

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

CONSTRUCTION OF A NEW SECONDARY SCHOOL

(No. B/55) Mrs. J. Prosper (*Sixth Island Region Member*) asked the Deputy Chief Commissioner as regards the construction of a new secondary at *Terre Rouge*, would he inform the House where matter stands?

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, the Rodrigues Regional Assembly through my Commission is going ahead with the construction of a new Secondary School at *Terre Rouge*. The project will be implemented in three phases as from the next financial year.

- (i) The first phase will comprise the construction of classrooms for Form I to III, office space, related amenities and specialist rooms.
- (ii) During the second phase, additional classrooms and related amenities will be built to cater for Form IV and VI students.
- (iii) The last phase of the project will consist of making the college become a Form I to VI college in line with the policy of the Ministry of Education and Human Resources.

It is expected that the college will be operational as from 2010 to accommodate Form I entrants for year 2010 and Form II students. Several sites visits have been effected to identify an appropriate site for the construction of the college at *Terre Rouge*. I wish to inform the House that pending the construction of a new college, Form I students for the year 2009 will be accommodated at Ex-Citron Donis Sixth Form College.

Mr. N. Lisette: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, may I ask the Commissioner for Education whether in the phase I of the construction of the school, this will also imply the construction of special rooms such as laboratories and amenities?

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Of Course Mr. Chairperson, Sir, because it will be a fully operational college and all the amenities, as I have just said, will be included.

Mr. N. Lisette: I would like also to know from the Commissioner for Education if the Commission has made a first study as regards to the population who are going to be taken there at *Terre Rouge*?

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Yes, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, there has been a survey which has been undertaken, I don't have the information in hand I will come with a first statement later on.

Mr. D. Speville: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, can the Deputy Chief Commissioner inform the House about the best site that is being envisaged so that matters can be expedited?.

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Yes, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, we have gone there and identified two sites and in the near future we will come with the exact site which will be finalized.

Mr. N. Lisette: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, at a given point in time the Regional Government was speaking about the taking of the SMF Compound, is it still the case? Is it still under consideration?

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: No, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, the site has not been allocated to us.

ALLOCATION OF SCHOLARSHIP TO HIGHER SCHOOL CERTIFICATE (H.S.C) HOLDERS

(No. B/56) Mrs. J. Prosper (*Sixth Island Region Member*) asked the Deputy Chief Commissioner with regard the allocation of scholarship to Higher School Certificate (H.S.C) holders, will he state:-

- (a) what was the criteria till 2007; and
- (b) whether the same criteria will be applied this year for candidates to be eligible this year to enlist for scholarship?

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

As regards part (a), the eligibility criteria for the award of the Rodrigues Open Scholarship to date are:

- (i) candidates should be born in Rodrigues of Rodriguan parents; and
- (ii) candidates should have followed at least from Form IV to Upper VI in Rodrigues.

With regards to part (b), the answer is no.

In fact, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, necessary action is being taken to review the existing eligibility criteria so as to render eligible other category of students.

Mr. N. Lisette: Can the Commissioner for Education, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, specify clearly who are the other categories of student that he wants to enlist within that such question?

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, it is being worked out because we have found that the existing criteria do not meet the specificity of all candidates.

Mr. N. Lisette: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, the state scholarship is stipulated in the Education Regulation. Has there been any consultation between the Commission for Education and the Ministry of Education on that particular matter to bring the necessary arrangement if need be?

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Yes, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, the Ministry is already aware but in fact we are still working on the criteria and in due course it will be submitted to the Ministry.

Mr. N. Lisette: Can we have more details Mr. Chairperson, Sir, as regards to the criteria that have been proposed to the Ministry and that is under study. Can we have more details on it?

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: It is being worked out Mr. Chairperson, Sir, and I will table it in due course.

Mr. D. Speville: Can the Deputy Chief Commissioner state to the House whether these criteria will be ready before the proclamation of results 2009.

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: I expect to do so Mr. Chairperson, Sir.

REFUSE/WASTE COLLECTION AND DISPOSAL

(No. B/57) Mr. N. Lisette (*First Local Region Member of Baie aux Huitres*) asked the Commissioner responsible for Public Infrastructure, Housing, Environment & Others as regards to refuse/waste collection and disposal in Rodrigues will the Commissioner state whether:-

- (a) there has been any correspondence emanating from his Commission to the Ministry of Finance/Procurement Policy Office for any

advise/inquiry/information of any nature on the procedures to be adopted/followed or which should have been adopted/followed for tendering/procurement exercise of same for the present financial year of next financial year;

- (b) any reply was obtained from the Ministry of Finance/Procurement Policy Office and if yes, to state the relevant information/content of the letter?

Mr. F. A. Grandcourt: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, as regards to part (a) the answer is in the affirmative. As regards to part (b), it is not in my policy to disclose any information or correspondence between my Commission and any other office or body in Mauritius.

Mr. N. Lisette: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, as regards to part (a) of the question may I know the nature of the information that the Commission was asking from the Ministry of Finance or the Public Procurement Office.

Mr. F. A. Grandcourt: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, the correspondence was following a correspondence from the Public Procurement Board and I have stated that it is not my policy to disclose any information or correspondence of any nature between my Commission and any other board or office in Mauritius.

Mr. N. Lisette: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, is it right to say that there has been ...

(Interruptions)

The Chief Commissioner: Point of order Mr. Chairperson, Sir. The Member is asking is it right, it is a question of opinion. It is not allowed.

Mr. Chairperson: Can you reformulate the question!

Mr. N. Lisette: I will reformulate my question. I would like to know from the Commissioner for Environment whether the information has something to do with the bidding process, the procurement process of disposal of waste in Rodrigues?

Mr. F. A. Grandcourt: The answer is 'Yes' Mr. Chairperson, Sir.

Mr. N. Lisette: I would like also to know from the Commissioner Mr. Chairperson, Sir, whether, as regards to the procurement and tendering exercise that was adopted for the present financial year, the Procurement Office has stated anything as regards to this?

Mr. F. A. Grandcourt: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, there was no Procurement Office it was the Central Tender Board we were dealing with. It was not the Central Tender Board, there were no procurement at that time.

Mr. N. Lisette: In this case Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I think the Procurement Act has become into force just sometime back. May I ask the Commissioner as regards information he did not want to disclose in this House whether for the next financial year there will be a change in the procurement or tendering exercise by the Commission as regards to disposal or collection of waste in Rodrigues?

Mr. F. A. Grandcourt: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, we will proceed according to the Law and let me remind the Member that we have stopped Rod Clean to collect refuse in Rodrigues and we will come with necessary measures.

Mr. N. Lisette: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, if I refer to the procedures that have been dealt with for the former financial year, the procedure of giving contract to Rod Clean, whatever you called it whether it is a tender, assignment or whatever it is. I would like to know from the Commissioner for Environment whether, the Central Tender Board Act as it used to be and which has just come into force, the Procurement Act, these Acts allow to give direct procurement to Rod Clean Company Ltd?

Mr. F. A. Grandcourt: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, this is a new question, completely new question. I will ask the Member to come next time with a substantive question and I will be glad to answer his question.

Mr. N. Lisette: I reformulate the question then Mr. Chairperson, Sir. I would like to know from the Commissioner for Environment whether, as regards to the two Acts, now called the Procurement Act which has just come into force, the Commission is in a position to award a direct contract or a direct procurement to any company for the collection and disposal of waste in Rodrigues?

Mr. F. A. Grandcourt: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, let me remind the Member there is no contract with Rod Clean. I don't know, he keeps insisting, telling me, talking about contract, there is no contract with Rod Clean, there is an assignment.

SEA CUCUMBERS (BAMBARAS)

(B/58) Mr. N. Lisette (*First Local Region Member of Baie aux Huitres*) asked the Chief Commissioner as regards to the collection/fishing of sea cucumbers (Bambaras) in Rodrigues, would he, for the benefit of the House, state:-

- (a) the number of times, due to illegal fishing that sea cucumber has been seized since January 2008 and the amount, thereof;

- (b) whether any person/s has/have been contravened for same during that period and, if yes;
- (c) whether in light of these contraventions there has been any threat received by an officer/s of his Commission?

The Chief Commissioner: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, as regards to part (a), sea cucumber has been seized on 25 occasions since January 2008. A total of 87 gunny bags of both live and dried sea cucumber mixed were seized. As regards part (b), contraventions have been established and the prosecutions are ongoing. As regards part (c), I am informed that one entry has been made by one Principal Fisheries Protection Officer at Rivière Cocos Police Station to the effect that a person from the public has threatened him in the exercise of his duties. Police is still enquiring on the alleged threat made to the Fisheries Protection Officer.

Mr. N. Lisette: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, the Chief Commissioner has specified the number of times that sea cucumber has been seized but he has not made mention of the number of contravention established. May I, if he is in possession of these figures, have these figures from him, please?

The Chief Commissioner: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, if sea cucumber has been seized on 25 occasions I think logically on 25 occasions there must have been contraventions, of course. And at times Mr. Chairperson, Sir, sea cucumbers are seized on the coast even in the sea in the shallow waters but it may not be always possible to have a person to whom to put the contravention.

Mr. N. Lisette: This is the purpose of the question Mr. Chairperson, Sir, there may be seizure of sea cucumber but yet, as we are hearing for so many times on the radios, there is no contravention that is established by the Fisheries Officers. This is why, the purpose of the question was to ask the number of times sea cucumber were seized and of course, whether these numbers of seizures coincide with the number of contravention established?

The Chief Commissioner: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I think I should buy a crystal ball, a big crystal ball and when the Member puts a question I read his question, I put my paper next to the crystal ball and I guess what the Member wants to say. Let me look my friend your question is the number of times, I told you 25 occasions and you asked me since January 2008. It is clear what are you asking more, if you want an answer you must put your question clear and if you want lesson how to put question come and see me.

Mr. Chairperson: Please wait. Can you realize now that in your question it has not been asked the number of contraventions? It is not specified in your question. Yes, you may proceed.

Mr. N. Lisette: In this case Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I think that, as regards to the answer of the Chief Commissioner, there is illegal fishing that is taking place in our lagoon at a very high rate. For five months there are 25 times that ...

The Chief Commissioner: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, the Member is making a statement following my answer. Please ask the question if you don't have any question please sit down, don't waste the time of this House, please. Sit down.

(Interruptions)

Mr. Chairperson: Order please.

The Chief Commissioner: If you want my friend just cry, you want to cry, just cry.

(Interruptions)

Mr. Chairperson: Order please. The First Member for Oyster Bay, try to be very relevant to what you have been asked by way of notice. Yes, proceed but you have to be relevant to what you have asked originally. If you travel away from the questions then you are sure that you may be met with answers which are not very forthcoming. Yes, any supplementary.

Mr. N. Lisette: Yes, some more supplementary Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I was saying that there is a high rate of illegal fishing.....

Mr. Chairperson: You cannot comment on the answers.

Mr. N. Lisette: I am coming to the question. I would like to know as regards to the figures that have been put by the Chief Commissioner how much control now is being exerted to reduce that number, that high number rate of illegal fishing in our lagoon. What are the measures that are being taken by his Commission to minimize this?

The Chief Commissioner: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, if you would allow me, when I was giving instructions for the preparation of the answer to this question and I was surprised to see one word, it is the Member who want me to say the number of times. It's ok, I said 25 occasions and then he asked me the amount, thereof, seized. I don't know whether amount he means number of units so that I or my officer will go and count each sea cucumber which have been seized, even this was not clear and I made the effort to give the information, 85 gunny bags. You have to be precise when you ask a question. As regards to the protection Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I have to congratulate the Officer in Charge of the Fisheries Protection Service, each time there is bambaras which is being seized I am informed and he tells me what to do, what he is doing. I direct him to apply the Law as it is Mr. Chairperson, Sir, apply the Law as

it is. Wherever and whenever there is illegal fishing, the FPS will go and seize these illegal bambaras fishing. And let me recall to this House that it is this side of the House, this Government which introduced the Sea Cucumber Regulations and if they were still there may be no single sea cucumber would exist in the lagoon in Rodrigues. The protection is going on well but, of course, there are limits to this protection and there are still people using all sorts of ways to illegally fish sea cucumber, for example you have local fisherman going at sea and taking small quantities of sea cucumber in their bags having it boiled, processed at their home in their kitchen and then selling it to sea cucumber dealers. All these we know but we cannot go at each and everyone to look into their bags when they are coming out of sea to see if there is sea cucumber. So we have three fisheries posts, all the officers are actively working and we are satisfied. I would like to tell them that we are satisfied with their job that they are doing. There is no protection, nobody has any protection and what we are doing, is apply the regulations that this House has passed.

Mr. N. Lisette: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, it may be quite difficult to exert control fully in the lagoon as regards to these illegal exploitations but still there is one thing that can be exerted at the level of export because we know that sea cucumber (bambaras) is not used locally but it is normally processed and then exported. Is there any control with the relevant authorities which are being exerted at the level of export?

The Chief Commissioner: Yes, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I don't know whether the Member now does not trust the customs service of Rodrigues. The customs is supposed to check one and every consignment of goods entering and leaving Rodrigues. And they have strict instructions as regards sea cucumber, no person can export sea cucumber without an export permit delivered by the Fisheries Protection Service.

SALE OF RATION RICE

(B/59) Mr. N. Lisette (*First Local Region Member of Baie aux Huitres*) asked the Chief Commissioner as regards to the sale of rice in Rodrigues, would he state:-

- (a) the total amount of same that is sold in Rodrigues annually;
- (b) the stand of the Executive Council with respect to the forthcoming liberalisation of import and subsequent liberalisation of prices of the commodity as announced by the Central Government?

The Chief Commissioner: With regards to the sale of ration rice in Rodrigues, I am informed that the average annual sale is about 3,000 metric tons.

I am further informed that taking into consideration the soaring prices of rice on the world market and the imposition of export ban by traditional exporting countries, Central Government has agreed to liberalise the importation of ration rice. It is felt that such a measure would not only allow other players to join the market but also to ensure sourcing of rice from other exporting countries.

For the Executive Council, it is understood that liberalisation of the import of rice is not synonymous with price liberalisation. Furthermore, I have to state our dissatisfaction as regards the fact that the price of ration rice is higher in Rodrigues than in Mauritius. We have formerly attempted to convince the Central Government to put the price of ration rice at par with that of Mauritius without success. It is to be further noted that ration rice is a controlled commodity and it is our policy that it remains and shall remain a controlled commodity. Thank you.

Mr. D. Speville: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I would like to ask the Chief Commissioner what is being done and what will be done to prevent shortage of rice in Rodrigues, after subsequent liberalisation of price, because it may happen that rice of a better quality than *riz ration* is imported at a moderate price a bit higher one rupee or two rupees higher than *riz ration* and that the amount which is being imported does not include the quota for Rodrigues?

The Chief Commissioner: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I can't see into the future to know what will happen to the price of rice according to the hypothesis that the Member is making. But I repeat Mr. Chairperson, Sir, it is our policy that rice shall remain a controlled commodity. And of course we will ensure at the level of Rodrigues that there is enough supply of rice for the population of Rodrigues. But, of course, we have already started campaigning on the need for people in Rodrigues and the results are there, to ensure food security. And the Member who is formerly Commissioner for Agriculture, we have had record harvest of maize this year in Rodrigues and the proof is that the small blending mill that we have at Citronelle has been turning on a daily basis at full capacity since at least two months. Also we have our Rodrigues Trade and Marketing Company Ltd which at any time if we can decide and take over and account for any shortage that may arise in rice. The Commissioner has just informed me that State Trading Corporation is interested to become a partner in this company so that we can ensure smooth and good continuous supply of rice for the Rodrigues market.

Mrs. F. Gaspard Pierre Louis: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I would like to know from the Chief Commissioner with regards to the project of the Regional Government to sell pajeros so that the prices of rice become at par as in Mauritius, I would like to know where matter stands then?

The Chief Commissioner: Yes, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I repeat the answer for the Member. I have to state our dissatisfaction as regards the fact that the price of ration rice is higher than in Mauritius. We have formerly attempted to convince the

Central Government to put the price of ration rice at par with that of Mauritius without success. As regards the sale of pajeros I don't know what is the problem, we have offered these for sale, in Mauritius, in the newspapers but it seems that nobody wants to buy them at a good price and I don't know why maybe too many people have had their fingers crushed in the doors.

SWIMMING POOL - MARECHAL

(B/60) Mr. N. Lisette (*First Local region Member of Baie aux Huitres*) asked the Commissioner responsible for Youth and Sports & Others as regards to the swimming pool of Marechal, would he state:-

- (a) the present status of the pool as regards to water level and quality;
- (b) whether any checks/maintenances have been done on its machinery/equipment from January 2007 to date and if yes, when and by whom?

Mr. C. Agathe: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, please let me inform the House that it is a basic principle of sound financial management that, before starting a project, one must have recourse to a feasibility study with a full cost/benefit analysis. It is at this preliminary stage that all the aspects of the project are analysed, due consideration has to be given to the capital expenditure as well as the recurrent cost of the project.

At this stage, data is required about all the various inputs of the project for example we have water. Where to obtain the water? For example at the swimming pool, it is good to note that rain water harvesting has been taken into consideration, since all the surface water that falls at the swimming pool is stored in an underground water tank.

Secondly, water supply ought to come from Anse Raffin Dam, unfortunately Mr. Chairperson, Sir, today, even the former Chief Commissioner and the former Commissioner for Public Infrastructure can play football inside.

Thirdly, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, the capacity of the swimming pool is 50 m x 20 m by 2 m depth. Can the Rodrigues Regional Assembly Mr. Chairperson, Sir, allow itself to empty the swimming pool every 2 to 3 years and replenish it by 2000 m³ of water?

Let's hope, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, that with the setting up of a desalination plant at Songes, we can obtain water to run the swimming pool. We have also Mr. Chairperson, Sir, the problem of location. *Zoué football ladans, alle zoué football ladans, hein commence plein.* The location Mr. Chairperson, Sir, where to locate the swimming pool?

As far as Rodrigues is concerned Mr. Chairperson, Sir, are we going to locate it near the sea where we can use a desalination plant in case there is water supply problem? Are we going to locate it in a place where domestic water supply is a usual problem for the immediate inhabitants like Marechal?

The size of the swimming pool. What size of swimming pool to construct? We have 50 by 25, 50 by 20 or 25 by 25 metres? And we have also Mr. Chairperson, Sir, the problem of technical staff since in a swimming pool we need technician, swimming coach, swimming pool attendant and so on.

It is deplorable that during the conception and construction stage of the swimming pool, the then Commissioner for Youth and Sports and the then Executive Council have not thought on all these factors, thus causing a lot of harm on the recurrent expenditure of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly. It is estimated Mr. Chairperson, Sir, that the running cost for the swimming pool is at a minimum of Rs 3 million per year.

Mr. Chairperson, Sir, as regards to part (a) of the question, the swimming pool of Marechal is actually full after the recent rain received last week and also with the considerable effort that has been put by the Commission for Water Resources. The water has been treated regularly with chlorine to maintain the quality of the water.

As regards to part (b), I am informed that regular maintenance is carried out by the staff of the swimming pool in collaboration with technicians from the Ministry of Youth and Sports.

Mr. N. Lisette: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, the question was clear as regards to part (b), if maintenance has been done, when and by whom. He has not stated when these maintenances have been done by his Commission at the level of the swimming pool.

Mr. C. Agathe: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I have said by the staff of my Commission and the technician from the Ministry of Youth and Sports.

Mr. P. Francois: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, if you allow me I would like to know from the Commissioner when the swimming will reopen and start its activities?

Mr. C. Agathe: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, this is quite a good question. Mr. Chairperson, Sir, at *Marechal* we do have a borehole, the borehole is now at its critical level, it's becoming red Mr. Chairperson, Sir. One can see the red light on, this means that there is danger here and *Anse Raffin* also Mr. Chairperson, Sir, there is no water coming from *Anse Raffin*. And Mr. Chairperson, Sir, we are entering now the winter season, being given that the water will be cooler than in summer, therefore, we have to boil the water and we need lot of diesel in order to boil the water in order that swimming can be done. We have all these factors that we have to bear in mind

Mr. Chairperson, Sir, but even though the technicians at the level of my Commission is now adding chlorine because the water is a bit green, now they are treating the water in order that swimming can be done.

Mr. N. Lisette: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I would like to have clear answer from the Commissioner because so many times he refers to lack of water and sometimes he refers to lack of finance for the proper running of the swimming pool. May I know what is the exact problem why the swimming pool has been closed for one year, is it because there is no water or is it because there is no finance?

Mr. Chairperson: No, this question is not allowed. This is a completely new question, you may come forward with notice. How can you connect this? That does not mean that, you can ask new question?

Mr. N. Lisette: Ok, Mr. Chairperson, Sir. I would like to know from the Commissioner because he referred to technician Mr. Chairperson, Sir and I know that there is a post that has been placed in the budget as far back as 2006. I would like to know from the Commissioner for Youth and Sports where does matter stand as regards to the recruitment of that technician since 2006?

Mr. Chairperson: Well, this is completely new, yes, Commissioner for Sports I can see nothing in this. But of course, you do have the information, you want to inform the House, of course you are welcome.

Mr. P. Francois: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, in fact the Commissioner did not reply to the question, when the swimming pool will reopen. I want to know from him whether *natation* will be a discipline in the next *Jeux de Rodrigues*?

Mr. N. Lisette: I come up to the level of water Mr. Chairperson, Sir, and I think that this time it is not going to be out of question. The Commissioner stated that as at now the swimming pool is full and at a given point in time he was speaking of leakage in the swimming pool, may I know now what is the stand of the Commissioner as regards to this, especially that he was speaking at a given point in time about the setting up of a fact finding committee?

Mr. C. Agathe:: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I will still state that there is leakage at *Marechal* swimming pool but now we have got water from rain, there is rain. Mr. Chairperson, Sir. As regards to the maintenance I can table copies of letter Mr. Chairperson, Sir, there is adverse report regarding the maintenance of the swimming pool.

Mr. D. Speville: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, even the inhabitants of *Marechal* are complaining about the incompetency of the Commission to manage the swimming pool.

Mr. Chairperson: This is not allowed.

The Chief Commissioner: The Member here is not allowed to deliver certificate of incompetency and if you allow me as regards this swimming pool, I think at statement time I will come with a statement because I visited it last time I would say that I was really surprised, surprised Mr. Chairperson, Sir, as regards the fine infrastructure and *assisé*, I'm Chief Commissioner here I'll speak, *ou envi alle ploré lors podium ou alle ploré*.....

(Interruptions)

Mr. Chairperson: Well, you have understood the point of order raised. Yes, you don't want me to rule.

Mr. D. Speville: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, being given we are in the rainy season and we see in many villages of the country water is flowing even at night. I would like to ask the Commissioner whether there has been a special committee that has been put in place between his Commission and the Commission for Water Resources to tackle with this problem.

Mr. C. Agathe: Yes, Mr. Chairperson, Sir.

OVERTIME WORKS DONE BY STAFF OF COMMISSION FOR AGRICULTURE

(B/61) Mr. S. P. Roussety (Fifth Island Region Member) asked the Commissioner responsible for Agriculture, Water Resources & Others whether, as regards to overtime works done by the staff of his Commission, he would, for the benefit of the House, state:-

- (a) how much overtime has been paid for the financial year 2007-2008;
- (b) whether any public officer, who has worked for overtime, has not been paid up to now;
- (c) the nature of works performed and the period when overtime works were done; and
- (d) the amount of money for overtime which is still due to be paid?

Mr. L. A. Perrine: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, as regards to (a), I am informed that the amount of overtime paid by my Commission for the current year is as follows:-

	<u>Amount</u> <u>Paid</u>
Agricultural Services	Rs 696,959.00
Water Resources Unit	Rs 788,712.00
Forestry Services	Rs 46,600.00

Mr. Chairperson, Sir, payment of overtime is effected only in cases where prior approval has been obtained from the Accounting Officer. Unfortunately, in many cases such approval has not been sought and obtained and the payment of overtime in these cases has been delayed.

As regards to (c), the nature of work comprised of water distribution, supervising works and repairs of pipe, loading and unloading works at the Agricultural Services. The overtime was performed as from October 2007 to March 2008.

Moreover, the House may wish to note that the organization of Agri-fair in the context of the World Food Day last year, the reopening of the St. Gabriel Livestock Production Unit and the water scarcity problem which we are facing, have implied extra working hours of the Agricultural Services and the Water Unit. Consequently, the voted provision for overtime under the estimate of my Commission for the present financial year has been exhausted. The amount of outstanding claims not yet entertained is Rs 258,000 for the Agricultural Services and Rs 300,000 for the Water Unit. These claims after examination have been referred back to their respective sections since no prior approval was sought and obtained and only deserving and justified claims will be entertained subject to availability of fund for reallocation to the relevant item vote.

Mr. D. Speville: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, the Commissioner said that approval has not been sought in some cases, I would like to ask the Commissioner who has given the valve operators *les directives* to work after working hours?

Mr. L. A. Perrine: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, valve operators received instruction from gangman, may be in this case the gangman took on himself and gave the instruction but this has not obtained prior approval of the Departmental Head.

Mr. D. Speville: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, has the Commissioner of Water Resources expediate enquiries to look where the problem is, because there are many workers who are complaining who having worked for many hours, after odd hours and three months have lapsed and they have not obtained money for overtime. Can the Commissioner expediate an enquiry to look whether the gangmen are giving directives to the valve operators without prior approval of their Departmental Head, because in many of the region of Rodrigues workers are working after odd hours and money for overtime is not being paid.

Mr. L. A. Perrine: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, in August 2007, a circular was issued by the Departmental Head to all Head of Sections asking them to comply with the instruction. We have to put order and those who have given instruction to perform overtime without prior authorization of the Departmental Head will have to foot the bill.

Mr. N. Lisette: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, as per the answer of the Commissioner we can see that there is a sort of mismanagement

Mr. Chairperson: You cannot say that.

Mr. N. Lisette: I would like to know from the Commissioner for Water Resources what is the protocol of procedure that his Commission has put into place in order that same does not arise in the future.

(Interruptions)

Mr. N. Lisette: I need notice for this question.

Mr. S. P. Roussety: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, can the Commissioner tell the House when the outstanding amount of overtime will be paid to those workers?

Mr. L. A. Perrine: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I have said that all cases will be scrutinized and only deserving cases and cases that can be justified will be paid because clear instruction was given in August 2007 telling officers, responsible officers to seek prior approval of the Departmental Head before allowing workers to perform overtime. And furthermore, I have also given instruction that overtime should be planned one year in advance, telling how much money will be involved, will be needed for overtime and those who go above their budget will have to bear the consequence.

Mr. N. Lisette: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I come back to the question. The Commissioner stated that prior approval was not obtained by the gangman from the Departmental Head. He stated that the gangman who gave orders to those valve operators to do work, those gangman did not get the approval from the Departmental Head. This is why I am asking now, being given that this situation has arisen in the past, how would the valve operators know that approval has been given, if ever they are being told to do overtime. How are they going to know for sure that the gangman has obtained the prior approval from the relevant authorities in order to do the work?

Mr. L. A. Perrine: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, valve operators cannot decide on their own to perform overtime. Overtime is being performed under request when there is an emergency, priority. So instruction should come from above, gangman should not take on themselves, valve operators cannot decide themselves and perform overtime as and when they decide, this is not the case.

Mr. D. Speville: Being given that the gangmen are liaising directly with the Departmental Head, I would like to ask the Commissioner responsible for Water Resources whether the Officer in Charge of Water Unit has been kicked off from the whole skeleton?

Mr. L. A. Perrine: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, the Member was a former Commissioner of Water Unit he must know which work, in government, the gangman is accountable to of course to a higher officer but instruction should come from the Departmental Head and the gangman is fully aware when to obtain the authority.

Mr. N. Lisette: I would like to know Mr. Chairperson, Sir, when approval is given by the Departmental Head whether there is any correspondence that emanate from the Departmental Head to these valve operators through the gangman and through the officer in charge.

Mr. L. A. Perrine: Yes, Mr. Chairperson, Sir.

**“GANDIA” PLANTS FOUND IN THE COMPOUND
OF THE QUEEN ELIZABETH HOSPITAL**

(B/62) Mr. S. P. Roussety (*Fifth Island Region Member*) ask the Commissioner responsible for Health and Others as regards to “Gandia” plants found in the compound of the Queen Elizabeth Hospital on the 07 May 2008 whether he could for the benefit of the House, obtain information on the following:-

- (a) how was the police made aware that there was plantation of “Gandia” in the compound of the hospital;
- (b) whether there has been any arrest?

Mr. C. Agathe: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, with your permission I will answer the question.

Mr. Chairperson: Proceed.

Mr. C. Agathe: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, having gone thoroughly at question B/62, I am questioning myself of how come that the Member knows exactly that this is a gandia plant, even the police or a learned Magistrate Mr. Chairperson, Sir,
.....

(Interruptions)

Mr. Chairperson: Commissioner, please..... Yes, Mr. ROUSSETY if you want an answer you have stay silent in order to listen to the answer. Yes, this is my job you cannot interrupt him. Yes, you cannot make insinuation on any Member, please. Proceed with your answer.

Mr. C. Agathe: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, even the word plantation also is questionable. *Ou trouve plante gandia dans chose ou.*

(Interruptions)

Mr. Chairperson: Yes, answer your question, please.

Mr. C. Agathe: On 07 May 2008, the Commissioner for Health instructed the Departmental Head to request the Foreman at Queen Elizabeth Hospital to clean all gutters and to remove all debris which are found on Q.E.H. roof buildings. At about 13.00 hours, the Foreman informed that there are three plants which he suspected to be “Gandia” on the roof of OPD Ward – Nursing Staff mess. He was instructed by the Departmental Head to wait for the Police to handle matters. The Departmental Head immediately informed the police of the situation.

I am further informed by the Divisional Commander, Rodrigues that on 07 May 2008 at the request of the D.H., ADSU Officers proceeded to Q.E.H and secured from the roof of the nursing staff mess three (3) green plants suspected to be cannabis plants, ranging about 30 cm, planted in two plastic containers.

Mr. Chairperson Sir, as regard part (b) I am informed by the Divisional Commander that no arrest has so far been effected and an enquiry is in progress.

FLOODING IN THE NORTHERN REGION OF THE ISLAND

(B/63) Mr. S. P. Roussety (Fifth Island Region Member) asked the Commissioner responsible for Agriculture, Water Resources & Others as regards flooding in the northern region of the island can the Commissioner state, what actions his Commission intends to take to avoid same and whether his Commission intends to clean the following rivers:- Fond La Digue, Accacia and Oyster Bay, and if so, when?

Mr. L. A. Perrine: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, as the House is aware, my Commission has recently embarked in a Natural Resources Rehabilitation Programme and a unit under the responsibility of a Scientific Officer has been set up at the Agricultural Services to implement this programme.

The objective of this programme is to rehabilitate drains on agricultural land, particularly in valleys, cleaning and constructing of retaining walls, gabion dyke in rivers.

In this context, the rehabilitation of river Bamboo at *Creve Coeur* is nearly completed and we intend to continue this programme to other rivers particularly those prone to flooding. These include *Fond La Digue*, *Accacia*, *Oyster Bay*, *Grand Bay* and *English Bay* among others.

Moreover, the rehabilitation of *Camp du Roi* River is ongoing and gabion will soon be installed. Rehabilitation of rivers, however, will be intensified during the course of the next financial year upon availability of fund.

Mr. D. Speville: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I would like to ask the Commissioner whether a global emergency rehabilitation programme has been set up at the level of his Commission and if his Commission intends to replicate the cleaning of rivers not only in the northern region but on other parts of the island?

Mr. L. A. Perrine: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, as for replication the answer is 'Yes'. We have about 48 rivers in Rodrigues and we have prepared a programme, rehabilitation programme for three years and this we are looking. As regards disaster committee I think Mr. Chairperson, Sir, this do not fall under the preview of my Commission.

STRAYING OF DOGS

(B/64) Mr. S. P. Roussety (*Fifth Island Region Member*) asked the Commissioner responsible for Agriculture, Water Resources & Others with regards to straying of dogs in Rodrigues would the Commissioner, for the benefit of the House, state:-

- (a) whether he has received any written or verbal complaints from the inhabitants that many goats and sheeps have been killed by dogs; and if yes;
- (b) what action he intends to take to remedy the situation;
- (c) how many animals have been killed by dogs, if any?

Mr. Chairperson: Yes, Commissioner for Agriculture.

Mr. L. A. Perrine: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, up to date, the Agricultural Services has registered 32 complaints from farmers having got their animals bitten to death by dogs. This is a serious problem being faced by the farmers' community since

approximately 50 animals including pigs, goats, sheep and calf have up to now been killed.

Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I must inform the House that the problem of stray dogs have been existing since before we came into office. Following its visit in March 2005, the MSPCA has recommended that a Dog Pound be constructed but unfortunately this recommendation has not been implemented by the previous Regional Government.

In view of addressing this problem, my Commission has set up a Dog Trapping Unit at the Agricultural Services, which is presently operational on a trial basis. As from beginning of June 2008, the activities of the Dog Unit will be intensified. All dogs trapped will be impounded at *Montagne Plate*, where a special dog caging system has been constructed. If not reclaimed by their owners within 3 days, the dogs will be disposed of through euthanasia as provided under the appropriate section of the Law, the Stray Dog Act of 2000. In addition, a dog clinic will be soon operational at the Veterinary Services, as from July 2008, to undertake the sterilization of dogs to control its population.

Mr. S. P. Roussety: *M. le Président, je voudrais demander au Commissaire si sa Commission a l'intention d'aider ces éleveurs qui ont perdu leurs animaux ?*

Mr. L. A. Perrine: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, the matter is being looked into.

Mr. N. Lisette: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, the Commissioner stated in his answer that the recommendation of the MSPCA has not been taken into account as regards to the dog pound. May I know, as from 2006 up to now, what has been done by the Commission for Agriculture for the setting up of the same?

Mr. L. A. Perrine: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, my Commission has already set up a dog caging system at *Montagne Plate*. We have set up a Dog Trapping Unit, we are coming forward with a dog clinic where we are going to sterilize dogs and this will start as from next month.

Mr. D. Speville: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I would like to ask the Commissioner for Agriculture if registration of dogs initiated by the ex-Regional Government is still going on?

Mr. L. A. Perrine: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, the answer is 'Yes'. Up to date 5641 dogs have been registered.

Mr. D. Speville: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, *je voudrais demander au Commissaire quelle dispositif en terme de transport est-ce que sa Commission possède pour le transport des chiens parcequ'il y avait un camion qu'on avait modifié auparavant, je*

voudrais demander quel disposition en terme de transport est-ce que sa Commission possède pour transporter des chiens ?

Mr. L. A. Perrine: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, there is a lorry which has been modified and being used to transport dogs, that have been trapped, to *Montagne Plate* caging unit.

Mr. D. Speville: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, *ce problème est un problème épineux à Rodrigues et nécessite des actions concertées de toutes les autorités concernés. Il est également, je crois, urgent de responsabiliser les propriétaires des chiens, qu'est que la Commission de l'Agriculture compte faire pour cela ?*

Mr. L. A. Perrine: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, we are coming with a regulation in the month of July following the setting up of the different unit that would be fully operational.

ALLOCATION OF THE 83 NATIONAL HOUSING DEVELOPMENT COMPANY (N.H.D.C)

(B/65) Mr. L.P. François (Second Local Region Member for Baie aux Huitres) asked the Commissioner responsible for Public Infrastructure, Housing, Environment & Others whether, as regards the allocation of the 83 National Housing Development Company (N.H.D.C) housing units to beneficiaries in August 2007, by the Executive Council of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly, he would:-

- (a) give details of the amount deposited and the monthly installment paid by the beneficiaries;
- (b) state the amount collected by the Rodrigues Regional Assembly since August 2007 to date under the scheme;
- (c) state the sum outstanding by the beneficiaries since August 2007 to date; and
- (d) the measures he is contemplating to recover the amount due by the beneficiaries?

Mr. F. A. Grandcourt: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I wish to remind the House that there are two types of NHDC housing units in Rodrigues; Type 1 being a house with provision for a septic tank and Type 2 without a septic tank for which the monthly installment is Rs 610 and Rs 495, respectively. The deposit amounts to Rs 283,890.00, to date.

As regards to part (b), the total revenue generated by the Rodrigues Regional Assembly under this scheme since August 2007 is Rs 410,450.00

As regards to part (c), the outstanding amount due by the beneficiaries since August 2007 is as at to date Rs 138,310.00

With regard to part (d), my Commission has already issued letters to the beneficiaries in view of recovering the amount due.

Mr. P. Francois: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I would like to know from the Commissioner whether the two types of houses, all the houses have been allocated to beneficiaries?

Mr. F. A. Grandcourt: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, almost all the houses have been allocated to beneficiaries?

Mr. P. Francois: Can I know, how many are left?

Mr. F. A. Grandcourt: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, for the time being only two housing units are vacant.

Mr. N. Lisette: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, one of the criteria for the allocation of these NHDC houses is that at least one spouse should be working either in the private or public sector and as per the audit report it is noted that in two cases the housing unit were allocated to beneficiaries in receipt of social aid. May I know whether these persons who have benefited, these persons who are having social aid, of the housing unit are paying on the same terms and conditions as the other beneficiaries?

Mr. F. A. Grandcourt: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, the answer is 'Yes'.

ROAD CONSTRUCTION PROGRAMME

(B/66) Mr. L. P. Francois (*Second Local Region Member for Baie aux Huitres*) asked the Commissioner responsible for Public Infrastructure, Housing, Environment & Others whether with regard the Road Construction Programme in Rodrigues for financial year 2007-2008, he would inform the House about the length of new roads his Commission intends to construct up to the end of this current financial year?

Mr. F. A. Grandcourt: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, as regards to the construction of new roads for the financial year 2007/2008 the data is as follows:

- (i) Access road from the Box Culvert to fish landing station at *Baie du Nord* – 300 m and this portion of road has been completed;

- (ii) *Grand Baie to Baladirou* Phase 1 - 1.3 km which is ongoing; and
- (iii) Thirdly access road from Regional Cultural Centre at *Mont. Plaisir* approximately 200 m which is also ongoing.

It should be noted Mr. the Chairperson, Sir, that some roads have not been constructed due to financial constraints. However, we will proceed with same in the coming financial years.

Mr. D. Speville: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I would like to ask the Commissioner responsible for Public Infrastructure if at the time being he is satisfied with the quality of work that is being done on these roads?

Mr. F. A. Grandcourt: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, as far as I know the same contractor is doing the work when the respected Member was the former Commissioner for Public Infrastructure. Yes of course, I am satisfied with the work which is performed by the contractor. Of course Mr. Chairperson, Sir, there are some shortcomings but we have regular meeting with the contractor to attend all these shortcomings or defaults.

Mr. D. Speville: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, being given that there are no consultants in Rodrigues to supervise these works and that there is a lack of manpower at the level of the Commission for Public Infrastructure, I would like to ask the Commissioner on the frequency at which these works are being supervised and who are supervising these works at the level of his Commission?

Mr. F. A. Grandcourt: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, the former Commissioner seems to know better than me what is happening in my Commission. There is no shortage of staff, who told you that there is a shortage of staff, there is no shortage of staff. There are regular site visits with the contractor and as I have said we attend all the defaults or any other defaults we see on shortcomings on the construction of different roads in Rodrigues.

DEMOLITION/ RECONSTRUCTION OF COMMUNITY CENTRE - MONTAGNE CHARLOT

(B/67) Mr. L. P. François (*Second Local Region Member for Baie aux Huitres*) asked the Commissioner responsible for Health & Others as regards the demolition and reconstruction of the Community Center in the village of Montagne Charlot as a consequence of the village community school project, could the Commissioner inform the House where does matter stand so far?

Mr. C. Agathe: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, with your permission I will answer this question. I am informed that the construction of the Community Centre at *Mt. Charlot* was included in the contract awarded for the construction of community schools at *Araucaria* and *Mt. Charlot*.

However, due to the non-performance of the contractor, the contract was determined in March 2008.

Being given that the former community centre was demolished to accommodate the construction of the community school at *Mt. Charlot*, it is proposed to include anew the construction of the new community centre in the scope of works for the completion of the community schools.

Mr. D. Speville: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I would like to ask the Commissioner whether the Commission has informed the villagers on this state of matter?

Mr. C. Agathe: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, there are meetings.

EXCAVATION WORKS

(B/68) Mr. J. D. Speville (Second Local Region Member for St. Gabriel) asked the Commissioner responsible for Public Infrastructure, Housing, Environment & Others as regards excavation works which are being carried out alongside the road from Father Gandy Roman Catholic Association School to *Citron Donis*, he will for the benefit of the House, state:-

- (a) the nature and scope of works which are being carried out;
- (b) Whether there has been a demand for way leave and if so, whether authorization was given and table a copy of both;
- (c) what safety and precautionary measures have been taken to ensure security of road users, if any; and
- (d) the remedial action taken to reinstate the road environment?

Mr. F. A. Grandcourt: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, works are actually being carried out by the Mauritius Telecom in view of extending its underground telecommunication network at *Citron Donis*.

The scope of work consists of:

1. Excavation of trench over a length of 1.25 km

2. Placing of bedding in trench
3. Laying of duct and placing of cables
4. Backfilling
5. Construction of manholes
6. Reinstatement works on completion

As regards to part (b), a request for way leave was made by Mauritius Telecom and which was granted by my Commission. A copy of the request and conditions of authorization is being tabled. (APPENDIX)

Mr. Chairperson, Sir, as regards to part (c), I wish to inform the House that works are presently being carried out off the confines of the road, paragraph 2 of the conditions of authorisation stipulates the necessary safety and precautionary measures that shall be taken, including the display of advance warning signs on each side of the working area.

As regards to part (d), the proponent has the obligation to reinstate the road environment as stated in the conditional clauses. In addition, a maintenance of 12 months for any reinstatement works has been specified during which Mauritius Telecom shall make good any defect which may arise. A deposit of Rs 75,000.00 in the form of bank guarantee has also been submitted to that effect. A copy is being submitted for reference. (APPENDIX)

Mr. D. Speville: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I would like to ask the Commissioner responsible for Public Infrastructure to inform the House whether the contractor is fully equipped to perform such type of works?

Mr. F. A. Grandcourt: The answer is 'Yes' Mr. Chairperson, Sir.

Mr. D. Speville: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, is the Commissioner aware that during the whole working period the holes dug alongside the road, where main hole should be built, were not secured with road pegs, fluorescent tape, no beacon lights were installed nearby the holes and this has been considered as a serious threat to the road users by the villagers.

Mr. F. A. Grandcourt: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, as I am not aware of this but one decision we have taken at my Commission is that the work should be done off the confine of the road. But I would like to remind the respected Member that to show our seriousness concerning these excavation works instead of giving the way leave for the work being done carried out on the road. What he did when he was the former Commissioner for Public Infrastructure? He did the work, the excavation work was done on the road, we have taken the decision to carry out all the excavation work, off the confines of the road. So I will look into the matter but I do not think how far it has been a threat for the villagers in the locality.

Mr. D. Speville: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I would like to tell the Commissioner that when he is telling off confinement of the road, all the pedestrians they walk on part of the road, alongside the road which is off confine from the road because there is no footpath. I visited the road myself, your colleague Mrs. PROSPER can tell you, many holes have been dug alongside this road and it has been a threat for the villagers because they used to walk on the part of the road where the holes have been dug.

Mr. F. A. Grandcourt: Ok, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I will look into the matter.

Mr. N. Lisette: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, the Commissioner has stated that he is not aware whether there has been a lack of warning signs along the roads where the works were being performed. May I know from him how regular are his officers monitoring these works to ensure that all the clauses of the contract, or whatever it is, are being adhered to?

Mr. F. A. Grandcourt: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, site visits are effected very often on the site.

MISSION OF THE TOBACCO BOARD

(B/69) Mr. J. D. Speville (*Second Local Region Member for St Gabriel*) asked the Commissioner responsible for Agriculture, Water Resources & Others with regard to the recent prospect mission of the Tobacco Board in Rodrigues with a view to launch the cultivation of Tobacco, therein, he will for the benefit of the House:-

- (a) state whether officers of his Commission have undergone on any official mission at the Tobacco Board in Mauritius; and if yes state the composition of the delegation;
- (b) give a breakdown of the expenditure incurred in respect of each member of the delegation in terms of airfares and subsistence allowance;
- (c) table a copy of the outcomes of the mission;
- (d) say whether seed of Tobacco have been sent to the Commission of Agriculture and distributed to planters and if yes, give a description of progress to date of such distribution;
- (e) state whether these seeds were sown at the Oyster Bay Agricultural station and the seedlings uprooted and if yes, give a breakdown of the expenditure incurred?

Mr. L. A. Perrine: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I wish to reassure the House and to make it clear, because it seems that some people are losing their objectivity, that the

plantation of tobacco does not form part of the agenda of my Commission nor does it appear in our strategic options 2007 - 2015 which we have prepared in November for the revitalization of the Agricultural Sector in Rodrigues.

We are strictly following this strategic option nonetheless we will lay more emphasis on staple crop to ensure food security. Once again, I would like to stress that tobacco plantation does not form part of our agenda and it is not the intention of my Commission to focus on its cultivation in Rodrigues.

However, I must point out that tobacco is a legal crop which is governed by the Tobacco Board Act voted by the Legislative Assembly in 1982. My Commission, therefore, has no right to prevent people from growing tobacco, which they have always been doing in Rodrigues.

Mr. Chairperson, Sir, as regards to part (a), I would like to state that no delegation from my Commission has ever undergone any official mission at the Tobacco Board in Mauritius. However, at the request of the Board, one Senior Officer of my Commission proceeded to Mauritius on 11 March 2008 to visit tobacco plantations in Mauritius. This visit was purely technical. As regards to (b), my Commission met the cost of the mission of the visit time. As for (c) I have mentioned above, the visit was purely technical and apart from the officer being familiarized with tobacco plantation, there was no other matter discussed.

As regards to parts (d) and (e), the answer is of course, no.

Mr. D. Speville: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, being given that seedling of tobacco has been brought from the Ministry of Agriculture from *Barkly* in Mauritius and distributed to the planters in Rodrigues via the Commission for Agriculture, this is the packet of seedlings. *Je voudrais demander au Commissaire s'il y a vraiment une collaboration entre sa Commission et Tobacco Board pour implanter la culture du tabac à Rodrigues ?*

Mr. L. A. Perrine: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I have made it clear it is not our intention to focus on this culture. However, the Tobacco Board is legally empowered to market tobacco leaves in Rodrigues. As regards the distribution of seeds, my Commission has never received, I look at the official register book of the Commission when we receive donation the Commission should have registered all these donations in what we call store form 10. This document has not been used. Therefore, I cannot base on rumors and I am not aware that the Commission has received seedlings to be distributed to farmers.

Mr. D. Speville: *M. le Président, dans une déclaration faite à week-end dans son édition du 27 avril le Chef*

The Chief Commissioner: On a point of order, it is clear in the Standing Orders that Members should not refer to press articles even in questions and I think more of it in supplementary questions.

Mr. N. Lisette: Ok Mr. Chairperson, Sir, the Commissioner stated that there has been visit by his officers at the Tobacco Board for the technical aspect of tobacco plantation. May I know whether his officers will use these different advice or different technique that he acquired from the Tobacco Board to encourage or to advise plantation of these by farmers in Rodrigues?

Mr. L. A. Perrine: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, technical officers should be conversant and aware of all culture, of all crop that is being planted. They have to be conversant to the crop that is why they have been sent in Mauritius to be conversant with the plantation but not to encourage.

Mr. D. Baptiste: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I would like to know from the Commissioner whether there has been a radio communiqué on or around the 28th of February, 2008 inviting planters to attend a meeting in relation to tobacco plantation emanating from his Commission?

Mr. Chairperson: Yes, I can see no link with this question. You can come forward with notice if you wish but not now.

Mr. D. Speville: *Monsieur le Président, je voudrais demander au Commissaire pourquoi les semis mises en terre à titre expérimentale dans une station agricole ont été récemment enlevés ?*

Mr. L. A. Perrine: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, at all experiment stations we have official documents and any experiment that is being carried out is recorded in this book. I have consulted the field

(Interruptions)

Mr. Chairperson: You asked a question you want an answer. Please, allow the Member to at least answer.

Mr. L. A. Perrine: I have consulted the field record book at *Oyster Bay* there is no entry concerning experiment that has been carried out regarding plantation of tobacco. Therefore, I based myself not on rumors but on official documents because if this has been done there should be an entry in the book that can be verified by anybody. There is no entry according to my information, there has never been any experience of tobacco at *Oyster Bay*.

Mr. N. Lisette: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I would like to know from the Commissioner whether during the visit of the Tobacco Board members there has been any meeting held in the presence of officers of his Commission with planters in Rodrigues?

Mr. L. A. Perrine: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, during the visit of official of the Tobacco Board, I met and discussed with them. As a Commissioner I have to listen to everybody, my office is open and officers also they come to ask advice, to seek information or have discussion with them, but I am not aware that my Commission organised meeting with farmers.

Mr. D. Speville: *Je voudrais demander au Commissaire si sa Commission va mettre, va aider à travers les officiers, à travers les expertises pour la culture de tabac, les planteurs à Rodrigues vu leur déplacement au Tobacco Board de Maurice ?*

Mr. L. A. Perrine: Up to now we have not received any request but when we will receive the request we will look into the matter.

Mr. D. Speville: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, *avec ses soucis qui nous guettent, la consommation du gandia par les jeunes et la crise alimentaire qui perdure dans le monde, est-ce que le Commissaire peut nous dire si le Tobacco Board, sans qu'il y a une collaboration, ira de l'avant avec le produit ?*

Mr. L. A. Perrine: This answer should be given by the Tobacco Board Mr. Chairperson, Sir.

WATER SUPPLY - LATANIERS

(B/70) Mr. J. D. Speville (Second Local Region Member for St. Gabriel) asked the Commissioner responsible for Agriculture, Water Resources & Others as regards water supply to the village of Lataniers, he will:-

- (a) state whether he has received any complaints from villagers on the water distribution frequency;
- (b) give the next date after 17th April, 2008 when these villagers were supplied with water;
- (c) state whether any meeting was held between the Water Unit and the villagers and if yes, give the outcome of the meeting;
- (d) state what remedial actions were taken to remedy the situation?

Mr. L. A. Perrine: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, as regards to part (a), I wish to inform the House that my Commission has in fact received representations from the Village Committee of *Lataniers* in a letter dated 17 April, 2008 concerning water distribution in the village.

Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I am informed that the village of *Lataniers* is normally supplied with water coming from two main sources namely:-

- (i) the *Malabar* II water system; and
- (ii) the *Petit Brulé* water system.

For those who are supplied with water from the *Malabar* II system, water distribution was effected on the following dates after 17 April 2008:-

20th April, 3rd, 10th and 19th May

For those who are receiving water from the *Petit Brulé* system, the distribution was effected on:-

30th April, 14th, 15th, 16th, 23rd and 26th May 2008

Mr. Chairperson, Sir, following the representations received from the Village Committee, a meeting was convened at the Water Resources Unit at *Malabar* on 17 May 2008 at 9.30 a.m. During the meeting the representations made by the villagers were discussed, examined and clarified. It was identified that the problems of water faced by some of the villagers of *Lataniers* was mainly due to act of vandalism by unknown persons who tampered with the water network during the night. Remedial measures were also identified during the meeting with a view to avoid this problem.

As regards to (d), remedial actions whereby the Water Unit has installed safety cap system at the main valve of the outlet pipe at *Malabar* and at the Cooperative junction to prevent illegal valve operation during the night. A gate valve has also been installed on the Cooperative water network in view of ensuring an adequate water supply to the villagers of the vicinity.

Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I am pleased to inform the House that a new borehole at *Mont Lubin* is now operational following drilling works which were completed last Friday. Together with the safety measures which the Water Unit has implemented, I am confident that the water supply at *Lataniers* will improve considerably.

Mr. D. Speville: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I would like to ask the Commissioner whether he is aware that the villagers who assisted the meeting at the Water Unit were fed with water just yesterday at the eve of the sitting of the Regional Assembly. They were fed on 17th April, at *Lataniers* people use to have water every week, every fifteen days, every week. And since 17th April to 26th May one month has elapsed, villagers in the central region of Rodrigues have not been fed with water.

Mr. L. A. Perrine: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, this statement is completely false as record submitted by the Water Unit proved the contrary. I have given the date when water was distributed I don't know if the respected Member control valve operators and look into the matter but I based myself on official record that has been submitted by the Water Unit and for his information water is distributed every 11 to 12 days in this region.

Mr. D. Speville: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, the best information is from the consumers itself.

(Interruptions)

Mr. Chairperson: Order please.

Mr. D. Speville: Can the Commissioner inform the House whether he intends to put in place a fraud squad to detect water which is being stolen in many villages including *Lataniers, Baladirou, Terre Rouge*. In many villages water is stolen at night, water is being diverted from a region during the day and fed to other villages at night. I would like to ask the Commissioner whether he intends to put a fraud squad to detect this situation?

Mr. L. A. Perrine: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, this is not my style of management. We are going to look at the problem in a holistic manner, we are going to increase the water availability on the island to give satisfaction to all the people.

FESTIVAL DES ILES 2008 AT DISNEY-LAND, PARIS

(B/71) Mrs. R. M. F. Gaspard Pierre Louis (*First Local Region Member for Grande Montagne*) asked the Chief Commissioner with regard to the Rodriguan delegation which are actually participating at the Festival des Iles 2008 at Disney-Land, Paris from 24 May to 2 June, 2008 he would, for the benefit of the House, state:-

- (a) the composition of the delegation;
- (b) the relevance and the role of each member participating in the event;
- (c) the total expenditure incurred for the Rodriguan participation together with the breakdown of expenses?

The Chief Commissioner: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, the Rodriguan delegation actually participating in the Festival Des Iles in Disneyland Paris, consists of the

following persons:

- Mr. Louis Rosaire Perrine, Adviser on Arts & Culture within the RRA; and
- A cultural group of fifteen (15) artists and dancers.

The cultural group, which consists of 7 musicians and 8 dancers, will perform from 24 of May to 2 June, 2008 at the Festival Des Iles in Disneyland village as well as in the street animations through Paris in France.

Mr. Rosaire PERRINE, in my absence, has been asked to act as Head of this delegation. He has also been entrusted the responsibility of organizing all major logistical arrangements to be made during the event.

With regards to part (c) of the question Mr. Chairperson Sir, it should be noted that the delegation is still on mission. As such the total expenditure incurred for the Rodriguan participation can only be calculated after the return of the delegation and the presentation and computation of all claims. I am informed that some of the claims are still being awaited for processing by my office.

Mrs. F. Gaspard Pierre Louis: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I would like to know from the Chief Commissioner since the cultural group has been announced as being a national troupe, I would like to know how the selection ...

Mr. Chairperson: “Announced”, that means he said that.

Mrs. F. Gaspard Pierre Louis: No, on the radio.

Mr. Chairperson: This is what you are saying as a matter of fact.

Mrs. F. Gaspard Pierre Louis: Yes, it has been so. I would like to know what is the mode of selection that has been practiced, put into place to select these artists.

Mr. Chairperson: Oh yes.

The Chief Commissioner: Yes, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I can account for what have been said in the press. However, I must say this is not a national troupe as understood for Rodrigues, it is a selection of artists to participate in this specific event at Disney-Land, Paris for which Rodrigues is the star guest. And this follows our missions at Disney-Land, people we have met at Disney-Land who have invited us and who are willing to help and promote Rodrigues as a major tourist destination in this zone of the Indian Ocean. Selection was made by the Departmental Head together with the staff of a committee composed of the Departmental Head, staff of the Tourism Office and staff of the Arts and Culture Unit.

ERECTION OF “MARQUEES” AND OTHER SHELTERS BY GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES

(B/72) Mrs. R. M. F. Gaspard Pierre Louis (*First Local Region Member for Grande Montagne*) asked the Commissioner responsible for Public Infrastructure, Housing, Environment & Others whether, in connection to erection of “marquees” and other shelters by government employees, he could for the benefit of the House:-

- (a) state on which occasions same has been done from August 2006 to date;
- (b) table the list of beneficiaries?

Mr. F. A. Grandcourt: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, the erection of “marquees” is done by our officers on various occasions including:

- (i) official government functions
- (ii) activities by socio-cultural groups
- (iii) fancy fair organized by educational institutions
- (iv) religious occasions
- (v) upon request by village committees mainly regarding fund raising activities.

This demonstrates that my Commission collaborates in achieving our vision for the promotion of both cultural and religious activities in Rodrigues.

As regards to part (b), the list is still being compiled.

Mrs. F. Gaspard Pierre Louis: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I would like to know from the Commissioner whether, around the 2 of September 2007, there has been installation of such “marquees” at Mourouk Ebony Hotel and for what purpose?

Mr. F. A. Grandcourt: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, as I have said the information is still being compiled but we used to install “marquees” at the Mourouk Ebony Hotel upon request from that hotel. If we think that this activity falls under these different occasions, I have just mentioned, we will accept. But for the specific date, that is on Saturday, I will look into the matter. And if the Member wants to come with a substantive question I will answer the question but I do not have the information for the time being.

Mrs. F. Gaspard Pierre Louis: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I would like to know whether it is a normal practice that “marquees” are erected for example at *La Détente* on the 4th of January by government employees during normal working hours for a marriage.

Mr. Chairperson: Yes, you cannot frame your questions and give information in your questions. Questions are asked in order to obtain information, you cannot

volunteer to give information and you want him to answer. You ask a question first, it may be some succeeding questions.

Mr. N. Lisette: I will reframe the same question Mr. Chairperson, Sir.

Mr. Chairperson: Yes, let the Member rephrase the question which may be pertinent but you've got to rephrase the question.

Mrs. F. Gaspard Pierre Louis: I would like to know whether government employees have been requested to install "marquees" on the 4th of January at *La Détente*.

Mr. Chairperson: Yes, that's perfect, thank you.

Mr. F. A. Grandcourt: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, as I have just said I don't have the information, the information is still being compiled so how can I answer this question.

Mr. N. Lisette: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, in this case would the Commission provide "marquees" for activities such as marriages and anniversaries if any request is made in this sense?

Mr. F. A. Grandcourt: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, if need be. If a Member from this House, for example if the Chief Commissioner wants to marry, I take it as example, if we think that the Member is eligible we are going to proceed.

Mr. N. Lisette: I would like also to know from the Commissioner Mr. Chairperson, Sir, about the criteria that have been established for the installation of same, whatever be the occasion of the request.

Mr. F. A. Grandcourt: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I have already answered to this question.

Mrs. F. Gaspard Pierre Louis: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I would like to know whether in connection with these "marquees" there is a fee that the persons have to pay and what is this fee, how much?

Mr. F. A. Grandcourt: In fact Mr. Chairperson, Sir, as I have just said, if it is for example an activity by social, cultural group or it is a fancy fair for fund raising activity so there is no fee, we do not ask for any fee.

Mrs. F. Gaspard Pierre Louis: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I would like to know whether it is the Government itself which bear the cost for transportation of same for personal matters?

Mr. F. A. Grandcourt: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, there is no personal matter. I do not know which personal matter she is referring to but for example upon request of village committee we do provide transport facilities. But why not, it is a service, I have taken the decision to extend the service to other communities in Rodrigues, so why not?

Mr. D. Speville: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I would like to ask the Commissioner whether demand has been made for marriages and anniversaries and if authorization has been given, who bear the cost of transportation and overtime?

Mr. F. A. Grandcourt: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I will repeat again I do not have the information. The information is still being compiled, when I will obtain the information I will come. And if the Member wants to come again with a question, I will answer.

Mr. N. Lisette: May we know from the Commissioner Mr. Chairperson, Sir, what is the fixed charge for private services whenever they are asked?

Mr. F. A. Grandcourt: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, as I have just said, if for example there is a fancy fair by educational institutions why do have to ask for a fee. For example, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I remember, we have just received a request for a concert for if we take for example *Natty Jah*, this is not our policy to give to such proof but there is someone coming from Mauritius and he is willing to make a concert for Gonzague Pierre Louis Institution or Centre that's ok we are going to look into it. But *Natty Jah*, no, of course not.

PAYMENT OF SCHOOL CERTIFICATE/ HIGHER SCHOOL CERTIFICATE EXAMINATION FEES

(B/73) Mrs. R. M. F. Gaspard Pierre Louis (*First Local Region Member for Grande Montagne*) asked the Commissioner responsible for Women's Affairs, Child Development and Family Welfares & Others whether, in connection to the payment of School Certificate (SC) and Higher School Certificate (HSC) examination fees by her Commission, she could state:-

- (a) the number of students who benefited from same, together with the corresponding amount paid;
- (b) the criteria set for a student to be eligible under such scheme?

The Chief Commissioner: With your permission and in the absence of the Commissioner, I will answer for the Commissioner for Social Security, Women's Affairs, Child Development and Family Welfares.

Mr. Chairperson: Yes, proceed.

The Chief Commissioner: As regards to part (a), 436 students benefited from the government subsidy scheme for payment of SC/HSC examination fees for 2008. The total amount paid for such fees amounted to Rs 3,528,466.00.

As regards to part (b), the following of the criteria laid down by the Ministry of Social Security for eligibility under the scheme:-

- (i) beneficiaries of social aid, unemployment hardship relief are entitled to full payment;
- (ii) an applicant whose average income does not exceed Rs 7,500 per month is entitled to full payment;
- (iii) an applicant whose family income is in the range of Rs 7,501 to Rs 10,000 and has more than one child sitting for the examination is eligible for 50% subsidy for each child;
- (iv) owners of cars, vans, lorries, buses, shops, restaurants and similar businesses are not eligible as it is believed that they have hidden resources and income exceeding the income threshold mentioned above.

Mrs. F. Gaspard Pierre Louis: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I would like to know from the Chief Commissioner whether there have been students, whose parent earned more than the fixed limit and the prescribed limit, who have benefited from the same scheme?

The Chief Commissioner: Yes, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, it may happen that a few, I repeat a few parents who are exceptional cases where they have a lot of children or other children sitting for HSC. The Executive Council did gave its approval for exceptional, a few exceptional persons for example cars, vans etc. I remember we gave our exceptional and discretionary approval for a few of these to be allocated the subsidy.

Mrs. F. Gaspard Pierre Louis: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I would like to know whether there are daughters or sons of Commissioners who benefited from same?

The Chief Commissioner: I don't know Mr. Chairperson, Sir, if any Commissioner has his daughter or son benefited from same. I do not think this is the case and in any case if you are referring to the daughter of Commissioner Agathe you must be aware that she is in receipt of social aid through her condition, her mother, who is a woman living alone and as such she is fully eligible for the subsidy. Thank you.

Mrs. F. Gaspard Pierre Louis: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I would like to know whether candidates who want to sit for private exams whether they are eligible for payment of exam fees?

The Chief Commissioner: I do not have this information Mr. Chairperson, Sir.

APPOINTMENT OF THE MANAGERS OF RODRIGUES EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT COMPANY LTD (REDCO)

(B/74) Mr. L. P. François (*Second Local Region Member for Baie aux Huitres*) asked the Deputy Chief Commissioner whether, with regard to the appointment of the Managers of Rodrigues Educational Development Company Ltd (REDCO) he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to:-

- (a) the terms and conditions of appointments, indicating their salaries, allowances drawn and the fringe benefits to which they were entitled before 2006; and
- (b) whether there has been any alteration in same, and if so, give details for each subsequent changes?

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, as regards part (a), prior to 2006, it was the Chairman of the Board of the REDCO Ltd who was also acting as Manager of REDCO colleges. The latter was paid an allowance of Rs 10,000 to carry out the duties of Manager in addition to the Chairman's fees.

With regards to part (b), I am informed that since 2006, full fledged Managers are now recruited on a contractual basis for an initial period of one year renewable, thereafter.

Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I am tabling the terms and conditions that govern the employment on contract of the Manager of REDCO colleges. (APPENDIX)

Mr. N. Lisette: I just want to know from the Commissioner, whether there have been any alteration, any change in conditions after that the post has been advertised?

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

Mr. N. Lisette: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, with respect to travelling I see that in the contract here it is stated that the person, who is assigned the duties is owner of a car, is paid a monthly allowance of Rs 7,525 for attending duty. I want to know from the Commissioner for Education whether it is the case right now?

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Yes, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, it is on the conditions that have been laid down in the paper I have just submitted.

Mr. N. Lisette: For the time being, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, is a car being provided to the Manager of the REDCO?

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, if it is in the terms of the contract, Yes, otherwise, No.

SALES OF LIVESTOCK

(B/75) Mr. L. D. Baptiste (*Second Local Region Member of Grande Montagne*) asked the Commissioner responsible for Agriculture, Water Resources & Others with regard to the sales of livestock at the different breeding stations from January 2007 to date, will the Commissioner for the benefit of the House, give information as to:-

- (a) when and where such sales took place together with the procedures used during the sales;
- (b) whether same were advertised and if so, give description about the dates and media used;
- (c) the number of each type of livestock sold; and
- (d) table the names, addresses and occupation of each buyer, together with details about the livestock bought and the price paid for each?

Mr. L. A. Perrine: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I am tabling the information requested at parts (a) and (c) of the question concerning sale of livestock which have taken place at the different breeding stations for period January 2007 to date. (APPENDIX)

The usual procedure for sale of livestock to beneficiaries is based on applications received at the Public Relation Unit of my Commission. Applications are approved on a “first come first serve basis” after site visit effected by officers of the Agricultural Services and subject to the following criteria being satisfied:-

- (i) The applicant possessing an appropriate animal shed;
- (ii) The applicant is a genuine breeder or a serious would be breeder (new comers) or is a needy person;
- (iii) The applicant starting a livestock farming project.

As regards to procedure used during the sale operation, the approved applicants are requested to call at the breeding station for taking possession of the animal against payment which is made according to the body weight of the animal purchased.

As regards to part (b), no advertisement is made as regards to the sale of the livestock as it is effected on an application basis as stated earlier in my reply.

Mr. Chairperson, Sir, as regards to part (d) of the question, I wish to point out that the purchase of these animals constitutes a contract between the buyers and my Commission. I, therefore, consider it not appropriate to disclose the names of the buyers without their prior consent.

Mr. D. Speville: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I would like to ask the Commissioner for Agriculture whether demand is being done in a chronological order or same is done at random?

Mr. L. A. Perrine: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, the applications are sent to the Public Relation Unit and the committee decide on a 'first come, first serve basis'. Of course depending on the qualifications of the applicant.

NUMBER OF APPLICATIONS

(B/76) Mr. L. D. Baptiste (*Second Local Region Member of Grande Montagne*) asked the Commissioner responsible for Women's Affairs, Child Development and Family Welfares & Others whether, as regards social aid, the Commissioner could inform the House:-

- (a) about the number of applications received for each category since January 2007 to date and the number of present beneficiaries in each category with the total amount involved monthly;
- (b) the number of applications which were rejected, if any and the reasons, thereof; and
- (c) state the number of cases where payment has been ceased since, January 2007 in each category, if any and give the reasons, thereof?

The Chief Commissioner: Yes, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, as the House is aware, the Commission for Social Security is only responsible for the administration of social security, a policy being decided upon by the Ministry in Mauritius. The Commission is, therefore, responsible for the applying of procedures laid down in the

Social Aid Act for the purpose of the section 3 of the Act, an applicant is qualified for claiming social aid only if he is temporarily or permanently incapable of earning adequately his livelihood and has insufficient means to support himself and his dependent as a results of:-

- (a) any physical or mental disability;
- (b) any sickness or accident certified by an approved Medical Practitioner;
- (c) abandonment by his spouse; or
- (d) any sudden loss of employment which has lasted continuously for not less than 6 months.

The Regional Government encourages people to be independent and self supporting. However, payment of social aid is a temporary measure to assist people in difficulties until a solution is found to their problems.

From January 2007 to date 467 applications for social aid and 140 applications for unemployment hardship relief have been received. There are at present 1384 beneficiaries of social aid and 177 beneficiaries of unemployment hardship relief. The average monthly payments to beneficiaries are total Rs 2,617,575 for social aid and Rs 225,859 for unemployment hardship relief.

As regards to part (b), 54 applications for social aid are in abeyance pending finalisation of enquiries, 100 applications for social aid have not been approved for the following reasons:-

- (i) in 9 cases the family income exceeds the prescribed limit;
- (ii) 2 cases have been disallowed by the Medical Board;
- (iii) 11 cases have been transferred to Basic Invalidity Pension; and
- (iv) 5 Basic Widows Pension;
- (v) in 10 cases the applicants are above 15 years old and not attending school;
- (vi) 23 applicants have left Rodrigues for Mauritius and abroad;
- (vii) in 40 cases the applicants were either civilly married or living with a party.

Regarding unemployment hardship relief, 24 cases are in abeyance pending finalisation of enquiries. 27 applications have not been approved for the following reasons:-

- (i) in 20 cases the family income exceeds the prescribed limit;
- (ii) in 3 cases the applicant had already secured employment;
- (iii) in 3 cases the applicant had gone to Mauritius;
- (iv) only 1 applicant was jailed immediately after his application.

Payment has ceased in 205 cases of social aid and 41 cases of unemployment hardship relief. The reasons for stopping payments include cases where the children have reached 15 years old and were no longer attending school or were no more leaving

Thank you.

Mr. D. Speville: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, can I know from the Chief Commissioner, for cases where people's pension has been disallowed, for how long they have been benefiting from the basic invalidity pension before it was cancelled?

The Chief Commissioner: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I think this is a purely technical question and out of the reach of an answer within the ambit of a supplementary question. How can I know even if I was really Commissioner for Social Security within the persons who have been disallowed the type of pension he is saying, the time for which they were given pension. This is I think a very technical question and I would invite the Commissioner, may be, to come forward with a statement later.

Mr. D. Speville: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, can I know from the Chief Commissioner in the cases of those persons whose pension have been disallowed whether it is the first time that the national pension officers are being called upon to make an appeal again such cases?

The Chief Commissioner: Yes, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, at times when we receive people in our office we see that there are rows and I have to tell you that, in my opinion, this Social Security Act is not fair. And I have had the occasion to speak to the Commissioner for Social Security in Mauritius, there is a Commissioner for Social Security who is at the Ministry of Social Security. And for example we have told him that it is not fair and from a human right point of view some people have been speaking many times about human rights, this is an example of non respect of human rights, the right to have a husband, to have a partner in life. Because a woman who is receiving social aid for his children where this woman gets engaged or lives with a man which is a normal thing under the sky of God, I would say, immediately it is the reflex of the Social Security Officers to cut social aid of the child and we have to ask if the pension given for the mother or for that child. And their reasoning is that the new husband or the partner of the mother should cater for the need of this child and this is not human Mr. Chairperson, Sir and I would say where need be we have to appeal and there is an appeal tribunal for medical cases also. Unfortunately, you may want to help a number of persons and just like the fishermen you were in the streets for it, we wanted to help the fishermen and the law says otherwise. So if there is need to appeal I am glad that they did appeal.

TOURISM SECTOR

(B/77) Mrs. M. A. Perrine-Bégué (*First Local Region Member of St. Gabriel*) asked the Chief Commissioner with regard to the Tourism Sector in Rodrigues, he will inform the House whether:-

- (a) there is any decrease noted in the number of tourist arrival in Rodrigues;
- (b) any loss of employment has been noted in the sector during the last 2 years;
- (c) any project submitted in that sector has been abandoned by any investor during the recent months;
- (d) any tourist operator/project has ceased operation during the last 2 years?

The Chief Commissioner: Yes, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, with regards to part (a) of the question, the answer is YES. Latest statistics shows a decrease in tourist's arrivals from 15,011 for the period Jan-April 2007 to 14,270 for the period Jan-April 2008, that is, less 741 tourists - a 4.94% decrease over the period.

The present fall in tourist's arrivals is a matter of concern for the Regional Government especially after taking into consideration the promotional efforts being put up in the sector. After analysis, it was found that the main causes of the decrease in tourist's arrivals are namely due to:

- a) the increase in air tickets fares by 15% from Rs 6,514 to Rs 6,914 in November 2007 by Air Mauritius;
- b) the introduction by Air Mauritius as from April 2008 of a "Service Fee" of Rs 350 + VAT on the Rodrigues route which has now increased the air tickets fare to some Rs 7,100;
- c) the fall in the purchasing power in mainland Mauritius, which represents nearly 70% of our market, where a decrease of 7.1% of tourist's arrivals from Mauritius is recorded for the period Jan-April 2008.

In order to counteract the above decrease, the Commission for Tourism plans to undertake further promotional efforts. However, with regards to the increasing cost of air fares, we are at the mercy of the worldwide price increases in fuel. The only way to decrease the cost of air tickets fares would be to come up with the new airport runway which will enable airlines to reduce their fares with A319 aircrafts and other bigger aircrafts.

As regards to part (b), I am informed by the Employment Office that 11 employees lost employment during the last 2 years, namely with the closure of Ecotourisme Rodrigues Limited in November 2006.

With regards to part (c) of the question Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I am informed that no projects have been abandoned during the recent months by promoters to whom approval has been given.

Mr. Chairperson, Sir, out of the 14 tourism projects approved since the last two years, the promoters have reached different stages of implementation of their projects. While some promoters are asking for additional land to be allocated to them, others are in the process of preparing and submitting architectural plans following letters of intent issued to them, while some are at the stage of either valuation of rental by the Chief Government Valuer or obtaining EIA license etc. My office is following up the tourism projects carefully to ensure that no projects are left in an abandoned state and urgent decision is taken once it is noted that the promoter is uninterested with the implementation of his project.

It is noted that there were promoters who had been granted leases for tourism projects since years and they had failed to start their project. In that respect, my office has reviewed all dormant hotel projects and cancelled the leases of promoters who have failed to set up their hotels. During the exercise, we have resumed possession of land allocated to three promoters.

With regards to part (d) of the question Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I am informed by the Licensing Unit of the RRA that only Ecotourisme Rodrigues Limited has ceased operation during the last 2 years.

Mr. N. Lisette: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, the Chief Commissioner has stated a decrease of 4.2% in tourist arrival which is mainly due to the impact of the increase in air tickets between Mauritius and Rodrigues. Has there be any discussion Mr. Chairperson, Sir, with the relevant authorities as regard to that issue?

The Chief Commissioner: The decrease is 4.94 % not 4.2, you should listen well. As regards to the question, yes, there have been discussions with Air Mauritius itself and the Ministry of Civil Aviation and Tourism. Unfortunately, they have been in the impossibility to avoid the increase in the air fares.

Mr. N. Lisette: May I know from the Chief Commissioner about any consultation as regards to the decrease in the number of tourism with local stakeholders?

The Chief Commissioner: Yes, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I meet several stakeholders very often and we are in constant contact to discuss about ways and means to improve, remedy the situation. But we should not alarm about this, we are

only at the beginning of the year and the core, the bulk of tourist arrival is still ahead this year.

Mr. N. Lisette: When we listen to what the Chief Commissioner had said, we can see that the effect of increase in price is overwhelming the effect of the promotional campaign that is being done by the Rodrigues Regional Assembly most especially by the Commission for Tourism. I would like to ask the Chief Commissioner whether he has studied about the impact of promotional campaigns that are being carried out by his Commission. And with respect to these different promotions that are being done, what about the sources of tourism whether these sources are being increased either from Mauritius or from Europe or from other destinations?

The Chief Commissioner: Yes, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I do not have to do any, as we can do it, it will be interesting. But let me recall him that when they left office, tourism was declining and when we came back with the promotional campaigns we instigated it increased Mr. Chairperson, Sir. Let me give him for the year 2007 per country the analysis over the increase for Mauritius which represents 68.67 % of the market for Rodrigues, it increased by 10.72%, for France/ Reunion which represents 24.64% of the market it increased by 17.49%, for the United Kingdom which represents 1.09% of the market in 2007 it increased by 32.41%, for Italy it increased by 25.24%, for Germany it decreased by 19%, for Switzerland it increased by 23.3%. We have all the statistics and may I reassure the Member we know how to use and to interpret these statistics.

Mr. N. Lisette: As regards to the interpretation of the figures, the Chief Commissioner is speaking about the increase in the number of tourism arrival from different destinations but yet as regard to the local stakeholders there is an issue that is being spoken, it is said that this increase in the number of tourism is not reflected in their business. Has the Commissioner carried out any investigation as regards to the occupancy rate to really see that these are being reflected in the different business of the local stakeholders, I'm not speaking about big hotels but especially those like *chambres*, *gite d'hotes* and other local people?

The Chief Commissioner: I am aware of this way of thinking Mr. Chairperson, Sir, and I always tell my Commissioners at the Executive Council for some tourist operators here they want us to go and bring the tourists to their doorsteps and they won't make any effort to promotion, in promoting themselves on the Internet, in their marketing etc. We are here to promote Rodrigues Mr. Chairperson, Sir, we are not here to promote a specific *gite* or hotel or any other, we are here to promote Rodrigues and if within this increase a particular *gite*, *chambre d'hotes* or a particular establishment is not seeing the results, this establishment must rework its marketing, must improve its services and then they will see the results. If you stay ahead, you stay behind and you think Government will bring tourists to your doorsteps you are not going the right way Mr. Chairperson, Sir.

Mr. N. Lisette: Of Course, this is very important Mr. Chairperson, Sir, but still there is that importance of constant consultations with the local stakeholders especially that they become aware of what the Commission is doing for them. This is what is of the most importance, if they want to promote their business, they really want to promote their business with respect to what the Commission is doing for them, I think there should be a constant relationship and constant consultation with the stakeholders. Is this what is happening with the Commission and the stakeholders nowadays Mr. Chairperson, Sir?

The Chief Commissioner: I do not know where the Member gets his information. Let me give him an example for the first time I think in January or February last we took a dozen small tourist operators to Paris, *Le Monde à Paris*, this is an example of the networking between the Commission and all the stakeholders Mr. Chairperson, Sir and I have to say the stakeholders themselves, the operators, they have to be organised. What is the role of the different associations? Where is their office? What are they doing? We don't know, it is not up to me to step into the shoes of other people, they have to organize themselves, they have to meet and they have to come with proposals to us, those who come with proposals to us regularly we take account of their proposals, we meet them. There is a Tourism Advisory Committee which has been set up under the regulations we have actively at the Tourism Office many of them who come to deposit their brochures, to discuss, to meet other people etc. There is today greater interaction and more interesting interaction. But I repeat it is a dangerous sign, if what the Member says some operators, they are saying that within the increase they are not seeing it at their doorsteps, within their business. It means that they are not doing well, there is a problem with their marketing, they are not well known or their service and they have review and do their homework. This is what we say, we are promoting Rodrigues, we don't want to promote a specific *gite*, all of them are in our brochures, all of them are on our website and soon there will be a new tourism guide for Rodrigues. If someone is not seeing the increase, do not expect me or the Commission for Tourism to bring tourists to your doorsteps, you have to make the effort and get into the promotional campaigns, participate and take the best out of it, improve your service also. Because we receive many complaints from some supposed *gite*, *table d'hotes* etc. which are not up to the level and which are not giving, responding to the type of promotion we are making Mr. Chairperson, Sir. It is up to the promoters now to take the relays and to propose the appropriate high quality service which is legendary to Rodrigues Mr. Chairperson, Sir. Thank you.

Mr. N. Lisette: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, when I listen to the Commissioner for Tourism he stated that these NGO's they are somehow badly organised because he does not know himself where they stand, he does not even know where is their office, he just said that. These NGO's do not have any office so there is some sort of misorganisation. May I ask the Chief Commissioner, Commissioner for Tourism

when he did last officially meet the NGO's like *Tourist Vert* or any other which are involved in the local tourist enterprises?

The Chief Commissioner: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, there is no punctual and regular meetings, officials etc. Anybody can come and see me, I am open. Anybody can come at the Tourism Office, they can come to meet the Departmental Head. We do not have to need and organize *des grandes messes à chaque fois* to consult and meet everybody. We meet at Tourism functions, we meet at the Tourism Office, regularly the Presidents of the associations, they come to see me. But I repeat again Mr. Chairperson, Sir, we are here to do part of the job and part of job is to be done by these associations, by the operators. We have today Mr. Chairperson, Sir, when I go to France, in Paris, when you speak about Rodrigues you say you come from Rodrigues immediately they speak to you about some persons who cook well, who have a very good service etc. But they speak badly of other people. Why? Because they have bad experience there, so it is up to these persons to improve and to provide their good services. It is not up to us to fill the hotels or the *gite* or the *table d'hotes* of such and such persons. We are here to promote Rodrigues as a destination and those, there are many of them Mr. Chairperson, Sir, who thinks that we have to do what they want. If they want to go to such and such promotional event we must include them, we must give them full tickets, full board and give the money etc. This policy has stopped Mr. Chairperson, Sir, we want the tourism operators to make the efforts and of course, those who are making the efforts they are doing very well Mr. Chairperson, Sir. There is no need, at this moment, for periodical consultations with the whole of all the tourism industry. I receive regular letters, emails, contacts, visits, they come to see me and we do speak about the problems and ways of improving the tourism sector.

Mr. N. Lisette: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, the Chief Commissioner stated that the role of the Commission is to promote Rodrigues and not individual local tourist enterprises, I think that is right. But there is one thing I cannot understand that he stated later which I think I need more clarifications. During his last visit to France, he took along with him individual local enterprises, does he think that it would have been fairer if instead of taking these local enterprises he took along with him associations, NGO's who would have been as per his policy, that is to promote Rodrigues. Because if he is taking someone who own a local enterprise, it is sure that there is going to be some sort of conflict of interest. Would it not be fairer if he chose rather associations rather than individuals local enterprises?

The Chief Commissioner: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, the Member is mixing up things and I repeat we are not here to satisfy the whims of Presidents of such and such associations. Anybody then Christian AGATHE, Gaetan or yourself, I can create an association I call myself *association tourisme Ocean Indien*, *association tourisme Bois d'Olive de Rodrigues* and I have three persons and we say we are an association I want tickets to go to Paris. Who do you represent? What are your real goals Mr. Chairperson, Sir? If I want to come back on what happened during the last promotion

campaign to the MAP, what we did Mr. Chairperson, Sir, is that we wrote to all registered and recognized tourism operators in Rodrigues telling them we are giving you such and such facility, the MTPA will give such and such facility, you have to pay your tickets Mr. Chairperson, Sir, or you have to negotiate within your association or any person who wants to come, which recognize you can come, association, individual etc. It is their right and some may be, I don't have the figure, 12 of them turned up and we accepted. We accepted all of those who turned up and there was a president of an association in it and you know what happen, the president of the association Mr. Chairperson, Sir, he could not even I think meet the cost that he has to cater for, so where is the seriousness? We are not here to deal with super president of associations, we are here to promote the whole of Rodrigues.

Many people think that they know better than us what is good. We don't have any lesson to teach in the tourism industry but don't come to teach us the lesson. We have competent staff, we are having professional staff as from the 1st of July, we will have two professional Tourism Promotion Officers, Tourism Promotion Assistants etc, Tourism Information Officers. The Tourism Office, promotion of Rodrigues is becoming under Discovery Rodrigues, we will give them the funds, we will prepare the program of promotion and these are ways that we have to increase. Now if you want to read the benefits of this, if you want to sit and relax and wait for the results to come to you, you will fail Mr. Chairperson, Sir. You have to work by yourself. One of the best tools today is the Internet, is advertising in small, *des petites annonces* for example in France where people wants to come to Rodrigues, they make searches on Rodrigues and they select you. How many of them first of all have a website, a regular website which is being maintained etc. We are not here to deal with one and every president and anybody can become a president. I can become a president of a tourism association. Therefore, should we all presidents deal with them or recognize what the effort of what they are doing? I don't say we should not deal with them, we should, they represent the industry but we give opportunity to them and opportunity to the individual operators also and nobody was penalized.

Mr. N. Lisette: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I see that the situation, when I listen to the Chief Commissioner, is quite conflictual not only conflictual but ...

The Chief Commissioner: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, this is a point of opinion again. I did not say it is conflictual, you are saying this. I did not say it is conflictual there are good relations, ok, now with your silly manner of interpreting things in your way, you are saying ...

Mr. N. Lisette: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, point of order. The Chief Commissioner qualified me as having silly manners. I would like you to kindly tell him to withdraw his words because I do not think I have bad or silly manners.

Mr. Chairperson: Yes, it seems to me that I really heard that the Commissioner said with your silly manners. I do not know whom he was addressing

to. But if he is addressing to the Member, well it is part of parliamentary practice to just withdraw, if it is meant for him.

The Chief Commissioner: I have not said silly manner but silly way of thinking.

Mr. Chairperson: If you have addressed the Member referring to his manners are silly, your silly manners then you have to withdraw if it is not him then of course.

The Chief Commissioner: Silly manners of thinking, I don't think unparliamentary *Façon bête de penser*.

Mr. Chairperson: Chief Commissioner, if you said the Member has silly manners, you should understand that this is not parliamentary, it is provocative unless you

The Chief Commissioner: Yes, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, it is not silly manners but a silly way of thinking. Manner or way is silly way of thinking somebody may have a silly way of thinking, so what.

Mr. Chairperson: There is a practice that you have adopted so far, you seem to paraphrase what the Commissioner has said, you recite what he has said and then you interpret it your way. Because you have been doing things against the standing orders, this is why you are meeting reactions like this. I have not stopped you, I want to be flexible to you but you know the results are sometimes curious. You should avoid from at least repeating what was said or avoid making your own assumptions or your own sentiments about it. You just ask your question and then, this can be done, I think in other institution but not here. Right, can you proceed with your question.

Mr. N. Lisette: When I listen to the Commissioner I see that

Mr. Chairperson: No, you cannot .

Mr. N. Lisette: The situation

Mr. Chairperson: You cannot repeat. I have just said to you. Don't react upon his answer. You may ask questions because you want information. Right, you understand me.

Mr. N. Lisette: Yes. I do understand but sometimes there is

Mr. Chairperson: I understand you as well but you know this is a House.

Mr. N. Lisette : In order to put.....

Mr. Chairperson: Yes, but do not at least make an assumption of what he had said or you seem to interpret the way he talks or answers. You ask your questions because this may give rise to controversies.

Mr. N. Lisette: The situation Mr. Chairperson, Sir, appears to be quite alarming given that some local enterprises are not even able to pay their ticket fees for their promotional campaigns whenever they are invited by the Commission for Tourism. I would like to ask the Chief Commissioner about the umbrella theory that he once mentioned in this Assembly, that is to help the starting and who are at the teething stage to be able to get up and to be able to be promoted.

The Chief Commissioner: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, let me answer in an image manner. If I give the Member an umbrella and the Member does not hold the umbrella correctly and holds the umbrella down, is it my business Mr. Chairperson, Sir, there is an umbrella theory. First of all, you must hold the umbrella correctly on your head, not hold it down or do not even refuse to take the umbrella. So what I say is that tourism enterprise, there is part of the effort that they must make from their part to promote themselves individually, we are promoting Rodrigues from a global point of view, from a general point of view to attract tourist to Rodrigues, to attract to the destination. Now, the individual choice will depend on the promotion which is being made by the individual promoter Mr. Chairperson, Sir.

Mr. Chairperson: We are left with four questions, two have been removed as per the Member's request but you have to put it again to through the Clerk and then we are left with only two questions, B/78 and B/80. No, she can table the questions again and may be if you are a little sick we can take your last question or do we have other businesses for this House today. I'm not aware, normally we break at 12.30 but we have to break and then take one question or two questions and we go at one go. Right and I understand the Member. So you can proceed with the next question after B/78. B/78 and B/80 removed.

(No. B/78) – Withdrawn

FUNDING AGENCIES OPERATING UNDER BILATERAL AGREEMENTS IN MAURITIUS

(B/79) Mrs. M. A. Perrine-Begue (*First Local Region Member of St. Gabriel*) asked the Chief Commissioner with regard funding agencies operating under bilateral agreements in Mauritius, he will state to this House:-

- (a) whether any project application has been made by the Rodrigues Regional Assembly as a non-state body to any donor-

organisation/institution for funding; and if yes, to state when and by which Commission;

- (b) the number of projects which have been approved; and
- (c) briefly state the objectives and impact of those projects for the island?

The Chief Commissioner: Mr. Chairperson Sir, the reply to part (a) of the question is yes. The Rodrigues Regional Assembly in its capacity as Non State Actor (NSA) submitted applications for projects under the ongoing Decentralised Cooperation Programme (DCP) and the Regional Programme for Sustainable Management of Coastal Zones (RECOMAP) which are being funded by the European Union. Both the DCP and RECOMAP consider the Rodrigues Regional Assembly as a Non State Actor for the purpose of their respective programme. The DCP and the RECOMAP are being implemented, respectively, by the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development and the Indian Ocean Commission.

Mr. Chairperson Sir, under the first call for Poverty Alleviation projects by the DCP, the Deputy Chief Commissioner's Office, the Commission for Social Security and the Commission for Health submitted one proposal each in September 2006.

Under the second call for proposals meant for projects aiming at the improvement of Natural Resources Management in Rodrigues, applications were submitted in January 2007 by:-

- ❑ My Office - 2 applications;
- ❑ Commission for Public Infrastructure - 2 applications;
- ❑ Commission for Health – 2 applications;
- ❑ Commission for Agriculture – 7 applications

Under the third call for Poverty Alleviation projects applications were submitted in February 2008 by

- ❑ Commission for Health - 2 applications; and
- ❑ Commission for Youth and Sports - 1 application

In December 2007 applications for funding were also submitted to the RECOMAP as follows:-

- (i) 1 project by my office and
- (ii) 3 projects by the Commission for Environment

To date eight projects have been approved by the DCP and one project has been shortlisted by the RECOMAP.

Mr. Chairperson Sir, the objectives and the impact of the projects approved by the DCP are as follows:-

Chief Commissioner's Office

(i) **Conversation of Lagoon Fishermen to off lagoon Fishermen:** To train 300 Fishermen on off lagoon fishery and contribute to the Socio-Economic situation of their families

(ii) **Sustainable exploitation of the Marine and fisheries Resources in Rodrigues through the promotion of out lagoon fishing:** To acquire an outerlagoon fishing vessel to fish outside the lagoon surrounding the island. The project will encourage other fishermen and businessmen to invest in the fishery sector.

Deputy Chief Commissioner's Office

Literacy and numeracy project in Rodrigues.

Commission for Social Security

Construction of toilet blocks for houses of needy families not possessing same.

Commission for Public Infrastructure

Construction of track roads around the island.

Commission for Health

Water Resources Management at Queen Elizabeth Hospital: To ensure a continuous availability and supply of water of high quality for use of Queen Elizabeth Hospital. The project will improve the quality of service by the use of high quality water free from contamination.

Commission for Agriculture

Rehabilitation of Degraded land: 300 hectares to be reforested and planted with grass, meliferous trees for beekeepers etc.

Setting up of Unit Farms: To facilitate the setting up of 25 unit farms of at least 2 arpents each mainly for livestock rearing. The beneficiaries will be able to improve their average monthly earnings.

Mr. D. Speville: I would like to ask the Chief Commissioner how are the people who have applied for project falling under the DCP being helped for the project write-up?

The Chief Commissioner: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, this question should be put to the DCP.

(No. B 80) – Withdrawn

ELDERLY HOUSING SCHEME

(No. B/81) Mr. L. D. Baptiste (*Second Local Region Member of Grande Montagne*) asked the Commissioner responsible for Public Infrastructure, Housing, Environment & Others whether, as regards to the Elderly Housing Scheme, he will:-

- (a) state the types of materials purchased from August 2006 to date, the amount purchased and the cost per types;
- (b) the amount per types of materials delivered so far and the amount left;
- (c) the procedures involved in the delivery and certification of the materials received; and
- (d) table a list:-
 - (i) the names and addresses of senior citizens identified in need of assistance for the repair/consolidation/ construction of their houses;
 - (ii) of beneficiaries and their address indicating the dates and details about the materials delivered and to be delivered;
 - (iii) of beneficiaries whose houses have been completed so far and the time frame for the other houses to be completed

Mr. F. A. Grandcourt: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, as regards to part (a), I wish to remind the House that the Elderly Housing Scheme has known a real success in relieving the concerns of our elderly group living in deplorable conditions to have a decent dwelling.

The materials which are provided under such scheme are corrugated iron sheets, timber and battens. Nails were also provided to the first batch of the beneficiaries.

The amount purchased since August 2006 and the respective costs, thereof, is being tabled. (APPENDIX)

As regards to part (b), the information is being compiled.

As for as part (c) Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I assure the House that all established procedures are being strictly adhered to. The Assistant Inspector issues a Store Form 5 to the Stores section to take possession of the materials and the delivery, thereof, is effected by the officers of my Commission on a door to door basis whereby each beneficiary is required to sign a form after verification of the quantities supplied, to acknowledge receipt of materials.

With regard to part (d), the information is still being compiled.

Mr. D. Baptiste: I would like to know from the Commissioner whether these materials have also been delivered to other categories of person apart from senior citizens?

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

Mr. D. Baptiste: Is the Commissioner aware that some senior citizens have not received their materials in adequate quantities to complete their house?

Mr. F. A. Grandcourt: No, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, there has been a survey by officers of my Commission and after which they have been provided with the amount of materials as per the survey. So if the beneficiary wishes to make a bigger house, I do not know. But at the Commission, we give the materials as to what the officer has recommended.

Mrs. F. Gaspard Pierre Louis: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I would like to know whether there is a supervision process after the delivery of these materials for construction of same houses?

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

Mr. D. Speville: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, *je voudrais savoir s'il y a une collaboration entre la Commission des Infrastructures Publiques et la Fédération des Personnes Agées pour pouvoir bien cibler les bénéficiaires sur le terrain ?*

Mr. F. A. Grandcourt: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, the answer is no.

Mr. N. Lisette: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, in light of the supervision that is being carried out by the Commission I would like to know whether the Commissioner can give us an idea of how the project is undergoing *sur terrain*?

Mr. F. A. Grandcourt: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, there is survey made by officers of my Commission and someone from the Social Security and then we proceed with the delivery, if these cases have been approved. Afterwards the Assistant Inspector of my Commission deliver the materials to these beneficiaries and I would say that everything is under control.

Mr. N. Lisette: Has there been any report Mr. Chairperson, Sir, as regard to the report that is with the Commission where there are elderlies who are incapable of completing their houses even though materials have been given to them and if yes, what does the Commission intends to do about these cases?

Mr. F. A. Grandcourt: Monsieur le Président, il faut comprendre une chose, on a beaucoup parlé lorsque le

Mr. Chairperson: You want to answer the question, please proceed.

Mr. F. A. Grandcourt: Yes, I'm answering the question. *M. le Président, on a toujours dit de ce côté de l'assemblée parce que les Membres de l'autre côté, on a parlé de cet mentalité d'assistanat. Donc à la Commission, ce que nous faisons, nous donnons des matériaux mais nous disons à la personne, il faut collaborer, le gouvernement donne des matériaux, des milliers de roupies mais il faut que le bénéficiaire puisse faire sa part des choses. Donc c'est vrai il y a eu des atteintes, il y a des gens qui ont essayé de nous forcer la main mais on a expliqué à ces gens il faut qu'ils puissent mettre la main à la patte pour préparer leur maisons, ils ont de la famille, ils ont des enfants donc il faut eux aussi qu'ils puissent donner un coup de main pour que ce projet puisse avancer comme il faut.*

Mrs. F. Gaspard Pierre Louis: *M. le Président, le Commissaire a mentionné qu'il y a d'autres personnes qui ont eu ces matériaux autres que des vieux, est-ce qu'on peut savoir quel sont ces types de personnes, ces catégories de personnes ?*

Mr. F. A. Grandcourt: *M. le Président, il y a le Housing Scheme for Elderly c'est vrai mais on a vu qu'il y a des matériaux en surplus donc on a pris la décision de donner ça à des gens qui sont nécessiteux, especially those having social aids, donc ces personnes même s'ils sont pas vieux, on les visite il y a*

(Interruptions)

Mr. Chairperson: Don't get interrupted, proceed.

Mr. F. A. Grandcourt: Il y a un officier

(Interruptions)

Mr. Chairperson: Yes, proceed with your answer, please.

Mr. F. A. Grandcourt: I'm being disturbed Mr. Chairperson, Sir.

Mr. Chairperson: Question time over. So can we move to the next item, Clerk.

STATEMENT BY COMMISSIONERS

DEVELOPMENT IN THE FISHERIES SECTOR

The Chief Commissioner: Yes, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I would like to make a short statement to this House on fisheries sector which is considered as a key pillar in the Rodriguan economy and stands presently at the crossroads. Analysis of the sector shows its vulnerability to various conditions namely the degradation of marine ecosystem resulting in a lower catch, situation of the lagoons etc. A large part of the population is directly and indirectly involved in fishing activities. The Fisheries Sector is highly vulnerable today and this is greatly impacting on the socio economic development of Rodrigues island. Actually, there is a degradation of the marine resources resulting from over exploitation and situation of the lagoons, fishers are becoming rare in the lagoons and new alternatives need to be thought of so as to cater for those who are dependent on the fisheries sector for them to earn their living and also to ensure a harmonious, social and economic development of Rodrigues. It is recognized that the fisheries sector contributes enormously to the Rodriguan economy in terms of job and wealth to the population.

In fact, it is a major source of revenue as such the Regional Government is seeking alternatives to lagoon fishing so as to remove, if not eliminate fishing in the lagoon and also to ensure effective remuneration and protection of marine resources. For instance, much is being done to encourage fisherman to go for off lagoon fishing through the provision of training, proper infrastructure and equipment amongst others. This is basically in line with my Government policy to develop the fisheries sector in Rodrigues. Specific measures were announced in my last budget speech. Mr. Chairperson, Sir, another alternative that my Regional Government is paying much attention is the development of a marine culture industry in Rodrigues. In 2007, with the help of the RECOMAP funding a strategic analysis of the potential for the development of marine culture industry in Rodrigues was carried out. The report has brightly enlightened on certain key potentials of the sector on a purely bio-technical point of view without taking into consideration other aspects. The key sectors are mainly culture of crabs in battery cages, coral farming, pond base main fish, seaweed

farming, sea cucumber branching. On the basis of that report we have requested that a detailed feasibility study of an identified potential sectors be carried out. This study was carried out by Dr. Lewis HAYWAY. The study was funded under UNDP, RRA and EU project. After careful analysis of all the factors and keeping in mind the preliminary benefits of each sector as well as the technical intricacies of each culture, the expert has recommended that only two cultures namely seaweed farming and sea cucumber farming could only be done on a high scale so as to maximize the economic benefits to the population and general economy of the island as well as a decent alternative life inputs for the fisherman.

The Regional Government organized a workshop from the 20th to the 21st of May 2008 to discuss the findings with all stakeholders which comprises of officials from the RRA, the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Fisheries, RECOMAP experts, UNDP experts and the fishermen communities. The unanimous concept was to go ahead with the development of a sea cucumber farming industry in Rodrigues due to its high economic potentials and the increasing demand on the world market. As a result of the workshop, my Regional Government, through the Commission for Fisheries, is taking the leap for the development of the sea cucumber industry in Rodrigues, farming, branching and the following actions have been identified for implementation shortly:-

- (i) A study tour will be conducted in Madagascar to look at the sea cucumber farming industry in Tuléar where a successful project of sea cucumber wrenching and farming has been developed. The approval of the companies is being awaited. A study tour will comprise both of officials, fishermen and private investors;
- (ii) Funding is being sort from RECOMAP and other agencies for technical assistance to the setting up of a hatchery in Rodrigues to produce juvenile both for farming and stock replenishment;
- (iii) A fast track system will be introduced to process the applications from promoters fishing to invest in sea cucumber aqua culture;
- (iv) Identification of potential sites for the farming of juveniles will also be carried out together with the measurements of the quality of the water;
- (v) The technical capacity of the Fisheries Research and Training Unit will be strengthened to support the industry;
- (vi) A strategic environmental assessment of developing such an industry will also be carried out;
- (vii) The legal and administrative arrangements required will be worked out and will also be set up.

Mr. Chairperson, Sir, with your permission I also wish to brief the House on a future twinning with Seychelles which is scheduled for August this year. I wish to inform this Assembly that at the 7th session of the Seychelles/Mauritius commission on bilateral cooperation held in December 2005 it was decided that cooperation with Rodrigues will be the face of environment, fisheries, marine parks, culture, tourism and twinning. In this context, my office in consultation with the Seychelles authorities has already formulated the twinning agreement to be signed between the two parties. We have also been informed that the twinning will be between Rodrigues and the island of Ladigue and that the Mayor of Victoria will sign the agreement on behalf of Seychelles. I am pleased to inform the House that the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development has now advised that the Seychelles authority is inviting a delegation of two persons from the Rodrigues Regional Assembly to proceed to Seychelles from 11th to 16th of August 2008 to sign the twinning agreement. This period coincides with the festival of Ladigue. We have accepted the invitation and I shall lead a delegation comprising one of my colleagues Commissioner or Member of this House to attend the twinning ceremony. Mr. Chairperson, Sir, the objectives of the twinning between our two regions will include inter-alia exchanges in the field of culture, youth and sports, training, handicraft, environment, fisheries, marine parks and tourism. I shall keep the Assembly inform of development on this matter. Thank you Mr. Chairperson, Sir.

PLANTATION OF TOBACO

M. le Président, je voudrais faire une déclaration, statement et donner le point de vue officiel du gouvernement Régionale, de la majorité régionale sur la culture du tabac à Rodrigues dans toutes sa perspective historique et mettre les points sur les i parce que j'ai l'impression que certaines personnes en mal d'argument sont entrain de nous attaquer injustement dans cet affaire du culture du tabac à Rodrigues Monsieur le Président et dans cette perspective Monsieur le Président, il faut savoir que la culture du tabac a toujours été quelque chose qui a été fait depuis la nuit des temps à Rodrigues et ce n'est pas Monsieur le Président, comme on veut le faire croire nous qui avons introduit le tabac à Rodrigues Monsieur le Président. Depuis toujours il y a du tabac qui était cultivé à Rodrigues et si vous le permettez je vais vous apporter la preuve à travers ce que Northcoombes dit dans son livre sur le tabac.

“Zotte allé, attane nou donne zotte lecon, alle ploré après”

At 13.05 hrs, all the Members of the Minority group walked out of the Assembly.

The Chief Commissioner: Yes, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, they don't want to listen to the history of Rodrigues.

Mr. Chairperson: You want to insist to for today.

The Chief Commissioner: Yes, I will give you a brief and then I will sit down. What North- Coombes says is at page 149 in his chapter on the magistrate of Rodrigues from 1890 to 1901. He says “at the period of the Colin’s administration, a certain prosperity was becoming evident among the inhabitant of Rodrigues. This had been brought about almost entirely by the beginning of the cultivation of tobacco for export to Mauritius in the period 1890. Tobacco had always been grown in Rodrigues for local consumptions, in small patches and free of tax. Its cultivation for export had always been governed by the tobacco situation in Mauritius and at the turn of the century, the cultivation of tobacco in Rodrigues would have an appreciable effect upon the welfare of the inhabitants.”

In 1888, Rodrigues exported 600 kilos of unmanufactured tobacco worth 300 rupees and let me give you the figures of export of tobacco, in 1895 - export was nil, in 1896 more than 100 years ago 9 tons of tobacco, in 1897 – 6.4 tons, in 1898 – 39.7 tons, in 1899 – 80.4 tons and in 1900, at the beginning of the last century 104.3 tons of tobacco. So at page 149 and 150 of the book of North-Coombes “History of Rodrigues”.

Tout ça pour vous dire qu’il est faut et malhonnête de dire que le gouvernement Régionale de Rodrigues est entrain d’introduire la culture du tabac à Rodrigues. Je mets au défi celui qui vient dire que c’est nous qui sommes entrain d’introduire la culture du tabac à Rodrigues et je dis qu’on est dans une démocratie et ceux qui veulent cultiver le tabac, qui trouve qu’il y a un profit dedans, nous n’avons pas de moyen de les en empêcher et ça ne veut pas dire que nous sommes entrain de les encourager. They are free to do it, if they want to do it, they see their profit into it, it is their right and we have to respect their rights. Thank you.

(Applause)

IMPLEMENTATION OF A DIAGNOSTIC ASSESSMENT SCHEME

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I have a small statement to make in connection with the National Policy in the implementation of a diagnostic assessment scheme for standard three. In the context of the curriculum reforms, the Ministry of Education is working on evaluation and assessment which constitutes an important element in the teaching and learning process, different from traditional test which mostly measure the learners competence, the diagnostic assessment provides reliable indication out pupil weaknesses and strength and is intended as a tool for teachers. Consequently, teachers can tailor the teaching in a more directive manner to give equal opportunities to every child. The diagnostic assessment tool which covers two subjects namely English and Mathematics are in this first instance and four other subjects will follow. It’s mainly a pupil support car

l'enfant n'apprend pas pour être évalué mais il est évalué pour mieux apprendre. The purpose of this diagnostic assessment is also to enable the identification of learning difficulties of children early enough in areas not sufficiently mastered and a middle action will be initiated in time. The end put will be that the CPE results will certainly increase. In line with the policy of the Commission for Education which is to combat the high rate of CPE failures, action has been initiated with the implementation of this project in our thirteen primary schools. I would like to point out that during the seminar held on 11 and 12 April last, it has been highlighted that remedial action should be initiated at the lower primary and the need to put in place a system of individualized support to children with serious learning difficulties so as to ensure the successful schooling of all primary school children.

On Thursday 29th May, 2008, 29 standard three teachers together with the Head Teachers will attend a half-day workshop during which they will be informed of its implementation in schools with a change mindset about the culture of assessment. A teacher's handbook has also been prepared which explains the whole purpose of the diagnostic assessment scheme to the teacher and provide information of the key skills which will be assessed. The diagnostic assessment will become an annual feature in our education system which the remedial education strategy project would be graded greater upon to pave the way for ensuring the successful primary schooling of all pupils. Thank you for your attention, Mr. Chairperson, Sir.

(Applause)

ADJOURNMENT

The Chief Commissioner: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I move that the House be adjourned to Tuesday 8th of July, 2008 at 10.30 am.

Mr. Chairperson: Question that this House be adjourned to Tuesday 8th of July, 2008 at 10.30 am. The House stands adjourned.

At 1.15 pm, the Assembly was, on its rising, adjourned to Tuesday 8th of July 2008 at 10.30 am.