

TERTIARY

SCHOLARSHIPS

YEAR 2001

RODRIGUAN STUDENTS - STATE (PRESIDENT AWARD) SCHOLARSHIP (03/04/01)

(No. B/93) **Mr C. Leopold (Fourth Member for Rodrigues)** asked the Minister of Education & Scientific Research whether, in regard to the Rodriguan born students who are beneficiaries of the State (President Award) scholarship at the University of Mauritius for the year 2000/01, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to -

- (a) their names;
- (b) the monthly amount payable to them;
- (c) whether they have been paid since the beginning of the first semester of the year 2000/01 and, if not, why not and whether he will make a statement thereon.

Mr Obeegadoo: Sir, I am informed that:

- (a) The scholarship under the President's Award Scheme for the year 2000/01 has been awarded to Miss Marie Joyceline Begue (now Mrs Hortense).
- (b) The monthly allowance payable to her is Rs6,500.
- (c) Mrs Hortense has already been paid her allowance for the first semester 2000/01.

Mr Leopold: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, there are two other students at the University to whom scholarships had been promised. I already contacted the hon. Minister of Education and the Minister of Rodrigues on this issue. Until now, these cases have not been cleared. Can I know from the Minister what will happen in the case of these two students?

Mr Obeegadoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, there is only one scholarship under the President's Award Scheme. The hon. Member might be referring to the two new scholarships announced by the previous Government for science related subjects. If that is the case, as the hon. Member knows, there has been some controversy as to whether the scholarships should indeed be limited to science subjects or otherwise. For the present year, the *status quo* is being maintained, that is, the gentleman - I believe it's Mr Courteau - already studying at the University of Mauritius, will benefit from the Science Subjects Scholarship Scheme pending an overall review of the whole gamut of scholarships being made available to Rodriguan students.

Mr Léopold: Sir, the students are already at the University since August last year, and I know of the financial difficulties of the families. Can I know from the hon. Minister when this question will be finalised?

Mr Obeegadoo: As I said, the matter has already been finalised. Unfortunately, we are not responsible for the confusion that initially existed. The matter has now been thrashed out. For the present academic year, the *status quo* is being maintained, that is, Mr Courteau should have benefited from all the payments due to him.

UNREVISED

DR/D28/P10/1

*On resuming at 2.35 p.m. with Mr Speaker in the Chair***STATE SCHOLARSHIPS - NUMBER, BENEFICIARIES, ETC.**

(No. B/746) 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 State scholarships awarded to students, commonly known as laureates, he will, since the creation of such type of scholarships to date -

- (a) give the number of
 - (i) students who have been awarded same;
 - (ii) beneficiaries who after successful completion of their studies have come back to Mauritius and the number of those who have not; and
- (b) say what measures are being taken to encourage successful beneficiaries to return to work in Mauritius.

Mr Obegadoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, a (i) The Mauritius Laureate Scheme dates back to 1818, when only one student was nominated. The hon. Member will appreciate that it is a rather difficult task to calculate the exact number of laureates since 1818.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Education Regulations 1957, as subsequently amended, provided for the award of 16 State of Mauritius Scholarships. With the establishment of the SSR National Scholarships in 1986, the number was increased to 18 yearly.

Furthermore, since 1999, 12 additional scholarships (including 2 for Rodrigues) are awarded yearly by the Government, under the Additional Laureate Scheme. This makes for a total of 30 scholarships awarded by the State for undergraduate studies on the basis of three distinct schemes.

As regards the second part of the question, although laureates are required to enter into a bond providing for them to return to the country, it has been difficult to monitor and to manage the system in that there is no way of precisely tracing out what happens to the students after they have finished their studies.

(NO B/746 CONF'D)

At present the Tertiary Education Commission is carrying out a tracer study to assess the exact situation. The findings of the study will reveal how many beneficiaries of scholarships for the past ten years have returned to Mauritius and what are their contributions and what have been their contributions to the various sectors of the economy and to national development in general. The report, I have been informed, will be ready within the next two months.

For the information of the House, I would like to add that a Task Force on reforms in the tertiary sector has been set up with representatives of the Ministry of Economic Development, Financial Services and Corporate Affairs, the Ministry of Training, Skills Development and Productivity, the Tertiary Education Commission, the University of Mauritius, the University of Technology, the Mauritius Research Council, the Mahatma Gandhi Institute, the Mauritius Examinations Syndicate and the private sector.

The Task Force is, *inter alia*, carrying out a comprehensive review of the scholarship system and the Task Force has already observed that for instance -

- (i) Under the present Laureate Scheme, Government sponsors yearly 28 Mauritian students for undergraduate studies abroad at the cost of over Rs70m and about 9 scholarships at postgraduate level for about Rs6.5m.
 - (ii) The present State of Mauritius scholarship scheme dates back to the pre-independence period, when the capacity to provide tertiary education locally was very limited.
 - (iii) There is no guarantee at present that scholars who have been sponsored by Government will eventually come back to work in Mauritius.
 - (iv) The cut-throat competition to obtain the limited scholarships prompts the students to focus very narrowly on subjects where they are more likely to obtain a scholarship.
-

UNREVISED

DR/D28/P10/3
(NO B/746 CONTD)

- (v) There is a large number of students with excellent grades at the Higher School Certificate examinations who are unable to pursue higher studies either because of the limited number of scholarships or because of the limited number of places available at the University of Mauritius .

Furthermore, the allocation of scholarships on a gender basis and subject-wise favoured students ranked much after better students on a combined merit list.

So, on the whole there is marginal difference with regard to performance gender-wise, and that difference, whatever difference there is, is called upon to disappear with the provision of equal facilities for science in boys and girls schools.

So, in the course of its work the Task Force will tackle many questions presently being directed at the Scholarship system - and I would like to give a few examples, Mr Speaker, Sir, for instance -

- Should the State continue to fund studies abroad at undergraduate level when the courses are available locally?
 - Should the State instead place greater emphasis on scholarships for post-graduate studies abroad?
 - Should scholarships continue to be awarded on a gender basis or should there be a combined list of merit?
 - Should scholarships remain open as to the proposed field of study or should at least some of the scholarships relate directly to the needs of the country?
 - Should beneficiaries continue to be required to return to the country after their studies and if so, what should be the legal and financial mechanism involved and how is it to be managed?
-

UNREVISED

DR/D28/P10/4
(NO B/746 CONT'D)

The hon. Member and other Members of the House are welcome to make their views and suggestions.

Mr Gungah: A supplementary question, Mr Speaker, Sir. Since these scholarships involve a huge amount of money and the beneficiaries sign a bond before leaving, what are the measures which the Minister intends to take in order to make the beneficiaries respect these engagements because in the past it hasn't been so?

Mr Obeegadoo: As I was saying just now, Mr Speaker, Sir, the system very simply has not worked out. There is no precise information to tell us what percentage of the students do come back after their studies to work in Mauritius. The mechanism to enforce the bond is completely unreliable and whatever indications there are would suggest that many of these students, in fact, do stay abroad. So, in the comprehensive review of the scholarship system, we need to decide first and foremost whether it is desirable and necessary for these students to return to their home country. And, if so, what is the legal and financial mechanism to be put in place to ensure the desired results and how do we manage it.

Mr Armance: May I ask the hon. Minister of Education whether he will consider the advisability of introducing more scholarships mainly in the field of Information Technology because it will be needed in the near future for our cyber island?

Mr Obeegadoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, ideally we would like to give a scholarship to every student of the land, but I am sure one realises that the possibilities of Government to ...

Mr Speaker: I think this question is not strictly relevant to the main question. If the hon. Minister can give a short answer it would be better.

UNREVISED

DR/D28/P10/5
(NO B/746 CONT'D)

Mr Obeegadoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, the point is that we are committed to human resource development in the field of ICT and we shall use whatever means at our disposal, financial and otherwise, to ensure that the maximum number of students at primary, secondary and tertiary level can study ICT.

Mrs Perrier: I am a bit surprised to hear the Minister say that one of the questions addressed to the task force is whether we should go on awarding scholarships on a gender basis. I would suggest that the gender basis should remain; it is the trend now and you can't repeal these criteria.

Mr Obeegadoo: The hon. Member seems to be labouring under a misconception. As the present system stands, it is objectively against girl students at Higher School Certificate who tend to do better very often on the combined merit list.

YEAR 2002

RICARDO, MR MOUZA -STATE SCHOLARSHIP (26/03/02)

(No. B/9) Mr J. C. Barbier (First Member for GRNW and Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Education and Scientific Research whether he will make a statement on the bursaries tenable by Mauritians abroad, with a specific reference to the case of Mr Ricardo Mouza.

The Minister of Economic Development, Financial Services and Corporate Affairs (Mr K. Khushiram): Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I will reply to this question. Bursaries offered by the State fall in the following four categories –

- (i) 2 scholarships under the Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam National Scholarship Scheme which covers all expenses, that is, international travel, tuition fees and a living allowance for a first degree in medicine for the whole duration of the course;
- (ii) 16 scholarships under the State of Mauritius Scholarship Scheme which also covers all expenses as for the SSR National Scholarship for any course, but the award is funded for a period of only 4 years;
- (iii) 12 scholarships under the Additional Laureate Scheme (including 2 for Rodriguans) which provides a financial package of up to R 500,000 yearly up to 4 years for any course; and
- (iv) about 9 scholarships under the State of Mauritius Postgraduate Scholarship Scheme which covers expenses for a one-year Master's degree abroad. The number of scholarships varies depending on the number of awards that can be funded from the budget allocated to the Ministry for that purpose.

Concerning Mr Ricardo Mouza, from the Chagos Island, he was exceptionally awarded a scholarship under the Additional Laureate Scheme, that is, the third category, in 1999 over and above the 12 scholarships awarded each year in view of his excellent performance at the HSC examinations.

The scholars under the Additional Laureate Scheme are aware of the financial limit and that they have to top up any amount over and above the R500,000 yearly. The Ministry pays the tuition fees to the University and the remaining balance is paid as monthly living allowance up to the approved rate. However, in some countries, like the United States,

tuition fees and the rate of exchange have kept increasing, resulting at times in overpayments.

In the case of Mr Mouza, for the first two Academic Years, the Ministry of Education & Scientific Research has paid a total amount of R1,058,509 entailing an overpayment of R58,509. For the third academic year, that is, the year 2001/02, an amount of about R214,000 has already been paid as University fees and living allowances for the 1st semester.

Mr Mouza has made a plea that the amount overpaid to him should not be deducted from the amount that still remains to be paid for the current academic year as the cost of living is relatively high in Arizona where he is studying. The Ministry of Education and Scientific Research is considering favourably this request on the understanding that should the overpayment need to be recovered, this will be done after Mr Mouza would have completed his studies and started working.

I wish to inform Members that following representations received from laureates to the effect that they are encountering serious difficulties to make do with the amount presently payable to them as opposed to the prevailing cost of living in the respective countries, Government has set up a Standing Committee to review allowances payable. The case of Mr Mouza has been referred to the Committee with a certificate of urgency.

Mr Barbier: The Minister informed us that Government grants R500,000 and if there is an increase, it needs to be topped up by the students. Is the Minister aware that in the case of Ricardo Mouza, being given he is a sponsored student, he has a G1 visa, he has no right to work in the United States, as most Mauritian students do elsewhere? Is the Minister aware of that policy in the United States?

Mr Khushiram: Mr Speaker, Sir, Mr Mouza, like all the other twelve scholars under the Additional Laureate Scheme, is governed by the same principles, which is that their allowance is a maximum of R500,000. They all study in the United States. The same restriction on work conditions apply to all of them. However, as I have indicated to the Member, the Standing Committee that the Government has set up will be reviewing the allowances payable to scholars and there is likely that the present ceiling may be revised to take account of increasing costs of living in the countries where the scholars stay. I would entreat the hon. Member to wait for the conclusions of that committee.

Dr. Chady: Mr Speaker, from what I understand, from October 2001, Mr Mouza has not been receiving money for his tuition fees and has had to make do with his allowance to pay his fees. I also understand that he is in a very desperate situation right now, with no money to pay his electricity bills, etc. So, would the hon. Minister make a proper inquiry?

Mr Khushiram: Mr Speaker, from the information that the Ministry has provided to me, clearly, an amount has already been paid for his university fees for the first semester 2001/2002 that covers the period October 2001 which the hon. Member is mentioning. However, for additional payments that would be made, it would be done in accordance with the schedule of payments as had been done in the past. Mr Mouza, in the plea he has made, does not refer to any late payment. He is only wishing that overpayment that has been made to him not to be deducted in future allowances.

18 June, 2002
(4)

8

UNREVISED

DR/D15/P02/1

LAUREATE SCHEME

(No. B/407) Mr M. Dowarkasing (Third Member for Curepipe and Midlands) asked the Minister of Education and Scientific Research whether the laureate scheme has been the subject matter of any complaint and, if so, what remedial actions are being contemplated.

Mr Obegadoo: Sir, my Ministry has not received any formal complaint concerning the so-called laureate scheme as such since September 2000.

It should be recalled that the laureate scheme was established in 1818 and subsequently became the state laureate scheme with a number of beneficiaries which now stands at 18. These laureates benefit from a scholarship covering university fees and living expenses for an undergraduate course. In 1999, following the phasing out of Australian scholarships the then Government introduced an additional scholarship scheme which provides for 12 scholarships of R 500,000 for undergraduate studies irrespective of course or country concerned. Further, a number of five scholarships are offered to the best H.S.C. students of Rodrigues, two of which are tenable abroad and three at the University of Mauritius.

A number of flaws within the present scheme have come to light in recent years. For instance, the fact that the scholarships concern only undergraduate courses often available at our own universities whereas at the same cost the State could have funded a far larger number of students for postgraduate studies on courses unavailable locally. Further, the allocation of scholarships genderwise objectively discriminates against girl students year after year should we consider a unisex merit list. Another example would concern the additional scholarship scheme which permits students to opt freely for any course in any country however costly and thereafter claim to be unjustly treated by the State, should they be lacking in funds.

In the light of these and other quite obvious shortcomings of the present laureate scheme, the Task Force on reforms in the tertiary sector of education which was set up by my Ministry over a year ago is scrutinizing the present scheme with a view to formulating proposals to improve what exists by providing for a scholarship scheme that is fairer and more responsive to the present and future needs of the country.

UNREVISED

DR/D15/P02/2
(NO B/407 CONT'D)

The hon. Member may wish to submit his views to the Task Force for consideration.

Mr Dowarkasing: Is the Minister happy that the country is reaping the full benefits from the investment that we are making on those scholars?

Mr Obeegadoo: Certainly not, Mr Speaker, Sir, which is precisely why after many years when nobody called into question the laureate scheme, we are now taking a careful look at each and every aspect of the scheme to see how it can be improved.

Mr Dowarkasing: Can the Minister confirm whether about 50% of those students benefiting from those scholarships are not returning to the country or we don't know their whereabouts?

Mr Obeegadoo: I would not be surprised if the figure was above 50%, Mr Speaker, Sir.

(No. B/566) Mr A.K. Gungah (Second Member for Grand' Baie & Poudre d'Or) asked the Minister of Education & Scientific Research whether he is aware of the hardship suffered by beneficiaries of the Additional Scholarship Scheme for further studies in UK and, if so, will he state what remedial measures have been taken.

The Minister of Training, Skills Development & Productivity (Mr S. Fowdar): Sir, the Additional Scholarship Scheme was introduced in 1999, following the phasing out by the Australian Government of 12 scholarships for undergraduate studies. Under this Scheme, 12 scholarships are awarded each year, including 2 for Rodrigues, for undergraduate studies, over and above the 18 fully-funded State scholarships provided for in the Education Act. It was then decided to help those students, who would otherwise have been denied a scholarship to study abroad, with a financial package of up to R 500,000 yearly for up to 4 years for any course of study. Since the scholarships are no longer funded by the Australian Government, the scholars are free to study in any country of their choice. However, they are aware of the financial upper limit and they have to top up any amount over and above the maximum yearly entitlement of R 500,000. A number of these scholars, who would have studied in Australia, under the Australian Scholarship Scheme, prefer to study elsewhere, for example, the UK or the USA, where fees and cost of living are much higher, and after having accepted the scholarships and the conditions thereof, try to lobby and seek funds in retrospect.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we are aware of the plight of these students, with increases in tuition fees and cost of living and increases in rates of exchange.

CA/D30/P06/3
(No. B/566) (contd)

As a matter of fact, we have also received representations from parents of students who have decided to study abroad on their own and who face similar problems. However, Mr Speaker, Sir, one has to bear in mind that these students have chosen their course and the country where they are studying of their own volition, and it is not fair to expect that Government should step in when they have problems. Furthermore, there are a number of students, with excellent results at the HSC, who neither get any scholarship nor any financial assistance. Many are unable even to afford university studies locally. With the developments taking place in the existing public tertiary education institutions, like the University of Mauritius and the University of Technology, the creation of private running institutions, Mauritius has, over the recent past, increased considerably its capacity to provide tertiary education at undergraduate level and postgraduate level in certain disciplines. We have to make the best of what is available locally and develop our local capacity further to make Mauritius an exporter of educational services in the region, instead of an importer. A Task Force on Tertiary Education is presently working on a draft White Paper on Tertiary Education, and has been called upon to address, *inter alia*, the whole Laureate Scheme.

In the meantime, it is proposed to maintain the financial limit to beneficiaries of scholarships under the Additional Laureate Scheme to R 500,000. However, these laureates will be issued with a letter incorporating a strong recommendation to opt for places like Mauritius, India, France or South Africa, where they will be able to cover all their expenses within the financial limit of R 500,000.

29 OCT 02
⑥

58

CA/D31/W05/1

POST GRADUATE SCHOLARSHIPS - BENEFICIARIES

(No. B/635) Dr. A. Boolell (Second Member for Vieux Grand Port & Rose Belle) asked the Minister of Education & Scientific Research whether he will give the number of beneficiaries of the Post Graduate scholarship over the last 3 years.

Reply: The answer is as follows –

	Scheme	1999	2000	2001
(i)	Scholarship offered by Government of Mauritius			
	State of Mauritius Postgraduate Scholarships Scheme	8	9	9
(ii)	Scholarship offered under Bilateral Co-operation			
	1. Indo-Mauritian Cultural Exchange Programme	1		
	2. Malaysia Technical Co-operation Training Programme	1		
	3. People's Republic of China		1	2
	4. Programme Canadien de Bourses de la Francophonie (PCBF)		1	
	5. Republic of France	22	16	40
	6. Russian Federation	3	2	2
	7. USA: Fulbright Junior Staff Development Programme	3	2	3
(iii)	Multilateral Organisation			
	1. Canada Commonwealth Scholarships & Fellowship Programme	2	3	1
	2. India Commonwealth Scholarship & Fellowship Plan			1
	2. New Zealand Commonwealth Scholarships & Fellowship Plan		1	1
	3. United Kingdom Commonwealth Scholarships & Fellowship Plan	1		2
	TOTAL	41	35	61

23/3/04

36

7

D02/P07/mt/5

UNREVISED

RODRIGUES - SSR MEDICAL SCHOLARSHIPS

(No. B/69) **Mr J. Von-Mally (Third Member for Rodrigues)** asked the Minister of Education and Scientific Research whether, in regard to the SSR Medical Scholarships for Rodrigues, he will -

- (a) state the number given to Rodriguan students yearly;
- (b) give the eligibility criteria for same, indicating if they are meant for students having completed their secondary education in Rodriguan institutions only, and
- (c) state if any have been given to eligible students having passed their HSC exams of 2003-2004.

Mr Obeegadoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that the SSR Medical Scholarships Scheme for Rodrigues was set up by the Rodrigues Regional Assembly in the year 2003, and is wholly administered by the Executive Council of Rodrigues.

I am further informed that the scheme consists of two scholarships for studies at the SSR Medical College, Belle Rive. At the present moment, my Ministry does not have all the information requested by the hon. gentleman, which information is in the possession of the Rodrigues Executive Council.

Accordingly, I would wish, with your permission, Sir, to suggest to the hon. Third Member for Rodrigues that he redirects the question to the Rodriguan authorities.

Mr Von-Mally: Being given that Rodrigues forms part of the Republic of Mauritius - and this question was put in Rodrigues, they have answered everything, except the question - may I ask the hon. Minister if it would not be proper to have an inquiry carried out there for the sake of transparency and justice to these children?

Mr Obeegadoo: I am not privy to the debates within the Rodrigues Regional Assembly, Sir, but if the hon. Member has any information which he wishes to communicate to me, I shall certainly grant him a fair hearing.

23/11/04 51

(8)

UNREVISED

SC/D37/P10/01

On resuming at 3.10 p.m. with Mr Speaker in the Chair

ADDITIONAL SCHOLARSHIPS SCHEME - BENEFICIARIES

(No. B/863) Mr S. Sakaram (Second Member for Vacoas and Floreal) asked the Minister of Education and Scientific Research whether, in regard to the Additional Laureates Scheme, he will state –

- (a) the quantum of the allowances granted to the additional laureates and the number of beneficiaries per year;
- (b) the rate of the pound sterling in Mauritian rupees when the Scheme was introduced and its present rate, and
- (c) whether he will make the necessary adjustments so that beneficiaries can meet the high cost of living in the United Kingdom and table a copy of the report of the Tertiary Education Commission on the above matter.

Mr Obegadoo: Sir, the Additional Scholarships Scheme was introduced in 1999 following the phasing out by the Australian Government of 12 scholarships for undergraduate studies. Under this Scheme, 12 scholarships ten (10) for Mauritius and two (2) for Rodrigues are awarded yearly for undergraduate studies, over and above the 18 State Scholarships provided for in the Education Act. The 18 fully funded State Scholarships which are awarded to the best ranked students by Cambridge are comprehensive in nature inasmuch as they cover both tuition fees and living expenses and the quantum thereof accordingly varies depending upon the country of study.

In contradistinction, the Additional Scholarships Scheme which benefits students ranked after those obtaining the comprehensive State Scholarships, is for an amount limited by a ceiling of Rs500,000 which was the yearly average cost of studies (living expenses, tuition fees) in Australia in 1999. Further to representations received, that ceiling was raised in 2003 to Rs590,000 based upon recommendations made by the

UNREVISED**SC/D37/P10/02**

Tertiary Education Commission taking into account tuition fees, rates of exchange and cost of living in Australia.

The Scheme as initially designed was meant to finance students to pursue their studies in Australia and not in the U.K or anywhere else. Consequently, the question of the exchange rate of the Pound Sterling vis-à-vis the Mauritian Rupee does not arise. However, the scheme does give the flexibility to beneficiaries to pursue higher studies in any country of their choice provided they top up, as may be necessary, any amount over and above the maximum yearly entitlement of Rs590,000. Beneficiaries under the Additional Scholarships Scheme are called upon to sign an undertaking to the effect that they should make their own arrangements to meet any additional expenses above the ceiling and that Government will not be liable, in any manner whatsoever, for any additional expenditure.

Students – I am sure the hon. gentleman will agree, should, prior to embarking on university studies, be fully aware of the cost implications thereof and likely cost increases having regard to their own available financial resources so as to make judicious decisions in relation thereto. The State cannot and should not be expected to revisit the Additional Scholarships Scheme at any time upon request. However, as Members may be aware, a White Paper is under preparation in respect of reforms for the Tertiary Sector of education, including scholarships.

The Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) has never published any report on the Additional Scholarships Scheme relating to the exchange rate of the Pound Sterling relative to the Mauritian Rupee.

YEAR 2005

TERTIARY EDUCATION LOAN SCHEME – SETTING UP (18/10/05)

(No. I B/352) Mrs S. Hanoomanjee (Second Member for Savanne and Black River) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether he will state if a Tertiary Education Loan Scheme has been set up and, if so, will he give the details thereof.

Mr Gokhool: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Tertiary Education Loan Scheme is part of the Government Programme for 2005-2010. A Committee has been set up at the level of my Ministry to look into the issue. The findings and recommendations of the Committee will be incorporated in the White Paper on Tertiary Education, which is currently under preparation. The main objective of the Tertiary Education Loan Scheme will be to increase access and improve equity in the Tertiary Education Sector. The loan will be open to all students following full-time and part-time award tertiary level education and training programmes in local, public and registered private institutions. It will cover the costs of tuition fees, books, examination fees and other related costs.

The proposed scheme will have to be discussed with the Ministry of Finance & Economic Development and other stakeholders in due course.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: The hon. Minister is, no doubt, aware that the previous Government had set up a Tertiary Loan Education Scheme on loans that that were secured only on the personal guarantee of students, i.e., neither the parents nor the students were required to provide any security for the repayment. Can the Minister say whether the same conditions will apply?

Mr Gokhool: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am aware of the scheme, but the scheme was not sustainable that is why it has to be revisited. Besides, the Government has a scheme which is going to be proposed in the context of the White Paper on Tertiary Education.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Is the Minister saying that the scheme was not sustainable? Can the Minister said how many students had benefitted from the scheme?

Mr Gokhool: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, a total of 179 students benefitted from the scheme.

SCHOLARSHIPS – AWARD – 2000-2005 (18/10/05)

(No. I B/360) Mr S. Mohamed (Third Member for Rivière des Anguilles & Souillac) asked the Minister of Education & Human Resources whether, he will table a detailed list of scholarships awarded to students and officers of his Ministry between the years 2000 to 2005 and say if it is proposed to review the existing method for the award of scholarships in order to make it more transparent.

Mr Gokhool: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, scholarships offered to students who have successfully completed their Higher School Certificate examinations are scholarships either State funded or provided by friendly donor countries or institutions. A list of the various scholarships will be tabled.

It is to be noted that the Open Scholarships processed by my Ministry are published in the newspapers as well as posted on my Ministry's web site, and is open to the public. Thus, there are no scholarships which are specifically awarded to officers of my Ministry *per se*.

I would like to inform the House that Government has recently decided that the criteria for the award of scholarships and the State of Mauritius Postgraduate Scholarships be reviewed, so that the criteria are more objective and transparent and the developmental needs of Mauritius are better taken into consideration. Government will no longer incur heavy expenses for some courses of study that are either available locally or that are not immediately relevant to our developmental needs.

Mr Mohamed: Would the Minister consider an introduction of affirmative action or positive discrimination, if need be, in order to give priority to the have-nots and thereby trying to reduce the gap between the haves and the have-nots?

Mr Gokhool: Well, I shall take note of this point and refer it to the Committee which is working on the review.

SCHOLARSHIPS – AWARD (08/11/05)

(No. I B/450) Mr C. Sayed-Hossen (Fourth Member for Montagne

Blanche and GRSE) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether, in regard to the award of scholarships to secondary school leavers, he will consider the advisability of awarding same directly on the basis of the results obtained at the HSC examinations instead of having recourse to interviews.

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, there are two categories of scholarships awarded to secondary school leavers, namely the State funded ones and those provided by friendly donor countries. The award of funded scholarships to secondary school leavers is made on the basis of ranking as communicated by the University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate through the Mauritius Examinations Syndicate and as such no interviews are held.

As regards scholarships offered by donor/friendly countries, the High Powered Scholarships Committee chaired by the Chief Technical Officer of my Ministry and comprising representatives of the Prime Minister's Office, the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development, the Tertiary Education Commission, the University of Mauritius and the Mauritius Examinations Syndicate has always based itself on qualifications as well as performance at interview.

My Ministry is currently reviewing the selection criteria for the following types of scholarships –

- (i) State funded (postgraduate) and
- (ii) Open (undergraduate and postgraduate).

The concern of the hon. Member will be taken on board in the review exercise. However, in respect of open scholarships granted by friendly countries, should they not be agreeable to selection done on the basis of qualifications only, my Ministry will have to comply with their terms and conditions.

It is to be noted that certain donor countries spell out that results of school leavers should not date back to more than five years and, moreover, they do not restrict themselves to HSC, but also accept a London GCE 'A' level certificate or a '*Baccalauréat*' as alternatives.

YEAR 2006

HSC SCHOOL LEAVERS - LOAN SCHEME (23/05/06)

(No. B/608) Mr M. Allet (Second Member for Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether he will state the number of HSC school leavers who have benefited from the loan scheme set up in the last budget to help students to have access to tertiary education.

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, as the House is aware, a Tertiary Education Interest Support Scheme was approved by the former Government in the 2005/2006 Budget to provide financial assistance at concessionary interest rates to HSC holders for access to tertiary education locally. The scheme involving a total amount of Rs25 m. was launched by the Mauritius Post and Cooperative Bank Ltd. on 02 May 2005. It was withdrawn in July 2005 as it did not prove to be sustainable. I am informed by the MPCB that a total of 179 students benefited from the scheme.

I wish to inform the House that with a view to increasing access and improving equity in the Tertiary Education sector, my Ministry is coming up with a Tertiary Education Loan Scheme in the White Paper on Tertiary Education. The proposed scheme will have to be discussed with the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development and other stakeholders in due course.

The loan will be open to all students following full-time and part-time award tertiary level education and training programmes in local, public and registered private institutions. It will cover the costs of tuition fees, books, examination fees and other related costs.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Mr Speaker, Sir, the Minister knows that there is a question of guarantee, that is, students cannot provide collateral's guarantee when they are taking the loan. Will this scheme provide for exemption of guarantee to students?

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, the scheme is being worked and the issue that has been raised will be considered in the context of the finalisation of the scheme.

MON TRÉSOR MON DÉSSERT S.E. – SCHOLARSHIPS (27/06/06)

(No. B/836) Mr S. Dayal (Second Member for Quartier Militaire and Moka) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether, in regard to the Mon Trésor Mon Désert Sugar Estate, he will state if his Ministry has been receiving, therefrom, an annual grant of Rs10 m for the

past four years for the purpose of granting scholarships to the children of persons working thereat and, if so, will he state if these sums have either been used or refunded to the Estate, indicating the reasons therefor.

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, since financial year 2001/2002, in accordance with Article 5 of the “ILLOVO Agreement”, my Ministry has been receiving an annual contribution of Rs10 m, from Mon Trésor Mon Désert.

This contribution was meant for a period of five years and will, therefore, lapse at the end this financial year 2005/06.

The annual contribution was meant for the setting up of an IT Training Trust for the promotion of ICT and biotechnology training and not for the purpose of awarding bursaries/scholarships to children of persons working at Mon Trésor Mon Désert.

The Trust was never set up. However, since financial year 2001/2002, my Ministry, in consultation with the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development, has been utilising the contribution from Mon Trésor Mon Désert for the payment of air tickets on an annual basis, except for financial year 2003/2004, to some 235 IT students proceeding to India for training at the Campus of Infosys Technologies Ltd in Mysore as well as in Bangalore/Pune, India.

The remaining unspent balance is transferred annually to the Consolidated Fund of the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development.

14
Oval answers debating
29 of 01/08/06 43

JG/D29/P07/8

UNREVISED

MTMD SCHOLARSHIP - INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY AND BIOTECHNOLOGY SCHEME

(No. B/1171) Mrs F. Labelle (Third Member for Vacoas and Floreal) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether, in regard to the Mon Trésor and Mon Désert Scholarship for Information Technology and Biotechnology Scheme, he will state the total amount of money –

- (a) received to date, and
- (b) spent for the promotion of Information Technology and Biotechnology respectively.

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, the total amount of money received to date under the Mon Trésor Mon Désert Information Technology and Biotechnology Scheme is Rs50 m.

Since financial Year 2001/2002, in accordance with Article 5 of the "Illovo Agreement", my Ministry has been receiving an annual contribution of Rs10 m., from Mon Trésor Mon Désert (MTMD). This contribution was meant for a period of 5 years and has, therefore, lapsed at the end of Financial Year (2005-2006).

The total amount of money spent for the promotion of IT and Biotechnology is Rs6,782.402.

The remaining unspent balance has been transferred to the Consolidated Fund of the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development.

The IT Training Trust for the promotion of ICT and Biotechnology, as intended originally was never set up by the previous Government.

I wish to refer the hon. Member to my reply I made to PQ B/836 of 27 June 2006 on this matter.

D29/IF/08/1

No. B/1171 (contd.)

Mrs Labelle: As a matter of fact, the Minister answered a previous PQ on this issue and he also mentioned that this amount was not meant for bursaries. May I ask the hon. Minister whether he is aware that his Ministry informed, most formally, the Director of Audit that the balance was earmarked for the award of scholarship?

Mr Gokhool: I think I would refer the hon. Member to my reply to PQ No. B/836 where I gave all the explanations. As the Fund was not spent, it was utilised for other purposes.

Mrs Labelle: Mr Speaker, Sir, maybe I have not said it to the Minister, it was for the financial year ended 2005 and, at that time, after June 2005, his Ministry has prepared a list of courses and identified institutions. May I know what has happened after this exercise of identification of institutions and list of courses?

Mr Gokhool: I have given the explanation that the original purpose was to set up a Trust for IT and Biotechnology. This was never set up. So in that year, that is, 2005-2006, the Ministry was exploring the possibility, but this was not possible. I gave all the explanations and the hon. Member may wish to take a look at the reply I gave.

Mrs Labelle: Mr Speaker, Sir, the reply of the hon. Minister is in front of me. I have gone through it. The hon. Minister mentioned that a sum of approximately Rs6 m has been used out of the sum of Rs50 m which was meant for the promotion of IT and Biotechnology. May I know from him how this sum of Rs6 m has been spent and under which item?

Mr Gokhool: The details are contained in my reply to PQ No. B/836. This was paid in terms of contribution for air tickets to students who were sent to India for training in IT. I have given the reply. In fact, Sir, if you allow me, this question has been fully answered in PQ No. B/836. All the details are given there.

D29/IF/08/2

Mrs Labelle: Therefore, Mr Speaker, Sir, do I take it from the hon. Minister that the Rs50 m received for the promotion of IT and biotechnology was used only for paying air tickets that we spent money out of the sum of Rs50 m, for the promotion?

Mr Gokhool: Yes, that is the contribution that was made for the payment of air tickets, but the crux of the matter is that this project should have been implemented by the previous Government, setting up of the Trust for IT and Biotechnology and then proper action would have been taken. I understand the concern of the hon. Member and I share it, but this is a problem that arose because the previous Government did not implement the project.

Mrs Labelle: Do I take it from the hon. Minister that since his assumption of duty as Minister, he has not considered it fit to do what he thinks the previous Government should have done?

Mr Gokhool: The project started during financial years 2001-2002 up to 2005-2006. We took over in 2006 and it was a few months after I became Minister. But for the last four years, nothing was done. I think the hon. Member should have queried as to why the previous Government did not do anything about it.

Mrs Labelle: Mr Speaker, Sir, is the Minister aware that his Ministry has taken some time to set a list of courses and institutions? After this has been done, what has the Minister done with this list and the courses, work that has taken years to be compiled? It is so easy to say the previous Government!

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, once the Trust would have been set up, it would have taken a series of action. It was not set up, so we tried to work out a few proposals, but this could not be implemented because of the short time and the money had to be credited to the Consolidated Fund.

YEAR 2007

SC/D13/P17/06

BANARAS HINDU UNIVERSITY - SCHOLARSHIPS

(No. B/606) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether, in regard to scholarships for post graduate studies in medicine for the year 2007-2008 at the Banaras Hindu University in India, he will state –

- (a) the date they were advertised;
- (b) the closing date and the required qualifications;
- (c) the candidates –
 - (i) shortlisted
 - (ii) submitted to the Indian High Commission
- (d) if two names were added and, if so
 - (i) why
 - (ii) if the Commission queried same, and
- (e) if he has received any complaints in connection therewith, indicating the outcome thereof.

Mr Faugoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I am also replying concurrently to PQ B/614 which has been addressed to my colleague the hon. Minister of Education and Human Resources.

As regards part (a) of the question, I am informed that the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development addressed a letter dated 25 January 2007 to my Ministry transmitting a copy of a correspondence dated 19 January 2007 from the High Commission of India inviting nominations, under the Indian Technical and Economic Co-operation programme of Mauritian candidates for postgraduate medical studies at the Banaras Hindu University in India for the academic session 2007. The offer was advertised on 06 February 2007 through a circular letter addressed to all Regional Health Directors, Medical Superintendents, Consultants in Charge and Heads of Divisions.

With regard to part (b) of the question, the closing date for the receipt of applications at the Ministry was 20 February 2007 for both local and overseas candidates.

In line with established criteria, the required qualifications were as follows –

SC/D13/P17/07
(PQ No. B/606 contd.)

- (i) confirmed officers in the grade of Medical and Health Officer/Senior Medical and Health Officer reckoning at least three years' service in the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life, and
- (ii) candidates should not have reached their 45 birthday at the closing date of the application.

As regards to part (c) (i), Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, 33 applications were received at the Ministry; out of which only 5 Medical and Health Officers satisfied the eligibility criteria; 21 had less than three years' service; 6 were employed on a month-to-month basis and one was employed on a contract basis.

The exercise was completed on 13 March 2007 and the candidates shortlisted were as follows –

Dr. R. Chooromoney
Dr. (Miss) L. Rittoo
Dr. A. Noorani Peerally
Dr. (Miss) S. Mudhoo
Dr. (Mrs) A.D. Mudoo

On 16 March, the recommended list of the five candidates shortlisted was submitted to the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development for onward transmission to the High Commission of India. I am informed by the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development that the same list was transmitted to the High Commission of India.

As regards part (d) (i), the Ministry did not add two names in addition to the list of the five candidates submitted to the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development.

Concerning part (d) (ii), assuming that the Commission to which the hon. Member is referring to is the High Commission of India, the question does not arise.

On 24 May 2007, the High Commission of India informed the Ministry, that is, the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life that Dr. (Miss) S. Mudhoo has been selected for admission to a postgraduate medical study at Banaras Hindu University.

D13P18CO1
PQ No. B/606 (contd)

As regards part (e) of the question, in a letter dated 24 May 2007, the Medical and Health Officers Association made representations to the Ministry to the effect that Medical Officers who did not apply through the Ministry and who did not satisfy the eligibility criteria had been selected for admission to the postgraduate medical studies at the Banaras Hindu University. Furthermore, the Association, in a second letter dated 30 May addressed to my Ministry, reiterated its representations. My Ministry has informed the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development of these representations and has requested the latter to take up the matter with the High Commission of India.

A reply is being awaited.

I wish to point out to the House, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that the final decision for the selection of Mauritian candidates for postgraduate medical studies in India rests with the Government of India, as indicated in its letter dated 19 January 2007 sent to the Ministry.

Mr Bhagwan: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, can we know from the Minister whether he is satisfied of the choice of Dr. Prayag and Dr. Ramdane ..

The Deputy Speaker: I am sorry. The hon. Minister cannot give his opinion.

Mr Bhagwan: Can we know from the hon. Minister whether Dr. Ramdane and Dr. Prayag informed the Ministry when they left?

Mr Faugoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am not aware whether Dr. Prayag or Dr. Ramdane has been allocated any scholarship so far. In fact, they were in service. Dr. Prayag was employed on a month-to-month basis. He was on annual leave for 16 days, from 27 April to 16 May, and 14 days' leave without pay as from 17 May to 30 May. After 30 May, he has not resumed duty up to now.

As far as Miss Ramdane is concerned, she was also employed on a month to month basis since 15 February 2007. She had also taken 14 days' leave without pay as from 30 April to 13 May. She resumed duty on 14 May and then, subsequently, sent a medical certificate for one week on 22 May. When she was due to resume duty, in fact, she has not.

D13P18CO2

PQ No. B/606 (contd)

Mr Bhagwan: Being given that the whole issue of this scholarship stinks and being given the way that Dr. Prayag and Dr. Ramdaneer have been chosen by whoever to follow these courses, can the Minister give the undertaking, following the reply from the Indian High Commission, to make a statement to the House on the whole issue? May I ask whether he has received requests from the union for a full inquiry to be carried out concerning the choice of these two persons, which is causing a lot of frustration within the medical service?

Mr Faugoo: I have already answered to the question, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. As I said, the decision rests with the donor country and not the Government.

Mr Jhugroo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Minister confirm whether a letter from the Ministry of Health dated 16 March 2007 was sent to the Indian High Commission through the Ministry of Finance with the names of the five selected candidates? If yes, who instructed the High Commission of India to add two more names on the list of candidates?

The Deputy Speaker: I think that hon. Members have to be aware that it is also a question of sovereignty regarding a foreign State and they have to beware.

Mr Faugoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, there are diplomatic implications on this issue. In my reply which I gave to the House, I stated that we have transmitted the names of those five qualified doctors who met the criteria set by the Ministry. We sent that list of five doctors to the Ministry of Economic Planning and the Ministry has confirmed to us that this is the very list with the five names, which was submitted to the High Commission.

With regard to the question of who instructed the High Commission of India to add two more names, it is not on record in my Ministry nor is it in the Ministry of Economic Planning. So, I cannot answer to the House on this issue.

Mr Bhagwan: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, can the Minister, at least, give the assurance to the House, to the country and to the whole medical service that there has been no political interference on the part of Government?

(Interruptions)

D13P18CO3
PQ No. B/606 (contd)

I am asking the hon. Minister to confirm that there has been no political interference on the part of Government as far as the Indian High Commission is concerned to add the names of these two persons.

Mr Faugoo: I have two things to say, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. First, I am not aware whether a scholarship has been awarded to other than Dr. (Ms) S. Mudhoo who is on the official list. What has happened outside, I cannot answer to this House. It is not within my knowledge. I cannot pronounce on things which I have no knowledge of.

The Deputy Speaker: Last question!

Mr Bhagwan: If Government has nothing to hide, it would be in the interest of

(Interruptions)

Let me finish! *Intolérants !*

I have no lessons to receive from anybody!

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order!

Mr Bhagwan: Being given that this whole issue stinks - I would say corruption and malpractice...

(Interruptions)

Let me finish!

(Interruptions)

Dehors aussi mo pour dire ! Mo pas comma toi, moi !

The Deputy Speaker : Order !

D13P18CO4
PQ No. B/606 (contd)

Mr Bhagwan: Would the hon. Minister, in the name of transparency, good governance, meritocracy, agree to set up of an inquiry by an independent person to look into the whole issue requested by the medical service, the union and the other persons who have applied for the scholarships? If Government has nothing to hide, is it agreeable to set up an independent commission of inquiry to look in the whole issue of scholarships?

Mr Faugoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have nothing to hide, the Government has nothing to hide. There is nothing wrong which the Government has done. There has been no intervention whatsoever by me or Government.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Bhagwan!

Mr Faugoo: I have explained the procedure from A to Z. Had something gone wrong as far as my Ministry or as far as the Ministry of Economic Planning is concerned, I would have inquired. This is something which does not pertain to my Ministry or to the Government. As I said, procedures have been followed and if there is anything at all, I would come back to the House.

Mr Jhugroo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Minister confirm whether there has been any internal inquiry undertaken by the Ministry on this issue?

Mr Faugoo: Inquiry as to what, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir? I can't follow!

Mr Bhagwan: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we are playing with the future of young persons and parents have invested in the future of their children. I am asking again this question, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Can the hon. Minister give an undertaking to the House - *si la conscience est tranquille et qu'il n'y a pas de problème* - that the Government will put up *une commission d'enquête pour plus de transparence*?

(Interruptions)

Mr Faugoo: I have answered to this question, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

The Deputy Speaker: Next question!

D13/P19/mt/6

BANARAS HINDU UNIVERSITY - SCHOLARSHIPS

(No. B/614) Mr P. Jhugroo (Third Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether, in regard to the selection of candidates for the grant of scholarships for post graduate courses in medicine for the year 2007-2008 at the Banaras Hindu University in India, he will state –

- (a) when the exercise was carried out , and
- (b) the outcome thereof.

(Vide reply to PQ. No. B/606)

HSC

STUDENTS – SCHOLARSHIPS (19/06/07)

(No. B/647) Mr G. Gunness (Third Member for Montagne Blanche and GRSE) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether, in regard to the additional scholarships offered to Higher School Certificate students, he will state –

- (a) when it was introduced,
- (b) the allowances paid to the selected candidates, indicating when these allowances were last revised.

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, the Additional Scholarships Scheme was introduced in 1999 following the phasing out by the Australian Government of 12 scholarships for undergraduate studies. Under this Scheme, 12 scholarships, 10 for Mauritius and 2 for Rodrigues are awarded yearly for undergraduate studies, over and above the 18 State Scholarships provided for in the Education Act.

I wish to inform the House that in principle, this scholarship scheme should have been phased out, but the then Government decided to maintain the provision to support students who have achieved excellence in their HSC results. It is to be stressed that the rationale between the two scholarships

schemes is distinct.

Government awards each year two SSR Scholarships for medical studies and 16 State of Mauritius Scholarships for undergraduate studies in various fields of studies. The SSR and State of Mauritius Scholarships are fully financed for the duration of the award, that is, they cover, tuition fees, a living allowance at the approved rates in the respective countries which the laureates opt for and a one-way economy class air ticket at the beginning and completion of the course, for the whole duration of a first degree in medicine, normally of five-year duration and an undergraduate course for a maximum period of four years respectively.

On the other hand, the Additional Scholarships Scheme covers the cost of air ticket, tuition fees and living allowance up to a maximum ceiling of Rs590,000 yearly for a maximum period of four years.

In 1999, when Government started funding the Additional Laureates Scheme, the ceiling was fixed at Rs500,000. The quantum now stands at Rs590,000 per annum.

I wish to inform the House that the revision of allowances payable to State Scholars is carried out by a Standing Committee chaired by the Executive Director of the TEC, and composed of representatives of my Ministry, the Ministry of Finance & Economic Development, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, International Trade & Cooperation and the Central Statistical Office. The Standing Committee last met in April 2006 and recommended that the ceiling be raised from Rs590,000 to Rs619,000 per annum, based on the inflation rate.

In view of budgetary constraints, this was not implemented. Further representations have been received and are being looked into by my Ministry.

In the context of the current reforms in the Tertiary Education Sector, as will be enunciated in the White Paper on tertiary education under preparation, the whole issue of review of State funded scholarships will be examined holistically as it would not be judicious to make *ad hoc* and piecemeal proposals on the matter.

Moreover, as the House is aware, there is now a diversity of destinations and students both under the State of Mauritius and Additional Laureate Schemes are always encouraged to opt for Centres of Excellence in higher education offering equally good services as universities in the UK, but at a

more reasonable cost. Even within the UK, expenses are not uniform depending on the location of the university opted for.

Furthermore, in case a top-up is required given the high cost of tertiary education in the UK or Australia, there are various loan schemes to which students are now eligible.

Mr Guinness: Mr Speaker, Sir, does the hon. Minister agree that in 1999 it was Rs500,000, then it was revised to Rs590,000, the parity of £1 was nearly Rs37 and the Australian dollar nearly Rs15 and, today, it has doubled? The hon. Minister said that in 2006, there was a recommendation to increase it from Rs590,000 to Rs690,000. Can I know why this measure is not being implemented?

Mr Gokhool: I have explained. I said it is because of budgetary constraints and the rationale that we should look at scholarships in a holistic manner and this will be attended to in the context of the White Paper on Tertiary Education.

(Interruptions)

Mr Guinness: Mr Speaker, Sir, the rationale and the revision will come, but, in the meantime, we have students who are facing difficulties. Can't we find an additional sum of Rs1.2 per annum for 12 students because of budgetary constraints? I find it not serious at all.

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I refresh the memory of the hon. Member by referring to Parliamentary Question B/863 which was put in 2004 and was answered by the previous Minister of Education? With your permission, Mr Speaker, Sir, I will read the relevant extract which pertains to the question asked by the hon. Member –
“Students, I am sure, the hon. gentleman will agree, should, prior to embarking on university studies, be fully aware of the cost implications thereof and likely cost increases having regard to their own available financial resources so as to make judicious decisions in relation thereto. The State cannot and should not be expected to revisit the additional Scholarships Scheme at any time from the request.”

I hope the hon. Member has taken note of this answer.

Mr Guinness: Can the Minister confirm whether one year before, that the answer he is giving the sum of Rs500,000 was revised to Rs590,000?

Mr Gokhool: One year before, but the answer came one year later, and the Minister answered what I have quoted.

(Interruptions)

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: May I ask the hon. Minister whether he does not agree that, once we have sent students on scholarship, and that the rupee is depreciating because of Government decision, Government has a responsibility towards students who have already been sent abroad?

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have already explained the rationale why the representations cannot be attended to now because of the budgetary constraints and also because the matter is being looked into in the context of the reform in the education sector. That's why we cannot take a decision on an ad hoc basis...

(Interruptions)

Mr Guinness: Can I know from the Minister whether he is aware that one student committed suicide because of financial constraints? What we are asking is to adjust the Rs500,000 with the present parity rate?

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Member should not try to make cheap politics out of an unfortunate incident which happened.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Mr Gokhool: Let me give the information for the benefit of the House. The sad case of the student referred to was a beneficiary of the Additional Laureate Schemes in 2003. He had completed his course in 2006. When he was given the scholarship, he did not face any difficulty. He finished his programme and he embarked on a post-graduate studies on his own. I do not think that it is fair to make reference to that case in the context of this question.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: May I make an appeal to the hon. Minister...

Mr Speaker: Can I inform the hon. lady that according to our rules, regulations and Standing Orders, she has to put questions.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: May I ask the hon. Minister whether he can consider looking into the matter and provide some support to students who have already been sent abroad?

Mr Speaker: That's correct!

Mr Gokhool: The matter is being looked into. I have already answered, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Guinness: Sir, since there was a proposal in 2006 to raise the fund from Rs590,000 to Rs690,000, did the Minister make representations to the Minister of Finance in view of the Budget that we are going to vote?

Mr Gokhool: I have already answered. When the Committee came with the recommendations, I have to make representations to the Ministry of Finance.

MEDICAL PRACTITIONERS - SCHOLARSHIPS – BANARAS HINDU UNIVERSITY (10/07/07)

(No. B/701) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether, in regard to the scholarships awarded to civil servants by foreign Governments, he will state if he is required to give his approval thereto, and if so, indicate if in the case of the scholarships recently awarded to medical practitioners by the Government of India at the Banaras Hindu University, his approval was sought and obtained.

(Vide PNQ)

MEDICINE - POST GRADUATE STUDIES – SCHOLARSHIPS (10/07/07)

The Leader of the Opposition (Mr N. Bodha) (By Private Notice) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms, Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether, in regard to scholarships for post graduate studies in medicine awarded to public officers, he will state –

(a) the number offered by donor countries for the year 2007/2008;

(b) for the years 2006/2007 and 2007/2008 for studies at the Banaras Hindu University –

(i) the name of the candidates who were nominated under

the Indian Technical and Economic Co-operation Programme, and

(ii) if his Office was involved in the selection exercise, and
(c) if he has received representations in connection with the selection exercise for the year 2007/2008 and, if so, if an inquiry has been initiated in connection therewith.

The Minister of Health and Quality of Life (Mr S. Faugoo): Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I shall reply to the PNQ as well as to PQ B/701 addressed to the hon. Prime Minister as both relate to the award of scholarships for post graduate studies in medicine to public officers.

As regards part (a) of the question, Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Ministry of Education and Human Resources that 15 offers of open scholarships for post graduate studies in medicine have been received.

There are 8 offers from China, 3 from Russia, 3 from New Zealand and one from SADC. These scholarships are meant for candidates in both public and private sectors. I am also advised that no scholarships have been awarded as yet for the year 2007/2008. Candidates have at this stage been recommended for nomination. The final selection of the nominated candidates rests with the donor countries. In addition, the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development has advised that they have received 3 offers from Banaras Hindu University, India for year 2007/2008.

As regards, part (b) (i) of the question, Mr Speaker, Sir, the names of the candidates who were nominated under the Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation Programme are as follows -
For the year 2006/2007 -

- (i) Dr. (Mrs) Leckwantee Rittoo
- (ii) Dr. Rajiv Kumar Bachonee
- (iii) Dr. Ahmad Noorani Peerally
- (iv) Dr. (Ms) Laila Prasad
- (v) Dr. Bipin Sookmanee
- (vi) Dr. (Mrs) Dhurmah Devi Sookmanee

From the list submitted, the nominations of Dr. (Ms) Laila Prasad, Dr. Bipin Sookmanee and Dr. (Mrs) Dhurmah Devi Sookmanee were retained by the Government of India for post graduate medical studies.

As far as years 2007/2008 are concerned, the nominations were for -
(i) Dr. Rajnishlal Chooromoney
(ii) Dr. (Miss) Leckwantee Rittoo

- (iii) Dr. Ahmad Noorally Peerally
- (iv) Dr. (Mrs) Aroona Devi Mudoo
- (v) Dr. (Ms) Sheila Mudhoo

From the list submitted, the nomination of Dr. (Ms) Sheila Mudhoo was retained by the Government of India for post graduate medical studies.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to point out that the exercise carried out by my Ministry is only an administrative one. Once the exercise is completed, the recommended list of candidates is sent by my Ministry to the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development for onward transmission to the High Commission of India.

I also wish to inform the House, Mr Speaker, Sir, that although 3 seats are offered by the Banaras Hindu University each year for medical studies, there have been instances where only 2 seats were finally allocated. For example, for the academic years 2001/2002 and 2002/2003 only 2 scholarships were awarded from a recommended list of 9 candidates in 2001/2002 and 9 candidates in 2002/2003.

Again Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that the Banaras Hindu University also offers self financing seats. In this respect, in the year 1992/1993, Dr. (Mrs) Bindoomatee Koolwant who was not nominated by the Government of Mauritius benefited from a self financing seat by that University from the seats reserved for Mauritian candidates.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I need to point out that the final decision for the selection of candidates for the medical studies in India rests with the Government of India as also indicated in its letter of 19 January, 2007 addressed to my Ministry.

With regard to part (b) (ii) of the question, the Prime Minister's Office has not been involved in the selection exercise. In accordance with existing arrangements, nominations of officers for scholarships are approved by the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development.

As regards part (c) of the question, Mr Speaker, Sir, both the Prime Minister's Office and my Ministry have received representations in connection with the selection exercise for the year 2007/2008. I also understand that there have been representations made to the Ag. Prime Minister. As it is my Ministry that is involved in this exercise, as stated in my reply to PQ B/606 of 05 June, 2007, my Ministry has informed the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development of these representations

made and has requested the latter to take up the matter with the High Commission of India. A reply is being awaited.

Mr Bodha: Mr Speaker, Sir, my first question concerns the name of Dr. Sheila Mudhoo in the list of 5 which was submitted to the Indian High Commission. May I ask the hon. Minister whether Dr. Mudhoo was seconded for duty at the Police Department and is, in fact, now under a traineeship and is expected to have a scholarship to become a Police Medical Officer in the years to come?

Mr Faugoo: That is a fact, Mr Speaker, Sir, but this did not prevent her to apply because she was still on the establishment of the Ministry of Health. She was entitled to apply and she did as she was qualified. This is why she was nominated.

Mr Bodha: Does the hon. Minister find it fit that somebody who is already undergoing training for forensic....

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! Order! Order!

Mr Bodha: Mr Speaker, Sir, does not the hon. Minister believe that somebody who is undergoing training to become a Police Medical Officer and who is expected to have scholarship to go to France to become a Police Medical Officer has taken the place of somebody else and then be awarded a scholarship in Pathology? May I ask the hon. Minister whether he feels that that person has not, in fact, availed herself of a scholarship which could have been better given to somebody else and that, in the first instance, Dr. Mudhoo should not have been in the recommended list of 5 sent to the Indian High Commission? That is my question.

Mr Faugoo: This, in my opinion, Mr Speaker, Sir, is a non issue because the scholarship was offered to all those people who were eligible.

Mr Speaker: Can I correct the hon. Minister? This is not a matter of opinion being given that the exercise was carried out by his Ministry.

Mr Faugoo: The offer was made, Mr Speaker, Sir, to all those who were qualified and that lady was qualified to all intents and purposes though she was seconded for duty. If she wanted to choose another field, why can't she? This is a free country; we can have two or three professions. Our Prime Minister is a doctor and a lawyer. Tomorrow I can choose to become

a doctor, if I am interested. Where is the problem?

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Mr Bodha: My question is very simple: whether it is not a mismanagement of resources? We have somebody who is already under traineeship in a department in one specific field, which is forensic science, who is expecting to have a scholarship in a year's to come and that person applies for another scholarship where everyone has not availed himself or herself of a scholarship. Isn't this a mismanagement of resources? Dr. Mudhoo should not have been on the list, to start with?

Mr Faugoo: This is not mismanagement at all. On the contrary, this is good management, offering the chance to everybody who is interested and eligible to apply.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! Order! I said order!

Mr Faugoo: I will repeat. Mr Speaker, Sir, this is not mismanagement. On the contrary, offer was made to all officers who were eligible and she was an officer who was eligible to apply.

Mr Bodha: Mr Speaker, Sir, let me now come to the two doctors who have been nominated and the complaints and representations that were sent to the Prime Minister and to the hon. Minister. May I ask him whether the Prime Minister, at one point in time, has to give his clearance for a public servant to go on a scholarship?

Mr Faugoo: As I said, Mr Speaker, Sir, there is a circular from the Secretary to Cabinet and Head of Civil Service, which dates back to 22 March 2002, and it has been clearly been stipulated therein that nominations of officers are done, especially in this case, by the Ministry of Finance & Economic Development on behalf of the Prime Minister. So, the file does not need to go back to the PMO for approval. It is approved by the Ministry of Finance & Economic Development.

Mr Bodha: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister whether he is aware of a letter dated 24 May, addressed to his Ministry by Mr Jayprakash Kardam, the Second Secretary at the High Commission in

Mauritius. I am going to table a copy of that letter, Mr Speaker, Sir. In that letter, it is stated that –

“The High Commission is pleased to inform the hon. Minister that Miss Sheila Mudhoo has been nominated for admission to a post graduate course at the Banaras Hindu University”.

The next paragraph says this –

“You are requested to inform the candidate accordingly, so that they report to the Institute of Medical Sciences in Banaras Hindu University without any delay to complete various formalities”.

My first question is: whether he is aware of this letter?

Mr Faugoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have a copy of the letter in hand. This was sent by the High Commission to my Ministry.

Mr Bodha: Mr Speaker, Sir, my second question is whether the hon. Minister is aware – if he has got the letter – that the last paragraph says that ‘they may also be informed to report to the undersigned with release letter from your Government – that is, the Government of Mauritius – to complete formalities and obtain student visas’. When the Minister got a letter of that tenure, Mr Speaker, Sir, what has he done to find out any explanation as to the discrepancies in the letter?

Mr Faugoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, first, I cannot comment on the letter which emanates from the Commission. It is not a letter which comes from my Ministry. Second, for the information of the House, this letter is dated 24 May, which informs the Ministry that the name of Sheila Mudhoo has been retained. Without any representations made from any quarters, on 25 May we wrote a letter to the Ministry of Finance & Economic Development, requesting the latter to liaise with the High Commission of India on the two other nominations. That was done on the next day. If the hon. Leader of the Opposition does not have this letter, I can table it.

Mr Bodha: Mr Speaker, Sir, that is the question! The hon. Minister was offered three scholarships under the Indian Technical and Economic Co-operation Programme, which is a State to State matter. He is given a letter where one person is nominated, and is being told that ‘they may also be informed’. What does he do? He writes to the Ministry of Finance on 25 May. What has happened since then?

Mr Faugoo: Is the hon. Leader of the Opposition proposing that I should have walked down to the Commission myself?

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Mr Faugoo: The first thing which the Ministry did, was to write to the Ministry of Finance & Economic Development, asking them to take up the matter with the High Commission as to what happened. I will ask the hon. Leader of the Opposition: what happened in 2003? Can anybody on the other side of the House say what happened to the third seat? Two years, Mr Speaker, Sir! I am not justifying anything! As I said, these three seats are given to the Republic of Mauritius. Scholarships are given to public officers. There is a difference! What happened to Dr. Koolwant? She applied directly. I don't know what has happened. Officially, on record, I have one name. I have submitted five names, and one has been selected.

What do I do? I am inquiring! I will come back to the House, if need be, in the light of the outcome.

Mr Bodha: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister is taking the matter lightly. *La méritocratie a été bafouée*. The Minister is condoning it in Parliament, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition cannot use the word 'condoning'.

Mr Bodha: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister whether a release letter was granted to Miss Mudhoo for her to leave for Banaras?

Mr Faugoo: Indeed, Mr Speaker, Sir, after she was nominated, she applied for a release letter for leave without pay, which she was granted.

Mr Bodha: Mr Speaker, Sir, is the hon. Minister aware that two officers who were unqualified, who were not eligible and who have not applied according to the correct criteria and procedure, have been given two scholarships at Banaras Hindu University? Is he aware of that?

Mr Faugoo: Officially, I am not aware, Mr Speaker, Sir. Unless the hon. Leader of the Opposition wants me to answer from what I have read in the press! I am replying from what I have in my file! Only one officer has been selected, and she has been given release. As far as the others are

concerned – I don't know whether there are two, three or more – I don't know.

Mr Bodha: Mr Speaker, Sir, in the representation made by the trade union of medical officers, there is a fax, with reference AA1/327/26/212007, where a copy is sent to the Minister, stating –
“Please refer to the letter regarding nomination of foreign students.

The competent authority in this Ministry – that is, the Ministry of External Affairs in India – has approved nomination of the following candidates, as per details given below -.”

There are two for Nepal and three for Mauritius. For Mauritius, there is first, Dr. Anju Ramdinny, second, Dr. Rishi Raj Purryag and third, Dr. Sheila Mudhoo. Furthermore, it is stated that –

“The candidates are being advised to approach IMS (BHU) immediately. Their applications in original are being sent through special messenger for further necessary action.”

Has the Minister got a copy of this letter?

Mr Faugoo: I don't have a copy of that letter, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Bodha: Mr Speaker, Sir, this is a copy of a document which was sent by the trade union when they were protesting about the irregularities.

Now that I have mentioned to the Minister – because there is an official document from the Government of India – that out of three scholarships that were awarded to the State of Mauritius, one has been allocated from the list, and that two had been allocated to two persons who are not eligible, not qualified and who did not even apply, what does he propose to do now? Because it is a matter of the quality and the excellent relationship we have between India and Mauritius.

Mr Faugoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, we don't have any correspondence directly from India; either from the University or the Ministry of External Affairs. All we have is correspondence from the Commission, through the Ministry of Finance & Economic Development. As I said, we have written a letter and are waiting for a reply.

Mr Bodha: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister is saying that he has only the correspondence. But, I mentioned the correspondence which came

to his Ministry, as regards Miss Mudhoo and the word 'they'. Therefore, the only thing he has done so far is forwarding the letter to the Ministry of Finance & Economic Development. Does he not think that this is flouting meritocracy?

Mr Faugoo: Not at all, Mr Speaker, Sir. This is the normal course to follow. As I said, when we received the letter, we have made representations to ask what has happened. Because we owe an explanation. We don't know what has happened. This is why we wrote back to the Ministry of Finance for them to take up the matter with the High Commission.

Mr Bhagwan: I have three supplementary questions. Initially, I had asked one question.

Mr Speaker: I will give the hon. Member all the latitude.

Mr Bhagwan: Etant donné, M. le président, qu'il y a un climat de frustration au niveau du personnel médical, de la population, est-ce qu'il n'est pas dans l'intérêt du gouvernement d'avoir plus de transparence? Il y va même de la réputation du gouvernement. M. le président, est-ce que le ministre peut confirmer qu'il n'y a pas eu d'ingérence visible ou invisible au niveau du bureau du Premier ministre ou du Premier ministre? C'est la question que le public et le personnel médical se posent.

(Interruptions)

M. le président, le ministre n'a pas répondu. Est-ce qu'il peut donner la garantie à la Chambre qu'il n'y a pas eu d'ingérence au niveau du bureau du Premier ministre ?

Dr. David: The hon. Member is imputing motives when he says that there has been...

(Interruptions)

Let Mr Speaker arbitrate!

Mr Speaker: Order!

Dr. David: Mr Speaker, Sir, I said the hon. Member is imputing motives when he stated that there could have been interference from the Prime Minister's Office or the Prime Minister himself.

Mr Speaker: Let me give my ruling! In view of the words used by the hon. Member - if I heard him rightly - being given that he is referring of the involvement of the Prime Minister at the same time then that can impute motives against the Prime Minister. I am asking the hon. Member to rephrase his question.

Mr Bhagwan: Can I ask the hon. Minister whether he is aware that it is being stated that the Prime Minister's Office had been involved in trying to influence the decision of awarding the two scholarships to these two persons? Can the hon. Minister, at least, reassure the House and the population that there has not been any intervention through senior officials to the Indian Embassy for the award of scholarships to these two persons?

Mr Faugoo: In reply to the PQ asked by the hon. Member last time, I stated in the House that there has been no intervention and no involvement of the Prime Minister's Office in the selection exercise. I can reassure the House again today that there has been intervention whatsoever. We are waiting for a reply from the Commission and we cannot pronounce until we get a reply from the other quarters.

Mr Bhagwan: Being given that there is a lot of frustration among the personnel in the way this scholarship had been handled, can the hon. Minister, at least, give guarantee to the House that, through the diplomatic channel, attempts will be made to ask these two persons to return to Mauritius and give these scholarships to those who are eligible?

(Interruptions)

Mr Faugoo: In fact, when we wrote to the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development, we also wrote to the Ministry of External Affairs and I understand that my colleague or the officer attached to the Ministry has taken up the matter with the High Commission. First, we have written directly, as I said, to the Ministry of Economic Development and second to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and they are also taking up the matter with the Commission, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Bhagwan: If Government has nothing to hide, the hon. Minister has nothing to hide to the population and the personnel of the medical corps, is he agreeable to set up a Commission of Inquiry with a sitting Judge to look into the whole issue and enlighten the population?

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Mr Bhagwan: To set up a Commission of Inquiry, if he is not afraid!

Mr Faugoo: I had said last time, Mr Speaker, Sir, ...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

(Interruptions)

Order! Hon. Ms Deerpalsing, you are unnecessarily provoking the hon. Member.

Mr Faugoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Member is unnecessarily asking for a Commission of Inquiry.

(Interruptions)

Mr Faugoo: At the level of my Ministry and that of Economic Development, everything has been done in transparency and there is nothing to inquire about; we have to wait for the answer from the Commission.

Mr Dowarkasing: May I ask the hon. Minister whether he has made an inquiry as to whether any original application has been submitted to the Indian Authorities, and if so, can he table a copy of those original applications of all those three doctors involved?

Mr Faugoo: As I said last time, Mr Speaker, Sir, there were 33 applications and out of these only five candidates were qualified according to the set criteria and their names were submitted to the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development for onward transmission to the High Commission together with all the application forms and documents required by the Authority over there. I have no problem to table a copy of it.

Mr Dowarkasing: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am referring to the fax dated 22 May which the hon. Minister has received in his office and where the names of the three doctors have been clearly earmarked. It stated that the applications in original will be submitted. I am referring to the three doctors, the fax dated 22 May, and to those applications that had to be submitted to the Indian Authorities in original. I am just asking the hon.

Minister whether he has submitted the original applications of Dr. Rishi Raj Purryag and Dr. Anju Ramdinny to the Indian Authorities?

Mr Faugoo: I would request the hon. Member to table a copy of that letter and also state the source from where he got it, because I don't have any letter.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! Let the hon. Minister answer the question.

Mr Faugoo: The correspondence that I have in my file is from the Indian High Commission. I have no letter from any quarters in India. If he has a copy, he must disclose his source and table a copy, and then I will look into the matter.

Mr Jhugroo: Est-ce que le ministre peut nous informer qui a donné le *release* aux docteurs Purryag et Anju Ramdinny pour qu'ils obtiennent leur *student visa*?

Mr Faugoo: The Ministry has not given any release to Dr. Purryag and Dr. Ramdinny. We have given release to Dr. Mudhoo who was given the seat officially, as I stated earlier. No release has been given to these two doctors.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: The hon. Minister has just stated in his reply that following the letter dated 24 May where discrepancies were noted, his Ministry wrote to the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development. Can the hon. Minister say what has been the outcome of that letter since it has been issued since 25 May?

Mr Faugoo: If the hon. Member is referring to the letter which emanates from the High Commission addressed to us...

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister just mentioned in his reply that having noted the discrepancies in the letter dated 24 May, his Ministry wrote to the Ministry of Finance on 25 May. Can we know what has been the outcome of that letter?

Mr Faugoo: We have written not only this letter, which I am tabling a copy, but on 24, we wrote a letter. Then, again when we received representations from the Union, we wrote again. As I said, in my answer, we are waiting for a reply.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: I am surprised, Mr Speaker, Sir, because two months have already elapsed and yet there is no reply from the Ministry of Finance. Definitely, there is something wrong!

Mr Faugoo: I am waiting for the answer, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Can I ask the hon. Minister whether in view of the opacity of this whole procedure - since the Ministry of Finance has not yet replied to the Ministry - would he agree to set up a Fact Finding Committee to find out what exactly has happened?

Mr Faugoo: There is diplomatic implication in this matter, Mr Speaker, Sir. To set up a Commission of Inquiry to do what?

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: A question has been put, let the hon. Minister answer!

Mr Faugoo: As I said, as far as my Ministry and the Ministry of Finance & Economic Development are concerned, we have to follow procedures. We have to wait for a reply from the other quarters. In the light of the reply, we will have to see what should be done.

Mr Bhagwan: *Is the hon. Minister aware that tout le corps médical, les syndicats, les médecins, les nurses et même la population, si le gouvernement n'a rien à cacher, pourquoi attendre? Est-ce qu'on va attendre une éternité? J'ai pose une question il y a deux mois de cela. Entretemps, il y a 'mardaye'.*

Mr Speaker: The hon. Member has put his question, let the Minister answer!

Mr Faugoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have written and have asked, I am waiting for the question.

Mr Bodha: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I have two questions?

Mr Speaker: Yes.

Mr Bodha: My first question is: whether the hon. Minister is aware that the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Public Infrastructure had a meeting with the representatives of a trade union of the medical officers and there was a proposal to leave the matter as they are and that Government would find two new scholarships to provide for the list of five?

Mr Faugoo: I am told there was a meeting with the Ag. Prime Minister and the unions, but I do not know the outcome of the meeting, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Bodha: Mr Speaker, Sir, as there was a meeting and a proposal made that two new scholarships be found for the list of five and in view of the fact that it is an issue of meritocracy, of democracy - we know how is the whole issue of scholarships and we have also the excellence of relationship between India and Mauritius - is it not the duty of the Minister and Government to make things clear to the medical profession and to the nation at large? That's why I am reiterating what my hon. friends have said, namely that we need, at least, a Fact-Finding Committee or at most a Commission of Inquiry?

Mr Faugoo: I have answered to this question, Mr Speaker, Sir. We are waiting for a reply and we cannot take a stand at this stage unless we get a reply.

(Interruptions)

Mr Guinness: Mr Speaker, Sir, I was just referring to the letter which the Minister himself has laid on the Table of the Assembly. I feel the content of the letter itself deserves a full-fledged Commission of Inquiry. I refer the Minister to paragraph 3 where he himself said that only one applicant has been nominated for admission. In paragraph 4, he himself stated for academic session 2007, only one applicant has been selected and in paragraph 5, he said –

“Accordingly, I should be grateful if you could liaise with the High Commission of India to find out where matters stand concerning the two other nominations.”

Two months have elapsed and we do not know where matters stand as for the information asked to the Ministry of Finance. Therefore, I think that a full-fledged Commission of Inquiry can enlighten the House.

Mr Speaker: Although this question is being put for the third time, I could have disallowed it, but I will not do so and ask the hon. Minister to answer.

Mr Faugoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, we cannot impute motives. I, myself, said in my reply that in 2001 and 2002, only two applications were retained. We never knew, up to date, what happened to the third seat. Again in 2002 and 2003....

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! Order, now! A question has been put, let the answer come!

Mr Faugoo: Again in the years 2002 and 2003, out of three, only two were awarded when nine nominations were made. There was no factfinding committee, no commission of inquiry.

Mr Speaker: Order, now. Order!

Mr Faugoo: At least, we have written the next day to find out....

(Interruptions)

We have not only written directly, Mr Speaker, Sir, but we have also taken into account the representations made by the Unions and we are waiting for a reply. We can't do otherwise, Mr Speaker, Sir...

((Interruptions))

Mr Speaker: Time is over! Order now! The Table has been advised that PQ No. B/700 addressed to the hon. Prime Minister has been withdrawn.

BANARAS HINDU UNIVERSITY – SCHOLARSHIPS (17/07/07)

(No. B/790) Mr G. Guinness (Third Member for Montagne Blanche and GRSE) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance & Economic Development whether, in regard to the recent award of scholarships for postgraduate studies at the Institute of Medical Sciences of the Banaras Hindu University, he will state if his Ministry has now been informed by the High Commission of India as to the circumstances in which two other candidates who were not eligible for scholarships have obtained seats thereat.

The Minister of Labour, Industrial Relations & Employment (Dr. V. Bunwaree): Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission I shall reply to questions Nos. B/790 and B/792 together as they relate to the same subject matter.

As the House is aware, since the name of only one candidate out of a

list of five had been retained by the Indian authorities for the three scholarships offered, the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development, at the request of the Ministry of Health and Quality of life, inquired from the High Commission of India on 30 May 2007 about the outcome of the two other scholarships.

On the other hand, on receipt of a letter from the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life regarding representations in connection with the said scholarships, the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development, by letter dated 07 June 2007, requested the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Trade and Cooperation to take up the matter with the Indian High Commission. A reply is still being awaited.

Mr Guinness: The hon. Minister said that on 30 May, the Ministry Finance and Economic Development inquired from the High Commission. Can we know the outcome of the inquiry which was carried out by the Ministry?

Dr. Bunwaree: There was an inquiry. They inquired at the High Commission and, in the meantime, another representation was made by the unions, and a letter was sent. Because it was a Government to Government matter, it had to go to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

BANARAS HINDU UNIVERSITY – SCHOLARSHIPS (17/07/07)

(No. B/792) Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun (Third Member for La Caverne and Phoenix) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance & Economic Development whether, in regard to the alleged irregularity in the award of scholarships for postgraduate studies in medicine at the Banaras Hindu University, he will state if he has received a letter from the Ministry of Health concerning discrepancies in the list of candidates and, if so, if an inquiry has been carried out thereinto and the outcome thereof.

(Vide reply to PQ No. B/790)

HSC – LAUREATES – BOND FEE (17/07/07)

(No. B/803) 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 laureates of the Higher School Certificate, he will state the number thereof who, for the past ten years, have been asked to refund the bond fee on account of failure to return to the country after completion of their studies.

The Minister of Local Government (Dr. J. B. David): Mr Speaker, with your permission, I shall reply to that question.

Mr Speaker Sir, I am informed that for the period 1997 to 2000, 58 sureties whose wards have not returned to the country after completion of their studies have been requested to refund the bond fee of Rs500,000 in accordance with the provision of the bond which they have signed.

As regards the period 2001 onwards, figures are being compiled by the Ministry and will be circulated after the completion of the exercise.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: May I ask the hon. Minister what is the policy of Government regarding students who have obtained scholarships and who have not completed their courses?

Dr. David: I assume, Mr Speaker, Sir, that, by the end of three or four years, according to the length of the programme, they should have completed.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Speaker, Sir, my question refers to students who have obtained scholarships, but for one reason or the other could not complete the course for which they were given the scholarship.

Dr. David: Well, I'll look into the matter, Mr Speaker, Sir.

BANARAS HINDU UNIVERSITY – SCHOLARSHIPS AWARD

7/18/07

(No. B/975) **Mr G. Gunness (Third Member for Montagne Blanche and GRSE)** asked the Minister of Foreign Affairs, International Trade and Co-operation whether, in regard to the recent award of scholarships to three doctors by the Banaras Hindu University, he will state if he has now received any reply from the High Commission of India.

Mr Dulloo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I apologise for coming late. Unfortunately, it is not clear to which reply the hon. Member is referring for me to be able to answer this question.

Mr Gunness: Mr Speaker, Sir, the first time the question was put to the hon. Minister of Health. Then, it was again put to another Ministry which was dealing with the matter and then we were told that on 07 June 2007 the matter was referred to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to deal with the High Commission of India and to get a reply as to where matters stand concerning the three scholarships provided to the Mauritian doctors. This is why I address my question to the hon. Minister of Foreign Affairs.

Mr Dulloo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I shall exceptionally answer this question for the sake of transparency and in view of the excessive publicity given to this matter. Mr Speaker, Sir, we have been informed that the admission procedures had been completed, and, at this stage, the High Commission could not intervene in the matter.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I have said that I would exceptionally answer this question as, firstly, I was not sure whether I would be in order as per section 22(1) (b) of the Standing Orders, in the light of the supplementary question, and secondly, ...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: As a first issue, the hon. Minister has said whether the question is in order or not. I will have to rule as to whether the question is in order or not. The hon. Minister is quoting section 22(1) (b) –

“A question shall not refer to any debate that has occurred or to any answer that has been given in the current session.”

I think the hon. Minister is referring to “any answer that has been given in the current session.” Am I right?

Mr Dulloo: Yes, Sir.

Mr Speaker: I will have to say that, in my view, this question has not been answered and it is perfectly in order for the hon. Member to put the question.

Mr Dulloo: With due respect, Sir, I said I was not sure. This is why I said it diffidently and I thank you for your ruling because the hon. Member was referring to an answer that has already been given in this session. I thank you for your guidance, Mr Speaker, Sir.

The second reason why I said so was that the final decision for the selection of Mauritian candidates for post-graduate medical studies in India rests with the Government of India and with the relevant university there. There is the question of sovereignty and the rules, norms and conventions of international relations and diplomacy. Therefore, it would not be proper for me or for the Government to answer any further question on this matter, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Bhagwan: Mr Speaker, Sir, can we know from the hon. Minister whether Government has protested to the Indian Authorities since two of the three doctors were not nominated by Government for these scholarships? Therefore, other public officers have been debarred from their legitimate right.

Mr Dulloo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have no such information. I stand by the earlier reply that I have given.

Mr Guinness: Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to refer the hon. Minister to paragraph 5 of the letter which the Ministry of Health sent to his Ministry, I quote—

“Accordingly, I should be grateful if you could liaise with the High Commission of India to find out where matters stand concerning the two other nominations.”

Therefore, I suppose the Minister of Foreign Affairs must, by now, be in a position to give us a reply as to where matters stand concerning the two other nominations?

Mr Dulloo: I don't know to which paragraph 5 reference is being made and I can't answer that question, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker: May I inform the House that I have an urgent matter to attend and I will ask the Deputy Speaker to take the Chair, please!

At this stage, the Deputy Speaker took the Chair.

Mr Guinness: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have with me the letter which the Senior Chief Executive Officer of the Ministry of Health addressed to the Secretary for Foreign Affairs asking the Ministry to look into the matter. Can I table it so that the hon. Minister can see where the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was requested to liaise with the High Commission of India to see where matters stand concerning the two nominations?

Mr Dulloo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, reference was made to paragraph 5 without any mention of the document concerned. I am sorry, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I cannot answer because this letter is from the Ministry of Health addressed to the Financial Secretary. This is not a request that was made to us for information. It is not on the basis of this letter that we contacted the Indian High Commission for information. So, I can't answer further.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Is the hon. Minister saying that, in fact, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs did not contact the Indian Authorities?

Mr Dulloo: Mr Speaker, Sir, my first reply was very clear. We have contacted the Indian High Commission which has informed us that all the procedures have been completed and that, at that stage, they could not intervene into the matter. This information has been relayed to Government and now to the House and to the whole Mauritian community.

Mr Bhagwan: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Minister whether, through the diplomatic channel, the Indian High Commission has been made aware of the *maldonne*, of the way these doctors have been selected and which has caused a lot of prejudice, not only to other applicants, but to the medical corps and the nation as a whole?

Mr Dulloo: I will not venture along the line of the hon. Member because when we are dealing with a foreign State, especially a friendly country like India, with whom the last decision rests, that is, both the Government and the University, we cannot use the word '*maldonne*'.

Mr Jugnauth: Mr Speaker, Sir, there has been an outcry about this issue of Indian scholarship in the whole country. Does not the Minister think that it is for him, as Minister of Foreign Affairs, to look into this matter with the Indian High Commissioner and see to it that in future this does not recur?

Mr Dulloo: As I said, Mr Speaker, Sir, right from the outset, I agree that there has been excessive publicity on this matter ...

At this stage Mr Speaker took the Chair

As I was saying in my answer to the supplementary question from hon. Jugnauth, we agree that there has been a lot of publicity on this matter in the country and this is why I raised the issue with the Indian High Commission in Mauritius. This is the reply that I have conveyed to the House.

FOUNDATION – SCHOLARSHIP (06/11/07)

(No. B/1071) Mrs S. Hanoomanjee (Second Member for Savanne and Black River) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether, in regard to the scholarships awarded by the RAI Foundation, India, he will state –

- (a) whether these were advertised;
- (b) who sat on the scholarship selection panel, and
- (c) table a list of the selected candidates who have been awarded scholarships.

(Withdrawn)

RAI FOUNDATION – SCHOLARSHIPS (04/12/07)

(No. B/1261) Mrs S. Hanoomanjee (Second/Member for Savanne and Black River) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether, in regard to the scholarships awarded by the RAI Foundation, India, he will state –

- (a) if they were advertised;
- (b) the names of the persons who sat on the scholarship selection panel, and
- (c) table a list of the selected candidates who have been awarded the scholarships.

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, the following categories of scholarships fall under the responsibility of my Ministry -

- (i) State Funded scholarships, commonly known as the Laureate Scheme at the undergraduate level, and the State of Mauritius Postgraduate Scholarship Scheme at the postgraduate level, and
- (ii) Scholarships funded by friendly donor countries/organisations as a result of bilateral cooperation agreements.

Apart from scholarships under the Laureate Scheme which are awarded to the best ranked students at the Cambridge Higher School Certificate examination, the other categories of scholarship, namely the State of Mauritius Postgraduate Scholarships and those funded by friendly donor countries/organisations, are advertised to the public in the press following which a selection exercise is carried out by the High Powered Scholarships Committee under the chairmanship of my Ministry.

Scholarships awarded by the RAI Foundation, India were private scholarships. As those scholarships did not fall under either of the categories listed earlier, my Ministry was not involved in the issue.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Mr Speaker, Sir, doesn't the hon. Minister think that this is a very unfair situation, and that for the sake of transparency, all those private scholarships should be geared towards the Ministry of Education which then can advertise and give the possibility to everybody to apply?

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, this is not the statutory responsibility of the Ministry.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Doesn't the hon. Minister think that this is a very chaotic situation? Because when we are talking of equal opportunities, we are not providing same to each and every candidate with the required qualification to apply?

Mr Gokhool: I think there will be implications from the donors which maybe private organisations. I don't think the idea should be to regulate private scholarships.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: May I ask the hon. Minister whether he doesn't consider it to be proper in the future to ensure that all scholarships donated to Mauritius, privately or through Government bodies, be opened to all candidates rather than to be restricted to a few through some particular institutions?

Mr Gokhool: I think it is for the donors to decide how to manage the offer of these scholarships.

Mr Cuttaree: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Minister – since he has been given notice of this question – whether, up to now, he has tried to find out to whom these scholarships were awarded?

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, as I mentioned, these were private scholarships, and I don't think it is my responsibility to look into who obtained them. However, I need to add that TEC regularly advises parents and students to check with TEC with regard to recognition and equivalence and if they need any other information, be it for private scholarships, they can still go to TEC and seek the information.

Mr Cuttaree: Mr Speaker, Sir, if the hon. Minister does not know about it, there is a very easy way of finding out, he can ask his colleague, hon. Dr. Jeetah.

(Interruptions)

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Minister whether his Ministry condones this practice...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: The hon. Member cannot use the word “condone”.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Since Government proposes to come forward with an Equal Opportunity Bill, is this not against the practice of equal opportunities?

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have explained that private organisations are offering scholarships. I don't think this can be regulated or overseen by my Ministry. This is not the statutory responsibility of my Ministry.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister if he could find out whether there are other foreign institutions offering scholarships to Mauritians through private bodies?

Mr Gokhool: I don't know and this may have to be found out.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Minister whether this practice of private scholarships can, in a certain way, go round the practice of advertising scholarships by Government and that this bad practice can continue against usual practices?

Mr Gokhool: These are interesting issues, but I think they have to be discussed with the private organisations. I don't know how far we can go in terms of dealing with offers of private scholarships.

JG/D08/P01/1

Debate No. 08 of 20.05.08

UNREVISED

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

- (a) **SIR SEEWOOSAGUR RAMGOOLAM FOUNDATION – BOARD COMPOSITION**
- (b) **SIR RABINDRAH GHURBURRUN FOUNDATION – ESTABLISHMENT**

The Leader of the Opposition (Mr P. Bérenger) *(By Private Notice)* asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues and Outer Islands whether, in regard to Foundations set up by Acts of Parliament in respect of personalities having well served the country, for the purposes of paying tribute to them, he will state if –

- (a) the objects set out in the Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam Foundation Act are being fulfilled, indicating the composition of the Board thereof and when it last met, and
- (b) he will agree to the introduction in Parliament of a Bill providing for the establishment of a Sir Rabindra Ghurburrun Foundation.

Mr Bérenger: Mr Speaker, Sir, on a point of order. The law voted by this Parliament provides that it is the Prime Minister who appoints on the Board of the Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam Foundation and, obviously, a decision to set up a Sir Rabindra Ghurburrun Foundation lies with the Prime Minister. This is why I have put the question to the Prime Minister. I think it is totally out of order for the Minister of Education to reply.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, if I may answer the Leader of the Opposition. That may be so. Then, all that I can do is answer the question, because the whole subject matter is dealt with under the Ministry of Education. I can answer the question, but then there will be no supplementary questions.

(Interruptions)

JG/D08/P01/2
(PNQ contd)

Mr Speaker: A point of order has been raised and the basis of the point of order is that some members of the Board of the Foundation of Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam are appointed by the Prime Minister. I don't have the text in front of me, but there are certain institutions where the Boards or their Chairpersons are appointed by the Prime Minister, but the jurisdiction falls under the respective Ministers. For example, the Mauritius Institute of Education, I think, the Chairman, is appointed by the Prime Minister, but the Institute falls under the responsibility of the Minister of Education.

The Minister of Education & Human Resources (Mr D. Gokhool): Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission and, as you have mentioned, the operation of this Foundation falls under the purview of my Ministry. I will reply to this Private Notice Question as the objectives of the Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam Foundation relates mainly to the intellectual, physical, social, cultural and artistic development of the Mauritian citizens.

I would like to thank the Leader of the Opposition for this PNQ

With regard to part (a) I wish to inform the House that the objects of the Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam Foundation are as follows –

- (a) work for and further the progress of young Mauritians by affording them opportunities for their intellectual, physical, social, cultural and artistic development and by offering them scope for their creative talents in the arts and sciences;
- (b) grant scholarships in appropriate fields of study to deserving students of high promise and potential, and encourage and assist financially or otherwise institutions devoted to the achievement of goals similar to those of the Foundation.

As regards the composition, this is contained in section 5 of the SSR Foundation Act. I am laying a copy thereof.

(Interruptions)

JG/D08/P01/3
(PNQ contd)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Mr Gokhool: Although the Board *per se* has not been meeting, the objects of the Foundation have nevertheless been fulfilled through a Loan Committee, the composition of which is similar to the composition of the Board as per section 5 of the Act.

The Loan Committee last met in March 2007. It was the Board decision to meet when 5 or more requests for loans are received. Since March 2007, only two requests for loan have been received.

The objects of the Foundations have been implemented to needy students mainly through helping students with loans and for this reason the University of Mauritius has been entrusted with the responsibility of the fund.

I wish to remind that the Board is autonomous and independent and comprises only two representatives of Government. It has been vested with considerable authority and freedom to further the objects of the Foundation.

It needs to be pointed out that the members sit on the Board on a voluntary basis. I need to point out, Mr Speaker, Sir, that this Act was passed in 1981. So, it has been in operation with successive Governments. The hon. Leader of the Opposition will appreciate that there are practical difficulties with the functioning of such foundations with heavy reliance on voluntary members.

The Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam Foundation has two loan schemes –

- (a) the first scheme provides interest-free loans to full-time students of the University of Mauritius who need financial assistance to pursue their studies, and
- (b) the second scheme is meant for part-time students facing severe hardship; those who fall into difficulties during a course due to unforeseen or uncontrollable changes in circumstances and cannot pay their tuition fees. The loan carries an interest of 8%.

JG/D08/P01/4
(PNQ contd)

A sum of Rs2 m. was advanced to the fund by the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development in 1994. Additional funds were also received subsequently totalling Rs5.3 m. The SSR Foundation Loan has a bank balance of Rs2,2 m. as at December 2007. According to record, for the period 1997 to March 2007, 381 needy students have been granted loans amounting to sum Rs4.6 m.

Mr Speaker Sir, with regard to part (b) of the question, the proposal of the Leader of the Opposition to set up a similar Foundation in honour of Sir Rabindrah Ghurburrun is worth considering in view of his achievements.

However, I wish to point out that the SSR Foundation dates back to 1981 and since then, a number of organizations, including socio-cultural organizations and NGOs have come into existence. Moreover, there has been a substantial increase in the number of newspapers, television and radio channels. These bodies and entities constitute now a very effective and diverse means of honouring the name and memory of the great patriots and citizens who have left their marks on the socio-economic, cultural and political life of this country. Occasionally, private members' Bills have been introduced for such purposes.

D08/IF/P02/1

PNQ (contd.)

To date, Parliament has, on the initiative of Government, introduced legislations setting up Foundations only in the name of eminent personalities from the non-political sphere, except in the case of SSR and Sir Dayendranath Burrenchobay, former Governor General. These organisations and the public at large should continue to be encouraged in honouring the memory of distinguished political and non-political figures. Wherever appropriate, the existing Foundations may be empowered, by necessary legislative amendments, to also extend their activities to those aimed at honouring the other personalities.

However, if the wish is expressed by parties interested in putting up the necessary financial and other resources required to ensure a proper functioning of a statutory Foundation, Government will consider the advisability of setting up such a Foundation.

Mr Bérenger: Mr Speaker, Sir, I understand that the Minister is circulating a copy of section 5 of the Act, that is, the Board. What I requested was the names of the members of the Board. Can I ask, therefore, the hon. Minister to give us the names of the Chairperson, the secretary and the member of the Ramgoolam family appointed supposedly by the Prime Minister and when were they appointed?

Mr Gokhool: The Board to which I referred is chaired by the Chief Technical Officer of my Ministry...

Mr Bérenger: On a point of order, I am talking about the Board as provided under the law, not some committees set up by I don't know whom - the President of the Board *as per* the law.

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, as I informed the House, the Board has not been meeting, but there is a committee, that is, a loan committee, which looks at the objects of the Board ...

(Interruptions)

D08/IF/P02/2

Mr Speaker: Order!

Mr Gokhool: It is through the loan committee that the objects of the Foundation are pursued. This is the arrangement ...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Mr Gokhool: As I explained, the Act was passed in 1981 and if the Leader of the Opposition is implying that this is an unsatisfactory arrangement, all I am saying to the House is that, the Act was passed in 1981, successive Governments have accepted this state of affairs...

Mr Bérenger: No, there was no loan committee!

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Mr Gokhool: In the implementation of the Act, there was no board as such.

(Interruptions)

Mr Bérenger: In 1981, Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam was in Government. They were in Government. I am given to understand therefore that there is no Chairperson of the Board, no secretary and no one appointed by the Prime Minister to represent the Ramgoolam family. There is, in fact, no Board.

Mr Gokhool: I have to be precise.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

D08/IF/P02/3

Mr Gokhool: There is a member of the Ramgoolam family who has been appointed. But, as I explained, since 1981 - and even when I looked at the file, I asked myself that this may not be a satisfactory state of affairs, and the Leader of the Opposition is aware of that - the Act was passed and successive Governments have allowed this situation to prevail. We may have to look at it and remedy the situation.

Mr Bérenger: I suppose the hon. Prime Minister knows that this was voted on 12 June after nationwide celebrations in 1980 for the 80th birth anniversary of Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam. It was proposed by Sir Kher Jagatsingh, seconded by Sir Veerassamy Ringadoo, and the then Leader of the Opposition, Sir Anerood Jugnauth, approved the setting up of this Board. Will not the Prime Minister agree with me that it is shocking, it is a lack of respect for the Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam Foundation not to have a board?

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, I think we have to look at this situation in a very dispassionate manner because the responsibilities are shared. If the Act was passed, subsequently, the same situation has prevailed, I do not think it is fair for the Leader of the Opposition to try and put all the blame on the side of the Labour Party. This is a situation which has prevailed and we have to address it. This is what I am telling the House.

Mr Bérenger: The law voted by Parliament and which is still in force provides that the accounts of the Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam Foundation must be kept published in the Government Gazette every year. Can I ask the hon. Minister whether this has been done or is being done, if not, when were the last annual accounts gazetted?

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

D08/IF/P02/3

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, I said in my main answer that the Board, as it has been provided in the Act, has a lot of autonomy and independence. Besides, if you look at section 10 of the rules, I quote with your permission –

“Notwithstanding the Rules and General Clauses Act, rules made under sub section 1 shall not be required to be approved by the Minister laid before the Assembly or published in the Gazette.”

Mr Speaker: I think I have given enough latitude to the hon. Minister in answering the question. There is a specific question which has been put about the accounts or whatever it is. Has this been done?

Mr Gokhool: I have given the answer in the last part of my reply. It should not be published in the Gazette.

Mr Bérenger: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister has made reference to loans. The law provides that scholarships would be granted. Can I know whether scholarships have been granted and, if yes, when and to whom?

Mr Gokhool: What has been done is that loans have been provided to the needy students and not scholarships.

Mr Bérenger: The law says scholarships. Mr Speaker, Sir, I think we should all feel very sorry about what has happened and it is not too late to redress the situation, that is, appoint the Board and show due respect to Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam.

(Interruptions)

Can I ask the hon. Minister what is the situation as far as other foundations are concerned, for example, Sir Dayendranath Burrenchobay Foundation or the Mohunlall Mohit Foundation or the Hervé Masson Foundation? Are they all without Boards as well?

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, I do not have the answer because the question relates to Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam Foundation.

Mr Bérenger: Mr Speaker, Sir, I address my question to the hon. Prime Minister. Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister through the Minister who has been made to reply, whether the reply is yes that there will be legislation coming to this House to set up a Sir Rabindrah Ghurburrun Foundation?

Mr Gokhool: I have answered the question in part (b). If the hon. Leader of the Opposition wants me to reply once again, with your permission, I can do that.

Mr Bérenger: Mr Speaker, Sir, I want to know whether the hon. Minister has discussed it with the hon. Prime Minister, at least, to show due respect and whether the Prime Minister has agreed to the setting up of a Sir Rabindrah Ghurburrun Foundation?

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, in all fairness, I have to discuss with my Prime Minister. I can't come to the House and give an answer. I have discussed with my Prime Minister.

Mr Bérenger: The hon. Minister has or he is to discuss?

mrl/d08p03

(PNQ ctd/...)

Mr Gokhool: I have discussed, hon. Leader of the Opposition!

Mr Bérenger: The answer is not a definitive yes. But can I ask again to the Prime Minister through the Minister who has been made to reply that when the Sir Robin Ghurburrun Foundation is set up, that it be provided with what the law says, that is, a Board, a Secretary, a Chairperson, the financial means to fulfil the objects of the Board. Can I appeal to the hon. Prime Minister that this should be done in the case of the existing Foundations, starting with the Sir Seewoosagar Ramgoolam Foundation and the others, and should apply to the Sir Robin Ghurburrun Foundation?

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, first of all, I have to say that we are not saying no. What we are saying is that the proposal of the Leader of the Opposition is worth considering, but there are other issues that have to be taken on board. The second thing is that I have also referred to is that, should a legislation be brought, then we have to bring about the necessary amendments so that the Foundation can function in a much more effective manner. This is what I have indicated to the House.

Mr Bérenger: Can I also, Mr Speaker, Sir, put the point to the Prime Minister through the Minister? I referred to Sir Robin Ghurburrun because he has just left us. He is the last case of a deceased patriot who has left us. There are other cases - I won't mention other names - that deserve the same kind of consideration. Can I appeal to the hon. Prime Minister that, going down memory lane, we should pay due respect...

Mr Speaker: Hon. Leader of the Opposition, I am sorry, the main question is specific on two Foundations. It is not a general question and I think that it is not relevant to the question which has been put.

(Interruptions)

Order! No further questions. Time is over!

Hon. Members, the Table has been advised that PQ No. B/478 addressed to Dr. the hon. Prime Minister has been withdrawn. PQ No. B/475 with regard to Fishing Facilities addressed to Dr. the hon. Prime Minister will be replied by Dr. the hon. Minister of Agro Industry and Fisheries and PQ No. B/488 addressed to Dr. the hon. Prime Minister will be replied by the Attorney-General and Minister of Justice, keeping in mind that these questions will answered after the questions, time permitting. Questions addressed to Dr. the hon. Prime Minister!

FISHERMEN – CHILDREN – SCHOLARSHIPS

20/05/08

(26)

(No. B/544) Mrs S. Grenade (Second Member for GRNW and Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Agro Industry and Fisheries whether, in regard to the scholarships granted to the children of the fishermen, he will state if (a) any of these scholarships has been cancelled and (b) there has been any delay in the disbursement of funds in relation thereto.

(Withdrawn)

**BANARAS HINDU UNIVERSITY – MEDICAL STUDIES -
SCHOLARSHIPS (27/05/08)**

(No. B/574) Mr G. Gunness (Third Member for Montagne Blanche and GRSE) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether, in regard to the post graduate medical studies at the Banaras Hindu University, he will state if any scholarship has been offered this year and, if so –

- (a) the number thereof;
- (b) the procedures set up to ensure that the best qualified candidates are selected;
- (c) if these scholarships have been advertised, and
- (d) the eligibility criteria.

The Minister of Health and Quality of Life (Mr S. Faugoo): Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission I shall reply to this question.

In a fax message dated 04 March 2008, the High Commission of India in Mauritius informed my Ministry of the offer of seats to Mauritian candidates for Postgraduate Medical Courses at the Institute of Medical Sciences, Banaras Hindu University in India for the session 2008-2009. The offer made was for self-financing postgraduate medical courses and no request for any financial aid/scholarship was to be entertained by the Indian Authorities.

In the same correspondence, we were requested to submit the names of three candidates for each of the 5 fields of studies, according to the Ministry's priority, from a list of 15 fields given to us by the High Commission of India.

My Ministry initiated action for the nomination of candidates for the self-financing courses and concurrently requested the Ministry of foreign affairs, International trade & Cooperation to make a plea for Mauritius to continue to benefit from the three annual fellowships for the post graduate medical studies under the Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am pleased to inform the House that on 29 April, 2008, the High Commission of India informed the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, International Trade and Cooperation that the Government of India has agreed that in accordance with the

45 prescribed norms, scholarships would be considered for the seats for which nominations were invited under the self-financing scheme and that no additional seats were on offer. Therefore, following this decision of the Government of India to offer scholarships instead of self financing seats for postgraduate medical studies, a fresh circular was issued on 30 April, 2008 calling for applications from Medical and Health Officers/Senior Medical and Health Officers and Dental Surgeons/Senior Dental Surgeons for scholarships in the field of Pathology, Radio diagnosis, Radiotherapy, ENT and Orthodontics as per the priorities established by my Ministry. This exercise, Mr Speaker, Sir, ensured that all eligible officers willing to follow postgraduate medical courses are given an opportunity to postulate for the scholarships.

The criteria applied were that applicants should have held a substantive appointment and should not have reached their 45 birthday at the closing date of 07 May 2008.

Twenty-one applications were received for the medical courses and 6 applications for the Orthodontics course. One application for the medical courses was received after the closing date.

As there were only 3 qualified candidates from the 6 applications for the Orthodontics course, they have been shortlisted and their names forwarded to the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development for onward transmission to the Indian Authorities.

As regards the medical courses, as the number of applications received exceeded the number of nominations to be made, my Ministry screened all the applications. The established guidelines used for screening of applications in previous years have been applied for this year's exercise too. These are namely –

- (i) the candidates should hold a substantive appointment, be confirmed in their post and have served the Ministry for a period of at least three years,
- (ii) they should not have reached 45 years of age, and
- (iii) they should not have benefited from a scholarship in a very recent past.

Subsequently, only 9 candidates were found to satisfy all the criteria. They have, therefore, all been shortlisted and their names submitted to the Ministry of Finance and Economic development for onward transmission to the High Commission of India.

I wish also to point out, Mr Speaker, Sir, that from the remaining 12 applications, 10 candidates did not satisfy the criteria, one being over-aged and the 9 others are not yet confirmed in their post and have not served in the Ministry for the required three years.

The remaining two benefited from a one-year scholarship to follow the Diploma in Community Medicine course and they are due for appointment as community Physician shortly.

I further wish to stress here, Mr Speaker, Sir, that my Ministry submits the list of all eligible candidates for the scholarships to the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development for approval and submission to the Indian Authorities and the final selection of candidates for the scholarships rests with the Government of India.

46

Mr Guinness: Mr Speaker, Sir, in order not to be in the same situation as last year, is the Minister prepared to give the list of names which has been forwarded to the Ministry of Finance for onward transmission to the Government of India?

Mr Faugoo: I will do so, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Guinness: Is the Minister also prepared to give the list of names of those who have not been short-listed because probably they are not qualified?

Mr Faugoo: There is no problem; I shall do so, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Guinness: Mr Speaker, Sir, the case of self-financing has now become scholarship, which is a good thing. I am sure the Minister must be aware that there was another circular on the last day whereby the age limit was changed. Can I know from the Minister why it is so?

Mr Faugoo: I understand, Mr Speaker, Sir, that there was a meeting at the level of the Ministry and they had decided to reduce the age criteria. I understand also that there were not many applications and there were protests from other doctors who are above that particular age which was required and the whole criteria was revised and it was opened to 45 years old.

Mr Guinness: The Minister is saying that there were not many candidates. I take, for example, the cardiac centre, where there are doctors on secondment. Is the Minister aware that the advertisement was not sent there?

Mr Faugoo: In fact, there are lots of doctors who are on secondment from the regional hospital and the question as to whether the circular was sent to the cardiac centre. I am not aware of this. I need to check

Mr Guinness: The Minister will agree that these doctors who are on secondment in the cardiac centre will not be aware if no communication is made to them. According to my information, no communication was made there.

Mr Faugoo: As I said, Mr Speaker, Sir, I need to check.

Mr Guinness: Can I know from the Minister the names of the persons who were on the panel which was set up to interview the doctors?

Mr Faugoo: If I may come back to the question which the hon. Member has just asked. I see that there is one doctor who has applied and he is posted at cardiac centre. I am assuming that the circular was sent even there. I am going to confirm same. The panel of officers who were responsible for screening were the Ag. Chief Medical Officer, Dr. Joypaul in the absence of Dr. Gopee, Dr. Pavaday who is the Principal Medical Officer and the PAS, Mr Peeroo.

Mr Guinness: Is the Minister aware, for example, they were receiving phone calls in the morning to attend interview in the afternoon?

Mr Faugoo: I am not aware of the details, but it could be so, because when the first selected list was sent for onward transmission from the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development to the High Commission, the latter wanted to take the same list for onward transmission to Government of India for the doctors to be selected for scholarships. We then thought that it won't be correct because it will leave out those who

47

did not apply in the first place, thinking that there were no scholarships available and they were not interested on self-financing basis. Therefore, we, for the sake of transparency to give the chance to all of them who want to apply under the scholarship scheme, we opened it up. The deadline set was so short for this to be possible.

Mr Guinness: The Minister is right in saying that in the first instance it was self-financing, then it became scholarships. In the future it must be clear. Is it important for a self-financing student to sign the ICCR Form at the High Commission of India?

Mr Faugoo: This is a requirement by the High Commission and we have no choice, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Guinness: Can the Minister at least check because I understand that the ICCR Form is only for scholarships, but for those who are going to pay their studies, there is no need for ICCR Form.

Mr Faugoo: As I am saying, it depends on the criteria laid down by the Government of India. It is not for us to decide. If it is self-financing ..

(Interruptions)

There are different criteria.

(Interruptions)

I cannot be precise on this issue, Mr Speaker, Sir. As I said, whatever they do or are required to do is as per conditions which have been set by the Indian High Commission.

FISHERMEN WELFARE FUND – BOARD MEETING (17/06/08)

(No. B/704) Mrs S. Grenade (Second Member for GRNW and Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Agro Industry and Fisheries whether, in regard to the Fishermen Welfare Fund, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Fund, information as to the number of times the Board has met for the past year, indicating if the Chairperson was present, in each case.

Dr. Boolell: Mr Deputy Speaker Sir, the Chairperson of the Fisherman Welfare Fund was present for all the five Board meetings held during the past one-year up to now.

Another meeting of the Board is scheduled for today in line with the objects of the Fishermen Welfare Fund Act to advance and promote the welfare of fishermen and their families the Fund operates several schemes namely -

- (i) grants of 107 Scholarships every year for post CPE, post SC, post HSC and vocational courses;
- (ii) grant for damage boats and outboard motors;
- (iii) financial assistance to family in distress of fishers lost at sea;
- (iv) sickness allowance for hospitalised fishermen, and
- (v) payment of winter allowance for bank fishermen.

The Board regulates its meeting to address the above mentioned schemes as and when required depending on the urgency and volume of work to be addressed by the Board. In 2005/2006 seven board meetings were held and in 2006/2007 five similar meetings were convened.

In October 2007, the term of office of Board members lapsed and the Board was reconstituted in March 2008 after submission of information in respect of Fishermen's Associations by the Registrar of Associations and Registrar of Cooperatives, Rodrigues Regional Assembly and ultimately Fishermen's Associations which have the largest number of members.

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have heard the hon. Minister stating that the Board has met for six or seven times on a yearly basis. May I ask the hon. Minister whether he is aware that as per the Fisherman Welfare Fund Act of 2000 at section (6) regarding meetings of the Board, it is stated that –
“the Board shall meet, at least, once monthly at such a time and place as the Chairman considers appropriate.”

Dr. Boolell: Mr Speaker, Sir, I do realise so. But, it has been impressed upon the Board to meet as per the provision of the legislation. Of course, when they meet, they have to make sure that they discuss matters which are relevant to the welfare of fishermen.

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is the hon. Minister also aware that because the Board is not meeting regularly, there are lots of pending issues regarding the welfare of fishermen?

Dr. Boolell: I am not aware, Sir.

FISHERMEN – CHILDREN – SCHOLARSHIPS (17/06/08)

(No. B/705) Mrs S. Grenade (Second Member for GRNW and Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Agro Industry and Fisheries whether, in regard to the scholarships granted to the children of the fishermen, he will state if –
(a) any of these scholarships has been cancelled, and
(b) there has been any delay in the disbursement of funds in relation thereto.

Dr. Boolell: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the answer is no.

Mr Lesjongard: Can the hon. Minister confirm whether there are cheques of beneficiaries of those scholarships that have been held since 28 May 2007?

Dr. Boolell: This is not so. It could have happened, that there was delay in payment in certain cases due to non availability of relevant documents. But once these documents were submitted, matters were addressed very forcefully.

Mr Lesjongard: The Minister confirms that amounts related to scholarships were kept in abeyance. May we know for how long were they kept in abeyance?

Dr. Boolell: I said there was delay in payment in respect of relevant document not being submitted in time. I have all the relevant information, I have shared ..

(Interruptions)

Dr. Boolell: Maybe the hon. Member does not have the exact information!

TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS – SCHOLARSHIPS (08/07/08)

(No. B/798) Mrs F. Labelle (Third Member for Vacoas and Floreal) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether, in regard to the students whose family income does not exceed Rs7,500 and who are attending or are admitted to courses at the tertiary institutions in Mauritius, he will state if they will be provided with full scholarships as from 2008-2009 and, if so, indicate –

- (a) the expenses that will be covered, and
- (b) the authority which will deal with the applications for such scholarships

Mr Gokhool: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I will reply to PQs Nos. B/798 and B/829 together.

As I indicated in my reply to PQ No. B/721 on 17 June 2008, it is in line with Government policy to increase access to post secondary education and to make it affordable to all socio-economic groups that several measures have been enunciated in the 2008/2009 Budget Speech.

Accordingly, a Human Resource, Knowledge and Arts Development Fund has been set up to finance projects. The Fund will be managed and administered by a committee under the chairmanship of my Ministry. It will comprise representatives of three other Ministries, namely Arts and Culture, Finance and Economic Development, Civil Service and Administrative Reforms, the Treasury Department, Tertiary Education Commission, European Union, the private sector and three other nominees including a Rodriguan.

One of the projects is the provision of a scholarship including full scholarships for all students attending or admitted in courses at postsecondary institutions in Mauritius, with household income not exceeding Rs7,500 per month who face severe hardship following the death or serious incapacity of a wage earner. This is contained in clause 4(c) of the relevant

regulations made under section 24 of the Finance and Audit Act.

In determining the value of the scholarship, several elements will have to be considered including -

- (a) the duration and level of the programme;
- (b) fee structure and payment modalities, and
- (c) a stipend, as appropriate.

To administer the scholarship scheme, a committee will be set up under the chairmanship of my Ministry comprising *inter-alia* representatives of the Tertiary Education Commission and the Ministry of Social Security, National Solidarity and Senior Citizens Welfare & Reform Institutions to deal with applications for those scholarships and to make recommendations to the committee set up to manage the Human Resource, Knowledge and Arts Fund.

One of the other objects of the Fund will be to finance student loan schemes, a measure also announced in the Budget Speech 2008/2009. I refer the House to PQ No. B/721 and would like to add that it will be the responsibility of that committee to come up with the mechanisms to be put in place for the provision of loans to students. The committee has been constituted and the first meeting will be held shortly.

Mechanisms for the provision of loans generally include –

- (i) eligibility for the loan;
- (ii) amount of loan to be disbursed;
- (iii) conditions for the grant of loans;
- (iv) guarantees;
- (v) disbursements, and
- (vi) repayments.

These will be taken into consideration in operationalising the scheme.

The above measures for scholarships and student loans will become operational during academic year 2008/2009.

Mrs Labelle: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, regarding scholarships for those coming from families whose income is less than Rs7,500, the hon. Minister has mentioned that these families would be those who face severe hardship following the death or serious incapacity of a wage earner. If a student whose family income is less than Rs7,500, and both parents are here and have not suffered from incapacity, what is the rationale behind this?

They are making two categories.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Member, the rationale has already been discussed during Budget time. There is no use of coming back on the policy of Government. Your question has been set, it is very pertinent regarding the mechanism, the purpose or whatever, but the policy has already been canvassed during Budget time. So, there is no use of coming back to that now.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Since the hon. Minister has just mentioned that the scheme will be applicable this very year for the entry of 2008/2009, with the committee not yet sitting, may I know how is he going to inform the public about the possibilities and how the students will be called for interviews?

Mr Gokhool: I just informed that the HR, Knowledge and Arts Committee has been set up and is going to start its operations as soon as possible and, therefore, I believe that it will have to come up with the modalities for the implementation of the scheme for 2008/2009.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: May I ask the hon. Minister the amount that has been earmarked for the loans and the scholarships to be awarded to the students?

Mr Gokhool: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the fund is to the tune of Rs1 billion. There are different projects and depending upon the number of cases, the committee will have to process those cases. I do not think there is a ceiling on the issue of scholarships.

Mr Guinness: Can the Minister confirm who are those who will be eligible for the scholarships apart from the family income being Rs7,500? Last time when I put the question, the Minister of Finance, in a sitting position, replied 'no'. Can the Minister confirm that, at the same time, there must be a wage earner who faced severe hardship following death or incapacity? Will he confirm whether this forms part of the eligibility criteria?

Mr Gokhool: Yes, in fact, this is part of my answer and this is part of the regulation which has been made.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: May I ask the hon. Minister, for this financial year, for the entry to be done in 2008/2009, what is the sum earmarked and what is the ceiling? Because I am sure that the sum of Rs1 billion will not all be used in this very year.

Mr Gokhool: There is a sum of Rs1 billion which has been earmarked for several projects including the issue of scholarships and the cases brought before the committee will be examined and processed. The funds will be made available for all those cases which will be recommended by the committee.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: May I ask the hon. Minister what will be the criteria for the loan scheme?

Mr Gokhool: This has been laid out in the Budget Speech. I can refer the hon. Member to the appropriate paragraphs.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, since the committee will be sitting and will be deciding on the number of students eligible for the loan and who will be receiving it, may I know from the Minister the criteria that will be used by the Ministry to select the students?

He has mentioned that there is a certain sum which has been earmarked for this financial year.

Mr Gokhool: The question of the hon. lady refers to the criteria. I have given some indications in the second part of my answer, but it is for the committee to examine those suggestions and even add to those which I have just mentioned. I cannot say exactly what will be the criteria. I have given an indication in my answer.

Mr Guinness: Can I ask the Minister who will be chairing that loan committee?

Mr Gokhool: For the Human Resource, Knowledge and Arts Development Fund, the Chairperson will be the Senior Chief Executive of my Ministry. The loan scheme will be handled at the level of my Ministry and I believe it will be the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Sir, the Minister mentioned the Budget. But in the Budget it is mentioned that no student will be debarred from tertiary education. If we have a sum earmarked, I am sure that the criteria of the Budget will not apply, that is why I was insisting on the criteria to be used for the selection of candidates to be given the loans.

Mr Gokhool: The hon. lady is right. Every effort will be done to enable students to have access to higher education, but there are modalities which have been worked by Government to facilitate this process. I do not

think that we can go to the other extreme and say that everybody will be able to accede to the University irrespective of circumstances or conditions. That is why the scheme has been developed.

At 1.00 p.m. the sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 2.35 p.m. with the Deputy Speaker in the Chair.

TERTIARY SECTOR – STUDENTS - LOAN SCHEME (08/07/08)

(No. B/829) 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 measures announced in the Budget Speech for the provision of a loan scheme to the students in the tertiary sector, he will state the mechanism put up at his Ministry, in connection therewith.

(Vide reply to PQ No. B/798)

PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA – SCHOLARSHIPS (19/08/08)

(No. B/1159) Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun (Third Member for La Caverne and Phoenix) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether he will state if the Government of the People's Republic of China has awarded scholarships to the Mauritian students for the academic year 2008-2009 and, if so, indicate –

- (a) the fields of study therefor, and
- (b) the number of scholarships awarded for postgraduate courses in medicine, giving a list of the Mauritian doctors who have been awarded scholarships.

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, each year, the Government of the People's Republic of China offers scholarships to Mauritian nationals. For the academic year 2008/2009, 10 scholarships were on offer.

As regards part (a), the fields of studies are as follows –

Postgraduate level

Cardiac Surgery

Neurology

Medical Imaging Science & Nuclear Medicine

Cardiothoracic Surgery

Cardiology

Internal Medicine

Undergraduate Level
Mandarin Language
Medicine

As regards part (b), seven scholarships were offered by the Government of the People's Republic of China in the field of medicine at postgraduate level as follows –

Cardiac Surgery
Neurology
Medical Imaging Science & Nuclear Medicine
Cardiothoracic Surgery
Cardiology
Internal Medicine

Out of the seven nominated candidates, only six have accepted the scholarship. Dr. B. Taukoo who was nominated by the Chinese Authorities to study Neurology has informed the Ministry that he has declined the offer, as his choices of fields of study were –

- (i) Psychiatry
- (ii) Radiology
- (iii) Physical Medicine

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: May I ask the hon. Minister whether initially there were five scholarships for medicine and whether two additional seats were offered afterwards?

Mr Gokhool: I am not aware of this. I have the information as regards the number of seats which were offered.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am talking about the number of seats offered only. The Minister stated that there were 10 seats offered; for medicine 7 seats were awarded and out of these 7 seats one student refused. My question is whether initially the number of seats allotted for medicine was 5 or not?

Mr Gokhool: What I said is that 7 scholarships were offered at postgraduate level and one candidate declined. The seat is still there. What will happen is that the panel will go to the waiting list and pick up the next candidate.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: May I ask the hon. Minister whether the panel has already convened a meeting and has decided upon the next candidate to be awarded the scholarship?

Mr Gokhool: I am not aware of this.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: May I ask the hon. Minister when the students are expected to leave Mauritius for their studies?

Mr Gokhool: I think they have been informed by the Chinese Authorities, but I do not know the exact date when they will leave. The only problem will be with regard to the candidate who has declined and the panel will have to identify a new candidate.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: A last question, Mr Speaker, Sir. May I ask the hon. Minister how many of the doctors who have gone for postgraduate studies were already employed at the Ministry of Health, if ever the hon. Minister has the answer?

Mr Gokhool: I do not have this answer, Mr Speaker, Sir.