

PRIMARY

SPECIAL SUPPORT SCHOOL/ZEP

28.11.00

SCHOOL CHILDREN - UNDER PRIVILEGED AREAS - SUPPORT

(No. B/340) **Mr J. C. Armance (Third Member for GRNW and Port Louis West)** asked the Minister of Education and Scientific Research whether, in regard to compulsory education, he will state if he envisages -

- (a) to provide to children of the poor and unemployed
 - (i) at least one meal;
 - (ii) a school uniform;
 - (iii) shoes;
 - (iv) books and other accessories; and
- (b) to introduce amending legislation to protect children and this project.

Mr Obeegadoo: Sir, I wish to refer the hon. gentleman to the Presidential Address which outlines the legislative programme of the present Government and which reads at paragraph 127 -

"Access to education and training is an economic imperative for Mauritius to face the challenges of productivity and competitiveness. All stakeholders in Education will be encouraged to take an active part in the shaping of the educational future of our country and the partnership between the State and the private schools will be strengthened to offer a quality service."

In line with this statement, the Ministry of Education and Scientific Research is revisiting the concept of special support schools with a view to defining a number of *zones d'éducation prioritaire* so as to prioritise support for children in the underprivileged areas.

Mr Clair: Nous savons que dans pas mal d'écoles, il y a des enfants qui ont besoin d'aide. Ils n'ont pas de nourriture, ainsi de suite. Est-ce qu'il y a possibilité d'augmenter la subvention aux associations de PTA afin que les PTAs puissent justement venir en aide à ces enfants?

Mr Obeegadoo: M. le président, les besoins des enfants dans les régions défavorisées sont énormes et de tous genres. Donc, dans la perspective de cet exercice de définir les zones d'éducation prioritaire, nous allons étudier toutes les possibilités existantes pour assurer un accompagnement scolaire adéquat de ces enfants.

Mrs Labelle: M. le président, les PTAs, dans le passé, ont été appelés à faire des *capital expenditure* dont la réfection des toits, etc. Est-ce que

SPECIAL SUPPORT SCHOOLS - CPE PASS RATE, STAFFING, ETC.

3/4/01

(No. A/26) Mrs F. Labelle (Second Member for Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Education and Scientific Research whether in regard to the problem of staffing in schools of the ZEP, he will state what action he proposes to initiate to avoid such a disturbing situation for the children attending such schools.

(2)

Reply: We no longer have ZEP schools. However, the Ministry provides special assistance to Special Support Schools found in deprived regions and where the percentage of pass rate at CPE exams have not exceeded 40% over the last five years.

We have not had reports of generalised staffing problems in these schools where adequate teaching and non-teaching staff have been posted.

As an incentive, teaching staff, namely Headteachers, Deputy Headteachers and Teachers are paid a monthly allowance of Rs1,000.

Staff of Special Support Schools are rotated every 3 years and new teaching staff from other schools, including high-performing schools are given the opportunity to serve in Special Support Schools.

l'honorable ministre peut voir à ce que les PTAs puissent subvenir aux besoins des enfants, en leur donnant des chaussures, de la nourriture au lieu d'investir dans les bâtiments, etc comme cela a été le cas dans le passé?

Mr Obegadoo: C'est certain que dans ces zones d'éducation prioritaire, non seulement les PTAs mais le secteur privé, la société civile, les ONGs existantes seront appelés à contribuer d'une façon ou d'une autre à l'accompagnement scolaire des enfants.

Mr Clair: Les enfants pauvres n'existent pas seulement dans les zones d'éducation prioritaire. Il pourrait y avoir une école où il y a des enfants très intelligents mais les parents n'ont pas le nécessaire. Est-ce que justement il n'y a pas de possibilité que, dans ces écoles, les PTAs puissent arriver à aider ces enfants ou les parents? Je pense qu'il y a possibilité d'augmenter la subvention aux PTAs.

Mr Obegadoo: M. le président, nous sommes à la recherche des moyens les plus efficaces d'aider les enfants qui sont dans le besoin. Le représentant de Rodrigues suggère l'augmentation des subventions aux PTAs, nous étudierons cette proposition.

Mr Dowarkasing: Puis-je suggérer au ministre de considérer le fait de puiser dans le Poverty Alleviation Scheme pour éventuellement aider ces enfants défavorisés.

Mr Obegadoo: We will look into that matter.

Dr. Chady: I would like to ask the hon. Minister whether a survey has been carried out to find out why parents are not sending their children to school. Perhaps that would be a good idea to make a proper survey to find out what are the reasons behind it. There might be a lot of implications, financial, social or any other reasons.

Mr Obegadoo: Mr Speaker, school absenteeism is limited in extent, but we are, nonetheless, working in conjunction with the Ministries for Women's Rights and Social Security to find the appropriate formula now to enforce the concept of compulsory primary education.

YEAR 2001

PRIMARY EDUCATION SECTOR - SOCIO-PSYCHOLOGY (17/04/01)

(No. B/220) **Mr M. Chumroo (First Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue)** asked the Minister of Education and Scientific Research whether, in regard to the new curriculum for the primary education sector, he will state if provision is being made for medical or psychiatric personnel to be attached to all schools, with a view to detecting children with socio-psychological problems.

Mr Obeegadoo: Sir, the proposed new curriculum for primary education aims at providing a broad-based education to all pupils and Health and Physical Education will be one of the subjects taught at primary level. This will help pupils to know about their body and to develop healthy ways of living.

Furthermore, I have last year set up an *ad hoc* committee at the level of my Ministry to develop a strategy for the education of children with special needs. The committee comprises officials of my Ministry, other stakeholders like the Ministry of Women's Rights, Child Development and Family Welfare and the Ministry of Social Security, National Solidarity & Senior Citizen Welfare and Reform Institutions as well as most, if not all, NGOs actively involved in this field. The committee, which has met on various occasions, is presently finalising its report.

The Health and Anti-Drug Unit and the Socio-Psychological Unit of my Ministry will be reorganised so as to ensure prompt detection of cases of pupils with special needs and proper remedial action taken. In this context, my Ministry will be working in close collaboration with various Ministries like the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Women's Rights, Child Development and Family Welfare, Ministry of Social Security, National Solidarity & Senior Citizen Welfare and Reform Institutions Government and Non-Governmental Organisations.

For its part, the Ministry of Health will continue its routine screening exercise for pupils in primary schools and any cases identified will be referred to the authorities concerned for specialised care and treatment.

Mr Chumroo: In fact, I am sure that the Minister will recall right from 1994.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Chumroo, please put your question.

Mr Chumroo: In fact, I would like to elaborate a bit before putting the question otherwise it will be meaningless. I'll be very brief. Regarding the Pastoral Care Unit which was established in 1994 and was supposed to go further and be established in all schools, I am given to understand that it is no longer in practice and many schools do not have the

pastoral care anymore. It is in this line that psychologists would have been of great help at schools to detect cases of children with socio-psychological problems. Therefore, teachers are not in a position to do so....

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Chumroo, please put your question, you are making a statement.

Mr Chumroo: For the past five years, nothing has been done as far as pastoral care is concerned. What is the Ministry proposing as far as pastoral care is concerned in schools?

Mr Obeegadoo: As regards psychologists, I was surprised to learn that out of the five posts which exist at the Ministry of Education, only two are presently filled, the incumbents of the three posts are on authorised leave, some of whom are actually undergoing training for the precise object of working in schools thereafter. All I can say, Mr Deputy Speaker, in addition to what I have already said, is that the Socio-Psychological Unit is being reorganised. We are requesting, for the new budget, additional posts of psychologists attached to the Ministry of Education and when these posts would be filled, priority of consideration will be given to the special support schools in the *zone d'éducation prioritaire*.

Dr. Chady: I think the question is very pertinent and quite appropriate. The socio-psychological problems that exist in all our schools are the basis of the failures that we have got - *les recalés*. The hon. Minister has said that there would be an association with the Ministry of Health to address the problem, but the problem is a socio-psychological one which needs psychologists.

The Deputy Speaker: Would the hon. Member just put his question?

Dr. Chady: The Minister said that he is coming with plans, we would like to know what are those plans and how he is going to deal with them right away.

Mr Obeegadoo: Mr Speaker, as I have just explained, the problem of failure at schools is a complex one which does not date back to six months when we assumed office. Now, the matter is being tackled through various reforms of which the hon. Member is well aware. We are looking again at the curriculum. There are structural reforms. There is a curriculum renewal project which has already been presented. I have just announced the review of the operation of the Socio-Psychological Unit with more posts created, with emphasis on the criteria. I cannot add anymore.

Dr. Maudarbocus: Being given that, as the Minister said, we do not have enough people to fill the post of psychologists, is he going to amend his priority list and make psychology become a priority field of study of the Ministry? Secondly, are the teachers,

during their training, given certain background, are taught how to detect, not to diagnose, who are the children who need psychological help?

Mr Obeegadoo: I will certainly look into the first suggestion concerning psychology as a field of study. As regards the second part of the question, yes, Mr Deputy Speaker, the MIE trainees are given basic training as regards detection of special needs.
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MAURITIUS/RODRIGUES – ILLITERACY RATE

(No. B/784) Mr M. Dowarkasing (Third Member for Curepipe and Midlands) asked the Minister of Education and Scientific Research whether he will state –

- (a) the yearly illiteracy rate in the Republic of Mauritius for the last 5 years, together with a breakdown of same in respect of mainland Mauritius and of Rodrigues;
 - (b) the measures, if any, envisaged to improve the literacy rate in the Republic, indicating the expenditure earmarked to finance same, and
 - (c) whether an impact assessment of these measures has been made and, if so, the outcome thereof.
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D29P12CO2
PQ No. 784 (contd)

Mr Obeegadoo: Sir, the answer is as follows –

- (a) The illiteracy rate in the Republic of Mauritius is calculated from the data obtained from the 1990 Population Census. There has been no update in these figures as the data obtained in the 2000 Population Census are still being processed. The illiteracy rates will be worked out once these data are available.

For the purpose of the Census, a literate person is defined as one who can, with understanding, both read and write a short simple statement in his or her everyday life.

The above definition is as given in the UN Principles and Recommendations for population and housing censuses.

In 1990 it was found that 19% of all residents aged twelve and over in the Republic of Mauritius were unable to read or write any language. The rate for the Island of Mauritius was 18.4% while that of the Island of Rodrigues was 43%.

The proportion of illiteracy among the age group 12 – 14 was 8.4% (7.4% for the Island of Mauritius and 28.9% for the Island of Rodrigues).

- (b) The literacy drive is at the heart of educational reform measures which include preparation of pre-primary curriculum guidelines and curriculum renewal efforts at both primary and secondary levels, the development of a special programme of education for CPE double failures, the rethinking of pedagogy and the practice of teaching in schools and the review of training requirements for teachers. In addition the ZEP project is nearing finalisation and should provide a fresh impetus to educational efforts in the deprived areas as from next year. Finally, next year, the Ministry of Education and Scientific Research will be working on a major new scheme for adult education.
- (c) The measures just outlined are gradually being implemented and it is all too soon to assess their impact.
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D29P12CO3
PQ No. 784 (contd)

Mr Dowarkasing: Will the hon. Minister state to the House whether there has been a decrease in the illiteracy rate for the last five years or whether it has been stable or there has been an increase?

Mr Obeegadoo: As I have just explained at the outset, Mr Speaker, the information I have just imparted to the House is based on the 1990 Census carried out by the Central Statistical Office. So until the latest data for the 2000 Population Census are processed, we do not know what has been the trend over the last ten years.

Mr Dowarkarsing: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have some statistics with me. We see that the illiteracy rate in the 1990s was about 14.6; but we have one recent data from the Human Development Report 2001 which says that the percentage in 1999 is 15.8, which clearly means that there has been an increase in the illiteracy rate from 1990 to 1999. Is the hon. Minister aware of this?

Mr Obeegadoo: I am afraid I must go by the official figures, which are prepared and produced by the Central Statistical Office.

Mr Dowarkarsing: Mr Speaker, in order to make an assessment on the impact of the measures that the hon. Minister has just mentioned, will he plan or is he planning to introduce performance indicators in the field of education so that we can know exactly what the situation is, whether we are improving or not?

Mr Obeegadoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, we are of course open to new ideas and we are determined to ensure that the considerable investment heralded by the last Budget is cost-effective and that we have means and ways of ensuring that public money invested in education is being appropriately spent in terms of quality assurance.

YEAR 2002

PRIMARY SCHOOLS – DROP-OUTS (02/04/02)

(No. B/75) Mrs F. Labelle (Second Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Education & Scientific Research whether he will state the policy of his Ministry regarding cases of drop-outs at primary schools.

Mr Obeegadoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, as my colleagues of the House may be aware, in May 1991, the Education Act was amended to make attendance of primary schools compulsory for children of the relevant age group.

A preliminary investigation of the non-attendance rate in primary education carried out in respect of the years 1998-2000 by the Ministry of Education reveals that for Standards I to V, it is as low as 0.1% rising to 6.9% after Standard VI, although the latter figure includes children having failed the CPE at the first attempt, but who cannot repeat by reason of their age.

The issue is now being handled in the following matter. On the one hand, in collaboration with the Ministry of Women's Right, Child Development & Family Welfare, cases of tardy declaration of birth or absence of declaration altogether are being followed up to ensure integration within the primary school system.

On the other hand, a mechanism is being put into place to allow for follow-up of cases of drop-outs in the course of primary schooling. Thus, in the case of prolonged absences, head teachers are expected to summon parents concerned to discuss and remedy the situation. Should that fail, the case must then be reported to the Ministry for appropriate action including, should circumstances so warrant, a report to the Police and eventual prosecution of defaulting parents.

Yet, another innovation this year is that the pre-vocational stream at secondary level has been opened to students having failed CPE only once, but who are unable to repeat Standard VI due to their age.

While stressing that problems of school drop-outs at primary level remain few and far between, I share the concern of the hon. Member and would welcome, as usual, any constructive suggestion to ensure effective implementation of every child's right to education.

ESN SCHOOLS - GOVT. POLICY (23/04/02)

(No. B/210) Dr. R. Beebeejaun (Second Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Education & Scientific Research whether, in regard to ESN schools (integrated units), make a statement on Government policy regarding the development of such units, indicating the number of same presently functioning and say if he is aware of the conditions prevailing thereat.

The Minister of Economic Development, Financial Services & Corporate Affairs (K. Khushiram): Mr Speaker, Sir, ESN stands for Educationally Subnormal, and ESN schools are schools catering for mentally retarded children.

Integrated units are classrooms within primary school premises which accommodate children suffering from mild disabilities, be they mentally retarded, deaf or blind. The focus of my answer will be, as requested by the hon. Member on integrated units for children who are mentally retarded.

There are three such ESN Units (Integrated Units).

Two of them are under the direct supervision of the Ministry namely:

- (a) J.T. Ramsoondar Government School at Solférino, Vacoas
- (b) D. Hurry Government School at Goodlands.

A third unit is under the management of St Paul RCA (St Paul), run in collaboration with a non-Governmental organisation, the *Association des Parents d'enfants inadaptes de l'île Maurice*, APEIM.

The Ministry has seconded four teachers to these three ESN units.

The prevailing conditions in these three units allow for the normal functioning of these classes.

Sir, the Ministry of Information & Scientific Research is coming up with a strategy for the overall upgrading of the learning environment for children suffering from handicaps.

Special educational needs cater for the education of children suffering from different types of handicap: physical, mental, auditory and visionary.

A task force has been set up to look into special educational needs and has made recommendations which will serve as a basis for the formulation of a National Plan for

Special Educational Needs. The task force comprises representatives of various Ministries, NGOs and all stakeholders concerned.

Amongst others, these recommendations will form the policy for children with special educational needs -

- (a) The setting up of a Special Educational Needs Unit at the Ministry of Education; and
- (b) The amendment of existing legislation and introduction of regulations to bring Special Educational Needs schools at par with schools in the normal stream.

Dr. Beebeejaun: I would like to know, when the Minister of Education comes, whether he will make it a point of visiting the two Government schools, especially the one in Goodlands. I would also like to ask how the children are transported to school. Is transport provided to them? Do they have to take the bus or do the parents walk with them?

Mr Khushiram: I do not have the information, Sir. I will refer the question to the substantive Minister. I would also like to assure the Member that some of the problems arise from normal wear and tear of the buildings and these are being addressed by the general maintenance unit of the Ministry.

Dr. Beebeejaun: That remark is applicable generally, but not in this particular case. I would appeal to the Minister, on humanitarian grounds, to go and visit these two units to see how the children come to school, whether we could not have special provision for their transport, and also see if meals are provided at school or whether they have any meals at all. So, I make an appeal to the substantive Minister to transmit my request.

Mr Khushiram: The appeal of my hon. friend is noted, Sir.

ZEP STRATEGY - REPORT (28/05/02)

(No. B/365) Mrs F. Labelle (Second Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Education & Scientific Research whether the task force set up to review the concept of ZEP schools has submitted its report and, if so, whether he proposes to implement its recommendations and, if so, when.

Mr Obeegadoo: Sir, the task force set up to study the introduction of the new *Zone d'Education Prioritaire* strategy at primary education level has indeed submitted its report and the implementation modalities thereof are being presently defined.

The ZEP strategy will, in due course, and with the approval of Government, be made public.

RODRIGUES – ZEP SCHOOLS -TEACHERS - ALLOWANCE

(No. B/436) Mr J.Von-Mally (Third Member for Rodrigues) asked the Minister of Education and Scientific Research whether, in regard to the *Zone d'Education Prioritaire* in Rodrigues, he will state whether the teachers involved in the schools concerned were to be paid a special allowance and, if so, indicate if such allowance has been paid up when due and, if not, justify the delay in such payment.

Mr Obegadoo: Sir, the *Zone d'Education Prioritaire* project is not operational yet and has, in fact, never been in operation up to the present time. Therefore, no teachers whether in Rodrigues or Mauritius, have yet been concerned by the *Zone d'Education Prioritaire*.

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P.Q. No. B/436 (cont'd)

The hon. Member is probably confusing the ZEP concept which was announced, but not implemented, in 1996 with the Special Support Schools strategy.

I would like to inform the hon. Member that in 1999, the concept of Special Support Schools was introduced. Special Support Schools were schools where the pass rate at CPE for the previous three years had been below 40%. Twenty-five schools (including two in Rodrigues) were thus categorised as SSS.

Teachers working in the SSSs in Mauritius were paid a monthly motivation of R 1,000. However, I am informed that those working in the two SSSs in Rodrigues were not paid any motivation allowance apparently because no provision had been made in the budget of the Ministry of Rodrigues.

I would like to thank the hon. Member for bringing this to my attention and wish to assure him that I will see to it that the same treatment is meted out to teachers doing like work whether in Mauritius or in Rodrigues.

As the hon. gentleman is aware, the recent budget voted by the House heralds a fresh initiative to address the problems of low-performing schools located in the most deprived regions of the Republic in the form of the *Zone d'Education Prioritaire* also known as Education Action Zone Strategy.

With the coming into operation of the ZEP project in January 2003, the SSSs will be replaced by ZEP schools. The payment of allowances to teachers and non-teaching staff of ZEP schools will be governed by conditions provided in the ZEP project document. A copy of which will be laid in the Library.

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CA/D27/PW01/2

CONSTITUENCY NO. 4 – ZEP SCHOOLS

(No. B/511) Mr M. Chumroo (First Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Education & Scientific Research whether he will give a list of schools falling under the *Zone d'Education Prioritaire* (ZEP) in Constituency No. 4, together with the details of the measures taken for the upgrading of the education standard in those schools.

Reply: I would like to inform the hon. Member that a copy of the *Zone d'Education Prioritaire* (ZEP) Project document has been placed in the Library.

This project will be operational as from January 2003 and will concern the following schools of Constituency No. 4 –

- (i) H. Ramnarain G.S. – Terre Rouge
- (ii) La Briquetterie G.S. – Ste Croix
- (iii) Nicolay G.S. – Ste Croix
- (iv) Marcel Cabon G.S. – Cité La Cure

The following main measures are being proposed for the upgrading of the education standard of ZEP schools –

- (i) innovative approach to staffing;
- (ii) School Development Plan to further improve attainment, attendance, attitude and aspirations;
- (iii) improvement to infrastructure and environment of the schools;
- (iv) health and nutrition programmes;
- (v) innovative education strategies; and
- (vi) partnership with parents, community-based organisations, NGOs and business organisations.

Details regarding these measures are given in the project document.

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SCHOOLS (PRIMARY) - ABSENCES & DROP-OUTS

(No. B/675) Mrs F. Labelle (Second Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Education & Scientific Research whether he is contemplating the setting up of appropriate structures for the follow-up of cases of regular and prolonged absences and of drop-outs among students of the primary sector and, if so, will he give details thereof.

Mr Obeegadoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I should like to thank the hon. Member for her sustained interest in the issue of school drop-outs which has, for far too long, not received attention although those concerned come from the most vulnerable groups of our society. The question may be read as referring to three distinct situations -

- (i) children not registered in a primary school and who have therefore never attended any school;
- (ii) pupils who have been admitted to schools, but who are absent regularly and/or for prolonged periods; and
- (iii) pupils initially admitted to schools, but who drop out before completing their primary schooling.

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In the first case, my Ministry working in collaboration with the Child Protection Unit of the Ministry of Women's Right, Child Development and Family Welfare does from time to time come across cases of non attendance at primary schools for reasons ranging from non declaration of the child's birth to simply parental neglect. In such cases, the child is integrated within the primary schooling system in an appropriate manner. There is a need to further enforce coordination with other Ministries and non-governmental organisations to detect in a more systematic manner such cases of non attendance and the newly set-up Directorate for School Management at my Ministry will be expected to come up with clear proposals in that respect. Moreover, such initiatives as the *Zones d'Education Prioritaire* Strategy should also allow for better interaction between the school and the local community having regard to absences from school.

In the second situation, the responsibility of alerting and sensitizing parents of children absent from schools has been left to individual Head Teachers with occasional assistance from school psychologists. My Ministry is now ensuring a better monitoring of such cases which again require a coordinated effort with other Ministries such as the one responsible for Child Development as well as the Ministry of Social Security.

Finally, in the cases of drop-outs, I did in response to PQ No. B/75 put by the hon. lady in April this year, indicate the setting up of a mechanism to address the matter. One should differentiate cases of drop-outs is Stds I to V which average 0.2% of the school population from drop-outs at Std VI which average 6.4%. It is noteworthy that the number of drop-outs in Std VI has decreased from 2418 in 1999 to 1224 in 2001, but the latter figure is still cause for concern. The move towards compulsory schooling up to age 16 within the next couple of years will necessarily imply the elaboration of a more effective mechanism to confront the phenomenon of school drop-outs.

As always, we would welcome constructive suggestions from any quarters.

Mrs Labelle: Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister whether he will consider giving necessary authorisation or instruction to head teachers to report cases of regular absences to the Child Protection Unit directly instead of going through different channels? Will the head teachers be allowed to

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report cases directly to the Child Protection Unit, for example? Can this measure be considered?

Mr Obeegadoo: We shall certainly look into the matter, Sir.

Mr Dowarkasing: Sir, can we have the percentage of attendance in primary schools?

Mr Obeegadoo: I am afraid I would not have such information right now. What I do have are the percentages concerning drop-outs which I have just communicated.

17/12/02

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CA/D38/P05/1

ZEP SCHOOLS - IMPLEMENTATION

(No. B/761) Mr J.C. Barbier (First Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Education & Scientific Research whether, in regard to schools in the *Zone d'Education Prioritaire* (ZEP), he will state what measures have been implemented up to now.

Mr Obeegadoo: Sir, the *Zone d'Education Prioritaire* strategy is meant to be implemented as from January 2003, in replacement of the Special Support School project which has not produced the desired results. A copy of the ZEP project document has already been placed in the Library of the National Assembly.

I am, however, pleased to have an opportunity to provide the House with a progress report on the actions which are under way, in order to create the required conditions for the implementation of the strategy next year.

The ZEP strategy is, in fact, a shared project which aims at improving performance in low performing schools in specific regions, on the premise that positive reinforcement is required to create favourable learning conditions for children living mostly in less developed regions. In short, the strategy depends on a highly dedicated and professional human resource pool, a focused school project and improved school infrastructure, and environment.

My Ministry is currently finalising matters regarding the human resource dimension of the project, which consists of two major components, namely the school-based teaching and non-teaching personnel, and the project management and supervision team. Concerning the teaching and non-teaching personnel, my Ministry is currently assessing the suitability of those who have expressed the wish to serve in ZEP schools, and will finalise postings in a matter of days. As regards the project management and supervision team, which will include one project manager, having overall responsibility for the project as well as three cluster co-ordinators and six parent mediators, my Ministry will shortly advertise these positions.

The school project involves the different key partners and will target the specific needs of the pupils. Accordingly, arrangements are being made for the introduction of the *Carnet de Santé* (Health Card) and regular medical check-ups, to allow for the early screening and detection of children with learning difficulties for remedial action. Arrangements are also being made for a supplementary meal programme, to provide the students with a

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(No. B/761) (contd)

balanced diet. Since the ZEP strategy is a shared project, a series of contacts are being established with community-based organisations, NGOs and business organisations, to raise the standards of achievement of ZEP schools.

The Infrastructure Management Unit of my Ministry is currently undertaking a survey of all ZEP schools, in order to assess the scope and magnitude of the works to be undertaken, so as to create the required conditions for a positive teaching/learning process. Priority of consideration will be given to works which need to be undertaken prior to resumption of studies, and works which are more complex and greater in scope will be undertaken afterwards.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the various critical activities related to the implementation of the ZEP strategy are well under way, and it is felt that we would have a clearer picture of the situation early next year.

Mr Barbier: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I ask the Minister whether he is agreeable to circulate the list of NGOs and community-based organisations, for each school in the ZEP region, involved with the Ministry to work on this project?

Mr Obeegadoo: We view this as a dynamic process. There will be no static position, with a definite closed list of NGOs and business organisations with which the ZEP schools will be working. So, this will be a constantly evolving situation. At this point in time, we are establishing preliminary contacts with NGOs active in the regions, with business organisations of the locality or of the vicinity, but after the schools become operational, the intention is to keep working on that relationship. So, we cannot provide a closed list, but if the Member has any queries concerning any particular school, we can provide information as to what organisations we are presently in touch with.

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**ZEP SCHOOLS - LOCATIONS, RECURRENT EXPENDITURE,
ETC.**

(No. B/491) **Dr. B. Hookoom (Second Member for Piton & Rivière du Rempart)** asked the Minister of Education & Scientific Research whether in regard to the ZEP schools, he will -

- (a) state the different criteria laid down for being listed as such;
- (b) list all schools already identified as such and their respective addresses; and
- (c) state the total expenditure disbursed or to be disbursed for each such school, indicating how such expenditure has been used or will be used.

Mr Obeegadoo: Sir, the reply is as follows -

- (a) There is only one criterion which is used to classify a school as a ZEP one. In fact, in the ZEP project document of June 2002, it is clearly stated that a school is classified as a ZEP school when it has had a CPE pass rate of less than 40% over the last five years; or if it is a former Special Support School which has had, on average, a CPE pass rate of between 40% and 45% over the last five years.
 - (b) In the light of the latest CPE examination results, a list of 30 ZEP schools has been established which includes one in Rodrigues and two in Agalega. I am placing in the Library of the National Assembly a copy of the list of the ZEP schools and their respective locations. I wish to remind the House that the status of ZEP schools will be reviewed every three years as from implementation.
 - (c) As regards expenditure, a total amount of Rs37 m has been budgeted for this financial year inclusive of Rs5 m for Capital Expenditure. The breakdown of projected recurrent expenditure is as follows -
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Food Supplement Programme	: Rs20 m
Incentive allowances to teaching/ non-teaching staff	: Rs 7 m
Project Management and Supervision	: Rs 3 m
Basic grant	: <u>Rs 2 m</u>
	<u>Rs32 m</u>

As regards the Rs5 m earmarked for Capital Expenditure, a survey of infrastructural needs in each school will soon be completed yielding a school improvement programme. However, Sir, an innovative aspect of the ZEP project is that it is not wholly State-funded. As a matter of fact the project aims at building partnerships, by bringing in all stakeholders. In this respect, the private sector in a few international donor agencies have already pledged to financially support the project.

Dr. Boolell: Sir, can I ask the Minister why has there been a long delay in respect of the implementation of the programme?

Mr Obeegadoo: Sir, I would have thought that the point was fully canvassed during the budgetary debates. The project was announced in June of last year targeting the beginning of this year for the actual launching. However, we have experienced a historic moment in education in January/February 2003, and therefore all the human resources of the Ministry of Education were focused on successfully implementing the first resumption of studies without ranking on the basis of regionalisation, grading, etc. That is why we could not implement the project in January/February. As I answered some time back to hon. Dr. Beebeejaun, we also experienced some delays in the usual bureaucratic procedures, proclamation of scheme of service, recruitment exercise carried out by the Public Service Commission. All that has now come more or less to an end. We have the resources needed and the project is being officially launched on 17 July at 13.30 hours and, of course, the hon. gentleman will be invited.

Dr. Boolell: The Minister should recall that he made a lot of promises two years ago and he should also recall that all these factors should have been taken into consideration and the work could have been contracted out. Can I ask the Minister, therefore, why is it that priority has not been given to this sector knowing perfectly well that all these works could have been

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contracted out, that there could have been a harmonious blending with all the relevant parties and the Ministry could have ensured proper monitoring, but instead neither here nor there, and we end up with the result which speaks for itself...

Mr Speaker: Hon. Boolell, you have put a question and you are giving the reply yourself!

Mr Obeegadoo: The answer is very simple, Mr Speaker, Sir. The problem in Education is that for five long years between 1995 and 2000, nothing was achieved, *bilan zéro!*. This means that as from September 2000, we have had simultaneously to give priority to pre-primary, to primary, to secondary and to tertiary. We have had to prioritise democratising access, ensuring relevance of curricula, ensuring achievement in education. So, there is a host of priorities and we are battling on all fronts to achieve reforms and right now halfway through our mandate we have a very eloquent result sheet to show with success successors on all fronts; and as I said there is the historic achievement of the abolition of ranking which was in the Government manifesto in 1995 and which the previous Government could not achieve. Nothing was done for low-achieving schools; there was no ZEP project beforehand. This is a new project which is now being implemented and I would appeal for support and constructive involvement of the Opposition in that respect.

(Interruptions)

Dr. Boolell: Sir, I am glad that they are clapping at the resounding failure of the policy adopted by the Minister!

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CA/D11/P08/4

ZEP STRATEGY – FULL SCALE IMPLEMENTATION

(No. B/395) Dr. R. Beebejaun (Second Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Education & Scientific Research whether he will make a statement on the full scale implementation of the ZEP strategy announced for this current term.

Mr Obeegadoo: Sir, in reply to PQ B/20 at our sitting on 18 March 2003, I indeed apprised the House of preparation for the full-scale implementation of the ZEP (*Zones d'Education Prioritaires*) Project during the 2nd term of this academic year.

Contrary to a certain perception, the implementation of the ZEP strategy is certainly not a mere question of change of appellation from the existing Special Support Schools to ZEP.

There is, at the heart of the ZEP strategy, as it has been conceived by my Ministry, a philosophy which is in line with the educational reforms and which aims at improving access, reducing school inequalities and enlarging opportunities for all pupils of primary schools. In order to create a level playing field, the ZEP strategy focuses on the environment and the mobilisation of resources not only within the precincts of the school but also at the level of the community.

Consequently, there is a number of pre-requisites to meet and a series of procedural stages to follow before we can safely embark on the full-scale implementation of the strategy. These relate essentially to -

- (i) staffing and human resource development;
- (ii) school development project;
- (iii) infrastructural development project;
- (iv) building partnerships with parents, NGOs and business organisations.

At this stage I can confirm that -

- (i) the posting of the teaching and non-teaching personnel to the ZEP schools has already been effected;

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(No. B/395) (contd)

- (ii) the recruitment exercise of a Project Manager and Parent Mediators has been carried out and the PSC approval is awaited for the appointments to be formalised;
- (iii) the tender exercise for the School Feeding Project is well under way and is expected to be finalised by mid August.
- (iv) a one-day workshop has been organised for Head Teachers and Deputy Head Teachers on 23 April last, to facilitate the formulation of work plans in ZEP schools. Further, a one-week seminar on the theme "School Development Project", with the support of resource persons from Reunion Island, will be held in the very near future;

/...

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No. B/395 (contd.)

- (v) a survey is currently under way in the ZEP schools to be, and the outcome thereof will enable us to work out an infrastructural development programme for the future ZEP schools. The programme will include, amongst other things -
- Renovation and construction of toilet blocks
 - Erecting of brick walls, landscaping, fencing and tarring of school yard
 - Renewal and upgrading of classroom furniture.
 - Improving staff room
- (vi) concerning the health and nutrition programme the student health card is being prepared by the MCA and the enlistment of the services of medical practitioners on a sessional basis will soon be finalised;
- (vii) a pupil progress card to monitor pupils' attendance, progress and achievement is also being finalised;
- (viii) the posting of Remedial Education Teachers and Physical Education Instructors to perform specialised functions has already been effected;
- (ix) several Head Teachers have initiated a series of meetings with parents in the relevant regions so as to build awareness as to the ZEP project and to enlist their participation; and
- (x) consultations are under way with the different stakeholders of the strategy particularly the NGOs, the CBOs and the private sector through a shared understanding and a coordinated approach towards the implementation process.

Mr Speaker, Sir, all the activities which are currently under way will converge towards the formal setting up of the ZEP Unit to be headed by the Project Manager and the constitution of the ZEP Council which will define policies and overall strategies for the ZEP concept. The official launching of the ZEP strategy is expected in about a month's time.

D11/IF/P09/2

Dr. Beebeejaun: I thank the Minister for a full reply. I think if someone is honest about it, it is an extension of the special school support programme with new elements. There is nothing basically and radically new about it. I think many Members here - I am thinking of hon. Barbier, for example - have been practising it for the past ten years, at least; they have had discussions on this....

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Hon. Dr. Beebeejaun, you have taken the very bad habit of making comments. Why don't you put questions? I do not think it looks nice that Members from the other side making comments are trying to call your attention to that.

Dr. Beebeejaun: How is it that I make comments? I pick up from the answer of the Minister.

Mr Speaker: The hon. Member cannot pick up from the answer and comment upon it. He can only put questions.

Dr. Beebeejaun: The point I was making is that there is nothing new under the sun. We are all for this project and no one is arguing against it...

(Interruptions)

I would like to ask the Minister what has been the response of the teaching and non-teaching staff as regards this project as they were very enthusiastic about it and they had high hopes that there would be a lot of requests and demands to join the ZEP schools. What has been the response?

Mr Obeegadoo: I totally and fundamentally disagree with the proposition that this a mere continuation of past practice, but I will leave the hon. gentleman to fight his case before the tribunal of public opinion as to the paternity of the ZEP strategy.

(Interruptions)

We have indeed obtained a very positive and enthusiastic response concerning staffing in ZEP schools both on the parts of head teachers and the teachers.

At 12.55 p.m. the sitting was suspended.

(14) 14/10/03

Parliamentary Question

B/639 The Honourable Second Member for Port Louis South and Port Louis Central (Dr Beebeejaun)

To ask the Honourable Minister of Education and Scientific Research: -

Whether, in regard to the award of contract/s for the supply of yoghurt and *pains fourrés* to ZEP schools, he will state (a) the procedures followed for the award of same (b) the names of all bidders and the value of their respective bids (c) the name of the successful bidder and the contract value of the bids and (d) the criteria used for selection?

DRAFT REPLY

Sir,

The established procurement procedures have been followed before the contract was awarded to the successful bidder for the supply of yoghurt and "*pain fourrés*" to the ZEP schools.

In accordance with the provisions of the Central Tender Board Act, the tender exercise for the procurement of goods and services exceeding Rs 1 million is carried out by the Central Tender Board. The Central Tender Board invited submission of bids for the supply of yoghurt and "*pain fourrés*" to 24 ZEP schools by way of a Press Notice dated 19 May 2003, published in the Government Gazette on 24 and 31 May 2003 and in the main dailies.

As for part (b), the Central Tender Board had received, by the closing date of 02 July 2003, quotations from **10** bidders for the supply of "*pain fourrés*" and from **five** bidders for the supply of yoghurt. These bids were referred to my Ministry for evaluation and recommendation. A statement giving the names of the bidders and the value of their respective bids will be placed in the Library.

With regard to Part (c), contracts were awarded to Laiterie de Curepipe Ltée, the lowest bidder. The total estimated contract values of the bids for "*pains fourrés*" and Yoghurt were **Rs 11,412,945** and **Rs 7,778,025** respectively.

As for part (d), lowest bidder was selected after it had provided samples of the "*pains fourrés*" for the ten different menus (5 vegetarian and 5 non vegetarian) and the yoghurt to the Departmental Tender Committee and these were found to be acceptable.

D36P09CO1

ZEP SCHOOLS - OUTBREAKS OF SICKNESS

(No. B/640) **Dr. R. Beebeejaun** (Second Member for Port Louis South and Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Education and Scientific Research whether there have been recent outbreaks of sickness affecting children attending any ZEP school and, if so, will he make a statement thereon.

Mr Obegadoo: Sir, the only reported cases of sickness affecting pupils attending ZEP schools are as follows -

- (i) on 02 October 2003, a total of 76 pupils of Marcel Cabon Government School at Cité la Cure were reported at different intervals between 11.20 hrs and 13.30 hrs to be vomiting and suffering from abdominal pain. All the pupils were urgently sent to Dr. Jeetoo Hospital and after treatment they were allowed to go back home except one pupil who was admitted to hospital;
- (ii) in the evening of 02 October 2003, one pupil of Pointe aux Sables G.S., complaining of stomach pain was admitted to Dr. Jeetoo Hospital;
- (iii) on 03 October 2003, eight pupils of Pointe aux Sables Government School were reported to be suffering from symptoms of diarrhoea, an stomach pain. They were sent to hospital and were allowed to return home after medical treatment.

The two pupils admitted to hospital were discharged on 06 October 2003, after their general conditions were found to be good.

I am informed by the Ministry of Health that samples of drinking water at Marcel Cabon G. S. and Point aux Sables G. S. as well as samples of food items issued to pupils of ZEP schools and stomach wash-out samples in respect of sick pupils who attended hospital have been secured for analysis and that investigations are still being carried out by the Health Inspectorate, the bacteriological section of the Central Laboratory and the Chief Analyst Division of the Ministry of Health. At this stage, the final report is still awaited.

D36P09CO2
PQ No. B/640 (contd)

I wish to remind the House that the ZEP strategy as conceived in the ZEP Project Document of June 2002 indeed provides for the introduction of a Health and Nutrition Programme and the daily issue of a supplementary meal to each pupil attending a ZEP school. The objective thereof is to reduce school and social inequalities by providing equal opportunities to all primary school children of the Republic. Although the statistics are still being compiled, it is worthy of note that latest indications are to the effect that the Food Supplementary Programme has had a positive incidence on the attendance of pupils at schools.

The Food Supplementary Programme was worked out in close consultation with the Ministry of Health which highlighted the need for the pupils of the ZEP schools to be provided with a balance meal and that Ministry accordingly recommended that the pupils be issued with a *pain fourré* and a yoghurt daily; the stuffing of the *pain fourré* as required from the supplier was also recommended by the Ministry of Health.

Subsequently the Central Tender Board was invited to carry out a tender exercise for the procurement of *pain fourré* and yoghurt for the pupils of the ZEP schools and, as I indicated earlier, the contract was eventually awarded to the lowest bidder namely Laiterie de Curepipe for both the *pain fourré* and the yoghurt.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I mentioned earlier that in the light of the reported cases of poisoning at Marcel Cabon G. S. and Pointe aux Sables G. S. samples of food items have been secured for analysis by the officers of the Ministry of Health. In view of the public perception that there might be a link between the Food Supplementary Programme of the ZEP schools and the alleged cases of food poisoning at Marcel Cabon G. S. and Pointe aux Sables G.S. I have immediately, on taking cognizance of alleged cases of food poisoning, requested the Ministry of Health to broaden the field of investigation to include all the ZEP schools in a bid to protect and ensure the security of all pupils attending the ZEP schools.

D36P09CO3
PQ No. B/640 (contd)

In the meantime, in order to guard against any health hazards, the daily issue of *pain fourré* and yoghurt in ZEP schools of mainland Mauritius has been discontinued as from Monday 06 October pending the outcome of the investigations currently under way at the level of the Ministry of Health. However, in order not to penalise the pupils alternative arrangements have been made to temporarily provide the pupils with a free school base meal comprising of bread, cheese and a fruit or fruit juice. The School Development Unit comprising the personnel of the schools and the representatives of the respective PTAs will be involved in the implementation of that temporary arrangement.

I wish to reassure the hon. Member that in this most unfortunate matter, the prime concern of my Ministry and of Government is and will remain the health of the pupils.

CA/D36/P11/7

**STATE/PRIVATE SECONDARY SCHOOLS - CPE FAILURES -
SEATS**

(No. B/648) Mrs F. Labelle (Second Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Education & Scientific Research whether he will give the number of seats which will be available in January 2004 for CPE failures in –

- (a) State schools; and
- (b) private secondary schools and say whether there will be any change in the curriculum for these students.

Mr Obeegadoo: Sir, the projected number of seats in Form I pre-vocational available for the year 2004 stands at 2,914 with proposed allocation of seats as follows –

State Secondary Schools	-	1,365
Private Secondary Schools	-	1,549

With regard to the last part of the question, change is normally an ongoing process in curriculum development. Likewise, the present pre-vocational curriculum is being reviewed in the light of experience and feedback gathered.

MOTION

SUSPENSION OF S.O. 10(2)

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

The Deputy Prime Minister rose and seconded.

(16)

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ZEP SCHOOLS - YOGHURT & PAINS FOURRÉS - SUPPLY

(No. B/639) Dr. R. Beebeejaun (Second Member for Port Louis South and Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Education and Scientific Research whether, in regard to the award of contract/s for the supply of yoghurt and of *pains fourrés* to ZEP schools, he will state -

- (a) the procedures followed for the award of same;
- (b) the names of all bidders and the value of their respective bids;
- (c) the name of the successful bidder and the contract value of the bids, and
- (d) the criteria used for selection.

mrl/d36p08.05

(No. B/639 ctd.....)

Mr Obeegadoo: Sir, the established procurement procedures have been followed before the contract was awarded to the successful bidder for the supply of yoghurt and *pains fourrés* to the ZEP schools.

In accordance with the provisions of the Central Tender Board Act, the tender exercise for the procurement of goods and services exceeding Rs1m was carried out by the Central Tender Board. The Central Tender Board invited submission of bids for the supply of yoghurt and *pains fourrés* to 24 ZEP schools in mainland Mauritius by way of a Press Notice dated 19 May 2003, published in the Government Gazette on 24 and 31 May 2003 and in the main dailies.

As for part (b), the Central Tender Board received, by the closing date of 02 July 2003, quotations from 10 bidders for the supply of *pains fourrés* and from five bidders for the supply of yoghurt. These bids were referred to my Ministry for evaluation and recommendation. A statement giving the names of the bidders and the value of their respective bids will be placed in the Library.

With regard to part (c), contracts were awarded to Laiterie de Curepipe Ltée, the lowest bidder. The total estimated contract values of the bids for *pains fourrés* and yoghurt were Rs11,412,945 and Rs7,778,025 respectively.

As for part (d), lowest bidder was selected after it had provided samples of the *pains fourrés* for the ten different menus (5 vegetarian and 5 non vegetarian) and the yoghurt to the Departmental Tender Committee and these were found to be acceptable.

Dr. Beebeejaun: May I ask the hon. Minister whether there has been any complaint or representation about the quality of *pains fourrés* being supplied?

mr/d36p08.06

(No. B/639 ctd.....)

Mr Obeegadoo: Yes, Sir. There have been from time to time complaints from one quarter or the other and on each occasion, obviously, we investigate.

Dr. Beebeejaun: What was the nature of the complaint?

Mr Obeegadoo: The complaints, which were brought to our attention, from time to time were the quality of the bread.

Dr. Beebeejaun: There were complaints about the stuff in the bread itself. May I draw the attention of the Minister to the fact that on many occasions, the prepared stuff is of a small amount.

Mr Obeegadoo: The information I have, Mr Speaker, Sir, says that complaints related to the quality of the bread presumably would have included the stuffing.

Dr. Maudarbocus: Would the Minister make sure that the successful bidder is the one who supplies the school and that he does not sub-contract the supply to another person?

Mr Obeegadoo: That is one of the worrying facts which has been brought to our attention. Certainly it is a matter of grave concern and the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Education are working together to closely monitor the situation.

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

**ZEP SCHOOLS – YOGHURT – BENEFICIARIES, CONTRACTORS,
ETC**

(No. B/669) Dr. S. Chady (Second Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Education & Scientific Research whether, in regard to the yoghurt provided to ZEP schools, he will state –

- (a) the number of schools which have benefited from that aid;
- (b) the names of contractors who delivered same and the value of the contract, and
- (c) the name of the schools concerned.

The Prime Minister: Sir, I wish to refer the hon. Member to the reply which the substantive Minister of Education & Scientific Research gave to PQ B/639 at our sitting on 14 October 2003.

Be that as it may, the reply is as follows –

- (a) there are 27 primary schools in mainland Mauritius which are classified as ZEP schools, and they all benefit from the Food Supplement Programme;
 - (b) following a tender exercise conducted by the CTB, the successful contractor was *Laiterie de Curepipe*. The value of the contract for the item yoghurt is Rs7,778,025 and for 'pains fourrés' Rs11,412,945;
 - (c) a list of the schools concerned is being placed in the Library of the National Assembly.
-

21/10/03

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ZEP SCHOOLS - YOGHURT - ANALYSIS

(No. B/670) **Dr. S. Chady (Second Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East)** asked the Minister of Education & Scientific Research whether, in regard to the yoghurt provided to ZEP schools, he will state whether all samples have been sent for analysis and, if so –

- (a) will he state the laboratories to which they were sent, and
- (b) indicate the samples, if any, which have not been sent for analysis and the reasons therefor.

The Minister of Health & Quality of Life (Mr A. Jugnauth): Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I am answering that question.

In fact, 57 samples of yoghurt were secured from 19 schools falling under the ZEP scheme and sent to the Government Analysis Division, Réduit, and Central Health Laboratory for analysis.

All of the 57 samples of yoghurt which were secured were sent for analysis.

Dr. Chady: Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to ask the hon. Minister whether it would not be advisable to stop the distribution of perishable goods like yoghurt or milk products, because it seems that they can deteriorate overnight or with heat. Is it not time to review this practice?

Mr A. Jugnauth: Mr Speaker, Sir, my colleague has already done that. They have temporarily stopped with this practice – although they are looking into other ways and means. In fact, there is a temporary arrangement that has been made in ZEP schools. So, I think my hon. friend is quite right in saying that we should review this and see whether this product should be given to the students or not. As I said, this concerns the Ministry of Education and, in fact, for the time being, it has been stopped and other arrangements are being made.

21/10/03 (17)

PARLIAMENTARY QUESTION

B/669 The Honourable Second Member for Port Louis Maritime and Port Louis East (Dr Chady)

To ask the Honourable Minister of Education and Scientific Research:-

Whether, in regard to the 'yoghurt' provided to ZEP schools, he will state (a) the number of schools which have benefited from that aid (b) the names of contractors who delivered same and the value of the contract and (c) the name of the schools concerned?

DRAFT REPLY on 21 October 2003

Sir,

I wish to refer the Honourable Member to the reply which the substantive Minister of Education and Scientific Research gave to PQ B/639 at our sitting on 14 October, 2003.

2. Be that as it may, the reply is as follows:
- (a) there are 27 primary schools in mainland Mauritius which are classified as ZEP schools and they all benefit from the Food Supplement Programme;
 - (b) following a tender exercise conducted by the Central Tender Board, the successful contractor was Laiterie de Curepipe. The value of the contract for the item yoghurt is Rs7,778,025.00 and for 'pains fourrés' Rs 11,412,945.00;
 - (c) a list of the schools concerned is being placed in the library of the National Assembly.
-

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UNREVISED

ZEP PROGRAMME - PRESS COMMUNIQUE

(No. B/118) **Dr. R. Jeetah (First Member for Piton and Rivière du Rempart)** asked the Minister of Education and Scientific Research whether, in regard to the Rs 75,000 spent by his Ministry for the publication of a press communiqué relating to the ZEP Programme, he will -

- (a) state the name of the advertising company;
- (b) disclose the contents of the press communiqué, and
- (c) state whether any competitive bid was sought and, if so, will he give details thereof.

Mr Obeegadoo: Sir, the press communiqué under reference was, in fact, an advertisement for the post of Project Manager and Parent Mediator in respect of the *Zones D'Education Prioritaires (ZEP)* Project which, the hon. Member may be aware, is a novel approach of reducing social inequalities and affording equal opportunities to all primary schoolchildren in order to raise the standard of achievement of low performing schools.

The advertisement consisted of two specific components namely the artwork and design which are done by an advertising/publicity firm and the actual publication in the newspapers. Insofar as the artwork and design are concerned, Logos Publicité Ltd was entrusted with that responsibility for a sum of Rs15,000 for which tendering procedures are not required in line with the rules and regulations governing tenders in the Public Service. As regards publication, the advertisement was published in 'Week End' and in two dailies, namely, '*L'Express*' and '*Le Mauricien*' at the cost of Rs22,000 for 'Week End' and Rs14,000 each for two dailies. I am tabling copy of the advertisement.

Cont'd...

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P.Q. No. B/118 (cont'd)

Mr Speaker, Sir, as I said earlier the ZEP Project allows for innovative practices and in line with that basic principle it was felt that instead of a usual classical advertisement which more often than not goes unnoticed and yields poor response, a dedicated advertisement would be more appealing and thus better serve the purpose for which it was intended. On that count, my Ministry is satisfied that it has obtained value for money.

Dr. Jeetah: Could the hon. Minister tell the House of the sum allocated to the ZEP from which Rs75,000 were taken out?

Mr Obeegadoo: That does not arise from the question asked, Mr Speaker.

Dr. Jeetah: Would the Minister confirm that the sum of Rs75,000 were taken out of Rs32 m. that was voted and that was the only work carried out?

Mr Obeegadoo: Should the hon. Member put a substantive question, I would be delighted to answer, Mr Speaker.

ZEP SCHOOLS - CPE EXAMINATIONS - RESULTS

(No. B/119) **Dr. R. Jeetah (First Member for Piton and Rivière du Rempart)** asked the Minister of Education and Scientific Research whether he will state the overall rate of success of the low achieving primary schools which form part of the ZEP Programme at each of the CPE examinations of year 2002 and year 2003.

Mr Obeegadoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the hon. Member that the ZEP Project was launched in July 2003. Consequently, for the 2002 CPE Examination, the low achieving primary schools were not yet classified as ZEP schools, but were considered as Special Support Schools under the former Special Support Schools project put in place by the former Government in January 2000.

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P.Q. No. B/119 (cont'd)

Furthermore, a school is classified in the ZEP category when it has had a CPE pass rate of less than 40% over a period of 5 years or if it was a former Special Support School and has had, on average, a CPE pass rate of between 40% and 45% over the last five years immediately preceding the launching of the ZEP project. I am tabling a list of schools which were classified as Special Support Schools in 2002 as well as a list of ZEP schools of 2003 together with their respective CPE pass rates for the given years.

Finally, it is also worth pointing out that the ZEP Project document provides for the review of the status of ZEP schools every three years after implementation.

Dr. Jeetah: Will the hon. Minister tell the House whether there has been an improvement in the results?

Mr Obeegadoo: As I said, the ZEP project is premised on an evaluation after three years. We have not yet reached three years since the launch of the project.

Dr. Beebeejaun: Would the Minister confirm that the 2003 results of the ZEP schools are worse compared to the year before?

Mr Obeegadoo: No, I cannot confirm that, Sir.



D07P11CO4

ZEP SCHOOLS - CPE EXAMINATIONS - RESULTS

(No. B/291) **Dr. R. Jeetah (First Member for Piton and Rivière du Rempart)** asked the Minister of Education and Scientific Research whether, in regard to the *Zones d'Education Prioritaires (ZEP)* project -

- (a) he will agree that 2003 results of the ZEP schools at the CPE Examinations are worse than those of the preceding year, and
- (b) say why, according to the Report of the Director of Audit for financial year ending 30 June 2003, 99.8 per cent of the budget allocated for the project during the financial year ending 30 June 2003 has not been used.

Mr Obegadoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, the question relates to two separate issues, one being the comparison of the CPE Examination results in the *Zones d'Education Prioritaires (ZEP)* Schools for the years 2002 and 2003 and the other, the expenditure relating to the ZEP project for financial year 2002/2003.

Concerning part (a) of the question, I pointed out, in reply to PQ B/119 at our sitting of 30 March last that in 2002 there were no ZEP schools, the ZEP project having been implemented in an incremental manner as from July 2003. Consequently, for the 2002 CPE Examinations, the low achieving schools were still classified as Special Support Schools under an in conclusive project launched by the former Government in January 2000. I have also already tabled at our sitting of 30 march, a list of schools which were classified as Special Support Schools in 2002 as well as a list of ZEP schools of 2003 together with their respective CPE pass rates for the given years. In view of the fact that that two list are quite distinct, it cannot be concluded that the 2003 results are worse as compared to 2002. Further, it is crucial to understand that the ZEP strategy is being implemented in phases and will only be fully in place as from this year. More importantly, the ZEP project is premised on an evaluation after a period of 3 years as from implementation and we should allow the different components of the project to plug in so as to yield the desired results. Its stand to reason that no pedagogical project can be assessed within a few months of its launching.

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PQ No. B/291 (contd)

As regards part (b) of the question, the ZEP Project document was released in June 2002 and the project was expected to gradually take off in the financial year 2002/03 to culminate with a full scale implementation into 2003. However, there were a number of prerequisites to fulfill and in the process my Ministry had to reckon with the inevitable bureaucratic delays with the result that it was only in July 2003, when I was satisfied that the conditions were meant for effective implementation, that the ZEP project was officially launched. Consequently, since public sector spending is time barred, the only expenditure incurred in fiscal year 2002/03 under the ZEP project related to the administrative costs in respect of the exercise for the recruitment of the Project Manager and the Parent Mediators.

Dr. Jeetah: Thank you, hon. Minister. But I would like to point out to the Minister that in the debate dated 13 May 1997 mention was made of ZEP schools. I would like to table it if the hon. Minister wishes.

Mr Speaker, Sir, would the Minister confirm that in 2002 the CPE results of Emmanuel Anquetil Government School reached 85% failure and in 2003 it was in excess of 90%?

Mr Obeegadoo: Sir, let me explain this very clearly. We wrote into the Labour/MMM Manifesto of 1995 the concept of ZEP schools, but it was never implemented. There were pilot project schools, as I think they were called, launched by former Minister Parsuramen. That project was then renamed Special Schools as from 1999, I believe, with the only difference of Rs1000 per month being granted to teachers.

So, the ZEP concept is qualitatively different and is now being put into place. It takes a lot of time, but I think the children of these low-achieving schools deserve the effort being put in.

D07P11CO6
PQ No. B/291 (contd)

The results at some schools like Emmanuel Anquetil precisely illustrate the importance of putting in place the ZEP project. The 2003 CPE results provide a very mixed picture. There are schools like Marcel Gabon where results have declined and I am not at all happy, which is why we must accelerate the setting up of the ZEP project. There are schools like Xavier Barbe and Seenavessen which have maintained the same unsatisfactory level and then there are schools like Pointe aux Sables Government school which has shown remarkable progress. So, it is a very mixed picture and I do hope that we can pursue in the ZEP strategy and provide results within the next three years.

Dr. Jeetah: Mr Speaker, Sir, will the Minister confirm that for the last three years for Guy Rozemont as well, it has been consistently going down?

Mr Obeegadoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, if the hon. Member wants to play that game, I can provide a list of schools where results have improved. The hon. gentleman can then provide a list where the results have deteriorated. We will never end. What matters is that for once we have a Government which is putting the money where its mouth is and providing additional resources, is putting in additional efforts for the poor children from poor families in low performing schools. That in a nutshell is the ZEP project, Sir.

D07P12cl/1

UNREVISED

PQ No. B/291 (Cont'd)

Dr. Jeetah: Would the Minister agree that the country did not get value for money by spending Rs75,000 on advertisement while keeping Rs32 m. allotted to ZEP schools within the department?

Mr Obeegadoo: We did not get value for money for five years between 1995 and 2000 in the educational sphere! I believe that at the next election the public will be able to judge.

Dr. Jeetah: Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to ask the Minister to concede that he did not provide proper service to the kids.

(Interruptions)

Is the Minister aware that the figure of Rs75,000 that he gave to the House for the so-called advertising expenditure in PQ No. B/118 of 30 March 2004 was short of Rs10,000? The Minister did not even spend the whole sum of Rs75,000.

Mr Obeegadoo: The question is very clear. The hon. Member can put another substantive question and he will get the answer.

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D07P12cl/2

UNREVISED
ZEP PROJECT - PROJECT MANAGER AND PARENT MEDIATOR
- POSTS

(No. B/292) **Dr. R. Jeetah (First Member for Piton and Rivière du Rempart)** asked the Minister of Education and Scientific Research whether he will, in relation to the *Zones d'Education Prioritaires (ZEP)* project -

- (a) ascertain the identity, qualifications, experience and area of expertise of the applicants for the post of Project Manager and Parent Mediator and the scheme of duties relating thereto;
- (b) whether the vacancy has already been filled up and, if so, when and by whom, and
- (c) of the number of other posts created, giving full details thereof and stating whether these have already been advertised and filled up.

Mr Obeegadoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, as regards part (a) of the question, for the position of Project Manager, candidates were required to possess a post 'A' level degree or diploma in Management or alternative acceptable qualifications together with proven track record in the management of projects, strong leadership and organisational skills and computer proficiency.

In response to the advertisement for the position of Project Manager, 103 applications were received and 93 persons were convened for interview.

As regards the position of Parent Mediator, candidates were required to possess the Cambridge School Certificate, a Certificate in parental mediated learning and strong leadership, excellent communication/counseling and interpersonal skill as well as proven experience in parental mediation. 167 applications were received but only 13 applicants who were considered to possess the required qualifications were convened for interview.

Cont'd...

D07P12cl/3

UNREVISED

PQ No. B/292 (Cont'd)

I am tabling two complete lists of applicants together with their qualifications and experience. One in respect of the position of Project Manager and the other in respect of that of Parent Mediator. As regards reference to a 'scheme of duties', I presume the hon. Member is referring to a 'scheme of service'. If so, it is as per the advertisement for the post and which advertisement was tabled on 30 March 2004 in response to PQ No. B/118 from the same hon. Member.

As regards to part (b), the only one vacancy at the level of Project Manager was filled on 24 June 2003 with the appointment of Mr Yugeshwar Pandey whereas for the position of Parent Mediator only five out of the six vacancies were filled on 02 July 2003, the Public Service Commission having ruled that the remaining shortlisted candidates did not have the required qualifications as per the advertisement.

As regards to part (c), there are still three vacancies at the level of Cluster Coordinators, a position which my Ministry has advertised on two occasions, but has not been able to fill so far for lack of suitable candidates.

Further, in view of the extensive field which the Parent Mediators are expected to cover and the fact that a sizeable part of their work is done after normal office hours, my Ministry is proposing, as soon as it obtains the green light from the PSC, to recruit four additional Parent Mediators targeting this time holders of a degree/diploma in social work, as an alternative to the certificate in parental mediated learning.

Dr. Jeetah: Mr Speaker, Sir, in his previous answer, the hon. Minister stated that he made dedicated advertisements. Will he now confirm that it was not as dedicated after all?

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D07P12c1/4

UNREVISED

PQ No. B/292 (Cont'd)

Mr Obeegadoo: Mr Speaker, could I, with your permission, draw the attention of the hon. Member to Standing Order 22 of this House which says that questions should not to seek the opinion of Ministers and respectfully invite the Speaker to suggest to the hon. Member to study out Standing Orders before putting questions.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Which Standing Order is the Minister referring to?

Mr Obeegadoo: Standing Order 22 (1) (G) which says -

"Every question, including supplementary questions, shall conform to the following rules-

(g) a question shall not ask for an expression of opinion (...)"

Mr Speaker: I think the point has been well taken by the hon. Minister. I would advise the hon. Member to be careful next time. This morning, I have, on several occasions, given my ruling to the effect that Members cannot ask for the opinion of Ministers, because this is forbidden by the Standing Orders.

Dr. Jeetah: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. I thank the hon. Minister. Would the Minister agree that they failed once again?

Mr Speaker: Next question, please!

YEAR 2005

ZEP SCHOOLS - FOOD SUPPLEMENT PROGRAMME (08/02/05)

(No. B/55) Dr. R. Jeetah (First Member for Piton and Rivière du Rempart) asked the Minister of Education and Scientific Research whether he will state if the objectives of the Food Supplement Programme for the ZEP schools have been achieved and, if not, the reasons therefore.

Reply: The *Zones d'Education Prioritaire* (ZEP) Project launched in July 2003 has taken school aims to reduce school inequalities and in a broader perspective to combat social inequalities by providing equal opportunities to all primary school children of the Republic of Mauritius. The Food Supplement Programme meant for the ZEP schools is one of the most important components of the ZEP Project as it intends to supply a balanced meal to the ZEP school pupils who generally hail from the poorer sections of the country.

It must be emphasised that the Food Supplement Programme is also part and parcel of the ZEP School Health Programme which is monitored by a working committee at school level.

Even though all necessary precautions were taken by my Ministry, 3 regretful events occurred in the years 2003 and 2004 where there were alleged cases of food allergy at Marcel Cabon Government School, Pointe aux Sables Government School and Richelieu respectively. These events were much beyond the control of my Ministry and the causes were imputed to the supplier. Interim arrangements concerning food were made by the head teachers. The latter were given an imprest from the Ministry to ensure procurement of food items and they ensured the distribution and control of food distributed to the pupils.

The major achievement of the ZEP Food Supplement Programme has been the decrease in the rate of school absenteeism. From an average of 23-25% daily absentees, most of the ZEP schools today record an absenteeism of below 11%. The best formula would have been to entrust the ZEP Food Programme to the school concerned. This action would lead to a concern of the parents to feed their children at school level and henceforth community empowerment and development would follow. However, the major constraint is that the ZEP schools do not have the necessary logistics and the financial implications will be difficult to manage with regard to the audit

procedures. A single supplier was awarded the contract to supply the food items to over 11,000 pupils daily. Hence, due to daily bulk processing, there was little element of control and quality assurance. The supplier could have gained in terms of economies of scale but the quality of food did suffer.

The Ministry of Education and Scientific Research is now well equipped with past experiences which reflects knowledge and a will to change the structure of the Food Supplement Programme for the better. Indeed the tender specifications have been reviewed to include a greater degree of freedom to enlist the participation of the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life in the quality monitoring of the programme.

The most desired change has been the consideration to split the ZEP schools in terms of cluster based on geographical proximity. This is done in order to maximise resources and ensure better control over the process of distribution and quality of food supplied to the pupils.

TEACHERS (TRAINEE) - POSTINGS

15/2/05
25

(No. B/84) Dr. B. Hookoom (Second Member for Piton and Rivière du Rempart) asked the Minister of Education and Scientific Research whether, in regard to teachers who have completed their training at the MIE in the year 2004, he will state -

- (a) the number thereof who have been posted to the *Zones d'Education Prioritaires* (ZEP) schools;
- (b) the number of complaints, if any, from these teachers regarding their postings, and
- (c) the number of cases which have been considered and, the outcome thereof.

Mr Obeegadoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, as regards part (a), I am informed that out of the 229 trainee teachers who have completed their training at the Mauritius Institute of Education in November 2004, 32 have been posted in the *Zones d'Education Prioritaire* schools as probationers.

With regard to part (b), so far, of the 32, ten have complained about their postings on various grounds.

As for part (c), all the ten cases have naturally been considered and postings in four cases have been reviewed.

Cont'd...

D02P10cl/6

PQ No. B/84 (Cont'd)

Dr. Hookoom: Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Minister concede that we need experienced teachers to work in ZEP schools?

Mr Obeegadoo: We need experienced teachers to work in all schools, Sir.

Dr. Hookoom: Can the hon. Minister state the number of ZEP schools from where complaints have been registered?

Mr Obeegadoo: I repeat, Sir, that there have been 10 complaints. The question concerned the number of complaints. I cannot exactly whether the 10 complaints were from one school or different schools.

Dr. Hookoom: Can the hon. Minister state whether teachers are paid travelling allowances?

Mr Obeegadoo: Mr Speaker, I cannot say offhand. If the hon. Member would put a question relating specially to the point, I will answer.

**CAMP LEVIEUX, POINTE AUX SABLES & CHEBEL -
SQUATTERS' CHILDREN (30/08/05)**

(No. B/158) Mrs A. Navarre-Marie (First Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Women's Rights, Child Development, Family Welfare & Consumer Protection whether, in regard to the children of squatters in the regions of Camp Levieux, Pointe aux Sables and Chebel, she will state -

- (a) their number and age group, and
- (b) whether these children are attending educational institutions and, if so, what arrangements have been made in that connection and, if not, why not.

The Minister of Social Security, National Solidarity & Senior Citizens Welfare & Reform Institutions (Mrs S. Bappoo): Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that -

(a) there is presently a total of 248 children of squatters in the regions of Camp Levieux, Pointe aux Sables and Chebel.

The age groups are as follows -

Number

0 - 3 years	92
4 - 11 years	106
12-18 years	50
Total	248

Of the 248 children, only 9 are not attending educational institutions, namely 7 at Camp Levieux and 2 at Pointe aux Sables. It has been reported that these children were previously residing at Floreal, Quatre Bornes and Terre Rouge and were attending schools in their respective catchment areas.

I am also informed that officials of the Ministry have been visiting the families on a regular basis and as education is compulsory to our children, the need to send children to school was impressed on the parents during these visits. They were also apprised that arrangements for the transfer of their children to the nearest school would be made. These parents were, however, reluctant to accept such arrangements. They had stated that they would not embark on transfer procedures for their children to be admitted in a new school of the vicinity where they are actually, given that they were residing in these regions only on a temporary basis. They would initiate such procedures only when they would be made aware of the outcome of their unstable situation, but counselling by officials of the Ministry is still going on.

CHILDREN (DISABLED) - EDUCATION – AMOUNT EARMARKED (18/10/05)

(No. I B/355) Mrs F. Labelle (Third Member for Vacoas and Floreal) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether he will state –

(a) the amount earmarked for the education of disabled children for the year 2005-2006, and

(b) the amount paid as at 30 September 2005 during that financial year to the institutions which provide education to children with special needs.

Mr Gokhool: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as far as part (a) of the question is concerned, an amount of Rs17 m. has been voted in the 2005-

2006 Recurrent Budget under my Ministry's vote item "Special Education Needs Sector".

As regards part (b), so far, no disbursement from this item has been made.

I would like to bring out that grants are usually provided to the NGOs in two instalments as follows: the first instalment between October and December, and the second instalment between March and June. Last year, payment was effected in one lump sum in November 2004. Grants amounting to Rs4.2 m. were paid to 14 NGOs catering for 684 children with special needs. This year we intend to extend payment of grants to another 18 NGOs likely to be registered with my Ministry, thereby reaching 1,200 children with special education needs.

Payment is normally effected after the registration of NGOs has been completed, which is not the case at this stage. NGOs are registered with my Ministry after they have filled in the prescribed form and after clearance is subsequently obtained from the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life. This process is still on and is expected to be completed by the end of October 2005.

For the information of the House, all items for grants have been reviewed and increased. The basic idea is to aim at parity in respect of the per capita for children aged 5 to 16 years old. In this connection, my Ministry is working out the new criteria for the increased allocation of the grant to the NGOs registered with my Ministry.

Disbursement of funds is expected to be made in the course of November 2005.

Mr Bérenger: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I was listening to the hon. Minister. Did I understand him rightly when I heard him say that Government is considering extending financial support to a number of new NGOs and that until that review is completed the NGOs at present, until now, having received financial support, disbursement will not take place? I hope I have been wrong in hearing that.

Mr Gokhool: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in fact, the registration exercise for all NGOs is taking place because new criteria will be applied. So, we have to register them and then check whether the criteria are being met. It is only then that the disbursement can take place.

Mr Bérenger: Can I appeal to the hon. Minister that most, if not all, of the existing NGOs receiving financial support do a heroic job and they depend on that financial disbursement for their very survival? If the disbursement is late by a few days not even a few weeks, they end up in real troubles. So, can I appeal to the Minister that there should be no break in the disbursement process?

Mr Gokhool: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am aware of this problem. In fact, I checked as to why disbursement is late, but I was given the explanation that it was because of the registration and also the criteria. But since the point has been made, I will take it up and will see to it that no problem is caused as far as disbursement is concerned.

ZEP SCHOOLS – POLICY (25/10/05)

(No. I B/399) Mr J.C. Barbier (Third Member for GRNW & Port Louis) asked the Minister of Education & Human Resources whether, in regard to the ZEP schools, he will state if there is a new policy and, if so, will he give details thereof.

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to refer the hon. Member to PQs B/395 and B/491. Hon. Members may recall that the ZEP project was established in 2003, with the main objective of improving the educational attainments of pupils in schools which had a CPE pass rate of less than 40% over the last five years or if they were former Special Support Schools, an average pass rate between 40% and 45% over the last five years.

The previous Government laid out a number of conditions that needed to be met to attain the stated objectives of the project, namely –

- (i) staffing and human resource development;
- (ii) school development project;
- (iii) infrastructural development, and
- (iv) building partnerships with parents, NGOs, CBOs and business organisations.

Upon assuming office, I have been taking stock of the ZEP project, and I had a series of meetings with the different stakeholders – Head Teachers of the respective schools, parents, representatives of the private sector (the Joint Economic Council), and representatives of trade unions

on the management of the project.

I have also spoken to the UNDP representative, Mrs A. Smedler. Mr Speaker, Sir, the problem of underachievement in the disadvantaged regions has not yet been tackled. My Ministry has identified a number of weaknesses that need to be addressed, namely –

- (a) there has been no differentiated approach in the delivery of the primary school curriculum in these schools;
- (b) the posting of the teachers/Head Teachers has been carried out without due consideration to the specific demands of the ZEP schools;
- (c) the training of teachers has been very limited. Though a couple of training sessions have been organised by the ZEP unit, yet the transferability of skills of the newly trained teachers has not taken place;
- (d) the ZEP School Health Programme has not been implemented properly and there has been no proper follow-up. The pupil's health cards have not been issued to all pupils, as claimed by my predecessor in reply to PQ B/395;
- (e) the system of pupil's progress card, which was confirmed to have been finalised some years ago, has, in fact, never been implemented;
- (f) the specialised services offered by the teacher in charge of remedial education have, unfortunately, not yielded the expected results, as there are too few of these teachers for all the 27 ZEP schools in the island.
- (g) the ZEP project in its elaboration had mentioned the collaboration of the parents as the foremost stakeholder in the education process of their children. It is noted that not much has been achieved in this area. There has been very limited involvement of the parents having their pupils at the ZEP schools.

In July 2005, the UNDP sponsored an evaluation of the project and has brought to light a number of inadequacies.

In conclusion, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would like to state the ZEP project has neither used the resources to the optimum level nor has its programmes impacted positively on the schools; thus resulting in significant wastages of public funds.

In the light of the information I have provided there is urgent need for a review of the policy of the ZEP school project. In consultation with

all the stakeholders, my Ministry is in the process of formulating a new policy to put the ZEP school project on track and address weaknesses that I have highlighted. The details of the new policy are being worked out by my Ministry in consultation with the stakeholders.

CITE LA CURE ZEP SCHOOL – PTA – COMPLAINTS (08/11/05)

(No. I B/452) Mrs B. Virahsawmy (First Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether he will state if he has received any complaints from the Parent Teachers Association of the ZEP school of Cité La Cure regarding mismanagement and misconduct of the staff and, if so, will he state what remedial measures are envisaged.

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, on Tuesday 11 October, a group of parents of Marcel Cabon Government School reported to the zone directorate to discuss problems existing at the level of the school. The main problems raised related to lateness, absenteeism and the poor performance of teachers.

The parents requested for the transfer of a number of teachers including the Head Teacher who allegedly is unable to cope with the load of work.

It was explained to the parents that it is not proper, at this time of the year, to attend to their request for the transfer of those teachers and the Head Teacher, and such request will be considered in the forthcoming transfer exercise to ensure a smooth resumption of studies in January 2006. The parents agreed to the proposal.

On Thursday 13 October 2005, the Head Teacher reported that a group of 30 parents called at the school. The same issues as reported to the directorate on Tuesday 11 October were raised. Parents also added that upgrading works such as levelling of the ground and construction of a shelter for use by the pupils during rainy weather were not attended to. The parents were informed that consideration would be given to their requests and needful would be done wherever possible before the resumption of studies in January 2006.

A further meeting was held with the stakeholders on 25 October 2005,

where the grievances of the parents were discussed for possible solutions. The parent mediator attached to the school was requested to ensure follow up on the pending issues and keep parents informed on remedial actions taken.

The following actions have been taken to remedy the situation –

- (i) the Head Teacher has been requested to press upon the teachers on the importance of punctuality and to report to the directorate any abuse on late arrivals and absenteeism;
- (ii) the Head Teacher has been requested to lay emphasis on customer care and courtesy to pupils and members of the public;
- (iii) teachers reckoning late arrivals and who are regularly absent from duty have been requested to submit their explanations for their lateness/absences.

My Ministry is closely monitoring the situation and appropriate disciplinary action will be taken against those teachers who do not have valid reasons for their lateness and absences.

Mrs Virahsawmy: Will the Minister also tell the House whether he is aware that there is no filtered water at the said school?

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, I know that there are problems with regard to non-availability of water, but the Head Teacher has been instructed to ensure that these problems are remedied and also the quality of water is monitored.

SIR SATCAM BOOLELL GOVT. SCHOOL – PTA – COMPLAINTS (15/11/05)

(No. I B/501) Mr L. Bundhoo (Second Member for Montagne Blanche and GRSE) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether he will state if he has received any complaints from the Parent Teachers Association of the Sir Satcam Boolell Government School at Sebastopol, in regard to –

- (a) office and classroom requirements;
- (b) repairs and maintenance, and
- (c) extension of the school yard and, if so, will he state what actions have been initiated in respect thereof.

The Minister of Local Government (Dr. J. B. David): Mr Speaker, Sir, yes, a request was received on 15 September 2005. The request is only additional to the standard requirements obtained each year from the Head Teacher.

With regard to part (a) of the question, I am advised that the Ministry of Education and Human Resources has already examined the request and initiated the necessary procedures for the procurement of those items which are deemed acceptable.

Regarding part (b) of the question, I am informed that works have started and are expected to be completed during the November/December 2005 vacation.

As for part (c) of the question, the Ministry of Education and Human Resources will consider acquiring additional land adjoining the school. Furthermore, the backyard will be fenced so as to release space.

YEAR 2006

ZEP SCHOOLS - PARENT MEDIATORS – SALARIES (11/04/06)

(No. B/207) Mrs F. Labelle (Third Member for Vacoas and Floreal) asked the Minister of Education & Human Resources whether he will state if the “*Parents Médiateurs*” are still in employment in ZEP schools and, if so, will he give the dates on which they received their salaries for each of the months of January, February and March 2006.

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, five Parent Mediators were recruited on a part-time basis for an initial period of one year with effect from 02 July 2003. Thereafter, the contracts of employment of the five Parent Mediators were renewed yearly up to December 2005, after seeking the necessary clearances from the Public Service Commission, the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development and the Ministry for Civil Service Affairs and Administrative Reforms.

Prior to July 2005, the ZEP project was being implemented without the involvement of the Directorate, and as soon as I assumed office, I held a series of meeting with stakeholders with a view to aligning our objectives to sustain the socio pedagogical aspect of the project and to consolidate this social project within the Ministry. Thus, in order to give a new orientation to the ZEP project, including a review of its management and staffing structure, and its integration and consolidation within the Ministry.

However, in December 2005, in order to ensure that the ZEP project is not jeopardized, it was proposed that the five Parent Mediators on contract be retained for a further period of one year from January 2006 to 31 December 2006. In January 2006, the Ministry initiated action for the obtention of the necessary clearances from the authorities concerned. The approval of the Public Service Commission was sought on 14 February 2006 to -

- (i) renew the contracts of employment of the five Parent Mediators for another period of one year as from 01 January 2006, and
- (ii) to carry out the selection exercise for the recruitment of four additional Parent Mediators.

Subsequently, on 13 March 2006, the approval of the Public Service Commission was obtained, subject to establishment and financial clearances.

The establishment and financial clearances have been obtained on 06 March and 07 April 2006 respectively.

Meanwhile, one Parent Mediator has resigned from her post as from 01 February 2006, and another one has stopped performing duties of Parent Mediator since 01 January 2006, pending the renewal of her contract of employment. To date, only three Parent Mediators are in post.

The letters of appointment on contract have been issued to four Parent Mediators and payment of their salaries has been effected.

As regards the recruitment of four additional Parent Mediators, an interview exercise of the eligible candidates has been carried out last week by the selection panel, set up by the Ministry with the approval of the Public Service Commission. The report of the selection panel will, in due course, be forwarded to the Public Service Commission for approval. Thereafter, an offer of employment will be made to the four successful candidates, in order of rank as per merit list.

Mrs Labelle: Will the hon. Minister confirm that it's only today 11 April at 10 in the morning that the *Parents Médiateurs* have been paid their salaries for the months of January, February and March?

Mr Gokhool: The fact of the matter is that the salaries have been paid and I have explained that a number of clearances had to be obtained and this has taken some time, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mrs Labelle: Mr Speaker, Sir, if I heard the Minister well, he mentioned that in December the decision was taken to retain the services of the *Parents Médiateurs*. Does he think it's correct to make people work for months without paying their salaries? It's only today at 10 in the morning that they have received their salaries. In the meantime, of course, one has left because she was unable to sustain.

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have explained the circumstances leading to the decision in December and then we have to initiate action to obtain the necessary clearance.

SCHOOLS (PRIMARY & SECONDARY) - PRIVATE TUITION (25/04/06)

(No. B/369) Mr M. Dowarkasing (Third Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the Minister of Education & Human Resources whether he will state if he proposes to amend or introduce legislation to ban the practice

of private tuition.

Reply: The practice of private tuition is widespread in Mauritius, and has been so for numerous decades. Ideally, private tuition should not be a general practice but should be the avenue for students who are facing major difficulties in their schoolwork or who are slow learners.

Section 37 A of the Education Act prohibits the giving of private tuition to students of Standards I-III. However, for security reasons, primary school teachers are allowed to use the school premises for the purpose of giving private tuition to pupils of Standards IV, V and VI.

To that end, the Ministry has established clear guidelines and criteria for the use of the school premises for private tuition. These include, *inter alia*, the requirement that the teacher make an application to the Head Teacher for the use of the school premises, the prohibition of using the school premises for private tuition at specific times of the academic calendar, the requirement that there be a break of at least half an hour between the end of regular lessons and the private tuition, and limits on the class size and the time for giving private tuition on the school premises.

Concerned with the issue of private tuition, I had set up a team at my Ministry to study all the various implications of private tuition in State primary and secondary schools. The team has conducted preliminary assessments and has submitted their interim report recently.

In-house discussions are now being held at the level of my Ministry. I intend, subsequently, to involve all the stakeholders, including the parents and the teachers, to study the issue and come up with pragmatic and feasible remedial measures. Based on the recommendations of the future consultative sessions to be held on the subject, appropriate administrative and legislative measures will be taken.

However, I also wish to point out that within the context of the reforms that are currently being undertaken at the Ministry for the provision of a world class quality education to all Mauritian students, specific quality initiatives are being implemented to enhance both the teaching and learning experience at schools. Mechanisms are being set up for promoting early childhood development, ensuring literacy and numeracy, promoting a reading culture, ensuring responsibility and accountability at all levels, and for strengthening the management capacity at the schools.

Moreover, the MBC and the MCA, in collaboration with other key

stakeholders, are holding consultations for the launching and running of a proposed learning channel which will be beneficial to both students and teachers.

The ultimate objective is to ensure that the time spent in classrooms is geared towards the attainment of the Ministry's set goals and objectives. It is projected that if quality of teaching and learning is improved across board, the need for private tuition will be reduced.

ZEP SCHOOLS – BREAD DISTRIBUTION (16/05/06)

(No. B/518) Mrs D. Perrier (Fourth Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Minister of Education & Human Resources whether, in regard to the distribution of bread to students attending the *Zone d'Education Prioritaire* schools, he will state if the scheme is still operational and, if so –

- (a) the price per bread paid to the suppliers, and
- (b) the date of the last agreement signed between Government and the suppliers.

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the House that the scheme for the distribution of bread to students attending the ZEP schools is still operational.

Contracting out for the food supply for ZEP students is done at the level of the ZEP school through the Head Teacher and the School Development Unit. Thus, each school has its own supplier and its own agreement with the suppliers. Replies to parts (a) and (b) of the question are, therefore, being tabled.

Mr Dayal: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Minister whether there has been malpractice in tendering procedures in the past?

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, as I said, the purchase and distribution of bread is being done at the level of the schools, with the help of the School Development Unit, as a result of a lot of malpractice which was brought to the attention of the House in the 2003-2004 Director of Audit's Report.

Mrs Perrier: Le ministre peut-il nous dire s'il est au courant du prix, *on average*, que payent les différentes écoles pour chaque pain?

Mr Gokhool: The information is contained in the document I am going to submit. The range is from Rs1.50, Rs1.55. These are the figures which are mentioned.

Mrs Perrier: Can the Minister confirm when this agreement has been signed by the different parties?

Mr Gokhool: There are a number of suppliers, and agreements have been signed at different dates. That's why I am tabling the information.

Mrs Perrier: What about the latest one?

Mr Gokhool: I will have to check, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mrs Labelle: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister whether the question of each school taking care of the supplies was not a temporary measure pending the approval of suppliers?

Mr Gokhool: Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir. This is being looked into, and we will have to change the system, whereby we can co-ordinate the supply at the level of the Ministry.

Mrs Perrier: Le ministre vient de dire que le *average* était entre R 1.50 et R 1.55. C'est pour cela que je demandais à quelle date a été signé le dernier *agreement*, parce que depuis le 07 janvier il y a eu une augmentation du pain à R 1.65. Donc, si les *suppliers* peuvent livrer aux écoles à R 1.50, comment peuvent-ils justifier l'augmentation du pain à R 1.65?

Mr Gokhool: This is a matter which is dealt with at the level of the schools with the suppliers, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mrs Labelle: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I know from the hon. Minister what are the mechanisms put in place to ensure the quality of food being supplied in the different schools?

Mr Gokhool: This is supervised by the ZEP Project Manager and the cluster co-ordinators, together with the help of the liaison officers who work in this sector, Mr Speaker, Sir.

(No. B/601) Mrs F. Labelle (Third Member for Vacoas and Floreal) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether he will state the criteria laid down for the registration of educational institutions with the Special Education Needs Unit of his Ministry.

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, the criteria laid down for the registration of educational institutions with the Special Education Needs Unit (SENU) of my Ministry have been worked out by the Special Education Needs Unit in close consultation with the relevant organisations in the sector through an *ad-hoc* Committee set up in March 2005. Registration Certificates are valid for a period of two years. The educational institutions are registered either as Special Education Needs (SENS) Schools or as Special Education Needs day care centres. The SEN schools are those which provide educational services to children with disabilities, by either qualified or trained or experienced teachers, with a proper curriculum and appropriate pedagogical tools. SEN day care centres are those which provide care to children with disabilities, basic living skills and basic educational activities.

Except for this difference in the teaching mode, the registration criteria governing the SEN Units are the same for both the SEN schools and the SEN day care centres and these relate to *inter alia* issues such as - credibility of the institution (e.g. registration with the Registrar of Associations);

- quality;
- health and security ;
- qualifications and experience of the staff;
- recourse to appropriate curriculum and pedagogy;
- the provision of medical and para-medical services;
- the provision of specialised rooms;
- presence of adapted furniture and equipment;
- the school population;
- the age of the student population, and
- the teacher-pupil ration and the space-child ratio.

A draft handbook on the criteria governing registration has been prepared and this document is being finalised for the publication after necessary clearances are obtained.

SCHOOLS (PRIMARY) – CHILDREN – LUNCH (04/07/06)

(No. B/891) Mrs F. Labelle (Third Member for Vacoas and Floreal) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether he will state if any survey has been carried out at the level of primary schools to determine the number of children who come to school without lunch and, if so, when, indicating the measures, if any, taken to ensure that these children do not stay hungry at school.

Mr Gokhool: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, from the information available at my Ministry, I wish to inform the hon. Member that there has been no survey carried out at the level of primary schools to determine the number of children who come to school without lunch.

It has been the policy of my Ministry to provide all children in the mainstream primary schools with a loaf of bread daily, while children of the 30 ZEP schools are provided with a lunch comprising a *pain fourré*, a cake or a fruit, and a juice.

However, in line with the general policy of the Government to rethink our priorities in social protection and to re-orient our policy of subsidies such that the most needy are provided with adequate support, my Ministry has re-structured the School Feeding Programme to ensure that public funds are used optimally, while simultaneously ensuring that needy children are not penalised.

To arrive at a concerted strategy for ensuring that the most needy students are provided with a loaf of bread daily, I had chaired a meeting on Thursday 29 June, in the presence of hon. Bappoo, Minister of Social Security, National Solidarity, and Senior Citizens Welfare & Reform Institutions, key stakeholders such as the representatives of *Bureau de l'Education Catholique* (BEC), the Hindu Education Authority (HEA) and the Government Teachers' Union (GTU), *inter alia*, and various options were discussed.

During that meeting, the GTU had proposed that a consent form be given to parents for the latter to state whether they would desire to have their children continue benefiting from bread at school or not. All members present felt that this was a viable option.

In the light of discussions held, my Ministry is now in the process of consulting another key stakeholder, the Parent-Teachers' Association (PTAs) in order to secure their views and recommendations on the best means of identifying the most needy students.

Pending the finalisation of the strategy for identifying the most needy students, my Ministry is continuing with the policy of providing a loaf of bread at school to all children.

I wish to emphasize that it is the philosophy of the Government to provide assistance to the most vulnerable sections of the population, and to utilise public funding in a most equitable and just way. This is why the food programme for the ZEP schools is being maintained, while spending on the primary school feeding programme is being reoriented to ensure that public expenditures are reallocated in ways that bring greater benefits to those who need Government support the most.

Mr Lauthan: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Minister to inform the House whether the survey will cover the whole island? When we talk of vulnerable groups, we think of vulnerable areas. Even in what we call the *posh* areas, we have very poor families. Can we have some clarifications?

Mr Gokhool: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the exercise we are carrying will concern all schools, excluding ZEP schools where the food programme is already maintained. All non-ZEP schools will be concerned.

Mr Guinness: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, if I understand the Minister, the usage of the Form is not a final decision because he will be contacting the PTA?

Mr Gokhool: As I indicated, stakeholders have been consulted. At present, we are consulting the PTAs to get their views and suggestions.

PRIVATE TUITION (PRIMARY & SECONDARY) – REGULATION (25/07/06)

(No. B/1105) Mr S. Soodhun (Fifth Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Minister of Education & Human Resources whether he will state if Government proposes to regulate the practice of private tuition to students at primary and secondary levels.

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to refer the hon. Member to PQ B/369, to which I replied on 25 April 2006.

The practice of private tuition is widespread in Mauritius and has been so for numerous decades. Ideally, private tuition should not be a general practice, but should be the avenue for students who are facing major

difficulties in their schoolwork or are slow learners.

A study was carried out by the University of Mauritius in 1984 regarding private tuition at primary level. The report, although dated as far back as 1984, still holds substance, as it concluded that for any approach to succeed, it must be based on social and economic reality. It must be consistent with the desires of parents and children and with the realities of the job market. Any imposed solution which ignores these factors will be doomed to failure.

Some causes of the need for private tuition were found to be as follows –

- (i) parents considered that private expenditure on education as an investment with a high rate of return;
- (ii) raising the standard of requirements for different levels of jobs, leading to an increase in the demand for higher educational qualifications.

Some policy options were identified –

- (i) lengthening the school day;
- (ii) institution of remedial classes for slow learners, and
- (iii) enactment of legislation, imposing controls over private tuition.

At primary level, section 37 A of the Education Act prohibits the giving of private tuition to students of Standards I to III. The Ministry has established clear guidelines and criteria for the practice of private tuition.

They are as follows –

- (i) school premises are not to be used for private tuition during the following periods:
 - in January and December;
 - on Saturdays, Sundays and public holidays, and
 - the last week of school holidays.
- (ii) only three days of private tuition per week during school holidays, 9.00 to 12.00 a.m.;
- (iii) no private tuition in the morning and after 5.00 p.m. on school days;
- (iv) size of private tuition group not to exceed classroom capacity;
- (v) not more than six hours of private tuition per week;
- (vi) pupils should have a break of at least half an hour between the end of regular lessons and private tuition;
- (vii) all pupils taking private tuition with class teacher on school premises after school hours are under the custody of the

teachers concerned;

(viii) the teacher may be liable for any accident that may befall on any pupil on school premises before, during and immediately after private tuition;

(ix) tuition facilities should be extended to pupils who cannot afford to pay.

However, in order to improve conditions in which tuition is given, as well as for security reasons, teachers are permitted to use school premises for giving tuition to pupils of Standards IV, V and VI.

At secondary level, there is no legal provision which either allows or prohibits private tuition. There is no policy to encourage private tuition at secondary level, neither are schools placed at the disposal of teachers for private tuition. If there is private tuition at secondary level, it is done outside school hours and outside school premises.

As stated earlier on, it is not envisaged to unilaterally regulate or to take sanctions regarding private tuition, as the responsibility rests also with the parents. However, my Ministry has set up a team to study all the various implications of private tuition in State primary and secondary schools. The team has conducted preliminary assessments and has submitted their interim report, which is still being studied at the level of my Ministry.

Mr Soodhun: Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Minister confirm whether competition for the 1,260 seats will not, in fact, force the students to have recourse to private tuition, thus putting undue pressure upon them?

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, as I said, the practice of private tuition exists in our system. It is also the responsibility of parents to guide the students in terms of what is best for them.

Mr Varma: Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Minister kindly inform the House whether the teachers who give private tuition in Government schools pay a rent to Government?

Mr Gokhool: This is not the case, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Guinness: Mr Speaker, Sir, is the hon. Minister prepared to table copy of the interim report?

Mr Gokhool: As I said, this is an interim report, and it is being studied. Discussions with stakeholders will take place. This is not a final

report, and I don't think that it is advisable to table the report at this stage.

Mrs Labelle: Mr Speaker, Sir, will the hon. Minister consider regulating private tuition for practical classes, particularly at secondary level? Because we are aware that, now, teachers give tuition for physics or chemistry practical classes. Will the hon. Minister consider looking into this aspect of practical classes?

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, as I said, at this stage, it is not proposed to regulate private tuition. But, in the light of the work that is being carried out, this point can be taken on board.

Mr Gunness: Mr Speaker, Sir, there are a few cases - I don't say that it is general - where Standard III students are having private tuition, and we know that it is illegal to do so. But in some cases because of the A + now, parents are starting giving tuition to their children.

(Interruptions)

Is the Minister prepared to put notices in schools in order to notify parents that this is illegal?

Mr Gokhool: I think the hon. Member is a very experienced parliamentarian and he should not put a question on the basis of hypothesis.

(Interruptions)

I think the whole question is based on hypothesis.

Mrs Martin: Can I ask the hon. Minister whether he has a definite time frame as to when the negotiations with the relevant stakeholders will finish?

Mr Gokhool: Well, I think I indicated the next phase is to consult those stakeholders and then as we proceed, we will have to take into account what developments are taking place. I cannot put a fixed time frame at this stage.

Mrs Labelle: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister has talked about the parents' responsibilities. Maybe in view of helping parents to take their responsibility, will the Minister consider putting clear notices that private tuition is illegal from Standard I to Standard III?

Mr Gokhool: This is a valuable suggestion which we have to take on board.

At 1.00 p.m. the sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 2.30 p.m. with Mr Speaker in the Chair.

PHOENIX - HANDICAPPED CHILDREN – ABANDONMENT (17/07/07)

(No. B/768) Mrs F. Labelle (Third Member for Vacoas and Floreal) asked the Minister of Women's Rights, Child Development, Family Welfare & Consumer Protection whether she will state if her Ministry has been apprised of the case of two handicapped children who were recently abandoned by their mother in Phoenix and, if so, will she state if any inquiry was initiated thereinto and, if not, why not and, if so, the outcome thereof.
The Minister of Social Security, National Solidarity and Senior Citizens Welfare & Reform Institutions (Mrs S. Bappoo): Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I shall reply to this question.

The case of two handicapped children aged 11 and 12 years who were recently abandoned by their mother in Phoenix was referred to the Child Protection Unit of Phoenix on 12 June 2007 by the Phoenix Police Station as a case of child abandonment.

It was reported that the biological mother of the children living at Phoenix, abandoned the two children on 11 June 2007 around 18.00 hrs at the place of a woman living in the vicinity.

In the morning of 12 June 2007, the neighbour took the two children to the Phoenix Police Station to report the matter. Thereafter, the Police Officers took the children to the Child Protection Unit at Phoenix. Information received from the lady reveals that the minors' father passed away recently. It was also reported that the two minors were attending the APEIM school.

In view of the fact that the mother was untraceable, arrangements were made by the officers of the Child Development Unit for the children to be taken care of by a relative residing at Hollyrood, Vacoas.

A pre-measure statement was recorded to that effect at the Phoenix Police Station and the children were handed over to the relative.

I am also informed by the Commissioner of Police that the mother was arrested on 13 June 2007. She appeared before Court on 14 June 2007 and was released on bail on the same day after furnishing a surety of Rs1500 and recognizance of Rs25,000. After her release, she lived for some time at the place of that relative who was found to be, in fact, a family friend. Officers of the Child Development Unit have effected a visit on Friday 13 July 2007 at APEIM school and the children were found well dressed and even looked tidy.

The children informed that they were living together with their mother at the place of another relative at Camp Caval, Curepipe. I am also being informed that the person is, in fact, the mother's partner.

Mrs Labelle: May I ask the hon. Minister whether, in these type of cases there is a follow-up mechanism, that is, if regular visits are scheduled to monitor these children and their mothers respectively?

Mrs Bappoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, maybe the substantive Minister can later give more details, but I am informed that there are regular monitoring and visits by the officers of the Child Development Unit.

Mrs Perrier: Sir, can the Minister inform the House whether the mother is followed by a psychologist?

Mrs Bappoo: I am also being informed that she is being followed by a psychologist.

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**ZEP – TEACHERS – SPECIAL EDUCATION NEEDS-REMEDIAL
EDUCATION DIPLOMA**

(No. B/955) Mrs F. Labelle (Third Member for Vacoas and Floreal) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether, in regard to the teachers holding a Special Education Needs Diploma who are attached to the *Zone d'Education Prioritaire (ZEP)*, he will state the number thereof as at –

- (a) July 2005, and
- (b) July 2007

Reply: The Zones d'Education Prioritaire (ZEP) Programme was implemented as from July 2003 in the Republic of Mauritius. Out of a cohort of 21 teachers who held the Special Education Needs-Remedial Education (SEN-RE) Diploma from the MIE as from 2002, eleven were operating within the ZEP schools in July 2005. Of these eleven teachers, four have been appointed Mentor in 2006 and four others posted to the main stream schools (following requests made by them).

The three remaining holders of the diploma in SEN/Remedial Education still operating within the ZEP Programme were offered further training through a "BRIDGES Training Programme" in October 2006, offered by Australian Specialists. These teachers now form part of the core team of trainers that will provide training and supervision to 30 other experienced teachers with a view to transforming the latter into remedial teachers. They will service each of the thirty ZEP schools. Training of these 30 teachers is expected to be completed by the end of 2007.

Following the training of the first cohort of teachers during period 1999-2002, the course leading to the Diploma in Special Education Needs – Remedial Education was stopped. In fact, in April 2003, the MIE was requested to stay action regarding training of a second cohort of teachers in view of the fact that the Ministry was in the process of reviewing all staff development programs so as to align all courses with –

- (i) training needs;
- (ii) philosophy of reform, and

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- (iii) increase efficiency and effectiveness of training programmes.

After having taken stocks of the unsatisfactory state of affairs I inherited in 2005, I introduced an “in-service training” (INSET II) Project in July 2006 as part of the need to provide special support to children in ZEP Schools. Under this project, 225 teachers of ZEP schools have undergone training starting with 125 in October/November 2006 and the rest completing in early 2007. This course was conducted by MIE with a view to enhancing their delivery capacity through innovative classroom practices.

Another development being promoted concerns 65 teachers of lower primary classes who are following the “Tackling Underachievement Project” conducted by lecturers of the MIE which will be associated with the “3-earlies” initiative i.e –

- (i) early screening of children with learning difficulties;
- (ii) early diagnosis, and
- (iii) early intervention to be conducted with the support of the Remedial Team in training.

The ZEP Programme provides my Ministry with opportunities to develop, test and promote innovative practices which not only serve children in ZEP schools, but will be shared with non-ZEP schools as part of the ZEP+ programme that is being implemented.

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SPECIAL EDUCATION NEEDS UNIT – STAFF

(No. B/1347) Mr S. Lauthan (Third Member for Port Louis Maritime and Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether, in regard to the Special Education Needs Unit, he will state the number of persons posted thereat since 2002 to June 2005 to date and since July 2005 to date, indicating their names and grades.

Reply: Let me state at the very outset that the Special Education Needs (SEN) Unit which the hon. Member is referring to has not existed between 2002 and 2005. However, the responsibility for the specialised education sector was taken care of by the Director (Primary) of my Ministry. A Superintendent Specialised Schools was recruited in 2002.

The SEN Unit has been created in 2006 following the elaboration of a Policy and Strategy Document entitled “Special Education Needs and Inclusive Education in Mauritius”. Its functions are, *inter alia*, to –

- (i) co-ordinate all existing Special Education Needs schools or specialised schools as known in Mauritius;
- (ii) facilitate provision of services, starting with the early years of development and beyond;
- (iii) work with the school community, stakeholders and parents.

It is currently staffed by an Assistant Director who has been given the overall responsibility of looking administratively at the sub sector since January of this year, as well as a Superintendent of Specialised Schools.

With regard to the number of staff for the period 2002 to June 2005, there has always been one Superintendent of Specialised Schools who has been reporting directly to the then Director (Primary). As from 10 January 2005, the services of an Adviser was enlisted to advise on educational reforms in the field of reforms and related areas and to also reinforce the SEN Unit. Her contract came to an end on 10 January 2007. Since 17 September of this year, one Adviser has been recruited to advise among others on Special Education Needs.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am tabling the names and grades of the different officers who have serviced/are servicing the Special Education Needs for the period April 2002 to date.

YEAR 2008

**LE MORNE GOVERNMENT SCHOOL – TEACHERS, ZEP PROJECT,
ETC. (27/05/08)**

(No. B/594) Mr A. Ganoo (First Member for Savanne and Black River) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether, in regard to the Le Morne Government School, he will state –

- (a) the percentage pass rate at the Certificate of Primary Education examinations for the past five years;

- (b) if the successive Head Teachers posted thereat have been transferred shortly after their posting, and if so, the reasons therefor;
- (c) if an additional teacher is posted thereat for the purpose of replacing the teachers when they are on leave, and
- (d) the reasons as to why it is not included in the *Zone d'Education Prioritaire*.

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, as regards part (a) of the question, I am tabling the pass rate in respect of the Certificate of Primary Education examinations for the past five years. The figures indicate an erratic performance with a peak of 41.4% in 2006 which suddenly dropped to 8.3% in 2007.

As regards part (b) of the question, five Head Teachers have been posted to Le Morne Government School as from May 2005 to date. The first three of them served for short periods ranging from three months to one year before proceeding on retirement whereas the fourth one asked for a change in posting on account of long distance travelling after having served for one year.

The high mobility of Head Teachers is explained by the fact that Head Teachers are promoted on a seniority basis very near to their retirement and also by virtue of a policy evolved by my Ministry on a proposal of the trade unions in 2006 to the effect that the seniormost Deputy Head Teacher island wide should be identified to fill a temporary vacancy of more than 120 days in the grade of Head Teacher whenever and wherever it occurs. It should be noted that the turnover of Head Teachers is not limited to Le Morne Government School but applies to all schools across the island on account of the policy which I have just stated. This is a most unsatisfactory state of affairs which disturbs the stability of schools and adversely impacts both on the administration and management and aching/learning. The whole issue of appointment and assignment of duties at the level of Head Teacher needs to be revisited.

With regard to part (c) of the question, on account of a dearth of qualified teachers, it is not the policy of the Ministry to have an additional teacher at a school just to replace teachers on leave. In such cases, the school administration sees to it that no classes are left unattended for teachers who are on casual or sick leave by asking oriental language and ICT teachers to replace or by merging classes. In the eventuality of a teacher taking vacation leave he/she is temporarily replaced by a Deputy Head Teacher or a Supply Teacher.

As regards part (d) of the question, the criteria for a school to be included in the *Zone d'Education Prioritaire* (ZEP) in 2003 at the inception of the project was that the school should have had a percentage pass rate of less than 40% at CPE for five consecutive years prior to 2003 or if it was a former Special Support School with an average CPE pass rate between 40% and 45% over the last five years. The Le Morne

Government School has had a pass rate fluctuating between 40.9% in 1999 and 45.7% in 2001 and at that time did not qualify for inclusion in the ZEP program during the selection exercise of schools.

The ZEP Project is undergoing a mid term evaluation and in view of the fact that the ZEP Plus concept has been endorsed by the ZEP Council, best practices in ZEP schools will be extended to non-ZEP low performing schools following the evaluation including Le Morne Government School over the next three years.

Mr Ganoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I won't take the time of the House, but there are so many problems at Le Morne Government School, the absence of teachers, so many Head Teachers come within a short span of time and so on. Can I appeal to the hon. Minister to see to it that Le Morne – for the reasons that he has just given – is as quickly as possible integrated within the *Zone d'Education Prioritaire*?

Mr Gokhool: As I have stated, Mr Speaker, Sir, that there is a ZEP Plus concept which will also concern low performance schools. In a way, the ZEP project will be taking care of these schools which are low performance schools.

Mrs Labelle: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister whether in the ZEP Plus concept there is any particular solution which will tackle the problem of Head Teachers which he has explained, particular those reaching the retiring age?

Mr Gokhool: In fact, I gave the answer that the present policy is on the basis of seniority where the Head Teachers are posted. Very often, most of these Head Teachers are near retirement. This is an unsatisfactory state of affairs. I am looking into it and there will be some changes in this direction.

Mr Barbier: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I know from the hon. Minister whether the results concerning Le Morne Government School dropped by 8.3% or dropped to 8.3%?

Mr Gokhool: It dropped to 8.3%.

ZEP SCHOOLS – CPE PASS RATE (22/07/08)

(No. B/950) Mrs A. Navarre-Marie (First Member for GRNW and Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether, in regard to the *Zone d'Education Prioritaire* schools, he will state the pass rate of each of the schools at the Certificate of Primary Education examinations, since the implementation of the *Zone d'Education Prioritaire* scheme to date.

Reply: I would like to point out that the *Zone d'Education Prioritaire*

(ZEP) project was established in 2003 with the main objective of addressing educational failure, i.e to improve the educational attainments of pupils attending schools mostly in less developed regions, and which had a CPE pass rate of less than 40% over the past five years or if they were Special Support Schools with an average pass rate between 40% and 45% over the past five years.

In view of the considerable amount of information requested for by the hon. Member, I am herewith tabling a detailed list of the CPE pass rate in respect of each ZEP Schools for the period 2003-2007.

CHILDREN – HEARING IMPAIRMENT – SPECIAL SCHOOLS (29/07/08)

(No. B/1008) Mrs M. Martin (Second Member for Curepipe and Midlands) asked the Minister of Social Security, National Solidarity and Senior Citizens Welfare & Reform Institutions whether, in regard to the children with hearing impairment, she will state the number thereof who attend special schools, indicating the number thereof who do not wear hearing aids.