

RODRIGUES

FIRST REGIONAL ASSEMBLY

Debate No. 11 of 2003

Sitting of Tuesday 01 July 2003

The Assembly met in the Assembly House, Port Mathurin at 10.30. a.m.

(Mr Chairperson in the Chair)

The National Anthem was played

RODRIGUES REGIONAL ASSEMBLY

TUESDAY 1 July 2003

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CYCLONE CELINE II HOUSES - IMPROVEMENT

(No. B/237) Mr J. C. Agathe (Second Local Region Member for Marechal) asked the Chief Commissioner whether, with regard to the immediate environment of the houses constructed in the aftermath of cyclone celine II, the Chief Commissioner would give a brief statement thereon.

The Deputy Chief Commissioner, Mr Chairperson Sir, with your permission, I'll answer all questions addressed to the Chief Commissioner. I am informed that presently there is no project to improve the immediate environment of the houses constructed in the aftermath of cyclone Celine II. These houses were constructed without any proper *plan d'aménagement*. My Commission will be undertaking the survey of the sites shortly in order to produce a proper physical and landscaping plan of all the sites. The residents of those housing units will then be encouraged to embellish this environment according to the proposed plan. The possibility of financing the project under the IFAD Community Development Programme will also be looked into.

Mr Agathe: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I would like to draw the attention of the House to the reply given to my question B/81 as regards the financial lay-out of this Programme, the Deputy Chief Commissioner, in his answer, stated that funds ...

Mr Chairperson: I am drawing your attention to Standing Order 19 Subsection 2 (b) which says: "No question shall refer to any debate that has occurred or to any answer that has been given within the last year".

Mr Agathe: Mr Chairperson, Sir, last time you asked me to come with another question, this is why I am putting this question.

Mr Chairperson: Yes, proceed.

Mr Agathe: As regards the financial lay-out on this Programme, the Deputy Chief Commissioner, in his reply, stated that funds have been met from the Capital Budget to the tune of Rs12,979,483., that is, a cost of about Rs45,000 per house. What is worrying me is that there seems to be a discrepancy between the figure mentioned by the Deputy Chief Commissioner and that mentioned by the Director of Audit in his report for year ended 30 June 2002. Would the Deputy Chief Commissioner verify the figures and enlighten the House at the next sitting of the House?

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, the construction of these houses was not under our purview. What we are doing is that we are trying to legalise these houses, giving the occupiers, at least, a lease. After that, with the IFAD Programme we will do what is possible to embellish the environment.

Mr Agathe: Mr Chairperson, Sir. There is an environmental problem in the cité. Would toilet facilities be provided to these people?

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: As I have said, the residents of these housing units will be encouraged to embellish their environment and they will have also to contribute to this embellishment of the environment. We will try to do the landscaping of this region, legalise their situation and afterwards we will look into the matter.

Mr Agathe: Mr Chairperson, Sir, the Deputy Chief Commissioner said that there is a Committee that is working on that project. Can we know where the work stands up to now?

Mr Chairperson: Has the Deputy Chief Commissioner understood the question?

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Can the Member repeat his question?

Mr Agathe: The Deputy Chief Commissioner has said that there is a Committee which is working on the project of the Cité, where does the work of that Committee stand up to now?

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I would like to know what Committee the respected Member is talking about.

Mr. Agathe: The Deputy Chief Commissioner informed the House, in his last reply, that he is going to set up a Committee. Therefore, I am asking him where does the work of the Committee stand up to now. Can he please look into it?

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: The answer has already been given. We are doing all that is in our possibility to improve the life of these citizens. I'll ask the Member to wait and see; the time will come when he will see what we will do.

Mr Agathe: In his reply, he said: "A Committee is being set up to carry out a survey (...). Where is the Committee?"

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: The Committee has not yet been set up, but it will be set up in due course.

Mr Agathe: Can we know exactly when?

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Soon.

RODRIGUES REGIONAL FOOTBALL COMMITTEE

(No. B/238) Mr J. C. Agathe (Second Local Region Member for Marechal) asked the Commissioner responsible, *inter alia* for Youth & Sports whether, with regard to football in Rodrigues, he would state whether the Rodrigues Regional Football Committee is in conformity with the Sports Act 2001.

Commissioner Lisette: Mr Chairperson, Sir, the present Rodrigues Regional Football Committee was set up in December 2002 in the presence of the Secretary-General of the Mauritius Football Association and was supervised by a representative of the Electoral Commission. The Committee consists of 11 members and is in conformity with the Sports Act.

Mr Agathe: Since the Committee is in conformity, are all the players – now we are having Football League in Rodrigues – being insured?

Commissioner Lisette: Mr Chairperson, Sir, the question of insuring players rests with the Mauritius Football Association and not the Rodrigues Regional Football Committee.

Mr Agathe: Can the Commissioner say whether the players are medically fit? We have seen the problem of a Cameroun player.

Commissioner Lisette: This is a matter for the Mauritius Football Association, Mr Chairperson, Sir, because it falls under the purview of the Mauritius Football Association.

MANGUES COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTRE – OPENING HOURS, DRUGS, ETC.

(No. B/239) Mr J. C. Agathe (Second Local Region Member for Marechal) asked the Commissioner responsible for Health whether, with regard to Mangues Community Health Centre, he would state –

- (a) the days and hours when it is open;
- (b) if the nursing officer attached there is in charge of another Community Health Centre, and
- (c) if sufficient drugs are available at all times and, if not, why.

Commissioner Sooprayen: Mr Chairperson, Sir,

- (a) the Community Health Centre is open on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays from 8.00 a.m. to 4.00 p.m.

- (b) the Nursing Officer attached there is also in charge of Baie Topaze Community Health Centre on the other working days, that is, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays;
- (c) commonly used drugs are available at all times, e.g panadol, vitamin tablets, cough syrup, etc).

Mr Agathe: I refer to part (b) of my question. Is there a shortage of Nursing Officers in Rodrigues?

Commissioner Sooprayen: Mr Chairperson, Sir, there is no shortage of staff for the time being.

The Minority Leader: Can we know whether Nursing Officers attached to community health centres work specifically there or do they sometimes move to hospitals or health centres?

Commissioner Sooprayen: Usually they work on a roster basis and I have just said, for instance, Nursing Officers working at Mangues Community Health Centre go to Baie Topaze also.

The Minority Leader: As regards the ...

Mr Chairperson; whom are you addressing?

The Minority Leader: The Commissioner through the Chair.

Mr Chairperson: Please say so.

The Minority Leader: Mr Chairperson, Sir, as regards the total requirement of staff, is there a shortage of Nursing Officers for Mangues and other community health centres in the health services, specifically towards the delivery of services in health centres?

Commissioner Sooprayen: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I have just said that there is no shortage.

Mr Agathe: Mr Chairperson, Sir, since there is no shortage of Nursing Officers in Rodrigues, how is it that the same Nursing Officer is in charge of two community health centres?

Commissioner Sooprayen: Mr Chairperson, Sir, Mangues and Baie Topaze Community Health Centres open three days a week. According to the statistics, it has been noted that for Mangues only from January to April the total no. of persons visiting Mangues Community Health Centre is 730, out of which 518 patients were seen by a Medical Officer. If we come to a daily average it will be about 8 patients per day. This

is why for the time being we don't see the necessity of having more Nursing Officers or increasing the number of days there.

The Minority Leader: Mr Chairperson, Sir, if somebody is injured or needs medical assistance at Manges Community Health Centre, on Tuesdays and Thursdays when there is no Medical Officer and Nursing Officer there, what alternative is there for them?

Commissioner Sooprayen: Mr Chairperson, Sir, may I inform the respected and dignified Leader of the Minority that the community health centre is for simple cases. In case there is no Nursing Officer – which is not the case – these persons do go to the area health centres.

Mr Agathe: Mr Chairperson, Sir, since there is a primary school near Manges Community Health Centre, pupils who are injured have to go to La Ferme Health Centre and they lose a whole day. Can the Commissioner for Health say whether he intends to open Manges Community Health Centre for the whole week?

Commissioner Sooprayen: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I have just said that we don't find the necessity at present to have a full week service there. I think that the schools are provided with first-aid.

MALAGASY DOCTORS -EMPLOYMENT

(No. B/240) The Minority Leader (Mr J. Roussety) asked the Commissioner responsible for Health whether as regards, the recent employment of medical personnel of Malagasy origin in the Health Services in Rodrigues, he could study the matter and state –

- (a) whether their work was satisfactory from the point of view of his Commission, and
- (b) the reasons as to why their contract of employment had been terminated or not renewed.

Commissioner Sooprayen: Mr Chairperson, Sir, as regards part (a) of the question, my Commission is mainly involved with the Administration of the Health Services in Rodrigues in accordance with the Rodrigues Regional Assembly Act. My Commission has observed that the Malagasy doctors entertained good relations with both staff and patients. However, I am not in a position to give an opinion on the technical aspects of their performance as this is the prerogative of the Medical professionals of the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life.

With regard to part (b), the doctors from the Malagasy Republic posted in Rodrigues were on contract with the Government of the Republic of Mauritius through the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life. Their initial contract which was of a period of one year was not renewed upon completion and they were informed in advance. I

understand from the reply to a Parliamentary Question No. B/318 of Tuesday 13 May, 2003 in the National Assembly addressed by Hon. J. Robert Spéville, the Minister of Health and Quality of Life has stated. I quote -

“The duties of Medical and Health Officer/Senior Medical and Health Officer in Rodrigues entail the examination of clinical cases from all specialities and the provision of appropriate treatment without the supervision of a Specialist. The Medical & Health Officers/Senior Medical & Health Officers are therefore expected to have been exposed for sometime in the various specialities before being able to work in Rodrigues on their own. In the case of the doctors from the Malagasy Republic, by virtue of their training in the country of origin, they have not been exposed to different specialities. Even after one year in post, the Malagasy doctors could not adapt to the clinical situation in Rodrigues. Consequently, my Ministry has decided not to renew the contracts of the four Malagasy doctors on expiry of contracts of their employment.” Unquote.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, I wish to inform the house that the contract of the five other doctors from the Malagasy Republic posted in the island of Mauritius was also not renewed.

The Minority Leader: Mr Chairperson, Sir, can the dignified and respected Commissioner for Health tell the House, as a result of the non-renewal of the contract of these Malagasy doctors, what have been the personal implications, taking into consideration the fact that they had engaged, we are aware, into car loans, they had their children admitted in schools here and they had to go back. Have these implications been considered by the Commission?

Commissioner Sooprayen: M. le président, je tiens à dire à la Chambre et particulièrement au digne *Leader* de la minorité que personnellement je suis satisfait du comportement, de l'accueil des médecins malgaches vis-à-vis des patients. Comme je l'ai dit tout dépendait du ministère de la santé. Quand j'ai appris que leur contract n'a pas été renouvelé, j'ai essayé de faire un effort pour dire ce que je pense. Mais malheureusement cela n'a pas marché. Je regrette que le contrat de ces quatre médecins, M. le président, n'a pas été renouvelé. Il faut comprendre quand même que nous autres Rodriguais nous avons le sang malgache.

Mr Emilien: Mr Chairperson, Sir, we understand that the contract of these doctors has not been renewed. I would like to know from the Commissioner for Health what has been done so far to have them replaced, because it has an impact on the patient/doctor ratio.

Commissioner Sooprayen: Mr Chairperson, Sir, the four Malagasy doctors - who left because their contract has not been renewed - have already been replaced by four Mauritian doctors.

BOREHOLES - LOCATIONS

(No. B/241) The Minority Leader (Mr J. Roussety) asked the Deputy Chief Commissioner whether as regards, the digging and setting up of boreholes in Rodrigues during the last ten years, he would state –

- (a) the number of boreholes which have been dug and their locations;
- (b) the number of boreholes presently in use, that is from which water is being pumped on a regular basis, and their locations, and
- (c) the companies to which contracts for the opening of boreholes have been awarded and the respective sums paid.

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I have been informed that 46 boreholes have been drilled during the past ten years at different locations in Rodrigues. Presently there are 17 boreholes from which water is being pumped on a regular basis.

I am tabling the list of locations of the 46 boreholes drilled, the list of locations of the 17 boreholes which are presently in operation and the list of companies to which the contracts have been awarded as well as the amount paid. *(Appendix I)*.

The Minority Leader: Mr Chairperson, Sir, we have learnt that 46 boreholes have been drilled during the last ten years; only 17 out of these 46 boreholes are actually being used on a regular basis. Can the dignified and respected Commissioner tell the House why less than 50% of the boreholes that have been drilled are actually in use? Why is it that Government pays companies – the amount of money has not been given, we will learn about it later on – for drilling and they are left dormant?

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I would like to draw the attention of the Minority Leader to the fact that he has done studies in Economics not in hydrology. Out of the 46 boreholes that have been drilled, 10 are being drilled as duplicate in case any problem arises with the main boreholes – 17 plus 10 makes 27....

The Minority Leader: Mr Chairperson, Sir, the original answer that the Deputy Chief Commissioner has given is misleading. He did not say that the boreholes have been duplicated. He is misleading the House...

(Interruptions)

He is imputing motives. The original answer was not correct and now he is attacking me. He is doing as if I am a fool! He said 46; then he said “duplicate”.

Mr Chairperson: The Deputy Chief Commissioner has said that there are 46 boreholes and then he has tabled a list. Can you give more explanation?

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: There are 46 boreholes; you have 17 boreholes and 10 duplicate ones. This makes 27 boreholes; out of these, it remains 19. The 19 other boreholes have either low yield or are completely dry. The identification of all the sites for the boreholes has been carried by an expert of FAO and FAC project. I would like to draw the attention of the Minority Leader to the fact that when doing pumping, the parameters of the water table should reach the requirement for an ongoing supply of water. If the water content of the borehole is low, we will not pump air to give to the citizens of Rodrigues.

The Minority Leader: Mr Chairperson, Sir, people studying Economics are concerned with everything, including boreholes. The Deputy Chief Commissioner was with me in France and he knows very well that I studied Economics and I know very well that he studied something concerning water.

I understand that before digging boreholes there are specific – nearly accurate – technologies that are used to see that there will be at least a good yield of water. People who dig boreholes are not fools; they are scientists and if a borehole is dug they know what will be the yield. I know that there are quasi-accurate practices to evaluate the future yield of a borehole. How will he justify that they dug boreholes which are not productive?

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, in FAO and FAC organisations, there are experts. You can choose a site to dig a borehole which can be temporarily viable to produce water. It will depend on rain, on water flow for the water table to regenerate water. Those tests have been carried out; sometimes it produces water temporarily, but in dry season, the water level decreases and they are not viable, not efficient to pump water from the boreholes.

The Minority Leader: Mr Chairperson, Sir, from the information tabled, I see there is one contract by AELDDS Irrigation, FAO project, contract 51 digging of boreholes at Manic and Fond La Digue – Rs346,150 for boreholes; we don't know the number – a lack of precision; and then we see again contract BI 2001 – Water Research Co. – drilling of boreholes at Fond La Digue – Rs1,414,461. Aquana Ltd. – drilling of four boreholes – Rs3,237,448. So, there are very large discrepancies in the average amount paid for one borehole. How can the Deputy Chief Commissioner explain that?

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, the amount paid to drill a borehole depends on the geological formation of the site. Sometimes it can be a sandy site and it is easy to drill a borehole; but sometimes the site can be basaltic and more equipment have to be carried on site for the technicians to have the borehole drilled.

Mr Jabeemissar: Mr Chairperson, Sir, being given the favourable climatic conditions we have had this year as far as rainwater is concerned, could the Deputy Chief Commissioner make an assessment of the output capacity of these boreholes which before could not give a better yield and to see how the climatic conditions have been favourable to us?

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I take note of the question of the respected Member and I will look into it.

Mr Emilien: Mr Chairperson, Sir, the Deputy Chief Commissioner informed the House that there are 17 boreholes actually in use. Very often we see stray animals causing damages to the pumps. Can the Deputy Chief Commissioner inform the House what measures he intends to take to protect the boreholes actually in use?

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, many of these boreholes are found in reserved areas and we are doing our best to have them fenced.

CITRON DONIS FORM VI COLLEGE – LABORATORY AND OTHER SPECIALIST EQUIPMENT

(No. B/242) The Minority Leader (Mr J. Roussety) asked the Commissioner responsible for Education whether, he would, for the benefit of the House, give an indication as to where matters actually stand regarding the provision of laboratory and other specialist equipment to the Citron Donis Form VI college taking into account the forthcoming final HSC examination.

Commissioner Roussety: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, fixed furniture for the laboratories at Citron Donis Form VI College have already been received and are being installed. As regards the laboratory equipment and chemicals for these laboratories, the contract was awarded by my Commission on 19 June 2003 even though this college is run by REDCO.

Information available from the supplier indicates that these items will be available in Rodrigues by the next ship arriving in the beginning of July. These will then be delivered to Citron Donis College.

In the meantime, the present arrangements for the students to do their practices at Le Chou College will be maintained for their benefit. The other specialist equipment for music, etc. have already been delivered at the college and are available.

The Minority Leader: Mr Chairperson, Sir, the respected and dignified Commissioner has stated that the contract has been awarded by his Commission even though the college is managed by REDCO. *Est-ce que je peux lui demander de préciser ce qu'il veut dire par cette expression "even though"?*

Commissioner Roussety: Mr Chairperson, Sir, the argument is clear. We do not have the management of the REDCO schools; we do not have any say in these matters. But at the moment with the advent of the Regional Assembly and being here within very close proximity of these colleges and knowing their plight – lack of laboratory equipment and other school materials – I believe that it is our duty to step in while the REDCO Board sits in their Ivory tower some 650 kms away. If these colleges catch fire, who will

be the first people to come and extinguish the flames? It will be our duty to do so. And we feel, Mr Chairperson, Sir, that in this case, we are trying to act as facilitator even though it has been said – and that is a fact – that the money is included in the Budget of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly. This does not mean that we do the work for them. They have got to do their work and present a bill to us and we will see to it that it is paid. It has got to be appreciated on the Minority benches that we are doing our best; and I think it would be unbecoming to give us any sticker over that. I think we ought to be congratulated for the efforts we are making in this case.

The Minority Leader: Mr Chairperson, Sir, the Commissioner is free to congratulate himself, but he must be aware that in the meantime students sitting for HSC – I know, because I work there – have no laboratory. He has said that the budget was with him and that it was the responsibility of REDCO to launch the tenders. When these tenders were not launched – I believe he has his departmental Head, people who control finance here in Rodrigues – these people did not see that the money which was budgeted for the school was not spent. How is it that he has waited for REDCO and kept the money with him? Now he has to do the job of REDCO. This is how we must call it. How can he explain this state of affairs? He keeps the budget with him and this has created a very long delay.

Commissioner Roussety: Again I say that it is very simple, Mr Chairperson, Sir. It is a well-known fact that monies voted in the Budget are not always used; and I would say with due respect to the Chair and Minority Members that we are not REDCO's wet-nurses. REDCO has got to do its work. As I said out of the kindness of our heart, out of the concern we have for these young people, we have stepped in and offered our help. In this case, the help we offered could very well have been refused, and I think REDCO has every right to refuse the help we offered. In this case the help was accepted and we were very glad to step in and give a helping hand. We are helpers and we are not really people who are responsible for this. I will remind the House that REDCO is a private limited Company going away from the principles of its creation as a private limited company. This company was founded in 1993, because Rodrigues was experiencing a great deal of difficulties in managing the two colleges already in existence at the time. Le Chou was a satellite of Marechal; it was very difficult for the Principal for Marechal College to keep an eye on Le Chou at such a distance. Therefore, because of those difficulties, because of the problems of recruiting staff, because exactly of the difficulties of equipping the classrooms, a private limited company was founded and the power, the discretion were vested in a Manager. As a private limited company, REDCO does not have to go through tender; REDCO can just walk into the shops, gets quotations and buys outright, compared with the procedure that the Government has to follow according to the books. And this indeed is what we are doing. We have to go through tender and wait. This is a procedure that has already been set and it has got to be followed; and many things that happen are beyond our control.

The Minority Leader: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I understand that REDCO is a private company and that the Commission for Education is going to pay out of Government funds the purchases for a private company. Can a private company buy

things and then send the bills to the Commission? What about control of funds which are being disbursed by the Commission? How is it that Government money is being used for a private company?

Commissioner Roussety: These colleges are basically SSS. The money is voted by the Government and it is only the management of these colleges which has been placed into the hands of REDCO. I will remind the House that REDCO receives *per capita* grant direct from the PSSA; and these monies are supposed to be invested in equipment and other things. The buildings belong to the Government and are now vested in the Rodrigues Regional Assembly. This is the way things are; I think, with all due respect to the Minority Leader, it is a question of splitting hairs to find out exactly why the money is voted by the Government into the Education budget of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly while REDCO is a private limited company. I think if the Minority Leader needs further information or more details, he should please give notice and I shall be very pleased to give all the details in my answer.

Mr Emilien: I personally welcome the effort of the Commissioner for Education. But although the college is run by REDCO, the students are not from REDCO; they are Rodriguan students who need to be helped. Whenever there is a calamity – a cyclone – on the very day of the examination, it is considered as a *cas de force majeure* and average marks are awarded to the candidates. Can the Commissioner for Education inform the House if he envisages to have this arrangement? Because as we all know right now there is no laboratory at Citron Donis College as such and this is a big problem for those students there with the forthcoming examinations. So, can the Commissioner inform us if he intends to have a deal with the Examination Body so that these students are not penalised?

Commissioner Roussety: I fully appreciate my respected friend's remarks on that. But this is beyond my attribution and competence, because the arrangements made at the moment were made by the Ministry of Education in Mauritius. We have the management of education here. But we do not have the management of these colleges. As good Rodriguans, Mr Chairperson, Sir, we are showing a great deal of solidarity towards the students, because those students are our own children, our boys and girls. We are doing our utmost for them and as far as the request of the Member is concerned, I promise that this will be brought to the attention of the Minister of Education on his next visit. Apart from that I can't take any decision to grant the request the Member is making.

The Minority Leader: Mr Chairperson, Sir, the Commissioner said the contract for furniture, fittings, equipment, etc. has been awarded on 19 June. Can we know to whom the contract has been awarded and when will these supplies reach Citron Donis?

Commissioner Roussety: Mr Chairperson, Sir, in answer to the Minority Leader's supplementary question, I am pleased to give the supplementary information. Tenders for the supply of laboratory equipment was voted by the Commission for Education and Training on 13 May 2003 by selected tendering exercise which, I will say,

is an exercise which is quite rigid and exacting. The closing date for the submission of tenders was fixed for 05 June in Mauritius at the Ministry for Rodrigues with a view to expediting matters and as it would not have been practical for tenderers to deposit their bids in Rodrigues. There were 4 selected tenderers. At the first evaluation, two tenders namely from bishwall trading and Chempteck Ltd. were not retained for further evaluation failing to comply with tender instructions. The remaining two from Ducray Lenoir Ltd. and Editions de l'Ocean Indien Ltd. satisfied the conditions and were further evaluated by the Departmental Tender Committee of the Commission for Education and Training. Appropriate advice was sought from specialists from the Ministry of Education and Scientific Research and also from Rodrigues College, which is, of course, a senior college in Rodrigues.

The contract was awarded to Editions de l'Ocean Indien on 19 June 2003. The supplier confirmed his acceptance and informed that the items available ex-stock are being sent by the next shipping arriving in Rodrigues on 09 July. I will give a clarification here. When the contract was awarded to Les Editions de l'Ocean Indien on 19 June, a reply of acceptance was sent to us on 20 June, that is, the following day. On 23 June, arrangements were confirmed by the supplier to say that the equipment from stock was going to be lodged in containers on 26 June – that was fairly quickly. The contract price is one million eighty one thousand and ninety six rupees, but exclude some items which have to be purchased locally or through another tender exercise. The price difference between the two tenders is Rs878,382.90 cs.

The Minority Leader: Mr Chairperson, Sir, can it be concluded that there will be no laboratory problems at Citron Donis College for the beginning of the third term?

Commissioner Roussety: Mr Chairperson, Sir, with the best will in the world, I am not in a position to give such a conclusion. I can only keep my fingers crossed, pray the good Lord above that everything will be all right to the satisfaction of one and all. It is my concern as well as everybody else's concern. I would like to see a job done, concluded to the satisfaction of the House as well as of all the boys and girls and staff at Citron Donis College. *L'homme propose Dieu dispose!*

CADASTRAL UNIT - PLEDGES OF RIGHT

(No. B/243) The Minority Leader (Mr J. Roussety) asked the Chief Commissioner whether as regards, the delivery of “pledges of right” on state land leases by the Cadastral Office in Rodrigues he would make a statement thereon and ascertain whether there was any problem in the delivery of such pledges, and, if not, why delay has occurred recently in a number of such delivery.

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, a pledge of right is a legal commitment which the Lessor (the State) gives to lending institution in case of seizure for the transfer of the leasehold rights in the land to any other eligible person who may become the lawful owner after having acquired it either through sale by levy or otherwise.

On the other hand the pledging of leasehold rights are not granted for the repayment of debts contracted by the Lessee or of any loan contracted by a third party. Loans not directly related to the purpose of the lease, like loans for the purchase of vehicles by residential Lessee are, normally turned down. If there is any delay in the processing of applications for pledge of rights, it is attributable to the lending institutions which submit incomplete and scanty information regarding the loan applied for by their clients. Instruction has been given to the Cadastral Office to advise all lending institutions of all details that they are required to submit to facilitate the processing of their applications for pledge of rights.

The Minority Leader: Mr Chairperson, Sir, something serious is happening there. The Deputy Chief Commissioner has said that there is no problem for housing purposes. But I am aware that there is a big problem. People who have already applied and who have got their loan approved by the MHC, for example, are still waiting for those documents for a long time. We have information that an officer there – I won't mention his name here – is asking for bribes to deliver these documents. Would the Deputy Chief Commissioner investigate to this matter?

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, in May 2003, no pledge of right was issued as the Principal Surveyor requested for clarification from the authority responsible for granting such permission with the coming into force of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly. At the beginning of June, the Cadastral Office was authorised to resume the granting of pledge of rights by signing on behalf of the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Housing and Lands, as was the case prior to the coming into operation of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly pending the ruling of the Legal Adviser. As a matter of fact, a lessee is authorised to construct only one residential housing unit. But if, as said by the Minority Leader, there are officers who are asking for bribes from the lessees to have their pledge of rights signed, they have to go and make a declaration to the Police. This is a matter which concerns the Police.

Mr Emilien: Mr Chairperson, Sir, are we to understand that the Deputy Chief Commissioner does not intend to inquire into the matter?

The Minority Leader: I would add to the question of the Member on an administrative not a criminal point of view.

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, We can go and inquire into the matter if we have proof. There is no evidence that the said officer is asking for bribes. We cannot inquire if we have no proof.

(Interruptions)

You can investigate; but with no proof you will never know if such is the case.

The Minority Leader: Mr Chairperson, Sir, concerning pledges of rights, can we know what is the procedure for making an application and how much time, on average, must these poor people wait to have these?

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, there is no specific time for them to wait. As I have said as from the beginning of June, the authorising officer at the Cadastral Office is doing his best to have all pledges of rights signed if they meet the requirements of the Authority, that is, the lending and financing institutions should give all information concerning the housing loan that the lessee will borrow from them.

The Minority Leader: Mr Chairperson, Sir, has there been delivery of these pledges of rights and has it been going on smoothly?

Mr Chairperson: Please wait, Deputy Chief Commissioner, the Minority Leader is still on his feet.

The Minority Leader: How has delivery of pledges of rights been going on for the last two months? Has it been regular or has there been a pick and choose policy?

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: As I have stated in my answer, Mr Chairperson, Sir, in May 2003 no pledges of rights were issued, because the Principal surveyor requested for clarification from the State Law Office and the Legal Adviser. We have sought legal advice and now the Principal surveyor is in a position to have the pledges of rights signed and given to the lessees. As from the beginning of June, the signature of pledges of rights is going on smoothly.

The Minority Leader: Mr Chairperson, Sir, this is a serious matter. The Deputy Chief Commissioner has said that clarification has been sought from the State Law Officer. Can we ask him, if he is aware, of course - some people are not aware of some matters – which clarification has been sought?

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, it was normally the Island Chief Executive who signed leases. With the coming into force of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly, we have had to ask clarification on the authorised Officer that will be responsible for signature of lease and pledge of right. We are awaiting advice from the State Law Office and Legal Adviser to know if the Departmental Head of the Commissioner responsible for Land is authorised for such a signature. But pending this ruling, it is the authorising Officer of the Cadastral Office who is signing these pledges of rights.

Mr Jabeemissar: Mr Chairperson, Sir, being given that everything is clear now on his part and that instructions have been given to the banks or lending institutions so that they comply with the regulations, can the Deputy Chief Commissioner assure the

House that from now onward there will be no problem in the Cadastral Office for the delivery of pledges of rights to people?

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: The Cadastral Office has written to the lending institutions asking them to make sure that all information required regarding the loan are included in all documents that are sent to the Cadastral Office. I think that will go on smoothly.

The Minority Leader: Mr Chairperson, Sir, was there a conflict between the Ministry of Housing and Lands and the Executive Council regarding the delivery of these pledges of rights?

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: I am not aware of any conflict. We are just seeking for clarification on the signature of these documents.

BAIE DU NORD (MT PLATE) - ROCK QUARRY

(No. B/244) Mr G. Jabeemissar (Second Local Region Member for La Ferme) asked the Chief Commissioner whether, as regards the disposal of dug soil at the rock quarry of (Mt. Plate) Baie du Nord, he would -

- (a) say if an EIA had been carried out at the place where rocks are now being removed and soil deposited, and
- (b) inform the House whether the law was being complied with with regard to the above activities.

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson Sir, as regards part (a), I am informed that an EIA licence study had been carried out on the rock quarry at Montagne Plate (Baie du Nord) and an E.I.A. licence granted to Welcome Industries on the 2nd August, 1995.

With regard to part (b), the stone quarrying activities are being monitored by the Environment Division to ensure compliance with the provision of the E.I.A.

Mr Jabeemissar: Mr Chairperson, Sir, it is quite surprising to note that the EIA has been carried out a very long time ago. The problem I am specifying now is on the impact on the environment. For example, the work carried out there is being done everyday even very late at night. People living there have been complaining not only of dust pollution but also of noise pollution. It is a very grave problem. That is why I wanted to know whether an EIA is being carried out. According to the answer given by the Deputy Chief Commissioner, it does not take into consideration the problem faced by the people. Can the Deputy Chief Commissioner look into that matter to see how far the people in that region are being affected by the pollution?

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, different measures are being taken to ensure that there are no problems to the surrounding environment. First the excavated soil presently deposited on top of Mt. Plate will be utilised by Welcome Industries to reinstate and rehabilitate the site after exploitation as it is said in the EIA licence. Secondly, I would like to inform the respected Member that the EIA licence was granted by the Ministry of Environment in Mauritius but not by the Commission of Environment in Rodrigues. In this respect the Friends of Wildlife also have been awarded a contract to rehabilitate the site with endemic plants. A first phase of rehabilitation has been carried out on the mountain flank versant Pistaches where a retaining wall and peripheral drain have been constructed. A Technical Officer is constantly monitoring the mitigation measures proposed to limit erosion in the EIA report; and as a temporary measure, Welcome Industries have planted Batatrand creepers to contain the piled soil thus prevented it from being eroded during heavy rain.

Mr Jabeemissar: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I am very satisfied with the measures the Deputy Chief Commissioner has just mentioned; these measures are going to restore the place. I can assure the House that the way soil is being disposed of is a matter of great concern to the people of the locality. We should not forget, for example, in the recent past when there was heavy rain how all the drains near the road of Montée Baie du Nord have been obstructed and how damage was caused to traffic as well to the marine environment there. Could the Deputy Chief Commissioner investigate as to whether the way soil is being disposed of now complies with the existing environment laws? I know that no retaining wall has been built to retain the soil where it is now being deposited.

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, from the comments of the respected Member, I will look into the matter.

Mr Emilien: Mr Chairperson, Sir, there is a very paradoxical situation concerning this matter. The Government is spending money for the dredging of passes, for planting of mangroves to prevent erosion in the lagoon. On the other side, excavated soil is being deposited in such a way that during heavy rainfall the whole thing goes to the sea. Can the Deputy Chief Commissioner inform the House what measures have been taken to remedy this paradoxical situation? Secondly, has Welcome Industries informed the authorities when the excavated soil will be disposed of?

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I need notice of that question.

Mr Grandcourt: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I would like to ask the Deputy Chief Commissioner whether the EIA has taken into consideration the farmers who are now on Mt. Plate.

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, as I have said we will look into the matter and the problem of the farmers will be considered.

Mr Emilien: Mr Chairperson, Sir, can the Deputy Chief Commissioner inform the House if it is mentioned to remove rocks at a certain depth or are Welcome Industries going to pull down the whole mountain there?

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: No, Mr Chairperson, Sir, the progress of work concerning the removal of rocks has not been stated.

The Minority Leader: Mr Chairperson, Sir, the Deputy Chief Commissioner stated that the EIA licence has been granted by the Ministry of Environment prior to the setting up of the Regional Assembly. We know that one of the Regional Assembly's priorities is the environment. There has been a Memorandum of Understanding with the Ministry of Environment. Does it mean that if this firm is actually in breach of environmental laws in Rodrigues, he will not intervene because the EIA licence was granted by the Ministry of Environment? What about the *Police de l'Environnement*? What are they doing? I was in that region two nights ago at about 11 o'clock in the evening on the coast at Baie du Nord and there were noises.

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, as I have stated a Technical Officer is constantly monitoring the mitigation measures and in case there is non compliance with the above conditions, the licence may be withdrawn.

Mr Emilien: Mr Chairperson, Sir, the Deputy Chief Commissioner has informed the House that it is not mentioned in the EIA licence to what depth Welcome Industries will remove rocks. Can he inform the House if he intends to inquire into the matter and see whether they are going to dig to sea level or whatever?

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, as I have stated we will look into the matter. I'll inform the respected Member that the EIA report is available at the Environment Division if he wants to seek other information.

Mr Jabeemissar: Mr Chairperson, Sir, can the Deputy Chief Commissioner inform the House whether - now that we have got our autonomous status - the Executive Council has identified other rock quarries in Rodrigues which will not put at stake the environment....

(Interruptions)

Mr Chairperson: Can the Member be allowed to put his question, please?

Mr Jabeemissar: ...whether other sites have been identified so that in the future rocks quarrying may be done without putting at stake the environment of our beloved country?

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir this has been the concern of the Environment Committee. Site visits are being made and I think that the suggestions of the respected Member will be met in the near future.

STATE LAND - RESIDENTIAL LEASE - ALLOCATION

(No. B/245) Mr G. Jabeemisar (Second Local Region Member for La Ferme) asked the Chief Commissioner whether, following the many complaints received from members of the public with regard to the difficulty for obtaining a residential or any other lease of state land, he would inform the House of -

- (a) the procedures currently in place to apply for a lease;
- (b) the average time an applicant has to wait before being granted a lease.

The Deputy Chief Commissioner, Mr Chairperson Sir, any person willing to apply for a lease has to fill in the prescribed form available at the Land Section of the Central Administration. Copies of application forms are being tabled for the information of the House. (*Appendix II*).

Mr Chairperson, Sir, there is no specific time frame for the allocation of leases due to the fact that there are only three surveyors at the Cadastral Office to survey all building sites.

Mr Jabeemisar: Mr Chairperson, Sir, can the Deputy Chief Commissioner inform the House about the number of applicants now waiting for their lease - any type of lease - and can he also state the different types of application?

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I am not aware of the number of applicants who are waiting for a lease.

MT. CROUPIER – NUMBER OF INHABITANTS, MEETING PLACE, ETC.

(No. B/246) Mr G. Jabeemisar (Second Local Region Member) asked the Commissioner responsible for Community Development whether -

- (a) she could inform the House of the number of families living in the village of Mt. Croupier and its surroundings, and
- (b) she is aware that the people living there have no sheltered place for their social and religious meetings and, if yes, what measures she intends to take to remedy same.

Commissioner Roussety: Mr Chairperson Sir, in the absence of my respected and beloved colleague, the Commissioner responsible for Community Development, I shall give the reply on her behalf.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, there is no official statistics on the number of families living in the village of Mt. Croupier and its surroundings.

As regard part (b) of the question, I am informed that the people living at Mt. Croupier utilise two kiosks located in the green space at Pistaches for their social activities. At the last elections for the establishment of village committees, Mt. Croupier was clustered with the village of Pistaches. As you may be aware, these elections are supervised by the Rodrigues Council of Social Service. There are other instances where more than one locality is clustered under one village committee.

Mr Jabeemissar: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I know that in the recent past the Rodrigues Council of Social Service has agreed to grant the village of Mt Croupier the status of village committee, because before that, as the Commissioner stated, they were clustered with that of Pistaches. Now, as you are aware, Mt Croupier is not far from Pistaches, that is why I wanted to know how many families live there and whether they deserve to have their own village committee. I can assure the House that the people there had built a small kiosk, but this has been damaged by cyclones. That is why these people find it difficult to go from Mt. Croupier to Pistaches – even Pistaches is not a proper place for social gathering and so on. I want to know whether the Commissioner intends to, at least, repair the kiosk which exists there and which is in a bad state.

Commissioner Roussety: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I hope that the Members on the Minority bench will appreciate the fact that I am only standing in for my colleague. But I would like to add that, from previous experience in the Rodrigues Council of Social Service – the respected Member would remember that I succeeded him as secretary for two years and he is certainly well aware of the procedure for granting any locality the status of village. You have got the number of inhabitants and normally the procedure is not for the RCSS to just go out and look for isolated villages and hamlets say: well, we are going to give the status of a village committee. Normally, people send in a letter or a petition signed by members of the families and so on. I am aware that, for example, small hamlets like Chateau des Fleurs wanted to have the status of village committee. Of course, I hope that the respected Member will be indulgent and spare me all the sticks considering that my colleague, the Commissioner responsible for Community Development, is absent, and perhaps he will be indulgent enough and reserve any further questions.

PT. BUTTE - EX-CORAL CUTTERS

(No. B/247) Mr G. Jabeemissar (Second Local Region Member for La Ferme) asked the Commissioner responsible, *inter alia*, for Social Security whether as regards the ex-coral cutters of Petite Butte, he could state -

- (a) the amount of compensation paid to them, and
- (b) whether there was in place any scheme of continued assistance for their benefit and give a statement thereon.

Commissioner Mercure: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I am informed that Government has decided to ban calcarenite deposit in Rodrigues as from 1st January 2002 in view of the ecological damage caused to the environment.

Following this decision, a socio-economic survey was jointly undertaken by the Trust Fund for the Integration of the Vulnerable Groups and the Management Audit Bureau of the Ministry of Finance on the 24 persons that were engaged in this activity to determine the compensation to be paid to them.

With regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed that each person was paid an ex-gratia amount representing one-month salary for each year engaged in this activity. The overall amount paid was Rs690,400.

With regard to part (b), I am also informed that some of the ex-block cutters have been reconverted into block makers under the Trust Fund Programme. There is no continued assistance scheme for any of the block-cutters as they were compensated as explained earlier.

However, it should be made clear that this matter was handled by the Trust Fund for the Integration of the Vulnerable Groups and not by the Social Security; and that any request for further details should be addressed to the National Assembly.

Mr Jabeemissar: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I understand that the Commission for Social Welfare in Rodrigues does not want to bind itself to help these people if ever they feel the need for. Being given that these people had their own way of earning their living, they have been given the opportunity to choose another job – that is very good. I know these people, because they carry out their activities not far from where I live. There is a water problem; they have not got a direct prise from the network; they have not yet been supplied with electricity; there are 24 persons working and everything is being done manually. The blocks are purchased from Welcome Industries. That is why I wanted to know whether there is any sort of monitoring to see whether this job is worthwhile, whether it is sustainable in the long term. What does the Commission intend to do in order to help? I know the OPR government is known to be helping people in this country!

Commissioner Mercure: Mr Chairperson, Sir, this is under the Trust Fund Programme. The Social Security is not going to provide water to these persons to carry out their duties. We have not compensated these people; they have been compensated by the Ministry of Finance. I don't see how the Social Security will give them pension; if they are not earning their living, they have got to abandon their activities and ask for an unemployment allocation. I don't see how the Social Security can give them water and so on.

The Minority Leader: Mr Chairperson, Sir, est-ce que c'est une démission devant le travail social que l'Assemblée Régionale, le Conseil Exécutif doit faire. On n'a pas demandé au commissaire de donner de l'argent. Le membre a demandé au

commissaire de faciliter la tâche de ces personnes qui ont monté une petite entreprise de fabrication de blocs à travers sa Commission – pas une assistance financière, ou directe. Par exemple, ils veulent l'électricité, il faut qu'ils investissent une dizaine de milliers de roupies. C'est une démission de la part du commissaire – *I am not imputing motives ...*

Mr Chairperson: You should not make it a debate.

The Minority Leader *Yes, of course.* C'est une démission de sa part de ne pas vouloir aider ces gens et de répondre de cette façon.

Commissioner Mercure: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I am not responsible for industrial development. If these persons are in need of electricity, they just have to go to the CEB; it is not the Social Security which is going to provide them with electricity.

Mr Jabeemissar: Mr Chairperson, Sir, will the Commissioner assure the House that if ever these people will undertake any *démarche* to get water prise or electricity, will he see that they get due consideration?

Commissioner Mercure: Mr Chairperson, Sir, these persons should go to the appropriate Commission to get water or electricity; it is not the Social Security.

Mr Jabeemissar: Mr Chairperson, Sir, it seems that the Commissioner for Social Security is not....

Mr Chairperson: This is question time. I have been very lenient. You should be precise. I have also to inform you that we have reached one third of the total amount of questions and we have used half of the time.

Mr Emilien: I wanted to say that in the past fishermen have been compensated; for most of them God knows where the money had gone. Thanks God for these ex-coral cutters; they have been reinvesting their money. Any person with a common sense should praise their initiative. Does not the Commissioner for Social Security think that they should be helped? For example, they have bought new equipment to carry out their activities. They need some Rs70,000 to pay to the CEB to have electricity. We are not asking the Commissioner to give them these Rs70,000 to pay the CEB, but at least to monitor their activities and to help them morally.

Commissioner Mercure: Mr Chairperson, Sir, the Social Security does not monitor any activity or any industrial development. I don't see how the Social Security can help these people.

HOSPITALS AND HEALTH CENTRES - DOCTORS AND SPECIASLISTS

(No. B/248) Mrs M. T. Meunier (Second Island Region Member) asked the Commissioner responsible for Health whether he would, for the benefit of the House, state –

- (a) the number of doctors in our hospital and health centres in Rodrigues;
- (b) how many of them are specialist doctors; and
- (c) what was the doctor/patient ratio for the period October 2002 – June 2003.

Commissioner Sooprayen: Mr Chairperson, Sir, with regard to part (a) of the question there are fifteen (15) doctors posted to the Health Services at this moment. The Post of Health Director which will be filled shortly will bring the total figure to 16.

As regards part (b), five (5) of the doctors are specialists.

With regard to part (c), the doctor/patient ratio for the period October 2002 – June 2003 is 40:1, that is, 40 patients per doctor per day.

Mr Emilien: Mr Chairperson, Sir, can the Commissioner inform the House in what field are these specialists?

Commissioner Sooprayen: Mr Chairperson, Sir, the specialists are classified as follows-

- One specialist General Medicine
- One specialist Paediatrics
- One specialist Gynaecologist
- One specialist General Surgery
- One specialist Anaesthesia

Mr Emilien: Mr Chairperson, Sir, according to the Ministry of Health Regulations, can the Commissioner inform the House who are the specialists who are supposed to visit Rodrigues regularly?

Commissioner Sooprayen: Mr Chairperson, Sir, there is another question on this subject.

Mr Chairperson: Can I have the reference, please?

Commissioner Sooprayen: It is B/254.

Mr Chairperson: So, you would be replying to that question as well.

Commissioner Sooprayen: The proposed programme of work for visiting specialists to Rodrigues for the next six months, that is, July to December is as follows –

- One ENT Orthodontics
- Radiotherapy
- Psychiatry
- Ophthalmology

Orthopaedic
Plastic Surgery
Cardiology
Dermatology
Physical Medicine plus Orthopaedic workshop

Mr Emilien: My question was not about the programme of visits. Who are the specialists, according to the rules and regulations of the Ministry of Health, who are supposed to visit Rodrigues regularly? Are they these specialists that the Commissioner has mentioned?

Commissioner Sooprayen: Mr Chairperson, Sir, these specialists are coming soon.

Mr Chairperson: I inform the Fourth Island Region Member that as the question is being answered, supplementary questions are welcome.

The Minority Leader: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I would apologise if I am a bit technical. If the Commissioner can't answer, I'll understand. He said that the doctor/patient ratio is 1:40. I have read a document from the WHO this morning and it is said that the criteria used to describe a patient is that somebody who is ill, goes to the doctor once and then when that person comes back, he is considered as a patient. If he goes to see a doctor twice, he is considered as a patient. Ninety per cent of the population would be patients. So, I would like to ask the Commissioner whether the ratio 1:40 is not wrong given that practice of the WHO. I believe the doctor-patient ratio should be calculated: population of Rodrigues divided by the number of doctors. Is not the Commissioner misleading the House on this matter?

Commissioner Sooprayen: Mr Chairperson, Sir, may I inform the dignified Minority Leader that the doctor/patient ratio for the period of January 2002 to June 2003. As regards the doctor patient ratio, it is 1.40

DRUGS (PHARMACEUTICAL) - SHORTAGE

(No. B/249) Mrs M. T. Meunier (Second Island Region Member) asked the Commissioner responsible for Health whether he would say if -

- (a) there has recently been any lack of medical drugs in the hospital and health centres in Rodrigues; and
- (b) if yes; (i) state what these drugs were and why the lack thereof; and (ii) whether there has been any adverse consequences on the treatment of patients.

Commissioner Sooprayen: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I am informed that no lack of drugs has been reported in Queen Elizabeth Hospital and other Area Health Centres.

CRIMINAL OFFENCES – 2002-2003

(No. B/250) Mrs M. T. Meunier (Second Island Region Member) asked the Chief Commissioner whether, he would, for the benefit of the House, state –

- (a) how many criminal offences involving rape, assault and robbery have been committed during the period 2002-2003;
- (b) what categories of people are generally involved in these cases

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson Sir, I am informed by the Police that the number of criminal offences involving rape, assault and robbery committed during period 2002-2003 amounts to 1015 cases.

I am further informed that the cases mentioned above see the involvement of persons of both sexes, including adults as well as juveniles from all the social backgrounds of the community.

(Interruptions)

Mr Chairperson: No personal attack, please.

CHILDREN NOT ATTENDING PRIMARY SCHOOLS

(No. B/251) Mrs M. T. Meunier (Second Island region member) asked the Commissioner for Education whether he would, for the benefit of the House, say -

- (a) how many children between the age of 5 -12 were not attending primary school presently;
- (b) the reasons therefor, and
- (c) what measures he proposed to take to eradicate that problem.

Commissioner Roussety: Mr Chairperson, Sir, all children between the age of 5 and 12 must, in accordance with present legislation, attend school. Once these children enter the main educational stream, they stay until they complete their primary education.

With the reform in the education sector, education up to the age of 16 will be compulsory as from January 2006. No cases of children not attending school have been reported yet except for minor absences for medical reasons. However, my Commission will, with the collaboration of the Commission for Social Security, look into cases if ever there is any.

As regards parts (b) and (c) of the question, my information is that, with the coming into force of new legislation at the national level for child labour, all children will have to attend school and not be allowed to work.

Mr Jabeemissar: Mr Chairperson, Sir, could the Commissioner for Education inform the House what screening measures are being done in order to ensure that every child between the age of 5 to 12 goes to school?

Commissioner Roussety: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I would remind the House and the respected Members and colleagues of the Minority party that education policy is formulated nationally. Whatever measures proposed by the Ministry of Education in the Republic of Mauritius for enforcement will be enforced in Rodrigues on the same level as in the mainland Mauritius and in Agalega. At the moment I would like to bring to the attention of the House the fact that there has been a small number of children who have not been registered at birth. And those children, of course, are deprived of the social facilities either concerning hospitals and schools in particular, because they have to produce their birth certificate. But I know for a fact that *Action Familiale*, for example, is doing a wonderful job to detect and to encourage people to have even late registration of birth of their children so that they may benefit from the facilities offered by the State. I can assure the House that no effort will be spared in making sure that children do receive an education, that school is made really attractive so that children will be interested to attend.

Mrs Prosper: Mr Chairperson, Sir, does the Commissioner have records for children who absent schools regularly?

Commissioner Roussety: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I suppose there must be statistics, but then of course I have not got them. The respected Member would probably bear with me if I don't have the figures. But the figures certainly do exist and are available. If I am given notice, I shall certainly be pleased to produce these figures on a future occasion.

Mr Emilien: Mr Chairperson, Sir, in our RCA schools in Rodrigues we have a programme called "*Accompagnement Scolaire*" – I don't know whether it exists in Government schools – where education agents attend to pupils who absent themselves regularly from schools. Does the Commissioner for Education receive those statistics from the RCA schools to know whether there are cases of children not attending schools at all?

Commissioner Roussety: Mr Chairperson, Sir, as I have just stated probably those figures are stated or can be supplied if they are asked for. As I have said, if notice is given I shall be only too pleased to find out those figures and to produce them for the benefit of the House.

PORT SUD EST- WATER LOGGING

(No. B/252) Mr J. Pierre Louis (Fourth Island Region Member) asked the Commissioner for Education, whether, with regard to recent rains which have caused water logging in the river valley of Port Sud Est, he would state, the measures he is taking to drain the region to facilitate agricultural pursuits by the planters there.

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, following several complaints I had received from the planters of Port Sud Est to the fact that their land are water logged, I have carried out a site visit some two weeks back with officers of my Commission.

Subsequently my Commission has found that the main drain, which normally intercepts all the surface water, was completely blocked. I personally intervened in that matter and the drain was desilted last week.

PORT SUD EST - BRIDGE

(No. B/253) Mr J. Pierre Louis (Fourth Island Region Member) asked the Deputy Chief Commissioner whether, as regards the bridge mentioned in the budget 2003-2004 to be constructed at Port Sud Est, he would inform the House when same is due to start.

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I am informed that preliminary works in connection with the construction of a bridge at Port Sud Est have already started. Survey works have already been started and will be completed shortly. It is expected that works on site would start in September this year. I am further pleased to inform this House that my Commission has further decided to construct a single lane vehicular traffic bridge instead of a footbridge.

Mr Emilien: Mr Chairperson, Sir, can the Deputy Chief Commissioner inform the House of the exact location of the bridge in the village of Port Sud Est?

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, the bridge is situated in Port Sud Est at about 500 mts from the road leading to the school.

SPECIALISTS –PROGRAMME OF VISITS TO RODRIGUES

(No. B/254) Mr J. Pierre Louis (Fourth Island Region Member) asked the Commissioner responsible for Health whether he would inform the House of the current programme of visits of specialists to Rodrigues and of the measures he had taken or intended to take to deal with urgent cases whenever specialists were not available here.

Commissioner Sooprayen: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I understand that part of the question has already been answered **(Question B/248)**.

Mr Chairperson: It is over now.

Mr Pierre Louis: The other part of the question has not been answered. May I ask the Commissioner to

Mr Chairperson: With due respect to you, I made a mention that supplementary questions should be asked. But the question is over now.

PUBLIC LIBRARIES & DOCUMENTATION CENTRE – LAST ACQUISITION OF BOOKS

(No. B/255) Mr L. P. Francois (First Local Region Member for Baie Aux Huitres) asked the Commissioner responsible for Education, whether, as regards the Port Mathurin Public Library and the Documentation Centre at Malabar, the Commissioner would state when the last acquisition of books, magazines and other reading materials was made.

Commissioner Roussety: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I am informed that the last acquisition of books for all the libraries in Rodrigues was made by my Commission in May this year and in addition to books, subscriptions for magazines such as “Readers Digest”, “Santé”, “Femme Actuelle”, “Paris Match”, “Times” have also been made. I would also inform the House that for the past five years, these magazines were not made available to the public. These magazines will be of great assistance to our students and keep them abreast of all developments in the world, while at the same time allowing people attending libraries to have a greater variety of reading materials.

As regards the Documentation Centre at Malabar, it complements the functions of the CLAC (*Centre de Lecture et d'Animation Culturelle*), which is situated adjacent to it. This is a specialist library mainly for professionals and students of upper forms. The last acquisitions for this Centre were made in June this year.

Mr Emilien: Mr Chairperson, Sir, it is being rumoured that magazines are ...

Mr Chairperson: You cannot refer to rumours.

Mr Emilien: I have got information that the magazines – at least some of them – are read by many people before they reach the libraries. Can the Commissioner for Education inform the House what is the delay between the receipt of the magazines and their availability in libraries?

Commissioner Roussety: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I must say that I am not particularly aware of this kind of going on. But I must say also that in the past people who subscribed to certain magazines kindly donated them to the libraries after they had read them. I can assure the House that with the start of the new subscriptions they will arrive brand new like *virgo intacta* into our libraries.

The Minority Leader: For the sake of clarity, Mr Chairperson, Sir, would it be possible for the Commissioner to give instructions for a list of the magazines regularly available at the libraries to be affixed at these centres so that readers are aware which magazines are regularly coming?

Commissioner Roussety: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I certainly take note of the comment of the respected Leader of the Minority Party. We will do the necessary on that and let them know which magazines are available, as I have just mentioned a little while earlier.

I would also like to give this supplementary information for the edification of Members of the House. The last acquisitions were made in May this year for a sum of about Rs160,000. In all four volumes of each reading book were purchased for all the libraries. The libraries are “Le Cygne”, “Allot Edition”, “Le Printemps” and “Editions de l’Océan Indien”. In addition, subscriptions have been made for one year for magazines such as the Reader’s Digest, Femme Actuelle, Santé Magazine, Times, Newsweek and Paris Match through their representatives in Mauritius. All these magazines have been carefully chosen and selected as they contain certainly a lot of information for the intellectual edification of our young people who should really get as much information about what is going on in the world today. The Documentation Centre will be a professional library mainly for professionals and students of higher classes as I have already stated.

The Minority Leader: Mr Chairperson, Sir, are local newspapers printed or edited in Rodrigues available in these libraries regularly?

Commissioner Roussety: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I am at a loss to answer this question and I shall certainly check and confirm at a later date.

Mr Emilien: Mr Chairperson, Sir, concerning the display of the list of magazines in libraries, could the Commissioner consider the possibility of extending the same facilities to colleges?

Commissioner Roussety: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I do appreciate my colleague’s concern for these magazines to be made available in the colleges. But unfortunately our budget does not allow us to do that. All colleges receive grants; they are all private secondary schools.

(Interruptions)

The list! I do beg your pardon for not understanding, because people were talking left, right and centre. So, I missed the exact point of the Member’s intervention. Certainly the list will be made available. As you know we do make publicity in schools, because our readers come mainly from secondary schools. I promise the House that the list will be made available and circulated in all secondary schools.

ROAD NETWORK

(No. B/256) Mr L. P. Francois (First Local Region Member for Baie aux Huitres) asked the Deputy Chief Commissioner whether he would make a brief statement on the actions taken to make the road network of Rodrigues safer for pedestrians and vehicles.

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir I would like to inform this House that, further to the Executive Council decision to set up a Road Safety Committee under my chairmanship, the Committee met last month during which several decisions were taken to ensure that the road network of Rodrigues are safer for pedestrians and vehicles.

- (1) To review the traffic flow within Port Mathurin area.
- (2) The installation of proper traffic signs around the island.
- (3) The implementation of road repairs and a road marking programme.
- (4) The possibility of forbidding the entrance of very old vehicles in Rodrigues.
- (5) The identification of all black spots in Rodrigues where accidents frequently occur.
- (6) Carrying out of a sensitization programme on road safety in schools.
- (7) The possibility of having specific times for loading and unloading of goods within Port Mathurin.
- (8) The provision of additional street lighting throughout the island.

In that connection a technical committee under the chairmanship of one Engineer from the Traffic Management Unit, Mauritius together with local authorities and Divisions has been set up. The committee has been requested to provide concrete recommendations for implementation.

Mr Emilien: Mr Chairperson, Sir, it seems that – from the reply the Deputy Chief Commissioner has just given – school children have not been taken into consideration. Can the Deputy Chief Commissioner inform the House whether he envisages the construction of overhead footbridges near primary and secondary schools as well?

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, as I said, we have had only two meetings and this will be one of our priorities during other meetings.

Mr Jabeemissar: Mr Chairperson, Sir, being given that we are talking about safety for pedestrians and vehicles, may I ask the Deputy Chief Commissioner whether he is aware that the road from Grand La Fouche to La Ferme is very dangerous both for pedestrians and vehicles? The road has been damaged on both sides at Citadelle precisely; there is no pavement there for pedestrians and it is a very narrow road.

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, we have a list of roads that need repairs and this road is on the list recommended by the Committee; and works will start soon.

The Minority Leader: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I would like to ask the Commissioner whether he is aware that a number of vertical traffic signs are in the bush at La Ferme, for example. There is a speed limit sign which is in the bush. In some parts of Rodrigues, the signs are completely rusted. Is he aware of the bad maintenance of these signs? Can I know who is responsible for the maintenance of these traffic signs?

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, as I have said we have set up a Road Safety Committee and all that the Minority Leader is saying has been recommended by that Committee. Actions will be taken in due time – very soon.

The Minority Leader: Mr Chairperson, Sir, the citizens are constantly at risk because of big holes on the roads and bad maintenance of traffic signs. Which authority or department is responsible for the maintenance of these traffic signs? If there is no office, the Deputy Chief Commissioner should tell us; he should not tell us that actions will be taken very soon.

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, as I have said the Road Safety Committee under the Commission of Public Infrastructure is responsible for the safety of roads. But we cannot take all the clerks, all bankers to go and fix all the traffic signs and do the patching of roads. Pending the availability of workers, there is an established programme to have these roads patched and the traffic signs rehabilitated in their original places. They should wait; we cannot do all things at the same time. You have a programme of Economics in school, it takes time to finish the programme.

The Minority Leader: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I am speaking about maintenance. This is serious. This is an indication how this country is being managed, how the machinery of Government is working. The traffic signs are in the bush at La Ferme, for example... in other regions also. I want to know who – I am not asking clerks to paint traffic signs, it is not their duty – is responsible for that matter. He is responsible for public infrastructure. Is there somebody at present at the level of his Commission who is responsible for maintaining, identifying places where these should be repaired or new ones be put?

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, there are officers of the Road Traffic Branch in the Road Safety Committee. These officers do the site visits on the roads and they report to the Road Safety Committee. As I said, the Minority Leader should wait, because works take time to be done. We have established a Road Safety committee, because we are aware of these problems; there is vandalism on traffic signs, on public utilities. Things will be done in all places in due time.

Mr Jabeemissar: M. le président si nous essayons d'avoir une réponse claire et précise sur cette affaire c'est parce que - le Deputy Chief Commissioner doit être d'accord avec moi – nous connaissons tous les nids de poule qu'il y a à Rodrigues. Mais nous devons tenir en compte que le pays est visité tous les jours par les étrangers qui utilisent des véhicules. Ils ne doivent pas savoir là où les routes sont endommagées, là où il n'y a pas des signaux. Certainement cela va mettre en péril la sécurité des gens. C'est pourquoi donc nous insistons à ce que les mesures soient prises le plus tôt possible. Voilà pourquoi on n'a pas droit au retard.

Mr Chairperson: This was not a question.

Mr Emilien: Mr Chairperson, Sir, in Rodrigues we are accustomed to the actual state of our roads as my friend just said and now we are having new roads. People tend to accelerate on new roads. I understand that the Road Safety Committee has met only twice. Of course not everything has been considered. Can the Deputy Chief Commissioner inform the House whether he intends to consider the installation of speed breakers in Rodrigues where the roads are straight?

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, as I have said this is one of the priorities of the Road Safety Committee that will be discussed at the next meeting. As the respected Member has said, speed breakers are important to prevent people from accelerating. We are looking into the matter. I would like to say also that speed breakers should be accompanied with a system of lighting above. This is why we will consider the matter and we will seek the availability of funds for the installation of speed breakers where they are needed.

**JARDIN MAMZELLE VILLAGE - TRACK ROAD,
TELEPHONE SERVICE & ACCESS ROAD**

(No. B/257) Mr L. P. Francois (First Local Region Member for Baie aux Huitres) asked the Deputy Chief Commissioner whether, as regards the village of Jardin Mamzelle, he would see to it that –

- (a) trees along the track road from Oyster Bay Breeding Centre to Jardin Mamzelle are pruned as a matter of security;
- (b) private and public telephone facilities are made available to the village, and
- (c) the access road from Union to Jardin Mamzelle is upgraded.

The Deputy Chief Commissioner, Mr Chairperson, Sir, I am informed that with regard to the village of Jardin Mamzelle –

- (a) the Forestry Division will carry out pruning works as soon as pruning along the main roads of Rodrigues has been completed.
- (b) private telephone will be made available to all prospective customers at latest by end of July 2003. As regards public telephone facilities, I am further informed that the Mauritius Telecom is carrying out a survey in line with ICTA Regulations as to whether the need for installing same will arise after provision of private lines.
- (c) my Commission has been requested to include in the programme of road maintenance for this financial year the access road from Union to Jardin Mamzelle. The tarring of the road will be looked into during the next financial year subject to funds being made available.

The Minority Leader: Mr Chairperson, Sir, there is one part of the road from Oyster Bay Agricultural Station to Upper Jardin Mamzelle before reaching Union which

is the track road. Will the Deputy Chief Commissioner consider the tarring of the lower part, that is, the track road?

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, when we say that the tarring of the road will be looked into during the next financial year, I have not said part of the road. The tarring of road is from the beginning to the end.

PTE COTON/GRAVIERS/RIVIERE COCO/MT LUBIN - BUS SHELTERS

(No. B/258) Mr D. L. Guillaume (Third Island Region Member) asked the Deputy Chief Commissioner whether, in view of difficulties faced by bus travellers because of the vagaries of the weather to catch the bus along the road from Pte Coton to Mt. Lubin, from Graviers to Mt. Lubin and from Riviere Coco to Mt. Lubin via Port Sud Est and St. Gabriel, the Commissioner could state –

- (a) how many bus shelters had been constructed along these roads and state their locations;
- (b) whether he considered these adequate and, if not, what measures were being taken or would be taken to remedy the situation.

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir I am informed that six bus shelters have been constructed along the roads from Pte Coton to Mt. Lubin, from Graviers to Mt. Lubin and from Rivière Coco to Mt. Lubin via Port Sud Est and are located as follows –

- 2 at Mt Lubin
- 1 at Grande Montagne
- 1 at Brûlée
- 1 at Roche Bon Dieu
- 1 at Port Sud Est

My Commission is presently carrying out a survey to identify places for the construction of bus shelters all around the island. The survey is being carried by a sub-technical committee of the Road Safety Committee and is expected to produce a report by the end of July 2003.

GRANDE MONTAGNE/PORT SUD EST - SPORTS FACILITIES

(No. B/259) Mr D. L. Guillaume (Third Island Region Member) asked the Commissioner responsible for Youth & Sports whether, with regard to difficulties faced by young sportsmen in the region of Grande Montagne and Port Sud Est to have access to sports facilities, he would say what infrastructural facilities were planned to facilitate the pursuit of sports in these villages.

Commissioner Lisette: Mr Chairperson, Sir, in fact, my Commission has received no complaint so far from sportsmen about lack of access to sport facilities in

Port Sud Est and Grande Montagne. Nevertheless, with a view to providing more sports facilities, my Commission will be undertaking the complete renovation of Grande Montagne complex, including the provision of lighting for night training sessions. This will also involve the construction of a handball court. As regards Port Sud Est, it is planned to fence and level the football ground in the future.

3RD DIVISION FOOTBALL TOURNAMENT – MATCHES PLAYED, FOOTBALL GROUNDS, ETC.

(No. B/260) Mr J. A. L. Emilien (First Local Region Member for Marechal) asked the Commissioner responsible for Youth & Sports whether, as regards the current 3rd Division Football Tournament, he could state –

- (a) the number of matches played so far and the football grounds involved; and
- (b) whether any football match has been cancelled or postponed and, if yes, the reasons therefor and the steps taken, if any, to avoid the recurrence of such a situation.

Commissioner Lisette: Mr Chairperson, Sir, as regards part (a), there is no 3rd Division Football Tournament as such. Those teams which are not involved in 1st and 2nd Division Leagues have been grouped in a zone system tournament. I have been informed that –

Number of matches scheduled to be played	77
Number of matches played	35
Number of matches postponed	2

As regards part (b), I would like to remind the respected Member that there has not been any official competition of football in the island for nearly one year. However, for the time being there are about 20 matches every weekend including those for women.

One match at La Ferme was postponed due to non-availability of referees and the one postponed in Zone I was due to non-attendance of referees.

In fact, every necessary measure has been taken by my Commission and the organising body, that is the Rodrigues football Committee. Transport facilities are being provided to convey referees to and from the sites of the competition. Moreover, in an attempt to avoid any match from being postponed, the Rodrigues Regional Football Committee has scheduled a set of meetings since last week in each zone which aims at sensitising the referees to undertake their duties in a professional manner. It would be proposed in future tournaments that referees enter into a contract with the Committee beforehand with specified conditions which are to be determined with all stakeholders.

Matches are played on the following football grounds –

- (i) La Ferme ;
- (ii) Rivière Coco ;

- (iii) Marechal ;
- (iv) Grande Montagne ;
- (v) Baie aux Huitres, and
- (vi) Roche Bon Dieu

Mr Emilien: Mr Chairperson, Sir, from the reply to question B/187 of 27 May last, in reply to a question concerning the postponement of a football match at Marechal the Commissioner for sport said, I quote –

“An inquiry has been initiated to find out the causes of the problem. However, in the meantime and in order to avoid such a situation from happening again, my Commission and the Rodrigues Regional football Committee have already set up committees in each region which will be responsible for the smooth running of competition”

How come that the Commissioner is saying today that two matches have been postponed? I don't understand.

Commissioner Lisette: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I think that the respected Member is making a confusion, because these are two different things. The reply referred to by the respected Member concerned the 2nd Division League, whereas the question that is being raised now is on the zone system league and the problem is different. The previous question concerned marking, whereas the question being raised now is non-attendance by referees. They are different questions. Nevertheless, action has already been taken.

Mr Emilien: Mr Chairperson, Sir, does the Commissioner mean that there will be a sub-committee for each tournament?

Mr Chairperson: Is the Member discussing about an answer that has already been given? I'll request you to restrict yourself to the question, the more so that we don't have much time left.

Mr Emilien: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I would like to know from the Commissioner whether the sub-committee set up earlier has nothing to do with problems encountered in another tournament?

Mr Chairperson, Sir: Is this connected with the main question?

Commissioner Lisette: Mr Chairperson, Sir, for every tournament, there is a committee that deals with it. Normally for 2nd Division League, we have the Rodrigues Football Committee which deals with it; we have specific persons working with that particular League. For the zone system – because we have four zones - it is very difficult for the Rodrigues Regional Committee to deal with all the four zones at the same time. That is why it has been very important that one member from the Rodrigues Football Committee set up committees in each zone area so that the tournament can go on smoothly.

HOSPITALS AND AREA HEALTH CENTRES - AMBULANCE SERVICE

(No. B/261) Mr J. A. L. Emilien (First Local Region Member for Marechal) asked the Commissioner responsible for Health whether, as regards the ambulance service in hospitals and area health centres, he could state –

- (a) the number of ambulances presently in running condition;
- (b) the availability of ambulance at Area Health Centres during the night;
- (c) the list of spare parts available, if any, for these ambulances and, if not, measures he intends to take or has taken to ensure that spare parts are available in cases of breakdown; and
- (d) the length of time each ambulance has been out of order, if any, due to lack of spare parts on the local market and the amount of money spent on spare parts for ambulance during period October 2002 to date.

Commissioner Sooprayen: Mr Chairperson, Sir, as regards part (a), seven ambulances are presently in running condition.

With regard to part (b), ambulance service is available on a 24-hour basis at the Health Centres of la Ferme and Mont Lubin as well as at Queen Elizabeth Hospital.

As for part (c), most common spare parts are available. A list of spare parts available at the Mechanical Workshop is being compiled and would be submitted shortly.

Mr Chairperson Sir, in respect of spare parts I wish to point out that, at the beginning of each financial year a list of current items and non-current items are ordered. Most of the time not all the current items are purchased as it may lie idle if breakdown does not occur. It is the unavailability of non-current items that leads to delays in repairs of ambulances.

However, in order to avoid such delays, it has been decided that Mitsubishi spares for all ambulances would be ordered at the beginning of this financial year.

With regard to part (d), I am tabling a list of ambulances together with the length of time each one has been out of order (**Appendix III**).

With regard to the second part of the question I wish to point out that during the period October 2002 and June 2003, an amount of Rs84,168 has been spent on spare parts for ambulances.

Mr Emilien: Mr Chairperson, Sir, can I know from the Commissioner for Health whether - in area health centres where there is no ambulance available - a sick person can call on another area health centre to have the service of an ambulance?

Commissioner Sooprayen: Mr Chairperson, Sir, we do have one ambulance at La Ferme and one at Mt. Lubin plus four at Queen Elizabeth Hospital. There is no problem.

Mr Emilien: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I must inform the House and the Commissioner that every morning the ambulance at La Ferme conveys samples of blood to Queen Elizabeth Hospital; and this trip takes some 40 minutes. At times the ambulance stays there - I don't know the reason. Very often sick people have to wait for hours if they can't afford another means of transport to attend the area health centre. I would like to mention a case which happened recently – I can give more information if the Commissioner so wishes – where an ambulance from Queen Elizabeth Hospital came to Rivière Coco to take a patient; and there was another old woman waiting for the service of an ambulance; the driver refused to convey that patient to La Ferme, because he said that he was to convey X patient to X place. Do you think this is normal on a humanitarian basis?

Commissioner Sooprayen: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I will never accept such a thing. I condemn if such a thing has really happened. Everyday the ambulance does go to Queen Elizabeth and back; it takes some 40 minutes, as the Member said. This is why in our programme we are looking forward to have more ambulances at the area health centres as well as in the community centres.

Mr Agathe: Mr Chairperson, Sir, are the ambulances equipped with a means of communication?

Commissioner Sooprayen: Mr Chairperson, Sir, yes, they are.

The Minority Leader: Mr Chairperson, Sir, why does an ambulance have to travel to Queen Elizabeth every day?

Commissioner Sooprayen: Mr Chairperson, Sir, it conveys blood samples.

The Minority Leader: Mr Chairperson, Sir, in this case, is it necessary for an ambulance to transport blood samples? Can't these blood samples be transported in another Government vehicle? Because as far as ambulances are concerned, priority should be given to sick persons.

Commissioner Sooprayen: M. le président, je remercie beaucoup le digne *Leader* de la minorité. Je prends note.

Mr Emilien: Mr Chairperson, Sir, the Commissioner said that there are seven ambulances in running condition in Rodrigues; one is posted at La Ferme Area Health Centre and one at Mt Lubin. Where are the remaining ones posted?

Mr Chairperson: They are at Queen Elizabeth Hospital.

Commissioner Sooprayen: M. le président, je dois informer le membre de l'autre côté que quand je dis qu'il y a 7 ambulances et quand je parle de Mt. Lubin et de La Ferme Area Health Centre, un petit calcul nous montre que ce qui reste c'est pour Queen Elizabeth Hospital.

Mr Emilien: Does not the Commissioner think that it would be rather helpful to have one ambulance from the five which are attached to Queen Elizabeth Hospital to go round the area health centres to collect blood samples leaving the ambulances attached to the area health centres where they are?

Commissioner Sooprayen: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I thank the respected member and I take note.

CASCADE JEAN LOUIS - DRAINS

(No. B/262) Mr J. A. L. Emilien (First Local Region Member for Marechal) asked the Deputy Chief Commissioner whether as regards the drains alongside the road from Grand La Fouche Corail to Plaine Corail Airport precisely near one Mr Roussel Felicité at Cascade Jean Louis where during heavy rainfall the break causes water to flood and damage to Mr Felicité's and his neighbours' cultivations, could the Commissioner state –

- (a) the reasons why there had been a break in the drain at that particular spot;
- (b) the measures, if any, taken, or envisaged to remedy the situation; and
- (c) whether his Commission had carried out a survey throughout the island to identify such cases

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I am informed that the break in the drain at that spot was required to channel the water off the road. I am, further informed that when the road was constructed, the area was not cultivated and was bare land. Following the survey carried out by officers of my Commission, it is envisaged to dig an earth drain to channel all the water off the cultivated area.

No survey has been carried throughout the island to identify such cases. However, a list of complaints has been received and is being processed.

Mr Emilien: Mr Chairperson, Sir, may I know from the Deputy Chief Commissioner if that break was included in the original tender document?

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I need notice of this question.

Mr Emilien: Mr Chairperson, Sir, these persons encounter many problems when there is heavy rainfall. They are prepared to construct a small reservoir given that the authorities build kerbs to divert the water towards the reservoir. Does the Deputy Chief Commissioner envisage the construction of such kerbs just to help them?

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, we cannot build kerbs without knowing where the reservoirs will be.

STREET LIGHTING NETWORK - REINSTATEMENT

(No. B/263) Mr J. A. L. Emilien (First Local Region Member for Marechal) asked the Deputy Chief Commissioner whether, as regards the reconstruction programme in the aftermath of cyclone Kalunde, he could the Commissioner state how things stand concerning street lighting island wise.

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I am informed by the Central Electricity Board that works in connection with the reinstatement of street lighting network islandwise after the passage of cyclone Kalundé are progressing satisfactorily. As spelled out in my reply to question B/189, the target set to re-energise the street lighting network island wise and complete the survey of all faulty luminaries is maintained for the end of August 2003.

Mr Emilien: Mr Chairperson, Sir, in many villages, we have seen these days that out of five, three units have been repaired; out of seven, four units have been repaired. Will the Deputy Chief Commissioner consider the possibility of repairing the whole lot in a village before moving to another one?

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, there are street lights that need no repairs; they have been broken down and should be replaced. The commissioning of the street lightning is under way and they will be replaced in the weeks to come.

PORT MATHURIN/GRAND LA FOCHE CORAIL ROAD – UPGRADING AND RESURFACING

(No. B/264) Mrs J. Prosper (Sixth Island Region Member) asked the Deputy Chief Commissioner whether with regard to the upgrading and resurfacing of the Port Mathurin to La Fouce Corail road, he could –

- (a) state the number of trees cut down in the process;
- (b) the places where the logs are disposed;
- (c) and what he intends to use them for.

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I am informed that 702 trees have been felled down in the process of the upgrading and resurfacing of the Port Mathurin/Grand La Fouce Corail Road out of which 280 had a girth exceeding one metre.

The logs are now lying at Solitude forest compound and are also temporarily stacked on the reclaimed area at Mont Plaisir.

The logs are being and will be sold to the public for use as poles for construction, making furniture and fuel for wood and are also issued to Government divisions on demand.

PATIENTS EXAMINED FOR STRESS OR MENTAL DISORDERS

(No. B/265) Mrs J. Posper (Sixth Island Region Member) asked the Commissioner responsible for Health whether, with regard to people suffering from stress or other mental disorders, he would state –

- (a) how many of these patients had been examined in our hospital for calendar year 2002-2003;
- (b) how many of them had been treated or sent to Mauritius;
- (c) the cost of these treatments, including displacement.

Commissioner Sooprayen: Mr Chairperson, Sir, with regard to part (a) of the question the number of people examined and under treatment from complaints relating to stress or other mental disorders stands at 143.

As regards part (b), psychiatric cases referred to Mauritius for specialised treatment for the period January 2002 to June 2003 stood is 34.

As for part (c), according to estimates made by the Commission for Health the additional average cost of these treatments is Rs3,900 per patient.

Mr Emilien: Mr Chairperson, Sir, the presence of people with mental disorders in hospitals and area health centres causes a lot of stress and problems to other in-patients. Can I ask the Commissioner for Health whether there has been any special room built for that purpose or does his Commission envisage same?

Commissioner Sooprayen: Mr Chairperson, Sir, we have envisaged to have such a building in future.

HEALTH CENTRES - ECOGRAPHICAL EQUIPMENT AND INCUBATORS

(No. B/266) Mrs J. Prosper (Sixth Island Region Member) asked the Commissioner responsible for Health whether he would say -

- (a) how many ecographical items of equipment and incubators were available in our health centres and hospital, and
- (b) whether they were fully operational and, if not, state since when they had been defective.

Commissioner Sooprayen: Mr Chairperson, Sir, as regards part (a), three items of ecographical equipment and nine incubators are available within the Health Services.

With regard to part (b), the three items of ecographical equipment are fully operational and are in good condition.

Mr Emilien: Mr Chairperson, Sir, the Commissioner informed the House that three ecographical items are fully operational and are in good condition. What about the nine incubators?

Commissioner Sooprayen: Mr Chairperson, Sir, we have five incubators at Queen Elizabeth Hospital; one at Mt Lubin Health Centre (which is unfortunately defective) and one at La Ferme Area Health Centre. There is a total of seven instead of nine.

WATER UNIT – WATER PRISES - SURVEY

(No. B/267) Mrs J. Prosper (Sixth Island Region Member) asked the Deputy Chief Commissioner whether, as regards the exercise being carried out islandwise by the Water Unit to collect past water rent receipts, he would state –

- (a) the purpose of the exercise;
- (b) the officers entitled to carry out such an exercise.

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I am informed that the purpose of the house to house survey exercise that is presently being carried out by the Water Unit is to identify the number of illegal prises around the island with a view to updating the records of the Water Unit regarding the number of water prises on the island. This will in turn provide reliable data for the proper planning of the water distribution.

The officers entitled to carry out such an exercise are the Inspectorate staff of the Water Unit, the Gangman, Foreman and the Valve Operator attached to the Water Unit.

Mrs Prosper: Mr Chairperson, Sir, can the Commissioner tell us if there is an official record concerning water prises?

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: There is an official record concerning water prises, but it is not updated.

The Minority Leader: Mr Chairperson, Sir, can we know where these records are at present and why have they not been updated?

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: These records are found at the Public Infrastructure Commission. When I said that they are not updated, this concerns the illegal prises. There are households which have two/three water prises at their house; they are recorded as one prise, but we don't know about the other prises which are fixed illegally. This is why we are carrying out this survey so as to plan a proper water distribution in the near future.

Mr Emilien: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I would like to know from the Deputy Chief Commissioner how are they going to know who has got two/three prises? Whenever a receipt is issued to a customer there is always a duplicate. Why is it that these duplicates are needed to update datas?

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, as I have said we are updating as far as illegal prises are concerned. Checks have been made by the staff Inspectorate and we have come to the conclusion that many households have more than one prise. This is why we will take action in the near future so that water prises are given legally to people.

Mr Jabeemissar: Mr Chairperson, Sir, it has been noted that now all those who have got receipts in connection with water prises should come to Bay Lascar to produce these receipts. Does that not cause financial implications to these people? Because people come from all parts of Rodrigues, spending much more on transport to come and pay for water rent which is just Rs22., whereas all of us know that we have got a sub-office at Malabar and one at La Ferme. Could the Deputy Chief Commissioner envisage to decentralise in order to help these people?

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I take note of the arguments of the respected Member. But I would like to inform the House that there are households in Rodrigues which have not been paying water rents since 10 years. On humanitarian grounds, we are not asking them to pay the arrears. The cost of water prise of someone who will now be connected legally will be Rs108 and a yearly rent of Rs22. is payable. Therefore, the money that is being spent on transport is compensated in this big sum of money that could have been asked to be paid since 10 years back. But I take note of the arguments of the respected Member and I will look into the matter that this be decentralised in other parts of the island.

The Minority Leader: Mr Chairperson, Sir, have the records concerning subscribers to the water network been lost?

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I am not aware of this situation. If there is a case of loss, as I have always said in this House, people should go to the Police. I am not aware of any records having been stolen, because all documents are here.

The Minority Leader: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I asked this question, because I have information to the effect that an exercise is currently being carried out, because the records have been lost. I would like to ask the Deputy Chief Commissioner again whether the records we are talking about now have been lost.

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I would ask the Minority Leader to come with evidence, with written facts, not on hearsay.

The Minority Leader: I have not said that the records have been lost. I am asking the Deputy Chief Commissioner who has sworn in as such...

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: You have also sworn in.

The Minority Leader: Of course. Have the records been lost? Yes or no?

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, ...

Mr Chairperson: Please wait. This is the third time that the Minority Leader is putting this question and this is the third time that the Deputy Commissioner will be answering; I understand that this will be the last time.

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, as I have said, if the Minority Leader has evidence that records have been lost, he should go to the Police. We, at the Public Infrastructure Commission, are not aware that records have been lost, because we see the records everyday. How can we see things that have been lost?

Mr Grandcourt: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I would like to ask the Deputy Chief Commissioner whether he can table all the records.

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: I will table them at the next sitting.

The Minority Leader: Mr Chairperson, Sir, we have been speaking about humanitarian grounds; some people have constructed illegally, they have no lease, but they have a water network. When we speak about households, is the Deputy Chief Commissioner aware that four/five households are actually living in one house? Is it per house or per household? Because the family can have many households; you have the father, his sons, his daughters. If Government has legally issued receipts and water facilities - legally because they have receipts, they live on the same lease but different households - are you going to cancel these now?

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, when the receipt was issued, the lease where the houses are situated was not examined. I am not saying that we will cut all water prises of houses which are found on one lease. We are only updating the data so that - the respected Members always say that there is a water crisis - we can solve this problem in the near future. Statistics and database are important to solve problems. This is why we are doing such a work.

The Minority Leader: Mr Chairperson, Sir, if somebody refuses to produce his receipt, it is the duty of Government to have their records. I won't lose one day paying Rs45. at the NTA from Grand La Fouche Corail, from everywhere in Rodrigues going to Bay Lascar. If somebody does produce his receipt, what is he going to do?

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I'll not answer to the negative attitude. I know that the Minority Leader is always here to say "no". Let him do so.

The Minority Leader: Mr Chairperson, Sir, are people who have taps bound, according to him, to go and produce their receipts? This is a serious matter. If they don't come, is their water supply going to be cancelled even though they have their receipt? *C'est de la dictature. M. le président!*

Mr Chairperson: We wait for the answer first and then you can conclude.

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, the Minority Leader is turning the case into a violated case...

The Minority Leader: On a point of order...

Mr Chairperson: Please wait. When the Deputy Chief Commissioner says "violated" can I know what does he mean by that?

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, as if someone does not produce his receipt, we will, by force, oblige that person to produce same. No. We are updating our data.

Mr Chairperson: Deputy Chief Commissioner, take your seat, please. The Minority Leader has a point of order.

The Minority Leader: The Deputy Chief Commissioner is imputing motive saying that I have said such and such things using the word "violated". What have I violated?

Mr Chairperson: The word has been explained.

The Minority Leader: I would request him to withdraw this word, because this is insulting...

(Interruptions)

... my functions.

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, ...

Mr Chairperson: Your point of order is that the Deputy Chief Commissioner should withdraw the word "violated". What I have heard the Deputy Chief

Commissioner say is that they have violated the case; there has no imputation of motives against any specific Member. The Deputy Chief Commissioner may proceed, please.

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Nous ne sommes pas là pour dégénérer les choses, pour donner une version négative à l'action qu'entreprend le Water Unit. On est en train d'essayer de voir combien de prises légales il y en a et combien de prises, peut être illégales, il y en a. Quand il y aura d'autres projets concernant la distribution d'eau à Rodrigues, nous aurons des statistiques plus ou moins viables pour pouvoir travailler.

The Minority Leader: Mr Chairperson, Sir, is it true that payment for water rent is being made at the office of the NTA?

Mr Chairperson: Is it the NTA you mean? I have not understood the question. Can you repeat, please?

The Minority Leader: I'll repeat the question for you to understand, Mr Chairperson, Sir. Actually is it true that water rent is being paid at the cash office of the National Transport Authority at Bay Lascar situated near the bus terminal, if yes, why?

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, it is not a matter for the Leader of the Minority to come and ask me where this should be paid. We have the Commission; the building of the NTA falls under my Commission and being given that there is no space, I think that it is the place where these debts should be collected. I cannot go on the streets or at the post office to collect these debts. We have organised a system at the NTA office and the people are paying their debts there.

The Minority Leader: Mr Chairperson, Sir, if I understand well, tomorrow we will have our letters posted at the hospital!

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, as I have said, the Minority Leader does not understand the word "Commission". This is my Commission; it falls under my responsibility to see where these debts should be cashed. It is not for the Minority Leader to come and tell me which office should be used to receive these debts.

The Minority Leader: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I am not telling the Commissioner what to do, but I am reminding him that he is answerable to the House.

My supplementary question is: where were water bills paid before?

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, after the setting up of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly, a Commission has been set up and has decided that all people should pay their debts at the office of the NTA. It is not my problem where they were paid before!

The Minority Leader: Mr Chairperson, Sir, the NTA has specific services to deliver to members of the public like registering big vehicles. Has the impact of people coming to pay water rent at the NTA and people coming for matters specifically related to the NTA been examined? Because some people say that they have to queue up two times round the NTA office to have their motor vehicle licence renewed and they get mixed up with people coming to pay water rents. Is that serious? I am aware that there was a specific counter to pay water rent in the Works Division. If the Commissioner is saying that they should be serious in this matter of paying water rent, does he not think that it is time to put back that office in place? He is asking people to be serious to pay their water rent, but they must pay it at the NTA! Is he going to put back that office specifically for water? We can't continuously pay water bills at the NTA; this is not serious.

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, even before we have done this survey on water; people were queuing up at the NTA to pay their licences. We are in a Commission; I'll not step down to the proposal of the Minority Leader. I am working in a Commission depending on the availability of the resources that I have. I will not invent offices.

(Interruptions)

Now it is a Commission, before it was the Infrastructure Division. They can't understand what is meant by "Commission"!

(Interruptions)

Mr Chairperson: I'll allow only one supplementary question. We have 7 mins left for 7 questions.

Mr Jabeemissar: Mr Chairperson, Sir, to make things clear, could the Deputy Chief Commissioner inform the House whether the same officers cash money for water rents and for matters pertaining to registration of vehicles and so on at the NTA? The confusion arises from there. Even at the NTA office there is a problem concerning people who want to come for registration and so on. Now you are adding insult to injury by adding more works to those people!

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, this is a cash office and everything that will be cashed will be done there for the time being.

FIFA FUNDED GOAL PROJECT

(No. B/268) Mr J. C. Agathe (Second Local Region Member for Marechal) asked the Commissioner responsible for Youth & Sports whether, with regard to the FIFA Funded Goal project for the Republic of Mauritius, he could state the objectives of the project, the total financial layout thereof and whether Rodrigues has been included in the project.

Commissioner Roussety: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I would like to state from the very outset that the Goal Project is a matter between the MFA and the FIFA. The objectives of the Project are to promote excellence in football around the world.

The total financial implication is one million dollars for four years.

Although my Commission has made several requests to the MFA, until now we have not received any information about the project.

It is worth noting that the Rodrigues Regional Football Committee has also made a request to the MFA concerning the FIFA Funded Goal Project for more than one month now and no answer has been received till now.

LA FERME AGRICULTURAL STATION – SPRAYER MEN – TRANSFER

(No. B/269) Mr F. A. Grandcourt (First Local Region Member for La Ferme) asked the Deputy Chief Commissioner whether, with regard to officers of minor grades working at the La Ferme Agricultural station, he could state –

- (a) if any transfer has been made recently, and
- (b) if yes, give the number per category.

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I am informed that in view of the reorganization of the Agricultural Services so as to ensure better coordination of work, two General Field and Office Premises Worker have been transferred from La Ferme to Marechal while 4 sprayer men have been transferred to Citronelle to strengthen the team there.

Mr Grandcourt: Mr Chairperson, Sir, the Deputy Chief Commissioner has said that four sprayer men have been transferred from La Ferme Agricultural Station. Can I ask the Deputy Chief Commissioner whether it is fair to transfer these sprayer men? They are very helpful in the area.

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, within a Commission there is reshuffle of workers. After 12 October, the Commissions have been set up and there has been a reshuffle of workers. It falls under any Commission to transfer workers from one place to another. Your colleague has been transferred to Citron Donis!

Mr Grandcourt: Mr Chairperson, Sir, will the sprayer men be transferred back in the near future?

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, as I have said there will be a reshuffle in the Commission. If need be, they will be transferred back to La Ferme.

Mr Agathe: Mr Chairperson, Sir, are there any other minor grades who have been transferred from other stations, as regards Marechal or La Ferme?

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, this is another question. The question was on the transfer of sprayer men from La Ferme Agricultural Station.

CATTLE – TRANSFER FROM BAIE TOPAZE TO ST. GABRIEL BREEDING CENTRE

(No. B/270) Mr F. a. Grandcourt (First Local Region Member for La Ferme) asked the Deputy Chief Commissioner whether, with regard to the transfer of cattle from the Baie Topaze Breeding Centre to Saint Gabriel Breeding Centre, he could say –

- (a) when the transfer was made, and
- (b) the reasons therefor

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I am informed that a first transfer of cattle was effected on 26 January 1999 whereby 20 heads were moved from Bay Topaze Livestock Production Unit to St. Gabriel Livestock Production Unit.

The reason for this transfer was because of the drought condition prevailing in the region of Baie Topaze and the surroundings and mainly because of the serious water scarcity. The region of Saint Gabriel has always had adequate water and fodder to feed the incoming herd.

Part of this same herd (4 young bulls, eleven cows and one heifer) was moved back to Baie Topaze on the 24 May 1999.

A second transfer was made from Bay Topaze to Saint Gabriel on the 31 March 2001 for the same reason mentioned above. A herd of 37 heads including one bull, six male calves, fourteen cows, seven heifers and nine female calves was then transferred for the same reasons.

Mr Grandcourt: Mr Chairperson, Sir, according to the answer of the Deputy Chief Commissioner, the transfer has been made since two years. He has been talking about drought problem. During this season we have not had any drought. Can he explain why the cattle have not been transferred back to Baie topaze? The bull provides services to the farmers in the area. Now the bull has been transferred.

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, we are reorganising the agricultural sector and if need be we will transfer all the bulls at Baie topaze.

LOWER BAIE TOPAZE (LOWER)/CAMP PINTADE – WATER SUPPLY

(No. B/271) Mr F. A. Grandcourt (First Local Region Member for La Ferme) asked the Deputy Chief Commissioner whether, with regard to the supply of water for domestic purposes to lower Baie Topaze and Camp Pintade, he could say -

- (a) at what frequency water has been supplied for the last three months;
- (b) if the water supplied is safe for human consumption, and
- (c) whether some families receive water from water tankers.

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I am informed that for the last three months, water has been supplied at a frequency of once every 10 to 12 days.

Following the recent commissioning of the pumps, sample of the water has been sent to the Central Water Authority Laboratory, Mauritius. Meanwhile my Commission is accelerating procedures for the commissioning of the mini laboratory to ensure that all testing are carried out in Rodrigues so as to ensure the continuous monitoring of the water quality.

Consumers residing at aforesaid places used to receive water from tankers whenever it happened that frequency of distribution was delayed owing to breakdown of pumps, water distribution network, etc

CHATEAU DES FLEURS/GRAND LA FOUCHE MANGUES - TRACK ROAD

(No. B/272) Mr F. A. Grandcourt (First Local Region Member for La Ferme) asked the Deputy Chief Commissioner whether, with regard to the access road linking Chateau des Fleurs (Cader's shop) to Grand La Fouche Mangues (near the agricultural plot) he intends to build a track road thereon in order to reduce the hardship faced by the villagers during rainy seasons.

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I am informed that under the Anti Erosion Programme, a track road has been earmarked to be built along the access road linking Chateau des Fleurs to Grand La Fouche Mangues. Materials for the track road are being procured by the Project Management Unit of the Anti-Erosion project. A contract with the village committee for the construction of the track road is being finalised in line with the participatory approach of the programme. It is expected that the construction works will start shortly and the Labour costs will amount to about Rs.84,000.

STATEMENTS BY COMMISSIONERS

CONSUMER PROTECTION – COMMISSIONER FOR TRADE, INDUSTRY

Commissioner Mercure: Mr Chairperson, Sir, as you are aware, my Commission has been assigned full responsibility for the protection of consumers in Rodrigues and I would like to avail myself this opportunity today to make a statement to inform the distinguished members of this Assembly of the general orientation we are taking to fulfil our responsibility of creating an environment where consumer rights and responsibilities are duly respected.

Rodrigues is at present in a period of transition where we are experiencing a rapid change in our socio-economic configuration. This can be witnessed by accelerated growth of our commercial and service sectors of our economy that is leading to an inevitable increase in the consumption patterns of goods and services. Over and above the basic traditional commodities, there are new products and technologies that are being constantly introduced and to which our citizens are being exposed and attracted in quest of an increase in their quality of life and standards of living.

Mobile phones, computers, electronic appliances would constitute new brands of technological products which our consumers would be interested to purchase.

While our consumers may be familiar with certain goods and services, the risk for them of being victims to unfair trade practices as well as marketing manipulations do exist and should not be ignored.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, this present Governing Executive Council is fully conscious of its responsibilities in the face of this changing environment. We want to create an environment of commercial trade and services that respect consumer rights. We want to empower consumers to become alert and know their rights and responsibilities to enable them to stand up and resist any trade practices which impinge upon their rights.

To achieve this goal, my Commission is embarking on a re-structuring and strengthening programme of the Consumer Protection Division to enable the officers to meet their operational objectives more effectively.

Recently, officers of my Commission and myself, had a working session with my colleague the Commissioner for Commerce, and his officers. We have agreed on the need to render existing legislations more effective and enforce them more aggressively to better protect our consumers. We have already initiated arrangements in this connection and we are expecting to have a working session very soon with the Legal Adviser and a technician from the Ministry of Commerce in this regard.

A mechanism will be set up at the level of my Commission to ensure that there is frequent and regular checks on trade premises and at the same time, encourage the public to lodge complaints. We will not hesitate to prosecute contravenents.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, we are here to protect our public and we will not spare any single effort to achieve this goal.

In this endeavour, public information and education on existing legislation, consumer rights and responsibilities is crucial to achieve our objective. We are very much appreciative of the engagement of the "*Association des Consommateurs de L'Ile Rodrigues*" in undertaking consumer education programmes and support services. Indeed, this organisation has become an inevitable partner in our endeavor to achieve

consumer protection objectives. We are also grateful to our local MBC radio in this regard.

At the level of my Commission, we have felt it a need to bring all partners together, join our efforts to undertake consumer protection activities in a more coordinated and synergistic manner.

We have had a meeting on Friday last with representatives of the ACIR and the MBC Radio and we have identified an avenue of working collaboration. A programme will be elaborated and we are going to emphasise on awareness campaigns targetting school children, students and the community at large. The method and modalities for the campaigns will be worked out and this Assembly will be kept informed of developments.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, consumer protection issue *C'est l'affaire de tout le monde* and I make an appeal to all the components of our society to be alert, to collaborate actively in our programmes that will be soon set up and to denounce any cases of abuse to consumers. It is now time to act, let's do it together.

Thank you.

ADJOURNMENT

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I beg to move that this Assembly do now adjourn to Tuesday 15 July 2003, at 10.30 a.m.

Commissioner André Lélío ROUSSETY rose and seconded.

Question put agreed to.

ADJOURNMENT MATTERS

QUEEN ELIZABETH HOSPITAL – BLOOD DONATION

Mr J. A. L. Emilien (First Local Region Member for Marechal): Mr Chairperson, Sir, with your permission I am making the following statement. These days we have heard a lot about her Majesty Queen Elizabeth. This afternoon, I am using her name again, but in connection with her anniversary as Queen of the British Empire, but precisely on the hospital that bears her name, i.e Queen Elizabeth Hospital at Crève Coeur, where things seem to go the wrong way all the time and has lasted too long according to me.

We, respected Members of this Assembly and everyone and all know pertinently well that blood is a very precious thing, as it is the essence of life.

As chairman of a social organisation, I, together with other members of my committee, have organised voluntary blood donation exercises in the past to help the Blood Bank of Queen Elizabeth Hospital and the health sector at large. Following recent conversations I had with Responsible Officers at the laboratory the situation concerning the Blood Bank is usually critical.

Very often blood has to be ordered from Mauritius and very recently there has been negative reactions to this practice, as you know, Mr Chairperson, Sir, blood cannot be stored for a long time. By the time the request is made and received in Mauritius; the time for same to be considered in respect of the local needs there and the time taken to send the blood to Rodrigues, the time limit left for using the blood is too short and at times this precious liquid has to be destroyed. And this is pitiful and unbelievable.

Now, Mr Chairperson, Sir, I will share a personal experience – I talked about it to the Commissioner for Health, because it is a very serious matter, according to me. On Friday 30th May last, as a voluntary blood donor, I attended Queen Elizabeth Hospital at 8.00 a.m. for blood donation for a patient. Nursing Officers in the male ward had requested us to call at the Laboratory before 9.00 a.m.

There were some ten, if not more, blood donors at the laboratory (not for the same patient of course) and all these people had to wait for more than two hours, Mr Chairperson, Sir. It's a shame for an autonomous island like ours. Some of the donors had got a one-hour permission from their site of work and they were not happy at all as they would face problems on resuming work.

When I talked to the Officer in Charge of the laboratory he informed me that he had already made a request to have at least one Nursing Officer for the blood collection exercise. Half an hour later no Nursing Officer was seen at the laboratory. At about a quarter to ten a Nursing Administrator called at the Lab and gave some rather incomprehensible reasons to explain that chaotic situation. It seemed, according to him, that some Nursing Officers were absent and had to be replaced by those in attendance, and things like that - *le refrain habituel!*

Around 10.20 a.m., Mr Chairperson, Sir, three - not one not two - Nursing Officers came for this exercise. There was a sort of rush; they wanted to have three beds to attend to three blood donors at a time, where there were only two beds. As if they then wanted to have the exercise done in such a hurry.

Many Nursing Officers were absent and had to be replaced. But instead of one, three of them came for the exercise at 10.20 hrs! I get completely lost in my mathematics with these operations.

I am asking myself how can we have a stable situation at the Blood Bank if voluntary blood donors have to spend more than two hours at hospital for such a laudable exercise, which normally would have taken a few minutes. In my humble opinion, Mr Chairperson, Sir, there should be incentives for voluntary blood donors, such as transport

facility from the bus station to Queen Elizabeth Hospital and back, with Nursing Officers waiting for blood donors and not vice-versa. I read in a paper last week that, according to the Chairman of the Regional Health Advisory Board of Rodrigues, negotiations are under way for the creation of a Blood donors' Club. Let's hope that members of the club will not meet with what I experienced on 30 May last.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, if we really care for our people, if we really have a sense of responsibility, these things have to stop. *Nous ne pouvons pas venir manifester avec des pancartes en scandant "la santé est malade - la santé est malade et quelques jours après venir dire que tout est correcte. Si ce n'est pas de l'irresponsabilité, en tout cas ca lui ressemble étrangement.*

I am here making a fervent plea to the Commissioner for Health to seriously look into that matter and to report to this Assembly measures initiated by his Commission to prevent recurrence of this abominable situation.

Respected members, Mr Chairperson, Sir, thank you for your attention.

Mr Chairperson: Would the Commissioner for Health make a reply now?

Commissioner Sooprayen: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I thank the respected Member very much; I'll make a statement later.

At 13.45 p.m., the Assembly was, on its rising, adjourned to Tuesday 15 July 2003 at 10.30 a.m.