

SECONDARY

CURRICULUM

YEAR 2006

SCHOOLS – SEX EDUCATION (23/05/06)

(No. B/609) **Dr. R. Mungur (Second Member for Flacq & Bon Accueil)** asked the Minister of Education & Human Resources whether, in regard to sexual abuse, he will state if it is proposed to introduce school based programme designed to teach children to recognise threatening situations and to provide them with skills to protect themselves against such abuse.

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, I thank the hon. Member for this question. Sexual abuse is becoming a major concern for all of us. It is not limited to school premises or school hours. It is a societal problem which should concern everyone and we should all play our roles to protect our children and our citizens.

As far as schools are concerned, the existing primary and lower secondary curricula do provide for basic sex education. I wish to refer the hon. Member to my earlier replies to PQs B/137 and B/298.

My Ministry has also introduced a youth empowerment programme for lower secondary students, namely Life Skills for Teens. This programme is being run on a pilot basis in 50 State and private secondary schools. The themes covered are, *inter alia*, responsibility, self-management skills, resisting peer pressure, and making right choices. This programme is being integrated in Social Studies and will be taught through brainstorming, role play, interactive methods and the participation of learners.

Where sexual abuse is concerned, it is not only the cognitive development of the learner that must be aimed at, but also his/her affective development in a value-based context. In this regard, we are going beyond the curriculum to approach the issues.

Apart from schools, parents and the media have an important role to play in enabling students to recognise threatening situations. Society should partner with schools in our responsibility of equipping children to protect themselves.

I am working towards integrating parental involvement into the education process of the child. Parents will thus be called upon to assume greater responsibilities.

I take the opportunity to refer the hon. Member to my reply to PQ B/137 and PQ B/298.

Mrs Labelle: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister whether he will consider having sexual education as a subject on its own and not part of any other subject, be it social studies or biology? Because, up to now, we have always included it in other subjects, and all of us know what is the result. When are we going to have *l'éducation à la sexualité et non seulement une éducation sexuelle qui fait tout simplement partie de la biologie, notamment la vie reproductive, mais aussi le développement émotif des jeunes? Quand va t-on introduire un tel sujet dans nos écoles?*

Mr Gokhool: I have answered this question previously. But, I would like to draw the attention of the hon. Member that we are dealing with children of very young age to secondary school going population, and we cannot have one size fits all programme for everyone. The programme must be tailor-made, and this has been taken care of.

Mrs Labelle: Certainement, M. le président. Il est connu que l'éducation à la sexualité commence dès très jeune, et il y a des programmes qui sont élaborés pour chaque groupe d'âge. C'est de cela que je parle et non d'un programme uniforme pour les enfants et les adolescents. Donc, nous parlons de programmes différents pour des différents groupes d'âge. *That's what I am saying.*

Mr Gokhool: This is being taken care of in the programme that is being elaborated.

MATHEMATICS, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY – TEACHING (13/06/06)

(No. B/712) Mr S. Dayal (Second Member for Quartier Militaire and Moka) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether he will state if his Ministry has any plan to encourage and promote the teaching of Mathematics, Science and Technology in schools and, if so, where matters stand.

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, Government fully recognises the vital role of Mathematics, Science and Technology within our vision of a world

class quality education accessible to all, especially in view of our commitment to develop our human resources which will respond to the emerging needs of a global economy increasingly being driven by science and technology.

It is precisely against this backdrop that emphasis is laid in the Government Programme 2005/1010 on the need to give a major boost to teaching of Mathematics, Science and Technology, which are lagging behind.

It is a matter of regret that between 2000/2005, the focus of the previous Government was on access and on construction of schools only to the detriment of curriculum, content and pedagogy. For example, it is unimaginable that primary and secondary curricula have remained static for decades.

As a first step towards the objectives set out in the Government Programme 2005-2010, a national debate on curriculum was launched in December 2005 for the renewal of the primary and secondary curricula.

Once the renewal document is finalised and approved by Government in the weeks to come, the next step will be to write the new curricula for the different subjects and to concurrently prepare the new textbooks on the lines of the new curricula. The new textbooks will be designed in such a way as to encourage and promote all subjects, but with particular emphasis on Mathematics, Science and Technology.

In addition to the new textbooks, consideration is also being given to the following measures –

- (i) the possibility of including in the core compulsory subjects at School Certificate level, English, French and Maths one Science subject, so that students who opt for Arts and Economic Side have at least some competencies in Science up to Form V level;
- (ii) the organisation in August 2006 of a workshop with UNESCO for the benefit of policy makers, the educationists and *teachers* of how to strengthen the quality and relevance of Science and Technology educational policies and programmes, and
- (iii) the introduction of Internet and Computing Core Certification Programme (IC3), as recently approved by Government. This programme will be integrated in the curriculum of ICT at the level of Forms I to III.

Further, the MIE has been required in February this year to review its

training programme for Science teachers to make the learning of Science more learner-friendly so as to create greater interest in Science and technology amongst students.

With the help of Mauritius Research Council, primary schools are being encouraged to set up semi-mobile science labs and creativity corners in order to increase the interest of our students at an early age for science literacy. All these measures are intended to encourage and promote the teaching of Mathematics, Science and Technology in our schools.

Mr Dayal: Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to ask a very precise question. Will the hon. Minister state to the House how he is going to increase the low participation of 30% of students taking Science subjects as he, himself, has stated in this very House?

Mr Gokhool: As I indicated, Mr Speaker, Sir, first, we have to review the curriculum - which is being done. This is a process that takes some time. The new textbooks have to be written, training has to be provided. All these have been started and it would take some time. I cannot give a precise date as to when this is going to happen.

Mr Dayal: Is the hon. Minister aware that a Centre for Science, Mathematics and Technology as a NEPAD flagship, was recently launched in Nairobi, Kenya, with a view to creating scientists, mathematicians and engineers, which are vital for productivity and prosperity?

Mr Gokhool: This may very well be, but I indicated that the MRC is looking at the Science and Technology Policy and we are working in close collaboration to improve the status of Science and Technology in our school system.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Will the hon. Minister then confirm that Science will not be compulsory in the near future? It is something that will come much later on.

Mr Gokhool: As I indicated, the Curriculum Renewal Report is going to be submitted to Government. Once it is approved, the proposal contained is that we have at least one Science subject, which is taught up to Form V. A decision will have to be taken in the light of the report, which will be submitted.

Mr Dayal: Mr Speaker, will the hon. Minister state to the House whether any delegate from Mauritius has ever attended any training

programme in the country that I mentioned and, if yes, whether the officer has made any recommendation from his report?

Mr Gokhool: I am not aware of this kind of participation, but if the hon. Member indicates to me which institution it is, I'll look into it and see whether any report has been submitted or any recommendation has been made.

It could very well be the Mauritius Institute of Education, but I'll have to check.

Mr Dayal: Mr Speaker, Sir, it relates to the same question. I am making the hon. Minister aware that such a training programme took place between 11 November and 07 December 2004. Will the hon. Minister state to the House whether Government will reconsider the century old policy of granting State scholarships by increasing the number of scholarships to study Science, Technology and Mathematics?

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, this is a point I note and which I'll refer to the Ministry, and we will look into the implications. But, as I said, we are determined to promote Science and Technology. And this is a proposal, which can well be looked into.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister has just mentioned that the Curriculum Reform Programme is already on and it is presently being done. My question would be whether there is a time frame for the completion of the curriculum review and when do we intend to implement it?

Mr Gokhool: The time frame is to focus on the primary school sector first as a priority and, subsequently, to move on to the secondary schools. I think we should start the implementation of this programme by 2008.

Mr Speaker: A last question!

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Maybe I have to draw the attention of the hon. Minister to the effect that in the primary sector, Science is already being taught and it is compulsory. Everyone takes Science already in the primary sector right now.

Mr Gokhool: Yes, as I indicated, the interest in Science literacy is very low and you can see the repercussion in secondary schools, where only about 30% of students take Science subjects; and this is what we are going

to rectify.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: I said last question! Sorry! Hon. Dayal, put your question please.

YEAR 2007

SCHOOLS (STATE SECONDARY) – ASIAN LANGUAGES AND ARABIC (27/03/07)

(No. B/40) Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun (Third Member for La Caverne and Phoenix) asked the Minister of Education & Human Resources whether he has received representations from students, teachers or any other quarters against the Ministry's recent policy of centralising the teaching of certain subjects, including Asian languages and Arabic in State Secondary Colleges and, if so, will he state the remedial actions that have been initiated.

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, my Ministry receives representations on various issues and has received representations regarding the centralisation of the teaching of certain subjects at Higher School Certificate level, including Asian Languages and Arabic in State Secondary Schools. I am informed that all the representations concerning centralisation were attended to within the framework of the existing policy.

However, I wish to point out that the policy of centralisation of the teaching of certain subjects is not new or recent as mentioned by the hon. Member. It has always existed particularly for low demand subjects and subjects which are generally considered to be in scarcity areas. In pursuing the policy, my Ministry takes into consideration a number of pedagogical and practical issues, which include budgetary constraints as well as the need to optimise resources.

In terms of procedures, a survey is carried out at the end of the year to determine the likely demand for any subject combination in the ensuing year and a subject combination asked for is normally offered in the schools concerned if there is a minimum of 18 students who have expressed the wish to opt for that subject combination. For Oriental Languages, the subject combination is offered if there is a minimum of 10 students who asked for same, it being understood that the normal class size is 30.

For certain cases, depending on the availability of resources, the Ministry uses its discretion to allow a school to offer a particular subject combination even if the demand falls short of 18 or 10, as the case may be.

As a matter of fact, there are a few schools which are offering specific subject combinations for as low as 5 or 6 students particularly for Oriental Languages.

I am satisfied that by and large, the whole process of admission to Lower VI has been carried out smoothly and that all deserving cases have been given the required attention. As a rule, all students who qualify for admission to Lower VI have been offered a seat for a chosen subject combination or for a subject combination which is very near to the chosen one in the same school with the possibility of moving to another school if he or she still insists to opt for his chosen subject combination.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: May I ask the hon. Minister whether he is aware that none of the National schools reserved for boys offer Asian languages and Arabic and whether he does not think that this would be discriminatory against students opting for Asian languages and Arabic amongst other subjects?

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, I mentioned that the question of offering languages is taken within the overall policy which exists in terms of if there are demands which are sufficient to offer a subject, the subject will be offered. Otherwise, the subject is offered in another school. The only inconvenience is that the students will have to go to another school and take up the subject.

Mr Guinness: Mr Speaker, Sir, in the eastern region, there are quite a good number of colleges and I presume quite a good number of students have applied for Asian languages, namely Arabic and Islamic studies. Can the Minister inform the House whether there is any college in the East which is offering these courses in HSC?

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, from the information I have, as I said, it is a policy of centralisation to be able to offer the subject and, as far as the East is concerned, I don't have the information, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Guinness: Mr Speaker, Sir, Bel Air was offering Islamic studies. There are many students in the East who have applied for this subject in HSC and now they are told to go in the North if they persist to do that subject. Therefore, I think that, at least, one college in the East could have

done that combination to offer the facility to these students. This is quite unfair.

Mr Gokhool: As the hon. Member said, there are a number of students, but they are spread in different colleges. If you have a critical mass of students, up to 10 students or even less, then we can consider regrouping the students in that college. This is the principle that is applied.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Minister what is the main reason which has prompted the Ministry to adopt such a measure?

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have just mentioned to the hon. lady that this is a policy which exists. And I believe this is a sound policy. I don't think we have to scrap a policy which works in the interests of the students.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I ask the Minister whether one of the reasons of opting for centralisation in the teaching of subjects has been cost-effectiveness?

Mr Gokhool: As I said, Mr Speaker, Sir, this is not the only consideration. The pedagogical considerations are taken into account. The hon. lady is a teacher, she knows that we need to have a critical mass of students ...

Mr Speaker: The hon. Members must listen to the answers first and then continue putting questions. Does the hon. Member have another question?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: The Government has always had a policy to promote the teaching of Asian languages and Arabic in secondary schools. May I know from the Minister whether he has tried to find out what will be the impact of such a measure on the teaching and the promotion of Asian languages in colleges?

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, I think it is an opportunity for me to make an invitation to the hon. lady to look at what reforms we are bringing. This Government has already approved the decision to set the Language Institute of Mauritius. It is well in line with the promotion of all languages.

(Interruptions)

Mr Lauthan: Mr Speaker, Sir, could the Minister clarify this point? He said that whenever subjects chosen by the candidates are not available, he or she is offered a choice close to that. Does that mean that he or she has to opt for other subjects?

Mr Gokhool: The problem may arise for oriental languages and Arabic. In a subject combination, you have the oriental language, Arabic and other subjects. This is where the nearer alternative is offered because in most cases students make a case to take up the oriental language or the Arabic. This is accommodated.

Mr Mohamed: May I ask the hon. Minister what does he mean by a subject which is close to Arabic? I fail to understand that.

Mr Gokhool: I have just explained. If a student has asked for Arabic, this Arabic subject goes with Economics or any other subject. The nearer combination will be to have the Arabic with other subjects.

Mr Speaker: Last question!

Mr Mohamed: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I, therefore, ask the Minister, since there are questions that have been put in this Assembly about this policy, whether he will consider meeting those who are concerned by the problem being caused by this policy, and, if need be, revisiting this whole policy that has been set up, not recently, but before?

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have already met people concerned with this problem and, in fact, they have had many working sessions at my Ministry and I also took the opportunity of meeting the trade unions who represent this issue. As far as the policy is concerned, if we go by the policy that the language should be taught even if a college has got two or three students, I am afraid that this will not lead to the promotion of the languages. The policy ...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Mr Gokhool: We have to take into account whether it is practical, first, pedagogically. Can you have a class going on with three students?

(Interruptions)

Well, this is not sound pedagogy!

Mr Guinness: Mr Speaker, Sir, can we know from the Minister whether the Ministry has made a survey region wise as to the number of students in each region willing to take these Asian languages? Is the Minister prepared to lay copy of that survey on the Table of the National Assembly?

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, I don't have the results of the survey. But any policy which is implemented or revisited is based on facts and figures. I am sure the hon. Member knows that, when colleges do the time tabling, workload planning, all these issues are taken into account.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the Minister whether in the past there have been cases where a teacher or several teachers were made to teach in several schools, in a group of schools? So, why not adopt this policy rather than asking students to move from one college to another?

Mr Gokhool: What the hon. Member has said in terms of asking teachers to teach in several schools has always existed. We are not reinventing anything. It's just applying the policy in the context of the reform programme that we are implementing.

Mr Mohamed: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Minister to lay on the Table of the National Assembly a copy of the data collection containing the quantum of demand by students in each area of this country for Asian languages and Arabic?

Mr Gokhool: This will be done, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: May I ask the hon. Minister whether he finds it normal not to offer Asian languages and Arabic in the four national colleges reserved for boys?

Mr Gokhool: As I said, Mr Speaker, Sir, it depends on demand. If the demand is low in the colleges, then we have to apply the policy.

SECONDARY SCHOOLS - TEXTBOOK - MR COURONNE (06/11/07)

(No. B/1048) Mr G. Guinness (Third Member for Montagne Blanche and

GRSE) asked the Minister of Education & Human Resources whether, in regard to the withdrawal of the French textbook of Mr and Mrs Couronne from the prescribed lists, he will state –

- (a) when was the decision taken;
- (b) by whom and in favour of which textbook, and
- (c) the reasons therefor.

Mr Gokhool: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I wish to refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to PQ No. B/617 at our sitting of 05 June 2007. I indicated my Ministry's intention to review the process of standardization of textbooks for 2008-2009 so that the total cost of books does not weigh heavy on parents at the beginning of the year for the resumption of studies, while complying with pedagogical requirements relating to curriculum outcomes. I need to point out that an abusive practice whereby some schools prescribed too many textbooks, some of which were not even used during the year, needed to be remedied.

Accordingly, in line with the criteria of relevance to curriculum objectives and outcomes and of affordability in terms of costs, as well as to promote creativity in teaching and learning, guidelines were given to the subject panels for the list of every subject to be divided into a restricted number of recommended textbooks and a list of reference books, the idea being to encourage teachers to draw from a variety of resource materials without imposing a heavy burden on parents.

The proposals of the French panel, submitted on 10 August, contained a recommended list and a reference list for Forms I, II and III. However, for Forms IV, V and Form VI, the panel submitted only a recommended list without a reference list.

Consequently, my Ministry had to ensure conformity with instructions for the sake of consistency for all subjects, that is, reference and recommended. The guidelines for recommended and reference lists were applied accordingly. As a result thereof, the books of Mr Couronne for Forms IV and V were not “withdrawn” as erroneously stated in the question but listed under the category “reference”. Another Mauritian author who was proposing two different books equally was also placed in the reference list instead of a single book covering both Forms IV and V proposed by the panel was placed in the recommended list by the Curriculum Directorate of my Ministry. It is to be noted that:

(Interruptions)

This has been the practice even with previous Governments.

- (i) the recommendations of the panels are not binding or mandatory and that the Curriculum Directorate of the Ministry - that is the reason why we have a Curriculum Directorate in the Ministry - is entitled to review same

particularly when instructions have not been complied with;
(ii) the books on the reference list are in any way less important than those in the recommended list;
(iii) Mr Couronne's books have been recommended for Forms I, II, III and Form VI (3 books). On total 6 books have been recommended;
(iv) However, Mr Couronne's books have not been recommended for Forms IV & V. They are in the reference list. The decision was taken on the one hand by the need to ensure a fair distribution among different authors whose books...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order, order! Order, I said!

Mr Gokhool: I have not finished answering.

The Deputy Speaker: I am on my feet. Order, I said!

Mr Gokhool: The hon. Members have to listen.

The Deputy Speaker: Order I said. Order! Let me hear what the Minister has to say.

Mr Gokhool: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I was saying that Mr Couronne's books have not been recommended for Forms IV & V. They are in the reference list.

The decision was taken on the one hand by the need to ensure a fair distribution among different authors whose books are of acceptable pedagogical standards and on the other by the reason of affordability given that he was proposing two textbooks for Forms IV and V respectively whereas other authors were proposing one book for both Forms IV and V.

I think the commercial dimension comes out when we look at the books. Mr Couronne has proposed one book for Form IV and one book for Form V. The price of Form IV book is Rs145 and the price of form V book is Rs125, whereas there is another book which covers Forms IV and V and the price is only Rs145. So, who is looking at the commercial dimension? I leave it to the hon. Members of the House.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order! Members will have the opportunity to ask questions afterwards.

(Interruptions)

Order, I said!

Mr Gokhool: In the light of representations made by Mr Couronne and others, my Ministry gave a measure of flexibility to this year's exercise, by accepting that a book in the reference list could be substituted to a book in the recommended list as long as the number of books prescribed per subject does not exceed two.

I am personally satisfied that the overall exercise for the standardization of textbooks has been carried out in accordance with set criteria and operational guidelines and that there are no sinister motives behind the decisions taken. In this respect, Mr Couronne did talk to me about his perception of things, and I personally invited him to approach ICAC or any other authority as appropriate

(Interruptions)

I said ICAC or any other authorities. The Courts of law are there, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

A comprehensive communiqué on the issue was released to the public on 10 October 2007. I understand that an enquiry is under way at ICAC and that my Ministry is fully collaborating with the Commission.

Mr Guinness: Can the hon. Minister confirm whether it is the panel which recommended that the book is not to be included in the recommended list for Form IV and Form V?

Mr Gokhool: I answered, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that for Forms IV, V and VI, the panel submitted only one list. It did not separate the books into "recommended" and "reference".

Mr Guinness: Can I know, therefore - since the Minister is saying that the panel did not recommend a separate list - who took the decision that books for Form IV and Form V will not be considered as recommended list?

Mr Gokhool: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the role of the subject panel is to carry out an exercise and submit a list in two parts. The panel did not do that. We have a Curriculum Directorate. My predecessor, from the Opposition, who was there, has worked with the same Directorate which has to oversee that the requirements of the curriculum objectives and outcomes are being met. This is not the first time. Even in the previous exercise, the same thing was done. There is a precedent. The pedagogical value of the books is the same, but it was a matter of ensuring that there is a fair allocation of

the books across Form I to Form VI. I need to add, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that Mr Couronne's book appears across from Form I to Form VI whereas Dr. David's book does not appear for all Forms.

Mr Varma: Can the hon. Minister kindly confirm to the House whether the said Mr Couronne was, at one time, adviser to a Minister when his books were being used in schools?

The Deputy Speaker: This has nothing to do with the question.

Mr Gokhool: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I think I have to answer ...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: I am on my feet! I said, order! Hon. Mrs Labelle! Hon. Dr. David!

Mr Gokhool: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, people who live in glass houses should not throw stones. What I am going to say is that Mr Couronne was employed as Adviser from 2001 to 2005.

(Interruptions)

I am just stating the facts. I am not making inferences, and I have the right to state the facts. Mr Couronne was Adviser between 2001 and 2005; not only Mr Couronne, but Mrs Couronne also was Adviser to the previous Minister. Dr. David's books have been recommended since 1996 and I don't know whether it is coincidence that Mr Couronne's books were recommended as from 2002 when he was Adviser at the Ministry.

Mr Lauthan: M. le président, ce que nous entendons de la bouche d'un ministre de l'éducation est très grave. Est-ce que je peux demander au ministre si les critères que j'ai mentionnés, si le besoin de faire plaisir à d'autres prime sur la qualité pédagogique des manuels et si le fait de faire plaisir à tout le monde est parmi les critères officiels ?

Est-ce qu'il peut déposer la liste des critères?

Mr Gokhool: *M. le président, j'ai déjà répondu qu'il y a un panel qui agit sous des critères qui sont définis et à partir de là, il y a une recommandation d'une liste en deux parties. Le panel, pour certaines formes, n'a pas recommandé deux listes. Cette recommandation n'est pas complète* and I have not created the Curriculum Directorate, it was there and it has a role to play. The panel cannot exist by itself. It is a panel which is assigned a task, they have to do it and submit their report and the role of the Directorate is to ensure that there is consistency across Form 1 to Form VI which means that you

need to have, in the list, recommended and reference textbooks. This is what the Directorate has to do.

Mr Bérenger: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Minister who decided that if a school would not use the book of one Mr David - to which the Minister has referred – which was made compulsory, the poor children getting social security for the purchase of books would no longer get that? And the hon. Minister has back-pedalled on that!

Mr Gokhool: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the hon. Leader of the Opposition tried to impress me. I am going to answer the question. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as I said – I think the new Leader of the Opposition has listened to what I have stated – we engaged, this year, in the standardisation exercise in order that the cost of books does not impact on the budget of the family.

Mr Bérenger: The question is: who decided to withdraw social security?

(Interruptions)

Mr Gokhool: I don't know what is the question of the Leader of the Opposition because the needy students are entitled to books and they are going to continue receiving the books. There is no back-peddalling. I think the Leader of the Opposition is wrong.

He must check his facts because the needy students will continue receiving the books.

We have never back-pedalled.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order!

Mr Bundhoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, at a point in time the said Mr Couronne wrote a book on culture. May I ask the hon. Minister why was it written, under whose recommendation was it written and what has happened to this book?

Mr Gokhool: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, Mr and Mrs Couronne and a few other people wrote a book costing an overall Rs1,920,000 and this book was so full of mistakes that it was discarded. It was a waste of money and a waste of time.

Mrs Labelle: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would like to ask the hon. Minister whether following a statement ...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: I said, order! Otherwise, I am going to suspend!

Mrs Labelle: I will take the question again, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Can the hon. Minister inform the House whether members of the French panel submitted their resignation after a statement from the hon. Minister to the effect that the decision was taken by the panel? Has there been resignation from this panel and the reason thereof?

Mr Gokhool: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I said in my main reply that a comprehensive communiqué was issued by my Ministry to explain the situation. I am going to refer the hon. Member to the relevant part of the communiqué which is at paragraph 11, and I quote –
“The Ministry wishes to point out that subjects panel are not standing ones but are constituted on an ad hoc basis and are disbanded once the task is over.”
Because they have a job to do, they do it and the panel is disbanded.

The final list of the panel was submitted on 10 August. If we follow the chronology, the moderated list was posted on the website on 19 September. *C’était fini, l’exercice est complet!* Then, the resignation came on 09 October. There is no need for resignation.

The committee has already submitted his recommendation and that is the end of it. There is no need to continue.

Mr Guinness: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, when the panel submitted one list and the Curriculum Directorate split the list into “reference” and “recommended” list, who was, at that point in time, acting as Minister of Education?

Mr Gokhool: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as I said, if we follow the chronology ...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Just give a direct answer to a direct question!

Mr Gokhool: But it is important for me to give my answer and to put it in the context. On 10 August, the panel submits its recommendations. On 19 September the list is posted on the website and on 09 October, there is a sort of resignation of the panel members. The hon. Minister who was replacing me between 08 and 12 August was hon. Dr. David, but, as I said, the list was posted when I was the substantive Minister.

Mr Bhagwan: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, can we know from the hon. Minister whether any money is received on each book when it is sold?

Mr Gokhool: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this is an arrangement which the writers make with the publishers; we are not concerned with that.

Mrs Labelle: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would like to ask the hon. Minister whether the Social Security Office gives only recommended books to those who benefit from social aid?

Mr Gokhool: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as regards the question of books for beneficiaries of social benefits, there was one question asked by one Member of the Opposition as to why they have those difficulties. Let me say that one of the considerations in working out the standardisation and reducing the burden is, precisely, to help the beneficiaries of the social benefits; and whatever books will be in the list, they will get the refund. There is no problem about that.

(Interruptions)

I can assure the hon. Member that there will be no problem.

Mr Bérenger: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, if there is nothing to hide as to why the books from one Mr David were made compulsory and what exactly happened at Social Security where social aid was withdrawn from poor students and if the hon. Minister does not chicken out, is he prepared to recommend to the hon. Prime Minister the setting-up of a Select Committee of the House *pour faire toute la lumière sur ce scandale?*

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order !

Mr Gokhool: Mr Deputy Speaker

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order ! I have said order! Order, hon. David!

Mr Gokhool: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the hon. Leader of the Opposition ...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Labelle, order!

Mr Gokhool: The hon. Leader of the Opposition is talking about Minister Gokhool chickening out. I think he knows me. I am not that....

(Interruptions)

The hon. Leader of the Opposition can shout as much as he wants; he can shout here and outside and he knows that I never chicken out. I will never chicken out!

(Interruptions)

I am going to answer. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, ICAC is looking into the matter.

(Interruptions)

Secondly, if the Leader of the Opposition is so serious about it, why don't Members of the Opposition take action and go to the Court and sue? That is a responsible Opposition!

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order! Next question, hon. Guinness!

(Interruptions)

I said order! Order! Hon. David! I am very worried about the attitude of Members. There were people from IDEA visiting our Parliament, and I have to say that I am very much troubled by your behaviour, hon. Members.

INTER-COLLEGE GAMES – REINSTATEMENT (01/04/08)

(No. B/114) Mr E. Guimbeau (First Member for Curepipe and Midlands) asked the Minister of Youth and Sports whether in regard to the Inter-college Games, he will state if they will be reinstated and if so, when.

Reply: I would like to thank the hon. First Member for Curepipe and Midlands for this question which provides the opportunity to shed light on the organisation of the National Inter-College Games scheduled from 17 to 19 June this year.

At paragraph 224 of the Government Programme 2005-2010, it is mentioned that Government will give a new impetus to school sports as this provides a breeding ground for potential and upcoming high level athletes.

Accordingly, a Technical Committee comprising officials of the Ministry of Education and Human Resources and those of the Ministry of Youth and Sports as well as representatives of the Private Secondary Schools Association and the Mauritius Secondary School Sports Association (MSSSA) was set up in order to make proposals on

measures to be taken to boost up secondary schools sports, with regard to, firstly, on how to encourage a larger number of students to participate in school sports competitions at national level, and, secondly on how to bring back greater number of student spectators to the stadium during such competitions to support their respective collegemates and schools thus creating a sense of belonging.

Several meetings had been held with all stakeholders to identify an appropriate formula whereby inter-college sports competitions could be boosted up.

In March 2007, the Ministry of Education and Human Resources, the Private Secondary Schools Association and the Mauritius Secondary Schools Sports Association agreed, in principle, with the Ministry of Youth and Sports to the formula of holding of a National Inter- College Games involving competitions in a few sport disciplines over two to three days. After further consultation with the Ministry of Education and Human Resources and the Mauritius

Secondary Schools Sports Association, it was proposed that the Games be held from 17 to 19 June 2008.

Since September 2007, an Implementation Committee, comprising all stakeholders including Sports Federations concerned has been set up to look into all organisational aspects and to make all the necessary arrangements for the holding of the Games in June 2008.

In February 2008, after obtaining the necessary clarifications, the Mauritius Secondary Schools Sports Association reiterated its commitment to the holding of the Games as initially scheduled. However, at the end of february 2008 a few Physical Education Teachers from Private Secondary Schools had expressed their apprehension as they considered that they would require some more time for participation in the Games. My colleague, the substantive minister of Youth and Sports had met them in order to give them the assurance that with their collaboration the Games would be held on the target dates.

The Ministry of Youth and Sports is proceeding with the launching of the first edition of the National Inter-College Games on 17 June 2008.

NATIONAL INTER COLLEGE GAMES 2008 (29/04/08)

(No. B/341) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Youth and Sports whether, in regard to the National Inter College Games, he will state if they will be held this year and, if so –

- (a) when;
- (b) if the collaboration of the MSSSA and the Physical Education Sport teachers of the secondary schools have been enlisted, indicating if meetings have been held in connection therewith and the outcome thereof, and
- (c) the different categories proposed for the various disciplines.

Mr Tang Wah Hing: Mr Speaker, Sir, as announced, my Ministry is proposing to hold the National Inter-College Games from 17 to 19 June 2008.

Accordingly, my Ministry is working in close collaboration with all stakeholders for the organisation of the Games.

With regard to part (b) of the question, I must point out that my Ministry had held relevant consultations with the Ministry of Education and Human Resources, the private Secondary Schools Authority (PSSA) and the Mauritius Secondary Schools Sport Association (MSSSA) since March 2007 in connection with the launching of the Games.

I must here highlight that the Physical Education Teachers of Secondary Schools and Rectors fall under the aegis of the Mauritius Secondary Schools Sports Association.

Several consultation meetings took place between officials of my Ministry and all other stakeholders concerned after which the dates for the holding of the Games were finalized. Government's approval was then sought on 12 September 2007 for the holding of the Games on 17, 18 and 19 June 2008.

In February 2008, after obtaining the necessary clarifications, the Mauritius Secondary Schools Sport Association reiterated its commitment to the holding of the Games as initially scheduled.

However, at the end of February 2008, a few Physical Education Teachers from Private Secondary Schools had expressed their apprehension as they considered that the dates proposed were not sufficient for the competitions.

On 07 March 2008, I received the Physical Education Teachers upon their request to hear their grievances and views.

On 21 April, I met again the representatives of the Mauritius Secondary Schools Sport Association and the Physical Education Teachers where I requested them to submit proposals. During the meeting, my Ministry proposed the MSSSA and representatives of the Physical Education Teachers to be on board the different structures of the Organising Committee to ensure that the games become a success.

Mr Speaker, Sir, it is only yesterday, Monday 28 April 2008, that I have received the new proposals for the organisation of the National Inter College Games from the Mauritius Secondary Schools Sport Association. My Ministry is presently working on the proposals and decisions will be taken very shortly.

Mr Bhagwan: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I have the assurance from the hon. Minister, being given that this is a very important National Inter College Games, that everything will be done, that all the views of the Physical Education teachers and the managers of the college will be taken on board so that these games be held in a good atmosphere?

Mr Tang Wah Hing: Mr Speaker, Sir, I can give the assurance to the hon. Member.

SCHOOLS - "HEY-MATHS" WEBSITE

(No. 11/385) Ms K. R. Deerpasing (Third Member for Belle Rose and Quatre Bornes) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether he is aware that the "Hey-Maths", web-based Mathematics learning tool, is currently being used in the curriculum in many countries to encourage the teaching and the learning of Mathematics and, if so, will he state if he proposes to introduce the use thereof in our schools.

The Minister of Local Government (Dr. J. B. David): Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I am going to reply to this Parliamentary Question.

I thank the hon. Member for bringing this pedagogical tool to the attention of the Ministry. I am informed that "Hey-Maths" is one of the many interactive websites that provide interactive Mathematics lessons for primary and secondary school students. Access to this website has to be purchased after a trial period together with the license.

At first glance, it would appear that to implement this system would require investment, the order of which is not yet known. It seems we would need to upgrade our school IT infrastructure, while students would need to have internet facilities at home.

I wish to inform the House that teachers involved in the NEPAD e-school demonstration project have been trained to incorporate interactive learning strategies and materials, where appropriate in their lessons through accessing a variety of freely available websites. They have also been trained in rationalizing and contextualizing these lessons. The next stage would be to expose all teachers to these strategies. As a matter of fact, teachers are encouraged to access and use any free website of an educational nature. The advisability of accessing the "Hey-Maths" website will be examined by the Ministry of Education and Human Resources with due regard to the question of affordability and relevance and if it materializes, consideration will be given to the possibility of customizing it, taking into consideration the specificities of Mauritian schools and their environment.

Ms Deerpasing: Mr Speaker, Sir, in his answer, the hon. Minister mentioned the NEPAD project where teachers are already using interactive learning tools. In fact, I visited the Belle Rose SSS where I think they are using this NEPAD interactive tool for only Physics, Chemistry and English. In the context of the NEPAD project, could the Ministry implement that in these schools where they are using the NEPAD interactive tool on a pilot experimental basis?

Dr. David: I'll pass on the suggestion to the Minister concerned.

6/5/08
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PRIMARY SCHOOL – 'ABOLITION OF SLAVERY' MANUAL

20/1/08
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(No. B/524) Mr M. Mardemootoo (Second Member for Rivière des Anguilles and Souillac) asked the Minister of Education & Human Resources whether, in regard to the primary school, he will state if 'Abolition of Slavery' has been included in one of the manuals used and, if not, why not.

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker Sir, the reply is in the affirmative.

In fact, the standard VI manual on History and Geography contains at page 23 a chapter on Abolition of Slavery. Furthermore, at page 28 of the Resource Atlas for Mauritius and Rodrigues, the Abolition of Slavery is recorded as one of the important events during the British period, along with the beginning of the Indian Immigration.

In the new textbooks for Standards IV, V and VI, being prepared in accordance with the National Curriculum Framework, provision has been made for adequate coverage to be given to slavery and abolition of slavery.

I am tabling the extracts of the relevant documents.

Mr Bérenger: Since the hon. Minister made reference himself to a chapter dealing with the Abolition of Slavery, but somewhere else, in the same textbook, if I heard him correctly, referred to immigration of indentured labourers from India, can I know whether there is a chapter on that and whether it deals with the abolition of indentured labour also?

Mr Gokhool: The question was with regard to the chapter on slavery, but mention is made on the Atlas about the Indian immigration. When you look at the dates, mention is made chronologically about the Indian immigration as well.

SCHOOLS – SEX EDUCATION

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28/3/08

(No. B/525) Mr M. Mardemootoo (Second Member for Rivière des Anguilles and Souillac) asked the Minister of Education & Human Resources whether, in regard to the proposed introduction of sex education at schools, he will state where matters stand.

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, the issue of sex education has been raised on several occasions and I refer the hon. Member to Parliamentary Questions Nos. B/137, B/298 and B/609. I have provided the following views to the House –

- (1) There is need for exposing our children and youth to sex education, but there is no single standard approach to the teaching of the subject worldwide.
- (2) In fact, UNESCO treats sex education as a life skill and in countries where it has been introduced in school curriculum, it is being given the same treatment.
- (3) The issue is presently being handled within the existing curricula of primary and secondary schools as mentioned in my reply to Parliamentary Question No. B/298.
- (4) The issue is also being handled through the Youth Empowerment Programme...

Mr Speaker: The question is straightforward. It says: "where matters stand now." The hon. Minister has replied three Parliamentary Questions in the past. There is no need for him to repeat the answers he has given, because that is already in the Hansard. The question is: "where matters stand now", whether there has been any development.

Mr Gokhool: I am sorry, Mr Speaker, Sir. I am not repeating the answer, because there are three Parliamentary Questions where I have given extensive answers. I am just recapping the main points. I am just informing the House that this is being taken care of. Presently, in the curricula it is being taken care of as well as in the preparation of the new text books.

STATE SECONDARY SCHOOLS - AGRICULTURE SUBJECT (17/06/08)

(No. B/711) Mrs F. Labelle (Third Member for Vacoas and Floreal) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether, in regard to the State Secondary Schools, he will state if Agriculture is being offered as a subject and, if so, indicate –
(a) the number of schools offering same, and
(b) up to which level.

Mr Gokhool: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, Agriculture is offered for school at prevoc level, Colonel Maingard SSSV, Emmanuel Anquetil SSS, Forest Side Boys SSS and Rose Belle SSSV I am also informed that it is taught in 42 private secondary schools as follows :24 up to Form III level and 18 up to Form V level.

Should there be demand for Agriculture, my Ministry will consider in accordance with the existing policy of my Ministry regarding a minimum number of students for a subject to be offered.

My Ministry has a policy of reviewing subjects offered and the point raised by the hon. Member will be given consideration in future.

Mrs Labelle: If I heard the Minister right, he said that: “should there be a demand.” May I ask the hon. Minister if he does not think it fit to create this demand? We are talking about food crisis, to eat what we produce. Is it not time for us to inculcate this love for agriculture in our secondary schools, in our students? Will he consider this issue?

Mr Gokhool: Given the situation as it is, Mr Speaker, Sir, the point raised by the hon. Member is valid and the planning for the next year programme of studies is being undertaken and I will refer the matter to the appropriate committee.