

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

PETRIN, GRAND BASSIN – POLICE OPERATION

The Leader of the Opposition (Mr N. Bodha) (*By Private Notice*) asked the Acting Prime Minister whether, in regard to the Police operation carried out in the vicinity of Pétrin, Grand Bassin on or about Friday 07 July 2006, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, the following information –

- (a) the names of the persons arrested and the objects seized;
- (b) if these persons are allegedly involved in recent hold-ups and other serious offences;
- (c) the names of other persons, if any, arrested in relation thereto, and
- (d) if an inquiry is being carried out and, if so, where matters stand.

The Ag. Prime Minister (Dr. R. Beebeejaun): Mr Speaker, Sir, in my reply to the Private Notice Question, I am also addressing Parliamentary Questions B/1016 and B/1017 as they relate to the same subject.

I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that, on 07 July 2006, acting upon information received, a joint stop and search operation was mounted by ADSU officers and ERS personnel in many strategic places, including Pétrin, Grand Bassin.

At 2015 hours, the officers at Pétrin stopped a private car. Whilst searching the vehicle, the following items were found and secured -

- (a) a canister, commonly known as Federal Streamer, capable of discharging noxious substance;
- (b) two walkie-talkies;
- (c) a pair of handcuffs;
- (d) a pair of surgical gloves, and
- (e) a pair of fake registration number plates for a private car.

No firearm or ammunition was found.

The three occupants of the car, namely -

- (a) Mr Hussein Joomun Boolaky, aged 31, panel beater of 24, Oscar Grand Court, Cité Martial, Port Louis;
- (b) Mr Ramatoollah Hossen, aged 26, painter of Limit 1, Plaisance, Rose Hill, and
- (c) Mr Musaffar Ali Muhammad Raez Salauroo, aged 21, Computer Analyst of Avenue Créatin, Camp Levieux,

were arrested and detained. Further investigations have led to the arrest of five other persons, namely Mr Mohammad Swaley Tarsoo of Mont Blanc, Chemin Grenier, Mr Bye Issa Ajaree of Abée Laval Street, Eau Coulée, Mr Raffick Johur of Edward VII Street, Rose-Hill, Mr Jarwez Powtoo of Plaisance, Rose-Hill and Mr Naushad Ramchurn of La Paix Street, Port Louis, as they are suspected to be involved in a case of larceny at Corderie Street, Port Louis to the prejudice of a jeweller in August 2005.

Subsequently on 17 July another suspect, namely Mr Naushad Ramchurn, was arrested on a provisional charge of possession of stolen property.

A provisional charge has been lodged against five of them for “larceny with aggravating circumstances”, two for possession of stolen property and one for conspiracy.

The eight suspects have been remanded to Police cell. Police inquiry is underway.

As regards part (b) of the question, in the light of the inquiry, it has been established that five among the eight suspects were involved in a case of hold-up at Bijoulux at 39, Corderie Street, Port Louis on 22 August 2005. The inquiring officers have reasons to believe that the same suspects may be involved in other cases of larceny with violence and the inquiry is still under way to elucidate those cases.

According to the police, the inquiry has also revealed that the three suspects were conspiring to commit other similar cases of larceny and had already in that connection identified potential victims.

As far as part (c) of the question is concerned, the suspects have incriminated other persons who will be questioned by Police shortly.

As regards part (d) of the question, as indicated earlier, the inquiry is in progress and, at this stage, eight suspects have been provisionally charged.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the House that, as part of the strategy of the Police to ensure the safety and security of the public, the Police maintains a regular presence in sensitive areas. It is in this context that the arrest was effected by ADSU officers as special patrol in the Plaine Champagne area. For enhanced security in the area, Police is maintaining regular patrols and vehicle checkpoint both by day and by night. Moreover, Police helicopters fly over the area daily to monitor and detect any suspicious activities. Other specialised units, such as ADSU and CID, carry out frequent raid in search of fugitives and suspects involved in criminal cases under investigation.

Further I would like to remind the House that –

- (a) Police inquiry is still on;
- (b) provisional charges have already been lodged before District Courts, and
- (c) information gathered by the Police is very sensitive and any mismanagement thereof might jeopardise the inquiry, thus putting in danger the security of people.

Mr Bodha: Mr Speaker, Sir, I thank the Ag. Prime Minister for all the details he has given in the reply. When we see the pattern of the offences and the persons involved, would not that suggest that there is a revival of the *Escadron de la Mort*, which created havoc in our country in the past?

Mr Speaker: I am sorry, this is asking for an expression of opinion from the Ag. Prime Minister.

Mr Bodha: Mr Speaker, Sir, can the Ag. Prime Minister confirm that the name of Cehl Meeah has been mentioned in relation to hiring of a car and possession of stolen property in this matter?

The Ag. Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, as I said, the inquiry is still ongoing. It is a fact that it has been mentioned in the newspapers, but I would rather wish that we wait for the inquiry to proceed further. I think it would be unwise to talk about all this.

Mr Bodha: Mr Speaker, Sir, can the Ag. Prime Minister inform the House whether there has been any application from any close relative of Cehl Meeah for a new passport?

Mr Speaker: I am sorry. In what way does this question relate to the PNQ?

(Interruptions)

Mr Bodha: The Police is expecting Mr Cehl Meeah to come to Mauritius to start its inquiry and there are fears that he will not return to Mauritius and that members of his family may leave the country and join him. So, my question is: if Mr Cehl Meeah ...

Mr Speaker: Can I just inform the hon. Leader of the Opposition that the members of the family are private citizens and they are not linked with Mr Cehl Meeah or the PNQ.

Mr Bodha: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I then ask the Ag. Prime Minister what the Police intends to do if Mr Cehl Meeah does not come back to Mauritius?

Mr Speaker: What action the Police is taking to get Mr Cehl Meeah back to Mauritius?

The Ag. Prime Minister: At this stage, without prejudicing any inquiry, I think we have to wait what comes. It would be unwise to speculate; there are lots of things that can be done. The inquiry is still ongoing, so there are other facts that will emerge. For the time being, I would appeal to the hon. Leader of the Opposition, let us keep to the facts and not indulge in all sorts of fantasy. I am not saying that the Leader of the Opposition is indulging. There has been a lot of misreporting and a lot of exaggeration in what has been going on. I don't intend to go on those lines.

Mr Bodha: May I ask the hon. Ag. Prime Minister whether one of those who were arrested at Pétrin, Mr Joomun Boolaky, was not charged with offences committed by the former *escadron de la mort*?

The Ag. Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I don't have this specific information. But the Police is following very closely any link between the present and the past; and if we look at the *casier judiciaire* of all the eight persons, we find that a lot of them have had police problems before; they have been charged, there have been various charges against them. But today it has not been established that there has been any organisation. As to the link with the past as asked by the Leader of the Opposition, there is no evidence of that.

Mr Bodha: Mr Speaker, Sir, let us come now to one of the persons mentioned. There was an inquiry, but there was one of the persons, Adam Edoo, who presented a medical certificate in Court on behalf of Mr Nawshad Ramchurn. The fact that the authenticity of this medical certificate is in issue, may I ask the Ag. Prime Minister whether the Police intends to inquire with the medical doctor, who, in fact, came to request for a medical certificate?

The Ag. Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have asked for a full Police inquiry into the whole matter and this will be taken on board as well - all the details of what happened, the accusations made and the allegations made. But, I would point out to the hon. Leader of the Opposition that as of this morning there are no charges that have been retained against this person.

Mr Bodha: May I point out, Mr Speaker, Sir, to the Ag. Prime Minister that Mr Adam Edoo said in his statement that he had been given instructions to present the medical certificate by one Mr Acktar Ramchurn, that is, his statement? And, yesterday, in a statement, Mr Nawshad Ramchurn has said that, in fact, he had given instructions to Mr Edoo to present the medical certificate. There is a contradiction and I think therein lies the truth. May I ask the Ag. Prime Minister whether he can confirm who, in fact, as I said, went to see the doctor in la Rue Desforges to have the medical certificate?

The Ag. Prime Minister: The Police will establish this and I remind the hon. Leader of the Opposition that this gentleman did turn up yesterday and was questioned by the CID.

Mr Bodha: The Ag. Prime Minister mentioned that there were some targets, some families who have been earmarked by the three persons who were arrested for future offences. May I ask whether special security has been granted to those families that had been earmarked by the three persons who had been arrested?

The Ag. Prime Minister: The answer is yes. Firstly, immediately after that information was given, the families mentioned were warned to be careful; and secondly, there has been surveillance around the region.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Speaker, Sir, in view of what has just happened, people are very scared to use the road leading from Pétrin to other areas of the south. May I ask the Ag. Prime Minister whether more reinforcement of Police security on these roads are envisaged as from now?

The Ag. Prime Minister: In my reply, I did point out that it's not only at Pétrin that there has been surveillance but in other places as well and it has been stepped up.

Mr Bérenger: Since the hon. Ag. Prime Minister is saying us that the Police inquiry is still on, can I ask the Ag. Prime Minister which departments of the Police are carrying out the inquiry?

The Ag. Prime Minister: The CID of Curepipe and the Major Crime Investigation Team (MCIT).

Mr Bérenger: Would the hon. Ag. Prime Minister agree with me that it will not be helpful at all to have the MCIT involved in that case the way it is shaping up.....

(Interruptions)

The Ag. Prime Minister: No, I will agree with the hon. Member that there should not be Police brutality, but the inquiry must go on; and there is a good reason why the inquiry is under the charge of Curepipe because Pétrin falls in the area of Curepipe. So, where else will it be?

Mr Bérenger: Can I put the following question? Now, it's clear that one adviser to a Minister is involved in one way or the other. He was called by the Police. Will the Ag. Prime Minister agree with me that it's not in order that he should have been released without even bail being claimed?

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: That is for the Police to decide whether there is a *prima facie* case.

(Interruptions)

Mr Jhugroo: M. le président, je voudrais demander au Premier ministre par interim si la Police a l'intention d'avoir une station de Police dans la région de Pétrin et de Plaine Champagne.

(Interruptions)

The Ag. Prime Minister: The hon. Member has raised the matter, I will look into it.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! Order! It is a very serious question that the hon. Member has asked.

The Ag. Prime Minister: I would like to point out why Pétrin amongst other places. And I would say that when the hon. Leader of the Opposition was in Government, he himself asked the Police to have a surveillance in Pétrin - this may be one of the reasons - to have a Police post. I'll ask the Commissioner of Police to look into it.

(Interruptions)

Mr Gunness: Can we know from the Ag. Prime Minister whether the adviser of the Minister is still in post or will be asked to step down pending the completion of inquiry?

The Ag. Prime Minister: He is not in post at the moment.

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the Ag. Prime Minister the terms and conditions of employment of the adviser?

The Ag. Prime Minister: I am not aware that he has any special conditions.

(Interruptions)

Mr Dowarkasing: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Ag. Prime Minister whether he has information as to whether the car which has been involved in Pétrin incident, was hired by Mr Cehl Meeah himself?

The Ag. Prime Minister: Well, this is what the inquiry is going to establish. There have been allegations, but let us stay at the level of the allegations to be properly inquired into.

Mr Bodha: May I come back to the issue of the medical certificate? May I ask the Ag. Prime Minister to ensure that the Police does an inquiry to see who, in fact, came to see the doctor for a medical certificate?

The Ag. Prime Minister: I already replied to that. The answer is, yes, I will. I'll make sure who went and what happened.

Mr Lauthan: Dans sa réponse, le Premier ministre par intérim nous a dit que déjà l'enquête a révélé qu'il y a une liste de personnes qui auraient pu être des victimes potentielles de ce groupe. Est-ce que je peux savoir quelles sont les mesures qui ont été prises par la police pour assurer ...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! Order! Let us hear the question.

Mr Lauthan: ... pour assurer une protection même discrète à l'égard de ces personnes?

The Ag. Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, it's only fair to point out that this was at a point in time and the families were warned and as I have said the level of alertness has been stepped up.

Mr Bodha: Mr Speaker, Sir, in view of the fact that it is an issue of national importance and national security for the whole population, may I appeal to the Ag. Prime Minister to see personally - and ask the Prime Minister to look personally - into this matter so that we are aware of everything that surrounds the matter? We do not want to be prey to what happened in the past with the *escadron de la mort*.

The Ag. Prime Minister: I agree with the hon. Leader of the Opposition. May I point out that it is only fair to give the Police all the necessary help in terms of how we are addressing the issue. This is very important. I would point out that on 07 July, three individuals were arrested and within ten days there have been several press articles, but I can say that the Police is being given all latitude. They are independent and they have done a good work. I take this opportunity to congratulate the Commissioner of Police and the team which are working on it.

Mr Bodha: I understand the priorities given by the Ag. Prime Minister, but the issue is that between August 2005 and now, these people have been operating. That's why I said it is an issue of national importance and national security.

(Interruptions)

For one year.

The Ag. Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, let us stick to the facts. I would go along with the Leader of the Opposition in part, that they may have been operating, but we have no evidence so far of where and in what they have been involved. We know they've been involved in August 2005. There have been speculations about the other accusations, what happened at the end of June 2006, but yet we have to establish a relationship.

Mr Speaker: Yes, the inquiry is on.

Mr Ganoo: Sir, perhaps the Ag. Prime Minister does not know that from Pétrin to the area of Mont Blanc and Chamouny, the road is not only narrow, but it is also badly lit. There is street lighting only during festive

season like Maha Shivaratree or end-of-year. Can the hon. Prime Minister see to it for the comfort of the road users from Chamouny, Mont Blanc to Pétrin that street lighting is on, on a more regular basis?

The Ag. Prime Minister: I'll look into that.

Mr Jhugroo: Can the Ag. Prime Minister inform us *en quelle année l'escadron de la mort a pris naissance et qui était le Premier ministre...*

Mr Speaker: This is out of order!

Mrs Martin: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Ag. Prime Minister said that some names were mentioned during the inquiry and we do fully understand that we should not speculate further. But I would like to know whether an inquiry has been made as to when is the return of Cehl Meeah due to Mauritius.

The Ag. Prime Minister: Sir, we have no information on the matter.

Mr Speaker: Time is over. Questions addressed to the hon. Prime Minister.