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STATEMENT BY CHIEF COMMISSIONER

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ANNOUNCEMENTS**(i) SPEVILLE, MR CHARLES ROBERT - RESIGNATION FROM
RODRIGUES REGIONAL ASSEMBLY****(ii) PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE - CHAIRPERSON -
APPOINTMENT**

Mr Chairperson: Members of the Regional Assembly, I have two short announcements to make. First, I wish to inform the House that the Second Member of Local Region No. 6, Grande Montagne, Mr Charles Robert Speville has, on 31 October 2002, in writing, tendered his resignation as Member of the Regional Assembly. The President of the Republic of Mauritius has been informed of such resignation.

Secondly, following the motion for the setting up of the Public Accounts Committee and in accordance with Standing Order 61 (1) which requires me to appoint a chairperson to that committee, I wish to inform the House that the First Member of Local Region No. 2, Mr Joseph A. Emilien has been appointed to chair that committee.

Thank you.

PAPERS LAID

The following Papers were laid on the Table of the Assembly –

Office of Mr Chairperson

The Declaration of Assets Act 1991

- (i) The Chief Commissioner, Mr Jean Daniel SPEVILLE
- (ii) The Deputy Chief Commissioner, Mrs Marie Arlette PERRINE BEGUE
- (iii) Mr Commissioner André Lélío ROUSSETY
- (iv) Mr Commissioner Soopramanien SOOPRAYEN
- (v) Mr Commissioner Nicolson LISETTE
- (vi) The Minority Leader, Mr Johnson ROUSSETY
- (vii) Mr Franceau Aubret GRANDCOURT, Member
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- (xii) Mr Désiré Laval GUILLAUME, Member
- (xiii) Ms Jacqueline PROSPER, Member

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

STATE LAND - TOURISM PURPOSES - ALLOCATION

(No. B/1) **Mr J. Roussety (Minority Leader)** asked the Chief Commissioner whether, as regards the allocation of State land on lease for the construction of hotels, guest houses, "*gites*", restaurants and other tourist related businesses by private promoters in Rodrigues, he will -

- (a) state the criteria used for allocation of same;
- (b) table the list of holders of such leases to date comprising the names of the beneficiaries, the original dates of application, the dates of approval, the extent of the land leased, the location, the status of the project and the annual rent payable in each case, and
- (c) state whether there is any delay or problem with the implementation or payment of any fee by any of the applicants or holders of these leases.

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, the application for State land for tourism purposes were appraised not in Rodrigues, but in Mauritius by the Board of Investment and the Ministry of Tourism according to the following criteria -

- (a) size of investment;
- (b) number of rooms;
- (c) size of project;
- (d) extent of land required;
- (e) percentage of built-up area;
- (f) design and architecture;
- (g) credential of promoters;
- (h) management;
- (i) ratio of hotel rooms to guest houses;
- (j) status of proposed site;
- (k) water availability, and
- (l) road access.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, as regards part (b) of the question, the information is being compiled and will be circulated as soon as it is ready.

Concerning part (c) of the question, the following lessees have not paid rent for the period ending 30 June 2003 –

- (a) Pointe Coton Resort Hotel Cie. Ltd.
- (b) D. Bégué & Cie Ste de Filaos
- (c) Dr William Auguste (Le Récif)
- (d) Mr Paul Manrique (Jeantaque)
- (e) Mrs Hung Sik Yan Marie Aline (Pension de Famille, Terre Rouge)
- (f) Mr Hung Sik Yan Tat Yuen (Auberge Anse aux Anglais)

Mr Chairperson, Sir, I have instructed the Principal Surveyor to request the above-mentioned lessees to settle their rents.

Mr Roussety: Mr Chairperson, given the fact that now we have a full-fledged Assembly with full political decentralisation, can the Chief Commissioner inform the House how in the future he intends to process with the applications for State land leases for tourism purposes more rapidly in view of accelerating the tourism development in Mauritius?

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, during the last two years there has been a total disorder in the manner of granting leases either residential, commercial or for other purposes. During this week a State Land Committee will be set up and Members of the Assembly will know the procedures to be followed for the granting of State lands to Rodriguans.

Mr Roussety: The Chief Commissioner has said that there is total disorder. Can we have more information about what he means by "total disorder"? Being given the fact that the allocation of State land is a very sensitive issue, can we therefore have a total disorder in the allocation? Should we not go for a commission of inquiry to study in depth this matter, for a total disorder in the allocation of State land is something very serious?

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, the Minority Leader must be aware of what is happening around us. We are not here to put on our shoulder all mistakes done by a Ministry. In the forthcoming months he will see that there were really disorders in this island. Concerning the other question, I need notice.

POVERTY ALLEVIATION STRATEGIES & PROJECTS

(No. B/2) **Mr J. Roussety (Minority Leader)** asked the Deputy Chief Commissioner whether as regards poverty alleviation strategies and projects in Rodrigues, she will -

- (a) make a statement about the situation concerning the poverty problem in the island,
- (b) give an explanation about the tools and strategies that are being used to combat same, stating the number of projects or bodies working thereon, their respective areas of intervention, budgets and sources of funding,
- (c) table the latest available progress reports on each of these poverty alleviation projects for the information of the House.

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: The Minority Party as well as the governing majority has had ample opportunity to look and stare at poverty in the face and in the eye during the recent electoral campaign.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, according to the Action Plan for Poverty Alleviation prepared by the Ministry of Finance, 14.5% of the population of the Republic live below the poverty line, that is, with a monthly income less than Rs 3000.

The island of Rodrigues has long been acknowledged as one of the areas which has the highest incidence of poverty in the Republic of Mauritius. The Relative Development Index (RDI) developed in 1996 by the Central Statistical office, based on 12 indicators, *inter alia*, literacy rates, income level and life expectancy along with other social variables showed that Rodrigues was the least developed area in the Republic.

The latest census carried out in year 2000 revealed an average monthly household income of Rs 6,622 for the island of Rodrigues. However, the income is not evenly distributed and therefore not a proper indicator of standard of living. The Census reports mentioned that there were 1,472 households with a monthly income of less than Rs 2,000 and 3,686 households or 42% of the households with a monthly income of less than Rs 4,999. These data revealed that the income poverty situation is quite critical for the lowest 20% of the population.

In Rodrigues, poverty exists in many forms and in varying degrees of acuteness. It is related to deprivation or the inability of an individual, household or segment of the population to satisfy basic needs. Poverty is also reflected in the lack of opportunities for the poor to have access to productive employment or to health, education and other social services.

Although in Rodrigues, access to health, education and social services is free, there is a need to improve the reach of the poor to such services and to analyse the factors preventing them from benefiting from the available resources.

Being multi-faceted, poverty encompasses the dependent populations (children, the elderly, disabled persons); low income female-headed households; persons with special physical and/or mental disabilities, youth especially unwed and teenaged mothers, young unemployed men and neglected children and persons in poor communities/localities.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, unemployment remains a major problem of the island. According to the 2000 census the labour force stood at 14 and a half thousand of which 11,000 were employed and 3,500 unemployed. It appears that not all the unemployed are registered with the employment office. The latest December 2001 figures available from the Statistical Review of Employment put the figure at 2,778. The number of registered unemployed has risen by one hundred and seventy-two percent from 1,000 in 1997 to almost 3,000 in 2001. Most of the unemployed have not followed any training programmes.

Due to lack of employment opportunities in the island a high number of Rodriguans emigrate each year to work in the main island of Mauritius. During the decade 1991 to 2001 a total of 4,353 persons left Rodrigues. The average annual net migration stood at minus 395.

As of now, there is little or no reliable data on poverty. There is, therefore, a need to undertake a survey to quantify the extent and degree of poverty of the various categories of poor and to identify the root causes of poverty. For a meaningful formulation of policy, poverty needs to be defined with a set of figures assorted with some qualitative assessments.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, with regard to part (b) of the question, the policy of combating poverty has always been a serious concern in Mauritius. The Development Plan 1971-75 makes mention of the creation of the National Development Unit with the objective of reducing regional disparities among rural and urban areas. Social aid programmes (including, *inter alia*, old age

pension, widows' pension, invalids pension, hardship allowance were set up well before the independence with a view to assisting the needy and the poor. Unfortunately, this welfare system meant to shield the poor from dire poverty is not always readily accessible to the poorest of the poor.

Recently, there has been a growing concern about poverty. Various poverty alleviation programmes have been put in place to provide immediate support to the poorest sections of the populations, namely –

- (a) The Trust Fund for the Social Integration of Vulnerable Groups.
- (b) A Poverty Alleviation Programme “*A Nou diboute Ensam*”.
- (c) IFAD Community Development Programme Rodrigues.
- (d) Fight Against Exclusion in Rodrigues. “*Lév Déboute*”, and
- (e) NHDC Housing Programme for the low income group.

The Trust Fund for the Social Integration of Vulnerable Groups was set up in November 1999 with the objective of giving opportunities to the less privileged groups in society, who have not benefited from the mainstream of economic and social development and who are felt excluded. The staff employed work full-time on field and are easily accessible to the grassroots to ensure a speedy project implementation which caters for both Rodrigues and Mauritius. The Trust Fund is an entirely autonomous body falling directly under the Ministry of Finance.

The micro-projects programme for poverty alleviation “*A Nou diboute Ensam*” funded by the European Union for both Mauritius and Rodrigues is actually being implemented by the Ministry of Economic Development, Financial Services and Corporate Affairs. This programme has been initiated on a decentralised participatory approach, which is conditional to community initiatives, involvement, self-reliance and sustainability. The poor at the grassroots level are motivated to organise themselves to generate group dynamics and to initiate and implement projects, which are beneficial to the community.

The IFAD Community Development Programme is being implemented with a funding of Rs41.6 m. for a period of 6 years. The funds support activities under three categories namely, social infrastructure, productive investment and environmental protections. The national IFAD programme also includes a Fisheries Development component which is being implemented by the Ministry of Fisheries involving development of outer lagoon fishing around (Fish Aggregating Devices) as well as a micro-credit component which is being implemented by the Ministry of Women's Right, Child Development and Family Welfare. This programme is financed by the Government with a loan from IFAD.

The "*Programme Lévé Déboute*" has been designed specifically for Rodrigues with the financial assistance of the UNDP. The programme aims at empowering the poorest communities in Rodrigues to enable them to take care of their own development needs by facilitating access to technical and financial tools. This programme is being implemented with the full collaboration of local NGOs. The first phase of the programme (1999-2001) was financed by the UNDP for a total amount of US\$ 353,000. Some US\$ 312,256 approved for the second phase are being financed by the Government of Mauritius under the IFAD programme, UNDP and Afro-Asia Development Organisation.

The NHDC is operating two schemes for the low-income group regarding housing.

- (i) The grant for casting of slab under which any household with a monthly income less than Rs 7,500 is eligible for a grant of Rs 40,000 for a house up to 100 metre square.
- (ii) Up to Rs 40,000 is provided for the purchase of materials as assistance for construction of a house of up to 100 metre square. The monthly household income of the beneficiary should not exceed Rs 4,000

The strategies of all the programmes consist of –

- (a) participatory approach to project identification;
- (b) beneficiary contributions in terms of part financing (labour);
- (c) capacity building;
- (d) encouraging self-reliance, and

- (e) Micro-credit scheme to develop income generating activities.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, I am pleased to bring to your attention that I have with me copies of the latest available reports on these programmes and I am tabling them for reference.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, as you can see, alleviation of poverty is a major challenge in Rodrigues. It is, therefore, our prior intention to seek and apply remedies to the situation. First, I would like to say that poverty alleviation requires a multidimensional approach involving the entire Executive Council, with its many facets of responsibilities.

To show its commitment, Mr Chairperson, Sir, the Executive Council, in its few days of existence, has already decided to set up two committees to address the problem.

Firstly, a Co-ordination Committee, representing all the funds intervening in Rodrigues, to ensure that they are performing in a holistic approach.

Secondly, a Commissioners Committee, to review social security and poverty problems in the island.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, as I stated earlier, alleviation of poverty is multidimensional. Therefore, the agricultural reform, proposed as a first measure in our programme, will certainly have a major impact to combat poverty in our island. The tools we are putting into the hands of the population is land for production, and to encourage people to be more productive, we are also proposing that the employment benefit be converted into *une allocation à la production*.

Emphasis will also be laid on education and vocational and professional training.

This is the way, Mr Chairperson, Sir, which we propose to eradicate poverty in our well-beloved island. I avail myself of this opportunity to appeal to all the stakeholders and the community at large, to come forward to share with us the duty in all its implications, to change the face of society in our island.

Mr Roussety: Mr Chairperson, the Deputy Chief Commissioner has stated that poverty leads to immigration to Mauritius, and to social problems.

We are aware that many people have moved to this island after decades of efforts by Government. We are also aware that some people are still living in extreme conditions. Can the Deputy Chief Commissioner, together with the Executive Council, come forward with measures, in the short-term, like small allocations to families who are in serious difficulty? For example, they do not have Rs10 to give to their child to go to school. So, can the Executive Council come forward with a special budget, to help these persons?

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I have taken note of the proposition of the Minority Leader, but I would like to inform him that in our programme, we have a specific policy. Nous sommes conscients que beaucoup de gens ne tombent pas sous les différents programmes qui sont mis en place actuellement et même sous le programme d'assistance de la sécurité sociale. C'est la raison pour laquelle on a mis en place le Commissioners Committee, pour revoir cette situation. Je voudrais aussi dire que nous avons comme domaine de responsabilité l'administration de la sécurité sociale. Nous comptons venir de l'avant avec des propositions et les soumettre au ministère de la sécurité sociale, pour voir comment trouver des mesures, afin de permettre à ceux qui ne tombent pas sous ces programmes à avoir, eux aussi, un moyen d'assistance, puisque nous sommes conscients que la réalité locale de pauvreté d'ici n'est pas la même que celle de Maurice.

Mr Roussety: Est-ce que le *Deputy Chief Commissioner* pourrait considérer l'option dans la région numéro 6, c'est à dire la région Est? Nous savons qu'il y aura bientôt une campagne électorale. Je sais que le Trust Fund avait suspendu, momentanément, ses opérations à Rodrigues – allocation de maisons etc. Est-ce que cette mesure pourrait être prise, afin que la campagne se déroule sans faveur politique, chose que nous avons vue dans le passé, et ce dans l'intérêt de la démocratie?

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: M. le président, je voudrais rassurer le *Minority Leader* et lui dire que nous sommes des gens responsables. En tant que tels, nous avons eu un contrat avec la population pour gouverner. Comme il vient de le dire, il y a beaucoup de gens qui souffrent et qui ont trop attendu, M. le président. Donc, dans ce sens, je ne pense pas qu'il serait raisonnable de suspendre le programme du *Trust Fund*, car si on le suspend pour une région, on devra le faire pour toutes les régions. Ceci étant dit, votre proposition demande, naturellement, à être examinée par le conseil exécutif.

Mr Roussety: M. le président, je crois qu'on a mal compris ma question.

Mr Chairperson: Put your question, please.

Mr Roussety: Ma question se référait au programme de logement pour la région Est.

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Je suis désolée, M. le président, mais je crois que le *Minority Leader* n'a pas, non plus, saisi ma réponse. J'aimerais aussi attirer son attention sur le fait que le *Trust Fund for social integration of vulnerable groups*, comme stipulé dans ma première réponse, est une agence totalement autonome, qui tombe directement sous le ministère des finances. La décision d'interrompre ce programme avait été prise au niveau du ministère des finances.

FISHERMEN – SECURITY AT SEA

(No. B/3) Mr G. Jabeemissar (Second Local Region Member for La Ferme) asked the Chief Commissioner whether, after the disappearance of two fishermen recently at “La Passe Jimmy”, reputed to be a dangerous spot, he will say what measures he intends to take to ensure the security of our fishermen at that spot and other dangerous spots at sea.

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, with your permission, I would like, in a first instance, in the name of this House and in my personal name, to convey to the wives, children and relatives of the two fishermen who disappeared at sea, our deepest and hearty sympathy.

On 22 October 2002, Mrs Yolanda Jolicoeur of Grand La Fouche Mangles reported that her father, Mr Joseph Chantal Perrine, 54 years old, watchman, went for a fishing trip in a boat, registered No. 1285, in company of his friend, Harold Félicité, 61 years old, of the same locality and had not yet returned home. At about 10.00 a.m, the said boat has been recovered at “La Passe Jimmy”, which is between Ilot Coco and Ilot Sables. At about 14.35 hrs, the body of Harold Félicité was recovered. Searches are still being carried out, and the body of Chantal Perrine has not yet been recovered.

The Police is of the view that the fatal incident was the result of much negligence on the part of the fishermen.

Following the incident, it has, therefore, been decided that –

- (i) aggressive information campaigns on security at sea be held jointly by Police with local fishermen organisation in all fishermen regions, to sensitise our fishermen; and
- (ii) sea patrols security at “La Passe Jimmy” and other dangerous spots be effected by National Coast Guards and Fisheries personnel.

Furthermore, I am informed that eight places have already been identified for the installation of navigational aids. The places are –

- (i) Passe St. François
- (ii) Passe l’Encre
- (iii) Passe Grenade
- (iv) Passe Ile Plate
- (v) Passe Butte
- (vi) Passe Jimmy
- (vii) Passe Quatre Vingt Brisants
- (viii) Passe Baladirou

As far as rescue operation is concerned, the local Coast Guard personnel is able to cope with such situation in a timely manner, so long these accidents occur within a limited distance from the reefs.

Assistance has been sought from the Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport & Shipping, to assist in the preparation of specification and tender documents.

The tender documents are being finalised by the same Ministry and will be launched. I have given instruction to initiate immediate procurement procedures upon receipt of the tender documents. However, we are now looking seriously into the matter, and we are contemplating to introduce regulations for more safety measures that should be attached to a boat itself, not the fishermen.

We are also making provision for a life-safety boat at Plaine Corail.

As an additional information, I am informed that the two persons were not registered as professional fishermen and, as such, were not provided with life jackets.

Mr Jabeemissar: Further to the first part of PQ No. B/3, will the Chief Commissioner say whether measures have been taken or he proposes to take any measures in order to help the bereaved families concerned?

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I have met the parents, they will be meeting us again in the weeks to come and we will look into the matter.

Mr Emilien: I would like to quote from the Chief Commissioner's answer concerning the eight places earmarked for the installation of navigational aids. Is the Chief Commissioner aware that tenders were released on 03 July 2002 for supply installation and commissioning of eight navigational aids and same was cancelled. Can he state the reasons?

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, we were not here, so I need notice of the question.

Mr Roussety: Etant donné, M. le président, qu'on vient de parler de la lutte contre la pauvreté et qu'il y a deux personnes qui ont disparu, est-ce qu'on peut demander au *Chief Commissioner* s'il y a des programmes d'aide, des compensations qu'on peut allouer à ces gens?

The Chief Commissioner: Oui, M. le président, il y a des programmes d'aide, mais une décision sera prise après avoir rencontré les parents au bureau de l'administration.

Mr Roussety: Concernant les *tenders* dont on vient de parler, est-ce que le *Chief Commissioner* pourrait déposer.....

Mr Chairperson: The answer has already been given.

Mr Roussety: I would like to ask him whether he can table the contracts that have been cancelled for the information of the House?

The Chief Commissioner: I said that I need notice of the question.

HEALTH DEPARTMENT - TRANSFER OF OFFICERS

(No. B/4) Mr G. Jabeemissar (Second Local Region Member for La Ferme) asked the Commissioner responsible for Health whether, in view of the urgent need to restore the social climate in Rodrigues in the wake of the recent local election, he will state -

- (a) whether there have been any transfer within the Health Department since he assumed office and if yes, whether he can give the names and status of the concerned officer/s and reasons for the transfer/s; and
- (b) whether any officer will be transferred soon and the reasons therefore.

Mr Sooprayen: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I am informed that -

- (a) There has been no transfer within the Health Department since 01 October 2002.
- (b) No transfer of officers is currently being foreseen, but given the ongoing change in management set-up, I would prefer using the word "reshufflement" rather than transfer of staff. As we are a young, responsible and caring Government, reshufflement could be made for administrative convenience in order to provide the necessary support to the different Commissions for the latter to become fully operational.

PORT MATHURIN/MONT LUBIN - DUST PROBLEM

(No. B/5) Mr D. L. Guillaume (Third Island Region Member) asked the Chief Commissioner whether with regard to the dust problem along the road from Port Mathurin to Mont Lubin, he will state -

- (a) if all the conditions stipulated in the Environment Protection Act and its regulations are being complied with; and
- (b) whether in accordance to existing labour legislation the workers on that site are being protected from the dust and, if not, state the measures he proposes to take so that the workers have enough protection.

The Chief Commissioner: Sir, I am informed that -

- (a) No standard has been prescribed under the Environment Protection Act and subsequently regulations as regards to dust pollution along road construction. I have been informed that road works started last year and even though there were acute dust problems no action was taken by the Ministry of Local Government and Rodrigues. However, the matter is being taken with the road contractor.
- (b) According to Sections 5 and 56 of the Occupational Safety, Health and Welfare Act, it is the duty of the employer to ensure the safety, health and welfare of his employees. There are presently two categories of employees working on that site, namely those employed by the main contractor and those employed by subcontractors. It has been brought to my knowledge that only the subcontractors are not providing the appropriate health and safety equipment on site. I am further taking the opportunity of the visit of a Senior Occupational Safety and Health Inspector from the Ministry of Labour next week and has included in his programme a site visit so as to carry a full assessment of the situation and to take any appropriate action in the light of his findings.

Meanwhile the Road Development Authority, the body responsible for supervising the works has been requested to ensure that the contractor ensures the continuous watering of all the stretch of road to alleviate the dust problem using water from St Gabriel and Mangues.

MONTAGNE MALGACHE VILLAGE - ACCESS ROAD

(No. B/6) Mrs J. Prosper (Sixth Island Region Member) asked the Chief Commissioner whether, given the difficulty to get access to Montagne Malgache Village, he will state what measures he contemplates to make that village more accessible.

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, with your permission, I would like to point out that road construction/repairs from September 2000 to date was implemented on the basis of a priority list established after taking due account of funds made available in the

Estimates. Unfortunately, many villages, for example Mt. Malagache has remained isolated during the above-mentioned period.

Now the situation will change. I have already given instructions to the Public Infrastructure Division to submit a comprehensive report for future road construction/upgrading to enable the Executive Council to prepare a long-term investment plan and to reallocate funds for the extension/upgrading of the road network like Tammes - Mt Chérie, Mt Bois Noir - Mt Malgache, Anse Quitor - Reposoir, Mt Tonnerre - Allée Tamarin, Mt Cabri Est- St Francois which are among our top priorities.

With regard to PQ No. B/6, I am informed that the road linking Palissade Ternel via Mt. Bois Noir and Mt. Malgache to Port Sud Est is 4.5 km long. The first 400 metres from Palissade Ternel towards Montagne Bois Noir have already been tarred. There remains a stretch of about 1.8 km to reach the village of Mt. Malgache.

Works have stopped as part of the road alignment falls on private land at Mt. Bois Noir. The Cadastral Unit has already initiated action for the acquisition of all land falling on the road alignment so as to enable the construction of the roads.

In order to alleviate the hardship caused to the villagers, I am requesting the Public Infrastructure Division to look at the possibility of linking in a first instance the village of Mt. Malgache to Port Sud Est road. This Assembly will be informed in due course of any development.

Miss Castel: M. le président, je voudrais poser la question suivante au *Chief Commissioner*. Pourquoi y a-t-il eu un arrêt net de l'asphaltage de la route menant vers Mt. Malgache depuis septembre 2001?

The Chief Commissioner: M. le président, c'est parce que l'actuel ministre de Rodrigues n'a pas considéré les routes reliant les petits villages déjà commencé par l'ex- ministre, Benoit Jolicoeur, dans sa liste comme étant une priorité.

DOCTORS - HOTEL ACCOMMODATION

(No. B/7) **Mrs. J. Prosper (Sixth Island Region Member)** asked the Commissioner for Health whether in view of the need for services of doctors from Mauritius and abroad, he will state -

- (a) the amount of money spent during the last financial year for their stay in hotels before they secured a decent house, and
- (b) what measures are being taken by this department to cut down these expenses.

Mr Sooprayen: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I am informed that -

- (a) the amount spent during financial year 2001-2002 for the temporary accommodation of doctors, including specialists, in hotels has been Rs 854,559.80 (Eight hundred and fifty-four thousand, five hundred and fifty-nine and eighty cents).
- (b) Only doctors on a tour of service for a minimum of 6 months onwards, are provided with furnished quarters. These doctors normally stay in hotels for 2-3 days, pending that quarters intended for them are adequately refurbished.

During financial year 2001-2002, there have been cases where the duration of stay in hotels of some officers awaiting quarters was unusually long.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, may I inform the House and particularly the Sixth Island Region Member, of some cases where duration of stay was unusually long.

- (1) One Medical and Health Officer proceeded to Rodrigues on 08 November 2001. He was later joined by his wife and 2 daughters. They were accommodated at Les Cocotiers and left the hotel only on 25 January 2002 to occupy the quarters allocated to them. The cost of their stay at the hotel amounted to Rs 217,389.50.
- (2) One Medical Records Officer proceeded to Rodrigues with his family for a 12 month tour of service as from 16 January 2002.

They stayed at Les Tamaris Hotel for 36 days for a total cost of Rs 102,816.

- (3) Three Nursing Officers overstayed in hotels for various reasons, mostly related to quarters not readily available for their accommodation. The total accommodation costs for these 3 cases amounts to Rs 256,088.

Specialists on short visits to provide services not available in Rodrigues, are being accommodated in hotels. Other specialists that come to replace their colleagues who are on vacation, casual or annual leave are also accommodated in hotels.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, accommodation in hotels is always a temporary but inevitable arrangement to alleviate the problems faced by staff being posted in Rodrigues.

However, to curtail hotel expenses, the following measures will be introduced -

- (i) Rodrigues Regional Assembly will, from now onwards, monitor closely the temporary stay in hotels of officers posted to Rodrigues;
- (ii) As soon as Government Quarters become vacant, all necessary works to render them fit to be inhabited will be undertaken immediately so that the incoming officer can move in without delay.
- (iii) In case no Government Quarters is made available, officers will be paid rent allowance and/or subsistence allowance to enable them to face immediate living costs, thereby helping to reduce hotel expenses.

QUEEN ELIZABETH HOSPITAL – QUALITY OF SERVICES

(No. B/8) Mrs M. T. Meunier (Second Island Region Member) asked the Commissioner responsible for Health whether, following the death of several women in doubtful circumstances and caesarean in Queen Elizabeth Hospital, he will state -

- (a) what measures he plans to take to improve services offered to women in the hospital; and
- (b) whether investigations have been carried out to know the causes of these deaths.

Mr Sooprayen: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I am informed that -

- (a) measures to improve the quality of services offered to women in the hospital are as follows -

- (i) new echography apparatus have been brought last year for follow-up during antenatal care;

- (ii) the gynaecology and maternity unit will be renovated so as to provide for -

- a gynaecology room
 - an antenatal room
 - a postnatal room
 - a labour ward
 - a nursery
 - a mess and changing for doctors and nurses, and
 - an out-patient clinic with separate toilets

- (b) no woman died of doubtful circumstances since the year 2000. The number of maternal deaths since the year 2000 amounts to four (4), as follows -

<u>Year</u>	<u>Number of Deaths</u>
2000	1
2001	1
2002	2

Investigations were carried out in all cases of maternal death since 2000.

In May 2000 and January 2002, there were two cases of maternal deaths due to ruptured uterus.

In March 2001, one case of death was recorded due to pulmonary embolism.

In July 2002, another case was due to post-partum haemorrhage.

Mr J. Roussety: Can the Commissioner responsible for health state whether the four persons who died were under the medical care of the same doctor or medical practitioner?

Mr Sooprayen: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I need notice of the question and the answer will come in due course.

WATER SUPPLY

(No. B/9) Mrs M. T. Meunier (Second Island Region Member) asked the Chief Commissioner whether, given the serious problem of water supply the island usually faces during summer and the poor conditions of the reservoirs in our valleys, namely that at Anse aux Anglais which is full of mud and rocks, he will state what measures he intends to take to clean that reservoir and others in other valleys.

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I am informed that the dam at Fond Anse Aux Anglais was desilted in March 2002. However, during the recent rains, it has been completely silted again. It is considered not economical to desilt same again prior to the construction of filtering dykes upstream the dam so as to minimise the siltation effect after heavy rains.

Moreover, given the poor quality and the very small quantity of the surface water flowing, the absence of proper treatment facilities and the small volume of the dam (about 60 cubic metre), the water at Fond Anse aux Anglais cannot be used for domestic purposes, but will be made available for agricultural and farming purposes.

The Water Resources Division is carrying out a complete survey on the state of siltation of all small dams in other valleys and appropriate action will be taken in the light of the result of the survey.

However, Mr Chairperson, Sir, as additional information, I would like to tell Members of the House that part of village Anse aux Anglais is now being served by the reservoir of Terre Rouge with water pumped from the Malabar borehole, Mont Lubin borehole and Latanier borehole.

Secondly, Crève Coeur Reservoir is servicing the other part with water from Cascade Pigeon and Malabar borehole.

Thirdly, in both systems, the water is either chlorinated and/or filtered.

Fourthly, the flow of water at River Anse aux Anglais is about 0.14 cubic metre per hour, *à peu près la moitié 'drum' of water per hour.*

RIVIERE COCO, ILE MICHEL, GRAND VAR AND CITRON DONIS VILLAGES - WATER SUPPLY

(No. B/10) Mr J. C. Agathe (Second Local Region Member for Maréchal) asked the Chief Commissioner how the villages of Rivière Coco, Ile Michel, Grand Var and Citron Donis are supplied with water for domestic purposes.

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I am informed that these villages are supplied with water for domestic purposes by pipes.

(Interruptions)

Mr Chairperson: Order, please!

Mr Agathe: Mr Chairperson, Sir, the question is clear. How villages of Rivière Coco, Ile Michel, Grand Var get water for domestic purposes? I know it comes from pipes, but what is the source itself?

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, the question was direct; the answer must be direct. In Rodrigues, we cannot carry water by aeroplanes! Water is distributed by pipes. Now if you want additional information, I can give you.

As regards the villages of Rivière Coco, Ile Michel, Grand Var, water is fed by gravity from Fond Rivière Coco Dam to reservoir via a filtration and chlorination plant. The above villages are served by a 110 mm diameter polyethylene main with laterals of 90 mm & 63 mm diameter polyethylene pipes respectively.

The water, which is pumped from Bigarades spring, is chlorinated prior to being stored at Citron Donis Steel Reservoir. The Citron Donis village is served from that reservoir through a polyethylene main of 90 mm diameter and laterals of 63 mm diameter.

As additional information again, the village of Rivière Coco, Ile Michel and Grand Var is normally being served at a frequency of once a week. The village of Citron Donis is also normally being served with water at again a frequency of once a week and a contractor is presently carrying out rehabilitation works/proof covering at Bigarades Spring.

Mr Agathe: Mr Chairperson, I would like the Chief Commissioner to say how is the state of the source Bigarades.

The Chairperson: This is not a question, which is directly relevant to the main question. This question is not allowed.

Mr Emilien: Mr Chairperson, in line with what the Chief Commissioner said concerning water supply in Rivière Coco, Ile Michel and Grand Var villages, I, first of all, thank him for his additional information after his direct answer concerning the pipes. I would like to know from him, if he is aware that actually the reservoir at Rivière Coco is under repairs. He said that these villages are being served, at least, once a week, but we have been advised that we are not going to have water for the next fortnight because the reservoir is under repair. In the village of Rivière Coco, we have a reservoir made of metal which provides water for the uplands of Maréchal, Quatre Vents and other villages. Can the Chief Commissioner tell us if measures can be taken so as these villages namely, Rivière Coco, Ile Michel, Grand Var and Petite Butte be supplied by this metal reservoir?

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, we will look into the matter.

RIVIERE COCO - WATER SUPPLY

(No. B/11) Mr J. C. Agathe (Second Local Region Member for Marechal) asked the Chief Commissioner whether, he would say when necessary action could be taken so that the inhabitants of Rivière Coco at the back of Ste Thérèse de L'Enfant Jésus RCA School could be supplied with potable water from the Citron Donis water network.

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I am informed that there are about eleven families residing uphill behind Ste Thérèse de L'Enfant Jésus RCA School at Rivière Coco which are presently deprived of a water prise. This is due to the fact that their houses are at a higher altitude than the Rivière Coco Service Reservoir.

I have been informed of the undue hardship being experienced by these families and, therefore, I have already given instructions to the Water Resources Division to look, as a matter of priority, at the possibility of extending the Citron Donis network to serve those families.

ANTI-EROSION PROGRAMME IN RODRIGUES - CONTRACTUAL LABOURERS

(No. B/12) Mr F. A. Grandcourt (First Local Region Member for La Ferme) asked the Chief Commissioner whether, with regard to contractual labourers, employed by the Anti-Erosion Programme in Rodrigues, he will state –

- (a) the numbers involved and the terms and conditions of their employment, and
- (b) what measures he intends to take in case their contracts are not renewed.

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, the answer is as follows – with regard to part (a) of the question, 200 General Field/Office and Premises Worker were recruited on a one-year contract basis with effect from April 2001. Their contracts have been renewed in April this year for another period of one year. Actually 188 General Field/Office and Premises Worker are still employed on contract (140 male and 48 female), 5 did not accept the offer of employment and 7 have resigned.

As regards part (b) of the question, in line with the terms and conditions of the contract it was understood that the contract of the General Field & Office/Premises Worker would be purely temporary. As announced in the Budget Speech 1999/2001, funds were provided in the Budget for recruiting 200 manual workers to work on the anti-erosion programme. When the programme will be completed their services will no longer be required. But, according to our programme, we will see if new job opportunities will be made available to them, on basis of their working experience in the said programme.

STRAY ANIMALS - SEIZURE – JANUARY TO NOVEMBER 2002

(No. B/13) Mr F. A. Grandcourt (First Local Region Member for La Ferme) asked the Chief Commissioner whether, he will, for the benefit of the House, with regard to the seizure of stray goats, cattle, sheep and pigs by the authorities in Rodrigues, obtain information on –

- (a) the number of seizure that have occurred per category since January 2002 to date;
- (b) the conditions under which and the place/s where seized animals are kept;
- (c) the number of cases in which seized animals have died or were lost; and
- (d) the measures envisaged, so far, to compensate farmers for the losses sustained by them.

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, with regard to part (a), from January 2002 to 31 October 2002, the number of stray animals seized are as follows – 4 cattle, 52 goats, 2 sheep and 6 pigs. From 31 October 2002 to date, the matter is *sub judice*.

As regards part (b), all seized animals are kept at the ex-livestock breeding station of Maréchal pending court decision as to their disposal and are looked after by stockmen who are responsible to feed them. Any sick case is reported to the veterinary officer, who provides the appropriate care. Unclaimed animals are disposed of at the auction sales.

With regard to part (c), 15 goats died, one goat escaped on 12 May 2002 and could not be caught back at the station. A declaration was made at La Ferme Police Station, Sir, to that effect.

Concerning part (d), the question of compensating farmers for the losses sustained by them does not arise, as pursuant to Section 379 of the Criminal Code, the animal seized shall be forfeited. It is apposite to refer the respected Member to the provision of the Criminal Code.

I quote: "the instruments are "animals". I stress again "animals" - *les animaux* and bazaar commodities specified at 378 (g), (u), (w) and (x) shall be forfeited.

Mr J. Roussety: Mr Chairperson, I would like to ask the Member, if the information is not available today, to table information concerning the auction sales, the dates on which they were conducted, the dates on which notices were made to the public inviting them to come to these auction sales and how much money was raised from these auction sales.

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, as regards this supplementary question, the information will be compiled and circulated in the near future.

MOTION

LACK OF CEMENT

Mr Allan Ladd Emilien: Mr Chairperson, Sir, with reference to Standing Order 10 (2), I would request leave to move for the adjournment of the Assembly for the purpose of discussing a definite matter of urgent public importance, namely, the lack of cement in Rodrigues actually.

Mr Johnson Roussety (Minority Leader) rose and seconded.

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I am of the view that the Motion for Adjournment under Section 10 (2) of the Standing Orders and Rules should not be allowed; and I am objecting to the said motion on the ground that the matter has already been considered and that this was subject to a decision of the Executive Council on Thursday 24 October 2002, which decision has been released to the press. A special shipment has been agreed for the 08 November 2002.

Mr Chairperson: By virtue of Standing Order 10 (3), the motion is refused.

Members of the Assembly, the Chief Commissioner has consulted me in the office asking for leave to make a statement. In view of the practices obtained in the House. I have allowed him to do so.

STATEMENT BY COMMISSIONERS

RODRIGUES - APOSTOLIC VICARIATE STATUS

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, at the very outset of this important declaration, please allow me to quote this adage which goes in the direction of the wind of autonomy which is currently prevailing over Rodrigues -

"Un bonheur ne vient jamais seul"

In fact, while the Rodriguan population is still in the joyful ambiance of the advent of political autonomy which has allowed the setting up of the first Rodrigues Regional Assembly and which is entrenched in the Constitution, the majority of the Rodriguan people has got another good reason to keep on rejoicing.

In full recognition of the specificity of Rodrigues and of the originality of the Catholic Church of our island which is deeply rooted in the Rodriguan realities and which, as a result, has developed specific characters and personality, His Holiness the supreme Pontiff John Paul II has rightfully raised the Catholic community of Rodrigues to the status of "Apostolic Vicariate" to be headed by a bishop, namely Father Jean Baptiste Alain Harel who will be the first Bishop of Rodrigues.

Mr Chairperson, everyone will recall that during his unique visit at La Ferme, Rodrigues where he was welcomed at the Airport by the then Minister for Rodrigues, hon. Louis Serge Clair, His Holiness the Pope said *"Rodriguais, diboute lors to dé lipieds."* Today we are proud that the same Supreme Pontiff has acknowledged what I can refer to as the *"capacité Rodriguais."*

It is worth noting, Mr Chairperson, that this good news was released simultaneously at the Vatican (Rome) at 12 hours - Roman time and at 15 hours - local time at Saint Gabriel (Rodrigues) last week on Thursday 31 October 2002.

It is of historical importance to report that the request for an official recognition by the Universal Catholic Church came from the Rodriguans themselves. In fact it was expressed by our sister, Miss Antoinette Prudence, who was also the first president of the Rodrigues Local Council, on the 28 October 1997 at Carrefour in Rodrigues when His Eminence Cardinal Tomko, Papal Legate, was on an official visit in Rodrigues.

Mr Chairperson, the same wish was brought forward on the 15 August 2000 to the Synodal Assembly for thorough discussions which was followed by its approval by the Conference of Bishops of the Indian Ocean prior to presentation by His Eminence the Apostolic Nuncio Lord Mussaro and the Lord Bishop Maurice Piat to His Holiness the Pope. The Apostolic Vicariate of Rodrigues will liaise directly with the Holy See at the Vatican.

I have been personally informed by means of a letter addressed to me by the Lord Bishop of Port Louis that the ordination of Reverend Father Alain Harel as Bishop of Rodrigues will take place on the 08 December at St Gabriel in Rodrigues.

Mr Chairperson, as I pointed out earlier, the year 2002 will be recorded in our history as a great year, a year of blessing with, on the one hand, the setting up of the first Rodrigues Regional Assembly and, on the other, the erection of the first Apostolic Vicarate for the Catholics.

Mr Chairperson, in concluding, I would like to place on record my deep-felt appreciation for the invaluable role played by Catholic Church in the field of education in Rodrigues and in the emancipation of the Rodriguan people. I wish that with our new respective strengthened status, this collaboration will go on consolidating further ahead.

Thank you.

ADJOURNMENT

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I beg to move that this Assembly do now adjourn to Tuesday 26 November 2002, at 10.30 a.m.

The Deputy Chief Commissioner rose and seconded.

The motion was, on question put, agreed to.

At 12.15 p.m. the Assembly was, on its rising, adjourned to Tuesday, 26 November 2002, at 10.30 a.m.