

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

PORT MATHURIN – MOROIL BUILDING

(No. B/667) Mr J. C. Agathe (Second Local Region Member for Marechal)
asked the Chief Commissioner -

- (a) if, he would for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to how a previous public hospital was built on the land presently occupied by Moroil which is a privately-owned land, and
- (b) say what he intends to do to restore the building in view of its historical value.

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, the site presently occupied by Moroil was the object of an exchange agreement between the Government of Mauritius and late Mrs. Ww. Albertson Roussety. According to the agreement, a portion of land of the extent of 2 acres situated at Anse Quitor was given to government in exchange of a portion of 0.21 acres of land at Port Mathurin together with its building now known as Moroil.

The deed of exchange was signed by the then Magistrate and Civil Commissioner of Rodrigues, Mr Y. Pitchen, on behalf of the Government of Mauritius on 18 December 1971. Mrs. Ww Albertson Roussety has agreed to pay to government the sum of Rs7000 representing the cost of the building already existed on the said land at Port Mathurin. It therefore indicates that the Moroil building which was previously used as hospital was constructed at a time when the land in question was a State land and has been sold thereafter to late Mrs. Ww. Albertson Roussety during the exchange of land.

I am informed that a list of sites and buildings was inventoried and submitted to the National Heritage Board in February 2004 to be declared as National Heritage and Ancient Monument under the National Heritage Act 2003 and Ancient Monument Act respectively. It would appear that the building in question was also included in the list, but was not retained for declaration as Ancient Monument. A confirmation is being awaited from the Ministry of Arts and Culture.

Meanwhile, the Commission for Historical Building and Archives Museum is preparing its own list of ancient monument throughout the island. A team led by the Planner has initiated a survey in this respect in the context of the development of an area action plan for the region of La Ferme and has submitted a list of our local *patrimoine* for protection and restoration works. Appropriate regulation will be presented to the Assembly in this connection.

DEPUTY CHIEF COMMISSIONER – GOVERNMENT CAR

(No. B/668) Mr J. C. Agathe (The Second Local Region Member for Marechal) asked the Chief Commissioner whether a Commissioner who has been granted a government vehicle with the services of a driver for official travelling and who has also purchased his own vehicle in accordance with the Rodrigues Regional Assembly (Allowance and Privileges) Act may make use of other government vehicles for his official or unofficial business and, if so, under what circumstances.

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson Sir, a Commissioner can utilise other government vehicles than the one put at his disposal in case the one put at his disposal is on breakdown or is under servicing.

I am also informed that it happens that the Deputy Chief Commissioner who is responsible for the implementation of all infrastructural projects, travels in other government vehicles with officers of his Commissions while carrying out site visits and/or to attend site meetings. As regards a Commissioner's private vehicle, it is a privilege and is not meant to be used for official purposes.

Mr J. Roussety: Mr Chairperson, Sir, can the Chief Commissioner tell us why the Deputy Chief Commissioner to whom is assigned a vehicle of over Rs1 m. (a Pajero), has to use other Government vehicles for site visits, etc?

The Chief Commissioner: I have already answered this question. As I said. They go together for site visits in Government vehicles. Whenever he has to go alone for site visits, he uses his personal duty-free car. I think that in Mauritius also it is like that. They go in a vehicle for a site visit or to see how projects are going on.

Mr Agathe: Mr Chairperson, Sir, many times we have seen the Deputy Chief Commissioner alone with the driver in the Government vehicle. I think that there is something wrong about what the Chief Commissioner is saying, because...

Mr Chairperson: You can't say that.

Mr Agathe: We saw him many times...

Mr Chairperson: You can't say that there is something wrong in what the Chief Commissioner is saying. You may have another version.

Mr Agathe: It is contrary to what the Chief Commissioner has said. If ever this is the case, will the Deputy Chief Commissioner pay back the amount of diesel that he has used for his trips?

The Chief Commissioner: I have already replied to this question. I think it is very clear. It is not only for the Deputy Chief Commissioner. A Commissioner can utilise Government other vehicles than the one put at his disposal in case the one put at his disposal is on breakdown or is under servicing. This has already happened to me also.

Whenever the vehicle is on breakdown or under servicing, the Commissioner has to get a car for his official work.

(Interruptions)

Mr Chairperson: Order! Order, please!

Mr J. Roussety: Mr Chairperson, Sir, can the Chief Commissioner and Commissioner responsible for finance – I believe he must be aware – tell us when any Commissioner uses the vehicle officially assigned to him, according to the Rodrigues Regional Assembly (Privileges and Immunities) Act? Who pays for the diesel used by the Pajeros and BMWs and who pays for diesel when other Government vehicles are used?

The Chief Commissioner: This is simple, Mr Chairperson, Sir. We have a petrol allowance for the official car.

(Interruptions)

You get a petrol allowance!

Mr Chairperson: Order! Order!

The Chief Commissioner: The reply is: the petrol of the car used by any Commissioner is paid by the Administration, by his Commission. Ce n'est pas volontaire, cela arrive des fois que le vehicule tombe en panne ou doit aller faire un *servicing*. Cela n'arrive pas toutes les semaines. Il est tout à fait normal – cela se passe aussi dans d'autres ministères à Maurice – qu'un véhicule soit mis à la disposition du commissaire.

Mr J. Roussety: M. le président, il y a des véhicules officiels attachés au chef commissaire et aux commissaires. Je voudrais qu'il confirme, oui ou non, si c'est eux - ils prennent de l'argent, *travel grant et official travelling*, qui est payé aux membres de l'Assemblée pour utiliser leurs véhicules – qui paient le diesel des pajéros et les BMW qui sont attachés à eux. *Who pays? Is it from Government funds or money taken out of their pockets, of course coming from their salary and other allowances?*

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, it seems that the Minority Leader would like to say that we should pay for the petrol used in the Government cars at the disposal of Commissions. We will find out who is going to pay for the petrol used by the car, which the Deputy Chief Commissioner used to travel. As I said it is accidental; this does not happen every time.

Mr Jabeemissar: Mr Chairperson, Sir, from the Chief Commissioner's reply, it seems to me that there is some contradiction. In the first instance, he said that it happens

that when the Chief Commissioner, Deputy Chief Commissioner or any Commissioner uses another Government vehicle it is because firstly that his official vehicle has had a breakdown...

Mr Chairperson: Do not repeat the answer.

Mr Jabeemissar: Secondly, when the car is under servicing and further he said “to go on official site visit”. My colleague said that the Deputy Chief Commissioner has been found using other Government vehicles many times. Can the Chief Commissioner confirm that for all the times the Deputy Chief Commissioner has been using the Government vehicle, his official vehicle was either under repair or under servicing?

The Chief Commissioner: I’ll find out. It happens also that the driver is sick or he has taken one or two days’ local leave. Tomorrow my brother is going to take a casual leave...

(Interruptions)

We can drive, but we won’t do so. There are many occasions where the Commissioners – not only the Deputy Chief Commissioner – have to use cars of their Commissions, because either the driver is sick or is on leave. The problem is that this has to be discussed as to whether we can have several drivers driving the same car. This has to be discussed if when the driver of a Commissioner is on leave whether another driver can drive his car.

Mr Agathe: Mr Chairperson, Sir, can we to understand that the car which is at the disposal of the Deputy Chief Commissioner is a bad one?

Mr Chairperson: Your question is “can we understand”. I don’t know whether the Chief Commissioner will want to react to this.

Mr J. Roussety: M. le président, je vais demander encore, parce que ce n’est pas clair pour moi. Quand un Pajero attaché à un commissaire ou la BMW X5 attaché...

Mr Chairperson: Belonging to whom?

Mr J. Roussety: Attached to the service of the Chief Commissioner. I want to know when they go to the filling station and they fill the tank of their vehicles, do they use Government procedure of filling vouchers at the filling stations or do they take money out of their pockets to pay the diesel? Do they pay cash?

(Interruptions)

Mr Chairperson: Order! Order!

Mr J. Roussety: Or do they sign the vouchers?

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, we all receive travelling allowance; they receive travelling allowance; everybody here receives petrol or travelling allowance and we pay from this travelling allowance to put diesel in those pajeros. I give the cheque to my brother and he goes to pay. It is so simple. You receive a travelling allowance to pay the diesel for the car. You don't take diesel from the Administration.

Mr J. Roussety: *Dans ce cas, M. le président, le chef commissaire va nous confirmer que les commissaires recoivent*, like every member of this Assembly who has a car registered on his name, a travelling allowance; they don't use their pajeros, of course for reasons they have given and use Government vehicles. So, Government is paying the travelling allowance and the diesel they use in the other Government vehicles. Is that correct?

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, as I said, sometimes a Commissioner can go in a car with some members of the staff on a site visit or for a meeting somewhere. Even I do that; instead of going alone, I go with my colleagues to attend meetings and so on. Sometimes they pay more than they get as travelling allowance to go to meetings here and there or on site visits. *Il y a certaines choses qu'on doit revoir dans cette affaire d'utilisation des véhicules. Mais à mon avis il faudrait mettre de l'ordre, s'il y a lieu de le faire, et être bien précis sur l'utilisation des véhicules qui sont à la disposition des commissaires.*

Mr Jabeemissar: Mr Chairperson, Sir, the Chief Commissioner has been talking about putting order. *C'est vrai* in order to prevent abuse of public funds. What mechanism will be put in place in order to control the proper use of Government vehicles?

The Chief Commissioner: M. le président, ce que je voulais dire – il y a eu des questions qui ont été posées ici à l'Assemblée – c'est qu'il semblerait qu'il y a des confusions sur cette question d'utilisation des véhicules des commissaires. On n'a jamais posé des questions sur l'utilisation des voitures de l'Island Executive dans le passé. Je ne vais pas revenir dessus; on a tellement posé des questions sur les véhicules qui sont mis à la disposition des commissaires que je dis qu'il faut une fois pour toutes qu'on règle l'affaire avec le PRB, le Civil Service ou nous-mêmes ici pour mettre sur papier exactement dans quelles conditions ces véhicules doivent être utilisés. Quand on recoit une somme d'argent pour voyager, il faut savoir comment utiliser cet argent. Donc, à mon avis, on va poser des questions dessus, nous avons décidé entre nous de voir avec le Service Civil à Maurice ou d'autres pratiques comment arriver à mettre sur papier exactement l'utilisation de ces véhicules pour qu'on puisse en finir une bonne fois.

GRAND LA FOUCHE CORAIL – MRS FABRINA AUGUSTIN – HOUSE DESTROYED BY FIRE

(No. B/669) Mr J. C. Agathe (The Second Local Region Member for Marechal) asked the Commissioner responsible for Social Security whether, with regard to cases of people whose houses have been burnt down since the inception of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly -

- (a) he would state what facilities are granted to the victims generally; and
- (b) what facilities have been granted to Mrs. M. Fabrina Augustin of Grand La Fouche Corail whose house was destroyed by fire recently.

Mr Mercure: Mr Chairperson, Sir, at the Social Security Division, victims of fire are granted an allowance as laid in the Social Aid Act 1983 in the schedule to the Social Aid regulation Part (1) paragraphs (6) & (7), after an enquiry has been carried out by an authorized officer. This act stipulates that -

- (a) Rs1035 per member of the household as allowance to fire victims for the purchase of foodstuffs;
- (b) Rs1035 per member of the household as clothing;
- (b) Rs1035 per member of the household as cooking utensils;
- (c) Rs1035 per member of the household as furniture; and Rs 2040 per member of the household as resettlement allowance.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, I wish to inform the House that victims of fire should have a memo from the Police Station in his locality, a memo from the Fire Services then the victims will have to come to the Social Security Office and immediately an enquiry will be made and payment will be done according to the materials declared by the victims.

As regards the case of Mrs. Fabrina Augustin of Grand La Fouche Corail who applied for fire allowance on 10 July 2003, only furniture and foodstuff were burnt. In such condition, an amount of Rs6210 was paid to her (Foodstuff and Furniture) representing the two items (Rs1035 x 2) for three persons in this family.

Mr Agathe: Mr Chairperson, Sir, regarding the case of Mrs Augustin, it seems very strange that only furniture and foodstuff were burnt. Can the Commissioner enlighten us more on that?

Mr Mercure: Mr Chairperson, Sir, as I have just said an inquiry was made by an authorised officer of my Commission and he has got a memo from the Police and fire services wherein it is mentioned that only foodstuff and furniture were burnt. So, she has been compensated for foodstuff and furniture that were burnt.

Mr Agathe: Can we know what type of house does that lady possess?

Mr Mercure: A dwelling with iron sheets.

Mr Agathe: Mr Chairperson, Sir, that person lives in a house with iron sheets and only foodstuff and furniture were burnt...

Mr Chairperson: What is wrong with that? It is as per the inquiry of the Police. I understand your point; it is strange, but it happens according to the inquiry. Do you have any other questions?

Mr Agathe: Yes. Can the Commissioner inquire more on that case?

Mr Mercure: Mr Chairperson, Sir, a fire has broken in a house. That does not mean that the fire services have not reached there in time to extinguish the fire. In the inquiry it is said that only foodstuff and furniture have been burnt. So, am I going to give him resettlement allowance to build another house? It is mentioned in the inquiry.

Mr Jabeemissar: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I would like to ask the Commissioner whether, apart from the Police report, he himself has paid a personal visit to the victim. I am not saying that he does not trust the Police. But has he made a site visit there?

Mr Mercure: Yes, of course. In the law it is mentioned that an authorised officer will make the inquiry. Anyway I pay visits to victims of fire on humanitarian grounds. But I am not going to make the inquiry myself. It is stipulated in the law that an authorised officer will conduct the inquiry.

Mr Jabeemissar: Mr Chairperson, Sir, can I ask the Commissioner whether he was satisfied with the report handed over by the Police or the fire services?

Mr Mercure: Yes, of course, because only foodstuff and furniture have been burnt, I am satisfied with what has been handed over to me according to the law.

Mr Agathe: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I myself visited that lady. I know that the house was completely destroyed...

Mr Chairperson: You are stating that as a matter of fact. Do you have any proof in what you are saying?

Mr Agathe: I have been there.

Mr Chairperson: What is your question?

Mr Agathe: Will the Commissioner inquire into that case in order to know whether that person can get the facilities, which she requires?

Mr Mercure: There is an inquiry; there is a memo from the fire services and a memo from the Police officers. My Commission, through the authorised officer, has made an inquiry. I visited the house; this was in 2003. The house was not burnt as is being mentioned. I trust the Police, the fire services and my officer. I don't know if the house was burnt again after we have done all these things

Mr Chairperson: I will have to give a note of warning. Apparently, we have two different versions on this. I'll have to draw the attention of members that this is an institution and that information given in this House *viva voce* or in written should be exact. Otherwise the member may be committing a sort of offence which I'll have to decide upon. Thank you.

Mr J. Roussety: I beg your pardon, Mr Chairperson, Sir.

Mr Chairperson: You have not understood what I have said. You want me to repeat it.

Mr J. Roussety: No. You have said that there will be an offence. Under which statutory provision will there be an offence? Our...

Mr Chairperson: Take your seat, please. If a member intentionally gives false information in this House, this member may be committing an offence.

Mr Agathe: Mr Chairperson, Sir...

Mr Chairperson: Have you understood my ruling?

Mr Agathe: Yes.

Mr Chairperson: You have to understand first and then put your question.

Mr J. Roussety: I have not understood the point when you said there would be an offence when a member speaks here. As far as I know there is no offence in what can be said here. I can say that Mr X is a thief, is a burglar, is a terrorist, there will be no offence. I fail to understand how you, as Chairperson, is saying that there will be offence when words are expressed here.

Mr Chairperson: I maintain that if a member intentionally states something which is not true in this House as a matter of fact, then I'll have to take the necessary actions, because an offence is committed.

(Interruptions)

Mr J. Roussety: In the House.

Mr Chairperson: Yes, in the House; and it falls within my provinces to take appropriate actions.

Mr Agathe: Mr Chairperson, Sir, what will happen if someone...

Mr Chairperson: You won't query me about this. Next question.

RODRIGUES – NHDC HOUSING PROJECT

(No B/670) Mrs. J. Prosper (The Sixth Island Region Member) asked the Deputy Chief Commissioner as regards the NHDC Housing project in Rodrigues whether he could inform the House -

- (a) when the construction started and if the work is already completed and, if not;
- (b) state the completion date; and
- (c) table the list of applicants for a housing unit in that project?

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I am informed that with regard to the NHDC housing project the construction started in March 2003 and that works according to the original contract have been practically completed in November 2004.

However, my Commission has requested that each unit be equipped with proper septic tank, which was not included in the original contract. Approval is being sought from the Central Tender Board for an upward revision of the contract value to cater for the installation of same on each stock.

The criteria for the eligibility of applicants has not yet been finalised. Therefore, part (c) of the question does not arise.

Mrs Prosper: Mr Chairperson, Sir, can the Deputy Chief Commissioner inform the House whether lighting system and water supply are connected to the housing units?

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, as I have stated, no provision was made for sewerage network and water reticulation; toilet and electrical services installed but not connected to mains. However, my Commission has dealt with the CEB and the Water Unit. A survey has already been carried out and cost estimate for the provision of electricity and water is being worked out at the level of my Commission.

Mrs Prosper: Mr Chairperson, Sir, can the Deputy Chief Commissioner inform the House how money was disbursed up to now?

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I do not have the exact value. I'll come with a statement later.

POMPÉE – ROAD ACCESS

(No. B/671) Mrs. J. Prosper (The Sixth Island Region Member) asked the Deputy Chief Commissioner could the Commissioner state, if any road access is being envisaged at Pompée in the vicinity of Mr Vianney Ravanne's and Mr. Noel Gentil's places

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, following representation made by the village community of Pompée to IFAD and Public Infrastructure Commission, I am informed that the road access of Pompée is about 400 metres long. It has been a usual practice for my Commission to work out the technical feasibility of constructing access roads on the request of village communities and financing agencies like IFAD. However, it appears at this stage that a concrete track road will be more appropriate in that case because of the topographical context of the region, which is sloppy and very steep. The financing of the construction of the road access with the appropriate cost estimate will then be referred to the IFAD project for further consideration.

CARER'S ALLOWANCE - PROCEDURES

(No.B/672) Mrs. J. Prosper (The Sixth Island Region Member) asked the Commissioner responsible for Social Security whether he could inform the House about the procedures regarding the allocation of carer's allowance

Mr Mercure: Mr Chairperson, Sir, applicants who wish to apply for carer's allowance normally call at local office. If he satisfies the conditions as laid down in the Social Aid Regulations 1984 GN 48/84 Section (11) par 15 paragraph F (copy attached) a monthly allowance of Rs1355 will be paid to him.

Note that for beneficiaries of Basic Invalidity Pension and Basic Retirement Pension who satisfy the conditions as laid down in the Second Schedule of the National Pensions Act (copy attached) an additional allowance of Rs1150 and Rs1330 will be paid to them respectively.

Applications for carer's allowance are made at local offices as follows. The proxy will have to produce the following documents -

- (1) Birth Certificate, National Identity Card, Medical Certificate of client.
- (2) If a proxy calls at office in favour of client, he will have to produce his National Identity Card.
- (3) After the application has been made, the beneficiary will be medically boarded or a domiciliary visit caused if client is bedridden.
- (4) If he satisfies the condition as laid out in the second schedule, he will receive an award notice from the Benefit Branch. Payment is made with effect as from the date of application.

Mrs Prosper: M. le président, est-ce que je pourrai demander au commissaire - après que le *carer* ait cet *allowance* - s'il y a un suivi pour voir si vraiment la personne concernée ait les soins nécessaires ?

Mr Mercure: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I wish to draw the attention of the House to the fact that the carer's allowance is not an allowance which is paid separately to the carer; it is paid to the beneficiary; and there is mutual agreement between the beneficiary and the carer. The money is not meant for the carer himself. The Officer of the Social Security Commission does site visits on a routine basis every week, and then if there is any representation to the effect that the carer is not taking care of the beneficiary, then there will be a change of carer, whose name will be given by the beneficiary.

Mrs Prosper: M. le président, est-ce que le commissaire peut nous dire s'il y a déjà eu des cas où la personne n'a pas eu les soins nécessaires?

Mr Mercure: Yes, of course. But immediate action has been taken to change the carer.

FAMILY TREE - ESTABLISHMENT

(No. B/673) Mrs J. Prosper (The Sixth Island Region Member) asked the Commissioner responsible for Arts and Culture whether, with regard to Rodriguan Culture, she will for the benefit of the House, state what steps she is going to take to help us establish our family tree.

Mrs Perrine-Bégué: Mr Chairperson, Sir, the establishment of a family tree is of the nature of a private procedure. The interested person normally applies to the Civil Status Office for obtaining the necessary documents e.g Acts of birth, marriage or death.

These civil status documents serve to trace back ancestors only when dates, years and names are known or can be identified.

Searches can be made at the various Civil Status offices, the Archives Department, the Mahatmah Gandhi Institute (MGI) and the Nelson Mandela Centre for African Culture.

We are informed that several persons of Indian origin have tried to trace back their ancestors at the Mahatmah Gandhi Institute (MGI), but very few have succeeded.

The Nelson Mandela Centre for African Culture acts as facilitator for descendants of slaves who wish to reconstruct their family ties.

In this context, a database has been set up at the Centre and between 2001 and 2004 some 16,000 persons have called at the centre.

To date none of the applications made to the Nelson Mandela Centre for African Culture has been completed on account of the difficulty to trace back certain ancestors.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, there are three impediments to the success of establishing a family tree -

- (a) It is costly - all civil status documents are obtainable only against payment of the prescribed fee.
- (b) It is time consuming - in fact the applicant has to call personally at the relevant offices and carry out searches.
- (c) It needs precise basic information - names of parents, grand-parents and other remote ancestors are not always known. You may wish to know that sometimes some of our ancestors had only numbers *ou que des prénoms*. So, you cannot go further. Many of these information have been erased in the past deliberately by persons who had interest into erasing names of indentured labourers or slaves. But despite the numerous facilities available in Mauritius, very few applications have been successful. We may therefore infer that applications from Rodrigues will meet the same difficulties, given that we have scarcely all the information that Mauritius has. Nevertheless, my Commission has started negotiations with the Mahatmah Gandhi Institute and the Nelson Mandela Centre for African Culture for the eventual signing of Memoranda of Understanding for future collaboration in many fields; and anyone optimistic enough in Rodrigues who has to retrace his or her family tree may be guided by us through these institutions eventually.

PSYCHIATRIC PATIENTS – TREATMENT/INTERMENT

(No. B/674) Mr G. Jabeemissar (The Second Local Region Member for La Ferme) asked the Commissioner responsible for Health as regards patients suffering from psychiatric problems in Rodrigues, whether the Commissioner could –

- (a) table the list of cases recorded for the last five years;
- (b) say how many of these cases are related to abuse of alcohol or other drugs;
- (c) say what facilities including treatment or internment, are now available.

Mr Sooprayen: Mr Chairperson, Sir, due to the sudden death of his mother, the Medical Records Officer has had to go to Mauritius to attend the burial ceremony.

With regard to parts (a) & (b) of the Question the data is being compiled and will be tabled at the next sitting.

As regards part (c), Mr Chairperson, Sir, we do not have a Psychiatrist in post on a full-time basis in Rodrigues. However, psychiatric cases are handled by the Senior Medical Officer or referred to the Specialist in General Medicine/Physician who can handle the large majority of such cases.

A visiting Psychiatrist from the Brown Sequard Hospital holds three weekly sessions annually. The Specialist holds outpatient specialist clinics at Queen Elizabeth Hospital as well as Mt. Lubin and La Ferme Area Health Centres. Psychiatric cases are admitted in the male and female wards if needed. However, acute and aggressive cases are placed in cells till they stabilise and cases requiring specialised care are referred to Mauritius for follow-up. All the common psychotropic drugs are available in our pharmacy.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, the White Paper on Health Sector reform and development makes provision for the establishment of a Psychiatric Unit. In this respect four Nurses have just completed their 18-month Diploma course in Psychiatry. They are back in Rodrigues and will now assist in the care and rehabilitation youth Centre of mental patients. In the meantime renovation of the ward is progressing smoothly and will be operational as from next year.

Mr Jabeemissar: Mr Chairperson, Sir, unfortunately, data for the first and second parts of my question have not been made available. As regards internment of psychiatric patients, I would like to ask the Commissioner for Health whether they are kept at QEH now until the renovation of the new ward. Are they kept in wards together with other patients?

Mr Sooprayen: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I have already answered this question. I have spoken of cells; I have said that acute and aggressive cases are put in cells till they stabilise.

Mr Jabeemissar: Mr Chairperson, Sir, the Commissioner speaks of cells. Can we know what type of cells they are? Are they like Police cells? Are they cells specially accommodated for these types of patients? Where are these cells found? Are they found in wards?

Mr Sooprayen: Mr Chairperson, Sir, there are special cells in the veranda.

Mr Jabeemissar: Mr Chairperson, Sir, it is regrettable; we don't have any data. A psychiatric patient may be a man, a woman or a teenager. Are all of them kept in the same cells? How many cells are there?

Mr Sooprayen: Mr Chairperson, Sir, fortunately we have only one patient at times in female cell and one in male cell. I have just said that in the meantime renovation of the wards is progressing smoothly and will be operational as from next year.

Mr Jabeemissar: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I don't know whether the Commissioner knows that in the past there have been complaints from other hospitals that they were disturbed from that type of patients. Can the Commissioner say whether, when the new ward will be renovated – it will be found within the QEH – that will not cause the same disturbance as it has always caused to other patients of the hospital?

Mr Sooprayen: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I am aware of what happened in the past. This is why we are doing our utmost to finish with the psychiatric ward; it will not be in the male or female ward, but it will be a separate ward.

Mr Jabeemissar: Mr Chairperson, Sir, does the Commissioner mean that the ward which will be renovated will be a permanent one to be used for all the psychiatric cases in Rodrigues pending the decision of the White Paper on health?

Mr Sooprayen: Mr Chairperson, Sir, we are having this Unit. In due course we will see whether we can get it enlarged or have another psychiatric ward somewhere else. We are doing something to improve the situation.

JUVENILE DELINQUENCY

(No. B/675) Mr G. Jabeemissar (The Second Local Region Member for La Ferme) asked the Commissioner responsible for Family Welfare etc with regard to juvenile delinquency in Rodrigues, whether the Commissioner could -

- (a) table a list of the different cases since the setting up of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly;
- (b) say if any projects are in the pipeline to counteract the problem of juvenile delinquency.

Mr Sooprayen: Mr Chairperson, Sir, with your permission, I will reply to this question. A list of cases of juvenile delinquency has been referred by Rodrigues court to the Probation and After Care Service to inquiry purpose is being tabled.

Juvenile delinquencies could be prevented and require the support of a multitude of parents to take proper care of their children. Talks are also held over the radio. In addition, the Youth and Sports Division provides facilities for the integration of youth in leisure activities. The Commission for Youth & Sports is providing all amenities and training facilities such as music, aerobic amongst others in the youth centres around Rodrigues so that youth may indulge themselves in healthy and recreational leisure activities.

The three youth centres at Grande Montagne, Petit Gabriel and La Ferme are open for the youth up to 8.00 p.m. In collaboration with the Rodrigues Regional Youth Council, the Youth Division regularly pays visits to 60 youth clubs and motivates youth to form part in youth clubs so that they can benefit from the various activities that the youth clubs organise.

Activities organised include indoor games, seminars and outings. Various talks on youth issues are regularly organised in the villages and in zones. Other projects in the pipeline include schooling of all children up to the age of 16.

Mr Jabeemissar: Mr Chairperson, Sir, according to the report submitted by the Commissioner, it is found that most of the cases involving juvenile delinquencies are caused by youths who committed larceny. This is a very big problem in our society now. Apart from the talks that the commissioner has mentioned done by the Commissioner in youth centres and so on, can I ask him whether he has any project in the pipeline in order to counteract this specific problem? I don't know why these youths have got into that state of situation. Is it because there is too much poverty in the island? Is it because there is a social problem somewhere, which needs to be addressed? I want to ask the Commissioner what his Commission is envisaging to do in order to tackle that problem seriously? Because, according to the development trends over the island – if nothing is done now – in the near future it will be unable for us to keep control on that situation.

Mr Sooprayen: Mr Chairperson, Sir, after having given my reply, I must say that we have got institutions in Mauritius for juvenile delinquencies, like probation homes for girls, probation hostels for boys, rehabilitation youth centres and correctional youth centres. At the beginning of next year we are going to have a RYC in Rodrigues. We are very, very conscious of what is happening not in Rodrigues only but in Mauritius and in the world around. So, we are very conscious and we are going to do our utmost so that our young people will have many good things instead of going here and there.

Mr Jabeemissar: Another problem Mr Chairperson, Sir, the report talks of juveniles who are uncontrollable – there are many cases where parents themselves come to see the Police for help. The Commissioner has said that he will set up a YRC, will this be taken into consideration to cater for those uncontrollable youths as well?

Mr Sooprayen: Mr Chairperson, Sir, the rehabilitation centre is meant for such cases and if I may add that actually those going to the homes or hostels, they are uncontrollable by their parents. So, when they are in the home or hostel, which we are

going to have by next year, they will have substitute parents; probation officers will go every now and then to visit them; and those probation officers will go to see the parents as well to have talks with them so that they can amend themselves and control their children. This is what we are hoping in the future.

Mr Agathe: Mr Chairperson, Sir, from the list that we have here we see that there are cases of juvenile males and females who are wandering without having any fixed place of abode. In Rodrigues I know that we have the “Children Protection Unit”. Where will these children go in order to have a certain type of security?

Mr Sooprayen: Mr Chairperson, Sir, different Commissions of this Regional Government are aware of all these problems. The Commission for Women and Child Development, the Commission for Education and my Commission, we are working together to see what can be done; and it will be done soon.

Mr Agathe: Mr Chairperson, Sir, these juveniles are having problems now. Is there any institution in Rodrigues to cater for these problems?

Mr Sooprayen: Mr Chairperson, Sir, for the time being there is the probation service.

Mr Jabeemissar: Mr Chairperson, Sir, as far as I know problems of juvenile delinquency have also existed in Rodrigues. Formerly, all these cases were sent to Mauritius, because at that time we did not have any probation office. Now that the number of cases has increased considerably, can I ask the Commissioner whether there are still requests from parents or responsible authorities to send these youths to correction schools in Mauritius or is it the policy of his Commission to keep them here? Can he enlighten us on that?

Mr Sooprayen: Mr Chairperson, Sir, We are going to keep them here. As far as correction cases are concerned, usually they go to Mauritius. Those youths who have done no serious offences, they have to be rehabilitated. This is why they are put in RYC. If it is more serious, they go to Correctional Youth Centre.

Mr Agathe: Mr Chairperson, Sir, we have approved in the Budget for the construction of a juvenile centre at Marechal. Can the Commissioner inform us when the centre will be constructed?

(Interruptions)

Mr J. Roussety: It appears to me that some members in the public gallery, especially an Honourable Member, are disturbing the proceedings in the House. I would like to remind you that the members present in the public gallery...

Mr Chairperson: Remind me?

Mr J. Roussety: Not you, Sir. I wish that you call these persons to order. I have noticed this repeatedly. Some members are speaking, laughing and exchanging conversation with members in the VIP Gallery. This is not allowed in this House. I'll call upon the Police Officers here to ensure that regulations and practices are observed.

Mr Chairperson: Of course, the Minority Leader is right about order in the Galleries. The attention of the Sergeant-at-Arms is drawn to that. If there are persistent interruptions in the Galleries, obviously I'll have to order the persons concerned to move out from the Gallery.

There is a question put by Mr Agathe. Yes, Commissioner for Health.

Mr Sooprayen: Mr Chairperson, Sir, we are going with the construction of a RYC at Marechal.

Mr Agathe: I want to know when.

(Interruptions)

Mr Sooprayen: We have got the design and everything...

(Interruptions)

We are doing our work. You may say whatever you want, but we are doing our work.

(Interruptions)

Mr Chairperson: Order! Order, please!

COMMITTEE OF INQUIRY ON SALE BY LEVEY - REPORT

(No. B/676) Mr J. Agahte (The Second Local Region Member for Marechal) asked the Chief Commissioner –

- (a) if he would, for the benefit of the House, obtain the Report of the Committee of Enquiry on Sale by Levy is so far as Rodrigues is concerned, and
- (b) state what facilities are available in Rodrigues itself for the registration and transcription of the sale of private land in the island.

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, we have not yet received a copy of the report of the Committee of Enquiry on Sale by Levy, but I am pleased to advise that the report is available on the website of the Prime Minister's Office and can be downloaded from the website.

With regard to part (b) of the question, Mr Chairperson, Sir, the Registration Unit has been set up in Rodrigues since December 1997 to facilitate the registration, transcription of deeds and inscription of mortgages. This Unit is operational following the proclamation of the Registration and Transcription of Deeds and Inscription of Mortgages, Privileges and Charges (Rodrigues) Act 1997.

Mr Agathe: Mr Chairperson, Sir, as far as the inquiry is concerned, there are cases relating to this government. There are problems relating to State land lease. Will the Chief Commissioner enlighten us about this situation?

The Chief Commissioner: The question of the member is “state what facilities are available in Rodrigues itself for the registration and transcription of the sale of private land in the island”. We are talking of private land. Concerning State land there is transfer. The State Land Committee does examine the applications for transfer.

Mr Agathe: But there are cases relating to State land also. There are procedures...

Mr Chairperson: I allowed the member the supplementary question, but his original question was on “sale by levy” and “private land”. The member should come with another question.

Mr Agathe: Mr Chairperson, Sir, concerning the facilities, can we know the number of officers who deal with the signing of transcription on the sale of private land?

The Chief Commissioner: I need notice of this question.

STATE LAND – RESIDENTIAL LEASE

(No. B/677) Mr D. L. Guillaume (The Third Island Region Member) asked the Chief Commissioner whether, in view of difficulties faced by Rodriguan owners of a house on State land to obtain a residential lease, he could state –

- (a) how many such houses have been built on state land in the island;
- (b) how many owners of such houses have not received their land lease and why;
and
- (c) what action is being taken to solve this urgent problem so that these owners can improve their houses.

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson Sir, there is no information available for the time being with regard to parts (a) and (b).

(c) provision has been made in the estimates of my Commission during Financial Year 2004/2005 to undertake a Housing and Cadastral Survey throughout Rodrigues.

The objective of the survey is to establish a data base system on existing housing units in Rodrigues and to undertake new cadastral sub divisions within specific regions throughout the Island. This database will cover housing units on both private and state lands. The survey will be contracted out and draft tender document has already been prepared and vetted by the Legal Adviser of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly. The document is being finalized and will be floated shortly.

The survey will locate all housing units on the island and the status of their occupation. It will enable appropriate policy measures to improve land management, promote security of tenure, which is required for improvement of housing and environmental conditions. The result of the survey will therefore allow the Executive Council to focus on regularisation schemes in order to provide incentive to families to invest in their home improvement, in line with the National Development Strategy which forecast the number of housing units in Rodrigues to be around 11,000 by the year 2010.

The Assembly will be informed on the outcome of the survey.

FISHERMEN – END-OF-YEAR BONUS

(No. B/678) Mr D. L. Guillaume (The Third Island Region Member) asked the Chief Commissioner whether, in view of difficulties faced at the end of the year by Fishermen to pay their “loans” and also defray expenses on dress, books etc for their school going children, he could state –

- (a) how many professional fishermen are registered with the Fisheries Protection services; and
- (b) if all of them will receive an end-of-year bonus and/or compensation and, if not, what action is being taken to assist them.

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson Sir, this question is similar to Question B/50 and I shall reply along the same line.

Presently, there are 1971 professional fishers registered at the Fisheries Protection Service. This figure includes 1208 men and 763 women.

With regard to part (b), I am informed that the conditions prescribed by the Ministry of Fisheries for payment of bad weather allowance under the incentive scheme to professional fishers does not provide for the payment of an end of year bonus or allowance.

The Ministry of Finance has authorised payment of end of year bonus only to public sector and to pensioners. I would like to draw the attention of the Assembly that bad weather allowance is not a fixed pension, but an allowance to compensate registered fishers on bad weather days, that is, when the wind speed exceeds 19.2 km per hour or the sea is rough as certified by the Meteorological Services. The registered fishermen will therefore not be eligible for an end-of-year bonus or any additional compensation.

In order to assist them, I am informed that the Fishermen Welfare Fund is offering scholarship to children of fishermen as follows –

- (i) 10 scholarships for successful CPE students;
- (ii) 3 scholarships for successful SC students; and
- (iii) 2 scholarships for successful HSC students.

In addition, there are other existing financial schemes such as Trust Fund Programme for the Integration of Vulnerable Groups, the Association Cooperative des Caisses Villageoises, Levé Déboute and the Credit Union which the fishermen and other categories of the low-income group can approach to benefit from financial assistance.

Mr Agathe: Mr Chairperson, Sir, we all know the words the majority side always uses “autonomy means innovative”. So, we all know the problems that the fishermen are always encountering day in and day out. Will the Chief Commissioner *faire la bouche doux* to grant the fishermen an end-of-year bonus this year?

The Chief Commissioner: We have an administration at the Social Security. As I said, social aid pensioners who receive a fixed sum, Rs500 or Rs600 do receive a bonus at the end of the year. How are we to calculate a bonus on bad weather allowance, which is not a fixed sum? The fishermen earn a living by fishing. These people are also planters, breeders. We should all of us here encourage people at the beginning of the year to think what is going to happen at the end of the year. We have seen people, who are not employed, who are planting some vegetables or who are breeders, have planned for their children at the end of the year. This is what we call responsibility of the family towards their children. I think this is important for the future of this country. A lot of money is being spent on alcohol throughout the year. Why do we not think a bit of the future of our children?

(Interruptions)

Mr Chairperson: Order! Order, please!

The Chief Commissioner: This is policy; this is law, which is being voted in the National Assembly...

(Interruptions)

Mr Chairperson, Sir, I think I have explained; we should think seriously about the responsibility of parents as far as the education of their children is concerned. We know that there are people in this country who are not very poor, but who can manage during the year to put some money aside for their children. We have Schemes as far examination fees are concerned; we have a book scheme for needy students. The fishermen are not needy...

(Interruptions)

What do we call needy? Needy people are sole parents who receive just social aid; and they receive books for their children at the end of the year. Primary school children do receive books freely. I know that sometimes fishermen do have problems. As far as the end-of-year bonus is concerned, this is a national policy; it is not our concern. It has been set up by laws. We have to ask the Ministry of Finance to amend the law so that we can make rules and regulations in Rodrigues. The Legal Adviser is working on many laws here, such as the Planters Welfare Fund, Students Welfare Fund; these will be set up in due course so that fishermen or whoever who seems to be very poor can benefit from these welfare funds.

PRUDENCE, MRS NOELLA – RESIDENTIAL LEASE – APPLICATION

(No. B/679) Mr J. Roussety (The Minority Leader) asked the Chief Commissioner as regards an application for a residential lease made by one Noella Prudence of Fond La Bonté/Fond Baie aux Huitres, whether he can state when same was made, what consideration has been given to date and where do matters stand, taking into account the fact that the applicant is a deprived low-income woman with children.

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson Sir, I am informed that Miss Noella Prudence was living in Mauritius and is a mother of a two years' boy. She came back to Rodrigues in the year 2002 and put up an application for a residential lease on 21 July 2003. As at to date, her application has not been attended to since the Cadastral Office is processing in chronological order all applications, which have been recommended by the State Land Committee. These applications are being processed in the following order of priority -

- (i) Married applicant;
- (ii) Female head of households;
- (iii) Single applicant older than 25 yrs; and
- (iv) Single applicant having less than 25 yrs.

I am also informed that Miss Noella Prudence is now living in a corrugated iron sheet building belonging to her parents at Fond La Bonté who also possess a second concrete house on the same site.

During its meeting held on 29 November 2004, the Technical Committee on land has taken the decision to consider hardship cases irrespective of their date of application. Further to this decision, Miss. Noella Prudence will have to show case of her hardship situation to enable her application to be considered along with similar cases.

Mr J. Roussety: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I thank the Chief Commissioner for that effort. But I can assure him that that unmarried girl with children is really a hardship case and it would be appropriate to consider her case as a priority case.

The Chief Commissioner: We will look at her application. She should come to the Rodrigues Administration to see the Departmental Head of lands. She has to prove that she is a hardship case and there will be an inquiry before allocating her the land to build a house.

POINTE MONIER/POINTE L'HERBE – COASTAL ROAD

(No. B/680) Mr J. Roussety (The Minority Leader) asked the Chief Commissioner as regards the CEB complex at Pointe L'Herbe whether he can state whether a public road passing between the sea and the power station and from Pointe Monier to Pointe L'Herbe was included in the plans for the works and what is being contemplated to restore and embellish the site and the village following the works.

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson Sir, the subdivision of the reclaimed land at Pointe L'Herbe makes provision for a coastal road that would link Pte Monier to Pointe L'Herbe. According to the plan, the proposed coastal road is 7 metres (7 m) wide with one metre and fifty centimeters (1.50 m) reserve on eachr side.

The proposed road also appears on the description of the plots of land leased to the CEB and Rodnix respectively at Pointe L'herbe.

With regard to the restoration and embellishment of the site and the village, the CEB has already confirmed its intention to construct a handball pitch cum tennis court. This was discussed and agreed during a meeting with the villagers of Pointe L'herbe held on 9 September 2004.

The layout plan has been finalised and transmitted to the CEB for appropriate action. It is also envisaged to incorporate embellishment and landscaping works during the construction of the handball pitch cum tennis court.

Mr J. Roussety: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I am aware that the CEB was to build that new portion of road; that was said when the ceremony for the laying of stone was held; they said that they would build the road. Since the plan is included in the design for the works, can the Chief Commissioner tell us why that road has not been built yet?

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, perhaps my colleague can come with a statement. It was not agreed that the CEB would construct the road. I have never heard of that. What I have heard is that the CEB has taken a commitment to embellish the area at Pointe l'Herbe and to build handball pitch cum tennis court.

FINANCIAL ESTIMATES/BUDGET PROPOSALS YR 2005-06 - CIRCULAR

(No. B/681) Mr J. Roussety (The Minority Leader) asked the Chief Commissioner as regards the preparation of the financial estimates and the budget proposals for the next financial year (2005-2006) whether he can state if any circular has been issued by the Administration/Island Chief Executive in relation to same, and, if yes, whether he can cause a copy to be laid on the table of the Assembly.

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson Sir, this question calls for information on the day to day operation of the Central Administration and falls outside the ambit of Section 26 (1) and 35. However, I am informed that two circulars under the hand of the Island Chief Executive have been addressed to the different Heads of Departments and Divisions, and this in conformity with the actual practice. The gist of these two circulars pertains to the timely preparation of the budget estimates for the Financial Year 2005-2006, inviting the Departmental Heads, the Clerk and Heads of Divisions to submit their human resource requirements and expenditure proposals. I am advised that being given that these circulars, being subject to variations at any time, first pertain to the day to day administration and secondly are meant for restricted circulation only to those concerned, it would not be in order to upset administrative practices by tabling these circulars.

Mr J. Roussety: Mr Chairperson, Sir, according to constitutional practice the Assembly is supreme and I don't understand why a circular for administrative purpose calling for Heads of Departments/Sections to submit provisions cannot be circulated. Are there matters of secrecy, official secrets, matters of defence in that circular for the Chief Commissioner not to be able to table it here, the supreme Institution in Rodrigues, for the sake of transparency?

Mr Chairperson: In more clear details this question was whether it is admissible or not. In my reasoning this question falls rather on the borderline of admissible questions in this Assembly. Section 26 of the Act states that "the Regional Assembly is responsible for the formulation of policies, and these policies are carried out by the Executive Council". Our Standing Orders clearly state that "Questions asked to Commissioners should be based on facts or on administration for which they are responsible". By the setting up of our Institution, clearly the Administration is involved in the day to day running of the Regional Assembly and in conformity with Parliamentary practice; matters of administration are not normally dealt with in this House.

Members should be aware that this Assembly is not concerned with public documents and matters falling with the day to day administration, including circulars, orders probably are subject to variations each time, and Commissioners are not responsible to answer in this Assembly. If the Commissioner would like to enlighten the House further on any matter which he believes he is officially connected to, then it is up to him to decide whether to give this information.

Mr J. Roussety: Anyway, Mr Chairperson, Sir, if they don't want to give information they have their reasons not to do so. But for my part, I believe that circulars for the preparation of Budget are matters of policy. I respect the decision.

Can I ask the Chief Commissioner to whom does that circular - whose access has been refused to me - invite Heads of Departments/Sections to submit their requirements for manpower, personnel and the estimates for the next Budget? To whom does the circular indicate that the information should be submitted?

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, as I said it is clear – inviting the Departmental Heads, the Clerk and Heads of Divisions.

Mr J. Roussety: Mr Chairperson, Sir, my question is: to whom is it specified in the circular that information should be submitted?

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir...

Mr Chairperson: I heard it. Can you repeat the answer, please?

The Chief Commissioner: All circulars are addressed to the Departmental Heads.

Mr J. Roussety: To whom should information be submitted?

The Chief Commissioner: From the Island Chief Executive to the Departmental Heads.

Mr J. Roussety: And back to whom?

The Chief Commissioner: Back to the Island Chief Executive.

Mr J. Roussety: Is the Chief Commissioner sure?

The Chief Commissioner: Yes.

Mr J. Roussety: Mr Chairperson, Sir, would the Chief Commissioner confirm that contrary to financial practices in government, that circular invites, in fact, Heads of Departments/Sections to submit these estimates to an Adviser at his Commission? In this case, Mr Chairperson, it will be clear for all of us here if the Chief Commissioner could kindly table the circular. We know that Heads of Departments responsible for managing

Government's money should submit these requirements to an Adviser and not to the Island Chief Executive who is responsible for the sound management of all Commissions. This is a bad practice.

The Chief Commissioner: I think the Minority Leader means Mr Bazire. Well, the Adviser can collect all the information and submit it to the Island Chief Executive and try to work out the Budget. I think the Adviser for finance should advise Chief Commissioner on how we are going to prepare the Budget. The Adviser will assemble all the data and will send to the Chief Commissioner.

Mr J. Roussety: In this case, Mr Chairperson, Sir, why is the information not submitted to the Island Chief Executive who will then decide? Because it is the Island Chief Executive who is the Head of the Administration. The Adviser is not a public officer. We cannot ask public officers to deal with him directly. They must deal with their superior who is the Island Chief Commissioner here.

The Chief Commissioner: The Chief Commissioner is responsible for finance; this is in the law. So, the Island Chief Executive can ask Departmental Heads to submit the requirements to the Adviser of the Chief Commissioner. I don't see the difficulty. There can be another practice, *mais pour faciliter les choses beaucoup plus vite parce que nous n'avons pas beaucoup de temps. C'est bon que l'Adviser en finance puisse collecter tout cela et puis faire de sorte pour que les choses aillent plus vite.* He is the Adviser in Finance to the Chief Commissioner and he is going to hand over to the Chief Commissioner all proposals received from Departmental Heads.

RODRIGUES ECONOMY – MATHEMATICAL MODELING

(No. B/682) Mr J. Roussety (The Minority Leader) asked the Chief Commissioner as regards a proposed mathematical modeling (*modélisation mathématique*) of the economy of Rodrigues under the SIDPR (Sustainable Integrated Development Plan for Rodrigues) whether he will obtain details of same and state, in particular -

- (a) the appropriateness and justification thereof being given the few empirical economic data available for the island;
- (b) the methodology to be used in the model;
- (c) the proposed data base to be used in the study;
- (d) the cost in terms of finance and manpower to be involved in that activity;
- (e) the relevancy and significance of its use in future policy evaluation as proposed.

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson Sir, as regards part (a), the project is of relevance to the Sustainable Integrated Development Plan for Rodrigues (SIDPR) which provides for special studies to be carried out in areas where there are critical information gaps and the results fed into the SIDPR. The proposal was mentioned at the

last meeting of the Steering Committee of the project held on 07 September and has thereafter been approved by the UNDP office and the Executive Council.

With regard to part (b), a modelling framework will be developed at both macro and micro levels and a set of inter-related mathematical expressions and equations will generate in time the overall socio-economic system.

The software that will be used are Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) for Statistical Analysis and Simulink, Matlab and Mathematica for simulations and for solving the equations.

As for part (c), the study will utilise data from the “Abstract of statistical data on Rodrigues” and the “Digest of Statistics on Rodrigues” as from year 1994 will be utilised for the study.

As regards part (d), a three months’ contract has been awarded to Mr. Joseph Collet who holds a BSc (Honours) Mathematics Degree from the University of Mauritius to carry out the study. He is working on a full-time basis at the Project Management Unit of the SIDPR and would be paid Rs45,000 for the assignment.

With regard to part (e), this special study will provide tools to evaluate policy measures and actions with a view to consolidating and develop the productive sectors. The macro-economic models will track the behaviour of the economy over time and formulate forecasts in response to defined policies/actions and demographic, environmental and climatic factors.

Mr J. Roussety: Mr Chairperson, Sir, Mathematical modeling of the economy involves also the use of data available over time. If you look at the “Digest of Statistics” for Rodrigues, you will see only some little descriptive data, for example, there is no yearly data on employment, no data on yearly aggregate production in Rodrigues. Can I ask the Chief Commissioner how they are going to estimate in this modeling equations, parameters from unavailable data?

The Chief Commissioner: We are aware of that, Mr Chairperson, Sir. When I was in Johannesburg last year, a lot of things have been said on approximate statistics in developing countries. The purpose of the study is to see what are the gaps. I mentioned in my reply “where there are critical information gaps and the results fed into the SIDPR.” The statistics in Rodrigues are approximate. If we go ahead with the SIDPR study, we should rely on reliable statistics. Mr Bundhoo who is responsible for statistics in Mauritius sits on our Steering Committee for SIDPR. He will, together with Mr Collet and other persons in the statistical Office, start working on the statistics so that we can forecast in the future how we can build our economy and take policy actions concerning our development for the future

Mr J. Roussety: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I don’t understand what the Chief Commissioner is stating. He said that there would be a proposed mathematical modeling

for data ranging from 1994 based on the Digest of Statistics. So, there will be a model which will be outlined at the end of the study. In that study, we are going to build the statistics. The study needs the statistics readily available; it is not the study that will go and find out what is the data and build the parameters by itself. What is the purpose of carrying out that exercise knowing well that there is no data? What will be the outcome of this model?

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, we know that, as I have said though data do not exist, it will have to be corrected, examined and the “Digest of Statistics on Rodrigues” as from year 1994 will be utilised for the study. Sometimes figures which appear in the statistical digest in Rodrigues do not corroborate with the statistics of agriculture. All these will be taken into account to have something, which will make projection for a certain period of time. Same can be adjusted after some years when more information are obtained. We must not continue as things are being done now. We have to question those data; we have to find out why those data are incorrect. We have also to create new data on employment, on fishing, on exportation. All the manufactured articles sold here – even for *agro-alimentaires* - are not compiled. *Il y a des lacunes*. This study is going to take all this into account to construct something for the future.

Mr J. Roussety: In that case, if the data for this study are not available, would the Chief Commissioner kindly review that study by introducing a new component giving it a broader terms of reference by including the regular construction of appropriate economic data for Rodrigues on imports and exports, on employment, on job creation, at the level of prices? What is the GDP of Rodrigues? A mathematical model of this using the software the Chief Commissioner has mentioned would require the GDP, the labour force (male and female), the level of consumption. Where are we going to get all these to feed in that model? It is a loss of time. I would ask the Chief Commissioner to kindly review that study so that first and foremost we build up the necessary statistics. Then in five/six years we can go on with a model.

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, the project consists of two main parts. The first deals with the performing of some statistical analysis on the data available in the various sectors and which are related to the socio-economic sub-system of Rodrigues. The other part of the work is concerned with developing realistic mathematical models to limit the rodriguan demography and economy and also to establish forecast of the future evolution. This is a dynamic process.

Concerning the strategy, the two parts “Statistical Analysis” and “Mathematical Modeling” of the project will be tackled in turn. Hence, the first part of the work will create the local statistics on Rodrigues and the making of an appropriate and deep statistical analysis of these data. It is clear. Then aiming at realistically explore the effects of policy actions, demographic and environmental factors, and as far as possible climatic events on the rodriguan economy, we will develop a mathematical modeling framework that works at two levels. Macro level is concerned with social, environmental and macro-economic sectors; micro level is concerned with land availability and suitability for appropriate allocation. Therefore, a set of inter-related mathematical expression and

equations that will take factors available would generate the evolution in time of the overall socio-economic system. It is clear that the first part of the work will be local statistics on Rodrigues and the making of an appropriate and deep statistical analysis of these.

Mr J. Roussety: Mr Chairperson, Sir, this is an expert study. I praise the enrolment of a young Mathematician for the consultancy. However, I fail to understand how for the mathematical modeling of the Rodrigues economy, professionals in expertise in economy and econometrics are not included in that study. A Mathematician is a scientist. He is not aware of the workings of an economy. Is the Mathematician familiar with Simulink Mathematica, software for economic modeling that they are going to use there?

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, Mr Collet will work in close collaboration with the Statistical Office in Mauritius; all these statistics have been prepared at the Statistical Office in Mauritius. We must say also that Mr Collet is working with an Economist, Mr Jugoo, who has got a lot of experience in statistics. Mr Collet himself has studied Mathematics, but part of his studies are related to statistics. That is why we have given this assignment to try to get deeper in that modeling system.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, a lot has been said on this technical aspect of this question and the Minority Leader also has expressed his knowledge of Economy. It is a question of economist, it is a question of technicians; and we have at the SIDPR an Economist, Mr Jugoo and a Mathematician and Statistician, Mr Collet. The study is under the aegis of the Statistical Office in Mauritius with Mr Bundhoo who is a member of the Steering Committee.

Mr Chairperson: Before moving to the next item I have the following to say. Earlier I gave some note of guidance for the like situation where a member may not be stating matters as true. I could perceive at that time that some members were a little sceptical about this. I did not cite any reference, because I did not have same on hand. For ease of reference, I may start with the following; this is from Erskine May; these are rules that are applicable in the UK and Ireland. There they have practices, which are somehow not applicable in Mauritius. But the whole set of our Standing Orders are based on those in Mauritius which are themselves based on the Westminsterian system in the UK. I quote –

“The Commons may treat the making of a deliberate misleading statement as a contempt”.

Of course we may have a problem of proof. Well, I can hear nobody stating that this House should act as a court to investigate. I have from the National Assembly (Privileges, Immunities and Powers) Act at section 6 (l) “constitute a contempt anybody who presents to the Assembly any false, untrue, fabricated or falsified document”. Of course if there is verbal statement which, in fact, is not true – and it happens that the

House has proof that it is not true – the matter, I believe, has to be dealt with accordingly. Of course the decision will come when we cross the bridge.

Mr J. Roussety: I would like to ask one question, with your permission. How will you reconcile what you have just said with the fact that the Constitution, Parliamentary practice grants us here, as Parliamentarians, that is, freedom of expression?

Mr Chairperson: Well, I may talk too much. I would prefer if we can discuss that somewhere else.

Mr J. Roussety: I would like to have some references from the Erskine May.

Mr Chairperson: This is an old book, there is a new one, which is the same thing. If you are going to consult that, then, of course, discussions may ensue. So, I'll give you the book. We move to the next item.

Mr J. Roussety: I would like to have the page number.

Mr Chairperson: This is an old book; there is a new one. We move to the next item on the Order Paper.

STATEMENTS BY COMMISSIONERS

RODRIGUES REGIONAL ASSEMBLY - REPORT

Mr Chairperson, Sir, with your kind permission, I am pleased to inform the Assembly that I have submitted the Report of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly for year ended 30 June 2004 to the Minister for Shipping, Rodrigues and Outer Islands for presentation to the President of the Republic and for submission to the National Assembly. The report was handed over personally to hon. Prithviraj Putten during his recent visit to Rodrigues to attend the opening ceremony of the "*Festival Kreol*."

I am circulating a copy of the Report for the information of the Respected Members of the Regional Assembly.

Thank you, Mr Chairperson, Sir,

WATER SUPPLY

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, with your permission, I would like to make a short statement to this House regarding the critical situation facing the water sector in Rodrigues.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, the amount of rainfall for the past three months have been well below the normal and this has had a major impact upon the water distribution in Rodrigues. It is a known fact that the northern and southern regions are the most affected during such periods. My Commission has taken a series of decisions both at management and technical levels so as to alleviate the situation. First, the management staff in the southern region will be strengthened. The Officer in charge of the Water Unit has been requested to report at La Ferme to investigate complaints from the public and to help in the organisation of the works and, more particularly, on the water distribution in the southern and western regions.

A crisis committee has been set up under my chairmanship and a weekly meeting will be held with all senior staff of the Water Unit to review and monitor the situation.

The water from the borehole of Mont Lubin and Montagne Bois Noir will be dedicated exclusively to the southern region. An additional vehicle will be allocated to the Water Unit so that they can respond immediately to public complaints. The lorry water tanker will be authorised to work after normal hours if need be. The situation will definitely change subject to Anse Raffin dam and the retaining colline of Cascade Victoire being fully filled with water.

I make an appeal to the public *pour éviter tout gaspillage*, to collaborate with the Commission of Water Resources and wish to assure the public that every step will be taken to ensure that the available water will be distributed in a fair and equitable manner during this dry season.

Thank you, Mr Chairperson, Sir.

PHARMACY SERVICES

The Commissioner for Health (Mr Sooprayen): Mr Chairperson, Sir, I'll make a statement on Pharmacy Services in Rodrigues as promised during the last meeting of the Assembly when replying to PQ B/642.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, the Dispensing staff posted to the Medical and Health Services include 1 Principal Dispenser, 1 Senior Dispenser and 7 Dispensers of whom two are assigned higher duties of Senior Dispenser. These officers mainly dispense drugs to patients and submit quarterly orders of medicines to the Central Supplies Division of the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life. The Central Supplies Division of the Ministry comprises Pharmacists, Dispensers and Purchasing and Supply Officers who order all drugs required by the Government Hospitals and Health Centres in Mauritius and Rodrigues.

Pharmacists in the regional hospitals in Mauritius who are holders of a degree in Pharmacy also take charge of drugs including psychotropic/dangerous drugs, supervise dispensing staff, counsel patients with chronic illness on the taking of drugs prescribed by doctors, carrying out spot checks on private pharmacies, staff training and provide continuous Medical Education to medical/paramedical. Presently these duties, principally taking care of psychotropic drugs, are being cumulated by the Principal Dispenser who get an allowance for performing some of the duties of a qualified Pharmacist. The present principal Dispenser has followed the relevant training in the field and besides holds 33 years experience in store management, compounding of medicines, supervisions and dispensing drugs in Government Pharmacies in Mauritius. However, my Commission is quite conscious that a Pharmacist should be in post in Rodrigues; and during the last financial year we created a Post of Pharmacist in our Recurrent Budget and same will be filled upon availability of a suitable candidate.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, there are three pharmacies within the Medical and Health Services. The one of Queen Elizabeth Hospital offers its service over a 24-hour basis. Dispensers are in post from 08.00 hours to 17.00 hours. Afterwards a Dispenser is on call. This means that he comes to dispense drugs once he is called by the Nursing Officer of the Outpatient and Emergency Department. As he resides close to the hospital, he can call and serve within a few minutes.

At Mt. Lubin Area Health Centre the pharmacy is open from 08.00 hours to 17.00 hours. A Dispenser is then on call.

At La Ferme Area Health Centre where the level of patients' attendance is much lower than that of Mont Lubin, no Dispenser is on call after 4.00 p.m. to 08.00 a.m. the next day; and the Nursing Officers on duty receive an extra remuneration for dispensing common drugs. Here again, a doctor is on call at night and during weekends and drugs are of course invariably prescribed by him.

Besides the three (3) main health institutions, there are 14 Community Health Centres where Nursing Officers dispense all common medicines.

To conclude, Mr Chairperson Sir, I can say that the Pharmacy Services have improved greatly over the past two years.

Thank you, Mr Chairperson, Sir

At 12.30 p.m. the sitting was suspended

On resuming at 1.20 p.m. with Mr Chairperson in the Chair

Mr Chairperson: Before we move to the next item, the Chief Commissioner has informed me that he has to intervene on a point of explanation at this point in time.

The Chief Commissioner: Concerning the circular on expenditure proposals for 2005/06, the Minority Leader said that the reply should be made to the Adviser, Finance. I have a copy of the circular – which I am not tabling – dated 19 November 2004, which says at paragraph 3 –

“Recurrent expenditure”

“Your recurrent expenditure proposals for 2005-06 should be submitted in duplicate. The original addressed to the Island Chief Executive and the duplicate to the Chief Finance Officer.”

“Capital Expenditure”

“Capital expenditure proposals for 2005-06 together with the relevant supporting statements should be submitted in two copies, the original addressed to the Island Chief Executive and the duplicate to the Chief Finance Officer.”

Thank you.

MOTION

Mr Chairperson: Before moving to the motion, all respected members have noticed that an amended notice of motion has been circulated. I do realise that this amended notice of motion has been circulated today itself, that is, less than the minimum time required for an urgent meeting. I would therefore ask the Minority Leader if he would move the motion and then after it has been seconded to move for the formal amendment.

Thank you very much.

Mr J. Roussety: You mean that I should move the original motion and then the amended one.

Mr Chairperson: Yes. When you take the floor on the main motion, you speak on the amended motion as well.

Mr J. Roussety: Including the amended motion.

Mr Chairperson: Yes. Then after it has been seconded, you move formally to amend the motion.

NATURE RESERVES/SYLVO PASTORAL PERIMETERS/AREAS – ENVIRONMENT PRESERVATION

Mr J. Roussety: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I beg to move the motion standing in my name which reads as follows –

“That this Assembly resolves that in line with local, national and global policies aimed at the preservation of the environment and natural zones that as from today no lease be granted for any purpose and no government lands be disposed of in nature reserves and in all the sylvo-pastoral perimeters/areas fenced by Government during the different European Development Fund (EDF) projects in the different parts of Rodrigues to date”

Mr Chairperson, Sir, a minor amendment like you are saying has been proposed by me in view of improving the definition of the scope of the motion. There are two types of natural zones, which have been fenced by the different EDF projects. These are the sylvo-pastoral perimeters and the forest perimeters. Sylvo-pastoral perimeters are zones whose objectives are mainly to provide fodder to breeders of animals whereas forest perimeter mainly targeted at the rehabilitation and long-term conservation of forests. The word “forests” has therefore been added to account for greater parity. However, in the language of Rodriguan technicians it seems that both terms are being used interchangeably to denote the fenced protected areas set up by Government during the different FED projects.

M. le président, il y a unanimité dans le monde aujourd’hui pour préserver l’environnement et les zones forestières et naturelles. La planète terre étouffe. Chaque jour qui passe nous perdons un peu plus de notre biodiversité et notre patrimoine écologique et naturelle. C’est pour cela, M. le président, qu’il y a eu une prise de conscience importante au niveau internationale pour trouver des solutions à nos problèmes gouvernementaux pour la préservation de la nature et des forêts.

M. le président, il faut connaître l’histoire, le contexte dans lequel le gouvernement d’alors, avec les institutions que nous avons à l’époque, avec l’appui technique et financier du Fonds Européen de Développement ont entrepris les premiers travaux de réaménagement naturel et agricole de notre petite île. Pour cela nous remontons à 1982. En 1982, M. le président, Rodrigues avait atteint un seuil de déboisement sans précédent que les sécheresses des années 1970 avaient encore accentuées. Le rapport préliminaire avant le démarrage du projet FED qui a duré de 1982 à 1987 dit ceci –

“L’île souffre depuis longtemps du déboisement, de l’érosion des sols, de l’appauvrissement en ressources hydriques et de l’abaissement progressif de la profondeur des lagons. La conjugaison des facteurs climatiques, sécheresse et cyclone, et en tropique forte démographie et surpâturage, en est la cause principale. C’est dans cette perspective que le gouvernement de Maurice va solliciter une assistance technique et financière de la commission des

communautés économique européenne dans le but d'aider à soulager les problèmes et principalement à mettre en place un cadre de développement rural et agricole performant. La première phase du projet FED intitulé "Développement agricole à l'Ile Rodrigues" sous le numéro d'enregistrement M/501/81. La subvention initiale du FED était de trois millions d'écus alors que la participation du gouvernement de Maurice à travers le ministère de Rodrigues initialement fixée à 1,9 millions d'écus fut aussi à 3 millions d'écus à la fin du projet. Le projet débutant en octobre 1983 prit fin en janvier 1988. LuxConsult SA agissant comme bureau d'études avec M. Robberechts, très présent dans la mémoire de beaucoup de gens à Rodrigues pour oeuvre était le directeur du projet. La première phase du projet avait, pour objectifs principaux, l'amélioration de la production agricole, l'augmentation des revenus des paysans, la diminution du déficit commercial avec l'Ile Maurice, l'amélioration de la desserte routière des zones agricoles, la lutte contre l'érosion par des actions de défense et de restauration des sols et de reboisement.

Tous ces détails, M. le président, sont synthétisés dans le magazine "Rodrigues et l'Union Européenne – 20 ans de coopération" lancé récemment à l'occasion des 20 ans de coopération entre l'Union Européenne et l'Ile Rodrigues.

Durant cette première du projet dans l'Ile de 1982 à 1987, d'importants travaux furent entrepris. Beaucoup des périmètres sylvo-pastoraux et forestiers actuels datent de cette époque, de 1982 à ce jour – 20 ans de cela. Ainsi des périmètres suivant furent établis: 680 arpents de périmètres forestiers et sylvo-pastoraux clôturés, c'est-à-dire 35 kms de clôture métallique avec porte d'accès, 5 kms de clôture en pierre sèche- je crois que c'est à Pointe Coton, 700,000 plants forestiers et environ 300,000 arbres fouragers furent plantés; 200 arpents de paturage amélioré, 10 fosse abris forestiers construits et délacement de 21 maisons. Par exemple, dans les deux catégories périmètres forestiers et sylvo-pastoraux clôturés vous avez 116 arpents à Cascade Pigeon, 60 arpents à Mourouk, 25 arpents à Grande Montagne, 15 arpents à St. Gabriel, 75 arpents à Cascade St. Louis, 10 arpents à Pointe Coton pour les périmètres forestiers. Dans les périmètres sylvo-pastoraux, vous avez, entre autres, Baie Malgache: 104 arpents; Montagne Cabri: 141 arpents; Montagne Plate: 75 arpents et Pointe Source 60 arpents. Ce qui nous fait un total périmètres sylvo-pastoraux et périmètres forestiers de 680 arpents clôturés durant la première phase du projet.

Je vous fais remarquer, M. le président, il va sans dire que cela explique largement les objectifs généraux que le gouvernement mauricien, à travers le minist Rodrigues, et le projet FED voulait atteindre. 21 maisons furent déplacées. On enleva ces maisons des zones clôturés pour les reloger ailleurs, c'est-à-dire qu'elles tombaient dans les périmètres qu'on a clôturés à l'époque et on les a déplacées. C'était fait dans le but de rendre ces zones vraiment naturels, c'est-à-dire sans la présence permanente des hommes et des femmes.

Aujourd'hui, M. le président, que voyons nous en 2004, 20 ans après? Ce gouvernement régional va faire l'inverse de ce qui avait été fait. Ils ont décidé d'allouer

les terres du périmètre forestier de Pointe Source, réaménagées dans le projet FED dans le but d'allouer un bail pour un projet hôtelier. C'est de l'irresponsabilité flagrante en terme de conservation naturelle, M. le président.

L'objectif de cette motion n'est pas pour la forme, mais pour l'histoire – remettre les gens devant leur responsabilité. Chaque membre de cette Assemblée doit se poser quelques questions; et si nous mettons de côté notre appartenance politique – et cela pour une cause commune qui est la défense de l'environnement et la conservation de nos zones naturels et de nos forêts, nous verrons qu'elle est malade. J'appelle tous les membre de cette Assemblée à examiner cela. Nous voulons que tous prennent conscience – non seulement nous les membres mais la population – que la décision d'allouer un bail industriel dans un périmètre sylvo-pastoral est un fait sans précédent et qu'on est peu-être en train d'ouvrir la voie à la dilapidation de ces réserves naturels acquis au prix de tant d'efforts, financiers et humains. On ne peut se permettre aujourd'hui, M. le président -, alors que le monde entier se bat pour la nature - de la détruire ici à Rodrigues. Bien souvent quand les économistes examinent les projets publics/privés analysent en termes de coût d'opportunité - *opportunity cost*. On essaye de déterminer quelles sont les alternatives qui nous sont offertes surtout dans le domaine du développement rural, *Environmental Economics*. On peut décider de prendre une zone naturelle pour y construire un hôtel, par exemple. Quels sont les coûts d'opportunité de la construction de l'hôtel, M. le président? Ces coûts d'opportunité sont inestimables, car la destruction de l'environnement naturel et la perte de la biodiversité qui en découle *has no price*. Il nous faut préserver l'héritage que constituent ces zones clôturées pour les générations à venir. Une analyse de la couverture forestière de Rodrigues aujourd'hui démontre que nous n'avons pas assez de zones protégées et qu'il nous faut accentuer nos efforts pour sauvegarder celles qui existent déjà.

M. le président, cette motion se situe dans le cadre des efforts mondiaux , locaux et nationaux pour la protection de l'environnement de la nature. La résolution 55 (2) United Nations Millennium Declaration adopté en 2002 par les Nations Unies à la paragraphe 6 – *Respect for Nature* se lit comme suit –

“Prudence must be shown in the management of all living species and natural resources in accordance with the precepts of sustainable development. Only in this way can the immeasurable riches provided to us by nature be preserved and passed on to our descendants. The correct and sustainable patterns of production and consumption must be changed in the interest of our future welfare and that of our descendants.”

The United Nations Millennium Declaration further says, Mr Chairperson, Sir. Part 4 of that crucial Declaration –

“Protecting our common environment is more specific and indicative of what is expected from policy-makers and political Heads.”

Paragraph 21 of the Declaration states –

“We must spare no efforts to free all of humanity and above all children and grandchildren from the threat of living on a planet irredeemably spoilt by human activities whose resources would no longer be sufficient for their needs.”

At paragraph 23, it states –

“We resolve, therefore, to adopt in all our environmental actions a new ethic of conservation and stewardship; and as a first step we resolve to intensify our collective efforts for the management, conservation and sustainable development of all types of forests.”

And as a member of the United Nations, the Republic of Mauritius has ratified this Millennium Declaration.

M. le président les objectifs du développement du millénaire des Nations Unies ont fait l’objet d’un atelier de travail récemment à Rodrigues – je crois que tous les membres y ont participé, je n’étais pas à Rodrigues – et un rapport “Millennium Development Goals” a été publié. Dans ce document, M. le président, en première page, nous avons le message de M. Serge Clair, Chef Commissaire de l’Assemblée Régionale, à la toute première ligne on peut lire ceci –

“ My life-long quest has been to see that poverty is reduced substantially in Rodrigues. Enrolment and success in education increases steadily. Non-communicable diseases are brought under control; environmental resources are managed responsibly and preserved for future generations.”

This is self-explicit, Mr Chairperson, Sir. But as usual, very often, the layman, fails to understand the gap between official political intentions and what is being done in reality.

At page 26 of the NDG report for Rodrigues it is indicated that target 9 is “integrate the principles of sustainable development into country policies and programmes and reverse the loss of environmental bio-diversity”.

Page 42 of the report also states “Status and Trend – Environment - According to the Director of the Forest Division of Rodrigues, in 1983, 2182 ha. of land were covered by forests and, therefore, were protected to maintain bio-diversity. A reforestation campaign has been initiated since 1984; to date 3408 ha. of land are covered by forests in Rodrigues.”

There has, therefore, been an increase of 56% in the area of land covered by forests and most of all are “protected to maintain bio-diversity”.

M. le président, je vais plus loin pour supporter les arguments de cette motion dans le but de démontrer que nous sommes en train de faire une erreur, c’est sûr. Le

quatrième principe de la déclaration du Sommet de l'environnement à Rio de Janeiro en 1992 nous dit –

“In order to achieve sustainable development, environmental protection shall constitute an integral part of the development process and cannot be considered in isolation from it.”

Une autre déclaration internationale again designed for the protection of natural zones with time with emphasis on SIDS (Small Islands Developing States) is the programme of action for the sustainable development of Small Islands Developing States also known as Barbados Programme of Action, and whose review will be done at the beginning of 2005 in Mauritius. In the preamble to that Declaration, I quote –

“The small size of Small Islands Developing States means that development and environment are closely inter-related and inter-dependent. Recent human history contains examples of entire islands rendered uninhabitable through environmental destruction owing to external causes. Small Islands Developing States are fully aware that the environmental consequences of ill-conceived development can have catastrophic effects. Unsustainable development threatens not only the livelihood of people but also the islands themselves and the cultures they nurture.”

M. le président, l'aspect de cette motion est non seulement environmental mais comporte aussi une dimension sur l'utilisation des ressources foncières de Rodrigues. Notre Ile n'a jamais eu un plan d'aménagement du territoire digne de ce nom, et c'est cela qui explique qu'aujourd'hui il n'y a pas de mécanisme clair et objectif pour indiquer ce que l'on peut faire dans tel ou tel endroit.

J'ai expliqué au début que l'objectif premier des zones clôturées dans le cadre des différents projets du FED soit explicite et clair, c'est-à-dire la préservation de la nature et de la biodiversité de Rodrigues. M. le président, est-ce qu'aujourd'hui nous en 2004, 20 ans, après les premiers travaux d'aménagement de FED, pouvons accepter, en toute objectivité, en prenant en compte ce qui se passe au niveau de l'environnement dans le monde et dans notre île, que l'on alloue ces terres réaménagées et protégées à des promoteurs hôteliers? Est-ce que c'est responsable, visionnaire? Si on regarde les coûts et les bénéfices d'un projet hôtelier dans une réserve naturelle, périmètre clôturé, c'est sûr que tout développement hôtelier est positif en termes de création d'emplois, de génération de revenus, etc. Pour autant est-ce qu'on peut occulter le fait que nous sacrifions des réserves naturelles avec un statut spécial et déterminé? Non, M. le président, nous ne croyons pas cela puisse être fait. Et c'est pour cela que je prie humblement le gouvernement régional de revoir sa politique à ce sujet et à voter pour la préservation de ces zones. Comme j'ai expliqué dans toutes les Déclarations que j'ai citées, Déclaration de Rio, Déclaration des Barbades sur les SIDS – Sustainable Development of SIDS, les objectifs du développement du millénaire, les objectifs initiaux des projets FED, on ne peut pas aujourd'hui tolérer qu'on alloue des terrains pour le

développement industriel dans ces zones, parce que ce serait sacrilège contre l'environnement.

J'ai présenté une motion devant cette Assemblée. Il n'y a pas eu une motion de ce style visant à mettre en place certaines pratiques, certaine politique au niveau de l'environnement. Si jamais cette motion est acceptée, ce sera un signal clair, M. le président, de notre volonté à protéger notre environnement et à conserver nos zones naturelles, un exemple pour nous-mêmes, pour la nation l'île Maurice entière et pour le monde entier.

La section 26 "Responsibility of the Rodrigues Assembly of the RRA Act 2001 autorise cette Assemblée à prendre des dispositions nécessaires pour adopter et mettre en pratique les modalités de cette motion. On va me demander, M. le président: Quelles sont les zones clôturées? Je ne les ai pas citées dans ma motion; c'est vague. Mais elles existent officiellement, M. le président. Je vous ai cité quelques unes; et tous les officiers du département des forêts, de l'environnement, savent exactement où sont ces clôtures, ces périmètres sylvo-pastoraux et ces périmètres forestiers.

Finalement, M. le président, en votant pour cette motion nous enverrons un signal clair à tous ceux qui nous aident financièrement, dont principalement l'Union Européenne. Nous sommes disposés à assurer la continuité et la pérennité des actions entreprises dans le domaine de la protection de la nature dans le passé.

M. le président, cette motion vise à protéger ces zones pour l'avenir peu importe le gouvernement régional en place dans 5 ans, 10 ans ou 15 ans. Là en 2004 nous disons qu'il ne faut pas donner un bail, il ne faut pas disposer de ces terres; il faut les conserver pour les générations à venir, parce que Rodrigues est sur la pente dangereuse en ce qu'il s'agit de la conservation de l'environnement et de la forêt.

M. le président, j'invite tous les membres à voter pour cette motion et je vous remercie tous au nom de tous les enfants de Rodrigues de demain.

Merci.

Mr Agathe rose and seconded.

Mr Chairperson. Can the Minority Leader move to add the words?

Mr J. Roussety: Yes. Mr Chairperson, Sir, I move that the motion standing in my name on the order paper be amended by inserting the words "and forest" after the word "sylvo-pastoral" so that the amended motion may read as follows –

"That this Assembly resolves that in line with local, national and global policies aimed at the preservation of the environment and natural zones that as from today no lease be granted for any purpose and no government lands be disposed of in nature reserves and in all the sylvo-pastoral and forest perimeters/areas fenced

by Government during the different European Development Fund (EDF) projects in the different parts of Rodrigues to date”

Thank you.

Mr Agathe rose and seconded.

Mr Chairperson: This amendment has been circulated.

I understand from this side that the Chief Commissioner only will address the House. Being given the particular precepts of our Standing Orders, I'll invite members from the Minority side to address the House consecutively. Then the Minority Leader will sum up his motion after the speech of the Chief Commissioner.

On question put, amendment to the motion was agreed to.

Mr J. C. Agathe (Second Local Member for Marechal): Mr Chairperson, Sir, first of all let me congratulate the mover of this motion. That motion is of an utmost importance for the minority group since it deals with the future destiny of our young citizens.

Since the last decade many local and international working sessions were held; there were debates, slogans, *like ou zéter ou payer, a nou protèze nou l'environnement* have been organised to make the world population aware of the importance of our planet.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, this motion reminds me of Rodriguans who have been constantly thinking for the betterment of Rodrigues. When I was in my tennage, I came across a book entitled “Rodrigues 2000” and our party recently met youths of all regions of the island and “Rodrigues à l’horizon 2020” came out. Despite the difference between our political parties and views, sometimes there are things that are common and aim at achieving almost the same goal. We are proud today while reading the local newspaper “Weekend” see that the Chief Commissioner, who is also the leader of the Executive Council, *caresse le rêve de l’indépendance économique comme préconisé par la minorité*. In the same breath, I will associate myself to the Minority Leader by asking the majority side to put aside our *appartenance politique de penser à l’avenir et le bien de nos enfants*. Consequently, Mr Chairperson, Sir, while debating that motion, we, as members of this Assembly must bear in mind *l’environnement fragile de Rodrigues*, the size of the island, the constant increase in population and the economy of the island which is mainly based on agriculture, that is, the growing of crops and rearing of animals.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, though the area of 106 km² by the island of Rodrigues, there has been a constant increase in the population starting from 82 in the 1804 to 37,000 in 2004. Due to the considerable increase in population, zoning, that is, *zone touristique*, *zone forestière*, *zone d'habitation*, *zone industrielle* is vital, otherwise this alarming situation can hinder our future development, that is, aiming towards une indépendance économique. In the 70s different sailors who visited Rodrigues, described the island as forested and covered with scrub. According to history by the year 1792/1809 Maragon, a French ruler, who used to be the first cultivator on the island, established himself on 400 arpents of land, west of Le Soupir, in the hills between Oyster Bay and Mont Charlot. There, with his 37 slaves, he started deforesting 100 arpents of land to grow different varieties of crops. At a certain point of time, to encourage agriculture many young farmers were granted a unit farm of about 2 acres in area. Deforestation took place, leaving the land at the mercy of winds and heavy rain causing soil erosion. Henceforth, we can deduct that, from the 1970s onwards, there has been a drastic increase in population, thus causing the ruler of the island to start decreasing the amount of land allocated to each individual. Today it is so difficult for someone to obtain a large piece of land in this island. We are of the view that leasing of reserves is now premature. In the absence of petrol, electricity and cooking gas the population have no choice than to cut down trees to cook food. Fortunately, even a bit late, the abovementioned facilities were obtained, thus reducing the level of deforestation. Due to the continuous deforestation, the island was struck by seven years of severe drought in the 1970s causing the death of thousands of animals and many people died due to gastro-enteritis.

Luckily, Mr Chairperson, Sir, the European Union, through the EDF project, had taken into condition the mishap of the people of Rodrigues. In years 1980s a large sum of money under FED 1 and FED 2 were allocated to the island. It is worthwhile noting the vision and devotion that Mr Robberechts, Director of the project had for Rodrigues. Compared to the anti-erosion programme, the project has not been diverted from its objective. Today the product is tangible. Before undertaking a project in a specific place, consultation was carried out with the *société civile* to reach a consensus. Consequently, sylvo-pastoral perimeters are placed almost round the island mostly where the land was bare. The aim of these fenced areas was to help the farmers to obtain grass for their animals, especially during drought periods. To protect the perimeters houses that are found inside are removed and rebuilt at places identified by the victims. The fencing was made in such a way that even a puppy could not pass through. A gang of watchmen are attached to each sylvo-pastoral perimeter to prevent animals from entering. Today we can say that these sylvo-pastoral perimeters have serious impact on the socio-economic development of the island and on its physical environment.

Up to date the island has never faced the alarming effect of drought as in the 1970s. Doing something contrary to the objectives set may have a serious impact on the living conditions of the Rodriguan population and its natural resources.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, the Forest and Reserves Act 41 of 1983 forbids any animal to graze inside the perimeter, introducing any plant or animal into a nature reserve, introducing any article or thing injurious to plant life to State land, forest land, on

mountain, river or nature reserves. The United Nations states that climate change and the rising sea level cause a major threat to the very existence of Small Island Developing States (SIDS), specially Les Maldives, Tuvalu and many other tiny islands in the Pacific which may vanish from the earth in the next 25/30 years. The tiny Indian Ocean island of Maldives which depends primarily on fishing and tourism for its economic survival is threatened with extinction because of its projected rise in sea level caused by global warming. The Maldivian Foreign Minister, Fathulla Jameel, says that his country is like a can of tuna fish, because it comes with an expiry date. Due to the global warming and climate change, which have brought an increase in extreme weather events, coral bleaching, coastal erosion, the disruption of agricultural activities and vector-borne diseases and reduced resilience of land and marine eco-system, will have an adverse effect on our small island. Some places like Grand Bay, English Bay and other reclaimed land like Port Mathurin, Pointe l'Herbe and Baie aux Huitres may encounter the same fate as Maldives and other islets in the world. Consequently, more and more of these coastal inhabitants have to move to the sub-humid zones, thus decreasing the surface area for construction. Henceforth, preserving our reserves is of an utmost importance. Some State lands, once leased, may be difficult to retrieve back and may become a sort of private land in the future as the case is in the mainland with the Illovo deal. By the same way, I'll take the opportunity to ask the Chief Commissioner if he can discuss with our Prime Minister so that some members of both sides of this House can participate, *à titre d'observateurs*, in the conference to be held in January next in Mauritius.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, while studying the laws of Mauritius 2003 regarding mainly the Forests and Reserves Act, Rivers and Canals Act, I have come across an omission, according to my personal point of view. In the interpretation regarding the Rivers and Canals Act, sub-paragraph 2, mention is made regarding the forests and mountains in the Reserves Act and the roads and Forests Act, but it is nowhere to be found in the laws of Mauritius of 2003. If this is the case, this matter has to be dealt with to help our citizens.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, the Rivers and Canals Act stipulates that "any person may draw water from any river or stream for the use of himself, his family and animals possessed by him." Rodrigues is a peaceful island where almost everything is arranged mutually. Doing anything that can break up, once freedom may have a serious impact on the social life of the inhabitants as the case of Zimbabwe refers.

M. le président, le problème le plus important est celui de la pauvreté qui constitue la négation même du développement durable et de la gestion de l'environnement. Une bonne gestion des affaires publiques doit s'attacher au bien-être de la société et des citoyens. La pauvreté ne pourra être combattue si l'on ne parvient pas à la complémentarité entre le commerce et l'environnement à la promotion de meilleur indicateur de santé et sans un changement de mode de consommation et de production des pays développés. En dépit de déclarations de bonnes intentions, voire des engagements pris publiquement avec emphase sur le Millennium Development Goal, très peu d'actions marquantes - et encore moins de résultats concrets majeurs - ont été enregistrés, notamment au niveau financier et du point de vue des transferts de technologie. La situation environnementale de notre planète ne cesse de se dégrader. Les

émissions polluantes ont augmenté la quantité des ressources renouvelables dans l'eau douce, les forêts et les terres arables diminuent et la pauvreté endémique dans certains pays accélère la dégradation des ressources naturelles et le phénomène de désertification. La détérioration induite des habitats naturels et des éco-systèmes fragiles a entraîné un appauvrissement dangereux de la diversité biologique. L'impression négative est fort heureusement atténuée par une vague lueur d'espoir devant la mobilisation à l'échelle mondiale pour faire face aux défis de cette fin de siècle tel que le Sommet de la Barbade, de Rio, etc.

To conclude, Mr Chairperson, Sir, I support fully the motion of the Minority Leader and will encourage the Executive Council to use our nature reserves and all the sylvo-pastoral perimeters fenced by the Government during the different European Development Fund projects to generate our balance of payment. Instead of planting *piquant loulou* in some places we should have grown cyprus fruits in large quantities and export to the different islands of the Indian Ocean. It is a shame for our island to see out local street sellers selling oranges coming from South Africa.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, any attempt to lease the nature reserves and all the sylvo-pastoral [erimeters fenced by the Government during the different European Development Fund for projects will go against the universal policies.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, with these words, I thank you for your attention.

Mr G. Jabeemissar (Second Local Region Member for la Ferme): Mr Chairperson, Sir, I am, as my other colleague, a fervent proponent of the Minority Leader's motion, because I firmly believe that our survival, as Rodriguans living on that small island, depends on how we manage and preserve our environment. Let us not forget that the major problems encountered by the industrialised and developing countries today are mainly concerned with the environmental issues. I think that one of the main reasons in the meeting of the SIDS (Small Island Developing States) in January next in Mauritius is to discuss about vulnerable situations of our environment. That is why, Mr Chairperson, Sir, the objective of this motion is to have all of us in this House thinking deeply into this important issue which is the preservation of the environment be it natural or manmade in our small island.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, I will recall the House that one of the most important issues of the Millennium Development Goals is to ensure environmental sustainability. The Chief Commissioner himself, in his preface message, dated 5th December 2003, stated, amongst others, I quote: "that environment resources are managed responsibly and preserved for future generations". I think that the Chief Commissioner deserves our sincere congratulations for these intentions. However, he will deserve it much more if these intentions are translated into reality.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, if we take into account the great harm done to our natural environment by our predecessors due to their various activities, we have no right today

for any reason to continue putting at stake what remains today. We should also bear in mind how difficult and painstaking it has been to restore what have been lost and to create a new environment for our species be it flora or fauna. We must not also forget the great drought affecting the island in the 70s due to the mass deforestation. In the early 80s there were only some 2000 ha. of land covered with forests. Since then reafforestation campaigns were initiated; after so many efforts today we have reached an area of about 3,400 ha. of forests. It has taken us some two decades before we can reach such achievements.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, could this have been possible if there has not been the political will and the financial contributions of the different governments, the participation of stakeholders namely, the European Union, the Mauritian Wildlife Foundation, the whole population of Rodrigues at large.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, everybody knows that forest destruction can be done at a glance whereas restoration and reafforestation take years before success can be noted, without forgetting the great quantity of resources involved, manpower, money. Therefore, we should not spare any effort to preserve our natural and planted forests and continue with the reafforestation campaign.

I also reaffirm my conviction to the fact that any development planning should first and foremost take into consideration our very fragile eco-system. I wonder, Mr Chairperson, Sir, why some measures initiated since a long time to counteract the problem of soil erosion have not been implemented up to now. I am referring to the cattle walk regulations. We know that the grazing system of Rodrigues contribute a lot to soil erosion. Yet, appropriate measures have not been taken to stop it. Animals are not allowed to graze in forest plantations, but they are seen grazing on bare lands where the risks of soil erosion are more real. Another situation, Mr Chairperson, Sir, which seems a paradox to me, is the fact that many acres of land and the planted forest have been awarded to one promoter for the rearing of stags. If such project is implemented, Mr Chairperson, Sir, can't we find the risk that that will cause the same harm to our environment as do our domestic animals? How can we assess the impact of new introduced species be it animals or plants on the biodiversity of our island? How can we assist this? When we realise the harm that this has done, it will be too late. That is why, Mr Chairperson, Sir, I am calling upon the good faith of everyone of us to think seriously *et en leur âme et conscience de penser sérieusement à la motion du jour*.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, I'll quote from the National Development Strategy for Rodrigues –

“Development planning is more about the process by which, through constructive dialogue and inclusion, a promising future for growth and for the conservation and enhancement of the country's natural and built environment can be achieved which future generations can enjoy.”

Therefore, Mr Chairperson, Sir, if we aim at having a sustainable future for the development of our island, this cannot be done without an effective protection of our environment and a prudent use of its natural resources.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, I think that we must seize this golden opportunity to show to our population how much responsible and caring we, in this House, as policy makers, as decision takers, are for the future of our beloved country. By voting for a law which protects our nature reserves and our sylvo-pastoral areas, especially those where foreign agencies have spent a lot of money like the EDF and Maurice..... the JEF, UNDP which financed the restoration of our endemic plantations and so on, we show them how much we respect their contribution; and no doubt in the future, we are sure we can rely on their help again.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, we very often hear about development permits granted because an EIA has been favourably considered. We should not forget, Mr Chairperson, Sir, that part 4 of the EPA Act 2002 provides in the different sections, for example, section 15, for the public comment of an EIA. Lastly, when there was a project initiated in the island when public responded on that, many people found this unfair. But it is provided in the law, Mr Chairperson, Sir. The public has got to give their comments. Number 16 provides the review of an EIA. An EIA can have been awarded, it can be reviewed. Number 21 – transfer of an EIA licence and No., 22 – effect of an EIA licence. Let us not forget, Mr Chairperson, Sir, recently there has been a polemic on the issue of an EIA as regards the Southeastern Highway Project in the valley of Ferney in the mainland, where, although an EIA has been favourably considered, research is still under way and new species of endemic plants discovered.

Therefore, Mr Chairperson, Sir, I mean that before allowing any development project in any nature reserves, in any sylvo-pastoral fenced forest, etc, in Rodrigues, we must be very, very careful. We must not contend ourselves to the fact that an EIA has been granted, therefore *on fait Pilate*. *Non, M. le président! C'est très grave pour l'avenir du pays.*

Mr Chairperson, Sir, the development trends of our country, especially in the tourism sector, has known a great boost and we must be very careful when granting development permits to promoters.

Nous ne devrions pas commettre les mêmes erreurs que les autres pays, en effectuant des développements, n'on pas assez planifiés. Il nous faut écouter les conseils des autres. Combien des fois nous rencontrons des étrangers; il y en a qui viennent des îles de la région; quand ils viennent chez nous pour la première fois, ils constatent avec beaucoup d'amertume, beaucoup de regrets comment leur île a souffert de développement. Ils nous donnent des conseils très souvent; ils nous disent: faites bien attention; aujourd'hui où nous en sommes; ne faites pas comme nous; prenez votre temps; regardez bien; ne faites pas comme on a fait ailleurs; ne copeiez pas. D'ailleurs, M. le président, quand des touristes viennent chez nous, ils viennent chez nous parce que notre pays est encore vierge. Notre pays n'est pas comme ces autres pays qui sont finis

par le développement; il y en a qui nous proposent de demander à l'UNESCO pour que le pays soit inscrit au patrimoine mondial. Cela veut dire combien ils voient dans notre pays un paradis. Si nous nous n'essayons pas de faire en sorte que notre île soit protégée pour les générations futures, M. le président, qu'est-ce que les autres nous diront?

Sur ce, M. le président, je vais demander à ce que – des fois on constate avec regret tous les efforts qui ont été investis par les étrangers tout à l'heure le Minority Leader et mon ami, Agathe avaient mentionné le projet FED L'Union Européenne avait investi beaucoup d'argent à faire des clôtures pour pouvoir protéger nos forêts pour empêcher à ce que les animaux ou autres actes de vandalisme détruisent ces forêts, on constate qu'après les autorités locales ne s'intéressent plus. La plupart des clôtures sont restés à l'abandon. Les *chain links* pourrissent; les poteaux pourrissent sans qu'aucun effort de restaurer ces périmètres soient faits. Il y aussi des postes forestiers qui sont dans un état abandonné. S'il n'y a pas de suivi, vous croyez que les gens qui ont investi ici vont être intéressé à nous financer?

Sur cette question, M. le président, Je vous remercie.

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, there are presently four Nature Reserves in Rodrigues, namely Grande Montagne, Ile aux Cocos, Ile aux Sables and Anse Quitor. These have been proclaimed under the second schedule of the Forests and Reserves Act No 41 of 1983 as subsequently amended on 1st May 1984. This Act already provides for the protection of nature reserves under its section 14 which stipulates that, I quote:

No person shall

- (i) introduce any plant or animal into a nature reserve;
- (ii) light a fire in a nature reserve without the written authority of the authorize officer
- (iii) in any way interfere with a nature reserve or damage any feature on a nature reserve. (End quote)

It is therefore clear that whatever site has been proclaimed by law as Nature Reserve, has been set aside and it is not in the intention of the Executive Council to deproclaim any part thereof. On the contrary, we are considering the proclamation of additional sites such as Cascade Pigeon and the islets in the south of Rodrigues as Nature Reserve.

The question of protecting nature reserves by way of this present motion as presented by the Minority Leader does not arise and is therefore meaningless.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, sylvo-pastoral, by definition, is the raising of forest trees and pastures within the same land area for the purposes of providing tree cover and fodder for both ecological conservation and anthropogenic exploitation. It is an appropriate tool for integrating environmental preservation along with the use of land and forest areas to achieve the goal of sustainable socio-economic development.

Sylvo-pastoral perimeters in Rodrigues have been initiated and established under previous reforestation programmes since 1982 funded by the European Development Fund. A total surface area of 1058 ha of these perimeters have been created at Baie Malgache, Mte Plate, Grand Var, R.Coco, Cascade St Louis, Mt Cabris, Anse Ally, Pte Coton and Riviere Banane, including Pte Source. In addition, we have remnant forests at Cascade Pigeon and Mourouk which have been fenced.

In line with our vision to develop Rodrigues as an ecological island, one of our priorities is to protect these perimeters against human activities that might lead to their destruction. All proposals concerning development projects in these areas and on any state lands in Rodrigues are scrutinized by committees such as the Rodrigues Environment Committee, the Tourism Committee and the State land Committee, which have been set up to advise the Executive Council on matters pertaining to the protection of the environment and the management of state lands.

These committees have indeed rejected several applications for state land lease in sylvopastoral areas as the proposed projects were not environmentally friendly. The Hotel project at Pointe Source proposed by Mr. Alain O'reilly has been carefully examined by the Tourism Committee which found that the project would be to the ecological and socio-economic benefit and interest of Rodrigues and decided to recommend its approval as it will add values to the fenced sylvo-pastoral perimeter of the area. It is a project that will create and enhance the overall environment in the region of Pointe Source while increasing its economic value. It will provide additional assets for eco-tourism. It makes provision for recreational facilities to both our local people and visitors without disrupting the local environment of the site. It is strictly on this basis that the project has been approved. The Rodrigues Tourism Committee also took into consideration the proven track record of the promoter as a pioneer who is successfully implementing a true ecotourism project in Mauritius.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, I would like to inform the Assembly that the Government of Mauritius with the assistance of the FAO is presently reviewing the National Policy on Forest. This exercise also includes Rodrigues. In this context, the Conservator of Forest and experts of the FAO were on official mission in Rodrigues last week. According to discussion I had with them, they have confirmed the advantages of using Private/ Public Partnership which is compatible with the preservation and sustainable exploitation of sylvo-pastoral forest perimeters. Indeed, it represents a sustainable way of optimizing the sustainable use of these areas. This is now becoming the world trend in increasing the ecological and economic values of such lands and is presently being considered for inclusion into the national forest policy, which is under preparation.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, there are presently sufficient mechanisms in the existing legislation and structures in Rodrigues to control development projects on state lands, to make sure that they meet the criteria of sustainable development. There is therefore no

need for this Assembly to resolve that no lease should be granted in sylvo-pastoral perimeters. In addition, this might be in contradiction with the forthcoming national forest policy. Apart from nature reserves, this Assembly can declare any State land as National Forest in accordance with section 4 of the Forest and Reserves Act.

M. le président, beaucoup a été dit ici concernant le SIDS et beaucoup a été dit ailleurs même à Maurice il y a des rumeurs qui circulent à l'effet qu'on a accordé à quelqu'un 420 arpents de terre pour la construction d'un hotel. Si nous regardons cette région de Rivière Banane/Pointe Source, elle est clôturée; elle a été plantée en arbres. Nous ne disons pas que nous allons donner des hotels dans tous les périmètres boisés; on a refusé plusieurs. Mais celui-ci est bien particulier; il a été approuvé par le comité du tourisme. C'est ce qui va se passer, M. le président. Ce serait bon que dans quelques années nous puissions voir ce qui va se passer à Pointe Source. C'est que le promoteur a pris la décision avant que cela soit accepté de refaire cet espace de 61 arpents en un lieu écologique; il y a le know-how du secteur. Les bailleurs de fonds savent très bien ne donneront pas de l'argent à l'île Maurice tant qu'il est signifié dans cet accord l'engagement du secteur privé. C'est un nouveau concept qui est intervenu au niveau international dans la protection de l'environnement. On voit cela en Afrique où des hotels ont été donnés dans des endroits où cet hotel a créé tout un environnement extraordinaire – plantations des arbres, des jardins, des fleurs, des arbres endémiques qui est devenu une sorte de nature de réserves naturelles. A Pointe Source le promoteur qui veut relever cet endroit, créer un environnement. Est-ce qu'il y a un environnement créé à Pointe Source? Il y a quelques arbres qui sont encore à une hauteur d'un mètre. C'est un endroit assez aride et ce sera un défi pour le promoteur privé de créer un vrai environnement dans cet endroit. On a demandé aux autres promoteurs qui ont eu des hotels à St François, Anse Ally et ailleurs que si on leur donne quelques arpents de terre pour la construction des hotels s'ils peuvent avoir quelques arpents en plus comme accord de gestion de MoU pour qu'ils créent un environnement autour dans 10/15/30 arpents de terre...

Mr J. Roussety: *Ou croire dans bonhomme Noel!*

The Chief Commissioner: Non, ce sera la réalité. Il y a des lois. Je vois cela extraordinaire que les villageois participent dans un projet. C'est un droit à mon avis. Que tout citoyen a et ceux qui ont les moyens peuvent le faire. C'est un nouveau concept qui est en train de se réaliser dans le monde. C'est justement que le secteur privé puisse travailler avec les gens de l'endroit et les intégrer dans un projet social et économique. C'est un partenariat entre le secteur privé et les villageois et un partenariat entre le secteur privé et le secteur public. Cela va se passer aussi ailleurs, dans d'autres endroits et je pense que ce qui existe déjà comme sylvo-pastoral - et on pourra créer d'autres encore – cela va être un exemple d'un promoteur créant un environnement.

M. le président, on a parlé ici de *cattle walk regulations* ; on a parlé de dégradation de l'environnement. Vous savez, M. le président, il y a quelques années à je pense qu'à cette époque M. Jolicoeur était là – on avait travaillé sur *cattle walk regulations*. Qu'est-ce qu'on avait, M. le président? On avait des campagnes contre le

cattle walk regulations; le gens disaient: *ou prend ou boeuf ou alle là-bas*, ces beofs qui mangeaient les récoltes des gens; c'est cela la dégradation de l'environnement. Et puis ceux qui font des meetings et disent: *alle faire ou la caze cotte ou envie*.

(Interruptions)

Donc, M. le président, on peut parler autant sur l'environnement. Il ne faut seulement préserver l'environnement; il fut créer l'environnement. Chaque famille dans ce pays doit pouvoir créer un environnement; chaque famille doit pouvoir planter autour de sa maison des arbres. Il y des maisons qui n'ont pas d'arbres autour; il faut créer une mentalité dans ce pays. Le Rotary, le Lion's club, des clubs qui travaillent avec des gens avec des villageois pour planter des arbres endémiques et des jardins partout pour créer un environnement autour de la maison. Malheureusement il y a les animaux – et il faut les contrôler – qui marchent partout et qui mangent tout. On a connu dans le passé des gens qui ont enlevé les pierres des terrains pour les vendre. Il y a beaucoup de choses qui se sont passé et aujourd'hui il faut, avec ceux qui veulent créer l'environnement, le secteur privé, les gens conscients, les gens qui aiment l'environnement, créer cet environnement pour que justement les gens qui viennent chez nous puissent dire l'environnement c'est l'affaire de tous; nous avons tout un peuple qui est en train de créer cet environnement et qui créent des jardins partout. Nous avons dit de créer des jardins endémiques mêmes dans les écoles; cela va se faire avec le JEF, au niveau des collèges, dans les villages. Il y a tout un programme de création d'environnement. Il faut protéger ceux qui sont déjà là et améliorer, mais il y a aussi des environnements qu'il faut créer, qu'il faut faire naître; c'est cela créativité.

Le projet Pointe Source qui a soulevé tant de tapages à Maurice comme à Rodrigues, je donne la garantie, M. le président – et le promoteur aussi donne la garantie – qu'il va relever cet endroit. A Anse Quitor il y a le projet Griffith qui va justement recréer l'environnement avec des arbres endémiques avec la disparition des tortues.

Il y aura notre jardin botanique à Mourouk qui va bientôt commence avec la collaboration de Wildlife. Si M. O'reilly arrivera à créer tout un espace environnemental écologique où des Rodriguais peuvent aller marcher, admirer, cela est très important.

Nous avons financé la publication d'un poster sur les plantes endémiques avec la Jeune Chambre Economique.

Mr J. Roussety: Paradox!

The Chief Commissioner: Ce n'est pas paradox. Il y a des gens un peu partout qui sont conscients aujourd'hui de notre vision de Rodrigues. Ce Monsieur – même si vous ne l'aimez pas – est le pionnier de l'écotourisme à Maurice avec le Domaine de Chasseur; il est reconnu à Maurice. Laissez moi vous dire, M. le président, que le projet va être un projet qui va être *closely monitored*. Pourquoi le comité du tourisme l'a accepté? Parceque c'est un projet de 25 chambres' ce n'est pas un projet de 50 ou 60 chambre; c'est une toute petite unité. Il n'y a rien qui va être détruit là où l'hotel va être

construit. Il n'y a pas d'arbres qui vont être coupés. Ce qui va être intéressant c'est que cet environnement de 60 arpents va être recréé..

(Interruptions)

Justement, peut être à l'avenir si cet endroit est recréé, on peut à ce moment là déclarer cet endroit comme un *nature reserve*. A Grande Montagne, on est en train de remplacer les arbres envahissants et les autres exotiques par des plantes endémiques. Et là nous avons un bon exemple, M. le président, comment aujourd'hui avec le Wildlife et le service des forêts est entré en plein dans cette idée de créer de l'environnement. Quand je parle. Quand je parle à certains au niveau des forêts, c'est aujourd'hui un encouragement de voir comment ils sont en train de changer la mentalité pour créer un environnement, sur ce qu'ils sont en train de faire sur Mont Limon et ailleurs. Donc, il y a tout un plan d'ensemble pour rehausser ces périmètres boisés et le défi va être relevé par M. O'Reilly et son équipe pour créer un forêt naturel que demain on pourra arriver à déclarer cet endroit un *nature reserve* comme nous allons peut être probablement faire. Je pense qu'il y a un problème avec le micro...

Mr Chairperson: Yes, there is a problem with the public address system. I suspend the sitting.

At 2.45 p.m. the sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 3.25 with Mr Chairperson in the Chair.

The Chief Commissioner: M. le président, je vais conclure en disant ceci. Tout ce projet dans les environs de Baladrou, Pointe Source s'intègre dans tout un projet de création de loisirs dans cette région. Nous avons Grand Baie, Baladrou; nous aurons ensuite ce projet où le promoteur de l'hôtel va créer tout un environnement dans cet endroit. Comme je l'ai dit tout à l'heure, les habitants de l'endroit vont être intégrés dans ce projet. Ce qui fait qu'il va y avoir des emplois indirectes; les personnes qui ne vont être employées à l'hôtel vont être employées dans la création de cet environnement dans ces 60 arpents au lieu de 100 comme il a été dit quelque part. Il faut dire aussi que dans notre vision de faire de Rodrigues une île écologique il y a ce souhait de créer un *eco museum*, un musée écotourisme en reliant tous les projets d'éco-tourisme tant sur la terre que sur la mer. Comme vous le savez, nous aurons le parc marin; il y aura aussi des endroits du côté de Baladrou, de Rivière Banane qui a été choisi par Shoals de Rodrigues pour créer tout un espace où on ne peut pas pêcher, mais où on peut venir plonger ou pour faire d'autres activités de la mer.

M. le président, ce que je voudrai dire aux membres de la minorité, il ne s'agit pas de détruire l'environnement, mais de créer des espaces environnementaux pour permettre à la population de Rodrigues et à ceux qui viennent d'ailleurs de découvrir ce qu'est vraiment l'environnement, découvrir notre pays, et surtout, apprécier les efforts des habitants de ce pays pour faire de Rodrigues une île écologique. C'est pourquoi que quand nous disons à des gens qui passent leur temps à jeter ici et là-bas, cela est mal

interprété. Vous avez des bus qui klaxonnent à côté de l'hôpital à Mont Lubin. Quand on leur dit de ne pas faire cela, il y a des gens malades; on prend cela autrement. Ce qui veut dire qu'il y a toute une mentalité qu'il faudra changer, amener tout ce monde à participer dans la création de l'environnement pour protéger ce qui existe. Mais la création de l'environnement demande toute une participation, toute une volonté, tout un effort de la population pour changer le visage de ce pays.

Merci beaucoup, M. le président.

Mr J. Roussety: M. le président, le Chef Commissaire semble centrer le débat sur Pointe Source. Mais je dois rappeler que la motion concerne effectivement "*all the sylvo-pastoral and forest perimeters in Rodrigues*" incluant Pointe Source. Il se fait, M. le président, le défenseur d'un projet privé. Il faut bien faire attention lorsqu'on parle de PPP. Le secteur privé est intéressé par quoi, M. le président? Par définition, le secteur privé est intéressé par la propriété qui est au centre du système capitaliste et par le profit. Le promoteur lui a dit qu'on va préserver la nature, on va laisser entrer les Rodriguais; on va reboisé; ce sera un bijou pour Rodrigues. Il n'y a que ma fille qui peut y croire comme les enfants qui croient au Père Noël. Combien d'entrepreneurs, combien de promoteurs à Maurice, à Rodrigues et ailleurs ont signifié leurs intentions au démarrage de leur projet pour avoir le terrain et après faire d'autres objectifs? Quels sont les garanties, M. le président qu'on aura que les 60 arpents seront utilisés dans l'esprit du bail et que ce sera préservé? Le Chef Commissaire dit qu'on ne va pas détruire l'environnement. Il y aura 26 bungalows; il y aura le problème de *sewerage*; on devra construire la route pour accéder aux réserves. L'hôtel a utilisé des pesticides néfastes aux arbres endémiques et aux animaux. Ce qui est encore plus aberrant c'est que le Chef Commissaire vient nous dire à long terme la zone de Pointe Source pourrait devenir une réserve naturelle. Comment peut-on une réserve naturelle avec un hôtel inclus? N'est-ce pas perdre la tête, M. le président, en terme de réalisations, en terme de politique? Je ne sais pas comment on va décréter toute la zone avec le projet hôtelier comme étant une réserve naturelle! A moins que ce soit un zoo!

(Interruptions)

C'est ce que j'ai compris, M. le président. On a dit que la motion que j'ai présentée est *meaningless* au niveau des réserves, parce que les réserves sont déjà définies dans le Forests and Reserves Act. C'est vrai, mais rien ne nous empêche de renforcer la législation ici; rien ne nous empêche de réaffirmer notre volonté de préserver ces zones. On a dit que plusieurs applications ont été rejetées dans les périmètres sylvo-pastoraux. Pourquoi le projet de M. O'Reilly passe? Parce que M. O'Reilly les a séduits! Est-ce que le succès à Maurice qu'ils racontent ici va se transposer dans l'environnement de Rodrigues? Est-ce que c'est bien d'allouer un bail dans un périmètre sylvo-pastoral? Quel signal envoyons nous à ces bailleurs de fonds dont parlait le Chef Commissaire? Nous envoyons un signal que "nous n'avons rien à faire de ce que vous avez réalisé avant" Cela veut dire que nous avons clôturé des zones; nous n'avons rien à faire; on va construire des hôtels dans ces zones. Voilà le signal qu'on envoie à ces bailleurs de fonds! Ils sont en train de faire confiance, M. le président, à des promoteurs privés concernés par le profit. Ils viennent dire que les Rodriguais pourront avoir accès.

Aucune garantie n'existe. Ils sont victimes de la mondialisation! PPP! Libéralisation! Impliquer le secteur privé! N'est-ce pas les idées de la banque mondiale? C'est la mondialisation à outrance qui est tombée sur ces gens qui nous dirigent. Il faut faire attention, M. le président, parce qu'une fois qu'un bail est alloué, c'est fini; on ne pourra y accéder pour dire: ne coupez pas ces arbres; ne réaménagez pas ceci, ne construisez pas de routes, ne construisez plus de chambres encore. C'est la porte ouverte à la destruction de la nature. On a dit qu'on va allouer un bail; le promoteur va investir pour réaménager l'endroit. Il y a une sorte de *boeuf travaille cheval manger!* *To cite the hon. Leader of the Opposition in Mauritius.* Le FED, le gouvernement aménage des périmètres sylvo-pastoraux au fil du temps – 20 ans – on replante 700,000 plantes forestières et aujourd'hui le monsieur qui n'a rien investi avant va profiter de tous ces investissements publics pour son projet hôtelier. Pourquoi ne pas lui allouer un terrain qui n'est pas *fenced*? S'il veut vraiment développer, allouez lui un terrain dans un autre endroit. Donnez lui une autre place qui n'est pas encore périmètre forestier et dites lui de réaménager ce terrain, planter les arbres, *fence it*. Ne venez pas prendre ce qui est à nous, ce qui a été construit avec la sueur et le courage de tous ces travailleurs et l'argent du peuple, M. le président. On a dit qu'il faut faire confiance aux investisseurs. Un monsieur vient de Maurice, dépose son projet en 2003; en 2004 il a son bail; il y a de petites gens à Rodrigues, comme Madame Noëlla Prudence, qui demandent un terrain de la superficie de cette Assemblée pour construire une case et qui attendent depuis 10/15/20 ans. On a l'audace de venir dire ici qu'il faut allouer des terrains aux étrangers – et les terrains des périmètres sylvo-pastoraux! Quelle est la logique dans tout cela? Est-ce qu'on va privilégier les gens qui habitent cette île, qui n'ont pas accès comme à Maurice à l'éducation, aux infrastructures, à l'université, à l'ouverture sur le monde ou bien au niveau de Rodrigues on va donner priorité à nos promoteurs d'ici? Il y a beaucoup de problèmes, M. le président.

Le Chef Commissaire donne des exemples, par exemple, les chauffeurs des bus klaxonnent et dérangent les malades à Mont Lubin. C'est vrai. Si vous roulez derrière les véhicules du gouvernement sur la route de Solitude, vous éhicles du gouvernement sur la route de Solitude, vous êtes par une fumée noire. Je pose une question au Chef Commissaire, M. le président, lorsqu'il va dire au chauffeur de ne pas klaxonner, parce qu'il crée la pollution sonore; il y des malades à l'hôpital. Qu'est-ce le Chef Commissaire va répondre si le chauffeur lui demande ceci: Et vous, qu'avez vous fait avec les terres sylvo-pastorales à Pointe Source? Qu'est-ce qu'il va répondre? On ne peut pas donner des leçons quand eux ils prêchent autre chose, ils pratiquent autre chose; c'est une politique de deux poids deux mesures encore une fois.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, it seems that the members on the other side are not going to vote for this motion; they are arguing on words saying what are natural reserves and what are not as if it is completely legitimate to enter a pastoral reserve, ask the Cadastral Unit to measur a piece of land and give it on lease to anybody. Future generations will remember the day on which we have discussed this motion, because people will look at the Hansard of the Assembly; they will see what defence has been given for the project of Pointe Source. We are defending this project. People will see what the Opposition has

said; what arguments we have put forward and the different international instruments that I have cited.

To end, Mr Chairperson, Sir, I have in hand the electoral programme of the OPR actually in government. I am going to quote –

“Faire de Rodrigues une île écologique...”

A very praiseworthy argument!

“Un plan d’aménagement complet de l’île. Si l’on veut assurer un développement harmonieux durable de l’île il fut travailler le plus vite possible à un plan concret d’aménagement de l’île.”

Deux ans se sont écoulés – et nos amis de l’autre côté avaient dit “le plus vite possible”! Je ne sais pas quelle notion du temps ils ont! Mais je ne sais pas que deux ans tombent dans le domaine “le plus vite possible”! A la page 9 de leur programme, ils disent ceci –

“Du point de vue économique la gestion de l’environnement doit se faire dans le cadre de l’éco-développement. C’est à dire en améliorant les nombreux aspects de la vie économique et sociale et en utilisant, de manière écologique, les ressources locales. En tout cas il est exclu de promouvoir des activités économiques qui s’exercent au mépris de la santé publique et la dégradation de notre environnement.”

Je répète, M. le président, que l’OPR avait un programme – tout parti qui se respecte *abide to its programme* - pour arriver au pouvoir avait dit “En tout cas il est exclu de promouvoir les activités économiques (un hôtel est une activité économique) qui s’exerce au mépris de la santé publique et de la dégradation de notre environnement.” C’est le programme de l’OPR qui est au pouvoir aujourd’hui.

En ce qui concerne le Mouvement Rodriguais, nous avons dit la même chose dans notre programme électoral pour les élections régionales. Nous avons dit à la page 16 –

“La petite taille de notre île signifie que le développement et l’environnement sont étroitement liés et sont inter-dépendants. Il nous faut être conscients que les conséquences environnementales d’un développement mal conçu peuvent avoir des effets néfastes et catastrophiques. Rodrigues est notre maison et cela concerne aussi bien la mer que la terre. Ses ressources sont limitées et parfois sur-exploitées. Avec l’accroissement démographique cette pression va encore augmenter. Ce qui nécessite des pratiques environnementales visionnaires surtout dans la perspective que Rodrigues veut promouvoir son cachet – le tourisme et le dépaysement. “

M. le président, en conclusion, je vous ai cité le programme des gens qui nous dirigent et le programme de l'opposition. Et nous sommes arrivés au moment du vote. Bien sûr il faut prendre une décision en notre âme et conscience et en tant que membres de cette Assemblée. Comme j'ai dit au début la motion n'est pas une motion *with a political agenda*, parce que cela concerne l'environnement.

M. le président, on a beaucoup parlé sur cette motion. Je voudrais terminer en disant que pour la population de Rodrigues et tous ceux qui ont une histoire de ce qui s'est passé à Rodrigues, les périmètres sylvo-pastoraux et forestiers des réserves naturelles constituent notre héritage; et qui dit héritage dit préservation et préservation. Je vous ai cité des arguments des différentes conventions internationales qui vont dans le même sens. Maintenant cette Assemblée va décider si on doit préserver cela à tout prix ou bien on va laisser le champs libre à tout un chacun d'en faire ce qu'il veut et même continuer à donner des baux sur ces terrains.

Pour terminer, j'ai été à Pointe Source récemment quand on a annoncé qu'on va construire un hôtel là-bas. Je connais la plage de Pointe source, mais je ne connais pas le haut. J'ai été surpris de voir, M. le président, quelque chose inhabituel et de très rare – une paire de perdrix. Je ne connaissais les perdrix; je les ai vues pour la première fois. On peut les reconnaître quand ils s'envolent. Je ne sais pas s'il y en a d'autres. Je laisse le choix aux membres de décider sur l'avenir de cette faune et cette réserve de Rodrigues.

Je vous remercie pour votre attention.

Mr Chairperson: I'll put the question.

“That this Assembly resolves that in line with local, national and global policies aimed at the preservation of the environment and natural zones that as from today no lease be granted for any purpose and no government lands be disposed of in nature reserves and in all the sylvo-pastoral and forest perimeters/areas fenced by Government during the different European Development Fund (EDF) projects in the different parts of Rodrigues to date”

Mr Jabeemissar: Mr Cairperson, Sir, I move for a division of votes.

The Chief Commissioner: I think there must be separate votes. In the motion there is “nature reserves”. We cannot say “no” on nature reserves. We can't mix the whole with sylvo-pastoral. Nature reserves is already there; there is the law; but sylvo-pastoral, there is no law.

Mr J. Roussety: Mr Chairperson, Sir, on a point of order. The Chair has put the question. I don't believe that it would be advisable for a member to intervene. The Chief Commissioner was present in the House before the question being put. I think he should have raised the issue before. I believe that this motion is a single motion to be either voted or rejected in *toto*. It cannot be voted in two parts, unless the Chief Commissioner,

with your permission, comes back and amends the motion. They vote it and adopt part of it.

Mr Chairperson: You took a point of order; you want a ruling on that.

Mr J. Roussety: My point of order is that you have put the question. Is it correct for a member to intervene while the question has been put?

Mr Chairperson: The answer is yes.

Mr J. Roussety: We can proceed then.

Mr Chairperson: If you have a look at Erskine May, you will see the following – “Members may intervene, except when the vote has been taken.” In fact there was interruption before the vote. So, the debate is still open. As far as your conclusion and the conclusion suggested by the Chief Commissioner are concerned, it is up to the members, if they feel they would like to move and amend the motion. Then, of course, members may address the House on the Motion. Otherwise, when the question will be put, then there will be only one vote.

Mr J. Roussety: Mr Chairperson, Sir, with your permission, on a point of order again...

Mr Chairperson: Against my ruling?

Mr J. Roussety: No. It is a new point of order. Standing Order 35(8) says “No member may speak on any question after it has been put from the Chair”. As far as I know you have already put the question and my colleague has asked for a division of vote.

Mr Chairperson: You rightly raise that point. But the ruling is still based on Parliamentary practice. It will take me some time to refer you to the practice. The ruling is if no vote has yet been taken, the debate is still open.

(Interruptions)

Mr Chairperson: This is my ruling. You may come for rescission, if you wish.

Mr J. Roussety: You are supreme here; we can't do anything.

Mr Chairperson: I am not supreme.

Mr J. Roussety: You are.

Mr Chairperson: If nothing is forthcoming, I'll put the question again.

Question was put on the motion.

Mr Jabeemissar: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I propose to have a division of vote.

Mr Chairperson: let us take the votes.

The Chief Commissioner: On a point of order, Mr Chairperson, Sir. May I ask for the suspension of the Assembly for a few minutes?

(Interruptions)

Mr Chairperson: A suspension of how many minutes, please?

Mr J. Roussety: Mr Chairpeson, Sir, with your permission, we will agre that if they want to suspend the Assembly to meet and see what istheir strategy. With your permission, theycan kindly go and meet and discuss and if they wish to amend, they can amend or do what they want.

Mr Chairperson: I suspend the Assembly for 10 minutes.

At 4.00 p.m. the sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 4.10 p.m. with Mr Chairperson in the Chair.

Mr Chairperson: Before we take the division of votes, I will have to go back to one of the issues that cropped up in the Assembly, which has given rise to different interpretations. True it is that Standing Order 35(8) says that “No member may speak on any question after it has been put by the Chair”. The point is when can it be said that the question has been put from the Chair. I refer now to the most recent book I have on hand. Erskine May (1997), it is said, I quote –“No member may speak to any question after the same has been fully put by the Speaker” (the same thing that we have here in our Standing Orders) and “a question is fully put when he has taken the voices both of the ayes and the noes”.

I may say that interpreting a legislation is not an easy task even to us lawyers.

Mr J. Roussety: It is not our duty also. This is left to the courts.

Mr Chairperson: But for ease of reference, I always take the liberty – I think I am not wrong – to make these sorts of

(Interruption)

Mr J. Roussety: Your experience as former chairperson .

Mr Chairperson: Thank you very much. So, let me put the question.

On question put the House divided.

Ayes

5

Noes

10

The Noes have it.

Motion defeated.

END OF YEAR MESSAGE

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

Mr Chairperson, Sir, We have now reached the end of the second full year since the advent of the Autonomy. The first sitting of the Regional Assembly for this year was held on 27 February 2004, and as at today we have had 15 sittings out of which, three sittings were held principally for consideration of our Budget Estimates. We reckon that this is the first time that we had had a Committee of the Whole Assembly, termed the Draft Estimates Committee, to debate exclusively on the various items included in the Budget Estimates.

During this year two reports from Select Committees have been tabled, the first one, the report of the Standing Order Committee was tabled on 27 February, and the Second one, from the Public Accounts Committee, today itself. This Assembly had had the opportunity of reconsidering the whole set of Standing Orders, bestowed on us by Act No. 28 of 2002, an Act which came as an amendment to the main Act , the Rodrigues Regional Assembly Act 2001. Some major amendments have been made; I have in mind the Order enabling this Assembly to sit in Committee to approve the itemized budget.

Mr Chairperson Sir, this House has been called to debate on 6 motions out of seven, one being withdrawn and as at today, the regional government has been called to provide answers to 288 questions out of which seven requiring written answers. Members of the Executive Council, have in addition, through different statements, provided useful information to this House, including our policies present and future.

I wish now, to express to you, Mr Chairperson, Sir, my thanks to you for the distinctive manner in which you have presided over the deliberations of this Assembly. I also wish to express my appreciation to all the members for their active participation in the debates.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, may I now be allowed to ask you, in my own personal name and in that of all Members of the House to present the season's Greetings to the President of the Republic and to Lady Jugnauth, and also to the Vice President and Mrs Bundhun, and their families.

Mr Chairperson Sir, I convey to you and Mrs. Lamvohee our best wishes for a Merry Christmas and a happy New Year. My Best wishes also go to all the Respected Members and their families, to the Clerk and his family and to all the Staff of the Regional Assembly and their families.

M. Le Président, je voudrai présenter à toute la population de Rodrigues, les enfants, jeunes et adultes, mes vœux de Joyeux Noël et de Bonne Année et la remercier pour son intérêt et dévouement pour le progrès de Rodrigues et à tous ceux et celles qui durant cette année ont travaillé dur et qui ont contribué d'une façon ou d'une autre pour la réussite de cette île Rodrigues autonome.

Merci. M. le President.

Mr J. Roussety: Mr Chairperson, Sir, may I be allowed to join the Chief Commissioner in the transmission of our best wishes for a happy New Year 2005 to the President of the Republic and Lady Jugnauth, the vice-President and his spouse, to yourself and your spouse, to the Clerk and all the staff of the Regional Assembly as well as to all Commissioners and members, especially members of the Minority group. Best wishes to the population of Rodrigues and to the whole nation of Mauritius.

Thank you.

Mr Chairperson: I also wish to associate myself with the Season's greetings of the House as expressed to the President of the Republic and Lady Jugnauth, the vice President and Mrs Bundhun. With great pleasure we will convey the message of the House to them.

I thank the Chief Commissioner and the Minority Leader on my own behalf and on behalf of the Secretariat of the Assembly for their kind words and best wishes to my family and to all members of the secretariat and their families.

In return, I am pleased to express a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to the Chief Commissioner and Mrs Clair, to the Deputy Chief Commissioner and Commissioners, to the Minority Leader and to all members and the families. Finally, I wish to assure the respected members that I am very grateful to them for their co-operation and understanding of this House. Once again, best wishes for a Merry Christmas and very happy New Year.

Thank you.

ADJOURNMENT

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I beg to move that this Assembly do now adjourn to 15 February 2005 at 10.30 a.m.

The Deputy Chief Commissioner rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

At 4.25 p.m. the Assembly was, on its rising, adjourned to 15 February 2005 at 10.30 a.m.