

SECONDARY

LIBRARY FACILITIES/CAREERS GUIDANCE

RODRIGUES - GRANDE MONTAGNE COLLEGE - STUDENTS,
TEACHING STAFF AND NON-TEACHING STAFF

17.10.00

①

(No. B/44) Mr J. Léopold (Fourth Member for Rodrigues) asked the Minister of Education and Scientific whether in regard to Grande Montagne College, he will:

- (a) give the present number of students attending same and that of the teaching and non-teaching staff thereof; and
- (a) state when laboratory and computer facilities as well as proper facilities in specialised rooms meant for food and nutrition, audio visual and visual arts will be made available thereat.

Mr Obegadoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, the information requested in respect of Grande Montagne Collège is as follows -

No. of students	-	848
Number for teaching staff	-	33
Number for non-teaching staff	-	8

Mr Speaker, as regards part (b) of the question, as I stated earlier the REDCO Board has decided that as from January next year, both departments of Le Chou college would be operating separately.

Actually the department at Grande Montagne runs its classes up to form V level in 26 classrooms. It also contains five specialist rooms as follows -

- One science laboratory;
- One visual art room;
- One home economics room;
- One audio visual room; and
- One library

Action is currently being taken for the purchase of all furniture and equipment that would enable Grande Montagne to operate as a separate entity headed by principal as per the PSSA's requirements in the immediate future.

24/04/01

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SEBASTOPOL STATE SECONDARY SCHOOL –UPGRADING

(No. B/281) **Mr R. Daureeawoo (Third Member for Montagne Blanche & GRSE)** asked the Minister of Education & Scientific Research whether he will state if the Sebastopol State Secondary School which was initially conceived to be a vocational school will be provided with laboratories, library facilities and a gymnasium and be structurally upgraded to meet the same standard of other State Secondary Schools.

Mr Obeegadoo: Sir, Sebastopol SSS is one of three schools, the other two being at Pailles and Terre Rouge which were built in 1997-98 as vocational schools offering classes of Forms I to III. In the context of reforms in education the school will be converted into a State Secondary School for Forms I to V. Consequently, its infrastructural facilities are being reviewed.

The school will be provided with proper laboratory facilities. Its library, which catered satisfactorily to its past needs, will be expanded to suit the requirements of a full-fledged State Secondary School.

As regards provision of a gymnasium in the school, this will be considered in the global exercise which includes the construction of new State Secondary Schools which is to begin soon and will also depend, of course, on the availability of funds and the list of priority projects established by my Ministry.

Mr Chumroo: Can the Minister inform the House whether he is thinking of appointing a Board of Governors to run these two schools?

Mr Obeegadoo: This is something which could and should be looked into at a later stage, Mr Speaker, Sir.

24/04/01

(3)

**STATE SECONDARY SCHOOLS - LIBRARY & TOILETS -
MAINTENANCE WORKS**

(No. B/292) **Mr M. Dulloo (Third Member for Grand' Baie and Poudre d'Or)** asked the Minister of Education and Scientific Research whether, in regard to State Secondary Schools, he will state -

- (a) who is in charge of the maintenance and upkeep of the library and of toilets and
- (b) what arrangements have been made in that connection for the Sharma Jugdambi State Secondary School and for the Adolphe de Plevitz State Secondary School.

Mr Obeegadoo: Sir, with regard to part (a) of the question, the overall maintenance of infrastructure including libraries and toilets in state secondary schools is under the responsibility of the Project Implementation Unit of my Ministry. However, routine maintenance and minor works are attended to by the Regional Maintenance Team under the supervision of the respective Regional Directorates. As for major repair works that have to be carried out to the school infrastructure and premises, my Ministry usually awards contracts to private contractors with the approval of the Central Tender Board as and when required.

As for the daily cleaning of toilets, this work is generally entrusted to labourers of my Ministry posted to schools.

On the other hand, the general management and supervision of each school library falls under the responsibility of a library officer.

With respect to part (b) of the question, I am informed that the school library of Sharma Jugdambi State Secondary School, which is fairly well equipped with books, magazines and other library materials, is presently manned by one library officer and two library attendants. The library officer is also assisted in his task by the school clerk.

I am advised that the school library of Adolphe de Plevitz State Secondary School comprises one library officer and one library attendant. An amount of Rs20,000 has been allocated to this school as well as to all other State Secondary Schools for the purchase of library materials during the current financial year.

I am further informed that at Sharma Jugdambi State Secondary School, the toilets are being satisfactorily maintained by a private contractor.

I am given finally to understand that in Adolphe de Plevitz State Secondary School, maintenance works will be effected to the toilets by the maintenance team in respect of cistern level tanks and the water distribution system where defects exist. I understand that maintenance work is being undertaken as from this week.

Mr Dulloo: May I ask the hon. Minister whether he has received correspondence from the Chairman of the PTA of those two colleges, especially in respect of the library in Adolphe de Plevitz SSS which is so ill-equipped with a student population over 1,000. There is 1,000 books in the library. And has he received representations with regard to both colleges? Sharma Jugdambi SSS is a girl's college where there is a problem of security and harassment to girls because of the presence of a public library there.

Mr Obeegadoo: I must confess I cannot recollect, Sir. If representations there have been, they were not made in the very recent past. In any case, I shall look into the matter immediately.

Mr Dulloo: There is a correspondence from the Chairman of the PTA dated that 10 April – I will pass it on to the Minister.

Regarding the toilets, Adolphe de Plevitz SSS is a boys' college whereas Sharma Jugdambi SSS is a girls' college. In both colleges, there is a problem of the conditions of the toilets such that the boys could use the playground, the back yards behind the buildings, etc, but the girls have quite some problems so much so that the PTA was compelled to have recourse to private entrepreneurs and they are paying to the tune of Rs6000 per month for each college. The PTA has to contribute money to pay Rs6000 a month for each college for the maintenance of the toilets to be used by the students.

Mr Obeegadoo: Sir, my information is as follows: in the case of Adolphe de Plevitz, my information is that the situation is unsatisfactory and that is why maintenance work is being undertaken this very week. In fact, at Adolphe de Plevitz the PTA on its volition own, has decided to contract out the cleaning to a private company for the period 15 March 2000 - so that was none of my doing, it was under the previous Government – to 14 March 2001. Recently the PTA has requested the Ministry to meet the cost of cleaning of toilets as from 15 March and the Ministry has not agreed thereto because

As regards Jugdambi State Secondary, I am told that the situation at present is satisfactory. There again there is a private contractor since January 2001. In fact there is one private contractor and then the PTA has gone to a second private company for sanitary services.

I do concede that, unfortunately, PTA's often take initiatives without having it cleared with the Ministry which shows a sense of initiatives but is not always in the very best interests of the children eventually. So, if the hon. Member has any particular information pertaining to Sharma Jugdambi SSS I would be interested in getting informed.

Mr. Dulloo: The Minister has said that they had recourse to private firms without clearance from the Ministry. But is the Minister aware that the situation was desperate in Adolphe de Plevitz SSS where the 68 toilet vases were all blocked and the students had to go outside. So my question is: now that they have unblocked the situation would Government be ready to meet the cost, because it has to be borne by somebody?

Mr Obeegadoo: This initiative was taken in March 2000. The policy of the Ministry of Education then was that when PTA's have recourse to private contractors of their own initiative, then of course, the Ministry could not be held responsible for that. Now, if the hon. Member is suggesting that we review this policy decision of the previous Government, then I am ready to discuss the it with him.

8 APR 2003

004p07cl/4

UNREVISED

STUDENTS (NEEDY) – TEXTBOOKS

(No. B/155) Mr M. Chumroo (First Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Education and Scientific Research whether needy students have been provided with all the school textbooks for the academic year 2003 and whether he will use his good offices and arrange for same to be made available to such students in the month of January each year.

Mr Obeegadoo: Sir, under the Book Loan Scheme for Needy Students, the Ministry of Education and Scientific Research issues textbooks on loan, free of charge to needy students of both private and State Secondary Schools. A student is considered needy if his responsible party is drawing.

- Either Employment Hardship Relief Benefit
- Or Social Aid from the Ministry of Social Security, National Solidarity and Senior Citizens Welfare and Reforms Institutions
- Or Would have been entitled to receive social aid if the responsible party was not a recipient of –

Basic Widow's Pension
Basic Invalidity Pension
Basic Retirement Pension
Basic Orphan's Pension

The administrative mechanism in place previously was not functioning to the satisfaction of beneficiaries. In view of the problems encountered, new procedures were introduced this year with a view to facilitating the issue of textbooks. According to the new procedures parents are issued with textbooks which are available at the stores of the Ministry of

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UNREVISED

P.Q. No. B/155 (Cont'd)

Education. For books which are not available at stores responsible parties are issued with a voucher to collect same directly from the bookshop of the approved supplier.

Although an improvement has, this year, been noted in the provision of textbooks to needy students, the new system introduced has, however, been found to be fraught with practical difficulties. Thus, with a view to better assisting the needy students as from next year, the system has to be improved further. For instance, it is envisaged that textbooks for 2004 could be issued to needy students as from December of this year instead of January next year.

Out of some 85,000 textbooks required for the year 2003 only 11,000 remain to be provided. Of these, vouchers for about 3,250 textbooks have already been issued to responsible parties. I wish to point out to the House that vouchers were issued as from 20 January 2003 and are still being issued as and when new requests are received.

The approved supplier for this year has supplied books which were available ex-stock. Arrangements have been made with the supplier to provide the remaining books as soon as possible. My Ministry has also taken the necessary steps for books which the supplier is not able to provide, to be purchased from other sources.

Mr Chumroo: Mr Speaker, Sir, it has been brought to my knowledge that up to now certain books are still not available to students.

Mr Obeegadoo: As I have explained, Mr Speaker, Sir, there are firstly books which are already available in stores. These books presumably were in the past lent to students and which are returned. We do experience great difficulties in retrieving books which were lent to students in previous years. Whatever books are in stores are available subject to the students

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UNREVISED

P.Q. No. B/155 (cont'd)

meeting the conditions of eligibility and the Rector or Head of school so certifying. For books which are not available in stores vouchers are offered to those students upon request, for them to purchase same outside, that is, from the selected supplier or other bookshops. There are also some problems when books are prescribed by specific private secondary schools which are not available on the open market.

D07/IF/P13/5

CAREERS GUIDANCE - GOVT. POLICY

(No. B/278) Mr C. Leopold (Fourth Member for Rodrigues) asked the Minister of Education and Scientific Research whether he will state Government policy in regard to careers guidance in colleges, and indicate future developments in that field.

Mr Obeegadoo: Sir, I am informed that the Careers Guidance Service was set up in 1972 with the aim of providing guidance in four main areas namely: employment opportunities, training opportunities, further education, and career education at secondary level. In 1993 the Careers Guidance Service was attached to the Ministry of Education and Scientific Research.

I am further advised that presently the Careers Guidance Service is providing the following services to Government and private colleges -

- (i) careers guidance to Form III students in determining their choice of subjects with a view to preparing them for School Certificate and Higher School Certificate;
- (ii) talks on training opportunities, employment possibilities and tertiary education (local and overseas) to Form V and Form VI students;
- (iii) careers conventions for colleges at national level as well as at regional level.
- (iv) "School visits to Industry" Project, where students are given opportunities to visit work places to acquire knowledge about employment prospects, work environment and career paths. They are also taken on visits to training providers;
- (v) the Careers Guidance Service staff work in close collaboration with Education Officers who teach careers education in colleges and dissemination of information and literature on career issues.

In line with present day employment context and along with reforms in the 'Education Sector' I am in the process of revisiting the Careers Guidance Policy and consequently the Careers Guidance Service of my Ministry to make them more responsive to the needs of our students. Special arrangements will be made for Rodrigues which, up to now, has been neglected in terms of Careers Guidance Service.

17 July 2003

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D24P06CO3

**RODRIGUES - CITRON DONIS SIXTH FORM COLLEGE -
LABORATORY EQUIPMENT**

(No. B/444) Mr J. Von-Mally (Third Member for Rodrigues) asked the Minister of Education and Scientific Research whether, in regard to the Form VI College of Citron Donis, Rodrigues, he will state -

- (a) if there was a sit-in and protest of students and parents recently, and if so, the reasons therefor, and
- (b) whether the students have been denied the right to a fully equipped laboratory since the opening of the college, and, if so, the period thereof, indicating -
 - (i) if any equipment has ever been installed, and
 - (ii) the measures, if any, taken by his Ministry to ensure that students are no longer penalised as far as laboratory equipment are concerned, especially in view of the forthcoming HSC examinations.

Mr Obeegadoo: Sir, the Citron Donis Sixth Form College is the only VI Form College of Rodrigues and it began operating at the beginning of this year.

The construction works, which started in April 2002, were to have been completed in December 2002. However, there was delay in progress of works owing to a number of factors beyond our control such as unavailability of building materials in Rodrigues, cyclonic conditions and the subsequent spell of rainy weather. As a result, the whole school, including laboratories was completed in April 2003. It was only then that the fixed furniture, that is, items such as tables incorporating sinks, shelves, gas piping and so on, could be installed in the laboratories. I am given to understand that the fixed furniture is presently being put in place at the school. The exercise will be completed in the next few days. As for equipment and chemicals, the contract for the supply of same has, I am informed, already been awarded by the Office of the Commissioner for Education in Rodrigues. A first consignment of these items is expected by the next shipment to Rodrigues in the first week of July 2003.

D24P06CO4
PQ No. B/444 (contd)

As for the events the hon. Member is referring to, I am informed that some students of Citron Donis Sixth Form College expressed their disappointment at not having fully-equipped laboratories at their school and consequently did not enter their classes on Wednesday 18 June 2003.

I am further informed that the Parent-Teacher Association of the school supported the movement, but did not actively participate in the protest.

In fact, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, all students are being provided with practical classes at Le Chou College and that arrangement has been operational since the 03 April 2003 with transport facilities being provided free of charge by the Rodrigues Administration from Citron Donis to Le Chou College where there are fully equipped laboratories. This arrangement is still on and will be maintained as long as the laboratories at Citron Donis are not fully functional, although we expect the laboratories to be fully functional by the end of July.

Mr Von-Mally: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it seems that there has been a delay in the launching of the contract for the purchase of the laboratory equipment and I think this is very serious and I may say it is also scandalous, because it is the first Form VI College of Rodrigues. Can we know why there has been this delay? Should the contract not be launched prior to the opening of the college?

Mr Obeegadoo: I am no expert in procurement matters, Mr Deputy Speaker. My information is that it is only when the construction is completed or is very near completion that one can take practical steps concerning fixed furniture and thereafter laboratory equipment, because without the fixed furniture you cannot have the equipment in place.

My information is also that tenders for laboratory equipment were floated on 13 May 2003 with the closing date being 05 June 2003 and the contract has been awarded on 19 June 2003. Items available ex stock to be sent to Rodrigues on 09 July 2003.

D24P06CO5
PQ No. B/444 (contd)

Mr Von-Mally: Still, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we can say that there has been a delay for the launching of the contract as far as the laboratory equipment is concerned. Can we know why there has been this delay?

Mr Obegadoo: I repeat, Sir, there has certainly been a delay as regards construction works. I have no information, which would allow me to state before this House that there has been a delay in terms of the specific contract for laboratory equipment.

LIBRARIES (MUNICIPAL & VILLAGE COUNCIL) - INTERNET FACILITIES

(No. B/699) **Mr A. K. Gungah** (Second Member for Grand'Baie and Poudre d'Or) asked the Minister of Education and Scientific Research whether he will give the present number of municipal and village council libraries and ascertain if internet facilities exist in those libraries.

The Minister of Local Government and Rodrigues, and Minister of Housing and Lands (Mr G. Lesjongard) Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I shall reply to this question.

I am informed that there are presently 25 municipal and 37 village council libraries. I am also informed that a few of these libraries are equipped with internet facilities and that the possibility of extending these facilities to the other libraries is being looked into.

Mr Gungah: Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to ask the hon. Minister to give it a priority as we are aiming to make Mauritius a cyber island.

Mr Lesjongard: Of course, Mr Speaker, Sir.

BEACHES (PUBLIC) - STRAY DOGS

(No. B/700) **Mr S. Sakaram** (Second Member for Vacoas and Floreal) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Minister of Agriculture, Food Technology and Natural Resources whether he will state if measures have been taken to solve the problems caused by the presence of stray dogs on public beaches and, if so, will he list them.

Mr P. Jugnauth: Sir, the Mauritius Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (MSPCA) which was created in 1971 under the aegis of this Ministry was entrusted, amongst others, with the responsibility of catching and disposal of stray dogs in 1972. For its effective operation, the MSPCA has divided Mauritius into four regions to carry out its activities. Each region, which includes public beaches, is regularly visited by the MSPCA dogcatchers once a week, or five times a month, to catch stray dogs. Some 60 stray dogs are caught daily throughout the country, including those from the public beaches.

**MAHATMA GANDHI SECONDARY SCHOOLS - LABORATORY,
SPORTING FACILITIES, ETC**

9/8/05
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(No. I B/12) **Mr S. Dayal (Second Member for Quartier Militaire and Moka)** asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether, in regard to the Mahatma Gandhi Secondary Schools, he will state -

- (a) if they are equipped with (i) a Biology, Chemistry and Physics laboratory, and (ii) volleyball pitch, basketball pitch and football playground;
- (b) if any sporting facility and Domestic Science Room and/or a Design and Communication Room and Library exist and, if not, why not;
- (c) if the prevocational classes conducted thereat are equipped with any workshop facilities and, if not, why not, and
- (d) the arrangements, if any, made or to be made for the provision of the above basic facilities.

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, as regards part (a), I am given to understand that the Rabindranath Tagore Secondary School at Ilot and which is part of the Mahatma Gandhi Schools has Biology, Physics and Chemistry laboratories as well as volleyball and basketball pitches and football ground.

As for the Mahatma Gandhi Secondary Schools at Central Flacq, Moka and Solférino, they have neither Science laboratories nor proper sports facilities.

Since no building has been put up yet for the Mahatma Gandhi Secondary School, at Nouvelle France, its students are accommodated in the Nouvelle France Sixth Form State College next to the Mahatma Gandhi Secondary School site. They do not have Science laboratories and football ground, but they benefit from the volleyball and basketball facilities available at the college.

With regard to 'sporting facility' mentioned in part (b) of the question, this has just been answered.

The Rabindranath Tagore Secondary School has a Domestic Science Room, a Design and Communication Room and a Library.

But the four Mahatma Gandhi Secondary Schools do not have any of those facilities.

I am given to understand that the Mahatma Gandhi Secondary Schools, like a few other State Secondary Schools, are being constructed phase-wise due to time constraint and the urgent need for classrooms for accommodation purposes in the first instance. The Domestic Science room, Design and Communication Room and Library will be put up in the second or third phase of the respective projects.

As regards part (c), the Rabindranath Tagore Secondary School has got workshop facilities for the prevocational classes.

These facilities are not available at the four Mahatma Gandhi Secondary Schools.

The workshop infrastructure has not yet been built in those schools, but will be put up in the second or third phase of the construction works of those four schools. However, equipment has been purchased in March 2005 for the prevocational streams of all the Mahatma Gandhi Secondary Schools.

As regards part (d), some simple tools among those items of equipment are already being used by the students in practical work carried out in the classrooms. The rest of the equipment will be installed and put to use when the necessary infrastructure is put up in the second or third phase of their respective projects.

Mr Speaker, Sir, my Ministry is working closely with the MPI with a view to speeding up the completion of the remaining phases of all the schools, including the Mahatma Gandhi Secondary Schools.

Mr Dayal: Mr Speaker, Sir, is the hon. Minister aware that the school yard is so small that the ratio of the number of students to the area of school yard is less than 1:1, that is, one student to less than 1 square metre. More particularly, in the case of that MG SS Flacq where morning assembly could not be conducted because of lack of space, and parents rightly claim that this age which the students are presently living will not be revisited.

Therefore, I should like to appeal to the hon. Minister to look into the matter.

Mr Gokhool: I am fully aware of the problems being faced by the students in these schools, Mr Speaker, Sir. And again, I would say, as was mentioned by my colleague, Minister Burty David, this is yet another example of very poor planning and very poor project management. This is the reason why the students are facing ...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order, Order! Let the Minister answer the question, please!

Mr Gokhool: I assure the House that every step is being taken to correct the situation which has been prevailing over the last four and a half years.

6/14/05

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**SEBASTOPOL STATE SECONDARY SCHOOL –
PTA - COMPLAINTS**

(No. I B/596) Mr L. Bundhoo (Second Member for Montagne Blanche and GRSE) asked the Minister of Education & Human Resources whether, in regard to the Sebastopol State Secondary School, he will state if he has received complaints from the Parent Teachers Association regarding –

- (a) unavailability of a science laboratory and a computer room;
- (b) the non-existence of a football ground and a multipurpose hall, and
- (c) the need for adequate bus parking facilities, and if so, will he state what remedial measures will be taken.

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, complaints were received on the issues mentioned on 24 August 2005.

With regard to part (a), I am informed of the following –

- the chemistry laboratory, a preparation room and a demonstration room were handed over in March 2004;
- in September 2004, one of the two computer rooms was completed and handed over;
- in May 2005, the remaining science laboratories, namely Physics and Biology, with their respective demonstration and preparation rooms, were completed and handed over
- In October 2005, the second computer room was completed along with outstanding works on the Science block, and handed over.

With regard to part (b) of the question, a plot of 4A74 of land was acquired in August 2003 for the purpose of the construction of an international-sized football ground. The project has been put on hold for the time being because of unavailability of funds.

As concerns the multi-purpose hall, none has been constructed in any of the new State Secondary Schools built since 2002, though space has been earmarked for the same in future. If construction of multipurpose halls is to be envisaged that will depend on the availability of funds within the context of set priorities.

Concerning part (c) of the question, I am advised that bus parking facilities for eight buses were started by the National Development Unit on 25 May 2005 and are nearing completion.

Mr Bundhoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I do not quite understand the answer of the hon. Minister on the issue of the multipurpose. In fact, I will ask the hon. Minister to consider the possibility of having a hall within the school compound that will enable students to hold different activities such as basket-ball, meetings and whatever it is.

Mr Gokhool: Sir, normally gymnasiums are constructed and they are used by certain schools for other purposes. If a request is made for the construction of a gymnasium, this may be considered subject to availability of funds.

Mr Bundhoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I now, on behalf of the Parent-Teachers Association and Members of Parliament of the Constituency make a request for the construction of a gymnasium? And will the hon. Minister liaise with his colleague Minister for the availability of funds?

Mr Gokhool: The point is well noted.

YEAR

2006

STUDENT COUNCILS – MEMBERS (23/05/06)

(No. B/570) Mr Y. Varma (First Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Education & Human Resources whether he will state the number of colleges having student councils, indicating the established procedure for the selection of students to sit thereon.

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that 65 out of 70 State Secondary Schools and 95 out of 102 private secondary schools, including Rodrigues, operating under the aegis of the PSSA have a student council. In the State Secondary Schools, the students' council consists of representatives from different sections of the student community in such a way that each class has a spokesperson therein.

The members of the students' council are elected class wise by the students themselves, usually under the supervision of the form master. Once the council is constituted, it elects a President and a Secretary. Usually, meetings between school management and the students' council are organised once monthly or when the need arises.

As regards private secondary schools, I am informed that there is at present no established rule for setting up of students' council, but generally each class is represented therein by either the class captain or a representative.

I believe there is need to bring about standardisation of the procedure for setting up of student councils and their functioning in private secondary schools.

The PSSA is looking into the matter.

Mr Varma: Mr Speaker, Sir, is the hon. Minister aware that in the 1990s, the student councils used to benefit from a grant of Rs1,000 from Government and, if so, whether they are still receiving their grant now?

Mr Gokhool: Grants are made to schools. When activities are organised, these are done jointly by the student council and the management of the school.

Mr Varma: Mr Speaker, Sir, it used to be the practice in the 1990s for the Minister to have regular meetings with the student councils. I will ask the hon. Minister whether he proposes to meet the representatives of the students councils and, if so, when?

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, I thank the hon. Member for asking this question, and I would like to inform him that I have already met a number of representatives of student councils during my regular visits to schools.

Mr Guinness: Mr Speaker, Sir, I heard the Minister say that, out of 70 State colleges, 65 have a student council. Can we know the names of the five colleges that do not have one?

Mr Gokhool: I have to go through the list to give the names of the five colleges that do not have a student council.

Mr Varma: Mr Speaker, Sir, is the hon. Minister aware that there

was a committee, which was set up under the chairmanship of Mr Santosh Kumar Mahadeo in 1994, to review the role and activities of student councils?

Mr Gokhool: As I said, there is need for improving the functioning and working of the student councils, and this will be taken into account in the work that the PSSA, as well as at the Ministry, is doing.

Mr Varma: Mr Speaker, Sir, is the hon. Minister ready to legislate, in order to give legal recognition to student councils in all colleges?

Mr Gokhool: I will be awaiting the recommendations of the PSSA, and I will also look into the situation in the Government schools. In the light of the recommendations, consideration will be given to the request of the hon. Member.

At 1.00 p.m. the sitting was suspended.

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

Mr Speaker: I have got an announcement to make. I have been informed that PQ B/583 and B/604 have been withdrawn. Hon. Varma!

**SWAMI VIVEKANANDA CONFERENCE CENTRE
– ORIENTATION FAIR – INCIDENT (23/05/06)**

(No. B/598) Mrs F. Labelle (Third Member for Vacoas and Floreal) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether he will state if any incident occurred during the orientation fair which was held during the second week of May 2006 at the Swami Vivekananda Conference Centre and, if so, will he state if an inquiry was carried out therein and the outcome thereof.

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, the International Careers Guidance and Education Fair is organised since 14 years by the Rotary Club of Grand Bay, but with the participation of the Careers Guidance Service of my Ministry.

I am informed that there was no incident of a serious nature during the fair. However, a minor disturbance involving some students did take place.

No formal declaration was made to the local Police.

The hon. Member may wish to note that it is, however, a usual phenomenon for students to tend to be noisy, but according to the organizers of the event the situation never went out of control.

Consequently, the question of carrying out an enquiry does not arise.

Mrs Labelle: Mr Speaker, Sir, does the hon. Minister mean to say that there were no chairs damaged or anything else for that matter, and that the security was not called upon to take control of the situation?

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, this is a bit exaggerated. I have the report from the Police authorities that this was a minor incident and the situation never went out of control.

12 22/05/07

DR/D11/W05/03

SECONDARY SCHOOLS – TEXTBOOKS - GRANT

(No. B/470) Mrs A. Navarre-Marie (First Member for GRNW and Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Social Security, National Solidarity and Senior Citizens Welfare & Reform Institutions whether in regard to the scheme for the grant of school text books to students, she will state the number of students who –

- (a) are eligible thereto, and
- (b) have not received the text books, indicating the secondary institutions concerned.

Reply: My Ministry does not issue textbooks to students.

However, children attending schools whose parents are recipients of Social Aid, Unemployment Hardship Relief, Basic Pension (who would have qualified for Social Aid in the absence of the Basic Pension) are eligible for grant of textbooks under the Book Loan Scheme operated by the Ministry of Education and Human Resources.

On receipt of the application forms issued by Heads of Schools to students, my officers, after carrying out appropriate enquiry in certain cases, certify their eligibility on the said form. I understand that subsequently, the Ministry of Education and Human Resources issues the textbooks.

For the year 2007, 5220 such application forms have been received at the regional Social Security Offices of my Ministry out of which 4968 students have been found to be eligible for the grant of school textbooks and the application forms have been certified accordingly.

As regard part (b) of the question, in view of the fact that the responsibility of my Ministry is limited to ascertaining the eligibility of the students, I cannot indicate the number of students who have not received the textbooks and the secondary institutions concerned.

SSS –

BOOKS – PURCHASE (29/05/07)

(No. B/501) 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 purchase of books by the libraries of the State

Secondary Schools for the financial year 2006/2007, he will –

- (a) state the amount disbursed as at to date;
- (b) the number of books purchased, and
- (c) circulate a list of schools which have been provided with new books.

(Withdrawn)

BOOK LOAN SCHEME – NEEDY STUDENTS

(No. B/617) Mrs A. Navarre-Marie (First Member for GRNW and Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether he is aware that some students eligible for the grant of textbooks under the Book Loan Scheme, have not yet received the textbooks and, if so, will he state the remedial measures that will be taken.

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Mr Gokhool: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed that all students of State Secondary Schools who are eligible for grant of textbooks under the Book Loan Scheme for Needy students have received their books.

However, I have been given to understand that there are a few cases of students of private schools who have not yet received all their textbooks. These isolated cases are attributed to non-availability of a particular prescribed textbook on the market.

I have also been informed that this is a recurrent problem affecting in particular students of private schools and is due to a number of factors such as -

- (i) prescription by private schools of their own text books, including books which fall outside the list of recommended textbooks which the Ministry, besides publishing it on its website, issues every two years to all Zonal Directors of my Ministry and the Director of Private Secondary Schools Authority among others for the information of all the schools under their jurisdiction as well as to the Booksellers and Stationery Owners Association;
- (ii) late submission of list of prescribed textbooks by certain colleges to booksellers;
- (iii) long lists of text books prescribed by certain private schools, resulting in unnecessary expenditure since not all textbooks prescribed are used;
- (iv) a substantial number of students failing to return the books which have been issued to them on loan;
- (v) books being returned in too damaged condition for re-use or some books (e.g for literature) being rejected by teachers and students on ground of old edition.

.../...

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(No. B/617 Cont'd)
(Mr Gokhool)

- (vi) the late transfer of students from one school to another specially Form VI pupils who have to change options because of unavailability of seats for particular options, and
- (vii) some titles being out of stock, it is considered not economical by bookshops/publishers to go for printing or ordering from overseas of small quantities demanded.

For this year, it is proposed to request Head of Schools and PTAs to find additional textbooks which could be in the possession of senior students of the schools having utilised same in the previous years. In fact, I am informed that about 8 of the 37 schools whose students did not get all their textbooks have already made internal arrangements to help their needy students.

It may be noted that in previous years my Ministry was responsible for providing books required by needy students in private schools also. As the arrangements did not give satisfaction, the PSSA made advance payment to Managers of Private Secondary Schools on 14 December 2006 to enable them to purchase the books of their needy students. I understand they wish to have my Ministry take back the responsibility of providing for their needy students.

In view of the above, my Ministry is considering the possibility of -

- (i) making mandatory a recommended list of textbooks which it renews every two years on the basis of coverage of syllabus, quality and cost, and
- (ii) restricting the list of recommended books to a minimum so as to ensure that, while schools have a reasonable amount of choice to cater for different levels and sensibilities, all schools use mostly the same textbooks. This is expected to facilitate procurement both for parents and the Ministry, especially as

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there is a number of private school students who change schools every year. It will also ensure that all our schools, be they State or private grant aided ones, use the same quality textbooks.

A committee chaired by the Director (Curriculum) of my Ministry will start as from 11.06.07 the review of the list of textbooks recommended for academic years 2006-2007 to have the new list for the years 2008-2009 ready by the first week of July 2007. Subject panels have already been set up comprising seasoned teachers from both the public and private sectors. List of names from the private schools have been submitted to the Ministry by the Federation of Managers of Private Secondary Schools. All the members of the panels are specialist in their subjects.

Once the standard list of textbooks is approved, it will be posted on the website of the Ministry.

These arrangements will help to alleviate the difficulties presently encountered.

Mrs Navarre-Marie: M. le président, est-ce que le ministre trouve normal que nous sommes déjà à la fin du deuxième trimestre et que les étudiants n'aient pas encore reçu leurs livres scolaires jusqu'ici? Le ministre a parlé d'arrangement qu'il a fait pour que ces élèves puissent avoir leurs *textbooks*. Peut-il nous donner la garantie que ce soit fait très rapidement et que cela ne se répète pas l'année prochaine parce que cela est une discrimination, c'est une injustice envers les enfants ?

Mr Gokhool: I share the concern of the hon. Member, but this scheme was put up in 1988 and, over the years, all Governments have tried to sort out this problem. This is a recurring problem. I have given the reasons why we have this problem. It is a genuine concern. It is a very complex issue. Even the hon. Member knows that this is a very complex issue. That is why I have decided that we should find a solution, but even then, having studied the problem, I do not see a full and final solution to this

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problem. In any case, we will not have the same number of textbooks available on the market for various reasons and that is why internal arrangements have to be made at the level of the schools with senior students or even other internal arrangements have to be made, but action is being taken to minimize the difficulties being encountered by the students. I can say even the previous Government tried to resolve this problem, but could not do it.

Miss Martin: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister if he has an indication of the number of students who are eligible for the grant of textbooks and the number of students who have not yet received their textbooks?

Mr Gokhool: As I said, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I do not have the number of students who are in this situation, but there are a few cases, not in the Government schools, but in the private secondary schools. This is the information I have from the Private Secondary Schools Authority, but the number of students comes to around 5,000 – I can check it - who are eligible for books.

Miss Martin: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, may I then ask the Minister to find out because this is a very serious issue?

Mr Gokhool: I can check the exact figure, but the problem is to ensure that the students have the books.

Mrs Navarre-Marie: M. le président, est-ce que le ministre trouve normal que 5,000 de nos étudiants n'aient pas encore reçu leurs livres scolaires à ce jour?

The Deputy Speaker: This is not what the Minister has said. It's the number of eligible students which is approximately 5,000.

Mr Gokhool: I said this is the total number of students eligible as needy students, but, out of that, there are a few cases and I have explained the reasons why we have those cases. But the hon. lady should understand that even the previous Government did not sort out the problem. The hon. Member was there.

STATE

SECONDARY SCHOOLS – BOOKS – PURCHASE (19/06/07)

(No. B/663) 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 purchase of books by the libraries of the State Secondary Schools for the financial year 2006-2007, he will –

- (a) state the amount disbursed as at to date;
- (b) the number of books purchased, and
- (c) circulate a list of schools which have been provided with new books.

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker Sir, with regard to part (a) of the question, books to the value of Rs2,880,562 have been purchased and delivered to all 64 State Secondary Schools for Financial Year 2006/2007. However, the amount disbursed as at to date is Rs1,723,929.

All outstanding payments will be effected by 26 this month.

With regard to part (b), the number of books purchased is 18,408. Insofar as part (c) is concerned, the list of schools which have been provided with new books is being placed in the Library of the National Assembly.

Mr Lauthan: This is a serious matter, Mr Speaker, Sir. The individual schools were allotted a sum and they were free to launch the tender. The recent decision of the Ministry to proceed with the global tender exercise took almost a year and these books are no longer available on the market. Is the hon. Minister aware of this situation?

Mr Gokhool: I think the hon. Member is right, but we have to comply with the financial regulations and these are requirements by the Central Tender Board that we have to go for open bidding and international bidding. I agree with the hon. Member that it has taken quite some time and that is why I have met the representatives of the CTB to discuss and see to it that the procedures are simplified so that we can accelerate the process.

Mr Lauthan: Can the hon. Minister inform us whether the library cadres and rectors were consulted before this change in policy?

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, there have been consultations. At the end of the day, there are financial regulations which are promulgated and, as a Ministry, we have to comply. But I have found that this is not in the interest of the schools and the students. That is why I have met representatives with a view to simplifying the procedures.

Mr Lauthan: Mr Speaker, Sir, being given that the schools could not have the books that they wanted, is the hon. Minister aware that the Ministry had sent another list of books to request the schools to chose from it and these are not the books that were requested?

Mr Gokhool: We did not do that. We had to comply with the financial regulations and go for open tendering and this is what is being revisited in order to address the problem that we have faced.

Mr Lauthan: Mr Speaker, Sir, I would simply request the hon. Minister to be more pragmatic - of course, the old practice did not go beyond the established procedures so that these schools have their books on time and they could even purchase books twice a year!

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, in fact, the old system was working well. We have to comply with the financial regulations but, at times, they do not work in the interest of the Ministry and that is why we are taking a fresh look at them.

At 1.00 p.m. the sitting was suspended.

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

SECONDARY SCHOOLS – NEDDY STUDENTS – TEXTBOOKS (01/04/08)

(No. B/111) Mr Y. Varma (First Member for Mahebourg and Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether, in regard to the needy students of secondary schools, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to if they have been provided with all their textbooks and, if not, why not.

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have explained last year further to PQ No. B/617 why it has not been possible to provide all needy students with all their prescribed textbooks in time in spite of efforts made by the previous Government to resolve this complex problem.

In order to alleviate the difficulties encountered, my Ministry had a “Standardization of Textbooks” exercise carried out for textbooks required for academic years 2008-2009. Subject panels, each comprising a Coordinator and a teacher from both the State and Private schools were set up in June 2007 to study all proposals and select textbooks according to relevance to curriculum objectives and affordability. The list of recommended textbooks was posted on the website of my Ministry and a communiqué to that effect issued on 18 September 2007. Heads of State schools and grant aided schools

(through the Private Secondary Schools Authority) were also informed on 07 September 2007 of the above list and requested to submit their prescribed lists to Booksellers and Suppliers Owners Association and *Edition de l'Océan Indien* by 21 September 2007 at latest. Schools were strongly recommended to prescribe textbooks for their students, including needy students from the standardized list. The timely submission of school lists was also stressed as one of the factors which would help booksellers and publishers in preventing scarcity of books at the resumption of studies.

I am informed that for this academic year, requests from 6,075 needy students have been received, 1,856 from State Secondary Schools and 4,219 from Grant Aided Private Secondary Schools.

For the State schools, I am informed that all the 1,856 students have received their books except for 393 students who have not received one or two titles due to their unavailability on the local market. Orders have been placed for the missing titles.

However, I am given to understand that out of these 393 students, the parents of some 247 students have already made their own arrangements to get the missing textbooks so that textbooks ordered for them have been returned on 21 March 2008, after some one and a half months, to suppliers as per initial arrangements to avoid wastage. As for the remaining 146 students, their missing textbooks are expected by next week. They will be issued the missing textbooks as soon as these are received.

As regards the 4,219 needy students from the private schools, I am informed that 4,139 have received their textbooks prescribed by their schools from the list of recommended textbooks. Of these 4,139 students, a few have not received one or two textbook/s due to the delay in the two selected bookshops to supply. Orders have been placed with other bookshops and these are expected by next week. The remaining 80 students have not received any book at all. These are mostly Lower VI students who have been recently admitted to schools and those who have recently obtained their eligibility certificate from the Ministry of Social Security. Orders have been placed and the Private Secondary Schools Authority, which has taken the responsibility this year of supplying textbooks to needy students from grant aided private schools, expects to be able to supply by next week.

Mr Varma: Mr Speaker, Sir, could the hon. Minister kindly inform the House since when he is aware that there is this problem?

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, I replied to a parliamentary question no. B/616 some time back and I gave the history of how this problem has been there for a long time.

In spite of all our attempts, I am not in a position to solve the problem because it is very complex. The students have to get the admission first, they then go to the Ministry

of Social Security to be certified eligible as needy students. They come back to the school to get the list which they submit, then the PSSA and our zones start delivering the books. It

is a very complex process and at one time, we thought of giving them an amount of money which they can use once they are eligible as needy students. But there are different opinions about it as to what the parents will do with the money. That is why we have remained with the old system which has got certain weaknesses.

Mr Varma: Can the hon. Minister, Mr Speaker, Sir, kindly inform the House what is being done to remedy the weaknesses of the system?

Mr Gokhool: We have had meetings at various times and even in the context of last year, we had a meeting. We considered various options but, I am afraid, we don't have an option which will solve the problem where some students have this problem of books not coming in time.

Mr Varma: Can I, Mr Speaker, Sir, impress upon the Minister to use his good offices to find a solution? Because it is not a normal situation that students are left without books for one semester.

Mr Gokhool: In fact, we have improved, Mr Speaker, Sir. In the past - I have checked the records - students were left without books for two semesters. There are only a few cases, but we are going to address the issue. I am determined to solve this problem; it is not easy, but we will try to address it once again.

SCHOOLS - FURNITURE - TENDER

20/07/08
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(No. B/492) Mr M. Dowarkasing (Third Member for Curepipe and Midlands) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether, in regard to the supply of various items of furniture for the primary and secondary schools, he will state if tenders were launched in September 2006 and, if so, give -

- (a) details thereof and
- (b) the name of the successful tenderer.

Reply: Yes, tenders were invited through the press by way of a Tender Notice dated 29 September 2006 for the supply of various items of furniture for primary and secondary schools for the Financial Year 2006 - 2007. I am arranging for the list of items purchased and the names of the successful tenderers to be placed in the Library of the National Assembly as there were 17 different items purchased from five different contractors for primary schools and 24 different items purchased from 9 different contractors for Secondary Schools.

NEEDY STUDENTS - SCHOLARSHIPS & LOANS (17/06/08)

(No. B/721) Mr G. Guinness (Third Member for Montagne Blanche & GRSE) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether he will state if a survey has been carried out in the tertiary institutions, with a view to assess the number of students, hailing from a family whose household income does not exceed Rs7,500 per month and who are facing severe hardships, following the death or serious incapacity of a wage earner and, if so, indicate the number thereof.

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker Sir, no survey, as mentioned by the hon. Member has been carried out at this stage. However, it is in line with Government policy to increase access to post secondary and tertiary education and to make it affordable to all socioeconomic groups that several measures have been enunciated in the 2008/2009 Budget Speech.

As the House is aware, a Human Resource, Knowledge and Arts Development Fund has been set up for the promotion of post secondary and tertiary education. It will be managed and administered by a committee under the chairmanship of my Ministry.

My Ministry will in consultation with stakeholders from, *inter alia*, the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development, devise ways and means to ascertain that the funds are used from amongst others provision of loans and scholarships to students in genuine need.

It would therefore be premature at this stage to give a figure of such students.

Mr Guinness: Can I know from the Minister whether he will propose to Government to remove the conditionality of a wage earner following the death or serious incapacity of a wage earner for the granting of scholarship to children whose family earns less than Rs7,500, in absolute poverty? Can he ask Government to remove that conditionality?

Mr Gokhool: As I said, we have to carry out the survey first. I have just noted the question being asked by the hon. Member and I can't give an answer offhand.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order!

(Interruptions)

Order! Hon. Minister! Order, I have said! I am on my feet!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Gunness! Hon. Gunness! I request you to remain silent.

(Interruptions)

Both of you! I am going to take some drastic measures now. Order! Next question.

**TRUST FUND FOR VULNERABLE GROUPS –
NEEDY STUDENTS – ASSISTANCE (17/06/08)**

(No. B/723) Mr J.R. Spéville (Second Member for Rodrigues) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Trust Fund for Vulnerable Groups, information as to if the Trust Fund had recently approved a project to support the needy students and, if so –

- (a) the names of the students who have benefited therefrom, and
- (b) the amount of money approved as grants, indicating if the sums have been disbursed and, if so, since when.

The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development (Dr. R. Sithanen): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, one of the objectives of the Trust Fund for the Social Integration of Vulnerable Groups is to assist primary and secondary school children from needy and vulnerable families by providing them school materials in terms of school bags, copybooks, other stationery, uniforms and shoes.

With regard to the information being sought, I presume that the hon. Member is referring to Trust Fund projects being implemented in Rodrigues. In this respect, I wish to inform the House that during this financial year, eight such projects submitted by NGOs, including PTAs, have been approved by the Trust Fund.

As far as part (a) of the question is concerned, the eight projects cover a total of 761 needy students. Mr Deputy Speaker Sir, I am advised that they have all gone through a screening process and out of respect to these needy students, it would not be appropriate to disclose their names.

With regard to part (b) of the question, the Trust Fund has approved a total amount of Rs806,122 for implementing the eight projects. Out of this amount, a sum of Rs37,033 was disbursed as grant on 23 January 2008 to the NGO promoting the project for the purchase of school materials. These materials were distributed to 26 school children on 26 January 2008.

The other seven projects were approved by the Trust Fund on 15 May 2008. I am informed that disbursement will be effected during the course of this week, on submission of the relevant quotations by the NGOs promoting the respective projects.

Mrs Perrier: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, can I appeal to the Deputy Prime Minister that this is done at the beginning of the year and not in April. May as it happened in my constituency this year? It was in last April, but the students have got all their amenities.

It was too late as the parents had already spent their money.

Dr. Sithanen: I'll look into it, Sir.

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NATIONAL COLLEGES – BASIC SPORTS AMENITIES (12/08/08)

(No. B/1112) Mrs M. Martin (Second Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the Minister of Education & Human Resources whether, in regard to the national colleges, he will state the number thereof which are not equipped with basic sports amenities infrastructure and multipurpose halls.

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

As indicated in the reply to PQ B/920, there are now 15 National Colleges. Eight of them have all basic sports amenities and multipurpose halls. As regards the remaining seven, the information is being tabled, as they have partial basic sports amenities. In schools, where partial facilities are now available, action will be initiated to provide the additional facilities required.

Mrs Martin: Mr Speaker, Sir, in schools where facilities are not available, especially the Forest Side SSS, where there is no multipurpose hall and not even basic sports amenities, can the hon. Minister say whether particular attention will be given to that school in order to, at least, give some space for the children to have that kind of activity?

Dr. David: Mr Speaker, Sir, from information I have, they have got two volleyball pitches, one handball pitch and one football ground, and two volleyball and basketball grounds are coming in May 2009.

Mrs Martin: Mr Speaker, Sir, since Curepipe is a very humid and

rainy region, can the hon. Minister consider as well making facilities available for sports activities to be held indoors when the project is actually carried out?

Dr. David: Mr Speaker, Sir, I will pass on the information to the Minister concerned.

9/14/08 (20)

NATIONAL LIBRARY – NEW BUILDING

(No. B/1444) Mrs M. Martin (Second Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the Minister of Education, Culture & Human Resources whether, in regard to the project for the construction of a new building to house the National Library, he will state where matters stand.

(Withdrawn)

GLOBAL SCHOOL-BASED STUDENT HEALTH SURVEY - RECOMMENDATIONS

(21)
30/3/10

(No. B/88) Mrs S. Hanoomanjee (Second Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether, in regard to the Global School-Based Student Health Survey, he will state the –

- (a) outcome thereof, and
- (b) recommendations, indicating the measures taken for their implementation.

Dr. Jeetah: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I wish to inform the House that the Global School-based Student Health Survey (GSHS) was initiated in 2001 by the World Health Organisation in collaboration with UNAIDS, UNESCO and UNICEF and with technical assistance from the US Centre for Disease Control. The survey was meant to generate data on important health risk behaviours and protective factors amongst students.

I wish to highlight, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that some countries had already started the Survey as from 2003. In Mauritius, this Survey was conducted by my Ministry for the first time in 2007 among students aged 13 to 15 years. The final report was available in 2009. The survey has provided us with data and other important information on critical health behaviours and protective factors established during adolescence and which are related to significant causes of morbidity and mortality during youth and adulthood.

The detailed findings of the survey are available on the web site of the World Health Organisation since January 2009 and are now also available on the website of my Ministry.

The data generated will now serve as a baseline to evaluate interventions and health promotion activities focused on changing behaviours for reducing the burden of non communicable diseases in Mauritius.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as regards part (b) of the question, the main recommendations of this survey and the measures being taken are as follows –

- (a) Firstly, it is recommended that intersectoral collaboration between the Ministry of Education, Culture and Human Resources and my Ministry be established so as to develop a comprehensive and integrated approach to health promotion in schools. In this respect, Education and Health Councils, comprising representatives of both Ministries and other stakeholders have already been set up and are operational.
- (b) Secondly, the survey recommends the preparation of an Action Plan against violence and injuries in children and adolescents. A workshop with all stakeholders concerned was held on 25 March, 2010 to prepare good practice guidelines against violence and injuries in children and adolescents.
- (c) Thirdly, the survey proposes an increase in the number of physical education classes in all schools. I am informed that this has already been initiated by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Human Resources. In addition, my Ministry is currently finalising a National Action Plan on Physical Activity and one of its components will address physical activity in adolescents.
- (d) Lastly, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the other recommendations concern actions to reduce the use of tobacco, alcohol and drugs in schools. In fact, the Public Health (Restrictions on Tobacco Products) and Public Health (Prohibition on Advertisement, Sponsorship and Restriction on Sale and Consumption in Public Places of Alcoholic Drinks) Regulations 2008 have been promulgated and are being enforced as from last year with a view to addressing problems of tobacco and alcohol use on school premises amongst other things. I have to inform the House, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that following the enforcement of these Regulations, the consumption of –

- (i) Spirits (i.e. whisky, rum and compounded spirits) have decreased from 17.758,092 litres, that is, 17.7 million litres in 2008 - a few more if you will allow me, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir - to 13.4 million litres in 2009;
- (ii) Fruit Wine has decreased from 6.083 million litres in 2008 to 5.28 million litres in 2009, and
- (iii) Beer has decreased from 36.1 million litres in 2008 to 36.09 million litres in 2009, that is, it has stabilised, at least, it has not increased.

Furthermore, the import of cigarettes for the months of January and February 2010 has decreased to 166 million sticks as compared to 290 million sticks for January and February, that is from a high of 290 million sticks, it has come down to 166 million sticks over the period January to February 2010.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, let me say that the carrying out of this survey itself is a very laudable initiative. Can the hon. Minister say whether mobile clinics still go to primary and secondary schools to detect cases in secondary schools alcoholism, in primary schools of serious handicaps for children and at what frequency do they do so?

Dr. Jeetah: I am afraid not, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Mobile clinics are here for *dépistage*, for early detection of NCDs as well as breast and cervical cancer in women. We are also enforcing good eating practices and we are encouraging people to have a healthy lifestyle. We have also initiated another dental mobile clinic where we carry out dental check up. But I take the point, once again, a very valid point and we will try to see in what way we can collaborate with the Ministry of Education to try to enforce this further.

Mrs Labelle: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister whether there was a particular reason why the core questionnaire which contains nine questions relating to the sexual behaviours that contribute to HIV infection, other STI and unintended pregnancy module have been reduced to only two? There was nothing regarding questions which could have helped us to collect the database regarding the sexual activity of our adolescents.

Dr. Jeetah: I do not have an answer to that question, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, but I think the good thing is that, at least, now we have a basis for policy making. I am sure with the next survey we can consider all these issues.

Mrs Labelle: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am sure the hon. Minister is aware of the problem of teenage pregnancy in our country which is on the increasing trend. So, we have missed an opportunity to collect data regarding this activity of our youth. Is he prepared to look into that? Is there something else that is going to be done so that we can have such data, so that we can implement measures to help decreasing this problem that we are facing?

Dr. Jeetah: There are two points, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. This survey was initiated in 2001. It is my predecessor who initiated this study in 2007. So, I think we have to congratulate my predecessor who has started the work. I am informed now that hon. Mrs Seebun who is in charge of the Ministry of Women's Rights, Child Development, Family Welfare & Consumer Protection is looking into the subject.

Mr Jhugroo: Can I ask the hon. Minister whether he will consider undertaking a systematic screening exercise in view of detecting any medical abnormalities at the level of primary and secondary students?

Dr. Jeetah: I think that my colleague is going to answer that question. My colleague, the Minister in charge of Education, Culture and Human Resources, has some very ideas in order to tackle this, being a medical practitioner himself. But, once again, these are very valid suggestions that we are working on.
