

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

MAURITIUS - RODRIGUAN PATIENTS - TREATMENT

(No. B/205) **Mr. S. Roussety (Fifth Island Region Member)** asked the Commissioner for Health as regards to patients sent to Mauritius for further treatment, he would for the benefit of the House -

- (a) state the number of patients sent from August 2006 to date;
- (b) table the number of patients sent per month, and per category of illness;
- (c) state whether there is an officer in Mauritius to support these patients during and after treatment; and
- (d) the total expenditure incurred regarding these transfers to Mauritius for that period?

Mr. Emilien: Mr. Chairperson, Sir 422 patients have been sent to Mauritius for further treatment from August 2006 to November 2007. As regards part (b) of the question, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I am tabling documents for the question (**Appendix 1**). As regards part (c), patients sent to Mauritius are taken over by a medical social worker until their return to Rodrigues after treatment. And for part (d) Rs 4,211,572 have been incurred on such transfers for the above period.

Mr. Roussety: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, can the Commissioner inform the House whether some patients, who have had orthopedic surgeries at Queen Elizabeth Hospital, had to be transferred for further treatment in Mauritius for post operational problems?

Mr. Emilien: The reply to this question has been tabled Mr. Chairperson, Sir.

Mr. Spéville: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, being given the increasing number of patients suffering from cancer who have been referred to Mauritius, can the Commissioner inform the House whether provisions have been made or will be

made for these persons, who sometimes suffer from depression, to have medical assistance from Mauritius to Rodrigues?

Mr. Emilien: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, the criteria for sending patients to Mauritius depend on the treating doctor; he recommends that such patient be referred to Mauritius for further treatment and this is approved by the Health Director. At the level of my Commission, we just approve and finance the expenses regarding the transfer of these cases.

Mr. Lisette: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I refer to the document tabled by the Commissioner for Health and I can see that there are orthopedic cases and orthopedic workshop. Can the Commissioner enlighten us on this?

Mr. Emilien: According to me, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, orthopedic cases mean cases referred to orthopedic surgeons for further treatment. Orthopedic workshop means *prothèses* and things like that.

Mr. Lisette: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I would like to ask the Commissioner for Health whether he has made a comparative study throughout the years to see whether the number of patients is increasing or decreasing per year?

Mr. Emilien: The answer is no, Mr. Chairperson, Sir.

Mrs. Perrine-Bégué: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I would like to ask the Commissioner whether it has happened during the course of this year that patients who have been sent to Mauritius have not been hospitalized there. They have been asked to stay at their acquaintances' or families' place.

Mr. Emilien: I am not aware of this situation, Mr. Chairperson, Sir.

Mrs. Perrine Bégué: Mr. Chairperson, Sir I am aware of cases especially in cases of dialysis where some person, whom I met personally, have been asked to go and stay in families instead of staying in hospital. Can he enlighten us, why is it so?

Mr. Emilien: I am not aware, Mr. Chairperson, Sir. But what I can say is that at times maybe some patients, after their treatment in Mauritius, want to stay a few days with their relatives. They ask for discharge from the hospital and they stay with their relatives – maybe this is so, I don't know. But I am not aware of this situation, Mr. Chairperson, Sir.

Mrs. Perrine-Bégué: It is unfortunate, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, that the Commissioner is not aware. I'll ask him to enquire; maybe it would be best if he could meet those who have undergone treatment in Mauritius - especially dialysis patients – to have information. I have met a number of patients; and at least two of them were asked to go at their families' place. We know the hardship and conditions which those persons have to face, especially when they are not at their places. We know about their financial hardship but also the social conditions under which they have to live. On top of that we also know that when people accompany patients to Mauritius, especially the wife or husband, they leave behind them the rest of the family; they suffer the hardship at least three times. Could the Commissioner enquire into this?

Mr. Emilien: Any suggestion is most welcomed Mr. Chairperson, Sir.

Mr. Lisette: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I refer back to the document that has been tabled by the Commissioner for Health; and compared to figures for 2006 and 2007, I see that there is an increase. I'll give a few figures –

July 2006	-	22 cases
July 2007	-	32 cases
August 2006	-	24 cases
August 2007	-	33 cases
October 2006	-	18 cases
October 2007	-	27 cases
November 2006	-	16 cases
November 2007	-	36 cases

It implies that there is an increase of about 125% percent. How does the Commissioner account for such an increase in the number of patients who have been sent to Mauritius? As regards the increase, I would like to ask him if there is a strict control concerning the patients who are sent to Mauritius.

Mr. Emilien: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, at times some people come and complain that we are not sending patients to Mauritius. Now these same persons come and say that too many people are referred to Mauritius. You must know what you want! But as I said earlier, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, patients are referred to Mauritius under the recommendations of the treating doctor and with the approval of the Health Director. If they see that many cases are being referred to Mauritius, this is their issue. I can't comment on it, Mr. Chairperson, Sir.

Mr. Lisette: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I would like to raise a point of explanation with regard to what is being said in this House.

Mr. Chairperson: As regards to what you have said.

Mr. Lisette: Yes, as regards to what I have said! I stated, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, that I have observed that there is an increase in the number of ...

(Interruptions)

The Chief Commissioner: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, on a point of order. This is Question Time and the Member wants to make a statement. He just said, "he stated". He is not allowed to state. He is a Member sitting on the Minority side; his role is to ask questions not to make statements, Mr. Chairperson, Sir.

Mr. Chairperson: Yes, Chief Commissioner, your point is perfectly in order. But the Member, on the other hand, is entitled to give some explanation to prevent ambiguities. If he says, "I stated", then he will have to refer to what he said and then clear out these things. These are strict procedures.

Mr. Lisette: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I wanted to say that I didn't say that patients will not be sent to Mauritius but rather I have observed that there is an increase in the trend of patients being sent to Mauritius.

QUEEN ELIZABETH HOSPITAL - LABORATORY SERVICES

(No. B/206) Mr. S. Roussety (Fifth Island Region Member) asked the Commissioner for Health as regards to services offered by the laboratory of the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, he would for the benefit of the House state -

- (a) whether there has been any disruption of works during the month of November and December 2007 at the laboratory regarding the analysis of blood for patients for diseases such as cholesterol, gout and uric acid, and
- (b) if in the affirmative, why.

Mr. Emilien: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, as regards part (a) of the question, the answer is no, as there has been no disruption of works during the period mentioned.

However, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I wish to inform the House that the COBAS MIRA PLUS which is the main Biochemistry Analyser at the laboratory of Queen Elizabeth Hospital broke down on 12 November 2007. The supplier, Messrs Ducray Lenoir, was immediately requested to send a technician to Rodrigues for the necessary repairs. The technician came on 19 November 2007, that is, one month after the breakdown, and attended to the work. However, some spare parts had to be ordered from France and the technician had to come back on 09 December 2007 to finish off the repairs. In the meantime, that is, during the breakdown of the main Biochemistry Analyser, no disruption of works as such occurred, as I said earlier. In fact, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, the back-up biochemistry analyzer was used for all life saving emergency tests during the period 12 November to 11 December 2007. The back-up analyzer being not able to bear too much workload, as this would cause another breakdown, this is why only life saving emergency tests were made. However, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, the equipment is now functioning well and all routine biochemistry tests are being performed.

Mrs. Perrine-Bégué: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I would like to ask the Commissioner whether it is true that sometimes, by the time that patients are having their appointment with the doctor....

(Interruptions)

Mr. Chairperson: I am afraid this is hypothetical; the Member should rephrase her question.

Mrs. Perrine-Bégué: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, is it true that sometimes when patients go to the hospital for their appointment, samples which have been sent to Mauritius for further analysis are not in Rodrigues? What is being done at the level of the administration of his Commission to make sure that in urgent cases, those samples are not stuck up in the bulk that are being analysed in Mauritius?

Mr. Emilien: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, this question has nothing to do with the original one which asked, “whether there has been any disruption in the Laboratory”. Now, the respected Member is talking about samples sent to Mauritius.

Mr. Spéville: Can the Commissioner inform the House whether, during the period the apparatus was defective, there has been a lack of medicines and whether medicines were given to patients on a regular basis?

Mr. Emilien: I am not aware if there has been a lack of medicines, Mr. Chairperson, Sir. Lack of medicines has nothing to do with the laboratory test.

Mr. Spéville: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I would ask the Commissioner to look into it. We have been made aware that there has been a lack of cholesterol tablets during the period the apparatus was defective.

Mr. Emilien: This has nothing to do with the original question.

LOW COST HOUSING PROJECT - BENEFICIAIRES

(No. B/207) Mr. J. D. Baptiste (Second Local Region Member for Grande Montagne) asked the Commissioner responsible for Housing with regard to the low cost housing project built on a self-help basis he will –

- (a) state when was this project initiated;
- (b) state the procedure used to identify the beneficiaries;
- (c) state the number of beneficiaries where materials have been delivered;
- (d) table the names and addresses of the beneficiaries of materials during the period 14th February 2007 to date; and
- (e) the number of houses completed for the period 14 February 2007 to date.

The Commissioner for Public Infrastructure (Mr. F.A. Grandcourt): Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I wish to inform the House that I made a statement in respect to part (a) of the question. However, I remind the House that the project was initiated in September 2006. Mr. Chairperson, Sir, one of the main components of the speech of the Chief Commissioner during the presentation of the Rodrigues Government programme 2006-2007 is to lay much emphasis on the consolidation and improvement of the neediest persons of our society as far as housing facilities are concerned.

Mr. Chairperson, Sir, to that effect a technical committee comprising an officer of the Trust Fund, an officer from the Commission for Social Security and an officer of the Commission for Public Infrastructure effected site visits

to determine whether the applicants are eligible or not for such scheme. The beneficiaries were identified from a list of applicants from Trust Fund/Commission for Social Security and Chief Commissioner's Office and Commission for Public Infrastructure.

Mr. Chairperson, Sir, as regards part (c), I wish to inform the House that 157 beneficiaries have obtained materials for the construction of these houses.

Mr. Chairperson, Sir, as regards part (d), as at to date no houses have been completed. But however, out of 157 beneficiaries, 61 have reached beam level as at August 2007 and were unable to proceed with the casting of slabs due to the scarcity of iron bars on the local market.

Mr. Baptiste: Can the Commissioner inform the House about the time frame for the completion of these houses?

Mr. Grandcourt: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I cannot as I have just explained. It depends on the availability of construction materials. Therefore, I cannot give a proper time frame for the completion of these houses.

Mr. Spéville: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, can the Commissioner state who supervised the works at the beneficiaries' place and whether same was unpaid?

Mr. Grandcourt: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, there is a technical staff under the chairmanship of the Engineer, Mr. Hee Hong Whye, that supervised the works and we have also Assistant Inspectors who supervised the construction of these houses of these beneficiaries.

Mr. Lisette: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, the project for self-help low cost housing started in September 2006 and we are today in December 2007, there is not even one house which is completed. How does the Commissioner account that fourteen months after the start of the project, not even one house has been completed?

Mr. Grandcourt: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, it is a self-help project, but I will remind the Member, that his former colleague, the Commissioner for Public Infrastructure *avait commencé la construction de 65 low cost houses on a contractual basis et ils n'ont pas pu les terminer. Venir me dire ici, M. le président qu'on n'a pas terminé ces maisons après 14 mois, on a self-help basis ! M. le président, ce sont des gens nécessiteux ; cela prend du*

temps pour pouvoir construire et terminer leurs maisons. Ces maisons sont en phase. Mr Chairperson, Sir, there are different phases, and the last phase will be the casting of slab and the completion of these houses.

Mr. Lisette: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, the Commissioner has not specified clearly about the criteria of the beneficiaries, as asked in part (b) of the question.

Mr. Grandcourt: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I do not see any criteria in the question itself. At part (b) the question was: what are the procedures used to identify the beneficiaries. No criteria were asked.

Mr. Lisette: May I ask the Commissioner what was the criteria used for such selection?

Mr. Grandcourt: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, we use the same criteria as NHDC housing unit: the monthly revenue should not exceed Rs8, 500 and the applicant, of course, should not own a house.

Mr Lisette: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, according to the latest Audit Report that has come out last week or two weeks back, it is clearly stated - I must ask the Chairperson if he will allow me this question.

Mr. Chairperson: Yes.

Mr. Lisette: No criteria were defined for eligibility of construction materials under this scheme and also the basis for selecting the beneficiaries was not known. This is the Audit Report. How does the Commissioner account for this with respect to the answer he has just given in this House?

Mr. Grandcourt: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I have not been made aware of what is in the report because I have not yet received the report.

Mr. Spéville: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, can the Commissioner inform the House how the delivery of materials by the supplier was controlled on all the sites?

Mr. Grandcourt: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, this is another question. This is purely administrative. I don't have the answer. If the Member comes with a substantive question, I'll look for the information and will answer?

Mr. Spéville: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, is the Commissioner aware that there have been cases where the representative of his Commission did not sign the site book records? What corrective measures have been taken at the level of his Commission?

Mr. Grandcourt: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, as I have just said if the Member comes with a substantive question, I'll give the answer.

Mr. Baptiste: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, with regard to the answer to part (c), only the number of beneficiaries was given. What about their names and addresses?

Mr. Grandcourt: Mr. Chairperson, Sir this is confidential. We cannot disclose the names and the addresses of the beneficiaries to this House.

Mr. Spéville: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, being given that the materials supplied should be used exclusively for building housing units, can the Commissioner inform the House whether there was, or will be, a written agreement between his Commission and the beneficiaries before and after the construction of these houses?

Mr. Grandcourt: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I will look into the possibility of having this signed.

Mrs. Perrine-Bégué: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, when this Regional Government took office, can the Commissioner state whether there were materials that were already purchased for this low cost project and whether an inventory was made of them and what were these materials?

Mr. Chairperson: This does not relate to the main question.

Mrs. Perrine-Bégué: It does, Mr Chairperson, Sir.

Mr. Chairperson: Can the Member rephrase her question?

Mrs. Perrine-Bégué: Mr. Chairperson, Sir among the legacies that were left by the former Government, there was a designed plan, conceptualised by the former Government. Was this same plan given to those beneficiaries of this low cost project or was it modified?

Mr. Grandcourt: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I don't know.

Mr. Lisette: I have another supplementary question, Mr Chairperson, Sir.

The Chairperson: Tjis is the last supplementary question.

Mr. Lisette: Can I ask the Commissioner for Public Infrastructure whether any control was made by his Commission on delivery and whether a monitoring is done to ensure that the materials are being used for the right purpose?

Mr. Grandcourt: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I have just said there is a technical staff working on this Housing Scheme. There are site visits effected regularly by the Assistant Inspectors. We do monitor the project.

CAVERNE PATATE

(No. B/208) Mr. P. Francois (Second Local Region Member for Baie aux Huitres) asked the Chief Commissioner as regards Caverne Patate which is being exploited for tourism purposes, he would –

- (a) inform the House, if there is any action plan for a better utilisation of the site, and if so, and
- (b) briefly outline the recommendations and proposals thereof.

The Chief Commissioner: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, as regards parts (a) and (b), the Caverne Patate is one of the most visited tourist sites of Rodrigues. However, it is unfortunate to note that the site had been very poorly managed over the years.

In the Tourism Development Plan for Rodrigues, which was prepared by the then Kemp Chatteris Deloitte & Touche in 2001, the following measures were proposed -

- (i) the existing Guide's Office to be turned into an Information Unit;
- (ii) water to be provided by building from an underground reservoir supplied by rainwater catchments;
- (iii) the lighting of the cave to be improved;
- (iv) a vendor's kiosk, for handicraft and drinks to be built;
- (v) guides to be trained for better service and explanations; and

- (vi) the management of the site be given to the private sector, who would be responsible for its development.

It was also proposed to carry out improvements on the site by constructing a concrete building with toilets, information room and handicraft shops as well as provision for picnic tables and parking spaces.

However, though the measures were planned since 2001, no concrete actions were taken by the previous Regional Government. Nevertheless, since this Government took office, the responsibility of management of the Caverne Patate site has been successfully vested to Discovery Rodrigues Co. Ltd. I am pleased to inform the House that, through this measure, the company has already -

- converted the Guide's Office into an Information Unit;
- employed and trained three "Guides" for better service and explanations to tourists during the visits, and
- undertaken landscaping and infrastructural works for improvement of the site with the collaboration of the Commission of Public Infrastructure.

I am also informed that based on the projected revenue to be collected by the company, Discovery Rodrigues Co. Ltd. has prepared an action plan to cater for -

- water to be provided on the site for tourists on a regular basis;
- the lighting of the cave to be improved;
- provision of better access and parking facilities;
- a handicraft shop to be built and landscaping works as well as trees planting.

Mr. François: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, if you allow me, as regards the question, work is in progress at Caverne Patate Tourism site. I should like to know from the Chief Commissioner who or which company or division is engaged in the upgrading of the Caverne Patate?

The Chief Commissioner: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I have just said that the Commission for Public Infrastructure is engaged in improving the site.

Mr. François: I should like to know from the Chief Commissioner whether a private company is also engaged in the upgrading works.

The Chief Commissioner: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I understand that the Minority is mixing up issues with the private Companies that we have created and some policies that we are taking. We should understand; we should not mix up institutional arrangements for management of sites or for management of certain aspects with the maintenance of the sites for example. Discovery Rodrigues Ltd. will be entrusted the management of access and tourism services, through a lease, of the whole Caverne Patate area. But Caverne Patate remains the property of Government, just like Ile aux Coco is a nature reserve but Discovery Rodrigues Ltd manages access to it. Therefore, it is fully in order for the Commission for Public Infrastructure or any Government department to provide infrastructural works or any other services that may be necessary to these sites. For example the Commission for Agriculture still manages the nature reserves aspect of Ile aux Coco as well as the Forestry Services. But Discovery Rodrigues Ltd. manages the access and tourism services for these sites. So, there is nothing in order to improve Caverne Patate. Furthermore, there is no problem in that because in any way the Rodrigues Regional Assembly Government is the full and one hundred per cent shareholder of all these companies.

Mr. François: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, if you could excuse me. I think the Chief Commissioner missed the point. I never mentioned Discovery Rodrigues Ltd. in my supplementary question. The question was whether a private company is also engaged in the upgrading works at the Caverne Patate Tourism site, let us say companies, like A.J. Maurel or Allied Builders. I never mentioned Discovery Rodrigues Ltd.

The Chief Commissioner: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I am not aware what arrangements have been made. There may be of course. Where is the problem if a private company is doing the public infrastructure works at Caverne Patate? I have not spoken to my Commissioner on this, but I think that a contract has been allocated either by the Discovery Rodrigues Ltd. for some aspects which the Company is fully authorized and empowered to do or a contract by the Commission for Public Infrastructure. And in any case I invite the Member to be clearer; if he wants to know whether there is a contract, he should ask the question to the appropriate Commissioner.

Mr. François: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, being given that Caverne Patate is in an area where there are many farmers, - we can see animals like sheep grazing everywhere in that region - will the Chief Commissioner state to the House whether the region housing Caverne Patate will be fenced?

The Chief Commissioner: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, this is a policy decision. As I have just said the Cadastral Office has advised that the whole zone be leased to the Company for the operation management of the site. And I think that it will be proper to have the whole zone fenced because if we are planting trees, improving, embellishing the site and then animals *cabris, cochon, taureau* etc are coming on the site, this will not be proper.

Mrs. Perrine-Bégué: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, being given that Caverne Patate and all the other caves that we have in the surroundings are natural heritage, that they are not only culture but touristic patrimoine, can I ask the Chief Commissioner whether the infrastructural works are being undertaken under professional supervision or under a specific plan that has been designed, for example, by *spéléologue* to make sure that bones or whatever artefacts that are found in those surroundings are safely remitted to authorities like it is being done in many countries?

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

Mrs. Perrine-Bégué: In that case, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, can I ask the Chief Commissioner to give more information as to the company that is undertaking this professional supervision?

The Chief Commissioner: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, the works which are being carried out are light embellishment works, that is, placing of benches and kiosques etc. They are not digging into the caves; they have not yet started any work inside the caves. And I think that in its wiseness, Discovery Rodrigues Ltd. will, of course - I will ask them to do so - to see to it that any natural heritage which may be found there is properly preserved.

Mrs. Perrine-Bégué: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I would like to ask the Chief Commissioner to make sure that professionals are within the boundary of the site where the works will be undertaken, because artefact items are not easily identifiable by lay people. We know that those engaged in construction are not necessarily versed in cultural or historical items. I'll ask the Commissioner to make it a must that when major works, or even lighter works, are being undertaken on any patrimoine or historical site in Rodrigues, this is taken into consideration.

The Chief Commissioner: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, may I remind the Member that she was in government and that since 2001, Kemp Chatteris Delloite & Touche produced a report for the proper setting up for Caverne Patate. Nothing

has been done. We have started to do something, Mr. Chairperson, Sir. Now she wants to give us lesson of how to do our job. And I repeat Mr. Chairperson, Sir, as far as I know - and as far as all Members of this House know - there are no items on the ground which are of any historical, natural or pelegical nature. The Member is talking about things, which are found in the caves, but up to now we are not going in the caves. When we will be going in the caves, maybe we will invite her to come too.

RODRIGUES DAY 2007 CELEBRATION - ACTIVITIES

(No. B/209) Mr. P. Francois (Second Local Region Member for Baie aux Huitres) asked the Commissioner responsible for Arts & Culture as regards the celebration of Rodrigues Day 2007, could the Commissioner inform the House -

- (a) of the different activities organised by his Commission on that occasion;
- (b) the number of local, regional and international artists who participated individually or groupwise; and
- (c) table a breakdown of all the expenditures in respect of each activity in connection with the celebration?

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, the information is as follows -

- (a) On the occasion of Rodrigues Day 2007, my Commission has organised the following activities -
 - 21 September 2007 – Elocution Contest on the theme « Rodrigues, 5 ans d’Autonomie, quelle avancée » for secondary students
 - 6 October - Patriotic Song Competition on the theme “*Fier d’être Rodriguais*”

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- 6 October - Drama Competition on the theme “*Probleme Société dans Rodrigues*”,
- 8 - 10 October - three days exhibition on the services offered by the Rodrigues Regional Assembly
- 12 October -
 - (i) Inauguration of the new administrative block and unveiling of monument to mark the 5th anniversary of the setting up of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly.
 - (ii) Conference/debat on the theme “*Rodrigues, 5 ans d’Autonomie, quelle avancée*” organised by the Chief Commissioner’s office,
 - (iii) *Soirée de Récompenses* to confer the title of Honorary Freeman and award of “*Medailles de la Reconnaissance Rodriguaise*” to institutions; and
- 14 October - Official Ceremony at Camp du Roi Stadium,
- (b) 19 individual artists and 19 local cultural groups as well as 3 regional artists participated in the activities. No international artist performed in the activities organised to celebrate the Rodrigues Day.

As for part (c) Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I am tabling a breakdown of all the expenditure incurred in respect of each activity in connection with the celebration of Rodrigues Day 2007 (**Appendix II**).

Mrs. Perrine-Bégué: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, by the time I’ll receive the paper tabled, I would like to ask the Commissioner why no commemoration was organized around the monument *de l’Autonomie* at Malabar?

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, last year we did organize a celebration at this monument at Malabar. Members of the Opposition were invited, but nobody turned up. This year, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I did not think it fit to organise any celebration at that monument.

Mr. François: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I should like to know from the Deputy Chief Commissioner whether the total expenditure in respect of Rodrigues Day 2007 exceeded the sum allocated for financial year 2007/2008.

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr. Chairperson, Sir the answer is no, because one million was provided in the budget. According to the paper I have just tabled -the Member can look for himself - it did not exceed the sum allocated.

WORLD TRAVEL MARKET 2007 - DELEGATION

(No. B/210) The Minority Leader (Mr. L. S. Clair) asked the Chief Commissioner whether, in regard to the participation of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly in the World Travel Market – London 2007 held in November 2007, he will -

- (a) state the composition of the delegation and in what capacity;
- (b) give a breakdown of expenditure incurred in respect of each member of the delegation in terms of airfares and subsistence allowances, and
- (c) state the total expenditure incurred.

The Chief Commissioner: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, the delegation which participated in the World Travel Market 2007 in London in November 2007 consisted of myself as Chief Commissioner and also Commissioner responsible for Tourism; Mrs Rachel Juste-Meunier, Officer-in-Charge of the Office du Tourisme de Rodrigues and Mrs Mary Jane Prudence, as representative of the Rodrigues Tourism Office as we had a lack of personnel to assist us in that important mission.

With regard to part (b), Mr. Chairperson, Sir, the information is as follows –

- Airfares : Rs178,437
- Subsistence Allowance: Rs204,048.42

With regard to part (c), Mr. Chairperson, Sir, the total cost incurred by the Rodrigues Regional Assembly amounts to Rs494,585.26 which includes cost of promotional materials and their cost of carriage as well as subsistence allowance.

Mr Lisette: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, as regards the representative of the Mauritius Tourism office, I would like to ask the Chief Commissioner whether her expenses were borne by the Rodrigues Regional Assembly or by the institution that she represents.

The Chief Commissioner: I am not aware of any such matter Mr. Chairperson, Sir. The Rodrigues Regional Assembly delegation did not include any person from the MTPA.

Mr Lisette: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, if I got the Chief Commissioner right, I think he said that Miss Jane Prudence was the representative of the Mauritius Tourism Office. This is why I am asking whether the Rodrigues Regional Assembly met her expenses.

The Chief Commissioner: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I repeat my answer. Mrs. Marie Jane Prudence, as representative of the Rodrigues Tourism Office, participated as we had a lack of personnel to assist us in that mission. She is a person who is very well acquainted with tourism fairs; and I appointed her and invited her to assist us. We paid her airfare, lodging and she was given the standard rate of 40 euros per day - the rate which is paid to tourism operators to participate in fairs, Mr Chairperson, Sir. I would add that she did not represent the interests of any tourism operator in Rodrigues at that fair. She represented the interests of the Rodrigues Tourism Office.

COMMISSIONS - NATIONAL AND OVERSEAS MISSIONS

(No. B/211) The Minority Leader (Mr. L. S. Clair) asked the Chief Commissioner whether, in regard to all national and overseas missions undertaken by the different Commission of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly, for the period December 2006 to date, he could table -

- (a) the dates and composition of each mission;
- (b) a breakdown of all expenditure incurred in respect of each mission in terms of airfares, lodging and subsistence allowances, and
- (c) state the total expenditure incurred by each Commission?

The Chief Commissioner: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, the information is being compiled for circulation (**Document available in Library**).

SECONDARY SCHOOLS – FREE BOOK LOAN SCHEME

(No. B/212) Mr. J. D. Spéville (The Second Local Region Member for St. Gabriel) asked the Commissioner responsible for Education whether, in regard to the use of “*Manuel Scolaire*” in Secondary Schools, he will -

- (a) give the changes in books per subject for the different classes in each Secondary Schools in Rodrigues, for year 2008;
- (b) state whether the “Free Book Loan Scheme” will still be applied for these new books and, if so, what steps have been taken, so far, for the students to receive all their books on time; and
- (c) give the number of books damaged in all the colleges for the year 2007 and the corrective measures taken.

The Deputy Chief Commissioner (Mr G. Jabeemissar): Mr. Chairperson, Sir, as regards part (a) of the question, I am tabling the list of books which have been changed per subject for the different classes in each secondary schools in Rodrigues for the year 2008.

As for part (b) yes, the “Free Book Loan Scheme” will still be applied for these new books.

With regard to part (c), necessary arrangements have already been made by my Commission so that students receive their books on time.

As for part (d), a total number of “20 books” have been damaged for the year 2007. Parents have been requested to refund the books which were damaged as per condition included in the “Free Book Loan Scheme” acceptance form.

Mr Spéville: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, being given that each year students face problem on availability of books on the market, can the Commissioner inform the House whether his Commission intends to uniformise the recommended *manuels scolaires* in all colleges?

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: The answer is no, Mr. Chairperson, Sir. Although we will uniformise, as the Member said, that doesn't mean that there will be no more problems.

Mr Spéville: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, concerning the change in books and being given that his Commission has embarked on a "Free Book Loan Scheme", I would like to ask the Commissioner whether meetings have been held between his Commission and the different colleges during the year 2007, for his Commission to better get prepared for school year 2008 as far as availability of books is concerned?

The Deputy Chief Commissioner:: The answer is, yes, Mr. Chairperson, Sir.

Mr Spéville: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, being given that the damaged books can be repaired, can I ask the Commissioner whether they will be sent to the binding section of his Commission for repairs and redelivered to the different colleges? Because some parents are facing many difficulties; and we asked them to pay for damaged books. I think that the Commission can get these books repaired and redelivered to different colleges.

The Deputy Chief Commissioner:: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, as I said before, the parents and the pupils concerned have been informed well before about their responsibilities. They have accepted to refund for the damaged books. They have to take their responsibilities.

LAND MECHANISATION AND LAND PREPARATION – BENEFICIAIRES

(No. B/213) Mr. J. D. Spéville (Second Local Region Member for St. Gabriel) asked the Commissioner responsible for Agriculture whether, in regard to land mecanisation and land preparation for the benefit of planters, he will, for the period July 2006 to date, state -

- (a) the regions where such projects have been undertaken;
- (b) the names of the beneficiaries, and the extent of land involved;

- (c) the cost involved in each case in terms of overtime and fuel;
- (d) the plans and the time frame for future land mecanisation and land preparation by indicating the estimated cost per each agricultural region?

Mr Perrine: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, as regards part (a), I would like to inform the House that for agricultural purposes, Rodrigues Island has been divided into five sections, namely -

- (i) Citronelle;
- (ii) Maréchal;
- (iii) La Ferme;
- (iv) Trèfles; and
- (v) St. Gabriel.

These sections cover the whole island of Rodrigues. Land mechanization and land preparation have been carried out in all these sections since July 2006.

As regards part (b), the list of beneficiaries and the extent of land involved are being compiled and will be tabled in due course (**STILL AWAITING DOCUMENT, PHONED ON 19/05/08**).

Mr. Chairperson, Sir, with regard to part (c), I am informed that the cost involved in terms of fuel is to the tune of Rs255,121.25 and that there has been no overtime involved.

Mr. Chairperson, Sir, as regards plans and time frame for future land mechanisation and land preparation, I would like to inform the House that in June 2007 a technical team from the Ministry of Agro-industry headed by Mr. Lutchmeea, Principal Agricultural Engineer was in Rodrigues at my request, to make -

- (i) an assessment of the Mechanisation Unit and to make appropriate recommendations;
- (ii) to reorganise the Mechanical Workshop of the Commission for Agriculture.

Mr. Chairperson, Sir, it has to be noted that the topography of Rodrigues shows marked variations, from a study made by J. F. Dupont, of University d'Aix Marseille; I quote –

“Les terrains plats et les pentes inférieures à 8% n’occupent que 10% de terre Rodriguaise. Les terrains dont les pentes sont de 8% à 20% représentent 20%. Alors que les pentes supérieures à 20% représentent 63% de la terre Rodriguaise’.

Thus, it can be seen that the majority of the land in Rodrigues is sloppy and is very difficult for mechanization. The main problem encountered during tillage operations is breakage or premature failure of implements due to impact loads (shock loads). Hence, the main focus during selection of tillage implements action is to select that they are cost effective, use less draft force, are more ruggedly built and have ground tools protected by some form of impact reducing device.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, I have to say that, however, there is a wide scope of application of mechanization in the Rodriguan agricultural sector and the present status of mechanization requires improvement. Farm mechanization is a promising aspect in enhancing the status of agriculture by empowering the planters with appropriate tool for rendering the farming practices less costly, more efficient and timely and at times yielding more benefits. Undeniably it will be of extensive help in raising the standard of living of farmers and also help the country in increasing the overall agricultural production.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, the currently free mechanization services which are being provided to the farming community by the Commission for Agriculture will be maintained. Payment of a fee calculated on the basis of acreage and operation hour will be claimed in due course. It is estimated that some 300 hectares will be mechanized in 2008/2009 in the five agricultural regions at an estimated cost of Rs 600 per hour.

Mr Spéville: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, may I ask the Commissioner whether he is aware that in certain regions some planters are having their land mechanised and prepared while some are still on the waiting list? May I know what criteria have been utilized to select these planters for the land mechanization and preparation?

Mr Perrine: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, when I took over the Commission for Agriculture, application for land mechanism was submitted to drivers of tractors ...

(Interruptions)

I am talking of 2006. Now the requests are being processed by the Public Relations Unit according to recommendations made by Mr. Lutchmeea and everything is being done on a first come first serve basis.

Mrs. Perrine-Bégué: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I listened well to the different measures taken mentioned by the Commissioner as regards, for example, technical assessment of the type of lands, etc. If I understood him well, there is only 7% of land that are flat in Rodrigues and the 93% are sloppy. I would like to ask the Commissioner whether he is envisaging buying appropriate machines. Are those equipment that we have for mechanization today appropriate for the 93% sloppy lands?

Mr Perrine: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, according to the report, I must say that for the mechanisation of land there are several operations. First you have sub-soiling, thoroughing, ploughing and there are different equipment being used. We are making an assessment and the equipment requested will be included in the next budget so that we can have appropriate equipment to carry on mechanization in Rodrigues.

Mrs Perrine-Bégué: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, being given that up to now planters and farmers who have the privilege to have access to roads in the valleys have already developed their lands for the purpose of agriculture and they will get irrigation and mechanization. But we know that lands – the Commissioner has mentioned the regions - are found in areas where the planters cannot get access to roads and thus cannot get mechanization. Is this being taken into consideration?.

Mr Perrine: In his report Mr. Chairperson, Sir, Mr. Lutchmeea has covered all the issues mentioned by the respected Member. Access to land is an important issue which is being looked into very closely; and we are coming up with a new plan for the reorganisation of the sector so that farmers benefit fully from the land mechanisation programme that we are going to start.

Mrs Perrine Bégué: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, the Commissioner talked about sub-soiling, etc. and we know that these lands are more or less cultivable. The Commissioner mentioned also in previous answers that new lands are being given to farmers and planters. Can I ask the Commissioner whether derocking will be provided to planters for them to have cultivable lands?

Mr Perrine: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, we have to be very cautious when dealing with derocking because of the problem of erosion that we have in Rodrigues. However, we will consider slight derocking in certain regions of Rodrigues.

Mr. Lisette: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, there are many persons on the waiting list for land mechanization and the Commissioner stated that the system requires improvement. Can he elaborate on the improvement he is going to bring in the future and how long is it going to take?

Mr Perrine: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, this question needs a statement. However, I would like to re-assure the Member that we are looking closely to this important project, that is, land preparation and mechanization. We are coming up very soon with a paper specifying regions where light derocking and land mechanisation will be effected

Mr Spéville: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I would like to ask the Commissioner if a time frame to re-mechanise a land is taken into account. I am putting this question to find out why lands which are already good and which have recently been planted have been selected for mechanisation and preparation whereas other planters, who really need such help from his Commission, have not been taken on board?

Mr Perrine: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I am not aware of the issues raised by the Member. However, I must say that I am coming with a proposal soon so that land mechanization be payable. Only first operation to allow people to restart cultivating their land will be free; maybe land has been abandoned because they did not have land mechanization facilities. But I think we will consider reintroducing payable fees for the second, third and fourth operation.

RODRIGUES - ROAD SAFETY

(No. B/214) Mr. J. D. Spéville (Second Local Region Member for St. Gabriel) asked the Commissioner for Public Infrastructure with regard to road safety in Rodrigues, he will for the benefit of the House -

- (a) give a breakdown of accidents per category of vehicles for the period July 2006 to date;

- (b) state if any Committee has been set up at the level of his Commission on road safety in Rodrigues; and if so;
- (c) give the names, composition, objectives and modus operandi of the Committee;
- (d) state, his policy for a better traffic flow on the island and for a maximum awareness on road safety?

The Commissioner for Public Infrastructure (Mr F.A. Grandcourt):
Mr. Chairperson, Sir, as regards part (a), I am tabling a breakdown of accidents per category of vehicles for the period July 2006 to date (**Appendix IV**).

Mr. Chairperson, Sir, as regards part (b) of the question, a Road Safety Committee has been set up at the level of my Commission.

Mr. Chairperson, Sir, as regards part (c), I am tabling the names and composition of the Committee (**Appendix V**). The objective of this Road Safety Committee is to advise, develop and coordinate all activities relating to road safety issues in Rodrigues. The committee will ensure that the same policy applicable in Mauritius is being implemented in Rodrigues. Some of the activities of the Committee will be –

- Proposing road safety measures;
- Sensitizing the inhabitants in Rodrigues on Road Safety measures, for example -
 - Pedestrian safety;
 - Excessive speeding;
 - Drink-driving;
 - Not being well-equipped (not wearing seatbelts/helmets);
 - Using mobile phones while driving, etc.

The Road Safety Committee will have mainly as target group all road users including school children and senior citizens.

Mr. Chairperson, Sir, due to the increase in the number of vehicles in Rodrigues over the last 2-3 years, the road traffic situation in Rodrigues is

becoming more and more difficult. These effects are more pronounced in Port Mathurin, Mont. Lubin and La Ferme. In that respect, the expertise of a Traffic Management and Road Safety Unit in Mauritius will be solicited to assess the prevailing situation and to propose measures, if any, to be taken in order to better manage the traffic flow over the island. Meanwhile, actions are being taken to minimize the impact of road accident through proper road marking, installation of road traffic signs and attending to the problem of visibility of certain road corners.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, I wish to inform the House of the concrete examples of the kind of intervention undertaken by my Commission to increase road safety -

- (a) Cleaning of roadsides which were invaded by bushes for years.
- (b) Major excavation works undertaken in the Northern Coastal Road in order to improve visibility especially at hazardous curves.
- (c) Improvement of visibility at Road junction near Mangues Government School, which represented a threat to road users and especially to schoolchildren attending Mangues Government School.
- (d) Redesigning of the box culvert at Terre Rouge. The curvature of existing box culvert was so acute that it was impossible for two-way traffic at the same time. The traffic flow has improved significantly with the construction of the new box culvert and upgrading of the existing road.
- (e) The Road Safety Committee is working on new road safety strategy for Port Mathurin with a view to improving the traffic flow system.

During the period of festivities some roads namely Rue de la Solidarité from junction Rue Pere Gandy to Barclays bank and Rue Mamzelle Julia from Granary junction to Church are closed and public are encouraged to use available parking space on MCB Square, Millenium Square and the Jetty.

Furthermore, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, my Commission, in collaboration with the Traffic Management and Road Safety Unit in Mauritius, organized an exposition on road safety for one week in May 2007. Two sets of kits on road

safety were handed over to the Commission for Education and more sets of kits will be delivered to the Commission soon.

Mr. Chairperson, Sir, moreover, my Commission in collaboration with Road Riders organized “*Moto Ecole*” for one week in order to sensitize the motor cycle users on safety measures.

Mr. Chairperson, Sir, the traffic flow from Port Mathurin to the Northern part of the island has become more difficult following the demolition of the Winston Churchill Bridge. Some pedestrian use the temporary fort bridge next to the demolished Winston Churchill Bridge. Safety analysis of the bridge has shown that it is becoming more and more unsafe to use the fort bridge. The construction of the Winston Churchill Bridge has become a priority project for the Rodrigues Regional Assembly as such construction will provide a safety link from the Northern part to the capital, thus reducing the risk of accidents at that particular area.

My Commission has already initiated action for implementation of the construction works of the bridge, pending availability of fund.

Mr. Chairperson, Sir, for the awareness on road safety, the same policy as exists in Mauritius will be adopted. Targeted publicity campaigns will be conducted regularly on TV and on radio for sensitization. For example, a campaign could be carried out at the end of the year to sensitize drivers on speeding and drink driving. More frequent speed checks and alcohol tests would be carried out in order to deter drivers from over speeding as well as drink and drive.

The expertise of the Traffic Management and Road Safety Unit in Mauritius will once more, be solicited to give a helping hand in the setting up of Road Safety Clubs and traffic corners in primary and secondary schools, public children garden so that these could be a permanent means of sensitization on road safety to all Rodriguans throughout the year in Rodrigues.

Mr. Spéville: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, can the Commissioner inform the House at what frequency the damaged road signs are replaced? Because just before the coming of this question in the Regional Assembly I have seen *enne opération change panneaux, change plaque* on Friday last. I would like to ask the Commissioner if this *opération* would also be applied to other road because

there are roads on the entire Island whose road signs have been damaged since one year or one and a half year.

Mr. Grandcourt: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, the respected Member rightly said that there are damaged road signs since one and half year – I don't know whether they were stolen or damaged. At the level of my Commission, we are replacing these road signs regularly.

The Deputy Chairperson: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, could the Commissioner state whether the number of road accidents has increased or decreased from July to date?

Mr. Grandcourt: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, according to the figures we see that the number of road accidents as from July 2006 to date the trend is decreasing.

Mrs. Perrine-Bégué: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I didn't hear the Commissioner mentioning his policy measures as regards stray animals such as dogs and other animals. I would like to know whether he is envisaging taking measures to prevent accidents by stray animals?

Mr. Grandcourt: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, the answer is yes.

Mr. Spéville: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, the density of road network is 1.06 km per square km which compares satisfactorily with a good road density. Given the fact that the number of vehicles is 44 vehicles per km making the flow of traffic fluid on the entire network on all times, I would like to ask the Commissioner to give his policy on the importation of vehicles, which is increasing exponentially with respect to the length of road that is under construction. Does he intend to keep the number of vehicles per km constant by limiting the importation of vehicles, especially vehicles which can make Rodrigues a death site and can increase the risk of accident?

Mr. Grandcourt: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, there are already measures and regulations which are applied by the NTA. We have been talking about this issue during the previous Executive Council, about the alternatives we can adopt as far as the problem of transport is concerned. But as I have said in my reply, we are working on it to see what we can do to provide a fluent traffic flow in Rodrigues.

Mrs. Perrine-Bégué: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, coming back to the causes of accident, I would like to ask the Commissioner the number of accidents occurred in relation to driving under the influence of alcohol?

Mr. Grandcourt: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I don't have the information because it has not been asked. If the Member comes with a substantive question, I will provide the information.

Mrs. Perrine-Bégué: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, in this road policy that the Commissioner has just outlined as regards measures for preventing accidents, I would like to ask him whether any specific project or programme has been set up to prevent driving under the influence of alcohol during the course of his mandate up until now?

Mr. Grandcourt: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, we have regular meetings through the Road Safety Committee with the Police. I think that the figures clearly indicate that the trend is decreasing. I will just take an example, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, in Port Mathurin from July 2006 to December it was 46; January 2007 to June 2007 it has decreased to 37; and from July 2007 to December 2007 it is 30. The figures speak for themselves; they clearly indicate that there is a decrease and our policy is working.

Mrs. Perrine-Bégué: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, the Member has not answered my question directly. It might be that the percentage is decreasing, but I would like to know what preventive measures is he envisaging as far as driving under the influence of alcohol is concerned.

Mr. Grandcourt: This has been already been answered, Mr. Chairperson, Sir.

FARMERS AND PLANTERS COMMUNITY

(No. B/215) Mr. J. D. Spéville (Second Local Region Member for St. Gabriel) asked the Commissioner for Agriculture whether, in regard to the Farmers and Planters Community in Rodrigues, he will for the benefit of the House -

- (a) table the names, occupations, home addresses, farm addresses of persons who have been granted planters card, farmers card,

agricultural cards and agricultural leases for the period July 2007 to date;

- (b) specify the extent of land allocated to each of them;
- (c) state the number of applications which are still being processed in respect of planters, farmers card, agricultural permit and agricultural leases, and
- (d) the criteria applied to grant each of these facilities.

Mr Perrine: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, as regards part (a) of the question, I am tabling a list of all-

- (i) Planters Card;
- (ii) Breeders Card;
- (iii) Small Planters Welfare Fund Card

for period July 2006 to date and I am not aware of the existence of any Agricultural card (**List available in Library**).

As regards agricultural leases, no such lease has been delivered to date.

As regards (b), the question does not arise as no lease has been granted.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, with regard to part (c) I am informed that the following are under process -

- (i) 45 applications for Small Planters Welfare Fund card;
- (ii) 1291 requests for agricultural permit;
- (iii) 318 requests for agricultural lease.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, as regards part (d), I am to refer to a similar question addressed to this House on the 10 August 2004, PQ B/558, by the then Second Local Region Member for la Ferme, Mr. Gaëtan Jabeemissar to the respected Member who was then the Commissioner for Agriculture.

The criteria have not changed since then and are still the same for facilities referred to.

The basic criteria used since 2004 and up to now are as follows –

- The applicant should fill in an application form, and
- An inquiry is carried out by the Extension Services of the Agricultural Services to determine the genuineness of such application.

The criteria established are -

- (i) type of culture;
- (ii) number of animals reared per category;
- (iii) family background;
- (iv) surface of land under cultivation; and
- (v) occupation of the applicant

Mr. Spéville: Mr. Chairperson, Sir I would like to tell the House that there has been a printing error; it is agricultural permit; this error was notified to the Clerk and I don't have to ...

(Interruptions)

Mr. Chairperson: The correct one was repeated in part (c).

Mrs. A. Perrine: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, can I ask a question?

Mr. Chairperson: Of Course, proceed.

Mrs. Perrine-Bégué: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, all of us are planters and farmers; people are planting in their backyard, especially those days. I would like to know if there is a specific privilege attached to those cards which incite those who are doing quite extensive agriculture to come and register?

Mr Perrine: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, the Small Planters Welfare Fund caters for farmers in Rodrigues also. My Commission has an agreement with the Small Planters Welfare Fund and henceforth, the cards that will be delivered in Rodrigues will be called Planters Individual Cards and there are privileges and many facilities attached to these cards namely, access to financial help, death grant, health care, insurance coverage and other assistance in terms of educational facilities and privileges in stores in the private sector.

Mrs. Perrine-Bégué: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I would like to ask the Commissioner when was the agreement signed and whether these privileges have already come into force.

Mr. Perrine: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, at the beginning of this month I signed an agreement with Honourable Boolell binding my Commission and the Ministry of Agriculture in several conventions and agreements that concern the development of agriculture, facilities to farmers community and other assistance that will be extended to Rodrigues.

Mr. Spéville: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I would like to ask the Commissioner whether part of the recurrent vote item “incentive to planters and farmers” has been used to help these planters and farmers during hard season.

Mr. Perrine: Of course, Mr. Chairperson, Sir. I can give an example: the price of potatoes has been subsidised by more than 50% and the fund has been provided under the item “assistance to farmers and life stock producers”.

Mr. Spéville: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I would like to ask the Commissioner whether other assistance will be provided to the planters, especially as some planters have been facing difficulties with the last heavy rainfall.

(Interruptions)

Mr. Perrine: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, my Commission has not yet received any request for assistance in the case mentioned by the respected Member. In any way, if there is any new request, my Commission will look at it favourably.

RDP/IFAD PROGRAMME - PROJECTS

(No. B/216) Mrs. A. Perrine-Bégué (First Local Region Member of St. Gabriel) asked the Commissioner for Women’s Affairs and Poverty Alleviation with regard to project funded by the RDP/IFAD Programme will the Commissioner state -

- (a) the status of the uncompleted Community Development projects to date;
- (b) what were their date fixed for completion, and
- (c) if there is any initial delay and the reasons thereof.

The Commissioner for Women Affairs (Mrs. M.T. Clair): Mr. Chairperson Sir, the IFAD-RDP Programme came into existence in Rodrigues in 2001. With regard to part (a), there are presently nine projects uncompleted, namely -

- (i) La Ferme Community Centre;
- (ii) Les Capuccines Pre-Primary School at Nassola;
- (iii) Artisanal Workshop at Mont Limon;
- (iv) Community Centre at Mourouk;
- (v) Extension of Malartic Centre;
- (vi) Renovation of Camp Pintade Centre;
- (vii) Community Centre at Pointe Canon;
- (viii) Vanguard Track Road; and
- (ix) Zotvia Poultry Project at Montagne Goyaves.

The status of the project -

La Ferme Community centre: the building is already constructed by the initial contractor. There are some rendering work like septic tank, plumbing work, electrical work, flush doors and tiling left to be completed by new contractor. The project was supposed to be completed in March 2006.

With regard to the construction of Les Capuccines Pre-primary School at Nassola, the work is almost finished. Remaining work is mostly beneficiaries' contribution; painting, fencing and some minor works are left to be done.

Construction of artisanal workshop at Mt. Limon: works that are left to be done are plumbing work, electrical work, absorption pit, septic tank, flush door, windows and metal doors, painting and roofing.

Construction of Community centre at Mourouk: there are some plumbing work, electrical work, flush doors, wood work, tiling, and painting which are left to finalize the project.

Extension of Malartic Center: only painting and fixing of window pane are left to complete the project.

Renovation of Camp Pintade center: masonry work, electrical work, plumbing work, tiling wood, flush doors and kitchen and some cupboard are left to be done and to finalise the project.

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Construction of Community Centre at Pte Canon: all construction works are over; only painting and delivery of electricity is left to finalise the project.

Vanguard construction of track road: out of 800 meters of track road there is 121 meters left to be done. Project could not be completed due to the unavailability of fund in the 2006/2007 budget.

Zotvia Poultry Project at Montagne Goyaves: only delivery of animal food and construction of metal doors are left to complete the project.

The dates which were fixed for the completion of each project -

- (i) La Ferme Community Centre - March 2006;
- (ii) Les Capuccines Pre-Primary School at Nassola - March 2006;
- (iii) Artisanal Workshop at Mont Limon - April 2006;
- (iv) Community Centre at Mourouk - April 2005;
- (v) Extension of Malartic Centre - June 2005;
- (vi) Community Centre at Pointe Canon - February 2005;
- (vii) Vanguard Track Road - September 2004, and
- (viii) Zotria Poultry - September 2004.

The delay in the nine projects is attributed to the following reasons –

- contractors have abandoned the site work since very long time.
- budgetary constraints for financial years 2006/2007 and 2007/2008 have caused the implementation of the activities to remain pending till now.

The Rodrigues Regional Assembly has already released a sum of Rs1 m. for completion of the remaining project which is being done in installment of five thousand Rupees. Five thousand Rupees have already been released and some projects are already relaunched and ongoing and will be completed shortly. All these projects have been re-activated since October 2007 and are within a proposed date of completion.

Mrs Perrine-Bégué: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, is the Commissioner aware that the extension of the IFAD/RDP project was under negotiation at the time those limits stated by her were reached? Is she aware that at the time she took office the extension was just being granted by the IFAD/UNDP the provision project to Government?

Mrs. M. T. Clair: No, Mr. Chairperson, Sir. What I am aware is that the mission came to Rodrigues after I took office and we negotiated for the extension of the project.

Mrs. Perrine-Bégué: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, is it not true that the extension of the project was already given before June 2006 and is it not true also that the IFAD delegation came expressly to Rodrigues because funds required after the extension of this project were not allocated as requested by the Regional Assembly?

Mrs. M.T. Clair: No, Mr. Chairperson, Sir.

Mrs. Perrine-Bégué: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, the same Commissioner answering a previous question in the Assembly did acknowledge that no funds were provided in the budget after July 2006 when the extension of the IFAD project was given to Rodrigues. Can she tell us on which item vote are these projects being carried on actually?

Mrs. M.T. Clair: The money is coming from the Chief Commissioner's office, Commission for Finance, Mr Chairperson, Sir.

Mrs. Perrine-Bégué: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, does it not prove today that the Rodrigues Regional Assembly did not have a particular item vote as it is required in the contract? Is it not true Mr. Chairperson, Sir, that the Regional Assembly did not allocate fund for this project?

Mrs. M.T. Clair: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, what I know is that the respected Member is turning around the clock. We know perfectly well that the provision for IFAD 2006/2007 was a token vote and it is again a token vote for 2007/2008.

(Interruptions)

Mr Lisette: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I refer to the reply given by the Commissioner for Women Affairs. She stated that the projects were reactivated only in October 2007; and she has been in office since December last. May I ask her why she has taken so long before the reactivation of these projects?

(Interruptions)

Mrs. M.T. Clair: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, unless the Member rephrases his question and addresses me as I deserve it, then I'll answer the question.

Mr. Lisette: It is clear Mr. Chairperson, Sir.

Mr. Chairperson: Yes, if your question is clear you don't have to repeat it. If there is any any correction to be made in your question, you can do so.

Mr. Lisette: I want to ask the Commissioner, Mr. Chairperson, Sir...

Mr. Chairperson: Which part do you want to correct?

Mr. Lisette: Why has she taken so long for the reactivation of the project? Only in October 2007!

Mrs. M. T. Clair: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I have not taken so long because it does not depend only on me. It depends on the office in Mauritius. Negotiations have been ongoing for the reactivation of the project because there was a problem and all the contractors who were on the nine projects left the site. As the contractors have signed the contract with the beneficiaries, letters were sent to them. There were a lot of reminders. Nothing can be done unless the office in Mauritius decides to take action. So, all these are under way. We are seeing whether there will be money available to re-tender; and the beneficiaries themselves have to relaunch the contract because it was signed between the beneficiaries and the contractor.

Mr Spéville: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I would like to ask the Commissioner if she can state to the House since when the Patate Théophile vestiaire has been completed? And why since now, the inhabitants, especially the football team in that village, are not benefiting from the Infrastructure?

Mrs. M.T. Clair: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, this is another question. I will ask the Member to come with a substantive question.

Mrs. Perrine-Bégué: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I would like to ask the Commissioner why should the office in Mauritius take action against contractors who are working on site in Rodrigues and not the IFAD and the Finance section here in Rodrigues? Why should we wait for the IFAD office in Mauritius to take action against people with whom a contract has been signed locally?

Mrs. M.T. Clair: I have said earlier Mr. Chairperson, Sir, that since the contract has been signed between the contractor and the beneficiaries of the project, the office here could not take any action. We were seeking advice from the office in Mauritius as to whether action could be taken and they said no. So, we monitor the project, but we have no legal power to sue the contractor as mentioned earlier, because we are not signatory of the contract. That's all.

MT. LIMON - *MAISON D'ARTISANAT*

(No. B/217) Mrs. A. Perrine-Bégué (First Local Region Member of St. Gabriel) asked the Commissioner for Women's Affairs and Poverty

Alleviation as regards the "*Maison d'Artisanat*" situated at Mt. Limon initiated by Mont Limon/De Goyave and Champs Women's Association, will she state where matter stands and whether the Regional Government will keep its commitment for the landscaping of area around the building.

The Commissioner for Women's Affairs (Mrs. M. T. Clair): Mr. Chairperson, Sir, the project of "*Maison d'Artisanat*" situated at Mont-Limon initiated by Mont-Limon, Deux Goyaves and Champs Women Association was approved in March 2005. The respected Member should ask herself the question where she left matters rather than asking me where matters stand. The initial contract was signed between the contractor, Mr. Jean Noel Nemours and the managing committee of the project comprising representatives from all 3 above mentioned women associations. There has been a delay in implementing the project because the contractor had again abandoned the site without respecting his obligations and contract towards the beneficiaries. The PMU-R Officers had initiated actions to remedy the situation by sending letters, reminders and lastly all remaining payments have been ceased. With the money retained, a new contract has been relaunched since 2007 to complete the outstanding work. PMU-R is now awaiting for the disbursement of funds which is coming from the office of the Chief Commissioner to reactivate and complete the balance of the minor works with the participation of the beneficiaries, namely the three women's associations. The proposed date for completion is scheduled for mid-February 2008.

Mrs. Perrine-Bégué: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, is it not true that, by the time the Commissioner took over the project in 2006, procedures by IFAD which is a

co-signatory with the beneficiaries of the different projects were under way to recover the money that is at bank as a guarantee with the specific local contractor? Is it not true that procedures were already ending so that another contract may be given in June 2006 to complete the project?

Mrs. M. T. Clair: I am not aware of that, Mr. Chairperson, Sir.

Mrs. Perrine-Bégué: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I would like to ask the Commissioner whether the Regional Government had modified the project and try to change the beneficiaries of this project by a specific project which has been sent to the Empowerment Fund.

Mrs. M. T. Clair: The answer is, no, Mr. Chairperson, Sir.

Mrs. Perrine-Bégué: I am glad to know Mr. Chairperson, Sir. I would like to ask the Commissioner, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, if she is aware that there is a comprehensive plan which has been designed jointly by the Regional Government, IFAD and the beneficiaries being given that the site has a highly touristic bearing, just facing the Mt. Limon mapping.

Mrs M. T. Clair: No, Mr. Chairperson, Sir.

Mrs Perrine-Bégué: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I would like to ask the Commissioner whether she will look into the matter being given that there was a commitment between the government - as this site is for government - and the beneficiaries to make sure that the site is being uplifted. This site can become an eyesore with these persons operating there. There is a comprehensive plan to ensure that this site becomes another touristic site.

Mrs M. T. Clair: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, as I said earlier, the work will be completed by February 2008. So we wait until the work is completed. And it is the policy of this Government to decide what we want to do with the site. We don't want to ponder over what has been done in the past. We are a new Government; we have new policies. New decisions have to be taken and we don't have to follow all that had been done before. The project will be completed by 04 February 2008. We are going to decide what we will do with that project, whether it is for tourism, for the benefit of women's associations and whatever.

Mrs Perrine-Bégué: Mr. Chairperson, Sir there are no *quarante solution* for this tourist site; and the beneficiaries are poor people who cannot uplift the

landscape. Being given that we have already a plan that is conceptualized, will the Commissioner look into the matter? Because after all it has to do with Rodrigues and it has to do with public funds.

Mrs M. T. Clair: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I will see, but I am not promising anything.

CAMP DU ROI - CULVERT

(No. B/218) Mrs. A. Perrine-Bégué (First Local Region Member of St. Gabriel) asked the Commissioner responsible for Public Infrastructure as regards the culvert situated between the Porto Rico restaurant and one Mr. Tonio Meunier's residence at Camp du Roi if he is aware of major flooding occurring during rainy season which affect the whole village and the road traffic during, and in view of the forthcoming raining season, would he state if –

- (a) the necessary infrastructural works are being considered, thereon;
- (b) appropriate works will be undertaken upstream of the culvert to prevent flooding of houses situated in the vicinity of the upper part of the river.

The Commissioner for Public Infrastructure (Mr. F.A. Grandcourt): Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I wish to inform the House that the culvert located near Porto Rico restaurant is made up of circular concrete pipes of 900 millimeter diameter. The hydraulic section of the culvert has been calculated to cater for water flow during normal season.

However, during cyclonic season, debris especially branches coming from upstream may block the flow, thus causing flooding in the vicinity of the culvert. It is also noted that the width of the river where it meets the main road, has been reduced by eroded soil.

With regard to parts (a) and (b), a topographical survey has already been carried out to identify remedial measures that can be implemented. It is the policy of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly to tackle the issue by a holistic approach. Since dredging works will be carried out at Pointe Monier shortly to accommodate a fishing port, the following works will be carried out along the river -

- (i) the desiltation of the river to enlarge its width and depth;

- (ii) the construction of gabion dykes to act as debris and silt trap.

By so doing, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, the possibility of the culvert to be blocked by debris and hence, resulting in flooding will be greatly reduced and thus enabling the respected Member to drive safely there.

AIR MAURITIUS FLIGHTS/RODRIGUES - AIR TICKETS

(No. B/219) Mrs. A. Perrine-Bégué (First Local Region Member of St. Gabriel) asked the Chief Commissioner responsible for Tourism as regards the major increase recently in the cost of the air ticket on the Air Mauritius flights towards Rodrigues, will he inform the House whether -

- (a) this decision will have an impact of the tourism sector in Rodrigues;
- (b) the increase was priorily discussed with the relevant authorities in Mauritius and the Rodriguan stakeholders, and if so, when and with whom, and
- (c) what was the outcome of those discussions.

The Chief Commissioner: My office is continuously monitoring feedbacks from tourism operators and analysing the statistics for tourism arrivals to gauge the effect that this increase is having on our industry. For the month of November 2007, despite the increase in airfares we have maintained a 4.5% increase in tourist's arrivals compared to the same period last year. The average increase of 14% over the year is expected to be maintained for this month of December as well.

However, in order to counteract any negative effects that the increase in airfare might have on our local tourism industry, the *office du tourisme* is putting much effort on the promotion of tourism. Though, it is inevitable worldwide to prevent airfare increases with fuel cost always on the rise, my office is ensuring that the promotion of Rodrigues as a tourist destination is carried out systematically and professionally to counteract any negative effects that such increases might bring in the industry. With proper promotional measures, we expect to counteract this increase and any forthcoming increase in airfares. Our objective is to maintain a 15% increase in tourist arrivals over the next years so as to reach the targeted 100,000 tourists. Therefore, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, despite increases in air fares, it is

expected that our promotion strategy will counteract such increases and bring in more tourists to Rodrigues.

As regards part (b), Mr. Chairperson, Sir, the answer is no. The Rodrigues Regional Assembly does not officially represent any airline operator in Rodrigues.

Given the answer to (b) is no, the answer to part (c) does not arise.

However, for the information of the House, I wish to inform that when my office became aware of the increase, which was communicated to us by telephone by the local representative of Air Mauritius, we immediately sent a letter to Air Mauritius, to the Prime Minister & Minister of Rodrigues and to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Tourism, Leisure & External Communications for Air Mauritius to either hold or review its decision. We were, however, informed that the increase is inevitable given that the worldwide airline industry was facing the brunt of soaring fuel prices, which is adversely affecting operating costs. As such, they have no choice but to pass on part of the fuel increase to the passenger by increasing the fuel surcharge from 14 euros to 24 euros per leg, that is, an increase of Rs900 (15%) for the return fare on the route.

Mrs. Perrine-Bégué: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I would like to ask the Chief Commissioner whether this matter has been discussed with the Rodriguan stakeholders or the tourist operators who are in Rodrigues, actually.

The Chief Commissioner: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, as I have said no discussion was engaged between private operators and myself. I don't know whether they had had discussions with other people.

Mrs. Perrine-Bégué: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I would like to ask the Chief Commissioner whether he has received any representation from any local institutions dealing with tourism here, from travel agents specifically from Mauritius or Reunion Island as regards this major increase in the airfare.

The Chief Commissioner: No, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I have not received any correspondence at my office on this issue from the persons the Member is mentioning.

Mrs. Perrine-Bégué: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, is the Chief Commissioner aware that even before the increase of airfare for our principal reservoir of tourists, that is, Reunion Island, the airfare between Reunion Island and Rodrigues costs at

least the same as the airfare between Reunion Island and France? Will this matter not impede on our tourist industry in the long run?

The Chief Commissioner: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, as far as I know, a flight between Reunion Island and France is an internal flight; it can not be compared between a flight from Reunion Island to Rodrigues which is an international flight. What the Member should know is the fact that the increase of air ticket has not caused *per se* a reduction in the number of tourist arrivals. It may have affected the potential number of tourists who come to Rodrigues. But the fact is that there has been no reduction during the month of November. The airfare was increased at the beginning of November. We see that there has been no decrease in the number of tourist's arrivals; and I'm proud to say that this is due to our aggressive campaign of promotion and presence in the international fares, in specialist magazines and also the efforts the Commission of Tourism is making, and will make, to promote our tourist destination.

Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I have read somewhere that there are lots of persons who are on the waiting list to go on space. Mr. Chairperson, Sir, the price of this pleasure I would say is in itself astronomical. What I want to say is that even though the price may increase, we don't want it to increase. Even though the price is high compared to other destinations, we cannot, at our level here in Rodrigues - or even in Mauritius - have a control because of the increase in the price of petrol worldwide. We should take this into account; we are making all our efforts to make Rodrigues shine better in the tourism market. We think that tourists will keep having Rodrigues as one of their preferences.

GRANDE MONTAGNE COLLEGE - TOILET BLOCK

(No. B/220) **Mrs. F. G. Pierre Louis (First Local Region Member of Grande Montagne)** asked the Commissioner responsible for Education whether he is aware that one toilet block of Grande Montagne College is not operational, and if so, since when and what remedial measures has been taken by his Commission.

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr. Chairperson Sir, the information is as follows -

Yes, I was officially informed since April 2007. The matter has been referred to the Commission for Public Infrastructure and to date, we are still

awaiting the technical advice regarding the future course of action. Upon receipt of same, necessary action will be taken accordingly.

Mr. Baptiste: I would like to ask the Deputy Chief Commissioner whether he would consider this matter as urgent because according to my information the second toilet block now is also facing overflow due to the pressure.

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Yes, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, as I have just said, as soon as I get the advice I will take urgent action.

SKILLING AND RESKILLING PROGRAMME - TRAINEES

(No. B/221) Mrs. F. G. Pierre Louis (First Local Region Member of Grande Montagne) asked the Chief Commissioner with regard to the placement of the 245 newly recruited trainees, under the Skilling and Reskilling programme, would he state -

- (a) whether there has been any changes in the posting of the trainees;
- (b) what activities are being carried out by the trainees, and
- (c) would he table the different training programmes which will be delivered to the trainees.

The Chief Commissioner: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, as regards part (a) of the question, the answer is yes. As regards part (b), since the enlistment on 01 October 2007 - even though some people have been to the ICAC - the trainees have been involved in the following exercises -

- (1) rehabilitation of rivers, cutting down of trees in river beds and the removal of debris and waste along Rivière Pistache, Rivière Bouteille, Rivière Bambous, Rivière Baie aux Huitres, Rivière Anse Raffin, Rivière Saint Louis, Rivière Citron and Rivière Port Sud Est.
- (2) Maintenance of gabion works at St. Dor, Rivière Banane and Rivière Citron.
- (3) Desilting and maintenance of springs at Anse Raffin, Source Tigomme, Gravières, Orange and Eau Vannée.

- (4) Construction of retaining walls along embarkment of Rivière Bambous.
- (5) Cleaning of reclaimed land at Oyster Bay, “ça oussi dimoune pas conné”.
- (6) Construction of track road, weeding and fixing of fencing poles at Saint Gabriel Livestock station.
- (7) Construction of stands for agricultural fare 2007 and construction of public toilets at Baie du Nord and now starting at Anse aux Anglais and more coming at Grand Baie.

As announced in my Budget Speech, these trainees are attached to the Natural Resources Rehabilitation Programme for the conservation of biodiversity, soil, water and the marine ecosystem as well as the work sites where they will be trained in various ways related to sustainable management of natural resources including masonry, forestry, pasture development, agriculture, animal husbandry, carpentry, plumbing and pipe fittings operations of heavy equipment, landscaping etc.

Mrs. Gaspard-Pierre Louis: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I would like to know from the Chief Commissioner, given that the programme itself is meant for the skilling and reskilling of the trainees, how would these people be empowered by cutting down trees, “*nettoyage des rivières*” so that after the one year contract they can become more employable?

The Chief Commissioner: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, the memory of the Member is short. Maybe she should be aware of communications the Minority Leader addressed to the Human Resource Development Council about the fact that we are employing these people arbitrarily etc, etc. We have not been able to have the precious support of the Human Resource Development Council because of the intervention of some higher politicians in Mauritius. But what we are going to say, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, is that these persons are proud where they are. They are, for the time being, doing on the job training under the supervision of experienced and responsible government gangmen, foremen, etc. They are, for the time being, acquainting themselves with discipline, coming to work early, staying on the...

(Interruptions)

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson, Sir.

Mrs. Gaspard-Pierre Louis: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I would like to know whether it is true that among the trainees attached to the livestock at Baie Topaze there are people holding the government store.

The Chief Commissioner: I am not aware, Mr. Chairperson, Sir. What I can say is that I trust these persons; and any person, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, whether on placement or of any arrangement made, is working under government policies is bound by the Personal Management Manual to respect the rules and regulations of the public service. I repeat that I am proud - we are proud - of the contribution these people are making in the development process of Rodrigues.

SPORT ACTIVITIES – BUDGETARY PROVISION

(No. B/222) Mr. N. Lisette (First Local Region Member of Baie aux Huitres) asked the Commissioner responsible for Youth and Sports as regards the Recurrent Budget for the Financial Year 2007/2008 under the item votes “Promotion of Sports Activities” and “Major International Sports Events” he would -

- (a) state the total amount of money spent under each item vote from July 2007 to date per sports discipline;
- (b) table and give full details of the amount of money spent, if any, under each item vote by each Regional Sports Committee for the Indian Ocean Island Games;
- (c) table the amount left and/or earmarked to be spent per Regional Committee up to June 2008.

The Commissioner for Youth and Sports (Mr. J.C. Agathe) Mr. Chairperson, Sir, as the House is aware, a provision of Rs4.15 m. and Rs0.5 m. respectively, has been made under the item-vote ‘*Promotion of Sports Activities*’ and ‘*Major International events*’ for the current financial year. These funds have been provided to enable my Commission to meet expenses relating to sport activities. The amount spent from July 2007 to date per sport discipline under the item ‘Promotion of Sport Activities’ is as follows -

<u>Sports Discipline</u>	<u>Money spent</u>
Athletics	425,837.98
Badminton	13,097.00
Boxe Française	4,695.00
Basket Ball	32,775.00
Boxing	210,198.00
Cycling	40,432.00
Football	303,677.00
Handball	119,580.00
Judo	384,501.00
Kickboxing	44,136.00
Lawn Tennis	3,250.00
Petanque	24,758.00
Swimming	315.00
Table Tennis	24,412.00
Volleyball	323,035.97
Wrestling	499,994.62

As regards the item-vote '*Major International Events*', a total amount of Rs196,000 has been spent, to reward medallists of the 7th Indian Ocean Island Games, as follows -

	Rs
Athletics	88,000.00
Boxing	4,000.00
Judo	42,000.00
Wrestling	<u>62,000.00</u>

Total	<u>196,000.00</u>
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An amount of Rs300,000 was also used under the item to meet expenses to enable the official delegation from Rodrigues to attend the 7th Indian Ocean Island Games in Madagascar. I am tabling the details as requested at parts (b) (**Appendix VI**) and (c) of this question indicating expenses incurred for the 7th Indian Ocean Island Games and budgetary details of each Regional Sports Committee (**Appendix VII**).

Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I must point out that the preparation and training of athletes for the 7th Indian Ocean Island Games have had a major impact on

our budget, particularly under the item-vote '*Promotion of Sports Activities*' under which a total of Rs680,522 has been spent from the current budget to meet expenses in relation to the games as described in the tables which have been tabled.

Consequently, Athletics, Judo, Wrestling and Boxing which were represented in the games are now being affected as their budgetary provision has been almost exhausted in spite of an increase in the amount allocated to them with respect to last year. I must also inform the House that our request for additional provision for the 7th Indian Ocean Island Games was not entertained up to now during pre-budgetary negotiation at the Ministry of Finance. This situation has been clearly explained to the president of the different Sports Regional Committees during a meeting, which I had with them in September last concerning budget allocation and during which they have been invited to prioritise their activities according to funds allocated to them. They have also been explained that opportunity for additional funding provision from my Commission for their sport activities is very limited at this stage.

Mr. Lisette: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, when I look at the table that the Commissioner has just tabled, I see that some disciplines from Regional Committees have negative balances, for example, wrestling has spent all its money and I should say there is a lack of Rs44,709. Being given that we are still six months to go up to the next financial year, how will the Commissioner ensure that these athletes will participate in competitions locally or at national level?

Mr. Agathe: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, everybody in Rodrigues, and in Mauritius, is very proud of the success that wrestling has brought to the Republic of Mauritius because athletes from wrestling have won the first three gold medals. And Mr. Chairperson, Sir, at our Commission, we have to encourage disciplines with positive results. But as I have said in my reply, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, our request for an additional provision for the item "7th Indian Ocean Island Games" has not been entertained. But even though, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, we have managed to help the athletes who want to form part in the games; and of course we are proud of their performance.

But unfortunately, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, as I have said also, funds are very limited and I have to manage according to the fund made available by the Commissioner for Finance. I am sorry for their next competition because we are

now are now in December they have to go up to June. I'll have to make a request to the Chief Commissioner for a reallocation.

Mr. Lisette: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, we also are very proud of the performance of our athletes and I will seize this opportunity to heartily encourage them in their endeavours. But nevertheless, I have to ask the question. Maybe I am going to rephrase it. Some regional committees are left without money and I take the case, for example, of table tennis, which is left with Rs588. Does the Commissioner mean that from January to June 2008 these committees are not going to organise any competition at local level due to lack of funds?

Mr. Agathe: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, monthly meetings are held with regional committees at the level of my Commission. And I ask all regional committees to prioritise their activities according to the funds made available to them. I don't interfere in the activities that they organize, because they are autonomous.

Mr. Lisette: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I do understand that the regional committees are autonomous, but the budget remains at the level of the Commission. How far does the Commission scrutinise the request of the regional committees to ensure that no complete use of the fund is made before the financial year?

Mr. Agathe: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, as I said the regional committees are autonomous, so they don't have to rely only on the Commission in order to get fund. They can raise funds by organising different activities in order to meet their expenses.

At 12.30 the sitting was suspended

On resuming at 1.15 p.m. with the Chairperson in the Chair

SPORTS - ACTION PLAN

(No. B/223) Mr. N. Lisette (First Local Region Member of Baie aux Huitres) asked the Commissioner responsible for Youth and Sports with regard to the Action Plan formulated by his Commission he would, for the benefit of the House -

- (a) table a copy of same;

- (b) state how far the local stakeholders were involved in its formulation.

The Commissioner for Youth and Sports (Mr. J. C. Agathe): Mr. Chairperson, Sir, it is confirmed that my Commission is in the process of defining an action plan for period 2008/2011 for the development of sports in Rodrigues. The action plan is being prepared on the basis of issues and proposals raised during working sessions and meetings which I had with officers of my Commission and representatives of sports regional committees to whom a draft copy has been handed over on 14 November 2007 for comments. So far, no comments have been received and the plan is being finalised for release. A copy will be tabled in this Assembly shortly once it is finalized (**copy available in Library**).

Mr Lisette: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, if I understand the Commissioner for Youth and Sports well, up to now, the action plan for sports is not yet ready. It is under formulation. But I would like to refer the Commissioner for Youth and Sports to the press release of the Executive Council of 16 November 2007 under the chairmanship of Mr. Jabeemissar wherein it is stated that “the Executive Council has taken note of the action plan for period 2008/2012 on the development of sports in Rodrigues formulated by the Commission of Youth and Sports”. The action plan has been prepared in consultation with all stakeholders in Mauritius and Rodrigues. If I refer to the press release of the Executive Council, the action plan has already been prepared and the regional committees have taken part in its formulation. The Commissioner is now telling us that the action plan is under preparation. Which one is true? Is it the statement of the Commissioner or the press release of the Executive Council?

Mr. Agathe: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, maybe the respected Member has not listened well to what I have said. I will assure the Member the action plan will be released on the 28th.

Mr. Lisette: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, with regard to the brief action plan which has been sent to the regional committees, I would like to ask the Commissioner how much attention has been given for disabled athletes.

Mr. Agathe: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, it will be released on the 28th. I’ll invite the Member to wait and he will get a copy for himself.

RODCLEAN CO. LTD – PUBLIC OFFICERS, VEHICLES, ETC

(No. B/224) Mr. N. Lisette (First Local Region Member of Baie aux Huitres) asked the Commissioner responsible for Environment whether, in regard to Rodclean Co. Ltd, he would state -

- (a) the number of government vehicles and any resources attached/working with Rodclean Company Ltd;
- (b) the number of public officer/s, stating their respective grades, who have been/are attached/working with Rodclean Company Ltd;
- (c) the immediate supervising officer/s of these public officers, and
- (d) the item vote from which fuel, salaries, overtime and any other benefits are being paid.

The Commissioner for Environemnt (Mr. F. A. Grandcourt:

Mr.Chairperson, Sir, I wish to inform the House that no government vehicles are attached with Rod Clean Co. Ltd. I would like to point out, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, that the government vehicles attached to the Solid Waste Management Unit are being used for the collection and transportation of solid wastes. The daily programme of work for the collection and transportation of waste was discussed with the Manager of Rod Clean Co. Ltd. and the officers of the Solid Waste Management Unit prior to its implementation. It should be noted that in the past the Solid Waste Management Unit offered the same services to part of the island but now this scavenging service has been extended to cover the whole island, until such time when the company acquires all its vehicles.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, I wish to inform the House that an agreement between Rod Clean Company Ltd. and the Rodrigues Regional Assembly was signed with respect to the use of waste carriers of the Commission of Public Infrastructure and the service of scavengers/loaders of Rod Clean Ltd for the proper collection of waste across the island.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, with regard to part (b), no public officers are attached or working with the Rod Clean Co. Ltd. and therefore, the question related to part (c) does not arise.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, with regard to part (d), I wish to point out that an amount of Rs7 m was earmarked for “Refuse Collection” under vote item 05-102.065 for the financial year 2007/2008 and therefore, all the operating costs are being met under this item.

Mr. Lisette: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, being given that the vehicles are under the Solid Waste Management Unit, I would like to ask the Commissioner if there are any workers of the Rod Clean who are attached to these lorries.

Mr Grandcourt: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, as I have just said there has been agreement between Rod Clean and the Rodrigues Regional Assembly for the use of waste carriers so that the loaders can work on these lorries.

Mr. Lisette: Can the Commissioner elaborate on the conditions as per the agreement of these officers from the Rod Clean to be on these lorries?

Mr Grandcourt: The services are between Rod Clean, which is a Private Company and the Rodrigues Regional Assembly. So I don't think it would be wise to give all these information to this House.

Mr Lisette: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, it is an issue related to the Rodrigues Regional Assembly, which provides the budget. Anyway, with regard to part (c) of the question, I would like to ask the Commissioner for Environment whether he has received any complaint from any officer concerning molestation of public officers by supervisors of the Rod Clean Ltd.

Mr Grandcourt: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I have been informed by the Departmental Head of my Commission that there has been an incident. The driver of GMR 530 reported to his office that he had some problems with an employee of Rod Clean. After investigation and information obtained from the company, the Departmental Head is looking into the matter, as it is an administrative matter. So, he is looking into it.

Mr Lisette: Is it true Mr. Chairperson, Sir, that the driver has been requested, in a meeting held at the Commission for Public Infrastructure, to report directly in the morning to the supervisor?

Mr Grandcourt: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I am not aware of this.

Mr Lisette: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, the letter that the driver sent to the Commission for Public Infrastructure stated clearly that he has been asked, in a meeting, to report to the supervisor of Rod Clean Ltd. This is a fact...

(Interruptions)

Yes, I'm coming with the question. I would like to ask the Commissioner, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, being given that the workers of Solid Waste Management Unit attached to Rod Clean Ltd. have to report directly under the supervision of the supervisor, who monitors their overtime and any benefits?

Mr. Grandcourt: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, we have a Transport Unit at the Commission; these drivers have their supervisor and it is the supervisor who is, if I am not mistaken, supervising their work.

Mrs. Perrine-Bégué: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I would like to ask the Commissioner till when the Rodrigues Regional Assembly will continue to sponsor Rod Clean Ltd. in terms of equipment, fuel, etc. When will this agreement end? And what is the target set for the purchase of their own equipment?

Mr. Grandcourt: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I can't answer all the questions related to the company because it is a private company. The Member should know that.

Mrs. Perrine-Bégué: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, can I know which Commission or which institution signed the agreement on behalf of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly with Rod Clean?

Mr. Grandcourt: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, the agreement was prepared and has been vetted by the legal adviser; and it was signed between the Director and the Commissioner for Environment, who is myself.

Mrs. Perrine-Bégué: This means that the Commissioner knows the text of this agreement. Can he tell the House, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, what are the main issues that have been raised?

(Interruptions)

This is not a new question; it is related to the original question. Can we know the time frame set for this agreement to lapse?

Mr. Grandcourt: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I would like to invite the respected Member to come with a substantive question. I'll be very pleased to answer the question.

SEA CUCUMBER - SURVEY

(No. B/225) Mr. N. Lisette (First Local Region Member of Baie aux Huitres) asked the Chief Commissioner as regards the collection/fishing of sea cucumber in the lagoon of Rodrigues since last year, would he state whether -

- (a) any assessment has been made of its impact on the marine ecosystem;
- (b) there has been any change in the number and population density of the creatures, and if so, whether any record has been compiled especially regarding the commercially exploited species.

(Interruptions)

Mr. Chairperson: Last question. Order, please! Chief Commissioner.

The Chief Commissioner: Yes, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, a survey of sea cucumber in the lagoon of Rodrigues was carried out from 16 to 28 July 2007 by the Albion Fisheries Research Centre together with the Fisheries Research and Training Unit. This is the first time that a complete survey is carried out in Rodrigues to gather information on the status of the stock of sea cucumber, its distribution and abundance in the lagoon of Rodrigues.

Part (b) of the question does not arise. However, a further survey will be conducted after the closing of the season that is the 31st of December, to see if there is any change in the population density of sea cucumber.

Mr. Lisette: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I would like to ask the Chief Commissioner whether he is aware that a complete survey was carried out by one student from the University of Wales as regards the exploitation and stock assessment of sea cucumber in Rodrigues in August 2006.

The Chief Commissioner: Yes, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, we must have this survey by Shoals in our records.

Mr. Lisette: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, can the Chief Commissioner say what was the stock of sea cucumber in the Rodriguan lagoon as at August 2006?

The Chief Commissioner: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, this is technical information. If the Member wanted a specific answer, he should have asked it in his main question, Mr. Chairperson, Sir.

Mr. Lisette: It is not technical information. Given that the survey tabled by the Chief Commissioner in this very House clearly spells out, in its references as well as in its different paragraphs, that the survey has been taken into account and for his information, I would like to point out that the survey was carried out in August 2006...

The Chief Commissioner: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, what is the question? Is it an essay? What does the Member want to do here? He wants to give scientific explanation, to make his own judgment or to ask questions. They are taking the time of the House to make their own judgment! He should please put his question!

(Interruptions)

Yes I did it, but I am no longer there.

(Interruptions)

Mr. Chairperson: There is no need for me to rule. It's clear.

Mr Lisette: Mr. Chairperson, Sir I'm not making any suggestion.

Mr. Chairperson: Ask your question!

Mr. Lisette: I am giving facts. Mr. Chairperson, Sir, the survey revealed that there were some 48 million sea cucumbers in the lagoon of Rodrigues in August 2006; and the survey carried out in August 2007, revealed that there were only 17 million sea cucumbers in the Rodriguan lagoon. How does the Chief Commissioner react to this?

(Interruptions)

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please! Allow the Chief Commissioner to answer.

The Chief Commissioner: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, the memory of the Members on other side is short. May I remind them when they were in the Government, they allowed the destruction of the lagoon. The answer is simple because when they were in government, they did not take the appropriate measures; they did not pass regulations. This is why the stock depleted; and we have had the courage.

(Interruptions)

Listen to me! *Le membre a parlé, il doit m'écouter maintenant.* We have taken the appropriate measures; we have introduced regulations and we have given permits to fishermen and to those who process. And we have introduced also a closed season that will take effect by 31st December. The answer is simple. They didn't take the appropriate measures. Therefore, the stock was reduced, Mr. Chairperson, Sir.

Mr. Lisette: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, this survey was carried out in August 2006 and the number of sea cucumbers at that time was 48 million.

(Interruptions)

Yes, the Chief Commissioner is an expert. This is why I am asking him how he reacts as regards this drastic decrease in the number of sea cucumbers.

The Chief Commissioner: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I don't know where the Member of the Minority got the figures. A study has been carried out by a student in the case of a research. I am not disputing the study. But I am sticking to the study which my office undertook, and which said that the population of sea cucumber is such and we can remove such tons per year. This is what we did, Mr. Chairperson, Sir. We have even allocated the recommended quota for the removal of sea cucumber from the lagoon. Mr. Chairperson, Sir, we read in a newspaper called "*Le Nouveau Rodriguais*" - I don't know which survey they have carried out - that 50 million "*bambaras*" have been removed. I don't know whether they have done the survey while diving or whether from the office at Mont Lubin, they have looked around Rodrigues to reach the figure of 50 million. Which figure should we stick to? We cannot say in this House that a student gave such figure. The survey was carried out under government supervision, with the Fisheries and Research Training Unit; this is my benchmark. Only this survey is relevant but is not binding upon us. Any other study, I would say, may be contested, because a student did it. The survey carried out in 2007 was done by a

group of persons and they used proper methods all around the lagoon in Rodrigues to evaluate the density of sea cucumber.

Mr. Lisette: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, being given that reference has been made to that student's study...

(Interruptions)

He has got an MSc in Biological Environment. Mr. Chairperson, Sir, being given that reference has been made to the research undertaken by the student, why such figure did not appear in the survey carried out by the Commission for a proper comparative study of sea cucumbers?

The Chief Commissioner: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, if I understand the logic of the Member - I don't know whether he has been to India to study maybe Chemistry or something like that - he takes a bottle and puts it here and then he says to himself that this is a rock and then he keeps on making his judgement about it. Mr. Chairperson, Sir, this is against scientific reasoning or a proper judgement that we can make. I repeat that the survey made by any other person is not a benchmark. It should have been recognised. It was not an official survey. Anybody holding an MSc or a Phd. or some other degree can say that there are 16 million *bambaras* in the lagoon. Another person can come with another figure. Which survey is best? I will take the survey that has been more complete, more accurate. I have been able to look at the work and the procedures that have been used for the survey by the team from Mauritius; and this is our reference. We are in the government; we can't take figures provided by Tom, Dick and Harry, Mr. Chairperson, Sir.

Mr. Lisette: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I would like to ask the Chief Commissioner how far his Commission is working with local stakeholders as regards the assessment of exploitation of sea cucumber?

The Chief Commissioner: I repeat Mr. Chairperson, Sir, that our government has taken the responsibility of this sector. The previous Regional Government was not even able to manage the sector. When we took over, the rate at which the uncontrolled exploitation was going on, sea cucumber would have been extinct in Rodrigues since a long time. When we took office we came immediately with regulations, which I think they did not even vote. They came to criticize, Mr. Chairperson, Sir. We have introduced regulations; we have introduced permits. And today, the exploitation of this resource is being done

sustainably. I repeat it is being done on a controlled and a sustainable basis, because not everybody is allowed to fish, to export or process it. So, we will wait and see; it will be closed at the end of 31st of December until March. We will look into the matter and see whether we can grant permits next year. If our study reveals that the population has replenished and there is need to grant permits, we will do so. This is a responsible government as compared to what was done before.

Mrs. Perrine-Bégué: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, as regards the supervision of the techniques of collection of sea cucumber, is the Chief Commissioner aware that some of those operators are spilling oil at sea to the extent that it is seen kilometres from here?

The Chief Commissioner: Anyway, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, this is illegal; and it should not be allowed. I don't think that this is very extensive. It may have happened in some areas. But the Fisheries Protection Service is doing its work.

Mrs. Perrine-Bégué: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I would like to ask the Commissioner one more question. As regards the other sea stakeholders, those persons who are not collecting *bambaras* but who are nevertheless earning their living at sea, I would like to know, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, whether they have made any representation as to a change in the colour of the sea.

The Chief Commissioner: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I go at sea very often, I must say everyday. I don't know whether the Member has got a problem in her eyes, but I have not noticed any change in the colour of the sea.

Mrs. Perrine-Bégué: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, on a point of explanation, I referred to other sea stakeholders and not to myself. Being a responsible Member, I do not go at sea like the sea stakeholder, but I listen to what people say. I put that question, because those persons have pointed out this problem to us. I am sure the Chief Commissioner listens to the other sea stakeholders and not to the sea cucumber operators.

The Chairperson: I take it that the Member did not just collect information and then put questions to the Chief Commissioner. She has verified her information; otherwise this would be irregular. Chief Commissioner, do you have a reply to this question?

The Chief Commissioner: No.

Mr. Chairperson: Time is over.

STATEMENT BY COMMISSIONER

AFRICAN SWINE FEVER

The Commissioner for Agriculture (Mr. L. A. Perrine): Mr Chairperson, Sir, concerning the different measures taken to prevent African Swine Fever from entering in Rodrigues, I would like to inform the House that up to now no case of this disease has been reported in Rodrigues. Ten blood samples from pigs at Baie Topaze Livestock Production Unit have been taken and sent to South Africa at Onderstepoort Veterinary Institute for testing the presence of the African Swine Fever. The blood samples were taken from five pigs recently imported from Mauritius and from pigs from other sections. My Commission has just received the result of this test and I am pleased to inform the House that all the tests are negative. A copy of the certificate from the Veterinary Institute is being circulated for the information of Members (**Appendix available in the Library**).

Since 12 December this year, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, Rodrigues has restarted exporting pigs to Mauritius. Up to now 61 head of pigs have been exported and the revenue from these exportations amounts to more than Rs300,000.

Mr. Chairperson, Sir, my Commission believes that exportation of pigs to Mauritius will help in revitalizing the pig industry in Mauritius for the benefit of our local pig breeders. As such all the necessary efforts are being made so that the exportation of pigs to Mauritius continues as it was in the past, that is, at the rate of 300 per month.

Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: Next item.

MOTION

FISHERMEN - FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

The Chief Commissioner: I beg to move the motion standing in my name, which reads as follows -

“Considering the extreme hardship being faced by professional fishermen in Rodrigues and the social problems arising therefrom,

Considering that in June 2006, Central Government changed the criteria for the payment of bad weather allowances to fishermen,

Considering that such decision resulted into drastic reductions in the amount payable to each fishermen,

Considering that the subdivisions of the lagoon around Rodrigues are impractical and do not reflect the daily conditions faced by fishermen,

Considering that the lagoon around Rodrigues has been depleted to a larger extent,

Considering that the budgetary provisions for ‘**assistance to fishermen**’ emanates from the item vote under the Commission for fisheries and that the Rodrigues Regional Assembly has autonomy in all matters relating to **Fisheries**,

Considering that the extreme hardship that the families and children of those fishermen have been facing, are actually facing and will face and that

the Rodrigues Regional Assembly has autonomy in matter of ‘**Family Welfare**’,

Considering the responsibility, commitment and willingness of the Executive Council to alleviate those hardships,

Considering the spirit and principle of autonomy in Rodrigues,

BE IT RESOLVED THAT THIS HOUSE DO HEREBY APPROVE

- (a) all the decisions taken so far by the Executive Council on the quantum of financial assistance paid to those fishermen;

- (b) the continued payment of financial assistance to in-lagoon fishermen and subsequently to their families to supplement if need be the allowances paid to them under the criteria established by the Central Government to the tune of one thousand and eighty five Rupees per month whichever is the higher;
- (c) the payment of financial assistance to the said in-lagoon fishermen for an additional month in December this year;
- (d) that the Commissioner responsible for finance be empowered to make such financial arrangements as would be necessary for implementation of items (a) to (c) above.”

The Deputy Commissioner rose and seconded.

Mr. Lisette: Mr. Chairperson, on a point of order. I want to direct that question to the Chair that as regards the resolutions of the Motion presented by the Chief Commissioner regarding financial assistance to fishermen that: firstly the Finance and Audit Act as amended by the Rodrigues Regional Assembly Act 2001 allows the Director of Audit to report upon examination of all accounts...

Mr. Chairperson: Is it a point of order?

Mr. Lisette: I am coming to the point. The Finance and Audit Act as amended by the Rodrigues Regional Assembly Act 2001 allows the Director of Audit to report, upon examination, all accounts of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly relating to public money of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly. The recent Audit Report made publicly largely criticized negatively...

Mr. Chairperson: I'll ask the Member to resume his seat. There is nothing in this Motion that has any bearing at all to the powers of the Director of Audit, to the report or to the content of the report that has just been released. So, I remind you that your point of order should be direct and clear. A point of order means that the Assembly is proceeding with something, which is contrary to the Standing Order that this House has approved. I am drawing your attention to this. If you want to rise on a point of order....

(Interruptions)

Yes, I agree this is a procedure in this House. The point of order is addressed to me, you should show me to what part you are drawing attention and to what Standing Order you are referring that this procedure is fringing.

Mr Lisette: This is what I wanted actually to come up with.

Mr. Chairperson: Yes, you have got to be precise, short and clear.

Mr. Lisette: Yes, I am coming with the point of order.

(Interruptions)

The Chairperson: Order! Allow the Member to raise his point of Order.

Mr. Lisette: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, what I wanted to say. .

(Interruptions)

Mr. Chairperson: Please, proceed.

Mr Lisette: Yes, I'm coming to it for sure. The Audit Report clearly stated that, as regards ...

(Interruptions)

Mr. Chairperson: You can't raise a point of order and you mention the Audit Report. There is nothing contained in this Standing Order which refers to the Audit Report.

Mr. Lisette: Yes, Mr. Chairperson, Sir...

(Interruptions)

Mr. Chairperson: The Member is rising on a point of Order, please.

The Chief Commissioner: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, if you would allow me, let me...

Mr. Chairperson: Yes, carry on.

/UNREVISED/

(Interruptions)

Mr. Lisette: The bad weather allowance, Mr. Chairperson, Sir has been
.....

(Interruptions)

Mr. Chairperson: This motion has nothing to do with the bad weather allowance. I drew your attention to this...

(Interruptions)

Assistance to fishermen is one thing; bad weather allowance is another. You can proceed.

Mr. Lisette: Yes, I want to proceed with my point of order.

Mr. Chairperson: If you are going to mention the Director of Audit's Report or to the bad weather allowance, then you will be insisting on tedious repetition and I will have to stop you even if you are rising on a point of order. Please, proceed.

Mr. Lisette: My second point, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, is as regards section...

(Interruptions)

Mr. Chairperson: What is the first point, please?

Mr. Lisette: As regards bad weather allowance.

Mr. Chairperson: We are not debating on bad weather allowance.

Mr Lisette: As regards financial assistance...

Mr. Chairperson: Please, use the proper words.

Mr. Lisette: It is with regard to financial assistance to fishermen. It has undergone severe criticism and we are being ...

(Interruptions)

Mr. Chairperson: No, you are still insisting on that point. I have been attentive to you; I have been patient to you. I have told you that this is not a point of order. If there is something wrong with the motion, you can make your point.

Mr. Lisette: Yes, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, section 39 (2) of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly Act states that the Executive Council has the power to refer to any matter as regards policy to the Prime Minister and to the Cabinet; and this has been done by the Cabinet and there has been no response, thereon.

Taking into account, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, that section 3 (2) of the RRA Act states that “the Rodrigues Regional Assembly Act shall exercise its function on behalf of Government of the Republic of Mauritius”, I am of the view that we cannot overrule a decision of Cabinet with regard to financial assistance to fishermen. This is why I think...

(Interruptions)

Mr. Chairperson: Before you proceed, let me tell you that you seem to challenge my decision of having allowed this motion on the Order Paper - this is one thing; and the second thing is that you stated in the Assembly that the Executive Council has referred the issue of financial assistance to fishermen to Mauritius. I don't know whether you have got reliable information that this is so and that the Government did not agree to it. Before making your point, you should have tabled or at least circulated documentary evidence that this is so. Then this would have been a starting point for your point of order. You cannot just surmise, hyphothesise and then you ask me to rule on the point of order. If you have some documentary evidence, I will be very glad to see it. If you do not have any, then your point of order cannot stand. You should have documentary evidenbce to prove your point.

The Chief Commissioner: Mr. Chairperson, Sir. I must say that I am very surprised by the latitude you have given to the Member to intervene three times on a point of order...

At this stage Members of the Minority side left the Assembly

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please! Chief Commissioner, you will agree with me that we've gone off limit. There will be no point of order. Will you proceed with your motion?

The Chief Commissioner: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, first and foremost I wish to table the legal advice from the Legal Adviser of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly who was consulted on 12 December 2007 regarding the labelling of this motion and he has said that this Motion is in order (**Document available in Library**).

M. le président, nous avons encore une fois la preuve que la minorité et le parti derrière, l'OPR, travaille contre les intérêts de Rodrigues. Alors que nous avons une motion importante pour débattre c'est à dire, une aide financière qu'on veut donner aux pêcheurs *over and above social security*, les membres de l'opposition trouvent prétexte pour quitter cette assemblée pour ne pas premièrement débattre et pour ne pas avoir l'embarras quand ils doivent voter cette motion.

C'est une preuve encore une fois que ces personnes sont contre les pêcheurs, sont contre l'intérêt de Rodrigues et sont en train de faire quelque chose de grave. Ils sont en train de mettre en cause l'autonomie politique de Rodrigues en essayant, avec l'aide de certaines personnes à Maurice, de faire ces personnes s'ingérer dans les affaires de Rodrigues et de bafouer l'autonomie de Rodrigues.

I will table another letter, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, from a Permanent Secretary, which has been copied to me, intimating you not to proceed with this motion. C'est quelque chose de très grave qu'il faut que l'assemblée regarde. Un certain Permanent Secretary écrit au Chairperson pour dire: « the Assembly should not proceed with the Motion ». A quel niveau sommes nous arrivés aujourd'hui ? Quelle autonomie avons nous à Rodrigues si le gouvernement régional de Rodrigues n'est pas en mesure d'aider les pêcheurs Rodriguais ? Nous ne voulons pas casser les décisions du gouvernement. Le gouvernement a mis quatre zones, le gouvernement a modifié le critère du vent etc, cela est appliqué. Nous avons voulu discuter avec le ministre Boolell et le ministre des finances ; nous avons écrit au Premier ministre. Malheureusement ils ont été incapables de modifier ces critères. Ce que nous allons faire, c'est que nous allons donner, au delà de l'application de ces critères, une certaine aide financière aux pêcheurs *in-lagoon* pour qu'ils puissent rattraper le temps, développer la pêche hauturière et travailler. Après le cyclone Kalundé, on a payé R 3,500 aux planteurs pendant trois mois. D'où cet argent est-il sorti ? Cet argent est sorti des caisses de l'Etat.

Est-ce qu'on a eu besoin d'une loi de la sécurité sociale pour payer cela? On est en train de payer les compensations aux planteurs à Maurice chaque fois qu'il y a un problème, une calamité ou bien un problème concernant un groupe. On paye quelque chose ou bien on essaye de faire quelque chose pour eux. Pourquoi l'Assemblée Régionale ne peut pas payer une certaine somme pour supplémenter le *social security* qu'ils reçoivent? On va faire un ré-arrangement budgétaire pour faire ce paiement. Nous allons faire des sacrifices. On n'est pas en train de modifier le *Social Security Act*. Nous n'avons pas le droit de faire cela. La section 26 nous dit clairement - *first schedule* - que "*Social Security is a matter of Administration*" et que nous sommes en train de respecter.

M. le président, nous prenons notre responsabilité. Nous disons que l'application du ce *social security*, pour nous, résulte en une certaine *imbalance* et nous avons totalement le droit - et je dirais le devoir - d'aider ces pêcheurs. On va leur payer environ R 1000/R 1085 par mois - la somme va arriver jusqu'à R 1085 dépendant de ce qu'ils reçoivent comme *bad weather allowance* pour qu'ils puissent, je vais dire, survivre à Rodrigues. Tout le monde sait qu'elle est la situation des pêcheurs à Rodrigues. Qu'est-ce qui a été fait M. le président? Quel rôle la minorité joue aujourd'hui? Ils sont soi-disant le père de l'autonomie. A chaque fois qu'on doit prendre une décision courageuse M. le président - et là je dois remercier tous les membres de la majorité et les membres du Mouvement Rodriguais - ils ont d'une seule voix expliquer qu'il doit y avoir une décision prise en faveur des pêcheurs locaux; et la Rodrigues Regional Assembly Act, la constitution - que cela plaise ou non - nous autorise à le faire. On a tenté de nous empêcher d'utiliser les outils que nous avons en faveur de notre population pour le bien-être d'une catégorie de personnes. Et je reviens sur le rôle de l'opposition. L'opposition a envoyé le *Order Paper* à Maurice. L'honorable Rama Valayden, Attorney General, écrit au Ministère de Rodrigues pour dire à un fonctionnaire *to direct the Chairperson* d'enlever la motion: « *The Regional Assembly should not proceed with this Motion* ». C'est un viol, M. le président, de l'autonomie de Rodrigues; l'autonomie de Rodrigues veut dire que les affaires Rodriguaises soient décidées à Rodrigues par les Rodriguais, par les institutions Rodriguaises. Et cela je le dénonce.

Je vous félicite, M. le président, pour votre prise de position et la lettre que vous avez envoyée à M. Bonomally, *Permanent Secretary*. Nous aussi nous recevons beaucoup de lettres pour nous dire de faire ceci ou cela. Ce n'est pas nécessaire qu'on prenne en compte tout ce qu'on nous dit parce que Rodrigues a une identité autonome et il n'y a pas de conflit avec le gouvernement central parce qu'on n'est pas en train - malgré le fait qu'on a essayé de négocier

et ils n'ont pas accepté - de casser une décision du gouvernement. On est en train de prendre des mesures, je dirais, accompagnatrices pour la sécurité sociale. Qu'est ce que la minorité fait ? La minorité préfère quitter la Chambre ; ils n'ont jamais voulu aider les pêcheurs, M. le président quand ils avaient la possibilité à l'époque de prendre certaines décisions pour accompagner financièrement les pêcheurs. Ils n'ont jamais voulu prendre des décisions et aujourd'hui ils viennent avec des arguments *farfelus* comme le rapport du directeur de l'audit, etc. C'est normal que le rapport de l'audit va dire qu'on va dépenser de l'argent etc. Mais qu'est-ce que c'est, M. le président, R 10 millions pour l'Etat Mauricien ? On avait fait imprimer des billets qui n'étaient pas bons pour R 50 millions. Combien de gaspillage il y a au niveau de la République de Maurice ? Qu'est ce que c'est que R 10 millions pour une année pour deux mille familles de pêcheurs ? Est-ce que ça va coûter beaucoup au Premier ministre de Maurice, au secrétaire financier ou au ministre des finances, etc ?

(Interruptions)

Mr. Chairperson: Be careful about what you are saying.

The Chief Commissioner: Qu'est-ce que c'est que R 10 millions qui vont rester dans le budget du Regional Assembly à Rodrigues. C'est une honte pour la République de Maurice de ne pas vouloir entendre la voix autonome de Rodrigues et la voix officielle du Chef commissaire du Conseil Exécutif de Rodrigues ! Mais ce n'est pas pour autant qu'on est en train de modifier les décisions du gouvernement. *We know that we can't do it.* Mais on est en train d'adopter une mesure accompagnatrice. On reçoit des menaces pour nous dire qu'il ne faut pas payer ; on a menacé les fonctionnaires ; et si jamais cette motion est implémentée, j'espère que les fonctionnaires concernés vont appliquer cette mesure. Premièrement ils vont me consulter ; et deuxièmement ils vont comprendre que nous ne sommes pas en train de modifier l'application du Social Security Act ou Social Security Regulations à Rodrigues M. le président. Tout au contraire nous les respectons, mais nous adoptons une mesure pour accompagner ces pêcheurs jusqu'à la fin de l'année financière, pour les aider à vivre et à survivre dignement. C'est cela la question qu'il faut se poser ; et on est autonome dans le domaine de la pêche et de *family welfare* ; et nous sommes tout à fait en mesure de prendre certaines décisions allant dans le sens de cette aide aux pêcheurs.

Qu'est-ce que l'opposition est venu faire aujourd'hui ? L'opposition n'a jamais voulu aider les pêcheurs comme je vous ai dit. L'opposition est allée à Maurice pour faire toute sorte de déclaration et par la suite nous avons reçu des

querry à Rodrigues. Ecoutez ce que l'honorable Alex Nancy a dit à l'Assemblée nationale à Maurice, M. le président - il n'a pas honte de publier cela dans son journal à Rodrigues : *Our whole budget of Rs1.2 billion comes from Mauritius. People are making a lot of sacrifice here sending that money there.* Je me demande si M. Nancy représente Rodrigues ou bien une circonscription quelconque à l'Assemblée nationale à Maurice. C'est comme si Rodrigues est devenu le mendiant de la République. C'est faux, M. le président ! Rodrigues est une partie intégrante de la République, que l'Etat Mauricien le veuille ou non.

Il faut mettre de l'argent dans toutes les circonscriptions mauriciennes. Tous ces problèmes surviennent parceque ces gens qui étaient dans l'opposition ont accepté, de façon aveugle en 2006, sans qu'il y ait consultation profonde avec les pêcheurs pour la division du Rodrigues *lagoon* en quatre zones ; et cela a entraîné une réduction du *bad weather allowance*. A Maurice le *bad weather allowance* qui était de R 54 millions a été réduit et il est autour de R 44 millions. A Rodrigues c'était R 50 millions et est réduit à R 27 millions. Vous voyez bien que la réduction est relativement beaucoup plus à Rodrigues, alors que nous avons le même nombre de pêcheurs dans les deux entités. Mais qu'est-ce qui s'est passé après avec l'application de la mesure des quatre zones? J'ai en main le bulletin de la météo pour les pêcheurs à Rodrigues émis à 4.45 ce mardi 18 Decembre. Le bulletin donne les prévisions pour les prochaines 24 heures: *temps nuageux, du vent north d'est, la mer pou mauvais en dehors brisant et agiter dans le lagon ; banne sorti en mer déconseiller.* Mais on ne donne pas la météo pour chaque zone. *Who knows it!* Le pêcheur doit savoir s'il peut sortir en mer ou pas, parce que s'il ne sort pas à cause du mauvais temps, il va alors être payé le *bad weather allowance*, mais s'il va en mer en mauvais temps, il n'est pas payé. *I will table this because this is an absurdity again* parce qu'on a divisé le lagon en quatre, mais on n'a pas diviser le bulletin de la météo qui est nécessaire pour ajuster cela (**Document available in Library**). Et qu'est-ce que nous avons fait quand nous sommes venus ? Nous avons trouvé que l'application de cette mesure est injuste et nous avons avec l'accord verbal et impulsif du ministre de la pêche, payé ce qu'il fallait en plus pour soutenir ces pêcheurs. Mais suite au travail que certains dans l'opposition ont fait à Maurice - un travail machiavélique - pour nous empêcher de prendre certaines décisions, ils essayent de revenir en arrière de faire en sorte que les décisions concernant Rodrigues soient prises à Maurice. C'est ce qu'ils veulent, parce qu'ils ne sont pas au pouvoir aujourd'hui, M. le président. L'autonomie de Rodrigues est claire : les décisions doivent être prises par le Conseil Exécutif, et si nécessaire, par l'Assemblée régionale de Rodrigues. Donc, aujourd'hui nous avons une démission claire et nette, une violation des droits des pêcheurs par les membres de la minorité et un refus de soutenir cette

motion qui vise à aider et à soulager la souffrance des pêcheurs. Si l'opposition a préféré de s'en aller, c'est parce qu'elle est coupable, M. le président, de trahison envers Rodrigues et envers les pêcheurs de Rodrigues.

Merci, M. le president.

Mr. Chairperson: The Chief Commissioner has moved the motion standing in his name; there was a point of order. I take it that he has not made his summing up yet.

(Interruptions)

Yes, he was interrupted. The Deputy Chief Commissioner has the floor.

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I don't think there need much more explanation because the Chief Commissioner has given a broad outline of the situation and I fully support his stand and the stand of the majority side because as we know it is a question of policy. The Rodrigues Regional Act at section 26 part 1 "formulation and implementation of policy" states clearly that "the Regional Assembly in relation to Rodrigues be responsible for the formulation and implementation of policy in respect of matters set out in the fourth schedule". And in the fourth schedule part 16 clearly states that as far as Fisheries is concerned, the Rodrigues Regional Assembly is fully autonomous. Therefore Mr. Chairperson, Sir, our main concern today, as the Chief Commissioner clearly spelt out, is taking a decision about the fishermen in Rodrigues. We all know that the fisheries sector is not really productive, that although fishermen go at sea everyday, their catch is not good for them to earn their own living out of it. Therefore, Mr. Chairperson, Sir this Regional Government has taken the decision to supplement what the fishermen already have as bad weather allowance and so on. So, I think it is fully justified.

Donc, M. le président, aujourd'hui nous nous voyons devant un fait historique. Les personnes qui ont toujours clamé être les défenseurs et initiateurs de l'autonomie de Rodrigues, aujourd'hui quand ils voient que c'est la nouvelle majorité qui défend l'intérêt de Rodrigues, l'autonomie de Rodrigues, ils se voient coïncider. C'est pourquoi ils ont préféré jeter les armes et ont avoué qu'ils sont vaincus, M. le président ; et c'est vraiment déplorable pour une opposition qui se dise être en faveur de la population de Rodrigues. Ils doivent rendre compte devant l'histoire ! Ils n'ont pas donné leur support aux pêcheurs dans cette situation très difficile, M. le président. Nous savons les difficultés que ces pêcheurs

auront à la fin de l'année, non seulement pour faire face aux festivités, mais surtout pour envoyer leurs enfants à l'école en janvier. La plupart d'entre eux ne pourront pas acheter les matériels scolaires pour pouvoir envoyer leurs enfants à l'école, M. le président. Je suis entièrement d'accord avec le Chef commissaire ; je le félicite pour son courage de venir de l'avant avec cette motion, malgré toutes les critiques, **malgré tous les bâtons qu'on a mis dans notre roue**

Merci, M. le président.

The Commissioner responsible for Social Security, Child Development, Family Welfare, Social Security (Administration), Women's Affairs, Poverty Alleviation (Mrs M. T. Clair): M. le président, permettez moi, en tant que commissaire de la sécurité sociale, de féliciter le Chef commissaire, *Leader of the House*, qui a eu le courage, comme venait de dire mon collègue, M. Jabeemissar, de venir avec cette motion. En tant que commissaire de la sécurité sociale, je suis très déçue par l'attitude de l'opposition, par la lettre qui vient d'un fonctionnaire du ministère de Rodrigues qui ne comprend pas l'autonomie de Rodrigues, qui ne comprend pas le fonctionnement de l'Assemblée régionale de Rodrigues. A la sécurité sociale, comme le Chef commissaire l'a dit, on a seulement l'administration ; et je suis bien placée pour le savoir. D'ailleurs je voudrais dire ici que pendant la période de fin d'année on va distribuer des matériels scolaires aux enfants sous l'item 'Welfare of Vulnerable Groups'. L'item '*Welfare of Vulnerable groups*' ne veut pas dire seulement les personnes qui ont une aide sociale, les personnes sans emploi ou celles qui reçoivent une pension. Il y a aussi le *financial assistance* qu'on donne aux familles en détresse. Aujourd'hui on voit, d'après les chiffres, que les pêcheurs sont en détresse. Et c'est pourquoi je suis parfaitement d'accord avec cette motion. On n'est pas en train de *breach the Social Aid Act of 1954 which has not been amended since*. Tout ce qu'on est en train de faire est en règle. Je voudrais faire référence encore une fois à la section 39 du RRA Act. M. Lisette qui est parti malheureusement, a parlé de la politique du Conseil Exécutif. Regarding policy, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, it is said at section 39, that –

“The Executive Council shall develop policy on matters relating to Rodrigues in relation to its function for submission to the Prime Minister. The Executive Council may from time to time refer to the Prime Minister specific matter of policy relating to Rodrigues for the consideration of Cabinet”

At section 40, it is said that –

“The Chief Commissioner shall keep the Prime Minister fully informed concerning the general conduct of the affairs of the Executive Council in relation to Rodrigues and shall furnish the Prime Minister with such information as he may request from time to time with respect, thereof”.

Ce qu'on déduit de cette section de la loi c'est que le Chef commissaire et l'Executive Council ont le devoir d'envoyer des informations, mais non pas pour être approuvées. Ce que je voudrais dire c'est que le gouvernement régional *which is governed by the principles of the Mouvement Rodriguais is the ruling party now*. Il y a certaines personnes qui n'arrivent pas à accepter cela, Mr. Chairperson, Sir.

Il faut savoir que sur une population de 38,000 personnes à Rodrigues il y a 2000 pêcheurs - et on ne prend pas en compte le nombre de pêcheurs amateurs et ceux qui gagnent leur vie en allant à la pêche. *Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I myself come from a family of fishermen, of which I am proud. My uncles, my brothers, my aunts and cousins are fishermen too. The Chief Commissioner himself stated that he is a fisherman.* Il est un redoutable pêcheur, vous le savez bien, un vrai loup de mer. Peut être il y a des personnes qui ne comprennent pas la dure réalité des pêcheurs. Je suis déjà allée à la pêche ; et nous savons tous que ce n'est pas un travail facile. Les pêcheurs ont à faire face à beaucoup de difficultés quand ils sont en mer. Personne n'a pensé à améliorer leur condition de vie ou bien à réduire leur souffrance. L'histoire va se souvenir que depuis l'année 1840, pendant la colonisation, avec George Jenner, comme District Magistrate, il y avait des problèmes en ce qui concerne la pêche. Il y avait la sécheresse et la plupart des fermiers avaient décidé de se tourner vers la mer pour avoir une vie décente. On avait passé des lois à cette époque pour qu'il y ait des réserves à Port Mathurin, à Baie aux Huîtres, à L'île aux Crabes pour protéger le lagon. Tous les Magistrats qui sont venus, M. le président - il y avait un certain Brouard, Genave, Rouillard entre autres - ont essayé de trouver des moyens afin de protéger le lagon en même temps d'assurer une vie meilleure aux pêcheurs. Mais malheureusement en 1919 il y avait une interdiction sur la pêche à la senne parcequ'on avait vu que cela faisait beaucoup de mal aux petits poissons. Mais les pêcheurs à cette époque - je pense qu'ils n'avaient pas une bonne éducation - avaient logé des pétitions pour faire réintroduire la pêche à la senne. Monsieur Grouard qui était le District Magistrate voulait avoir *a strict enforcement*, mais il y avait le Roy qui était responsable des fisheries. Il disait que si on interdit la pêche à la senne, les bénéfices qu'on récoltait iraient aux commerçants chinois qui faisait de la pêche illégale à cette époque ; et les pêcheurs ne gagnaient rien. Après ces pétitions, ils ont décidé de redéployer la pêche à la senne et c'était en 1939 que la pêche à la senne fut recommencé. Pour vous dire que depuis cette époque

les pêcheurs étaient au centre de plusieurs controverses et cela continue jusqu'aujourd'hui. C'est chagrinant de voir que la minorité n'ait pas daigné prendre sa responsabilité ! Et je suis sûre que plusieurs membres de l'autre côté de la Chambre vont acheter du poisson pour faire un bon carri de poisson - *banne habituer mange mouton la*. Mais personne ne sait le travail abattu par les pêcheurs et la souffrance quand on trouve *enne pecheur inne amene ene "beng" la cote , ene vielle rouge, ene carangue la queue jaune, ene gueule pavé*. On ne sait pas si le pêcheur a passé toute une nuit en mer pour pouvoir apporter ces poissons. *If we think of those families who have lost one of their family members at sea. Fishing indeed is a risky business, Mr. Chairperson, Sir; and fishermen are people to whom we shall bow our head low*. Il faut avoir beaucoup de respect pour les pêcheurs. Pourquoi on est venu avec cette motion ? Parce que nous croyons dans l'esprit d'autonomie de Rodrigues, dans la vision d'un Rodrigues libre et indépendant économiquement. Dans ce même élan nous nous servons de ce pouvoir que confère l'Assemblée régionale pour apporter un moment de bonheur aux pêcheurs et à leur famille, comme tous les parents et les enfants du monde,. On n'est pas en train de changer le *bad weather allowance* ; on est en train de donner une aide pour qu'ils puissent passer l'année et peut être plus tard continuer. Qu'est-ce que c'est que R 1085? *It is an incentive, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, for all the work that they have done so far*. Parcequ'on sait que les pêcheurs sont ceux qui sont au bas de l'échelle. Si vous allez à la Commission de la sécurité sociale, vous verrez - je ne peux pas donner toutes ces informations - le nombre de pêcheurs qui sont venus s'enregistrer pour avoir les matériels scolaires l'année prochaine. Même si on donne les livres gratuitement, même s'il y a le transport gratuit, il faut toujours de l'argent pour acheter les sacs, les chaussures et les uniformes. Tout cela montre que les pêcheurs font face à beaucoup de difficulté. *I don't know what to say more, Mr. Chairperson, Sir*. On a entendu beaucoup d'absurdités dans cette Assemblée. On a entendu des revendications ; on a même eu des grèves de faim dans ce pays. Mais maintenant je me pose la question : pourquoi ces défenseurs des opprimés - il y a des personnes qui ont soit-disant passé la nuit avec les grévistes de la faim - sont-ils partis ? *What I can say is that they are only a bunch of political relegate, Mr. Chairperson, Sir. They don't want to spare anything to secure political gains*. Je pense qu'ils auraient pu vendre leur âme au diable pour revenir au pouvoir. Mais malheureusement le diable même ne veut pas acheter leur âme ! Qu'est-ce qu'ils ont contre les pêcheurs, M. le président ? Je sais - on ne doit pas faire un dessein sur un papier – qu'il y a des personnes qui ont la rancune tenace. Ils n'ont pas oublié un certain jour ou ils ont couru dans les rues pour échapper à la colère des pêcheurs. C'est facile pour ceux qui ne sont pas au pouvoir de mettre les bâtons dans les roues, pour mettre en danger l'autonomie de Rodrigues, d'agir comme des gens irresponsables. Eux qui voulaient soi-disant

conserver les acquis de Rodrigues ; eux qui se sont élevés pour signer toutes sortes de pétitions contre un nom qu'on a donné à un aéroport pour dire que ce n'est pas possible. Pourquoi se désistent-ils aujourd'hui? La vie de ces 2000 familles était entre les mains de ces personnes et entre nos mains. Nous avons pris la responsabilité et la décision qu'il fallait. Ils veulent écrire des lettres pour empêcher que cela se passe ainsi. Mais on doit dire que le Bon Dieu leur pardonne car ils ne savent pas ce qu'ils font. Il faut faire comprendre une fois pour toutes M. le président, que Rodrigues appartient aux Rodriguais, comme l'a si bien dit certaines personnes, et que c'est aux Rodriguais de prendre des décisions pour sauver leur pays. Je dirais ceci en terminant : en avant tous pour la motion ! En avant tous pour la motion tribord, bâbord, toutes voiles dehors poussons notre bateau vers le large, tous pour un, avec les pêcheurs.

Merci, M. le président.

The Commissioner responsible for Environment, Housing, Infrastructure (Mr J. F. Grandcourt): Le Chef commissaire a si bien exprimé le motif de la motion et j'aurai simplement à apporter mon soutien au Chef commissaire qui est *the mover of the motion* en disant quelques mots, Je remercie. bien sûr, les techniciens - ceci est très important à souligner, M. le président - qui ont travaillé sur la formulation de cette motion avant de venir dans l'Assemblée. M. le président, au moment où la minorité quittait la Chambre, je pensais à quelqu'un qui a rendu l'âme en mer deux jours de cela. Cette personne est allée en mer et elle est morte noyée simplement parce qu'elle a essayé d'avoir de quoi pour apporter à la maison. Et aujourd'hui, M. le président, on est là pour discuter d'une motion qui est très importante pour les pêcheurs ; et moi je pense que c'est dans des moments difficiles qu'on doit montrer qu'on est solidaire. C'est triste, M. le président, de ne voir personne devant nous. Je ne vois que le *sergeant at arms* devant moi qui écoute attentivement à tout ce qu'on dit.

M. le président, pensons à ces femmes pêcheurs, ces piqueuses d'ourites. Comment est-ce que ces gens vont pouvoir survivre avec R 100 à la fin du mois? Je suis responsable de la pêche ; à un moment il était question de ne rien donner à ces gens. On s'est dit qu'il y a de l'argent ; on avait discuter avec le Ministre Boolell à l'époque ; on lui avait dit *that it would be within the budget*. C'est ce qu'on fait, M. le président. Il n'y a rien de mal dans ce qu'on est en train de faire, M. le président ; et je trouve drôle qu'il y a des gens, comme l'a si bien dit le Chef commissaire, qui vont faire du canvassing pour nous empêcher de payer ces R 1000 à ces gens. M. le président, c'est le moment opportun pour nous de nous faire entendre au sein de la République de Maurice. Il faut faire comprendre

notre spécificité au gouvernement mauricien. Peut être qu'il y a une sorte d'incompréhension, mais c'est le moment de faire comprendre cette spécificité. Il y des gens qui disent qu'on persiste. Mais, M. le président, c'est contre le vent que le cerf-volant prend son envol. Faut-il que le fil qui tient le cerf-volant soit dur, et je n'ai aucun doute là-dessus, M. le président.

Je termine ici, M. le président, tout en étant triste de voir que les membres de la minorité ne sont pas présents ; ils sont supposés défendre l'intérêt des Rodriguais, l'intérêt des pêcheurs dans ce pays. Et moi je dis que la motion a sa raison d'être et il nous faut voter la motion du Chef commissaire.

Je vous remercie, M. le président.

(Applause)

The Commissioner responsible for Labour and Industrial Relations, Youth & Sports and Employment (Mr J. C. Agathe): M. le président, je dois saluer le courage du Chef commissaire qui n'a pas changé sa façon de faire, c'est-à-dire, parler un langage dans l'opposition et un autre langage arrivant au pouvoir. C'est cela qui lie tous les membres de la majorité. Je suis tombé, M. le président, sur un livre « La puissance de la pensée positive » de Normand Vincent. Je suis tombé sur deux extraits de la Bible, le premier c'est Mathieu 17-20 « *si vous avez la foi rien ne vous sera impossible* » et romain 8 et 31 « Si Dieu est pour nous, qui sera contre nous ? »

M. le président, le conseil exécutif n'est pas en guerre contre le gouvernement national, mais nous voulons prendre une décision pour préserver la paix sociale à Rodrigues. La semaine dernière nous avons fait face - surtout mon bureau - à une fausse grève de la faim montée par des politiciens et syndicalistes.

(Interruptions)

Malheureusement, il est parti. M. le président, Rodrigues fait face à plusieurs problèmes en ce moment tant sur les plans, constitutionnel, social, économique ou autre. Rodrigues a eu une maximum autonomie comme disait le *leader* de l'opposition et le président actuel. *Mr. Chairperson, Sir, this should be seen to be done and not the contrary.* La motion est propice pour sauvegarder l'autonomie de Rodrigues et se situe dans la stricte légalité.

Laissez moi commencer par la légalité, M. le président. Suivant la section 26 (1) de la RRA, l'Assemblée régionale peut dicter sa propre politique dans les matières énoncées à la quatrième schedule de la RRA sous laquelle figure les items 14 « *Family Welfare* » et 16 « *Fisheries* ». qui donnent à la RRA les pleins pouvoirs pour manifester en acte sa volonté politique. Il n'est nullement question ici de *social aid* qui reste encore - et c'est dommage - sous le contrôle de Maurice. Nous n'en débattons point maintenant. Sous la section 65 (3) de la RRA, cette dernière a les mêmes pouvoirs, privilèges et immunités que ceux de l'Assemblée nationale. La RRA, n'en a fait justice pour discuter de la motion du Chef commissaire et tout se fait sous la protection de la Constitution et les *Standing Orders* de la RRA. Il est choquant de constater qu'un simple employé du service civil à Maurice est prétendu interdire le débat de cette motion par envoi d'une lettre. Nous demandons au président de cette assemblée, c'est-à-dire, la RRA, de voir s'il n'y a pas matière à poursuite pour paraître devant la RRA ici pour *contempt of Assembly* par ce fonctionnaire. Imaginez, M. le président, qu'un fonctionnaire envoie une telle lettre à Maurice pour empêcher le Speaker de l'Assemblée nationale d'écouter une motion, il aurait été traduit devant la cour pour outrage à l'Assemblée. Cela se serait fait sous la section 6 (e) de la *National Assembly (Priviledges and Immunities) Act* ou nul ne peut forcer un membre à être pour ou contre une motion. Et puis le Speaker a un pouvoir inhérent de choisir librement si une motion est en ordre ou non, c'est l'essence de sa fonction. Tout comme sous la section 48 de la Constitution qui laisse à l'Assemblée la liberté de gérer ses affaires, la RRA mène les siennes comme elle l'entend sous la section 64 du RRA Act. Maintenant il est clair que celui qui a entrepris la démarche de chercher cette entrave au bon fonctionnement de la RRA n'a pas les intérêts de Rodrigues à cœur. Cette personne n'est autre que le *leader* de la minorité ; et on se demande dans quel but il l'a fait.

Autonomie, M. le président veut dire le droit à déterminer le bon déroulement d'un gouvernement, la bonne gouvernance d'un peuple pour le bien de celui-ci dans le chemin de la volonté de ce peuple. Depuis le philosophe Sartre cette définition n'a pas changé. Le peuple de Rodrigues que nous représentons est dans la difficulté de subvenir à ses besoins dans les familles des pêcheurs enregistrés et ils nous est possible de leur accorder cette aide indispensable, surtout en cette période de fin d'année ; et ce serait contraire à notre mandat de rien faire.

Et ceux qui s'opposent à ce que nous faisons sont des parjures au concept d'autonomie.

M. le président, l'allocation du mauvais temps à l'intention des pêcheurs fut introduit dans les années 90 lorsque le gouvernement central a cru bon, avec raison, d'introduire des mesures de support afin d'assister les pêcheurs pour les jours de mauvais temps pendant lesquels ils ne peuvent pas sortir en mer. Cette mesure fut ainsi appliquée à Rodrigues et a entraîné une convergence massive de notre main-d'œuvre active vers l'exploitation de nos pêcheries qui ont malheureusement connu une baisse de productivité au cours des années. Si au début de l'application de cette mesure, les pêcheurs gagnaient bien leur vie, aujourd'hui ce n'est malheureusement plus le cas. Les prises ont baissé considérablement et cela va de pire en pire. Notre lagon n'est plus productif. De nos jours les pêcheurs reviennent de leur partie de pêche sans aucune prise. C'est ainsi que l'allocation du mauvais temps est devenue aujourd'hui le seul moyen de revenue pour que ces pêcheurs puissent nourrir leur famille. Initialement le paiement de cette allocation est déterminé par le service de la Météo uniquement sur la base de la vitesse du vent et l'état de la mer. En juin 2006 ces critères ont été revus et Rodrigues fut divisé en quatre zones, ce qui a eu comme résultat une baisse drastique de l'allocation de mauvais temps payé aux pêcheurs.

M. le président, ici cet extrait est préparé par mon *departmental head* qui représentait Rodrigues lors de la rencontre à Maurice. Les pêcheurs se sont révoltés et nous avons eu une crise sociale qui persiste aujourd'hui. Je voudrais ici attirer l'attention de cette Assemblée que les pêcheurs à Rodrigues vivent dans un contexte différent,. Si à Maurice les pêcheurs ont des diverses possibilités de revenue pour subvenir aux besoins de leur famille, tel n'est pas le cas à Rodrigues. Ce présent gouvernement régional comprend les difficultés de ces pêcheurs et a pris les décisions qu'il fallait en août 2006 afin de les accorder une aide financière pour soutenir leur famille. Malheureusement, M. le président, cette décision fut critiquée par les membres de la minorité qui ont tout fait pour empêcher son application. A Rodrigues on parle une langue et à Maurice on fait le contraire. Et M. le président mardi dernier j'étais à l'Assemblée nationale les deux membres de l'opposition qui sont assis un peu devant moi, M. le président, passaient les extraits de notre *Order Paper* au *Leader* de l'opposition et au ministre de la justice, l'honorable Rama Valayden. Et M. le président, vous savez ce qui s'est passé tout de suite après.

M. le president il est bon de préciser que la motion proposée par le Chef commissaire est tout simplement une mesure de support et d'accompagnement, puisé à partir du budget courant de la Commission de la pêche déjà approuvé par l'Assemblée nationale. La section 26 du Rodrigues Regional Assembly Act donne le pouvoir à cette Assemblée de prendre des mesures appropriées pour le secteur de

la pêche et de bien être de la famille. C'est une possibilité que nous devons utiliser au maximum afin de résoudre les problèmes sociaux qui perdurent dans ce secteur et je ne comprends pas pourquoi notre démarche est protestée par les membres de la minorité.

M. le président nous avons été élus par le peuple pour résoudre les problèmes de notre société dans l'esprit de l'autonomie ; et il est de notre devoir de prendre des décisions qu'il faut afin de venir en aide à ces pêcheurs et leur famille. Les critères de l'allocation de mauvais temps ne répondent plus aux besoins des pêcheurs et le *zoning* du lagon n'est pas praticable à Rodrigues. Rodrigues, étant en partie, petite n'a pas une démarcation claire et nette pour identifier la zone de pêche de chaque pêcheur professionnel afin de comptabiliser une allocation de mauvais temps d'une manière juste et équitable. Cela a créé un sentiment de frustration parmi les pêcheurs. Nous ne pouvons pas rester devant cette situation les bras croisés, et il est de notre devoir et responsabilité d'agir. C'est pourquoi je félicite le Chef commissaire pour cette présente motion qui démontre que ce présent gouvernement régional a un coeur et qui comprend la misère des gens.

M. le président, je donne tout mon soutien et mon support concernant cette motion et je demande à cette Assemblée d'approuver la décision prise jusqu'ici par le conseil exécutif et de donner son approbation afin de permettre le paiement d'une assistance financière aux pêcheurs comme proposé par le Chef commissaire pour le bien-être de ces quelques 1800 pêcheurs et leurs familles.

Je vous remercie, M. le président, pour votre attention.

(Applause)

The Commissioner responsible for Community Development, Co-operatives, Fire Services, Health (Administration), Prisons and Reform Institutions (Administration) (Mr A. L. Emilien): M. le président, en ce jour nous discutons d'un point très sensible concernant nos amis, les pêcheurs, je ne peux m'empêcher de revenir quelques années en arrière, un 20 novembre 2001, ou mon ami et collègue, Christian Agathe et moi, étions dans l'hémicycle à l'Assemblée nationale à Maurice quand le RRA Act 2001 fut voté. Je ne peux m'empêcher de revenir en arrière pour penser à ce qui s'était passé ce jour là, M. le président, parce que j'ai en tête les interventions de tous nos représentants à l'Assemblée nationale, entre autres l'actuel *leader* de la minorité qui avait de la peine à prononcer ses mots tellement il était ému. Et son bon ami, l'honorable Paul Bérenger, qui est venu à sa rescousse pour dire : c'est l'émotion,

je comprends que c'est l'émotion. Aujourd'hui, M. le président, je me rends compte, et avec raison, j'en suis convaincu, que ses mots n'étaient que des mots d'intention pour asseoir son pouvoir sur Rodrigues, lui qui a été au Parlement, lui qui a été Ministre pendant des années. Donc c'était comme il disait, d'ailleurs, après 25 ans de lutte, après une éternité voilà le couronnement de tant d'efforts.

Mr. Chairperson, Sir, the absence of the Minority in this House at this point in time reflects the exact agenda they have for the poor and the weak section of our population. Une Assemblée pour le peuple, élue par le peuple pour défendre les intérêts du peuple ; et quand on est là aujourd'hui pour débattre d'une motion qui devrait logiquement donner le droit de mener une vie décente à une grande section de la population, nous voyons le rôle que joue la minorité dans ce cas précis.

Mr. Chairperson, Sir, we are debating a very sensitive and important issue today. Of course, we are not talking about bad weather allowance, but allow me to mention it very briefly just to say that the principle of paying a bad weather allowance itself to professional fishermen recognizes, Mr Chairperson, Sir, the fact that the latter's efforts to earn a living depend largely on factors beyond their control, namely weather conditions in and around the sea. My friend and colleague, Mr Grandcourt, just mentioned the case of two fishermen, living at Cité Patate who were at sea two days ago. We all know that the weather was very bad on that day, but unfortunately to earn their living they took the risk to go at sea and unfortunately, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, one of these two guys lost his life. That is why the Cabinet took the decision to assist fishermen whenever they would be unable to venture out at sea by reason of unfavourable sea and weather conditions. A formula was devised based on wind affecteriousness. However, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, in June 2006, the formula was revised in the light of new criteria and the wind force was increased and the height of waves added.

This new formula, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, was far from satisfactory and did not meet the needs of Rodriguan fishermen for the following reasons -

- Unlike mainland Mauritius, the size of Rodrigues is such that weather at sea and over the island tends to be the same throughout. The application of existing formula would result in unequal earnings by fishermen as a fisherman living on one side of the demarcation line could be at the disadvantage vis-à-vis a fellow fisherman living on the other side, living only a few metres away. Et cela, M. le président, cela aurait été une discrimination. Nous nous imaginons nous avons la ligne de démarcation pour deux zones différentes et

deux pêcheurs vivant à quelques mètres l'un de l'autre ou dans une zone nous avons 6 ou 7 jours de mauvais temps et dans l'autre il n'y a pas de mauvais temps du tout. Donc cela aurait été une inégalité et c'est pourquoi, M. le président, comme un gouvernement qui tient à coeur l'intérêt du petit peuple, nous disons qu'il nous faut trouver un moyen, tout en respectant la décision prise par le gouvernement central, pour alléger le fardeau de ces pêcheurs.

- The other reason, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, is the economic situation prevailing in Rodrigues which does not provide sufficient alternative employment opportunities to fishermen. What did the previous government do, Mr Chairperson, Sir? Nous nous souvenons quand il y avait la décision de mettre ce système de *zoning*, le gouvernement sortant, le gouvernement de l'époque, le Chef commissaire et commissaire responsable de la pêche qui est aujourd'hui le *leader* de la minorité est venu à la télévision pour dire qu'il faut '*mettre banne pêcheur à terre*' et que l'argent qu'on donne aux pêcheurs termine dans les caisses des restaurateurs, '*fini dans restaurants, fini dans tavernes*'. Donc ceci démontre clairement, M. le président, qu'il y avait un intérêt, une volonté ferme de supprimer cette allocation donnée aux pêcheurs, et c'est ce que nous nous décrions avec force et vigueur.

Mr. Chairperson, Sir, the Regional Government is mindful of Cabinet decisions for laying down new criteria for payment of bad weather allowance and pays due respect to the decision. However, what the Regional Government has in mind is to restore equilibrium in fishermen's earnings by toping up the low figure payable to someone who is unfortunate to be classified in the wrong geographical side. Moreover, the Regional Government cannot turn a deaf ear to the precarious situation of so many Rodriguan families who depend largely on the meagre income of a household's head for a living. Let alone the necessities of every day life for each member of the family. Such a difficult family situation can only give rise to social problems.

M. le président, nous qui sommes sur le terrain tous les jours, nous qui vivons au jour le jour la misère de ces gens, nous savons de quoi nous parlons et nous n'avons pas le droit de rester insensible à cette situation. Nous ne pouvons pas croiser les bras et dire que ce n'est pas une décision qui émane de l'Assemblée régionale '*banne la ça, pas nou ça*'. Donc on reste tranquille. Nous ne pouvons pas permettre tout cela, M. le président.

Mr. Chairperson, Sir, as a caring government, we would fail in our duty to the whole population of Rodrigues if we allow a section of that population to be left out of the welfare state. We need to bear in mind that the bad weather allowance alone allowance alone is hardly sufficient to give the opportunity to a whole family to lead a decent life. The allowance is only a palliative measure to make both ends meet until better times come. It is the declared policy and commitment of this Regional Government to alleviate the hardship of all unemployed Rodriguans and their dependents. It's unfortunate, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, that some persons who were supposedly struggling for the betterment of poor people in Rodrigues have written letters, have asked questions and have done so many revolting actions against the interest of these poor people, that today we can understand their position for not staying here in this Assembly because they would have been in a very delicate position when we would have come to the voting of this Motion, Mr. Mr. Chairperson, Sir. Le gouvernement en place aujourd'hui, M. le président, a fait preuve de beaucoup de sagesse envers les plus démunis de la population. Je vais citer quelques exemples.

Quelqu'un a mentionné tout à l'heure, des manuels scolaires qu'on distribue gratuitement aux élèves. Nous aurions pu prendre cet argent - si notre population avait les moyens d'acheter ces manuels - et l'utiliser dans d'autres secteurs. Mais voyant la misère de notre peuple, M. le président, nous avons pris la décision de donner ces manuels scolaires à nos enfants parceque beaucoup de nos étudiants n'auraient pas pu aller à l'école, faute des moyens pour acheter ces manuels scolaires. Ceci est une des décisions courageuses que nous avons prise et que l'opposition a décrié comme un gaspillage et a essayé a mettre des bâtons dans nos roues. Ceci ne nous a pas empêché d'aller de l'avant avec cette mesure ; et je félicite mon collègue, le Chef Commissaire Adjoint qui a pris la décision ensemble avec le conseil exécutif d'aller de l'avant et de maintenir le Book Loan Scheme pour 2008.

Nous avons recruté quelques 285 stagiaires, M. le président, dont quelques membres de l'opposition ont décrié tout a l'heure comme si c'était un scandale. Nous avons le souci de hausser le niveau de vie de notre population. Donc, nous avons voulu que ces jeunes aient une expérience du travail tout en allégeant leurs problèmes familiaux, parceque derrière ces stagiaires qui ont été recrutés, il y a 200 et quelque familles qui sont soulagées ; on reconnait que ce n'est pas beaucoup, mais c'est mieux que rien. Voilà encore un exemple pour démontrer la bonne foi, les bonnes intentions de ce gouvernement, M. le président.

Revenons sur la question de ramassage d'ordures. Qu'est-ce qui n'a pas été dit et qu'est-ce qu'on ne dit pas encore sur ce projet de création de la Compagnie Rod Clean ? La pratique voulait, M. le président qu'un quantum soit alloué à un contracteur pour le ramassage d'ordures ; et nous savons ce qui c'est passé ce dernier temps. Il y avait une petite poignée de personnes qui était employée et le gros de ce quantum qu'on allouait à la compagnie allait, bien sûr, à ceux qui ont investi dans la compagnie ; ce qui est assez logique quelque part. Mais nous nous sommes dits, M. le président : pourquoi ne pas donner du travail à un plus grand nombre de personnes, alléger le fardeau d'un peu plus grand nombre de personnes ? Parceque dans le passé il y avait 31 employés de la compagnie qui ramassaient les ordures. Aujourd'hui M. le président, nous avons presque 80 personnes et derrière ces 80 personnes, il y a encore 80 familles qui reçoivent un salaire fixe chaque mois et qui peuvent faire un budget. Quand on est père de famille et quand on n'a pas de revenue fixe, on ne peut pas dire que ce mois ci je vais mettre tant d'argent pour le riz, tant pour les manuels scolaires, tant pour la viande etc. On se sent démuni, on se sent comme un paria de la société, parce qu'on ne peut pas prévoir ce qu'on va manger demain, ce que mon enfant va mettre pour la fête qui vient ou si mon enfant va avoir son sac d'école etc. Donc, quand on a un revenue fixe, on peut se permettre ce genre de choses.

M. le président, nous avons tout fait, le Chef commissaire, moi-même, d'autres collègues, nous avons été à Maurice pour essayer de convaincre des compagnies de pêche pour venir à Rodrigues, malgré le fait que nous n'avons pas encore un port de pêche, malgré le fait que la passe n'a pas encore été fouillée comme il se doit pour alléger encore une fois le problème de la grande famille rodriguaise parceque nous considérons, M. le président, que la population de Rodrigues - ces 37000 âmes - comme la famille rodriguaise. Nous avons tout fait et nous sommes heureux de dire que deux bateaux sont venus prendre des gens pour aller faire une campagne de pêche en plein hiver. Les gens sont revenus satisfaits et à l'heure où je parle ici dans cette Assemblée, M. le président, il y a une cinquantaine de pêcheurs qui sont en mer sur les bancs ; et nous apprenons que certains bateaux font le plein trois fois par jour ; ce qui augure une bonne moisson pour nos pêcheurs qui sont sur les bancs. Donc, c'est encore des revenus additionnelles pour la famille.

Mon collègue, M. Perrine, a parlé tout à l'heure de l'exportation de 61 porcs pour plus de R 300,000. M. le président il y a eu, ces quelques temps, des manœuvres d'une bassesse extraordinaire faisant croire que le ministère de l'agro industrie à Maurice aurait accordé la permission à mon collègue ici d'importer des porcs qui seraient contaminés de Maurice vers Rodrigues. Or, tel n'est pas le cas

parce que la maladie qui attaque ces animaux les tue dans les 15 jours qui suivent. Donc, M. le président, nous voyons encore l'agenda de ces personnes qui veulent étouffer les Rodriguais, le petit peuple, qui ne veulent pas que les Rodriguais se développent, que l'économie rodriguaise prenne son envol. Donc, ce sont des actes criminels envers la population de Rodrigues, M. le président. Il faut que tout le monde s'unisse pour condamner ces actes irresponsables.

Nous avons aussi créé le Rodrigues Trade and Marketing Agency pour accroître la production et également permettre l'envol de nos produits. Nous ne voulons pas l'accroissement de la production ; nous voulons aussi assurer un marché après la production. Donc, à travers le Rodrigues Trade and Marketing Agency, nous voulons créer ce dynamisme qui va donner une synergie au niveau de tous les producteurs à tous les niveaux à Rodrigues pour donner un boost à notre secteur productif et également rapporter de l'argent à l'état, M. le président.

Un autre point que je voudrais soulever ici, M. le président, c'est le manque de sérieux de certaines personnes quand ils mettent n'importe quoi sur du papier, dans leur journaux, n'importe quoi n'importe ou pour faire croire que le gouvernement régional actuel est dans l'illégalité. Je me réfère ici, M. le président, à un article paru dans le '*Nouveau Rodriguais*', numéro 153 en date du 14 décembre 2007 qui voudrait faire accroire que la décision du gouvernement régional de présenter cette motion dans l'Assemblée aujourd'hui est illégale. Voyons ce que ces gens disent, M. le président : ' tout ce qui est applicable à Maurice devrait être applicable à Rodrigues car ce qui est bon pour Maurice, l'est également pour Rodrigues'. Est-ce que ces gens qui ont écrit cette cochonnerie - excusez moi, M. le président - ont vraiment le droit de se considérer comme Rodriguais ? A 650 km de Port Louis, peut-on se considérer comme Maurice ? Est-ce qu'on peut se dire que tout ce qui se fait à Maurice peut être calqué automatiquement sur Rodrigues ? Je vais déposer une copie de ce journal à l'Assemblée, M. le président, pour démontrer quel genre de personnes nous avons élu pour représenter la population de Rodrigues. Il ne faut pas oublier que ces membres - que ce soit de la minorité ou de la majorité, - ont été mandatés par le peuple pour défendre ce petit peuple aujourd'hui. I don't understand the behaviour of these people. What they say in Rodrigues is different from what they say in Mauritius. *Their behaviour in Mauritius is different from their behaviour in Rodrigues.* Alors, Je ne comprends pas pourquoi ils ont ces deux faces. Ici, ils se comportent en grands défenseurs du peuple, alors que lorsqu'ils sont à Maurice, ils restent tranquille, la queue entre les jambes. Ils acceptent tout en disant « *c'est pas nou sa, zotte sa* ». M. le président, aujourd'hui, ils auraient eu l'occasion de mettre en avant leurs idées, de contribuer à ce débat, mais on comprend leur position. Ils

auraient été dans l'impossibilité de voter la motion, parce qu'ils ont été toujours contre l'intérêt des pêcheurs, en disant que l'argent qu'on donne aux pêcheurs termine toujours dans les restaurants et dans les tavernes et que « *bizin tire pêcheurs dans la mer, mette à terre, comme ci prend casier mette à terre pou alle passe dans soleil* ».

M. le président, je termine ici en félicitant le Chef commissaire qui, malgré toutes les magouilles, malgré toutes les démarches intimidantes, n'a pas baissé les bras, n'a pas voulu courber l'échine. Il a voulu aller de l'avant avec sa motion, et je le félicite pour cela. Il a, donc, le soutien de tous les membres de l'Assemblée du côté de la majorité, et de tous les membres du Mouvement Rodriguais.

Merci, M. le président.

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I would like to thank the Commissioners who have intervened on this motion and, once more, say that this motion is in order. I would like to thank you for your wisdom in accepting this motion, and in defending in a way the powers conferred upon the Regional Assembly, which I think we should, of course, defend and promote as true people of Rodrigues.

As regards the financial implications of this motion, Mr Chairperson, Sir, there is already a provision of Rs27 m. in the Recurrent Budget this year concerning 'Assistance to Professional Fisherman' and, in the Memorandum, it is said that this money is to be used for the payment of bad weather allowance. My financial analysis states that the gist of this motion would require a sum of about Rs9 m., and the available balance as at 01 December 2007 on this item is Rs17,341,000. We will have to pay bad weather allowance in the lagoon, the closed season allowance for net fishermen and off lagoon fishermen, and we will need about Rs19 m., that is, we will have a shortfall of about Rs1.7 m. with regard to part (d) of the motion. We can reallocate from other sources, from other Commissions of the Regional Assembly or from other sections of the Chief Commissioner's Office.

I would like to have a final word, Mr Chairperson, Sir, for those public servants in Rodrigues who will have to consider the implementation of the Resolution that this House is about to undertake in a few minutes, and tell them that they will have to be courageous and loyal to the Rodrigues Regional Assembly. Of course, we interfere that they are bound by the rules of the Public Service, and that they may, if they wish, consider the views or opinion of any

higher authority. But they should bear in mind that this is a Resolution of the Regional Assembly and, of course, it is binding on one and all, unless, of course, there is authority for not implementing the Resolution.

Last but not least, I would like to thank our Legal Adviser and all those persons in Rodrigues and in Mauritius who have in one way or another supported us, and said that what we are planning to do, is of course, something which is important but also something – like one of my colleagues has said – that needs to be done. As politicians, at times you have to be courageous. Either you stand by the people who have elected you and you take up your responsibility, or you step back. We are not the type of people who will step back. We are not also the type of people to take illegal decisions. This is why I would like to say that this is not an illegal motion, because it has been put on the Order Paper. The Legal Adviser has vetted it. It is not modifying any Social Security law. Social Security is applying separately. The purport of this motion is applying separately, over and above, and independently of what Social Security pays. It is just *une mesure d'accompagnement*, and I do hope that everybody, especially those who might wish to have recourse to higher authorities, who might wish to do like Mr Bonomally, to bear in mind the spirit and principle of the autonomy of Rodrigues.

With these words, Mr Chairperson, Sir, I thank you as well as all the Members.

Mr. Chairperson: The debate on the motion is exhausted. But before putting the question, I should like to give some information about the letter which I received from a public officer from Mauritius. Some Members who have addressed this Assembly did make mention of the letter that was sent to me, and the Chief Commissioner mentioned briefly that I did reply. In fact I was very surprised that a public officer from Mauritius was attempting to direct me about what I should accept as regular in this Assembly. Probably he was misdirected and he is not well aware how this Institution really operates within the Republic of Mauritius. I did send a letter to him, explaining that he may be illegally interfering with the works of this Assembly.

Now I'll put the question on the motion. Members should bear with me as I'll have to read the motion.

“Considering the extreme hardship being faced by professional fishermen in Rodrigues and the social problems arising therefrom,

Considering that in June 2006, Central Government changed the criteria for the payment of bad weather allowances to fishermen,

Considering that such decision resulted into drastic reductions in the amount payable to each fishermen,

Considering that the subdivisions of the lagoon around Rodrigues are impractical and do not reflect the daily conditions faced by fishermen,

Considering that the lagoon around Rodrigues has been depleted to a larger extent,

Considering that the budgetary provisions for ‘**assistance to fishermen**’ emanates from the item vote under the Commission for fisheries and that the

Rodrigues Regional Assembly has autonomy in all matters relating to **Fisheries**,

Considering that the extreme hardship that the families and children of those fishermen have been facing, are actually facing and will face and that the Rodrigues Regional Assembly has autonomy in matter of ‘**Family Welfare**’,

Considering the responsibility, commitment and willingness of the Executive Council to alleviate those hardships,

Considering the spirit and principle of autonomy in Rodrigues,

BE IT RESOLVED THAT THIS HOUSE DO HEREBY APPROVE

- (a) all the decisions taken so far by the Executive Council on the quantum of financial assistance paid to those fishermen.
- (b) the continued payment of financial assistance to in-lagoon fishermen and subsequently to their families to supplement if need be the allowances paid to them under the criteria established by the Central

Government to the tune of one thousand and eighty five Rupees per month whichever is the higher;

- (c) the payment of financial assistance to the said in-lagoon fishermen for an additional month in December this year;
- (d) that the Commissioner responsible for finance be empowered to make such financial arrangements as would be necessary for implementation of items (a) to (c) above.”

On question put, the motion was agreed to.

The Chief Commissioner: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, before moving for adjournment, and as this is the last sitting for 2007, allow me to express my greetings to Members of this House and make a comment on this year. During this year there had been four special sittings with a Motion of Absolute Confidence on yourself on 19 February and on 19 March, there was an intervention of the Prime Minister. On 08 June, there was a Motion of No Confidence in myself. On 07 December on the occasion of the visit of the Tobago Delegation. There have been also 10 ordinary sittings. There were 12 Motions, of which one has been withdrawn. There were 225 questions and so many words spoken before this House.

I would like to transmit my end-of-year greetings to yourself and to Mrs. Lamvohee, to the Clerk, to the Deputy Commissioner, the Deputy Chairperson, the Commissioners and Members of this House. May I invite you to direct the Clerk to transmit our warmest greetings to his Excellency the President of the Republic and Lady Jugnauth, to the Hon. Prime Minister and Mrs. Ramgoolam and to the Deputy Prime Ministers as well as to the Speaker of the National Assembly; and I also wish a very good year to all people of Rodrigues.

Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: Mr Chairperson, Sir, before you move for the adjournment of House, allow me to associate myself with the greetings you have just expressed to the dignitaries in Mauritius and to their families, to the season's greetings expressed to all Commissioners. On behalf of the Secretariat and myself, I will, in return, express the season's greetings to all Members now present here.

/UNREVISED/

Unfortunately the other Members are not here; and I will instruct the Clerk to convey this message to the dignitaries in Mauritius.

Thank you.

ADJOURNMENT

The Chief Commissioner: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I move that the House be now adjourned to Tuesday 26 February 2008 at 10.30 a.m.

The Deputy Chief Commissioner rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

At 3.15 p.m the Assembly was, on its rising, adjourned to Tuesday 26 February 2008 at 10.30 a.m