

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

CHIEF COMMISSIONER - MISSION – MAURITIUS 25-27.08.08

(No. B/136) Mrs Perrine-Begué (First Local Region Member of St. Gabriel) asked the Chief Commissioner, whether, with regard to his recent mission in Mauritius for discussions with Central Government from 25 August to 27 August 2008, he will, for the benefit of the House, state -

- (a) what was the object of the mission and whom did he officially meet with and their respective response,
- (b) whether the Regional Government is considering any particular move as a subsequence of the mission's outcome and, if so, to state the nature of action(s), thereof.

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir I led a delegation comprising Mr Christian Agathe, hon. Joseph Von-Mally to Mauritius from 25 to 27 August 2008, where we met the President of the Republic, the acting Prime Minister, hon. Dr. Beebeejaun and hon. Minister Dr. Bunwaree. The purpose of the visit was to discuss the objection raised by the Financial Secretary regarding the payment of a one-off compensation to registered lagoon fishermen for the voluntary relinquishment of their registration cards. All of the officials we met were of the view that the Ministry of Finance and Economic Empowerment should be guided by the provision of the law.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, the Rodrigues Regional Assembly has been granted autonomy in various fields within well-defined parameters. Fisheries form part of these areas of responsibilities as part of the programme for which the current governing team in Rodrigues has been elected. We have planned to remove fishermen from the already over-exploited lagoon of the island and to promote deep sea fishing instead. Lagoon fisheries stocks are completely depleted, and

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there is a need to encourage the fishermen to leave the sector and help them engage in alternative income generating activities. These fishermen hold a fisherman card issued by the Commission for Fisheries of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly and which entitles them to bad weather allowance. Due to unilateral revision of the criteria for payment of bad weather allowance for Rodrigues by Central Government in 2006, this payment has become insignificant. As Members are aware, the Rodrigues Regional Assembly has proposed to compensate them and to encourage them to relinquish the fishermen cards to stop fishing. We recall that this Assembly has made budgetary provision to compensate the lagoon fishers to encourage them to relinquish their fishermen cards and to stop fishing. The Rodrigues Regional Assembly, out of its Capital Budget of Rs300 m. granted by Central Government for 2008/2009, has committed Rs10 m. in its Budget to start the implementation of the programme this year. In my Budget Speech in the Regional Assembly in April this year, I have announced that this measure is being implemented. The Rodrigues Regional Assembly is autonomous in the field of fisheries by virtue of section 26 of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly 2001, which enables it to formulate and implement policies in the fields where it is responsible. The Rodrigues Regional Assembly is entitled to devise and to implement the voluntary retirement scheme for the fishermen of Rodrigues. Within the spirit of the autonomy of Rodrigues granted by the National Assembly in 2001, Rodrigues can adopt differentiated measures, which may be required for its development and being given its specific attributes. In total disregard to all these elaborated circumstances, the Financial Secretary has been trying to block the implementation of the fishers' redeployment scheme as approved by this House. His office has sent a letter dated 21 August 2008 intimating that Cabinet, at its meeting of 25 July 2008, has expressed concern of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly having again been trying to pay allowances to Rodriguan fishermen against the principles approved by Government and that that matter has been

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taken up with the Chief Commissioner. Clearly, the stand of the Financial Secretary is a violation of the autonomy and the principle of the devolution of powers to Rodrigues and is *ultra vires* according to the Legal Adviser. The Executive Council has finalised the details of the scheme. We are proposing that a sum of Rs25,000 be paid as compensation to each fisherman who has reached the age of 60 at 01 July 2008 and, second, Rs20,000 plus Rs1,000 per each year they have been retaining fishermen card for those below 60 years old, subject to a maximum of 20 years. It is to be noted that this scheme is voluntary. Nobody holding a fishermen card is compelled to join the scheme. Many of the fishermen have been retaining their card for more than 25 five years. The aim of this compensation is clear; to compensate, first, from the economic loss for the cessation of the fishing activities and, second, to help in financing alternative income generating activities for those who so wish. A provision of Rs10 m. has been made in the Capital Budget to that effect. This Budget has passed all the statutory requirements and is in order. It has been approved by the Rodrigues Regional Assembly, transmitted to Cabinet for approval, and approved in the overall national Budget. Lagoon fishermen who wish to relinquish their registration cards against the proposed compensation were invited through press communiqué to apply accordingly. By the closing date for submission of applications on 30 September 2008, some 725 applications have been received. These applications are being processed, giving priority to fishers having more than 60 years old, those who are operating in the zone earmarked for the establishment of the marine protected area in the lagoon, south of Rodrigues, and based on age. We shall, thereafter, request the Ministry of Local Government, as the procedure is, to release the funds to proceed with the implementation of the scheme. Mr Chairperson, Sir, should the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development object to the release of the funds, we will have to act accordingly. However, we do hope that, through the negotiations

and consultations which we have made - which is the subject of this question - the autonomy of Rodrigues will be respected.

Mrs Perrine-Begué: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I would like to ask the Chief Commissioner if he could answer the first part of the question as regards the respective response of those he met concerning this issue. In the 29th August Executive Council official press release, it is said that the Chief Commissioner met Sir Anerood Jugnauth, hon. Dr. Beebeejaun and hon. Dr. Bunwaree. I would like if he could impart to the House their reaction as regards the opinion of the Regional Government.

The Chief Commissioner: I don't think it would be appropriate for me to disclose a conversation which has been held between me, the delegation and the President of the Republic. But, on the whole, the object of the mission was to make those that we have met understand what is our position and what we want to achieve. It is a process of negotiation that we have made. There is no need, at this stage, in this House, to disclose what are the specific opinions, points of views of these persons. But I can say that we have had a very positive response about the need first to preserve the autonomy of Rodrigues, and some of them have stressed also on the need to respect national laws which we, of course, are fully abiding to.

Mrs Perrine-Begué: Mr Chairperson, Sir, in the light of the negative answer from the Ministry of Finance, I would like to ask the Chief Commissioner if he could inform the House what would be the move of the Regional Government. Is it true that the Regional Government is contemplating legal proceedings against Central Government on these two issues of fishermen and respecting autonomy?

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir as I have said in the last paragraph of my answer, we hope that the autonomy, which has been granted to Rodrigues, will be respected. I hope all Members here, according to the oath

they have taken up before sitting in this House, will defend and explain the position of Rodrigues. This is why I would like to invite the Minority Leader, ex-Chief Commissioner, and all the Members of the other side to understand fully all the implications of the problem before making political comments or trying to derive political gains on this matter. The fishermen have fully understood what is the problem. The problem is that we have autonomy in fishing. Allocation of fishermen cards is our responsibility, and there is a situation in Rodrigues where there is too much pressure in the lagoon. We have provided for funds with regard to this, but a certain Ministry in Mauritius wants us not to go ahead with our policies, which we think are in order and law compliant. We have not done things out of the blue. We consulted our Legal Adviser and what we want to do, what we are planning to do is fully in order, Mr Chairperson, Sir. This Regional Assembly should not and should never be subjected to the qualms and whims of any officer in Mauritius. We have had example where a Permanent Secretary has directed the Chairperson of the House not to hold a meeting or to do such and such things. This was not in order when we had this problem. We, people of Rodrigues, have to stand up - starting from Members of this House - for our rights, and we have to stand up for the dignity of the Rodriguan people. We are not trying to amend something in education; we are not trying to amend something in law and order; we are not trying to amend civil aviation. All members are versatile with the Act. For example, if we want to amend something at the Plaine Corail Airport having a link with civil aviation, we are not allowed; if we want to modify the curriculum for CPE, we are not allowed to do this because we have administration of education only. We are not attempting to do something that we are not allowed to do. We are just fulfilling our responsibility and doing the job for which we have been elected. We are prepared, Mr Chairperson, Sir, to fight within the democratic and justice process for the respect of the autonomy of Rodrigues. If ultimately they still fail to release the funds, we will enter appropriate action

within the courts of the Republic of Mauritius, and we will also contemplate other political action to have our rights respected.

Mrs Perrine-Begué: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I would like to ask a final question to the Chief Commissioner. Being given that the Rodrigues Regional Assembly is a corporate body acting on behalf of the Government of Mauritius, I would like to ask the Commissioner whether green light was obtained while crafting the policies regarding the fishermen prior to the Budget that was finally voted in this House.

The Chief Commissioner: This is the big difference between what was the previous team and what is the present team. I don't understand the question of the Respected Member, and I fail in front of the absurdity of the question. Why do we have autonomy of Rodrigues? Do we have autonomy of Rodrigues so that for everything we want to do here we have to go and have the approval of a Minister or somebody in Mauritius? Is this the autonomy of Rodrigues that we wanted? No, Mr Chairperson, Sir! The autonomy of Rodrigues says that we can decide. Section 26 states that the Rodrigues Regional Assembly shall be responsible for the formulation and implementation of policies. But, of course, there are other contradictory sections which say that before implementing such and such policies, you have to obtain approval of the Government. Let us come to the specific problem here. Approval of Government has been obtained. How? We came here with a Budget proposal and, during the budgetary proceedings, debates, the Members of the Minority did not, at any time, raise any objection towards this scheme. This means that they agreed with it, they did not see anything against the law and anything anti constitutional. The Budget was approved here, and we all know that, when it is approved, it is transmitted to the Minister responsible for Rodrigues, who then takes it to Cabinet. And we have the records that Cabinet has approved the Budget. The Budget includes the Budget Speech, the Capital Budget and the Recurrent Budget. The Item Rs10 m. is in the Capital Budget and, then, following that,

the Budget has been incorporated in the National Budget, which has been voted by the National Assembly. So, can we say that Government has not approved the scheme, the Budget? It is not my problem if they don't read the Budget of Rodrigues! But what we want to do, Mr Chairperson, Sir, is implement our scheme.

We all know that the Regional Assembly Act has been done in such a way that there are some difficulties in reading it. One section may say this and another section may say that. But, within the spirit, if you read the Ahnee report, the terms of reference of the report as well as the different speeches which were made by the then Prime Minister at the National Assembly, they all said that maximum autonomy was being given to Rodrigues. What is meant by maximum autonomy? If we want to make fishermen here retire and compensate them, why can't we do it? Why do we need the approval of someone somewhere?

Mr Lisette: Mr Chairperson, Sir, as rightly put by the Chief Commissioner, there has been a Cabinet decision, which has been sent to the Rodrigues Regional Assembly, through the Financial Secretary. And, as per the Rodrigues Regional Assembly Act that the Chief Commissioner is mentioning so often, there is one section where it is said that the Chief Commissioner should consult the Prime Minister on basic issues as regards policy. Here, I am relating to section 39 of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly Act. If you allow me to quote, it is said that -

“The Executive Council should develop policies on matters relating to Rodrigues in relation to its function for submission to the Prime Minister.”

So, as regards that issue of fishermen, may I ask the Chief Commissioner whether there has been any submission of this policy to the Prime Minister before taking a decision in the Executive Council?

The Chief Commissioner: There have been many, Mr Chairperson, Sir.

Mr Lisette: In this case, may we know, Mr Chairperson, Sir, what has been the reaction of the Prime Minister on the formulated policy?

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

Mrs Perrine-Begué: Mr Chairperson, Sir, doesn't the Chief Commissioner consider the major setbacks and deadlocks in discussion fronts between Port Louis and Port Mathurin since this new administration is in the difference that he just depicted, namely that the team which was there believed in the essence of politics, that is, through negotiation and consensus, and that the Chief Commissioner believes that pangs, whips, spurs and imposition of the law is necessary? In this way, maybe Mauritius should go on Chagos today, if negotiation is not necessary in politics! I would like to have the reaction of the Chief Commissioner.

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, there is an autonomy in Rodrigues, and I have even mentioned independence of Rodrigues. If need be, Mr Chairperson, Sir, I will be the first person to work for the independence of Rodrigues because the rights and the dignity of the people of Rodrigues, the constitutional set-up of Rodrigues within the Regional Assembly and the constitutional amendments which have been made have to be respected. We have negotiated, but we have fallen upon walls. I have responsibility towards my people, towards my electors, and we believe that what we are doing is right. There is a sort of big brotherhood mentality. If they want to become the accomplices of these people, I invite them to go and make public meetings and say that I am wrong in trying to remove fishermen, and that some people in Mauritius are trying to prevent me. They should go and defend their position in public; they should hold public meetings and say this, Mr Chairperson, Sir, and you will see that will happen to them. People think that politicians of Rodrigues should stand up for Rodriguans, not hide in their office. When there are problems, we need to speak, we need to defend these people, we need to defend

these fishermen because their children are not having food to eat, because there has been the unilateral revision of bad weather allowance, because the Director of Audit has made negative comments. Who is the Director of Audit to amend this? And they stayed silent when Rodrigues was divided in four zones! This is the source of the problem. When Rodrigues was divided into four zones, if they had spoken and elevated their voice, this problem would not have happened, Mr Chairperson, Sir. We don't want a Government which is passive. Rodriguan people want politicians, a Government that is active and that defends them.

Mrs Perrine-Begué: Mr Chairperson, Sir, being given the Chief Commissioner just mentioned the people of Rodrigues, which does not encompass only his electorate because major issues like autonomy and independence must encompass the whole population including the Opposition and the Government, I would like to ask him whether these issues have been discussed with the civil society when he is embarking himself on issues like independence.

Mr Chairperson: I won't allow this question. It is far away from the main question. The Member should understand this. We are not in a debate. The Chief Commissioner mentioned it, because the Member asked an open-ended question. So, I had to give him a fair way to answer to it. But this is not an authority for the Member to open debates on many political issues. This is Question time. If the Member can please reformulate her question, trying to fit it in the main question, she is welcome.

SKILLING AND RESKILLING PROGRAMME

(No. B/137) Mrs M. A. Perrine-Begué (First Local Region Member of St. Gabriel) asked the Chief Commissioner whether, with regard to the placement of the 245 recruited trainees under the Skilling and Reskilling Programme, he would inform the House -

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- (a) whether any letter has been issued for the renewal or termination of training and, if so, give details of same, and
- (b) what is the next step of this training programme.

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, as regards part (a), I wish to remind the Assembly that, as indicated in my reply to Question B/110 from the First local Regional Member of Saint Gabriel, only 243 persons accepted the offer of placement which was made to 245 applicants. These 243 trainees have completed their one-year placement on 30 September 2008. Being given the substantial contribution of these trainees in the activities and projects of the Commission where they were posted, the Executive Council has approved the extension of placement of trainees for an additional year as from 01 October 2008. These trainees have been informed of the renewal of their placement in individual letters dated 25 September 2008.

As regards part (b), Mr Chairperson, Sir, I consider having replied to part (b) of the Question in my response to part (c) of Question B/110 from the same Member, when I explained that the training programme for unemployed will be pursued as long as we deem it necessary.

INFRASTRUCTURAL PROJECTS

(No. B/138) Mrs M. A. Perrine-Begué (First Local Region Member of St. Gabriel) asked the Commissioner responsible for Public Infrastructure, Housing, Environment & Others whether he would inform the House of any new infrastructural projects that have been kicked off or completed since the coming into effect of the new financial year.

Mr Grandcourt: Mr Chairperson, Sir, on the basis of budgetary provision under Capital vote item, a project execution framework has been developed to plan the implementation of the projects over the financial year 2008/2009. I am pleased to inform the House that my Commission is on schedule, and the following projects are ongoing –

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- (i) construction of road from Grande Montagne to Brulé;
- (ii) access road from Baie du Nord Anse Nicolas, phase two;
- (iii) access from main road to hauteur *Accacia morcellement*;
- (iv) construction of track roads at Crève Coeur, Camp du Roi and Petit Butte;
- (v) construction of children playground at Batatrand;
- (vi) construction of toilet block at Anse Ally;
- (vii) extension of lighting network at *morcellement* Jean Tac;
- (viii) renovation of rangers quarters at Port Sud Est;
- (ix) upgrading of access road at Gravières;
- (x) extension of Baie aux Huitres Community Centre;
- (xi) construction of basement to house seismometer at Citronelle;
- (xii) upgrading of volleyball pitch at Grande Montagne, and
- (xiii) completion of outstanding works at Araucaria primary school.

Moreover, Mr Chairperson, Sir, as the House is aware, with the proclamation of the Public Procurement Act all documents had to be worked out accordingly. Tenders of the following projects have already been launched, and are at evaluation stage and will be awarded soon –

- (i) extension of MBC at Citronelle;
- (ii) upgrading of onsite waste disposal system at Grenade and,
- (iii) construction of podium at Mourouk. Tenders for the global consultancy for selected development projects in Rodrigues have already been launched, while tender notice for the construction of Winston Churchill Bridge will be issued in the press by next week.

Mrs Perrine-Begué: Mr Chairperson, Sir, with regard to these ongoing projects, I would like to ask the Commissioner whether there was need to issue any new contract and, if yes, whether these contracts have been issued.

Mr Grandcourt: Mr Chairperson, Sir, can the Member be more explicit in her question?

Mrs Perrine-Begué: Mr Chairperson, Sir, in the first part of the Commissioner's answer, he mentioned the number of ongoing projects. I would like to know if there was need to give contracts anew for this financial year on these projects which you consider have started in the financial year and, if yes, how many of those contracts were awarded, to whom and the cost, if possible.

Mr Grandcourt: Mr Chairperson, Sir, this is a big question, but part of the works is being done in-house. But due to a lack of manpower, we have launched tenders. For example, there are three projects, namely extension of MBC at Citronelle, upgrading of onsite waste disposal site at Grenade, and construction of podium at Mourouk. For some of the works, as you know, we have a contract with A.J Maurel by means of works order. For others, we had to launch tenders. So, I do not have the exact information about the different projects, but I do know that, for Grande Montagne to Brulé, Rs.8.6 m. have been earmarked.

Mr Spéville: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I would like to know from the Commissioner whether some contracted works have been stopped and continued in-house by Government workers.

Mr Grandcourt: Yes, Mr Chairperson, Sir, we do have this Araucaria primary school because the outstanding works can be undertaken by our staff; we do have skilled staff. Some other works will be done by means of works order or contract but, for the time being, we are doing some in-house work on the spot.

Mr Spéville: Mr Chairperson, Sir I would like to know from the Commissioner whether the workers who are undertaking the works at Araucaria are from the 245 batch of workers.

Mr Grandcourt: Mr Chairperson, Sir, the answer is yes. Some of them are from the trainees, because we have to bear in mind that they are skilled workers. This is why we have taken them. They have different skills and these skills have been put at our disposal. For example, these workers are undertaking works such as laying of tiles, renovation works at the different toilets.

Mr Spéville: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I would to know from the Commissioner whether the skills of these workers have been recognised by different institutions before undergoing these types of work.

Mr Grandcourt: Mr Chairperson, Sir, these guys are not just left like this on the site. They are being supervised by foremen, assistant inspectors, even inspectors, and we do have our engineers who go on the spot at times to evaluate the work.

Mr Lisette: Mr Chairperson, Sir, there are many infrastructural projects which started as far back in 2006 and which have not been completed so far. I have not heard the Commissioner for Infrastructure reply to this in his answer. May I know about the different track roads which are lying incomplete around Rodrigues at Allée Tamarin, Mt Longues and so many places? Why is it that priority is not being given to these incomplete works?

Mr Grandcourt: Mr Chairperson, Sir, we are only two months from the new financial year. If we consider the question, it has asked about the projects that have been kicked off or completed since the coming into effect of the new financial year. We do not have only this to do. We have the whole financial year. Let me show you, because maybe you are not accustomed to it. We have an implementation project, implementation/execution framework. Each Commission has one, and my question was only part of it. This document is for

the whole year - 12 months - and here we are only at two months of the financial year. We have to wait to develop our policy to execute all these.

Mrs Perrine-Begué: Mr Chairperson, Sir, may I remind the Commissioner that the clock is ticking and that we are not at two months, as in July we start the new financial year. The clock is ticking very quickly. I would like to ask the Commissioner for Infrastructure, Mr Chairperson, Sir, who devised the implementation programme that he mentioned in the first part of his answer.

Mr Grandcourt: Mr Chairperson, Sir, it has been devised by different technicians of my Commission, taking into consideration the policy of different Commissions.

Mrs Perrine-Begué: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I would like then to ask the Commissioner if he could inform the House about tender for consultancy services. Is it for supervision or different infrastructural projects, or for any other issue?

Mr Grandcourt: Mr Chairperson, Sir, as I have said, tenders for projects in Rodrigues have already been launched, and we are waiting for the bidders with regard to the different bids. Consultancy means all that is supervision and design of the different projects.

Mrs Perrine-Begué: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I would like to ask the Commissioner what about the project of the Student House in Mauritius. Is it inserted in the implementation programme?

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

Mrs Perrine-Begué: Mr Chairperson, Sir, one million has been put to kick off projects as regards this issue in this Budget.

Mr Grandcourt: Mr Chairperson, Sir, the question was about those projects which have been kicked off or completed. It will come. As I have said, we have 12 months. The other projects will come afterwards.

Mr Spéville: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I would like to have more information about the global consultancy that the Commissioner was talking about. Will tenders be launched for global consultancy to supervise all the ongoing works or will it be local consultants?

Mr Chairperson: Commissioner, you seem to be in the vague. Of course, I can't understand the question that the Member has just put. I cannot, with any **stretch** of the mind, connect it to the main question. The Member should agree. Next question!

INVEST RODRIGUES - PROJECTS

(No. B/139) Mrs M. A. Perrine-Begué (First Local Region Member of St. Gabriel) asked the Chief Commissioner as regards Invest Rodrigues, whether he would, for the benefit of the House, state how many projects have been submitted thereto since its inception and the number of projects approved and thereafter implemented.

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I am informed that the total number of projects submitted to Invest Rodrigues is 407, and the total number of projects approved thereafter is 68. I wish to further inform the House that Invest Rodrigues was primarily set up to facilitate local persons and investors who have difficulty to have access to State lands and other facilities falling under the purview of the Regional Assembly for the setting up of their businesses. The approval of the project by Invest Rodrigues is with regard to its feasibility and viability. The files are then referred to the Cadastral Office for the finalisation of any lease aspect after approval by the Commission for Land.

Mrs Perrine-Begué: Mr Chairperson, Sir, can I ask the Chief Commissioner why only 15% of the submitted projects have been approved?

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, not all projects are approved simply because the projects either don't fall within the policy of Government for the zones or areas for which they are being asked. Second, the officers at Invest Rodrigues see that the ideas are not well conceived and that it will not be feasible. Third, most of the projects relate to areas, economic activities where there is already a sort of saturation. For example, retailers of tobacco, general retailers. Therefore, if we see that, in a certain locality, there are already four retailers for about 60-100 families, there is no need again to promote competition in this area, as we will only lead these people to a sort of failure in their businesses if we allow them land. So, there are a lot of aspects which come into consideration, such as the planning, feasibility and viability aspects. For example, if someone wants to set up a sort of factory, a sort of business, whereby most of the materials will be imported, there is not enough specific labour for this in Rodrigues, there is need for a lot of water, and this person will not have access to such quantity of water, then we do not recommend this project. There is a correlation, but this should not be a matter of concern, because many projects are either not feasible for policy, commercial or another reason. What we concentrate on are those projects that are really feasible.

Mrs Perrine-Begué: Mr Chairperson, Sir, being given that more than 2,000 new entrepreneurs registration certificates were issued by the SEHDA, I would like to ask the Chief Commissioner how come that only 407 finally came to Invest Rodrigues to seek for approval of their business? Why this mismatch?

The Chief Commissioner: There is no mismatch, Mr Chairperson, Sir. The answer to the question is in the question itself. The SEHDA has issued 2,000 certificates. For example, if there is someone doing cooking, bakery at his place and he already has his lease, this person has nothing to do at Invest Rodrigues, unless there is some facility that Invest Rodrigues has to give. Those people coming to Invest Rodrigues are basically those for which there is

a State land, commercial State land aspect. So, if you take the 2,000 persons and minus 407, this means that about 600 persons don't want to make application for land as they are already carrying out their business. Invest Rodrigues is just a partner in the whole business community in Rodrigues. We are not a monopoly.

Mrs Perrine-Begué: It's not 600 but 1,600 persons, which is quite consequent. I would like to ask the Chief Commissioner whether, if those persons did not come to the office for approval, for licences, for permits, it means that they already have their permits or there is another office at his office where people are seeking for licences, or should we make any other deduction?

The Chief Commissioner: The answer is in the question, Mr Chairperson, Sir.

Mrs Perrine-Begué: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I still want to ask the Chief Commissioner whether there is a different office for licensing at his office.

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I don't know whether the Member is familiar with Rodrigues administration. Of course, there is a separate section for licensing, and Invest Rodrigues is just an analysis office, examining feasibility and making recommendations. Applications for licences are not made at Invest Rodrigues but at the licence section of the Chief Commissioner's Office. A Member of the Regional Assembly should be aware of this, maybe to advise these 2,000 persons who come to see her. I may invite her not to advise the persons, because she may mislead them.

Mrs Perrine-Begué: Mr Chairperson, Sir, at one point in time, I remember it was said that Invest Rodrigues was overlooking licensing activities. Anyway, as regards the six activities that fall under the purview of Invest Rodrigues, which was mentioned in his Budget Speech, I want to ask the Chief Commissioner whether they are still being carried out.

The Chief Commissioner: Of course, Mr Chairperson, Sir, not any person who calls at Invest Rodrigues will have a file open there. If somebody comes to Rodrigues, goes to Invest Rodrigues and says that he wants to do such and such business in Rodrigues or a Rodriguan goes there to have some advice, they would advise him. This does not mean that a file is opened immediately for this person. The advisory role of Invest Rodrigues is still there. They also help people to write their project together with SEHDA.

Mrs Perrine-Begué: In the light of this, I see the six points concern collaboration with the Ministry of Industry and SEHDA. I would like to ask the Commissioner whether he is aware that those entrepreneur registration certificates are still being issued by Mauritius, signed by the Director of SEHDA and whether, in an autonomous Administration, which he seems to defend, it is normal.

The Chief Commissioner: SEHDA is an independent corporate body, Mr Chairperson, Sir, and any independent corporate body can do things in Rodrigues following consultations with us. I don't see where is the problem if SEHDA distribute the certificates to entrepreneurs in Rodrigues. We pay the CEB bill, and the CEB is based in Mauritius. Is there a problem? Where is the problem if an entrepreneur receives a certificate from SEHDA, from the Mauritius Chamber of Commerce and Industry, from the Mauritius Ports Authority, from any organisation in Mauritius? Invest Rodrigues is here to support. If tomorrow SEHDA wants to do such and such things in collaboration with Invest Rodrigues, they can do it, and they can deliver their own certificates. There is no problem in that.

MELAMINE-CONTAMINATED PRODUCTS

(No. B/140) Mr N. Lisette (First Local Region Member of Baie aux Huitres) asked the Chief Commissioner whether, with respect to the potential melamine-contaminated products, he would, for the benefit of the House, state

whether his Commission has carried out an assessment/identification of such products on sale in Rodrigues, and if so, to state since when, and whether any such items have been identified.

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, with respect to the potential melamine-contaminated products, I am informed that, since 24 September 2008, the inspectorate has carried out inspections at more than 28 shops, four supermarkets, 13 tobacco shops, 32 hawkers, eight schools and four colleges. Most of the points of sale are being visited on a daily basis by the health inspectorate staff.

I am further informed that no milk from China is actually on sale in Rodrigues, and that some 41,500 units of ‘white rabbit’ sweets have been detained pending results of analysis. Meanwhile, the Consumer Protection Unit is carrying out normal routine checks at trade devices to ensure that both milk powder from China and ‘white rabbit’ sweets are no longer on sale. During the talk on radio on 01 October 2008, the Consumer Protection Unit has given an overview on the issue of melamine-contaminated products. The public was advised not to purchase the incriminated products pending the results of the analysis being carried out.

Mr Lisette: Mr Chairperson, Sir, the Chief Commissioner has only mentioned the case of ‘white rabbit’ sweets. But I believe that there are other foodstuffs that may be contaminated with melamine. Has there been a list of such potential melamine-contaminated products which has been issued in a communiqué to the radio to inform them of the threat of consuming same?

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, we are guided here by a national policy on this matter and, of course, if we are aware that any melamine-contaminated product, any food product or any other product on sale in general in Rodrigues has a certain risk for health or contamination for consumers, we will act accordingly. I am not aware of any other product which may contain

melamine apart milk and the sweets that we have mentioned. If it comes to our knowledge that there is any other risk in any other product, we will act accordingly. But if the Member thinks that there are some products that may be melamine risky, he may write to us and let us know.

Mr Lisette: Mr Chairperson, Sir, the threat is there, and I want to make the Chief Commissioner aware of it. Nowadays, our traders are importing directly from China, and it may happen that there are products which are on sale in Rodrigues but not on sale on the Mauritian market. In this case, how will the Commission for Consumer Protection deal with such matter?

The Chief Commissioner: It is a hypothetical question, and if the Member thinks that people, traders from Rodrigues are bringing products from China, which are melamine risky, he should let us have know. But, until then, he should not alarm the consumers.

Mr Lisette: Mr Chairperson, Sir, we are not alarming, but I think that the consumers should be aware of the threat, Mr Chairperson, Sir. In many countries, there is a list of products, which may not necessarily come from China, but which are made from derivatives of milk from China. This is the case in many countries. When these products are made from derivatives of cheese, of milk from China, there is a threat also. You can see on the Internet and the newspapers products which are already mentioned in other countries, like ‘snickers’. I have just seen this. In Singapore, there are ‘Oreo, Wafer Stick’, and these are on sale in Rodrigues. So, this is my question. How is the Commissioner for Consumer Protection dealing with this? Should we wait for someone to get poisoned before we react, Mr Chairperson, Sir?

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I trust those who are responsible for controlling these products in Rodrigues. All goods which are imported in Rodrigues go through the customs either in Mauritius or in Rodrigues. The Customs in Rodrigues are well organised; they know which

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products have been banned and should not be imported. I am not for a China product bashing, Mr Chairperson, Sir. Chinese people are working. If there is a problem, this should not be a reason for us to remove all the Chinese products from all the shelves of the shops. Mr Chairperson, Sir, the Member is saying there is a big risk that products may be melamine contaminated. We know that there are sweets and milk from China, which are not on sale in Rodrigues. With regard to the sweets, when we have come to know that there was a risk, 41,500 units have been seized. They have acted promptly. Here, we are in small Rodrigues; we are not in Singapore, where there are big laboratories and experts to know what is in the products. If the Member or anybody knows that there are some products, which may be contaminated, we should be made aware. We are vigilant and we are watching out for all risk of contamination. But, it is out of question to target all Chinese goods imported from China.

Mr Spéville: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I would like to ask the Chief Commissioner whether there can be more public communiqués to appraise the Rodriguans, especially the youngsters, that the ‘White Rabbit’ sweets are melamine contaminated, and consumption of same can be of potential danger to human health. It can happen that some tobacco shops still sell them to children.

The Chief Commissioner: Yes, Mr Chairperson, Sir, this can be done. But we have learnt this morning that there is a Government decision that we have to implement, which is not an autonomy decision. ‘White Rabbit’ has been banned; we cannot sell and consume it; we cannot even have it at home. This is decision that Government has taken. As soon as possible, we will invite people not to consume or even buy or hold these products.

ATELIERS DE SAVOIR PROJECT

(No. B/141) Mr N. Lisette (First Local Region Member of Baie aux Huitres) asked the Commissioner responsible for Youth & Sports & Others whether, as regards the *Ateliers de Savoir* Project in Rodrigues, he would seek

information from the Rodrigues Regional Youth Council, the implementing agent, as regards to -

- (a) the trends in the number of enrolment and those who left for the past three years per *atelier de savoir*;
- (b) the number of these youths who are having/have had access to credit facilities through the “*Caisses de la Jeunesse*”;
- (c) the breakdown of expenditure with respect to the item vote 06-101.399 “contribution to “*Ateliers de savoir* “ for financial year 2007/2008);

Mr Agathe: Mr Chairperson, Sir, the project *d’Ateliers de Savoir*, as the Member rightly stated, is a project implemented by the Rodrigues Regional Youth Council. The Rodrigues Regional Youth Council is an autonomous body under the aegis of the National Youth Council, as per section 13(2) of the National Youth Council Act of 1998, which states that there shall be in each district a Regional Youth Council, and for the purpose of this Act the Island of Rodrigues shall be considered as a district.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, I must say that I am proud of the youth who are doing their best to be trained, to enable them to be more employable and to launch themselves in small and medium enterprise. Being a partner in the implementation of different projects, our role is just to facilitate the proper running of the different *ateliers* and to ensure that the trainees and ex-trainees get the proper training in the different trades and opportunities to become future entrepreneurs.

M. le président, à la veille de la célébration du sixième anniversaire de l’autonomie de Rodrigues, il faut pouvoir reconnaître ce qui a été fait de bon, et de continuer si besoin est. Mais, tout de même, tout être humain a ses forces et ses limites. Permettez-moi, M. le président, de faire brièvement l’historique de ce projet. Mr Chairperson, Sir, following the unfortunate closure of BEFA, that

is, the Basic Education for Adolescents, UNICEF initiated another project for the youth, that is, for the *Ateliers de savoir*. The project of the *Ateliers de Savoir* was then launched by the former Commissioner for Youth & Sports, Mr Lisette, with the help of the UNDP, UNICEF, Canada Fund, which was followed by the actual adviser of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly, Mr Roberston Mercure, who eventually boosted up the project by creating *les caisses de la jeunesse* in four regions of Rodrigues, namely at La Ferme, Grande Montagne, Malabar and Camp du Roi. Consequently, being given that the project gears towards overcoming unemployment, I have spared no effort to continue supporting the project, being given that much emphasis was made on training only with the agreement of the Rodrigues Regional Youth Council. We have re-oriented the project by putting more emphasis on youth entrepreneurship and employment. Apart Senior Youth Officer, Miss S. Meunier, who is responsible for the proper running of the different *ateliers*, another Senior Youth Officer has been designated to promote entrepreneurship development programme for the unemployed youth, including trainees and ex-trainees of the *Ateliers de savoir*.

As regards part (a), Mr Chairperson, Sir, for the past three years, there has been an increase in the number of enrolment at the different *ateliers*. I must point out also that enrolment in the different *ateliers* is made whenever seat is available in the different *ateliers*, as the number of trainees to be recruited depends on the number of seats available in each *atelier* and the capacity accommodation of each *atelier*. Since 2005 to date, some 90 trainees have left the different *ateliers*. It is to be noted that the programme provides that the trainees may leave at any time after having acquired the necessary skills and training in their respective trades and, therefore, this will leave place for others to get enrolled. For example, ten young ex-trainees of pastry *atelier* of Malabar have left to set up a snack at Baie Lascar Bus Terminal.

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I seize this opportunity to thank the Chief Commissioner for having granted the snack for a nominal fee only. Under phase two of the project, integrated development of adolescents for youth project in Rodrigues, a fund of Rs500,000 was donated to the Rodrigues Regional Youth Council by UNDP for the provision of micro credit facilities to all unemployed youngsters age 18 years. They may be ex-trainees of *Atelier de savoir* or not. In that context, the fund was transferred to the *Association Coopérative des caisses villageoises 'Levé Deboute de Rodrigues'* on 26 July 2006 for the setting up of four *caisses de la jeunesse* at Grande Montagne, Camp du Roi, La Ferme and Malabar. The different *caisses* were launched on the occasion of the International Youth Day 2006, that is, on Wednesday 09 August 2006, at Malabar, by the then Commissioner for Youth & Sports, Mr Mercure. Presently, 68 youths from the different *Ateliers de Savoir* have had access to credit facilities for the four *caisses de la jeunesse*.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, I am tabling the breakdown of expenditure with respect to the Item Vote 06-101-399 - contribution to the *Atelier de Savoir*, for the Financial Year 2007/2008. Fund was solely met for allowances to the six *responsables d'ateliers* accordingly. It is worthwhile pointing out that, during this financial year, my Commission has increased the sum of Rs250,000 to Rs300,000, and appropriate arrangements are being made for the disbursement to the Rodrigues Regional Youth Council.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, the six *Ateliers de Savoir* have their own fund, which is being managed by the independent managing Committee and, as regards part (d), I consider that it would not be ethical for me to disclose the statement of their account.

Mr Lisette: Mr Chairperson, Sir, the Commissioner for Sports stated that enrolment depends on availability of seats. Since there has been an increase in that number of enrolment, this means that there is also an increase in the number

of drop-outs. May we know from the Commissioner for Youth & Sports whether any study has been carried out to see what has become of these youngsters who are leaving the *Atelier*? Are they being employed or are they left like this, without any work?

Mr Agathe: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I think this is a good question. As far as I know, my colleague, Commissioner Emilien, has asked the former Commissioner the same question. Whenever the trainees want, they can leave the *Atelier de savoir* and, up to now, we have not come to know exactly where the trainees have gone. But I must point out, Mr Chairperson, Sir, that in Rodrigues *il y a un problème. Les gens ne veulent pas se risquer à entrer dans le business, surtout en ce qu'il s'agit de coopérative ou d'association. Cela pose des fois des problèmes. Mais il y a un officier en la personne de M. André qui s'occupe de ces jeunes pour leur donner la chance de devenir les entrepreneurs de demain.*

Mr Lisette: Mr Chairperson, Sir in an evaluation workshop, which was carried out just before the end of the initial period...

(Interruptions)

The Chief Commissioner: On a point of order, Mr Chairperson, Sir. The Member is mentioning an evaluation workshop. This is new material being added to the main question. It should not be allowed.

Mr Chairperson: I don't know what he has in mind. If the Member proceeds, he has to stick to the main question.

Mr Lisette: In that evaluation report, it was stated that the drop-outs was mainly due because of poverty. Some trainees were not able to come to the *Atelier de Savoir* because they were not able to pay for their transport and, sometimes, to have their lunch. Has there been any development or strategy in order to reduce that number of drop-outs in the *Atelier de Savoir*, which is related to poverty?

Mr Chairperson: This question is not allowed.

Mrs Perrine-Begué: Maybe, in the light of the same question, I would like to ask...

Mr Chairperson: Which question?

Mrs Perrine-Begué: I would like to rephrase it. Just a little rephrasing.

Mr Chairperson: But the whole substance falls outside the ambit of the question.

Mrs Perrine-Begué: I just want to add an element, which I know, and rephrase the question.

(Interruptions)

Please, don't destabilise me! I have the right to ask questions here!

Mr Chairperson: Don't get interrupted. Put your question.

Mrs Perrine-Begué: Mr Chairperson, Sir, the Commissioner said that there are a number of *stagiaires* who do not have the means to attend those training courses. I personally know of one youth who lives at Bassin Galard, Petit Gabriel, who walks down to Grand La Fouche Corail. I would like to ask him whether he is aware of that, and whether he considers it as a matter of importance to make a study on the issue and see how another measure could be taken to encourage them to attend those training courses, which are very important for their future.

Mr Agathe: Mr Chairperson, Sir, unfortunately, the different *ateliers* have been placed in different regions of Rodrigues, that is, Malabar, Grand La Fouche Corail. Maybe, there has been a problem regarding what the hon. Member was saying, but I will look into the matter.

Mrs Perrine-Begué: One more question, Mr Chairperson, Sir. Being given that the Commissioner for Youth and Sports is also the Commissioner for

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Employment, I would like to ask him whether it is in his policy to keep a track record of those persons who complete successfully the programme while they leave and to give support and any accompaniment for them to successfully put into application the training that they received.

Mr Agathe: M. le président, comme je l'ai dit, les jeunes peuvent quitter à n'importe quel moment. But, as regards the Rodrigues Regional Youth Council, it is an autonomous body. Therefore, I can look into the matter with them.

Mr Lisette: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I did not hear the reply to part (b) of the question as regards the number of youth who have had access or are having access to *the caisse de la jeunesse*.

Mr Chairperson: There was an answer, but can the Commissioner repeat the answer, please? Was it 68? No more supplementary question? Next question!

FROZEN FOODS – COMMISSION FOR HEALTH

(No. B/142) Mr S. P. Roussety (Fifth Island Region Member) asked the Commissioner for Health & Others whether, with regard to the supply of frozen foods to the Commission for Health for the year 2008, he will, for the benefit of the House, state -

- (a) the names of suppliers who have quoted for the delivery of frozen foods together with the prices quoted by each;
- (b) the name of the successful bidder, and
- (c) table a copy of the contract awarded.

Mr Emilien: Mr Chairperson, Sir, on 11 April 2008, requests for sealed quotation No. 10 of 2008/2009, supply of frozen food, were issued to four potential local suppliers, namely Roussety & Company, Innodis, ex Le Comptoir, Mr Kong Wong So & Yan sea marketing. It should be noted, Mr

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Chairperson, Sir, that quotations were issued to all registered suppliers possessing a valid trade licence registered with the Commission as per Public Procurement Act 2006, section 19, restricted bidding, paragraph 1, section (c). On opening of tenders on 23 May 2008, only Yan Sea Marketing has responded. The quoted prices by the only bidder Yan Sea Marketing were as follows -

Frozen fish first grade headless – Rs120 per kilo

Frozen beef tender halal – Rs155 per kilo

Chicken fried frozen halal – Rs130 per kilo

Chicken breast frozen halal – Rs170 per kilo

As per the recommendation of the evaluation committee, Mr Chairperson, Sir, the name of the successful bidder is the only bidder which is, in fact, Yan Sea Marketing, and I am hereby tabling a copy of the contract, comprising the letter of offer, the acceptance of offer and the performance bond valid up to 01 March 2009.

Mr Roussety: Mr Chairperson, Sir, can the Commissioner inform the House whether the supplier is in possession of a refrigerator lorry for delivery of frozen meat and fish to Queen Elizabeth hospital and other health centres?

Mr Emilien: Mr Chairperson, Sir, the question refers to tender documents, name of suppliers, the prices quoted and, now, the Member is asking about lorry!

Mr Chairperson: If you have the information, it is alright.

Mr Roussety: My question refers to the supply of frozen food.

Mr Chairperson: Let me please explain. On the list of questions, the bold characters pertain to the subject and the questions are, in fact, a, b and c. The bold letters and characters don't give the Member a licence to ask all sorts of questions with regard to frozen food and the supply.

Mr Lisette: Mr Chairperson, Sir, as regards the contract awarded to Yan Sea, is there any specific condition as regards delivery to health centres and Queen Elizabeth Hospital?

Mr Emilien: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I have tabled the appropriate document concerning part (c) of the question. I would like to ask the respected Member to have a look at the document.

Mr Chairperson: Does the Member want the document?

Mr Lisette: In this case, Mr Chairperson, Sir, may I ask the Commissioner for Health whether all conditions as regards delivery of frozen food to the different area health centres and hospitals are being observed as per the Food Act or the regulations regarding frozen food?

Mr Emilien: Once again, Mr Chairperson, Sir, I would like to refer the respected Member to the original question, where it is only mentioned the conditions of the contract. In the contract – maybe, the respected Member has taken cognizance - it is mentioned, amongst other conditions, that the supplier has to abide to some conditions. The Member should have a look at the conditions, and then he can put his question.

Mr Spéville: M. le président, je voudrais demander au commissaire si sa commission dispose d'une unité pour contrôler la chaîne du froid du fournisseur à sa commission.

Mr Emilien: M. le président, là où le fournisseur a à délivrer ses produits, il y a des officiers pour les réceptionner. Donc, aussi longtemps que les officiers sont satisfaits de la qualité du produit, nous n'avons aucun problème.

Mr Roussety: Can the Commissioner inform the House whether, during the month of September, there was any incident regarding the delivery of products at Queen Elizabeth Hospital and any other Area Health Centre?

Mr Chairperson: This question is not allowed.

Mr Lisette: Mr Chairperson, Sir, the Food Regulation for distribution of frozen food means that these foods should be delivered at a temperature which is less than -18 degree Celsius - when they are delivered to hospital - as per regulations which are in force in the Republic of Mauritius and also in Rodrigues. Is this condition being adhered to on delivery, and who is the officer who checks that the temperature is being respected?

Mr Chairperson: The question is pertinent. There is a difference. Most of the questions asked are pertinent, but the Member has to relate it to the main question. He cannot ask the Commissioner to table a copy of the contract and then refer to incident and delivery. While asking to table a copy, the Member could have asked additional questions. When the Member says 'table a copy', it means that he does not want the Commissioner to extrapolate on the conditions. The Member could have done so if he had put it in the main question, but he wanted the Commissioner to table a copy.

Mrs Perrine-Begué: There are officers who *accusent réception* of these products. I would like to ask the Commissioner whether, at any point in time, products being supplied by this successful bidder were refused.

Mr Emilien: Mr Chairperson, Sir, as I said earlier, we have officers at Queen Elizabeth Hospital to take receipt of the frozen food from the supplier. Whenever there is a doubt or whenever there is a shortcoming, these officers report immediately to the Health Section of my Commission, who immediately attend to the case and see whether there has been any shortcoming. If such is the case, it takes necessary action. I think, Mr Chairperson, Sir, this has been always been the practice, although the Member seems not to be accustomed to these practices. But it has always been the practice.

Mrs Perrine-Begué: I asked something quite clear: whether, in the course of this contract, any product has been refused on the basis of quality and

whether the Commissioner has been made aware. Could he confirm to the House?

Mr Emilien: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I will look into the matter and inform the House accordingly.

Mr Spéville: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I would to ask the Chief Commissioner who examined the quotation and whether only the financial and technical aspects were taken into account.

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, this is a question which is out of purview from the part of the ex-Deputy Chief Commissioner, asking how the tender was allocated. There is a Tender Committee; there are all the procedures, Mr Chairperson, Sir. This question is silly, and the Member should not waste the time of the Assembly. He is taking the time of the Assembly for things which are out of reach, and is asking things that he already knows. He is asking whether financial consideration was taken into account and who awarded the contract. He knows the procedures; he was a Commissioner. Why does he ask it?

Mr Chairperson: There is no need for me to give a ruling on this. Next question!

HAUTEUR ACCACIA - STATE LAND LEASE

(No. B/143) Mr S. P. Roussety (Fifth Island Region Member) asked the Chief Commissioner whether, with regard to the State land on the plateau at Hauteur Accacia, precisely between Accacia peak and Pointe Monier peak towards Pointe l'Herbe and Pointe Monier, he will, for the benefit of the House, state -

- (a) if the land has been surveyed and subdivided into lots and, if so, table a copy of the plan thereof, and
- (b) whether any of these State lands is being used for agricultural and for rearing of animals and, if so, table a list of those planters and farmers.

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, the answer to part (a) of the question is no.

The answer to part (b), I am informed by the agricultural services that there are ten planters and farmers that have been granted either agricultural leases or agricultural permits for use of the said land for food crops plantation and for rearing of animals, and the list is being tabled.

TOBACCO PLANTATION

(No. B/144) Mr S. P. Roussety (Fifth Island Region Member) asked the Commissioner responsible for Agriculture, Water Resources & Others, with regard to the plantation of tobacco in Rodrigues, he will, for the benefit of the House, state -

- (a) whether small tobacco plants were received in Rodrigues during the month of August 2008 and, if so, on which date, from whom, and the number of seedlings received, and

- (b) who was the officer of the Commission for Agriculture who took receipt of same at the airport, and the one responsible for the delivery of these seedlings to planters.

Mr Perrine: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I am informed from the Tobacco Board that, following a request from local tobacco planters in Rodrigues, 30,000 units of tobacco seedlings were dispatched in August 2008. The seedlings were sent by the Tobacco Board.

As regards part (b), no officer of my Commission received the seedling nor was responsible for their delivery to the planters.

Mrs Perrine-Begué: Mr Chairperson, Sir, the Commissioner usually says that there is national law and that the Tobacco Board has the right to operate here. Being given that tobacco can be harmful to health, to land, to agricultural products, amongst which one of the most strategic is our honey, I would like to ask the Commissioner whether he deemed it necessary to monitor – being the authority here, having the maximum autonomy in agriculture - the nature of the tobacco activities in Rodrigues, so as to weigh and, if need be, control its impact on agriculture, land and health.

Mr Perrine: Mr Chairperson, Sir, as I have said lastly, tobacco is a legal crop. There is no ban on importing tobacco seedlings in Rodrigues or exporting tobacco in Mauritius. The Tobacco Board operates under the Tobacco Act, which has been voted in 1982, and it is legally authorised to operate in Rodrigues. So, my Commission cannot just overnight decide to ban tobacco. What we are doing is that, in the strategic plan, we have not taken into consideration tobacco and we are putting emphasis on staple food.

Mr Roussety: Mr Chairperson, Sir, is the Commissioner aware that one of the technical officers of his Commission collected these tobacco seedlings at the airport?

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, on a point of order. The Commissioner has answered that no officer of his Commission took collection of this. I don't know whether he is an insider at the Commission or whether he dreams at night. He dreams in front of the mirror, we have been told, Mr Chairperson, Sir. But, again, as Leader of this side of the House, I will invite you to tell this Member to be responsible. The Commission has said clearly the no officer of his Commission went there, and he comes to say that it is his Commission. If he has the information, he can give the name of the officer and on which date. Show us that he went there in his official capacity. I challenge the Member to put the information in front of us. If he can't do that, he should sit own and close his month.

Mr Chairperson: Chief Commissioner, this comment is not warranted. The Member is right to ask questions, but if he has an answer or a description, which is different from the Commissioner, he has to submit evidence before this House or table documents, so that the Commissioner can enquire or respond to it.

Mr Lisette: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I have a point of order.

(Interruptions)

Mr Chairperson: Please wait. We should allow the Member to respond to it first.

Mr Lisette: On a point of order...

Mr Chairperson: Please wait. The Chief Commissioner rose on a point of order, and then I made a ruling. If the Member wants to proceed, he can.

Mr Lisette: While speaking, Mr Chairperson, Sir, the Chief Commissioner stated that the Member should shut his mouth and sit down. I don't think, Mr Chairperson, Sir, that the Chief Commissioner has the right to tell the Member to sit down and shut his mouth. I would like the Chairperson to

kindly invite the Chief Commissioner to withdraw this word, which is not in his capacity to say in this House.

Mr Chairperson: Yes, I did reproach the Chief Commissioner not to use this word again. But there are so many Members in this House, and I have not been informed that any Member represents any Member. If a Member feels offended, he's got to react on the spot, simultaneously. Let us move to the next question, please!

Mrs Perrine-Begué: One supplementary question as regards to this. It is a direct correlation to the answer of the Commissioner as regards my supplementary question, whereby he said that he just sort of discard his power in policy as regards agriculture and land. I would like to ask the Commissioner whether, at any point in time, considering that this is a national policy but at the same time agriculture is a totally devolved area of responsibility to Rodrigues...

The Chief Commissioner: On a point of order, Mr Chairperson, Sir. Again, this question is an abstract legal question, asking for the opinion of the Commissioner responsible for Agriculture to answer on whether agriculture is fully devolved to Rodrigues. Where are we going in this House, Mr Chairperson, Sir?

(Interruptions)

I am answering on a point of order. There is a point of order.

(Interruptions)

They want us to interpret the law ...

(Interruptions)

Mr Chairperson: Order please! I suspend the Assembly.

The sitting was suspended.

On resuming, with Mr Chairperson in the Chair.

Mr Chairperson: Before the suspension, there was a Member on the point of asking a question, and then the Chief Commissioner rose on a point of order. I understand that the Member who was on her feet took objection that the question was not fully asked. I understand this point but, in this Assembly, if you start a question by taking such ambit, which is far away from the main question, I would agree a Member can stop you on a point of order. If you want to lay a basis before asking the supplementary question, you have the right to do so, but it has to fall within the ambit of the main question. This is my ruling on this point of order, and I will ask the Member to reformulate the question or to ask whatever question she has.

Mrs Perrine-Begué: In fact, the ambit around this question is just to remind the Chief Commissioner that we have full autonomy in agriculture.

Mr Chairperson: No, the Member does not have not to remind. This is question time.

Mrs Perrine-Begué: I was just putting in the ambit. Being given the Commissioner admitted before that there have been discussions with the Tobacco Board and that they have the leeway to go forward according to the law, I am asking the Commissioner whether, at any point in time, he has personally tried to flatten the tone of the scope of the project, being given that it can be harmful to health and the different agricultural projects, the most strategic ones being honey and land, as I said.

Mr Perrine: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I repeat that, in our strategic plan, there is no mention of tobacco. We have a strategic plan, and we are focusing on staple food “produce what you eat and eat what you produce”. There is no mention of tobacco. But I repeat that I cannot ban tobacco because it is legal crop. But my Commission is giving no incentive, no support to tobacco planters in Rodrigues.

Mrs Perrine-Begué: Mr Chairperson, Sir, one question again. Forty thousand plants is outstanding, and the strategic plan is still being awaiting for. The Tobacco Board is a commercial body with all the facilities, and if the Commissioner is not flattening the tone of the project, this means that they are going to be more rapid than the plan for Rodrigues ...

Mr Chairperson: This is hypothetical.

Mrs Perrine-Begué: Can the Commissioner consider that the Tobacco Board can cause a lot of harm, being given that tobacco might have major importance on other agricultural products?

The Chief Commissioner: On a point of order. I am sorry to have to disturb the House again. I believe that the Member is again engaging in hypothesis, asking the Commissioner what would be, in his opinion, the impact of tobacco cultivation on the whole of Rodrigues. This is very far from the main question, and it is again a question of opinion. Commissioners are not here to give their opinion; they are here to answer on question of facts. Mr Chairperson, Sir, let me remind the Member, with your permission, Standing Order 18(1) - she should read the Standing Orders – where it is said - “proper object shall be to obtain information on a matter of fact within the special cognizance of the Commissioner to whom it has been addressed”.

Mr Chairperson: The point of order is well taken. Of course, it does not prevent the same Member from giving notice of a question concerning this policy. But, this question that the Member purported to ask is not allowed under this main question.

Mr Lisette: Mr Chairperson, Sir, being given that the Commissioner for Agriculture is aware that that there are 30,000 seedlings that have be brought to Rodrigues, has his Commission carried out inquiry to assess the impact that this may have on the agricultural products, especially on honey in Rodrigues?

Mr Perrine: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I have to confess that there is a special unit at my Commission which is looking after this aspect.

Mr Lisette: What are the conclusions of the report of that technical committee on that particular aspect?

Mr Perrine: Mr Chairperson, Sir, the report has not been tabled yet, but we are following the planters. We have the name of the planters, and they are being monitored. I will come in due course with a study on the impact of tobacco plantation on other crops in Rodrigues.

Mr Lisette: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I would like to ask the Commissioner for Agriculture whether any of his office premises has been used for the stocking.

Mr Chairperson: When the Member says 'his', what does that mean?

Mr Lisette: I would like to know whether any of the premises of his Commission has been used for the stocking of these seedlings.

Mr Perrine: The Member must be focussed in his question. I am not aware, Mr Chairperson, Sir. But there was an officer of the Tobacco Board of Mauritius present in Rodrigues to do all this activity. I don't know, but I will inquire.

Mr Spéville: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I would like to ask the Commissioner whether his Commission is giving full technical expertise to the project of tobacco plantation in Rodrigues.

Mr Perrine: Mr Chairperson, Sir let me repeat for the third time that my Commission is giving no support to tobacco planters in Rodrigues. These planters are being supervised by technical officers coming on regular visit from the Mauritius Tobacco Board.

Mr Spéville: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I would like to ask the Commissioner how come that an officer from his Commission was sent to the Tobacco Board

in Mauritius to have consultations, meeting and work sessions on the plantation of tobacco?

Mr Perrine: Mr Chairperson, Sir I have already answered that question I explained that our officer went there to learn about the cultivation and to monitor the work in Rodrigues. He is the officer in charge of the unit to follow the plantation.

PATIENTS - PSYCHIATRIC PROBLEMS

(No. B/145) Mr P. Francois (Second Local Region Member for Baie aux Huitres) asked the Commissioner responsible for Health & Others whether, as regards patients suffering from psychiatric problems, the Commissioner would inform the House -

QUESTION MISSING

Mr Emilien: Mr Chairperson, Sir, two categories of patients attend Queen Elizabeth Hospital for treatment, namely new cases and those coming for routine follow-up, be it for psychiatric or whatever problem it means. As the question refers to cases recorded at Queen Elizabeth Hospital since the beginning of this year, the answer to part (a), Mr Chairperson, Sir, is 45. Maybe, we can add some more cases.

With regard to part (b), the answer is yes. Patients are seen by Medical and Health Officers and senior Medical and Health Officers who, at times, whenever need be, refer cases to the medical specialist. Some patients, just like others, are admitted to Queen Elizabeth Hospital whenever required, while others get back home after receiving appropriate treatment. It should be noted, Mr Chairperson, Sir, that, whenever cases requiring urgent attention are reported, they are being sent to Mauritius for further management. Since January this year, 23 patients have been referred to Brown Sequard Hospital in

Mauritius, over and above the treatment offered, Mr Chairperson, Sir. As has been the case in previous years, psychiatrists undertook three visits to Rodrigues, namely in March, June and November. Dr. Viramoutoo visited Rodrigues from 24 to 27 March this year, and treated 320 patients, among whom 20 were new cases. Dr. Gopee visited Rodrigues from 21 to 24 July and treated 330 patients. Out of them, there were 25 new cases, and the next visit is scheduled for next month.

Mr Francois: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I would like to know whether, when patients are admitted at Queen Elizabeth Hospital, they are admitted in the psychiatric ward.

Mr Emilien: Mr Chairperson, Sir, it depends on the cases. Not all psychiatric cases are alike. The medical and health officer decides whether a particular case has to be admitted to the psychiatric ward or not. It depends on the case. Some are violent, while others are not.

Mr Francois: I would like to know from the Commissioner whether the psychiatric ward is still being used.

Mr Emilien: As I said, Mr Chairperson, Sir, it depends on the medical officer. If he finds it fit to refer a patient to the ward, the necessary is being done to have the patient admitted in this specific ward.

Mrs Perrine-Begué: Mr Chairperson, Sir, in cases where psychiatric patients are being admitted in male and female wards, I would like to ask the Commissioner whether he is aware that other patients sometimes complain about non stop disturbance and what he considers to do to remedy this situation.

Mr Emilien: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I have not been informed of such a situation. Anyway, I will look into the matter and see what can be done to remedy this situation.

Mr Lisette: Mr Chairperson, Sir, even though the psychiatrist is coming to Rodrigues on a four month basis, may we know from the Commissioner for Health how is the follow-up made during this four months' time frame?

Mr Emilien: It is in my reply, Mr Chairperson, Sir. I said that patients are seen by medical and health officers and, at times, are referred to the medical specialist. Over and above this, if need be, patients are being referred to Mauritius. From January to date, 23 patients have been referred to Mauritius.

Mrs Perrine-Begué: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I would like to ask the Commissioner whether he has had a close look at the figures, since only in one year, there have been 330 psychiatric patients; one percent of our population. What does he have to say about it? Is there any analysis that he considers to make around this figure, which seems to be quite important?

Mr Emilien: Mr Chairperson, Sir, it would seem to me that the respected Member is wrong in her figures. I never mentioned 330 cases since the beginning of the year. I think she is wrong in her figures.

Mr Lisette: I come to the nurses who give treatment to them or who are going to take care of them. Are they specialised nurses or nursing officers that are going to take care of them specifically?

Mr Emilien: Normally, Mr Chairperson, Sir, it has always been the case in Rodrigues that there are no specialised nursing officers to deal with persons with psychiatric problems. This is not new; everybody knows that it has always been like that. What do these people need? They are just like other cases; they need injections, tablets, other medication and, when need be, they are referred to Mauritius to a specialised hospital. But, as far as the hospital is concerned, they are being treated just like other patients, apart from those cases who have to be put in the psychiatric ward. There is no difference.

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Mr Lisette: Is the Commissioner aware, Mr Chairperson, Sir, that there are some nursing officers who have specifically been trained to look after these specific cases of psychiatric problems in Rodrigues?

Mr Emilien: Of course, Mr Chairperson, Sir, some nursing officers have been trained, and this is a plus for our service. But we can't, whenever we have somebody who has been admitted with psychiatric problems, call on the same officers to be in attendance night and day. There has to be a roster system.

Mr François: I should like to know from the Commissioner whether he is aware that the psychiatric ward has been closed down and converted into a store?

Mr Emilien: No, Mr Chairperson, Sir, such is not the case. I am not aware of this.

Mr Francois: On 30 September, I visited the male ward, and there was a patient in the cell. During visiting hours, members of the public were making a mockery of that person because he was naked, he was praying and claimed himself as a prophet. Is the Commissioner aware of this situation?

Mr Emilien: Mr Chairperson, Sir, in fact, I am not aware of that particular case that the Member is mentioning. He went there at a specific time, on a specific day. Maybe, he is not all the time like this.

Mr Chairperson: Maybe, it is a good time to suspend. I therefore suspend the Assembly for one hour.

At 12.20 p.m, the Assembly was suspended.

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

SCHOOL FEEDING PROJECT

(No. B/146) Mr P. François (Second Local Region Member for Baie aux Huitres) asked the Deputy Chief Commissioner whether, as regards the School Feeding Project in Rodrigues, he will inform the House -

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- (a) the amount of money budgeted for this item for financial year 2008/2009;
- (b) who is the supplier of local fruits to pre-primary and primary school children and the conditions attached thereto, and
- (c) the frequency local fruits are being issued to school children.

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

As regards to part (a), an amount of Rs5 m. has been earmarked for the School Feeding Project for the financial year 2008-2009.

With regard to part (b), the supplier of local fruits to pre-primary and primary schools is Mr Cyril Pierre Louis. Mr Pierre Louis has been awarded the contract for the supply of ripe bananas to pre-primary and primary schools at the rate of Rs1.60 per banana for the period of August to November 2008. The bananas are to be delivered once a week, in accordance to the daily school attendance of pre-primary and primary schools.

As regards to part (c), local fruits are distributed to school children once, on a weekly basis.

Mr François: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I should like to know from the Commissioner whether there is a sort of control at delivery of local fruits to schools?

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Of course, Mr Chairperson, Sir. Once the delivery is done at school level, it is the duty of the school administrator to ensure that the bananas comply with the norms, and that the amount is according to the daily attendance of the pupils.

Mr François: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I should like to know from the Commissioner whether complaints have been received at the level of his Commission as regards the types of bananas delivered at schools.

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

Mrs Perrine-Begué: Mr Chairperson, Sir, is the Commissioner aware that bananas are sometimes brought to schools late after the pupils already have had recess, so that classes are being disturbed, interrupted for distribution of bananas? Is he aware of this?

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, it is not specified at what particular time the bananas should be delivered. But if the respected Member says so, I should have been informed by the schools concerned. But, up to now, no complaints have been sent to me, and I will enquire into the matter.

Mrs Perrine-Begué: As a matter of information, I would just like to inform the Deputy Chief Commissioner that I have been made aware of this issue for the school of Port Sud Est. I would like also to ask the Commissioner why is there one supplier for so many schools? Why this Regional Government has judged it more appropriate to deal with one supplier instead of giving the chance regionally, like we did, to many suppliers? Maybe, it would have helped not to have these problems.

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, this is my policy. I don't have to follow what they did before, because I think it's not a big problem to supply 6,500 bananas once on a weekly basis. But if the schools complain that the time of delivery of the bananas is not appropriate, then we would have to inform the supplier. But, up to now, since the schools have not made any complaints, I don't think that there is any problem on that part. So, it is up to them to say that the time that the bananas are being delivered is not appropriate and inform the Commission. Then, we will advise the supplier to deliver it at a more appropriate time. I don't think that the problem is because one supplier is supplying to all the schools in Rodrigues. I don't think this is the real problem.

Mr Spéville: Mr Chairperson, Sir, can I impress upon the Deputy Chief Commissioner to use his good offices to find a solution to remedy the weaknesses of the system? Some days ago, some parents from Don Bosco RCA came to my house to apprise me of the type of bananas that are being distributed to the pupils. Pupils are left with bananas which have been ripened in bad conditions, and which seem to be unfit for consumption. This is why I would like the Deputy Chief Commissioner to look into the matter.

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Yes, Mr Chairperson, Sir, I will look into the matter.

ELBERLY HOUSING SCHEME

(No. B/147) Mr P. Francois (Second Local Region Member for Baie Aux Huitres) asked the Commissioner responsible for Public Infrastructure, Housing, Environment & Others whether, with respect to the Elderly Housing Scheme under item vote 31-104.-14 “Housing Rehabilitation Programme” in the Capital Budget 2008-2009, he would inform the House where do matters stand so far.

Mr Grandcourt: Mr Chairperson, Sir, this Government has maintained the Elderly Housing Scheme to provide assistance to the elderly group to own a decent dwelling. This is in line with our vision towards poverty alleviation.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, 206 applications have been received in the course of this financial year, and surveys are being carried out jointly by my Commission and the Commission for Social Security, out of which 50 have been completed. As at to date, building materials hereunder listed to the tune of Rs640,000 have already been delivered to the beneficiaries.

	Material	Quantity
1.	Corrugated iron sheets - 9Ft long	356
2.	Corrugated iron sheets - 10 Ft long	116

- | | | |
|----|---------------------------|-----|
| 3. | Timber 4 x 4 - 12 Ft long | 308 |
| 4. | Batten 2 x 1 - 12 Ft long | 184 |

Surveys are ongoing for the rest of the applications, and due consideration will be given to the meritorious cases, following which materials will be granted to them.

Mrs Perrine-Begué: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I would like to ask the Commissioner whether delivery of materials as regards to this project is the final stage for the Commission or effective implementation is also the issue?

Mr Grandcourt: Mr Chairperson, Sir, after the materials have been delivered to the beneficiaries, we do have some monitoring by assistant Inspectors, and the cases are being looked into, especially those who have not used their materials at the time given to them.

Mrs Perrine-Begué: In this case, Mr Chairperson, Sir, can I ask the Commissioner whether he is satisfied with the situation? Because it's nearly two years that the project has been ongoing.

Mr Grandcourt: Mr Chairperson, Sir, we are satisfied. Up to now, let me remind the House that we have granted materials to 300 beneficiaries to build or to upgrade their houses and, now, we are with 206 applications, out of which 50 have been completed. Up to now, I can say that we are satisfied with this scheme.

Mr Lisette: On the basis of the survey that has been carried out, Mr Chairperson, Sir, may I know from the Commissioner whether there are any cases, which have been rejected, and the reasons, thereof?

Mr Grandcourt: M. le président, il y a une chose qu'on doit prendre en considération lorsqu'on parle du *Elderly Scheme*. C'est dommage de dire, M. le président, qu'il y a certaines personnes qui viennent et qui ont des maisons ; ils ont travaillé au sein du gouvernement. Après leur retraite, ils viennent et disent

qu'ils ont donné leurs maisons à leurs enfants et que, donc, il nous faudra leur donner une autre maison. On a sollicité l'aide de la commission de la sécurité sociale pour voir si vraiment ces gens-là méritent d'être assistés par ce *scheme*.

Mrs Perrine-Begué: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I would like to ask the Commissioner what happens to those houses which are nearly cracking down. We know that there are old houses made of corrugated iron sheets, which are totally spoiled and, even if it is visible that *les poutres sont en bon état*, then inside *il y a plein de carias*, etc. What happens to those? What is the policy on this issue? Do you reconstruct totally the house or do you continue in rebuilding bits and pieces of it?

Mr Grandcourt: What we do in this case, Mr Chairperson, Sir, is that we have designed a type of house. So, we grant this beneficiary with a new house.

Mrs Perrine-Begué: My other question concerns those persons who have been incapacitated with age and, at the same time, having difficulties to self-help themselves on the issue of reconstruction. They do not have children; their environmental situation does not allow them to have help. What do you *préconiser* in respect to this?

Mr Grandcourt: M. le président il y a des assistant inspecteurs qui accompagnent ces bénéficiaires. Tout le monde connaît tout le monde à Rodrigues. Il y a des cas, comme vous dites, où il y a des gens qui n'ont pas d'enfants, mais leurs voisins, la famille, les frères, les neveux aident à construire ces maisons. Donc, ce n'est pas une bonne politique d'aller réparer ces maisons à titre individuel pour ces gens. Jusqu'à maintenant, on n'a pas de cas précis, et ça aussi c'est un problème. Mais ce qu'on fait, on accompagne ces gens, et je peux dire que c'est en bonne voie. Les gens aident les plus nécessiteux.

Mrs Perrine-Begué: Maybe, I can tackle the matter at adjournment time, because there are national funds that can cover such issues. I would like to

ask the Commissioner whether he is aware of funds that can cover such issues. The Chief Commissioner is saying that there are no resources and, yet, we know that, at national level, all is being done, *comme le chef du gouvernement le disait, pour les vieux pour mieux les soutenir*. If they have no other resources, nobody can help them, their environment is completely alien to them. What can be done?

Mr Grandcourt: M. le président, je vais répondre à la question. On sait qu'il y a des *funds* qui peuvent aider. Mais, va t-on laisser cette personne attendre qu'on débourse des fonds pour l'aider à construire sa maison ? Donc, où est la participation des rodriguais, la responsabilité vis-à-vis des grands, des vieux ? On vit dans une île, M. le président, où tout le monde connaît presque tout le monde. Pourquoi est-ce qu'on doit aller chercher des fonds, lorsqu'on peut aider ? Les voisins, les neveux peuvent aider à construire cette maison.

Mr Lisette: Mr Chairperson, Sir, what the Commissioner is saying is what is ideal. But, with regard to the reality on the ground, *la réalité sur le terrain*, it is not the case. May I ask the Commissioner, in this case, whenever such cases occur, what will be his policy?

Mr Grandcourt: Mr Chairperson, Sir, we have not yet come across any case like this. Whenever we come across a case, we will decide accordingly.

TOP RESA TOURISM FAIR 2008

(No. B/148) **Mr S. Clair (The Minority Leader)** asked the Chief Commissioner whether, in regard to the official Rodrigues Regional Assembly participation in the Top Resa Tourism Fair 2008 in Paris, France, from 16 September to 19 September 2008, he will -

- (a) state the composition of the delegation and in what capacity;

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

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, the delegation which participated in this year's Top Resa Tourism Fair in Paris consisted of -

- myself, as Chief Commissioner and Commissioner responsible for Tourism;
- Mr Robertson Mercure, Chairman of Discovery Rodrigues Co Ltd, who has been entrusted the responsibility of the management of the Tourism Office of Rodrigues, and
- Mrs Carinne Prosper, Tourism Promotion Officer and Officer in Charge of the Tourism Office.

With respect to parts (b) and (c) of the question, the information is being tabled.

TOURIST ENTERPRISE LICENSES

(No. B/149) Mr S. Clair (The Minority Leader) asked the Chief Commissioner whether, with regard to the Rodrigues Regional Assembly Tourism Regulations 2007, which came into operation since 01 January 2008, will he state -

- (a) how many tourist enterprise licenses have been duly delivered by his Commission;
- (b) how many new tourist enterprise applications have been received up to date;
- (c) table a detail list of all applicants as well as those that have been successful, and

- (d) whether those already operating as tourist accommodations (*gîtes* and *chambres d'hôtes*) are satisfying the definition and guidelines, as set under the Second Schedule.

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, as regards part (a), no tourist enterprise license has been delivered by the Commission up to now. Following the coming into force of the RRA Tourism Regulations 2007, all necessary logistics have now been put in place to ensure proper execution of the provision of the regulations. A new Tourist Enterprise License Office has been opened at the ex-Local Council Building since July this year, and a tourism technical team has been set up to assess the compliance of tourist enterprises with the Tourism Regulations 2007. A meeting was also held on 29 July 2008 between myself, my office staff and all tourism operators, where the tourism operators were explained of the different provisions of the regulations as well as the application procedures. All tourism operators have been invited during the meeting to apply for their respective tourist enterprise licenses. Press communiqués and radio announcements were also made in the months of July and August this year, to invite all operators to apply and comply with the regulations. As at date, we have received some 21 applications for tourist enterprise license at the office, out of which nine applications were found to be incomplete and requiring additional information. The tourism technical team has already effected site visits for 11 applicants and is in the process of assessing their compliance with the regulations, after which recommendations will be made for the issue of their tourist enterprise license accordingly.

As regards part (b), I am informed that, as at date, 21 applications have been received for tourist enterprises under the RRA Tourism Regulations 2007. Out of these 21 applications, nine applications refer to those who already had a trade license before the advent of the RRA Tourism Regulations 2007. The remaining 12 applications represent completely new applications.

The list of the 21 applications received to date is being tabled. As stated, there has not been any application finalised yet, given same are still being examined by the tourism technical team which effected site visits in September this year.

With regard to part (d), given the tourism technical team is still processing the applications received, there is no exact feedback for the time being whether the tourist accommodations, which were under operation, are fully satisfying the norms under the regulations. Once the tourism technical team completes the processing of the applications received, the team is also planning to undertake site visits to existing enterprises that have failed to apply for license, in order to assess their compliance with the regulations. These enterprises will be helped to improve and given necessary delays to do so. However, all the legal provisions will have to be adhered to.

Mrs Perrine-Begué: Mr Chairperson, Sir, the Chief Commissioner just said that help will be given to those who are operating actually. But, in case they are not respecting the norms set by the regulations, I would like to ask him if he could give more details as to the nature of the help that might be given to those persons.

The Chief Commissioner: I repeat that a technical team has been set up. For example, if they are not complying under a particular item, if the electricity or their water heater installations are not according to norms, they would be advised to change it or they will be shown how to do it. It can be also under the heading which the applicant is applying. Somebody may be qualifying for a *gîte* whereas he is applying for another permit which may need a reception. For example, a hotel has to have a reception. If they don't have a reception, they can't apply for a hotel. You will see in the Act that every tourist enterprise must have specific requirements. There is a core requirement for all of them, and then each has specific requirements. For example, those applying under the

wrong item, the wrong type of business will be advised maybe to apply under another type if they qualify. But, of course, we are here to help those who want to help themselves. Ultimately, for those who don't comply, we will not include them in our tourist guides, and we will not recommend them to tourists in Rodrigues.

Mr Lisette: Mr Chairperson, Sir, as regards those who already have a tourism license enterprise, has there been any proposal or is the Commission proposing anything concerning the lapse of time that will allow these tourism enterprises to come in conformity with the existing regulations?

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, no one has a tourism enterprise license yet. They have the license issued under the RRA License Regulations. So, as you are aware, these tourism enterprises have been removed from the general licenses which are given, for example, for retailers etc, and they have now their specific licenses. We had, when we voted the Act, said that 01 January this year would be the deadline for all those to comply. Unfortunately, generally, with all the difficulties that you know we are facing in the tourist industry, most of them have not been able either to apply or to comply. I won't say that they are not compatible; most of them are already acceptable. They are already fully compliant with all the provisions of their respective businesses. Maybe, there are some minor items; for example, separation of their personal family areas from the business, etc; they have to modify maybe some minor things. But most of them are fully compliant. We must say also that, according to the records I have had from the visits, some of them have not really made efforts. Because, for example, when the officers went to visit, they looked at the general environment; there were iron bars in the yard, the windows were not painted, there were no curtains or the walls were cracked. They have to assess all this. What we want is quality tourism but, of course, we are here to help. Unfortunately, for those who don't want to make efforts and think that tourism needs only a bed and a room, they will not be allowed to

continue. They may continue illegally. It is their problem if ever something happens. We will not encourage this, and they will not be recognised as licensed tourist enterprises.

Mrs Perrine-Begué: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I would like to recall the House of the announcement that the Deputy Chief Commissioner made, while acting as Chief Commissioner, on the issue of tourism. I think, in November last, he stated that no licenses would be given to those who are already operating but are not satisfying the norms. We know that the law sometimes makes provision for those who are already in business, giving a lapse of time, etc. I would like to ask the Commissioner if he does not consider it a vicious circle for those who are required to upgrade while not having a permit, not having access to funds? Where does it stop? Will these persons finally arrive at those norms? Cannot the authorities consider specific measures for those who are already in business by giving, for example, an interim development certificate?

The Chief Commissioner: There is no circle, Mr Chairperson, Sir. There is a law; the Rodrigues Regional Assembly Tourism Regulations. We have given a deadline, 01January, for them to comply. Unfortunately, for reasons that we all know, difficulties of the tourism industry, they don't have enough funds to reinvest, etc. Ultimately, we will take a decision, together with the technical team and in consultation with the tourism operators, about how to proceed. Our objective is to have quality tourism, tourist enterprises. One is that they must comply with the Tourism Regulations 2007. Those who comply will be issued with their licenses; those who don't comply - either they have a license now or they don't have a license - will not receive tourist enterprise licenses. And, of course, those who have a trade license under the previous regulations, previous set-up, will be either cancelled or not renewed. But, of course, we have to take into account the specific, general nature of the problems. Many people say that they have a *gîte*, they have a *table d'hôte* and, sometimes, they don't even know

what this means. If you don't have a tourist enterprise license, even writing *gîte*, restaurant, *table d'hôte* on a building is forbidden by the law. We can take contraventions because a person has written restaurant X, restaurant Y, *gîte rose*, *gîte bleu*, *gîte marron*, whereas this is not a *gîte*. Because it is misleading for tourists, the clients and the public in general. What we will do is to allow some time again. But what we are satisfied with is that most of the tourism operators have read the Act; they are acquainted with it. We have administration framework for the putting in force of the Act and, from this, we will go ahead and gradually deliver tourist enterprise licenses. The motivation will be that those who don't comply, first, will not receive any trade license - so they will not be recognised as such - and, second, they will not be in our promotion. But most of them now comply and are making efforts to improve and increase their promotion.

Mr Lisette: Mr Chairperson, Sir, the Chief Commissioner has been mentioning advertisement, *guide touristique*. With regard to the new *guide touristique*, which has just been published either by his Commission or by any institution falling under his Commission, may I ask him whether these enterprises which are not already in conformity with the regulations have been set up or given advertisement in same?

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, this question was raised when we recently launched our French tourist guide 2008. And, of course, when I got the feedback from people of the tourism office, the tourist departmental head of our office, it was really necessary to remove some people. One or two were not making efforts and were not compliant with acceptable norms - not only international but even local norms - to receive people at their places. What we have done is to warn them that they are not compliant and that they are being given one last chance, as they were only two or three. They were given a last chance, from a humanitarian point of view, being given that these people rely on this. They have explained that they are making efforts, they are

applying for loans, they are working on their improvement; they have been included in the list. Anyway, it's just a minority.

Mrs Perrine-Begué: In view of his answer about the norms and conditions for licenses, I would like to ask the Commissioner whether any cut-off date has been set.

The Chief Commissioner: Not yet, Mr Chairperson, Sir. As I have explained, we are working on improvements and, of course, I will take a decision on the cut-off date. We didn't even have to take a decision, because the law is the law. The law has come into force, and we have to apply it. Of course, there is an adaptation period, and I think that the cut-off date will be at the end of this year. We have given 01 January 2008 - one whole year - and I think one whole year to adapt is again sufficient. By 01 January 2009, for those who are not compliant, we will cancel their trade licenses or we will not give them new tourism enterprise licenses. But, of course, we will work in consultation with the tourism associations; we don't want anybody, out of this policy, to lose his living. We are going to help them.

BRACKISH WATER - TREATMENT & DESALINATION PROJECT

(No. B/150) Mr J. D. Spéville (Second Local Region Member for St. Gabriel) asked the Commissioner responsible for Agriculture and Water Resources & Others whether, as regards the treatment of brackish water and the project of desalination water in Rodrigues he would, for the benefit of the House, state -

- (a) if the projects are now operational, and if not, give reasons for the delay;
- (b) the persons, agencies or institutions, if any, who are or who will be responsible for the operations of both projects;

- (c) whether the whole equipment housing the project of treatment of brackish water and desalination belongs to the Rodrigues Regional Assembly or have been vested to any private firms, and
- (d) describe the tendering procedures or decision taken for both or any one of the project.

Mr Perrine: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I am pleased to inform the House that three Reverse Osmosis Brackish Water Purification Plants have already been installed at Hauteur Accacia, Baie Topaze and Creve Coeur and commissioned on 12, 13 and 22 August 2008 respectively. These plants will purify brackish water from respective boreholes at Camp du Roi, Baie Topaze and Fond La Digue and, very shortly, we will be able to supply pure water to the public from these boreholes. For the time being, the plants at Baie Topaze and Creve Coeur are not yet fully operational due to electricity problem, which is presently being settled by the Central Electricity Board. The plant at Hauteur Accacia is operational.

As regards the desalination project, there has been a delay in the supply of the equipment by the contractor, who has informed that the delay was due to a strike in Italy in August 2008. However, the Mediterranean Shipping has informed my Commission that two containers have arrived in Mauritius on 24 September 2008 with the equipment of the desalination plant. It is expected that all the equipment will be shipped to Rodrigues before the end of this month.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, with regard to (b), a maintenance and operation contract renewable every year for three years has been awarded to the contractor, Aquaflo Ltd, for the maintenance and operation of the three brackish water purification plants, as per tender document.

As regards the desalination plants to be installed at Pointe Venus and Songes, these will be also maintained and operated by the contractor as per tender document.

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With regard to (c), Mr Chairperson, Sir, all the equipment become the property of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly once they have been commissioned.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, with regard to (d), the tendering procedure for the supply, installation and commissioning of the brackish water purification plants was as follows -

- (i) bidders were invited by press notice, authorised under section 7(1)(2) of the then Central Tender Board Act 2000, on 23 August 2007;
- (ii) the closing date and time for submission of tender was fixed on Wednesday 03 October 2007 at 13.30 hours.

At the closing date and time, only three bids were received. A Tender Evaluation Committee, comprising of technicians from the Central Water Authority, Ministry of Public Utilities and the Water Resources Unit of my Commission, was set up to evaluate the offers received and make recommendation on the most successful tenderer.

The Evaluation Committee has recommended the offer made by Aquaflo Ltd, which was the cheapest technically acceptable offer, for the sum of **Rs15,600,000.81**, inclusive 15% VAT, and contingency sum of Rs300,000.

The recommendation of the Evaluation Committee was subsequently submitted to the Central Procurement Board for approval.

Following the approval of the Central Procurement Board to award the contract to Aquaflo Ltd, a letter of award was issued to the contractor, and a contract agreement was signed between the contractor and my Commission.

Mr Spéville: Mr Chairperson, Sir, being given that some of the projects have been commissioned to be sure that the equipment belongs to the Government, I would like to ask the Commissioner whether he thinks that it is

ethical that the name of the private firm is still affixed on the Government property as a sort of publicity for the company, even though the project has already been commissioned.

Mr Perrine: Mr Chairperson, Sir, we have just launched a tender for the fencing and upgrading of the site where the purification plant has been installed. The contractor will be requested to remove the stickers that he has placed on the container as soon as the place will be operational.

Mr Spéville: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I would like to ask the Commissioner whether tests have been carried on the backwash water from the brackish water treatment plant to know whether this water can be used for other purposes. I would like to know whether tests have been carried out to know the degree of salinity, and whether same can be used for other purposes and how the water can be disposed of.

Mr Perrine: Mr Chairperson, Sir, we are looking into this issue. The water sample has been sent to Mauritius for examination, and a decision will be taken in due course.

MONT LUBIN/ DANS BEBE - ROAD CONSTRUCTION

(No. B/151) Mr J. D. Spéville (Second Local Region Member for St. Gabriel) asked the Commissioner responsible for Public Infrastructure, Housing, Environment & Others whether, as regards the construction of road from Mont Lubin via Orange to Dans Bebe, he would state to this House where matters stand concerning completion of all snag work along the road and financial compensation to be paid to owners whose private lands have been compulsorily acquired.

Mr Grandcourt: Mr Chairperson, Sir, all snag works have been attended by the contractor during the defects liability period ending on 14 June 2007. However, regarding the compensation to be paid to owners of private lands, the

matter has been referred to the Commission responsible for Land for necessary action.

Mr Spéville: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I would like to ask the Commissioner responsible for Public Infrastructure whether a practical completion certificate has been issued to the contractors.

Mr Grandcourt: Yes, Mr Chairperson, Sir, the final completion certificate for the project was issued on 15 June 2007.

Mr Spéville: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I would like also to know from the Commissioner whether all the retention money has been released.

Mr Grandcourt: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I don't have the exact information. I don't want to induce this House in error. So, I will ask the respected Member to come with a substantive question.

Mr Spéville: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I would like to ask the Commissioner whether officers of his Commission have performed site visits after the road completion to see the potential danger that the non-completion of some snag works can impede to road users, because there are still snag works to be done on this road. The road has been completed, but there are still works outstanding on this road.

Mr Grandcourt: Mr Chairperson, Sir, let me inform this House that this road has been ill planned. And let me remind the respected Member that he himself gave the works order for this road. There is a problem in this country, where people tend to follow *la patte boeuf*. This is the policy of the previous Government and the former Commissioner for Public Infrastructure. This road has been ill planned.

(Interruptions)

Why is he talking about dangers? If he says that the road is alright, I am not going to answer, since he is contradicting himself.

Mr Lisette: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I believe that, whenever there is a contract, the contractor should make good of what is destroyed during the construction. May I ask the Commissioner for Public Infrastructure where do matters stand as regards the Orange Sports Complex which was destroyed during the construction of this road?

Mr Grandcourt: Maybe, Mr Chairperson, Sir, the respected Member should ask himself or his colleagues why they allowed the Orange Sports Complex to be destroyed. But, with regard to the snag works, I have talked to my colleague, the Commissioner for Youth and Sports. So, what has happened is that when the complex has been destroyed, first of all there has been no agreement on paper. There was no agreement on paper, Mr Chairperson, Sir, and the length of the pitch has been shortened. But I have talked to my colleague, and we are going to see how we can improve the complex at Orange.

RODRIGUES TRADING AND MARKETING COMPANY

(No. B/152) Mr J. D. Spéville (Second Local Region Member for St. Gabriel) asked the Commissioner responsible for Agriculture, Water Resources & Others whether, as regards the setting up of the Rodrigues Marketing and Trade Company he would, for the benefit of the House, obtain the following information -

- (a) when the company was incorporated:
- (b) the names and occupation of all the members who form part of the Board of the company, and
- (c) the *modus operandi* and the procedural steps involved in the marketing, buying, stocking and selling of agricultural products from Rodrigues to Mauritius.

Mr Perrine: Mr Chairperson, Sir, the Rodrigues Trading and Marketing Company Ltd has been incorporated on 30 June 2006.

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The names and occupation of all the members constituting the Board of Directors of the company are being tabled.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, initially, the company was wholly owned by the Rodrigues Regional Assembly until 30 June 2008. Since then, its shareholding structure is 60% owned by the Rodrigues Regional Assembly and 40% owned by the State Trading Corporation.

The Board members have consequently been increased from five to eight to reflect the shareholding structure of the company.

The Rodrigues Regional Assembly is represented by five members, and the State Trading Corporation is represented by three members on the Board of Directors.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, as regards (c) the company operates under the overall direction of the Board of Directors, which meets on a monthly basis. The company started its operation since December 2007, with the recruitment of a Manager who is responsible for the implementation of decision taken by the Board of Directors and the day-to-day management of the company. Since its operation, the company has been focusing its activities mainly on the purchase and export of pigs. From December 2007 to date, 830 live pigs have been exported to Mauritius for a total value of Rs4,575,010, as compared to 44 pigs which were exported in 2006.

Moreover, on a trial basis, the company has presently purchased three tons of red beans and three tons of potato from planters to be commercialised both in Rodrigues and Mauritius.

The company is, therefore, gradually extending its activities to other Rodriguan products, and emphasis will be also laid on maize, lemon, chili, onions and other crops, and livestock products such as goat, chicken and agro-processed food.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, the Rodrigues Trading and Marketing Company also deals with the import of seeds with a view to facilitating farmers. For the crop season 2008, 32 kg of onion seeds have been imported and sold to 78 planters, and eight tons of potato seeds have been sold to 79 planters.

For the purchase of agricultural produce from local producers, the procedural step involved a call through the local radio for registration of those interested in selling their produce to the Company.

For pigs, only animals raised according to the specifications and which do not show any symptom of diseases are bought. Breeders are invited to bring their animals to the seaport, where they are weighed and shipped. Payment is made within three to four days after purchase.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, as regards crops, a selection for purchase is effected by the company, and the selection is based on price, quality and quantity offered. Same is applied for milk. All products purchased are further screened for quality and packed with the label of the company prior to exportation.

Mr Spéville: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I would like to ask the Commissioner whether the Rodrigues Marketing and Trade Company is also engaged in the purchasing and selling of animal feed?

Mr Perrine: Mr Chairperson, Sir, this is a project of the company, but it has not yet get involved in this activity.

Mr Spéville: I would like to know from the Commissioner if, at the moment, his Commission is still engaged in the selling of animal feed?

Mr Perrine: We have had a problem with the Ministry of Agriculture, and we are not importing feeds since the month of August.

Mrs Perrine-Begué: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I would like to ask the Commissioner if the company has been given any mandate to intervene to strike a balance. For example, he has just mentioned potato seeds given to local

planters. But, we know that, a point in time, the local products cost more than importing of same. So, has the company any mandate, any possibility of intervening on the market, in order that those who have invested - whom we have pushed into this lane - do not lose their commercial?

Mr Perrine: Yes, of course, Mr Chairperson, Sir. This is the role, the duty of the company. The company will be involved in six importations, as well as for purchase and selling of agricultural products. I have just mentioned that, for the time being, the company has purchased three tons of red beans and nearly five tons of potatoes, which will be commercialised locally and exported to Mauritius.

Mr Spéville: Mr Chairperson, Sir, being given that animal feed is not being sold to breeders, can I ask the Commissioner what sort of alternative is being given to breeders at the moment, being given that same costs a higher price at other places?

Mr Perrine: Mr Chairperson, Sir, the feed which was imported by the Commission for Agriculture was only for the south. But we have two companies; we have one cooperative, which is the *Fédération des Agriculteurs Rodriguais*, and Meaders which deal with the importation and sale of animal feed in Rodrigues.

Mr Lisette: Mr Chairperson, Sir, one of the objectives of the company is to establish RRA priorities in respect of agricultural products for export. May I know from the Commissioner for Agriculture where does matters stand as regards to this?

Mr Perrine: I have just said that, for the time being, the company has been focusing on the exportation of pigs to Mauritius. Anyway, gradually, the company is extending its activities to beans and potatoes, lime, chilies and also other agricultural products. We must have la masse critique, and we must also look at the quality and quantity offered to be exported to Mauritius.

Mrs Perrine-Begué: Mr Chairperson, Sir, may I ask the Commissioner whether there are any strategic partnerships which are being discussed/contemplated to give full possibilities for product commercialisation of niche or star Rodriguan products with Mauritius or with any other countries for marketing and commercialisation?

Mr Perrine: Mr Chairperson, Sir, our policy is to focus on six products, *produits du terroir comme on les appelle*, for which there is a market, there is a price. The company will soon establish contact to be able to get a confirmed market, so that the products can be exported at any time.

Mr Lisette: Mr Chairperson, Sir, foodstuffs are being exported from Rodrigues to Mauritius, and I believe that this requires a particular certification. If we want to make sure that our products that are being sold in Mauritius on the shelves are really coming from Rodrigues, I think that it is of utmost importance that they are certified Rodriguan products. May I know from the Commissioner for Agriculture whether the Rodrigues Marketing and Trade Company has embarked on the issue of certification of Rodriguan products?

Mr Perrine: Mr Chairperson, Sir, the company has already submitted a project to Eedo, where we will have an expert coming to Rodrigues very soon to help the company dealing with standardisation and certification of the products.

Mr Spéville: Mr Chairperson, Sir, in view of the fact that the Rodrigues Marketing and Trade Company has not got past experience in the exportation of food, which is its core business, will the Commissioner state whether other support has been sought from other authorities to design a strategy, to ensure a balance between food security and the exportation of food from Rodrigues?

Mr Perrine: Mr Chairperson, Sir, during my last mission in Mauritius, I have discussed lengthily with the representative of FAO in Zimbabwe and we are signing an agreement with the FAO before the end of this year. We will receive support/assistance from the FAO to deal with this issue.

Mr Spéville: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I would like to ask the Commissioner whether the Rodrigues Marketing and Trade Company is asking the planters to pay a fee for bags before onions are being packed and sold to Mauritius?

Mr Perrine: I am not aware but, as far as I know, there is no fee being claimed.

Mr Spéville: Mr Chairperson, Sir, on the radio this morning, it has been said that a fee of Rs5 will be taken per empty bag before same is being packed. May I make an appeal to the Commissioner to use his good offices to waive the deposit of Rs5 on each empty bag that the planters should pay before packing the onions? Because some of them have financial difficulties for the transportation of onions and, perhaps, deduction of same could be made when they receive money after onions are sold.

Mr Perrine: Mr Chairperson, Sir, we have a cooperative also which is engaged in the purchase of onions; it's not only the RTMC. I will look into the matter, and take the appropriate decision.

FOND TETEL WATER IMPOUNDING STRUCTURE

(No. B/153) Mr L. D. Baptiste (Second Local Region Member of Grande Montagne) asked the Commissioner responsible for Agriculture, Water Resources & Others whether, with respect to the water impounding structure (batardeau) located at Fond Tetel in the vicinity of Trois Soleils and Trefles, he will state if there has been/will be any new project/policy as regards to its management/maintenance/upgrading and, if so, give details thereof.

Mr Perrine: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I refer to my reply to Parliamentary Question B/47, which I made to this Assembly, and wherein I informed that water from the dam at Fond Tetel is being exploited by a farmer in the name of Mr S. S, and the Société Kan John.

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Mr Chairperson, Sir, in a meeting chaired by myself with the two parties on 03 May 2008, agreement was reached with all parties concerned for the water to be distributed from 7.00 to 16.00 hours to Société Kan John and from 16.00 to 7.00 hours on the following day to Mr S.S.

This agreement was not respected by Mr S.S, as he has tampered with the water upstream thereby preventing the replenishment of the dam. Consequently, the Société Kan John was deprived of water for its stone crushing and block making activities. The industry was on the verge of collapse and closing down due to this water problem.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, water is a scarce commodity, and the policy of my Commission is to ensure an equitable distribution of the water from the dam at Fond Tetel between the two parties. In this perspective, the Executive Council has taken the following decisions -

- (i) to maintain the distribution schedule according to the agreement reached, as mentioned earlier;
- (ii) to fence the dam and to put it under restricted zone.

The fencing work with a perimeter of approximately 350 ft has already been completed. A committee, under the chairmanship of my Departmental Head and comprising of the two parties, has been set up to monitor the situation closely.

Mr Baptiste: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I would like to know whether police officers were present at the site of work on the day the fencing of the dam was made.

Mr Perrine: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I was on mission on Saturday when the work was carried out. I will look into the matter.

Mr Baptiste: But, anyway, Mr Chairperson, Sir, the work now has been completed, as far as fencing is concerned. Is the Commissioner aware that

barriers have been placed across the road? I mean a road which linked Roche Bon Dieu to Trois Soleils and which was used by four wheelers.

Mr Perrine: I am not aware, Mr Chairperson, Sir, but I will look into the matter.

Mr Baptiste: Now that we know that we are facing quite a dry season and the water level has decreased considerably, I would like to know from the Commissioner what is his policy as regards water distribution? I mean: now that the water is decreasing, and water is being used by planters.

Mr Perrine: Mr Chairperson, Sir, we, as a Government, have a policy for irrigation. What is being done at Fond Tetel is small amateur water irrigation. We are coming with a national water irrigation programme, which will cover the regions of Patate Theophile, Fond Tetel and elsewhere.

Mr Baptiste: I remember, in reply to PQ B/47, the Commissioner mentioned that two technicians from the Irrigation Authority would soon come. I would like to know where matters stand?

Mr Perrine: Mr Chairperson, Sir, they have just submitted their report, which is being studied, and we will come with a programme. There is a study; we have to look at it, to come up with a programme with phases, that is, what is going to be done first, second, etc. That is what we are doing, and we are going to come soon with a programme for the region of Patate Theophile.

Mr Spéville: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I would like to ask the Commissioner whether the water retention capacity of the impounding structure will be increased to satisfy the demand of all the planters in Rodrigues.

Mr Perrine: Eventually, no. But we have other alternatives. Maybe, we can have a borehole at Anse Ally. We have other possibilities. We are going to study what the Irrigation Authority has recommended and what we are going to put into practice in Rodrigues.

MONTAGNE CABRIS/MT LONGUE - TRACK ROAD

(No. B/154) **Mr L. D. Baptiste (Second Local Region Member of Grande Montagne)** asked the Commissioner responsible for Public Infrastructure, Housing, Environment & Others whether, with regard to the construction of a track road from Montagne Cabris to Mt. Longue, for which work started around August 2006, the Commissioner would inform the House on the amount and types of construction materials delivered so far, and the expected date of completion of the project.

Mr Grandcourt: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I am informed that works in connection with the construction of track road from Montagne Cabris to Montagne Longue actually started in March 2007.

The project, as per the policy, was carried out on a voluntary basis by the inhabitants, while construction materials were supplied by the Commission for Public Infrastructure.

The following materials were delivered -

- (i) Cement - 75 bags of 50 kg;
- (ii) Coarse aggregate - 10 m³;
- (iii) Fine aggregate - 10m³;
- (iv) Iron bars 10 mm - 25 units;
- (v) Iron bars 6 mm - 50 units;

and 30m of the track road were implemented.

However, due to lack of interest and motivation of the volunteers, the project did not progress further despite our attempt to motivate them.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, for the time being, my Commission has already liaised with the newly constituted village committee to initiate actions to complete the project.

**OYSTER BAY (RECLAIMED AREA) - BUILDING - LOW INCOME
EARNING WOMEN**

(No. B/155) **Mr S. P. Roussety (Fifth Island Region Member)** asked the Commissioner responsible for Public Infrastructure, Housing, Environment & Others whether, as regards the construction of building on the reclaimed area at Oyster Bay for women of low income earnings, he would, for the benefit of the House, state -

- (a) if his Commission contributes in the said construction, and if so
- (b) what has been the participation of his Commission up to now, and
- (c) what is the status of the work and whether his Commission will continue to the termination of the construction.

Mr Grandcourt: Mr Chairperson, Sir, as regards part (a) of the question, the answer is yes.

As regards part (b), upon the request of the President of the Women's Association dated 25 April 2008, my Commission has undertaken works pertaining to roof structure and veranda.

As regards part (c), about 70% of works have been completed. However, upon request of the Trust Fund for Vulnerable Groups, the project has been kept in abeyance. I am informed that the official registration of the Association with the Registrar of Association is awaited and, thereafter, the Commission of Public Infrastructure and the Trust Fund intend to proceed with the completion of the project.

Mr Lisette: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I would like to know from the Commissioner for Public Infrastructure whether any materials of any kind have been given by his Commission for this project.

Mr Grandcourt: Yes, Mr Chairperson, Sir, we have contributed for timber, CIS, and board to a total cost of Rs34,000.

**COMMISSIONER FOR AGRICULTURE – PRIVATE MISSION
ITALY**

(No. B/156) Mrs R. M. F. Gaspard Pierre Louis (First Local Region Member for Grande Montagne) asked the Commissioner responsible for Agriculture, Water Resources & Others whether there has been a delegation from Rodrigues who effected a mission in Italy during the month of September 2008 and, if so, state -

- (a) who headed the delegation, the composition of same, and in what capacity each member formed part of the delegation;
- (b) who met the cost of the mission, and
- (c) table a breakdown of all the expenses incurred.

Mr Perrine: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I effected a private visit in Italy from 07 to 14 September 2008 together with four persons from Rodrigues.

As regards parts (b) and (c) of the question, I would like to inform the House that all costs were met by the Italian side and that no expenses whatsoever were incurred by the Rodrigues Regional Assembly.

Mrs Gaspard Pierre Louis: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I would like to ask the Commissioner whether a Departmental Head formed part of delegation.

Mr Chairperson: It is a private visit. The Commissioner is kind to give that piece of answer.

MAIZE GRINDING & LAND MECHANISATION

(No. B/157) Mrs R. M. F. Gaspard Pierre Louis (First Local Region Member for Grande Montagne) asked the Commissioner responsible for Agriculture, Water Resources & Others whether, with regard to services offered to the public by his Commission, he would -

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- (a) inform the House whether there is a backlog regarding land mechanisation and maize grinding and, if so, state the reasons, thereof, and
- (b) table the list of planters who applied for the service of land mechanisation by mentioning those who are still awaiting for such service for the period August 2007 to date.

Mr Perrine: Mr Chairperson, Sir, there is presently one maize milling machine at the Agricultural Services which offers services of maize grinding to the public. Unfortunately, the machine is not in working condition since July 2008 due to a breakdown of the switch system. Several attempts to repair the machine have not been successful. Actions have been taken to purchase a new switch, but same is not available neither locally nor in Mauritius.

In the meantime, procedures have been initiated to purchase two new maize grinding machines, and we are envisaging to decentralise the maize grinding service to La Ferme and Trèfles.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, as regards part (b) of the question, the list of planters who applied for the service of land mechanisation for the period August 2007 to date is being compiled and will be submitted to the Assembly in due course.

Mrs Gaspard Pierre Louis: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I would like to ask the Commissioner whether he is aware that there are numerous planters who are waiting for such services for one year.

Mr Perrine: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I take note, but I don't think that it is one year. With the new tractor that has just been imported from Mauritius, I don't think so. I will look into the matter, and I will give the figure. Facts must be given. I will give the figure at the next session.

Mr Lisette: Mr Chairperson, Sir, may I ask the Commissioner for Agriculture how does he explain the fact that planters of the same villages

making application within the same time frame are not served with such facilities whenever the tractor moves from Citronelle to the villages?

Mr Perrine: This is a regional related question; it will be difficult for me to give an answer, Mr Chairperson, Sir. But I will look into the matter. We are putting order everywhere; we have changed the system of operating, and we are trying to decentralise the system of application. Now, someone living in the south can go to La Ferme or Marechal to make his application instead of coming to Citronelle. This will take some time, but we are coming with a full programme very soon.

Mr Lisette: Mr Chairperson, Sir, being given that the planters are within the same community, does not the Commissioner think it fair that, whenever the tractor is moving from Citronelle to the villages, all the planters within the same area are served at the same time? Does he think that it would have been a better policy as regards to fuel consumption by these tractors and also as regards to time with respect to the mechanisation process?

Mr Perrine: Of course! I agree with the respected Member. But, as I have said, I have had to reorganise the work, to start anew and to set up new targets, namely first to buy new tractors because when I took office, there were only two tractors.

Mrs Perrine-Begué: One more question regarding maize grinding. Being given that there are a number of private service providers who are already operating on the market, is the Commissioner's policy now to move out of the public project? Is it an affirmed policy to slowly move out of the circuit?

Mr Perrine: Mr Chairperson, Sir, this is the policy of the Commission, but we are not going to move out immediately. Whenever there is a service provider, a private doing the job, the Commission will not compete with that service provider. We are going to move out, provided the service which is given

is of good quality. So, we are going to remain as long as necessary, but we are going to move out gradually whenever private operators step in.

Mrs Perrine-Begué: But is the Commissioner aware of the difference in prices that are being offered on the market as regards this staple food? For example, private providers are offering more than 200 times the price that is being offered. 50 cents being offered; Rs5 of the private sector, which means that, only for grinding, it's Rs5. Now, with the cost of production, it means that the price is going to fuel up. Can the Commissioner give his opinion about the timing of waiving out?

Mr Perrine: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I think that this is profiteering. Anyway, we are moving gradually, but I cannot say how long. I will give you one example where the RTMC is stepping into one activity to stabilise the price. For instance, we have purchased three tons of potatoes, which we are going to put on the local market just to keep the price at an acceptable level. People importing potatoes from Mauritius are claiming high prices, and the population has to pay for it. So, we will play this role, but it will take some time. We cannot just step in and take a decision like this.

Mr Chairperson: Next item, please!

STATEMENTS BY COMMISSIONERS

SEYCHELLES – MISSION – TWINNING AGREEMENT

The Chief Commissioner: M. le président, vous vous rappelez que, lors de notre dernière séance le 05 août 2008, j'avais informé l'assemblée d'une proposition de mission en République des Seychelles. Avec votre permission, je vais maintenant informer l'assemblée des résultats de cette mission. Comme prévu, une délégation dirigée par moi-même et comprenant l'honorable Nicolas Von-Mally, membre de l'Assemblée nationale, Madame Jacqueline Prosper, membre de l'Assemblée régionale de Rodrigues, a visité les Seychelles du 09 au

16 août 2008 pour la signature de l'accord du jumelage entre Rodrigues et l'île de La Digue.

L'accord du jumelage fut signé le 14 août 2008 par moi-même et Madame Marie Antoinette Alexisse, la Mairesse de Victoria, qui est responsable de l'administration de l'île de La Digue. Une copie de cet accord de jumelage est déposée sur la table de l'Assemblée. Et, comme je l'ai dit dans mon dernier *statement* sur cette affaire, nous voulons renforcer les liens d'amitié qui existent entre nos deux îles et promouvoir les échanges d'expérience dans le domaine de l'environnement, de la culture, de la jeunesse et des sports, des personnes âgées, du développement humain, de l'entrepreneuriat et la formation, ainsi que des opportunités de *business*.

Pendant notre séjour, nous avons été accueilli chaleureusement et nous avons pu assister à différentes activités et différents programmes. En l'absence du Président des Seychelles - qui n'était pas aux Seychelles à ce moment - nous avons rencontré son Excellence, M. Joseph Bellemond, vice-Président des Seychelles, qui a exprimé son intérêt, son désir de visiter Rodrigues.

A La Digue, nous avons eu l'opportunité de visiter les entreprises touristiques qui sont petites et qui favorisent le contact entre les opérateurs et les touristes. L'unité de désalement de l'eau est opérée par deux personnes seulement, et nous avons pu prendre connaissance des projets d'environnement sur l'île de La Digue, avec l'emphasis sur la préservation de la forêt et la préservation de la faune et la flore unique, comme un oiseau qui s'appelle la Perle Noire, qui est une espèce en danger.

Aux Seychelles, à La Digue, ils ont aussi développé avec succès une marina pour les bateaux de pêche et pour les bateaux de plaisance. Notre attention a été aussi attirée par des bateaux de pêche avec des moteurs et avec la voile qui sont fabriqués aux Seychelles. Nous avons aussi noté une grande ressemblance entre les habitants de La Digue et les habitants de Rodrigues,

ressemblance sur le visage, sur la mentalité et la manière de vivre. Il faut savoir aussi que La Digue est supervisée par un *Board* qui s'appelle le *La Digue Board*, composé de 18 membres. Ces membres sont nommés par le gouvernement des Seychelles, et le *Board* agit comme *Adviser* pour les différentes autorités qui doivent faire des projets ou des travaux sur l'île de La Digue. La Digue a aussi un membre qui représente l'île à l'Assemblée nationale des Seychelles.

A la suite de notre visite, nous avons invité le Maire de Victoria à venir, avec une délégation, à Rodrigues à l'occasion du Festival Créole qui se tiendra du 03 au 07 décembre 2008, et nous allons saisir cette opportunité pour discuter et travailler le premier programme de travail dans l'accord de jumelage entre Rodrigues et La Digue. De plus, j'ai écrit au vice-Président des Seychelles pour l'informer que nous avons demandé, à travers le ministère des affaires étrangères, de l'inviter à travers le *diplomatic channel* pour venir au Festival Créole en décembre. Nous allons tenir informée l'Assemblée des développements et des échanges entre La Digue quand ces échanges vont se développer.

Merci, M. le président.

RODRIGUES DAY 2008

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I have the following statement to make in connection with the different activities to mark the Rodrigues Day 2008.

As you are aware, on 12 October, this year, we are celebrating the sixth anniversary of the setting up of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly, also known as Rodrigues Day. I am pleased to inform this House that my Commission, which has the responsibility to promote Arts and Culture, will organise activities to mark Rodrigues Day with great fervor and, at the same time, promote our spirit of patriotism and solidarity among the population. In

addition, I have the pleasure to announce that Dr. the hon. James Burty David, Minister of Local Government, Rodrigues and Outer Islands, has accepted to be our guest of honour on the Rodrigues Day 2008.

In the context of *La Journée de Rodrigues*, the committee, comprising various stakeholders, has been set up under my chairmanship since July 2008 to brainstorm on activities to be organised for the day. The theme chosen this year to celebrate Rodrigues Day is “*Fier d’être Rodriguais*”. It has been decided to retain the same theme, which was used last year, as we believe that this theme tends to foster a sense of belonging among the population and show our pride to be Rodriguans. The Organising Committee has decided to minimise activities to be organised this year, so as to be in line with the measures announced in the Chief Commissioner’s Budget Speech 2008-2009 regarding the introduction of a one-month revision before the Certificate of Primary Education Examinations on a pilot basis. It has also been decided not to involve schools in these activities.

As such, to celebrate Rodrigues Day 2008, only a few activities will be organised around the theme “*Fier d’être Rodriguais*” as from 10 October 2008, as compared to last year where several activities were held during two weeks amongst schools and the public in general.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, these activities are as follows -

1. reading of the Chief Commissioner’s message in schools;
2. an open presentation;
3. a *soirée de récompenses*, and
4. an official ceremony

On Friday 10 October, the Chief Commissioner’s message will be read at 09.00 hrs in all schools except in secondary ones, as these schools will be involved in examinations. Furthermore, cakes and juices will be distributed

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among pupils and teaching and non-teaching staff of pre-primary, primary, vocational and special education aid schools.

An open presentation will be held on the same day at the MCB Square, Port Mathurin. During this activity, representatives of various non-governmental organisations and private sectors will be invited to talk on the theme “*Fier d’être Rodriguais*” in relation to their sector. Several artists will also participate in the presentation through various artistic forms. This activity aims at giving the opportunity to representatives of various organisations to voice out their opinions and feelings on the theme chosen, and enlist also the participation of the population in the celebration of Rodrigues Day.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, on Saturday 11 October 2008, an award night, commonly known as “*soirée de récompenses*”, will be organised as from 18.00 hrs at the Passenger Terminal Building, Port Mathurin. As in the past practice, the aim of this award night is to confirm a title of honorary freeman to personalities of institutions and award “*médaille de la reconnaissance rodriguaise*” to citizens and organisations. The “*soirée de récompenses*” will also include socio-cultural shows and will culminate in a cocktail.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, on 12 October, a ceremony will be held as from 13.00 hrs at Camp du Roi Stadium. The programme will comprise of the official ceremony, which will be graced by Dr. the hon. James Burty David, Minister of Local Government, Rodrigues and Outer Islands, in the presence of the Chief Commissioner. Several groups, including disciplinary forces, cultural groups, women trainees or women and family centres, accordionists, Red Cross and scouts, as well as youth clubs will participate in the displays. Thereafter, the day will end up by the final of a football tournament, which was organised in the context of Rodrigues Day and will oppose L’Union Sportive Central Sud to Olympic de L’Ouest.

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Mr Chairperson, Sir, I seize this opportunity to thank my colleagues Commissioners for their valuable support in the organisation of the mentioned forthcoming activities. I would also like to thank members of the Organising Committee for the Rodrigues Day as well as the staff of my Commission for their collaboration and assistance in making necessary arrangements for the holding of these activities in the context of Rodrigues Day 2008.

I thank you for your attention.

ADJOURNMENT

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I beg to move that the Assembly do now adjourn to Tuesday 21 October 2008 at 10.30 a.m.

The Deputy Chief Commissioner rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

Mr Chairperson: I understand there are some Members who wish to intervene at this point in time.

MATTERS RAISED ON ADJOURNMENT

WOMEN – LEGAL AID

Mrs M. A. Perrine-Begué (First Local Region Member of St. Gabriel): M. le président, je vous remercie. D'abord laissez-moi m'associer au *Deputy Chief Commissioner*, pour souhaiter un bon anniversaire à tous les membres que nous sommes de la Journée de Rodrigues. J'aimerais aussi, au nom de toute l'opposition, féliciter Sir Anerood Jugnauth pour sa réélection comme Président de la République et faire éventuellement cette proposition : qu'il est grand temps qu'on mette l'accent, dans le cadre de la Journée de Rodrigues, sur notre devise, si on veut être fier d'être rodriguais ; travail, solidarité, fierté - c'est tout un programme.

M. le président, la nature de mon intervention cet après-midi concerne les femmes qui sont abandonnées. Il y a beaucoup de femmes, M. le président, qui

sont abandonnées par leurs époux, ou dans des cas de divorce, d'instabilité sociale. Et ces femmes, M. le président, tombent dans des catégories de personnes qui sont en dehors des filets de protection sociale, tout en étant hautement vulnérables.

Ces femmes, M. le président, sont celles dont les maris ont trouvé une autre épouse et ont carrément quitté la maison. C'est très important, parce que bien souvent ce sont des femmes qui ont la cinquantaine, la fin de la quarantaine, ou le début de la soixantaine. Beaucoup d'entre elles ne sont pas éduquées, ne trouvent pas un moyen de trouver un emploi et sont donc laissées sur le pavé social. Le problème, M. le président, c'est que nos lois pour la sécurité sociale donnent un soutien aux femmes qui ont un enfant ou deux enfants en bas âge. Mais, pour ces personnes, si elles se sont mariées jeunes, les enfants ont déjà 18 ans, ont déjà quitté l'école et, à ce moment, elles se retrouvent sans moyens, sans soutien social. Il y a de nombreux cas, M. le président, et c'est pour ça que je veux intervenir, parce que je pense que, même si au niveau national, on n'a pas trouvé que ces personnes doivent être incluses dans le filet de protection sociale, ce sont des cas. En ce qui concerne le contexte rodriguais, où le marché du travail est assez restreint, où les gens sont en train de se battre pour avoir un travail, où beaucoup de petits travaux sont déjà faits par les ménagères, c'est assez difficile pour elles entre quarante-cinq et soixante ans de retrouver un travail.

M. le président, des fois, le tort de ces femmes, pour que les autorités puissent éventuellement intervenir, par exemple au niveau de la cour, c'est d'avoir gardé leur maison, « pas fine quitte la case », avoir été abandonnées par leur époux. Et, dans ce cas, si la maison *is assessed* à plus de R 75,000, elles n'auront pas droit au *legal aid*. Ce qui veut dire qu'elles n'ont même pas le moyen de demander un *alimony* si le mari travaille ; elles n'ont pas le moyen d'aller en cour et demander à ces maris qui sont toujours responsables d'elles,

sans justement être présents, d'agir selon ce qui est requis par la loi et de prendre soin de leur autre moitié.

Moi, j'appelle cela, M. le président, *economic violence*, sevrage économique, et c'est grave. Il y a beaucoup de cas de ces femmes, M. le président, qui se retrouvent avec de nombreuses factures. Ces factures peuvent être au nom de leurs maris qui travaillent, mais les maris ont décidé, pour faire les femmes quitter la maison, de ne plus payer, et ces femmes se retrouvent dans le noir, sans électricité, sans avoir le frigo rempli ; rien. Et donc, M. le président, le spectre de la mendicité, le spectre de la prostitution, le spectre de mourir de faim est là pour ces femmes. Moi, je pense que tout citoyen a le droit de vieillir, parce que nombreuses sont celles qui me disent « Ben, Madame Perrine-Begué, quand mo pou gagne 60 ans ? » *But even if the clock is ticking* ça va prendre son temps. Donc, moi, mon intervention, c'est de faire un appel à la dignité, M. le président. On est autonome, comme on dit, et c'est vrai qu'en regardant les choses de plus près, ayant été moi-même commissaire, je me dis : quelles sont les solutions qu'on aurait pu trouver ? Il y a un *immediate relief* mais qui, malheureusement, ne peut être que temporaire, notamment le *Women and Children in Distress Scheme*, qu'on avait mis sur pied à l'époque et qui peut être renouvelé. Cela peut éventuellement donner la chance à la personne d'entrer une action en cour, d'avoir un avoué. Pour pouvoir entrer un cas en cour à Maurice, je sais qu'ils donnent R 9,000, mais je crois qu'ici ils donnent jusqu'à R 9,000 au niveau de la commission. Je crois qu'un avoué prend R 1,000, R 2,000 pour entrer un papier en cour. Elles pourraient éventuellement poursuivre le mari et s'il est prouvé qu'il peut payer, éventuellement il pourrait donner un petit *alimony*. J'aimerais faire un appel à la commissaire des droits de la femme et de la famille, de regarder ces cas, parce qu'il y en a de nombreux.

Je pense aussi que, dans un moyen terme, M. le président, il y a une autre possibilité. Il y en a qui ont encore la vigueur de travailler et qui ont un peu d'éducation. Nous savons qu'il y a le *Empowerment Programme*, mais nous

savons aussi qu'il y a un *Welfare Officer*. Ces cas peuvent être envoyés à ce *Welfare Officer* qui a été *duly trained* par l'université et, à ce moment, il peut *channel* et justement *advocate* les cas de ces femmes, leur donner un *training*, afin qu'elles puissent trouver un travail pour pouvoir justement devenir *employable* et créer leurs petites entreprises; parce que nombreuses d'entre elles ne savent ni lire ni écrire.

Ensuite, M. le président, j'aimerais aussi faire un appel. Pourquoi ne pas mettre un *scheme* spécifique pour ce genre de cas ? Il n'y aura pas de millions de cas, mais il y aura certains quand même. Un *scheme* avec un *first mission stage* qui aurait pu donner une certaine somme, dépendant des cas, et examiner *on a case to case basis* par rapport à ces cas. Je voudrais aussi attirer l'attention de la Chambre qu'à Maurice, dans le budget 2007-2008, au niveau du *Prime Minister's Office*, il y a un *Women and Children Solidarity Fund*. Ce *Solidarity Fund*, M. le président, traite des *specific objectives*. Premier objectif *is to work on priority areas with the ultimate aim of diminishing all forms of violence against women and children*. Ce qui veut dire que ce genre de cas *falls under the purview* - et ça je viens de l'apprendre - de ce genre d'institution.

M. le président, j'ai pris la peine d'appeler ce genre d'institution pour voir comment Rodrigues aurait pu bénéficier, et on m'a informée que si de tels cas sont mis à leur écoute, ils pourraient réagir positivement. R 25 millions l'année dernière que nous n'avons pas profité, parce que c'est fait via les ONG. Mais nous avons aussi un *corporate body* qui est le RRA ici. Cette année, c'est R 50 millions, et c'est le chef du gouvernement qui pilote ce projet, M. le président. C'est un cas d'enfants et de femmes en détresse.

Donc, M. le président, je m'arrête ici. C'était pour attirer l'attention sur le problème de toutes ces femmes que les maris rejettent mais qui ont néanmoins la dignité, le droit de vivre et le droit d'être soutenues dans notre société.

Merci.

Mr Chairperson: The Commissioner for Women is not here. Anybody will intervene?

The Chief Commissioner: The subject matter of women is not only a women's matter, I understand.

Mr Chairperson: This is why I asked you.

The Chief Commissioner: Yes, of course. M. le président, nous savons très bien quels problèmes sociaux en général existent à Rodrigues. Les points qui ont été soulevés sont constructifs et ont été notés bien sûr. Nous sommes au courant des problèmes de notre environnement de tous les jours, des drames qui surviennent dans des couples et dans les familles et, bien sûr, nous sommes sensibles à cette catégorie de femmes qui, après tant d'années, des décennies de vie commune, se retrouvent, pour une raison ou une autre, dans cette situation. Cela peut être dû au décès du mari aussi qui est le seul pourvoyeur d'argent dans la maison ; cela peut être son départ, une paralysie, une séparation. Mais la perception que j'ai notée dans l'intervention de madame la membre, c'est que la femme ici à Rodrigues est la soumise de l'homme. Par exemple, la perception imagée de la femme qui n'a pas le frigo rempli à la maison, comme s'il était du devoir de l'homme de remplir le frigo de la maison. C'est une conception un peu masochiste du rôle de la femme.

Deuxièmement, elle a dit que le mari est responsable de la femme. Ce n'est pas la perception d'un couple aujourd'hui, M. le président. La perception d'un couple doit être deux personnes qui sont solidaires pour la vie, comme ils se disent le jour du mariage 'pour le meilleur et pour le pire'. Au niveau des propositions pour la sécurité sociale, bien évidemment, qu'est ce que vous diriez demain si on faisait comme pour les pêcheurs ? Si on essaye de payer quelque chose aux femmes qui ont perdu leur foyer etc, qu'est ce que l'audit va dire ? C'est la même chose que nous avons voulu faire pour les pêcheurs, parce qu'il y avait un problème économique, un problème humanitaire, et on les a payés. On

nous a accusés de quoi ? Nous avons volé l'argent du gouvernement. Elle a proposé de payer des petites sommes dépendant des cas. C'est interdit de payer des petites sommes d'après la loi actuelle. Même une femme qui a un ou deux enfants aujourd'hui et qui reçoit de l'aide sociale, du moment qu'elle a un partenaire dans sa vie elle perd automatiquement les aides sociales qu'elle reçoit d'après la loi. C'est la loi. Nous avons combattu cela ; moi, quand j'ai combattu cela, je me suis retrouvé à la police, les officiers de la sécurité sociale sont allés me rapporter à la police. Ce que je dois dire, c'est qu'à Rodrigues, il y a un vrai problème et c'est à tout un chacun - ce n'est pas uniquement au gouvernement - d'aider ces femmes. Mais il faut regarder pourquoi on arrive à cette situation. On arrive à cette situation, premièrement, parce qu'il y a l'instabilité venant des familles. Il faut que les gens réfléchissent à l'intérieur de leur famille, avec l'aide de l'église. C'est pour cela que, dimanche dernier, à Anse Raffin, j'ai dit qu'il ne faut pas croire que nous avons des organisations sociales, des institutions religieuses, que ce soit l'église, la mosquée ou le temple ou les petites églises qu'il y a à Rodrigues, et que leur rôle est de faire la messe et de suivre les fidèles ; il faut une action beaucoup plus approfondie, et cela doit être au niveau individuel et familial. C'est là que ça commence. S'il y a la confiance, le respect, on aura moins ce genre de problème. On est tous en difficulté, mais aujourd'hui il y a un problème social général. Les gens se marient de plus en plus trop tôt, et ne sont pas assez préparés. Il y a un amour pour le matérialisme ; chacun veut avoir une grande maison. Ceci est bien sûr légitime, mais il faut être raisonnable. Le problème de l'avenir c'est d'étudier d'un point de vue psychologique et psycho familial, c'est-à-dire dans la famille; réfléchir, quand deux personnes se mettent ensemble, quel est leur avenir commun. Il y a le rôle des femmes aussi, M. le président. Mais quand deux personnes se séparent, ce n'est pas uniquement le problème de l'homme ou de la femme. Bien sûr, la commissaire concernée va y revenir après avoir pris note des commentaires qui ont été faits.

FOND LA BONTE – ROAD – BAD STATE

Mr Lisette: Thank you, Mr Chairperson, Sir, to allow me to take the floor. I wish to bring to the attention of this House, especially the Commissioner for Public Infrastructure, the problems that are being faced by the villagers, especially in my region No. 4, that is, Baie aux Huitres and Petit Gabriel. I am sure that the other regions in Rodrigues are encountering more or less the same problem and the same burden. First of all, I want to point out that most of the issues that I am going to deal with have been raised in this House through questions put by Members of the Minority, and some dated up for more than one year. The Commissioner concerned did reply that remedial action would be taken but, unfortunately, up to now, nothing has been done so far, and our villagers are suffering.

The first point, Mr Chairperson, Sir, I take the case of Fond la Bonté with respect to the road. Since the desilting of the dam, commonly known as Gros Maman, which, I should point out, has not really solved the water problem, the road was damaged by lorries used in the transportation of silt and debris. Up to now, the road still lies in a pitiful state. The matter was raised in the Assembly as far back as October last year, and the Commissioner for Public Infrastructure did assure the House that remedial action would be taken in the next month to come. Unfortunately, as at now, the situation has worsened with the heavy rainfalls that hit the island in December last, and there have been major accidents which have occurred, especially to motor riders.

LE CHOU VILLAGE – FOOTBALL GROUND

The second pledge that I want to make, Mr Chairperson, Sir, is with respect to the village of Le Chou. There has been the starting of the construction of a football ground, which was to be served by both the college as well as the community and, unfortunately, up to now, this football ground is still in an incomplete state. This is why I do hope that the respective Commissioner

will take into account the issues raised for improving the standard of living of our fellow citizens and villagers.

The Commissioner for Public Infrastructure (Mr Grandcourt): M. le président, comme j'ai expliqué la dernière fois au cours d'une réponse au parlement, on a une liste des routes qu'on doit *upgrade*. Il y a aussi tout un programme de *patching* dans les différentes régions de l'île. Pas plus tard que la semaine dernière, on a parlé de ce tronçon de route qui mène vers Fond la Bonté. J'ai moi-même été voir la structure de cette route. On a pensé qu'il faudrait mettre des drains lorsqu'on va refaire cette route. On a fait cette route dans le passé avec même pas trois centimètres de bitume, comme si on avait posé une feuille de papier sur de la boue, car c'est un endroit assez boueux. M. le président, avec le passage des gros camions, avec ce poids, c'est vrai que le chemin a été endommagé. Pas plus tard que la semaine dernière, on a abordé la question et j'ai aussi eu une lettre de la part du président du village de Fond la Bonté. On va aller de l'avant, on va réparer cette portion de route. Mais, toujours est-il, M. le président, qu'on a un problème de financement. Il y a aussi ce problème que les routes ont été très mal construites à Rodrigues. A chaque fois, il faut venir réparer, et nous savons très bien qui sont ceux qui ont construit ce type de route.

M. le président, concernant le terrain de foot, j'en ai parlé à mon collègue de la commission de la jeunesse et des sports, et si c'est dans sa politique d'aller de l'avant avec ce terrain, on va travailler ensemble. Mais j'aimerais profiter de l'occasion pour parler du *track road*, M. le président. Pour ceux qui demandent des matériaux pour construire des *track roads* chez eux, on va venir avec un autre politique, c'est-à-dire voir *region wise* comment on peut donner des petits contrats pour construire des *track roads* dans des différents endroits de l'île.

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M. le président, j'aimerais aussi rappeler aux membres de la région numéro 4, qu'en ce qui concerne le *track road* à Allée Tamarin, on a donné des matériaux ; il y a du ciment, il y a tout, sauf que les gens ne font pas l'effort pour construire ce *track road*. Donc, on a fait nos efforts, mais si cela continue, on va demander à un contracteur de le faire.

Mr Chairperson: No more intervention? The House stands adjourned.

At 3.15 p.m, the Assembly was, on its rising, adjourned to Tuesday 21 October 2008 at 10.30 a.m.