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RODRIGUES FIRST REGIONAL ASSEMBLY

Debate No. 17 of 2003

Sitting of Tuesday 02 December 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 FIRST REGIONAL ASSEMBLY

TUESDAY 02 DECEMBER 2003

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REGIONAL ASSEMBLY – SITTINGS – NON-ATTENDANCE AND ABSENCES

Mr Chairperson: Respected Members, you would have probably noticed that there are two seats presently unoccupied. I don't think there is any vacancy right now. But indeed, the Second Member for Local Region No. 2 and the Fifth Island Region Member have intimated to me in writing that they won't be in attendance today. I have duly informed them of the legal provisions governing non-attendance and absences from the sittings of the Regional Assembly.

Thank you.

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

PAVÉ LABONTÉ - GEOTECHNICAL INVESTIGATIONS – AWARD OF CONTRACT

(No. B/378) The Minority Leader (Mr J. Roussety) asked the Deputy Chief Commissioner, as regards the award of the contract for site geotechnical investigations to Aqualia Ltd. in connection with the proposed dam at Pavé La Bonté, whether he would -

- (a) justify the amount of more than Rs2,350,000 as contract value for that study;
- (b) give a description of how Aqualia Ltd. was selected, whether a tender was launched and when, together with the name of other tenderers and amounts bidden by each; and
- (c) state what experience Aqualia Ltd. had in carrying out such feasibility studies giving details of the specialist personnel to be involved and the time frame for the completion of the study.

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I am informed that with regard to the award of the contract for the site geotechnical investigation to Aqualia Ltd. in connection with the proposed dam at Pavé La Bonté that the scope of work comprises, *inter alia*, the drilling of 7 coreholes of total depth of 150 m. I am tabling the bill of quantities as worked out by the Consultant Gibb (Mauritius) Ltd., which gives full details and quantities of the works to be carried out.

As regards part (b) of the question, I would like to inform the House that the contract is an extension of the existing contract for geotechnical investigation for Pistache Dam, which was awarded to Aqualia Ltd. following a tender exercise. Since all the equipment was mobilised in Rodrigues, the contractor has agreed to claim for the

mobilisation costs amounting to Rs500,000 and further agreed to apply the same rates quoted for geotechnical investigation for Pistache Dam. The contract for Pavé La Bonté Dam geotechnical investigations works amount to Rs2,374,594 whereas the one for Pistache Dam was Rs4,553,747.

Aqualia Ltd. and Sotramon Ltd. are the only two firms in Mauritius that are fully equipped to carry out geotechnical investigation works. Aqualia Ltd. has over 20 years' experience in that field and has carried out geotechnical investigation at major dams in Mauritius such as Midlands Dam, Riche-en-Eau Dam, Bagatelle Dam, La Nicolière Dam, Sir Anerood Jugnauth Dam, Soreze Dam, etc. The study is scheduled to be completed by 24 February 2003. A geotechnical expert is heading all the works under the supervision of the Consultant Gibbs (Mauritius) Ltd. I am also tabling the C.V. of the supervisor of the contractor.

Mr J. Roussety: Mr Chairperson, Sir, from the Communiqué of the Executive Council announcing that Aqualia Ltd. has been selected, it is specified that more than Rs2,360,000 is being awarded to Aqualia for Pavé La Bonté Dam. Can I know from the Deputy Chief Commissioner whether that amount of Rs2 m. or more than Rs2,350,000 is solely for the study of the dam at Pavé La Bonté or whether it includes drilling of seven coreholes and other works as he is specifying?

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Yes, Mr Chairperson, Sir, the geotechnical study of a dam includes the drilling of coreholes.

Mr J. Roussety: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I am much surprised. Can the Deputy Chief Commissioner tell the House how is it that his Commission is allowing a contract, first for a study and second for works for the same amount? Why is it that there were no separate contracts, one for study and another one for works to be carried out?

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, normally the study for a dam includes bills of quantities which specify the works to be done to conclude the study. As I have stated, the study of a proposed dam includes drilling, geotechnical investigations and underearth investigations. All these are comprised in the Rs2.5 m.

Mr J. Roussety: May I know, Mr Chairperson, Sir, where these coreholes are going to be drilled and whether, after the high cost of the study - more than Rs2,300,000 - these coreholes will be of particular use given that the study might reveal that the dam may not be feasible?

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Yes, of course, normally when coreholes are drilled, the different layers, the different geotechnical formations are used to know whether the dam will be watertight or the geological formation of the dam will be impermeable or porous with regard to water.

Normally, these geotechnical formations are used to know whether the dam will be watertight.

Mr J. Roussety: Mr Chairperson Sir, if the study will cost more than Rs2.3 m., can we have an indication from him of what would be the estimated cost of any future dam if however the study is positive?

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, a study cannot tell us how much a proposed dam would cost. The time will come when this price will be known.

Mr J. Roussety: Mr Chairperson, Sir, has the Commission specified in the terms of reference what kind of dam they are contemplating to have, for example what capacity?

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Yes, Mr Chairperson, Sir, according to the study of the geological formations, we will know what will be the height of the dam, the weight of concrete the formation can withstand, etc.

(At this stage the Deputy Chairperson took the chair)

ENTERPRISES - FREIGHT REBATE SCHEMES

(No. B/379) The Minority Leader (Mr J. Roussety) asked the Commissioner for Trade, Commerce and Licensing as regards the provision of subsidies and freight rebate schemes to enterprises operating in Rodrigues, whether he would –

- (a) give an overview of the subsidies or schemes available for the import of raw materials and equipment;
- (b) state what facilities and incentives are provided for the export of products from Rodrigues;
- (c) give an overview of the number of businesses which have been benefiting from such incentives, and
- (d) state what measures are envisaged to create more awareness of the existence of these facilities.

Mr Lisette: Mr Chairperson, Sir, with regard to part (a), the following schemes are available -

Freight Rebate Scheme

A 50% Freight Rebate Scheme is applicable to Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) for shipment of raw materials and production equipment from Mauritius to Rodrigues. This facility is only applicable to SMEs that are registered with the SMIDO in Rodrigues.

Freight Subsidy Scheme

A 50 % Freight Subsidy Scheme is also extended to the shipment of animal feeds and fishing boats. This facility is reserved for importer of animal feeds, farmers and fishermen mainly.

With regard to part (b), there exists the Rodrigues Export subsidy Scheme for the export of agricultural and handicraft products from Rodrigues to Mauritius by boats.

With regard to part (c), the number of applications processed and considered favourably for these schemes annually -

<u>Year</u>	<u>Freight Rebate Scheme</u>	<u>Freight Subsidy Scheme</u>
2001	31	24
2002	36	62
2003	78	100

Measures that are taken to create more awareness of the existence of these facilities -

- (i) Sensitisation campaigns and talks are conducted in women centres, community centres, colleges, pre-vocational and vocational schools, and youth centres;
- (ii) The schemes are also promoted through distribution of brochures;
- (iii) Occasionally, information on these incentives are disseminated through the radio;
- (iv) Entrepreneur Development Programmes are also organised throughout the whole year to inform entrepreneurs and would-be entrepreneurs of these facilities;
- (v) Internet surfers can retrieve such information on the Web Site of SMIDO.

(Details are available at the Documentation Centre of SMIDO.)

Mr J. Roussety: Mr Deputy Chairperson, Sir, can I ask the Commissioner what are the procedures to be followed by applicants who wish to avail themselves of these facilities of freight rebate and subsidy schemes?

Mr Lisette: Mr Chairperson, Sir, in my answer, I have stated that to benefit from the subsidy and freight rebate schemes, the enterprises should be registered with SMIDO. There are application forms available there.

RODRIGUES -TRADE IN GOODS AND SERVICES

(No. B/380) The Minority Leader (Mr J. Roussety) asked the Commissioner for Commerce, Trade & Licensing as regards trade in goods and services between Rodrigues and the rest of the world, whether he would –

- (a) give the import and export figures for the year 2002 together with the estimated surplus or deficit;
- (b) state who is responsible for the preparation of such statistics for Rodrigues and the procedures and methodologies used, and
- (c) envisage, where not yet available or appropriate, the setting up of proper balance of payments accounts or records specific to the island.

Mr Lisette: Mr Chairperson, Sir as regards part (a), the figures are being compiled and will be tabled soon.

As regards part (b), the Statistical Unit is responsible for the preparation of the statistics. The figures are calculated and prepared from information extracted from the cargo manifests obtained from the Custom and Excise Office.

Insofar as part (c) is concerned, in order to render the statistics more reliable, the following matters are being considered –

- (i) reinforcement of the Statistical Unit by setting up of a Planning and Monitoring Unit shortly, and
- (ii) strengthening of the Customs Service for better control and checks.

Mr J. Roussety: Mr Chairperson, Sir, we are in December 2003 and it is surprising to note that the figures for 2002 are not yet available. As regards part (c) of my question, Mr Chairperson, Sir, I have asked whether they propose to set up proper balance of payments accounts or records specific to the island. Can I ask the Commissioner, with regard to this particular part of the question, what they propose to do?

Mr Lisette: Mr Chairperson, Sir, as I have stated in my answer, once the Statistical Office has been re-inforced, these payment accounts will be done specifically for Rodrigues.

PLAINE CORAIL AIRPORT - STATION OFFICERS

(No. B/381) The Minority Leader (Mr J. Roussety) asked the Chief Commissioner as regards the posts of Station Officers working at the Plaine Corail Airport, whether he would -

- (a) state the number of posts provided for in the budget and the number of officers substantively holding that post, and
- (b) state the number and names of those acting and, if any, since when and whether he would arrange that those acting or otherwise eligible were confirmed in the post after appropriate procedures had been followed.

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Deputy Chairperson, Sir, with regard to part (a), the number of posts of Station Officer provided in the current budget is three, out of which only one is filled in a substantive capacity.

With regard to part (b), since 1994 and 1997, two other officers are acting in the two vacancies respectively.

The post of Station Officer is filled by promotion on the basis of experience and merit of officers in the grade of Sub Officer who -

- (a) reckon at least three years' service in a substantive capacity in the grade;
- (b) have successfully completed an approved course of training in aircraft fire-fighting held either locally or overseas, and
- (c) possess qualities of leadership.

It is not envisaged for the time being to fill the two existing vacancies because of the imminent transfer of staff to the Airport of Rodrigues Ltd.

GRANDE MONTAGNE/GRAVIERS - ROAD REPAIR

(No. B/382) Mrs J. Prosper (Sixth Island Region Member) asked the Deputy Chief Commissioner whether he was aware of the bad state of the road from Grande Montagne to Graviers and, if yes, what measures did he intend to take to have it repaired urgently.

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I am informed that the road leading from Grande Montagne to Graviers is damaged at several spots. Remedial work is now scheduled to start early next week due to the fact that the team is presently involved in the reconstruction of part of the road at Pistaches.

LATANIERS/CASCADE VICTOIRE - TRACK ROAD - CONSTRUCTION

(No. B/383) Mrs J. Prosper (Sixth Island Region Member) asked the Deputy Chief Commissioner whether with regard to the track road in the village of Lataniers which leads to Cascade Victoire, he could say -

- (a) when works on the track road started;
- (a) why the construction works had stopped, and
- (b) if he intended to continue same up to Cascade Victoire.

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, with regard to the track road in the village of Lataniers, I am informed that the total length is about 400 metres, out of which the last 240 metres were constructed in May 2002 and completed in July 2002.

The road was financed under the Anti Erosion Project for an extension of 240 metres. The construction works have now been completed. It is to be noted that there are no houses between Cascade Victoire and the place where the track road ends. The possibility of extending the said track road will be looked into at a later stage as priority is being given to the construction of track roads to link existing houses so as to create better communication and better access.

Mrs Prosper: Mr Chairperson, Sir, as we know, it is an attractive place, which is frequently visited by tourists. Is it not necessary to continue the track road?

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, the remaining length of track road to Cascade Victoire is about 120 metres. The Commission for Tourism has earmarked a viewpoint in the upper part of Cascade Victoire and the extension of the track road will be looked into in conjunction with the construction of the viewpoint in that area.

“FETE DU TROISIEME AGE” - EXPENSES, DONATIONS, ETC.

(No. B/384) Mrs J. Prosper (Sixth Island Region Member) asked the Commissioner for Social Security whether he will inform the House about -

- (a) all costs incurred as regards the last “*Fête du Troisième Age*” held at Graviers;
- (b) the source of the funds used;
- (c) any donation made to the old-age persons and where did they come from.

Mr Mercure: Mr Deputy Chairperson, Sir, as regards the last *Fête du Troisième Age* held at Graviers on 16 November, 2003, the expenses of the celebration of the International Day of the Elderly were met under the Chief Commissioner’s Relief Fund. The budget amounted to Rs247,600.

With regard to part (b) of the question, some 2,000 T-shirts were donated by *Compagnie Mauricienne de Textile Ltée* and were received a few months after cyclone Kalunde. They were distributed to the elderly and the rest will be distributed to social aid recipients and to needy students.

Mr J. Roussety: Mr Chairperson, Sir, as regards T-shirts which have been distributed, can we know from the Commissioner for what purpose and under what conditions these T-shirts or other things were donated?

Mr Mercure: These T-shirts were received after cyclone Kalunde for cyclone victims. But everybody will agree with me that the persons who suffered most from cyclone Kalunde are from the poorest section of the population, that is, those who receive social aid, because they don’t have the means to build a good house. So, they are the first victims. In fact, we are all victims of cyclone kalunde, but in Rodrigues the poorest section needs help more than others.

Mr Emilien: Mr Deputy Chairperson, Sir, can I ask the Commissioner how come that donations received in the wake of a cyclone have stayed for so long, awaiting for a *fête* at Graviers to be donated to those people, who, according to him, are the poorest section of the population?

Mr Mercure: Mr Deputy Chairperson, Sir, we received those donations a few months ago, but there were several organisations. We could not do the distribution immediately, but we delivered them to the poor people afterwards.

Mr Jabeemissar: Mr Deputy Chairperson, Sir, can the Commissioner inform the House whether there are still other donations which have been received in the wake of cyclone Kalunde which are awaiting to be distributed on a future occasion?

Mr Deputy Chairperson: This question is not allowed.

Mr Jabeemissar: Why, Mr Deputy Chairperson, Sir?

Mr Deputy Chairperson: Take your seat, please! We are talking about T-shirts.

Mr J. Roussety: I don't find that the word "T-shirt" has been mentioned in the question. What is mentioned is "any donation" at part (c).

Mr Jabeemissar: Mr Deputy Chairperson, Sir, I'll repeat my question because part (c) talks of "any donation". Could the Commissioner say whether there are still other donations awaiting to be distributed at a future stage?

Mr Mercure: I have already replied to the question, Mr Deputy Chairperson, Sir.

Mr J. Roussety: So, Mr Deputy Chairperson, Sir, if we put the matter clear, the Commissioner is saying that donations which have been received after kalunde have not been distributed to victims of Kalunde specifically, but to other people at the "*Fête du Troisième Age*". Is that correct?

Mr Mercure: I have already replied to the question, Mr Deputy Chairperson, Sir.

Mr J. Roussety: Unless I was not there, I did not hear the reply, Mr Chairperson, Sir.

Mr Deputy Chairperson: Next question!

Mr J. Roussety: I'll repeat my supplementary question with your permission, Sir. I am asking the Commissioner whether donations received in connection with Kalunde have not been distributed to cyclone Kalunde victims *directly*, but at a *Fête du Troisième Age* at Graviers. Is that correct?

Mr Mercure: Mr Deputy Chairperson, Sir, I have already replied to the question. I have stated that the elderly people who are recipients of social aid are the poorest and distribution has been made to them.

Mr J. Roussety: Mr Deputy Chairperson, Sir, does the Commissioner mean that the poorest and the most needy people were all present at Graviers on that day?

Mr Mercure: Mr Deputy Chairperson, Sir, I have said that a list of social aid recipients is being compiled. I did not say that all of them were at Graviers. I have already answered the question.

PORT SUD EST - BRIDGE - CONSTRUCTION

(No. B/385) **Mrs M. T. Meunier (Second Island Region Member)** asked the Deputy Chief Commissioner where the project for the construction of the bridge over Port Sud Est river stood.

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr Deputy Chairperson, Sir, with regard to the construction of the bridge over Port Sud Est, I wish to inform the House that the

design for the bridge has now been submitted by the Consultant. The contract is being awarded to A. J. Maurel Construction Ltd. under the annual rates' contract approved by the Central Tender Board. Works are being scheduled to start on site by mid January 2003 and will be completed in a period of five months.

Mrs Meunier: Mr Deputy Chairperson, Sir, can I ask the Deputy Chief Commissioner when exactly will the works be completed?

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr Deputy Chairperson, Sir, I have stated mid January. It is exact.

Mrs Meunier: Mr Deputy Chairperson, Sir, if I understand the Deputy Chief Commissioner correctly, the contract has been awarded to A. J. Maurel Construction Ltd. Can I know the cost of the works to be done?

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr Deputy Chairperson, Sir, the contract will be awarded to A. J. Maurel Construction Ltd. on the approved rates that A. J. Maurel Construction Ltd. is doing for road construction. But for the exact cost of the bridge, I need notice of the question.

ANSE AUX ANGLAIS/CREVE COEUR - LINK ROAD - CONSTRUCTION

(No. B/386) Mrs. M. T. Meunier (Second Island Region Member) asked the Deputy Chief Commissioner whether for the benefit of the House he would state -

- (a) if he had any meeting with the villagers of Anse Aux Anglais regarding the construction of a road linking the upper part of Anse Aux Anglais to the road leading to Crève Coeur;
- (b) if yes, what was the outcome of the meeting;
- (c) if not, whether he had the intention of constructing that road in the near future.

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr Deputy Chairperson, Sir, I wish to inform the House that I carried out a site visit together with the Cadastral Unit, the President of Anse Aux Anglais Village Committee and some villagers regarding the possibility of constructing an access road to link the upper part of Anse aux Anglais up to the road leading to Crève Coeur. The villagers have indicated to me a possible road layout. However, on verification by the Cadastral Unit, the proposed road layout falls on several portions of State land which have already been leased. A new access road layout is being worked out and will be proposed at a next meeting with the villagers. The construction of the road will be looked into after agreement of all parties on the proposed layout.

ILE AUX COCOS - PASSES

(No. B/387) Mrs. M. T. Meunier (Second Island Region Member) asked the Chief Commissioner -

- (a) what was the state of the passes leading to Ile aux Cocos, and
- (b) whether he was aware of the serious difficulties faced by pleasure boats and crafts which frequently travel there.

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Deputy Chairperson, Sir, the pass leading to Ile aux Cocos is navigable except for a stretch and from Pointe Rond to the islet which is not navigable at low tide. Consequently, pleasure craft operators proceed to the islet at high tide or the visitors have to walk the last 900 metres to reach the islet. In view of erosion problem at Sable Island, it has been decided not to dredge the channel from Pointe Rond to Ile aux Cocos so as not to amplify the erosion problem.

Furthermore, previous studies have recommended against the dredging of passes leading towards these sandy islets.

The situation may be reviewed in the light of the management plan for the conservation of the offshore islets, which is being prepared by consultants recruited by the National Parks and Conservation Services of the Ministry of Agriculture. The consultants who were in Rodrigues recently had a working session with all stakeholders including the pleasure crafts operators and the issue of access to Ile aux Cocos was raised.

LA FERME - LORRY DRIVERS - DEMONSTRATION

(No. B/388) Mrs M. T. Meunier (Second Island Region Member) asked the Deputy Chief Commissioner whether he could state the reasons for the demonstration by lorry drivers which took place recently at La Ferme.

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr Deputy Chairperson, Sir, I am informed that with regard to the demonstration by lorry drivers at La Ferme, the lorry drivers were protesting against the bad state of the Pistache Road and about the sharp edged aggregates which were used and being placed for the repair of the road. According to them, the sharp edged aggregates are likely to cause punctures to the tyres of their lorries.

After listening to the grievances and taking into account the security of the workers working along the road, they were allowed to use the road via Hauteur Terre Borne until completion of the road reconstruction at Pistache scheduled to be completed in a fortnight.

RODRIGUES - REFUGEE CENTRES

(No. B/389) Mr F. A. Grandcourt (First Local Region Member for La Ferme) asked the Commissioner for Social Security whether with regard to refugee centres in Rodrigues, he could -

- (a) table the list of all official refugee centres, and
- (b) state the facilities offered to refugees during cyclones.

Mr Mercure: Mr Chairperson, Sir, during the last meeting held at the Passenger Terminal Building on Thursday 13 November, 2003, a list of refugee centres has been established. They are community centres in different villages and Government schools are put at the disposal of the refugees. I am tabling a list of the different refugee centres.

Facilities offered to refugees during cyclones are usually soft drinks, canned food, candles and matches. These are provided to them as soon as there is a cyclone warning class III. Since complaints were received to the effect that the food issued was not adequate, my Commission will increase the ration.

Furthermore, since the Commission of Social Security took over, our objective is to give a better treatment to refugees during cyclones. Therefore, we are proposing to give 2 torches per centre, mattresses for babies and small children - 2 per centre - armchair for supervisor and a cyclone attendance register. In the future we are going to look into the possibility of attaching a Cyclone Refugee Store to each Refugee Centre to store things like armchairs, mattresses and torches.

Mr Grandcourt: Mr Deputy Chairperson, Sir, the Commissioner has been talking about the facilities offered to refugees during cyclones. He has mentioned mattresses, torches, so on and so forth. I would like to ask him whether these commodities are already available if ever there is a cyclone next week?

Mr Mercure: Mr Deputy Chairperson, Sir, as I stated in my answer, we are proposing to give torches and mattresses for babies and children at the rate of two per centre. I cannot, at my level, say they are available. These are new things that we propose to give to the different centres. It is not available now, but the time will come when these facilities will be given to refugees.

Mr Jabeemissar: Mr Deputy Chairperson, Sir, in the past, there was a cyclone committee which looked at the good sheltering condition of the refugee centres. Can the Commissioner tell us whether this is still the case? Because, during the last cyclone, some of the refugee centres were not at all safe for refugees? Has a special team been set up to continue this work?

Mr Mercure: Mr Chairperson, Sir, there is a cyclone Committee which has been set up under the Chairmanship of the Chief Commissioner, of which I am a member as Commissioner of Social Security. I cannot say whether the safety of the centres has been verified. At the Social Security, we are concerned with the facilities to be given to the refugees such as food. But I am sure that the Committee under the chairmanship of the Chief Commissioner is looking into the matter.

LA FERME SPORTS COMPLEX

(No. B/390) Mr. Grandcourt (First Local Region Member) asked the Commissioner for Youth & Sports whether with regard to the renovation works carried out at La Ferme Sport Complex, he would

- (a) table the tender documents and contract if any pertaining to the works carried out, and
- (b) state if the works had been completed.

Mr Lisette: Mr Chairperson, Sir, with regard to part (a) of the question, it is not advisable to table any contract document. All information related to the costs and works carried out was given in reply to Parliamentary Question No. B/354.

As regards part (b) of the question, the works have been completed and will be commissioned by the officers of the Commission for Public Infrastructure soon.

Mr J. Roussety: Mr Deputy Chairperson, Sir, can I ask why it is not advisable to table the tender documents concerning this project?

Mr Lisette: Mr Deputy Chairperson, Sir, in any contract document, there is a schedule of rates, which is applicable to contractors, who are going to bid for the works. Normally these contractors use this schedule of rates for the other contracts that they are going to bid for. So, it is very important that these remain confidential.

Mr J. Roussety: Mr Deputy Chairperson, Sir, I do not understand why this has to be confidential when public funds are involved. I'd like to check with the Clerk whether we do not have tender documents tabled here.

The Deputy Chairperson: Your question, please?

Mr J. Roussety: I am coming to the question; allow me to put it, please. How is it that the Deputy Chief Commissioner has tabled the tender documents and here he does not wish to table tender documents? Do we have two different policies for different Commissions? I would like to know the specific reasons as to why these tender documents are being hidden from the Assembly.

Mr Lisette: Mr Deputy Chairperson, Sir, there is no document that is being hidden from the Assembly. It is a matter of principle that my Commission has decided not to table these documents. As I have said before, there is a schedule of rates related to the contractor.

Mr Grandcourt: I don't know whether they are hiding things. Concerning the answer to part (b) of the question, the Commissioner said that works have been completed, but I would like to ask him about the lighting of the pitch?

Mr Lisette: Mr Deputy Chairperson, Sir, in the contract given to Pro-Civil for the works to be carried out; there was no lighting to be done within the contract.

Mr J. Roussety: Mr Deputy Chairperson, Sir, the Commissioner is admitting that they have carried out renovation works at La Ferme Sports Complex and they have not catered for lighting.

Mr Lisette: In the contract work for the renovation of La Ferme Sports Complex, there was no lighting component. Nevertheless, Mr Deputy Chairperson, Sir, when works are to be carried out, they should be done with regard to availability of funds allocated to the Commission. This is why lighting facilities have not been made available yet, but this may be considered in future budgets.

Mr Grandcourt: Mr Deputy Chairperson, Sir, I would like to ask the Commissioner for Sports whether he is aware that a handball pitch was to be included in the sports complex?

Mr Lisette: Mr Chairperson, Sir, the La Ferme Sports Complex is not up to standard norms for use as a handball ground.

Mr Grandcourt: Mr Chairperson, Sir, the Commissioner says that it is not according to norms. What does he intend to do about it? The handball players...

(Interruptions)

Mr Deputy Chairperson: Address the Chair, please.

Mr J. Roussety: Mr Chairperson, Sir on a point of order, ...

(Interruptions)

Mr Chairperson, Sir, may we have some order in the House. While I am speaking, some Members are speaking at the same time. This is not conducive to...

Mr Deputy Chairperson: Please put your question.

Mr J. Roussety: I have a point of order not a question. While my friend was speaking, a Member intervened and prevented him from putting his question. I, myself, while I was speaking, a Member intervened from a sitting position to prevent me from speaking. I would like the Chair to call this Member to order please.

Mr Deputy Chairperson: Yes, I wish to request Members to allow order in this House. Next question!

Mr Grandcourt: I have a supplementary question. Can the Commissioner for Sports tell us what he intends to do?

Mr Lisette: Mr Deputy Chairperson, Sir, as Commissioner for Youth & Sports, I am very aware that one of the main disciplines, which is widely practised in this part of the island, is handball. For future projects related to sports, we shall consider the construction of a handball pitch according to norms so that these sportsmen can benefit from this activity.

Mr J. Roussety: Mr Deputy Chairperson, Sir, to come back to the tender documents, as far as I know they are available to all those contractors who wish to bid for the contract. Tender documents are not secret documents, so can these documents be tabled? We want to know what was specified in the tender documents as presented to the contractors. We want to know the work specifications submitted in these tender documents. Will he see to it that these documents be tabled?

Mr Deputy Chairperson: The Commissioner has already answered the question.

Mr J. Roussety: Tender documents, as far as I know, can be in the newspapers, which anybody can buy.

Mr Deputy Chairperson: Are you asking any question?

Mr J. Roussety: I would like to ask him to table the tender documents where it is specified what works are to be carried out, not those which have been filled by the bidders. This is public domain.

Mr Lisette: Mr Chairperson, Sir whenever works have been carried out by any contractor, the Commission for Public Infrastructure sees to it that the works have been done according to the contract documents. So, Mr Chairperson, Sir, I don't see any need for my Commission to table even the unfilled documents, because such documents are sold only to registered contractors.

Mr Jabeemissar: Mr Deputy Chairperson, Sir, I think that any Commissioner is answerable to the House. To justify the request of the Minority Leader, how are we to know what types of work were to be done? How can we justify that the specifications have been complied with? That is why, once again, I am appealing to the Commissioner to table in the House those tender documents.

Mr Deputy Chairperson: I understand the Commissioner has already given an answer.

Mr Emilien: Mr Deputy Chairperson, Sir, we all know that sportsmen and sportswomen in Rodrigues work in difficult conditions. Before renovation works were carried out at La Ferme Sports complex, lighting facilities existed. I'd like to ask the Commissioner how come that, after renovation works have been undergone there, there are no lighting facilities.

Mr Deputy Chairperson: The Commissioner has said that this will be provided later.

Mr Emilien: My question is: why before renovation works lighting facilities existed, but after renovation works have been carried out, they have bulldozed all the lights? *Comment se fait-il qu'avant les travaux de rénovation il y avait de la lumière sur le complexe? On fait des rénovations pour améliorer mais au lieu d'amélioration c'est la détérioration, M. le vice président.*

Mr Lisette: Mr Deputy Chairperson, Sir, I think the Member is mistaken. There were no lighting facilities on the sports complex before the renovation works were carried out, especially after the passage of cyclone Kalunde.

(Interruptions)

Mr Deputy Chairperson: Order, please!

Mr Grandcourt: Mr Deputy Chairperson, Sir, the Commissioner knew that, before the renovation works of the sports complex, there was no lighting. So, I would like to ask him why he has not included provision of lights in the contract?

Mr Lisette: As I said, Mr Chairperson, Sir, the matter concerned availability of funds. If I refer to the budget which has been allocated to my Commission, I can see straightforward that it is impossible for me to allocate funds for the installation of lighting to the Sports Complex.

Mr Grandcourt: Mr Deputy Chairperson, Sir, concerning the fencing of the Sports Complex, I have noticed that it has been done on one side only. Can I ask the Commissioner why it has been like this and whether he intends to fence the other sides of the complex as well?

Mr Lisette: Mr Deputy Chairperson, Sir, the work which has been carried out at La Ferme as expected is as per the contract document. The fencing placed along Le Pape Jean Paul II road is included in the contract document and it is as per specifications.

Mr Grandcourt: Mr Deputy Chairperson, Sir, referring to his answer to question B/354, which I asked about one month ago about the works being carried out at La Ferme, the Commissioner stated that the fencing above the wall would be done on the side of the complex facing the road. I would like to inform him that the complex has three walls facing roads. Why is it that only one side has been fenced?

Mr Lisette: Mr Chairperson, Sir, even a small child in a kindergarten can answer this question. There is only one road which is most frequently, used by vehicles. So, this is why only the wall facing the Jean Paul II road has been fenced.

Mr J. Roussety: Mr Deputy Chairperson, Sir, I don't know whether he has ever been at La Ferme, but I can tell him that there is another road leading to the stadium also which is frequently used by vehicles. It is not only a matter of vehicles; it is a matter of balls going out of the stadium and each and every time the players have to go out and pick up the balls. Is it how we want to encourage sports in Rodrigues?

(Interruptions)

Mr Deputy Chairperson: Take your seat, please. Next question, please.

(Interruptions)

Order, please! Order, please!

(Interruptions)

I suspend the sitting for five minutes

At 11.25 a.m. the sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 11.30 a.m. with Mr. Deputy Chairperson in the Chair.

Mr Deputy Chairperson: We are not going to tolerate any disorder in the House. This is addressed to both sides. Next time measures will be taken.

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Deputy Chairperson, I apologise for disturbing the House's proceedings.

Mr Deputy Chairperson: Thank you.

Mr Grandcourt: Mr Deputy Chairperson, Sir, if you allow me, I have some more supplementary questions. Every day I pass by this Sports Complex and I have noticed that for more than 3 weeks the door is still locked although the works have been completed. I have been there this morning. Handball, volley ball and basketball players are still waiting. What does he intend to do? The works have been completed, but the complex has not been handed over.

Mr Lisette: Mr Deputy Chairperson, Sir, how can someone know that a complex has been completed if the door is closed? I have said, Mr Deputy Chairperson, Sir, that the Commissioner for Public Infrastructure will Commission the work. Then, and only then, the site will be handed over to us.

Mr Grandcourt: Mr Deputy Chairperson, Sir, even a fool will understand! The Commissioner has just said that the works have been completed.

Mr Deputy Chairperson: Put your question please.

Mr Grandcourt: I am coming with the question.

Mr Deputy Chairperson: The word “fool” is unparliamentary.

Mr Grandcourt: Mr Deputy Chairperson, Sir, I withdraw the word. The Commissioner stated himself that the works have been completed, I would like to ask him when will the Sports Complex be handed over to his Commission?

Mr Lisette: Mr Deputy Chairperson, Sir, I never said that the works were completed two weeks ago. I said that the works are now complete which means they could have been completed yesterday or today. Nevertheless, the complex will be handed over once it has been commissioned by the Commission for Public Infrastructure.

LA FERME HEALTH CENTRE - WATER SUPPLY

(No. B/391) Mr F. Grandcourt (First Local Region Member for La Ferme) asked the Commissioner for Health whether, with regard to the supply of water at La Ferme Health Centre, he could state if there had been any shortage of water there during the month of November this year.

Mr Sooprayen: Mr Deputy Chairperson, Sir, during the month of November there was a shortage of potable water distributed from the internal piping system at La Ferme Area Health Centre on one occasion, namely from 3.00 p.m. on 23 November to 8.00 a.m. the next morning. This situation was, however, of an exceptional nature as water supply is usually regular and shortage is rare at the Centre.

I am informed that the Charge Nurse of the Centre notified the Water Unit Office of La Ferme of the situation instantly and water supply was restored at 8.00 a.m. on 24 November.

Mr Grandcourt: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I would like to ask the Commissioner whether his Commission was aware of the problem on 23 November between 3.00 p.m. and 8.00 a.m. on the next day.

Mr Soobrayen: Mr Deputy Chairperson, Sir, my Commission was aware of the problem. May I inform the House that during the time mentioned by the Member, the Health Centre, having seven water tanks with reasonably good quality water, had a satisfactory supply of water.

Mr Jabeemissar: Mr Deputy Chairperson, Sir, can the Commissioner inform the House whether he is aware that some in-patients of the centre had to leave the hospital during the period of water shortage to go and buy potable water from shops nearby?

Mr Sooprayen: Mr Deputy Chairperson, Sir, no in-patient has the right to leave the hospital to go out and buy water.

Mr Jabeemissar: Mr Deputy Chairperson, Sir, if I asked that question it is because I can assure the House that this has been the case. May I ask him to see to it that whenever there is a problem of water shortage, this is considered by him as a matter of urgency so that all means may be used to prevent patients from being penalised?

Mr Sooprayen: Mr Deputy Chairperson, Sir, I take notice of the question, but I can say that arrangements have already been made so that in future such things do not occur.

Mr J. Roussety: Mr Deputy Chairperson, Sir, can we know whether during this shortage there was any repercussion on treatment such as surgical operations being carried out?

Mr Sooprayen: Mr Deputy Chairperson, Sir, I need notice of that question.

Mr Grandcourt: Mr Deputy Chairperson, Sir, I think the La Ferme Health Centre is the most neglected one in Rodrigues. On the 24th at 9.00 hours, there was still no water at the health centre; the in-patients had their tea ...

Mr Deputy Chairperson: It is question time, please put your question.

Mr Grandcourt: I would like to ask him whether he is aware that the in-patients had their tea at 9.30 hrs due to this shortage of water.

Mr Sooprayen: Mr Deputy Chairperson, Sir, I have already replied that on the 24 at 8.00 o'clock in the morning water supply was restored.

Mr J. Roussety: Mr Deputy Chairperson, Sir, as a result of the lack of water on 23 between 3.00 p.m. on that day to 8.00 a.m. on the next day, was there any incident at the health centre?

Mr Deputy Chairperson: He has already replied to the question.

Mr J. Roussety: But this is directly related to the subject matter.

Mr Deputy Chairperson: As I said he has already replied.

Mr J. Roussety: But he said he needs notice.

Mr Deputy Chairperson: He has already given an answer.

LA FERME - RECREATIONAL PARK

(No. B/392) Mr G. Jabeemissar (Second Local Region Member for La Ferme) asked the Chief Commissioner whether, with regard to the Recreational Park of La Ferme, he could say -

- (a) who was the responsible authority for its maintenance, and
- (b) what measures he intended to take to restore it to the required norms as its current state left to be desired.

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Deputy Chairperson, Sir, the cleaning of the children playground at La Ferme is carried out by a private contractor under the supervision of the Environment Division.

With respect to part (b) of the question, Mr Deputy Chairperson Sir, the Commission for Arts and Culture will discuss with the villagers of La Ferme concerning the future utilisation of the playground. My colleague, the Commissioner of Arts and Culture, will envisage the integration of infrastructure for leisure and cultural activities within the playground.

Mr Jabeemissar: Mr Deputy Chairperson, Sir, can the Chief Commissioner inform the House within what time frame will restoration works be carried out? As far as I know this recreational park has been in a bad state since long. All the fencing around is falling apart; the central lane leading to the park which was lit is no more the case now and the amenities for children - merry go-round, swings and so on - are in a bad state and have become an eyesore for the village. Can I ask the Commissioner whether he considers this as a matter of urgency?

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Deputy Chairperson, Sir, as we have now consultancy services which include the service of an architect, the assignment will be given to Gibbs & Partners in Mauritius for the design of the playground which will include a leisure centre in the garden. This is being envisaged for the future. But for the time being we are going to look into the matter and see whether the Environment Officer is supervising the cleaning and whether there is any reparation to do to the fencing and so on.

Mr Jabeemissar: Mr Deputy Chairperson, Sir, the Commissioner has been talking about a leisure centre. Being given the small area of that garden, is it advisable to have the centre built within the compound of that specific park? My suggestion is to restore the park so that it gives a better look in that area.

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Deputy Chairperson, Sir, the playground will be done with the assistance of the Principal Surveyor. We will see whether we can keep the playground as it is. We have been told that there is land outside the fence. So, we are going to have a survey of it and the architect will have a look at it and we shall discuss with the villagers to see what is best.

Mr Jabeemissar: Mr Deputy Chairperson, Sir, in the light of the consultations with the people of the locality, can the Chief Commissioner inform the House who will have the final word? Will it be the Commission or the villagers?

Mr Deputy Chairperson: This question has already been answered.

The Chief Commissioner: It is the architects, the experts and any other people who know.

Mr Jabeemissar: Mr Deputy Chairperson, Sir, may be the question has been misunderstood. There is no need to have consultation with the people if things have already been decided before. My question is: in the light of the consultation, if people in the locality find that there is no need to have a building inside the garden and that it is better to restore it and leave it as it is, who will have the final word?

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Deputy Chairperson, Sir, before we go to the villagers, we should put before them the results of the technical work already done. There must be a survey by the Cadastral Office and the Consultants' views. They will decide on that. Are we going to impose? If the villagers say that they want something better outside, we shall consider this.

Mr Emilien: Mr Deputy Chairperson, Sir, if you would allow me. We know that in this particular recreational park there were 2 tortoises since long. One of them died in an accident. I would like to ask the Chief Commissioner whether he is contemplating to find a companion for the remaining one?

The Chief Commissioner: We shall ask Mr Griffiths whether he can accommodate the survivor in his project. For the time being I have been told that it is being fed by the agricultural office at la Ferme.

ENT SPECIALISTS - VISIT

(No. B/393) Mr G. Jabeemissar (Second Local Region Member for La Ferme) asked the Commissioner for Health whether, as regards the recent visit of ENT Specialists in Rodrigues, he could say –

- (a) what types of surgical interventions were made;
- (b) if some students couldn't attend school/exams due to surgical interventions, and, if so;
- (c) how many and why.

Mr Sooprayen: Mr Deputy Chairperson, Sir, as regards part (a) of the question, Dr. Chandra RAMYEAD, ENT Specialist, accompanied by a Nursing Officer visited Rodrigues during the period 02 to 08 November 2003 and 24 patients were operated. Most of the operations were tonsillectomies and adenoid tonsillectomies.

With regard to part (b), some children were admitted for operation after being screened during outpatient consultation. They should have missed schools or examinations.

As for part (c), I am tabling an ENT operation List. About seven pupils attending school may have missed school or examinations while they were admitted or came for review. From information supplied by the Commission for Education, examinations were held for pupils' aged 6 to 10 years from 05 to 07 November.

Mr Deputy Chairperson, Sir, the Specialists visiting Rodrigues have a very tight work schedule in their respective specialised hospitals, but we will ensure with the Chief Medical Officer of the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life that such visits do not coincide with school examinations.

WESTERN/EASTERN REGIONS - ANIMALS – LACK OF FODDER AND WATER

(No. B/394) Mr G. Jabeemissar (Second Local Region Member) asked the Deputy Chief Commissioner with regard to farmers in Rodrigues especially in the Western and Eastern regions where there is a lack of fodder and water for animals due to the prevailing droughts whether he intended to take any measures to tackle same.

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr Deputy Chairperson, Sir, with regard to question B/394, I wish to inform the House that the Agricultural Services is presently working on a major programme aimed at rehabilitating two sylvo-pastoral areas, one at Mt. Plate and another at Mt. Gabris (Est). The rehabilitation work will consist of -

- repair of walls;
- plantation of fodder species, both gramineous and leguminous plant;
- fertilisation of cropped fodder plants; and
- removal of weed as far as possible.

The rehabilitation of the other sylvo-pastoral areas will further be looked into after completion of the above two areas. The plantation of fodder will start at the beginning of the next rainy season. In addition, two areas of ten hectares each have already been identified to start rotational grazing in the cattle walk areas.

In regions where rotational grazing will be practiced, it will then be easier to provide facilities such as a reliable water supply, veterinary services, etc. Moreover, facilities will be given to groups of farmers for the cutting of fodder in selected areas. However, to combat the prevailing drought at the moment as from next week, permission will be granted to individual farmers to cut fodder in sylvo-pastoral areas. The farmers will have to make a request to the Extension Officers in their locality. Moreover, transport facilities will be provided to farmers' associations only. The population will be informed accordingly. My Commission, in collaboration with the Anti-Erosion Programme, will donate seven bush cutters to Farmers' associations to render the cutting of fodder less tedious.

As regards lack of water, the Agricultural Services will, in the short term, provide water to groups of farmers following an official request. Two tractors will be put at the disposal of the farmers for conveyance of water.

Mr Jabeemissar: Mr Deputy Chairperson, Sir, I thank the Deputy Chief Commissioner for his interest in the fate of farmers. I see he has planned good things for them in the long term. But he has talked about supplying them with two water tankers. Does he think that these two tankers will be sufficient to meet the demand for all parts of Rodrigues where farming is mostly done?

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: As I said, Mr Deputy Chairperson, Sir, water will be provided to these farmers upon an official request. The population will be informed accordingly as from next week and if the demand is too high, we'll look for other alternatives.

Mr Jabeemissar: Mr Deputy Chairperson, Sir, we know that in certain regions domestic water supply is a very great problem. That's why I am not questioning the Commissioner's decision. But if we have too many requests, I wish to know how he will cope with them, what will be the facilities that will be offered as animals need water everyday. Will the supply be on a daily basis or on a weekly basis or will it be once in a while?

Mr Deputy Chairperson: This is hypothetical, we never know how many farmers will ask for water.

Mr Jabeemissar: I am sure that if the required information is given all farmers will make request. That's why I ask the Deputy Chief commissioner what measures he is going to envisage to ensure that the supply of water is done on a very regular basis.

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr Deputy Chairperson, Sir, as I have said, formal requests will be received and, if need be, we'll look for alternatives to cater for the demand. If the problem persists, the member can come with a further substantive question.

Mr Emilien: Mr Deputy Chairperson, Sir, the Deputy Chief Commissioner just informed the House that, as from next week, the farmers will be informed about the new service that will be offered to them. May I ask the Deputy Chief Commissioner what measures he is contemplating to use to pass on the information?

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr Deputy Chairperson, Sir, my Commission, together with the officers of Agriculture, we have already taken note of the prevailing situation and I am chairing a special meeting this week to devise methods on the procedures for better help to the farmers. But the population will be informed by radio.

GRAVIERS - TOURISM PROJECTS

(No. B/395) Mr G. Jabeemissar (Second Local Region Member for La Ferme) asked the Chief Commissioner as regards all tourist-related Projects at Graviers and its vicinity, whether -

- (a) he would give the names of all promoters together with the number of rooms proposed and the projects status at Government level; and
- (b) state whether any project has been modified by the promoter in the meantime, that is pending the approval of his application; and
- (c) the reasons, if any, for the modification of the original proposal.

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Deputy Chairperson Sir, tourism-related projects at Graviers and its vicinity are as follows –

S n	Promoter	No. of rooms	Status
1.	La Belle Rodriguaise (Mr & Mrs Francoise Dhondee Baptiste)	34	Approved in September 2002. The promoter's request for boundary shift and road realignment is being studied.
2.	Ecotel Ltd (MTTB)	60	Approved in August 2002.

As regards part (b), Mr Chairperson Sir, in November 2003 Messrs Ecotel Ltd has submitted a revised project concept.

As for part (c), the promoter requested a shift of the boundaries of the site allocated to them to cater for a nicer project design. The request could not be approved as it includes part of the zone of 30 metres from high water mark, which is reserved for public use in accordance with existing policy. Consequently, and after various meetings, which we had with the promoters, they have submitted a new project concept that is an individual villa type hotel which is more suitable for the site and the Rodriguan context.

Mr J. Roussety: Mr Deputy Chairperson, Sir, being given that the Chief Commissioner has been elected in that region and he is very familiar with it, can we know from which point to which point at Graviers they propose to re-align the road?

The Chief Commissioner: The re-alignment of the road is not the one which passes near the seaside because we have to respect the ribbon of 30 metres from the high water mark. The re-alignment of the road is from Mourouk to Graviers, just behind the land leased to the promoters. We have the Cadet Planner and all the engineers of the Commission for Infrastructure considering the re-alignment of the road behind the plot leased to the promoters.

Mr J. Roussety: Mr Deputy Chairperson, Sir, there are two projects which have been approved for the region. Are these projects on the sandy part of the beach or on the upper parts of less ecological value?

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Deputy Chairperson, Sir, we are not allowing hotels to be built on the beaches. The land which has been allocated to *La Belle Rodriguaise* is a land inside; it is far from the beach; it is inside the present road. That's why there will be a new alignment of the road behind the land allocated to *La Belle Rodriguaise*.

Mr J. Roussety: Can we know, Mr Deputy Chairperson, Sir, whether the policy currently obtaining in Mauritius that promoters contribute to public infrastructure works will be applied here especially with regard to the cost of this re-alignment?

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Deputy Chairperson, Sir, this has been discussed with the promoters.

Mr J. Roussety: If the matter has been discussed, Mr Deputy Chairperson, Sir, could he say what has been the outcome?

The Chief Commissioner: No, this has not been finalised.

Mr J. Roussety: Mr Deputy Chairperson, Sir, as regards the project by *La Belle Rodriguaise*, may we know whether modifications have been brought to the project? I apologise if the details have been given; I was taking note and did not grasp all the details.

The Chief Commissioner: No modifications have been made because it accords with our concept of tourism development in Rodrigues.

Mr Jabeemissar: Mr Deputy Chairperson, Sir, we all know that construction of hotels is a very delicate issue. Given the experience of Mauritius, we have always said that we should be very careful when we plan the construction of hotels in Rodrigues. We know that tourism will be the backbone of our economy. Has the grant of State land, for example, at Graviers, been well planned? Is it not better to locate such projects elsewhere? We want to go for eco-tourism. In Mauritius, they are now going into the most remote places in forests, on the hillsides. Is it not better to allocate land in the interior away from the seaside so as to be ecofriendly?

The Chief commissioner: Yes, Mr Deputy Chairperson, Sir, the land allocated to *La Belle Rodriguaise* is very far from the seaside. The public will have access to the seaside. I said there was a road some 40 – 50 metres from the seaside; the land allocated to *La Belle Rodriguaise* is far behind this road. That's why we are proposing that promoters go inside and not remain near the seaside as at Pte. Coton Hotel. So, land that will be allocated is inside not near the beach.

Mr Jabeemissar: Mr Deputy Chairperson, Sir, will the Chief Commissioner inform the House whether other promoters have offered better prospects in that specific region and which have not been approved during that period?

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Deputy Chairperson, Sir, we are trying to have a balance between Rodriguan promoters and people from abroad. I think there has been a meeting chaired by the present Prime Minister, hon. Paul Bérenger, where it was mentioned that some eighty promoters have been listed by the Board of Investment. I find here that there are about 4 applications for this area. They are from Mrs. Gabrielle Mootien (60 rooms, not approved); Mr Salim Peerbux (240 rooms, not approved); Mr Narainsamy Parsooramen (60 rooms, not approved) and Mr Prakash Lutor (30 rooms, not approved). Some of them have asked to build hotels within the EDF re-afforested area. These applications have not been approved. That's why we said we have to be very careful before allocating land for tourism projects.

Mr J. Roussety: Mr Deputy Chairperson, Sir, as regards these two projects which he has mentioned, have they taken part of the FED fenced compound?

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Deputy Chairperson, Sir, I have just said, project applications within the EDF compound have been rejected.

Mr J. Roussety: As regards Ecotel, Mr Deputy Chairperson, Sir, I understand the initial project was for 60 rooms. Then the promoter has modified the project; he is now going for bungalows. Can we know how many bungalows will there be and whether there has been a re-evaluation of the project? Because the surface area of land related to 60 rooms is not the same for a few bungalows. As far as the new project is concerned, how many bungalows are being built? In light of this, has the land leased been modified?

The Chief Commissioner: I have already replied to this, Mr Deputy Chairperson, Sir, the promoter made a request for a shift of the boundaries of the site allocated to them to cater for a nicer project design; the request could not be approved as it would have encroached on part of the 30 metres wide ribbon of land from the high water made which is reserved for public use in accordance with present policies. So, there has not been any change in the surface area of land allocated to Ecotel. The new design will be accommodated within the plot originally allocated to them.

Mr J. Roussety: Yes, but will he tell how many bungalows will be built in place of a 60-room hotel?

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Deputy Chairperson, Sir, I need notice of this question. At the next sitting, I shall come with a reply to the Minority Leader.

Mr J. Roussety: As regards the leases, Mr Deputy Chairperson, Sir, have they been delivered or have they just been given prior approval?

The Chief Commissioner: Yes, a Letter of Intent has been delivered to Ecotel.

Mr J. Roussety: In this case, Mr Deputy Chairperson, Sir, may we know what conditions, whether material or financial, are attached to the Letter of Intent?

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Deputy Chairperson, Sir, as we are going out of the original question, I shall request the Minority Leader to come with a substantive question on the matter.

Mr Jabeemissar: Mr Deputy Chairperson, Sir, the Chief Commissioner has been talking about a nicer project. Can he inform the House whether his Commission has gone into the details of the project to see how nicer it is? How is it different from the original one? How is it so much more attractive that it has been granted approval?

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Deputy Chairperson, Sir, I see that I must come with a new statement on the matter and state exactly the difference between the two proposals.

GRAND LA FOUCHE CORAIL - LAYING OF PIPES

(No. B/396) Mr A. L. Emilien (First Local Region Member for Marechal) asked the Deputy Chief Commissioner as regards the laying of pipes at Grand La Fouche Corail by the water unit recently, whether he would state –

- (a) the length and average depth of excavation;

- (b) whether the excavation passed through residential zone and if yes, whether security measures were taken to prevent accidents and injuries, and
- (c) whether he was aware that one Antoinette Félicité a young dumb and deaf of eighteen years of age, fell into the excavation on the 15/11/03 as a result of which she was hurt.

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, with regard to the laying of pipes at Grand La Fouche Corail by the Water Unit, I am informed that the length of the trench was about 100m with a depth ranging from 0.60m to 2.5m. The purpose of laying the pipeline is to increase the water flow to the reservoir of Grand La Fouche Corail. The excavation was effected on an access road leading to the reservoir and only two families normally use this access. No warning sign was placed at the works and they were scheduled to be completed on the same day.

I have been informed by Police that one Antoinette Félicité fell into the excavation on 15 November 2003. She was injured and attended treatment at La Ferme Hospital. She was not admitted in hospital. An inquiry is under way by Police to situate responsibility.

Mr Emilien: Mr Deputy Chairperson, Sir, the Deputy Chief Commissioner informed the House that the work was scheduled to be completed on the same day. But digging of the excavations started on the 20 October and the incident happened on or about 15 November. How come that during the long lapse of time no security measures had been taken especially as he says that two families frequently use the road?

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir between the 15 October and 20 November, we had a problem with the excavation to backfill the trench. I understand the pain of the family and the Police is looking into the matter to situate responsibility for the incident.

Mr Grandcourt: Mr Deputy Chairperson, Sir, I'd like to ask the Deputy Chief Commissioner, after the accident of Miss Antoinette Félicité, what measures has his Commission taken?

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr Deputy Chairperson, Sir, we have not taken any measures and we have no measures to take. But we ensure that other work sites will be provided with adequate warning signs. But the measures that will be taken will be based on the results of the Police inquiries.

Mr Emilien: Mr Deputy Chairperson Sir, I'd like to ask the Deputy Chief Commissioner if he is aware that the day following the accident the trench was backfilled.

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr Deputy Chairperson, Sir, the work was done in collaboration with the Water Unit and A.J. Maurel Colas and the trench was backfilled as the excavator was available.

Mr Emilien: Comme tout a fait par hasard, M. le Président, l'appareil était tombé en panne pendant tout ce temps là et le lendemain de l'accident, c'était en état de marche! *Can I ask the Deputy Chief Commissioner how come the collaboration of the A.J. Maurel could not be sought to backfill the trench before the accident? Why do we wait for what we say "après la mort la tisane"?*

The Deputy Chief commissioner: Mr Deputy Chairperson, Sir, we cannot backfill with a defective excavator; other excavators are tied up at other work sites.

Mr Jabeemissar: The Deputy Chief Commissioner admits that there has been neglect on the part of the Water Unit, which has caused that accident. Can he inform the House whether there has been any offer of apologies, formal or otherwise, conveyed to the bereaved family?

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr Deputy Chairperson, Sir, we were not aware of this accident. We became aware through the written press and on the basis of the outcome of the inquiry we'll do the necessary to apologise to the family.

Mr J. Roussety: We're surprised that the Commissioner has learnt of such important issues from a newspaper. Being given that there are a number of families living the vicinity of these works, can I ask him why a small temporary bridge or structure was not set up to prevent this dumb and deaf girl of 18 years from falling into these trenches?

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr Deputy Chairperson, Sir, this problem has occurred due to the breakdown of the excavator, but it is not our responsibility to build a bridge over a trench only for one day. But we do know that it is a preventive measure to have warning signs, not a curative one. Sometimes, in spite of warning signs, accidents do happen and it is also part of the responsibility of people to take care where they walk, where they wander and to take care of those who have disabilities.

Mr J. Roussety: Mr Deputy Chairperson, Sir, I was not talking about building a bridge. When works are carried out in a region, trenches are dug; we don't build a bridge, we place temporary structures. This was not done, *et le Commissaire pêche par ignorance en disant que c'est la faute de la fille si elle est tombée dans la tranchée! Comment peut-on venir dire cela à l'Assemblée? Quand on fouille des trous trois mètres de profondeur...*

The Deputy Chairperson: Your question, please. This is question time.

Mr J. Roussety: We are all aware that it is question time.

The Deputy Chairperson: If you are aware, please put your question.

Mr J. Roussety: Mr Deputy Chairperson, Sir, there are legal provisions regarding excavation works, that is, placing of warning signs and safety structures for passers by. At the level of his Commission, is it a general policy to carry out such works, not to take care of the immediate environment and what does he propose in the future to prevent such accidents?

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr Deputy Chairperson, Sir, as I have said, it is part of the responsibility of people who wander in such places to take care. But as I have said, our policy in these matters is to place warning signs, but as this happened as a result of the breakdown of the excavator, we will look into the matter.

Mr Jabeemissar: Mr Deputy Chairperson, Sir, the Deputy Chief Commissioner informed the House that his Commission was not aware when the accident occurred, but I was personally there accompanying the victim. We had consultation with the officer in charge of the Water Unit of La Ferme.

The Deputy Chairperson: Your question, please.

Mr Jabeemissar: My question is: what action is he going to take against the Officer of the Water Unit of La Ferme? Because there has been negligence on his part.

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I have already answered this question.

Mr Emilien: Mr Deputy Chairperson, Sir, it seems to me that either the Deputy Chief Commissioner does not know really what happened on that day or he does not know that region when he says it is the responsibility of people wandering about within the vicinity to take care. The excavation is between the house and the road, how can you say it is the responsibility of people wandering about. And before the excavation works, there was a road providing access to vehicles...

The Deputy Chairperson: No statement, please. This is question time.

Mr Emilien: Yes, I am coming, Mr Deputy Chairperson, Sir, with my question ...

The Deputy Chairperson: Come with your question please. This is question time.

Mr Emilien: We know, but we have to give some introductory words.

The Deputy Chairperson: You are not making a statement:

Mr J. Roussety: Mr Deputy Chairperson, Sir, it is the first time that you are taking the Chair. But you were here when we mentioned that before putting a question straight away we need a short introductory part to make it intelligible.

The Deputy Chairperson: These are supplementary questions. Put questions directly.

Mr J. Roussety: Mr Deputy Chairperson, Sir, allow me...

The Deputy Chairperson: Take your seat, please. You are not going to argue with the Chair. You are here to ask questions and the answer has already been given. No argument. It is question time. You put your question and the Commissioner will answer.

Mr J. Roussety: We are not in a dictatorship here. What I was saying if you would allow me to tell you is that on this part of the House representing at least 45% of electors in Rodrigues....

The Deputy Chairperson: No, I want your question please.

Mr J. Roussety: Allow me to speak, Mr Deputy Chairperson, Sir,

The Deputy Chairperson: This is Question Time. The question is about somebody who fell into a well.

(Interruptions)

Take your seat! Take your seat, please.

Mr J. Roussety: I am the Minority Leader and I am telling you something. Please listen to me ...

The Deputy Chairperson: Take your seat, please.

(Interruptions)

Mr J. Roussety: If you will please listen to me. There are seven members present here, on behalf of the minority, I have been appointed Minority Leader and I wish to play my role as Minority Leader when I feel that a member is not being given an impartial treatment in this House. We have said it here, the Chairperson has agreed that to introduce a question...

The Deputy Chairperson: Please..

Mr J. Roussety: Allow me to finish.

The Deputy Chairperson: I want your question, please. Do not shout!

Mr J. Roussety: I am not shouting. Maybe the microphone is a bit loud! Allow me to speak, Mr Deputy Chairperson. To introduce the question we must come at least with some introductory matter and then we put the question. We just don't put the question tit tat, it won't be good.

Mr Emilien: Mr Deputy Chairperson, Sir, is the Deputy Chief Commissioner aware that the excavation was being done between the victim's house and the road? It would, therefore, not be proper to say that it is the responsibility of people to take care when they wander in the vicinity of works.

The Deputy Chairperson: He has already answered this question.

Mr J. Roussety: But let him answer please.

Mr Emilien: Mr Deputy Chairperson, Sir, this question has not been put. How can the Deputy Chief Commissioner answer this question if it has already answered?

The Deputy Chairperson: He has already answered to every question.

Mr Emilien: How can you know what questions are coming?

Mr J. Roussety: Are there things which are being said and that we are missing? We are here and we have not heard the answer.

The Deputy Chairperson: Take your seat, please.

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr Deputy Chairperson, Sir, as I have said it is part of the responsibility of people to take care if they wander near excavation works. I have not said the victim did not take care. But as I have said, let us wait for the outcome of the inquiry and if need be, we shall then take measures against those who are responsible.

The Deputy Chairperson: Respected members, I suspend the sitting for fifteen minutes.

At 12.25 p.m. the sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 12.40 p.m. with Mr Chairperson in the Chair.

LAGOON - PASSES

(No. B/397) Mr A. L. Emilien (The First Local Region Member of Marechal) asked the Chief Commissioner as regards passes in the lagoon all around the island, whether he will -

- (a) state the number, names and length of each;
- (b) the state of each;
- (c) since when they had been dug or maintained;
- (d) whether there had been an invitation to bid for maintenance works and, if yes; where matters stood.

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson Sir, concerning parts (a) and (b), of the questions I am tabling a list of the thirteen passes in the lagoon indicating their names, length, state and the last time they have been dug or maintained.

Concerning part (c) and (d) of the question, tenders were sought for the dredging of passes leading from Petite Butte to Pointe Vingt Tours and la Passe Diamant. A contract was then awarded to Mr Louis Gonzague Lalande for dredging of Passe Petite Butte to Pointe Vingt Tours over a length of 600 metres at the fixed rate of Rs425 per metre. The contract for Passe Diamant was not awarded due to lack of fund. A sum of Rs300,000 was provided in the estimates for financial year 2003/2004.

The Mauritius Port Authority has been requested to provide a pontoon and a crane for the dredging of passes as it was done in the past.

Mr Emilien: Mr Chairperson, Sir, as regards part (c) of my question, we don't know the answer of the Chief Commissioner, may I ask him if there is regular maintenance of the passes all round the island?

The Chief Commissioner: As I said in part (c) of my answer, maintenance is done through contracts, that is, digging the pass. That's why I said that Rs300,000 were provided in the estimates for financial year 2003-2004. During a meeting with the Mauritius Port Authority in Mauritius, I raised the question of having a crane here on a pontoon as in the past to dig the passes around Rodrigues. This will help a lot because now the passes are being manually dug by contractors with hoes, etc. We would like to mechanise this work around Rodrigues and near the islets.

Mr Emilien: May I ask the Chief Commissioner, Mr Chairperson, Sir - he just mentioned the using of spades, hoes. etc. - whether there is in the contract any clause relating to the disposal of corals, sand, etc. dug from the passes?

The Chief commissioner: The residue has to be taken on shore, not laid at sea.

Mr Emilien: Mr Chairperson, Sir, is there a monitoring unit to ensure that these specifications are adhered to?

The Chief Commissioner: The work is being monitored by the Fisheries Division.

Mr Grandcourt: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I'd like to ask the Chief Commissioner, before the dredging or digging of these passes, has there been any study or any sort of EIA before awarding the contract?

The Chief Commissioner: I need notice of the question, Sir.

“ABREUVOIRS”- NUMBER, LOCATION ETC.

(No. B/398) Mr J. A. L. Emilien (First Local Region Member for Marechal) asked the Deputy Chief Commissioner, as regards *abreuvoirs* in Rodrigues whether he would –

- (a) indicate their number and locations thereof;
- (b) the number presently in working condition;
- (c) the frequency at which they were provided with water, and
- (d) the number which were not in working condition and the reasons therefor.

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, with regard to *abreuvoirs* in Rodrigues, I am tabling a list of 25 *abreuvoirs*, their locations and their current state.

I am, further, informed that water is normally supplied to those working *abreuvoirs* upon official request by group of farmers. In line with our policy to bring animals to cattlewalk areas, only *abreuvoirs* falling within the proposed cattlewalk areas

will be rehabilitated. Moreover with the destocking programme, the necessity for the rehabilitating of all the *abreuvoirs* is not felt.

Mr Grandcourt: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I would like to ask the Deputy Chief Commissioner, since we don't have the paper just tabled, we can have a look at it.

Mr Chairperson: You can do so.

Mr Grandcourt: Concerning part (b) of the question, many *abreuvoirs* are presently non-operational, can the Deputy Chief Commissioner give the reasons as to why they are not operational?

The Deputy Chief commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, as I have said, we have another policy for farming in Rodrigues. The current uncontrolled grazing system is causing more soil erosion and we are going to revise pasture regulations. Some of these *abreuvoirs* will be abandoned because they will be governed by our new policy to build new *abreuvoirs* in those cattlewalk areas.

Mr Grandcourt: Mr Chairperson, Sir, in the answer concerning Anse Nicholas, there is one *abreuvoir* which is in good condition but with no water supply. It is made up of concrete.

Mr Chairperson: Your question, please?

Mr Grandcourt: I'd like to ask the Deputy Chief Commissioner why is there no water in the *abreuvoir* although it is in good condition. I know personally this *abreuvoir* and it has not been provided with water for a long time. Why does he say it is in good condition?

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, as I informed the House, water is normally supplied to those working *abreuvoirs* upon a formal request from groups of farmers. But we are working on a new farming policy in Rodrigues and some of the *abreuvoirs* will be rehabilitated and some where water supply is not available and fall within the proposed cattle walks will also be supplied with water.

Mr J. Roussety: Mr Chairperson, Sir, we note that out of 24 *abreuvoirs*, 2 only are operational, one at Anse Enfer and the other at Cascade Jean Louis which is in a river bed. The Commissioner is saying that *abreuvoirs* are provided with water on formal requests. Is he not aware that animals are thirsty and need water everyday?

Mr Chairperson: As men do.

Mr J. Roussety: This is physiological, Mr Chairperson, Sir. So, is it the policy of his Commission to wait for formal requests from farmers to bring water to these *abreuvoirs*? Or, will he not agree that water is needed by animals on a daily basis?

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I have just answered another question before. We shall leave two tractors for water supply at the disposal of farmers on formal requests. My Commission will look into supply of water to *abreuvoirs* in service.

ELECTRICITY SUPPLY – APPLICANTS – NEW CONNECTIONS

(No. B/399) Mr A. L. Emilien (The First Local Region Member of Marechal) asked the Chief Commissioner as regards electricity in Rodrigues, whether he could –

- (a) obtain information as regards the number of applicants for new connections whose applications had been turned down and the reason therefor, and
- (b) table the EIA Report for the construction of a power plant at Pte L'Herbe.

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, you will recall that at the last sitting of the Assembly I informed the House that measures are being taken to control the problem of squatting. It is considered that if electricity is supplied to squatters, this may encourage further squatting of State land. In this context, the Central Electricity Board has been requested to seek clearance from my office before providing electricity to applicants so as to ensure that such services are not provided to squatters.

Up to now, the Central Electricity Board has consulted my office in 370 cases, out of which 268 have not been approved. However, the Central Electricity Board has been advised to verify whether any of the rejected applications are from private land owners, who may be provided with electricity. The others may be provided with electricity when they will receive their residential leases.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, although the Rodrigues Regional Assembly has been entrusted responsibility for the subject of environment, the processing of EIA licence still rests with the Ministry of Environment. Therefore, it is considered that it would not be appropriate for me to table a copy of the EIA Report, which the Central Electricity Board has submitted to the Ministry of Environment with a view to obtaining an EIA licence for its new power plant.

In accordance with the Environment Protection Act, the EIA Report was made available for public inspection at the office of the Environment Division from 02 to 18 September 2002. It can still be consulted on request at the Department of Environment in Mauritius.

Mrs Meunier: Mr Chairperson, Sir, can I ask the Chief Commissioner whether there is a special policy at his Commission for the supply of electricity to poor people who cannot afford to pay for the cost of electric poles?

The Chief Commissioner: It is the policy of the Rodrigues Regional Act to sign a Memorandum of Understanding with different partners in Rodrigues. We are signing one or two and are preparing one with CEB. As the respected Member is saying, we shall see what will be the responsibility of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly concerning poor people.

Mr J. Roussety: Mr Chairperson, Sir, a number of housing programmes in Rodrigues have been implemented without the beneficiaries having leases. Can we know from the Chief Commissioner whether, out of the 368 applications that have been turned down, some of them are beneficiaries of the housing programmes, but have not been favourably considered because they don't have a residential lease?

Mr Chairperson: I think the number is 268, isn't it?

Mr J. Roussety: Yes.

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, a policy decision has been taken concerning Trust Fund houses. Usually, before the beneficiaries construct their houses, the Trust Fund has to seek for clearance from my office or go to the State Land Committee so that the planner can visit the site and decide whether clearance can be given. Once the clearance is given, the house can be built and electricity is supplied to those people.

Mr Jabeemissar: Mr Chairperson, Sir, can the Chief Commissioner inform the House whether all the people living in *morcellements* have had their residential situation legalised and whether all of them have had their houses connected to electricity as he has just mentioned?

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, my colleague, the Commissioner for Public Infrastructure, has already replied to a question concerning *morcellements* made by the Cadastral Office. Now all those who have been allocated land in a *morcellement* have been provided with electricity. In fact, a sum of Rs3 m. has already been paid to the CEB for the supply of electricity. We have started with Roche Bon Dieu and we have finished with Songes. I am not sure about Baie Malgache, but there are about four or seven villages which are concerned. People who have already been allocated a plot of land in a *morcellement* will be provided with electricity.

Mr J. Roussety: Mr Chairperson, Sir, 268 applications have been turned down and I believe that for Rodrigues it is relatively high. I don't know whether these persons are being definitely deprived of electricity, but I would like to know what measures, policies or solutions are envisaged? Because when houses are built they are for a long time. They may have been built illegally, that is, in places where this is not allowed. Is it the policy of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly to refuse electricity supply indefinitely to those whose applications have been turned down?

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I must say that a lot of these people who have built their houses are on a list entitled "already built up". The Cadastral Office is processing those applications to give them a letter of intent or a lease.

Mr Grandcourt: Mr Chairperson, Sir, the Chief Commissioner has talked about providing those people with a lease in *morcellements* with electricity. Does this apply to all *morcellements*? Because some people have to pay a large amount of money to the CEB for electricity in a *morcellement*. Could he give some more clarification?

The Chief Commissioner: Well, according to the availability of funds only the seven *morcellements* will be provided with electricity. I take notice of the question and will try to find out whether there are any *morcellements* which are not on the list to be

provided with electricity. For the time being, Rs3 m. have been provided in the Budget of 2003-2004 for CEB to supply electricity to seven *morcellements*. If there are others we shall have to make a bid for funds in future budgets.

Mr J. Roussety: M. le président, le Chef Commissaire a expliqué que dorénavant sa Commission va examiner les demandes pour avoir l'électricité chez soi. Je voudrais demander au Chef Commissaire - en mon âme et conscience - s'il ne pense pas qu'il va un peu trop loin, M. le président.

The Chief Commissioner: M. le président, quand nous répondons aux questions, nous disons, "ma Commission, mon ministère ou mon bureau, cela veut dire les différents départements de ma Commission. *When I said that, I was responsible for Land, Environment and Tourism. When I say 'my Office', these include the different structures of my Commission.*

Mr J. Roussety: Mr Chairperson, Sir, would it not be more appropriate that these approvals are given by the Commission for Public Infrastructure instead of the Chief Commissioners Office? Because in the past I know that plans were sent to the CEB and then to the Works Division for approval. Now, it is the Public Infrastructure Commission.

The Chief Commissioner: We are talking about *morcellements*/land. My colleague, the Commissioner for Public Infrastructure, has already replied to the question also responsible for water and energy. But, as I said, we are talking about land and leases; and this concerns my Commission. Why transfer my responsibility to the Commissioner for Public Infrastructure?

Mr J. Roussety: On ne m'a peut-être pas bien compris M. le président. Est-ce que le Chef Commissaire entend que chaque demande pour l'électricité devrait être examinée par ses services à l'avenir?

The Chief Commissioner: La demande pour l'électricité va d'abord au CEB, qui l'envoie ensuite au *Departmental Head* responsable de la terre pour s'assurer si le demandeur a un bail. C'est ainsi que cela se passe. Pourquoi donner de l'électricité alors que cette personne n'a aucune autorisation pour construire une maison? Il faudrait que les honorables membres sachent que, si nous voulons mettre de l'ordre dans ce pays, si nous voulons vraiment aller vers une politique globale dans l'intérêt du développement, il faudrait quand même qu'il y ait un plan d'aménagement, c'est-à-dire, un *outline scheme for human settlement*. M. le président, nous sommes en train de travailler là-dessus. Si on autorise aux gens de "*squat*" un peu partout, nous ne finirons jamais de mettre de l'ordre dans ce pays et nous ne pourrons jamais mettre notre économie sur pied.

En ce qui concerne l'électricité, c'est une question de terre, terre privée ou terre de l'Etat. Donc, pourquoi le Commissaire des infrastructures devrait s'en occuper quand c'est une question de terre de l'Etat?

Mr Jabeemissar: M. le président, pour éviter une politique de deux poids, deux mesures, il se peut qu'il y ait dans certains morcellements certaines personnes qui ont fait une demande d'électricité et vu que le bureau du Chef Commissaire n'a pas encore pris des décisions pour "*implement*" la décision dont il a parlé et vu que peut-être ces

personnes là ont déjà payé des fois une grosse somme d'argent, est-ce que le bureau du Chef Commissaire est disposé à leur rembourser l'argent qu'ils auraient déjà payé?

Mr Chairperson: This question is not allowed as it is principally based on a hypothetical case. If the Member so wishes, he can reformulate the question, but this is not allowed.

RODRIGUES - UNEMPLOYMENT

(No. B/400) Mr D. L. Guillaume (Third Island Region Member) asked the Commissioner responsible for employment whether with regard to the problem of unemployment in Rodrigues, he would state -

- (a) how many unemployed persons were registered with the employment office for the last three years and how many of them had secured employment;
- (b) the names of all contractors responsible for the construction of the road from Port Mathurin to Grand La Fouche Corail via Petit Gabriel and for the Airport of Rodrigues Ltd;
- (c) how many persons had been employed by them for the last three years and if all these workers were still with them, and, if not, why;
- (d) what action was being taken to tackle this problem.

Mr L. Roussety: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I am informed that the number of registered unemployed with the Employment Information Centre for the three successive May-August periods are 2824 for 2001, 3009 for 2002 and 2868 for 2003.

As regards the number of persons who have secured employment, my information is that some 270 had placements through the Employment Information Centre. However, this number does not take into account direct recruitment made by companies and organisations as people continue to have their names registered, even when they have secured a job.

Regarding part (b) of the question, I am informed that the contractor for roads construction is A. J. Maurel Ltd. and Allied Builders Ltd. was responsible for the construction at the airport at Plaine Corail.

As regards part (c) of the question, Sir, the information requested for relates to private companies over which we do not have any say. In the circumstances, it would not be appropriate to answer to these parts. So, I would say that the other small companies-sub-contractors are responsible to the contractors A. J. Maurel and Allied Builders who have contracts with the Rodrigues Regional Assembly.

PORT SUD EST/MOUROUK AGRICULTURAL DEMONSTRATION PLOT - ACCIDENT, UPGRADING, ETC.

(No. B/401) **Mr D. L. Guillaume (Third Island Region Member)** asked the Deputy Chief Commissioner whether in view of difficulties faced by pedestrians along the road Port Sud Est to Mourouk Agricultural Demonstration Plot, he could state –

- (a) if any fatal accident had occurred on that road and, if yes, the name of the victim/s;
- (b) the breadth of the road, where the accident occurred, whether it was a two-way traffic road and whether it was equipped with handrail and pavement and, if not, why, and
- (c) what action is being taken to solve this problem.

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I have been informed by Police that a road accident involving a motorcycle and a pedestrian named Mr Archange Catherine occurred on 12 September 2003 at Port Sud Est. The pedestrian died on 19 September 2003.

The width of the road where the accident occurred is 3.4m. The road is a single lane one with two overlapping lay-bys. The road is neither equipped with handrail nor footpath.

It is envisaged to upgrade that small stretch of road subject to availability of funds. Meanwhile, proper road signs will be installed to clearly indicate vehicle priority, speed limit as well as proper road marking.

STATEMENTS BY COMMISSIONERS

RRA EXECUTIVE COUNCIL - PROJECTS

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, with your permission, I would like to make a statement to this House.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, I have been made aware that there are some apprehensions among various stakeholders of the construction industry in Rodrigues as regards the future of the construction industry following the completion of some major projects like the “*La Route de L’Autonomie*”, the Airport project and others.

I would like, as Commissioner for Public Infrastructure, to reassure the various stakeholders of the construction industry that the Executive Council of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly is committed to continue and build up this huge momentum that has been gathered since the past months in order to secure the employment of the hundreds of masons, carpenters, bar benders, labourers, sub contractors and other workers involved in the construction field. In this connection, several projects have been initiated and others will be initiated shortly to maintain the same momentum.

I am pleased to announce to the House that the following projects have been identified for implementation. Some of the major projects that have been or are being initiated are -

- (1) a gymnasium at Grande Montagne with a seating capacity of more than 600 persons. The project is presently at tender stage;
- (2) a swimming pool complex at Marechal which is due to start in early 2004;
- (3) the construction of the new Regional Assembly building. Tender will be launched in 2004. This building will also house offices of different Commissions;
- (4) upgrading of the basic football pitch of which works will start in early 2004;
- (5) the construction of five social welfare centres at Le Chou, Jardin Mamzelle, Roseau, Petite Butte and Fond La Bonté scheduled to be completed in early 2004;
- (6) the construction of four residential flats at Anse aux Anglais for officers serving in Rodrigues scheduled to start in early 2004;
- (7) a new office block at Port Mathurin to accommodate the Public Library, the Commission for Health, the Commission for Arts and Culture and others. Tenders have been sent to Central Tender Board for floating of tenders;
- (8) the construction of 83 low cost housing units which will be ready by April 2004;
- (9) three roads will be constructed during this financial year viz Palissade Ternel, Montagne Malgache and Anse Quitor Dans Coco. Works have already started along the Tamme Montagne Cheri which is scheduled to be completed by beginning of April 2004;
- (10) works for the construction of a bridge along Port Sud Est River will start by mid January and completed within a period of 5 months;
- (11) The construction of Anse Raffin Dam will be accelerated and will be completed by end of April 2004. Concrete works have now started and it is expected that more manpower will be required on the site;
- (12) the construction of Grenade Dam as well as an irrigation reservoir at Cascade Victoire will be completed in 2004;
- (13) a feasibility study of the Pavé La Bonté Dam will be completed by March 2004 and construction works will start towards the end of 2004;
- (14) following the preliminary report of the consultant, the construction of a dam along Pistache River is being looked into. The estimated cost is around Rs400 m. to Rs500 m. for a storage of 3 millions metre cube of water;
- (15) the establishment of a primary network in the south region is being carried out. Works for the Montagne Cabri, *Banzilique* pipeline will start in early 2004, whereas the pipeline linking Grand La Fouche Corail to Reposoir Camp Pintade and Citadelle will be completed by mid 2004;
- (16) the Winston Churchill bridge will be reconstructed in 2004, and
- (17) the works for the construction of a Regional Culture and Leisure Centre at Latanier will start by end of March 2004.

Minor works will be carried out such as -

- (a) construction of stalls at Port Mathurin Bus Terminal;
- (b) upgrading of sports complexes, and
- (c) embellishment works at public places.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, the above works which have been identified by the Executive Council will promote a “*dynamique*” within the construction industry.

Ces travaux, M. le président, sont la mise en pratique de notre manifeste électoral. Nous voulons assurer nos ouvriers qu’ils ne seront pas sur la touche. Nous maintiendrons notre philosophie participative et nous travaillerons ensemble avec tous les gens concernés, les ingénieurs, les contracteurs, les sous contracteurs, les ouvriers et la population afin de rendre Rodrigues encore plus belle.

Je terminerai, M. le président, en réaffirmant que l’avenir du secteur de la construction est prometteur et je fais un appel aux gens concernés de garder confiance.

Merci.

MOTION

SOCIAL ADVISORY AND MONITORING COMMITTEE - SETTING UP

Mr J. Roussety: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I beg to move the motion standing in my name on the Order Paper, namely -

"This Assembly is of the opinion that, in accordance with Section 59 (5) (f) of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly Act 2001, a committee to be known as the Social Advisory and Monitoring Committee be set up made up of seven Members in all, four being from the majority and three from the minority."

The objects of the Committee shall be –

- (a) To advise and overview the distribution of aid, donations and funds by government and other agencies local and international, to vulnerable groups;
- (b) To design and ensure the continuous implementation of a code of conduct for NGOs involved in the support of vulnerable groups;
- (c) To receive representations/proposals from relevant parties as to how such distribution should be carried out.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, we have come up in the Assembly with this motion to set up the Social Advisory and Monitoring Committee with specific reasons in the background and as can be read in the motion with clear-cut objectives. The role of all Assemblies in a democracy and specifically here in Rodrigues is to act as a watchdog as far as honesty and transparency are concerned mainly when those, at the end of the process, are vulnerable people.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, our move is a positive one. The majority may think that it is hazardous for the Opposition to come with motions. In fact, it is. However, we are determined to bring our contribution by way of motions or other tools provided for by the Standing Orders where we think that such motions or such proposals come from the baseline, that is, the community and from those people with whom we are directly in contact.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, I recall the sayings of today's Chief Commissioner, Mr Clair, during an interview on the MBC some months before the RRA elections. He was interviewed by Mrs Perrine-Bégué, then a reporter of the MBC. Mr Clair declared that it is the role of the Opposition to be constructive and in the event he is elected he would be prepared to study proposals from the Opposition. Mr Chairperson, Sir, in a democracy, Parliament, national or regional, is viewed as one of the supreme bodies which has been elected by the people to carry out policies and implement good governance on its behalf. Vulnerable groups have been receiving aid of various forms for a long time in Rodrigues and, no doubt, we must here pay tribute to all individuals and organisations who have been giving much of their time and resources to help these people. However, Mr Chairperson, Sir, during the past few years, we have noticed two important phenomena, one positive and the other negative. First, Mr Chairperson, Sir, there have been tremendous efforts by Government and international NGOs and this has resulted in an increase in the number of programmes targeted at vulnerable groups. We have had programmes for poverty alleviation through micro credit, housing, through donation of materials by the Trust Fund for the Social Integration of Vulnerable groups. There have been track road construction and other similar projects where, in some way or another, materials or monies have been donated to specific groups for specific projects.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, concerning the negative side, at the same time there has been a number of acute irregularities, which, in some cases, have cast much doubt and attracted justified criticisms on such projects. Politicians only are not to be blamed. Mr Chairperson, Sir, it is not correct to see old people, of over 60 years of age, with tears in their eyes because they have not been donated construction materials whereas the unmarried young still living with his parents did receive materials in the same village. Thus, there has been the development of a great feeling of injustice and frustration. There has been, first, an incorrect planning of programme implementation. The organisations, responsible for the implementation of the projects, did not plan their resources and finance correctly and when the number of applicants increased, they did not know how to manage. There has been an improper definition of eligibility in many of these programmes. The criteria, which have been used for eligibility of beneficiaries, have not always been objective and have not always been defined sufficiently so that those, who would benefit from donations, are clearly identified. There has been bias of various forms, for example, political bias. In some cases, unmarried women with children have had to face discrimination.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, improper review and evaluation is also one of the causes why problems have arisen so that most of these programmes have been implemented by trial and error so that it has been most of the time impossible to learn from past errors. As you see, the problems I have enumerated are important. As a result of these, the success of programmes targeted at vulnerable groups *a été nuancé*. Examples of what have happened owing to improper management and improper control are numerous. For example, in house construction, materials have been donated to less needy people in the same villages. People, in some organisations, have been mixing up issues forgetting the rules of transparency and have acted purely on political or discriminatory grounds. We have also had recent examples of 500 metres track roads leading to the houses of one or two families only.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, the motion, if adopted, will provide Rodrigues with a tool to rationalise the aid programmes towards the vulnerable groups. It is important to have

parliamentary control on such issues because it concerns implementation of social aid to vulnerable groups. As far as the housing programme by the Trust Fund for the Social Integration of Vulnerable groups is concerned...

Mr Chairperson: Could the hon. Member, please, refrain from referring to the Trust Fund because it has been stated in the Assembly that the organisation does not fall within the jurisdiction of the Assembly.

Thank you.

Mr J. Roussety: Allow me to bring to the attention of all Members the contents of the reply to Parliamentary Question No. B/365 in the National Assembly on 27 August 2003. This question from hon. Von-Mally was addressed to hon. Paul Bérenger, then Minister of Finance. Hon. Von-Mally proposed in a supplementary question that a committee comprising Members of both sides of the House, that is, of the Regional Assembly, be set up to overview the selection of beneficiaries. The then Deputy Prime Minister replied, I quote -

“I have no objection but the question should be put there. I can’t speak for the Rodrigues Regional Assembly, I have had the occasion of telling the hon. Member that we will tolerate no political interference in any way”.

He further added -

“now setting up a committee with both sides of the Regional Assembly, the question should be put there, but I am sure it will be considered positively, and I hope so”.

This is, therefore, an alignment of thoughts as regards the proper target, that is, to better help the vulnerable groups.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, as I have presented the motion, I would like to emphasise how this committee is going to work if we decide to set it up. We are not, in the philosophy of this motion, going to control each and every individual application for social help or each and every programme for social aid. We are proposing an advisory and monitoring committee, which will only look at the policies and at the broad aspects of help to vulnerable groups and specific programmes. The setting up of this committee is, therefore, a must and is fully justified in the light of past experiences to ensure better results in the fight against poverty and exclusion. I would invite my colleagues, Members of the House, to support the motion and to come forward with positive and constructive comments as to how we can better help the vulnerable groups.

With these words, Mr Chairperson, Sir, I commend the motion to the House.

Mr Grandcourt rose and seconded.

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, after having heard the Member, who has intervened on the rationale of the proposed committee, I am still at odd to follow his line of reasoning and I am indeed surprised with the so-called advisability for the constitution of the committee. For a number of reasons, which I shall elaborate upon afterwards, I am against the constitution of the said Committee. First of all, I feel

that there are lots of misapprehension of the role of such types of parliamentary Committees. A committee constituted under Section 59 (5) (f) has to proceed in debate in the same manner as in the House itself and according to Section 20 (a) of the sixth schedule to the Act “no person other than a member shall attend a meeting of a committee”. It stands to reason that such committees cannot officially receive any proposal from any person whatsoever. There is consequently, no substance in the object labelled (c), I quote -

"to receive representations, proposals from relevant parties as to how such distributions should be carried out."

However, under Section 59 (7) (a) there is a mandatory requirement that the Committee shall submit its confirmed report to the Assembly. There is equally no substance in object (b), which is to the effect that “the Committee should ensure the continuous implementation of a code of conduct”. Is it that the proposed committee would act as an enforcing body, a tribunal or a court for NGOs? I do not have to say more save to mention that there is a total misconception of the role of members in this House. A NGO by definition, I quote from the Oxford English Dictionary, is an association not belonging to or associated to Government. It is against the spirit of these organisations and, indeed, it is not the intention of this regional Government to intervene in the workings of NGOs and still less to issue a code of conduct. The mover of the motion, if he wants to follow that track, I am afraid, may do so without our participation.

On the other hand, Mr Chairperson, Sir, I do agree that if these NGOs are partly funded by the Government, the latter has a role, which is to ensure proper utilisation of its funds. But our system of democracy has already provided a framework where the Public Accounts Committee can make such inquiries.

Finally, as far as the distribution of aid donations are concerned, there exists already a team of public officers in different Commissions to make inquiries after natural disasters. For example, after cyclone Kalunde, there has been a team officers which has done the inquiry. We trust their integrity and aid will be distributed on the basis of their recommendation after the approval of the Executive Council. Therefore, we are not going to approve a Committee for duplication of work.

Thank you, Mr Chairperson, Sir.

Mr Chairperson: Any intervention from the minority side?

Mr Emilien: Mr Chairperson, Sir, with your permission, I would like to make a statement in line with the proposal for a Social Advisory and Monitoring Committee.

Mr Chairperson: A speech you mean?

Mr Emilien: Yes, Sir, thank you. Mr Chairperson, Sir, we are all in a democratic State, the Republic of Mauritius and as such we are bound to evolve within the parameters of democracy. After having heard the Deputy Chief Commissioner, it seems that they are reluctant to support the setting up of such a committee according to Standing Orders/Rules. But, in fact, we are of the opinion that there is a need for such a committee, maybe the name, the assignment may vary from the original one. In a recent

study on poverty, it has been noted that Rodrigues remains the poorest region of the Republic of Mauritius, poorest in terms of wealth, development, standard of living and democracy. Now that we are an autonomous island, it would be very sad if we have to be added to the list of the poorest islands in terms of democracy and transparency. We can all recall the sad episode of cyclone Bella where there was a negative response from members of the public in connection with distribution of donations in the wake of that natural disaster. We have all in mind the scandalous event associated with donations from the Red Cross society which led to a complete mess. We can also recall the unprecedented case of bags of cement being eaten by rats at Trèfles. This may seem to be funny, Mr Chairperson, Sir, but these are, among others, realities we face within *la spécificité rodriguaise*. More recently, after cyclone Kalunde people are still shocked by the traumatic way allocation of financial aid was done. Genuine planters and breeders have not been given due consideration. For the sake of transparency, if this Government really means to govern this island in a democratic way, we are confident, Mr Chairperson, Sir, that the Social Advisory and Monitoring Committee or whatever name and duties they would have liked to assign to it, has to be set up.

If you people, sitting on the other side of the House, do not have any hidden agenda so far as social donations are concerned, there is strictly no reason why you should be reluctant to have such a committee comprising members from both sides of the House. Officials of the Trust Fund for the Social Integration of the Vulnerable Groups will conduct a thorough survey throughout the island to identify housing units allocated to those people who are not using same as dwelling places which means, Mr Chairperson, Sir, that they have got another house and were, therefore, not, in fact, in need of that assistance.

For those who rent these houses, what does all this mean? There has not been transparency in the identification of beneficiaries. This gives the strong signal so far as the level of democracy is concerned. It has been broadcast and known to one and all. Is this the image that we want to use to sing the praises of our beloved island? Justice has not only got to be done but must be seen to be done. Otherwise the people will bear no confidence in the people who are in the driving seat of the affairs of the island. This will be a dangerous situation.

In mainland Mauritius, Mr Chairperson, Sir, the Prime Minister is agreeable to the setting up of such a committee for the sake of transparency and I really can't see why Members of the other side of this House do not realise the opportunity given to them to dissipate any doubt in the minds of the public. Unless they come up with reasonable grounds to support their reluctance, it will always be incomprehensible to me.

Before ending, Mr Chairperson, Sir, I would like to refer to part of the reply of the then Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, now Prime Minister of Mauritius, hon. Paul Bérenger, to the question of hon. Von-Mally and referred to by my colleague earlier. I shall not quote it, but it seems that no consideration is being given to the wish of our Prime Minister. *On ne peut être plus royaliste que le roi, M. le président, à moins que le projet de certains est de jeter les bases d'une république bananière chez nous. Mesdames et Messieurs, le monde entier a les yeux tournés vers Maurice ces derniers temps. Quand je dis Maurice, M. le président, par ricochet il y a Rodrigues. Justement Maurice étant cité comme un modèle de démocratie, n'attirons pas l'attention sur nous par des entorses à la démocratie car cela fera fuir les investisseurs potentiels et Dieu sait*

combien nous en avons besoin à Rodrigues, à moins qu'un de vos buts soit justement cela.

For the sake of democracy, Mr Chairperson, Sir, to avoid frustration and more problems, I am hereby appealing to your sense of meritocracy, of responsibility to consider positively the setting up of this Committee. The coming generations will pay tribute to you. They will remember your contribution to democracy and transparency in this island of Rodrigues.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, I thank you.

Mrs Perrine-Bégué: Mr Chairperson, Sir, the motion has to be seen in its right perspective. From my point of view, the following questions should be put -

- Is it necessary to increase the number of committees upon simple requests?
- Will there not be any duplication of work or competence, or any conflict with the Executive arm of the Regional Assembly with the setting up of such a committee?

Let us scrutinise the wording of the motion and the request contained therein. First, at part (a), there is mention of, I quote -

“advise and overview the distribution”.

Second, at part (b), it goes further by mentioning, I quote -

“design and ensure implementation”.

Third, at paragraph (c), *il pousse le bouchon plus haut*, I quote -

“receiving representations, proposals from relevant parties as to how”.

which tantamount to seek for an examining body with delegated powers although this is not expressly requested in the motion. This is where, Mr Chairperson, Sir, I say that the proposed committee will conflict with the Executive Council which already has full powers to determine and implement policy under section 37 of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly Act. With this motion, the minority is seeking to share the exercise of power in Rodrigues. It has always been clear in this House that the minority group never understood or accepted to be in an opposition position. This is what we call ruling without a mandate which is undemocratic unless there is a coalition or an alliance.

Mr Chairperson Sir, I now come to the request, I quote -

“design and implement a code of conduct for NGOs”.

This question does not arise. Rodrigues has always had an exemplary and participative social structure and is always quoted in Mauritius and abroad on a number of occasions as a model of its kind. Over the years, NGOs in Rodrigues have developed their own code of conduct, which contains all the elements of good governance. They work within the regulatory framework - the Registration of Associations Act which

ensures that they cannot go astray and, if they do, Government can intervene promptly to prevent any abuse. NGOs in Rodrigues are of 2 types: promotional NGOs and protective NGOs. They cover a wide variety of activities and causes and they defend a wide spectrum of interests among the population, for example, labour, agricultural, professionals, charitable, social and welfare groups. Their effectiveness depends on their size, unity, social status and leadership. In Rodrigues, NGOs have always acted as intermediaries between Government and the people offering a channel of communication between the two. Rodriguans, therefore, participate in public activities in a more direct way. NGOs are a means whereby citizens can make their views felt and ensure that their viewpoints are heard. A striking example of such application in Rodrigues was after the enactment of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly Act. On the 20 November, 2001 all NGOs united themselves as a "*front pour la réalisation et l'implémentation de cette loi*". Mr Chairperson, Sir, do you find it logical for Government or Parliament to lay down a code of ethics for such NGOs? Government has already set up the legal framework for NGOs. It is up to them to develop their own code of conduct.

As I said earlier, we have a strong and well-organised civil society. But it can still improve. We shall add, Mr Chairperson, Sir, that maybe we do not fully realise that in Rodrigues, just like in every democratic country, NGOs can act as a check on the Executive to the extent that they have access to a considerable amount of information. On account of the fact that NGOs have access to the local people, Government sometimes in every country seeks advice and contributions from them. This does not imply that NGOs may do whatever they want in giving a helping hand to the authorities because it must not be forgotten that NGOs comprise members of different interests. This, in itself, constitutes a neutralising effect to wrongdoing. The proposed Social Advisory and Monitoring Committee in trying to control NGOs will not make them efficient NGOs, but GONGOS (Government non-Governmental Organisations). I will go as far as saying that the proposed Social advisory and Monitoring Committee would then become a super GONGO.

To conclude, Mr Chairperson, Sir, the OPR Government which has legally been elected, is, according to the Rodrigues Regional Assembly Act, a representative and responsible Government. As regards its duties and powers, it has to perform for whatever decision in strict accordance with law, be it for taking care of vulnerable groups or other things. Adequate control mechanisms exist in our autonomous democracy. First, Members of the Regional Assembly have the right to put questions for oral or written replies on all subjects, including the receipt of goods, services, donations, etc. Then, the Public Accounts Committee which includes Members from both sides of the House have access to all the accounts of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly.

Moreover, the accounts of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly are subject to an independent examination by the Director of Audit whose annual report is laid on the Table of the National Assembly and is, therefore, open to the scrutiny of one and all. So, I objectively conclude, Mr Chairperson, Sir, that the need for the setting up of a Social Advisory and Monitoring Committee does not arise. I am therefore, against the motion.

Mrs J. Prosper (Sixth Island Region Member): Mr Chairperson, Sir, this is supposed to be an enlightened aid as we are now in an autonomous state. These words, indeed, I did pronounce in my Budget Speech for the year 2003/2004 and I say it again in this House today because, here, our people are still poor and if we look at the statistics, among these poor people, around 70% of them are women. Yes, Mr Chairperson, Sir,

poverty has become a gender issue here, in Rodrigues. The fact that, traditionally, our society is a chauvinist one does not facilitate the smooth integration of poverty-stricken women in our society and I am sure the Commissioner for Women will agree with me on that matter. And, if added to that, Mr Chairperson, Sir, when social aid is being offered and distributed to these people, there is political bias and blackmailing.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, most of the women who receive social aid and other kinds of aid are single mothers. They are highly vulnerable and are condemned by the morals and mores of that country. Being a single mother is often considered as not morally or socially acceptable and they are often regarded as unprincipled people.

Although some people in this House, here, might prefer not to talk on that issue, considered as a very sensitive one, we cannot close our eyes and see our people being abused and wronged by those who are supposed to give their aid to them. These people, also called social helpers or NGOs or whatever, have been closely selected for their moral value and social achievement and personal integrity and have been entrusted with the task of helping poor people.

However, cases of electoral bribery and other kinds of proposals - some of them of very indecent nature - have been heard of or often reported, but many of these victims were not taken seriously either because they simply are poor people, so they are given no consideration at all or simply because they are women and they are given very little consideration.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, I want to make a special plea for these people, especially, these women. Many might think that this motion is being moved only for political reasons, but justice and transparency should prevail when aid is offered to the most needy and our political agenda or other motivation of whatever nature they are, must be looked into all the time.

We, Members of this Assembly, having sworn to serve our people, should ensure that justice is being done. There should be checks and balances to ensure smooth integration of poor people in society. And who can do that best if not we, members of this Assembly! I insist on that because I feel that it is a matter of utmost importance and concern at a time when we are militating for equal rights and justice for all. Women should no longer be victims because they are simply called women. *Elles sont femmes mais humains avant tout et elles souffrent de la pire des misères, la pauvreté. Et si on ajoute à cela, toutes les autres choses dont elles sont victimes.*

Mr Chairperson, Sir, the Social Advisory and Monitoring Committee - or if you want to call it by another name because I think you are a bit reluctant because of the wordings like the respected Commissioner for Culture has said - will ensure that these people be considered as full-fledged citizens of the Republic of Mauritius and receive their social aid without anybody encroaching upon their rights.

We should not stick to the wordings, wordings have been placed on paper and the Committee would sit in due time to decide how it would work. We should try to understand the object behind this motion and the wording can be worked out another time. We have no intention, here, on this side of the House, to rule without mandate, but we feel that a Committee for our people is necessary. We are here concerned for vulnerable people. We have sworn here as Members and I support this motion fully

because I feel that with Members of both sides of the House, this Committee will help to ensure a better monitoring of social aid being given to people.

Thank you.

Mr Chairperson: Thank you. Any intervention?

Mr N. Lisette: Mr Chairperson, Sir, with your permission, I would like to make a small intervention on the motion brought forward by the Minority Leader. The motion is about Social Advisory and Monitoring Committee.

As regards social security, we very often received aids and donations to be distributed to vulnerable groups. These donations are either from Government or other agencies, local or international. As everybody is aware, donations are given to Government of the day for vulnerable groups of the country. As a caring Government, every person who falls in a vulnerable group is benefiting, regardless of his colours, race or political party. The only criterion is their vulnerability. Since I take responsibility of the social security, I have done several distributions of donations by my staff and with the collaboration of volunteer NGOs. It has been noticed that this has been done in a very effective way and no representation from vulnerable groups has been detected after the said exercise. So, I think that we are doing our job correctly and, therefore, the said Committee proposed by the Minority Leader does not have its place here in our Government.

Furthermore, NGOs, as the name suggests, are non-governmental organisations. They got registered by the Registrar of Associations on a specific criterion and we, Government, are not here to design or ensure the continuous implementation of code of conducts of the NGOs. This is why, at the beginning, I have said that Government properties concern only public officers and NGOs, they are all here to give voluntary help. They cannot interfere with the distribution as such.

Concerning the objective that said that "to receive representation, proposals from relevant parties as to have such distributions should be carried", I would say that such distributions concern Government policies and not relevant parties. We do not put political issues everywhere.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, I don't see the importance of such Committee as we are doing our job correctly and do not need any help from the Minority group. Very often, when they were invited to give their views and ideas on other issues, they had refused to do so. I cannot understand why whenever there is a distribution of donation they want to collaborate. There must be something that really interests them or any hidden agenda. We know how to do our job and we are doing it. I repeat that I am against such a Committee.

Thank you, Mr Chairperson, Sir.

Mr Chairperson: Any intervention from the Minority side?

Mrs M. T. Meunier (Second Island Region Member): M. le président, c'est avec beaucoup de convictions humanitaires que je supporte cette motion car je crois en sa raison d'être. Transparence et justice, M. le président, devraient être le slogan de toute

organisation qui vise à améliorer la vie des personnes les plus démunies mais tel n'est pas le cas à Rodrigues.

Les organisations non-gouvernementales qui ont la charge d'offrir un service d'aide à ces gens défavorisés requièrent l'aide bénévole des personnes qui connaissent mieux leurs situations. Mais certaines personnes se servent de leurs positions pour exploiter ces situations à leur propre profit. Par exemple, des projets d'aide dont les véritables bénéficiaires sont laissés au profit de leurs copains, parents ou collègues politiques. Il devrait y avoir un *third party* qui veuille à la bonne marche de ces projets. Et qu'est-ce qu'on peut trouver de mieux qu'un comité composé des membres des deux côtés de la Chambre?

Personnellement, je ne vois pas d'autres moyens, M. le président, qui puissent dissiper les doutes et les malversations qui ont sévi lors de ces projets d'aide. Je crois, M. le président, qu'avec un tel comité, tout se fera dans la transparence.

Merci.

The Chief Commissioner: M. le président, nous nous trouvons ici devant une motion qui peut être très dangereuse. A travers cette motion, on parle de la démocratie et des dons qu'on reçoit. On dit qu'il faudra essayer de voir comment ces dons sont distribués et en même temps on parle sur les codes de conduite pour les ONGs.

Il faut savoir qu'il y a des organisations non-gouvernementales qui reçoivent des dons directement des organisations non-gouvernementales internationales et de la coopération décentralisée de l'Union Européenne qui disposent à sa manière selon les objectifs de l'organisation. Est-ce qu'il nous faudra entrer à l'intérieur de ces organisations pour essayer de leur dire voilà comment il faut faire? Est-ce que ce n'est pas une atteinte à la liberté d'organisation qui existe dans la Constitution nationale de la République de Maurice qui dit: toute personne a le droit de constituer des organisations que ce soit au niveau social, économique, politique, culturel et ainsi de suite? Venir, nous ici, une institution politique, soit-disant vouloir diriger ces organisations! Je pense que c'est grave. Un membre de l'autre côté de la Chambre, M. Emilien, a dit que si on ne met pas sur pied ce comité, notre réputation sur la scène internationale va attraper un bon coup. Mais non, M. le Président! Allez entrer à l'intérieur de ces ONGs, c'est d'une puissance internationale et c'est cela qui va porter un coup à notre démocratie et à notre institution politique. Je dis que c'est grave d'aller contre la Constitution Mauricienne d'autoriser des personnes de s'organiser dans la liberté et de prendre leur responsabilité selon un objectif bien précis. Je suis d'accord qu'il y en a qui ne font pas leur travail comme il faut. Mais nous devons surveiller à cela.

(Interruptions)

Il y a des règlements qui régissent les associations qui sont enregistrées au *Registrar of Associations*.

Au niveau international nous voyons que les ONGs sont une force indépendante des gouvernements que ce soit en Europe ou en Afrique, mais il y a certains pays qui ont constitué leurs propres ONGs comme une arme politique. Ce n'est pas le cas pour Rodrigues. Nous pensons qu'à Rodrigues les ONGs font un bon travail. Evidemment, il

y a certaines lacunes, mais il est de notre devoir de les responsabiliser. Ce n'est pas de notre devoir de les guider, de prendre leur place mais de les responsabiliser. Il y en a qui font du bon travail, par exemple, CARITAS, La Croix Rouge etc.

Comme je l'ai dit au début, des dons sont envoyés à Rodrigues par des gouvernements, des organisations non-gouvernementales, qui, très souvent, vont directement vers les organisations concernées. Mais il y a des dons qui viennent de certains pays qui sont dirigés *towards the executive arm of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly*, c'est-à-dire, le conseil exécutif qui doit prendre en charge ces dons et ensuite les distribuer. Nous n'avons pas tous les pouvoirs nécessaires. C'est un exemple extraordinaire à Rodrigues où nous voyons des fonctionnaires qui travaillent en étroite collaboration avec des ONGs qui apportent leur contribution dans la lutte contre la pauvreté, dans la formation et d'autres domaines. Je profite de l'occasion pour les féliciter aujourd'hui.

M. le président, il y a des organisations qui ne veulent pas subir la politisation. Ils veulent être autonome dans leur liberté d'action. Ce n'est pas de notre devoir d'aller politiser ces ONGs. Nous apportons l'aide nécessaire au niveau des subsides. Comme le commissaire des arts et de la culture et de la femme a dit, il y a des institutions au niveau de cette Assemblée qui ont le pouvoir de vérifier si cet argent est utilisé comme il faut. De notre côté, M. le président, nous n'avons aucune intention d'approuver cette motion car elle est une atteinte à la liberté de la personne et des organisations non gouvernementales.

Merci, M. le président.

Mr J. Roussety: M. le président, connaissant ceux que nous avons en face de nous, nous ne nous attendions pas à un accueil avec des roses. En ce qui concerne les dons, la corruption au sein des associations ne date pas d'hier à Rodrigues. Il y a eu le cas de la boulangerie "La Rodriguaise". Il y a une affaire en cours pour extorsion de fonds etc.

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, on a point of order. I would like the Minority Leader to withdraw the insinuations made. What he said has nothing to do with the motion before the House today. It concerns donations and the NGOs.

Mr J. Roussety: Mr Chairperson, the Chief Commissioner said that I have made insinuations. May I know what are the insinuations he is referring to?

Mr Chairperson: There is a cardinal principle that when we are debating a motion, all speeches have to be relevant to the motion itself. But it is acceptable to a certain extent that reference be made to people and organisations which are not in this Assembly. But there is a restraint on what can be said about these people who can be easily ascribed some bad impression or offensive language. I invite all Members to refrain from making in their speech any imputation to any organisation or any persons behind their back.

Mr J. Roussety: Mr Chairperson, it seems to me that the Commissioner of Arts and Culture thinks that Members of the Opposition here would wish to form part of this regional Government. In no way, Mr Chairperson, Sir, I would form part of such a

Government! I am glad to be in the Opposition of the first Regional Assembly. Members on the other side have said in their comments on the motion that it is an innovative motion. From an innovative point of view, what motions have we had to date? We have had motions on the Budget, for the setting up of committees. What innovation have they brought to this new Assembly? They are sleeping, Mr Chairperson, Sir! And when the minority works, they say that it is dangerous. They misinterpret the words to say that we want to *museler* the NGOs. This is not what we were saying.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, this morning, before coming to this House, I checked on Internet what was being done in the world to have donations directed towards the right recipients. For example, Botswana which is one of the co-operating counters in Africa has implemented a code of conduct for NGOs. This does not mean that they are putting up a tribunal to judge chairmen of NGOs. They are free to follow the code of conduct. It is a code for the well being to support vulnerable groups. The motion is not a code of conduct for NGOs in general, but it is a code of conduct for NGOs involved in the support of vulnerable groups.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, one of the Commissioners has said that a Committee of the Assembly cannot receive proposals. The Public Accounts Committee can receive proposals. Who has said that we will include members who are not Members of the Assembly in the Committee? This is not the case. We are speaking of a Parliamentary Committee. Don't we understand what a Parliamentary Committee is?

Mr Chairperson, Sir, they are saying that the Public Accounts Committee is responsible for checking accounts of departments accountable to the Regional Assembly. But, for example, the accounts of Trust Funds do not fall under the responsibility of the Regional Assembly and are not checked by the Public Accounts Committee. This is why we came with this motion not to control the NGOs, but to help in the identification and the proper implementation of projects.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, we have no intention in politicising the work of NGOs here, but we feel that this Regional Government is not in line with international practices. In fact, Mr Chairperson, Sir, they have been elected on such practices. They are in power today because these practices have helped them to come into power. They have used some organisations. They have used some means whereby *ils ont marchandé des votes en échange de matériaux ou de dons. Nous savons très bien aujourd'hui quel est le sentiment de la population.*

Mr Chairperson, Sir, Parliament does not operate in a vacuum. We are operating with the people, for the people and we are here by the people.

Mr Chairperson: When the Minority Leader refers to Parliament, he has to qualify it.

Mr J. Roussety: Yes, Mr Chairperson. Therefore, what are they afraid of?

(Interruptions)

Mr Chairperson: Please proceed!

(Interruptions)

Mr J. Roussety: Therefore, what are they afraid of? They are afraid of transparency, of the feeling of equity that will reign if this Committee is set up. They are afraid that they will not be able to give construction materials or track roads to some people. If this Committee is set up, it will not control or report people to the Police, but see to it that vulnerable groups are better helped.

Commissioner Arlette Perrine-Bégué seems to be concerned with words, the form and not the substance of the motion. She speaks of the words of the motion, why not propose amendments? Look at the substance. It's going to be a joint Parliamentary Committee to advise in the distribution of aid. For example, the Trust Fund. How many weaknesses there have been in the Trust Fund projects?

Mr Chairperson: You should not talk on the Trust Fund.

Mr J. Roussety: As far as housing projects are concerned, Mr Chairperson, Sir, how many houses have not been completed and are still waiting to be completed? How many houses have been given to people who did not deserve them? How many persons with four to five children have not received these houses, whereas people who are living alone have received one? And today they are speaking of seizing these houses because either they are not used or they have been rented? It is because their planning at the beginning was wrong. Therefore, they are afraid. We hear nothing from the majority. Some people believe that election is something static. Allow me, Mr Chairperson, Sir, to tell them that things move, it is not a rock that remains still. Those who will judge – international organisations and people in Rodrigues *vont comprendre que cette majorité ne veut rien faire pour aider à ce que les discriminations et les problèmes cessent dans ce domaine. Ils ne veulent rien faire, rien proposer, rien accepter pour qu'on fasse en sorte que ceux qui nécessitent vraiment les aides en bénéficient. M. le président, les problèmes vont continuer et ce sont eux qui sont responsables.* This will continue because of their lack of vision and competence. As regards poverty, Mr Chairperson, Sir, we are the poorest in the Republic. We are about to become the poorest in the Indian Ocean. We start behind Bangladesh and Seychelles with the OPR government in power.

I thank you.

Mr Chairperson: I'll now put the question on the motion of the Minority Leader.

On question put, the motion was defeated.

END OF YEAR MESSAGE

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, before I move for the adjournment of the House, I would like, in my capacity as leader of the House, to say a few words.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, this is the first full year that this young Assembly has ever had, and indeed it has been, a very remarkable year. As at today we have had 17 sittings during which the Assembly has approved two budget Estimates, adopted one regulation

and set up two Committees. In all, this Assembly has been called upon to debate on 7 motions including one private member's motion.

During the year, this local government has replied to 350 Questions requiring oral answers coming from Members from both sides of the House. We have also made written replies to several questions and tabled many items of useful information. This has been an unusually long meeting as the House started to sit as early as from the 7th day of January 2003 for the approval of the First Budget Estimates.

Mr Chairperson Sir, during this year we have witnessed an historical and definite political change both in Rodrigues and in Mauritius. As far as Rodrigues is concerned I have in mind the resignation of Mr Jean Daniel Spéville as Chief Commissioner following which I was elected Chief Commissioner on 04 February 2003.

Concerning Mauritius, I have in mind the resignation of Sir Anerood Jugnauth as Prime Minister, following which Mr Paul Raymond Bérenger was appointed Prime Minister of the Republic of Mauritius .

It is important to mention that a new Government for the Republic of Mauritius was constituted on 30 September 2003, and Sir Anerood Jugnauth was elected President of the Republic of Mauritius on 07 October 2003. We specially welcome this change since we have at heart these two remarkable and outstanding persons who have made this Regional Assembly a reality.

I would like to pay tribute to Sir Anerood Jugnauth and to Mr Paul Raymond Bérenger for their contribution to the Republic of Mauritius, in particular to Rodrigues.

I would like to express my thanks to you Mr Chairperson for the manner in which you have presided over the deliberations.

I also wish to express my deepest appreciation to all the Respected Members for their participation in the debates and matters of the House, which have been in many respects useful to one and all.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, may I now be allowed to ask you, in my own personal name and in that of all Members of the House, to present the Season's Greetings to the President of the Republic of Mauritius and to Lady Jugnauth, and to the Vice President and Mrs Bundhun, and their families and also to the Prime Minister, Mr Paul Raymond Bérenger and his family.

Mr Chairperson Sir, I convey to you and to Mrs Lamvohee a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

My best wishes equally go to all the Members of the Executive Council and their families, to all respected Members of the House and their families, to the Clerk of the Regional Assembly and to his family, to the Island Chief Executive and his family, to all Departmental Heads and their families and to all the staff of the Regional Assembly and their families.

Thank you, Mr Chairperson, Sir.

Mr J. Roussety: M. le président, permettez moi en cette fin de session de demander au Clerk d'adresser les félicitations venant de la minorité et de l'Assemblée en général et nos voeux de fin d'année au President de La République et Lady Sarojini Jugnauth, le vice président et son épouse, au Premier Ministre et à son épouse. Nos meilleurs voeux envers vous même M. le président et votre famille, Le Clerk et sa famille, tous les Commissaires et les membres de l'Assemblée Regionale et leurs familles et la population de Rodrigues en général. Nous leur souhaitons meilleurs voeux et une bonne et heureuse année 2004.

Mr Chairperson: Respected members, I wish to associate myself with the season's greetings which the House has expressed to the President of the Republic and Lady Sarojini Jugnauth, to the Vice President and Mrs Bundhun, to the Prime Minister and Mrs Bérenger. I shall with great pleasure convey the message of the House to them. I thank the Chief Commissioner in my own name and on behalf of the staff of the Regional Assembly for his good wishes to my family and members of the staff and their families. In return, I am pleased to wish a Merry Christmas and a happy new Year to the Chief Commissioner and Mrs Clair, to the Commissioners and their spouses, to the Minority Leader and Mrs Roussety and to all other members and their families. Finally, I wish to re-assure all members that I am very grateful to them for their co-operation and understanding in the House. Once again best wishes for a Merry Christmas and a happy New Year to all of you.

ADJOURNMENT

The Chief Commissioner: Sir, I beg to move that this Assembly do now adjourn to Friday 27 February 2004 at 10.30 a.m.

The Deputy Chairperson rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed.

At 3.00 p.m. the Assembly was, on its rising, adjourned to Friday 27 February 2004 at 10.30 a.m.