

The Chief Commissioner: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, the Paper has been laid on the Table –

PAPER LAID

The Annual Statements of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly for the year ended 30 June 2007, together with the certificate of audit and a report of the Director of Audit.

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

WATER SUPPLY

(No. B/1) Mr. S. P. Roussety (Fifth Island Region Member) asked the Commissioner responsible for Water Resources whether as regards water distribution, he would for the benefit of the House -

- (a) state whether the water distribution to houses from the reservoir of Fond Accacia and feeding mainly Accacia is treated accordingly to appropriate national or international standards before being distributed to villagers, and if not, obtain information with regard to the quality of that water;
- (b) describe the situation regarding the quality of water for the rest of domestic consumers in Rodrigues;
- (c) give a list of sites where facilities for chlorination and water treatment exist in Rodrigues, together with their original date of inception or installation and the total cost involved, and
- (d) give the name of those contractors to whom the contract to install these facilities have been awarded.

The Commissioner for Water Resources (Mr. L. A. Perrine): Mr. Chairperson, Sir, as regards part (a) of the question, I would like to inform the House that water at *Fond Accacia* is collected in an intake dam from which all water is canalised from the treatment plant at about 350 meters downstream.

The treatment plant consists of the following –

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- a sediment tank,
- a pressure filter and a chlorination plant.

Water is then pumped to a concrete reservoir uphill at *Jardin Mamzelle* and distributed by gravitation into the villages of *Accacia*, *Pointe l'herbe* and the vicinities. Water at *Fond Accacia* is, therefore, being treated according to appropriate national standards, that is, filtered and chlorinated, before being distributed to villages.

Mr. Chairperson, Sir, as regards part (b), I am hereby tabling the result of the recent physio chemicanalysist regarding the quality of water for the rest of domestic consumers in Rodrigues. (Appendix I).

Mr. Chairperson, Sir, with regard to part (c), I am informed that in 1998 the Ministry for Rodrigues awarded a contract for the sum of Rs16,130,522 m. on for the design, supply, installation, testing and commissioning of 26 chlorination plant in Rodrigues.

As regards part (d), I am informed that the contract was awarded and executed by DBS Limited.

Mr. S. P. Roussety: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, can the Commissioner inform the House what are the solutions used for the filter of water and for chlorination?

Mr. Perrine: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, this is a technical issue and it is on the recommendation of the Technical Officer that solutions are being used.

Mr. S. P. Roussety : M. le président, j'ai ici une bouteille d'eau qui sort d'un robinet à Accacia ce matin même et tout le monde est en train de boire cette eau. Est-ce que le commissaire trouve cette eau normale ? Peut-il dire aussi si l'eau est filtrée?

Mr. Perrine: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, there is a standard concerning the colour of the water. Chlorination and filtration eliminate bacterial and chemical insight. The colour is included, but it is not a priority according to analysts.

Mr. Spéville: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I would like to ask the Commissioner..

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(Interruptions)

Mr. Chairperson: Yes, Chief Commissioner.

The Chief Commissioner: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, on a point of order! Is it appropriate to bring a bottle of water in the precincts of the House?

(Interruptions)

I don't know whether it is water! I would invite the Chairperson to ask the Sergeant-at-Arms to have this liquid removed from the House.

Mr. Chairperson: I was not aware whether there was something to be exposed in order to illustrate the question. But according to practice, I should normally have been informed before. If there will be no more supplementary questions about the water, then the proper way is to remove the bottle afterwards. So, we maintain it here until we finish with that question. It will have to be removed afterwards.

The Chief Commissioner: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, can I ask you whether I will be allowed to bring some cows in the Assembly at the next sitting?

Mr. Chairperson: Normally the procedure...

The Chief Commissioner: I am just asking in order to know what can be brought here.

Mr. Chairperson: I don't want to refer to a past ruling on this. But the practice is that it is permissible for you to bring articles, visual articles, maps, whichever kind, but there are some conditions to it. I have to approve it first and it should not in a sense obstruct the normal proceedings of the House or obstruct part of the passageway and so forth. But I don't think I have to answer your question that a big or small animal would normally pass those criteria. But again if there are other Members who wish to come forward with visual articles then, of course, they have to follow procedures. I don't know how the Member has been able to bring this bottle of water in the House. I'll ask the Sergeant-at-Arms to be guided in future.

Mr. Lisette: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I would like to know from the Commissioner responsible for water, when was the last test carried out at

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Accacia, with regard to the colour of the water as well as its different bacteriological aspects?

Mr. Perrine: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I am informed that the recent physio-chemical analysis of water at *Accacia* is as follows -

- (i) turbidity tested for *Accacia* is 8 ntu;
- (ii) colour is 15 ptcu which is 20 ptcu at the normal level;
- (iii) sanity 0.5;
- (iv) ph is 6.9;
- (v) conductivity is 62 unit per centimeter;
- (vi) phosphate is 1.29 microgram per liter;
- (vii) sulphate is 55.4 microgram per liter;
- (viii) nitrite is 0.02 microlite per liter whereas at national level under the regulation it is 3 microgram per litre.

Mr. Lisette: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, whatever has been mentioned by the Commissioner, that is, turbidity and conductivity, all these are chemical aspects of the quality of water. My question is clear; there has been recent rainfall, all these factors that have just been mentioned may have changed. This is why I am asking the Commissioner when was the last test carried out at *Accacia*.

Mr. Perrine: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, tests are being carried out on a regular basis, at least, every month.

Mr. Spéville: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, may I ask the Commissioner who is responsible to cater for the water treatment at *Fond Accacia* and whether bacteriological tests are being performed on water samples at the level of the Commission?

Mr. Perrine: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, at the Water Resources Unit we have a micro-lab, which carries out physio-chemical test. As regards bacteriological test, samples are being sent regularly to Mauritius to be tested.

Mr. Spéville: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I would like to ask the Commissioner at what interval are samples being sent to Mauritius to be tested to ascertain the purity of water.

Mr. Perrine: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I have just answered the question and I have said that it is carried out at regular interval, at least, every month.

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Mrs. Perrine-Bégué: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, concerning this reservoir, I would like to ask the Commissioner whether there have been any complaints from staff or technical persons saying that the filter plant was not working.

Mr. Perrine: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, up to now we have not received any representations. However, regular visits are being carried out by the Senior Inspector to inspect the filter plant and treatment plant to see whether they are working according to norms.

Mrs. Perrine-Bégué: As regards the volume of water that is distributed from that particular reservoir, can the Commissioner inform the House whether he is aware that consumers have installed pumps within their own houses to boost up their intake of water?

Mr. Perrine: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, my Commission is aware of this problem; and we are coming with new regulations to address this issue very soon.

Mrs. Perrine-Bégué: Have there been any representations made as regards this particular problem to the Commission?

Mr. Perrine: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, representations have been received mainly from *Port Mathurin* and from the northern region.

Mrs. Perrine-Bégué: As regards the volume of water coming from this reservoir, I would like to ask the Commissioner whether he is aware that there are some consumers who are receiving water from direct pipelines, that is, from the direct network instead of the secondary network and, if yes, how many persons there are?

Mr. Perrine: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, this has been a way of life in this Commission. People have recourse to illegal tapping; they have connections on different laterals and other people have several connections. My Commission is carrying out a complete audit on the water network and we will bring solutions to this problem very soon.

Mrs. Perrine-Bégué: As regards this particular problem, is it not true Mr. Chairperson, Sir, that in some parts of the northern region, people are protesting for not having a regular water supply? Some people are being privileged.

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Mr. Perrine: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I don't think this is the case. When I assumed responsibility as Commissioner for Water, as I have said earlier, we have had to review all the works that have been done to bring preventive measures. Later during the day I will make a statement on the solutions to have a regular water supply in Rodrigues and what should be done to increase the production of water over the island.

Mrs. Perrine-Bégué: Is the Commissioner saying, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, that this has been a way of life for some people to be privileged? Some people have multiple lines to receive water. Other people, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, install pumps in shaded places where people cannot see to get this basic resource. Can the Commissioner say what measures he intends to take to make sure that there is equality in this country with regard to water supply?

Mr. Perrine: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I have just said that presently my Commission is carrying out a thorough audit of the water network. I will come up with a strategic paper.

Mr. S. P. Roussety: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, is the Commissioner aware that the dam at *Fond Accacia* is in a deplorable state with rotten leaves and mud? What actions does the Commissioner intend to take to remedy the situation?

Mr. Perrine: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, the northern section is being managed by a Senior Inspector and a team of employees; they have a programme of work. The problem that the respected Member has just brought to our attention will be looked into.

CANCER – NO. OF PATIENTS, STUDY, ETC.

(No. B/2) Mr. S. P. Roussety (Fifth Island Region Member) asked the Commissioner for Health whether, with regard to the disease of cancer, he would for the benefit of the House state -

- (a) the number of patients suffering from that disease;
- (b) the number of patients who died of that illness from January 2007 to date, and

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- (c) whether his Commission is considering carrying out a study to find out the cause of the illness.

The Commissioner for Health (Mr. J. A. L. Emilien): Mr. Chairperson, Sir, the reply to part (a) of the question is 72. With regard to part (b), it is 22.

As regards part (c) of the question, as the House is aware, there are several types of cancer ranging from breast cancer, pancreas cancer, lungs cancer to colon and rectal cancer and touching various parts of the human body.

The spectrum for research is very wide and complex and involves considerable resources both financial and technical. However, my Commission is already in close contact with the Mauritius Institute of Health for various studies including the causes of cancer. It is understood Mr. Chairperson, Sir, that only hereditary cases could, in the first instance, be attended to.

Mr. Chairperson, Sir, as specified earlier, cancer includes, among others, breast cancer, gastric cancer, cervical cancer, brain, colon, throat, liver and lungs cancer, uterine, skin cancer and other parts of the body are concerned.

Research in each and every case should cover a vast range of aspects, namely -

- Gene expression;
- Molecular aspects of oncogenesis;
- Viral molecular biology and pathogenesis;
- Molecular structure and function analysis;
- Pharmacology and therapeutics;
- Regulation and development of the immune system;
- Cell cycle control;
- Human genetics;
- Cellular and development biology.

And all this, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, requires qualified professionals, very sophisticated equipment and involves large amount of money that we unfortunately cannot afford. The money, we have, has to be spent in a judicious way, prioritising the needs of the population. This is not to say Mr. Chairperson, Sir that research is not important, but we must cut our coat according to our cloth.

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Mr. Chairperson, Sir, extensive studies have been carried out in developed countries like the United States, United Kingdom, Canada, France, Australia during the past 20 years and in some countries it dates back to 1904, that is, the United States of America to try to determine the possible causes of cancer in one or two specific fields. Those studies have been very complex and the possible causes so varied and costing millions of U.S dollars and yet, it has not been possible to determine the causes of cancer. Many hypotheses have been put forward but to-date there has not been any consensus thereon. Consequently, it is very unlikely that a study in Rodrigues would throw enough light on the disease and its causes.

Mr. S. P. Roussety: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, the number of patients suffering from cancer is increasing. Does the Commissioner consider the situation as alarming?

Mr. Emilien: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, it may be right to say that the number of cases is increasing. But in the past, many cases were not clearly identified. Many people died without knowing the exact causes of death. Biopsy - removing a little part of cell from the body – which had to be sent to the central lab in Mauritius was not done on a regular basis. This may be the reason why many cases were not detected; but to say that the number is increasing, it may be right as it may not.

Mrs. Perrine-Bégué: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, being given that cancer is spreading worldwide and it is on the increase and, at the same time, we know that the number of persons who are recovering from that illness also is on the increase, even in Mauritius, I would like to ask the Commissioner what measures his Commission disposes of to fight against this illness and being given also that more and more people are going to Mauritius for the necessary treatment.

Mr. Emilien: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, as I said earlier, we must cut our coat according to our cloth. Research in the field of cancer is so expensive that we can't afford to do it. But treatment is available at the QEH, which includes diagnosis, followed by a biopsy in certain cases. The biopsy is sent to the central lab in Mauritius; after getting the result, if need be the patient is then referred to Mauritius. Minor operations are being performed here, except for Nero-surgery. Certain cases of chemotherapy recommended by the oncologist are being done in Mauritius. We have also the visits of the oncologist here twice a year to look after patients suffering from cancer. That's all we have for the time being, Mr. Chairperson, Sir.

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Mr. Lisette: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, many people die from cancer because the disease is diagnosed when it has reached the final stage. From studies, it is known that if the disease is detected right from the very beginning, that is, at an early stage, there is a big chance that the patient may be treated. What does the Commission intend to do for early diagnosis of cancer for the Rodriguan population?

Mr. Emilien: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I am not aware of the fact that many people die from cancer because they are being diagnosed at a late stage. But no case can be attended to if it is not reported to the medical services. We can't do anything if people don't call at the hospital. Mr. Chairperson, Sir, there have been information campaigns, for example, on breast cancer; very often the physician comes on the radio to talk about breast cancer as to how it can be detected. But as I said earlier cancer concerns also different parts of the body. It's true that at times people come to the hospital when the disease is at an advanced stage, but the problem is that the health services are not aware. At times people come to hospital when they feel some pain, it's too late. Unfortunately cancer is like that. There is nothing that we can do more than what is being done at the time being, unless the Member has a suggestion.

Mr. D. Spéville : M. le président, vu les conséquences que cette maladie a sur la société, je voudrais demander le commissaire s'il existe un plan d'action au niveau de sa commission, par exemple, des causeries dans les écoles, les villages, etc. pour conscientiser la population sur cette maladie.

Mr. Emilien: I have said, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, that we have information campaigns for certain...

(Interruptions)

Very often Mr. Chairperson, Sir, we have campaigns on these issues through radio and talks in colleges also.

MAISON DES PÊCHEURS - FENCING

(No. B/3) Mr. S. P. Roussety (Fifth Island Region Member) asked the Commissioner responsible for Public Infrastructure, with regard to the fencing at *Maison des Pêcheurs*, he would for the benefit of the House state -

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- (a) whether same has been demolished and why;
- (b) how many pieces of galvanized pipes have been removed;
- (c) whether these pipes are still in the custody of the Commission for Public Infrastructure or have they been disposed of and, if so, how.

The Commissioner for Public Infrastructure (Mr. F A. Grandcourt): Mr. Chairperson, Sir, following a request from the Commission for Fisheries, part of the damaged fencing at the “*Maison des Pêcheurs*” has been removed and is being replaced with a view to upgrading this compound. It is to be noted that the public was accessing the yard through the damaged part of the fencing that was being used at times as a festive ground by some drunkards.

As regards parts (b) & (c), thirty pieces of galvanised poles have been removed and are presently under the custody of the Commission for Public Infrastructure.

FESTIVAL KREOL DEC. 07 – EXPENDITURE INCURRED

(No. B/4) Mr. L. P. François (Second Local region Member for Baie aux Huitres) asked the Commissioner responsible for Arts and Culture whether in regard to the Festival Kreol held in December 2007 in Rodrigues, he will -

- (a) state from which item vote of the budget 2007/2008 money was disbursed and the total amount incurred, thereof;
- (b) give the names of the members of the Organising Committee, their status and to what specific group/association they belong to, and
- (c) table a breakdown of the amount of money paid to the local, regional and foreign artists and other expenses in connection with that event.

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

- (a) As regards the Festival Kreol held in December 2007, money was disbursed from the following vote items for the total sum of Rs1, 386,817.60 from items Overtime, Festival Kreol, Promotion of

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Arts and Culture and Promotion of Tourism.

- (b) The names of the members of the Organising Committee, including their status and group/association they belong to, are being tabled. (Appendix II).
- (c) I am tabling a breakdown of all the expenditure incurred in respect of each activity in connection with the Festival Kreol. (Appendix III).

Mrs. Perrine-Bégué: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I would like to ask the Chief Commissioner whether there has been any protest from traditional groups who were not satisfied by the way the programme was organized, especially as regards the schedule that was given to them? Is the Chief Commissioner aware also of the changes that have happened? Even after they had left their home, they were called on and were told that they would be performing at another place and not at the place they were supposed to.

The Chief Commissioner: I am not aware Mr. Chairperson, Sir.

Mrs. Perrine-Bégué: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I would like to know whether the local artists and the foreign artists were paid at the same rate.

The Chief Commissioner: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I am not aware whether there is a rate for local artists and another one for foreign artists. I think that there is one rate and this rate has been used to pay the artists.

ROD CLEAN LTD – ALLEGED CASE OF HARASSMENT

(No. B/5) Mr. L. P. François (Second Local region Member for Baie aux Huitres) asked the Commissioner responsible for Environment whether, in regard to the Rod Clean Ltd., a Company fully owned by the Regional Assembly, he would for the benefit of this House -

- (a) obtain information, if there has been any alleged case of harassment by a Director towards a Manager of the Company and if so, whether it has been referred to the police, and
- (b) state if the Manager is still in post and if not, the reasons thereof.

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The Commissioner for Environment (Mr. F. A. Grandcourt): Mr. Chairperson, Sir, as regards part (a), this is a purely administrative matter and I, as Commissioner, would not poke my nose in such issues.

As regards part (b), I wish to inform the House that the Manager submitted her resignation letter on 31 December informing the Director that she will terminate her employment on 31 January 2008.

According to one of the conditions of service, the employee should give one month notice prior to the resignation.

The Director, Mr. Jeetoo, is performing the duties of Manager pending the recruitment of a new Manager shortly.

CAMP DU ROI STADIUM - ACCESS ROAD

(No. B/6) Mr. L. P. François (Second Local region Member for Baie aux Huitres) asked the Commissioner responsible for Environment whether, with regard to the access road passing behind Camp du Roi stadium linking *Pointe Monnier* to *Camp du Roi*, he intends to upgrade the road, the drainage system, as well as lighting facilities in order to reduce the hardship faced by the inhabitants thereof.

The Commissioner for Environment (Mr. F. A. Grandcourt): Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I wish to inform the House that the stretch of road passing behind Camp du Roi Stadium linking *Pointe Monier* to *Camp du Roi* is about 246 metres long with a width ranging from 3 metres to 4.3 metres.

The road is almost levelled and the drainage system is being looked into very carefully in order to avoid possibility of water stagnating.

Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I have to inform the House that the road construction/road improvement is carried out according to a priority list. Subject to availability of funds, it is proposed to include the construction of the above stretch of road during financial year 2008/2009. Meanwhile, arrangements have already been made for the provision of lighting facilities.

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NEW SCHEME - EMPOWER FISHERS

(No. B/7) Mr. L. S. Clair (The Minority Leader) asked the Chief Commissioner whether, in regard to the New Scheme to Empower Fishers in Rodrigues, he will -

- (a) state the number of fishers who have received the one-off-grant of Rs2500 and signed the commitment letter in December 2007;
- (b) table a list of the names and addresses of fishers per fish landing station who received the grant, and
- (c) state whether his Commission is working with the Empowerment Programme for the setting up of the new scheme and give details, thereon.

The Chief Commissioner: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, the answer to part (a) is 1,504.

With regard to part (b), I am tabling the requested information. (Document available in Library).

As regards part (c), I am informed that the Empowerment Programme has retained the services of Mrs. Lydie Roussety to carry out a survey to identify the interest of in-lagoon fishers to move out from their existing economic activity, to motivate these fishers to join the new scheme proposed under the Empowerment Programme and to identify the potential business activities that they can engage in on a sustainable basis and that could start generating revenue in the short term. My office is providing logistics support to the Consultant at the request of the Empowerment Programme.

Mrs. Perrine-Bégué: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I would like to ask the Chief Commissioner whether his Commission had discussed with the Empowerment Fund and whether there was consensus prior to the recruitment of this person to Rodrigues? Can he also tell us whether he has approved the scheme that is being proposed to those fishers for them to move out from their activities?

The Chief Commissioner: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I repeat my answer; I am informed that the Empowerment Programme has retained the services of Mrs. Lydie Roussety to carry out a survey, etc.

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Mrs. Perrine-Bégué: I'll repeat my question, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I would like to know whether there was discussion between the Chief Commissioner who is in charge of fisheries and the Empowerment Fund as regards this particular scheme?

The Chief Commissioner: The issue of recruitment of consultant has not been discussed with us, Mr. Chairperson, Sir.

Mr. Lisette: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I would like to ask the Chief Commissioner how far is his Commission going to collaborate with the Ministry of Finance in order to set up the new scheme which is to empower fishermen?

The Chief Commissioner: As far as necessary, Mr. Chairperson, Sir.

Mr. Spéville: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I would like to ask the Chief Commissioner whether there are other partners from the Empowerment Programme who are engaged to empower fishers?

The Chief Commissioner: No, Mr. Chairperson, Sir.

Mrs. Perrine-Bégué: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I would like to ask the Chief Commissioner whether he is aware of any resistance by the fishers with regard to the respective projects that are being proposed by the Empowerment Fund in Rodrigues to the fishers.

The Chief Commissioner: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, the Empowerment Programme is at consultancy stage to see whether, first, the fishers are interested to move out of their fishing activities and, if yes, which activities they would like to carry on. I am informed that most of them would like to carry on with traditional activities such as goat rearing, poultry rearing, etc. I am also informed, from the meeting that the consultant had, that some of them would still wish to be engaged in fishing. This is why the Regional Assembly is embarking on an ambitious programme of fisheries development with particular aspect on training. Last week, the training programme has started at the rate of about 50 fishers per month. Training is given to in-lagoon and non-registered fishermen to work on multi-day fishing boats. We are also working on the development of berthing and other logistics for medium size boats in Rodrigues.

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Mr. Lisette: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, when I listened to the reply of the Chief Commissioner, he referred to “they”, instead of “us”. Fisheries is under the responsibility of the Regional Assembly. When he referred to “they”, this means that some other body is dealing with the matter.

I would like to ask the Chief Commissioner how far prior consultation was made with his office before the consultancy, which was appointed by the Empowerment Programme?

The Chief Commissioner: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I repeat: no consultation was made. I would like to refresh the memory of the Member as regards the whole history of this issue, whereby they supported the change in bad weather allowance and they were not present to vote for the motion in favour of fishermen in Rodrigues at the last sitting, saying that the motion was illegal. So, this is why we had a problem, Mr. Chairperson, Sir. We passed a resolution in this Assembly; the Members of the opposition chose to play the cat with us and the problem remains the same. We will recall that Rodrigues was on the verge of riots. This is why Hon. Sithanen ordered the Empowerment Programme to pay under the Trust Fund. He said “exceptional allowance to the fishers” because otherwise we would have had social unrest; and I had warned the Government about this.

Now they want to go ahead with their Empowerment Programme; we are giving them logistics; we are advising them but the money for disbursing these income-generating activities is with the Empowerment Programme. And I am glad to inform the House, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, that following all these problems, they have realised in Mauritius that something needs to be done. They have invited us to submit the names of persons and a Commissioner to sit on the Rodrigues Committee of the Empowerment Programme. Following this, I appointed Commissioner Christian Agathe to sit on that Committee and from their discussion I am glad to announce that the Empowerment Programme is funding to the tune of Rs10 m. for the purchase of, at least - it will depend on the price - two multi-day fishing boats which can go to the east bank 51 nautical miles from Rodrigues to the hawking banks 100 nautical miles from Rodrigues, with all the appropriate equipment. They can fish there and have their fish reserve chilled and come back to fish. You will see that we are refurbishing the *Maison des Pêcheurs*. We have just launched tenders for the acquisition by the Rodrigues General Fishing Company Ltd, a private company, owned by the Regional Assembly. We have been accused of *étatisation*, but as Commissioner responsible, for the fishing sector, we know where we are heading.

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As regards the Empowerment Programme, we don't want to poke our nose on what they will do, what they will give. We are just here to advise them; what they do with the beneficiaries is between the beneficiaries and them.

Mr. Lisette: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, being given that now there is a representative of the Executive Council who is sitting on the Empowerment Programme Committee, can we know what are the other proposals that have been made by the representative of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly on that Committee as regards fishermen, apart from the boats that the Chief Commissioner has just mentioned?

The Chief Commissioner: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, the objective of the representation of the Commissioner on that Committee was not specifically to make proposals. The objective is to listen what they want to do and to advise them as how best to do it in Rodrigues, after consultation with the Executive Council and myself. I repeat that there is a consultant working; she will submit her report to the Empowerment Programme shortly. And in the light of these findings, they will design, of course, in consultation with us, ways and means to put forward for those who would like to leave the fishing activities.

Mr. Spéville: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I would like to ask the Chief Commissioner whether he has had consultations with other NGOs on the issue of education and training for fishers in Rodrigues and, if yes, what has been the outcome?

The Chief Commissioner: Yes, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, we are in constant consultation with the two main fishermen associations in Rodrigues; and they are agreeable to these proposals, subject to them being finalized and subject to them being interested in it.

Mrs. Perrine-Bégué: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, being given that the Chief Commissioner admits that there has been no prior consultation and consensus on a major partner coming to Rodrigues on a particular project which he himself says has been so important that there might have been social unrest, can he tell the House the rationale of this particular project? Because the consultant, of course, is going to submit her report, but there are proposals that are being given to persons on particular lines. Is he aware whether this rationale behind the mindset of the Empowerment Fund coming to Rodrigues on this particular project goes in line with his economic policy?

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

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“ÉCOLE DE FOOTBALL” - FOOTBALL TOURNAMENTS

(No. B/8) **Mr. N. Lisette (First Local Region Member of Baie aux Huitres)** asked the Commissioner responsible for Youth & Sports as regards the different football tournaments held in Rodrigues for the ‘*École de Football*’ for the year 2007, whether the Commissioner could -

- (a) state the names of the ‘*École de Football*’ who won in the different categories, and
- (b) inform the House whether each winning team has been awarded their prizes and the nature of same, if any.

The Deputy Chief Commissioner (Mr. J. C. Agathe): Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I would like to inform the House that the reorganization of football in Rodrigues has been one of my priority objectives since my tenure of office in December 2006. The aim is to enable the emergence of high calibre football players to eventually constitute Rodrigues teams to participate and win the MFA Cup and from there, eventually represent the Republic of Mauritius in the African Football Champion Cup Competitions and to make Rodrigues known on African and world map.

In view of achieving the above objective, one of the priority actions that my Commission is undertaking is to increase the number of “*Ecole de Football*” in Rodrigues and to set up a “*Centre de Formation*” to enable the skillful players from the “*Ecole de Foot*” to pursue their training at higher level so that they can be integrated and consolidate the strength of both existing football teams in Rodrigues and be selected for the different participation at local and national level.

Presently, we have 10 “*Ecole de Football*” and we are aiming at increasing this number to twelve, at least two “*Ecole de Football*” and one “*Centre de Formation de Football*” in each local region of Rodrigues.

For the year 2007 football tournaments, I would like to table the results and state that the athletes have had the chance to participate in the *Tournoi de Port Louis* where they have resided in a *famille d'accueil* as it used to be in the past. (Appendix IV).

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Mr. Chairperson, Sir, an Inter Regional Football tournament will then be organised for the “*Centre de Formation*” for athletes aged below 18 years old yearly to motivate the players to improve. Other competitions will be also organised. In July this year, for the first time, Mr. Chairperson Sir, my Commission will organise the *Jeux de L’Avenir* for athletes aged between 12 to 13 years followed by next year both *Jeux de L’Avenir* and *Jeux de L’Espoir* will be organised. Moreover, some of the football players of the “*Ecole de Football*” will hopefully participate in a Regional tournament, which will be organised in Reunion in May 2008.

To sum up, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I would rather state to the House that my Commission lays much emphasis at enabling the athletes to reach high level rather than stressing on prizes. Exceptionally for last year competitions, the athletes will be awarded Cups, medals and football shoes in order not to disrupt the routine abruptly.

Mr. Lisette: The question refers to local football tournaments which were held in Rodrigues. I think that the Commissioner has mentioned about the participation of our football players in the *Tournoi International de Port Louis*.

Nevertheless, being given that the tournaments have been completed since last year, I would like to know why the Commission is taking so long to award the prizes and may I know, at the same time, when the tournament was over?

Mr. Agathe: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, the tournament ended in December last and I will say that the award of prizes was delayed purposely to enable the players to use the equipment such as football shoes for training sessions in relation to the *école de football* and not allowing them to go outside and play anywhere with that equipment. The tournament will start shortly.

Mr. Lisette: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, does the Commissioner mean that if prizes are given...

The Chief Commissioner: On a point of order, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, the question of the Member is hypothetical. He is starting to make hypotheses again in this House!

Mr. Lisette: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, on a point of order. Every time I put questions in this Assembly, there is always objection on the use of the word

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“if” and I would like to state that “if” is not always hypothetical. It is not always hypothetical!

(Interruptions)

Mr. Chairperson: Have you finished with your point of order? You want a ruling on this.

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

Mr. Chairperson: The proper object of a question normally is to obtain information on some matters of fact, which are within the cognizance of the Commissioner. One of the cardinal rules about questions is that a Member cannot ask a hypothetical question for the basic reason that it is not a matter of fact which the Commissioner can answer. I don't know what you are referring, when you say there were interruptions. But of course interruptions are interruptions. All Members can rise on a point of order, but the basic characteristic is that if you raise minor points of order which are themselves not points of order, then your stand not is in order.

If there is a point of order against the use of the word “if” by you, then of course you have to wait for my ruling. I have to take the word “if” within the context you used it. Of course if my ruling is that it is hypothetical then you are bound by my ruling. This is not what you are complaining about. You are complaining about the number of interruptions.

Mr. Lisette: I am going to rephrase the question. Is the Commissioner aware of the frustration and discouragement that is occurring among the young football players when he is delaying the award of these prizes?

Mr. Agathe: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I am not aware of such a state of affairs, but I must say that we have two coaches for football and they always report that the session is carried out normally and that there is no frustration.

VOLLEYBALL - RODRIGUES

(No. B/9) Mr. N. Lisette (First Local Region Member of Baie aux Huitres) asked the Commissioner responsible for Youth & Sports as regards volleyball in Rodrigues he would, for the benefit of the House, state -

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- (a) whether his Commission received a request from the Rodrigues Regional Volleyball Committee for the use of the Malabar gymnasium for the holding of the Volleyball Republic Cup 2008, and if so;
- (b) when the volleyball Republic Cup 2008 was scheduled to start, and
- (c) whether there is any objection from his Commission as regards the request.

The Commissioner responsible for Youth & Sports (Mr. J. C. Agathe): Mr. Chairperson Sir, my Commission received a request from the Rodrigues Regional Volleyball Committee on 29 January 2008 asking for authorisation to use the Malabar Gymnasium for the organisation of the Volleyball Republic Cup 2008.

As regards part (b), the Volleyball Republic Cup was scheduled to start on Saturday 02 February 2008.

Concerning part (c), Mr. Chairperson Sir, there has been no objection from my Commission regarding the request, except for the match to be held on 02 February 2008, as the gymnasium was not available. Volleyball matches scheduled for 03 February 2008 did take place according to fixed time.

Following a further correspondence from the Volleyball Regional Committee dated 03 February 2008 asking for authorization to use the Malabar Gymnasium on 07 February 2008, the Regional Committee was first advised and agreed during a meeting held in February 2008 to decentralise its activities in order to meet the objective of my Commission to regionalise sports in Rodrigues, so that a maximum number of Rodriguans could be exposed to the discipline and eventually participate and set up new clubs.

My Commission has never refused the use of the Malabar Gymnasium to the Regional Volleyball Committee although we have stressed upon the need for them to regionalise their activities.

The issue was clarified during a meeting, which I had with all its members in my office on Wednesday 20 February 2008 during which the Committee has given its commitment to incorporate regionalisation of

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volleyball activities in its yearly programme. Volleyball matches for the Republic Cup 2008 are being held in the Malabar Gymnasium.

Mr. Lisette: May I know, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, from the Commissioner whether there has been a letter emanating from his Commission after 02 February to state to the Regional Committee that the Gymnasium will no longer be made available to them?

Mr. Agathe: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, the answer is no.

Mr. Lisette: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I have a letter (Ref. COM/YS/182V7) which was sent to the Regional Committee on 12 February wherein it is stated that the Malabar Gymnasium will no longer be made available to the Regional Committee and that they have to decentralise their activities. The hint of the problem is that, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, a request was made on 29 December - the match was supposed to start on 02 February - and they received a letter after 02 February telling them to decentralise their activities. May I ask the Commissioner why such a letter has not been sent to the Regional Committee before the start of the tournament?

Mr. Agathe: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, before starting a match for a given league, first of all we must see whether playgrounds are available; and secondly, we must seek for funds. But as I have said, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, we are going to regionalise. A sum of Rs400, 000 has been made available for the promotion of volleyball for all the community. It's not only the people who live in the surroundings of Malabar gymnasium who are going to see matches there, Mr. Chairperson, Sir.

Mr. Chairperson, Sir, we could have gone further in our decentralization programme, if it was not the fault of the former Commissioner of Sports. We have many playgrounds around Rodrigues, but we don't have *vestiaires*, W.Cs, etc. This is what the Volleyball Committee members are asking for.

Mr. Lisette: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, in his reply to the supplementary question, the Commissioner has admitted that a letter was sent to the Regional Committee contrary to what he said before. I would like to ask the Commissioner whether the letter, which emanated from his Commission after 02 February is in line with the problem that he faced with the president of the Regional Committee.

Mr. Agathe: No, Mr. Chairperson, Sir.

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Mrs. Perrine-Bégué: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I would like to ask the Commissioner whether the core of the problem is not the last minute policy for regionalisation of that particular tournament. And when the Regional Committee maintained its schedule, then the Commission retaliated and refused this particular governmental infrastructure to the Regional Committee.

Mr. Chairperson: Mrs. Perrine-Bégué, you used the word “retaliate”. This is your assumption. I allowed you to use it but you must not use it again.

Mrs. Perrine-Bégué: I think you have understood the first part of my question. I would like to ask the Commissioner whether such attitude would not impede on the progression of sports in Rodrigues, being given that the collaboration between major partners is absolutely essential for the promotion of sports in the country.

Mr. Agathe: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, maybe the respected Member has not listened. I am tabling the notes of meeting held at my office in the presence of all the partners concerned; at pages 2 & 3 you will see that it is decided to decentralise volleyball matches at Malabar Gymnasium. (Appendix V).

Mr. Spéville: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I would ask the Commissioner what has been the reason for him to retract, back-pedal from the firm decision of not giving the gymnasium.

(Interruptions)

Mr. Agathe: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I don’t know whether the respected Member knows what is meant by “back-pedal”. I have said that we are going to regionalise sports in Rodrigues. I maintain that we are going to regionalise volleyball in Rodrigues. I have said to the Committee members, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, that if they don’t want to go outside, I will have to bring volleyball to all the community of Rodrigues in order to see what volleyball is. I remind them that volleyball is an in-door and out-door game.

Mrs. Perrine-Bégué: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, still in line with major collaboration which is important between the State and the different regional committees for sports to progress, I would like to ask the Commissioner, after this problem, what is the state of relationship today between his Commission and this particular Regional Committee. Can he also state what is the standpoint of the Committee as regards his policy for regionalisation?

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(Interruptions)

Mr. Chairperson: There is a question on the floor.

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

FISHERMEN CARDS - RENEWAL

(No. B/10) Mr. N. Lisette (First Local Region Member of Baie aux Huitres) asked the Chief Commissioner as regards the renewal of fishermen cards in January last he would inform the House –

- (a) whether any fishermen who formerly had their cards for in-lagoon activities have been issued cards for off-lagoon activities and vice versa;
- (b) the criteria applied for the change/transfer and selection of those fishermen; and
- (c) table the names of those fishermen and their respective fish landing stations.

The Chief Commissioner: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, the answer to part (a) is no. Therefore, the rest of the question does not arise.

Mr. Lisette: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, the Chief Commissioner has stated that there has been no transfer. But the fishermen have brought their cards to me and it is a fact that there has been transfer of fishermen card from in-lagoon to off-lagoon. I don't know how far his information is right.

Mr. Chairperson: You cannot say that.

Mr. Lisette: But it is a fact that there has been transfer.

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

Mr. Chairperson: Please wait, Chief Commissioner. The Chief Commissioner is saying one thing and the Member is saying the contrary. Then, the standpoint of the Chief Commissioner as Commissioner in charge of the Commission for Fisheries is that he has got the official answer. The Member

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has given a completely different information. In order for any response, it is in the public interest to know. Can the Member substantiate what he is saying?

Mr. Lisette: Yes.

Mr. Chairperson: You can!

The Chief Commissioner: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, this is serious and the Member there seems to know everything that is going on in Government, even I think more than me as Chief Commissioner. But if he knows any person whose card has been transferred from in-lagoon to off-lagoon, I would invite him to put it on the table of this House Mr. Chairperson, Sir. He should not come here and cast all sort of allegations; he can write to me or he can come to my office.

Mr. Lisette: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, the Chief Commissioner may rest assured that in the next sitting I will be coming with the proof.

The Chief Commissioner: Yes, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I will wait for him and will show him that the answer I have given is right, that is, there has been no transfer from in-lagoon to off-lagoon.

Mrs. Perrine-Bégué: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I would like to ask the Chief Commissioner – this may be an advice - if he could have a look at fishers who are over 60, living in the region of Baie aux Huitres, who have effectively seen their cards, not being taken away from them but transferred to off-lagoon.

The Chief Commissioner: If this has been done, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, this is against authority; and if the Member can give the names of these persons, we will deal appropriately with those persons, Officers or any other body not having my authority who have transferred these cards. I repeat I am not aware of this. This has not been done and I have my eyes wide open on it and I welcome her advice.

RODRIGUES – SME BOOSTER SCHEME

(No. B/11) Mr. N. Lisette (First Local Region Member of Baie aux Huitres) asked the Chief Commissioner as regards the Rodrigues Small Medium Enterprises (SME) Booster Scheme as spelt out in his Budget Speech 2007/2008 he would state -

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- (a) the number of local entrepreneurs who have benefited from same;
- (b) the total amount of money disbursed so far;
- (c) the sectors/activities in which these entrepreneurs are involved?

The Chief Commissioner: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, as regards this question, during negotiations with the Development Bank of Mauritius, they stated that they are already providing a Booster Loan Scheme and we have encouraged them to develop it more for Rodrigues along the line of the budget which was presented last year. I am informed that up to now there are 22 entrepreneurs who have benefited from the Booster Loan Scheme with a total disbursement amount of Rs512,100.

They are involved in bee-keeping, garment making, food processing, handicraft and others. It is to be noted that at the level of Invest Rodrigues, those entrepreneurs to whom we are granting land and permits approving their projects, they are referred with recommendations through the DBM for loans or assistance, financed under this scheme.

Mrs Perrine-Bégué: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, the Chief Commissioner came to this august Assembly and he announced a Rodrigues Small Medium Enterprise Booster Scheme; he even announced *un plafond* of Rs10 m. of which Rs5 m. would be disbursed rapidly to start this project. Is it not la *debacle*, is it not a complete collapse of the Chief Commissioner's policy? Is it not misinformation to this House to come up with a project which already exists? Can the Commissioner inform the House whether, being given that the Development Bank of Mauritius (Rodrigues branch), would have been a major partner to process this particular policy, he had prior consultation to look out at the different envelopes that are being offered by this particular bank?

The Chief Commissioner: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I will come with the Budget soon and we will have immense opportunity to comment widely on what has been done and what has not been done during the financial year. I invite the Member to wait for the appropriate time of the Budget speech and debates thereon. But what we can say is that discussions were held with the DBM, first on the amount and second on the criteria on the access to finance, because they were asking formerly for all sorts of papers, guarantees, etc. This is not the case now following my meeting with the General Manager of the DBM in his office, in Mauritius before the Budget speech of last year. And may

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I remind the respected Member also that this House did not get the voted amount, that is, Rs325 m. and she knows what has happened on this issue.

Mrs. Perrine-Bégué: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, being given that an estimate of Rs5 m. has been made in this House to, at least, start the project, can the Chief Commissioner tell the House what his Commission envisages to do, or has been doing with this particular fund that has been budgeted?

The Chief Commissioner: I have not been doing anything with the funds, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, simply because they were not made available by the Ministry of Finance; and we have other priorities of course. May I remind the Member that the speech we made here was a proposal, subject to the approval of the National Assembly; and we made proposals for, I think, Rs325 m. and we got only Rs275 m. We had Rs50 m. short – this is simple mathematics - and we have to cut and paste somewhere, thank you.

Mrs. Perrine-Bégué: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, economic policy, as we know, has been the motto of this Regional Government. Doesn't the Chief Commissioner consider it alarming that under this more or less similar project only 22 persons have benefited from small-scale programmes?

The Chief Commissioner: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I repeat that the DBM was approached and we told them that we want to have more persons to have access to finance; and they said to us that they already have funds at the bank, granted by the Central Government, for funding any serious project. The Member should be aware that a bank would not fund a project which is either not serious or a project for which there is, for example, not enough collateral etc.

If the bank has funded only 22 projects, there may be some problems somewhere. Maybe the persons are not presenting their projects in a correct manner; maybe most of them are still doing traditional activities, in which the bank is not interested. The reimbursement rate for this type of activities is small because we should not forget that the DBM is facing much difficulty with loan reimbursement and they won't give loan again in sectors where people have difficulties to reimburse their loan. So, this is the internal policy of the bank and we are not prepared to tell the bank what to do and what not to do with their funds.

Mrs. Perrine-Bégué: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, the rationale behind the SME Booster Scheme was to look at the question of people not having the necessary

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basics to put as guarantee. When the project started, and after discussions, has the Commissioner enquired whether the reason for such a small number of persons who have benefited from the plan of the DBM - financing up Rs200, 000 which is not much money being given the cost of life of today - has to do with the question of guarantee?

The Chief Commissioner: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, today we can see posters displayed in banks inviting people to take loans of Rs500,000 without any guarantee, I have seen this in a bank in Port Mathurin. Some are even giving loans of Rs800,000 without guarantee. I am aware that the DBM also has relaxed its collateral aspects for loan there. Anybody having a serious project or even entrepreneurs having a shortfall of cash working capital, they can apply for loan there; and I repeat these funds are available for serious projects. I have been informed that they are no longer funding small fishing boats - 23 feet fishing boats - and outboard motors because most of those who have benefited from this loan are not effectively reimbursing their loan. The same thing is for other types of activities, like cattle rearing, etc.

People take money from the DBM. We should learn one thing that money which is borrowed must be reimbursed and this money must be worked out, must be invested judiciously so that it can be reimbursed it. There is a practice in Rodrigues, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, where people think that loan money from DBM is like lottery money. They take loan from the DBM under the pretext of making business. Some people are serious, but they don't use it for business; and the DBM as a bank has a corporate responsibility. Of course they will not give loan; it is government money; the Ministry of Finance puts funds at the DBM for loans to businesses. I don't have the information but the rate of default in terms of reimbursement is very high at the DBM of Rodrigues in general.

Mrs. Perrine-Bégué: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, the Chief Commissioner said that while discussing for the implementation of the Small and Medium Enterprise Scheme, they realized that the DBM had a similar project. Will he confirm to this House that the component of the similar project that the DBM is actually offering to the customers in Rodrigues bears the question of guarantee?

The Chief Commissioner: I repeat Mr. Chairperson, Sir, banks today are relaxing their amounts needed for collateral, and those interested in those serious projects at the level of "Invest Rodrigues" and whose land has been approved or they already have their land, they get a sort of recommendation from Invest Rodrigues and they can use their commercial leases - today, they

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can use their residential leases - to have access to DBM as collateral. But the final aspect is the profitability and the feasibility of the project. If we have given money to the DBM for funding, it is not as if everybody can ask for a loan of Rs200, 000 and the bank will give them the loan. Businessmen and people in Rodrigues should know that when they want to invest, they must have an investment plan and an investment schedule. They must know what they will do with this money; they must know the rate of return, the costs in terms of interest because borrowing today is a serious matter. And of course we do not want people to get more and more indebted, so that they can't reimburse and they move out of business.

There is a general culture to be introduced as regards loans because very often we see people taking loan and they go to Mauritius or abroad. We see people taking loans for water tanks from the DBM and they do not build the water tank, etc. This is why I am stressing on the point "feasibility". If the project is feasible, the bank will give the loan. They have relaxed their...

(Interruptions)

I don't know whether the Member has applied for a loan, he seems to know everything.

Mrs. Perrine-Bégué: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, this was a major project, especially for women. We know today that almost all husbands here are indebted. If they are indebted, the women may go to the DBM - that's what I said last time - and the DBM will enquire and will not give funds to the women who have know-how and who would like to start a project. Will the Chief Commissioner concede that his policy to give women and small people at the lower rung of the ladder access to funds has been defeated?

The Chief Commissioner: I am not conceding anything, Mr Chairperson, Sir. Access to finance is one aspect and seriousness of these entrepreneurs is another aspect. I believe about unity between wife and husband and, of course, each family should know what are their debts. If the husband is already indebted and the wife has a serious project, it should be feasible. The bank will enquire - I am not a banker yet, maybe one day - and will look at the feasibility of the project. If it is not feasible, even if the person puts thousand of acres of land in guarantee, no banker will finance the project. All serious projects, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, are having the priority they should have. I have visited some people who have taken loans from the DBM; their projects are

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working perfectly because they are serious, their projects were feasible and they are doing well.

Mrs. Perrine-Bégué: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I'll request - if I can - the Chief Commissioner to look into this issue. Is he aware that there is a number of funding agencies like *A nou diboute ensam* and Trust Fund which have found that women have submitted serious projects? But the DBM being the processing agency and being given also that their husbands are indebted for their houses, which is legitimate, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, these persons have not been successful in obtaining that fund. It is not a question of proposing serious projects.

The Chief Commissioner: I always tell people who want to do business that doing business is not like going fishing. Doing business is like a *parcours du combattant*, Mr. Chairperson, Sir; it is a very difficult task today to start a business anywhere in the world; and those who do succeed Mr. Chairperson, Sir, are those who really thrive. Whatever be the amount of money you have, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, what you need is an idea; and I agree with the Member when she says there are serious projects which do not have funding. What is the problem, Mr. Chairperson, Sir? You should distinguish between community, group projects and individual projects. The DBM will not finance community projects from its banking activities unless they are a cooperative, a company or a formal business organisation. So, this is another problem. They are saying that we have failed on the business side. They are preceding us on the budgetary debates. Who has liberalised the possibility for people to put their lease, whatever lease, even if it is for a WC, collateral, Mr. Chairperson, Sir?

Formerly, when I came into office, no lease was allowed. If you had a residential lease with a house on it, you could not put it as collateral to obtain a loan for your business, a loan to buy a car or a loan to send your ward for study. This is being done today. Anybody can put as collateral what he or she has as lease, whether residential or commercial, for a serious project.

Another aspect we have just launched the Registrar of Companies and it is working. Dozens of companies are registering there. Today you can set up a company in Rodrigues and file your company documents in Rodrigues. We should encourage people to engage in corporate business. Today one person can make a one-person company. So, we should not think that money is the sole concern, Mr. Chairperson, Sir. Money as capital is required but the person should have a serious business project - and it is an advice to the Member, it

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seems she wants to setup a business maybe. It is not a question, for example, of setting up a mechanical workshop. We do have many mechanical workshops today. But it should be a mechanical workshop with emphasis on a particular aspect, on a particular service or on a particular type; this is a new concept, Mr. Chairperson, Sir. Somebody calls at the DBM and asks for a loan of Rs200, 000 to set up a mechanical workshop. When I was in the private sector, somebody came to see me and asked me to write a project for him. I asked him what he would like to do. He said that he wanted to open a restaurant. I asked him what type of restaurant he wants, what will be the name, where it will be, etc. He asked me just to write the project and it will be O.K. It can't be done like that. We have to be more proactive if we want to have access to finance.

ST GABRIEL DAM - DESILTING

(No. B/12) Mr. J. D. Spéville (Second Local Region Member for St. Gabriel) asked the Commissioner responsible for Water Resources whether as regards the excavated soil obtained from the desilting of the St. Gabriel dam, he would state -

- (a) the terms of the contract for the removal and transportation of the soil from the dam to the other places of the Island;
- (b) the places where the soil has been deposited and whether this is in conformity with the terms of the contract.

The Commissioner for Water Resources (Mr. L. A. Perrine): Mr Chairperson, Sir, as regards part (a), the terms of the contract for the removal and transportation of the soil from the dam are as follows –

- (i) loading and conveyance of excavated soil and bowlers at Saint Gabriel partial land to various agricultural plots and nursery in Rodrigues in a range of 3 to 12 kilometres as instructed by the Technical Officer, Commission for Natural Resources Rehabilitation;
- (ii) to provide, equipment and labour force, to reinstate the site after completion of work.

Mr. Chairperson, Sir, as regards part (b), the soil was to be deposited within a radius of 3 to 12 kilometres around Rodrigues and around various agricultural plots. However, on starting of activities on 23 February 2008, it was

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reported by the Scientific Officer, Agronomy section of the Agricultural services that the soil contained too many bubbles and, therefore, not suitable for the potting of seed links on our station.

A site meeting was subsequently carried out on 26 January and attended by the Departmental Head, the Senior Agricultural Officer, the Scientific Officer of the Agronomy section, the representative of A. J. Maurel Construction Ltd. It was decided during the site meeting that, henceforth, the soil will be deposited elsewhere or to be donated to anybody requested for sale.

Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I am informed that seventeen trucks of soil have been deposited at Maréchal station for filling purposes and eighty two trucks of soil have been deposited at the St. Gabriel compound at the request of the church to increase parking facilities at St. Gabriel.

Mr. Chairperson, Sir, as it has been agreed during the site meeting held on 26 January 2008 the excavated soil could be deposited elsewhere as may be decided by the contractor or to donate it to anybody who makes a request. I am, therefore, not in a position to state where the contractor has deposited the total amount of excavated soil that has been removed from St. Gabriel as the contractor is not obliged to dispose same under the terms of the contract.

Mr. Spéville : M. le président, je voudrais demander au commissaire s'il y a des planteurs qui ont bénéficié de cette terre ?

Mr. Perrine: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, all requests that we have received up to now have been entertained; and I must say that some requests are being submitted directly to the contractor and, we are not aware of this at the Commission.

**ANSE AUX ANGLAIS/TERRE ROUGE - ROAD SEGMENT -
CONSTRUCTION**

(No. B/13) Mr. J. D. Spéville (Second Local Region Member for St. Gabriel) asked the Commissioner responsible for Public Infrastructure with regard to the construction of the road segment from Anse aux Anglais to Terre Rouge, he would give a full description of the progress of work to date.

The Commissioner for Public Infrastructure (Mr. F. A. Grandcourt): Mr Chairperson, Sir, with a view to improving the traffic flow and safety in the

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region of Terre Rouge, my Commission has embarked on the project of re-designing and reconstruction of the box culvert and reconstruction of 1 km of asphaltic concrete road at Terre Rouge.

The curvature of existing box culvert was so acute that it was impossible for two vehicles to cross at the same time. The traffic flow has been improved significantly with the construction of the new box culvert and upgrading of the existing road.

The project consists of the Reconstruction of the road from Anse aux Anglais to Terre Rouge of a total length of about 1.0 km and comprises *inter alia* of the following -

- Earthworks
- Road Works
- Associated drainage work
- Construction of Box Culvert
- Construction of concrete footpath

Works are being executed in phases by the Contractor A.J. Maurel Construction Ltd. through the Issue of Works Order.

Mr. Chairperson, Sir, Phase I consisted of the civil engineering works which consisted of the construction of the first 200 m of road including the construction of a box which culvert. Works for Phase I started on 27 August 2007 and all the works were completed on 30 September 2007, except for wearing course which will be laid over the whole length of 1.0 km of the road under Phase 2.

As at to date, this stretch of road is fully opened to traffic.

Mr. Chairperson, Sir, Phase 2 consists of the construction works for the remaining 800 m of roads. Works Order for Phase 2 was issued on 02 October 2007. The contract period is 6 months and construction works are scheduled to be completed by end of March 2008.

Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I am tabling the progress of works for Phase 2 as at 22 February 2008. (Appendix VI).

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It is to be noted there from that progress of works is satisfactory but was hampering during these recent days due to the prevailing bad weather conditions.

It is expected that laying of remaining base course will start in the first week of March which will be followed by the laying of wearing course and finishing works over the whole stretch of the road. Thus, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, the construction of the road from Anse aux Anglais to Terre Rouge will be completed within the contract period of 6 months.

It is to be pointed out that all works are being carried out without hindering the traffic flow as well as minimising inconvenience to the residents.

The road marking and installation of traffic signs being outside the scope of the contract will be executed by inhouse labour.

Mr. Spéville: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, can the Commissioner state to the House whether the second phase of the road construction will end about 200 m after the bus stand so as to ease transportation of that part of road? Because there is an acceptable settlement nearby?

Mr. Grandcourt: The answer is no. It depends on availability of fund. We have a priority list; so we have had only one kilometre of road to be constructed from Anse aux Anglais to Terre Rouge. During the next financial year we are going to see whether we can extend that portion of the project.

PLEASURE CRAFT - LICENSEES

(No. B/14) Mr. J. D. Spéville (Second Local Region Member for St. Gabriel) asked the Chief Commissioner as regards the pleasure craft traffic around the island he would -

- (a) table the names, occupations, addresses of all the pleasure craft licensees and the date of issue of same;
- (b) state the number of pleasure craft permits issued from July 2006 to date;
- (c) state the number of tourists, using those pleasure craft, who have visited the Coco Island since July 2006 to date and what are the procedures established for such visits.

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The Chief Commissioner: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, as regards part (a), the information requested is being tabled. (Appendix VII).

With regard to part (b), the number of pleasure craft licences issued from July 2006 to date is 8.

As regards part (c), the number of tourists who visited the Coco Island for the period July 2006 to mid-November 2007 is not available. During this period, and as was always being done since several years, permits to visit Coco Island were issued on a group basis at the rate of Rs200 per group of 20 persons maximum. No records were being kept on the number of tourists who effectively visited the island during this period.

Since 20 November 2007, the new government, Discovery Rodrigues Co. Ltd. has been entrusted the responsibility to issue permits to tourists visiting Coco Island. I am informed that during the period 20 November 2007 to 19 February 2008, 2,123 tourists visited the Coco Island generating a revenue of Rs217, 580 for the three months only, compared to Rs159,800 collected over one whole year under the previous system from July 2006 to July 2007.

With regard to procedures for obtaining permits, same is as follows -

- The tourists may buy tickets at the office of Discovery Rodrigues in Port Mathurin;
- They are required to mention the pleasure craft as well to ensure same is licensed;
- On arrival on Coco Island, the staff of “Discovery Rodrigues” verifies the permits and also guides the tourists.
- Pleasure craft licensees may also buy tickets which they use, one ticket per person on board of each pleasure craft, excluding the skipper.

Mr. Spéville: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I would like to ask the Chief Commissioner whether he is aware that some boat owners without pleasure craft licence, used to carry tourist at *Ile aux Cocos* island?

The Chief Commissioner: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, the Member said “used”. This was formerly the case.

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Mr. Spéville: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, being given that a sum of Rs110 is being cashed from the visitors, I would like to ask from the Chief Commissioner whether he is satisfied with the condition of the amenities which is available on the island.

The Chief Commissioner: No, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I am not personally satisfied. This is why we have already set up a committee to improve all these aspects. I have had the opportunity to visit *Ile aux Cocos* at the beginning of this year, and I must say that I am not satisfied with the physical aspect of *Ile aux Cocos* - ecological and other scientific aspects. There are dead filao trees and dead coco trees present on the island, and I have requested that these be removed. It is said from scientific advice that this should not be done as if it is on a simple beach. Scientific and ecological aspects should be taken into consideration. I was also not satisfied with the state of the building which is in a state of decrepitude. Mr. Chairperson, Sir, the former Executive Council used a mixture of cement and seawater for the construction. This is why there are cracks in the building and more surprisingly, I think, there are only two toilets. The government staff posted there uses one of the toilets and the other one is used by the tourists. This also is not satisfactory, and I am of the opinion that no concrete building should have been built there, Mr. Chairperson, Sir. They should have used wood, iron sheets in a very esthetic manner or hatch, *la paille comme on dit*.

We are embarking today on an improvement scheme on the environment aspect to have these trees removed; replanting of trees, of course, taking into consideration all the sensitive ecological environment there as regards the nature reserve. We are also planning to build toilets with woods which will, of course, be ecological.

Mr. Spéville: Does the Commissioner find it fair to cash Rs110 from the visitors before implementing the construction?

The Chief Commissioner: Yes, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, this has started. If somebody does not have a coat, this does not mean that he should not work to have the coat, Mr. Chairperson, Sir. We want *Ile aux Cocos* to be a reference and, we are shortly also going ahead with the placing of buoys in the sea. We should not forget that *Ile aux Cocos* is not only a nature reserve, it is also a gazetted marine reserve. Following my skipper course, I have learned, together with the Commissioner and yourself, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, that we can put yellow buoys in the sea to define the limits of the marine reserve so that people/fishermen know what they can do in the marine reserve, what are its

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limits, where it starts and where it ends. I will call upon the Commissioner for Public Infrastructure to implement these works and the decisions taken. There was a committee meeting where the Wild Life, the Commission for Agriculture, the Commission for Public Infrastructure, the Tourism office, Discovery Rodrigues were all present and we examined the different aspects that need improvement.

Mr. Spéville: Mr Chairperson, Sir, is the Chief Commissioner aware that many little Rodriguans have rejected their tours to the Coco Island when they have learnt that they should pay Rs110 per head?

The Chief Commissioner: I did not get the Member well. He said many Rodriguans have.....

Mr. Spéville: Rejected their tours to Coco Island.

The Chief Commissioner: They did not accept to go there because they can't pay the price.

Mr. Spéville: Do we have a special price for the Rodriguans here?

The Chief Commissioner: Yes, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, of course. If the Member wants to go, there are also free tickets delivered very often by Discovery Rodrigues. They have requested for a group of fifty persons, maybe students or other persons willing to go there because this is a nature reserve. In the first instructions we gave, we said that there should be a differentiation for children, for old aged persons. Today we are improving, all these have a cost. If there is any group or any person who feel they can't pay, I will give the instructions to the Chairman of Discovery Rodrigues, for the Board to examine the possibility of having a special price for these types of persons.

BAIE AUX HUITRES - SHELTER

(No. B/15) Mrs. Perrine-Bégué (First Local Region Member of St Gabriel) asked the Commissioner for Women's Affairs and Poverty Alleviation as regards the shelter at Baie aux Huitres, she will state -

- (a) who is in charge of its Management together with the number and status of the staff posted there;

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- (b) what is the monthly running costs of the shelter;
- (c) the number of beds available for the inmates presently staying there; and
- (d) whether there has been any problems at the shelter recently and/or any protests from the inmates and if yes, for what reason?

The Commissioner for Women's Affairs (Mrs M. T. Clair): Mr. Chairperson, Sir, as regards part (a) of the question, my Commission has recently set up a Managing Committee with a view to strengthening the management of the shelter at Oyster Bay, which the seat was managed by the Acting Family Protection Officer at my Commission. This Managing Committee is chaired by myself and comprise the Departmental Head of my Commission, a representative from the Commission for Health, one from Public Infrastructure, Environment and the Water Unit. The Committee has already had its first meeting on 14 February 2008 and a series of measures have been identified to improve the physical status of the shelter and the related services.

In addition, there are seven female General Workers who are currently posted there acting as Caretakers and who are working on a roster basis.

With regard to part (b), the running cost of the shelter varies. It depends on the number of inmates at the shelter; it varies between Rs50,000 to Rs70,000. The information for the month of January and February is being compiled and will be tabled later.

As regards part (c), the shelter can accommodate at least 10 inmates, that is, there are ten beds available as at to date. There are seven inmates actually there, aged between 7 months to 14 years living at the shelter.

As for part (d), to my knowledge there has been no problem or any protest at the shelter from the inmates. I am not in the presence of any formal complaint in this respect.

Mrs. Perrine-Begué: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, then, I would like to ask the Commissioner, what was the reason for the caretakers to take with them the inmates and to come over to her Commission early morning last Monday?

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

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Mrs. Perrine-Bégué: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I went to her Commission and I saw the caretakers themselves, those small children with my own eyes. I would like to ask the Commissioner if she is aware that those small children, especially the seven months, were drinking “*delo disik*” over that weekend before the caretakers came over to her Commission on that Monday. I would like to ask her whether she has a complaint book because, I am sure, that this is written somewhere or somebody must have informed her. I would like to ask her if she is aware that the small children and all the inmates have been drinking “*delo disik*” and eating “*bouillon lenti*” during those last few weeks.

Mrs. Clair: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I have already answered the question. I have told the respected Member that I am not aware of this situation. So, I’ll enquire and give the answer later.

Mrs. Perrine-Bégué: Is it not true Mr. Chairperson, Sir, that following the complaints that have been made both by the caretakers and the inmates - because they came along with the caretakers to her Commission – that subsequently there was a crisis management meeting at the level of her Commission last week to put up this managing committee and to see to it how things could be done better?

Mrs. Clair: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, the committee was not set up as a result of what the respected Member is saying. Since the beginning of the year, we have decided that there should be a Management Committee for the shelter because the Family Protection Officer who was previously in charge of the shelter was overloaded with work because she has to take care of the Child Development Unit and also other various activities at the level of the Commission. So, we have decided to set up a Committee for the proper management, especially for the physical status because the caretakers do not have enough time to look after these children and, at the same time, take care of the water supply, of the cleaning of the ground outside the shelter. This is why the Management Committee has been set up; and this is not a result of what the respected Member is saying. Of course, I’ll enquire into the matter and see whether what she is saying is true because I am not aware of this situation.

Mrs. Perrine-Bégué: Would the Commissioner admit then that there has been a Management meeting regarding the shelter last week at the level of her Commission? She has just said that. I would like to ask the Commissioner whether she is aware that there has been an adverse medical report as regards the health of the children there, especially one child suffering of malnutrition according to the Pediatric specialist.

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Mrs. Clair: I don't know how the respected Member came across a report which is supposed to be confidential, especially for somebody who is in a shelter; and I don't think this is receivable here, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, on a point of order. Somebody is in a shelter; it is supposed to be confidential. How come she is aware of an adverse report? I am not supposed to read the report here, it is supposed...

(Interruptions)

I don't know; excuse me. No! The Member is not supposed to know reports on somebody who is in a shelter. Mr. Chairperson, Sir, on a point of order...

The Chief Commissioner: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, may I intervene on this matter? Because I had a personal experience to relate what I saw. Commissioner Perrine, Commissioner Emilien, Commissioner Agathe, Commissioner Grandcourt and myself visited this compound a few weeks ago and we were told by one of the attendants there, that at times there may be lack of foods and other necessities for the shelter. When we left the shelter, the person who is in charge of the shelter was going there and we stopped her on the road and we asked her whether it is true that these persons do not get food etc. She told us that this is false because if they lack something, there is an arrangement with a local shop in Baie aux Huitres, where they can go and take anything they may not have at the shelter. So, the Member is playing on the emotion of people here Mr. Chairperson, Sir.

Mrs. Perrine-Bégué: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I am asking a question; this is my right. I would like to know if the Family Welfare Officer is too overloaded with work to look into the good running of the shelter during weekends. Is it not true that there is a problem of store forms for the availability of urgent needs of the inmates?

Mrs. Clair: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I am surprised that the ex Commissioner for Women's Affairs is pointing a finger towards me on something which she herself has set up - and in what conditions we would agree - and which we are trying our best to manage. One thing I would say is that the Acting Family Welfare and Protection Officer is available from Monday morning to Sunday afternoon at the shelter. But we have found that when she is overloaded - sometimes she has to go to Court to attend cases of sexual abuse on minors - we have to have somebody who takes over. This is why we have set

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up this Management Committee. There is no problem with store forms. When there is a problem - sometimes somebody is absent - we try to manage because there is a shop there at Oyster Bay, as the Chief Commissioner has just said. Whenever there is something missing, the General Worker working there goes to that shop and takes what is missing and goes back to the shelter. So, I don't see where is the problem.

Mrs. Perrine-Bégué: I would like to ask the Commissioner how many times she has been to the shelter to talk to the inmates and to have a general overview of the situation.

Mrs. Clair: For the information of the Member, I have been there several times with my children as well.

Mrs. Perrine-Bégué: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I'm glad that the Commissioner has said that she has included a number of stakeholders and institutions on the Managing Committee. Coming to the general state of the shelter - environment and security - I would like to ask the Commissioner whether she is aware of any complaint with regard to the quality of the water which is stored in the reservoir there.

Mrs. Clair: Following the heavy rain and also because of the leaves – there are a number of trees around the shelter - there is always a problem with the quality of water. With the Public Infrastructure and the Commission for Water Resources, we are trying to solve the problem. Once a month a team of workers go there for the cleaning of the reservoir and to look after the water supply also, plumbing and everything.

Mrs. Perrine-Bégué: Is the Commissioner aware that a rat died in that water and that this water has been used for some weeks as drinking water and also for other uses?

Mrs. Clair: I don't know of that particular detail because I have not been in the tank myself.

Mrs. Perrine-Bégué: I'll ask the Commissioner to ask the persons there and they will tell her. Mr. Chairperson, Sir, may I ask a final question? As regards the inmates themselves, a subsequent plan would have been to construct a second *aile* for young adolescents who are having problems at their family's place. I would like to ask the Commissioner where are young

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adolescent (boys) put actually when they are taken away from their family where there is a problem of security for their life.

Mrs. Clair: For the time being we have no young adolescents. But normally they come, they are usually placed in another room and they are taking care so that they don't mix up with the girl inmates. Yes, we are aware of the plan of constructing another *aile*, like the Member said, for the young men. But we are presently contemplating to construct a larger shelter with a special wing for the female and for the young male adolescents. We are also working on foster care so that this problem does not arise again because we found out that placing people having problems in a shelter does not solve their emotional and psychological problems.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE - CASES

(No. B/16) Mrs. M. A. Perrine-Bégué (First Local Region Member for St. Gabriel) asked the Commissioner for Women's Affairs and Poverty Alleviation with regard to domestic violence, would she, for the benefit of the House, state -

- (a) the number of cases reported in the various local institutions during the last 6 months;
- (b) if there have been any related projects/programme initiated by her Commission since she took office in 2006 and if yes, to give details of same.

The Commissioner for Women's Affairs and Poverty Alleviation (Mrs. M. T. Clair): Mr. Chairperson, Sir, my Commission has registered up to date 74 cases of domestic violence for period September 2007 to date. This figure is viewed to be on the high side and is on the increasing trend. With a view to addressing this issue, my Commission has already implemented several measures in the past; a hotline service has been launched since November 2006 and supported by a continuous awareness campaign undertaken at village level. The objective of the hotline is to provide immediate advice in services to the victims of domestic violence. The implementation of a Parental Education Programme has started since May 2007 and is ongoing. The objective of this programme is to sensitize parent on their roles and responsibilities in order to promote peace and harmony in the family. As at date five villages have already

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been reached and approximately 400 families have attended the talks organized in these villages. In November 2007, my Commission has organized a series of radio talks aiming at sensitizing the public at large on the impact of domestic violence on children. This programme will be repeated on a quarterly basis. The reasons for domestic violence have been as follows -

- (i) alcohol;
- (ii) idleness from the part of partners;
- (iii) lack of education, and
- (iv) lack of information.

Furthermore, we are embarking on a programme where we are including single parents. These parents will be following courses at the IVTB and also the Committee responsible of Parental Education has just met a week ago; and we are working on a serious campaign for the year 2008 on domestic violence.

Mrs. Perrine-Bégué: I was the one who initiated the Parental Empowerment Programme. So, I know fully well that we have a list. Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I would like to ask the Commissioner whether she is aware that this Parental Empowerment Programme concerns more the basic of the objective, it has more to do with sensitizing, training parents to take care...

Mr. Chairperson: This is a speech?

Mrs. Perrine-Bégué: No.

Mr. Chairperson: You should go straight to your question.

Mrs. Perrine-Bégué: Is she aware that it has to do more with sensitizing parents rather than sensitizing partners as to how to behave towards each other?

Mrs. Clair: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, parents are partners; they live together. It is Parental Education Programme; this is what I have just said. So, we are sensitizing parents on their role in the family and educating them on values and especially how to empower them to get along with their life together.

Mrs. Perrine-Bégué: My question was with regard to the specific measures towards domestic violence. I would like to ask the Commissioner who are the major perpetrators of domestic violence and who are the major victims?

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Mrs. Clair: It has been found that the major perpetrators are normally men and the victims are women. But we do have cases also where women are violent against men and especially children are more or less the victims nowadays. We have found quite a number of cases where children are being battered by their parents as a result of domestic violence.

Mrs. Perrine-Bégué: Is it not true that those who listen to those campaigns in villages are mainly those who are victims rather than the perpetrators themselves?

Mrs. Clair: Yes, this is a fact; and we have just discussed about that in the Committee and we are working on a programme. I will come later with a statement to explain how we are going to reach the perpetrators because we have found that most of the time the men are not involved in the talks - and it is logical. We have embarked on a programme together with the Ministry of Women's Affairs and we had a seminar at Pointe Venus Hotel with four people on gender issues; we invited quite a number of people; we have a representative from the "*Regroupement Zom*"; and we think that with these people we can embark on a specific programme where we would reach the perpetrators more than the victims.

Mrs. Perrine-Bégué: Is it not true that those men who are in "*Regroupement Zom*" are already sensitized? It has been nearly two years that the Commissioner has been in office and she said that now she realized that the programme did not reach the perpetrators. Have there been specific activities that have been done during the course of these two years to sensitize men directly on this issue of domestic violence?

Mrs. Clair: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I just want to clarify something regarding the "*Regroupement Zom*". What the respected Member said is that these people are already trained; they are already sensitized. But this is not the case. We are thinking of using these people as social workers to reach the other perpetrators, this is the main reason. We are embarking on various training and the importance is that we have seen that most of the time, women are much more involved *dans le circuit des personnes qui sont responsables d'aller au devant d'autres personnes qui sont victimes ou bien qui sont auteurs de violence domestique. Le meilleur moyen d'aller vers les hommes c'est d'avoir des hommes eux mêmes qui connaissent les réalités des hommes et d'essayer de parler avec eux.*

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Pour le moment on n'a pas un programme spécifique concernant la violence domestique. Mais comme j'ai dit on a un *Parental Empowerment Programme* qui est axé aussi à la violence domestique dans tous les problèmes familiaux et on est en train de travailler spécifiquement sur l'avance, vu le nombre de cas qu'on a eu durant ces derniers mois.

Mr. Chairperson: Maybe it is a good time to suspend for lunch. We will resume at fifteen past one.

At 12.25 p.m. the sitting was suspended.

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

RODRIGUES - WATER SECTOR

(No. B/17) Mrs. M. A. Perrine-Bégué (First Local Region Member of St. Gabriel) asked the Commissioner responsible for Water Resources as regards the water sector in Rodrigues, will he state if there have been any new developments or major problems arisen during the last two months, and if yes, to give details of same.

The Commissioner for Water Resources (Mr. L. A. Perrine): Mr. Chairperson, Sir, the main challenges the water sector has to face in Rodrigues are as follows -

- (i) availability of water and its quality;
- (ii) the water supply infrastructure, and
- (iii) competent and relatively qualified personnel for the operation and management of the sector which should adopt a demand side rhythm management instead supply side rhythm.

Mr. Chairperson, Sir, all the strength and weaknesses of the sector have been taken into account and a clear policy and strategy has been elaborated to address the main issues. We have opted to develop for anticipatory and preventive approach to manage the water sector for the economic and social benefits of the population and on an equitable and sustainable basis. Therefore, development of the sector is an ongoing process and corrective measures are

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being taken as planned. Mr. Chairperson, Sir, there is no new development as such as all activities have been strategically planned.

However, for the information of the House, I will elaborate on one exercise that is being presently carried out to improve the availability of water to the community of Rodrigues. I am referring to the rehabilitation of 16 boreholes throughout Rodrigues. Mr Chairperson, Sir, recently 70% of the water supply in Rodrigues come from boreholes, therefore, representing the main source of potable water to the island. For the last ten years, no thorough monitoring of boreholes has been carried out in Rodrigues. The yield of boreholes has dropped significantly culminating in other pumping during dry season. Submersible pumps have been replaced on an ad hoc basis without the execution of a proper survey of the boreholes resulting into poor performance and high cost. The borehole of Latanier is a typical example. The yield of this major borehole which was as high as 60 cubic meters per hour some years ago, has now fallen to nearly 18 cubic meters per hour.

Mr. Chairperson, Sir, to reverse the situation, an early exercise is being carried out to clean 16 boreholes. An early interim report indicates that there has been a general increase of 15 to 20 percent from all the boreholes. My Commission will continue to carry out preventive and corrective maintenance and will monitor closely the performance of every borehole in Rodrigues so as to ensure the availability of water to all elements of the society, including the poor and under privileged and to take into account the particular needs of women and children.

Mrs. Perrine-Bégué: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, during a recent sitting of the Assembly, the Commissioner came with a number of answers and statements whereby he said that the projects will be implemented within a very short delay, that is why I put that question. As regards the tender that was launched for two particular desalination plants to purify or to render usable underground water namely in the region of the north, I would like to ask the Commissioner where matters stand.

Mr. Chairperson: Before you answer, I'll ask the Deputy Chairperson to take the chair, please.

At this stage the Deputy Speaker took the Chair

Mr. Perrine: Madam Deputy Chairperson, we have two projects. I would like to clarify the question, that is, we have one project to set up a

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desalination plant and another one to set up a treatment plan, that is, to treat blackish water. So, for both projects, tender procedures have been undertaken and for blackish water tender has been awarded to Aquaflo and for desalination plant the tender has not yet been awarded; and we are waiting for the decision of the Central Tender Board.

Mrs. Perrine-Bégué: Madam Deputy Chairperson, I am going to ask the Commissioner if he can give more information as regards the tender that has been given to Aquaflo Ltd.

Mr. Perrine: Madam Deputy Chairperson, I do not have all the information, but I can tell the Member that the tender has been awarded, the site has been taken over and the contractor to complete the project within three months.

Mrs. Perrine-Bégué: Can I know from the Commissioner how many regions will be concerned with this particular project?

Mr. Perrine: Madam Deputy Chairperson, the project will cover the whole island; for the first time there will be two desalination treatment plants, one will be located at Camp du Roi for the north and one at Songes for the southern region.

Mr. Spéville: Madam Deputy Chairperson, can the Commissioner tell us what has caused the delay in the construction of the two desalinated plants being given that *il avait fait une annonce à la radio disant que ce sera opérationnel en décembre 2007*?

Mr. Perrine: Madam Deputy Chairperson, you know I have no control on the radio and the press. But we have proper procedures that we have to follow - tender procedure and CTB regulations.

(Interruptions)

I have said that tender will be launched in December.

Mr. Lisette: I would like to ask the Commissioner responsible for Water Resources, how does he explain the fact that even though there is rainfall these days, the frequency at which water is being distributed to the northern villages is less as compared to last year or previous months?

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Mr. Perrine: Madam Deputy Chairperson, I have just stated in my reply that 70% of water for domestic purpose comes from boreholes and that the level of boreholes over the years has become insignificant. Now we are carrying out an exercise to clean these boreholes so as to increase the amount of water that we have in Rodrigues by 15% to 20%. This does not mean that if we have positive rainfall this month, immediately there will be increase in the production of water. It takes time for surface water, there will be an increase but this will be for a short period. But as for boreholes it takes time to replenish. First of all we have to clean these boreholes and then it is only after one month that we will be able to get an exact figure of the increase in the yield of boreholes.

Mr. Lisette: I am still referring, Madam Deputy Chairperson, to the distribution of water in the northern region where I should say most of the villages do not get water from boreholes like the villages of *Oyster Bay*, *Hauteur Accacia*, even *Pointe La Guele*. They are not provided with water from boreholes but rather from surface reservoir. How is it that there has been desilting of *Gros Mama Dans Fond La Bonté* and still the frequency of water has not yet increased?

Mr. Perrine: Madam Deputy Chairperson, I must say that even though we had a good rainfall since end of December, for some dams and reservoirs the situation is still alarming. I am here talking of Anse Raffin where the level is still at dense storage. This does not mean that if we have rainfall everyday that all our reservoirs will be full with water and available to be distributed.

(Interruptions)

Mrs. Perrine-Bégué: Madam Deputy Chairperson, coming to the *Pavé la Bonté*, the Commissioner said that it is better to desilt this existing borehole rather than to construct a dam or a reservoir. We already voted money for this dam and it was to cater for 70, 000 meter cube of water. I would like to ask the Commissioner whether this reservoir which has been desilted is already operational and what is the quality of that water?

Mr. Perrine: Madam Deputy Chairperson, the dam at *Fond La Bonté* which is commonly known as *Gros Maman* has been put into operation and about 7000 cubic meter of water is being treated there and distributed into the network, touching the region of *Allée Tamarin*, *Oyster Bay* and *Accacia*.

The Deputy Chairperson: No, supplementary, next question.

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Mrs. Perrine-Bégué: I have a lot of supplementary questions on this question.

The Deputy Chairperson: Last one.

Mrs. Perrine-Bégué: I have a lot of supplementary questions, because this is water sector development. Madam Deputy Chairperson, is the Commissioner aware that the water at *Pavé La Bonté* is nauseous? Is he aware that the water cannot even be used for irrigation actually?

Mr. Perrine: I think this was before the dam was put into operation. There has been an exercise carried out by a team of workers from the Water Unit; the water is being treated and as from this week, the population will be provided with water according to the national standard.

Mrs. Perrine-Bégué: I would invite the Commissioner to make an enquiry. I have been there; I have spoken to some of the persons there, who are provided with this water. They said that the water cannot even be used for irrigation because of the very bad smell. I have got that information since some two or three weeks back. As regards some regions like, for example, the sub-part of the *Latanier* village - the *Latanier* valley where the borehole is situated - is the Commissioner aware that people were receiving water nearly twice weekly in the past?

The Chief Commissioner: May I draw the attention of the Chair to standing order 19(7)? The question here is any new developments or major problems. The Member is putting her question to generalise and to look at each and every small...

(Interruptions)

She has been speaking about individual problems that she has been visiting. These are not major problems; it may happen that some people receive water which smells bad after the rain etc. But this shall not be a pretext for debate. Standing Order 19(7) is clear.

The Deputy Chairperson: You carry on with the question you were just asking before the point of order.

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Mrs. Perrine-Bégué: This is a major problem as regards Latanier and I met the representative of the people who have voted for us. They are saying that they are having water once a month ...

(Interruptions)

Au-delà d'un mois. I would like the Commissioner to look into that. As you know Latanier is a very large village; and there are other people, who are connected to that network. Other villages around are facing the same problem.

Mr. Perrine: Madam Deputy Chairperson, we have, at the level of my Commission, a Crisis Committee that meets every week; and every representation that we receive is being analysed and remedial actions are taken immediately. I am surprised to hear that for one month, people have not been provided with water. Anyway, maybe it is a personal connection. I will ask my Commission to look into this situation.

Mrs. Perrine-Bégué: It is unfortunate that I did not bring the letters, but I will send them next time. As regards the upgrading of the network, can the Commissioner tell us where we are with this project?

Mr. Perrine: Madam Deputy Chairperson, there is a question coming and I will deal with this issue thoroughly.

RODRIGUAN ARTISTS - PROJECTS

(No. B/18) Mrs. M. A. Perrine-Bégué (First Local Region Member of St. Gabriel) asked the Commissioner responsible for Arts & Culture as regards the empowerment of the Rodriguan artists he would state if any new project has been finalised and submitted to any donor organised for funding and if yes -

- (a) would he give details of the project in the different fields involved; and
- (d) if the local artists were consulted for that purpose.

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The Chief Commissioner: Madam Deputy Chairperson, no new project has been finalised as regards this matter. Therefore, parts (a) and (b) of the question do not arise.

HOUSING AND CADASTRAL SURVEY - CONTRACT

(No. B/19) Mr. D. L. Guillaume (Fourth Island Region Member) asked the Chief Commissioner with regard to the Housing and Cadastral Survey, could the Chief Commissioner inform the House -

- (a) to whom was awarded the contract and the total value of the contract;
- (b) the contractual commencement date and the expected completion date;
- (c) the objectives of the Housing & Cadastral Survey and the status of the project as at date, and
- (d) whether he is satisfied with the scope of works of the survey as specified in the assignment.

The Chief Commissioner: Madam Deputy Chairperson, the information is as follows -

- (a) The contract was awarded to the Joint Venture R.A. Jeewa/Roopun/Tupsy for a contract value of Rs24,325,000 + VAT.
- (b) The contractual commencement date was on 02 May 2006. The expected completion date is 01 May 2008.
- (c) The objectives of the Housing and Cadastral Survey were to -
 - (i) carry out a Housing and Cadastral Survey of all existing housing units and buildings in Rodrigues;
 - (ii) developing new sub-divisions in specific regions or within defined areas throughout the island, and

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- (iii) setting up a digitalized cadastral system and housing database.

The project consisted of the following phases -

- (i) the undertaking of a housing survey throughout Rodrigues;
- (ii) the establishment of 350 control points;
- (iii) the survey of existing lots for residential/commercial and industrial purposes, and
- (iv) setting up of the digitalized cadastral system and housing database.

The status of the project is as follows -

- (i) Housing Survey

The Housing survey was completed in November 2006. The Housing Survey collected information on every single housing units in Rodrigues with details such as name of owner, ID Card Number, type of house, nature of land tenure, date of occupation, etc. All housing units have been surveyed and given a PIN.

- (ii) Establishment of Control Points

In accordance with provisions of the contract, 350 control points (40 primary control points and 310 secondary control points) have been fixed by the contractor and have been verified by the Cadastral Office.

- (iii) Subdivision of lands

Within the terms of the contract, the Joint Venture is also called upon to propose subdivision of land for residential, commercial and industrial purposes. As at date sub-divisions have been finalized in the following places: Terre Rouge, Anse Goeland, Mt. du Sables, Reposoir, Mourouk, Mangues, Mt. Cabris Corail, Ile Michel, Anse Baleine, Anse Tamarin,

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Songes, Mt. Chérie, Mt. Cabris Est and Citron.

(iv) Cadastral Survey

According to the contract, the Joint Venture is required to survey all state lands with built-ups and housing units in Rodrigues and produce same in a digital map. The Cadastral Survey is being undertaken on a zone-by-zone basis starting from Zone 1. Field surveys started in September 2006. The field surveys for Zone 1, 2 and 3 have been completed. The Joint Venture is presently undertaking field surveys for Zones 4 and 5. The digital maps for Zone 1 have been submitted by the Joint Venture and which has started with the placing of boundary stones for Zone 1 and 2.

With regard to part (d), of the question, Mrs. Deputy Chairperson, regarding the scope of the works, I would like to point out that I noticed several shortcomings in the contract and the scope of works. The contract makes provision for collection of only static survey data which will be outdated in a few years. No provision has been made for a dynamic system of storing and maintaining the survey data. No provision, whatsoever, has been made for the updating of the digitalized system. If we are not prudent, we run the risk of wasting the Rs24 m. invested on this project.

I have been informed of the various shortcomings on the contract further to various discussions also held with the Ministry of Housing & Lands. However, my office is planning to correct the enormous flaw in the design of this project. In that respect, my office will be setting up a modern Geographical Information System (GIS). The GIS system for Rodrigues will be operated within the Cadastral Office. The GIS would be a modern tool for effective state land management and planning. The project will involve establishment of the GIS by acquiring the GIS software, transferring existing manual/Autocads plans and data on the GIS, linking the GIS to the existing State Land Rental Information System and the training of users of the system.

COMMISSIONER OF POLICE – VISIT TO RODRIGUES

(No. B/20) Mr. D. L. Guillaume (Fourth Island Region Member) asked the Chief Commissioner whether he is aware of a recent visit of the

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Commissioner of Police in Rodrigues and whether he was informed officially of the said visit and if so, he had the occasion to speak to the latter.

The Chief Commissioner: Mrs. Deputy Chairperson, I was not informed of the visit of the Commissioner of Police to Rodrigues. However, I did receive an invitation from him to attend the inauguration of the Police Station of Plaine Corail and La Ferme which was held on 01 February 2008 on the same day of the celebration of abolition of slavery.

Mrs Deputy Chairperson: The Chairperson will take the Chair.

At this stage, the Chairperson took the Chair.

REDCO - VACANCIES

(No. B/21) Mr. L. P. François (Second Local Region Member for Baie aux Huitres) asked the Commissioner responsible for Education with regard to the vacancies advertised by Rodrigues Educational Development Company Ltd. (REDCO) around period October 2007, could he, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to -

- (a) the description of the respective posts advertised and the number of applications received per post;
- (b) the number of candidates called for an interview for each post;
- (c) the expenses incurred and outcome of the exercise.

The Chief Commissioner: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I am tabling the information requested at parts (a), (b) and (c). (Appendix VIII).

Mrs. Perrine-Bégué: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I would like to ask the Chief Commissioner, if he could give information as regards the Selection Board that was set up for the recruitment of the different personnel.

The Chief Commissioner: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, the question is about description of respective posts advertised, number of applications, number of candidates, expenses incurred. I don't see any matter pertaining to selection board. Anyway, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, the Board of Selection is comprised of members of the Board of REDCO.

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PIPES AND FITTINGS - COMMISSIONING

(No. B/22) Mr. J. D. Spéville (Second Local Region Member of St. Gabriel) asked the Commissioner responsible for Water Resources whether, as regards the last commissioning of pipes and fittings he will -

- (a) give a full description of its tendering procedures;
- (b) table a breakdown of the use of these pipes in the different places of the island;
- (c) give the names of private organisations and associations who have or will benefit these pipes;
- (d) state what measures he proposes to take to test for water leaks and to stop them, if any, in new designed pipelines?

The Commissioner responsible for Water Resources (Mr. L. A. Perrine): Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I wish to inform the House that the project for purchase of pipes and fittings is an ongoing project. As regards the last commissioning of pipes and fittings, the tender document was prepared by the Officer in Charge of Water Resources Unit, in consultation with the Central Tender Board in July 2007.

Upon approval of the Central Tender Board on 1st August 2007, tenders were floated through the press by the RRA.

Tender documents were purchased at the Commission for Water Resources at Citronelle against payment of a non-refundable fee of Rs500 per set. Tender documents were deposited in the Tender Box of the Central Tender Board, Julius Nyerere Avenue, Rose Hill in Mauritius. By closing date, the CTB reported that the following tenders together with original bid bonds were received, namely -

- (i) STR Marketing Ltee
- (ii) Aqualia – DPI
- (iii) Procivil Works Co. Ltd

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The Departmental Tender Committee took cognizance of the Central Tender Board recommendations and a Technical Committee to assess the bid was set up comprising of -

- Civil Engineer – Commission for Public Infrastructure
- Senior Inspector – Commission for Water Resources; and
- One Inspector – Water Resources southern region.

The Technical Committee submitted its recommendation on 17 October 2007 and same was approved by the Departmental Tender Committee.

The approval of the Central Tender Board was obtained on 22 November 2007 and, subsequently, the contract was awarded on 27 November 2007 to the lowest bidder, STR Marketing Ltée, for the sum of Rs7, 044, 047.

Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I wish to inform the House that around 90% of pipes and fittings have been commissioned and the remaining 10% should be commissioned by 15 March 2008 as per conditions of the contract.

Mr. Chairperson, Sir, as regards part (b), I am hereby tabling a list where pipes have been deposited for the improvement of water distribution network. (Appendix IX).

Mr. Chairperson, Sir, as regards part (c), I wish to inform the House that no private organisation or association has or will benefit these pipes which have been purchased to replace the remaining 60.8 km old galvanized pipes water network around Rodrigues as mentioned lately in my statement to the House.

Mr. Chairperson, Sir, as regards part (d), I am informed that losses due to leakages amount to approximately 40% which is considered as very high. The main reason causing these leakages is the defective existing galvanised pipes water network. The replacement of all these galvanised pipes by HDPE will reduce significantly leakages in the new designed network.

Mr. Spéville: Mr Chairperson, Sir, the question was on new designed pipelines. Given we have not only the galvanised pipes but PVC pipes, there are some regions where there are leakages on these new designed pipelines. I would like the Commissioner to look into it, because leakages are not only on the old galvanised pipes but also on PVC pipes - the new designed pipelines. Can the Commissioner say to the House what measures he has taken to avoid these leakages?

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Mr. Perrine: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I wish to inform the House that we have set up a team in the Water Unit to look into this important issue of leakages; and we have in fact three teams in every section: the north, the south and the central. And they are making a thorough audit of this issue and will take remedial action as soon as we have the report on the actual situation.

Mrs. Perrine-Bégué: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, the Commissioner has said that 90% of the newly bought pipes have been commissioned, then there are 60.8 kilometers of galvanised pipes that would be disposed of. Can he inform the House how those galvanised pipes have been disposed of?

Mr. Perrine: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, we have normal procedures regarding disposal of government property. So, the disposal of these pipes will be done according to government procedures.

Mrs. Perrine-Bégué: Coming to water leakages, normally we have a team of people working during working hours. Being given that water is precious, is there any plan which has been put in place for a mobile team to look into water leakages? When you drive along the Autonomy Road, you can see leakages from the major pipe. People are not having water and water is flowing away. Can the Commissioner tell the House whether a team of workers will be put to work after office hours to look into the problem of leakages?

Mr. Perrine: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I must say that we are now facing a big problem in the water sector which is vandalism. People are cutting the pipes, disrupting the network; and several cases have been referred to the police. I have set up a special mobile unit which travels all over the island to look into this issue, even after office hours. The unit is based at Malabar and it covers the whole island.

Mrs. Perrine-Bégué: Excuse me to insist. The mobile team looks after leakages after office hours. We know that the office is closed. So, how do we get access to this mobile team?

(Interruptions)

Mr. Chairperson: Yes, Commissioner. The Member wants an answer. Order please! The Commissioner is on his feet.

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Mr. Perrine: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I wish to inform the Member that we have made special arrangements so that contact can be established with the section, even after office hours including Sundays and public holidays. There is always someone working on roster, attending to all these issues.

Mr. Spéville: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, this government is talking of the empowerment of Rodriguans in the field of agriculture, does the Commissioner find it fair to stop helping the private organisations and associations as far as pipes are concerned?

Mr. Perrine: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, this project aims at improving the network and so the pipes and fittings have been purchased for that purpose. I don't think it will be in order to use pipes that have been purchased for a specific project to be distributed to organisations and associations. This issue can be addressed from other projects and within the budget of the Water Commission; we will look into that issue. We have organisations, let us say, in the Agricultural sector which need help as far as irrigation is concerned; we can help them to set up their agriculture project. As far as domestic purposes are concerned, procedures are clear. They have to pay for connection; and these pipes cannot be put at their disposal.

Mr. Spéville: Mr Chairperson, Sir, can the Commissioner give the names of projects which exist at the level of his Commission to help people in agriculture, for example, the planters or associations engaged in agriculture?

Mr. Perrine: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I will just like to remind the respected Member, who has been himself a Commissioner for Agriculture, that there is an item called "Incentive to Farmers" which is being used to help these organisations.

**MONT LUBIN HEALTH CENTRE – STAND-BY GENERATOR &
ECG MACHINE**

(No. B/23) Mr. S. P. Roussety (Fifth Island Region Member) asked the Commissioner responsible for Health as regards the Health Centre at Mont Lubin, he will state for the benefit of the House whether -

- (a) the stand-by generating set is in good working condition and if not, since when and what has been the cause of the breakdown;

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- (b) the electro-cardiogramme apparatus is in running condition and if not, since when and what have been the cause of the breakdown.

The Commissioner responsible for Health (Mr. J. A. L. Emilien): Mr Chairperson, Sir, the reply for both parts (a) and (b) of the question, is yes.

Mrs. Perrine-Bégué: If the stand-by generator of Mont Lubin is in good condition, then, why was a team mandated there last week to look into the matter and what was the result of it?

Mr. Emilien: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I have always been saying in this House that maintenance of all equipment is of utmost importance. In fact, the maintenance team was there on Thursday 21 February for normal maintenance work.

Mr. S. P. Roussety: I am sure that the Commissioner is well aware that the electro-cardiogramme apparatus was sent in a hurry at the Mont Lubin Health Centre on Wednesday 20 February 2008. Why to wait for the reception of the question to send a new electro-cardiogramme to that Health Centre?

Mr. Emilien: Mr Chairperson, Sir, in fact a new ECG apparatus has been sent to Mont Lubin Area Health Centre last week. The reason is that while the old one which had been reported to be out of order was, in fact, in good working condition. I must point out, Mr Chairperson, Sir, that, very often, Nursing Officers report that ECG apparatus are out of order when, in fact, this is not so. The Bio-medical technician from the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life calls at Queen Elizabeth Hospital and the health centres several times in a year for repair or maintenance of various items of equipment. At each visit, the technician is called upon to attend to repairs of ECG machines and he frequently finds out that the equipment is not faulty. But the Nursing Officer is either not always fully conversant with the way to handle the equipment properly or is guilty of negligence.

The Bio-medical Technician from Mauritius seizes every opportunity of his visit to Rodrigues to train Nursing Officers on the way to use the ECG apparatus. It must be noted that the ECG technician, Mrs. Meunier, has no problem with the ECG machine, which she has been using for the past 5 years. In fact, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, there are four electro-cardiogramme machines at QEH in good working condition. One unit at the ECG Unit: make Biocare, one unit at the Out Patient Department, make Innomed. Two units at the Intensive Care Unit: make Biocare, ECG 300 and Innocare (three/single channel).

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The ECG machine of the male ward, make Biocare, is actually under repair at the Bio-medical Unit of Dr. Jeetoo Hospital and awaiting the Pre-Amplification Board. Spare part is expected in one month.

Mont Lubin is equipped with one ECG machine, make Hinson Kohden, cardiofax, 685lk. During the last visit of the Bio-medical technician in October 2007, the equipment was checked and tested and found to be in good working condition in the presence of Mrs. Meunier, ECG Technician.

For the information of the respected Member and the House, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, La Ferme Area Health Centre is also equipped with one ECG machine, make Cardioline, Delta plus. The machine has been checked and tested in good working condition during the last visit of the Bio-medical technician. I have always said that, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, maintenance of equipment is of utmost importance. The Bio-medical technician of the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life has highlighted it in his report.

For the information of the respected Member, when using an ECG machine Mr. Chairperson, Sir, the following steps should be followed -

- (i) connect the ECG Electrodes on patient properly;
- (ii) put the machine on;
- (iii) select the filter mode (either Hum or Emergency);
- (iv) select the ECG either on automatic or manual mode and either single channel or three channel;
- (v) and then you start the ECG.

Most important, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, after having finished the ECG, disconnect the electrodes from patients and make sure to clean the electrodes with a cloth to remove the gel.

As you know, to avoid electric shock and burning, gel is spread on the body at places where the electrodes are to be fixed and this gel should be wiped away from the electrodes after each and every use of the ECG machine.

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This is why I was telling the House, Mr. Chairperson, Sir that the ECG machine is in good working condition because very often it has been mishandled. People don't wipe it properly, that is why very often they report that ECG machines are not in working condition and when the Biomedical Technician tests the machines, he finds out that they are all in working conditions.

In October 2006, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, five ECG machines were sent to Mauritius for repair; and it was reported that none of these machines was faulty. They were all in good working conditions. It needed only to be maintained, that is the fact, Mr Chairperson, Sir.

Mrs. Perrine-Bégué: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, the respected Commissioner said that the ECG machine at Mont Lubin was in good condition. Is he aware that patients admitted at the Health Centre there have to be sent, very frequently, to the QEH to do an ECG? Because ECG machines at Mont Lubin were not working. This was prior to the question put to him.

Mr. Emilien: As I said, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, maybe she is right in saying so because at times the apparatus are being reported to be faulty. So the patients have to be sent to the QEH because we have only one ECG machine at Mont Lubin. But after tests we found out that it was not faulty.

(Interruptions)

Mrs. Perrine-Bégué: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I have another question as regards part (a), the stand-by generator. I would like to ask the Commissioner whether it is not true that it is because the stand-by generator was reported to be faulty that patients were discharged at 19.00 hours when there was a cyclone warning class 2 - cyclone "Yvan"- for fear that during the night the weather would worsen and that the generator could not be used.

Mr. Perrine: Either the Member is of bad faith or her memory is very short. Her colleague, who was Commissioner for Health, told in this House that during cyclonic conditions prevailing over the island patients living nearby the Health Centres could be sent home if they so wished. This is a normal practice Mr. Chairperson, Sir.

Mr. S. P. Roussety: A supplementary question, Mr Chairperson, Sir...

(Interruptions)

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Mr. Chairperson: Silence! Order!

Mr. S. P. Roussety: If the generator was of good running condition, why spare parts were ordered by DHL from Mauritius?

Mr. Perrine: Mr Chairperson, Sir, for the information of the respected Member, I will ask him one thing: what do you call a generator in good running condition? When you put it on, it starts and it generates electricity at the expected voltage. This is the case at the Mont Lubin Health Centre. But sometimes it may happen that the automatic changeover switch of this generator does not respond immediately. When this intermitted fault occurs, the generator is put on manually by means of a knob which is being done in a few seconds, Mr. Chairperson, Sir.

Apart from this, I have to note here, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, that five emergency lamps have been installed at Mont Lubin Area Health Centre: one in the out-patient department, one in the male ward, one in the female ward, one at the Maternity ward and one in the pharmacy also. When there is no supply of electricity, these emergency lamps automatically turn on and each lamp has autonomy of eight hours. So, the question of urging on people to go home at night during cyclone does not arise at Mont Lubin. At Mont Lubin we don't have any operation being done there, so what's the use of sending people there? The generator there only supplies for light at night. The question does not arise.

GRANDE MONTAGNE - SPORTS COMPLEX

(No. B/24) Mr. L. D. Baptiste (Second Local Region Member of Grande Montagne) asked the Commissioner responsible for Youth & Sports with regard to the use of the Sports Complex of Grande Montagne, could the Commissioner provide for the benefit of the House the following informations-

- (a) on the teams who are using the sports complex for training purposes together with their respective time scheduled for training sessions;
- (b) whether the complex is provided with lighting facilities;
- (c) if there has been any disruption in the electricity supply in 2007/2008 and if so, when and the reasons, thereof.

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The Commissioner responsible for Youth & Sports (Mr. J. C. Agathe): Mr Chairperson, Sir, allow me to highlight this point to this House, regarding the state of the Grande Montagne sports complex, particularly the cloakrooms, dated since long, maybe at the time when I myself was playing football. We have got different Rodriguans who were Ministers for Rodrigues and the party of the Minority side has been in power since some twenty years including three years as Commissioners of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly. What have they done to reinstate the infrastructure of Grande Montagne sports complex? Mr Chairperson Sir, nothing! They have only abandoned it in a dumping state and even they have not been able to take a decision as to whether to erect a sports complex at Grande Montagne or at Roche Bon Dieu. They are hop-hopping, one day at Roche Bon Dieu, one day at Grande Montagne.

Nevertheless, my Commission has cleaned and marked the volleyball pitch to enable training services at the sports complex. Mr. Chairperson, Sir, all sports complexes in Rodrigues, including the one at Grande Montagne, are at the disposal of all the sports community.

As regards part (c) yes, the complex is provided with lighting facilities. The Central Electricity Board has disrupted this in December 2007 for safety reason following technical problems encountered. The matter has been referred to the Commission for Public Infrastructure for investigation.

With regard to part (d), it is expected that the electricity supply at Grande Montagne Sports Complex will be re-established shortly by installing the accessories both for the football playground and the Sports Complex inside the Grande Montagne Youth compound.

Mr. Lisette: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, the Commissioner stated that the cloakroom was in a bad state. I would like to know what he has been doing since he has been in office to upgrade same.

Mr. Agathe: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, as I said, I repeat they were hop-hopping...

(Interruptions)

Mr. Chairperson, Sir, this complex is being used by sports community and we have also the artists who are using the complex. Therefore, there has been tampering of the meter reader.

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RODRIGUES – SCHOLARSHIPS - AWARD

(No. B/25) Mr. L. D. Baptiste (Second Local Region Member of Grande Montagne) asked the Commissioner responsible for Education whether, in regard to the award of scholarship to Higher School Certificate (HSC) students for Rodrigues for University studies, he will state -

- (a) the number and description of scholarships available for Rodrigues for year 2008;
- (b) the eligibility criteria for the award of same.

(Interruptions)

Mr. Chairperson: Yes, there is a question for the Commissioner for Education. I don't know who is going to answer this.

The Chief Commissioner: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I am tabling the information required at parts (a) and (b). (Appendix X).

Mr. Chairperson: Nobody seems to be interested with the paper. Next question.

PATIENTS – TRANSFER TO MAURITIUS

(No. B/26) Mrs. R. M. F. Gaspard-Pierre Louis (First Local Region Member for Grande Montagne) asked the Commissioner responsible for Health whether, with regard to the transfer of patients to Mauritius for further treatment, he would state -

- (a) the number of patients transferred for the period December 2007 to date;
- (b) the necessary conditions under which the transfer should be effected.

The Commissioner responsible for Health (J. A. L. Emilien): Mr. Chairperson, Sir, from December 2007 to date 104 patients have been

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transferred to Mauritius for treatment. Referring to part (b) of the question, patients from Rodrigues are sent to Mauritius for treatment or further treatment are usually accompanied by a Nursing Officer or close relative and sometimes it is necessary for patients to be accompanied by both a Medical Officer and a Nursing Officer depending on the nature of the specific case.

The Health Director's Office books air tickets (Rodrigues/Mauritius) in favour of the patient and inform the Head of J. Nehru Hospital (in Rose Belle) of the arrival and flight details of those patients.

Patients are sent by ambulance to Sir Gaëtan Duval Airport and when they arrive in Mauritius, another ambulance takes them from SSR Airport to the relevant hospital. When the general condition of the patient is not stable, a SAMU team from Mauritius comes to Rodrigues and takes the patient to Mauritius.

The Medical Social Worker of J. Nehru Hospital makes necessary arrangements for the collection of the patient at Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam National Airport and for his admission.

The patient is then taken on charge for his treatment and transfer to other hospitals until his discharge.

Patients are sent to Mauritius only when the treatment is not available in Rodrigues and the transfer to Mauritius must be recommended by the treating doctor, with the approval of the Health Director.

Mrs. Gaspard-Pierre Louis: Mr Chairperson, Sir, the Commissioner said that usually both parents and officers from the Health sector accompany patients. I want him to inform the House whether for the months of January/February there have been cases when patients have had to travel alone to Mauritius.

Mr. Emilien: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I said that in some cases patients are at times accompanied by both medical and Nursing officers and relatives. This does not mean that every time patients are being accompanied. It happens very often that patients are not accompanied by relatives to Mauritius.

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Mrs. Gaspard-Pierre Louis: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, is it normal that patients going to Mauritius, who are *sous la responsabilité de la Commission* go alone. What would happen if there were a problem during the travel time?

Mr. Emilien: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I would take an example; last time we had a breakdown of an apparatus called colonoscopy. This apparatus is introduced through the anus to detect if there is a problem to the intestine. If such a patient is sent to Mauritius, he has no problem at all to sit properly in the plane, to complain for whatever problems or to have any specific treatment. So, there is no use for every patient to be accompanied by a relative.

Mr. Lisette: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, where will the responsibility of the Commission lie if an unaccompanied patient does not go to the hospital where he should be going? Where are the responsibilities of the Commission?

Mr. Emilien: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, maybe the respected Member was not listening. Let me read again the part of my reply where this is mentioned. The Health Director's Office books air tickets (Rodrigues/Mauritius) in favour of the patient and inform the Head of J. Nehru Hospital (in Rose Belle) of the arrival and flight details of those patients. Patients are sent by ambulance to Sir Gaëtan Duval Airport and when they arrive in Mauritius, another ambulance takes them from SSR Airport to the relevant hospital. So, an ambulance takes him from hospital to the airport and from SSR National Airport there another ambulance takes him to Nehru Hospital and from Nehru Hospital, they arrange for everything, for example, if the patient has to be transferred to, let us say, Dr. Jeetoo Hospital, Queen Victoria Hospital or SSRN Hospital.

Mrs. Gaspard-Pierre Louis : M. le président, donc est-ce que le Commissaire trouve normal qu'un patient de plus de cinquante ans souffrant du cancer peut partir seul pour un faire la chimiothérapie à Maurice ?

Mr. Emilien: M. le président, j'ai parlé longuement sur les stages du cancer ce matin. Il y a quatre stages. Il y a un stade ou on ne peut rien faire parce que le patient doit être accompagné d'un *Nursing Officer*, d'un médecin ou bien d'un parent. Mais dans bien des cas, il y a des gens qui souffrent d'un cancer et qui sont normaux comme vous et moi, donc il n'y a pas lieu de les faire accompagner par des parents.

Mrs. Gaspard-Pierre Louis : M. le président, je voudrais savoir s'il y a eu des cas ou les médecins ont recommandé qu'un officier de la santé accompagne un patient et que la Commission a refusé ?

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Mr. Emilien: Jamais ! Qui prendrait cette responsabilité ? Qui prendrait cette décision ?

Mrs. Perrine-Bégué: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I would like to ask the Commissioner for Health, for which cases – when patients are being accompanied by their parents - the cost of the transfer is being taken care of by the Commission?

Mr. Emilien: These cases are being determined by the treating doctor Mr Chairperson, Sir. Unfortunately, I can't give the criteria here?

Mrs. Perrine-Bégué: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, there are cases where patients are seriously ill and they are accompanied by Nursing officers, Doctors or whatever. We know that there are many Rodriguans who have parents in Mauritius, but there are also many families who do not have any relatives in Mauritius. Is the Commissioner aware that there is much hardship for those patients who do not have the necessary personal care because they do not have any relatives or friends to take care of their personal belongings or to look after them?

Mr. Emilien: I welcome the question of the respected Member. The question was about the transfer of patients. Well, I will look into the matter concerning accompanying relatives.

Mr. Chairperson: Next question.

The Chief Commissioner: I'm afraid, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, time may be over.

Mr. Chairperson: Yes, time is over? Normally at the end of question time I normally take into consideration that there had been some interruptions, like points of order and so forth. But normally this goes, but if a Member does raise a point of order, then the matter stops here. I can't do otherwise if the time limit has already elapsed. This is Standing Order and the law. Yes, can we move on to the next item?

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STATEMENT BY COMMISSIONER

RODRIGUES - DEVELOPMENT OF SPORTS

The Commissioner for Youth and Sports (Mr. J. C. Agathe): I would like to make a statement to apprise this Assembly of the Regionalisation policy which my Commission is implementing for the development of sports in Rodrigues.

I have opted to make this statement to dissipate all misunderstandings and confusion which might have arisen following several controversial articles which have appeared in the newspapers recently particularly with respect to the use of the Malabar Gymnasium by the Rodrigues Regional Volleyball Committee for the organisation of matches for the Republic Cup 2008. Questions however being put in this Assembly during this morning.

Mr. Chairperson Sir, when I came into Office in December 2006, I have inherited a situation where all sport activities were centralised at the Malabar Gymnasium and the stadium at Camp du Roi. This state of matter has deprived the rest of the population from the opportunity of practising sports but more importantly from having healthy recreational and leisure activities with the consequence that sports were only the concerns of a restricted group of people while the population was exposed to social evils, particularly alcohol, drugs and other health problems.

M. le président, cet état de choses ne peut pas continuer, prenant en considération la politique du gouvernement régional d'atteindre l'indépendance économique de Rodrigues. Le développement économique d'un pays est possible que s'il y a une population saine et en bonne santé. En tant que Commissaire responsable du sport, je suis convaincu que le sport est un des éléments clés pour la construction de notre société.

C'est pourquoi, M. le président, nous voulons que le sport devienne une affaire de tout le monde et que tout le monde ait accès aux différentes activités sportives de leur choix. Il faut que les différentes activités sportives fleurissent à travers Rodrigues ! Pas seulement au Stade de Camp du Roi et le Gymnase de

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Malabar! Notre vision est de développer le sport de masse, apporter le sport vers les différentes régions de Rodrigues non seulement pour créer des meilleures conditions pour l'émergence des athlètes de haut niveau, mais aussi pour combattre les problèmes sociaux qui nous guettent et pour créer des opportunités de loisirs pour toutes les couches et tranche d'âge de la population.

C'est dans cette perspective, M. le président, que nous avons adopté, au sein de ce nouveau gouvernement régional, une politique de régionalisation des activités sportives. Pour ce faire, nous avons adopté les six régions existantes comme définies par la Commission Electorale et nous avons décentralisé nos services vers ses régions tant au niveau de la jeunesse qu'au niveau du sport.

Afin de permettre une meilleure promotion du sport dans ses six régions, nous avons institué des comités au niveau de chaque région. Ces comités régionaux agiront sous l'égide de ma Commission et vont travailler en étroite collaboration avec les comités régionaux des différentes disciplines sportives. D'ailleurs, les seize comités régionaux sportifs ont été invités à se faire représenter au sein de ces sous comités. Leur participation est capitale afin de permettre une meilleure collaboration et coordination dans l'organisation des activités au niveau des régions. Je suis très content que la plupart des comités régionaux aient répondu favorablement après que des zones d'ombres ont été clarifiés.

Je voudrais remercier tous ces comités régionaux qui ont répondu favorablement. Je remercie aussi les présidents et membres de ses six comités pour leur collaboration et dévouement.

Toujours dans cette même perspective, nous avons demandé aux comités régionaux de décentraliser leurs activités au niveau des régions. Nous avons déjà commencé avec le football et la pétanque. Le résultat est déjà tangible car cela a entraîné une meilleure affluence du public vers ces activités.

M. le président, tout changement bouscule les habitudes et les comforts. Ce qui est important, M. le président, c'est que nous avons pu dépasser notre différence. Le comité régional de volley-ball a présenté des excuses et, ensemble dans le dialogue, nous avons cherché un terrain d'entente dans le soucis de préserver le bien-être du sport à Rodrigues. Je suis satisfait que le comité régional de volley-ball ait reconnu la nécessité d'introduire dans leur calendrier annuel une activité qui sera organisée au niveau des régions avec l'étroite collaboration de ma Commission.

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M. le président, je suis convaincu que nous sommes sur la bonne voie et j'espère pouvoir le prouver en décembre de cette année avec l'organisation des Jeux de Rodrigues. Une condition cependant reste essentielle : la collaboration de chaque partenaire".

Je fais un appel à toute la population, aux comités régionaux, des différentes disciplines sportives, aux athlètes, aussi bien que la minorité -

Oublions ensemble nos différences,

Unissons nos efforts et

Développons notre sport.

Ceci est l'affaire de tout le monde

Merci, M. le président.

(Applause)

MOTION**FISH – PRICE FIXING – REGULATION**

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

"That this Assembly is of opinion that, by virtue of section 31 of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly Act 2001, there is passed the Rodrigues Regional Assembly (Consumer Protection-Fixing of price of fish) Regulations 2008"

Mr. Chairperson, Sir, as Commissioner responsible for Consumer Protection and Fisheries, I am pleased to present to this Assembly the fourth regulation of this Government. It is the first time that a regulation is presented in this House through the fixing of prices. Within the spirit of the decentralised system of government for Rodrigues, I had two options to review the price of fish as sold in Rodrigues, either to use the provision of the Consumer Protection Act or provide for new regulations.

Fresh fish from the lagoon is a controlled good for the island of Rodrigues and its prices are fixed by regulations made under section (iii) and 35

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of the Consumer Protection Act 1988 up to date. Prices of fresh fish and chilled fish were last revised in July 2003 by the Rodrigues Consumer Protection (Fresh and Chilled Fish) Regulation 2003 as per GN 88 of 2003 signed by the Minister of Commerce.

We have received complaints from consumers that fish is being sold at a higher price than fixed and on the other side fishers have requested for the revision of the price of this commodity being given increase of cost of living and rises in their operational cost. A meeting was convened with all stakeholders, that is, Head Fishermen, Association *des consommateurs de l'île Rodrigues*, Fishermen Associations, Enforcement Officers and officers of my office to discuss this issue. It was generally agreed that the price of fish needed to be revised. In a market economy, it is quite normal that we allow the price to be determined by the forces of demand and supply. It is observed that fish activities are risky and require practice, ability and courage. Fishers should sell their fish at a decent price to earn their living, whereas, on the other hand, many low-income household should be able to afford the commodity at a reasonable price. It is expected that with these regulations, the prices of fish be fixed at the current price on the market. Enforcement Officers will have a good tool to help in their daily work. Necessary action will be taken so that the legislation is effectively enforced.

With these regulations we are regulating the sale of fresh fish taken from the lagoon of Rodrigues, to better protect the consumers and, at the same time, enable the fishers to have a decent living. We are providing for Consumer Protection Officers, Fisheries Protection Officers and Police Officers to act as authorised officers, so as to enable consulted approach in the enforcement of the law.

Section 6 provides that the Commissioner responsible for the subject for Consumer Protection may sign a notice which shall be publish in the Government Gazette and in the local press in Rodrigues for the amendment of the schedule. This will facilitate the process of implementing any change or amendment on categorisation of species and maximum prices without passing through any Ministries in Mauritius. This Regulation is the first step to the process of fixing of prices here in Rodrigues for all controlled commodities as provided under the Consumer Protection Act being given that the consumer protection is one of the areas of responsibilities to be exercised by the Rodrigues Regional Assembly.

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Mr. Chairperson, Sir, with our vision to protect consumers and making fisheries a pillar of our economy, it is certain that the introduction of these regulations in Rodrigues will help us in achieving the objectives of my Regional Government. With these word Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I commend this Motion to the Assembly.

Thank You.

The Deputy Chief Commissioner rose and seconded.

Mr. Chairperson: Anybody from the Minority side to intervene.

Mr. Lisette: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, thank you for allowing me to take the floor. These days one of the great concerns in every country and every people's mouth, whether in developing or less developing countries, *c'est le pouvoir d'achat du consommateur*, and the motion that is brought to this House by the Chief Commissioner is directly linked to this issue, because it deals with the purchase, the selling and the ability to purchase one of the commodities which Rodrigues considers as one of its basic commodities and that appears sur *la carte du jour* of most housewives. Unfortunately, fish that constitute a staple food for the population is now becoming a high-class one due to its scarcity on the market. It is no longer the days when one may go to the fish landing stations and have fish *à sa propre guise*.

This is why the Minority group feels deeply concerned with the motion presented as it is linked with the *bien-être des consommateurs* and the whole population at large. And every proposal that we are going to make will go with the utmost wish and the ideal of protecting the rights of consumers and enable the *ti-dimounes* to have access to fresh fish.

Mr. Chairperson, Sir, whenever we are dealing with price fixing of fish, we should as far as possible strike a balance at protecting the interests of the fishermen without, at the same time, losing sight of the interests of the consumers. The fishermen community is faced with the high increase in the cost of living in terms of the continuous increase in commodities, such as fuel and other equipment that they use during their daily work. So, I consider it justifiable and rightful to revise the price of fish after some time to match this increase in operational cost. But I still believe that the consumers do also need more protection and consideration especially those who are in the lower rung of the ladder. I will come later Mr. Chairperson, Sir, to depict some proposals

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which the Minority group feels could have been included in the present regulation to better-off the consumers.

But first and foremost, I would like to make a remark - I cannot prevent myself from making it. The Chief Commissioner has mentioned in his speech about the Regulation which was made in 2003 under the Government Notice 88 of 2003, Government Gazette of Mauritius 61 of 5 July 2003. But what I have observed after careful perusal of the regulation is that section 7 of the present regulation is wrong and incorrect. Why is it so, Mr. Chairperson, Sir? This is going to be one of the major amendments that we are going to bring to this regulation. When I have a look at the Regulation of 2003 No. 61 of 5 July, it is clearly specified at section 4 the Rodrigues (fresh and chilled fish) Maximum Price Regulation 2000 are revoked meaning that the Chief Commissioner is coming to this House to revoke a regulation that has been already been revoked. So I want him to enlighten us on this matter, how he is coming in this House to revoke a regulation that has already been revoked in the 2003 Regulations.

Mr. Chairperson, Sir, in the Regulation passed in 2003, the then Commission for Trade, Commerce and Licensing proposed major changes which were adopted by the respective Ministry, after consultation with the fishermen community, the fishmongers community as well as "*Association des Consommateurs de l'Ile Rodrigues*" (ACIR). First of all, a major wholesale price was introduced. Why? Because this aims at fixing the prices at which fishermen should sell their products to fishmongers. This step ensured the protection of the fishmongers who may get fish at a fairly reasonable price from the fishermen to be sold around the island to the public. Very often Mr. Chairperson, Sir, the price of fish is respected by the fishermen at the fish landing stations but are sold exorbitantly to the consumers by the fishmongers. And this is the cause of conflict between the fishermen community and the fishmongers community who complain that the latter are making a high profit for little effort put. So this is why I think there is a need to put a maximum retail price as well as a wholesale retail price to reduce this conflict between fishmongers and fishermen and which will at the end come in the interest of the consumers. Mr. Chairperson, Sir, when I compare the present regulation which is being proposed in this House today with the regulation which was passed in 2003, this constitutes one complete omission of the Commission of Trade, Commerce and Licensing. This lack of consideration to one of the strategic partners in the sale of fish, that is, the fishmongers may lead to chaos in the system. More protection should have been given to them and, at the same time, measures should have also been taken to exert control over their activities. This is actually where the main problem lies, Mr. Chairperson, Sir as regards the sale

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of fish in Rodrigues. I remember that I personally had meetings with the fishmonger community in July 2006; and there are many interesting points that were raised by this community, for example, how the Rodrigues Regional Assembly, through the Commission for Trade and Licensing, can look for measures that can be given to them to ensure a smooth process of the activity which, at the same time, will result in the interest of the consumers.

The non-inclusion, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, of the maximum wholesale price which specifies the price at which fishermen should sell their catch to the fishmongers leaves space for bringing chaos in the system. This leads me to conclude, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, that there has been no consultation with the fishmongers community which is a strategic partner in the process of the sale of fish. If such is the case, if there has been any meeting held, then surely they would have come up with very good proposition. Mr. Chairperson, Sir, the habits of the people have changed. It is very rare nowadays to see people living on the central ridge going to purchase fish at fish landing stations, very few people do that. They prefer to wait for the fishmongers. It is thus very important to protect as well to control the activities of the fishmongers, which consequently would be beneficial to the consumers.

Secondly, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, in the 2003 Regulations, four grades of fish were introduced instead of three as compared to the 2000 Regulations. This was viewed to be in the advantage of the consumers. Likewise, some fish were shifted from a higher grade to a lower grade based on the proposal and plausible reasons put forward by the *Association des Consommateurs de l'Ile Rodrigues*. This again was in the interest of the consumers and aimed at protecting them. Exactly, the opposite has been produced in this present Regulation.

Mr. Chairperson, Sir, maybe the mover of the motion will come later but for the time being he has not been able to convince this Assembly why the number of grades of fish has been reduced from 4 to 3. I am expecting him to give us a plausible explanation on why there has been a decrease from 4 to 3 as compared to the last regulation of 2003. And also why has there been changes made to the categories of fish like the *mullet* which was formerly in the second grade which has now been categorized under the first grade? Same apply to the *Batardet*, *Barois* and *Caroliste*. Has the *mullet* been so rare due to illegal fishing that are occurring these days that it has got a promotion in its grade? This is my question. I think Mr. Chairperson, Sir that this Assembly needs to be enlightened as to why such changes in number of grades as well as changes in the number of categories have been proposed. We have not been enlightened on this.

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Mr. Chairperson, Sir, as stated before, I now come to some of the prevailing conditions of the sale of fish in Rodrigues and, at the same time, come with some proposals which I invite the Assembly to take stock of. I want to point out also that most of these proposals that I am going to introduce here were discussed with different stakeholders in July 2006 and on which I should say consensus was almost reached.

Firstly, Mr. Chairperson Sir most of the time, consumers are denied their right to a choice between non-gutted and gutted fish as only the latter category is offered for sale. Most fishmongers are now selling gutted fish at prices that are exorbitant for the vulnerable people. They evade the selling fresh fish at controlled prices and they put up Rs5. and sometimes even to Rs.10. per half kilo which is considered excessive. This is why it is of utmost importance - and I think that this has been proposed in the present regulation - that these types of fish be also placed under the controlled commodities to reduce abuse.

Mr. Chairperson: I don't want to interrupt you because you seem to be discussing something rather pertinent, but there is one thing which normally digests from the debate we are having now. I have been trying to have for two minutes the relevant excerpt which says that Members must confine discussion to the main purpose and the contents of a bill and not deal at length with matters not provided for therein, though reference may be made. This is clear that we have a regulation before us. We need to confine our debate thereon and we should not in a sort of way try to say what should have been done. You may, of course, refer to it. But the matter changes; if you want to bring an amendment to add a section, of course you will be allowed to do so. Do you get my point? I don't want to stop you, but I'll ask you to bear this in mind.

Mr. Lisette: Yes, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I take note to what you have said. But I am simply trying to make an overall view on the sale of fish, which, in consequent, is directly related to the price fixing of fish; and I am trying to make an overview of how the present system is not good enough for the control of the price of fish. This is why I am making an overview which will at the end converge towards the fixing of the price of fish which is directly linked with the motion of the ...

(Interruptions)

Mr. Chairperson: Yes, proceed.

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Mr. Lisette: Thank you, Mr. Chairperson, Sir. I was speaking of gutted fish and how the fishmongers try to evade the price control because normally this type of fish was not formally placed under the price fixing commodities. As gutted fresh fish has been slightly 'processed', one may expect the selling price to include a reasonable extra charge for the extra services and the loss of weight but still this should not become an abuse.

Secondly, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, this is also a very interesting point and proposal also. We all know, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, that there is limited enforcement staff which leads to the difficulty for the division to satisfactorily protect consumers' right especially with regard to the sale of fish. We have noticed - and it is a fact - that whenever officers want to intervene, the fishmongers simply drive away on seeing the officers arriving on a selling spot or simply they don't stop even if they intend to sell there. This is why I consider that it is becoming crucial to propose specific routes for fishmongers to be better controlled by consumer protection officers. And secondly to re-open Mr. Chairperson, Sir, the different '*poissonneries*' around the island and organize the service, I want to say that these proposals were discussed formerly with the fishmongers and the Commission of Trade, Commerce and Licensing, in conjunction with the Commission of Public Infrastructure, and a course of action was intimidated on this issue in 2006. And the discussion that was held with the fishmonger was positive. We should look at the positive aspect that this is going to bring to the consumers. I don't know how Members on the other side of the House are looking at this proposal, but still they should view it in the sense as to how far the consumers are going to benefit out of it.

Thirdly, consumers complain about the unhygienic conditions in which the sale of fish is carried out these days. Some fishmongers sometimes remain on the spot for more than 6 hours with no refrigerating equipment to keep the fish fresh. Others freeze the fish late at night without gutting it and sell same the next day. I think that a lot of sensitization needs to be done on that issue. The present regulation could have catered for this point. The opening of the different '*poissonneries*' as proposed may cater for such problems. And Moreover, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, it is noted that even the different fish landing stations which have been built during our tenure of office have not been used yet, like those at *St Francois and Tamarin*. There are some fish landing stations which have been built to cater for the interest of the consumers, those who go to the seaside for the purchase of fish, but these fish landing stations have remained closed up to now.

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Mr. Chairperson, Sir, the Chief Commissioner is taking, through section 6 of the present Regulation, as a one-off authority of the House to allow the present Commissioner or any one responsible for Consumer Protection and related matters to amend through the Executive Council the prices as well as the grades of fish without having recourse to this Assembly. The Minority is of the view that being given that fish constitutes a basic commodity of the population and given the fact that the fixing of prices of fish is done not more than once a year, it is more transparent that same is debated in this Assembly. It would have been more democratic, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, to allow a debate on that particular issue given that this is being done maybe once every year or sometimes one every three years. We also feel, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, that a better piece of legislation could have been prepared, including the points that have been raised and proposed if enough consultations were made with all stakeholders and if everyone's views were taken on board.

With this, I thank you for your attention.

(Interruptions)

Mr. Chairperson: Order please! I want to know how many Members from the Majority side and Minority side will intervene. I see that there is only one. Yes, Commissioner for Health.

The Commissioner for Health (Mr. J. A. L. Emilien): Mr. Chairperson, Sir, this regulation for me is straightforward and as such I will not be long. I have only a few words to say on this regulation which I consider to be very important because the last exercise was held in 2003. And I was surprised to hear the respected Member of the other side of the House saying that he had a meeting with the fishmongers and fishermen in 2006 whereas he has been in office since 2002. I can't understand why he has been waiting so long to have a meeting with these people and to say that interesting proposals came from this community. Anyway, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, everybody has his way of doing things. Another thing the respected Member has mentioned is the availability of fresh fish for the *ti-dimounes*. We all know the difficulties faced by the *ti-dimounes* to provide fish, which is considered as being one of the basic food of the Rodriguans. One for the major reasons for the scarcity of fish on the local market is that the price was not fixed according to what it was in fact on the market. That is why fish was so scarce in the market, Mr. Chairperson, Sir. Most of the fish was geared towards hotels, restaurants and other commercial houses. With these regulations, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, now everybody would know that the price has been revised. Of course day after day, the cost of living

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is becoming higher, the price has to go up. And the respected Member rightfully say that equipment, the price of equipment is going up so we have to take all this into consideration; and I am confident that this regulation will in a certain way help the *ti-dimounes* to have fish on the local market. The types of fish *ti-dimounes* were having, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, were only '*ti-lonson*, *ti-ripé*, *ti-mamus*' because '*capitaine*', '*Carangue*' all these fish were sold directly to the hotel and restaurants if not sold at a very high price at places like Mt. Lubin where *capitaine* was sold at Rs60. half a kilo. Now with these regulations, I am very happy to note that not only the retail price of fresh fish will be controlled but chilled fish also and the Member mentioned gutted fish also. I am confident, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, that with time life changes, the habit also changes. The respected Member was talking about people from the central ridge of the island who no more go to the coastal region to get fresh fish because now they rely on fishmongers. If we go further back, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, we see that people from the central ridge came with sweet potatoes, cassava, mangoes, banana to the coastal region to have fish. It was a sort of barter system if you want and all this has changed. So the way of living changes and so do the eating habits of people.

The respected Member was talking about some types of fish which are upgraded like '*barois*, *carolis*', etc. May I remind the House that '*mullet*' was once classified as a third grade fish. But what happened? Today if I personally go to Baie du Nord '*cotte enne pecheur la seine*' on the first of March, the first thing I'll do is to look for a *mullet* among the other fish such as *carrange*, *capitaine* and so on. This is a commercial activity; it depends on the demand; the more demanding is a commodity the more the price will go up. For me, it is basic. So just to say that with the change in our daily life, many things – not all - are called upon to change, Mr. Chairperson, Sir. So we have got to adapt to these situations because we can't do otherwise. Another thing I would have liked to say concerning the price of fish sold to fishmongers. Our problem here, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, in this House is not the price of fish sold by fishermen to fishmongers, but we are concerned with the price sold to the public. So, the fishmonger has to deal with the fishermen to have a reasonable price so that he can sell the fish at an official price where he will not get into trouble with the authorities.

Mr. Chairperson, Sir, before ending, I would like to remind the respected Members that this regulation will help the *ti-dimounes* to have fish on the local market. Those people living on the central ridge will now go back to the coastal region because they will have to buy the fish from the fishmonger at the same price as the fishermen would sell to them there and so the fishermen would

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prefer to sell the fish directly to the consumers because he will have more money. This, I think, will help the *ti-dimounes* to come back to their previous habit of going to the coastal region of the Island and to buy fresh fish directly from the fishermen.

Thank you Mr. Chairperson, Sir.

Mr. Chairperson: No more intervention. The Chief Commissioner, you have the floor for the summing up.

The Chief Commissioner: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I thank the Commissioner for his intervention and support for this motion. I would like to comment on some of the points that have been raised by the Commissioner and the Minority Member. As the Member has said fish is a scarce commodity today and it is therefore - to use his own words - 'justifiable and rightful' to come forward after consultation to modify the price of fish. As regards the comments that have been made regarding section 7, which says "the Rodrigues Fresh and Chilled Fish Regulations 2000". In fact, it is a typing error it should read 2003. I'll propose an amendment at the relevant time. It is not something of so great importance. It is just a typing error, but the motto behind is the regulation of 2003.

A question was raised to the effect that the wholesale price must be fixed. We have given thought to it, but we have seen that this is not practicable also, because the fishermen have said that they should be allowed to make their deal with the different fishmongers to sell their fish, because there are fishmongers who are regular buyers of fish while others are irregular; and they want to have the possibility to make their own deal with the fishmongers as regards the price of fish. What is important, as the Commissioner has just pointed out, is the retail price of fish not the wholesale price of fish. So fishmongers – and for that matter any person, fisherman or shop selling fish - will not be allowed to sell fish at prices higher than what is fixed. The fishmongers have been consulted as regards the different categories and the different prices. We have found it more practical to have three prices instead of four. Formerly the prices were for the four categories Rs15, Rs17, Rs.20 and Rs21. This makes too many categories and it is confusing when you are selling or buying fish to have these four categories. Also, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I have not personally sat down in my office and decided which fish is going to be category 1, category 2. We had formally at the office level placed *cordonnier*, for example, in grade 1 because many people like *cordonnier*. But after consultation - the Member said that there was no consultation - with the members of the public as well as other

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members of the committee which met, representatives of the consumers, they said that *cordonnier* fish have a lot of waste and should, therefore, be put in the second category. As regards *mullet*, fishermen also pointed out that everybody wants *mullet*, so it has a very high demand. If you follow the logic, scarce commodity means high demand. Scarcity is based in the higher price category. So I have justified the number of categories - gutted or non-gutted fish. We have also included chilled fish. We have also a renovation in these regulations; formerly only Officers of the Consumer Protection cadre could apprehend fishmongers or persons selling fish and take contraventions. May I draw the attention of the House to section 2 of the "Interpretation"; "Authorised Officer" now includes not only the officers of the Consumer Protection cadre but also the officers of Fisheries Protection cadre and also a Police officer. So, if a fishmonger does not want to stop, I think the police still have the power to stop any person on a motorcycle or in a car, Mr. Chairperson, Sir. So, we have enlarged the scope of all the enforcement officers - section 5 says "fish which is being sold at higher prices or not respecting these regulations". We have been accused of seeking a one-off authority. Yes, it is not a one off-authority; it will be subject to the scrutiny of the Regional Assembly because same will be tabled here and published in the Government Gazette; and anybody who has the majority can change these regulations at any time, amend all the provisions or even amend the schedule. Why have we chosen to allow this procedure? It is because if we want to change the price of fish, it can be done more rapidly after consultation so that it is published more rapidly because these regulations have to wait for three months, one month I think if my memory is good if the National Assembly is sitting because all our regulations are subject to a negative resolution of National Assembly. And in any way section 6 is in order because the Regional Assembly Act says that the Executive Council may implement policies or decisions even though it is not approved by the Regional Assembly, not all decisions are required to come to the Assembly. Therefore, I will bring an amendment, because of a typing error at section 7 Mr. Chairperson, Sir. I thank all the Members for their contribution and I commend and invite the vote for the motion.

Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: There is an amendment to Regulation 7. Can the Chief Commissioner move for the amendment?

The Chief Commissioner: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I move that in Regulation 7 after the word 'Regulations' "2000" be replaced by "2003".

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Mr. Grandcourt rose and seconded.

Amendment agreed to.

Mr. Chairperson: Now we turn to the schedule, last page.

Mr Lisette: I have an amendment to propose here, Mr. Chairperson, Sir. I move that fish *mullet* under grade I be shifted from grade I to grade II.

Mrs. A. Perrine-Begué rose and seconded

On question put, the amendment was defeated.

Mr. Chairperson: I now put the question –

“That this Assembly is of opinion that, by virtue of section 31 of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly Act 2001, there is passed the Rodrigues Regional Assembly (Consumer Protection-Fixing of Price of Fish) Regulations 2008 with amendment.

On question put, the motion was agreed to.

ADJOURNMENT

The Chief Commissioner: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I beg to move that the Assembly do now adjourn to Friday 28 March 2008 at 3.00 p.m.

Mr. Grandcourt rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed.

At 3.10 p.m. the Assembly was, on its rising, adjourned to Friday 28 March 2008 at 3.00 pm.

WRITTEN ANSWER TO QUESTION

PUBLIC BUILDINGS – SECURITY SERVICES – TENDERS

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(No. B/27) Mrs. R. M. F. Gaspard-Pierre Louis (First Local Region Member for Grande Montagne) asked the Chief Commissioner whether, for the period August 2007 to January 2008, there has been any launching of tenders for the guarding of public buildings and if so, would he state -

- (a) the set criteria for a security firm to be eligible to guard a public building;
- (b) the buildings which were concerned by this exercise; and
- (c) table the list of bidders, together with the amount each tendered and a copy of the contract of the successful bidder, thereof.

Reply: I am informed that from period August 2007 to January 2008, tenders were sought on 09 November 2007 for the provision of security services at Human Resource Centre at Malabar and on 22 November 2007 for the provision of similar services at Mourouk reservoir, pumping stations, and premises, Petit Brulé Reservoirs and compound inclusive gate door services; and Livestock Production Unit at Saint Gabriel inclusive security of animals, reservoir, pasture areas and door gate services.

As regards criteria of eligibility the tender documents for the two contacts requires the bidders to submit their Certificates of Incorporation, Police Licence for the delivery of security services and their references.

Messrs. Rodrigues High Security Services Agency Ltd and Island Secure Agency Ltd submitted bids for the contract in respect of the Human Resource Centre while only Messrs. Island Secure Agency Ltd. submitted a bid for the contract in respect of Reservoirs and the Livestock Production Unit of St. Gabriel. In accordance with the Public Procurement Act and the Public Procurement Regulations 2008 the amount quoted by these companies cannot be disclosed.