

TERTIARY

STUDY ABROAD/UNESCO

28.11.00
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MAURITIAN STUDENTS - UKRAINE & RUSSIA - COMPLAINTS

(No B/344) Mr A.K. Gungah (Second Member for Grand' Baie & Poudre d'Or) asked the Minister of Education & Scientific Research whether he will say if he has registered any complaint from a number of students who have studied abroad, mostly in Ukraine and Russia wherein they complained that they had been deceived by some agents.

Mr Obeegadoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that no such complaints have been received at my Ministry.

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UNESCO SCIENCE PRIZE - SUBMISSION OF ENTRIES

(No. B/139) Mr X. L. Duval (Fourth Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the Minister of Education & Scientific Research whether, in regard to the 2001 edition of UNESCO Science Prize and, as a result of the communiqué dated 12 February 2001 issued to the local press by his Ministry, he will state-

- (a) the number of applications/submissions received within the prescribed time-limit, that is, 31 March 2001;
- (b) if a selection of the best candidates has been carried out by his Ministry and, if so, by whom;
- (c) the time-limit, if any, laid down by UNESCO, Paris for the receipt of submissions, and
- (d) the date on which that of the best qualified Mauritian candidate was sent to UNESCO, Paris, indicating his name.

Mr Obeegadoo: Sir, with your permission, I shall answer to both PQ Nos B/139 and B/140 at the same time.

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According to the information I have received, Sir, the UNESCO Science Prize was advertised in the papers in February 2001, the date-limit for the submission of entries being 31 March 2001. By that date, seven entries had been received at the National Commission for UNESCO.

It ensues that a selection had to be carried out. A panel comprising the Chief Technical Officer of my Ministry, the Director of the Mauritius Research Council and the Executive Director of the Tertiary Education Commission, was appointed.

The time limit for the submission of entries to UNESCO, Paris was 15 May 2001.

After evaluation of the entries, the panel did not recommend any one of them for submission to UNESCO.

The Ministry stood guided by the expert advice of the panel and did not accordingly send any entry to UNESCO.

However, in June 2001, after representations were made to the Ministry, the panel was invited to reconsider and recommend the best entry/entries if only because the submission to UNESCO would be a sign of encouragement to Mauritian scientists.

Finally, on 12 July 2001, two entries, as advised by the panel, were sent to UNESCO, Paris, with an appeal for late consideration.

A communication was received from UNESCO on 24 July 2001, informing the Ministry that the submissions of the Mauritian candidates could not be examined by the jury.

My Ministry did receive a letter dated 03 September 2001. However, I am informed that it has not been the practice of the Ministry of Education to inform candidates of the findings of the panel set up to assess entries.

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KV/6/P17/3

NO B/139 (CONTD)

I wish to inform the House that this UNESCO Science Prize is awarded every two years. Hence in 2003, another exercise will be carried out locally and unsuccessful candidates in 2001 may have their entries considered anew, as appropriate.

Mr Duval: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, how can the hon. Minister reconcile these two situations that appear quite ridiculous? On 15 May, no candidature is found to be adequate although UNESCO asked for one. In July, two applications are found good although again UNESCO asked for one only. The submission of two entries, I presume, cancelled the whole point of the selection exercise in Mauritius.

Mr Obeegadoo: Let me explain again, Mr Deputy Speaker. The Minister and the Ministry had stood guided by a panel of scientists appointed by the Ministry comprising, as I said, the Director of the Mauritius Research Council, the Executive Director of the Tertiary Education Commission and the Chief Technical Officer of the Ministry, that is the head of the technical cadre of the Ministry, all three respected personalities with a scientific background. Their initial recommendation was that no entries should be sent to UNESCO. Thereafter, there were repeated representations made to the Ministry in line with which the panel was invited to reconsider and judge the possibility of submitting the best entries of the seven which were made as this was, as I said, perceived to be an encouragement to Mauritian scientists whatever the global judgment of the panel. Two entries were sent. Neither the hon. Member nor I, Mr Deputy Speaker, would be in the secret of the panel as to their evaluation. We stood once again guided by the panel which, in its wisdom, recommended that the two entries be sent. I have recently had my attention drawn to the fact that in fact only one entry could have been submitted. So, two problems, in all honesty, would appear to have arisen which prevented UNESCO from considering this late submission. Firstly, the fact that it was made outside the delay and, secondly, that there were two entries instead of one.

The Prime Minister: There was not one best, but two better!

Mr Obeegadoo: That is what it would seem, but, again, I am not competent to judge. On this issue of there being two entries rather than one,

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my attention has recently been drawn to that fact and I shall accordingly conduct an inquiry to understand why that was so. But, in any case, unfortunately - and that is indeed a very sorry story - the applications were submitted late with an appeal for late consideration, which was not accepted.

Mr Duval: That's a ridiculous situation! There is a high-flying committee appointed by the Minister or by the Ministry. So, the Minister cannot dissociate himself from that committee. That committee comes to no opinion in May, but after a letter from the Ministry, they suddenly change opinion completely - they don't stand by their first decision not to send any entry and they find two suitable entries. Is the Minister happy with the fact that he has appointed such a committee to look into such an important matter?

Mr Obeegadoo: I am sure that the hon. gentleman does understand. There is a panel that is appointed by the Ministry and in its own sovereign judgment decides that none of the seven entries is worthy of submission to UNESCO according to the criteria laid down in the documents from UNESCO. The Ministry stands guided by that panel of scientists and experts. Thereafter, recommendations are made to the Ministry that the panel should at least have sent a submission that applying for this UNESCO science prize is regarded by the local scientific community as a matter of status and encouragement. Therefore, the Ministry invited the panel to consider the advisability of submitting whatever entry or entries it found to be the best as amongst the seven even if, initially, they had considered that none was worthy to be sent to UNESCO. Thereafter, the panel, again in its own wisdom, came forward to say - I would rather not mention names and specific projects, unless the hon. gentleman would insist - that two of the seven entries are the best and suggests that they be sent to UNESCO. So, the Ministry said: thank you very much, and it sent the submissions to UNESCO with an appeal for consideration although we were outside delay. The response was in the negative and it reached us in July. As I said, I do hope that in 2003 when new entries will be made and the entries for 2001 will be renewed they can be considered together once again by an independent, impartial, objective and qualified panel to take a decision.

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CA/D06/P18/1 (No. B/139) (contd)

Mr Duval: Why were two candidatures sent to UNESCO in July when they had, in fact, asked for one candidature only?

Mr Obeegadoo: As I said, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this is the disturbing feature. I have admitted that earlier, which has recently been brought to my attention. I was under the impression that the problem had come from the late submission. I am now informed that, apart from the late submission, there was another problem, which was that at the second go, the panel decided to recommend two rather than one entry. So, this matter will now be investigated.

Mr Collendavelloo: Indeed, it is a sad state of affairs. Can I know whether this panel of *sommités nationales scientifiques* was given terms of reference and secondly, did it give reasons for not selecting any of the candidates for submission to UNESCO?

Mr Obeegadoo: I do presume that in normal course of things any assessment panel would be provided with all relevant documentation, including terms of reference and specific requirements of UNESCO. According to information provided to me, none of the entries was recommended for submission to UNESCO on the basis that none of them satisfied the criteria laid down by UNESCO.

Mr Collendavelloo: Would the Minister be kind enough to personally verify the working papers of this panel, to check what was the work they actually did in their assessment and to find out what were the reasons, and come back to the House with a statement on an extremely sad matter which, I am under the impression, was just negligently dealt with by officers without any care for scientists of Mauritius?

Mr Obeegadoo: I shall certainly, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, carry out a thorough investigation into the matter and come back to the House with a full statement. However, until the conclusions of such an investigation are available, I will not pronounce on the manner in which the exercise was carried out.

Dr. David: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would like to know whether the members of the jury, in their own personal wisdom, as the Minister said, were aware that four Nobel prize winners had congratulated one of the entrants for his work?

Secondly, is it not the responsibility, or should I say irresponsibility, to have sent two entries instead of one? It's as if it's an international slap we got from UNESCO, making an appeal for late entry and then UNESCO just banging the door and say 'No'. It's a second

CA/D06/P18/2 (No. B/139) (contd)

humiliation for Mauritius. These things should not have happened, because we have got one of the best scientific brains in Mauritius. I remember having read comments in the Newsweek years ago about this periodic table and four Nobel prize winners, not any Tom, Dick and Harry. Four Nobel prize winners commended very highly the work of Mr Rivet. Does not the Minister think that this is something unfair and irresponsible?

Mr Obeegadoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as regards the first part of the question, the hon. gentleman has been Minister of Education and I am sure that he would agree that it is not the role of the Minister of Education, once a panel of assessment is set up, to interfere with the work of such a panel. Therefore, I am not in a position to say what was or was not brought to the attention of the panel by individual candidates in submitting their entries.

As regards the second part of the question, since a name has now been mentioned, let me say that two entries were eventually recommended for submission by the panel albeit outside the delay. One, that of Mr Raymond Rivet on the new periodic table of the chemical elements, based on electron configuration and the other was from Mr A.J. Carcasse, on device and method of accumulating mechanical energy. I can only say that Mr Carcasse is not personally known to me, whereas I have the greatest of all possible respect for Mr Rivet as an educationist. I am not competent to pronounce on the worth or not of any scientific project, I must admit. Be it as it may, let me reiterate my dismay at this whole affair, which is a very sad story indeed, and the UNESCO science prize should be a means to stimulate, to encourage and to reward our scientists who decide to innovate and to do research in the realm of science and such scientists are, unfortunately, too few.

UNESCO SCIENCE PRIZE (2001 EDITION) - SUBMISSION OF ENTRIES

(No. B/140) Mr X. L. Duval (Fourth Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the Minister of Education & Scientific Research whether, in regard to the 2001 edition of the UNESCO Science Prize and, as a result of the communiqué dated 12 February 2001 issued to the local press by his Ministry, he will state-

- (a) if his Ministry has received from one of the candidates a request dated 03 September 2001 for information as to the outcome of his submission and, if so, with what result and
- (b) if he has received from UNESCO, Paris any observations as to the rejection of the Mauritian submission and, if so, will he make a statement thereon.

(vide reply to PQ No. B/139)

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Mr Dulloo: May I ask the hon. Minister whether a copy of the circular letter could be communicated to us, or at least be laid on the Table of the Assembly?

Mr P. Jugnauth: Yes, I can table copy of that circular letter.

IRAQ - MAURITIAN STUDENT

(No. B/205) Mr J. R. Spéville (Second Member for Rodrigues) asked the Minister of Education and Scientific Research whether it has been ascertained if there are any Mauritian students presently studying in Iraq and, if so, will he state –

- (a) the field of study, and
- (b) state whether he is in presence of any information regarding their situation in Iraq at present.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs and Regional Cooperation (Mr A. Gayan): Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I will reply to this Parliamentary Question.

Mr Speaker, following a communiqué issued by my Ministry to obtain particulars about Mauritian nationals in the Gulf region and after consultations with the Ministry of Education and Scientific Research, I would like to inform the House that there was just one student, Mr Nundkishore Suraj Bissoondoyal who was pursuing studies in the field of medicine in Iraq.

I am given to understand that he has returned to Mauritius following the outbreak of war in that country.

15 July, 2003

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MAURITIANS STUDYING ABROAD – LOAN SCHEME

(No. B/481) Mr A. K. Gungah (Second Member for Grand' Baie and Poudre d'Or) asked the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance whether, he will use his good offices with the DBM and other local banks in order to set up a scheme to help parents/responsible parties whose children study abroad and who are adversely affected by the appreciation of the euro and pound sterling.

The Ag. Prime Minister: Sir, Mauritians studying abroad are not only affected by fluctuations in exchange rates but also by increases in the cost of living in countries where they pursue studies. Parents and responsible parties of these students have various avenues open to them for meeting their financial needs.

They can apply for loans under the Student Relief Fund operated by the Ministry of Education and Scientific Research. The loans are granted to students of tertiary sector who have completed the first half of their course of study. The maximum amount of loan available is Rs45,000, with interest at 2 per cent per annum and repayment extending over five years. The loan ceiling will shortly be increased to Rs75,000. On average, some 25 students benefit from these loans each year under the scheme.

A second source is the Employees Welfare Fund. The EWF operates an Educational Loan Scheme for the benefit of employees and their children undertaking post-secondary studies. Under the EWF Scheme, the amount of loan granted is limited to Rs300,000. The rate of interest is 8 per cent per annum, with repayment extending over 12 to 72 months. Since the start of the Scheme, the EWF has granted loans to over 4,100 beneficiaries for a total amount of Rs868 m.

The third possibility is the Trust Fund for the Social Integration of Vulnerable Groups. The Fund operates a revolving loan scheme through the Development Bank of Mauritius for the benefit of needy students enrolled at the University of Mauritius, the University of Technology and the Industrial
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P.Q. No. B/481 (Cont'd)

and Vocational Training Board. The maximum amount of loan available for a course of study is Rs100,000. The rate of interest is 8 per cent per annum, with reimbursement starting one year after completion of the course. As at May 2003, some 150 loan applications had been approved by the DBM for a total amount of Rs9.8 m.

The fourth source is the Mauritius Civil Service Mutual Aid Association Limited which has launched an Educational Loan Scheme since April this year. Under the Scheme, a member can obtain two loans each of Rs300,000. The loans carry an interest rate of 11.75 per cent per annum and are refundable in 72 equal instalments. To date, 37 applications for loans have been sanctioned for a total amount of Rs8 m.

Finally, Sir, two commercial banks have recently launched educational loan schemes for the benefit of students doing post-secondary studies locally and abroad.

Thus, Sir, several possibilities exist for parents and responsible parties of students affected by the appreciation of the euro and pound sterling to meet their financial needs. It would not be advisable for the DBM to operate a scheme aimed specifically at the appreciation of the euro and pound sterling. This is not the vocation of the Bank.

Mr Gungah: Will the Ag. Prime Minister confirm whether it is true that self-employed persons like fishermen are not eligible to such type of financial assistance as has been mentioned?

The Ag. Prime Minister: I would like to have a chance of looking at the DBM operated Fund. I see no linkage between employment and the Funds put by the Trust Fund for Social Integration of Vulnerable Groups through the DBM. It is not for employees of any given bodies. Therefore, my reading of the conditions would allow fishermen and self-employed to apply.

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P.Q. No. B/481 (Cont'd)

Mr Barbier: Mr Speaker, Sir, actually, these financial facilities are limited only to students of the University of Mauritius, the University of Technology and IVTB. Will the Ag. Prime Minister look into the possibility of extending these facilities to students of other accredited institutions?

The Ag. Prime Minister: It is a policy decision. They have decided to help needy students here in Mauritius. As I said, other schemes target students going abroad. But in that case, it is a policy-decision. I will ask the Trust Fund for Social Integration of Vulnerable Groups to look into it. But I doubt whether the policy-decision needs to be changed in that case.

3 June 2003

**MAURITIAN MEDICAL STUDENTS, RUSSIA -
ADMISSION TO SSRMC**

(No. B/393) Mr D. Hurnam (Third Member for Pamplemousses and Triolet) asked the Minister of Education and Scientific Research whether, having regard to the sad demise in Saint Petersburg in the Russian Federation earlier this year of a Mauritian student from Gros Billot and the subsequent meeting to which parents of students studying in Russia attended when a proposal, amongst others, was made to them to the effect that those students who are minded to continue their medical studies may return to Mauritius to pursue same at the Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam Medical College, he will state if any such applications have been received and attended to.

Mr Obeegadoo: Sir, I would like to point out at the very outset that as a matter of fact no proposal was made by the Inter-Ministerial Committee which met the parents to the effect that, I quote - "those students who are minded to continue their medical studies may return to Mauritius to pursue same at the Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam Medical College". It was rather a wish expressed by one parent present on that day.

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P.Q. No. B/393 (Cont'd)

I am informed by the Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam Medical College (SSRMC) that 29 applications have been made to the College, out of which only 9 applicants qualify. Criteria of eligibility for admission to the Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam Medical College are laid down by the University of Mauritius, to which the SSRMC is affiliated and the criteria consist of a minimum requirement of 22 points in science subjects achieved at the HSC examinations.

I am further advised that of the 9 applicants who qualify in terms of the minimum requirement of 22 points, only two have actually joined the Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam Medical College and the remaining 7 have not followed up on their initial application.

Mr Hurnam: Mr Speaker, Sir, I supposed that this meeting was organised after the death of Atish Ramgoolam and the purpose of it was to certainly sensitise students and parents that, should there be any need, they can apply to the local Medical School, although no official pronouncement was made by the Ministry.

Mr Obeegadoo: No, Mr Speaker, Sir. As the hon. Member might be aware, after the very sad incident involving the passing away of a Mauritian student studying in Russia, Government set up an inter-ministerial committee which had a first meeting with several hundreds parents or responsible parties of students in Russia to give them a hearing and listen to all their concerns and to reassure them that Government was doing all that was within its possibility to help in that particular situation. Thereafter the inter-ministerial committee carried out different tasks and met again the Association representing the parents to monitor progress and to consider future developments together with them.

The issue of students in Russia being admitted to SSRMC was only one of the items mentioned. It was mentioned by one parent and Government said it would try to assist and give a helping hand if such request did materialise. Of course, the University of Mauritius minded to maintain standards has, therefore, its own admission requirements. As I said, there were only 29 applications immediately after the incident.

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P.Q. No. B/393 (Cont'd)

Clearly, once the dust settled, many students did opt to pursue their studies in Russia. Out of the 9 students who qualified, only 2 actually followed up and obtained admission.

Mr Hurnam: I would not ask the Minister to interfere with the criteria laid down by the University of Mauritius. But could not there be a suggestion that, exceptionally those third-year medical students in Russia be allowed to continue their studies at the SSRMC?

Mr Obeegadoo: I am afraid it would create a very dangerous precedent. But in any case, I have not received any request to that effect.

Mr Hurnam: How would the Minister reconcile the fact that students studying medicine in Russia can come to practise in Mauritius once they are qualified, as opposed to the SSRMC?

Mr Obeegadoo: I can assure the hon. Member that this is one of the issues being considered by the Tertiary Education Commission in line with international trends.

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DR/D37/P06/03

AAPRAVASI GHAT/LE MORNE - NOMINATION DOSSIERS

(No. B/851) **Dr. A. Boolell (Second Member for Vieux Grand Port and Rose Belle)** asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Home Affairs whether Government has decided to submit a report on the Aapravasi Ghat to the UNESCO for consideration as a world heritage site and, if so, will he give the reasons thereof

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, Government has decided to submit to UNESCO the Nomination Dossier for the inscription of the Aapravasi Ghat as a World Heritage Site together with that of Le Morne.

The preparation of these Dossiers is being undertaken with the assistance of UNESCO.

In the case of Le Morne, as recommended by UNESCO Consultant, Mr Saliba, UNESCO provided the services of two experts to assist in the preparation of the Nomination File for the joint inscription of Le Morne and Black River Gorges National Park. In this context, two UNESCO experts, Dr Abungu and Prof. Edroma, came to Mauritius in July 2004. They met with the stakeholders and collected information and documents for the drafting of the Nomination File.

A first draft Nomination File for the joint inscription of Le Morne and Black River Gorges National Park has been received and is being examined by the Le Morne Heritage Trust Fund and the National Parks Conservation Service of the Ministry of Agriculture, Food Technology and Natural Resources.

In the case of Aapravasi Ghat, UNESCO delegated Mr Peter Stott, Consultant of the World Heritage Centre, to Mauritius from 01 to 07 November 2004 to assist in the preparation of the Nomination Dossier and to train national experts in that respect.

Once the two Dossiers are ready they will be submitted to UNESCO.

YEAR 2005

MAURITIAN STUDENTS – PAKISTAN – MADRASSAHS (23/08/05)

(No. I B/88) Mr S. Lauthan (Third Member for Port Louis Maritime and Port Louis East) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms, Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether he will state the measures, if any, taken to avoid the repatriation of Mauritian students presently studying in madrassahs in Pakistan with a view to becoming maulanas, halims and halimas, following the recent decision of H.E Mr Parwez Musharraf, President of the Republic of Pakistan to send back to their respective countries all foreign students studying in madrassahs in Pakistan.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, an announcement was made by President Parvez Musharraf while addressing the International Media on 29 July 2005 for foreign students attending Madrassas in Pakistan to leave the country within a month.

Government, upon taking cognizance of the announcement, contacted our High Commission in Islamabad and our Honorary Consul General in Karachi to follow up and monitor the situation with regard to all Mauritian students attending Madrassas in Pakistan and to extend all possible assistance and support and to keep us informed of the developments. Moreover, Government has taken a number of measures so as to ensure that Mauritian students, presently studying in Madrassas in Pakistan, suffer no undue hardship. The Minister of Foreign Affairs had an urgent meeting with the High Commissioner of Pakistan in Mauritius and he was requested to follow up the situation and to keep us informed of any development.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, International Trade and Cooperation has formally requested the Pakistani authorities, through the Pakistan High Commission in Mauritius, that special consideration be given to Mauritian students while underscoring the strong bilateral ties that exist between Mauritius and Pakistan. The High Commission of Pakistan has notified us in writing that our request is under consideration by the relevant Pakistani authorities.

So far, the Government of Pakistan has not yet informed of the measures to be put in place to implement the announcement made by President Musharraf.

Our High Commissioner in Pakistan, His Excellency, Mr Janhangeer, has met the Pakistani Federal Minister of Religious Affairs, and the Minister of State for Interior, on 13 August and 16 August 2005 respectively. During the meetings, our High Commissioner has pleaded the case of our students, while bringing home to the Pakistani Ministers the special ties, founded on solid cultural and historical affinities, that bind Mauritius, and he undertook to follow up and intercede for special consideration to be given to Mauritian students. On 19 August 2005, our High Commissioner met the Chairman of the Senate of Pakistan, to present a special case for the Mauritian students and to inform him of the case of our nationals, of the request made by the Government for special consideration to be given to our students in Pakistan.

Our High Commissioner in Pakistan was instructed on 10 August 2005 to proceed to Karachi to see how best to assist the Mauritian students. As per the diplomatic practice in Pakistan, the required authorisation for our envoy to move out of Islamabad has been obtained this week and our High Commissioner will be proceeding to Karachi on 25 August 2005.

I have also personally written to President Musharraf, requesting him to allow our students to complete their studies and to take into consideration the special links that exist between our two countries.

Mr Lauthan: My information, Mr Speaker, Sir, is that there are two categories of Mauritian students studying. Some are studying in recognised Madrassas, others in unrecognised Madrassas. As we know, our Mauritian Ulemas have studied in recognised Madrassas, we have not had any problem with them. Could I suggest to the Prime Minister that during future deliberation, we concentrate on those who might be in problem, those who are presently in unrecognised Madrassas?

The Prime Minister: I must say that the statement made by President Musharraf talks of foreign students attending Madrassas in Pakistan, without making the difference between either they are proper Madrassas or not. And our instructions to our High Commissioner has been to look at all students, especially those who have problems and are asking for help.

**UNIVERSITY OF UKRAINE –
STUDENTS – PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED (23/08/05)**

(No. I B/92) Mr P. Jhugroo (Third Member for Port Louis

North and Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether he is aware of the problems faced by the students in medicine in Ukraine and, if so, will he state the measures taken in relation thereto.

The Minister of Education & Human Resources (Mr D. Gokhool): Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I will answer this question. I am informed that Mauritian students who proceed to Ukraine for further studies do so through recruitment agencies/individuals or on their own. My Ministry does not keep a record of students effecting studies in Ukraine or elsewhere at their own expense. However, no formal complaints have been received from the students in Ukraine. Should such cases be brought to the attention of my Ministry, appropriate action will be taken to come to their assistance.

Moreover, with a view to safeguarding the interest of these students, it is proposed to introduce appropriate legislation to regulate the activities of recruitment agencies/individuals involved in the recruitment of students for tertiary studies overseas.

Mr Jhugroo: Mr Speaker, Sir, will the hon. Minister state what is the policy of the Government with regard to the *agents recruteurs* who are sending students to study medicine in Ukraine?

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have already answered the question. We will introduce legislation to regulate the activities of these organisations.

Question/idea

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**CPE EXAMINATIONS - NOVEMBER-DECEMBER 2005 –
PERCENTAGE PASS RATE**

(No. B/446) Mr G. Gunness (Third Member for Montagne Blanche and GRSE) asked the Minister of Education & Human Resources whether, in regard to the November-December 2005 CPE Examinations, he will state the percentage –

- (a) pass rate;
- (b) pass rate subject-wise;
- (c) pass rate with an "A" subject-wise;
- (d) pass rate with a "B" subject-wise, and
- (e) failure in the English language

Mr Gokhool: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with regard to the November-December 2005 CPE examinations -

- (a) the overall percentage pass rate was 62.24%;
- (b) statistics pertaining to percentage pass rate subject-wise, the percentage pass rate with "A" subject-wise, and the percentage pass rate with a "B" subject-wise is being tabled;
- (c) the percentage failure in the English language was 25.6%

Mr Gunness: Since the hon. Minister is tabling the document, I am sure he must have the information; I don't have it. Can the Minister confirm that since 1998, exception made to year 2001, the 2005 result pass rate with an "A" in all subjects, including English, is higher?

Mr Gokhool: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, if we look at the statistics, it is true that the pass rate is slightly higher over all the years that have been mentioned by the hon. Member.

Mr Gunness: When I say, exception made to 2001, can the hon. Minister say, at that point in time, what were the marks for an "A" in 2001, and what were the marks to be obtained to get an "A" in 2005?

Mr Gokhool: The hon. Member is going back to 2001. I have figures for 2002 and 2003, and I have to check the marks. But all I am saying is that, if we look at the statistics, there has been a slight improvement, and if the hon. Member is looking at the statistics for English, even there, the improvement has not been very significant.

Mr Guinness: What the hon. Minister said on the education reform, he based himself on the supposedly failures, that is, the down trend in English and other subjects. Now that the results are out, we see that this is not true. As I said, since 1998, the best result has been in 2005. Can the Minister now confirm that the education reform that we have brought is now bearing the fruits?

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, if we look at the analysis made by the MES over the last few years, even during the time when the previous Government was in power, the results have not improved significantly. The overall result has been around 70% and the failure rate is around 30%. Apart from the MES report, it would be interesting for the hon. Member to know that, at the last ADEA Conference in March, where my predecessor was present, a scientific report was presented by Dr. Sukon on the performance over the past few years. I will read an extract from the report because education is a national issue and we should look at it as such. This report should be available to my predecessor. I quote an extract from the report -

“The reforms don’t seem to have helped the schools to do better.”

Because, as a matter of fact, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the 70%, 30% have not moved. We should go beyond statistics and look at the quality of performance to which we are addressing. Let me read out the relevant extract -

“The reforms don’t seem to have helped the schools to do better. What is even more surprising is the grade distribution at CPE level as shown in Figures 1-5.”

I am going to table this document.

“The “U-Shape” shows a trend which is exactly opposite to that of a normal curve which governs the distribution of intelligence.”

I am not a statistician, but if the hon. Member knows a little bit of statistics, he

can make out what has happened over the last few years.

Mr Guinness: I know statistics.

(Interruptions)

Mr Gokhool: I am here to teach you any time!

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order! Order, please!

Mr Guinness: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, how can we see whether there has been an improvement? I don't agree with the hon. Minister. When it serves his purpose, he uses statistics, he uses percentage. When it does not serve his purpose, he does not use it. We agree today that the 2005 result has been the best since 1998.

Mr Gokhool: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the vision of this Government is to improve the quality of education. This is what we are trying to do. I can also inform the hon. Member that if we look at the CPE examination papers, there are two sections - the Essential Learning Competencies and the Desirable Learning Competencies. This is where the problem lies because most students
.....

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Please, resume your seat, hon. Minister! I won't tolerate Members making remarks from a sedentary position.

(Interruptions)

The hon. Member should stop. He should not debate with me. He has to stop for the peace of mind of everybody in the House.

Mr Gokhool: What I was saying, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is that it is true that there has been a slight improvement, but a large number of students have not acquired the higher order skills tested in section (b) of question papers. Let me also add for the benefit of the House, that only yesterday the British Council presented a preliminary report on the level of English. I can tell you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that there is a lot of concern about the level of English.

Once the final report is there, we will inform the country about the level of English which has been going down and these are issues that we have to address.

LE

MORNE TRUST FUND – ACTIVITIES (04/07/06)

(No. B/924) Mr G. Lesjongard (Second Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Arts and Culture whether, in regard to Le Morne Trust Fund, he will state the activities scheduled for the financial year 2006-2007

Mr Gowressoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed that Le Morne Heritage Trust Fund proposes to carry out amongst others the following activities during the financial year 2006-2007 –

- (a) creation of a web site and finalisation of a logo;
- (b) putting up of a stele at Le Morne in the context of The UNESCO Slave Route Project;
- (c) design and manufacture of a maquette of Le Morne;
- (d) preparation and finalisation of the Management Plan of Le Morne;
- (e) conservation works aimed at protecting and preserving the natural fauna of the mountain;
- (f) talks, exhibitions and seminars;
- (g) research project to set up a database on “Marronage” in Mauritius;
- (h) review of contents of slavery and “Marronage” in secondary school textbooks, and
- (i) publication of pamphlets to be distributed to educational institutions

Moreover, the Trust Fund will also organise activities in the context of

the marking of the abolition of slavery.

Mr Bérenger: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Minister whether the file of the Le Morne Project to be included in the UNESCO Heritage sites, has been submitted to UNESCO and, if not, whether it will be submitted in 2006/2007?

Mr Gowressoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Master Plan has been submitted to UNESCO on 13 January. There are some classifications and we have to prepare the Management Plan by 30 September 2006.

UNESCO - PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE (11/07/06)

(No. B/956) Mrs S. B. Hanoomanjee (Second Member for Savanne and Black River) asked the Minister of Foreign Affairs, International Trade and Co-operation whether, in regard to the permanent representative of Mauritius to UNESCO in Paris, he will state -

- (a) the terms and conditions of her appointment, and
- (b) the costs incurred by Government in respect of her office.

The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport & Shipping (Dr. R. Beebeejaun): Mr Speaker, Sir, as regards part (a) of the question, Mrs Indira Savitree Thacoor-Sidaya has, in accordance with Section 87 of the Constitution, been appointed as Permanent Delegate of the Republic of Mauritius to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) with the rank of Ambassador, with residence in Paris. Her appointment is on a contract basis of 3 years with effect from 14 April 2006 with terms and conditions as laid down in the Pay Research Bureau Report, which is a public document.

With regard to part (b), the costs incurred by Government in respect of her office are -

- (a) 2280.95 euro as yearly rental for an office of 14 square metres made available by UNESCO at the 'Maison de l'UNESCO'.
- (b) 1890 euro for purchase of one computer, one printer and a fax machine.
- (c) It is to be noted that the Office of the Permanent Delegate is serviced by 1 Second Secretary, 1 Secretary/Typist on loan from our Embassy in Paris.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Can the Deputy Prime Minister confirm that it is the first time that a Permanent Representative to UNESCO is based outside

the Mauritian Embassy in Paris?

Dr. Beebeejaun: I am not aware if it is the first time, but many countries do it. We have a number of countries with their Permanent Delegation and Permanent Ambassadors at UNESCO. This is not an unusual practice. It has been going on for a long time.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Can the Deputy Prime Minister state whether in a situation where we are asking people to *serre ceinture* ...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: I am sorry, this is out of order.

(Interruptions)

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Was there a need for the country to have a "Second Embassy" in Paris?

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Next question, hon. Varma.

18/7/06
Statement by Ministers. Debate no 25 113 (11)

CA/D25/P19/4

AAPRAVASI GHAT – WORLD HERITAGE SITE - INSCRIPTION

The Minister of Arts & Culture (Mr M. Gowressoo): Mr Speaker, Sir, it is a matter of great pride and honour for me today to inform the House that the Aapravasi Ghat has been inscribed on the list of World Heritage sites at the 30th meeting of the UNESCO World Heritage Committee held last week in Vilnius, Lithuania.

The Aapravasi Ghat now belongs not only to the Mauritians but to the whole humanity. Aapravasi Ghat is the first ever site in Mauritius to gain international recognition as a World Heritage site due to its outstanding universal value.

Mr Speaker, Sir, it was not an easy task. In fact, following the submission in January 2006 of the draft Management Plan of Aapravasi Ghat, the International Council of Monuments and Sites, the advisory body of the World Heritage Committee, recommended in its evaluation report, in April 2006, that the nomination dossier of the Aapravasi Ghat, which was submitted in January 2005, was incomplete and should be deferred. This meant that several outstanding issues had to be cleared and a new dossier submitted in February 2007.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Mr Gowressoo: As soon as Government was apprised of the above and in view of the high historical importance of the Aapravasi Ghat, Government decided to set up a Ministerial Committee, chaired by me, to decide on the way forward and to ensure that the weaknesses mentioned in the ICOMOS Report be attended to, prior to the meeting of the World Heritage Committee in Vilnius. The Ministerial Committee met on a daily basis to clear all technical and legal issues which might hamper the Dossier. Besides, Government delegated a Ministerial team, comprising the Attorney-General and myself to Vilnius to present our case.

/...

CA/D25/P19/5

The Mauritian delegation started its lobbying campaign in Paris and pursued it in Vilnius. Meetings were held separately with the African group and those representing the interests of European, American, Arab and Asian countries on the World Heritage Committee to convince them of the uniqueness and significance of Aapravasi Ghat for the people of indentured ancestry all over the world, as the Aapravasi Ghat is the first site for the immigration depots of the 19th century indenture.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Mr Gowressoo: We fought till the end for our efforts to be compensated, and the agreement for the inscription of Aapravasi Ghat on the World Heritage List was reached through consensus.

Apart from Norway, which was in favour for a referral of the Dossier, all the other member States were agreeable for the inscription of Aapravasi Ghat. This, Mr Speaker, Sir, is a tremendous accomplishment for Mauritius.

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JG/D25/P20/1
(Statement cont'd)

I also wish to sincerely thank the hon. Prime Minister, my colleague Ministers and the members of the Ministerial Committee for their commitment to this project. My thanks also go to the Chairpersons and staff of the Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund and the National Heritage Fund, the staff of my Ministry and other members of the Committee for their dedication, zeal and enthusiasm which have led to the successful inscription of Aapravasi Ghat.

Mr Speaker, Sir, it is also worth reminding the House of the immense contribution of late Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam and late Mr Bickramsing Ramlallah for the tremendous work accomplished by them for due recognition given to the Aapravasi Ghat.

Mr Speaker Sir, the inscription of the Aapravasi Ghat as a World Heritage Site will definitely be an advantage to our economic sector as it will boost up tourist arrivals in Mauritius, increase the flow of tourists to the Aapravasi Ghat site and promote cultural tourism.

(Applause)

Mr Speaker Sir, now that we have been successful in the inscription of Aapravasi Ghat, my Ministry will leave no stone unturned for the inscription of Le Morne on the UNESCO World Heritage List. The Ministerial Committee set up to facilitate the inscription of Aapravasi Ghat will now monitor Le Morne Dossier closely. The Nomination Dossier will be finalised with the assistance of the World Heritage Centre and will be submitted to UNESCO by 30 September 2006.

I thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

(Applause)

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D26/P07/mt/6

NATIONAL HERITAGE – GOVERNMENT POLICY

(No. B/1095) Mrs M. Martin (Second Member for Curepipe and Midlands) asked the Minister of Arts and Culture whether he will state Government policy in regard to redeeming part of its national heritage found in various parts of the world.

Mr Gowressoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, the 185 heritage sites, buildings and monuments listed as our National Heritage are all found in the territory of the Republic of Mauritius.

According to section 6(k) of the National Heritage Fund Act 2003, one of the functions of the National Heritage Fund Board is to work in collaboration with the international community to trace and recover any national heritage which may be outside the territory of Mauritius and to restore foreign heritage or to jointly manage shared heritage.

Section 16 of the Act also provides that “no person shall export, or cause to export a national heritage without the prior approval of the Board.”

Furthermore, since 1978, Mauritius is a party to the 1970 UNESCO Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property. According to this Convention, any State party undertakes to take the necessary measures, consistent with their national legislation, to prevent museums and similar institutions within their territories from acquiring cultural property originating in another State party which has been illegally exported. ←

It is the policy of Government to bring back to the country any item having the potential of being listed as national heritage and in case of shared heritage, to have access to the heritage for joint management and use.

.../...

D26/p07/MT/7

(No. B/1095) contd.

I have been informed by the National Heritage Fund that to date it has not received any representations in respect of items of potential national heritage found outside Mauritius.

I take this opportunity to invite Members of the House, who have any information on any such items, to forward same to the National Heritage Fund, so that relevant action could be initiated accordingly.

Mrs Martin: I thank the hon. Minister for his answer. However, may I inform the hon. Minister that some parts of our national heritage may be found abroad, especially in some of the neighboring islands. Could he inquire into the matter?

Mr Gowressoo: Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir.

(No. B/1134) Mr G. Lesjongard (Second Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Arts and Culture whether he will state the progress achieved in regard to the nomination of Le Morne as a World Heritage Site by the UNESCO.

Mr Gowressoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the House that following the submission of the Nomination Dossier of Le Morne to the UNESCO World Heritage Centre in January 2006, the latter has, on 01 March 2006, informed that the Dossier was incomplete and advised that the revised Dossier should be submitted before 30 September 2006 so as to enable the centre to respond and allow the State Party to make any necessary changes before 01 February 2007.

In this context, as advised by UNESCO, a request was made to the World Heritage Centre in April 2006 for the services of an expert to work on the Nomination Dossier and the Management Plan.

On 19 July 2006, the World Heritage Centre has recommended that a South African Consultancy firm be approached for the assignment.

My Ministry is presently having necessary consultations with that firm so that an expert could be delegated to Mauritius in August 2006 so as to meet the deadline of 30 September 2006.

Mr Speaker, Sir, furthermore, the Ministerial Committee and the Technical Committee are having regular working sessions and with the arrival of the UNESCO expert, the Committee will finalise the Dossier so as to meet the deadline of 30 September 2006.

Mr Jhugroo: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Minister what does he mean when he says that the Dossier was incomplete?

Mr Gowressoo: The Dossier was incomplete, so...

(Interruptions)

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister mentioned that necessary changes should be brought to the Dossier. Can he inform the House what are those changes?

Mr Gowressoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, we are still working on it. We have got two meetings. Last week, we had a Ministerial Committee and this week also we are going to have a Ministerial Committee and a Technical

Committee to process the Dossier.

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Speaker, Sir, I'll get back to the question again. Cabinet submitted the Nomination Dossier in January this year; and now, I understand from the Minister that we have to work the Dossier again because there are revisions that have been put forward and that necessary changes have to be brought in the Dossier. May I know what are those changes?

Mr Gowressoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, there are many changes. So, I will lay it on the Table of the House.

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to tabling of documents, in an answer given by the Minister on 21 March this year, he...

Mr Speaker: Can I ask the hon. Member whether it relates to this question, please?

Mr Lesjongard: Yes.

Mr Speaker: All right.

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Speaker, Sir, we are still awaiting the final report of Dr. Abungo on Le Morne since March this year. We haven't had that document placed in the Library.

Mr Gowressoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, we'll send the document shortly.

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Speaker, Sir, we need to be informed of the progress also. The Minister made some statements and now he is telling the House that changes have to be brought to a Dossier that was approved by Cabinet and submitted to UNESCO. What are those changes?

Mr Speaker: I understand the point of the hon. Member. On this question, hon. Lesjongard, the Minister has said that he is going to table the changes that he has brought. Is the hon. Member satisfied? I hope he is satisfied. Any other supplementary questions? Hon. Ganoo!

EDUCATION SYSTEM – ADEA REPORT (07/11/06)

(No. B/1282) Mr Y. Varma (First Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Education & Human Resources whether he is aware that the report, prepared by the Association of

Education for the Development of Education in Africa, under the aegis of the UNESCO, makes mention of weaknesses identified in our education system and, if so, will he state the remedial measures that will be taken, if any.

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, I thank the hon. Member for giving me the opportunity to reply to this question and also to bring certain precisions and clarifications. Yes, I am aware of the Report prepared by the Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA) which makes mention of weaknesses identified in our education system.

I would like here, in the first instance, to inform the House that, in 2004, Mauritius agreed to participate in a “Peer Review of the Education System”, an exercise which was to be carried out jointly with the Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA), with the aim of improving policies and practices within the education system.

In this connection, a Framework for Cooperation was signed on 27 May 2005 for the review to be undertaken. I must indicate clearly here that the exercise was to assess the education measures introduced by the previous Government for the period 2001 to 2005. The exercise was not commissioned by UNESCO and ADEA is not an agency of UNESCO. It was carried out in a phased manner and the final report was submitted, after validation by all stakeholders, to Government in August 2006. It was then made public on Wednesday 02 August 2006.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the report highlights the weaknesses present in the education system and related to the period 2001-2005. At the primary level, the Report highlighted, *inter-alia*, that –

- the introduction of Citizenship Education had not been successful;
- the implementation of School IT Project (SITP) in 2002 did not take off due to absence of computer labs, although 325 specialist teachers were recruited from mid 2002 to teach ICT;
- the existing curriculum was too heavy and encouraged rote learning, and
- important differences in achievement scores were recorded between Mauritian students. The argument is supported by a very descriptive case of the “U” curve stratification characteristic of systems having unequal distribution of educational opportunities. This is opposite to the distribution of intelligence which is a normal curve and is depicted in the table and graph below (for the period 2001-2004).

I am tabling a copy of the table and the graph.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the graph is a clear statistical indication of the decline in overall performance.

The Report also stressed that there was a 30 % to 40 % failure rate at CPE level, and there was a very high repetition rate and poor transition rate to secondary. Also, prevocational education was viewed as a system operating in parallel to the mainstream one, with one for achievers and the other for failures.

At secondary level, the following weaknesses were, *inter alia*, identified –

- most problems of secondary education stem from primary, namely the effects of rote learning and exam culture, high CPE failures, automatic promotion and an overloaded curriculum,
- high rates of repetition and dropout.

At the tertiary level, the following problems were noted -

- the tertiary sub-sector was not fully integrated in the reform process;
- demand for access to education was still a major challenge despite considerable achievement by public and private institutions, and
- lack of intra and inter policy coherence among the different levels of schooling (pre-primary/primary/secondary/tertiary).

Mr Speaker, Sir, as you are aware, this Government is committed to providing Quality Education of international standard accessible to all and is addressing problems in the education sector in a holistic, comprehensive and integrated manner. Accordingly, the reform programme that my Ministry has embarked upon takes on board the various weaknesses that have been identified in the Report so as to overcome them. Government did not wait for the Report to formulate its new vision for the education sector.

In this connection, allow me, Mr Speaker Sir, to mention just a few of these measures –

(i) since the existing curriculum does not really address the needs of the child or those of the economy, a national debate was held in November/December 2005, and Government has approved in September 2006 the Report towards Quality Curriculum. In its wake, we are coming up with a new curriculum framework. I am glad to announce that the

Curriculum Reform Document will be made public tomorrow;

- (ii) a new orientation has been given to the School IT Project. For the first time, the project is really taking off. We have ensured that every school has at least five computers and a printer, and facilities are being expanded for the proper development of an IT literate school population;
- (iii) we are working towards the reduction of the failure rate at CPE. Hence, we are introducing the system of continuous assessment within the primary schools such that an early identification of learning difficulties is made for them to be addressed timely.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I can speak lengthily on the different measures being taken to bring corrective action to many weaknesses identified in the Peer Review Report. For the sake of brevity, let me synoptically inform the House that, in line with the recommendations made in the Report, a number of measures have already been embarked upon, including, *inter alia*, the following –

- (i) a Strategy Document on Special Education Needs has been finalised as part of Inclusive Education;
- (ii) with reference to Vocational Education, action is already ongoing for the setting up of IFETs;
- (iii) the White Paper on Tertiary Education is nearing completion;
- (iv) the establishment of a third University, the Open University of Mauritius, is under way.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the benchmarks of quality and equity run across all these changes in line with this Government's stated policy to provide a World Class Quality Education accessible to all. A Standing Committee has been set up at the level of my Ministry, chaired by the Chief Technical Officer, to monitor the implementation of many of the recommendations contained in the ADEA Peer Review.

/...

I have also agreed on the principle that ADEA could undertake a follow-up Peer Review exercise for the period 2005-2010.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister whether one of the recommendations made in the report was to do away with the automatic promotion system at the level of primary schooling? Will the hon. Minister confirm whether this figures among the corrective measures he is planning to take?

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have set up a steering committee which is looking at the recommendations. Some of the recommendations are being implemented, and others will have to be studied. Then, we will come with proposals. The issue of automatic promotion will certainly be taken care of.

Mrs Labelle: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister has mentioned many weaknesses underlined in this report. May I ask him whether, besides the weaknesses he mentioned, this report also mentioned the selection at an early age as a weakness and also underlined the problem of mother tongue in our education system?

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, the Peer Review looked at the whole system and identified both weaknesses and strengths. As the question was related to the weaknesses, that's why I highlighted the weaknesses. It does not mean that our education system has weaknesses only. There are strengths, but we have to improve on that.

As regards the selection, I have mentioned that we are introducing a dose of continuous assessment, which will build up slowly towards eventually revisiting the issue of using the CPE as a selection exercise. This is going to take time, Mr Speaker, Sir. As I have said, it is not something that can happen overnight. We have to work on a medium term and then try to bring about changes with regard to selection.

/...

As regards mother tongue, it is provided in the Mauritian legislation, the Education Act, that Creole can be used to facilitate teaching and learning. We are not at the point where we can officialise mother tongue, because the question that will arise is: which mother tongue?

Mr Guinness: Mr Speaker, Sir, is the hon. Minister prepared to lay a copy of the report on the Table of the Assembly? Because he laid only the graph.

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have, on request, given a copy to the hon. Leader of the Opposition, and I have no problem of laying a copy in the Library of the Assembly. I think that it is a very useful document.

LE MORNE – ARCHAEOLOGICAL WORKS (29/05/07)

(No. B/540) Mrs M. Martin (Second Member for Curepipe and Midlands) asked the Minister of Arts and Culture whether he will state if it is proposed to carry out any archaeological works at Le Morne and, if so, will he give details thereof.

Mr Gowressoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, archaeological works started at Le Morne in 2002-2003 when the University of Mauritius investigated the caves and mountain base of Le Morne in the context of the Maroon Slave Archaeological Investigation Project (MSAIP). The project leader was Mr Chowdhury, an Indian national.

In August 2004, for the preparation of the nomination dossier for the inscription of Le Morne on the World Heritage list, the University of Mauritius was entrusted with another project on the preparation of a statement of the archaeological significance of Le Morne. The assignment included fresh archaeological investigations to enable reinterpretation of the existing archaeological knowledge of the area.

Following the recommendations of Dr. F. Odendaal who prepared the nomination dossier of Le Morne, it is proposed to carry out further archaeological works. In this context, my Minister has submitted a request to the Government of Egypt for the services of a qualified and experienced archaeologist as in Mauritius there is only one freshly qualified archaeologist, Mrs Mungur-Mehdi. She is currently employed by Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund.

Mrs Martin: Mr Speaker, Sir, I thank the hon. Minister for his answer. Does he have any idea of the cost that these archaeological works will involve?

Mr Gowressoo: I don't have the information, Mr Speaker, Sir,

UNESCO OFFICE - PARIS – EXPENDITURE (17/07/07)

(No. B/765) Mrs S. Hanoomanjee (Second Member for Savanne and Black River) asked the Minister of Foreign Affairs, International Trade and Co-operation whether in regard to the UNESCO Office of Mauritius in Paris, he will state the total expenditure incurred since its opening to date.

The Minister of Information Technology & Telecommunications (Mr E. Sinatambou): Mr Speaker, Sir, the House may wish to know that this Government took a policy decision in March 2006 to open a permanent delegation of the Republic of Mauritius to UNESCO in Paris. Permanent delegate was appointed in March 2006 and assumed duty in Paris on 14 April 2006. The need to open a permanent delegation for

Mauritius at UNESCO was strongly felt by Government in view of the strategic importance of UNESCO and the benefits which Mauritius tends to derive from its assistance and support.

The decision was taken at an opportune moment, particularly, when Government was to embark on a strong lobbying campaign at the level of UNESCO for the inscription of the Aapravasi Ghat and Le Morne site on the World Heritage List. UNESCO supported the decision of Government and the office of a permanent delegation has been instrumental in the inscription of the Aapravasi Ghat on the World Heritage List in July 2006.

I am informed, Mr Speaker, Sir, that the permanent delegation is vigorously pursuing its lobbying actions in favour of the nomination *dossier* for the Le Morne Cultural Landscape to be examined by the World Heritage Committee scheduled for July 2008.

(Interruptions)

I can assure the House that the permanent delegation has been instrumental.

I also wish to highlight that on 19 June 2007, subsequent to lobbying by the permanent delegation, Mauritius has been elected with 42 votes on a total of 56 to one of the five seats allocated to Africa on the 24-Member Inter-Governmental Committee for the protection and promotion of a diversity of cultural expressions of UNESCO for a full term of four years. The election of Mauritius to the Committee will bring added value, we believe, to the request made by Mauritius for the inscription of Le Morne Cultural Landscape on the World Heritage List

The House may also wish to know that there are 50 States, including countries of the region like the Comoros and Madagascar, having a permanent delegation to UNESCO separate from the Embassies accredited to the Republic of France. Since its opening to date, Mr Speaker, Sir, I am advised that as per records total expenditure amounting to about Rs16,781,590 has been incurred in respect of the office of the permanent delegation of Mauritius to UNESCO in Paris.

I would like to end my reply, Mr Speaker, Sir, by stating that I believe that this is money very well spent.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Minister say whether he is, in fact, stating that officials of the Mauritius Embassy in Paris do not have the competence to deal with it and this is why there was need to

have another office in Paris equivalent to the one that we have now?

Mr Sinatambou: That is certainly not what I have said. The hon. Lady should listen more carefully, perhaps.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: At this particular juncture, when savings need to be done by Government, can I ask the hon. Minister whether the UNESCO office will still be maintained in Paris for quite some time or whether, after the two projects have gone through, this office will be dismantled?

Mr Sinatambou: Mr Speaker, Sir, that is a question of policy which will be taken. I am only the Acting Minister. Probably, it would be better to wait for the substantive Minister to reply.

(Interruptions)

Mr Cuttaree: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am not talking about the policy, I am talking about something more concrete. When we were discussing the Budget recently on the estimates, there was a sum of some Rs9 m., if I am not mistaken, which was voted for rent. Can I ask the hon. Minister whether he is aware that the permanent representative has only one person as staff. They could have been easily accommodated in the Embassy, but the Government decided to have a special office for two people at the cost of Rs9 m.? Does the hon. Minister find that normal?

Mr Sinatambou: Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to stress that we should not be pennywise and pound-foolish.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Mr Sinatambou: If the hon. Members on the other side of the House would care to listen! Mr Speaker, Sir, if we just take the site of Le Morne, if that were to become a World Heritage Site...

(Interruptions)

We are to understand that the price of property on a particular World Heritage Site would not be worth, let us say 25%...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order, please! Order!

(Interruptions)

Has the hon. Minister finished with the reply?

Mr Sinatambou: I did not finish my reply, Sir.

Mr Speaker: Address the Chair, please!

(Interruptions)

Order! Order!

Mr Sinatambou: I will insist, Mr Speaker, Sir, this is money very well spent for this country.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: May I ask the hon. Minister whether he can confirm that the permanent representative is entitled to a residence allowance, an entertainment allowance, allowances for clothing, allowances for her husband and children? Can he confirm this?

Mr Sinatambou: My information, Sir, is that all the payments are as per standard conditions of service in line with the PRB report of 2003 and local legislation in force in France.

Mr Dowarkasing: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask one supplementary question? Can I ask the hon. Minister if he has the figures to state to the House what amount is being given as allocation for warm clothes allowance?

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Mr Sinatambou: I do not know whether those types of allocations used to be given under their Government, but I see no such thing here, Mr Speaker, Sir.

SC/D27/W04/01

LE MORNE WORLD HERITAGE SITE PROJECT

(No. B/954) Mrs F. Labelle (Third Member for Vacoas and Floreal) asked the Minister of Foreign Affairs, International Trade and Co-operation whether he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the permanent delegation of the Republic of Mauritius to the UNESCO, information as to the reasons why the "Le Morne World Heritage Site Project" does not appear as a project under the heading "Projects" with UNESCO, on its official website.

Reply: I am advised that the nomination dossier for the inscription of the Le Morne Cultural Landscape has been submitted to the World Heritage Centre of the UNESCO on 25 January 2007. In March 2007, the latter informed that the Nomination Dossier had been determined to be technically complete. As per the Operational Guidelines of the World Heritage Convention, the Nomination Dossier will be evaluated by the Advisory Bodies to the World Heritage Committee.

The Nomination Dossier of Le Morne will then be examined at the 32nd session of the World Heritage Committee to be held in July 2008 in Canada.

The UNESCO World Heritage website provides a "Tentative List" under the heading "Shortcuts" which informs that 158 States out of the 184 which are parties to the World Heritage Convention have submitted a Tentative List. This List is an inventory of those properties which each State intends to consider for nomination during the following years. Mauritius forms part of the List and Le Morne is mentioned as one of the properties listed for Mauritius.

As regards, the website for the permanent delegation, consideration is being given to its redesign and updating in a professional manner. A proposal received from a website consultant in that connection is under examination. All the relevant information concerning the Le Morne World Heritage project will be posted on the website.

I wish to assure the House that we are pursuing our lobbying campaign for the inscription of the Le Morne site on the World Heritage List at the level of my Ministry, the Ministry of Arts and Culture, the permanent delegation of Mauritius to UNESCO as well as through our other Missions abroad and at international conferences.

7/8/07
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**FOREIGN TERTIARY INSTITUTION - MAURITIAN NATIONAL -
PROFESSIONAL CERTIFICATE**

(No. B/970) Mrs L.D. Dookun-Luchoomun (Third Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to whether a case has recently been reported of a Mauritian national who has been awarded a professional certificate by a foreign tertiary institution for a course which he never attended, as per the requirements and if so, if an inquiry has been carried out thereinto and the outcome thereof.

(Withdrawn)

LE MORNE – WORLD HERITAGE SITES - INSCRIPTION

29/04/08

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(No. B/348) Mr S. Soodhun (Fifth Member for La Caverne and Phoenix) asked the Minister of Arts and Culture whether, in regard to the application made to the UNESCO in relation to the inscription of Le Morne on the list of World Heritage sites, he will state where matters stand.

Mr Gowressoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, in January 2006, Le Morne was designated as "National Heritage".

In March 2006, UNESCO informed that the Dossier which had been prepared in 2005 was incomplete.

Government then decided to set up a Ministerial Committee to rework the Dossier and to monitor the inscription process.

A new Nomination Dossier, together with a Draft Management Plan were forwarded to UNESCO in January 2007.

A new Dossier was found to be complete and was retained for evaluation.

The evaluating body of the World Heritage Committee, International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) has also completed its evaluation of the site.

The Final Management Plan of Le Morne was approved by Government on 25 April 2008 and will be sent to UNESCO in the coming days.

The next and last step will be the examination of the Dossier by the World Heritage Committee in July 2008.

The Nomination Dossier of Le Morne is the only one retained from the African continent for consideration by the World Heritage Committee this year. This gives an indication of the quality of the Le Morne Dossier prepared by Mauritius. I am confident that Le Morne will be inscribed on the World Heritage List.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Minister give the date on which the Dossier was first submitted to UNESCO?

Mr Gowressoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, the Dossier was submitted in January 2007.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister then how can he mention that the Dossier was incomplete in 2005? The question does not arise.

Mr Gowressoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, it is the initial Dossier which was sent.

Mr Jhugroo: Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Minister inform the House how much money was paid as overtime to prepare this Dossier of Le Morne?

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! Order! Can the hon. Minister answer?

Mr Gowressoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I cannot assess.

MEDWAY COLLEGE - IRELAND - MAURITIAN STUDENTS (01/07/08)

(No. B/749) Mrs A. Navarre-Marie (First Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether he is aware that Mauritian nationals studying in Ireland are facing difficulties, and if so, will he state if measures have or will be taken to come to their assistance.

Reply: I am advised that there has been no official representation from students in Ireland about any difficulty they are confronted with.

However, on the basis of reports appearing in the press to the effect that there are some Mauritian students who are facing difficulties in Ireland following the deregistration of Medway College in February 2008, our High Commissioner in London was requested to look into the matter and to report.

He visited Ireland in that regard and met with some senior officials of the Irish Department of Education and Science and raised the issue of Mauritian students in Ireland in general, and also the case of Medway College in particular.

The Department of Education and Science in Ireland which registers complaints from international students, informed the High Commissioner that no complaint or grievance has been registered from any Mauritian student following the deregistration of the Medway College.

Our High Commissioner also met with some Mauritian students in Dublin. The students whom he met did not voice any grievance and, indeed, seemed comfortable in Dublin.

Our High Commission in London is monitoring the situation and is ready to extend consular assistance to the Mauritian student community.

However, I am advised that, in the wake of the recent press articles reporting on the difficulties faced by Mauritian students in Ireland after the Medway College was deregistered by the Irish authorities, the Ministry of Education and Human Resources has requested the police to carry out an inquiry to determine whether the students have proceeded to Medway College on their own or through unlicensed recruiting agents.