

23/11/10 (4)

PUBLIC TRANSPORT USERS - PROTECTION

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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