Examinations as from the year 2008, he will state if students will be required to take a maximum of seven subjects and, if so, the reasons therefor.

**Mr Gokhool:** Mr. Speaker Sir, my Ministry has an open policy regarding the number of subjects that a student may take at the Cambridge School Certificate Examinations. The minimum number of subjects which a student can take is six but the school may allow the student to take more than six and up to nine subjects even if these subjects are not taught at school. Usually, it is the Rector who decides on such matter in consultation with the parents, the teachers and with due regard to the ability of the students. There is a degree of flexibility in such matters depending on the aptitude of the child.

In general, on average, secondary schools students sit for a maximum of seven to eight subjects. However, we do have cases in some private secondary schools that the school requests less able candidates to sit only for 5 subjects, in which case the students qualify for a GCE award rather than a SC.

### **S.C. EXAMS (2006) – FRENCH PAPER (06/11/07)**

**(No. B/1068) Mrs M. Martin (Second Member for Curepipe and Midlands)** asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether, in regard to the irregularities noted in the French paper of the Cambridge School Certificate Examinations 2006, he will state if an inquiry has been carried out thereinto and, if so, indicate –

- (a) the outcome thereof, and
- (b) the recommendations made, if any

**Reply:** Contrary to what is stated in the question, there was no irregularity in the French Paper for the Cambridge School Certificate examinations 2006. However, in May 2007, in the

grade review exercise for candidates who had scored border line marks which was carried out by MES in December 2006/January 2007, it was noted that the review marks of only 470 out of 1808 candidates were forwarded to Cambridge by MES.

Corrective measures were taken by MES. Marks of the remaining candidates were forwarded to Cambridge for review, as a result of which 234 candidates had their grades changed. However, it was felt that we should probe further and shed light in the matter.

Accordingly, Government approved the setting up of a Fact Finding Committee chaired by a sitting Magistrate and comprising two Assessors to –

- (i) ascertain whether procedures had been followed;
- (ii) situate responsibilities; and
- (iii) make recommendations to improve the existing procedures.

The Fact Finding Committee, started its enquiry on 11 October 2007 and todate has had four sittings.

The outcome and recommendations of the Committee will be submitted to my Ministry once the exercise is completed.

It is expected that the Committee would complete its investigation and submit its report within three months of its first meeting, held on 11 October 2007.

### **SC EXAMINATIONS 2007 - FASHION & FABRIC PRACTICAL PAPER (20/11/07)**

**(No. B/1164) Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun (Third Member for La Caverne & Phoenix)** asked the Minister of Education & Human Resources whether, in regard to the Cambridge School Certificate Examinations, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Examinations Syndicate, information as to whether, on 04 October 2007, students taking the Fashion and Fabric Paper were made to sit twice for the practical paper on the same day and, if so, the reasons therefor.

**Mr Gokhool:** Mr Speaker Sir, I am informed by the MES that –

- (i) for the Fashion and Fabric subject there are two question papers. The first question paper, which is theoretical in nature, is of two hours duration. It tests concepts, knowledge, understanding and recall, whereas the second paper is a practical one which tests practical skills and the quality and accuracy of students in their ability to construct a garment, and
- (ii) the candidates taking part in the Fashion and Fabric practical examinations sat for the paper only once, except for those who took the paper at the Examination Centre at Muslim Girls' College.

In fact, I am informed by the Director of the Mauritius Examinations Syndicate that six students who sat for the Cambridge School Certificate Fashion and Fabric Paper at Muslim Girls' College Examination Centre on 04 October 2007 were made to take the paper twice.

There were two examination sessions at Muslim Girls' College Centre, one from 9.00 to 11.30 hrs for a group of six candidates, and a second one from 12.30 to 15.00 hrs for another group of five candidates.

Unfortunately, the first group of candidates was provided with examination materials and patterns for making garments, but without the question papers which remained inadvertently in the custody of the Supervisor of that examination centre.

Since both groups take the examination and since the second group starts at 12.30, when the first examination session was over at 11.30, the six candidates who took part therein were kept under close custody by MES in a room, to avoid contact with the next group of candidates who were to take the same examination at 12.30 hours. In practice, it is only when the second group is inside the examination room that the earlier group is released. It was at around 12.15 hours that the Supervisor found out that she had not distributed the question papers to the first group of six candidates.

In the light thereof, the Chief Organiser called at the Examination Centre and had a meeting with the candidates concerned, where he explained to them the problem which occurred. It is to be noted that, at no point in time, did any of the six candidates make any representation or protest regarding the non-circulation of the question papers. In the light of the meeting of the Chief Organiser with the candidates of the first group, it was decided to give the following options to them -

- (i) to be given an additional half an hour to take cognizance of the question paper and respond to same, or
- (ii) resit the paper altogether at the end of the second session at 15.00 hours.

All the six candidates agreed to resit the paper and did so after 15.00 hours when the second session was over. In the meantime, they were kept under close custody.

Although, as I have stated previously while replying to a PQ on MES, it is not my concept of ministerial responsibility to interfere in the functioning of the MES. The House will agree that this is a most serious matter, and that all the checks and balances have apparently not worked out.

This has been conveyed to the MES. I am informed, at this stage, that the

MES is handling the matter internally with the University of Cambridge International Examinations, but it is clear that the MES has already established that the Supervisor was at fault, and her attention has been drawn thereto. The supervisory services have come to an end.

I am also informed that the CIE has been apprised of the incident on the same day and that CIE has confirmed that it will have no consequence on the performance of the candidates.

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** Can I ask the hon. Minister whether he considers it to be sound to have students being in an examination centre from 9.30 in the morning to 15.00 hrs in the afternoon and to be kept in custody before an examination that they have to sit for?

**Mr Gokhool:** As I am responsible for this authority, I have given all the factual information and it is unfortunate that this happened. It is a failure and I have drawn the attention of the MES to this issue.

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** May I ask the hon. Minister whether it is normal for a Supervisor not to be in presence of question papers, because I cannot understand how this may happen? May I ask the hon. Minister how can a Supervisor be in an examination centre and not provide examination papers to the students?

**Mr Gokhool:** The Supervisor was in presence of the examination papers which were in an envelope, but it is a practical paper. There are two sets of envelopes. There is one set of envelope which refers to the materials and the garment which has to be given to the students and the other one is the examination paper proper. When the Supervisor distributed the practical paper, the materials and the garment were given to the students, but not the examination paper. I need to add that for fashion and fabric - it is not that I am removing whatever blame is there - at times, the examinations are conducted where materials and the fabric are given and the students are allowed to exercise a creativity. This was not the case. They should have been given the examination paper and that was not done.

**Mr Bérenger:** This is the second mess at the Mauritius Examinations Syndicate over a short period of time. Last time, I don't know how many young students were given wrong results, some left the education stream, then they were regraded and now we have this mess. Can I ask the hon. Minister what is going to be done to sort out things at the MES?

**Mr Gokhool:** I am as concerned as the hon. Leader of the Opposition. Mr Speaker, Sir, this is not a perfect world, you always have mistakes, but we want zero defect at the level of the MES and I am impressing upon them to take action where action has to be taken and action has been taken in this

case. They are taking other measures to ensure that such things do not occur at the MES.

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** I just heard the hon. Minister say that Cambridge has given its assurance that this will have no impact on the students. I fail to understand how keeping students for so many hours before a paper will have no impact on the performance of the students.

**Mr Gokhool:** I think the hon. lady is a teacher and she knows when there is a mistake, the benefit of doubt always goes to the students. This is the principle observed by any examination body and the CIE will have to take that into account.

*At 4.35 p.m. the sitting was suspended.*

### **SC & HSC EXAMINATIONS – SUPERVISORS & ORGANISERS – SELECTION (04/12/07)**

**(No. B/1291) Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun (Third Member for La Caverne & Phoenix)** asked the Minister of Education & Human Resources whether, in regard to the supervisors, assistant supervisors, organisers and assistant organisers appointed to conduct the Cambridge School Certificate and the Higher School Certificate Examinations, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the MES, information as to the criteria used for their selection.

*(Withdrawn)*



11/12/07  
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**SC/HSC EXAMINATIONS – SUPERVISORS & ORGANISERS –  
SELECTION**

(No. B/1322) Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun (Third Member for La Caverne and Phoenix) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether, in regard to the Supervisors, Assistant Supervisors, Organisers and Assistant Organisers appointed to conduct the Cambridge School Certificate and the Higher School Certificate Examinations, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Examinations Syndicate, information as to the criteria used for their selection.

**Mr Gokhool:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Mauritius Examinations Syndicate that the Supervisors and Assistant Supervisors as well as the Organisers and Assistant Organisers for the conduct of the Cambridge School Certificate (SC) and Higher School Certificate (HSC) examinations are selected by the syndicate essentially on the basis of seniority, that is, their respective dates of appointment as Education Officer in the Public Service. Supervisors and Assistant Supervisors are selected from Education Officers of the State sector only whereas Organisers and Assistant Organisers are selected from Education Officers of both the State and the private sectors.

The exercise of selection is done on a yearly basis and normally starts with the issue of a circular to schools in April to invite expressions of interest from those who wish to be retained to work for the conduct of the SC/HSC examinations. Obviously, those Education Officers whose wards are taking part in the examinations become *de facto* disqualified.

Thereafter, the Mauritius Examinations Syndicate undertakes the selection exercise, looking at the seniority criterion and taking into account adverse reports, if any, on the persons concerned. Normally those who have satisfactorily worked for the conduct of the SC/HSC examinations in the past are selected.

I am informed by the Mauritius Examinations Syndicate that although the existing arrangements have been working without any major problem so far, the Syndicate intends to review the whole process in the light of experience gained to render the criteria more

rigorous and effective, ensure greater accountability on the part of officers and provide for a wider pool of resource persons for the conduct and organisation of examinations.

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister whether he is aware that the criterion of seniority was not applied during the examination which was held in November this year and that there are cases where officers which have never served the MES as Assistant Organisers were asked to act as Organisers in schools and centres where the Assistant Organiser had a long experience in the conduct of examinations.

**Mr Gokhool:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I have given the reply that seniority has been used and if the officer has no adverse report, these are cases which are considered.

The hon. lady is making a general statement. The procedures are there, if somebody is aggrieved, he can make a representation to the MES who will look into the matter, but as at now, I do not have any representation to that effect.

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I am not making any general statement. In fact, I am referring to a case at a particular centre where an Assistant Organiser has subsequently had to take back offer of service, because someone else without experience was placed as Organiser in the same centre.

**Mr Speaker:** The Minister has answered that the person must make representations to the MES.

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** May I ask the hon. Minister whether he is not aware ...

**Mr Speaker:** The hon. Minister has answered the question. Does the hon. Member have another question?

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** I have another question on the same issue, Mr Speaker, Sir. The Assistant Organiser in question did make representations at the MES, Mr Speaker, Sir.

**Mr Speaker:** Is the hon. Minister aware that representations have been made?

**Mr Gokhool:** I am not aware at the stage.

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister whether he is aware that, since the procedure was not well respected this particular year, some schools have had major problems during the conduct of practical examinations? One case was referred to in this Assembly. I am referring to another case where Chemistry examinations were held and solutions prepared were not proper.

**Mr Gokhool:** Again, Mr Speaker, Sir, I must say to the House that we should not generalise from one particular case. I did answer to one particular case with regard to fashion and fabric. Another case about Chemistry examination is being referred to. If the hon. lady puts a substantive question, I'll come to the House and give all the information.

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** Mr Speaker, Sir, may I also ask the Minister whether he is aware that practical Biology examinations have been postponed for a number of times because it seems that the list of Organisers was not ready until the eve of the exams?

**Mr Gokhool:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to have your guidance. The question is about the criteria for the appointment of Supervisors, Assistant Supervisors.

**Mr Speaker:** The hon. Minister should say that he needs notice.

**Mr Dookun-Luchoomun:** A last question, Mr Speaker, Sir. In fact, I am talking about the appointment of Organisers for the exams and the question is related, Mr Speaker, Sir.

**Mr Speaker:** Yes, he has said that he needs notice.

**Mr Dookun-Luchoomun:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister just stated that one of the criteria for appointment of Supervisors is that they should be public officers. May I ask why Education Officers from the private sector have not been called for to serve as Supervisors for exams?

**Mr Gokhool:** As at now the criteria is that we look for Education Officers of the public sector. I have said that this would be looked into because we want to widen the pool of Supervisors.

**SC &**

### **HSC EXAMINATIONS FEES – SUBSIDY (25/03/08)**

**(No. B/45) Mrs F. Labelle (Third Member for Vacoas and Floreal)** asked the Minister of Social Security, National Solidarity and Senior Citizens Welfare & Reform Institutions whether, in regard to the School Certificate and the Higher School Certificate examinations fees for the year 2008, he will state –

- (a) the number of applications her Ministry has received for payment;
- (b) the number of applications approved, and
- (c) the dates the funds will be disbursed.

**Mrs Bappoo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, as at to date, the situation regarding applications for School Certificate and Higher School Certificate examinations fees for the year 2008 is as follows –

Regarding part (a) of the question, the number of applications received for SC is 6,289; for HSC, it is 2,535 and the total number of applications for both is 8,824.

Regarding part (b) of the question, the number of applications approved for SC is 4,079; for HSC, it is 1,621 and the total number of applications approved is 5,700.

As far as part (c) is concerned, I wish to inform the House that once an application is received, an enquiry is carried out to determine the eligibility of the applicant. In the case the applicant is found eligible, a certificate of eligibility is issued to the parent of the student who is required to hand over same to the officer-in-charge of the college.

As has been agreed last year by the Ministry of Education & Human Resources and Mauritius Examinations Syndicate, my Ministry disburses the total amount of fees to the Mauritius Examinations Syndicate directly after the completion of the whole exercise, the deadline of which is 31 March 2008.

**Mrs Labelle:** Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister whether as at to date, there are still parents who are awaiting an answer from the Ministry of Social Security?

**Mrs Bappoo:** They are not only awaiting an answer, Mr Speaker, Sir.

As at to date parents are coming for the first time to submit their application in spite of the fact that the first press communiqué was launched on December. It is most unfortunate that many of them wait for the last week to come and this causes a rush. There are applications which are still being entertained, but there are also new applications which are coming at the same time.

**Mrs Martin:** The hon. Minister has been talking about an ongoing process. May I ask her whether some of those parents who have been found eligible have had the fees for their children paid already?

**Mrs Bappoo:** For those who are eligible?

**Mrs Martin:** Since the hon. Minister is saying that it is an ongoing process, and probably, until the last day, the parents are going to be found eligible, have there been any parents who have been found eligible have had

their children's fees paid already?

**Mrs Bappoo:** I have answered in my reply. There are no fees being paid. The certificate is being issued to the school and then the whole amount is being disbursed at one go to the MES.

**Mrs Martin:** May I know from the hon. Minister, therefore, when is the deadline for the whole amount to be paid completely?

**Mrs Bappoo:** It is 31 March, according to the MES.

**Mr Guinness:** May I know from the Minister whether, while calculating the average, the overtime for December, for example, the factory workers, has been taken into account?

**Mrs Bappoo:** In compiling the monthly income, overtime is a matter which is being considered in the final state of monthly revenue. It is only the travelling which is not computed.

**Mr Guinness:** I am sure the hon. Minister is aware that, in December, normally people working in EPZ do a lot of overtime which is not the case throughout the year. Can the Minister reconsider the compilation of their wage bill for December when calculating the average?

**Mrs Bappoo:** For those who are working on piece rate, Mr Speaker, Sir, be it in the EPZ or even in the sugar sector, the wages of the last five months are being taken into consideration on an average of the three monthly least wages.

**Mrs Labelle:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to know from the hon. Minister whether she has an idea of the number of applications who are still in process?

**Mrs Bappoo:** I don't have the information at hand, Mr Speaker, Sir.

**Mrs Perrier:** Est-ce que le ministre se rend compte qu'en prenant en considération les cinq derniers mois qui sont les mois où il y a plus d'*overtime*, cela ne reflète pas vraiment la situation économique de ces personnes?

**Mrs Bappoo:** C'est pourquoi j'ai dit, M. le président, que nous prenons les cinq derniers mois, mais avec une moyenne des trois derniers mois avec *the least wages being paid*.

**HSC EXAMINATIONS 2007 – DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY  
PAPER (25/03/08)**

**(No. B/52) Mr G. Gunness (Third Member for Montagne Blanche and GRSE)** asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether, in regard to the error that occurred for the Design and Technology Paper of the last Higher School Certificate Examinations, he will state –

- (a) the causes thereof, and
- (b) the effect, if any, that this error has had in the award of scholarships.

**Mr Gokhool:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Mauritius Examination Syndicate (MES) that -

- (a) Following the release of the HSC October/November 2007 examinations results, queries were received at the MES from the Rectors of the Royal College of Port Louis and John Kennedy College concerning the results of coursework components for the subject Design and Technology.

The Matter was investigated at the MES and it was found that one of the Assessment Moderators had made a mistake in the transfer of marks on the marksheets. There are four columns on the marksheets related to the four Assessment criteria and one column where the total marks are to be inserted by the Assessment Moderator. One of the Assessment Moderators made a mistake in transferring marks from one specific assessment criterion column instead of transferring the marks from the total components' column marks, and

- (b) When this mistake was identified, the correct marks were submitted to University of Cambridge International Examinations (CIE) and, as a result, 16 candidates obtained better grades. There were changes in the ranks of two candidates who were competing for State Scholarship on the Technical Side (Boys). The rank of one of the candidates changed from 27th to 4th and the other one, from 15th to 6th on the Rank Order List.

- (c) The Director of MES gave public explanations on the issue and action has been initiated at the MES to review the procedures in place for strengthening quality assurance so as to ensure that this type of error does not recur. MES will have to intervene in the quality control of the marksheets of the Assessment



Moderator. The Assessment Moderator has been informed of the serious mistake and that his services will no longer be used.  
(d) There were no implications in the award of scholarships since only the first two candidates are awarded scholarships whereas the two candidates convened whose results were upgraded finally came up as 4th and 6th respectively.

### **FISHERMEN – SC & HSC EXAMINATIONS FEES – SUBSIDY (25/03/08)**

**(No. B/59) Mrs D. Perrier (Fourth Member for Savanne and Black River)** asked the Minister of Social Security, National Solidarity and Senior Citizens Welfare & Reform Institutions whether she is aware that professional registered fishermen have been denied the subsidy on the examinations fees for their wards sitting for the Cambridge School Certificate and Cambridge Higher School Certificate Examinations this year and, if so, will she state the reasons therefor.

**Mrs Bappoo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, professional registered fishermen are entitled to refund of examination fees, provided their average monthly earnings are not more than Rs7,500 or Rs10,000 as the case may be.

I understand that the applications of 7 fishermen were not acceded to as their income was initially assessed to be more than Rs7,500.

However, following representations received at my Ministry to the effect that the income of these fishermen was so much affected owing to the adverse climatic conditions prevailing during the year, their income was reassessed and, subsequently, these cases were found to be eligible and were accordingly approved.

**Mrs Perrier:** Peut-on savoir quand cette nouvelle décision a été prise?

**Mrs Bappoo:** There have been several...

*(Interruptions)*

...but there have several representations on several dates.

*(Interruptions)*

But I don't have the date at hand.

**Mr Speaker:** The Minister does not have the dates. Time is over! The Table has been advised that PQ Nos. B/63, B/64, B/65, B/66 and B/74 have been withdrawn.

**RODRIGUES -SC AND HSC EXAMS 2007 EXAMINATIONS– ORGANIZERS,  
LABORATORY ATTENDANTS– FEES (01/04/08)**

**(No. B/151) Mr J. C. Leopold (Third Member for Rodrigues)** asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether, in regard to the organizers, invigilators, laboratory attendants and others whose services were retained for the conduct of the Cambridge School Certificate and the Higher School Certificate examination 2007, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Examinations Syndicate, information as to whether all of them have been paid their fees, and if not –

- (a) the reasons therefor, and
- (b) the remedial measures that will be taken to prevent such recurrence.

**Mr Gokhool:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that all those who worked for School Certificate and Higher School Certificate examinations have been paid, except for those who worked as organizers and laboratory attendants in Rodrigues. Payment could not be effected in respect of these two categories of employees because their National Identity Card number and Tax Account Number were not provided to the Mauritius Examinations Syndicate despite several requests made to the schools to that effect. It was only on Friday 28 March 2008 that the required information was obtained and payment has already been effected on 31 March 2008.

**Mr Leopold:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I am afraid that part of the answer given by the Minister of Education is not correct, because I am perfectly aware that, since January this year, on several occasions, colleges have submitted both the IC Number and the Tax Account Number but, as at to date, some of the laboratory attendants and organizers have not been paid for the exams conducted in December 2007.

**Mr Gokhool:** I have given the information provided to me by the MES, but I have taken note of the hon. Member's remarks and I'll enquire into it and ensure that remedial action be taken.

**Mr Leopold:** Mr Speaker, Sir, as far as I know, in the claim form provided in December 2007 information like the Tax Account Number was not mentioned. Can the hon. Minister see to it that next time the MES will come forward with up to date claim form so that this problem does not occur again?

**Mr Gokhool:** Mr Speaker, Sir, in fact, we had this problem with Mauritius as well and I have already advised the MES to ensure that all the relevant information is contained in the form before the agreement is signed with the organizers, laboratory attendants and examiners for future examinations.

Mr Speaker, Sir, if all the information is available it can be processed quickly.

**Mr Leopold:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to draw the attention of the Minister to the fact that examiners for Oral English which was conducted in July 2007 were paid a couple of days before December 2007. This is again scandalous.

**Mr Gokhool:** I am aware of this and we are taking remedial action so that in future we don't have these delays. It is a lack of information that leads to the delay.

**MOTION  
SUSPENSION OF S.O. 10(2)**

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

**The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport & Shipping (Dr. R. Beebeejaun) rose and seconded.**

*Question put and agreed to.*

**RODRIGUES – MS K. A. – EXAMINATION FEES (08/04/08)**

(No. B/217) **Mr A. Nancy (First Member for Rodrigues)** asked the Minister of Social Security, National Solidarity and Senior Citizens Welfare & Reform Institutions whether, in regard to the subsidy on examination fees, she will state if same has been granted in respect of one Ms K. A. of Maréchal College, Rodrigues, and, if so, if she is entitled to same and if not, if an inquiry has been carried out thereinto and the outcome thereof.

**Reply:** Miss K. A. of Maréchal, whose mother is a beneficiary of social aid, has benefitted from payment of School Certificate Examination fees. Given the fact that children of beneficiaries of social aid are eligible for full payment of examination fees, Miss K.A. was granted full payment of examination fees.

**HSC 2007 EXAMINATIONS - URDU PAPER – RECOUNT (01/07/08)**

**(No. B/774) Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun (Third Member for La Caverne and Phoenix)** asked the Minister of Education & Human Resources whether he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Examinations Syndicate, information as to if a student, who had made a request for a recount of her Urdu Paper taken for the November/December 2007 Higher School Certificate Examinations, was informed that her script was untraceable and, if so, the reasons therefor.

**Mr Gokhool:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Mauritius Examinations Syndicate (MES) that there was indeed one candidate of Maurice Curé State College for the 2007 HSC Examinations who had applied for a remarking of her papers for Chemistry, General Paper and Urdu and who was informed that of the two papers she took for Urdu, one was lost and could not be traced back.

According to MES, the candidate had applied both for remarking and for individual candidate's report. Following the remarking a practice for all ranked candidate by Cambridge International Examinations, her results for Chemistry, General Paper and Urdu were maintained. She was provided with individual candidate reports in respect of all the papers save and except for Paper 2 of the Urdu Question Paper. CIE has informed MES that -

- (i) loss of the paper is an extremely rare failure of a sophisticated and complex system whereby CIE handles more than 5 million scripts per year, and
- (ii) since the paper had been marked and also remarked by a Principal Examiner, there is no room for doubt about the marks awarded to the candidate.

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** May I ask the hon. Minister whether the MES has asked for the situation in which a script may become lost or untraceable at the CIE?

**Mr Gokhool:** Yes, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the MES has been in touch with the CIE. On two occasions, they have written and phoned to the CIE to look for the explanations and these are the explanations provided by the CIE.

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** May we know exactly where the papers have landed? Because they have given an explanation and it seems that to have a script out of a lot untraced is a matter of concern to all those involved in marking of student's papers.

**Mr Gokhool:** It is a matter of concern. It has been mislaid. When

they do the remarking they have to look for the scripts and send the scripts to the Principal Examiner to do the exercise, and in the process, they said that the script was mislaid.

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** Have there been many other cases of loss of scripts for Mauritian students in the past?

**Mr Gokhool:** From time to time there are cases. I think these are brought to the attention of the public and MES gives the explanation which it seeks from the CIE.

**Mrs Labelle:** With your permission, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, since we are talking about MES and all these problems, there was a committee set up regarding errors on SC French Paper in 2006.

**The Deputy Speaker:** This does not arise.

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** May I ask the hon. Minister whether there are measures which are being taken for such matters not to recur in the future?

**Mr Gokhool:** At this stage, the candidate can make an appeal. In fact, CIE has decided to waive the fee chargeable for the remarking which amounts to Rs7,316. Secondly, the candidate can make an appeal against the decision of CIE and, thirdly, of course, the candidate may also go to Court and sue the CIE.

**Mr Mohamed:** Is this the case that the only script that has disappeared is for that only student who has asked for recount?

**Mr Gokhool:** This is the case of a student who asked for remarking. We know about this case.

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** May we know what is the rank of the student as far as Cambridge Scholarships are concerned?

**Mr Gokhool:** I don't have this information, but the candidate was ranked.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Minister can provide the information later.

**Mr Gokhool:** Yes, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** Will the hon. Minister look into the matter and let us know whether this has not impacted on the student's chances of securing a scholarship?

**Mr Gokhool:** I can check this information, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

### **MEDWAY COLLEGE - IRELAND - MAURITIAN STUDENTS (08/07/08)**

**(No. B/749) Mrs A. Navarre-Marie (First Member for GRNW & Port Louis West)** asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether he is aware that Mauritian nationals studying in Ireland are facing difficulties, and if so, will he state if measures have or will be taken to come to their assistance.

**Reply:** I am advised that there has been no official representation from students in Ireland about any difficulty they are confronted with.

However, on the basis of reports appearing in the press to the effect that there are some Mauritian students who are facing difficulties in Ireland following the deregistration of Medway College in February 2008, our High Commissioner in London was requested to look into the matter and to report.

He visited Ireland in that regard and met with some senior officials of the Irish Department of Education and Science and raised the issue of Mauritian students in Ireland in general, and also the case of Medway College in particular.

The Department of Education and Science in Ireland which registers complaints from international students, informed the High Commissioner that no complaint or grievance has been registered from any Mauritian student following the deregistration of the Medway College.

Our High Commissioner also met with some Mauritian students in Dublin.

The students whom he met did not voice any grievance and, indeed, seemed comfortable in Dublin.

Our High Commission in London is monitoring the situation and is ready to extend consular assistance to the Mauritian student community.

However, I am advised that, in the wake of the recent press articles reporting on the difficulties faced by Mauritian students in Ireland after the Medway College was deregistered by the Irish authorities, the Ministry of Education and Human Resources has requested the police to carry out an inquiry to determine whether the students have proceeded to Medway College on their own or through unlicensed recruiting agents.



## **SC EXAMINATIONS 2006 - FACT FINDING COMMITTEE (08/07/08)**

**(No. B/796)& B/828 Mrs F. Labelle (Third Member for Vacoas & Floreal)** asked the Minister of Education & Human Resources whether, in regard to the Fact Finding Committee set up in October 2007 in relation to the errors that had cropped up in the French paper results of the November/December 2006 Cambridge School Certificate Examinations, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Examinations Syndicate, information as to –

- (a) the composition thereof, and
- (b) if the Committee has submitted its report and, if so, when.

**Mr Gokhool:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I shall reply to Parliamentary Questions No. B/796 and No. B/828 at the same time, as they relate to the same issue.

In August 2007, Government approved the setting up of a Fact Finding Committee to investigate into discrepancies noted in the results of School Certificate candidates who sat for French Paper 3014 in November 2006. The Committee was chaired by Mr Nicolas François Ohsan-Bellepeau, Sitting Magistrate, with Mr Medavy Pillay Munien and Mr Habeebulla Hyatoolla as Assessors. The terms of reference of the Committee were broadly to -

- (i) ascertain whether procedures had been followed;
- (ii) situate responsibilities, and
- (iii) make recommendations to improve the existing procedures.

The Committee first met on 11 October 2007 and, on completion of its investigation, submitted its report to me on 27 June 2008.

The report is at present under study at the level of Government. As soon as Government has completed its examination of the report, the MES will be requested to initiate remedial actions to prevent recurrence of same, as well as disciplinary actions as appropriate.

**Mrs Labelle:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister whether he will give the names of the persons who have signed the report that has been submitted?

**Mr Gokhool:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as far as I can recollect, it's the Chairperson as well as the two assessors.

**Mrs Labelle:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister has mentioned the name of Mr Munien as one of the assessors. May I ask the hon. Minister whether, at the time Mr Munien signed the report, he was also an adviser to him?

**Mr Gokhool:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I received the report on 27 June. I cannot say at what material point in time the report was signed. As far as Mr Munien is concerned, he is not my adviser.

**Mrs Labelle:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is he adviser to the Ministry?

**Mr Gokhool:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am saying that he is not the adviser.

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister whether he would give us an indication on the recommendations made by the Fact Finding Committee?

**Mr Gokhool:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I understand the interest of the hon. Member. But, at this stage, I cannot reveal the content of the report. It has to be viewed by Government, and then a decision will be taken.

**Mr Guinness:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, from what the hon. Minister is saying, has Government not yet taken cognizance of the Fact Finding Report?

**Mr Gokhool:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the procedure is that the Fact Finding Committee was set up by Cabinet. The report has not been submitted. I have to report to Cabinet and, from there, things will follow.

**Mr Guinness:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister just said that he received the report on 27 June. Therefore, everybody in the country is waiting for this report. I thought that the Minister would have made the report public. Why is the hon. Minister taking so much time to bring it to Cabinet?

**Mr Gokhool:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the report has been submitted to me on 27 June, but it has to be looked into. We have to go to Cabinet, and afterwards the issue of whether making the report public or not will be addressed. I don't think it's too long a time since the report has been submitted.

**Mrs Labelle:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister,

besides being one of the assessors, in what capacity is Mr Munien attached to the Ministry for the time being?

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member herself said that he is an adviser.

**Mr Gokhool:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I don't think it arises out of this question. But, I can answer the question.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Minister will take stock of what the hon. Member has said and will ask whether he is an adviser.

**Mrs Labelle:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, maybe I have not been clear. From what the hon. Minister stated, Mr Munien was one of the assessors of this Committee, and besides he is attached to the Ministry. May we know from the hon. Minister in which capacity he is attached to the Ministry?

**Mr Gokhool:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, Mr Munien is employed to look after the ZEP schools as a Project Coordinator.

### **HSC PROFESSIONAL EXAMINATIONS (29/07/08)**

**(No. B/1000) Mrs D. L.Dookun-Luchoomun (Third Member for La Caverne and Phoenix)** asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether, he will state when the decision was taken to hold Higher School Certificate Professional Examinations, indicating the colleges which offer the courses leading to these examinations.

**Mr Gokhool:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as the House was informed, in the reply to the PNQ of Tuesday last, as part of the education reform programs, the objectives of my Ministry is to go one step further in traditional mainstream education by introducing the vocationalisation of the curriculum.

Already in many schools, subjects like fashion & fabric, food studies, art & design, design & communication and travel & tourism are being offered and some schools are even standing out to dedicating themselves to the vocationalisation of secondary education. A case in point is the John Kennedy College.

It is the policy of my Ministry to give growing importance to vocational subjects in view of the new orientation of the economy. In this

context, my Ministry has requested the MES to work with Cambridge on the possibility of introducing the HSC Professional as a new qualification at the end of the secondary cycle in parallel with the present system of HSC which is mainly academic in nature. The HSC Professional has a direct linkage of school with the world of work in that it includes a placement programme for the students, encourages entrepreneurship and allows, by virtue of its four streams, a clear focus on a professional line that a student could opt for. This qualification is a three-year course based around a work related programme and has a modular examination approach.

The advantages of the HSC Professional is that it will help reduce the number of drop-outs after School Certificate by offering an appealing work study package, decrease existing mismatch in skills of school leavers and the requirement of the job market, reinforce academic skills and allow students to learn valuable work related skills as the HSC Professional has a work placement component, help fight unemployment, allow students to make informed career decision and provide more opportunities to students to accede to tertiary education through diversified channels and work incentive.

The MES has been requested to refine the proposals made to the Ministry. Once these are finalised, they will be submitted for consultations to all stakeholders.

Subject to all the conditions being fulfilled, my Ministry is considering the advisability of introducing the HSC Professional tentatively as from 2010 on a pilot basis. Meanwhile the range of vocational subjects will be increased.

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** Mr Deputy Speaker, may I ask the hon. Minister whether - if I have got him right - he is planning to have HSC professional being implemented in years to come and that the subjects that will form part of this course are, amongst others, design and communication, design and technology and other subjects that he has just mentioned, which are presently being taught at schools?

**Mr Gokhool:** These subjects form part of the family of professional subjects. The other subjects are banking, finance, ICT, and these are the package of subjects which can fall within the ambit of HSC professional.

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** I heard the hon. Minister state that if students fail at SC level, we should be able to get them back into the professional line. However, I would like to stress, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with your permission, and ask the Minister whether he is aware that students

are already doing very well in these subjects and many of these subjects form part of the scholarship groups of subjects and that most students taking design and technology do so with the view of getting a scholarship. And, therefore, the question of stating that these students will be restored through a professional line at the HSC level does not arise.

**Mr Gokhool:** I have made myself clear. There is a new stream, the HSC professional, where a certain number of subjects will be grouped and if students opt for that, they will sit for the exams and they will be awarded an HSC professional and not the conventional HSC certificate.

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** It's only going to be a change in the name of the examination. The certificate only will bear another name whereas the teaching and the course will still be the same as the one being taught at school.

**Mr Gokhool:** I think the hon. lady may wish to take a look because the structure of the programme is available at Cambridge. Right now a certificate of HSC is awarded and the subjects are mentioned, but the HSC professional regroups subjects which belong more to the family of professional subjects. It is a distinct certificate and, as I said, it is a different kind of a programme and it is not the same programme that the hon. lady is thinking of.

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the present HSC examination consists of three main subjects and two subsidiary subjects amongst which we have General Paper. My question is whether we are going to have a separate appellation.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Minister said it is a new stream.

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** No, it cannot be, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

**The Deputy Speaker:** This is the answer that has been given.

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** That is why I want a clarification from the Minister. If we are saying that the students would be given a new course, then I do not agree and I will ask the Minister to state how this is going to be a new course. Because the students are ...

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member has made her point.

**Mr Gokhool:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I kindly request the hon. lady to look at my answer and she will get the answer.

**Mr Rucktooa:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, to embark on studies of HSC, usually the prerequisite of SC qualification is a minimum of 4 credits. Is the hon. Minister considering the same prerequisite to embark on the HSC professional examination?

**Mr Gokhool:** I stand guided by the MES because it is looking at all the issues.

**Mr Guinness:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, recently the Director of the MES stated that the syllabus for the HSC professional is ready and will be submitted to stakeholders in the education sector. Can I know whether the Ministry has received a copy and, if yes, is the hon. Minister prepared to table copy of the syllabus.

**Mr Gokhool:** We have received a copy, it has been looked into and sent back to MES for further consideration. At this stage, I do not think it is proper for me to table a copy. Once the MES has finalised, I will have no problem to submit copy of the programme.

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** May I know from the Minister whether students in the mainstream who opt to take business, banking or design and technology would also be attributed the same certificate or will they be allowed to have an HSC academic certificate as the Minister states?

**Mr Gokhool:** If they opt not to go for the HSC professional, they will be given the normal HSC certificate, but if they opt for the HSC professional which is, as I said, three-year duration, they will be awarded the HSC professional.

**Mr Rucktooa:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, personally I think a lot of confusion is arising, because of the appellation of ‘Higher School Certificate Professional Examinations’. The hon. Member was talking about scholarships and I know what she is referring to. All this is arising because of the words “Higher School Certificate Professional Examinations”. Will the hon. Minister consider giving the same course on these subjects, but calling it by another name like “Higher National Certificate”?

**Mr Gokhool:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this is a programme which is offered by the Cambridge International Examinations Body and I don’t think we can change it. The MES is in consultation with the CIE. It is an

internationally recognised certificate. I don't think that in Mauritius we can try to bring about amendments and all that. It will affect its international standard.

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister whether, from now on, we are going to have two sets of scholarships for HSC professional students and HSC academic students?

**Mr Gokhool:** There will be incidence once the project is approved. I said the project, in any case, will be piloted as from 2010 and all the modalities will have to be finalised. We are still ahead of time and if this project goes ahead, then it will have implications for the scholarships.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The Table has been advised that PQ Nos. B/1008, B/1009, B/1010 and B/1019 have been withdrawn. Next question!

### **SC EXAMS 2007 – FACT FINDING COMMITTEE (12/08/08)**

**(No. B/1125) Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun (Third Member for La Caverne & Phoenix)** asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether, in regard to the report of the Fact Finding Committee set up to investigate into the errors in the results of the November/December 2007 Cambridge School Certificate Examinations French paper, he will state if he will now table copy thereof.

**The Minister of Environment (Dr. J.B. David):** Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I am replying to this question. I refer the hon. Member to the joint reply given to PQ Nos. B/796 and B/828 at our sitting on 08 July 2008.

It is not proposed to release the report of the Fact Finding Committee for reasons of confidentiality and security. The report makes ample reference to the systems and processes of the MES in carrying out examinations. It would therefore be prejudicial to the functioning of the Syndicate to render such sensitive information public.

A summary of the findings and recommendations of the Fact Finding Committee has already been made public by Cabinet.

The MES is now implementing the following course of action which has been approved by Government -

(i) initiating disciplinary proceedings against those who have been found responsible of negligence, lack of supervision and other



shortcomings;

(ii) setting up of a Steering Committee under the chairmanship of the Director of the MES to look into the implementation of the recommendations of the FFC, and

(iii) ensuring that a new system is in place before the 2008 SC/HSC examinations.

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** May I ask the hon. Minister whether he would be ready to table the recommendations in the National Assembly?

**Dr. David:** As I said, Sir, some of the findings have already been made public and I am ready to lay copy on the Table of the National Assembly.

### **HSC - MUSIC – EXAMINATION SUBJECT (19/08/08)**

**(No. B/1181) Mr G. Lesjongard (Second Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue)** asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether, in regard to the introduction of music as an examination subject at the Cambridge Higher School Certificate as from November 2009, he will state –

(a) the colleges offering music at Form V level, and

(b) the requirements for taking the subject at the Cambridge Higher School Certificate.

**Reply:** At present, music (both western and oriental) is taught as a subject only in Forms I and II. In the context of Curriculum Reforms, as from 2009, consideration will be given to students of Form III being taught music as a subject and if the process gathers momentum, it will be gradually extended to other classes culminating up to its introduction in HSC in year 2013 or earlier as the case may be. In such an eventuality, collaborative arrangements with the *Conservatoire De Musique François Mitterrand* and the MES will have to be resorted to basically for practical based classes.

At this stage, music is not being offered at SC or HSC level. Candidates can, however, take Music privately at Advanced Subsidiary (AS) Level and as from 2009, it will also be possible for them to take Music at Advanced or Advanced Subsidiary Level.

The teaching of Music as a subject at Higher School Certificate level in 2009 is therefore not envisaged at this stage.

(*Note* : 2 Advanced Subsidiary Levels in the same subject are equivalent to one “A” Level).