

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

YACHTS - CONTROL

(No. B/608) Miss L. Castel (Fifth Island Region Member) asked the Chief Commissioner whether, as regards tourists visiting Rodrigues by yachts, he could inform the House of the security measures his Commission is taking to prevent the introduction of illicit commodities into the island.

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I am informed that on getting into territorial waters, every vessel establish contact with local authorities that is Port Superintendent's Office and National Coast Guard to notify their arrival and to obtain permission to enter the harbour. On reaching harbour limits, the vessel is cleared by the Health Services. After clearance by the Health Services, the yacht is boarded by the National Coast Guard, Customs, Immigration, Anti-Drug and Smuggling Unit as well as Police Dogs. Thorough search is made by abovementioned departments for dangerous drugs, weapons, stowaways and other illicit commodities.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, so far no dangerous drugs, stowaways or illicit commodities have been discovered on board of those vessels, save some firearms and spear guns which the crew usually carry (under a licence) for their personal safety during their various voyages and which are secured for safe custody by Police and handed over to the crew on leaving Rodrigues. Otherwise, daily patrols are carried out throughout Port Mathurin Harbour and territorial waters around Rodrigues by regular Police and National Coast Guard to prevent any illegal activity involving crewman of all sailing vessels.

OFF-LAGOON FISHING – INCENTIVES & FACILITIES TO FISHERMEN

(No. B/609) Mr J. Pierre Louis (Fourth Island Region Member) asked the Chief Commissioner whether he would inform the House of the incentives and facilities, if any, offered to fishermen to encourage them to go fishing off lagoon.

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, the following incentives and facilities are provided to fishermen to encourage them to start off-lagoon fishing -

- (i) Training in fishing techniques with special emphasis on fishing around fish aggregating devices are dispensed by the Fisheries Research and Training Unit. A stipend of Rs250 per day is paid to fishers during the training with funding under the IFAD Project.
- (ii) Duty concessions for the purchase of ice making machines and ice boxes;
- (iii) Fish aggregating devices (FADs) are set and maintained to ease fishing in the off-lagoon areas;
- (iv) Concessionary loan of up to Rs200,000 for an individual at 3% interest rate per annum refundable in seven years after one year moratorium is offered by the Development Bank of Mauritius for the purchase of fishing boats of at least 23 feet in length.
- (v) Concessionary loan of up to Rs3,000,000 for the development of the semi industrial fisheries to fishermen's associations or co-operatives at 8% interest rate per annum with a repayment period of seven years and a moratorium period of 12 months with security as follows -
 - (a) Fixed Charge on fishing boat and equipment;
 - (b) General Floating Charge, after existing charges, on assets of the promoters;
 - (c) General Floating Charge on borrowers assets, and/or
 - (d) 100% Guarantee under the Small Fishermen Guarantee Fund.
- (vi) A Small Fishermen Guarantee Fund has been introduced by the Government to provide guarantee in favour of groups of fishermen who have no collateral who wish to take loan from the Development Bank of Mauritius to finance fishing projects. An amount of Rs10 m. has been provided to the Development Bank of Mauritius in April 2004. Three fishermen associations/co-operatives have already applied for such facilities and their applications are being processed by the Ministry of Fisheries.

- (vii) The IFAD Programme has agreed to provide 10 fishing boats of 30-35 feet to groups of fishermen who follow training at the Fisheries Research and Training Unit. Action is being initiated to purchase four fishing boats during this financial year.

In addition to the above measure, off-lagoon fishermen also benefit from other scheme applicable to all fishermen such as payment of bad weather allowance and facilities provided by the Fishermen Welfare Fund.

Mr Emilien: Mr Chairperson, Sir, the Chief Commissioner has been talking about incentives given to fishermen, but I have not heard anything about security measures. Recently, three fishermen at St. Brandon were lost. What about communication as a sort of security measure for fishermen?

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, facilities are given with regard to security at sea, like life jacket, and **trailers** are being given this year to fishermen. Concerning St. Brandon, this is out of our purview and concerns the Ministry of Fisheries in Mauritius.

Mr Emilien: Mr Chairperson, Sir, the Chief Commissioner has been talking about St. Brandon. I took St. Brandon as a reference, but he was talking about territorial sea. I am talking about communication, because this also forms part of incentives. Everybody knows that off-lagoon fishing is not like fishing in the lagoon, where security measures have been strengthened. What is being contemplated by the Commission concerning communication for off-lagoon fishermen?

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I have been told that it is a question of radio communication, especially after five miles from the shore. I think that it is obligatory to have radio communication. I will find out whether these facilities are being given duty free.

Mr J. Roussety: Mr Chairperson, Sir, among the facilities that have been mentioned, we have the fish aggregating devices which the Chief Commissioner said is set and maintained to ease fishing. Can I ask him how many of these FADs there are around Rodrigues and their distance from the shore?

The Chief Commissioner: I need notice of the question, Mr Chairperson, Sir, so as to give the exact information to the Assembly.

Mr J. Roussety: Mr Chairperson, Sir, as an amateur fisherman, I know that these FADs are very far away from Rodrigues. There is only one FAD in the north accessible to small fishing boats in very good weather conditions like the one we had last weekend. Boats of 30-35 feet are being offered by IFAD to fishermen, and with a loan of Rs200,000, the boats they will be able to build are very small and very inappropriate as compared with the FADs. I would like to ask the Chief Commissioner whether he is aware that these FADs are very far away and the boats being proposed are not really appropriate to reach these FADs.

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, the question of the Minority Leader requires a lot of information. I will come with a statement with regard to that matter.

Mr Emilien: Mr Chairperson, Sir, we all know that for fishermen in Rodrigues, the question of assets is a very big problem. The Chief Commissioner has been talking about fixed and floating charges concerning loans. What will happen to those who don't have any asset and want to obtain a loan to **buy a boat** to go fishing off-lagoon?

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

Mr Grandcourt: Mr Chairperson, Sir, since there is no radio communication between the fishermen going off lagoon, I would like to ask the Chief Commissioner whether he is envisaging to set up a special squad so as to be ready to intervene in case any accident occurs.

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, there are laws and regulations governing those who go fishing in high sea. Those who go beyond a certain distance must have radio communication. The Port Authority and the National Coast Guard should see whether they have got all those facilities. Concerning the squad, there is a question of rescue at sea and this has been discussed with the National Coast Guard in Mauritius. There will be a sort of national guard-post station. As the Commissioner of Police is coming, we will discuss this issue, and we have put on our agenda this question of security at sea in the future.

SIGNPOSTS, ROAD SIGNS, PUBLIC STRUCTURES – VANDALISM - MEASURES

(No. B/610) Mr L. P. François (First Local Region Member for Baie aux Huitres) asked the Deputy Chief Commissioner whether he could inform the House of the extent of damages caused to signposts, road signs, public structures and other such objects due to vandalism and the measures he is contemplating to avoid same.

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I have been informed by the Police that more than 50 traffic signs have been damaged along the road network in Rodrigues over the past six months. It has been noted that most signposts were being detached from their posts. Necessary action is being taken to replace all damaged traffic signs, whereas some of the road signs have now been fixed on buildings wherever possible.

Furthermore, I have been informed that Police are providing daily mobile patrols along those prone areas, and instructions have been given to patrolmen to exercise tighter vigilance. Regular appeal to the public by the Police is made on radio. The population is being informed not to vandalise such signs, as damaged signs may cause accidents.

ISLAND CHIEF EXECUTIVE - POST

(No. B/611) M. J. Roussety (The Minority Leader) asked the Chief Commissioner whether as regards the office of the Island Chief Executive, he will state -

- (a) the qualifications and work experience of Mr Wong So, including experience in the service of Rodrigues;
- (b) whether any vacancy notice has been published by the Rodrigues Regional Assembly or the Public Service Commission for filling the post recently;
- (c) what are the qualifications and experience of the officer who has been assigned the duties of Island Chief Executive on the departure of the previous incumbent of the post;
- (d) whether Mr Pierre Louis has been the object of any police/judicial/corruption inquiry relating to his public office or has been the object of any complaint related to his participation in political activities here in Rodrigues.

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson Sir, as far as parts (a) and (c) of the question are concerned, I am tabling the qualifications and experience of Mr Claude Wong So as well as those of Mr Jean Claude Pierre Louis who has been assigned the duties of Island Chief Executive in replacement of Mr C. Wong So as from 23 October 2004.

With regard to part (b), the post of Island Chief Executive had been advertised by the Public Service Commission on 20 August 2002. The advertisement stipulated that the selected candidate would be appointed on a contractual basis for an initial period of two years, which might be renewed thereafter. The selection exercise was carried out by the Public Service Commission in September 2002.

As for part (d), Mr Chairperson, Sir, Mr Jean Claude Pierre Louis has not been the object of any inquiry whatsoever relating to his public office. I am not aware of any complaint made against Mr Pierre Louis related to his participation in political activities.

Mr J. Roussety: Mr Chairperson, Sir, the Chief Commissioner stated that a selection exercise was carried out in September 2002 for a recruitment made in October 2004. I would like to ask him how is it that the selection exercise was carried out in September 2002 and the appointment made now, whereas Mr Wong So just left his post?

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, the Public Service Commission has decided that Mr Jean Claude Pierre Louis be assigned the duties of Island Chief Executive for a period of two years on the expiry of the contract of Mr Wong So. Mr Pierre Louis was on the reserve list kept at the Public Service Commission following the selection exercise of September 2002. The assignment has been made in accordance with Section 89(4) of the Constitution and Section 66(2) of the RRA. The post of Island Chief Executive is a public office established by Section 66 of the RRA.

Mr J. Roussety: Mr Chairperson, Sir, there was a first selection exercise in 2002. I would like to ask the Chief Commissioner through which means were the advertisements made for the post of Island Chief Executive.

The Chief Commissioner: The advertisements were made for the post of Island Chief Executive. As I said, there was a reserve list. This is within the prerogative of the Public Service Commission. We are not going to question the PSC. The PSC knows how to assign duty and when to advertise a post. This is the business of the PSC.

Mr Chairperson: Mr Chief Commissioner, I understand the question is rather how the first notice of vacancy was made.

The Chief Commissioner: It was an advertisement made in the newspapers.

Mr J. Roussety: Mr Chairperson, Sir, we know it is within the purview of the PSC, but Section 66(2) of the law says that before giving concurrence to the appointment of Island Chief Executive, the Chief Commissioner is to be consulted. Every professional, every citizen of this country, including all of us here, has, if he is qualified, the right to apply for any public post, but recruitment must be made publicly. Many persons have qualified since September 2002. Many persons have gained experience. I would like to ask the Chief Commissioner why opportunity has not been given to one and all to apply for the post now. Mr Pierre Louis has been appointed. Why opportunity has not been given to Rodriguan professionals, professionals in the Republic of Mauritius to apply for that post, especially, Mr Chairperson, Sir, women. It is a question of equal opportunity. Equal opportunity has not been given to everybody. Why?

Mr Chairperson: I understand from the previous answer given to the question that the matter is within the purview of the PSC. The question is, in fact, on this...

Mr J. Roussety: Mr Chairperson, Sir...

Mr Chairperson: Please wait until I finish! I will allow the question, but the Minority Leader should bear in mind that the Commissioner has no power or jurisdiction over the PSC. But the question is allowed.

Mr J. Roussety: Mr Chairperson, Sir, with all due respect to you, I believe that it is up to the Chief Commissioner or to any Commissioner to say that it is not within his purview. This side of the House is of the view that it is not up to you to reply for them. Let them answer.

Mr Chairperson: I understand the queries of the Minority Leader, but I think I have to intervene to set matters straight. This Assembly has been created by an Act, and the Act itself sets up the powers of this Assembly and the powers of the Commissioners. It is in conformity with parliamentary practice that a question should first be receivable in the Assembly and then it's up to the Commissioner to answer the questions. If somebody or any Member is to say that I have to accept all questions that are put, then certainly this is not in accordance with parliamentary practice. Questions asked to Commissioners should, in fact, fall within their jurisdiction. Any question, which calls for an answer

outside the jurisdiction of the Commissioners and outside the jurisdiction of the Assembly, is not receivable and is not going to be allowed in this Assembly.

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I respect the PSC, which is a constitutional institution. The PSC has the power to decide. I have no power to question the PSC or to look for information from the PSC. The PSC is a constitutional institution, and they have the right to do according their rules and regulations.

Mr J. Roussety: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I agree with the Chief Commissioner that the PSC is a constitutional institution, and that nobody can question the PSC. But my point is that, before appointing the Island Chief Executive, the Chief Commissioner must be consulted.

The Chief Commissioner: Yes.

Mr J. Roussety: I don't want to know whether he has been consulted and what were the objects of the consultation. I know that this cannot be spelt out here. What I want to know is why he has not requested that equal opportunity be given to one and all, being given the importance of that post and being given that he is at the head of the Executive Council in Rodrigues.

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I think there is a question of interpretation of the section of the law. That's why we need clarification on this, because the Minority Leader has said that there is consultation first and then, afterwards, the PSC has made the appointment. We should put the question as to whether there is consultation before or after appointing someone. After the advertisement was made, there has been a selection by the PSC. After that, there has been consultation with the Prime Minister and the Chief Commissioner. I think there is a question of interpretation in the law, which needs clarification.

Mr J. Roussety: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I don't want to enter into all the administrative and legal aspects of that matter. Let's take myself as an example. I am qualified and wanted to apply, but the opportunity was not given to me. I have a friend who wanted to apply. We are qualified and experienced and we aspire to serve our country as everybody else in this island. I want to know why the Chief Commissioner, in his vision, dans sa sagesse, n'a pas demandé ou proposé au Premier ministre et à la PSC, dans le cadre de la transparence, l'égalité des chances – gender equality also – et de faire un nouvel exercice de recrutement? Pourquoi a t-on choisi des candidats datant de deux

ans de cela, M. le président? Pourquoi n'a t-on pas donné la chance à tout un chacun dans cette île ainsi qu'à la république de Maurice et au titulaire du poste, *to reapply*, Mr Chairperson, Sir? *Why was not he given the chance to reapply?* C'est un crime ce qu'on a fait avec lui, M. le président! Un homme qui a servi son pays! Pourquoi, M. le president...

(Interruptions)

Mr Chairperson: Order, please!

(Interruptions)

Mr Chairperson: Order, please!

Mr J. Roussety: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I am not talking about the legal and constitutional aspects.

(Interruptions)

Mr Chairperson: Order, please!

Mr J. Roussety: Why has not opportunity been given to one and all, including the previous incumbent to that post...

(Interruptions)

Mr Chairperson: Please! There is a Member on his feet putting questions. Of course, the Member should not take the opportunity to put questions as a pretext for a debate. The questions should be forthcoming and straight. This is question time, of course! I am sure the Member knows this.

Mr J. Roussety: Yes, I know very well. The Chief Commissioner is getting angry. We should not, Mr Chairperson, Sir!

Mr Chairperson: We should not! Thank you for this.

Mr J. Roussety: Mr Chairperson, Sir, once more I want to know why a good friend of mine, who wanted to apply for the post of Island Chief Executive, has not been

given the opportunity to do so? Why have we chosen from a list which dates back to 2002? Tomorrow, we can come and take a list which dates back to 1960!

Mr Chairperson: Before this question is being answered, the Chief Commissioner raised a very good point as to whether consultation takes place after a short-listing, after the PSC has already selected somebody or before the whole procedure starts for recruitment. This is a sort of legal interpretation, which falls outside the purview of this Assembly. But, of course, if the Chief Commission could enlighten this House.

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, the PSC is an independent body. The PSC can decide whether to have new advertisements or take candidates on the reserve list. This applies to any post in the public service. You can have a reserve list. For example, it is the same for departmental heads. There is advertisement and then there is a reserve list. When this reserve list is exhausted, then it is for the PSC to issue new advertisements. *Ceci est la prérogative de la PSC.* C'est une institution indépendante dans la constitution de Maurice. C'est cela qu'il faut comprendre. Nous ne pouvons pas dicter la conduite de la PSC. Ce n'est pas en notre pouvoir. Il leur revient de décider s'ils veulent nommer quelqu'un sur cette liste de réserve de l'année dernière ou pas. S'ils trouvent qu'il y a des candidates valables, ils peuvent ne pas faire un nouvel appel de candidature, mais s'ils voient qu'il n'y a pas de candidats valables sur cette liste, c'est à eux de décider et non pas à nous. Donc, je ne veux pas, M. le président, interférer dans le pouvoir...

(Interruptions)

Mr Chairperson: Order, please!

(Interruptions)

Mr Chairperson: Order, please!

(Interruptions)

Mr Chairperson: Order, please!

(Interruptions)

Mr Chairperson: Order, please! Order, please!

(Interruptions)

Mr Chairperson: Order, Please!

(Interruptions)

Mr Chairperson: I suspend the Assembly.

(Interruptions)

At 11.05 a.m. the sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 11.10 a.m. with Mr Chairperson in the Chair.

Mr Chairperson: A few minutes ago, I heard these marvellous words that we should not get angry. I hope that we will abide by these words. So, everybody has calmed down? We may proceed with the questions. I understand the Chief Commissioner was on his feet to answer.

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I have already answered the question. This is the prerogative of the PSC, which is a constitutional institution.

Mr Chairperson: Being given the clear-cut answer of the Chief Commissioner, I am not going to allow any question which falls within the jurisdiction of the PSC.

Mrs Meunier: Mr Chairperson, Sir, according to Section 66(2) of the RRA Act - I understand it is open to interpretation - it is clearly stated that, before giving his concurrence to the appointment of the Island Chief Executive, the Prime Minister shall consult the Chief Commissioner. What I want to know is whether the Chief Commissioner has a say in the matter. If he is consulted, he must have a say in the matter, be it before or after.

Mr Chairperson: We are not now embarking on a question of legal interpretation. It is only the Court that can give interpretation to the law. I understand that the Member is not asking the Chief Commissioner to interpret the law, but to give a sort of factual issue.

The Chief Commissioner: There has been consultation between the Prime Minister and the Chief Commissioner, as stipulated in the law.

Mr J. Roussety: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I was having a look at the qualifications of the previous holder of the post and the one that has been appointed. Is the Chief Commissioner aware that Mr Wong So has an Msc plus 25 years experience at top management level, whereas Mr Pierre Louis, who has newly been appointed, holds a Bsc? Mr Chairperson, Sir, there are people holding PhD in Economics, in public administration, with a lot of experience. I want to ask the Chief Commissioner, Mr Chairperson, Sir, whether he made an analysis of these facts when he was consulted.

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, the PSC has got all the powers to nominate someone according to his experience, qualifications. This is the decision of the PSC. When the PSC chooses people who are on the reserve list, there is consultation with the Prime Minister and the Chief Commissioner. It is not a question of big qualifications. It is a question of how the PSC judges the person, what he has done in the past, and not his qualifications. Mr Jean Claude Pierre Louis has got a lot of experience in administration. The PSC has found it right to nominate him as Island Chief Executive after consultation with the Prime Minister and the Chief Commissioner.

Mr J. Roussety: Mr Chairperson, Sir, Mr Wong So has been occupying that post for two years. Now that he is no longer in office, I would like to ask the Chief Commissioner whether he has been satisfied with the work performed by him. Being given that this person has been the Head of the Civil Service, I believe that the Chief Commissioner had direct daily contact with him.

Mr Chairperson: This question clearly falls outside the purview of the original question, but I will allow it.

The Chief Commissioner: This is a personal question, and I will not reply.

Mr J. Roussety: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I am not asking the Chief Commissioner whether, as a man, he appreciates Mr Wong So.

Mr Chairperson: No insinuation, please.

Mr J. Roussety: There are two offices. There is the office of the Chief Commissioner, which Mr Serge Clair is now occupying and that, in the coming years, other people will occupy. There is the office of the Island Chief Executive, which Mr Wong So...

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, can the Minority Leader go straight to the point?

Mr Chairperson: This is well taken. Please proceed.

Mr J. Roussety: I would have finished if you did not interrupt me.

Mr Chairperson: Who? This is the Standing Orders.

Mr J. Roussety: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I want to know whether the Chief Commissioner, as Head of the Executive Council, is satisfied or dissatisfied with the work performed by Mr Wong So during these two years?

Mr Chairperson: In our Standing Orders, it is stated that an answer cannot be insisted if the Commissioner has refused to answer the questions.

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I have already replied. I will not give my personal appreciation of a person. I will not reply to that question.

Mr J. Roussety: Mr Chairperson, Sir, it is clear that the Chief Commissioner does not want to give his appreciation of the work done by this professional at the service of Rodrigues. *C'est clair qu'il a été boycotté, M. le président.*

(Interruptions)

Mr Chairperson: Order, please! Minority Leader, you stand up at question time and each time you want to make a statement, to make criticisms. Where do you think you are?

Mr J. Roussety: I am in the Assembly!

Mr Chairperson: If you are in the Assembly, I believe that you, as Minority Leader, ought to set the example that observance to the Standing Orders can only lead to good parliamentary atmosphere and not the reverse. Of course, if you want to set a basis for your question, this is understandable. But, each time, you cannot rise up and make all sorts of criticisms and comments.

Mr J. Roussety: But this is the role of the Opposition!

Mr Chairperson: Not at question time.

Mr J. Roussety: What do you want me to do? Put flowers on the table?

Mr Chairperson: If you have a question, you put it.

Mr J. Roussety: On a point of order, Mr Chairperson, Sir. From a sitting position, the Chief Commissioner said '*arrête cause boycotté*'. I am not boycotting anybody, and I would like him to withdraw these words. *Qui arrête cause boycotté? Qui mone boycotté? Mone boycotte ou moi?*

(Interruptions)

Mr Chairperson: Please wait! Order, please! Where do you think you are?

Opposition Members: In the Assembly!

Mr Chairperson: If you really think you are in the Assembly, you should wait until I give my ruling.

Mr J. Roussety: Of course! But, he stood up.

Mr Chairperson: I ordered him to sit down.

Mr Emilien: He was talking!

Mr Chairperson: Respected First Local Region Member, I am giving you a warning now. You are the person who, most of the time, conforms to the practice of the Assembly. I fail to understand you now. There is a point of order to the fact that a Member has allegedly said some words from a sitting position. I cannot hear more than one Member at a time. The Minority Leader was on his feet putting a question, and if really the Chief Commissioner did say these words, I have not heard it at all. So, you cannot expect me to give a ruling on something that I did not even hear.

Mr J. Roussety: Where are we?

Mr Chairperson: If my attention is drawn to that fact and if I happen to hear it, of course, the point of order is well taken. We move to the next question, please.

Mr J. Roussety: We have not finished, Mr Chairperson, Sir.

Mr Chairperson: Next question, please.

Mr J. Roussety: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I have got supplementary questions.

Mr Chairperson: Is it the last one?

Mr J. Roussety: I don't know.

Mr Chairperson: This will be the last one. We have spent more than 20 minutes on one question...

Mr J. Roussety: Mr Chairperson, Sir...

Mr Chairperson: Take your seat, please. I have the power to limit the number of questions as well as the relevance. I am allowing a last question on this topic. So, you choose between you who want to put a question.

Mr Emilien: Mr Chairperson, Sir, a lot has been said on this issue, namely the post of Island Chief Executive. It is known to everybody – *c'est du domaine public* – that the post of...

(Interruptions)

Does someone want to say something?

Mr Chairperson: No interruptions as well from this side of the House! The Member is on his feet. Don't get interrupted, please!

Mr Emilien: A lot has been said, and we all know that the contract of Mr Wong So as Island Chief Executive has not been renewed. I would like to ask the Chief Commissioner whether there has been any action taken – he has been at the head of the Administration for two years – either to praise Mr Wong So for his competence and his professionalism or against his maladministration, and whether there has been any serious shortcoming in his office as Island Chief Commissioner?

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, there is no explanation.

Mr Chairperson: We move to the next question. Minority Leader, please!

POINTE SOURCE – TOURISM PROJECT – ALLOCATION OF STATE LAND

(No. B/612) Mr J. Roussety (The Minority Leader) asked the Chief Commissioner whether, as regards the granting of State land for a tourism project at Pointe Source, he will -

- (a) give all details related to same, giving date of application, details about the promoter, stating whether he has been granted any lease of land, either personally or as a partner in any project in the past in Rodrigues, and the extent of land granted;
- (b) state whether the land granted at Pointe Source or part of it forms part of any fenced/protected area or natural reserve;
- (c) whether an EIA has been produced prior to the issue of the letter of intent or lease.

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, as far as part (a) of the question is concerned, Mr Alain O'Reilly proposes to construct a "*hotel de charmes*" of 25 rooms at Pointe Source. He first applied for a lease on the site in December 2001 and he renewed his application in March 2003. In his initial application, Mr O'Reilly also requested for a lease at Baladirou, which was not entertained, as the site is occupied by the youth camp.

The promoter of the project is the "*Repaire Resort Ltée*" having as main shareholder Mr Alain O'Reilly who is the founder and owner of the Domaine du Chasseur in Mauritius. He is the pioneer of Ecotourism in Mauritius, as witnessed by the success story of the Domaine du Chasseur. He has never been granted any State land in Rodrigues. However, he was a shareholder of Valomé Ltd, which was granted an industrial lease over a site of 35,326 m² in 1991 for the construction of a hotel at Paté Reynieux, where stands Mourouk Ebony Hotel. It seems that he withdrew from the project before the construction of the hotel and, according to our records, the shares of Mr O'Reilly was held by one Mr Yves Maurice Honeger.

In 1996, he applied for a site at Anse Baleine for the setting up of an ecotourism project, but no lease was granted.

With regard to part (b), it is exact that part of the site at Pointe Source is found in the sylvo pastoral perimeter, but the Rodrigues Tourism Committee considered that, given the tract record of the promoter in ecotourism in Mauritius, part of the site found in

the sylvo pastoral perimeter could be exceptionally allocated for the ecotourism Project. In line with the favourable recommendation...

Mr Chairperson: Please wait, Chief Commissioner. I heard you say something, Minority Leader. If you want to say so, you have to rise. I won't allow any more interruptions from a sitting position. Thank you.

(Interruptions)

Probably because you are nearer to me! Please proceed.

The Chief Commissioner: In line with the favourable recommendation of the project, the Executive Council has approved in principle that an industrial lease be granted over a plot of land of about 12, 656 m² to the promoter.

A letter of reservation has been issued to the promoter and the views of the Board of Investment will be sought prior to final approval of the project. The Ministry of Tourism has also indicated that in principle they have no objection to the proposed hotel project.

At the request of the Rodrigues Tourism Committee, the promoter has accepted to undertake the integrated development of the protected area in close collaboration with the Forestry Services and the Mauritian Wildlife Foundation. This is in line with our policy to enlist the participation of hotel promoters in the protection of the environment and the development of the region in the vicinity of their respective projects. The details and conditions of the management of the protected area will be defined in consultation with all stakeholders. The promoter will be responsible for construction of the access road to the site.

Concerning part (c), Mr Chairperson, Sir, the promoter will be required to obtain an EIA licence before starting any construction over the site. This condition has been included in the letter of reservation and, according to current practice, it will also be specified in the letter of intent and the lease agreement. Indeed, the promoter has to submit proof that he is authorised to develop the site before being eligible to apply for such a licence.

Mr Grandcourt: Mr Chairperson, Sir, with regard to part (c) of the question, I would like to ask the Chief Commissioner whether the promoter has provided a preliminary environment report on the project.

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, the promoter will be required to obtain an EIA licence before starting any construction over the site. The EIA licence will come after the land has been allocated to the promoter.

Mr Grandcourt: I have talked about preliminary environment report. This should be followed by the EIA. For instance, since the Executive Council has approved the project, there should be a preliminary environment report. I would like to ask the Chief Commissioner whether this report has been provided.

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, it is stipulated in the law that preliminary reports are needed for certain categories of development. But, tourism development needs an EIA. In the Environment Act, it is stated that a preliminary report is required for certain categories of development, for example, industrial, or any environment development.

Mr Grandcourt: Mr Chairperson, Sir, this is a big project. There should be a preliminary report. According to the Chief Commissioner, there has been no report. Therefore, this is not in accordance with section 16 of the Environment Protection Act and section 14 of the Town & Country Planning Act. I would like to ask him whether he is aware of that. This is against the law. He should go and read section 16 of the Environment Protection Act!

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, all preliminary reports and all EIAs are being dealt with by the Ministry of Environment. Whenever there is a hotel project, there is an EIA. It is the duty of the experts of the Ministry of Environment to say whether a project needs a preliminary report before an EIA. In the Schedule, it is said that an EIA is required for tourism development. A preliminary report is not mentioned in the Schedule for tourism development.

Mr Jabeemissar: Mr Chairperson, Sir, the Chief Commissioner has been talking of an exceptional decision taken to grant that promoter the project in a pastoral perimeter. I want to know from the Chief Commissioner who decided to offer that exceptional grant to that promoter, and whether he, as Chief Commissioner, had a say in that decision.

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, as I said, it is the Tourism Committee that approved and recommended the project. We must not isolate the project.

We told the promoter that it is exceptional and that he should take care of all the fenced area and create the environment, create the randonnée à l'intérieur, créer dans ce périmètre clôturé tout un espace. Aujourd'hui, les boeufs entrent dans cette zone. Des conditions seront mises sur papier afin que le promoteur puisse prendre en charge la surveillance des plantes endémiques en collaboration avec le Wild Life Foundation et le Forestry Services pour relever cette portion de terre clôturée à Pointe Source et à Montagne Goyave. Donc, il y a tout un projet d'ensemble à travers ce projet à Pointe Source.

Mr J. Roussety: M. le président, le Chief Commissioner a cité le Environment Protection Act...

Mr Chairperson: But don't go too much in the interpretation of the law.

Mr J. Roussety: I am not a lawyer. I don't to be academic. I just want to demonstrate that the Chief Commissioner has, once more, been lying to this House.

Mr Chairperson: No. Please, take your seat. It is not in conformity with parliamentary practice to say that the Chief Commissioner is lying.

Mr J. Roussety: Yes, Mr Chairperson, Sir, but, maybe, the Chief Commissioner has been giving information that is not correct, that is not appropriate. Section 16 of the Environment Protection Act says that a preliminary environment report shall be produced for any project under part (a) of the First Schedule. Part (a) of the First Schedule mentions hotels and apartments of 20 units. So, Mr Chairperson, Sir, it is clear that there is need for a preliminary environment report. Being given the fact that the law has not been observed, I want to ask the Chief Commissioner what he intends to do now.

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, there has been a new environment law.

Mr Chairperson: Yes.

(Interruptions)

Please wait!

The Chief Commissioner: I think there has been a new law in 2003. Please check!

Mr Grandcourt: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I would like to ask the Chief Commissioner whether the promoter is intending to introduce any type animal, like birds, within his project in Rodrigues.

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, the promoter has expressed a lot of things that can be done in that region, for example, to create a sort of recreational area. I think that it's a good thing that we ask promoters of hotels to get integrated in the region and to get people in the region involved to create recreational areas. This will be discussed with the promoter. We agree with the concept that promoters should not only have land for hotels but to also get integrated in the whole region. I want to tell the Minority Leader that there has been a new environment law in 2003. That's why I said that there are two Schedules and that there have been amendments, thus resulting in a new law.

Mr Grandcourt: Mr Chairperson, Sir, unless I heard wrong, I think that the Chief Commissioner has not answered my question.

Mr Chairperson: Put the question again.

Mr Grandcourt: I am asking whether the promoter intends to introduce any type of animals in Rodrigues.

The Chief Commissioner: I have already replied to that question. We are going to talk to the promoter about what kind of activities there will be in that area, and this will be approved by the *Comité du Tourisme*. They have already given their green light. Le Mauritian Wildlife Foundation, le Forestry Services and other stakeholders *vont dire exactement ce qu'il sera permis au promoteur de faire dans cette region*.

Mr J. Roussety: M. le president, le chef commissaire a parlé d'expérience, de succès. On est d'accord. Mais, il a aussi parlé du fait que le promoteur, qui était actionnaire dans Valory Ltée, a vendu ses actions. Que va t-il se passer dans l'éventualité qu'il vende ses actions encore? Il a une compagnie, vous donnez le *lease on behalf of a company*, et lui vend les actions! Est-ce que le chef commissaire va permettre que 12,656 m² des terres de Rodrigues changent de mains, d'un simple jeu d'écriture, de changement d'actions? Est-ce ce qu'il veut pour le pays?

The Chief Commissioner: Il me semble qu'il y a des garde-fous pour empêcher ce genre de choses. Je ne puis répondre, et il faudrait voir s'il y a ces garde-fous. Nous sommes conscients de cela. Dans le passé, on a vu des gens qui ont essayé de spéculer

sur ces terres. Ce n'est pas notre politique d'accorder des terres pour tel ou tel projet et ensuite voir des gens spéculer sur ces terres.

Mrs Meunier: Mr Chairperson, Sir, earlier on, the Chief Commissioner said that land has already been granted to that person - it has already been approved - and now he says that they are going to discuss about the green light, about the details of the project. How come? Can he enlighten us on that? Because I think everything should be included, that is, whether there would be animals, what type of activities there would be, etc, in the original project. It's not after land has been granted that you are doing to discuss! What does that mean?

The Chief Commissioner: As I said, no land has been granted. There has been no lease and not even the letter of intent has been issued. The promoter is going to send us a concept of his project. We are talking about land that is going to be granted for the project, but the other part of the land, which is a fenced area – *périmètre* - will not be granted. This will be taken into consideration later, after we know how he is going to develop that land, how he is going to create a recreational area. These are two things quite different. This will not form part of the lease granted to him. We are not giving a lease of 12,000 sq metres and another lease. There will be only a sort of accord, a Memorandum of Understanding with the promoter qui va être signé. Ce sera encore sous la supervision des services des forêts. La terre ne sera pas à lui tout simplement. Ce ne n'est pas un bail qui sera donné. Ce sera une collaboration entre le promoteur, les services des forêts, le Wildlife Foundation et d'autres personnes afin de développer cette région. La région ne lui appartiendra pas. Comme l'avait dit M. Bérenger lorsqu'il était ici pour la pose de la première pierre d'un hôtel, les hôtels doivent pouvoir s'intégrer socialement, économiquement et culturellement avec les gens de la région.

Mr Grandcourt: Mr Chairperson, Sir, with regard to the lease to be granted to the promoter, I would like to ask the Chief Commissioner whether this portion of land includes the *Pas Géométriques*.

The Chief Commissioner: According to the new law, it is about 30 metres from the shore. No development will be authorised. It has been declared a public beach and any development, according to the new Land Act, will be done 30 metres inside. It will not be like what has been done in the past for Ebony, Coton Bay. According to the new law, there is a reserve of 30 metres and development starts from that point of 30 metres from the shore.

Mr Emilien: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I was a bit confused by the reply of the Chief Commissioner. I am to understand that the portion of land has already been granted for the construction of the hotel.

The Chief Commissioner: The Reservation.

Mr Emilien: Has any portion of land, at that particular place of Rodrigues, been granted to whatever promoter for a tourism project?

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, it's the only project in that region. The other projects are near Coton Bay, St. François. It's the only project in that part of the island.

Mr J. Roussety: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I have seen in the press that, with regard to that project, they even want to go in the sea...

Mr Chairperson: Please wait! Of course, you are not basing your question on a press article. This is not allowed, and even to cite what is in the newspaper is not allowed. You can make reference, but not use it as a basis for your question.

Mr J. Roussety: Mr Chairperson, Sir, the promoter was speaking through the press.

Mr Chairperson: Yes, but here it is the Assembly.

Mr J. Roussety: You don't have anything against the press.

Mr Chairperson: I don't!

Mr J. Roussety: Does the project include the small beach which is found at Pointe Source? I am putting the question today, because it is important. Will members of the public still have access to the small beach in the future if ever this project is materialised? This small beach is very beautiful at Pointe Source.

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, 12 beaches have been declared public in Rodrigues. I'll find out whether this beach is a public beach. I need notice of that question. I'll find out whether that part where the hotel will be has been declared public beach. Whenever a beach is declared public, everybody is allowed to go on the beach. But, if it has not been declared a public beach, we will find out why it has not been declared a public beach.

Mr J. Roussety: Mr Chairperson, Sir, what is a public beach? Today, if I want to go to Pointe Source, I can do so. After the Assembly, I can go there and have a swim. Nobody will prevent me from going there. The question is not whether it is a public beach or not. The question is that today, any Rodriguan, any person, any tourist can go to Pointe Source and spend the day, do camping or anything they want that is legal. Will this practice still be valid when this project is implemented, or will the promoter prevent access to Pointe Source beach?

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, as I said, there is the law. Twelve beaches have been declared public. We will find out whether this beach at Pointe Source has been declared public. This is the law as stands in Mauritius. It is in the law that Pereybere, Mont Choisy, Flic en Flac are public beaches! We are going to find out whether this beach has been declared public.

Mr J. Roussety: Mr Chairperson, Sir, let me not talk about beach but rather the coastline from Baladirou to Rivière Banane, which passes through Pointe Source. Will members of the public be allowed to sit, relax, picnic within that zone when the project will be implemented?

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I have already replied to the Member's question! Let's find out whether this beach has been declared a public beach!

(Interruptions)

I know what he is talking about! I know!

Mr Chairperson: Order, please!

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I can't continue replying to the same question!

(Interruptions)

Mr Chairperson: Minority Leader, please! The Standing Orders gives the Chief Commissioner the power to refuse to answer a question. Of course, if he doesn't want to answer or if he has already answered, he can kindly say so. If a question with the same wording happens to be put two times, then, of course I will have to refuse it. But, if there are new elements in the same question, I am bound to allow it.

I won't allow any more supplementary questions on this issue. We have spent nearly half of Question time on five questions, when today we have 25 questions on the Order Paper. Let us move to the next question.

TOURISM PROJECTS – ALLOCATION OF STATE LAND

(No. B/613) Mr J. Roussety (The Minority Leader) asked the Chief Commissioner whether, as regards the granting of State land for tourism projects in Rodrigues, he will -

- (a) give an account of all projects approved, including those already operational, prior to 12 October 2002;
- (b) give an account of all projects approved since 12 October 2002, giving details about name of promoter, extent of land granted, type of tourism activity proposed, and development status of each project.

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I am tabling two lists of tourism projects for which State land have been allocated; the first one showing projects approved prior to 12 October 2002, and the second one showing projects approved after the coming into operation of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly.

Mr J. Roussety: Mr Chairperson, Sir, with regard to the granting of State land for projects, is there a delay in the lease contract as to the period of time during which the promoter has to start his project?

The Chief Commissioner: I'll find out. I can't say exactly, but it seems that he has got two years to complete his project.

Mr Chairperson: I am sorry to say so, but you should understand that the proper philosophy behind giving notice is, in fact, to alert the Public Service and the Commissioner to prepare for the answer. If, out of my flexibility, a question is allowed, even if it is outside the purview of the original question, of course, you should expect these kinds of answers from the Commissioner.

Mr J. Roussety: Mr Chairperson, Sir, to come back to what you were saying about questions, I believe that, if somebody is the Commissioner responsible for Tourism, State lands and Environment, he should know what is in the lease granted to a promoter. This is the least he can do. If he does not know, it is a sign of irresponsibility.

I would like to know whether, as regards other projects, the promoters have not respected the delay allowed for them to start...

Mr Chairperson: This is not allowed. It is too much away from the main question.

Mr J. Roussety: Mr Chairperson, Sir,...

Mr Chairperson: No, it is too much away.

Mr J. Roussety: For all the projects approved...

Mr Chairperson: There is no reference to the terms of leases. The Member can come with a substantive question next time. This is parliamentary practice. We move to the next question.

GRAND BAIE – ROAD WIDENING

(No. B/614) Mr J. Roussety (The Minority Leader) asked the Deputy Chief Commissioner whether his Commission intends to provide a solution to the problem of falling rocks and earth on the road leading to Grand Baie, which represents a threat to public safety.

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I have to inform the House that, following a site visit carried out at Grand Baie in the context of the celebration of the *Festival Créole* in that area, decision has already been taken to enlarge the road leading to Grand Baie and to cut the earth to the required slope. The surplus earth will then be used to reclaim part of the muddy area next to the beach, so as to create a green space nearby. Moreover, handrails will be placed on the side of the road.

PALISSADE-MONTAGNE MALGACHE – ROAD CONSTRUCTION

(No. B/615) Mrs J. Prosper (Sixth Island Region Member) asked the Deputy Chief Commissioner whether, with regard to the construction of the road from Palissade to Mont Malgache, he could –

- (a) state the length of the road under construction, and

(b) inform the House where exactly the road will end and the reasons therefor.

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I am informed that, with regard to the construction of the road from Palissade to Montagne Malgache, the exact length for the road is 1,785 metres and that the road will end 165metres just after the shop located on the left hand side towards Port Sud Est.

Due to financial constraints, the construction of the road will stop at that place. Turning will be provided at that place.

Mrs Prosper: Mr Chairperson, Sir, is the Commissioner aware that beyond the end part of the road, many people live there, especially old age people? What does the Commissioner intend to do for these people?

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, the action of this Regional Government is to provide access to remote villages. We have taken the decision not to asphalt the road from T..... to Mourouk, so as to give priority to other people in this country, like Montagne Malgache, **Anse Quitor and Rivière Coco**. This is a policy decision. Time will come when decision will be taken to complete this road, Mr Chairperson, Sir.

Mr Agathe: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I want to ask the Deputy Chief Commissioner whether there has been any official meeting with the inhabitants of Montagne Malgache and, if so, what has been the outcome?

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, we have had two meetings at Montagne Malgache. The villagers were very happy because of the road access to their village. But, the estimated cost of this portion of road is about Rs20 m. We will deal with the contractor if there is availability of funds from the 20 m. This will depend on the walls that will be constructed on the two sides of the road. If there is availability of funds, we will level the part of the road after the community centre towards Port Sud Est.

PRE-PRIMARY & PRIMARY SCHOOLS - NEW SCHOOL FEEDING PROJECT & SUPPLY OF FRUITS

(B/616) Mrs J. Prosper (Sixth Island Region Member) asked the Commissioner responsible for Education whether he could inform the House -

- (a) if the new school feeding project has already started in pre-primary and primary schools in Rodrigues, and
- (b) about the different categories of fruits proposed and the proposed mode of procurement.

Mr Roussety: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I wish to inform this Assembly that my Commission has been implementing the New School Feeding Project since 16 August 2004 on a pilot basis. Equipment for preparation and distribution of milk were made available by mid-August of this year. Milk and sugar were supplied to all pre-primary and primary schools in Rodrigues on a daily basis. In view of high financial implications, my Commission decided that these commodities be supplied twice per week and to date it is being implemented smoothly.

As regards part (b), Mr Chairperson, Sir, I would state that various possibilities were explored to make local fruits available to the pupils of all pre-primary and primary schools. However, due to established procedures, my Commission has to take care of all its implications. Subsequently, the primary schools were grouped as follows -

Group 1

Notre Dame de Lourdes RCA School
Batatran Govt. School
Marc Etienne Roche Bon Dieu Govt. School
Ste Famille RCA School

Group 2

Basile Allas Port Mathurin Govt. School
Terre Rouge Govt. School
Oyster Bay Govt. School

Group 3

Don Bosco RCA School
Mangues Govt. School
Port Sud Est Govt. School

Group 4

St. Esprit RCA School
Grand La Fouche Corail Govt. School
Ste Therese de l'Enfant Jesus RCA School

Bananas are being supplied to pupils of all pre-primary and primary schools as from 08 October 2004 on a pilot basis. The Fruits Growers' Association has been supplying bananas once per week to pre-primary and primary schools. This exercise will enable us to come up with a decision as to the future course of action.

On 08 October, that is, on the Friday preceeding immediately the start of the CPE Exams, distribution of bananas was made at Roche Bon Dieu, Brulé and Batatran. On the 15th, at Roche Bon Dieu again, Batatran and Brulé. On 21st, at Marc Etienne Roche Bon Dieu, and on 22nd, at Terre Rouge, Basile Allas Port Mathurin and Oyster Bay.

Mrs Prosper: Mr Chairperson, Sir, could the Commissioner say whether there is any problem in the mode of procurement?

Mr Roussety: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I will not say that there are really problems in the mode of procurement. But, it must be borne in mind that banana is a rather delicate fruit. They can only be collected for supply before they are ripe and stored away for ripening and then distributed. I have not been informed of any difficulties as such.

Mr Grandcourt: Mr Chairperson, Sir, since the Commissioner considers bananas as being delicate fruits, I would like to ask him whether, before they are supplied to the students, any sample check is made by the health authorities or any other health precautions taken.

Mr Roussety: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I will give an outright reply to this question: No.

Mr Emilien: Mr Chairperson, Sir, the Commissioner just said that there is no problem as far as procurement of bananas is concerned. I would like to ask him how come that, out of four occasions when bananas were distributed to schools, some schools have received bananas not less than three times whereas others haven't?

Mr Roussety: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I have already pointed out that we have divided the island into four different regions, and it is the responsibility of the banana

growers in each region to make the collection and get the required number for distribution in the schools.

Mr Grandcourt: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I would like to ask the Commissioner for Education why is it that no health precautions are taken before the bananas are supplied to the students?

Mr Roussety: Mr Chairperson, Sir, there are health precautions as regards prepared food. But, as regards fruits which have already been provided by a special protective car, we don't think that it is really necessary to make special health inspections.

Mr Emilien: The Commissioner was talking about four different regions, Mr Chairperson, Sir. I would like to know from him whether there are four different funds for these regions? Do they each have their respective budget for the purchase of fruits?

Mr Roussety: I do not have the necessary information, Mr Chairperson, Sir. If the respected Member of the Opposition would kindly come with a substantive question, I shall be only too pleased to provide the necessary and exact reply to his satisfaction.

Mr Emilien: Mr Chairperson, Sir, the Commissioner was talking about availability of bananas in this region, thus facilitating the distribution of same in region number one. Am I to understand that, if ever it is decided that '*cari ourite*' will be distributed to school children, only schools falling within the vicinity of the region, with coastal access, like Port Sud Est, Rivière Coco, Oyster Bay will be provided with '*cari ourite*'?

Mr Roussety: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I do appreciate this little dose of humour coming from the other side, to make a change. I think it will be understood by one and all that different regions of the island tend to have a particular sub-climate of their own. There is a certain abundance of bananas grown in the centre of the island, but as you get to the west of the island there is scarcity of bananas. I can assure my respected friend of the minority, that we have taken all the necessary measures to ensure that the children are supplied with bananas at least twice a week. It is, of course, in the interest of the suppliers to make sure that they do good business with us.

Mr Emilien: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I think it would be fair, due to scarcity of bananas in other regions, to provide school children in these regions with same. Being given that the money used for the purchase of bananas comes from public funds - and all of us are taxpayers - bananas which are available in certain regions should be distributed

to one and all. Either one and all benefit from this facility or we wait until we have something that is available in all the regions. What does the Commissioner think about that?

Mr Roussety: Mr Chairperson, Sir, indeed, this is an idea that has already germinated in the heads of the suppliers, namely that they are going to supply other regions which cannot find the necessary number for the children. This has already been put in place. I thank the Member of the opposition to have made such a suggestion.

REGIONAL CULTURE & LEISURE CENTRE

(No. B/617) Mrs J. Prosper (Sixth Island Region Member) asked the Commissioner responsible for Arts & Culture whether, with regard to the construction of the Regional Culture and Leisure Centre, she would give a breakdown of costs incurred to date.

Mrs Perrine-Bégué: Mr Chairperson, Sir, Rs352,800 have been spent to date by way of consultancy fee for preparation of plans, designs and tender documents.

‘RATION’ RICE – IMPORTATION, QUANTITY, CONSUMPTION ETC

(No. B/618) Mr G. Jabeemissar (Second Local Region Member for La Ferme) asked the Commissioner responsible for Trade & Commerce whether, with regard to the recent increase of the price of rice, he could inform the House of –

- (a) the number and names of importers of rice in Rodrigues and the amount imported by each of them;
- (b) the number of consumers of the ‘*riz ration*’, and
- (c) the number of beneficiaries of a food aid in Rodrigues.

Mr Lisette: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I have been informed that the State Trading Corporation is the only importer of ‘*ration*’ rice in Rodrigues, and the quantity imported is about 5,500 metric tons annually.

With regard to part (b), ‘*ration*’ rice is consumed by a large portion of the population in Rodrigues, and the consumption is about 5,000 metric tons annually.

Concerning part (c), there are about 4,631 persons who are beneficiaries of a food aid in Rodrigues.

Mr Jabeemissar: Mr Chairperson, Sir, the Commissioner himself said that a large portion of the population depends on '*riz ration*'. The policy of Government in decreasing the subsidy on rice was based mainly because in mainland Mauritius, the consumption of that commodity seemed to have decreased over the years. But such has not been the case in Rodrigues. Therefore, I would like to ask the Commissioner whether, once this decision has been taken in Mauritius, the Executive Council has seen to it that our population be able to survive, be able to buy that very important food since they depend largely on that commodity?

Mr Lisette: Mr Chairperson, Sir, first of all, I would like to tell the respected Member that decision is being taken in Mauritius.

Mr Jabeemissar: I agree with the Commissioner, but he should bear in mind that Rodrigues, due to its autonomous status, has got its own specificity. I am sure that, if the decision has been taken in Mauritius, this does not mean that we are to follow the same trend as in Mauritius, because we have our specificity. That's why I am putting the question. Furthermore, Mr Chairperson, Sir, I would like to ask the Commissioner whether he has any well defined policy or strategy for Rodrigues, so as to make us become less dependent on rice, because in the near future it is most probable that the price of rice will rise again. Therefore, can we always depend on rice for our survival?

Mr Lisette: Mr Chairperson, Sir, there are two things that should be pointed out. First of all, this is the policy of this Government: '*Nous bizin servi banne zaffaire qui sorti dans nous la cour*'. And we always say it.

Second, Mr Chairperson, Sir, even if there has been a decline in the number of persons consuming the rice in Mauritius, still it does not mean that there are less people in Mauritius using the rice. We have 35,000 people in Rodrigues and in Mauritius about 1.1 million. So, it may happen that in Mauritius there are about 300,000, 400,000 people consuming the '*ration*' rice. Of course, there is a specificity which is applied to Rodrigues. But, I am sure, Mr Chairperson, Sir, that there are more persons in Mauritius consuming '*ration*' rice than in Rodrigues.

Mr Emilien: Mr Chairperson, Sir, the Commissioner is talking about two categories of citizens. Central Government has granted a special subsidy on '*ration*' rice for Rodrigues. I don't understand, because Rodrigues has been declared a duty free zone. Why is it that, in Mauritius, they don't say that we have two categories of citizens? This does not stand. Mr Chairperson, Sir, the Commissioner said that he is thankful to Central Government to apply a one-price policy. According to me, this means that nothing has

been done at the level of the Commissioner of Trade & Commerce to have more subsidy on this '*ration*' rice for Rodrigues. Has this been the case, Mr Chairperson, Sir?

Mr Lisette: Mr Chairperson, Sir, the subsidy being provided by the Government of Mauritius is more than satisfactory, because the price of rice would have been higher than the actual price of Rs3.50 per kilo if it was not subsidised.

Mr Emilien: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I would like to know if the Commissioner is aware that, following a study, Rodrigues has been declared the poorest region of the Republic of Mauritius.

Mr Lisette: Mr Chairperson, Sir, this is substantiated by the fact that 4,631 people are having a food aid with respect to this.

Mr Agathe: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I want to know what is the general procedure for a beneficiary to obtain food aid.

Mr Lisette: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I would kindly invite the respected Member to refer the question to the Commissioner responsible for social security, because this does not fall under my purview.

Mr Jabeemissar: Mr Chairperson, Sir, as regards the '*riz ration*', we all know that, once it comes to the granary here, sometimes there are rejects which are not good for consumption. Can I ask the Commissioner whether such rice is being sold to the public and, if yes, under what condition and at what price?

Mr Lisette: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I remember that once there was a question on that item. I explained clearly to this Assembly the decision taken by my Commission to ensure that consumers in Rodrigues do have rice of the required standard. So far, I have not received any complaint from the public as regards the bad quality of rice being sold. Nevertheless, I would like to point out to the respected Member that officers of the Consumer Protection Unit, which is attached to my Commission, do pay regular visits and checks on premises in Rodrigues to ensure that consumers are satisfied with the type and quality of rice that is being sold to them.

TELBERT DAM - LA FERME

(No. B/619) Mr G. Jabeemissar (Second Local Region Member for La Ferme) asked the Deputy Chief Commissioner whether, as regards Telbert Dam at La Ferme, he could say –

- (a) how many homes are supplied with water from that dam;
- (b) what measures are being taken to protect the water from any source of pollution, and
- (c) if the dam is periodically cleaned and, if yes, at what frequency.

The Deputy Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I am informed the following with regard to Telbert Dam at La Ferme –

- (a) There are actually some 225 families that are supplied with potable water from Manique Reservoir, which is in turn fed partly by Telbert Dam, Manique Borehole and Telbert Borehole.
- (b) Regular physico-chemical analysis is carried out by the Water Unit in the laboratory of Malabar, and the analysis has shown no sign of pollution. The dam was first desilted by the Agricultural Services in April 1999. The dam was desilted again in 2001 prior to the execution of gabion works. The bank of the dam facing the northern part was protected by two layers of gabions. Upstream, a gabion filtering dyke has been constructed so as to minimise the siltation of the basin. The dam will be desilted when the need will be felt. No exact frequency can be established, as such action is dependent on several factors, such as floods, rainfall pattern, vegetation, etc.

Mr Jabeemissar: Mr Chairperson, Sir, we are now in a rather dry period and water from that dam is not flowing, thus remaining more or less stagnant. Due to that, it has turned into a greenish colour. All the people living in the vicinity is aware of that fact, and this has a psychological effect upon them. Even though water is being filtered and chlorinated, they don't have any confidence in that water. Is the Deputy Chief Commissioner aware that, some time back, the automatic filtration plant had a breakdown, thus making the water to be distributed to the people unfit for consumption?

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, sometimes it is difficult to see water flowing in a dam, because the water flows at a lower level than the ground surface. Normally, in all dams, the water looks greenish because rays of sunlight pass through the water surface and there is a natural biochemical process, photosynthesis, which allows the growth of algae at the bottom of the dam. A water analysis report stated that water turbidity is 0.8 compared to 5 as per the water health organisation. The average total dissolved is 411 compared to 1,000. The concentration of sulphate is 51

compared to 250 milligrammes per litre. At the level of my Commission, we have had no complaint concerning problems with that water. But, I will take note of the question and see whether there has been a defect in the filtration plant.

Mr Jabeemissar: Mr Chairperson, Sir, is the Deputy Chief Commissioner aware that on the upper side of the dam, on both banks of the river, people are living there? If one goes there, one will see that there are lots of debris, which will certainly flow into the dam if there is heavy rainfall. That's why I would like to ask him whether a proper monitoring is carried out by the health services to ensure that this water is not polluted.

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I will take up the matter with the Commissioner responsible for Environment to monitor the situation near this dam.

ONIONS – PRODUCTION

(No. B/620) Mr G. Jabeemissar (Second Local Region Member for La Ferme) asked the Deputy Chief Commissioner whether, as regards the production of onions in Rodrigues, he could inform the House –

- (a) of the estimated production for this year and the production cost;
- (b) how this year's production compares with last year's production;
- (c) of the export price of the commodity, and
- (d) the amount of onions which is made available on the local market.

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I am informed by the Agricultural Services that, with regard to the production of onions in Rodrigues, the estimated production for this year is well above 200 tonnes. The production cost of onion...

Mr J. Roussety: Mr Chairperson, Sir...

Mr Chairperson: Is it a point of order?

Mr J. Roussety: It is not really a point of order; it is a technical point. We don't really hear what the Deputy Chief Commissioner is saying, and this is not only due to the microphone. We don't hear.

Mr Chairperson: Take your seat. Is the microphone working?

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I am informed by the Agricultural Services that, with regard to the production of onions in Rodrigues, the estimated production for this year is well above 200 tonnes. The production cost of onion for $\frac{1}{4}$ *arpent* is estimated at Rs21,000.

I am further informed that the production of this year is more than 200 tonnes, which is much higher than last year's production of 160 tonnes, despite the fact that some loss has occurred due to the exceptionally heavy rains in the month of February/March this year.

The export price of onions for the year 2004 is as follows –

First Grade (local)	Rs10.80 per kg
Second Grade (local)	Rs 6.50 per kg
Third Grade and G22	Rs 8.60 per kg

I am further informed that the planters sell most of their onions to the Marketing Board and usually keep a few for their own consumption. Lower grade onions are being used for agro industry. Such amount is estimated at about 30 tonnes.

Mr J. Roussety: Mr Chairperson, Sir, can the Deputy Chief Commissioner state how much was last year's production? He said that for this year, it is more than 200 tonnes.

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, the production for last year is about 160 tonnes.

Mr J. Roussety: I don't know what is happening, whether some people in Government get some information while others get different information, because I have here the digest of statistics for Rodrigues, published by the CSO and signed by Mr Bundhoo. This is an official material. Here it is said that, for 2003, with regard to Rodrigues' production of onions– it is not provisional; it is final – there are 4.3 hectares under cultivation and the production has been 89.1. Mr Chairperson, Sir, I don't want to go into any discussion, but I would like to know where the Deputy Chief Commissioner has got his figures, because the Director of Statistics says that it is 89.1.

Mr Chairperson: Does the Deputy Chief Commissioner agree with the figure 89.1? He can check the book if he wishes.

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, when I mentioned 160 tonnes, this meant production for export, production for local, agro, tourist industry, and production for our own consumption. This is figure compiled at the Agricultural Services by the Extension Officers of the Service. The figure 89.1 represents only export to Mauritius.

Mr J. Roussety: Mr Chairperson, Sir, *la réponse est superflue*. At page 29 of the Digest of Statistics for Rodrigues for 2003, it is said: Local production – this is not local consumption. The table is: Food crop production - Island of Rodrigues 2003. This is not provisional but final. The production of onions is 89.3 and this material is on the website of the Director of Statistics. It is not consumption, it is not for tourism; it is local production. So, I would invite the Commissioner responsible for Agriculture to reconcile his figure with that of the Director of Statistics. Because it would be a very big error and a big shame for the Regional Assembly to give a figure which is two times above the official report of the Director of Statistics.

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I trust the integrity of my officers. Export to Mauritius is 89 tonnes, 40 tonnes is for agro industry and there is also local consumption. All these figures added together make about 160 tonnes for last year. The Statistics Office has only compiled the figures of onions produced last year and sold to the Agricultural Marketing Board at Citronelle.

Mr J. Roussety: Mr Chairperson, Sir, we can discuss lengthily on figures. The Deputy Chief Commissioner mentioned the figure 160 tonnes. Does he have the figures for the area under cultivation last year with regard to 160 tonnes?

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I do not have the figure.

Mr J. Roussety: Mr Chairperson, Sir, the figure that the Director of Statistics gave for 89.1 is 4.3 hectares. The yield per hectare is 20.6, which is within the average. So, if they stated 89.1 and 4.3, it is normal. I believe that the Deputy Chief Commissioner is wrong.

Mr Chairperson: It is in the interest of all Members and the public to have information which is true in this Assembly. Of course, the House should deprecate the supply of wrong information. The Commissioner has given his figures and data, which are in contradiction with the official figures. His attention is drawn to that fact, and he has got to set matters right.

Mr Jabeemissar: Mr Chairperson, Sir, according to the information that the Deputy Chief Commissioner has got, this year's production is more than last year's. Can he give the reasons for that? Is it because more land has been under cultivation or is it because of climatic or other conditions, which have favourably increased the production?

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, as I have said, last year, there has been loss that has occurred due to exceptional heavy rains in the months of February and March. Moreover, there has also been consolidation of *Association des Planteurs* into various groups. In villages, they have grouped themselves into a federation, and incentives are being given to these planters. I hope that this has given a boost to the production of not only onions, but also maize, beans and other agricultural foodstuffs.

Mr J. Roussety: Mr Chairperson, Sir, regarding production of onions, if we look at the figures, we see that in 2000, the number of hectares under cultivation was 42; in 2001, 39; in 2002, 35, and in 2003, it was 4. From 42 in 2000 to 4 in 2003, this shows that there has been a 90% decrease. These are the figures of the Director of Statistics. I, personally, trust them, because I know how they work. Can I ask the Deputy Chief Commissioner what measures he proposes to introduce regarding production of onions, so as to prevent *la disparition de cette denrée*? On a vu que cela est passé de 42 en 2000 à 4 en 2003. Qu'a fait la commission pour qu'on en soit arrivé à 4 hectares de plantations d'onions à Rodrigues? Que compte faire la commission à ce sujet?

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, as I have said, last year, there has been a decrease due to bad weather conditions. This year, we have seen that there has been a boost in the production. We have reorganised the Commission for Agriculture, regular talks are being delivered to the planters, and we are also increasing the production of *semences* in Rodrigues. I think that with this consolidation together with other incentives like irrigation, the agricultural sector is on the right track for a boost.

Mr Chairperson: The question is whether there has been a drastic decrease in the total area of onion cultivation. It has been stated that in 2003, there were four hectares. First of all, does the Commissioner agree with this figure?

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, as I have said, I don't have the figure of the surface area planted for this year. I will have to look for the figure and compare it with that of last year. But, if there is an increase in production, it is normally proportional to an increase in the surface area. It is normal that an increase in production is correlated with an increase in the surface area planted.

Mr Jabeemissar: Mr Chairperson, Sir, it is surprising to note that the price of onions for export is about Rs10 per kg, whereas on the local market, we, consumers, buy the same commodity twice that price, that is, Rs10 per half a kilo. Can the Deputy Chief Commissioner explain to the House what is his policy regarding that commodity? Is it normal to sell at a lower price and buy at a double price?

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, *la vente d'oignons à Maurice est une question de marché. C'est l'offre et la demande.* Mauritius is buying onions from India at a cheaper price than from Rodrigues. Onion in Mauritius is a subsidised commodity, and it is cheaper to export the onion to Mauritius than to store it in Rodrigues for sale. The cost incurred for storage, electricity, labour, infrastructure, makes it cheaper to export onions to Mauritius than to store it here for sale at a cheaper price in Rodrigues. Moreover, the export of onions to Mauritius depends on the producer himself. Many producers want to sell their onions at one go. They don't want to store it. In Mauritius, onion is being imported from other islands at a cheaper price. In 2001, there has been a light increase in the price of onion.

Mr Emilien: Mr Chairperson, Sir, we are talking about the price of onion. I would like to draw the attention of the Deputy Chief Commissioner to the fact that Government should act as a facilitator towards people and not as a profit making body. He has talked about infrastructure, but this is for the long run. I would like to have one precision from the Deputy Chief Commissioner. I don't know whether I am right, Mr Chairperson, Sir, but I heard the Commissioner say that the price of first grade onions is Rs10.80 a kg, second grade onions, Rs6.50 a kg and third grade, Rs8.60 a kg. I don't understand how the third grade is more expensive than the second grade. Could the Deputy Chief Commissioner enlighten us?

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I would ask the Member to listen when replies to questions are given. What I said is that for first grade onions, it is Rs10.80, second grade Rs6.50, third grade and G22 Rs8.60. It is not only third grade, but third grade and G22.

STE THERESE DE L'ENFANT JESUS RCA SCHOOL – ZEP PROJECT – FACILITIES

(No. B/621) Mr J. C. Agathe (Second Local Region Member for Marechal) asked the Commissioner for Education whether, with regard to the ZEP project, the Ste

Therese de l'Enfant Jesus, RCA School, is benefiting from all the facilities available under the project in Mauritius, and, if not, why.

Mr Roussety: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I wish to apprise this Assembly that the ZEP Project was officially launched in May 2004 and a workshop for ZEP Schools was organised by the ZEP Unit of the Ministry of Education & Scientific Research. As per the policy of ZEP Schools, to date, the pupils of Ste Therese de l'Enfant Jesus RCA School are being served with a balanced lunch on a daily basis.

The capital grant for infrastructural improvement/development is to the tune of Rs200,000. Furthermore, I have learnt that responsibility allowances are made available to the staff of the ZEP schools in Rodrigues. The Head Teacher, the Deputy Head Teacher, the School Clerk, the Caretakers and the General Workers are all eligible to this responsibility allowances as their counterparts in Mauritius.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, I understand that a special matching grant to the tune of Rs35,624 has been earmarked for the Parent/Teacher's Association of the ZEP school in Rodrigues. Moreover, workshops and training facilities are being organised and offered respectively to the Head Teacher and teachers of the school concerned.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, I have also learnt that materials, as well as laboratory and media equipment, have already been earmarked for Ste Therèse de l'Enfant Jesus RCA School under the "*A Nou Diboute Ensam Support Programme*". I, therefore, wish to state that upon receipt of same at my Commission, the distribution process would be effected without any delay.

Mr Agathe: Mr Chairperson, Sir, the approach of the ZEP project is to reduce school inequalities. How is it that, in Mauritius, the project started in September 2002 while in Rodrigues it started in May 2004?

Mr Roussety: Mr Chairperson, Sir, the matter does not depend on us. It is being dealt with directly by the Ministry of Education in Mauritius. I will concede that there was a delay in the implementation of the facilities in Rodrigues. Here, I must say that my Commission has been acting rather as a facilitator than provider.

Mr Agathe: Mr Chairperson, Sir, since the inception of the project, it is meant that doctors should pay visits to the ZEP schools, that the children should have a *carnet de*

santé, parent mediators and psychologists should be recruited, uniform allowance should be granted as well as school kits and transport. Are all these facilities available now at Ste Thérèse de l'Enfant de Jésus RCA school?

Mr Roussety: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I am informed that books and school kits have already arrived and are being stocked at the Commission awaiting distribution to the RCA school. Concerning the other arrangements raised by the Member for Marechal, I would say that it is in the pipeline. We must just have a little bit more patience to see that my Commission is handling all this with great seriousness.

Mr J. Roussety: Mr Chairperson, Sir, from this side of the House, we have the impression that Question time is being rushed into, so that we can finish. I would propose that we suspend the Assembly for lunch and then come back *à tête reposée, afin qu'on puisse poser des questions en toute quiétude et en toute liberté. De ce côté de la Chambre, nous avons l'impression que* we are rushing. It would not be good for us here to prepare questions, submit them to be discussed on a certain day, and when the day comes to be in a rush.

Mr Chairperson: The basis of your second question is unfounded. This is so only because of the number of questions and the time left for the questions to be exhausted. This is the management of Question time. There is no rush here for my part. But, if all Members would wish to have lunch now, I'll suspend the Assembly for one hour.

At 12.45 p.m the sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 13.45 p.m with Mr Chairperson in the Chair.

Mr Chairperson: I hope that everybody is happy by now. We are left with 11 questions, but we are running out of time. We have 15 minutes to proceed with the questions. So, Question time will end at 1400 hrs. Can we proceed with the Second Member for Marechal please?

RODRIGUES DAY 2004 – ASPL 2000 PARTICIPATION

(No. B/622) Mr J. C. Agathe (Second Local Region Member for Marechal) asked the Commissioner for Arts & Culture whether, with regard to the participation of ASPL 2000 in Rodrigues for the Rodrigues Day 2004, she would state –

- (a) the size of the delegation;
- (b) the place where they were lodged;
- (c) the dates of their arrival and their departure, and
- (d) the total amount of money, if any, earmarked and spent item wise for their stay.

Mrs Perrine-Bégué: Mr Chairperson, Sir, in the context of Rodrigues Day, a football team from Port Louis, ASPL 2000, was in Rodrigues for a friendly match against Rodrigues selection at Camp du Roi Stadium on 17 October 2004. The delegation consisted of 16 players, the President of the Sports Committee of the Municipality of Port Louis and another Municipal Councillor.

The delegation was accommodated at Le Tamaris Hotel. The delegation arrived on 16 October 2004 and left on 18 October 2004. The cost of the air tickets was Rs96,408, and hotel accommodation amounted to Rs27,600.

Mr Agathe: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I would like to know the reason behind inviting ASPL 2000.

Mrs Perrine-Bégué: Mr Chairperson, Sir, as we all know, our friends were there when we signed the twinning agreement with Port Louis town. We have a twinning agreement in which the fourth point is well spelt out about sports exchanges between Port Louis and Port Mathurin. That's why we have invited the group to come to Rodrigues on the occasion of the second anniversary of Rodrigues. In the agreement, we have what we call '*le retour*', and so we are expecting a '*retour*' from Mauritius towards Rodrigues. They have explained that they would be organising as Rodrigues week in Mauritius, whereby our sports people may have the same opportunity as they had to come here.

Mr Agathe: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I would like to know whether the players did get any stipend.

Mrs Perrine-Bégué: Mr Chairperson, Sir, no stipend was offered to any member of the delegation in Rodrigues.

“JOURNEE INTERNATIONALE DE LA PAUVRETE” – ACTIVITIES

(No. B/623) Mr J. C. Agathe (Second Local Region Member for Marechal) asked the Commissioner responsible for Family Welfare whether, with regard to the

“Journée Internationale de la Pauvreté” held recently, she would state what activities, if any, were organised on the occasion and whether any expenditure was incurred.

Mrs Perrine-Bégué: Mr Chairperson, Sir, as you know, alleviation of poverty is a cross-sectoral issue. All the policies and programmes of the Executive Council and its different Commissions are geared towards alleviating poverty.

This year, the Executive Council has decided that World Food Day and World Poverty Day would be celebrated jointly under the same local theme: *‘La Sécurité Alimentaire’*.

The organisation was entrusted by the Executive Council to the Deputy Chief Commissioner’s Office. As mentioned by the Chief Commissioner and the Deputy Chief Commissioner in their opening speeches, the whole *foire agricole* was meant to show to the population how the agricultural reform, new techniques, improved agricultural methods and new governmental services can contribute to foster development and alleviate poverty. There has been mass popular participation in the fair, despite canvassing not to participate.

Poor people generally do not like to be thrown in the limelight but prefer to be discretely taken care of. It is the policy of the Regional Government not to give alms, that is, not to give money, food and clothes to needy people, but to respect their dignity by empowering them to combat poverty. We have chosen not to give them a fish on the occasion of the International Day against Poverty, but to teach them how to fish.

“CHAMPIONNAT D’AFRIQUE JUNIORS DE HANBALL” – COTE D’IVOIRE - RODRIGUAN PARTICIPATION

(No. B/624) Mr J. C. Agathe (Second Local Region Member for Marechal) asked the Commissioner responsible for Youth & Sports whether, with regard to the *“Championnat d’Afrique Juniors de Handball”* held in Côte d’Ivoire from 09 to 16 October 2004, he would obtain information as to whether any Rodriguan was offered the possibility to participate in the pre-selection exercise and, if not, why.

Mr Lisette: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I have been informed that, with regard to the pre-selection exercise in view of our participation in the *championnat d'Afrique juniors de handball*, preparations started in December 2003.

Three athletes from Rodrigues were invited to participate in a training camp in Mauritius from 05 to 15 January 2004, namely Nigel Banin, Evans Meunier and **Miguel** Albert. **Miguel** Albert did not attend the training due to personal reasons.

Following the training camp, only Nigel Banin was retained for further training in February. However, the latter was unfortunately not eventually retained in the pre-selection, because he did not perform as the 16 other players.

During the visit of the DTN in Rodrigues in the month of May, all three players and some others were once evaluated, but none was found to be up to the expected standard.

QUEEN ELIZABETH HOSPITAL – DENTAL UNIT – COMPRESSOR

(No. B/625) Mrs M. T. Meunier (Second Island Region Member) asked the Commissioner for Health –

- (a) whether he would inform the House where the compressor used by dental surgeons at Queen Elizabeth Hospital is to be found;
- (b) whether he considers it as safe, and
- (c) if not, what measures, he intends to take to remedy same.

Mr Sooprayen: Mr Chairperson, Sir, the compressor for the dental unit at Queen Elizabeth Hospital is located next to the dental clinic.

As regards part (b), it is safe, as it is not exposed to rain and excessive humidity.

Mrs Meunier: Mr Chairperson, Sir, when the Commissioner says that the compressor is located next to the dental clinic, can I know where it is found exactly?

Mr Sooprayen: Mr Chairperson, Sir, the compressor is located in a place adjacent to the dental clinic.

Mrs Meunier: Is it located in a special room?

Mr Sooprayen: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I have already answered the question.

Mrs Meunier: Mr Chairperson, Sir, is there a special room? Because, according to information, it is found in the toilet. So, I want to know whether it is true.

Mr Sooprayen: M. le president, les toilettes n'ont rien à voir avec cela. Le compresseur a été placé sur l'avis d'un technicien d'expérience et non pas au petit bonheur.

Mrs Meunier: Mr Chairperson, Sir, can I know the name of that technician and the experience he has?

Mr Sooprayen: The biotechnical technician came from Mauritius for all the technical equipment.

Mrs Meunier: Mr Chairperson, Sir, can I ask the Commissioner to seek information with regard to the experience of that technician, and when he came and placed that compressor there?

QUEEN ELIZABETH HOSPITAL – NEW ADMINISTRATIVE BLOCK

(No. B/626) Mrs M. T. Meunier (Second Island Region Member) asked the Commissioner for Health whether, as regards the new administrative block of Queen Elizabeth Hospital, he could inform the House –

- (a) if all the doors and windows are in good condition, and
- (b) if not, whether he can describe the situation of same and what measures he intends to take to repair same.

Mr Sooprayen: Mr Chairperson, Sir, all windows of the new administrative block are actually in good condition.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, in respect of the damaged aluminum sliding door in Consultation Room No, 5, contract has been awarded for repair of same together with repair of all other aluminum windows within the hospital premises, and works are being executed smoothly.

Mrs Meunier: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I don't quite understand the Commissioner when he says that everything is in good condition and then says that they are under repair.

Mr Sooprayen: I regret to inform the respected Member that she has misunderstood my reply. I said that all windows of the new administrative block are actually in good condition. Then, I talked about the sliding door.

Mrs Meunier: Mr Chairperson, Sir, can I know from the Commissioner for Health whether any window has been broken during this calendar and, if yes, when it was broken, when it was repaired, and why it has taken so long to have it repaired?

Mr Sooprayen: Mr Chairperson, Sir, my reply is that all windows are actually in good condition.

ROUTE DE L'AUTONOMIE – DEAD ANIMALS CARCASSES – REMOVAL

(No. B/627) Mr F. Grandcourt (First Local Region Member for La Ferme) asked the Chief Commissioner whether he could inform the House who has the responsibility for the removal of dead decaying animals from both sides of the "*Route de L'Autonomie*" in Rodrigues.

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, carcasses of dead animals along "*La Route de L'Autonomie*" and other public roads in Rodrigues are removed by the waste collection team attached to the Environment Unit. In the case of decaying dead bodies, same are disinfected by the Public Health Division prior to removal.

We are thankful to members of the public who usually report the presence of carcasses along public road to the Environment Unit or the Public Health Division.

Mr Grandcourt: Mr Chairperson, Sir, it seems that it is not the practice in Rodrigues for the Environment Unit to remove carcasses of dead animals on the road. This often happens in the western part of the island, and more recently, last Monday, a dog remained on the side of the road for three days. I would like to ask the Chief Commissioner whether he is aware of that case, and what action has been taken.

The Chief Commissioner: As I said, the waste collection team attached to the Environment Unit does not go to pick up garbage or anything else everyday along the road. Sometimes, it is also the responsibility of the public. Very often, whenever I, myself, see things like that, I just call the health inspectors or the Environment Unit. I think that it is our duty as citizens – those who are respectful of the environment – to let the Environment Unit or the health inspectors know whenever there are carcasses of dead animals on the road or on the side of the road. I am not aware of the case mentioned by the Member, because if I had passed by, I would have called the health inspectors or the Environment Unit to have the animal's dead body removed from the road.

Mr Grandcourt: Mr Chairperson, Sir, can I ask the Chief Commissioner why is it that this is not included in the company's duty responsible to collect waste everywhere around the island?

The Chief Commissioner: Same is not included in their contract. We have checked. It is true that the removing of carcasses of dead animals is not in the contract of *la voirie*. We are going to take measures, so that carcasses of dead animals along the road, be it cats, dogs or any other animals, be removed quickly by the Environment Unit.

Mr Grandcourt: Mr Chairperson, Sir, in his reply, the Chief Commissioner said that the company did not accept to collect these dead animals. How come? I think that all the parameters of the contract should be respected.

The Chief Commissioner: In the last contract, it was specified 'dead animals along the road'. But in this contract, it is not specified. We are trying to take measures so that we either remove the carcasses or see with the new contractor – we are having a meeting in the future – whether he will accept to remove the carcasses of dead animals.

Mr Emilien: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I would like to ask the Chief Commissioner how come that something was included in a previous contract and when same is allocated to another company, certain clauses are excluded in the new contract? How come that this clause is not present in the contract allocated to this new company?

The Chief Commissioner: A new contract has been worked out. We did work out a contract for the whole island, as I said previously in this Assembly, but it would have cost us a lot of money, millions and millions of rupees. We have not earmarked money for that, and we had to work out a new contract. We have received lorries for the Environment Unit. We are trying to organise our work, so as to be within the sum of money allocated to us. While trying to work out a new contract, with new duties for the

contractor, there may have been a few things missing. It is not the first time that something is missing.

Mr Emilien: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I would like to ask the Chief Commissioner whether he could table a copy of both contract documents, that is, the previous one and the new one, concerning *la voirie* and Maxiclean, at the next sitting.

Mr Chairperson: I understand that the new contracts have been tabled.

Mr Emilien: Part of it.

The Chief Commissioner: I'll find out with the authorities concerned whether this can be done.

CASCADE JEAN LOUIS – WATER NETWORK - CONNECTION

(No. B/628) Mr F. Grandcourt (First Local Region Member for La Ferme) asked the Deputy Chief Commissioner whether he could give reasons as to why some inhabitants at Cascade Jean Louis, near Mr Christy Félicité's residence, have not yet been connected to the water network.

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, connecting remote regions from existing water network has always been the priority of the Regional Government. The connection of some of the inhabitants at Cascade Jean Louis with the water network is on our programme and scope of work, as it has been for remote villages like Anse Femi, Cité Perdu and others. Action has already been taken for the extension of the existing network to enable these families to be equipped with an individual water prise.

Mr Grandcourt: Mr Chairperson, Sir, can I know from the Deputy Chief Commissioner how are these families provided with water right now?

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, normally these families have water from a potable water source.

Mr Grandcourt: Mr Chairperson, Sir, the Deputy Chief Commissioner is talking about a potable water source. Is he sure that the water is potable? How can he be so sure that the water is potable?

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, all the time these persons have used this water and we have had no complaint. But, we have a programme and a scope of work for the extension of existing water network, and this region is on our agenda.

BAIE TOPAZE – WATER DISTRIBUTION PIPELINE

(No. B/629) Mr F. Grandcourt (First Local Region Member for La Ferme) asked the Deputy Chief Commissioner whether, with regard to the water distribution pipeline recently connected at Baie Topaze next to Mr Félicité's residence, he could inform the House about the number of families connected to this network and the frequency at which these families are provided with water.

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I am informed that the number of families which are actually connected to the network is about seven, and that the frequency of water distribution in that sector has increased from once monthly to once every 22 days. However, this network has been built six months ago in such a way that it allows flexibility of water supply from either Citadelle Reservoir or Camp Pintade Reservoir. The remaining three families will be connected shortly upon an extension of the network.

Mr Grandcourt: Mr Chairperson, Sir, is the Deputy Chief Commissioner aware that since this new network has been installed six months ago, not a single drop of water flowed through that network?

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, this network has been interconnected. We have a water network from Citadelle Reservoir to Baie Topaze and another water network from Camp Pintade Reservoir. Sometimes, due to the distance from Camp Pintade Reservoir, these inhabitants encounter problems to have water. To allow flexibility of water from either reservoir, we have interconnected them to let these persons have water. We have had no complaint at the level of my Commission to the effect that these persons are not getting water through this interconnected network.

RODRIGUES AUTONOMOUS STATUS – 2ND ANNIVERSARY - ACTIVITIES

(No. B/630) Mr J. Emilien (First Local Region Member of Marechal) asked the Commissioner responsible for Finance whether, as regards activities organised in

connection with the 2nd anniversary of the autonomous status of Rodrigues, he could state –

- (a) the total amount of money earmarked in the 2004-2005 Budget, if any, for all the activities;
- (b) the outstanding balance, if any, and
- (c) the amount of money spent per activity.

Mrs Perrine-Bégué: Mr Chairperson, Sir, in respect of the activities organised in connection with the 2nd anniversary of the autonomy of Rodrigues, I am informed of the following –

- (a) Rs800,000 have been provided for in the 2004-2005 Budget.
- (b) To date, there is an outstanding balance of Rs737,068, of which Rs700,000 have been earmarked for future payments.
- (c) Only Rs62,932 have so far been paid out.

Claims are being received and processed, and payment will be effected in the coming days.

Mr Emilien: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I would like to know from the Commissioner whether the sum of Rs700,000, which has been earmarked for future payments, concerns payments in connection with the activities organised on such occasion.

Mrs Perrine-Bégué: Mr Chairperson, Sir, it is recorded in our final copy of the Budget. A sum of Rs800,000 has been earmarked for this item. That's what I said.

Mr Emilien: Mr Chairperson, Sir,

PETITE BUTTE – WATER DISTRIBUTION

(No. B/631) Mr J. Emilien (First Local Region Member of Marechal) asked the Deputy Chief Commissioner whether, with respect to water distribution through the network of Montagne Cabris West to Petite Butte, he could state –

- (a) the frequency (with dates) of water distribution for the region for period 01 January 2004 to date;
- (b) the date and duration of the last breakdown of the water pump of Montagne Cabris West;

- (c) on what date the breakdown was reported to the water unit workshop and by whom, and
- (d) on what date mechanics from the workshop were sent to Montagne Cabris for necessary repair work.

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I have been informed that the water distribution to Petite Butte is not effected through the network of Montagne Cabris West. There has never been any pump which has been installed at Montagne Cabris West, and parts (c) and (d) of the question, therefore, do not arise.

Mr Emilien: Mr Chairperson, Sir, this concerns the water pump of Marechal, which feeds Montagne Cabris West Reservoir. If the Deputy Chief Commissioner does not want to reply, I will come back with another question!

(Interruptions)

Mr Chairperson: This is the last time that I am allowing these things to happen. Please proceed, Chief Commissioner.

OFF-LAGOON FISHING – TRAINING TO FISHERMEN

(No. B/632) Mr J. Emilien (First Local Region Member of Marechal) asked the Chief Commissioner whether, as regards the National Training Campaign of Fishermen for off-lagoon fishing recently launched in mainland Mauritius, the Commissioner could say whether this campaign will be extended to Rodrigues and, if yes, when and what criteria will be used for selection, and if not, why not.

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, since 2002, the Fisheries Research & Training Unit is offering training to fishermen in off-lagoon fishing similar to those offered to fishermen in Mauritius. Five batches of large net fishers were trained during period May 2002 to November 2002, and ten fishermen of the Rodrigues Seafarers Cooperative Ltd. The training of the first five batches were funded under the IFAD Loan in the context of the Fad Fishery Sub Programme. The Rodrigues Seafarers Cooperative Ltd is proposing to purchase a fishing boat to start an off-lagoon fishing project.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, I assume that the respected Member is referring to training to be dispensed by the Fisheries Training & Extension Centre at Pointe aux Sables, Mauritius, which has just started its activities this month. The Ministry of Fisheries has been approached to adjust the content of the training offered by the Fisheries Research & Training Unit in Rodrigues to that which is being offered by the Fisheries Training & Extension Centre. Previous training was of two weeks duration while the new training programme will be of 13 weeks duration.

The Ministry of Fisheries has indicated that, once the Fisheries Training & Extension Centre would have passed through the initial phase of operation, some seats will be provided for Rodriguan fishers at the Fisheries Training & Extension Centre, provided that arrangements are made for their board and lodging. This proposal will be looked into.

STATEMENT BY COMMISSIONER

STILLBIRTHS & NEONATAL DEATHS – REPORT BY DR. F. AUMEER

The Commissioner for Health (Mr S. Sooprayen): Mr Chairperson, Sir, following reports of abnormally high levels of stillbirths and neonatal deaths registered since the beginning of the year 2004, my Commission requested the Ministry of Health & Quality of Life to carry out an epidemiological survey into the nature of the problem. In this context, the services of Dr. F. Aumeer, member of the Royal College of Obstetrician/Gynaecologist and Specialist on the subject was solicited in July 2004 to document the problem and make recommendations that will help reduce the rates of stillbirths and neonatal deaths in Rodrigues.

My Commission has recently received from the Ministry of Health & Quality of Life a copy of the report prepared by Dr. F. Aumeer.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, the main findings of the study are –

- First, for the first six months of 2004, there were 16 stillbirths and 14 neonatal deaths.
- Second, the majority of stillbirths till June 2004 were associated with hypertensive disorders of pregnancy.
- Third, 62% of stillbirths had underlying cause, that is, maternal hypertension and pre-eclampsia with or without abruption.
- Fourth, 60% of neonatal deaths were attributed to pre-maturity, with associated respiratory distress syndrome.

- Fifth, other causes of neonatal deaths included congenital malformation, septicaemia, that is, generalised infection and intra-partum asphyxia.
- Sixth, teenage pregnancies, increased maternal age, obesity, grand multiparity (that is, mothers who have had a large number of babies) smoking and malnutrition in mothers, were associated with increased risks of neonatal deaths.

(Interruptions)

Mr Chairperson, Sir, my Commission is doing a lot of things. There is actually the same problem in Mauritius, and they are doing a lot of things there also.

(Interruptions)

Mr Chairperson: Do not interrupt the Commissioner, please!

Mr Sooprayen: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I am now coming with the recommendations.

Dr. F. Aumeer concluded that all cases of high-risk pregnancies have been properly managed by the hospital staff. The report, however, made the following recommendations –

- First, upgrading of facilities and equipment in Paediatric and Maternity Wards along with training of nursing staff in handling of premature and low birth weight babies.
- Second, aggressive treatment of hypertension in pregnant and would-be pregnant mothers.
- Third, re-organisation of Mont Lubin and La Ferme maternity wings into Day Care Clinics for pregnant women with hypertension and diabetes.
- Fourth, early referral of high-risk pregnant women to the obstetrician.
- Fifth, routine screening of all high-risk patients by the gynaecologist at an early stage of pregnancy.
- Sixth, development and adoption of clearly defined management protocols by the Ministry for common obstetric problems.
- Last, step up health education/health promotion programmes by community nurses to improve attendance to antenatal clinics and nutrition during pregnancy.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, may I inform this Assembly that some implementations of these measures have already started.

Thank you.

ADJOURNMENT

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I beg to move that this Assembly do now adjourn to Tuesday 16 November 2004 at 10.30 a.m.

The Deputy Chief Commissioner rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

At 2.15 p.m, the Assembly was, on its rising, adjourned to Tuesday 16 November 2004 at 10.30 a.m.