

Debate No. 1 of 17.02.2009

RODRIGUES

SECOND REGIONAL ASSEMBLY

Debate No. 1 of 2009

Sitting of Tuesday 17 February, 2009

The Assembly met in the Assembly House, Port Mathurin at 10.30 am.

(Mr. Chairperson in the Chair)

The National Anthem was played

RODRIGUES REGIONAL ASSEMBLY

TUESDAY 17 February, 2009

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ADJOURNMENT

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The Executive Council

(Formed by Mr. Johnson Roussety, GOSK)

Mr. Johnson Roussety, G.O.S.K	Chief Commissioner, Commissioner responsible for Finance, Economic Affairs, Central Administration, Civil Aviation (administration), Civil status, Customs and Excise (administration), Fisheries, Industrial Development, Information Technology and Telecommunications, Judicial (administration), Legal Services, Marine Services (administration), Meteorology (administration), Postal Services (administration), Registration, State Lands, Statistics in respects of Rodrigues, Town and Country Planning, Tourism, Trade, Commerce and Licensing, Handicraft, Consumer Protection, Water Resources
Mr. Gaetan Jabeemissar	Deputy Chief Commissioner, Commissioner responsible for Arts and Culture, Education (administration), Library Services, Museums, Archives, Historical Sites and buildings, Vocational Training
Mrs. Marie Thérèse CLAIR	Commissioner responsible for Social Security, Child Development, Family Welfare, Social Security(administration), Women's Affairs, Poverty Alleviation

Mr. Franceau Aubret Grandcourt	Commissioner responsible for Environment, Housing, Infrastructure including Highways and Roads and Public Buildings and Utilities, Marine Parks, Transport
Mr. Jean Christian Agathe	Commissioner responsible for Labour and Industrial Relations, Youth and Sports, Employment
Mr. Joseph Allan Ladd Emilien	Commissioner responsible for Community Development, Co-operatives, Fire Services, Health (administration), Prisons and Reform Institutions (administration)
Mr. Louis Ange Perrine	Commissioner responsible for Agriculture, Food Production, Forestry, Handicraft, Plant and animal quarantine

PRINCIPAL OFFICERS AND OFFICIALS

Mr Chairperson - Lamvohee, Mr Joseph Chenlye

Clerk - Gopall, Mr Navin

Sergeant -at-Arms - Louis, Mr Jorgenson

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

PRE-PRIMARY SCHOOL SECTOR

(No. B/1) Mrs F. Gaspard Pierre Louis (First Local Region Member for Grande Montagne) asked the Deputy Chief Commissioner whether, with regard to the pre-primary school sector, he would, for the benefit of the House, state -

- (a) the total number of applications requesting the payment for schooling of the 3 years plus students for the year 2009 and the number of approved applications;
- (b) with regard to the schooling of the 3 years plus students, if there has been the necessity to upgrade the infrastructures and facilities of the different schools and, if yes, give details, thereof;
- (c) where matter stands for students in Rodrigues in connection with the measures announced by the Minister of Finance in the Budget Speech 2008/2009 regarding pre-primary school sector, and
- (d) table the eligibility criteria to benefit from payment of 3 years plus schooling together with the number of beneficiaries per school.

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, as regards part (a), the total number of applications received to date for the payment of school fees for 3 years plus children is 500, and the number of approved applications is 255.

As regards part (b), with the additional number of 3 years plus children attending school, there has been the need to provide additional chairs and tables to each of the 30 private pre-primary schools.

Regarding part (c), I have been informed by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Human Resources that the Eradication of Absolute Poverty (EAP) Committee, operating under the Trust Fund for the Social Integration of Vulnerable Groups and which operates under the aegis of the Ministry of Finance & Economic Empowerment, has initiated the pre-primary school project, whereby needy children not attending pre-primary schools and residing in pockets of poverty are being encouraged to attend school regularly. The implementation of the project is being fine-tuned, and the project will be extended to Rodrigues.

The Trust Fund, which also operates an office in Rodrigues, has been requested to carry out a survey to find out the number of needy children who are not attending pre-primary school.

With regard to part (d), I am tabling the eligibility criteria to benefit from payment of school fees for three years plus children.

Mrs Gaspard Pierre Louis: Mr Chairperson, Sir, in his answer, the Commissioner mentioned a number of 500 applications and 255 approved cases. How can he account for the disparity, the mismatch between these numbers? There are actually 245 students whose applications have not been accepted.

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, it is because these parents, in fact, do not satisfy the existing criteria.

Mrs Gaspard Pierre Louis: Mr Chairperson, Sir, last year, from July to December, did all the applicants who are masons, carpenters benefit from this scheme?

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, when we started implementing such measures last year, it was found that some 40% of three years plus children didn't attend school. When we applied the same criteria, we noticed

that there may have been also some people of low income families who could have benefited. So, these were treated on a case to case basis, and we are still applying the same procedure this year again.

Mr Lisette: Mr Chairperson, Sir, if you so allow, I am going to refer to the statement made by the Commissioner on the same issue last year. It was said that, when he introduced this policy, it was found that 350 pupils were out of school and, today, we see that only 255 are benefiting from these facilities. Can the Commissioner assure to the House whether all students who were attending school and benefiting from this facility last year are attending the four plus scheme this year?

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Of course, Mr Chairperson, Sir. The figures that the respected Member is mentioning are for last year, because these pupils were three plus. This year, they are in the category of four plus. So, the figures that I have just mentioned in the reply concern those students who are three plus this year. Those concerned last year are now attending school, but are in the category of four plus.

Mr Lisette: This is the issue, Mr Chairperson, Sir, and this is what I want to ask the Commissioner for Education. Being given that these students were benefiting of these facilities when they were three plus, and now they are four plus, is he aware that these students are not able to pay right now?

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: In fact, Mr Chairperson, Sir, my Commission is still contributing - half, of course - because the policy at national level is that we give them a per capita grant. We are assisting the parents, but they have to find out the difference. In fact, as I have just told the respected Member,

there may be some cases where deserving parents call at the Commission and explain their problem. Then, we may consider on a case to case basis who needs assistance.

Mr Lisette: Mr Chairperson, Sir, this is where I am getting confused. Three plus students, whom we know were poor last year, are benefiting of 100% subsidy. Now they are four plus, and are attending pre-primary school. We know that they are still poor, but they are benefiting of only 50%. Why?

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: The respected Member seems not to understand, Mr Chairperson, Sir. If I didn't start such policy, this year and last year all the three plus pupils would have been out of school. My policy is that I want to get all three plus children at school. But the four plus normally should be at school. Every year, the practice has always been to give them a per capita grant, and the parents have to top up the difference.

Mrs Gaspard Pierre Louis: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I would like to ask the Commissioner whether it is not true that, during the various meetings held with the parents of those beneficiaries last year, the Commissioner assured the parents "*pas tracassé, nou pas pou laisse ou tomber l'année prochaine*". Didn't he reassure the parents of that?

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Exactly, Mr Chairperson, Sir. Until now, *jamais mo ine laisse zot tomber*. I started helping them 100% last year, and all the parents know that when the kids are four plus, they automatically benefit of a per capita grant of Rs200. So, I don't know why the Member is coming with such a question.

Mr Lisette: Mr Chairperson, Sir, is the Deputy Chief Commissioner aware that, because these parents were benefiting of 100% subsidy last year, now that

their kids are four plus, they are reluctant to pay the “*ti miss*” in the pre-primary schools? Is he aware of this situation now?

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: I understand. I know, but can we allow people to be permanently dependent, assisted? When the Member was on the majority side, did she apply the same procedure? Never! Did she give any per capita grant to the four plus children? Is it new to her? This is what she did when she was here.

Mrs Gaspard Pierre Louis: Le Commissaire, dans ses réunions, a donné l’assurance à ces personnes de ne « *pas tracasser* ». Est-ce que cela ne veut pas dire qu’automatiquement les personnes vont attendre ? Est-ce que ce n’est pas lui qui a créé la confusion dans la tête de ces gens-là ?

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Je n’ai jamais dit à ces personnes que lorsque leurs enfants auront quatre ans et plus, ils auront 100%. Je n’ai jamais dit cela. *I told them that I would continue to assist them. This is what I am doing.*

Mrs Perrine-Begué: Mr Chairperson, Sir, one of the star measures that presumably the Regional Government took last year during the budget was to encourage those small children to go to school when their parents were not able to pay. Is it logical that, while scrutinizing those cases, you saw that there were so many people that could not pay at all? Has there been any change in the economic situation for those persons to be able to pay on a *pro rata* basis now? If they were not able to pay last year and you encouraged them to go to school, how come that this year you just dropped them out?

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, there is no question of dropping them out, because if these kids were not at school last year, they normally should be at school this year. We know that, normally, due to

difficult economic situation, some parents wait till the last year of pre-primary age to send their kids to school. They know that, at the age of four plus, they normally benefit from a help from the Commission. So, where is the logic that, if last year they didn't attend at all, then the kids would have lost one year of schooling? I help them to come. Even late last year, we started implementing the measures in July due to budgetary measures. Some of these parents understand that we have done a lot for them. We have helped them for at least three or four months. I know there are some financial difficulties for these parents, but I invite them to come; we will study it on a case to case basis. We help some people like planters, traders who are convinced that they are of low income categories.

Mrs Perrine-Begué: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I would like to ask the Commissioner whether all those who make a request or send their children to school, being social aid beneficiaries, actually benefit of the Fund.

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Yes, Mr Chairperson, Sir, I have just tabled the criteria.

Mrs Perrine-Begué: Mr Chairperson, Sir, then, how do you explain that there were some persons who came to the Commissioner's Office protesting last Tuesday, and among them there were people benefiting from social aid? Is it true that the Commissioner has not well scrutinized the cases?

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: I am not aware of that, Mr Chairperson, Sir. I will look into the matter.

Mrs Perrine-Begué: Is the Commissioner aware that some 30 parents came to his Office as well as to the Social Security Office to ask for more explanations? Did he meet them?

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: If the Member sent them to my colleague's Office, I am not aware. If those who came to my Office meet these criteria, automatically there is no problem with them.

Mrs Gaspard Pierre Louis: Mr Chairperson, Sir, we are still in mid-February, and some parents have been called to come at the Commission around 20 February for justification and explanation. Doesn't the Commissioner think that these procedures should have been completed prior to the school entry date January 2009, so that people know what they should do and whether they should send their kids to school?

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: It is nonsense, Mr Chairperson, Sir. The Member is telling me to do that exercise prior to the school entry. If the admission has not been done yet, how can I know that such and such child will be in pre-primary?

Mr Lisette: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I now come to the infrastructural aspect of the question. The answer of the Commissioner makes mention of additional chairs and tables. Taking into account the harsh climatic conditions that we are experiencing right now, is there any problem as regards space, accommodation in some schools, due to overcrowding of the premises?

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: I am not aware, Mr Chairperson, Sir. But where the teachers informed me that they have problems to accommodate all the pupils, for example, lately I visited one school at *Trefles* and I understood that there was a problem of spacing there. There is need to partition the building, so that they get additional space and a better environment for learning to take place. My Commission is prepared to partition that building so that, instead of one class, they get two classes to operate in a good, conducive learning condition.

Mr Lisette: I rephrase my question, Mr Chairperson, Sir. If I take the four plus, there may be some 900 pre-primary students who are attending school, and adding to this the three plus, this will make a total of maybe 1,700 pre-primary school students. Do the 30 pre-primary schools that exist today have enough space for accommodating easily these 1,700 pre-primary school students?

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Yes, Mr Chairperson, Sir. But, in fact, they are not evenly distributed, because we understand that in certain places there may be more demand than availability of space. We can't do otherwise, because it depends on the demand. But, in certain places, it is under occupied. If we can do an even distribution of all the students, the spaces available in the 30 schools are sufficient to cater for all the pre-school children that we have.

Mr Lisette: Mr Chairperson, Sir, in his answer, the Commissioner has not mentioned about any new construction of pre-primary schools. Knowing the situation that we are facing now, I have not heard of the construction of new pre-primary schools. Is this the policy of the Commissioner for Education?

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: For the time being, Mr Chairperson, Sir, the question does not arise. There is no need to construct a new pre-primary school for the time being.

Mrs Gaspard Pierre Louis: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I want to ask the Commissioner whether he is aware that, in certain schools, instead of having 25 students in one class, we are having 36 students? The regulation stipulates that in one classroom there should be 25 students. Is he aware of that?

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: No, Mr Chairperson, Sir. Pass on to me the information and I will look into it.

Mr François: With regard to the upgrading of infrastructure and other facilities, it was announced last year in the Budget Speech that every pre-primary school would get a TV set, a DVD writer or a sum of money as equivalent. I would like to know from the Deputy Chief Commissioner where do matters stand?

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, this is already done.

Mrs Perrine-Begué: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I would like to ask the Deputy Chief Commissioner whether he is aware of parents who have removed their children from pre-primary school.

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: It may have happened, Mr Chairperson, Sir, but I don't know the exact figure. If the Member says that it is so, I will enquire to know how severe the problem is.

Mrs Gaspard Pierre Louis: Mr Chairperson, Sir, since the regulations stipulate clearly that, for 15 students, there should be one toilet, and given that there are actually the three year plus coming to school and we have 75 or 80 children in one school for two toilets, I would like to know if the Deputy Chief Commissioner is considering constructing other toilets for these establishments.

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, if need be, I will take the matter into consideration. I will have to enquire, and if there is need to build new toilets, I will find out what are the ways and means to be able to do it.

Mr Lisette: Mr Chairperson, Sir, the big loser in the system introduced by the Commissioner for Education as regards subsidy is the "*ti miss*". They are the ones who are not being given this additional sum of Rs200 that should be paid by the pre-primary students having four plus. Is the Commissioner for Education

willing to take additional proposal from these “*ti miss*”, in order to reduce their loss as regards to what should have been their due?

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: My reply will be in two parts. First, in the Budget 2008/2009, it has been doubled; the Chief Commissioner mentioned it in the Budget Speech. We have doubled the allocation which was normally provided to the pre-schools. Who will get that Rs1.8 million? Is it the parents? Is it the children? This money goes in the pockets of these “*ti miss*”.

Second, if you want additional measures to be taken, I’ll ask the Respected Member to wait for the next Budget Speech, and then she will see.

Mrs Gaspard Pierre Louis: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I would like to ask the Commissioner whether he is considering to pay these “*ti miss*” for the month of January, because they have not been paid up to now, and we are the 17th of February. When will it be done for the month of January?

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, there is a procedure for that. Once all the attendances are submitted to my Commission, we do the necessary action to pay them. If such is delayed, therefore, there will be delay in the payment of the fees, of course.

Mrs Gaspard Pierre Louis: M. le président, je voudrais savoir si ce retard n’est pas dû au fait que le nombre d’élèves qui vont bénéficier n’a pas été finalisé à ce jour.

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Normally, Mr Chairperson, Sir, they are automatically being paid for all the children who satisfy the criteria. But, for the cases that we are still considering, of course, there will be a delay.

**‘GROUP ARTISANAT NASSOLA A’ - AGRICULTURAL PLOT -
ROAD ACCESS**

(No. B/2) Mrs F. Gaspard Pierre Louis (First Local Region Member for Grande Montagne) asked the Chief Commissioner whether, with regard to land used to give road access to an agricultural project for “*association féminine A*” in the village of Nassola, he could inform the House if there has been any request for the provision of an access road from the main road and, in the affirmative, to state whether there has been a site visit by the relevant officers and give the outcome of the visit.

The Chief Commissioner: I am informed that, on 26 December 2008 and 19 January 2009, the Cadastral Office received a request from “Group Artisanat Nassola A”, represented by their President, Mrs M. Thérèse Baptiste, for provision of an access to an agricultural plot at Nassola.

Following the request, an officer of the Cadastral Office visited the site in the presence of Mrs M. Thérèse Baptiste to inquire in the matter, and he observed that the group has opened an access, using a JCB, passing on the building sites of Mr Jean Noel Jhabeemissur and Mr Agathe. Mrs M. Thérèse Baptiste explained that they urgently needed access to the site, in order to implement a project that has been approved by the Decentralised Cooperation Plan (DCP) in favour of their group for a project on “Sustainable Agricultural Technologies for Rodrigues”.

Given the proposed levelled access was passing on two already existing building sites and was inappropriate, a new access was being proposed by the Cadastral Office. Since there are some Razouna trees standing over the new proposed access, a new site visit was carried out by the Cadastral Office with an officer of the Forest Department on 30 January 2009. The views of the Forest Department are being awaited before proceeding further.

Mrs Gaspard Pierre Louis: M. le président, d’après la réponse du Chef commissaire, il paraît que les travaux n’ont pas encore été entrepris sur la route.

Est-ce que le Chef commissaire est au courant, qu'à cet endroit, il y a un drain, et que les arbres fruitiers de M. Jhabeemissur et Madame Agathe ont été enlevés sans leur consentement, ainsi que leurs bornes?

The Chief Commissioner: I repeat, Mr Chairperson, Sir, that there is a big problem regarding all these earthworks which are being done illegally. There is also a problem regarding illegal fencing of agricultural works. We are issuing a communiqué this week to warn people that they can't do anything they want on State lands. They have to respect it. I am informed that, on 25 December, we received requests. The requests came after the works were done. The Cadastral Office did not give clearance to do anything on the site. So, those who have done it have done it illegally and, of course, if those people who have been victims, who have lost property or plants, etc, have grounds for reparation, they can do so by their proper means.

Mr Lisette: Mr Chairperson, Sir, in the light of illegal excavations that have been done on the site, have any measures or any steps been taken by the Executive Council or the Commission concerned?

The Chief Commissioner: Yes, Mr Chairperson, Sir. Very often, in these cases, it is a question of problems between neighbours. We never encourage and tell people to open access everywhere, wherever they want. This is illegal. These people are old-age persons. We have to tackle the problem by strict legal means. We have warned them that they can't do whatever they want, that what they have done is not correct and that they have to wait for proper clearance before doing anything.

Mrs Gaspard Pierre Louis: M. le président, est-ce que le Chef commissaire est au courant que le jour où justement le chemin a été détruit, les

policiers qui travaillent dans le département de l'environnement étaient bien présents pendant toute la durée ? Est-ce qu'il est au courant ?

The Chief Commissioner: This is why there were complaints, Mr Chairperson, Sir. When there were complaints, they went there to see what was going on. We are also introducing regulations in this sector in order to have control over the heavy vehicles which perform these works. Not only at *Nassola*, but at other places also we have had problems. If there are specific regulations regarding control on these vehicles, and if the drivers or the owners of the excavators know that they need a permit before excavating anything and do it even if they don't have it, they will have to face the sanctions which will be provided by the law; imprisonment, fines or seizure of their vehicle.

Mr Lisette: Mr Chairperson, Sir, there is one thing that I cannot understand. Illegal excavation was going on in the presence - as I have just learnt - of police officers for almost a whole day. Why is it that a stop order for the excavation was not given at that particular time, knowing that it is illegal?

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I don't know whether the police stopped the excavation but, in any case, I repeat that there was no clearance, and this was an act of irresponsibility on the part of the persons who have ordered it. I don't know whether the *police de l'environnement* went there to stop or to control, but I repeat that they did not have the clearance to do the proposed works; and this is the last of these occurrences. As from now on, everybody doing this type of offence, although we are not, legally speaking, well structured to take actions, will have to answer for their actions.

Mr Baptiste: Mr Chairperson, Sir, the fact that the excavation works have been done illegally and in the presence of the *police de l'environnement*, I would

like to know whether any action has been initiated against those who have done such illegal works.

The Chief Commissioner: I repeat, Mr Chairperson, Sir, that there is a community aspect in this project. There is the DCP which is involved. Here again, I must say that we are not satisfied with the way some projects have been approved by the DCP, and they will have to look into their procedures. They can't give approval to projects without, for example, having clearance from the Commission for Land and the Commission for Agriculture. What happens is that they approve projects for some people without these people having the clearance for the land. This is a very big problem. Then, people come and complain that they can't go ahead with the project. They have to work according to regulations and laws that are in force in Rodrigues. They should not embarrass us. We have told them this, and we do hope that they are going to follow it.

Mrs Gaspard Pierre Louis: Mr Chairperson, Sir, being given that the Chief Commissioner mentioned that this excavation work has been done illegally, how can he account for the presence of a government excavator on 07 January there to start the work?

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I am not aware of the course of action which has been made, but I will request the responsible Commissioner to look into the matter and to see to it that government vehicles do not participate in illegal actions, if any.

Mrs Perrine-Begué: Mr Chairperson, Sir, the Chief Commissioner said that the request was made after the persons who made the applications illegally served themselves on that site - there have been damage and illegal actions. I would like to ask him whether that same request was subsequently approved by his Office to go forward.

The Chief Commissioner: I am not aware, Mr Chairperson, Sir. I don't have this information at hand, but I said that the views of the Forest Department are being awaited before proceeding further with the new alignment. I don't think that, for every agricultural land, there should be a track road or pathway going through it. They can walk also.

Mrs Meunier: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I would like to ask the Chief Commissioner to inform the House who exactly the beneficiaries of this project are, and the scope of this project.

The Chief Commissioner: It is Group Artisanat Nassola A, which is represented by Mrs Baptiste. Of course, as I have stated, it is a community project. There have been some misunderstandings; maybe, they did not know, and we can't now just take them and jail them.

Mr Baptiste: Mr Chairperson, Sir, there have been victims like those who have lost their banana trees, which have been uprooted, as well as pineapples. Does the Commissioner intend to compensate those people for the loss incurred?

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, the Commission cannot compensate for the wrongdoings of other people. There are civil laws in Mauritius. I understand that the victims have to go to the police, to court and request those persons who have illegally destroyed their plants to refund them. It is not for the Commission to refund for the wrongdoings of third parties.

MT. CROUPIER, MT. PLATE & BAIE TOPAZE - MODEL FARMS

(No. B/3) Mr D. Spéville (Second Local Region Member for St. Gabriel) asked the Commissioner for Agriculture and Others whether, with regard to the proposed project of unit farm in the region of Montagne Plate/Eau Verte, he could for the benefit of the House -

- (a) state whether the project is ongoing and whether State land for the unit farm project has been allocated to a group of breeders of Mt. Plate-Eau Verte and if so,
- (b) state the number of unit farms that will be constructed and operational by the end of this year through this project;
- (c) table the names of the beneficiaries of this unit farm project together with the corresponding extent of land allocated or will be allocated to each of them, if any, and
- (d) state whether these persons will perceive any appropriate funds to entertain such project, and if so, give details thereon.

Mr Perrine: Mr Chairperson, Sir, the Decentralised Cooperation Programme of the European Union has provided a grant of Rs4.2 m. to the Commission for Agriculture for the setting up of model farms in the region of Mt. Croupier, Mt. Plate and Baie Topaze. The project aims at improving the quality of life of small livestock farmers and their families who are poor and deprived, through the adoption of a more productive and sustainable livestock production system.

Furthermore, the project aims at controlling land degradation in the targeted areas and optimising utilisation of land through good management and husbandry practices. The project will also empower the small livestock farmers to adopt a more competitive livestock production system with economic return and benefit to the environment, with also less damage to crop production in the region.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, no State land has so far been allocated to breeders under this project. My Commission has just started consultations with breeders in the targeted regions.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, with regard to part (b) of the question, I have to say that it is proposed to start with 25 model farms. Each farm will be operated as a business, where the beneficiaries will constantly improve productivity on his/her farm to obtain maximum profit.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, the list of beneficiaries has not yet been finalised but, as I have said, consultations have started with farmers in the targeted regions. The project will provide the beneficiaries with the capacity and facilities to operate a model farm.

It is proposed that a maximum of 2 ha of land may be allocated per model farm. Under this project, each model farm will comprise of about 1.5 ha under improved pasture land, and also will allow the beneficiary to undertake other income generating activities such as poultry, goat, sheep and pig production, which have shorter production cycles.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, assistance will be provided in terms of fencing, water tank for drinking water, fodder cuttings for individual fodder plantation, track road to enable easy access to site and also technical assistance from the Commission for Agriculture.

Mr Spéville: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I would like to ask the Commissioner whether all the farmers of the region will be taken on board on the baseline survey.

Mr Perrine: Yes, the baseline survey, which started last year, is nearly being completed, and covers all types of farming. All the farmers will be included.

Mr Spéville: Mr Chairperson, Sir, can the Commissioner state what criteria will be used to choose the 25 farmers out of all the farmers that have been taken on board during the baseline survey?

Mr Perrine: The selection will be done according to meritocracy and in all transparency. First of all, it should be small livestock breeders, poor and deprived, and also if they agree, because, according to a first consultation that we had, there are some farmers who are very reluctant. We are going to accept the demand, but only those who accept and decide to change the system of farming, that is, to adopt the system cut and carry, will benefit from the project.

Mr Spéville: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I would like to ask the Commissioner whether there has been any protest with regard to the way the project is being carried out in the region, and how his Commission has catered with same.

Mr Perrine: Mr Chairperson, Sir, as I have said, we have had, at least, three meetings with the farmers, especially in Eau Verte and Camp Pintade, and we are moving to Montagne Croupier and Baie Topaze. Some are very reluctant, but there is a small group that has accepted.

Mr Spéville: M. le président, vu que le projet de *unit farm* est un projet de politique d'élevage commun bien plus qu'une politique d'accompagnement de la production agricole, je voudrais demander au commissaire *what is the way forward* afin que les fermiers qui n'auront pas la chance de participer dans ce projet puissent aussi être partie prenante dans cette politique d'agricole commun.

Mr Perrine: M. le président, les terres pour le pâturage, la superficie du *cattle walk* que nous avons à Rodrigues était de 2,000 hectares en 1997. Aujourd'hui, la superficie est tombée à 600 hectares, peut être moins. Il y a 21 sites, et tous sont des terrains dégradés qui n'ont pas été entretenus et qui causent beaucoup d'érosion. Ma commission a décidé d'introduire un nouveau système d'élevage, et on va faire 25 projets pilotes dans la région sud. On peut instituer ces projets dans d'autres régions de Rodrigues, si les éleveurs acceptent bien sûr.

Mr Spéville: Mr Chairperson, Sir, the Commissioner said that a new system of farming will be taken on board. Can I ask the Commissioner whether a Land Management Unit will be allocated on this project of unit farm according to the soil properties, the land form and vegetative cropping?

Mr Perrine: Nous avons à la commission, M. le président, un *Pasture Land Management Unit*, et nous venons de terminer un *Land Suitability Survey* qui a été fait par la MCRI. La commission travaille sur toutes ces données, et nous allons prendre en considération tout ce que le *Respected Member* a dit.

Mr Spéville: Mr Chairperson, Sir, to increase both the profitability and sustainability changes in farmers' attitude is among the top challenges. I would like to ask the Commissioner whether same has been taken on board and what corrective measures will be taken if these farmers do not carry out environmentally beneficial practices.

Mr Perrine: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I must say that we have cattle regulations, which dates back to 1998 and which have not been implemented. The final draft was submitted in 2004, and the file is still in the drawer. If we just sit and don't take any action, in ten years, all the pasture lands will have disappeared; there will remain only stones. So, we have to take action now, so that in the future we still have cattle breeders in Rodrigues. The action is to move from open grazing to the system cut and carry.

Mr Lisette: Mr Chairperson, Sir, may we have an idea of the overall cost of the 25 model farms that will be established, as well as the source of income?

Mr Perrine: It will cost about Rs9 m., and the DCP is providing Rs4.5 m.

Mr Spéville: Mr Chairperson, Sir, to better monitor this community group of farmers, I would like the Commissioner to state whether there are other stakeholders other than the farmers who will be engaged in the project.

Mr Perrine: Mr Chairperson, Sir, as I have said, we have just started consultations with a group of farmers, but farmers who are not in the group will be contacted. We will have discussions with every farmer of the region, and they will be included in the project if they are eligible.

Mr Lisette: The DCP is going to provide Rs4.5 m. out of the Rs9 m. Can the Commissioner inform us of the other Rs4.5 m. that will be needed for that project, and where it will come from?

Mr Perrine: This will be the contribution of the Commission.

Mr Spéville: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I would like to ask the Commissioner whether there will be payment of officers after working hours for technical assistance for this project.

Mr Perrine: Mr Chairperson, Sir, we have just received the request, and it is under consideration.

Mr Spéville: Mr Chairperson, Sir, can the Commissioner give us a time frame for the setting up of the project?

Mr Perrine: According to the project, Mr Chairperson, Sir, the 25 model farms should be operational by the end of December 2009.

Mr Lisette: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I want to be clear about the Rs4.5 m. to be given by the Commission, because in the Food Security Fund there is also a similar project. May I ask the Commissioner whether the Rs4.5 m. will be from the Food Security Fund or from the budget of the Commission itself?

Mr Perrine: It depends, because in the Food Security Fund, I agree we have also a certain amount of money which will be used to set up farm clustering and also model farms. But if we have more than 25 applicants in the southern region, then we will use the money of the Food Security Fund to set up other unit farms in that region.

FARMERS - REGISTRATION

(No. B/4) Mr D. Spéville (Second Local Region Member for St. Gabriel) asked the Commissioner responsible for Agriculture and Others whether, as regards to registration of farmers in Rodrigues, he could, for the benefit of the House, state if same is ongoing by his Commission and, if so, table the list of farmers registered to date per category of farming activities together with their addresses, addresses of farms, details on types of farming activities and of land use authorisation.

Mr Perrine: Mr Chairperson, Sir, my Commission is presently completing a baseline survey and update information relating to farmers, and their activities will soon be available.

Moreover, let me inform the House that, by virtue of the Small Planters Welfare Fund Act 2002, registration of planters in Rodrigues is carried out by the Small Planters Welfare Fund, which operates one branch at Citronelle.

I am informed that, up to date, some 293 planters have received a planter's card with a 2-year validity period. The list is being tabled.

With regard to registration of breeders, I have been informed by the small planters that the matter is under consideration at the level of the Fund and the State Law Office.

Mr Spéville: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I would like to ask the Commissioner whether farmers operating on illegal fenced land are also being registered or have been registered.

Mr Perrine: Mr Chairperson, Sir, we will have this information when we receive the results of the baseline survey and a second survey that is presently being carried out. For the time being, I cannot talk about the illegal farmers.

Mr Spéville: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I would like to ask the Commissioner, if ever these farmers are operating on illegal fenced land, what remedial action will be taken at the level of his Commission to legalise the situation.

Mr Perrine: Mr Chairperson, Sir, we will look into this issue of whether the applicant can submit the application. We have just issued a communiqué, telling people engaged in illegal activities that they will have to apply, and our officers will proceed on site.

PASTURE LANDS - EXTENT

(No. B/5) Mr D. Spéville (Second Local Region Member for St. Gabriel) asked the Commissioner responsible for Agriculture and Others whether, with regard to pasture lands in Rodrigues he would, for the benefit of the House -

- (a) state the extent of land available for pasture in Rodrigues;
- (b) table list of plots of land already enclosed for pasture in Rodrigues, together with the names of farmers affected thereto;
- (c) state whether surveys are being carried out by the Commission for Agriculture to sort out those agricultural land that have been squatted and which are still “*en friche*” and, if so,

- (d) give the list of land already enclosed legally and illegally without any farming or agricultural activities, together with the names of the owners who are supposed to occupy same.

Mr Perrine: Mr Chairperson, Sir, with regard to (a), I have to inform the House that the extent of land for pasture in Rodrigues is approximately 1,526 ha, which are as follows -

Type	Area (ha)
Sylvo Pastoral Areas	800
Community Pasture	50
Cattle walk areas	601
Agricultural Station	75
TOTAL	1526

Mr Chairperson, Sir, about 80 ha of enclosed pastures are found at Baie Malgache, Mourouk, Grande Montagne, Pointe Cotton, Montagne Cabris, Montagne Plate, Cascade Pigeon, Cascade St. Louis, Pointe Source, Deux Montagnes and Tamarin.

I table the list of these plots. As regards the names of farmers utilising the enclosed pasture areas, my Commission does not have full information on all of them for the time being. Rehabilitation works on some plots are underway.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, I must add that my Commission has started a baseline survey of all agricultural activities in Rodrigues, and is conducting a second survey focused on agricultural land, occupancy and tenure.

It is on completion of the survey that information about ownership, activities and status of land can be extracted.

Mr Spéville: Mr Chairperson, Sir, just before coming to this Assembly this morning, I heard a communiqué on the radio stipulating that land should not be enclosed without agricultural permit or a lease. Can I ask the Commissioner what legal action will be taken against those who have already enclosed without authorisation?

Mr Perrine: Mr Chairperson, Sir, a notice will be served upon the person, and he will be requested to remove all enclosure and fencing that he has placed.

COCCINELLE PRE-PRIMARY SCHOOL - STATE LAND LEASE

(No. B/6) Mr S. Clair (The Minority Leader) asked the Chief Commissioner whether, as regards to land in Rodrigues, he would inform the House if there is/has been any demand by the Coccinelle Pre-Primary School of Mont Lubin for a portion of State Land between the school and Route de l'Autonomie to be used as a green space project and, if yes, since when and where matters stand.

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, as regards part (a), the Coccinelle Pre-Primary School of Mont Lubin has, on 05 May 2008, applied for a portion of State land between the school and the *Route de l'Autonomie* for the creation of a green belt and recreational area for the school. I am informed that the request is being processed by the Cadastral Office, which has carried out already a preliminary survey.

I would like to also point out that, following a request in October 2008 from the *Association des Ecoles Maternelles de Rodrigues*, the Cadastral Office is also carrying out a complete survey of land leased and vested to pre-primary schools in

Rodrigues as at date, in view of surveying and regularising all the pre-primary school lands and also earmark new plots for future pre-primary schools.

Mr Lisette: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I would like to ask the Chief Commissioner whether there has been any survey carried out by the Cadastral Office with respect to a commercial site on that particular portion of land that we are talking about.

The Chief Commissioner: I am not aware whether the survey was made for a commercial site, Mr Chairperson, Sir. In any case, this may not be considered. What I am aware is that there was a request and that, following this request, there has been a survey to assess the extent, the plan for the eventual granting of the site to the school.

MONT LUBIN COLLEGE - PLAYGROUND

(No. B/7) Mr S. Clair (The Minority Leader) asked the Deputy Chief Commissioner whether, with regard to the playground at Mont-Lubin College initially built for the use of both the college students and the community at large, he will, for the benefit of the House, state -

- (a) if the community has access to it and, if not, why, and
- (b) what remedial action is being envisaged, if any.

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, as regards part (a), I have been informed by the Manager of REDCO that the community used to have access to the open space in front of the college.

However, since the open space is not physically separated from the school infrastructure, and it has been observed that there are a lot of breakages at the school, the Manager has reported that the open space will no longer be made available, until further notice, to members of the public after school hours.

I am also informed that the multipurpose ground (volleyball cum basketball complex), which is situated at the opposite side of the college, is available to those who want to make use of the facilities available there after school hours.

As regards part (b), I have also been informed by the Manager of REDCO Ltd that the possibility of fencing the open space and having a separate entrance is being looked into, so that the villagers could have access to the open space.

LIVESTOCK – WATER PROVISION

(No. B/8) Mr S. Clair (The Minority Leader) asked the Commissioner responsible for Agriculture and Others whether, with regard to livestock production in Rodrigues, he will state if his Commission has obtained any representation from the La Boucherie Farmers Association for their problems regarding the protection of pasture land in their locality and, if yes, where matters stand.

Mr Perrine: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I have to inform the House that no representation from the La Boucherie Farmers Association (*Association Eleveurs, La Boucherie*) regarding the protection of pasture land in their locality has been received at the Commission.

However, I wish to inform the House that the said Association made a request for a bull, which has been entertained in October 2008, and another request regarding the provision of water for livestock. This also is being looked into.

BAIE MALGACHE - WATER SUPPLY

(No. B/9) Mr P. Francois (Second Local Region Member for Baie aux Huîtres) asked the Chief Commissioner whether, as regards to domestic water supply in the village of Baie Malgache in December last, he would for the benefit of the House -

- (a) state whether there were any complaints of shortage of water and, if so, what measures he undertook to remedy the situation together with the number of cases dealt with since the setting up of a hotline;
- (b) state whether there were any private suppliers involved in the distribution of domestic water and, if so, the mode of selection for same;
- (c) table the operational cost for such activities, by giving a breakdown of the sum payable to each supplier, and
- (d) state the frequency at which the village of Baie Malgache was supplied with tap water since September 2008 to January 2009, including the dates of distribution.

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, with regard to the domestic water supply in the village of Baie Malgache in December last, I am informed that -

As regards part (a), there has been a complaint from the villagers with regard to delay in effecting water distribution. Water was thereafter distributed by lorry water tanker. Since the setting up of a hot line, only two complaints have been received for the period 28 December 2008 to 15 January 2009.

As regards part (b), the mode of emergency procurement was adopted for the hiring of the lorry water tanker, in line with section 21 of the Public Procurement Act enabling emergency procurement.

As regards part (c), I am tabling the cost incurred for the operation, together with a breakdown of the sum payable to each service provider.

As regards part (d), the frequency of water distribution since September 2008 to January 2009, at Baie Malgache, are as follows -

12 September, 16 September, 11 October

14 and 15 November, 14 and 19 December 2008

02 January, 16 January and 30 January 2009.

Mr Lisette: Mr Chairperson, Sir, with regard to the different dates he mentioned for water distribution, I would like to know from the Chief Commissioner whether this applies to the whole village or part of the village of Baie Malgache.

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, part of Baie Malgache is Baie Malgache.

Mrs Perrine-Begué: Mr Chairperson, Sir, the Chief Commissioner said that, since the setting up of a hotline recently, two complaints only have been made. Being given that the hotline has been put for the whole of Rodrigues, I would like to know whether the two complaints were from Baie Malgache or all over Rodrigues.

The Chief Commissioner: I meant two complaints for the whole of Rodrigues, Mr Chairperson, Sir. It means that a good job is being done.

Mrs Perrine-Begué: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I would like to ask the Chief Commissioner why is there a new hotline when we know that, in the different sections of the Water Unit, there are already hotlines, namely at La Ferme and at Mont Lubin? Why was it expedient to put this new hotline?

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, it is because the delay of reaction at the level of the different officers was not satisfactory. I will make a statement later today, explaining the developments in the water sector and what we are doing at the level of the Rodrigues Water Company. You will understand better why we have put a hotline. It is because we want to know from a customer

care point of view where the problems are. Those who have to deal with the problems don't manage the complaints themselves. Because if they manage the complaints, they can hide them and we won't know, and people will still suffer.

Mr Spéville: Mr Chairperson, Sir, may I ask the Chief Commissioner when was the hotline set up?

The Chief Commissioner: The hotline was set up, Mr Chairperson, Sir, as announced at the press conference we made at Baie Malgache.

Mr Spéville: Mr Chairperson, Sir, can the Chief Commissioner tell the House how the grievances of the population were recorded before the setting up of this hotline?

The Chief Commissioner: I am not aware, Mr Chairperson, Sir. I was not Commissioner for Water at this stage.

Mr Lisette: Mr Chairperson, Sir, as regards the problems that arose in the village of Baie Malgache in December last, it was mainly due to the fact that part of the village was not having sufficient water. I would like to ask the Chief Commissioner whether, with respect to the different dates he has mentioned, that part of Baie Malgache, which was suffering more, has been dealt with in order to relieve these villagers from their sufferings.

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, we are seeing to it that there is efficient service in the water sector. One of the biggest problems - I am not happy to say it - is that the people who manage to open water, that is, the valve operators - not all of them; some - don't do their job properly. This is why we have problems. From a technical, theoretical point of view, we have in the drought season - let us be pessimistic - 5,000 m³ of water produced per day, which makes that if we distribute 5 m³ to 1,000 households per day, and let us say we put 10,000

lines of distribution, in 10 days we have completed distribution and we come back to the first batch. This is in theory. In practice, it is an imbroglio we are working upon.

CAMP DU ROI-LE CHOU - ROAD

(No. B/10) Mr P. Francois (Second Local Region Member for Baie aux Huîtres) asked the Commissioner responsible for Public Infrastructure, Housing, Environment & Others whether, with regard to the road from Camp du Roi (*Le Bon Marché* shop) to Le Chou (I.V.T.B.) via Mon Charlot and Soupairs, he could inform the House -

- (a) what his Commission is contemplating to remedy the bad state of this road, and
- (b) whether any survey has been carried out as regards the number of buses, taxis and other mode of public transport deserving that road and, if so, state same.

Mr Grandcourt: Mr Chairperson, Sir, this government has brought much improvement in respect of roads in Rodrigues. Since we have taken office, 1.3 km of new road has been constructed and 29 km upgraded in various regions of Rodrigues to the tune of Rs224,553,038.73 m.

As regards part (a), the construction and upgrading of roads are undertaken on the basis of a priority list policy.

Actually, the road from Camp du Roi to Le Chou is maintained by our maintenance unit. Patching works and minor repairs are effected when the need arises, as is the case for the overall road network.

However, the possibility of longitudinal reprofiling of the above road will be considered in due course, and implementation thereof upon availability of funds.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, a holistic approach to remedy the state of the road will warrant -

- (i) elimination of natural humps;
- (ii) improvement of all turning radii;
- (iii) provision of footpath and handrails to segregate vehicular traffic and pedestrians, and
- (iv) installation of guard rails along the stretch where there is ravine besides resurfacing of the road.

Moreover, Mr Chairperson, Sir, the report submitted by the Chief Engineer of the Traffic Management and Road Safety Unit, following survey carried out, recommended that the introduction of buses between Camp du Roi and Soupirs via Mont. Charlot would be very hazardous and risky, as the road leading to Soupirs is of winding nature, uneven and sloppy.

As regards part (b), the answer is yes.

The officers of the National Transport Authority have conducted survey thereat.

There is no bus service between Camp du Roi and Le Chou via Mont. Charlot and Soupirs, but the bus route No. 220 serves between Port Mathurin traffic centre and Soupirs via Creve Coeur, Mont. Lubin, Malabar and Le Chou.

Also, Mr Chairperson, Sir, no taxi is licensed to operate from Mont. Charlot and Soupirs.

However, Mr Chairperson, Sir, it is observed that “illegal taxi” do ply occasionally along Mont. Charlot and Soupirs. The road traffic check on this stretch has allowed three such operations to be booked by the National Transport Authority.

Mr François: Mr Chairperson, Sir, the Commissioner has mentioned Bus Route 220 from Bus Terminal to Soupirs via Creve Coeur. I want to know how many buses operate on that route.

Mr Grandcourt: Mr Chairperson, Sir, there are three buses actually operating on that route.

Mr François: Is the Commissioner aware that, out of the three buses, one is working regularly on that route, the second one is on and off, and the third one is “*transport fantôme*”?

Mr Grandcourt: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I am not aware of it. I will look into the matter.

Mrs Perrine-Begué: Mr Chairperson, Sir, we see a number of houses are being constructed alongside the road. Being given the steepness of the road, I would like to ask the Commissioner whether enough land is being secured for the reprofiling of the road, to allow the buses to operate in that access.

Mr Grandcourt: Mr Chairperson, Sir, can the Member be more precise? Does she mean Montagne Charlot and Soupirs?

Mrs Perrine-Begué: Yes.

Mr Grandcourt: A survey has been made, Mr Chairperson, Sir, and the outcome of the survey is that we have enough land to improve the road.

Mrs Perrine-Begué: Mr Chairperson, Sir, next to that road, where there is no construction, there is also lot of private land. And we see that the money for compulsory acquisition in the Budget 2008/2009 is not enough. Can the Commissioner say how this will be dealt with?

Mr Grandcourt: Mr Chairperson, Sir, that portion of road is on a priority list. I don’t know when, but it will be upon availability of funds. As the Member has said, we are nearing the end of this financial year. I don’t think that, in this financial year, we will be able to upgrade that road. But, still, we are coming with

a new financial year, and the matter concerning acquisition of land will be looked into.

Mr Lisette: Mr Chairperson, Sir, as regards route 220 mentioned by the Commissioner for Transport, does he not consider it as discriminatory that, out of three buses that were to serve this route, only one is being in service?

Mr Grandcourt: Mr Chairperson, Sir, as I have said, I am not aware of it. I will look into the matter, and decisions will be taken accordingly.

Mr Lisette: I would like to ask the Commissioner for Transport whether he has recently met the bus owners serving this route.

Mr Grandcourt: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I have met one of them.

Mr Lisette: As per this meeting, were there any complaints as regards the situation that we have just mentioned, that is, the discriminatory approach in the servicing of that route?

Mr Grandcourt: Mr Chairperson, Sir, the guy came to see me just like this, and I don't want to disclose any information concerning our meeting.

Mr Lisette: Mr Chairperson, Sir, being given that the bus owner has met the Commissioner for Transport, there is an issue of concern. May I ask the Commissioner, with respect to the issue raised and being made aware by the Minority that there is a problem on that route, what will be the measures taken by the Commissioner in order to remedy same?

Mr Grandcourt: For the third time, I am saying that I will look into the matter. I have to look into the matter first, and then take a decision. How can I answer this question? I have to look into the matter first.

Mr Lisette: Does the Commissioner mean, Mr Chairperson, Sir, that there has been no information given to him by the National Transport Authority officers as regards this aspect?

Mr Grandcourt: Mr Chairperson, Sir, no official information has been given to me.

Mr Lisette: Is he aware, Mr Chairperson, Sir, that there has been a complaint made by one Member of the Minority on that issue at the NTA office?

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

Mrs Perrine-Begué: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I would like to ask the Commissioner why he refused to see some of the bus owners and saw only one of the two of them.

Mr Grandcourt: Mr Chairperson, Sir, *je pense que les membres commencent à entrer dans les détails de tout ce qui se passe dans les bureaux, tout ce qui est du day-to-day running of the office.* This is my office. Someone wanted to contact me, and we talked about many things. I don't want to disclose this information.

PISTACHE DAM - CONSTRUCTION

(No. B/11) Mr D. Baptiste (Second Local Region Member of Grande Montagne) asked the Chief Commissioner, with regard to water in Rodrigues, whether he can give description about the progress to date on the proposed construction of the Pistache Dam, and table a copy of any latest reports/study and other documents pertaining to this project.

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, with regard to the proposed construction of the Pistache Dam project, I am informed that the feasibility study for the construction of same was carried out by Ninham Shand. (PTY) Co. Ltd., a South African consultancy firm. The project has been submitted to AFD (*Agence Française de Développement*) to look at the possibility of financing the construction of same.

AFD has carried out further studies to assess its economic viability as well as looking at other alternatives. A draft report has been submitted by AFD. The Commission for Water Resources is studying the report and will be submitting the views of the Commission thereon. Since the report is at a draft stage, it will not be advisable to make it public for the time being.

Mrs Perrine-Begué: Mr Chairperson, Sir, in the Executive Council report of 30 January 2009, it is said that recommendation is being made not to proceed ahead with the construction of the Pistache Dam. In that same report, it is said that proposals have been made to look into the possibility of modifying the project of Pavé La Bonté. Is that not a setback, Mr Chairperson, Sir? Is it not true that the Regional Government is back-pedalling not only technically but, at the same time, politically, being given that they freezed that same project that was already ongoing? Funds were made available for that Pavé La Bonté project.

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, you know what is project planning and what are commitments. The first report which has been made by Ninham Shand says nothing about permeability and other technical aspects. They just said that a dam can be made, and that such and such volume of water can come into it. Thereafter, there has been a LuxConsult report, saying that the dam may be made, etc. There are certain assumptions in the LuxConsult report; for example, that, hypothetically, it may be filled once every 19 years. I personally prefer to make errors now, Mr Chairperson, Sir, in deciding, than to look at a dam which is empty in 20 years' time. We have the example of Anse Raffin, which we have to mitigate, Mr Chairperson, Sir. The actual cost of the dam - if this dam is to be made - is exceeding presently Rs1 billion; *un milliard de roupies*. What AFD told us when they came here, is that we have to be very careful about which alternative choices we have to make. I have to admit that we have put only Rs40 m., because

at the time of the preparation of the budget we thought that we could tender it and start some preliminary works, etc. This Rs40 m. would have to be completed by external funds from the Ministry of Finance, which would have helped to negotiate. But when we were told to approach AFD, AFD told us that they had to look at many aspects. The report is here; it will be made public and, of course, we have to listen to the experts. The experts say many things about Pistache Dam, mainly that there is need to be further investigations and studies. Following this, if need be and if we have the finances and there is justification about the cost benefit of the dam over the very long term, the Regional government will take a decision.

Mrs Perrine-Begué: Can I ask the Chief Commissioner what is the time frame, Mr Chairperson, Sir? We see that there have been major upheavals in the northern region because of water specifically, and there have been a number of options that have been taken to forget about technical reports that had already been submitted to the ancient government to look into new technical perspectives. Mr Chairperson, Sir, we see that we come back to square one. I would like to ask the Chief Commissioner how many times we are going to use lorries and how many times we are going to have so many social problems, when we know that there is no other alternative to have water in the northern region than what has been said in the report that he mentioned?

The Chief Commissioner: What is the question, Mr Chairperson, Sir?

Mrs Perrine-Begué: My question is about the time frame, Mr Chairperson, Sir. The Chief Commissioner is saying “we are going to look into other options” again. But the problem continues, and we have seen at the beginning of January how it coerced, Mr Chairperson, Sir.

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, we have to look at the whole water problem in Rodrigues in a holistic and - I would say - dispassionate

manner. We have to put passion apart; we have to put reasons. Everybody here knows what a decision making process is regarding a project. If I say that I use to swim in a river, I like this river and I must put a dam here, this is not a reason. You agree with me. It must be guided by the volume of water which is going into it, by the permeability. All technical aspects must be taken into consideration, and we must be guided by the cost, if we have to pump the water upwards, etc... This is the new approach in the water sector. I must say that the committee which has been set up is doing a job that should have been done 20 years back.

Mr Baptiste: Mr Chairperson, Sir, in the main question I asked to table the latest report. So, I would ask the Chief Commissioner whether he could table the report.

Mr Chairperson: The Member has not listened to the answer.

The Chief Commissioner: The report is at draft stage. I will table it when it will be finalised.

Mr Spéville: Mr Chairperson, Sir, being given that there is a compromise between the viability and financial aspect of the construction of the Pistache Dam, can the Chief Commissioner state what other alternatives, in terms of construction of dams, his Office is contemplating with reference to the LuxConsult report which came before the Ninham Shand report?

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I thank the Member for this question, being given the importance of this issue. With your permission, I would like to read a short summary of the report.

Mr Chairperson: Of course, if it forms part of your answer, you can proceed.

The Chief Commissioner: Allow me to guide you. We will share the résumé of the report with everybody. We will have a workshop on 02 March on this issue, that is, water sector reforms, etc. I hope I will see all Members there, and that they will give their point of view. This is the résumé –

Suite à la mission technique effectuée du 12 au 17 octobre 2008 sur les sites de barrages sur l'île Rodrigues, et au vu des données et documents à notre disposition, les experts préconisent pour le projet de barrage de Rivière Pistache -

- de ne pas envisager la construction de cet ouvrage de 3h m³ sans une justification technique de l'étanchéité de toute la retenue non faite à ce jour et des résultats positifs concernant la possibilité de réaliser un écran étanche sous le barrage par injection de coulis dans les matériaux ;
- de redéterminer le volume de la retenue par rapport à des épisodes pluvieux constatés dans le passé, car il existe un risque important de ne pas pouvoir le remplir les années déficitaires ;
- d'envisager la réalisation en lieu et en place d'une retenue de petite capacité pour l'irrigation agricole comparable au réservoir de Cascade Victoire. De même, pour le projet de Pavé La Bonté, il est recommandé de vérifier s'il n'existe pas d'autres projets ou variantes plus intéressantes pour l'île, compte tenu son coût relativement élevé.

Le projet de Cascade Pigeon, proche de Port Mathurin, serait un projet plus intéressant si le site est trouvé étanche. Les actions et les études pour la sécurisation de l'eau potable à Rodrigues et domestique pour la population de l'île que nous recommandons sont les suivantes -

- des actions immédiates ne nécessitant que quelques études ;

- nettoyage et curage des retenues en exploitation, notamment celle de Cascade Pigeon que nous avons entamé déjà ;
- réhabilitation et étanchéité sous le barrage est à reprendre ; les ouvrages d'Anse Raffin et de Solitude ;
- encourager la collecte individuelle et collective des eaux de pluie par les aides financières et subventions ;
- réduire les pertes sur le réseau principal de distribution d'eau par une surveillance accrue, des mesures continues et des contrôles, compteurs, facturation, etc, et dissociation du réseau d'eau potable et domestique du réseau d'irrigation ;
- surveiller les pompages d'eau saumâtre dans la nappe profonde, afin d'éviter les intrusions irréversibles d'eau de mer ;
- des actions et études envisagées rapidement ;
- étudier la possibilité de rélager un barrage réservoir à Cascade Pigeon en remplacement de celui de Pavé La Bonté.
- étudier un projet de petite capacité à Pavé La Bonté se substituant au seuil aval existant ;
- étudier l'opportunité de réaliser un projet de pompage-turbinage avec le CEB à partir du projet de Pavé La Bonté ;
- développer l'énergie éolienne sur plusieurs sites ;
- conforter le développement du dessalement de l'eau de mer en association avec l'éolien, ainsi que la récupération de la chaleur des groupes diesels existants aux générations, bien que marginal ;

- privilégier la réalisation des petits réservoirs de 500 à 5,000 m³; un par bassin, pour favoriser l'irrigation locale.

Les études de fonds à engager sur le long terme -

- confirmer l'étanchéité de la cuvette du barrage du réservoir de Pistache et la faisabilité de l'écran étanche sous le barrage par injection de coulis ;
- définir un volume optimal de la retenue du barrage de Pistache ;
- étudier la possibilité de construire une retenue étanche à Pistache ;
- étudier la possibilité de surélever le barrage de Telber ;
- engager des études générales, etc ;
- étudier la possibilité, après étude hydro-géodynamique, de réaliser un captage en galerie à Rivière Banane.

ST. FRANCOIS-TROU D'ARGENT - ACCESS ROAD

(No. B/12) Mr D. Baptiste (Second Local Region Member of Grande Montagne) asked the Commissioner responsible for Public Infrastructure, Housing, Environment & Others whether, with regard to road construction, he would state if there is/will be any construction/upgrading of the access road from St. Francois to Trou d'Argent and, if so -

- (a) give description about the nature of works to be carried out there;
- (b) who will carry out such works, and under whose supervision;
- (c) the cost of the project and the expected date of completion;
- (d) table a copy of the project plan, if any.

Mr Grandcourt: Mr Chairperson, Sir, it goes beyond doubt that Trou d'Argent remains one of the main tourist attractions in Rodrigues, and more so this beach has been classified among the most beautiful beaches of the world.

As regards part (a) of the question, there is no construction of any access road from entrance gate located at St Francois to Trou d'Argent beach. However, accessibility along the steep slopes is being improved to enhance the safety and security of the visitors.

The nature of the works is as follows -

- (i) construction of 218m of track road from last '*radier*' at St Francois to the existing entrance gate. But, Mr Chairperson, Sir, I must admit that, due to a misinterpretation of the project plan, excavation works were extended slightly beyond this chainage, and same were remedied thereafter;
- (ii) construction of calcanerite and wooden steps and handrail along the steep gradient over a stretch of 200m, and
- (iii) fixing of 50m of wooden parapet on the cliff at Grand Anse.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, I reassure the House that all existing track inside the enclosed area leading to Trou d'Argent will be kept in its actual state and the natural environment will be preserved.

In addition, all materials which will be used to fabricate the steps and handrails will blend with the environment.

As regards part (b), the works will be carried out in-house under the supervision of the technical staff of my Commission.

As regards part (c), the project is being funded by the Tourism Fund to the tune of Rs3 m., and will be completed within the above budgetary provision over a period of three months.

As regards part (d), I hereby table a copy of the proposed project plan.

Mr Lisette: Mr Chairperson, Sir, may I ask the Commissioner for Public Infrastructure whether there were prior meetings with the tourism operators and tourism stakeholders before starting the project?

Mr Grandcourt: Mr Chairperson, Sir, before starting the works concerning the track road, we had a meeting with the villagers, the tourist operators, and we had also a site visit to explain to the different stakeholders what we are intending to do, with photos and so on.

Mr Lisette: In this case, Mr Chairperson, Sir, how does the Commissioner account for the fact that there have been not only complaints but resistance from the part of the tourist operators once the project started?

Mr Grandcourt: Mr Chairperson, Sir, in fact, as I have said in my answer, there was a misinterpretation of the project plan, and some excavation works started slightly beyond the chainage. We stopped everything, and this is why I think the tourist operators were worried. But we have taken all the necessary decisions, and everything is according to the plan I have just tabled.

Mr Baptiste: Does this mean that the wrong instructions were given to those workers? How come that there were a misinterpretation of plan if there is a plan?

Mr Grandcourt: M. le président, l'erreur est humaine. Prenons par exemple le barrage d'Anse Raffin. Qu'est-ce qui s'est passé ? On a dit que ça allait coûter R 70 millions, et puis je vois qu'on a terminé avec R 132 millions, et ça c'est une

grosse erreur. Il faut comprendre que l'erreur est humaine. Heureusement qu'on a pu corriger à temps, alors que le barrage d'Anse Raffin ne sert presque à rien.

Mr François: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I would like to know from the Commissioner who prepared this project plan.

Mr Grandcourt: The project plan was prepared by the engineer, Mr Davis Hee Hong Wye.

TERRE ROUGE COLLEGE

(No. B/13) Mr D. Baptiste (Second Local Region Member of Grande Montagne) asked the Deputy Chief Commissioner whether, as regards the Terre Rouge College (Secondary School), he could state -

- (a) when was registration sought from the appropriate authorities;
- (b) whether the college has been duly registered and, if so, when, and if not, why;
- (c) the criteria/procedures required for the registration of a new secondary school;
- (d) whether the location/construction site has been identified and, if so, table a copy of documents relating to same, and
- (e) when are construction works likely to start.

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, as regards part (a), I have been informed by the Manager of REDCO Ltd that registration procedures for the opening of Terre Rouge College were initiated in September 2008.

Regarding part (b), registration was not obtained from the Private Secondary Schools Authority to open the new college, as there should be a minimum of 150 students enrolled there.

As regards part (c), the criteria procedures for the registration of a new secondary school are as follows -

- (i) application for the registration of a private secondary school should be submitted to the PSSA by 31 July of the preceding year, and
- (ii) the following facilities should be made available -
 - (a) well ventilated classrooms and the necessary furniture for teachers & pupils;
 - (b) a room for library with all facilities; reading and reference books, shelves, seats, reading table;
 - (c) a junior laboratory with all equipment;
 - (d) equipment for physical education, and
 - (e) room & facilities for optional subjects (Home Economics, CDT, computer) if taught.

As regards part (d), I am tabling the location site for the construction of a new college at Terre Rouge.

Regarding part (e), I have been informed by the Commission for Public Infrastructure that construction works are likely to start by May 2009.

Mr Lisette: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I would like to ask the Commissioner for Education whether it is a good practice to register a secondary school before its construction is complete.

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: I can't say, Mr Chairperson, Sir, whether it is a good practice or not, but we all know that the Director of Planning and Staff of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Human Resources undertook a planning exercise in terms of infrastructure development at secondary level in

April 2007. The projections in the report clearly indicated that there will be a shortage of seats in the existing REDCO colleges, with its existing physical facilities as from 2008. Among one of these recommendations, the Director has advised that REDCO needs to review its Form I intake to cater for Form VI classes in the short term. Based on the above recommendations, it was decided to reopen Citron Donis Form VI College as from 2008 to cater for the Form I entrance, pending the construction of a new college at Terre Rouge. That is why, in view of that, we decided to register, because it was decided to start the construction of the college. But it was decided not to open the college since the CPE pass rate has dropped in 2007.

Mr Baptiste: I would like to know why the Manager took so long to apply, because you have mentioned that application was sought in September 2008. Why was it mentioned in the criteria that application for registration of a school shall be made by the person not later than 31 July? Being given that you already knew that there was a shortage of space and it was supposed that the Terre Rouge College get registered, why did it take so long?

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: The reason, Mr Chairperson, Sir, is that, in 2007, the PSSA had already granted permission to operate the college. As I just mentioned, the CPE pass rate dropped in 2007 but, as for 2008, the Manager applied for registration in September, because normally it was just a reminder, as the PSSA knew that we would have to operate the college subject to the required amount of pupils. This year, due to the fact that we had only 98 students admitted at Citron Donis, we couldn't operate it again as Terre Rouge College; but it is being operated as an annex of Marechal College.

Mr Lisette: Does the Commissioner agree, Mr Chairperson, Sir, that there are delays in the kicking off of projects, being given that this decision was taken as

far back as 2005 with the abolition of Form VI colleges? Does he agree that there is delay in construction as regards this?

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Yes, Mr Chairperson, Sir, I admit that there is delay. The Member is talking about 2005, but I came in office as Commissioner for Education only in 2006.

Mr Baptiste: I would like to know, Mr Chairperson, Sir, why is it that Terre Rouge was offered as a choice for parents in the option form? As a result, we also know that some children were allocated Terre Rouge College. So, if it is not registered, why were children allocated Terre Rouge College?

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, it is because...

Mr Lisette: Mr Chairperson, Sir, as regards the state of affairs now, where students of Terre Rouge College are being admitted at Citron Donis, will it not be easier to register Citron Donis until the construction of the Terre Rouge College?

Mrs Gaspard Pierre Louis: The Commissioner informed the House that the construction will be starting in May 2009. When is he targeting to make the school operational?

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: The project, Mr Chairperson Sir, consists of three phases -

- (i) the first phase is construction of Form I to Form III classrooms and basic amenities such as staffroom, toilets, administrative blocks, specialist's rooms, etc;
- (ii) second phase - construction of Form IV to Form V classrooms and related amenities, and

- (iii) third phase - construction of Form V to Form VI classrooms and related amenities.

The college will be implemented under the global consultancy services, under the supervision of the Public Infrastructure. So, the site has already been identified, the consultancy already appointed to start the planning and so on. We will start by doing the first phase and, as soon as the first phase is completed, the school will start being operated.

Mr Lisette: Now that we have 98 students at Citron Donis and, next year, most probably, there will be no admission at Form I level, we are going to reach or to go higher than the bar of 150 students, which means that we are going to have registration. The criteria for registration are not only the number of students, but it also depends on the availability of facilities such as laboratory, classrooms or whatever it is. Why the Commission failed to have registration, since there has been no construction, no lab or other facilities available at Terre Rouge?

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, temporarily we are using ex-Citron Donis Form VI College. At Citron Donis, all these facilities exist, such as toilet, lab and so on.

Mr Lisette: Mr Chairperson, Sir, the facilities that the Commissioner is talking about are found at Citron Donis College, and we are seeking registration for Terre Rouge College, which is not constructed so far. We have no lab and other facilities. How can you ask for registration, being given that criteria for such registration require the setting up of lab and other facilities? Is it not going to fail when the PSSA is going to issue...

Mr Chairperson: I think that we are really dealing with some future events.

Mr Lisette: It is about registration, Mr Chairperson, Sir.

Mr Chairperson: If construction is going to start in May, how is the Member going to be sure to have a basis for a question, stating that there is no lab or there will be no lab, there won't be such ventilation in classrooms? My point is that it has not been constructed so far.

Mr Spéville: Being given that the Citron Donis College has not been operational for some time, I would like to ask the Deputy Chief Commissioner whether the specialist rooms are now fully equipped so that the students can have a full fledged programme over the year and, if not, what remedial measures are being considered?

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, before operating ex-Citron Donis College, we have seen to it that all these facilities exist.

Mr Baptiste: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I would like to know under which name the ex-Citron Donis is operating if Terre Rouge has not obtained registration.

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: I just mentioned it, Mr Chairperson, Sir. It is operating as an annex of Marechal College.

Mr Baptiste: I would like to know whether the parents have been informed, because there was great confusion. Some parents were asking why they have been allocated Terre Rouge College but have to wear the uniforms of Citron Donis or part of Maréchal.

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Ça ne change rien, M. le président. Comme je l'ai dit, c'est la procédure pour avoir une admission. Avant les résultats du CPE, il fallait faire l'enregistrement avec le MES. Alors, on a enregistré sous le nom de Terre Rouge. Mais, en fait, c'est avec l'accord des parents que ces élèves

ont été admis à Citron Donis sous le nom de Maréchal College. Les parents étaient d'accord.

Mr Spéville: Being given that these Form I students are at Citron Donis College, I would like the Deputy Chief Commissioner to see to it that these students have the same rights as those in other colleges and have all the equipment, namely for science subjects where they are having some problem of equipment, so that they are not penalised.

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: I thank the Member for his suggestion; I will look into the matter.

Mrs Gaspard Pierre Louis: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I would like to know from the Commissioner whether, with regard to the registration of students for the Terre Rouge College, there has been nomination of officers to the grade of acting Rector for this college.

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

Mr Chairperson: We have taken sufficient time to deal with question B/13. I understand, through a letter, that the Fifth Island Region Member, Mr Roussety, won't be in attendance today, and has requested that his answers be in form of written answers. The Commissioners concerned are being informed to give the answers to the Clerk, so that they are submitted to the Member concerned. I think it's a good time for us to suspend now, and we will resume with question B/17. I, therefore, suspend the Assembly for one hour.

Atp.m the sitting was suspended.

On resuming atp.m with the Chairperson in the Chair.

WATER SECTOR - PROJECTS, DEVELOPMENTS

(No. B/17) Mrs A. Perrine Begué (First Local Region Member) for St. Gabriel asked the Chief Commissioner whether, with regard to the water sector in Rodrigues, he will, for the benefit of the House, state -

- (a) the number of projects realised for the period 2003 to 2006 and July 2006 to 2008 respectively, and table same;
- (b) whether any new development occurred in the sector during the last 3 months;
- (c) the reason for the setting up of a Water Management Committee, its composition and the outcome of its first meeting, and
- (d) in the wake of the setting up of the Water Company, what will become of the actual staff of the Water Unit.

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I am surprised with part (a) of the question inasmuch as the Member was then a Commissioner and would surely have recalled what projects were being implemented by her colleagues. Nevertheless, the information is being compiled and will be tabled in the Library of the Assembly shortly.

As regards part (b), one of the major developments in the sector is the setting up of a Water Management Committee, the setting up of a full fledged Commission at Malabar for the Water Resources Sector, and the operationalisation of the Rodrigues Water Company Ltd. The mandate of the Water Management Committee is to -

- (a) implement the Regional Government Programme 2006-2011 for the water sector;
- (b) study the problem of water shortage in the drought season, and to take appropriate measures.

- (c) spearhead the reforms in terms of institutional arrangements of the water sector through the Rodrigues Water Company Ltd., and
- (d) undertake any other measures that may deem necessary in the water sector.

The Committee is chaired by the Chief Commissioner and Commissioner for Water Resources and comprises of -

- (i) Commissioner for Public Infrastructure
- (ii) Commissioner for Youth and Sports
- (iii) Commissioner for Health and Community Development
- (iv) Commissioner for Agriculture and Natural Resources
- (v) Departmental Head, Water Resources, and its technical staff
- (vi) Members of the National Assembly, hon. C. Leopold and N. Von-Mally

I am pleased to inform the House that, following the first meeting of the Committee, the following projects are now being implemented -

- (a) construction of a new 1,000m³ reservoir at Montagne Patate and Rivière Coco;
- (b) rehabilitation of Cascade Pigeon Dam;
- (c) desilting of dams at Mangues, Quatre Vents and Rivière Coco;
- (d) upgrading of Grand Baie water system;
- (e) operation of the Rodrigues Water Company, including its staff recruitment;
- (f) purchase of submersible pumps, and

(g) rehabilitation of Fond La Digue spring.

As regards part (d) of the question, a Memorandum of Understanding has yet to be agreed with the Rodrigues Water Company to define exactly the responsibilities of the Water Resources Unit and that of the Rodrigues Water Company. In that respect, a consultative workshop will be organised on 02 March 2009 to discuss the modalities of the Memorandum of Understanding amongst other things. The staff, which may be made redundant in some areas, will be posted to other sections of the Commission or other Commissions with the Rodrigues Regional Assembly, like for example the Irrigation Unit at the Commission of Water Resources.

Mrs Perrine Begué: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I would like to ask the Chief Commissioner whether there was any committee for structural management of the Water Resources in Rodrigues which was operational before the setting up of that Management Committee.

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

Mrs Perrine Begué: Mr Chairperson, Sir, being given that the Chief Commissioner is responsible for all Commissioners, how come he is not aware whether there was any managerial commission? Is it that he overlooked or can he give more information?

The Chief Commissioner: I'm not aware, Mr Chairperson, Sir. What I know when I took the responsibility of the Water Resources is that we agreed to create a committee of Commissioners to manage, overview and advise with a team spirit about how to manage water resources and distribution in Rodrigues. I'm not aware that there was such a committee or any other committee. Maybe, the then Commissioner could inform me, but, at this stage, I cannot ask him.

Mrs Perrine Begué: Mr Chairperson, Sir, the Chief Commissioner means the Commissioner responsible for all the Commissioners. Did he find it important, before he took over that portfolio, to ask what was happening at the Commission and to be kept informed of all the different developments happening at the level of that Commission?

The Chief Commissioner: Yes, Mr Chairperson, Sir. There was a former Committee, which I chaired, for drought only when there was crisis. I don't know what the Member wants to prove. We are here to work, and the modalities about how this work is to be done are through arrangement between different Commissions, and the work is being done.

Mr Lisette: Mr Chairperson, Sir, in view of the answer of the Chief Commissioner, does that mean that he did not make an assessment of what was happening in the water sector when he took that portfolio? Because if he is willing to change things, this means he should be able to know what is not working and needs to be improved. Does that mean that he did not have an overall view or briefing or a proper handing over with the Commissioner, in order to know what is not working or what needs to be improved?

The Chief Commissioner: It is because I have a good overview, Mr Chairperson, Sir, that I took over.

Mrs Perrine Begué: The Chief Commissioner mentioned the number of projects and new developments that have happened since he took over the water sector. I would like to ask him whether there has been a change in apportionment of the budget that was given to water by him, or whether these projects were already there.

The Chief Commissioner: The budget which has been allocated to water, Mr Chairperson, Sir, has remained the same. But within the water sector, there may have been some changes like, for example, re-allocation of money to the water company, to enable it to operate.

Mr Spéville: The Chief Commissioner talked about the new development that has occurred during the last three months. I would like to ask him whether there has been development on the issue of water desalination, and to give the reasons for the delay, as well as the time frame for its operation.

The Chief Commissioner: This is another question, Mr Chairperson, Sir.

Mrs Perrine Begué: Coming to redundancy, Mr Chairperson, Sir, the Chief Commissioner is talking of a MoU, but the water company is not yet set up. So, the MoU is between which organisations?

The Chief Commissioner: It is wrong to say that the water company is not yet set up. I know that the Member watches the decision of the Executive Council. She should go through the papers, and then she would see that one of the first decisions we took was to create the water company. I don't have the exact date, but I will make a statement today. We already have a General Manager for the company. We already have an Office at Malabar, and I will inform the House about the details regarding operationalisation of this company. Everything will be defined. It is not up to me to define it; everything will be done in consultation. This is why we are having a consultative workshop, and I am inviting her to come and participate, to give her point of view. We know broadly what will be the responsibility of the water company, and this is why we have set it up. Now, we want people to share their views and to give their opinions about what we are going to do, and these are very important reforms.

Mrs Perrine Bégué: Talking of reforms, Mr Chairperson, Sir, the mandate of the Management Committee is to first implement the Regional Government Programme, which pertains to policy, and it goes down as to undertake any other measures, through institutionalisation, water shortage, etc. Being given that water has been devolved to Rodrigues and is an area of responsibility which has been given officially to the Chief Commissioner, I would like to ask him what remains of the role of the Commissioner who has just taken this portfolio.

The Chief Commissioner: He is just a figurehead, maybe, Mr Chairperson, Sir.

Mrs Perrine Bégué: Can the Chief Commissioner say whether he is proud of this?

The Chief Commissioner: Yes, I'm proud of it, Mr Chairperson, Sir. Why should I not be proud to work within a team? Mr Agathe who was formerly Commissioner for Water, Mr Franceau Grandcourt who is the Commissioner for Public Infrastructure - and he has experience in the execution of technical projects -, Mr L. A. Perrine and two other Members of the National Assembly will work together. Everybody gives their point of view. I am the Chairman of the Committee and, with this team spirit, when a decision is taken, I have to follow it up and do the job. I go for visits, and I report to the committee. The Committee listens to the people, and all ideas are brought together. Where is the problem? Does the Member think I have given the responsibility of the Water Resources to the company? No, it's to the Commissioner, but the committee is working to help. There is no problem to that. Where is the problem?

FOOD SECURITY FUND – RRA

(No. B/18) Mrs A. Perrine-Begue (First Local Region Member of St. Gabriel) the Commissioner responsible for Agriculture and Others whether, with regard to the allocation of funds to the Rodrigues Regional Assembly under the Food Security Fund, he will state -

- (a) how the money will be disbursed;
- (b) the sectorial priorities regarding same, and
- (c) give an account of the related measures and decisions already taken in that connection, if any.

Mr Perrine: Mr Chairperson, Sir, as regards part (a), a sum of Rs187 m. has been earmarked for the Commission for Agriculture, Rodrigues Regional Assembly, following the submission of 21 projects to the Food Security Fund for financing, which have all been approved. The funds will be managed by the Food Security Fund Committee itself through appropriate financial committees.

Disbursement of the funds will be made through the Food Security Fund Committee upon submission of the following information by the Commission for Agriculture -

- a detailed breakdown of each project identified, together with the capital involved, substantiated by invitation to tender where required;
- a detailed work programme of the different projects.

The above documents will be analysed by the Finance Committee of the Food Security Fund Committee, and approval for disbursement would only be made if the committee is satisfied that all the information requested have been submitted.

With regard to (b), Mr Chairperson, Sir, the main priority is to increase the self-sufficiency level of Rodrigues in terms of food crop production. Hence, the priorities laid down by the Commission for Agriculture are according to its strategic option for the Agricultural Sector in Rodrigues in November 2008, namely -

- (i) food crop;
- (ii) construction of maize drying centre;
- (iii) clustering of farmers;
- (iv) improvement of irrigation facilities;
- (v) rehabilitation of abandoned lands;
- (vi) construction of a feed mix unit, etc

Mr Chairperson, Sir, meetings have already been started with farmers of various sectors to assess their requirements, following which the following projects have been initiated -

- (i) setting-up of agricultural village;
- (ii) upgrading of structures related to onion production;
- (iii) rehabilitation of abandoned land for maize production;
- (iv) pasture land rehabilitation, and
- (v) setting-up of various agricultural villages, namely at Grand Baie, Camp Pintade, Gravières, etc.

Mrs Perrine Bégué: Mr Chairperson, Sir, in Mauritius, this national fund has an important committee which is managing and overlooking everything. Then, we have a Monitoring Committee to look into the projects. Being given that

almost twenty percent of that big envelope has been given to Rodrigues, can the Commissioner inform the House how he is going about in Rodrigues?

Mr Perrine: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I must make it very clear that we have several committees in Mauritius. First, we have the committee for managing the Fund itself. This is a separate committee, and Rodrigues is represented on this committee by the officer in charge for Agriculture. Then, we have 12 technical committees. Rodrigues also is represented on 11 eleven committees. And then, they have just set up the project implementing committee, which is chaired by Mr Monty in Mauritius. At the level of my Commission, there will be a coordinating committee which will liaise with the implementing committee in Mauritius for disbursement of funds and for approval of projects.

Mrs Perrine Bégué: Mr Chairperson, Sir, there are 11 technical committees for the rest of the money - Rs800 m. For Rodrigues, there are Rs187 m. How do you go about it? There are 11 Technical Committees? There is the Monitoring Committee in Mauritius. You are on that Board, but there are different projects for Rodrigues. How do you do with the stakeholders in Rodrigues? Is there any structural development that has occurred, since the announcement of this project, when you went on the Committee and took over the envelope?

Mr Perrine: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I think the respected Member is confused. The 12 technical committees were set up before the approval of the strategic plan; 12 technical committees were to prepare the strategic plan that has been presented to Central Government for approval. This is from where we had the sum of Rs187 m. There is an implementation committee which has just been set up at the level of the Ministry. In Rodrigues also, we have a subcommittee to implement all the projects. We have 21 projects which have already been submitted in Mauritius.

Government has approved, and now there will be disbursement for only these 21 projects. For all these projects, we have committees set up in Rodrigues.

Mrs Perrine Bégué: In Mauritius, we see that these committees embrace civil societies, as well as experts, members from NGOs, members from the private sector. What about Rodrigues?

Mr Perrine: In Rodrigues also, Mr Chairperson, Sir, farmers and planters will be involved whenever projects that are being implemented are related to them. We will try to put a limited number of committees, because if we lose our time in committees only, then nothing will be done. We have small committees that take decisions, so that the implementation of the projects does not delay and take much time.

Mrs Perrine Bégué: Agriculture, Mr Chairperson, Sir, is quite cross-sectoral in nature and, as regards this Fund, we see that it is a cross-sectoral issue which will need input from a number of Commissions, be it Women, Water etc, which means that there is need for high level consultation, collaboration. Can the Commissioner assure the House of collective commitment? Can you enlighten the Commission that you are backed by the whole Executive Council for this?

Mr Perrine: Mr Chairperson, Sir, of course, the Executive Council is giving all its support for the execution of this project. I must inform the House that we have just started a vast campaign of sensitisation at the level of both farmers and planters, and that all the stakeholders will be kept informed. They will be informed of everything that will take place, and will participate in the decision making.

Mr Spéville: Being given that the main project comes from the sugar sector, can the Commissioner state if a special derogation has been made for Rodrigues? Because Rodrigues is a non sugar sector.

Mr Perrine: Mr Chairperson, Sir, in all these committees, emphasis was not only laid on sugar; it was also for non sugar sector. For sugar, there is a special committee dealing with it. But for the other projects, we have special committees dealing with farmers, producers, agro-industry etc.

Mrs Perrine Bégué: Mr Chairperson, Sir, we see that, in this strategic plan, land preparation is common in Mauritius and Rodrigues as a priority. But we see that, in Mauritius, for land preparation, an attached list of regions is separately published in a tabular form. It is already transparent. For Rodrigues, we have not heard anything. Right now, we hear about consultations, etc, but nothing has been published. Can the Commissioner inform us whether he will take the responsibility to publish in total transparency how this envelope will be disbursed?

Mr Perrine: Of course, Mr Chairperson, Sir. I think one should be smart enough to understand that we can't do agriculture everywhere; we need some technical experience and support to start the project. For instance, concerning the rehabilitation of abandoned land, we cannot go around and rehabilitate lands that are on the mountain, which are not fertile. This should be done after a technical survey has been made and recommendation submitted. That's why we have already contacted the MSIRI, which has already conducted a land suitability survey to tell us what abandoned lands are to be rehabilitated. We are not going to use government money to rehabilitate land that will not produce anything. So, all these information will be published in due course.

Mrs Perrine-Bégué: Mr Chairperson, Sir, we see that, at national level, there is quite an important envelope dedicated to pig growers. We know that in

Mauritius they have had problems. It's quite fair that such a share be given to them. But nothing is mentioned as regards Rodrigues. At national level, there is also a grant of Rs53 m. for pig growers. There is also a question of landing. Can the Commissioner inform the House why when the priorities of the Fund were being discussed, pig growers were not inserted in the Rodrigues chapter?

Mr Perrine: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I must inform the respected Member that the Food Security Fund does not cover the rearing of pigs, which is being spearheaded in Mauritius by the Empowerment Programme Foundation. But, for Rodrigues, we have a special programme. Last Friday, I presented a paper at the Executive Council, where we are coming with a new policy for pig growing in Rodrigues, which includes a clustery condition related to environment. And also, what is very important, I think, is the setting up of a feed unit in Rodrigues.

Mrs Perrine Bégué: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I see that one of the priorities of Rodrigues under this particular Fund is milk production. We see that the setting up of a milk pasteurization unit at Saint Gabriel will be financed by the Fund, provided that dairy breeders accept to regroup themselves into a cluster for milk collection. I would like to ask the Commissioner how this is being organised to make sure that Rodrigues can profit fully of this Fund, and whether he is considering taking steps to make sure that the breeders cluster together.

Mr Perrine: Mr Chairperson, Sir, up to now, we have about four associations dealing with milk. What we are going to do is strengthen these organisations, for instance helping them to have dairy cattle and also with the setting up of the pasteurization unit. The collecting and marketing of milk will also be looked into.

Mrs Perrine Begué: Under this same chapter, we speak of a dairy farm that will be set up. Can the Commissioner give information as to where it will be set up and the cost thereof?

Mr Perrine: Mr Chairperson, Sir, it is at Saint Gabriel. It will be upgraded and converted with all the necessary equipment, to be able to operate according to norms, whereby milk and milk product could be made available. This is why the Fund provides Rs300 m. for the rehabilitation and improvement that are taking place at Saint Gabriel.

Mr Lisette: Mr Chairperson, Sir, the strategic plan, as submitted by the committee, states that some 4,750 *arpents* of agricultural land, which are abandoned, will be rehabilitated. May I know from the Commissioner whether the rehabilitated abandoned land will be given to registered farmers or to anyone who wants to enter this move?

Mr Perrine: Mr Chairperson, Sir, after the report submitted by the MSIRI, we are now conducting a new survey, a very rapid survey to know exactly the status of these lands, who are the owners, where they are and why they are abandoned. If there is no record about that, the land, of course, will be put at the disposal of applicants. We have more than 8,000 applicants and it will be made available to them, so that we can cultivate all these lands that are being abandoned in Rodrigues.

Mrs Perrine Begué: Mr Chairperson, Sir, when we look at the 2007/2008 budget, we see that Rs54 m. were given to your Commission in the form of capital expenditure and that, at January, only Rs11 m. had been spent. Now, the Commission will be given Rs187 m. over and above its own budget. Can the Commissioner guarantee this House how he will be able to perform this envelope?

Mr Perrine: Mr Chairperson, Sir, first of all, the Rs50 m. include also water sector, which is Rs40 m. For agriculture, I must say that, up to now, we have spent our entire capital budget. But, coming back to the Rs187 m., which represents three times our budget, that is, the budget that we will have in three years, we have taken steps so that all the projects are implemented, and the amount disbursed and spent in Rodrigues. I must inform the respected Member that the Rs187 m. is for three years.

Mr Spéville: Under the Food Security Fund in Mauritius, the project implementation committee will set up loan guarantee schemes to be operated by commercial banks, to provide a revolving line of credit of about Rs100 m. for the purchase of equipment. I would like to ask the Commissioner if the same facilities will be applied to Rodrigues.

Mr Perrine: Mr Chairperson, Sir, of course, the same facility will be applied, and we are in the process of seeing how all these will be implemented in Rodrigues.

RRA - FINANCIAL STATUS

(No. B/19) Mrs A. Perrine-Bégué (First Local Region Member of St. Gabriel) asked the Chief Commissioner, as regards the ongoing Financial year 2008/2009, whether he will inform the House of the actual financial status of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly regarding the Rodrigues Capital Expenditure; and the performance of each Commission regarding same, by listing the number and names of projects completed and ongoing as well as those not yet kicked off.

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson Sir, I am submitting a table showing the actual financial status of expenditure under the capital budget for circulation **(Appendix I)**. From the table, it will be noted that the majority of

projects and programmes of all Commissions have been completed or are ongoing. A few large infrastructural projects, which are yet to be started, have now been entrusted to the consultant who has recently been appointed for the design and supervision of projects of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly. The contract for the provision of consultancy services was awarded to Messrs Servansingh Jadav and Partners Consulting Engineers Ltd on 29 January 2009, following relevant procedures carried out by the Central Procurement Board.

Mrs Perrine Bégué: We have just spoken about the Food Security Fund and we see that, for example, aquaculture and laboratory are projects which overlap with the Fund. What will happen now to the funds that have been appropriated for those matters?

The Chief Commissioner: The budget which has been appropriated by the Rodrigues Regional Assembly runs until 30 June of this year, Mr Chairperson, Sir.

Mrs Perrine Bégué: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I ask the Chief Commissioner to be serious. We are asking...

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, on a point of order. Is the Member saying that I am not serious in my answer here? I would kindly invite you, Mr Chairperson, Sir, to consider requesting this Member to remove the words “not serious”. Because I come here with all the seriousness possible, and she cannot cast such an allegation upon me, saying that I am not serious. This is unprofessional from her part.

Mrs Perrine-Bégué: The answer that the Chief Commissioner gave is not professional.

The Chief Commissioner: This is the Member’s point of view.

Mr Chairperson: I don't have to state again that, saying that somebody is not serious is unparliamentary. So, can you proceed?

Mrs Perrine-Bégué: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I insist to say that the answer is not what we are expecting here. Maybe, the person is serious, I don't know. But, as regards to the answer, definitely it is not one. Because this is public money, and by the time the funds were appropriated there was no Food Security Fund.

Mr Chairperson: Is the Respected member commenting on his stand or is she asking a question?

Mrs Perrine-Bégué: I'm asking again, Mr Chairperson, Sir.

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, the Member was a former Commissioner. My answer is an intelligent one. I said that the actual budget runs until 30 June this year. Do you think, Mr Chairperson, Sir, that we would be so silly to put in the Food Security Fund projects for which money have already been appropriated? Of course not, Mr Chairperson, Sir! Do I have to come here and say this? Does this not transpire from what I have said that the budget runs until 30 June? Therefore, what has been appropriated? Can I change what has been appropriated here, because we have had money from the Food Security Fund? No. For the Food Security Fund, we have had new projects. They are specific projects which have been submitted by the Commission over and above the budget of the Commission. Is it clear and intelligent, Mr Chairperson, Sir?

Mrs Perrine Bégué: I was saying, Mr Chairperson, Sir,...

Mr Chairperson: No, don't return on this. Otherwise, I'll have to make a ruling.

Mrs Perrine Bégué: What I was saying, Mr Chairperson, Sir, is that there are projects which collide...

Mr Chairperson: Can the Member put it in the form of a question?

Mrs Perrine-Bégué: Yes, of course. I spoke about aquaculture project. Being given that aquaculture and laboratory are projects which have been spelt out in the Food Security Fund to be funded by that Fund, I was asking the Chief Commissioner what will happen to the money that has been appropriated here in our budget.

Mr Chairperson: You mean the Fund is for three years.

(Interruptions)

Mr Chairperson: Order, please!

The Chief Commissioner: The problem with women is always...

Mr Chairperson: Don't generalise, please.

The Chief Commissioner: They want you to say what they want.

Mr Chairperson: If you can, please do so.

(Interruptions)

Allow the Chief Commissioner to answer the question. Chief Commissioner, can you proceed to answer the question?

The Chief Commissioner: I repeat, Mr Chairperson, Sir, that there may be overlapping. For example, in the Food Security Fund, we have a number of small construction works like construction of track roads and rehabilitation of dams; all these will come. But it does not mean that if some Rs1 m. is put for construction of track road, for example, in Baie Malgache, to rehabilitate the valley, we don't ask for some money again in the Food Security Fund. The projects are joint projects. It is the source of finance which is different, Mr Chairperson, Sir. It may happen that part of the funding of a project comes from the Food Security Fund

and part from our own budget, because for the Food Security Fund to be implemented we are putting our resources already here; our vehicles and machinery, our manpower, etc. We want the projects to go ahead.

Mrs Perrine-Bégué: Now, he has answered, Mr Chairperson, Sir. Mr Chairperson, Sir, Rs300 m. have been given as capital expenditure and only Rs100 m. have been used up to now. I would like to ask the Chief Commissioner how he accounts for this.

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I repeat that the financial year runs until 30 June 2009, and we have until 30 June to pay bills.

(Interruptions)

Mr Chairperson: Whatever is the Member's reaction, I don't want to hear 'not serious' again.

Mrs Perrine-Bégué: Mr Chairperson, Sir, Rs5 m. were given for the project of Esplanade Tourist Port Mathurin. In the mid of the financial year, we came with a question and the Chief Commissioner said that due to technical constraints, the funds have been reallocated to sports and roads. I like to ask the Chief Commissioner where matters stand with regard to this particular project.

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, this project was at the level of my Commission, and the problem is consultancy. You know how it is with tendering of consultancy; when we tendered for the consultancy, we have seen that the cost is as much as Rs12 m. So, we want to see whether we can wait, because we can't have Rs5 m. to start the project itself, whereas we have consultancy tenders which exceed Rs10 m. We have to devise other means. We have now a consultant who can work on the project. In the meantime, we have decided to reallocate the money. It is not the first time that money is reallocated.

Mrs Perrine Bégué: This Regional Government, Mr Chairperson, Sir, does not take lessons? This thing happened last year, 2007/2008. Rs5 m. have been reallocated *dans le parcours*, halfway, and now it is the same answer that the Chief Commissioner is giving us. Mr Chairperson, Sir, I know I cannot use the word “serious”. I would like to ask the Chief Commissioner if he didn’t oversee or didn’t experience that problem for the first time in 2007/2008. How come that he says the same thing halfway of the second Budget, when he actually put again Rs5 m., which means that he knew already what to do with that money?

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, we all know what are the difficulties for projects to start, and when she was on this side, she used to come and say what difficulties they have. If the Member wants to teach me lessons, she should get the majority first and then come to teach us lessons. We want the project to be realised, and we are committed to it. You know the importance of the project. This is why every year we put money in it, because we want it to be kept in the capital budget and we want things to be done. It will be done, Mr Chairperson, Sir, even though we have difficulties. Unfortunately, at times, even though we have the willingness to do the project, we have many constraints, and all these constraints must be addressed.

Mrs Perrine-Bégué: Mr Chairperson, Sir, this Regional Government took over from us two specific projects, which were nearly at term in the health sector, namely *maternité* and the extension of Mont Lubin. I would like to ask the Chief Commissioner how come that, nearly four months ahead of the closure of the budget, Rs9 m. have been allocated and only Rs486,000 have been used.

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, a lot of water has run under the bridge since they were in government and were kicked out. There has been the new Procurement Board, with all the problems which have arisen. The tender has

been awarded for the provision of the maternity ward of the hospital with equipment. They provided for the building; but did they provide for the equipment? Do they think that women will go and have their children on the floor? They won't have a bed and an operation theatre etc. It is when we came that we provided for the equipment. Can a maternity ward be opened where there is only the building? Where will you put the patients? The Member said they built up the maternity ward. Did they cater for the equipment? When we came, we had to wait for the budget to cater for the equipment. They took Rs10 m. out of the budget of agriculture to buy Pajero; they should not forget it. They took agricultural money, Rs12 m., which were to be used to buy tractors, for their own comfort, to buy Pajero, Mr Chairperson, Sir; *pas blier*.

Mrs Perrine Begué: Mr Chairperson, Sir, staying with the vulnerables, I would like to ask the Chief Commissioner - out of the Rs5 m. - where matters stand with regard to the shelter.

The Chief Commissioner: The shelter is being designed, Mr Chairperson, Sir, by the consultant. It will be built this year. Of course, as I said, we had a problem with regard to the consultant. The consultant has just being appointed, and now they are designing it. It's just like the market; they will see the market taking off the ground very soon.

Mrs Perrine Begué: There is one more question with regard to food crops and livestock. There is Rs5 m. and we see that, once again, there is proviso as regards to crops, livestock etc in the Fund. So, I would like to know how far the Commission has gone with regard to this program yet.

Mr Chairperson: Is the Member addressing the question to the Chief Commissioner or the Commissioner for Agriculture?

(Interruptions)

You don't insist on the question. So, we move to the next question.

STIMULUS PACKAGE

(No. B/20) Mrs A. Perrine-Begue (First Local Region Member of St. Gabriel) asked the Chief Commissioner, with regard to the stimulus package announced by the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Finance to shore up the economic performance nation-wide, whether he will for the benefit of the House -

- (a) give a detailed breakdown of the apportionment to the different projects of the sum allocated to Rodrigues, and
- (b) state whether there were any consultation between the Ministry and the Rodrigues Regional Assembly prior to the spelling out of those specific projects for which the money should be used in Rodrigues.

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, a sum of Rs50 m. has been provided to Rodrigues under the Additional Stimulus Package to be used for a new Market in Port Mathurin, the reconstruction of Winston Churchill Bridge and upgrading of roads. This sum has been provisionally apportioned as follows -

New market in Port Mathurin	20 m
Construction of the Winston Churchill Bridge	10 m
Upgrading of road from Caverne Patate to Riviere Coco	20 m

The vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and Economic Empowerment has indicated that the Rs50 m. is in addition to the sum provided for the feasibility study of the new runway and for upgrading of the Sir Gaëtan Duval airport.

As regards to part (b) of the question, following a request of the Ministry of Finance and Economic Empowerment, a list of eight projects, totalling Rs248.5 m., was forwarded to the Ministry on 17 December 2008 for consideration under the Additional Stimulus Package.

Mrs Perrine Begué: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I would like to ask the Chief Commissioner whether he is satisfied with the priorities that were set within the stimulus package as regards shoring up the economic development in Rodrigues.

The Chief Commissioner: This is a question of opinion, Mr Chairperson, Sir. We have submitted for Rs248.5 m; we have received Rs50 m., and every right minded person will see that it is not sufficient.

Mr Lisette: Mr Chairperson, Sir, the Chief Commissioner mentioned a list of eight projects that were submitted to the Ministry of Finance. Can he inform the House about these eight projects?

The Chief Commissioner: The eight projects submitted for consideration under the additional stimulus package are -

- (i) Fishing Port at Oyster Bay
- (ii) Road Development Programme
- (iii) Pointe Monier Fishing Port
- (iv) Port Mathurin Market
- (v) Construction of Winston Churchill Bridge
- (vi) Low Cost Housing Units for Vulnerable Groups
- (vii) Upgrading of Community Centres
- (viii) Additional equipment for the Maternity Ward of the Queen Elizabeth Hospital

Mr Lisette: Mr Chairperson, Sir, since we are speaking of boosting up economic development, I think one of the pillars of the economy here is the tourism industry. I note that, in the eight projects mentioned, there has been no record of same which has been submitted to the Ministry of Finance. May I ask the Chief Commissioner if the tourism industry does not need a boost up at the time we are experiencing that financial crisis?

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, the projects are capital projects. In tourism, what capital projects do you think I could submit for Rs15 m./Rs20 m? We already have Rs10 m. for promotion, and we are being helped through the Ministry of Tourism in the stimulus package for Rodrigues. What would we do, Mr Chairperson, Sir, with Rs10 m? Do they want me to build a hotel; what do they want us to do? We have asked money to build roads. When we improve the road infrastructure of Rodrigues, doesn't this help tourists; doesn't this help the development of Rodrigues? I want the Member to give me an example of a project in tourism that he could have included, apart from promotion, for which we already have much money.

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

The Chief Commissioner: I put a question to the Minority. Give me an example of one project they would have included for tourism, being given we have money for all the Commissions - improvement and minor works at St. Francois is ongoing.

Mr Lisette: Let's us speak, Mr Chairperson, Sir...

Mr Chairperson: This is not proper. He volunteers to ask you questions. It's question time; you put your question.

Mr Lisette: I'm going to ask the question in the form of an answer to his question. Let's consider projects that he mentioned. Is not the esplanade from Port Mathurin to Baladirou a tourism project?

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, it is not only a tourism project. Projects are made for the population and, secondly, it has a spill over effect over tourism. We have chosen within the stimulus package, and there were criteria. The criteria is that, first, it should not be in the budget. The project the Member is talking about is already in the budget, and we could not include it.

Mrs Perrine-Bégué: Mr Chairperson, Sir, on the same line, even if the Chief Commissioner is saying that a capital project is always going through physical development, we see that in this stimulus package programme, Mauritius has included projects which have nothing to do with infrastructure but with those players within the sector. *Est-ce qu'une des possibilités n'aurait pas pu être une ligne de crédit, M. le président ?* We asked a question about that last time, when we said that if those persons who are not following the guidelines that have been set in the tourism regulations don't have the money, they won't get the permit, and if they don't have the permit, they won't get the money. There is a vicious circle. So, is it not true that this could be a possibility, Mr Chairperson, Sir?

The Chief Commissioner: There is no vicious circle. The Member is inventing, Mr Chairperson, Sir. Don't come and tell me that you want to have a registration plate for a car when you don't have the car! You must have a car to have the registration plate! So, the person must have invested in his hotel. Who will invest in this? Do you want government to put this? I repeat that if you go to the DBM with a serious project, your project is approved. There is money available in the Empowerment Programme, at Enterprise Mauritius etc. They have money to help all these people at national level. Should we, at the level of the

Regional Assembly, take over all these financial projects, and give people money etc? We can do it. And then, who will manage all these? Should I, as Commissioner for Finance, go and take a guarantee on the land of people, telling them to take money from us and then they refund? Is it the role of the Regional Assembly or do we have specific institutions for this?

Mrs Perrine-Bégué: Is it not true that the Chief Commissioner has misunderstood capital projects, and that he construed it as physical projects? Because we see that, here, in the stimulus package for Mauritius, the manufacturing sector, SME, tourism, social contract have been catered for.

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir...

Mr Chairperson: The Member cannot ask a person whether he has misconstrued something.

The Chief Commissioner: If she knows better than those sitting in the Chair; maybe she knows better. I know exactly what are physical projects and what are capital projects, Mr Chairperson, Sir. As regards the question, I repeat that there were criteria for submission of these project proposals. And we were bound by these criteria.

Mrs Perrine-Bégué: Mr Chairperson, Sir, therefore, an additional sum of Rs50 m. is being granted to this Regional Government - four months ahead of the closure of the budget. *Il y a encore R 200 millions dans la nature.*

The Chief Commissioner: On a point of Order, Mr Chairperson, Sir. Money *pas capave dans la nature; qui ou pe vine raconté ou!* She is casting allegations on the government, saying that money is *dans la nature*. This is not true. The money is not even here; the money is budgeted, and when there is need to pay we will pay. Please wait. We have until 30 June. We have shown them last

year, and we will show them again this year. So, they should please wait, and they will see. The Rs 50 m., Mr Chairperson, Sir, are not attached with the financial year. We have until 31December - if my memory is good - 2010 to realise these projects. The money will stay here; it will overlap on the financial year. I know it's not good news for them; but what can we do!

Mrs Perrine-Bégué: Mr Chairperson, Sir, Mauritius has taken some steps like, for example, the design and build procurement method to accelerate implementation of this stimulus package. Being given that there is an additional sum of Rs50 m., and even if it is for one more year, I would like to ask the Chief Commissioner what is the situation for Rodrigues.

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I have not even received the stimulus package presented by government. What we were asked for are capital projects which can be implemented readily until it could be started. So, what we did was to submit this. If we were invited to submit major things to help tourism operators, planters, etc, we would have done it, Mr Chairperson, Sir. Unfortunately, we were told to submit capital projects that could be implemented readily and which are not in the budget. These were the criteria. When you are asked for something, you don't give more than that; you provide the information which has been requested. We were not consulted about what could be done to improve in Rodrigues. I was not even aware they were asking this. It is after this that they said there was a stimulus package. But we were not consulted; we were just asked to give a list of capital projects readily to be implemented. And if respected Members do not agree, they have to fight; keep fighting.

Mrs Perrine-Bégué: *M. le président, j'aimerais demander* in the light of what the Chief Commissioner has said - we understand that he understood it in a

way - I would like to ask him whether, in view of this Rs50 m., he considers it is a stimulus impetus that is given to our economy.

The Chief Commissioner: M. le président, le grand terme est : qu'est-ce qu'on va faire? Ce n'est pas tout le monde qui connaît les difficultés des entreprises, les difficultés de la création d'emploi à Rodrigues, la petitesse de l'île, la hausse du prix du billet d'avion, etc. On fait de notre mieux pour essayer de dire qu'on a des problèmes. C'est pour cela que les opérateurs touristiques font des consultations, et ils m'ont dit que, bientôt, ils vont faire des actions sociales, pétitions etc. pour demander certaines choses au gouvernement national par rapport à Rodrigues, par exemple, qu'on enlève toutes les taxes sur les billets d'avion. On demande cela depuis deux ans, et cela a été refusé. Il faut que la population civile se réveille, que les ONG, l'opposition donnent un coup de main, et disent 'oui', il y a un problème. Il faut que Rodrigues parle d'une seule voix par rapport aux problèmes que nous avons. S'il n'y a pas de touristes, cela ne veut pas dire que c'est de la faute de la Commission du tourisme ; s'il n'y a pas de touristes, c'est parce qu'il y a une récession mondiale, c'est parce que Air Mauritius s'est engagé dans une stratégie de *hedging*, ce qui fait que le prix du billet qui aurait dû aujourd'hui être à R 5,000 reste à R 8,000. Mais, qu'est que Johnson Roussety ou X, Y peuvent faire? Est-ce que je suis responsable ? *No! We are doing our best.* La semaine prochaine, on fait le déplacement, avec une trentaine d'opérateurs, à la Réunion, pour rencontrer les opérateurs réunionnais, pour booster le marché réunionnais. Mais, qu'est ce qu'on peut faire de plus, M. le président ? Est-ce qu'on peut, nous, prendre l'argent du budget de Rodrigues, *and subsidise air tickets to Rodrigues* ? On ne peut pas le faire. J'ai récemment exprimé l'idée qu'on pourrait peut-être envisager de créer une compagnie rodriguaise, dans le court terme ou à l'avenir, pour faire la ligne Maurice/Rodrigues et Maurice/Réunion. Qui

s'est exprimé ? Il y a des gens qui se sont exprimés, mais, après, il faut que la société civile *take over issues, work them out and make them come up*.

Mrs Perrine-Bégué: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I must say in this House that I'm very ashamed of this package, and this reflects the nature of the proposals made from Rodrigues. N'est-il pas vrai, M. le président, que les vrais problèmes économiques de Rodrigues ne se trouvent pas dans les propositions qui ont effectivement été faites à la demande du ministère des finances au gouvernement? N'est-il pas vrai que les vrais problèmes économiques de Rodrigues ne s'y situent pas? Le gouvernement, la majorité a raté le coche. N'est-il pas vrai qu'ils n'ont pas soumis les propositions qui reflètent vraiment où se trouve le *boubou* de l'économie Rodrigues?

The Chief Commissioner: Maybe the Member should remember why her budget in 2003, I think, came down from Rs450 m to Rs250 m. Maybe, she also, in the then government, did not make the proposals, Mr Chairperson, Sir. Yes, I repeat to you, hon. respected Member; when we are asked about something, we give the information. We were not told there would be additional stimulus package; we were told in December that there was additional money in Mauritius. They said they wanted to give us some money more, and to submit to them projects ready for implementation. We had the market, the bridge, and a portion of road from Corail to Rivière Coco. We submitted all these to the tune of Rs285.5 m. If we were told the stimulus package was coming and that we had to propose specific measures to run the economy of Rodrigues, we would have done it. We want to propose, Mr Chairperson, Sir. They should not see the problem in the Regional Government. They should see the problem in those authorities that have the power to make things change in Mauritius, and that are not willing to make things change. If government wants to remove the tax on the air ticket to

Rodrigues, it is a one line decision. They can remove the tax; the ticket will fall and tourists from Mauritius will come. The same thing happened when Mauritius became a duty free zone in 2005, I think; this had an adverse effect on Rodrigues. Who spoke about that, Mr Chairperson, Sir? Who spoke against the rezoning of the fishing grounds in Rodrigues in four zones? Who spoke against that, Mr Chairperson, Sir? Who took these decisions? The autonomy of Rodrigues is not being respected, and the voice of Rodrigues is not being heard. This is the problem. Don't see the problem in me. The problem is in Port Louis. If Port Louis does not move and take certain decisions - I have told the operators, people here - Rodrigues is going to be depopulated. The youth will move out of Rodrigues. People will not want to live here because prices are high. The cost of the air ticket to Rodrigues is high. We are facing big problems. We are away from Mauritius. If they don't want to listen in Mauritius, we have to see in Rodrigues what means and ways we have to use to make them hear the voice of Rodrigues. Another example is the VAT. Why do they need to put VAT on hotel services in Rodrigues? We have written to them, we have made proposals. We have told them to remove the VAT on certain facilities, industries in Rodrigues. They don't want to hear about that. We have told them to give companies investing in Rodrigues duty free, *zone franche*, not to tax them for ten years and not make them pay certain fees for a certain number of years. Who is listening? Nobody is listening.

Mrs Perrine-Bégué: Mr Chairperson, Sir, being given that we see that this stimulus package that we received, supposedly to upgrade the economic performance, *passe complètement à côté de la plaque des vraies réalités, j'aimerais demander solennellement au Chef commissaire - même avant la crise on*

était dans la crise - if this package cannot be rethought locally, restyled and sent back to Mauritius for reconsideration.

The Chief Commissioner: May I invite the Member to make a motion here, Mr Chairperson, Sir? We will call the Assembly and discuss about this. An invitation, a challenge as if...

Mr Chairperson: No, it cannot be a challenge; an invitation maybe.

The Chief Commissioner: This is a suggestion to the Member and the Minority. They should come here with a motion, saying that they don't agree with this stimulus package. Then, we will debate and vote for it.

INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR DISABLED PERSONS 2008

(No. B/21) Mrs F. Gaspard Pierre Louis (First Local Region Member for Grande Montagne) asked the Commissioner for Women's Affairs, Child Development and Family Welfare whether, with regard to the celebration of the International Day for the disabled persons for year 2008, she would inform the House if any activity was organised to commemorate same and, if in the affirmative, give details regarding the activities organised, the number of participants in the events, the cost breakdown relevant to the activity.

Mrs Clair: Mr Chairperson Sir, no activity has been organised in connection with the International Day for the Disabled persons for year 2008. So, the rest of the question does not arise.

Mrs Perrine-Bégué: Can we know why, Mr Chairperson, Sir?

Mrs Clair: Mr Chairperson, Sir, a meeting was organised on Friday 31 October 2008, at the seat of my Commission, with all stakeholders, and it was decided to organise a march and a recreational gathering for the disabled persons at Saint Francois Public Beach on Sunday 07 December 2008 to commemorate the

day. Another meeting was held on 12 November with the same stakeholders, and the representative of the police, namely the Divisional Commander, and he informed the members present that, due to the organisation of the Festival Creole and other activities which would be held at the same time, it would be impossible to provide police assistance. So, the organisation of the international day for the disabled was postponed to a further date.

Mrs Gaspard Pierre Louis: Mr Chairperson, Sir, can we know from the Commissioner when is this further date fixed?

Mrs Clair: This further date has been scheduled for 15 March, respected Member.

Mrs Perrine-Bégué: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I would like to ask the Commissioner whether all activities regarding disabled persons only pertain to recreational or is there any other matter for reflection regarding welfare that can be made as regards disabled persons. Should it always be *fête*?

Mrs Clair: I remind the respected Member that all activities which are being organised for any group, be it elderly, women or the disabled, are decided by a committee, and it is proposed by the members of the committee themselves, which means the disabled persons. It is what they would like that we do. We do not decide for them; they decide what activities they like, and we provide the funds.

Mr Lisette: Mr Chairperson, Sir, provided the situation where there was no police assistance available for security purposes at Saint Francois, why is it that the Commission, together with the stakeholders, did not decide to organise something not requiring police assistance, in order to mark that very important day?

Mrs Clair: You would recall respected Member that, normally, we celebrate the International Day for the Disabled on 03 December. So, we had to postpone that day to 07 December. Again there, it was not possible to have police assistance, and the members were adamant to organise a recreational activity. In fact, they wanted to have a march and a recreational activity in the afternoon. This is their decision. I can't tell them to go back on their decision because of the problem of police assistance. This is what they would have liked to do, and we are planning to do it in March. So, what is the problem? I don't see where the problem is.

Mrs Gaspard Pierre Louis: Mr Chairperson, Sir, the Commissioner said that there is a committee, and that decisions are taken in the committee. I would like to know whether this committee is aware about the reason for which the activity has been postponed, because it seems that, up to now, they are not aware about what will happen.

Mrs Clair: I don't know, because the last meeting we had was on 12 November 2008. We had two meetings, and we decided that the activity should be postponed to next year. There, we have decided to organise it in March; so I don't know.

SINGLE MOTHERS - TRAINING COURSES

(No. B/22) Mrs F. Gaspard Pierre Louis (First Local Region Member for Grande Montagne) asked the Commissioner for Women's Affairs, Child Development and Family Welfare & Ors whether, in connection to the training courses destined to single mother that her Commission jointly organised with the IVTB during the year 2008, she would -

- (a) give details about the training courses delivered, their respective start/completion dates, the course duration, and the cost of the programme;
- (b) state and table the number of beneficiaries per training course who enrolled and successfully completed the programme;
- (c) give details about the number of trainees who have been able to set up their project up to now.

Mrs Clair: Mr Chairperson Sir, the information is being tabled for parts (a) and (b).

As regards to part (c), we do not have the number of trainees who have been able to start their project up to now. However, my Commission with stakeholders are organising the follow-up of these trainees, to encourage them to set up their own enterprises and also to group them. Furthermore, my Commission is considering the provision of additional facilities to those trainees, so as to facilitate them to start their own businesses. Various discussions and consultations have already been made with Cooperative Credit Unions, Trust Fund and Empowerment Fund to devise ways and means to empower these women. The Commission is still working on the action plan; a sum of Rs500,000 has been earmarked in the budget to help the women to start up. At the beginning, with the help of project officers from various organisations, we were trying to direct these women towards grouping. Throughout the two sessions which we held after all the courses have ended, we discovered that few of them were willing to start group work. Only one group following bee keeping has set up an association, and a lot of education and training is required to manage their business. Various programmes are being finalised by the Commission and will soon be announced once all stakeholders are agreeable to it.

Mr Lisette: Mr Chairperson, Sir, with respect to training courses that were held at IVTB, was it right that travelling expenses were to be given back to the beneficiaries?

Mrs Clair: Of course, Mr Chairperson, Sir.

Mr Lisette: Mr Chairperson, Sir, being given that the training courses ended in December, have the travelling expenses been refunded fully to the trainers as at now?

Mrs Clair: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I don't have this information but, as far as I know, all expenses for travelling are being refunded. I don't know as yet whether all these expenses have been refunded because, in fact, the officer who was in charge of the project has been absent for quite some time as she was been sick. I will look into the matter and come later with an answer.

Mrs Gaspard Pierre Louis: Mr Chairperson, Sir, the Commissioner has talked about the need to upgrade the trainees in terms of management courses. I would like to know what is the way forward, and whether she is considering the possibility of helping these persons.

Mrs Clair: Of course, Mr Chairperson, Sir. As I said in my answer, we are working on various programmes with different organisations, and it will soon be finalised once all stakeholders are agreeable to these programmes and we will set training programmes in management of business. Then, with the Rs500,000 which we have in the budget, we are going to start a kind of revolving fund, which will help these women to start with their business.

Mrs Perrine-Bégué: Mr Chairperson, Sir, the Commissioner says that she is working with stakeholders; stakeholders meaning those trainees. It is true that not only women, but Rodriguans in general do not like to group; so, they don't like to

group, to cluster for economic purposes. This is what I have experienced, Mr Chairperson, Sir, and this is what the Commissioner has just said.

(Interruptions)

So, you are disavowing your Commissioner. This what she has just said. *C'est qui line remarké, line dire.* When she says that contact is being made for styling a programme to come and help those women, I would like to know how many times she has met those trainees after the course.

Mrs Clair: As I said, we had two sessions with these trainees - not only myself, but members of the cooperatives and other organisations - and have started to talk to them about how they are going to start their business. First of all, we were trying to get them to set themselves into groups, and they agreed at the beginning. But, as time passed, at the second session, we had only one group which came forward. So, this is why we had to revise, because as I said, it's not a question that women are unwilling to work in group; the question is that they are quite scattered all over the island. For example, when they are going to start a pig rearing business, it is difficult to group women - let's say Port Sud Est, Citron Donis and all around. This is why we have some difficulties, but those who are in the same region sometimes are not really willing. The respected Member said that she had experienced it herself. They prefer to serve their own business at home. We are trying to find ways and means to do that.

PRE-PRIMARY & PRIMARY SCHOOLS - SUPPLY &

DELIVERY OF BREAD

(No. B/23) Mr N. Lisette (First Local region member for Baie aux Huîtres) asked the Deputy Chief Commissioner whether, as regards to the supply

and delivery of bread to the pre-primary and primary schools in Rodrigues for year 2009, he would state -

- (a) when the tender was launched, and the conditions attached thereto;
- (b) the names of the different bidders and their respective prices;
- (c) the name of the successful bidder;
- (d) if any complaints have been received from any school on any related matters.

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

With regard to part (a), tenders for the supply and delivery of bread to pre-primary and primary schools were launched on 12 September 2008. The closing date for the submission of quotations was 26 September 2008 at 1300hrs local time.

The successful bidder is required to supply and deliver bread flute of 100 gm before noon at all pre-primary and primary schools, in accordance with the daily attendance of pupils. In addition, a performance security, representing 10% of the contract value, should also be submitted by the successful bidder.

I am tabling the information pertaining to part (b).

As regards part (c), the name of the successful bidder is Lions Bake Ltd of La Ferme.

With respect to part (d), to date, this office has received only one complaint from one school on 14 January 2009, to the effect that bread was delivered for two days at 11.30 hours and on one day at 12.30 hrs respectively.

As such, the supplier was immediately requested to ensure that bread is supplied to schools before lunch time, that is, 11.40 hrs, at each pre-primary and primary schools. Since then, no complaint has been received.

Mr Lisette: Being given that the tender was launched on 12 September 2008 and closed on 26 September 2008 and that the price of bread fell on 22 December 2008, I would like to ask the Commissioner of Education whether it will not be appropriate and in the interest of the Commission to launch a new tender, in order to cater for this lowering in price as regards bread.

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: The question, Mr Chairperson, Sir, does not arise, because we have already entered into a contract with the bidder. It entails a lot of problems.

Mr Lisette: I would like to know, Mr Chairperson, Sir, whether the Commissioner has given due consideration to the proposal that has just been made.

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Yes, Mr Chairperson, Sir, I thought about it. But cancelling a tender and relaunching it means that, in the meantime, it's the pupils of the school who will suffer. So, I can't dare doing that.

Mr Chairperson: Time is over! Next item!

STATEMENTS BY COMMISSIONERS

PROGRAMME-BASED BUDGETING

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, with your permission, I wish to report development on arrangements which have been initiated for the implementation of Programme-Based Budgeting in Rodrigues. You will recall that, at its sitting of 21 October 2008, I apprised this House of the need to amend the Rodrigues Regional Assembly Act to allow the Regional Assembly to adopt

Programme-Based Budgeting, which has been introduced at the national level as from July 2008.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, in this context, I am pleased to inform the House that the Ministry of Finance and Economic Empowerment (MOFEE) has formulated specific amendments to be brought to the RRA Act, which would be introduced at the National Assembly upon its resumption in April 2009. I had the opportunity to discuss the proposed amendments with a delegation from the Ministry of Finance and Economic Empowerment, which was in Rodrigues on Monday 09 February. During the meeting, the attention of the delegation was drawn to the provisions of section 75E of the Constitution, which state, I quote -

“Subject to the provisions of the Constitution, any law giving effect to this Chapter and to any matters incidental thereto shall not be altered without the concurrence of the Regional Assembly, unless such alteration is supported at the final voting in the National Assembly by the votes of not less than two thirds of all the Members”.

During the meeting, the delegation from the Ministry of Finance and Economic Empowerment agreed to review some of the proposed amendments on which we expressed reservation and, thereafter, they have indeed confirmed that our views have been taken into consideration.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, I intend to propose a special sitting to present the proposed amendments, duly vetted by the Solicitor General's Office, to this Assembly to obtain its concurrence, in accordance with section 75E of the Constitution.

In the meantime, we are in consultation with the Legal Adviser and the Ministry of Finance and Economic Empowerment with regard to the financial

procedures to be followed concerning the presentation of the next RRA Estimates, taking into consideration that, pursuant to section 44 of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly Act, as Commissioner responsible for the subject of finance, I have to submit draft estimates for the next financial year by 31 March of this year. It is also noted that, according to the Finance and Audit (Amendment) Act 2008, financial year means the period of 12 months ending on 31 December in any year, with a transitional provision in respect of the period of six months from 01 July to 31 December 2009.

Mr Chairperson Sir, I expect that, by the time I shall submit the draft amendments to this House for approval, I shall be in a position to advise on the proper procedure to be followed. As a result, since the law would not have been amended before 31 March 2009, I shall submit draft estimates according to the traditional line budget for approval by the House. However, in view of the adoption of Programme-Based budgeting as from 01 January 2010, I also propose to submit an indicative Programme-Based Budget Estimates for the information of the House. This indicative Programme-Based Budget will be used by all the Commissions for proof testing of the various mechanisms to be put into place, to ensure that all the requirements are properly in place for a successful implementation of the new system on the assigned date, that is, as from 01 January next year.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, as soon as the Rodrigues Regional Assembly Act would have been amended to allow for the adoption of the Programme-Based budgeting in Rodrigues, I shall present a motion to the Assembly, seeking approval for the Standing Orders Committee to amend the Standing Orders, to enable the House to examine and consider draft estimates along the Programme-Based budgeting system.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, as the House is aware, since some time a few operational issues have emerged on the implementation of the RRA Act, and in 2004 former Justice Robert Ahnee was requested by the then government to look into these issues and to propose possible amendments for enactment by the National Assembly. We have requested our Legal Adviser to review and update these amendments, and he has now completed the exercise. I am proposing to carry out a wide consultation with all partners on these amendments, through a workshop to be held at the beginning of April. Following the workshop, we shall submit the retained amendments for the concurrence of this Assembly, before transmitting same to the government and the Law Reform Commission for their consideration and further action.

RODRIGUES WATER COMPANY LTD

Mr Chairperson, Sir, with your kind permission, I would like to make a second statement regarding the operationalisation of the Rodrigues Water Company Ltd. The Rodrigues Water Company Ltd was set up by the Regional Government as a tool to alleviate the managerial burden of the Water Resources Unit. As a private company, the Rodrigues Water Company will have the sufficient managerial flexibility to operate and manage the water sector in a more efficient and customer-oriented approach. Since our taking over the responsibility of the water resources, the operation of the Rodrigues Water Company has been given a boost. In that context, Mr Toolsy has been appointed as Manager, and the following actions are being taken -

- (a) A Memorandum of Understanding is being finalised to set out the responsibilities of both the Water Resources Unit and the newly set up Rodrigues Water Company Ltd.

- (b) The required organigram of the company is being finalised, as well as the scheme of service of each post within the new organisational set-up.
- (c) The business plan of the company is being worked out, in accordance with the Rodrigues Regional Assembly Investment Management Regulations.

Pending the finalisation of the above actions, the Water Management Committee has decided to entrust to the Rodrigues Water Company Ltd the responsibilities of setting up a customer care service through the operation of a hot line. I am pleased to inform this House that any member of the public who may have any complaint regarding water distribution, report on any leakages in the network, or have comments and suggestions with regard to the water sector in general, can telephone on the number 8324000. In that same perspective, a cross sectoral consultative workshop will be held at the Cotton Bay Hotel on 02 March 2009, to present the proposed reforms in the water sector and to consult relevant stakeholders on the proposed development. All Members of this House will be invited, and I do hope that they will actively participate.

Thank you, Mr Chairperson Sir.

YOUTH MUSICAL CENTRE

The Commissioner for Youth & Sports (Mr C. Agathe): Mr Chairperson, Sir, with your permission, I have two statements to make. The first one about the opening of the Youth Musical Centre in Rodrigues, and the second one about the Employment Relations Act and Employment Rights Act 2008.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, I would like to inform the House that, due to the increasing number of youth who engage themselves in music, both traditional,

modern and other form, and their good performances in the Jump Around Youth Concert in 2007, my Commission is proceeding shortly with the setting up of four Music Training Centres for the youth in Rodrigues, starting with Citron Donis Youth Centre in the first instance, and eventually in the three other regions of Rodrigues.

The main objectives of these Musical Training Centres are as follows -

- (i) to provide opportunities to our youth to consolidate their talents, to specialise in the musical instrument of their choice, and to further develop their musical creativity and skills;
- (ii) to give the youths opportunities to engage themselves in healthy cultural activities, thus reducing their risk of being indulged in anti-social activities;
- (iii) as a long term objective of poverty alleviation, whereby the young musicians and singers may earn a living in the music sector in the future.

My Commission has already initiated the necessary procedures for the purchase of additional musical instruments. We expect to launch the Centre during the forthcoming week.

The first Musical Centre of Citron Donis will be under the responsibility of a Youth Officer of my Commission, who is well versed in music, and will be opened three days a week from 8.00 to 16.00 hours. This Centre will complement existing training in music which is being offered by my Commission, from which many professionals have emerged and are now performing in hotels, professional bands and in international musical events.

My Commission is also liaising with the *Conservatoire de Musique “François Mitterrand”* in Mauritius, which has confirmed its interest in the project. Most probably, the Music Training Centre will eventually broaden its scope into a branch of the *Conservatoire François Mitterrand* in Rodrigues. Further discussion will be held between stakeholders to define the modalities. In the short term, we are envisaging to send one or two young Rodriguans for training, leading to a Diploma in Music at the *Conservatoire François Mitterrand* in Mauritius, to enable the setting up of a branch of the *Conservatoire* in Rodrigues.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, my Commission will leave no stone unturned to get this project implemented, as it will be a major breakthrough in the development of our youth in the field of music.

EMPLOYMENT RELATIONS ACT & EMPLOYMENT RIGHTS ACT 2008

Mr Chairperson, Sir, I would like to make a statement to apprise this Assembly that labour and industrial relations in Rodrigues, as well as in Mauritius, are now governed by two new laws, namely “The Employment Relations Act 2008 and “The Employment Rights Act 2008”. These laws were proclaimed and came into force as from 02 February 2009, and replaced the Industrial Relations Act and the Labour Act, which dates back since 1973 and 1975 respectively.

I am pleased to note that, following the intervention of my Commission during their preparation stage, stakeholders in Rodrigues were consulted and invited to give their views and comments. The trade unions have submitted their comments, which were transmitted to the Ministry of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment.

A consultative workshop was subsequently organised in Rodrigues in November 2007 at Malabar Gymnasium. In January 2008, the Labour and Industrial Relations Officer of my Commission and a representative of the trade unions in Rodrigues participated in a tripartite workshop on the two Bills in Mauritius, in the presence of representatives from the International Labour Organisation (ILO).

The new Employment Relations Act makes provision for the formation, administration, registration and recognition of trade unions and will, therefore, facilitate the emergence of stronger trade union organisations. It also provides more autonomy and financial independence to workers' and employers' organisations in the management of their affairs. There are also other specific provisions which aim at empowering both workers' and employers' organisations, with a view to promoting social dialogue, collective bargaining and eventually harmonious industrial relation at work places.

On the other hand, the Employment Rights Act provides for the setting up of a workfare programme for the benefit of all laid-off workers. This is considered as a revolutionary measure, as it aims at providing support through financial assistance and possible job placement to workers who have been laid off by their enterprises, particularly for economic reasons.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, I am also pleased to note that, following the remarks of my Commission and trade unions during the consultation stage, a specific chapter has been provided in the Employment Relations Act to specify the application of the Act to Rodrigues. Section 99, under Part IX of the Act, provides for the establishment of the Rodrigues Commission for Conciliation and Mediation. This Commission shall comprise of a president, a representative of workers' and

employers' organisations and one independent member, all to be appointed by the Commissioner responsible for Labour and Industrial Relations.

The Rodrigues Commission for Conciliation and Mediation shall operate on a part-time basis and shall, among its function -

- provide a conciliation and mediation service on any labour dispute referred to it, and
- investigate into any labour dispute reported.

This is a major breakthrough in the field of labour and industrial relations in Rodrigues, as it will avoid local parties to proceed to Mauritius to have recourse to conciliation and mediation services, as was the case before in case of major labour dispute.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, I consider that these two laws have arrived at the right moment to provide the appropriate legal framework and mechanism to cope with the ever changing complexities of labour and industrial relations issues, in the face of new emerging challenges on both the international and local fronts.

Recently, in the month of January last, we have had the visit of the Minister of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment and senior officials of his Ministry to sensitise our local stakeholders on the provisions of the new laws and their implementation.

I would like to thank hon. Jean François Chaumière and his Ministry for their expressed interest with regard to Rodrigues. I would also like to thank our stakeholders in Rodrigues, particularly the trade unions and officers of my Commission, for their valuable contribution in the finalisation of the two laws.

I have already started consultation with both the trade union and workers' organisations, in view of the setting up of the Rodrigues Commission for

Conciliation and Mediation, whose president and members will be shortly appointed as per the legal provision made.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, I would like to avail myself of this opportunity to inform the House that my Commission is also laying emphasis on safety and health issues, with a view to promoting a safety work culture in Rodrigues. In this context, and for the first time in Rodrigues, legal procedures are being instituted against two enterprises for failing to notify the authority of the accident, where workers have suffered personal injuries. The two cases will be called *pro forma* on 16 March 2009 in the Rodrigues Court.

I thank you for your attention.

MOTION

THE RODRIGUES REGIONAL ASSEMBLY (FISHERIES AND MARINE RESOURCES - MARINE PROTECTED AREA) REGULATIONS 2009.

The Commissioner for Public Infrastructure & Ors (Mr A. Grandcourt): Mr Chairperson, Sir, I beg to move the motion standing in my name which reads as follows -

“That this Assembly is of opinion that, by virtue of section 31 of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly Act 2001, there is passed the Rodrigues Regional Assembly (Fisheries and Marine Resources - Marine Protected Area) Regulations 2009.”

Mr Chairperson, Sir, I understand that a copy of the Regulations has already been circulated to each and every Member of this House. First and foremost, I would like to refer to sections 26 and 31 of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly Act, which empower this Assembly to pass regulations. Section 26 provides that the

Rodrigues Regional Assembly shall, in relation to Rodrigues, be responsible for the formulation and the implementation of policy in respect of matters set out in the Fourth Schedule of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly Act, Marine Park, under which the relation purports to be area of responsibility listed in the abovesaid Fourth Schedule. Mr Chairperson, Sir, section 31 empowers this Assembly to pass measures in the form of regulations, which shall be known as Rodrigues Regional Assembly regulations.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, Rodrigues possess a continuous 90 kilometres of fringing reef surrounding the island, which has created a lagoon of over 240 square kilometres. This creates a ridge eco-system hosting a diversity of marine fauna and flora with some 140 species of hard corals, 494 species of fishes and 74 species of *equinoderms* among others. The studies have shown that the coral reef is still in relatively good condition, which is a cover of coral of 51 % with a coral mortality of 2% only. However, Mr Chairperson, Sir, the coral reef eco-system is being seriously damaged by destructive fishing practices and siltation, with additional threats from agricultural chemicals and sewage pollution, and it is estimated that 40% of the coral has been severely impacted. This shows how our marine eco-system is, thus raising concern for its preservation for our future generation.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, the need to conserve the natural environment and eco-system has long been recognised globally and nationally. Several international attempts have been made at implementing requirements to provide adequate and comprehensive protection of all major ecosystem types. Rodrigues and Mauritius have shown a strong commitment to these international initiatives. Some examples of the latest conventions, of which the Republic of Mauritius is a party, include

firstly the Convention for Biological Diversity, and secondly the Millennium Development Goals ratified in 1992 and 2000 respectively.

In addition, Mr Chairperson, Sir, the 2010 Biodiversity targets were agreed at the Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development in September 2002. One of the outcomes expected of the 2010 biodiversity targets is the application of the ecosystem-based biodiversity and natural resource management through integration of coastal zone management with watershed management, highlighting the inter-connections of coastal and marine eco-system and the importance of managing upstream ecosystem as part of the coastal and marine system. This is an important management feature of the South East Marine Protected Area in Rodrigues. Hence, Mr Chairperson, Sir, with the aim of addressing issues of the different conventions, the Global Environment Facility (GEF), the United Nations Development Programme UNDP, the Government of Mauritius and the Rodrigues Regional Assembly signed an agreement for the project 'Partnership for the marine protected areas in Rodrigues and Mauritius'. By definition, Mr Chairperson, Sir, a marine protected area is any area of the maritime zone, including the sea bed, any land or wet land associated with these maritime zones that have been declared as such. There are three types of marine protected areas, namely fishing reserves, marine reserves and marine parks. Fishing reserves, marine reserves or marine parks means that part of the sea, including any land found within that part of the sea, which is designated as a fishing reserve, marine reserve or marine park under section 4 of the Fisheries and the Marine Resources Act.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, a marine park is an area where a wide variety of activities can be allowed in zones specified for that purpose. These zones include multiple use, conservation, mooring, swimming, traffic lane and sky lane. Upon

the proclamation of this regulation, Mr Chairperson, Sir, the second phase will be to carry out the identification and delimitation of the aforesaid specific zone and enhance this regulation to include the various prohibition and permissible activities specific to each zone and exercise a targeted control over the sea.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, several islands of Indian Ocean have been involved in regional initiatives towards the protection and preservation of the marine ecosystem through the setting up of marine protected areas. For example, Seychelles is very popular with a good network of eight Marine Parks and Madagascar, six Marine Parks. To date, Mr Chairperson, Sir, there has been significant progress made in the region in the setting up of MPA. A regional network of marine protected areas has been set up under the aegis of the World Wildlife Fund, and is already functional with the membership of the Indian Ocean countries. Mauritius, Mr Chairperson, Sir, on the other hand, has proclaimed two Marine Parks, namely Balaclava and Blue Bay in 2001, having been a total surface area of 3.5 km². Rodrigues is not an exception, Mr Chairperson, Sir. We already possess five fishing reserves and four marine reserves of a total of 24.4 km². In an attempt to further enhance better protection of the marine resources, efforts are now being deployed in the southern lagoon for the setting up of the new MPA. This joint initiative is being undertaken with the support of GEF, UNDP and the Rodrigues Regional Assembly. The project adopts a co-management participatory approach, involving all the different stakeholders of the area in decision making. During the project development phase since 2005, there were various consultative meetings with the committees of the region by the consultants, and various activities have been initiated to get the marine protected area in place.

Procedures were initiated for the recruitment of MPA staff for the Project Management Unit. The fishers' community was sensitised on the project and its

objectives, and the involvement of the different stakeholders in the process for the MPA. Mr Chairperson, Sir, this project originally targeted an area, including four fish landing stations, namely Songes, Port Sud Est, Mourouk and Gravieres. These sensitisation and consultative meetings witness the support of the fishermen committee towards the setting up of MPA as a result of their growing concern regarding the decline of the marine resources owing to destructive harvesting practices and unsustainable fishing. Mr Chairperson, Sir, the sensitisation and awareness raising of the fishermen community were later extended to include the five remaining fish landing stations of the southern region, with the aim of ensuring a more holistic approach to the management of marine resources in the south.

In addition, Mr Chairperson, Sir the other resource users, including the tourism operators and associations, were sensitised and taken on board to support in the implementation of this project. Posters were designed and distributed to all local institutions and SEMPA village centres to sensitise the public in general. Mr Chairperson, Sir, let's look at the benefits of the MPA. Marine Protected Areas are areas where management regimes are put in place, designed to protect the natural ecosystem and features within these areas. A wide range of benefits will be obtained upon setting up an effective management of the Marine Protected Area. Some of the benefits of setting up the SEMPA are -

- (i) To ensure the protection of endemic and endangered marine species from extinction.
- (ii) It helps to provide a nursery for preservation of economically important species whose stock is declining.

- (iii) It allows the regeneration of the marine flora presently impacted upon as a result of destructive fishing practices such as trampling of corals by octopus fishers.
- (iv) It controls illegal fishing.
- (v) It provides a model of pristine ecosystem with limited impact from human interferences for our future generation to witness.

The setting up of the SEMPA, Mr Chairperson, Sir, will provide a nursery ground for all species, thus helping towards the regeneration of fisheries resources and contributing to achieve the objective of developing the Seafood Hub. This regulation, Mr Chairperson, Sir, will bring the legal framework in achieving the above objectives.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, let's look now at the SEMPA boundary. The SEMPA extends from Pte Corail to Pte Roche Noir and also includes an outer lagoon portion. This area is the fishing ground for a population of some 932 registered fishers and almost an equivalent number of non-registered fishers. The SEMPA boundary was circulated to relevant stakeholders, including the Ministry of Fisheries and the community at large.

This exercise led to the selection and adoption of the final SEMPA marine boundary, which is a total surface area of 42.37 km² and which was ratified by the SEMPA Management Board on 15 January 2009. The SEMPA boundary defined under the First Schedule of the Fisheries and Marine Resources - Marine Protected Area Regulations 2009 and Regulation 3 stipulates the general provision for the preservation of marine protected areas.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, following gazetting and demarcation of the SEMPA boundary, we will proceed with the zoning process. This will involve the selection

of specific zones assigned for specific purposes such as conservation and multi-producers amongst others, as stated earlier. The SEMPA zoning plan will be developed with the inputs from different stakeholders. Zoning workshops will be organised to provide the platform, where all the different stakeholders and the local community can discuss and agree on the most appropriate zones for each purpose. These zones will later be managed and monitored to assess the evolution of the MPA resources.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, as far as sensitisation is concerned, the concept of co-management is a key to the implementation of the SEMPA project, whereby all key stakeholders are empowered to take part in all decision making. This initiative was undertaken right from the conceptual stages of the project, whereby various consultative meetings were held with the communities of the region. Since the start of the project, the fishers were further briefed on the project through various sensitisation meetings organised at each of the nine fish landing stations of the area. This exercise witnessed the active participation of the fishers, helping them to better understand the project objectives and how they will contribute to its success. This process is to create appropriate platform for discussion among the different stakeholders. To this end, various committees have been set up, including the Community Resources Committee, Committee Advisory Council, South East Marine Protected Area Management Board and the Project Steering Committee chaired by the Chief Commissioner.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, SEMPA Resource monitoring. To ensure success of a MPA, there is need for continuous monitoring of the resources of the area. The project Management Unit has, therefore, been empowered for monitoring of the resources through the purchase of equipment, including three boats, five complete sets of dive equipment, six safety equipments such as life jackets, and two GPS.

The unit will be further equipped with other equipment to be purchased soon. Presently, the consultants recruited by the UNDP are undertaking survey works for the establishment of a baseline data to help for the long term monitoring. The SEMPA staff will further be trained to continue with the monitoring exercise.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, as far as development of alternative livelihood for fishermen is concerned, given that the different users, particularly the fishers will be affected with the implementation of this project, there is need to develop alternative economic activities to support the community. My Commission has explored various avenues to enable the development of alternative livelihood for the fishers. Various initiatives have been taken, and this particularly to attend to the request of the community, including –

First, an aquaculture workshop was undertaken in May 2008 to assess the potential for the development of aquaculture in Rodrigues. The focus was particularly laid on the culture of two species, namely sea cucumber and sea weeds.

Second, we are encouraging the fishers to form associations, thus empowering them to apply for external funding from funding agencies. One such newly formed association is the *association des pêcheurs du parc marin du Sud Est* which has been supported for the development of a glass bottom boat project, which has been approved by the GEF small grant programme.

It is important to note, Mr Chairperson, Sir, that the association was formed under the Community Advisory Council. This project will empower the fishers to get involved in tourism activities, and hence generate revenues for the community. One such boat owned by the *Association Ocean Tribe* is already in Rodrigues as alternative livelihood activity for fishers of Rivière Banane marine reserves. It is

expected that with the rise in the number of tourists visiting the area, the economic activities will be called upon to develop further.

Third, Mr Chairperson, Sir, the IFAD has approved the funding of two Rs205 m. for the supporting development of alternative activities through the conversion of fishers to land-based activities. The project is entitled from fishers to farmers in the South East marine protected area. This project will target the fisher families and will involve animal rearing and agriculture.

Fourth, Mr Chairperson, Sir, the Rodrigues Regional Assembly has set up the voluntary relinquishment of fishermen cards against compensation, and the fishers redeployment scheme is currently under discussion with the Ministry of Finance in view of the disbursement of the financial provisions in respect of the development in-lagoon fishers. Presently, 932 fishers are located within the SEMPA, of which 838 in-lagoon fishermen are eligible for relinquishment under the scheme, while the off-lagoon fishers will not be affected by the setting up of the MPA.

Fifth, the recruitment of rangers and other personnel from the fisher community. Mr Chairperson, Sir, we do not intend to stop here. The external funding and donor agency will be approached to seek funding to assist the fishermen to be redeployed in various sectors of the economy.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, as far as enforcement is concerned, it is fact that the success of the MPA relies much on proper management of each resources and enforcement of the regulations. There is the need for an effective enforcement system to be put in place, thus the project will develop a ranger service to conduct *surveillance* of the marine protected area and the enforcement of regulation pertaining to the MPA with the support of the National Coast Guard and the fisheries protection service. The ranger service will comprise of one Chief Ranger,

two Deputy Chief Rangers, three Senior Rangers and nine Field Rangers in the long term. Community resource observers will be a member of the fisher committee who will be selected by the CAC and the PMU on a weekly basis to assist the rangers in patrol. The role of the observer will be to act as a committee link between the rangers and the committee, to ensure the rangers fulfil their duties into the community and act as impartial observers in the case of complaints being brought against the rangers by community members.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, to further enhancing our environmental objectives, the Fisheries and Marine Resources - Marine Protected Area Regulations 2009 is being introduced. The objective in a nutshell is to exercise control on the conservation and preservation of the marine protected area. These regulations are at a crossroad in the establishment of the South East Marine protected area.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, in line with our vision to ensure the sustainable development of Rodrigues, we have to doubt that the introduction of the regulations will help us in achieving the objectives of our Regional government and be line with the global trend in the protection of the marine environment. Being an environment-conscious country will boost the image of this country vis-à-vis the international organisations and donor countries and put Rodrigues on the regional and international scene.

With these words, Mr Chairperson, Sir I commend this motion to the House.

Thank you.

Mr rose and seconded.

Mr D. Spéville (Second Local Region Member for St. Gabriel): Mr Chairperson, Sir, the UNDP/GEF partnership for the setting up of a marine protected area in the south east of Rodrigues started with the ex OPR Regional

Government. At the very start of this project, it was agreed that it will attempt to develop a co-management process with the fisher community providing a sense of ownership and responsibility among the stakeholders for the lagoon and its resources, involving the fishers with the MPA management and planning from the outset. To achieve this end, it is a must that we come with regulation for the management of the MPA, which is part of the process of reducing human pressure on the lagoon, while attempting to safeguard and improve the socioeconomic condition in their life. However, if we come to the regulation that is being introduced today in this Assembly, we see that same is incomplete, namely in Regulation 3 - interference in the Marine Protected area. Secondly, there are no regulations in the document to support some general prohibition within this specific marine protected area simultaneously. If we come to Regulation 3, that is, interference in the Marine protected area, some questions remain unanswered among the fishing community and the other economic stakeholders like the pleasure craft boat owners in that area. First, can a person be engaged in a commercial activity in the Marine Protected Area or should he have a permit to do so? Secondly, for commercial purposes, will someone be able to take photographs, shoot film by way of video recording or otherwise in the Marine Protected Area or he should have a permit to do so? All these questions should have been addressed by way of Regulation here, but since same has not been made, we, on this side of the House, think that the regulation introduced today should be reframed, so that it is adapted to the Rodriguan specificity and for future marine development.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, if in Regulation 3(2) it is stated that no person shall deposit any waste or liquid acid or other chemical or otherwise interfere with any marine fauna or flora etc, automatically a part of the regulation should have dealt with the general prohibition within this specific marine protected area. When we

talk about oil, we should bear in mind that some motor boats in the area use oil for fishing activities, for pleasure crafts. Then, shall a person fish with a net in the Marine Protected Area be it the surface of water for catching fish? Moreover, can a person fish with a bait gear or a basket trap or he should have a permit to do so? What are the limitations of the activities to be carried out in the Marine protected area Mr Chairperson, Sir? Thirdly, concerning extractive use for any excavation or drilling operation, will it be authorised? Fourth, concerning introduction of animals or plants, will someone be allowed to introduce any animal or plant in or allowed any animals or plant to remain in, unless he owns a permit? Mr Chairperson, Sir, in this part of general prohibition, some other concerns should have also been taken into account, like interference with the structure of the Marine Protected Area, deposit of rubbish, use of vessels, use of aircraft, jet *privé*, access to certain areas of the Marine Protected Area like the islet.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, *ce règlement a beaucoup de lacunes, et le gouvernement ici présent* has made many *tamassa* and set many rumours among the fishing community of the South East region when this Marine Protected Area was to be set up. Aujourd'hui, on est là pour renvoyer la balle sur eux, car on voit qu'il n'y a pas eu assez de consultations *region wise and island wise* avec la communauté des pêcheurs et d'autres *stakeholders* pour l'introduction de ce règlement dans cette Assemblée aujourd'hui. Il n'y a pas seulement les pêcheurs à Port Sud Est qui sont concernés par ces règlements. Il y a aussi des pêcheurs de Bati Madame, de Pompée. Il y a des pêcheurs dans ces villages qui viennent pêcher à Port Sud Est, à Songes et à *Mourouk*. Et le fait que le règlement soit incomplet augmente davantage, M. le président, la confusion parmi la communauté des pêcheurs. C'est pour cela que je demanderai au Commissaire de revoir les règlements et de venir avec quelque chose de plus professionnel et qui va dans le

sens de la protection de notre écosystème marin et de la zone côtière. On ne peut pas venir ici avec un règlement qui a pour but d'écrire seulement le *boundary* du *South East Marine Protected Area* avec les *general provisions for the preservation of same*, mais sans les *general prohibitions within this specific Marine Protected Area simultaneously*.

Merci, M. le president.

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I would like to thank the Commissioner for working on these regulations and for bringing this important piece of regulation, which is a landmark in the formalisation of the Marine Protected Area in the South East of Rodrigues. These regulations are just a preliminary; they are meant for delimitating, as the Commissioner said. We are just delimitating and saying generally what can be done and what cannot be done in this Marine Protected Area, for which we have commitments with the UNDP, Mr Chairperson, Sir. Everybody, I hope within this House and within the fishermen community, should be convinced by the general advantages which Marine Reserves and Marine Protected Areas will bring in Rodrigues and, of course. Just like for land, we have protected and still protecting some spaces for sylvo-pastoral areas etc, efforts must be made to protect the sea because if we don't protect now, tomorrow will be too late. So, these provisions, which have been approved by the Executive Council before introduction here, are only meant for the delimitation principally. After these delimitations, there are certain tasks that will be done and, following this, the Commissioner will have to come here with more detailed regulations about the Marine Protected Area, which is a specific project and which is different from Marine Reserves, which is meant here with more community participation. Within the same scope, I have to tell the House that we are working, despite several difficulties, to explain the fishermen community about the

importance of Marine Reserves and the Marine Protected Area, and very often we face the reticence of these people about why we need to protect some parts of the sea to promote regeneration etc. Here, I have to say that fishermen at times understand and at times don't understand, and one big problem we are having is the professionalisation of illegal fishing. Some people have specialised, and their job is to fish illegally, Mr Chairperson, Sir. And we are doing much effort to counter and to fight against illegal. Illegal fishing is a threat to the survival of all species in the lagoon of Rodrigues, and we will spare no effort and we will have no pity for all those practising and working on illegal means to fish in the lagoons of Rodrigues. We have already set the physical limits of the Rivière Banane Reserve; we have put a temporary fisheries post, which will be upgraded to protect and overview Marine Reserve of Rivière Banane, and I have just taken the decision that there should be more coordination between the different services. We will not put only Marine Reserves and Marine Protected Areas, and then do nothing. Illegal fishing, I repeat, is a danger for the fishermen themselves and for the future of the fishermen community. People in Rodrigues should know that there are laws and that we have to abide to these laws, to these regulations. Not later than last week, some fishermen have had the idea of coming to the Petite Butte Fisheries Post and try to attack the officers of this section, and the police had to use tear gas to be able to arrest these persons. So, the population has to make a choice, and the fishermen community has to make a choice. Either we spoil all the resources, we fish illegally, we destroy everything, there is disorder and we threaten all the officer who are supposed to protect the sea and we are left in less than one year or two years with nothing, or we protect it and do something that we call sustainable management of our resources in the perspective of sustainable growth, Mr Chairperson, Sir. We have been making efforts but, at times, we see that our efforts are being spoilt by negative and retrograde attitudes, Mr Chairperson, Sir. People

fish illegally by band and, at times, there is complicity in the protection service; some people give information etc. We have to fight against all this. This is why I would invite the population to think well before engaging into illegal fishing activities. We have, for example, some young people who have started diving to catch octopus. What happens is that they get 40 pounds of octopus within one hour, and they have more than 100 pounds per day for some period. And then what will happen? Everything will be destroyed. So, we need consensus on the need to protect not only the lagoon but the outer reefs also, beyond the reefs. This is why you will see that the Marine Protected Area and the Marine Reserves go beyond the reefs. Surveillance and application of the law will become strict in the Marine Reserve Regulations that we have voted. The Commissioner responsible for Fisheries has to prescribe what is authorised and what is not authorised in the four Marine Reserves that we have delimited, namely at Ile aux Cocos, Grand Bassin, Anse aux Anglais and Rivière Banane. This will be done, Mr Chairperson, Sir, by next week, and after this we have to make an effort to go and to put the delimitation in terms of buoys. Mr Chairperson, Sir, people even cut and remove the buoys at sea; the buoys to delimitate the Marine Reserves. There are all sorts of acts of vandalism at sea. The population, the fishermen community must know that if we destroy everything now, tomorrow it will be too late. We don't want this type of people to jeopardize the future of this island. I really hope that everybody will understand and everybody will try to respect these regulations. There is need for consultation, of course; there is need for conscientisation, education; people knowing what to do in any circumstances.

I would like to congratulate the Commissioner and say that it is not the regulations which will guide the Marine Protected Area. It is only the delimitation

of the Marine Protected Area. More regulations have to be made about what has to be done, what is possible and what is not possible in the future.

Thank you.

Mr Grandcourt: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I would like to thank the Chief Commissioner for his intervention. I understand the Member has taken the regulation for Blue Bay and has compared same with our regulation. Mr Chairperson, Sir, I would like to make a few precisions. Our regulation is only for the delimitation of the MPA without the zoning. So, this regulation will allow the setting up of the SEMPA with the specific objective of gazetting the outer boundary in the first instance. Once proclaimed, we will proceed with the development of specific zones for specific purposes within the area, with the support of the community at large; there will be consultation.

One important phase of the project implementation is the consultative phase, whereby the fishermen community and tourism operators will be sensitised on the project. The consultations have been ongoing for the last three years. It started in 2005 as rightly said by the Member, since my coming into office. It is a very good project, and we have to give some support to this project. We saw that UNDP, as a partner, was very interested in the setting up of this MPA, so we went ahead with it. Following consultations with the community, they have expressed their support and commitment towards the project pending the development of alternative livelihood activities to compensate their loss of income, due to a reduction in their fishing ground.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, appropriate structures have to be put in place to support the fishermen community, and the fishers are being encouraged to form associations. There is one such association already, which demonstrates the

participatory approach and the willingness of the fishermen community towards the project.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, upon proclamation of the SEMPA, it will be the largest MPA for the Republic of Mauritius, with a total surface area of 42.37 km². Setting up of the SEMPA will increase the potential for tourism development of the region and allow even greater diversification of economic activities there. The regulations will provide a legal framework for the management of the southern lagoon. The expected outcome will be a better management of the resources, thereby reducing pressure presently being deployed in the lagoon, and enhanced control of the area will be achieved. After proclamation, we will proceed with the zoning of the proclaimed area through an amendment to the existing regulation for a targeted output.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, after this pathway of the SEMPA, we are relying on the support of this House in proclaiming the SEMPA in the interest of one and all, and setting a stepping stone towards further conservation projects for a healthy marine ecosystem.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, I would like to thank the Chief Commissioner, my colleagues of the Executive Council, my Departmental Head, Mr Jean Rex, the fishermen, the community who, in some way or another have contributed towards this regulation. I don't forget the UNDP and all the experts who have worked on this regulation.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, I am very proud today that we are passing this regulation, and I think this will boost this project towards the setting up of the SEMPA.

Thank you, Mr Chairperson, Sir.

On question put, the motion was agreed to.

ADJOURNMENT

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I move that the House be adjourned to Tuesday 10 March 2009 at 10.30 a.m.

Mr Grandcourt rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

Mr Chairperson: The House stands adjourned.

MATTER RAISED

ROADS - FATAL ACCIDENTS

Mr D. Spéville (Second Local Region Member for St. Gabriel): M. le président, durant le premier mois de l'année 2009, la route a fait un mort. Comme il y a une enquête policière qui est en cours, je ne vais pas utiliser cette Assemblée pour statuer sur les causes de l'accident, mais une chose est sûre ; c'est que l'entretien de nos routes, surtout les routes secondaires, qui est en ce moment quasi inexistant, figure aussi parmi les causes. Depuis octobre de l'année dernière, nous, de ce côté de la chambre, avons rencontré un bon nombre d'usagers de la route qui nous ont fait part de leur inquiétude par rapport au mauvais état des routes.

M. le président, je vais citer trois exemples seulement ; la liste est trop longue, et je ne veux pas perdre le temps des membres. Par exemple, tronçon Bel Air Rivière Banane, tronçon Songes Anse Baleine, tronçon Soupîrs Mt. Fanal. Ces tronçons de route ont suivi une nette détérioration et méritent d'être réparés au plus vite. Je sais que le gouvernement régional a eu souvent recours à des contrats pour l'achat de bitume auprès de A. J. Maurel/Colas, la seule firme présente ici pour la réparation rapide des routes, mais je ne sais pas si cette pratique existe encore. Le

temps passe, et les trous s'agrandissent de jour en jour, et les dangers deviennent de plus en plus probables, surtout où les routes ne sont pas éclairées le soir. Alors, je demanderai que la réparation de ces routes, surtout les routes secondaires, soit placée comme *top priority* pour une circulation plus fluide à travers le pays, et pour la sécurité des usagers de la route, et que les autorités et la police collaborent pour plus de respect du code de la route.

Merci, M. le président.

The Commissioner for Public Infrastructure & Ors (Mr F. Grandcourt): M. le président, j'aimerais réagir suite à l'intervention de ce Membre. Je comprends son inquiétude, mais toujours est-il que lui aussi a sa part de responsabilité. Il était là, et il n'est plus là ; on maintient les routes, M. le président. Mais il se trouve que les routes qui ont été construites dans le passé ont été mal conçues, je peux dire. J'allais le lui dire tout à l'heure, mais je n'en ai pas eu l'occasion. La route de Mt Charlot a été mal conçue, la route de Rivière Banane a été mal conçue, la route de Gravières a été mal conçue. M. le président, avec l'augmentation du nombre de véhicules à Rodrigues, nous nous attendons à quoi ? C'est facile de venir ici qu'on n'a pas entretenu des routes, mais si vous avez mal conçu les routes, tôt ou tard cela va causer des accidents.

M. le président, le Membre en intervenant a montré que lui-même a été incompétent, dans le sens où l'OPR a été au pouvoir pendant 25 ans et ils ont construit les routes, M. le président. On a hérité de ces routes, et ces routes sont en mauvais état. Moi, je n'aurais jamais accepté, M. le président, qu'on fasse une route telle que la route allant vers Rivière Banane. Jamais je n'aurais accepté qu'on fasse une route comme on a fait à Mt. Charlot, à Gravières. Mais on a hérité, et on essaye d'entretenir. Je trouve drôle que le Membre vienne dire que ces routes ne sont pas entretenues. M. le président, il faut comprendre aussi que nous faisons des

efforts. L'argent devient de plus en plus rare et lui-même a parlé, comme dit M. Agathe, de *machine faire roupies*.

M. le président, une chose qu'il faut comprendre c'est que dès notre arrivée au pouvoir, on a travaillé avec la police. Le Membre Lisette a posé une question l'année dernière - c'était une très bonne question – et a demandé combien d'accidents il y a eu depuis 2006. Vous savez combien d'accidents il y a eu, M. le président ? *The number of accidents in Rodrigues keeps decreasing because we have taken the right measures.* On dit que le soir il faut éclairer les routes. Je comprends, mais les voitures ont des phares, les motocyclettes ont des phares. Est-ce que si j'éclaire toutes les routes, cela va empêcher les accidents ?

M. le président, en venant ici, le Membre lui-même a admis qu'il n'a pas pu faire le travail. Je prends en considération tout ce qu'il a dit, mais il faut qu'il sache que ces routes ont été mal conçues, et l'équipe qui était là c'est l'équipe de l'OPR.

At 3.35 p.m., the Assembly was, on its rising, adjourned to Tuesday 10 March at 10.30 a.m.