

Debate No. 2 of 2009

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY 2009

(No. B/28) **Mrs. M.D.L. Chan Meunier (Second Island Region Member)** asked the Commissioner responsible for Women's Affairs, Child Development and Family Welfare whether, with regard to the International Women's Day 2009, the Commissioner can state to the House the theme for this year's celebration and the different activities which have been organised in connection with the above.

The Commissioner for Women's Affairs & Ors (Mrs. M. T. Clair): Mr. Chairperson, Sir, the theme for the celebration of the International Women's Day this year is "Women and men united to end violence against women and girls". This was the theme chosen by the United Nations. The theme chosen for Rodrigues is "*Femmes et Hommes unis face aux adversités de la vie*"

Mr. Chairperson, Sir, my Commission has organised different activities in the context of the International Women's Day, as follows:

One competition in "Fruits/Vegetables Processing and Preservation", project write-up for the Women's Association, and distribution of awards to five women who have contributed in five sectors of development in Rodrigues, namely:

Health (*femme sage*) – Mrs. Marie Elizabeth Ravina – Dans Bébé

Training (*école ménagère*) – Mrs. Genevieve Pierre Louis – Marechal

Education (*ti miss*) – Miss Claudette Felicité – Oyster Bay

Women Development (NGO) – Mrs. Elphresia Andre – Marechal, and

Fishing- Mrs. Jeanne D'Arc Gaspard – Port Sud Est

We have also organized a sensitisation campaign on the theme "*L'Unité au sein de la Famille*". We have chosen three villages namely, Terre Rouge, Camp Pintade and Batatrans.

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The Official Ceremony was held on Sunday 8 March 2009 at the Cultural and Leisure Centre of Mont Plaisir. The sensitization campaign on the theme *Unité de la Famille* was conducted as follows:-

The launching was held on Monday, 2nd March at Terre Rouge Community Centre. On Tuesday, 3rd March, the campaign continued at Camp Pintade Community Center and on 5th March at Batatrans Community center.

Mr. N. Lisette: Regarding the competition in agro-processing, I would like to ask the Commissioner for Women what were the criteria used to designate the winner of the award.

Mrs. M. T. Clair: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, the criteria were decided by a jury comprising of a cook from Cotton Bay Hotel, Mrs. Eliane Prudence who delivers courses at the Family Integrated Center of Malabar and Mrs. Michaela Perrine. The criteria were decided by the jury and based on the originality and quality of the product, and the product should be made from an unprocessed fruit.

Mrs. F. Gaspard Pierre-Louis: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, as regards the writing up of the project, I would like to know from the Commissioner who were the persons involved.

Mrs. M. T. Clair : The project write up competition was meant for the *Associations Femminines*. But since there were only two participants, it has been reported for the *Journée de la Femme*.

WINSTON CHURCHILL BRIDGE - CONSTRUCTION

(No. B/29) Mrs. M. D. L. Chan Meunier (Second Island Region Member) asked the Commissioner responsible for Public Infrastructure, Housing, Environment & Others whether, as regards the construction of the Winston Churchill Bridge, he can state to the House where matters stand.

The Commissioner for Public Infrastructure & Ors (Mr. F. A. Grandcourt): Mr. Chairperson, Sir, the Winston Churchill Bridge forms part of our structural development of road network for an enhanced road linkage and better travel conditions of the citizens. The construction of this bridge is also in

line with our approach to deal with the problem of traffic congestion in Port Mathurin, especially with the setting-up of the market.

I would like to remind the House that the bridge was demolished in 2004 due to its deteriorated state, and the absence thereof has since been hindering the traffic flow. Mr. Chairperson, Sir, the contract for the construction of the bridge has already been awarded to Laxmanbhai & Co. Ltd. for a contract value of Rs. 10,064,268.13, and the contractor has already set up his site office. The contract period is 210 days.

Mrs. L. C. Meunier: Mr. Chairperson, Sir can the Commissioner inform the House why there has been such a long delay in the construction of the bridge?

Mr. F. A. Grandcourt: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, the bridge was demolished in 2004, and we inherited this problem from the previous Government. This bridge was supposed to be a gift from the company. The foundation stone was laid and after that nothing has been done. Nothing has been done, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, until we take over, and now I am very pleased to announce that the construction of the bridge will start soon.

Mr. N. Lisette: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, as regards this question of gift, I would like to ask to the Commissioner for the Public Infrastructure whether, after his coming into office in 2006, he has made a proper follow up of this matter and, if so, what has been the outcome.

Mr. F. A. Grandcourt: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I heard that it was a gift. The problem is that there has not been any commitment. There is nothing in writing, and this is why there has not been any follow-up. The former Commissioner has not done the job properly. He should have asked the Company to put it in writing that they were going to construct this bridge free of charge. There is nothing in writing. That's the reason why there has not been any follow up.

Mr. N. Lisette: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, is the Commissioner aware that as far back as 2006 activities had started on the site, and that sand had already been brought there? Is he aware of that?

Mr. F. A. Grandcourt: Mr. Chairperson, Sir we received a letter saying that sand was needed in order to start the construction of the bridge. Therefore, we brought some sand on the construction site, and it was only after that that the contractor said that there was no commitment. We looked at the file and saw that

there was nothing written in the file to that effect. Therefore, we have taken back the sand to be used for other purposes.

Mr. D. Spéville: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I would like to ask the Commissioner if he is aware that the question of gift was mentioned in a letter which was taken up by the-then Executive Council. Is he aware that a meeting had been held with the representatives of Mauritius Telecom and the CEB to discuss about redesigning the cabling on that site. Is the Commissioner aware of that?

Mr. F. A. Grandcourt: Yes, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, these are minor works. But as far as I know there was no letter. Maybe the letter has been eaten by rats or something else. There has not been any letter, no firm commitment on the part of the contractor to construct that bridge free of charge.

Mr. D. Spéville: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I would like to ask the Commissioner how could the previous Government, together with other stakeholders, take a decision to redesign the cabling of Mauritius Telecom and the CEB in the absence of a firm commitment.

Mr. F. A. Grandcourt: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, as I have said, these are minor works and they used to work by saying: “ok, go, do this and do that” even if there is no firm commitment . I repeat: the previous Government has failed. This is why the said company has been able to bid for the contract, saying that they had no firm commitment. I don’t know, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, what arrangements had been made with the previous government, but what I know is that there is nothing on paper saying these guys should construct that bridge.

Mr. N. Lisette: Yes, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, the Commissioner for Public Infrastructure mentioned that there is a letter stating that they intend to start the project, and that was the reason why sand was brought over there. I would like to ask the Commissioner for Public Infrastructure who made the design for the construction of the bridge.

Mr. F. A. Grandcourt: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, the Member is asking for technical information, which I do not have right now. I will therefore request him to come with a new question.

Mr. N. Lisette: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, is the Commissioner for Public Infrastructure aware that the firm has even started with the casting of concrete blocks on the site?

Mr. F. A. Grandcourt: And so what, Mr. Chairperson, Sir! Should I wait for ten years? As I have said Mr. Chairperson, Sir, the demolition of that bridge has been the cause of traffic congestion in Port Mathurin. Should I wait for a hundred years? I have to act! We are acting now by launching the tenders. I don't know what were arrangements made by the contractor and the previous government. *Je ne sais pas mais je ne vais pas attendre, M. le Président. Il faut qu'on agisse et on a donc lancé le tender.* We have a successful bidder and we are going to start the construction of the bridge.

ARAUCARIA & MT. CHARLOT - COMMUNITY SCHOOLS - CONSTRUCTION

(No. B/30) Mrs. M. D. L. Chan Meunier (Second Island Region Member) asked the Deputy Chief Commissioner whether, as regards the community schools at Araucaria and Mt. Charlot, he can state to the House where matters stand.

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, following the termination of contract with regard to the construction of community schools at Araucaria and Montagne Charlot in March 2007, the Commission for Public Infrastructure was requested to make an assessment of the status of works at both Araucaria and Mt. Charlot sites so as to establish the action that needs to be taken to complete all outstanding works. It was found that progress of works at Araucaria and Mt. Charlot was estimated to be 70% and 40% respectively. Meetings were then held with the Commission for Public Infrastructure to discuss the way forward regarding the completion of all outstanding works. Subsequently, it was decided to implement part of the outstanding works at Araucaria in house and to contract out the remaining works, whereas the works at Mt. Charlot would be completed under the Global Consultancy Services in view of their outstanding volume.

Mr. Chairperson, Sir, necessary arrangements have been made by my Commission, in collaboration with the Commission for Public Infrastructure, to complete all outstanding works at Araucaria. The nature of the works consists of: fixing of openings, installation of roof sheeting, external works including laying of paving bricks, electrical & plumbing works and finishes. Contracts have already been awarded and works are going on satisfactorily. The works are expected to be completed by the end of June 2009.

With regard to the community school at Mt. Charlot, Consultant Servansingh Jadav & Partners is presently working on the procurement procedures for the completion of the outstanding works. The works will start shortly and are expected to be completed by the end of December this year.

Mrs. M. D. L. Chan Meunier: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, can the Commissioner inform the House when the Araucaria School will be fully operational? Can he give the exact date of the first intake?

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I have just stated that there are some outstanding works going on. We expect to open the school as soon as these works are completed, that is, by January 2010.

Mr. D. Spéville: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, can the Deputy Chief Commissioner state to the House the reason why this project has been delayed since 2006?

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, the respected Member is well aware of the causes of the delay. This project was already delayed when I took over. This is the reason why I had to terminate the contract in 2007. And then we had to start the different procedures for the completion of the works, and these procedures are still ongoing.

Mr. N. Lisette: If I understood the Deputy Chief Commissioner well, - and I will refer to the Audit report, if you allow me, Sir - works started on the 22nd of May 2006, and we left office in July 2006. And the termination of contract took place on 20th February 2008, according to the Audit Report. How does the Commissioner reconcile this with what he has just said? When did the delay occur - between May 2006 and July 2006? Why is he saying that there has been a big delay and that is the reason why he has terminated the contract?

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, on several occasions last year, questions regarding this issue have already been asked and answers have been given. I clearly stated the different reasons that caused the delay. And then, of course, before the termination of the contract, several meetings had to be held with the contractor until a final agreement was reached, and the contract terminated. And works had to be started again. And it's clear that even if the works were completed right now, we won't be able to open a school during the second term or the third term of a school year. Therefore, we will have to wait till the beginning of next year. And I can assure the House that by next year all the

infrastructural works will have been completed, and we will also by then have the required teachers to post in the school because right now we don't have teachers even if the infrastructures were ready .

Mr. N. Lisette: I would like, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, to ask the Deputy Chief Commissioner, where matters stand as regards the damages that were to be paid by the contractor because they had not done the work.

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, for all contracts there is a performance bond. I don't have the information asked for right now. I will inquire and inform the Member subsequently.

Mr. D. Spéville: Can the Deputy Chief Commissioner inform the House whether his Commission has made an assessment on any surplus in costs incurred as a result of subcontracting?

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: I have not made any real assessment, Mr. Chairperson, Sir. In fact, since part of the works are being carried out in-house by the Commission for Public Infrastructure and the remaining works subcontracted , this will cost a lot less than what the original contract would have cost.

Mr. D. Spéville: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, can the Deputy Chief Commissioner inform the House whether changes will be brought to the project in order to absorb the surplus costs incurred as a result of subtracting?

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: I don't have the information asked for, Mr. Chairperson, Sir.

DAMS - SILTATION

(No. B/31) Mrs. J. Prosper (Sixth Island Region Member) asked the Chief Commissioner whether, with regard to the siltation of existing dams in Rodrigues, he will inform the House of the number of dams that have been desilted to date and whether there is any siltation work going on presently.

The Chief Commissioner: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I am informed that siltation have been carried in the following dams up to now: Fond La Bonté (Gros mama), Saint Gabriel, Moricco, Letchi, Fond Rivière Coco.

I have to further inform the House that siltation works will be carried out or have already started at the following dams: Cascade Pigeon, Mangles, Quatre Vents and Grand Baie.

Thank you.

Mr. N. Lisette: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I would like to ask the Chief Commissioner whether siltation works have been carried out at Baie Topaze Dam. I did not hear the Commissioner mentioning this dam.

The Chief Commissioner: Yes, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, siltation works have been carried out at Baie Topaze Dam on the river. This has been done for irrigation purposes by the Commission for Agriculture.

Mr. N. Lisette: Mr. Chairperson Sir, I would like to ask the Chief Commissioner whether, as a result of the siltation of the dams at Fond La Bonté, Letchis and Riviere Coco, there has been an increase in the frequency of distribution of water to the population.

The Chief Commissioner: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, this question is very surprising and, of course, the answer is obvious. Maybe the Member no longer lives at Fond La Bonté. I would invite him to walk upstream at Fond La Bonté and see for himself the works that have been carried out there.

Mr. N. Lisette: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, this is the problem. If you go to other parts of the Island, for example Allee Tamarin and Baie aux Huitres, and you ask the people there whether there has been an increase in frequency of water distribution, you will be surprised to hear that formerly they were being supplied with water almost every eight days.

The Chief Commissioner: On a point of order, Mr. Chairperson, Sir. The Member is making a statement about what people have told him when he inquired *sur le terrain*. I would request him to ask a proper question.

Mr. N. Lisette: I would like to ask the Chief Commissioner, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, whether any of these dams are leaking.

The Chief Commissioner: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, all dams leak.

Mr. D. Spéville: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I would like to ask the Chief Commissioner whether the foundation basement at Cascade Pigeon is still strong and, if not, whether it will be reinforced in order to ensure water tightness after siltation works have been carried out.

The Chief Commissioner: Yes, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, the whole concrete structure at Cascade Pigeon will be reinforced and will be upgraded. The height also will be increased and maybe doubled. The actual capacity is some ten thousand cubic meters, and we expect to increase the capacity by digging more inside the dam to increase its height, and also reinforce it so as to bring its capacity to eighteen thousand cubic meters.

TOURISM - CAMPAIGNS ABROAD

(No. B/32) Mrs. J. Prosper (Sixth Island Region Member) asked the Chief Commissioner whether, with regard to tourism campaigns abroad, he could, for the benefit of the House, state the number effected from January 2009 to date, the outcome and breakdown of costs of each campaign.

The Chief Commissioner: I am informed by the Rodrigues Tourism Office that the following tourism campaigns have been organized abroad:

- From January 2009 to date – first internet promotion by the MTPA and the Rodrigues Tourism Office in Reunion Island, which started on 25 January 2009 via the website of the Tourism Office.
- Production and broadcast of 20 three-minute TV shot clips on Rodrigues, three times per day, on the Antenne Reunion TV Channel during prime time during the period 19 January to 19 February. The clips were also promoted via the Antenne Reunion internet web page.
- Promotional road show campaign in South Africa together with the MTPA and local tourism operators from 9 to 13 February 2009.
- Participation in the BIT International Tourism Fair in Italy from 19 to 22 February 2009.
- Promotional road show campaign in Reunion Island from the 22 to 28 February 2009 in St Denis, St Gilles and St Pierre.

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The internet promotion campaign and the TV clips campaign on Antenne Reunion Channel were aimed at increasing the visibility of Rodrigues Island in Reunion Island which is the second source market of tourists for our island. The two campaigns have been very successful. These two events were financed by the MTPA.

With regard to the road show in South Africa, the objective was to counteract the adverse impact of the current global financial crisis on tourist arrivals in Rodrigues and Mauritius, and to tap the market of South Africa which, by virtue of its proximity and the availability of air-seat capacity, represents a potential that could be advantageously tapped. I am informed that the road show has been very positive for Rodrigues where some 190 tour operators in Johannesburg, 120 tour operators in Cape Town, and 90 tour operators in Durban were given a presentation on Rodrigues Island, and contacts were established with them. Further, the visibility of Rodrigues Island was also improved with press conferences in Johannesburg and Cape Town.

With regard to the participation in the BIT Fair in Italy, the objective was to touch the Italian and European travel trade markets, and to ensure continuant yearly presence. The participation of Rodrigues was an ideal way of increasing the destination's visibility and the image awareness of Rodrigues Island. It was also a means of providing maximum information to travel trade professionals in Europe, and this is now being followed by PR activities by the Rodrigues Tourism Office.

As regards the promotional road show campaign in Reunion Island, this activity was organized following consultations with the local tourism associations and hotels of Rodrigues, especially after the television promotional campaign on Antenne Reunion. During the promotional campaign, the Rodrigues Tourism Office has organized 8 promotional events in 4 towns of Reunion Island namely, St. Denis, Bras Panon, St. Gilles and St. Pierre. During the day, the Rodrigues Tourism Office organized workshops with the travel agents. In the afternoons, promotional evenings were organized with selected guests such as the *Comites d'Entreprise* of banks, RFO Reunion, France Telecom, the Post office, the French Army, the *mairie* of Le Tampon, the Clinique Ste. Clothilde, as well as Golden Age Association, hiking associations, journalists, and so on. During these events, the Rodrigues Tourism Office made detailed presentations of Rodrigues Island. The hotels and local tourism enterprises also had the opportunity to market their enterprises. The Rodrigues Tourism Office ensured the distribution of promotional materials such as brochures, CDs, maps, etc. The promotional campaign was a

great success and it was noted that an average of 84% of guests invited replied to our invitation.

The breakdown of costs for the above events is being tabled. **(APPENDIX...)**.

FOOD SECURITY PROGRAMME

(No. B/33) Mrs. J. Prosper (Sixth Island Region Member) asked the Commissioner responsible for Agriculture & Others whether, with regard to the Food Security Programme, he will, for the benefit of the House, state:-

- (a) whether there was any recent visit of the Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) experts in Rodrigues and,
- (b) if so, what was the work undertaken by them, and the outcome of same.

The Commissioner for Agriculture & Ors. (Mr. L. A. Perrine): Mr. Chairperson, Sir, with regard to part (a) the answer is yes. A multi-disciplinary team of FAO's experts was in Rodrigues on a first mission from 12 to 18 February 2009. The delegation was composed of the following:-

Mr. Francois LEONARDI, International Consultant;

Dr. Noel GOVINDEN, Agronomist, Deputy Director of MSIRI;

Mr. Kamlesh BOODHOO, Livestock Specialist, Senior Lecturer, Faculty of Agriculture, University of Mauritius; and

Dr. Yousouf ISMAEL, Agro-economist.

Mr. Chairperson, Sir, with regard to part (b), I am pleased to inform the House that, following a request from my Commission, the FAO has approved the formulation of a Technical Cooperation Programme to support the implementation of the Rodrigues Agricultural Strategic Plan. In this context, the work to be undertaken by the experts is to develop and draft a programme in line with the island's objectives and priorities as recently formulated by my Commission in its Strategic Plan for the Agricultural Sector in Rodrigues (2007-2015).

Mr. Chairperson, Sir, the expected outputs are:-

- (1) prioritizing the current strategic plan to enable concrete supports;
- (2) preparing a project proposal; and
- (3) establishing a budget for the different activities.

The expected outcome is the signature of a three-year Technical Assistance Programme with the FAO to the tune of USD 500,000 hopefully by June 2009.

Mrs. M. D. L. C. Meunier: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, can the Commissioner inform the House when the draft development programme to be prepared by the FAO experts, will be presented in Rodrigues?

Mr. L. A. Perrine: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, the experts are presently in Rodrigues doing some ground work: collecting information, contacting stakeholders, and the first draft of the programme will be presented in early April for validation by the stakeholders and the authorities.

Mr. D. Spéville: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, the Commissioner has talked about technical assistance. I would like to ask the Commissioner whether the question of phytosanitary treatment of food for their preservation was raised, for example, at household level, how to preserve maize which is severely attacked by ...

Mr. L. A. Perrine: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, this aspect will be taken on board by the experts.

CITÉ PATATE - ACCESS TRACK - UPGRADING

(No. B/34) Mr. L. Guillaume (Fourth Island Region Member) asked the Commissioner responsible for Public Infrastructure, Housing, Environment & Others whether, with regard to upgrading access track to Cité Patate, he will state whether there is any plan for works to be undertaken there and, if yes, and whether the works will be carried out on the existing track.

The Commissioner for Public Infrastructure (Mr. F. A. Grandcourt): Mr. Chairperson, Sir, the access road leading to Cité Patate is upgraded regularly as per our road maintenance schedule in order to maintain the road in a practicable condition. The latest works carried out there in mid December 2008 comprised

backfilling and leveling. No major works are presently planned along the above access road in view of the pressing urgencies in other locations and due to financial constraints. However, I assure the House that my Commission will continue to look after the maintenance of that access road to the satisfaction and interest of the residents.

Mr. D. Spéville: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, in 2005 we leveled that road. I would like to ask the Commissioner whether there will be new developments on that road because it is found on a *formation corallienne* and we believe that its natural aspect should not be altered.

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

RODRIGUAN STUDENTS ABROAD – FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

(No. B/35) Mrs. M. F. Gaspard Pierre Louis (First Local Region Member for Grande Montagne) asked the Deputy Chief Commissioner whether, with regard to Rodriguan students attending university/tertiary institutions abroad and locally, he will inform the House whether:-

- (a) any of them is benefiting from financial assistance or other type of assistance from the Rodrigues Regional Assembly, and if so, whether he will give the details thereof;
- (b) any request for financial assistance has been made by the students for the period January 2008 to date and, if so, whether he will give the details thereof, and
- (c) with regard to students studying at the SSR Medical College in Mauritius, there has been any request for assistance addressed to the Commission and, if so, will he state to the House where matters stand?

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, as regards part (a), I am tabling a list of the names of students who have benefitted and who are benefitting from financial assistance from the Rodrigues Regional Assembly from July 2006 to date together with their fields of study. **(APPENDIX...)**.

With respect to part (b), eight applications for financial assistance have been received from January 2008 to date from students who are attending or will attend universities/tertiary institutions abroad and locally. Two students who have already been enrolled at local/ tertiary institutions are already benefiting from financial assistance. As regards the other six applicants, they have been requested to submit proof of admission at their respective institutions so as to enable this office to consider their request.

With respect to part (c), we have received requests for financial assistance from five students studying at the SSR Medical School and financial assistance has already been granted on a case to case basis, accordingly.

Mrs. M. F. Gaspard Pierre Louis: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, the Deputy Chief Commissioner mentioned that eight applications have been received from students studying abroad. I would like to know whether these applications include one from student Roxanna Collet.

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: I don't know who is Roxanna Collet. Can the Member be more precise, please?

Mrs. M. F. Gaspard Pierre Louis : Mr. Chairperson, Sir, a student studying in London. She has been the laureate for the year 2008.

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, Roxanna Collet was a laureate? No, I have not got any request from any person called Roxanna Collet, Mr. Chairperson, Sir.

Mrs. M. F. Gaspard Pierre Louis: Is it not true, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, that on 9th February 2009, this student sent a request to the Commission for Education and the request was copied to the Ministry regarding the problem she is facing in London?

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I repeat: I have not received any official request from that person, but I am aware that she is facing some problems in whatever country she is studying. But I have not been informed officially of that matter.

Mrs. M. F. Gaspard Pierre Louis: M. le président, cela me semble bizarre qu'il n'y ait pas eu de lettre parce que la j'ai une copie d'une lettre que la demoiselle m'a envoyée. Elle est d'avis que les choses ne bougent pas. Une copie

de cette lettre a aussi été envoyée au *Departmental Head of Commission of Education*. Cette étudiante m'a envoyé une copie de cette lettre parce qu'elle fait face à de sérieuses difficultés. *Will the Commissioner attend to her request shortly?*

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I would request the Member to ask the student to address her letter to me personally next time. Ok? If I receive a request, then, of course, I may consider it. But we should not forget that our priority is to help those students who have not had the chance to benefit from any scholarship. Before that student went abroad, I had a meeting with her and I advised her to choose the right university and the right destination, taking into consideration the cost of living in whatever country she chooses. The laureates normally get enough money to allow themselves to live and study abroad, but it all depends on the style of living they choose. Maybe she has not made the right choice, and that's why she is facing difficulties.

Mr. N. Lisette: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, many of our students are studying in England nowadays, and I think that we should feel concerned as these students are patriots who will be coming back to help this country. As we are all aware, Sir, the whole world is now being threatened by an economic crisis, and consequently the cost of living in England must have surely increased, thus adversely affecting the Rodriguan students there. Is the Commission for Education therefore ready to give financial assistance to those students who are studying abroad, be it England or in Australia?

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Yes, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, as I just said there are many of our students studying abroad in various parts of the world. We are ready to give financial assistance to our students abroad provided we are satisfied that they deserve same. There are many such cases. I don't know whether they are on the list I have just tabled. Anyway, as regards this student, if such request is made to me, I may consider it and see how we can help her.

Mrs. M. D. L. C. Meunier: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, can the Commissioner tell the House the whether those students should satisfy any specific criteria order to be eligible for this sort of financial assistance?

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: There are no specific criteria, Mr. Chairperson, Sir. The applications for financial assistance are considered on a case to case basis.

Mr. N. Lisette: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, even if the applications are considered on a case to case basis, there must surely be criteria that the applicants should satisfy. This is what we want to know - what are the criteria used to decide who are those eligible for financial assistance and who are those who are not eligible?

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, if the student comes from a low-income family, his application for financial assistance will be considered because financial situation is one of the criteria. The family background of the student may also be considered, for example, if he or she comes from a very large family. There may also be other criteria for a student to be eligible for financial assistance.

Mrs. M. F. Gaspard Pierre Louis: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, being given that the student in question satisfies all these criteria, can the Commissioner give the assurance to the House that her demand will be entertained as soon as possible?

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, as soon as I get

The Chairperson: The Deputy Chief Commissioner does not have to answer this question.

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Yes, as soon as I receive the request I may consider it and take a decision.

Mr. D. Spéville: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, the Deputy Chief Commissioner says that they consider the applications. I would like to ask him whether there is a specific committee set up at the level of his Commission to consider such applications.

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

Mr. N. Lisette: I think that this is a pertinent question, Sir, - who assesses the applications of the students at the level of the Commission?

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, if the letter is addressed to the Departmental Head, the file should come to me, and we study the case together. I don't have to set up a special committee for that.

Mrs. M. F. Gaspard Pierre Louis: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, regarding students attending the SSR Medical College, I would like the Commissioner to inform the House whether any meeting has been held with them during 2007 and 2008.

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Yes I had a meeting with them when I went on mission in Mauritius Mr. Chairperson, Sir.

Mrs. M. F. Gaspard Pierre Louis: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I would like to know whether they raised the question regarding financial difficulties they have to face in order to meet the expenses incurred in the buying of books required for their studies.

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, if the respected Member reads carefully the list that I have just tabled, she will see that we have during the past years given financial assistance to some of them. But for cases where there is no request, what can I do? In fact, when the respected Member was there they asked her for financial assistance, and they did not ask me. What can I do? Why should I give?

Mr. N. Lisette: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, there is one thing that I do not understand. Students attending the same university are benefitting from different facilities. If I base myself on the document that has been submitted by the Deputy Chief Commissioner, some students who are studying at the SSR Medical School are benefitting from books and others are benefitting from financial assistance to meet the costs incurred in examination re-sit. I would like to know from the Deputy Chief Commissioner whether these facilities are available to all the students.

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, not all the students have to re-sit. The students are normally granted a monthly stipend of Rs 8,300. The respected Member mentioned, for example, that all the requests were made in 2006. Let me ask her to have a look at the case regarding, for example student Davidson Casimir. This student was granted a book allowance of Rs 15,000., and a financial assistance of Rs 20,000. to meet the cost of two re-sit examinations. This is because this student wrote to us and explained his financial problems. This is how a decision was taken at the Executive Council level, not at the level of my Commission, to help him. These students are not usually expected to re-sit but if ever they have to re-sit and have to incur additional expenses, they should make a request for financial assistance. The request will be considered at

the level of the Executive Council which will decide whether to help or not, but usually, we do help.

Mr. D. Spéville: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, can the Deputy Chief Commissioner inform the House whether there exists, at his Commission, a file for each student studying abroad in order to facilitate the follow up on each case?

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

Mrs. M. F. Gaspard Pierre Louis: Mr. Chairperson, Sir the Commissioner has mentioned in his reply that five students from the SSR Medical College wrote and asked for assistance. I would like to know where matters stand regarding these requests.

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: The requests have been considered, Mr. Chairperson, Sir.

Mrs. M. F. Gaspard Pierre Louis: This means that the students have been granted the assistance asked for?

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: I will have to check Mr. Chairperson, Sir. As I just said, all the requests that come to me are studied and entertained if need be.

Mr. D. Spéville: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, if a file exists for each student, how can the Deputy Chief Commissioner not be aware of the problem of Roxanna Collet?

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I will not reply to any further question regarding the case of Roxanna Collet.

RODRIGUAN STUDENTS IN MAURITIUS - GRANT

(No. B/36) Mr. L. D. Baptiste (Second Local Region Member of Grande Montagne) asked the Deputy Chief Commissioner whether, as regards the grant of Rs.3,000. to Rodriguan students pursuing tertiary education in Mauritius, as announced in the 2008-2009 Budget Speech, he will state:-

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- (a) the eligibility criteria for students to benefit from same;
- (b) the amount earmarked in the budget for this item vote;
- (c) the number of applications received to date;
- (d) the number of beneficiaries, if any, and the number of rejected applications, giving the reasons, thereof, and
- (e) whether he will table a copy of the names and addresses of beneficiaries.

Mr. Chairperson: Deputy Chief Commissioner, the question is addressed to you.

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

As regards part (a), the eligibility criteria for students to benefit from the grant of Rs 3,000. are as follows:-

- (i) priority of consideration will be given to students who are not in receipt of any scholarship;
- (ii) students should come from low-income families;
- (iii) students should have studied at least either from Form IV to V or Form IV to VI in Rodrigues; and
- (iv) students should study in a recognized training institution in Mauritius.

As regards part (b), one million rupees has been earmarked for same.

Regarding part (c), 96 applications have been received to date.

With regard to part (d), to date, 21 beneficiaries have benefitted from the grant of financial assistance and 31 applications have been rejected because they do not meet the eligibility criteria.

As regards part (e), I am tabling the names and addresses of beneficiaries.
(APPENDIX...)

Mr. L. D. Baptiste: The Commissioner has mentioned that one of the criteria is that the student should come from a low-income family. Can he enlighten the House as to what he exactly means by low-income?

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Should I answer, Mr. Chairperson, Sir?

Mr. Chairperson: I believe yes.

The Chief Commissioner: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, on a point of order. According to Standing Orders, questions should not be asked to obtain trivial information that is already available at the library, on internet and in dictionaries. Low-income means low-income. The Member is an economics and Business Studies teacher, and I think he know what low-income means, Mr. Chairperson, Sir.

The Chairperson: Please wait. If the concept of low income can be obtained from a book, then I believe the Deputy Chief Commissioner can tell the Member to which book to refer to get the information he is requesting.

Mr. N. Lisette: I rephrase my question, Sir. I would like to ask the Deputy Chief Commissioner whether, as regards the low-income family criteria, there is a *bareme* fixed by the Commission?

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, the family income should not be more than Rs 7,400.

Mr. L. D. Baptiste: I would like to know when the first installment has been disbursed to these students.

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: I do not have the exact answer, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, but this has already been done.

Mr. N. Lisette: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, according to the reply given by the Deputy Chief Commissioner, 96 applications have been received out of which 21 were approved and 31 rejected. Can the Deputy Chief Commissioner state to the House what decision has been taken concerning the remaining 40 or so applications?

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: They are still under consideration, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, and a decision will be taken, after a more in-depth inquiry will have been carried out.

Mr. L. D. Baptiste: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, can the Deputy Chief Commissioner tell the House what mode of communication was used to inform all potential beneficiaries about the facilities put at their disposal, especially those students who are still studying in Mauritius?

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, we usually do it by phone if we have a contact phone number. Otherwise, we send them a letter informing them of the decision that has been taken.

Mr. L. D. Baptiste: As regards the students whose applications have been approved, I would like to ask the Commissioner for Education, what is the date limit for the beneficiaries to take advantage of the facilities put at their disposal.

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, this is a decision that has been taken in this financial year. Normally, it will not lapse with the end of the financial year. The students will continue to benefit from these facilities until the end of their studies whenever they will be facing financial difficulties and as long as we have funds in the budget.

Mr. D. Spéville: As regards the applications that are still under consideration Mr. Chairperson, Sir, can the Deputy Chief Commissioner tell the House whether there is a deadline for their approval, because, as you aware, Sir, the length of study of the students concerned is limited?

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: We usually start the procedures by making an advertisement requesting students to send their applications. There is a date limit for the applications. After that date, we start processing all the applications received and this exercise is normally over within a month.

Mr. N. Lisette: I would like to ask the Commissioner for Education whether the students receive this grant of Rs 3,000. even when they are on vacation.

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: I don't have the information requested, Mr. Chairperson, Sir.

Mrs. Gaspard Pierre Louis: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, regarding those beneficiaries, I would like to know as from which month the payment will take effect.

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, this information is available in this financial year's budget. Payment will take effect as from January of this year.

“ÉCOLES DE FOOTBALL”

(No. B/37) Mr. N. Lisette (First Local Region Member for Baie aux Huitres) asked the Commissioner responsible for Youth & Sports & Others whether, as regards the “*écoles de football*” in Rodrigues, he will, for the benefit of the House:-

- (a) state the names of the ‘*écoles de football*’ that won in the different categories for the year 2008;
- (b) inform the House whether each winning team has been awarded their prizes and the nature of same, if any;
- (c) state the number of “*écoles de football*” that are functioning and whether there is any one which is not active/operational or has been closed down;
- (d) state the number of young footballers who completed their training in these “*écoles*” last year and their follow-up?

The Commissioner for Youth and Sports (Mr. C. Agathe): Mr. Chairperson, Sir, as regards part (a), the first “*Plateau Atelier Football Debutant*” was organised on 5 April, 2008 at La Ferme for children aged 8 to 11 yrs; there were ten teams: Port Mathurin, Roche Bon Dieu, Port Sud Est, Petit Gabriel, Baie aux Huitres, Marechal, Grande Montagne, Baie Topaze, La Ferme and Riviere Coco, and the winner was Port Mathurin. The second plateau was organized on 14 June 2008 at Baie aux Huitres for children aged 8 to 11; there were ten teams and the winner was Port Mathurin. We have also organised a league that started on 1 March 2008, and ended on 30 August 2008 for *Categorie Benjamin*; there were 10 teams and Petit Gabriel was the winner. Roche Bon Dieu was the winner for *categorie minime*.

As regards part (b), I must point out that the priority objective of the organized competitions is to get the young players to master the technical, tactical and physical aspects of modern football. We do not emphasize on giving prizes although we do understand that this is an additional motivating factor for the children. They are normally provided with the necessary equipments by my Commission as additional incentives for their training.

As regards part (c), Mr. Chairperson, Sir, all the “*Ecoles de Football*” are operational.

As regards part (d), one hundred and ten (110) players born in 1993 out of two hundred and thirty-seven (237) will leave the “*Ecoles de Football*”. With a view to ensure their follow-up, four “*Centres de Formation de Football*” will soon be set up in the four football zones of Rodrigues, that is, zone 1, 2, 3 and 4, as adopted for the *Jeux de Rodrigues*. It is expected that the best players in the “*Centres de Formation*” will constitute the Rodrigues selection and will participate in tournaments in Mauritius.

Mr. N. Lisette: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, May I ask the Commissioner for Sports, with respect to the *Ecoles de foot de Port Mathurin and La Ferme*, at what frequency the children are being trained and the name of the *animateur* who is training them.

Mr. C. Agathe: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I know that all the *écoles de football* are operational. I don’t have the exact information about the date and time of training, but I assure Member that I will look into the matter. I understand that it is Mr. Castel who is acting as *animateur*.

Mr. N. Lisette: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, as regards the functioning of the *écoles de football*, the Commissioner replied that everything is functioning properly. I would like to ask him how this is being monitored, at what frequency, and when did the last check take place on these schools.

Mr. C. Agathe: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I believe the sports coach for football is monitoring the work of the different *animateurs* in the different schools. Meetings are held on Mondays, and whenever there is a problem the sports coach has to report same to us during those meetings. But as far as I know there has been no problem up to now.

Mr. N. Lisette: Is there any possibility Mr. Chairperson, Sir, that since the last check, some of these *écoles de foot* are no longer functioning and are not at all operational?

Mr. C. Agathe: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, as I said there are ten *écoles de foot* in Rodrigues. I have just mentioned all of them. As I have just said, there are ten teams for each plateau. All the teams have been participating in the activities of the plateaus in categories *Benjamin* and *minime*. Therefore, they are active.

Mr. N. Lisette: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I would like to remind the House that the same issue was raised last year on 26 February. In his reply, the Commissioner informed the House that he intends to increase the number of *écoles* from ten to twelve. He also said in his reply that a *centre de formation* would be set up in each and every local region of the island. I would like to ask him why there has been such a long delay in the setting-up of these *centres de formation*.

Mr. C. Agathe: Mr. Chairperson Sir, when we organized the *Jeux de Rodrigues*, we found out that we could divide Rodrigues into four zones, and we are organizing these four zones. The *centres de formation* were due to be operational by January, but unfortunately up to now they have not been set up. But I can assure the House that my Commission will give all necessary facilities in order to help the football players start the tournament.

Mr. N. Lisette: May I ask the Commissioner, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, whether a budget has been voted at the level of his Commission for the setting-up of a *centre de formation de football*?

Mr. C. Agathe: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, we have got a budget for the promotion of sports. And we are going to use it for the promotion of sports.

Mr. N. Lisette: Can the Commissioner state to the House the amount of money that has been allocated for this activity?

Mr. C. Agathe: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, this will depend.

SPORTS – PROMOTION ACTIVITIES & MAJOR INTERNATIONAL EVENTS – ALLOCATION OF FUNDS

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(No. B/38) Mr. N. Lisette (The First Local Region Member for Baie aux Huitres) asked the Commissioner responsible for Youth & Sports & Others whether, as regards the Recurrent Budget for the financial year 2008/2009 under the item votes “Promotion of Sports Activities” and “Major International Sports Events”, he will:-

- (a) table the amount of funds allocated/earmarked to each Regional Committee for their different activities under each item;
- (b) state the amount spent/committed to date for each Regional Sports Committee;
- (c) state whether the allocation earmarked for any Regional Sports Committee has been decreased as compared to financial year 2007/2008; and if yes, state:
 - (i) the reasons why, and
 - (ii) how this decrease affects/will affect the activities of the Regional Sports Committees?

The Commissioner for Youth & Sports (Mr. C. Agathe): Mr. Chairperson, Sir, a sum of Rs.4.4 million has been earmarked for sports activities of all sports disciplines under recurrent item/vote 01-0101-154 of my Commission for the promotion of sports in Rodrigues for financial year 2008/2009.

As regards to part (b), the amount spent and committed under this item for each sports discipline as at 5 March 2009 is as follows:

No.	Sports discipline	Amount spent (Rs)	Amount committed(Rs)
1	Athletics	339,409.97	62,364.00
2	Badminton	4,404.80	Nil
3	Boxe Française	45,648.00	nil
4	Basket Ball	39,800.00	nil
	Boxing	172,422.85	nil

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5	Cycling	745.00	nil
6	Football	691,663.00	15,800.00
7	Handball	174,601.00	nil
8	Judo	420,473.40	310.50
9	Kick Boxing	78,012.00	nil
10	Karate	7,400.00	6,466.00
11	Lawn Tennis	420.00	nil
12	Petanque	150.00	nil
13	Swimming	1,765.00	1,044.00
14	Table Tennis	2,500.00	nil
15	Volleyball	386,081.70	7,150.00
16	Wrestling	425,940.20	1,620.00

As regards the item/vote “Major International Sports Event”, no allocation has been made under this item to Sports Regional Committees, as this is meant for the participation of Rodriguan athletes and officials in international sport events. The amount spent under this item to date is Rs 150,578.96 in connection with the participation of Rodrigues in the recent CJSOI Games held in Seychelles from 18 July to 4 August 2008, the participation of Rodrigues in the Herculis Meeting held in Monaco on 29 July 2008 and the Danone Nations Football Cup held in France from 4 to 8 September 2008. A sum of Rs 150,000.00 has been committed for the participation of Rodriguan judokas in the Judo competition to be held in Reunion Island shortly during this month.

As regards part (c), this question does not arise since my Commission is entertaining requests from regional sports committees to finance their activities within the limits of our budget provided the expenses are justified.

Mr. N. Lisette: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, the Commissioner for Sports has said in his reply that there is no specific allocation for regional committees. Can the

Commissioner state to the House, therefore, how the regional committees will plan their calendar of activities? Will it be on a weekly, a monthly or a yearly basis?

Mr. C. Agathe: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, the calendar of activities is planned on a yearly basis.

Mr. N. Lisette: In this case, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, if no budget is allocated to them by the Commission, on what are they going to base themselves to plan their activities for a year?

Mr. C. Agathe: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, the regional committees are autonomous - they get funds from Government, and they can also organize themselves to get funds from other sources. I think that the Member is confused, and maybe he thinks only the Commission can fund the activities of the regional committees. The regional committees are autonomous; they are free to obtain funds from other sources too.

Mr. N. Lisette: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, the Commissioner for Sports knows very well that sponsorship in Rodrigues is very limited. He himself stated to the House that he could not get a sponsor for the sports award activity, and that was the reason why it was not organized. Therefore, I wonder how the regional sports committees are going to obtain the required funds to enable them to organize their activities! I would like to ask the Commissioner for Sports, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, whether he is aware that the traditional independence tournament is not being organized for various disciplines for lack of funds? Is he aware that as a result of limited financial resources, tournaments are being organized for only three or four out of the sixteen disciplines that exist in Rodrigues?

Mr. C. Agathe: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, the independence tournament is organised by the Commission for Culture and the funds have to come from that Commission.

Mr. N. Lisette: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, can the Commissioner inform the House whether there has been any request in this regard from the Commission for Sports to the Commission for Culture? If so, what has been the response of the Commission for Culture?

Mr. C. Agathe: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, the Commission for Culture is giving Rs 50,000. for football only.

Mr. N. Lisette: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I would like to ask the Commissioner for Sports whether he is aware of the number of activities that have been cancelled since January? We have had the case of wrestlers who were supposed to go to France and who were informed on the eve of their departure, and after intensive training, that it had been decided to cancel their participation in the event. May I ask the Commissioner once again whether this was due to lack of funds?

Mr. C. Agathe: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, every Member in this House is aware that the Rodrigues Regional Assembly has the responsibility to pay for tickets to Mauritius only, and that it is the responsibility of the MYS and the Federations to pay for tickets to other destinations. We have a small budget Mr. Chairperson, Sir, and we can afford to pay for the athletes to go to Mauritius only.

Mr. N. Lisette: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, the Commissioner would agree with me that since the regional committees have no idea about the amount of money they can spend in a year, they are at a lost when it comes to the preparation of their calendar of activities?

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

ELECTRICITY SUPPLY – DISCONNECTION – JANUARY 2007 TO DATE

(No. B/39) Mr. N. Lisette (First Local region member for Baie aux Huitres) asked the Chief Commissioner whether, for the benefit of the House, he would seek information from the Central Electricity Board as regards:-

(a) the number of households which were disconnected from the electrical mains since January 2007 to date in Rodrigues, if any, and giving the details per month together with the reasons;

(b) the number of such households which have been reconnected to the power supply?

The Chief Commissioner: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I am informed by the General Manager of the Central Electricity Board that 2,845 consumers in Rodrigues have been disconnected from the electrical network during the period January 2007 to date. The details per month, as received from the Central Electricity Board, are being tabled and it can be noted from the list that all disconnections are due to non- payment of electricity bills. **(APPENDIX...)**.

As regards part (b) of the question, I am informed by the Central Electricity Board that 1,449 consumers out of the 2,845 disconnected have been reconnected upon settlement of their bills.

PUBLIC OFFICERS – RODRIGUES REGIONAL ASSEMBLY

(No. B/40) Mr. N. Lisette (First Local region member for Baie aux Huitres) asked the Chief Commissioner whether, as regards the Public Officers working under the Rodrigues Regional Assembly, he would, for the benefit of the House:-

(a) state the number of same who have been granted leave without pay since August 2006 and table their grades, the length of leave and the Department/Commissions to which they are/were attached;

(b) state whether there has been any refusal for granting of leave without pay for the same period to any officer/s, and if yes:

(c) the grades of the officer/s concerned and the Commissions/Departments to which they are attached; and

(d) the reasons why?

The Chief Commissioner: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, as regards part (a) of the question, I wish to remind the House that in the past the ex-Chief Commissioner did not reply to questions referring to matters concerning employees of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly which fall under the sole responsibility of their Responsible Officer, the Island Chief Executive. However, having said that, the number of Public Officers who have been granted leave without pay since August 2008 is 28. I am submitting the information requested in respect of these cases. **(APPENDIX...).**

As regards part (b), eight officers have not been granted leave without pay applied for. The list of employees together with the reasons why their applications for leave without pay have not been approved is also being tabled. **(APPENDIX...).**

Thank you.

Mr. N. Lisette: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I will, with your permission, refer to two cases concerning officers from the Fisheries Protection Services? I can see that in one case an officer, whose name I am not going to mention, has been granted 90 days leave for personal reasons. And I also note that another officer from the same services, who is immigrating to England has been refused extension of leave, while there is provision now in the PRB report for such leave. May I ask the Chief Commissioner...

Mr. Chairperson: Which department?

Mr. N. Lisette: Fisheries Department.

The Chief Commissioner: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I will have to repeat my reply and tell the Member again that it is the responsible officer, that is, the Island Chief Executive, who has the sole responsibility of deciding whether to grant leave without pay or not on the basis of PRB recommendations. In cases of leave without pay to take employment in parastatal and statutory bodies; leave without pay to accompany spouses who are public officers proceeding on approved leave etc; leave without pay for those benefiting from maternity leave and for other private purposes, the leave should not exceed an aggregate of ninety days that can be taken in a maximum number of three times every ten years. I have to tell the Member that, as regards the case he has just mentioned, there is a lack of personnel at the Fisheries Protection Services. They are in full phase of organizing and reinforcing the protection of marine reserves, which is the mission of the Fisheries Protection Services. If this officer has been refused leave without pay it has been done on the basis of the exigencies of the service and the requirements of Government. This officer referred to by the Member is not the only one who has been refused leave without pay. Officers from the Meteorological Services, the Commission for Health, the Commission for Agriculture, the Commission for Public Infrastructure, from the Cadastral Division, the Commission for Education as well as primary school teachers have also been refused leave without pay. May I know the reason why the Member is focusing on that particular officer?

Mr. N. Lisette: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, the Chief Commissioner has stated that leave without pay has been refused on the basis on the exigencies of service. Knowing the public sector in Rodrigues, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, it is quite surprising to note that there is only one planner in Rodrigues and he has been granted leave without pay, and ...

The Chief Commissioner: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, on a point of order. Is the Member explaining what Government is doing or is he asking a question? He has started talking about one Fisheries Protection Officer, and now he is talking about a Planner! This has nothing to do with the substantive question. He should ask supplementary questions related to the main question. If the Member is unable to do this, he should please sit down!

Mr. Chairperson: The point of order is correct. I draw the attention of the Member to section 66 of the law which says that the overall administrative control rests on the Island Chief Executive and not on the Commissioners. This is a sort of separation of powers.

Mr. N. Lisette: Yes, Mr. Chairperson, Sir. But my question is related to the reply given by the Chief Commissioner.

Mr. Chairperson: Information mentioned incidentally cannot be subject to supplementary questions.

Mr. N. Lisette: I wanted to draw...

The Chief Commissioner: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, this is question time it is not the time to draw I don't know what! It is the time to ask questions! I would kindly invite you to ask the Member to ask his question and not to draw I don't know what. If he wants to draw things, this is not the proper place to do it.

Mr. N. Lisette: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I would like to ask the Chief Commissioner how does he explain the fact that there is only one Planner in Rodrigues, and he is granted leave without pay whereas there are many officers in the Fisheries Division and when one of them asks for extension of his leave without pay, he is refused. Don't you see that there is something fishy?

Mr. Chairperson: Please wait, Chief Commissioner. When the question was put, I noted that there was a point to be cleared, that is, whether the day to day administration of a Department can be questioned in this House. I understand the point of the Member, but I think he should formulate his question differently. There is a thin line between the admissibility and the non admissibility of a question. I can give the Member time to reformulate his question if he so wishes.

SECONDARY SCHOOLS – NEW SCHOOL HOURS

(No. B/41) Mr. J. D. Spéville (Second Local Region Member for St. Gabriel) asked the Deputy Chief Commissioner whether, with regard to new school hours for secondary schools for the year 2009 he will:-

(a) state whether meetings on this issue, between his Commission and other stakeholders, were held before establishing same in Rodrigues; and if yes, give the nature of same;

(b) state whether his Commission has made an assessment of the degree of lateness of students in every secondary school in Rodrigues as from January 2009 to date; and if so;

(c) state the degree of lateness of students for each secondary school and the reasons associated, thereof;

(d) inform the House what is being contemplated by his Commission to remedy same?

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, as regards part (a), following a circular letter pertaining to new timetabling arrangements dated 2 March from the Ministry of Education, Culture and Human Resources, which was received on 4 March, a meeting was held on 6 March with the Managers and Rectors of all colleges in Rodrigues to discuss the new timetable for schools.

In the circular letter No. 419, we have been informed that there will be 40 teaching periods and five activity periods per week.

Rectors are advised to opt either for the school day to consist of 2 periods of 40 minutes, 6 periods of 35 minutes and one activity period of 30 minutes or to opt for all periods being of an equal duration of 35 minutes each.

The new timetabling arrangements have not yet been established in our schools. Since the first term is nearly over, all rectors have proposed to adopt the new timetable as from the 2nd term so as not to disrupt the smooth running of schools.

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

With respect to part (c), the information is still being compiled.

As regards part (d), prior to carrying out a survey on the degree of lateness in every secondary school, a meeting was held with the officers of the (NTA) National Transport Authority and Managers and Rectors of schools on 20 January 2009 to discuss problems faced by students as far as transport facilities are concerned.

The officers of the NTA have been requested to ensure and monitor that school bus services are made available to students to and from school on a daily basis.

In addition, Mr. Chairperson, Sir rectors have been advised to set up a transport monitoring cell or committee at the level of their school to monitor and ascertain that students are making full use of the school buses and report any problem to the NTA. They were also requested to make an assessment of the degree of lateness in their respective schools.

Mr. D. Spéville: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I would like to ask the Deputy Chief Commissioner whether the questions of *decalage horaire* between Mauritius and Rodrigues, and the specific transport network of Rodrigues have been discussed at the meeting with the NTA. I would also ask him to state to the House whether his Commission would make a request to the management of Redco and Rodco, Rodrigues College to start school by some minutes later in the morning in order to bring down the degree of lateness in the colleges, which is 60% between 8.00 a.m. and 8.30 a.m.

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: First of all, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I have to ...

Mr. Chairperson: You have understood the *decalage horaire*?

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: As far as I am aware, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, there is no *decalage horaire* between Mauritius and Rodrigues. I can assure the Member that this problem will be dealt with and everything will be back to normal very soon.

Mr. Chairperson: May be the Member would like to explain what he meant?

Mr. D. Spéville: Mr. Chairperson, Sir,...

Mr. Chairperson: Can the Member refrain from asking too many questions at the same time. This creates confusion.

Mr. D. Spéville: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, even though *l'heure d'été* will be abolished soon, the problem will persist because there is a lack of buses catering for the transport of people from and to Port Mathurin. This is why I would like to ask the Deputy Chief Commissioner whether he can look into the matter because there is a high level of lateness in this school during the first period which is turn causing a total disruption in the programme of study in schools.

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, first of all, let me remind the respected Member that, according to the circular letter from the Ministry of Education, there is a new time table which is coming into force. This time table will be applied in all our schools in Rodrigues during the second term. Therefore, if everything goes back to normal, as it was before, there will not be any *decalage horaire*. And so there is no reason why we should raise this question now. There is no question of *decalage horaire*. Now, concerning the issue of the transport system in Rodrigues, I had a meeting with representatives of the NTA and the Rectors and Managers. I asked them to set up a committee in their respective schools to monitor the degree of lateness and to submit to a report to me. In the light of report, I will decide on whether changes should be brought to the time table. The time table has to be implemented as prescribed by the Ministry, and it will take effect as from the second term.

Mr. N. Lisette: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, the outcry of students in Mauritius has forced the Ministry of Education to change the time table and the school hours. Being given the specificity of Rodrigues and the fact that we don't have the same bus fleet as in Mauritius, did the Commissioner for Education study the new time table, Sir? Did he make an assessment of the situation since January, and did he make any recommendation?

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: I am aware of that problem, Mr. Chairperson, Sir. I know that the situation here is different from that of Mauritius. This is why, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I had a meeting with the different parties involved. I asked them to monitor the situation and to submit a report to me. It's only after that that I will be able to take a decision on the action to be taken. But up to now I have not received any report. Therefore, I can't take any action now.

Mr. N. Lisette: So, the Commissioner is saying, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, that since the start of the school year in January and up to now there has been no report as regards the situation prevailing in the schools concerning the transport system?

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: The report is still being prepared, but I have not got a complete report yet. So I can't take any action until I am in presence of a complete assessment of the situation.

Mr. N. Lisette: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, Commissioner for Education has said that he has had a meeting with the representatives of the NTA. Has there been a report from the NTA Officers and from the Directors of the different schools on the transport problem?

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, we are all aware that there are not enough buses in Rodrigues to cater for the public and the student population at the same time. We have to do with what we have. The NTA has been instructed to closely monitor the situation. As regards the timetabling, as there will be a change, maybe we will no longer have this problem and maybe not. Therefore, I will have to wait until the next term, when the new time table will be applied, to know whether there are other problems and to act accordingly.

Mr. D. Spéville: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, the Deputy Chief Commissioner has said that there is a lack of buses in Rodrigues. Can I, therefore, ask him whether any recommendation can be made for the second term pour *decaler l'heure de bureau et l'heure de la rentrée des écoles* which is presently 8.00 a.m.? Because formerly, when school hours were between 8.15 a.m. to 8.35 a.m., the problem was less acute. Now the problem is very acute and we cannot solve it because both offices and schools start at 8.00 a.m. We have 60% to 70% of students arriving late at school. This is why as from the second term there should be a change in school hours, but the length of school hours should remain unchanged. We should see to it that schools and offices do not start at the same time.

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: I understand the point raised by the Member, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, and I will look into the matter.

SEA PASSES - DIGGING & LIGHTING

(No. B/42) Mr. J. D. Speville (Second Local Region Member for St. Gabriel) ask the Chief Commissioner whether, with regard to the digging and

lighting of sea passes “*la passe*” in the lagoon all around Rodrigues, he could inform the House where matter stands?

The Chief Commissioner: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, with regard to the digging and lighting of sea passes ‘*la passe*’ in the lagoon all around Rodrigues, I wish to inform the House as follows: A contract has been awarded for an EIA study for the siltation and enlargement of passes around Rodrigues. The EIA report is due to be submitted within the next two months. Thereafter, the tender for the works will be floated incorporating all the conditions of the EIA. Secondly, five solar marine lanterns have been purchased by the Commission for Fisheries. The necessary structure to support the lanterns is being constructed. It is expected that all works will be completed, and the lanterns will be installed on the structures in the sea by the end of May.

Mr. D. Spéville: Mr. Chairperson, Sir can the Chief Commissioner state to the House where the lanterns will be installed?

The Chief Commissioner: We are actually going according to priority, Mr. Chairperson, Sir. I have been at sea twice this week and I’ve been told that certain illegal fishermen tamper with and destroy these lanterns in order to prevent the officers of the Fisheries Protection Services from locating them. As regards the question itself, I think this is the first time such lanterns are being installed. I do not know whether this has been done before, but there is a problem concerning the main pass of Port Sud Est and that of Grand Bassin. The lantern has not been placed where it should be - it has been placed on the rock, when it should be near the pass. Port Sud Est is a priority as well as other small passes but we have to be careful because the lantern on the pass will act as a signal that the pass is safe, whereas we know that some passes are not safe and are even not recommended, for example in pass Jimmy.

Mr. D. Spéville: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, can the Chief Commissioner inform the House whether provision has been made for special lanterns to be placed on land, because sometimes fishermen confuse the light of lanterns with the light of houses. I would like to ask the Chief Commissioner whether he could consider the possibility of having the colour of the lights of certain houses situated nearby changed.

The Chief Commissioner: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, it a known fact that lay persons tend to confuse the lanterns guiding them to the pass with other lights,

especially with the development of the rural areas. I would invite the Member to follow the training course for skippers, because if one is a skipper, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, one should be able to distinguish by the colour of a lantern's light, as well as by its signaling pattern, between a guiding light, a navigational light, and that of a house. I agree with the Member that fishermen are not trained to recognize these lanterns, and that we have to make an effort in this regard. But again, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, the main problem is vandalism. Even on land people steal the lanterns, and we can sometimes see these lanterns lighting on houses, etc. We also have to make people understand, the fishermen in particular, that these lanterns have been placed there in order to save the lives of fishermen. For example, in Grenade...(gap in cassette) *end of cassette 1*).

The Chief Commissioner:....at in the past where the lantern is and we know how difficult it is to enter the southern pass. Our priority is therefore to place lanterns and fluorescent buoys in the southern pass in order to help the fishermen using that pass.

FISH AGGREGATING DEVICES

(No. B/43) Mr. J. D. Speville (Second Local Region Member for St. Gabriel) asked the Chief Commissioner whether, with regard to Fish Aggregating Devices 'FADs' around Rodrigues, he would for the benefit of the House:-

- (a) give the number of Fish Aggregating Devices 'FADs' around Rodrigues together with their locations;
- (b) give their actual status;
- (c) state whether some of the Fish Aggregating Devices 'FADs' have disappeared; and
- (d) if so, give the list of those disappeared, its impact on the outer-lagoon fishing production and state how his Commission is aiming to replace same and install new one?

The Chief Commissioner: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I am tabling a list of FADs around Rodrigues, their status, those that have disappeared and those that have been replaced. **(APPENDIX...).**

The aim of the Fisheries Research and Training Unit is also to replace all disappeared FADs to reduce its impact on outer lagoon fishing. Four additional

FADs will also be placed at a much lower depth by the end of April. Development of FADs, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, is a priority for us because at the present time, fishermen who just go out at sea and fish anywhere, find it difficult to make their fishing profitable, and the FADs do help them to bring some fish ashore.

Mr. D. Speville: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I would like to ask the Chief Commissioner whether there is a stock of already constructed FADs to replace those that have disappeared?

The Chief Commissioner: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, FADs are not constructed; they are mounted as and when required. There is a stock of all the materials, buoys and ropes at the FRTU, and very often FADs that have been damaged by bad weather, high tides, tsunamis, winds, cyclones, etc. are being replaced or repaired. We do, therefore, have a stock of materials to enable us to mount the FADs rapidly.

Mr. D. Speville: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, being given that a stock of materials is available, I would like to ask the Chief Commissioner why it has taken nearly two years to replace the FAD at Ile aux Cocos, which had disappeared in August 2007 and which has been replaced in January 2009 only?

The Chief Commissioner: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, when a FAD is lost, it is not really necessary to replace it. I am aware that there are presently two FADs functioning at Ile aux Cocos. Those that had disappeared in other places have been replaced by new FADs in other locations. And as the Member is surely aware, going out at sea to replace a FAD is not like walking in the street. This is a very difficult job, Mr. Chairperson, Sir. The main reason why there has been a delay to replace the FAD is because the small equipment, the triode, which has to be mounted on the fishing vessel Diego Rodriguez broke down. This is the equipment used to lower the FAD down in the sea. This is a mechanical, a hydraulic equipment, and it broke down. Therefore, we had to wait for its replacement. Because this is a very dangerous job, and there can be loss of lives if you are not careful.

Mr. D. Speville: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I would like to ask the Chief Commissioner if his Commission is aiming to place FADs nearer to the *barrière corallienne* so as to allow more fishermen to carry out outer lagoon fishing.

The Chief Commissioner: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I will again have to give a course on fishing and fishing grounds to the Member. Mr. Chairperson, Sir, the FADs are placed according to the depth of the sea. If you place FADs in 20 metres of water you won't get anything. FADs have to be placed at least 50 to 60 metres deep because FADs are used to catch pelagic fish, that is, fish which are most of the time migrating like tuna, dorado, etc... I am myself a sports fisherman. I am aware, Sir, that complaints have been received regarding FADs. But as I told you, the equipment had broken down, and is now being replaced. And it also depends on the weather which at times does not permit the officers of the FRTU to go out at sea and place these FADS. But again, I must point out that FADs are placed according to various criteria. We had the visit of a specialist in this field from Mauritius who has made recommendations on where to place FADs. I agree with the Member when he says that we have to place more FADs around Rodrigues, as this is a means of keeping the fish around. And also FADs have to be placed according to a given pattern that will enable us to keep the fish in the waters of Rodrigues.

LOCAL RESIDENT PROPERTY DEVELOPMENT SCHEME

(No. B/44) Mr. L. S. CLAIR (The Minority Leader) asked the Chief Commissioner whether, as regards to the Local Resident Property Development Scheme, he could for the benefit of the House state:-

- (a) the number of applications received and approved as up to date ;
- (b) table the names and address of any successful promoter together with its locations and extent of land allocated;
- (c) the amount of revenue generated from the one-off social contribution and annual rental of state land?

The Chief Commissioner: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, since the launching of the scheme on 1st September, 2007, 37 applications have been received under the scheme. As at date, 16 applications have been approved by the Executive Council. The Cadastral Office is now in the process of identifying and proposing the locations and plots to be allocated to the approved cases, following which letters of intent will be issued to the approved cases.

As regards part (b), the information regarding the names and addresses of the successful promoters is being tabled. **(APPENDIX...)**. As mentioned, no location has been finalized as at date and no land allocated up to now.

Under the scheme, the lessee will be required to make a one-off contribution of Rs 50,000 to the RRA as social contribution for economic/social projects and pay rental at the rate of Rs 12,000 annually for the first ten years and Rs 30,000 annually for the remaining 10 years. The payment has to be made only upon finalization of the plot and issue of a letter of intent to the applicant. Given the Cadastral Office is still in the process of identifying and finalizing the plots to be allocated and no letter of intent has been issued under the scheme. As at to date, no amount either as one-off contribution or rental has been collected up to now. An amount of Rs 30,000 has been collected regarding the Rs 1,000 non-refundable application fee for each application.

Mr. N. Lisette: May I ask the Chief Commissioner, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, if I got him right, whether there is approval of the project first and then identification of the site? May I also ask him whether it is the applicant who applies for a particular region or a particular site, or it is the Executive Council that proposes a site to the applicant?

The Chief Commissioner: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, this is the procedure: once the approval has been given, the Cadastral Office has to give planning clearance regarding the proposed site. Some of these applicants are trying to obtain a lease on a family property. For example, we cannot approve a lease for a person living in Mauritius and owning a house in Rodrigues but all the family members are in Mauritius and they have to secure tenure for the lease. This is a clear cut case where the site is already known. In such cases, the Cadastral Office has only to give its clearance for the granting of the lease, be it a building or a site. This is the usual procedure. The same procedure has to be followed before granting either residential leases or commercial leases. The applications are approved first, and then the Cadastral Office is requested to identify the sites that can be granted to the applications in cases where a site has not already been proposed. They are as far as possible grouped together in residential zones. No prime land, or commercial land situated industrial zones will be used for this purpose.

Mr. N. Lisette: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, last year the Chief Commissioner stated that one application was received and approved. Can the Chief Commissioner inform the House whether any project falling under the property

development scheme has started up to now, and what is the delay granted to the promoter to start the project after the approval of the project and the issue of the letter of intent?

The Chief Commissioner: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, as I have just stated, no amount of money representing one-off contribution has been collected. This means that the person whose application was approved last year has not turned up to pay yet. As regards the timeframe to start the project, it is the same as for residential leases. The project has to start within a period of 18 months.

Mr. N. Lisette: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, we have a case where the application was approved by the Commission for Land, and the successful applicant called for signature, and did not turn up. Does it not mean that that person is no longer interested? What does the Commissioner for Land decide in such cases?

The Chief Commissioner: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, if the application has been approved, therefore a letter of intent has, I believe, been issued. And the applicant should pay the survey fees amounting to Rs 50,000 within a given period of time. If the said fees are not paid within that given period of time, the offer lapses and the application is automatically cancelled.

MONT LUBIN - RECLAIMED LAND

(No. B/45) Mr. L. S. Clair (The Minority Leader) asked the Chief Commissioner as regards to environmental and physical sustainability of the Mont Lubin reclaimed land, he would state whether, in the interest of the community at large and avoiding degradation, he is contemplating of reviewing his land use plan before allowing any development in this strategic area and if in the affirmative, provide any details thereof, and if not, why?

The Chief Commissioner: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, with regard to the Mont Lubin reclaimed land, I informed the House last year in my reply to question B/86 that the land at Mont Lubin has been surveyed and parceled out into lots. I also circulated to this House the plan of the parceling.

I wish to inform the House that at the time of parceling of the site, no land use plan was available for the region. My office, having taken note of this shortcoming, has already started preparing the Land Use Plan not only for the

region but for the whole island. We are in the process of completing the detailed Land Use Plan for local region number one.

For the Mont Lubin reclaimed land, we are planning to:

1. Solicit the services of a Geotechnical Expert in order to ascertain the suitability of the site and the types of construction that can be made thereon;
2. Construct a retaining structure to improve the backfilled site and undertake necessary works to ensure proper compaction with the collaboration and financial contribution of any person having a commercial lease there.

Mr. N. Lisette: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, is the Chief Commissioner aware that construction works or at least the foundation works have started on the said site?

The Chief Commissioner: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I am aware of that. I have seen one person trying to excavate foundations, and I invite the Commissioner responsible for Public Infrastructure to see to it that no building permit be granted pending a solution to the problem of “unstability of Land”. We have to decide on which type of construction can be put there and what sort of reinforcement works that have to be carried out, Mr. Chairperson, Sir. And I should say, Sir, that the reclamation of this land was itself done out of the blue, without any proper planning, without any retaining wall, without taking into consideration the water source downstream. This has been done before we took over, Sir. The work has been wrongly done, and now we have to find a solution to this problem.

Mr. Chairperson: I believe questions B/46 and B/47 concern the same subject. Will the Chief Commissioner answer them together or separately? Can the Minority Leader ask both questions to the House at the same time?

The Chief Commissioner: Yes, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I will answer both questions together.

ROUTE DE L’AUTONOMIE - ROAD EXCAVATION

(No. B/46) Mr. L. S. Clair (The Minority Leader) asked the Chief Commissioner with regard to road excavation works being carried out from Route de L’Autonomie at Solitude towards Cascade Pigeon, he could state:-

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- (a) what environmental measures are being observed to avoid any degradation in such an ecological sensitive area;
- (b) if recommendations have been obtained from various departments such as Cadastral Office, Environment Unit, Forestry Division and the Planning Department before starting the work;
- (c) whether, the Forest Department has submitted a comprehensive report about the preservation and protection of trees along the road alignment; and if yes, state the recommendations, thereof?

(No. B/47) Mr. L.S. Clair (The Minority Leader) asked the Chief Commissioner with regard to road excavation works being carried out from Route de L'Autonomie at Solitude towards Cascade Pigeon, he could state:-

- (a) whether the excess soil, rocks debris and wood produced from the sites are being disposed of in an environment friendly manner;
- (b) if the contract caters for the construction of retaining wall or any other structures along the road in sloppy and abrupt terrain conditions ; and
- (c) the estimated cost of the project?

The Chief Commissioner: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, with your permission, Sir, I would like to reply to both Parliamentary Questions B/46 and B/47 together.

The Chief Commissioner: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I will reply to both questions together as they both deal with the same subject.

Mr. Chairperson, Sir, the siltation/rehabilitation of the Cascade Pigeon dam has been favourably recommended in the various reports on the Water Sector in Rodrigues since long. However, one of the major difficulties for its implementation has been the construction of an access road/service road to the dam. My Commission has, in consultation with the various Departments in Rodrigues, worked out the best alternative route to access the dam.

The major environmental measures that are being and will be observed are:

- (1) stabilization of the lower banks with boulders to avoid soil erosion.
- (2) the carting away of surplus soil to a spoil tip.

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I have to further inform the House that the alignment of the access road was finalized after extensive consultations with relevant authorities namely the Forest Department, the Environment Unit and others. Both the Forest Department and the Mauritius Wildlife Foundation were solicited to ensure that the design of the road layout will not entail the destruction of endemic trees. I have to say the design of the road follows the initial track which was used to build the reservoir and therefore does not contain many endemic trees.

All excess soil, rocks, debris and wood products will be disposed of in an environment-friendly manner. Moreover, retaining walls will be constructed wherever required along the road and in the reservoir area. We have to say, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, that this is a service road for the reservoir and of course will not be open to the public. It is found in the Cascade Pigeon forest area and is fenced, and will not be a public road.

The cost of the project, which includes also the rehabilitation and siltation of the dam, is Rs 16m. exclusive of VAT.

(At 12.30 hrs, the Assembly was suspended for one hour)

(At 13.30 hrs the Assembly resumed)

PETIT GABRIEL - COMMUNITY CENTRE –CONSTRUCTION

(No. B/48) Mr. P. Francois (Second Local Region Member for Baie aux Huitres) asked the Commissioner responsible for Health & Others whether, with regard to the difficulties faced by the village community of Petit Gabriel B/Pavé La Bonté, especially the youngsters to find a convenient place to perform sports, social and cultural activities in the village, he will as a matter of urgency, consider the construction of a community centre there?

The Commissioner for Health & Ors (Mr. A. L. Emilien): Mr. Chairperson, Sir, no request for the construction of a Community Centre has been received by my Commission for Petit Gabriel B/Pavé La Bonté Village.

Upon receipt of a formal request for the construction of a Community Centre, my Commission will give the necessary attention to the project. However, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I am informed that the Village Community has submitted a

list of projects to be financed by the Trust Fund for the Social Integration of Vulnerable Groups, comprising water tanks, housing units, toilets and a Community Centre among others.

I wish to refer to a report from Mrs. Reine Anani, IFAD Consultant on mission in Mauritius and Rodrigues from 19 October to 5 November, 2008, where she stated, I quote:

“My mission noticed a problem with the strategy used for identifying and selecting the community investments to be financed by the RDP. There were no animators trained nor in place to sensitize and help the population to define their priority needs before choosing the infrastructure to be financed. Thus, most of them (mainly the Community Centres) were not the real priority of the community and, therefore, most of them are under-used (Centres open only few hours in the afternoon, not even every day) or not used at all, nor are they completed or maintained by the community (they lack floors, furniture and maintenance)”. end of quote.

Mr. Chairperson, Sir, taking this into account and following our own observations thereto, it is understood that our limited resources have to be used judiciously. The policy of the present Regional Government is to make optimal use of our resources and it is obvious that we are committed to deliver the goods in so far as Community Development is concerned. This is why I will be coming in this House soon with regulations concerning the posting of Social Welfare Officers/Attendants in all Community Centres to boost up and organise activities in the field of sports, culture, leisure, and so on in these communities.

Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I must also confess that I am really surprised to note that the respected Member, my good friend, Philippe Francois, is mentioning in his question, a matter of urgency. The fact is that youngsters of the mentioned region are members of either *Jeunesse Ouvrière Chrétienne*, Youth Club and Eau Vannée/Petit Gabriel Volley-ball Club, Santos Football Club, and are involved in various activities organised by the Youth Centre of Petit Gabriel, which is fully equipped for both indoor and outdoor activities. Thus, I really can't understand where the matter of urgency stands.

Over and above this fully equipped youth centre, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, other social infrastructure in the vicinity of Petit Gabriel B/Pavé La Bonté are Petit

Gabriel Community Centre, Bigarades Community Centre, Eau Vannée Community Centre, Remir Socio-Cultural Centre among others.

Nearby sports infrastructures are: Citron Donis Football Ground, Petit Gabriel Sports Complex, Petit Gabriel/Citron Donis Youth Centre for the practice of indoor games, karaté, Judo etc...

In many villages of Rodrigues, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, youngsters travel much more distance to reach either a Community Centre or a sports infrastructure. I can say that the youth of this region is better off than many of their counterparts in many villages of Rodrigues.

But, of course, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, this doesn't mean that the inhabitants of this region will not benefit from a Community Centre or a sports infrastructure in the future. The first step is to submit a request that will be given due consideration by officers of my Commission.

Mr. P. François: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, the Commissioner mentioned the different infrastructures, etc... I don't know whether he is aware that Petit Gabriel is the biggest village in Rodrigues and that's why we have Petit Gabriel A and Petit Gabriel B. I would like to know from the Commissioner whether he is willing to know where the youngsters that I mentioned are meeting to carry out their different activities in Petit Gabriel B?

Mr. A. L. Emilien: What I know Mr. Chairperson, Sir, is that these youngsters that I have mentioned in my reply may meet in different socio cultural organisations or sports organisations. Anyway, if need be, as I said in my reply, if I am in the presence of a request for the construction of a community centre, be it a sports complex or whatever, due consideration will be given to the request.

Mr. N. Lisette: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, as regards the proposition for the use of the Citron Donis Youth Centre, is the Commissioner aware that the time schedule at this centre is tight, and does not include any outdoor activities, and that these young people have made a request to the Commission for Sports?

Mr. A. L. Emilien: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, this matter has been referred to my colleague, the Commissioner for Youth and Sports.

Mr. N. Lisette: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, the Commissioner is saying that these youngsters should be directed to the centres he has mentioned. Can I ask him

whether he has made an inquiry in order to be informed of the problems that are being faced by the youngsters at Petit Gabriel?

Mr. A. L. Emilien: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I don't know where the Member has been fishing these words. I never said that they have to be directed there. I said that they presently frequent these centres. I never said that they have to be directed there. This is totally wrong.

Mr. N. Lisette: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, the activities around the...

(Interruptions)

The Chief Commissioner: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, an allegation is being made here. *“Ki to ine dire mo ine gagne l 4x4? Mo ti pou zour toi! A cause mo dan l'assemblée...”*

Mr. N. Lisette: Yes, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, the youngsters in Petit Gabriel, are facing a real problem. They want a community centre in the village and the Commissioner is suggesting that they should be directed to other community centers. Yes, he has talked about Bigarade and Petit Gabriel A. But the fact remains, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, that there is a village committee that has been set up even at the level of the RCSS, which means that there is a need for it. There is a need for it, this is why there has been a separate village committee...

The Chief Commissioner: On a point of order, Mr. Chairperson, Sir. Maybe the Member is being nostalgic; he thinks he is still a Commissioner. This is question time, not speech time!

Mr. N. Lisette: This is the question, Mr. Chairperson, Sir. He is always interrupting me. The question is that there is already a village committee in Pavé La Bonté and Petit Gabriel. How much concern is the Commissioner showing as regards that request from the youth of that particular village?

Mr. A. L. Emilien: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I am very surprised to see this sort of reaction from an ex-Commissioner. The reply that I have given is clear. At no point in time did I say that they have to be directed to whatever community centre or sports infrastructure. What I said is that these facilities exist in the vicinity of Petit Gabriel B and Pavé La Bonté. For the information of the House and that of the respected Member, I would like to say that we have in Rodrigues almost 96 village communities, but not all these communities enjoy a community

centre or a sports complex. Why should I give priority to such and such villages? And it is very important to point out, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, that there has been no request. The only request is now coming from my friend over there, but not from the youth. So I can't understand why I should give a priority to this request when there has never been any request addressed to my Commission.

Mr. P. François: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, is the Commissioner aware that a request has been made as far back as 2004/2005?

Mr. A. L. Emilien: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, as I have already said, I am not in presence of any request from this village community.

Mr. Chairperson: The question is: whether you are aware of a request made in 2004. We move to the next question!

FOND ACCACIA DAM

(No. B/49) Mr. P. FRANCOIS (Second Local Region Member for Baie aux Huîtres) asked the Chief Commissioner whether, with regard to Fond Accacia Dam he would, for the benefit of the House, state:-

- (a) the capacity of the dam when full;
- (b) the number of households, enterprises, government quarters and others, if any, which are being fed by *Fond Accacia Dam*;
- (c) what immediate measures he intends to take to clean the reservoir, and
- (d) the long term measures he intends to take to prevent the continuous siltation of dams/reservoirs in other places?

The Chief Commissioner: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I am informed that, with regard to Fond Accacia Dam, the capacity of the dam when full is about 500m³ and it serves about 253 households, 8 government quarters, 1 pre-primary school and two industrial enterprises.

Siltation works will be carried out shortly within our reforms. There are no big siltation only maintenance. In the future, it is proposed to install gabion dykes upstream in the small dam to reduce the siltation of the dam. However, it is to be noted that the siltation of dams is a common event for dams of very small capacity.

Mr. P. François: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I would like to know from the Chief Commissioner whether the water, which is being distributed now in the households, is being treated?

The Chief Commissioner: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I don't have this information at hand. The water which is being distributed is of satisfactory quality. And if the Member wanted to know if the water is being treated, it should have been included in the question.

Mr. D. Spéville: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, a 1000 m³ reservoir has been constructed in the upper part of the village. I would like to ask the Chief Commissioner if at the level of his Commission other alternatives are being envisaged to feed the reservoir from other water sources.

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

ACACIA - BUS SHELTER - CONSTRUCTION

(No. B/50) Mr. P. Francois (Second Local Regional Member for Baie aux Huitres) asked the Commissioner responsible for Public Infrastructure, Housing, Environment & Others whether, in view of the difficulties faced by the villagers, students and members of the public when waiting for public transport at Accacia near the Espace vert, he will, as a matter of urgency, consider the construction of a bus shelter there for comfort and convenience?

The Commissioner for Public Infrastructure, Housing, Environment & Ors (Mr. F. A. Grandcourt): Mr. Chairperson, Sir, my Commission has received a request from the Accacia Village Committee on 12th February 2009 in connection with the construction of a bus shelter along the main road.

In furtherance to the above, a joint site visit was convened with the representatives of the Accacia village and the Commission whereby two locations have been proposed including '*Accacia Espace Vert*' for the setting up of the bus shelter.

It should be noted that many such requests have been received by my Commission from different villages and a priority list has been set up.

As such, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, the request from the villagers will be favourably considered and the implementation thereof shall start in the course of this current financial year.

RODRIGUAN STUDENTS - STUDENT HOUSE

(No. B/51) Mr. P. Francois (The Second Local Region Member for Baie aux Huitres) asked the Chief Commissioner with regard to the construction of a student house to facilitate the accommodation of Rodriguan students, as stated in his Budget speech of 2008/2009, in Mauritius, he will inform the House where does matter stand so far?

The Chief Commissioner: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, the construction of a Student House in Mauritius as announced in my budget speech last year remains a priority project for the Regional Government. In fact, we are planning to construct a full-fledged Rodrigues Complex in the vicinity of Port Louis and Reduit or in the Plaine Wilhems.

The full-fledged Rodrigues Complex is planned to not only accommodate the Student House but also to:

- (i) Act as an RRA office in Mauritius to provide information on Rodrigues and general assistance to persons seeking information on Rodrigues, including business persons, tourists, etc ;
- (ii) Provide accommodation to accompanying family members of patients;
- (iii) Provide accommodation and basic office and secretarial facilities to officials of the RRA when travelling to Mauritius.

In that respect, I met the ex-Minister of Housing & Lands in Mauritius last year and discussed the project with him. He gave his consent to our proposal following which a formal request was made to the Ministry of Housing & Lands in June last year for the vesting of state land of about 4,000m² in the vicinity of Port Louis and Reduit or in the Plaine Wilhems. I am informed that the Ministry of Housing & Lands is in the process of identifying plots of land that can be put at our disposal in the requested regions. My office is also envisaging to inquire at the

State Land Development Company for the possibility of obtaining land within the new Highlands city near Reduit.

Mr. Chairperson: Next question. I am informed that the Member won't be here this afternoon and has requested that the reply be submitted to her in writing.

PRIMARY & SECONDARY SCHOOLS - ABSENTEEISM

(No. B/53) Mr. L.D. Baptiste (Second Local Region Member of Grande Montagne) asked the Deputy Chief Commissioner whether, with regard to absenteeism and children who come to school without lunch, he will for the benefit of the House, state:-

- (a) whether any survey has been carried out at the level of primary and secondary schools and, if so, when and the outcome thereof?
- (b) outline the measures, if any, taken to ensure that these children attend schools regularly and do not stay hungry at school; and
- (c) the number of children (per school) who come to school without lunch and those who do not attend schools regularly due to financial or other constraints?

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

As regards part (a), a survey has been carried out at the level of primary and secondary schools as from February 2009 regarding the rate of absenteeism in schools.

With respect to primary schools, it has been noted that most of the pupils who were absent from schools as from January 2009 to date do so due to reasons of illness and other plausible reasons.

The list is still being compiled for secondary schools.

With respect to part (b), there are “*Agents de l’Education*” who are recruited by the Centre Carrefour attached to schools with the specific task to visit parents facing difficulties, and ensure that children are attending schools regularly.

A Memorandum of Understanding will be signed shortly with the Centre Carrefour for the recruitment of additional *agents d’éducation* with the financial support of the RRA.

Moreover, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, Head Masters and Rectors will be advised to refer cases of chronic absences in their respective schools to the Child Development Unit for an indepth investigation so as to enable my Commission to take necessary action.

I would like to draw the attention of the House that we have not been informed of cases where children stay hungry at school, by neither any primary nor secondary school. In fact, under the school feeding project implemented at the level of pre-primary and primary schools, bread and butter are distributed daily to all pupils. In addition, milk and cheese are given twice and thrice on a weekly basis to pupils, including a fruit once a week.

With respect to part (c), I have just been informed that the number of students who do not attend schools regularly due to financial or other constraints is as follows:-

Oyster Bay Government School	-	1
Mangues Government School	-	31
Father Ronald Gandy RCA School	-	2

Mr. D. Baptiste: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, the Commissioner has talked about the primary schools. As regards secondary schools, I understand that a survey is still being carried out. May I know who is carrying out this survey?

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: This matter was taken up during the meeting I had with rectors, and I asked the latter to inquire and to carry out a survey.

Mr. N. Lisette: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, the Deputy Chief Commissioner has stated there are 34 cases whereby students do not attend school due to financial constraints. This is the result of a survey: 1 at Oyster Bay Government School, thirty-one at Mangues and 2 at Ronald Gandy. Is any special measure being taken

or will any measure be taken by his Commission in order to ensure that these students attend school regularly and are not disadvantaged as far as their studies are concerned.

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, regarding the cases where children do not attend school regularly due to financial and other constraints, these will be referred to the Commission for Social Security first. And, secondly, we have also asked headmasters to take up this matter at the level of the PTAs, because we do give assistance to PTAs. I am sure that at the level of the schools, the headmasters, together with the members of the PTAs, can address the issue by themselves because they have sufficient means to do it.

Mr. N. Lisette: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, as regards secondary school students, there is a problem which is always coming up at the start of each school year, whereby needy students should apply to the Social Security in order to benefit from a pension. In some cases, there is a long delay before the application for pension is approved. How can the Commission for Education help in expediting matters?

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I will take up the matter with my colleague, the Commissioner for Social Security.

RIVIERE BANANE - MARINE PROTECTED AREAS

(No. B/54) Mr. L. D. Baptiste (Second Local Region Member of Grande Montagne) asked the Chief Commissioner whether, as regards the Marine Protected Areas of Rivière Banane, he will, for the benefit of the House, state:-

- (a) the number of professional fishermen who were fishing in this zone;
- (b) when were fishing activities in this area prohibited and what measures, if any, have been taken to compensate the loss of revenue of the fishermen;
- (c) the mechanism set up there to ensure its proper operation and control?

The Chief Commissioner: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, with regard to the Marine Protected Area of Rivière Banane, I am informed that:

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- (a) 52 professional fishermen were fishing or living (I'm not sure) in that zone;
- (b) Although the Regulation prohibiting fishing in the reserve was published in March 2007 and because we had to consult, it was only in December 2008 that a proper unit was set up to enforce the above regulations after installation of proper demarcation buoys;
- (c) A Fisheries Sub Control Post headed by a Senior Fisheries Protection Officer has been set up to ensure the proper operation and control over the marine reserve.

Mr. D. Baptiste: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I would like to know whether there has been any representation by the fishers of Riviere Banane in relation to certain fraudulent practices that take place from time to time at Riviere Banane.

The Chief Commissioner: Yes, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, two weeks ago, a group of fishermen came to my office and complained that certain persons living outside Riviere Banane together with some others from Riviere Banane itself were poaching into the reserve. This is a common feature when marine reserves are set up. We have first to sensitize people on the importance of the reserves and second to reinforce surveillance.

Mr. D. Baptiste: I understand these fishermen are no longer fishing there. I would like to know what measures have been taken by the Chief Commissioner to ensure that these people are compensated for the loss of revenue incurred by them.

The Chief Commissioner: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, the issue of compensation as regards the marine reserve of Riviere Banane forms part of the overall compensation policy for fishermen. We have a motion on this subject coming soon, and I hope the Member will vote for it.

ROADS - UPGRADING /PATCHING

(No. B/55) Mr. P. Francois (Second Local Regional Member of Grande Montagne) asked the Commissioner responsible for Public Infrastructure, Housing, Environment & Others whether he is aware of the abandoned state of the roads from Carrefour to Nassola, Grande Montagne to Graviers, Brule to Riviere

Banane and from Brule to Pointe Cotton, and if so, will he make the necessary arrangements towards upgrading/patching of same indicating when and, if not, why?

The Commissioner for Public Infrastructure, Housing, Environment & Ors (Mr. F. A. Grandcourt): Mr. Chairperson, Sir, the construction and maintenance of the road network has always been high on the agenda of this Government. My Commission has a full fledged and dedicated team to undertake the regular and constant maintenance of the roads.

Presently over 70 km of roads are being upkeep by our maintenance team on a regular basis.

Patching of the stretch of road from Roche Bon Dieu to Pointe Cotton has been carried out from 24 to 27 February 2009 over a length of 3 km.

Whilst we are aware of the state of the roads at Carrefour to Nassola, Grande Montagne to Graviers and Brulé to Riviere Banane, these have already been included in the work programme of the above team and shall be undertaken shortly.

It should further be noted, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, that the number of vehicles have increased considerably in the recent years and, coupled with the existing road network being ill planned, also contribute to the degradation of the roads.

We also acknowledge that due to the recent rainy periods, the state of the roads has been deteriorated around the island and measures to reinforce the road maintenance section have already been taken accordingly to provide a quick response.

MARKET - NEW - CONSTRUCTION

(No. B/56) Mr. S. P. Roussety (Fifth Island Region Member) asked the Commissioner responsible for Public Infrastructure, Housing, Environment & Others with regard to the site chosen for construction of a new market at *Port Mathurin*, he will, for the benefit of the House, state:-

- (a) which site has been chosen for the construction of same;

- (b) how many stalls will be erected for the vegetable merchants, and
- (c) table a copy of the site plan and layout plan of the new market?

The Commissioner for Public Infrastructure, Housing, Environment & Ors (Mr. F. A. Grandcourt): Mr. Chairperson, Sir, as regards part (a), the location identified for the construction of the new market is the site presently occupied by the Post Office and other offices in Port Mathurin.

As regards part (b), 125 stalls have been provided for the sale of vegetables.

Mr. Chairperson, Sir, we are coming up of with a state-of-the-art market concept which shall, besides the sale of vegetables, also incorporate two cafeterias, a covered shed for hawkers, meat shops, toilet blocks, spaces for sale of handicraft, agro products and fruits.

The social aspect has also been catered for by providing a large open plaza to allow social gathering in a secure environment.

I am hereby tabling a copy of the site plan and layout of the proposed new market. **(APPENDIX...)**.

Mr. S. P. Roussety: M. le président, pour le moment il y a 200 maraîchers qui opèrent dans le marché de Port Mathurin. Le Commissaire a dit dans sa réponse que seulement 125 étales seront construites. Est-ce- que le Commissaire pourrait dire à la Chambre où seront loges les autres maraîchers ?

Mr. F. A. Grandcourt: M. le président j'ai dit approximativement 125, mais il faut comprendre qu'il y a en moyenne au moins une centaine qui viennent tous les samedis. Nous nous sommes basé sur ce chiffre. Mais en sus de cela, il y aura le *open plaza*. Comme vous allez voir sur le plan, la construction se fera en phases. On pourra par la suite augmenter le nombre si on peut le faire.

Mr. S. P. Roussety: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, can the Commissioner inform the House whether a parking site has been earmarked for the vehicles attending the market.

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

Mr. D. Spéville: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I would like to ask the Commissioner responsible for public infrastructure, whether provisions have also been made to house the hawkers operating in Port Mathurin in the vicinity of the market.

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

Mr. N. Lisette: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, the construction of the new market on the site mentioned by the Commissioner for public infrastructure will cause difficulties with respect to those who are already working on that particular site. Will a new site be allocated to them until the construction of the new market is completed?

Mr. F. A. Grandcourt: Yes, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I have already talked to the Chief Commissioner. One of the proposed sites is next to the *putt putt* that is at the millennium square.

TOURISM PROMOTION – REUNION ISLAND

(No. B/57) Mr. S.P. Roussety (Fifth Island Region Member) asked the Chief Commissioner with regard to tourism promotion in which the Rodrigues Regional Assembly participated officially during the month of February in Reunion Island, will he for the benefit of the House;

- (a) state the composition of the delegation and in what capacity;
- (b) give a breakdown expenses in respect of each member of the delegation in terms of air fares and subsistence allowance;
- (c) state the total expenses incurred?

The Chief Commissioner: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, the delegation which participated in the tourism promotion campaign in Reunion Island in February consisted of:

- Mr Robertson Mercure as Chairman of Discovery Rodrigues Co. Ltd., who is in charge of the management of the Tourism Office;
- Mrs Carinne Prosper-Ferst, Officer- in- Charge of the Tourism Office;

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- A local group of musicians and artists, namely Le Solitaire Traditional Group (11 persons);
- A representative of each of the four main tourism operators associations, namely ARTO, Association Gite, Chambre D'Hote et Table D'Hote, Association ARDETI and Association Tourisme Vert;
- A representative of the Hiking Association of Rodrigues; and
- Nine (9) local tourism operators from hotels and guest houses.

A detailed list is being circulated. It should be noted that there was no official representative of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly in the delegation. **(APPENDIX...)**.

As regards part (b), being given that there was no official representative of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly in the delegation, no expenditure in terms of air fares and subsistence allowance was incurred by the Rodrigues Regional Assembly. However, with regard to the delegation which participated in the event, the expenses were incurred by Discovery Rodrigues Co. Ltd., the Mauritius Tourism Promotion Authority and the participating local tourism operators. The breakdown of expenses is being tabled. **(APPENDIX...)**.

The total expenditure expected to be incurred by Discovery Rodrigues Co. Ltd. is Rs 483,154.00. The Mauritius Tourism Promotion Authority is expected to foot bills for some Rs 1,352,334.00.

USED OIL - SPILLING

(No. B/58) Mr. S. P. Roussety (Fifth Island Region Member) asked the Commissioner responsible for Public Infrastructure, Housing, Environment & Others with regard to spilling of used oil in Rodrigues, he will, for the benefit of the House, state:-

- (a) whether there has been any complaint made to the Police of Environment regarding spilling of used oil in a certain region of Rodrigues on the 02 March 2009;
- (b) in the affirmative, please state where?

The Commissioner responsible for Public Infrastructure, Housing, Environment & Ors (Mr. F. A. Grandcourt): Mr. Chairperson, Sir, there has been no spill of used oil in whatever region of Rodrigues. However, I am informed that during a drill exercise carried out by the Fire Services at Millenium Square, Port Mathurin on 2nd March 2009, by approximately 5 litres of diesel, which were being used for the above purposes, were accidentally spilled. A complaint was lodged with the Police of Environment in this respect by a complainant on the aforesaid date.

Following the above occurrence, immediate measures were taken by the *Police de l'Environnement* and the Environment Division of my Commission in the presence of Fire Services to contain the fuel and the contaminated sand of approximately 1 m3 was scrapped and carted away. No ecological damage was caused.

LA FERME HEALTH CENTRE - AMBULANCE SERVICES

(No. B/59) Mr. S. P. Roussety (Fifth Island Region Member) asked the Commissioner responsible for Health & Others with regard to the ambulance services at La Ferme Health Centre, he would, for the benefit of the House, state:-

- (a) how many ambulances are attached, thereto;
- (b) whether there has been any complaints with regards to the services provided to the patients, if any?

The Commissioner for Health & Ors (Mr. A. L. Emilien):Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I am informed that La Ferme Area Health centre is equipped with two ambulances, bearing registration number:

- (i) 6RRA 04 – Make ISUZU; and
- (ii) 2RRA 04 – Make NISSAN PATROL respectively.

As regards part (b) of the question, no complaints have been received.

Mr. S. P. Roussety: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, can the Commissioner tell the House whether the ambulance encountered a breakdown during the service?

Mr. A. L. Emilien: Like any other vehicle, Mr. Chairperson, Sir. Our ambulances work on a 24 hours basis. Therefore, like any other vehicle, they happen to break down. This is normal.

Mr. S. P. Roussety: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, patients are complaining that the ambulances are of very bad state. Is the Commissioner envisaging to have these ambulances replaced?

Mr. A. L. Emilien: Yes, Mr. Chairperson, Sir. In fact since I am in charge of the Commission for Health, we have bought 2 new ambulances and we are in the process of buying 2 additional ones. But being given that the 2 additional ones will be posted in Mont Lubin and La Ferme, we have to buy other ambulances similar to the ones we have presently, that is 4x4 ones, not the type of ambulance used by the SAMU. That is why it is taking a bit longer, but it will be done in this financial year.

Mr. Chairperson: I wish to inform the House that the questions in the name of Mrs. Arlette Perrine-Begue have been withdrawn according to her request. She was unable to be here today.

CAMP DU ROI - WATER DISTRIBUTION

(No. B/60) Mrs. A. Perrine-Begue (The First Local Region Member of St. Gabriel) asked the Chief Commissioner whether, with regard to the water distribution at Camp du Roi he will, for the benefit of the House, state:-

- (a) When was water distributed via the network to the public for the last time before the 3rd of March;
- (b) What is the frequency of distribution for that village and whether any change in that frequency has been envisaged lately; and if so, the reason, thereof;
- (c) Whether any development is targeted to improve the quality and volume of water distributed in that locality?

(Withdrawn)

POINTE CANON FILTER PLANT RESERVOIR – WATER RUN OFF

(No. B/61) Mrs. A. Perrine-Begue (First Local Region Member of St. Gabriel) asked the Chief Commissioner whether as regards continuous run off and accumulation of water coming from the Pointe Canon filter plant reservoir which is causing water logging, damages and environmental concerns to the residents living on the northern boundary towards the Cardinal Gantin Allée, he will state:-

- the root causes of the problem;
- if it constitutes a threat to the residents and Cardinal Gantin Allée;
- what immediate actions will be taken to remedy the problem?

(Withdrawn)

WATER REFORM - WORKSHOP

(No. B/62) Mrs. A. Perrine-Begue (The First Local Region Member of St. Gabriel) asked the Chief Commissioner whether, with regard to the workshop held at Cotton Bay Hotel on 2nd March on reforms in the water sector, he will state:-

- (a) the outcome of same;
- (b) whether any immediate actions in the water sector are contemplated, if any; and if so, to state which ones and by which means?

(Withdrawn)

FETE DU POISSON

(No. B/63) Mrs. M.A. Perrine-Begue (The First Local Region Member of St. Gabriel) asked the Chief Commissioner whether, as regards the organization of the “*fête du Poisson*” at Petite Butte this year, he will state:-

- (a) the overall cost for that event and table the breakdown of same;

- (b) whether any individual artist or group of artists was/were invited from Mauritius as guests to entertain in that event, and if so, to state the cost of their stay and performance, and
- (c) the sum paid or to be paid to each local individual artist and group of artist to perform for the event?

(Withdrawn)

STATEMENTS BY COMMISSIONERS

PUBLIC HEALTH REGULATIONS 2008

The Commissioner for Health & Ors (Mr. A. L. Emilien): Mr Chairperson Sir, with your permission, I would like to make a statement concerning the recent Public Health Regulation 2008, which came into force on the 1st of March this year.

Mr. Chairperson, Sir, as the House may be aware, the Public Health (Prohibition on Advertisement, Sponsorship and Restriction on Sale and Consumption of Alcoholic Drinks) Regulations 2008 and the Public Health (Restrictions on Tobacco Products) Regulations 2008 are effective since the 1st of March 2008.

For recall, tobacco use is a global epidemic and is the cause of major public health problems around the world. Tobacco epidemic affects around 1.2 billion smokers in the world and is the main cause of five million deaths per year, that is some 13,000 deaths per day.

Mr. Chairperson Sir, tobacco kills more than AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria, illegal drugs, road accidents, murder and suicide combined together. In Mauritius alone, that is including Rodrigues, of course, the tobacco epidemic affects some 35.9 percent of male adults and 14.8 percent of the youth between 13 and 15 years of age and is the cause of an estimated 1,000 deaths per year.

Mr. Chairperson Sir, the global response to the tobacco epidemic was that in May 2003 the World Health Organisation adopted the Framework Convention on

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Tobacco Control (FCTC) which is an international agreement to control the tobacco epidemic. This agreement came into force on the 27th of February, 2005, and has to date been ratified by more than 150 countries.

The aim of this Regulation is to reduce disease and death caused by tobacco use by reducing the supply of tobacco products.

Mauritius has adopted the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control, which was signed on 17th June, 2003, and same was ratified on 17th, May 2004.

Mr. Chairperson Sir, Mauritius responded to the FCTC by adopting the following measures: -

- The establishment of a National Action Plan on Tobacco Control 2008-2012
- The adoption of a Public Health (Restrictions on Tobacco Products) Regulations 2008

The measures contained in the Public Health (Restrictions on Tobacco Products) Regulations 2008 aim at reducing demand through the following measures:

1. Control of environmental tobacco smoke (smoke-free areas);
2. Control of packaging and labeling;
3. Ban on advertising, promotion and sponsorship.

The measures also aim at reducing demand through: -

1. Control on advertisement, promotion and sponsorship whereby no advertisement, promotion and sponsorship is allowed;
2. Control on packaging and labeling through the sale of packages of 20 only, and prohibition of sale of obscured packages.

In addition, the following measures are applied: -

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- (a) Rotating warnings with texts and pictures in main display areas with fixed text warning on the sides;
- (b) Warnings shall occupy 65% of space;
- (c) The text warnings shall be in French and Creole;
- (d) The warnings shall be prescribed by the Ministry;
- (e) No misleading or deceptive messages on packages; and
- (f) Cigars and pipe tobacco packages shall carry single text warning in French and Creole.

The control of exposure to tobacco smoke makes provision for: -

- (a) A clear definition of the terms: “indoor area”, “public convenience”, “public place”, and “workplace”.
- (b) No smoking in public places, such as indoor public areas and indoor workplaces.
- (c) No smoking in public places, such as: public conveniences, outdoor premises of health, educational institutions, and outdoor sports premises;
- (d) No smoking in public places, including recreational places like gardens, outdoor cafés, bars and restaurants, bus stands, bus stations and taxi stands, and excluding beaches;
- (e) No smoking while driving a vehicle carrying passengers and while preparing, serving or selling food on premises where the public has access.

The Tobacco Regulations 2008, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, makes provision, through the exposure to tobacco smoke strategies, for reasonable measures to be taken in order to prevent smoking in a public place by: -

- asking the person who is smoking to stop smoking

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- asking the person to leave the place, or
- calling the police.

Under the Tobacco Regulations 2008, it is an offence if no reasonable steps are taken to prevent smoking.

Mr. Chairperson, Sir, the following measures are also contemplated to reduce the supply and sale of tobacco to and by minors through:-

- (a) Prohibition of sale to and by minors;
- (b) Prohibition of sale by automatic vending machines;
- (c) Prohibition of sale of sweets, toys, etc in the form of cigarettes;
- (d) Prohibition of display for sale;
- (e) Prohibition to offer or supply free of charge, at a discounted price, as a prize, pursuant to a lottery or otherwise
- (f) Request of proof of age of buyer (ID, passport, driving license)
- (g) In addition, shop owners should post signs in their shops indicating that the sale of tobacco to minors is prohibited.

The strategy to reduce illicit trades will be implemented through the following measures: -

- Package should indicate the country of origin;
- Package should include the following statement in French and Creole: “Sale allowed in Mauritius only”.

Mr. Chairperson, Sir, the Tobacco Regulations 2008 make provision for the types of tobacco allowed for sale, that is only tobacco products for smoking are allowed, whereas tobacco products for sucking, chewing or sniffing as well as flavoured tobacco products are not allowed. The following penalties will apply for defaulters in respect of the Tobacco Regulations 2008: -

- 1st conviction: a fine of Rs 5,000 – Rs8,000

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- 2nd conviction: a fine of Rs 8,000 – Rs 10,000
- Subsequent conviction: imprisonment of up to 12 months

Mr. Chairperson Sir, the Public Health Act which may be cited as the Public Health (Prohibition on Advertisement, Sponsorship and Restriction on Sale and Consumption in Public Places of Alcoholic Drinks) Regulations 2008 makes provision for the following: -

- (i) no person shall advertise or cause to be advertised an alcoholic drink for its sale or consumption;
- (ii) no person shall offer any form of sponsorship in relation to an alcoholic drink or a brand name or brand associated with an alcoholic drink;
- (iii) no person shall consume an alcoholic drink in a public place;
- (iv) no person shall consume an alcoholic drink on or in the vicinity of an off licence for the sale of alcoholic drinks business premises;
- (v) no person shall, outside opening hours, consume an alcoholic drink on or in the vicinity of an on licence for the sale of alcoholic drinks business premises;
- (vi) a person who is licensed to sell alcoholic drinks by retail for consumption off his licensed premises shall not display those alcoholic drinks for sale other than in a designated area;
- (vii) every alcoholic drink offered for sale shall bear a label both in English and French indicating that an excessive consumption of alcoholic drinks causes serious health, social and domestic problems.
- (viii) every seller of an alcoholic drink shall conspicuously post inside the point of sale a prominent message in English, French or Creole informing the public:
 - (1) that the sale of alcoholic drink is prohibited to minors;

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- (2) that an excessive consumption of alcoholic drinks causes serious health, social and domestic problems.
- (ix) every seller of an alcoholic drink may request a buyer to produce proof of age prior to any sale of an alcoholic drink through production of: -
 - a national identity card;
 - a passport; or
 - a driving licence.

Any person who contravenes these regulations shall commit an offence and shall, on conviction, be liable to a fine not exceeding 10,000 rupees and to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 12 months.

Mr. Chairperson, Sir, in Rodrigues, though all the figures have not been compiled yet, we can easily guess that the situation is alarming. The mindset, however, behind the formulation of these regulations is to protect the people's health so that we are all in good and better health to help bringing wealth to the society. Everyone has got the right to breathe pure air and every child has got the right to enjoy a healthy living without experiencing all the evil things related to alcohol and tobacco consumption. I have in mind, here, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, divorce, mouth, lungs and other cancers; disputes and other forms of violence within the family; rape, abortion, prostitution, and so on.

The law will be enforced and an Enforcement Committee will be set up shortly to closely monitor the implementation of these regulations. *Les brebis galeuses ne seront pas tolérées, M. le Président. Nous avons un besoin urgent de protéger la santé de nos citoyens.*

NEWSPAPER ARTICLE – “*PROFIL BAS – RODRIGUES AUTONOME?*”

Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I wish, with your permission, to bring some clarifications regarding a recent article that appeared in a daily newspaper on Sunday 8th March 2009 under the sub title “*Profil Bas – Rodrigues autonome?*”

This article, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, is what can be classified as a very misleading and mischievous piece of writing designed to cause confusion and harm to the image of the health sector in Rodrigues.

I would like to bring to light the following points written in the paper, I quote: *“la flotte d’ambulances a deux vieux véhicules en panne. Les autres ne peuvent pas aller chez les patients car pour y accéder il faut des ambulances 4x4 tout terrain”*. end of quote.

I can assure the House that besides the fact that minor repairs have been carried out on these vehicles, like to all vehicles, as I just said in reply to a question, these two ambulances, which have been on our roads for a certain time, have never been reported to be « *en panne* » both at the same time. And, concerning *“les allégations que les autres véhicules ne peuvent pas atteindre certains endroits parce qu’il nous faut des 4x4, je voudrais informer la Chambre qu’à Mont Lubin nous avons deux ambulances qui sont en effet deux 4x4, M. le président*.

Mr. Chairperson Sir, the article gets even ridiculous by stating that: *les ambulances ne disposent pas de bombonne d’oxygene”*. All ambulances in Mauritius are not equipped with oxygen cylinders; only SAMU vehicles are equipped with oxygen cylinders in Mauritius and the same applies here in Rodrigues.

Mr. Chairperson Sir, the article ends this “Rodriguan bashing exercise” by stating: *« une des machines à rayons X est en panne depuis ...9 mois”*. I do not recall Mr. Chairperson, Sir, that Mont Lubin and La Ferme Area Health centres are equipped with X-Ray machines. Therefore, I will not be in a position to take any remedial action, Sir, unless the author of the newspaper article comes and shows us where the x-ray machine is found at Mont Lubin Area Health Centre.

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson, Sir.

MOTIONS

DRAFT ESTIMATES – FINANCIAL YEAR 2009/2010 – ADJOURNMENT OF DEBATES

The Chief Commissioner: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I beg to move the motion standing in my name which reads as follows: *“that this Assembly resolves that for the purposes of section 44 (1) of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly Act 2001, there is approved the draft estimates of recurrent revenue and recurrent expenditure and capital revenue and capital expenditure for the financial year 2009/2010.”*

Mr. Chairperson: Yes, this is the second motion. We have three motions under the name of the Chief Commissioner. He may start by moving any one of them. I allow him to move as he wishes.

The Chief Commissioner: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, the reason why I am moving this motion today is because there are reorganizations under way in the Republic of Mauritius. Normally, there is a special sitting and a budget speech, but this will not be the case this year. There will be no submission of the draft estimates of capital revenue and capital expenditure. I will explain why. The attention of the Assembly should be drawn to the fact that the Finance and Audit Act was amended in May 2008 to provide *inter-alia* for a change in the accounting period of annual estimates from a financial year ending 30th June to a calendar year ending 31st December, and for the introduction of the Programme Based Budgeting.

Transitional provisions were also made for the Minister to present estimates in respect of the period of six months ending 31st December 2009. Through the next motion, we will be moving for amendments in order to allow this Assembly to concur that the draft estimates for the period of six months ending 31st December, 2009 and the annual estimates for the period 1st January, 2010 to 31st December 2010, later this year be presented later this year.

According to the calendar of the National Assembly, it will not be possible to bring these amendments before the 31st of March, 2009. I have, therefore, been informed, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, that after approval by the Regional Assembly of the draft amendment that we will be presenting today through the next motion, as required by section 75 (e) of the Constitution, it is expected that the amendments to

the Rodrigues Regional Assembly Act will be approved by the National Assembly by the 15th of April, 2009. I propose, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, that in view of the proposed amendments, which are clear and for which there is a proper time table, this Assembly does not initiate steps regarding the approval of the estimates submitted by me today, as would have normally been the case according to the existing section 44 of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly Act.

Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I propose to submit the draft estimates for the period of six months ending 31st December, 2009, for approval by this Assembly after the amendments to the Rodrigues Regional Assembly Act become effective. I am also proposing to present an indicative Programme Based Budget on the 17th of April. This will be followed in September by the presentation of another budget for the whole of calendar year 2010, with the financial year starting on 1st January 2010 and ending on 31st December 2010.

As regards the draft estimates for calendar year 2010, it will be submitted for approval by the Regional Assembly in the Programme Based Budgeting format by 30th September 2009. As you are aware, Sir, this is included in the amendment that we are requesting the Assembly to concur with today. I am tabling copies of a calendar of activities which I will invite the Clerk to distribute to Members of this Assembly. This calendar will serve as a guide to Members with regard to the activities that are going to be held. I repeat, Sir: we will in the first place present this budget, and we are required by law to present a motion prior to this exercise. Therefore, we are presenting this motion, but we are not moving ahead with the debates on the budget because the law will be amended in early April. And the amended law will require us to resubmit a budget for the period of six months ending 31st December 2009. And, of course, regarding the yearly provisions, we will present same to the Assembly every year before the 30th of September and send them to Mauritius for approval before the 15th of October, instead of us presenting them before 30th of March and approving them before the 15th of April.

I thank all the Members for their comprehension. Thank you, Sir.

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I second the motion and, on the basis of what the Chief Commissioner has just said, and I move that the debate be now adjourned.

The motion was, on question put, agreed to.

Mr. Chairperson: I invite the Chief Commissioner to present the next motion standing in his name.

PROGRAMME BASED BUDGETING - INTRODUCTION

The Chief Commissioner: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I beg to move the motion standing in my name which reads as follows: *“that this Assembly concurs with the amendments to the Rodrigues Regional Assembly Act 2001 as proposed by government to enable the introduction of Programme Based Budgeting, pursuant to section 75E of the Constitution of the Republic of Mauritius”*.

Mr. Chairperson, Sir, this is the first time that we are making use of this important provision. As you are aware, the political fathers who were in power in Mauritius, the-then Prime Minister, and the-then government wanted to give maximum and full autonomy to Rodrigues. And it is entrenched in the provisions of the law that this autonomy may not be altered in any sort and in any easy manner. This is why we have this section 75E of the Constitution whereby before any amendment is brought to the Rodrigues Regional Assembly Act or to the structure of the Regional Assembly, or to any law regarding the Regional Assembly, we must have the concurrence of this House. I do not know whether all the laws that have been made or whether all the amendments that have been brought to the Rodrigues Regional Assembly Act before have had this concurrence. And I am also not sure of their legality also. But the point that I want to make here is that we should respect this provisions of the law, that is Section 75E of the Constitution, which says that unless there is concurrence of this House or a vote of two-thirds of the Members of the National Assembly, no amendment can be brought to the Rodrigues Regional Assembly Act.

Members of this House will recall that I made a statement in this Assembly confirming our intention to move from a Line Budgeting to Programme Based Budgeting (PBB). Under the Performance Based Budgeting, emphasis is laid on the outputs and outcomes rather than the inputs in terms of financial, human and physical resources being put at the disposal of government. Performance Based Budgeting is being implemented in a vast majority of countries including France, the United States, Singapore and Canada. The central government in Mauritius has already adopted the Programme Based Budgeting since July 2008. The Finance and Audit Act was amended in May 2008 to provide *inter-alia* for a change in the

accounting period from the traditional financial year beginning 1st July to that of calendar year starting 1st January, and to enable the introduction of Programme Based Budgeting. The same Act exempted the Regional Assembly from presenting its budget in the Programme Based Budgeting format.

Mauritius published its first official Programme Based Budgeting for financial year 2008/2009 after an indicative PBB for 2007/2008. That was presented together with the traditional capital budget and recurrent budget. The PBB is now being extended to all government bodies. The implementation of the PBB will necessitate the following changes:

- (1) Certain amendments will have to be made to the Rodrigues Regional Assembly Act and the Standing Orders of the Regional Assembly;
- (2) The introduction of a new chart of account so that data can be processed and required reports retrieved from the system in real time;
- (3) The training of senior staff involve in administration, executive and financial duties on the new method of budgeting. Some training has already been dispensed to our staff through the support of the Ministry of Finance and Economic Empowerment.

I have had had consultations with the Ministry regarding the changes that should be made to our legislation. My office has had discussions with the Ministry of Finance over proposals for technical changes, and we have now reached an agreement over the specific amendment to be brought to the RRA Act. I am also pleased to inform the House that the amendment has been vetted by the Solicitor General.

Mr. Chairperson, Sir, the objects of the proposed amendment are, *inter-alia*, to provide for:

- (a) The introduction of a Programme Based Budgeting to achieve improvements in fiscal sustainability, allocative efficiency, and to improve operational efficiency in government administration;
- (b) Alignment with the changes brought to the Finance and Audit Act of May 2009. This will allow:
 - (i) the approval of draft estimates for the six-month period - 1st July, 2009 to 31st December, 2009;

- (ii) the introduction of a calendar accounting period of 1st January to 31st December, and to set new dates for the presentation of the draft estimates to the Minister;
- (iii) the application of all financial instructions including the Financial Management Manual and PBB Manual in Rodrigues;
- (iv) the transfer of the balance of capital fund as at 1st January 2010 to the consolidated fund as there will be, as per the provisions of the PBB, a single fund to incur both the recurrent and capital expenses.

The PBB is a new management to facilitate a more efficient and effective allocation and use of our limited resources. In addition, we will be able to gather data on output, thus facilitating the monitoring of projects. Moreover, we will be able to monitor the quantum and quality of service offered to the general public thereby enabling our services to aim higher.

In accordance with section 75 E of the Constitution of the Republic of Mauritius, the concurrence of this House has to be obtained in the first instance. Section 75 E - Alteration of certain written laws – says, I quote: “subject to the provision of this Constitution, any law giving effect to this chapter” - chapter on Rodrigues Regional Assembly – “and to any matters incidental thereto, shall not be altered without the concurrence of the Regional Assembly unless such alteration is supported in the final voting in the National Assembly by the votes of not less than two-thirds of all the Members”.

Mr. Chairperson, Sir, PBB will be a very important tool, and we believe that this change, which is a national change, is for the better. We have to adapt and accustom ourselves to this change. We should not resist change. And also, PBB will help Commissions to design their policies in a better way; to better formulate these policies, and to implement, follow up and evaluate these policies.

Important changes are being brought. It may not be easy for Members and officers of the Regional Assembly to get accustomed to these changes easily. For example, there will be only one fund, the Consolidated Fund. There will not be two separate capital and recurrent budgets. There will be only one document and we have to get ourselves accustomed to this change after one year or two, and I am sure Members will be able to adapt themselves to that PBB format. Although we

may at times think that the current format is good, let us try the new one, and I am convinced that it will give good results.

Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I repeat that we should not repeat what has been done in the past. We have to ensure that in the future all amendments to the Rodrigues Regional Assembly Act go through this procedure, the one through which we are going today, unless, of course, the National Assembly has a two-third majority in favour of the amendment, in which case we can go ahead with the amendment.

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

Mr. Chairperson: I understand that only one Member is going to intervene from each side. The Respected Member has the Floor.

Mr. N. Lisette: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, Rodrigues is transitioning to a new program-budgeting structure. For the past years, government leaders worldwide have struggled to explore the latest approaches to and best practices in performance based budgeting. International conferences have been held on this subject, and it has been noted that the change to this new system of budgeting has been followed worldwide. It is therefore important that Rodrigues follows this international trend.

The application of this new budget format will enable us to see what is accomplished with each rupee that we spend. This new budget format will show us the results we get when spending our money. And I think that the measures that going to be taken by the Rodrigues Regional Assembly in order adapt to this change represent a very big challenge. This will certainly not be done this with a scientific precision, but in an approximate manner, by outlining the general chain of cause to effect.

I would like to point out, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, that though the project submitted by the Ministry of Finance is very systematic and concise, the MTEF concept as depicted is not totally new to us. If we make a flash back, many of the Members of this House will remember that when we came into power in 2002, we convened all the stakeholders to a seminar at Cotton Bay Hotel where we depicted our five-year programme as regards our projects, especially the capital projects. Even the Members of the Minority were convened to that seminar and we did depict our capital projects and our five-year plan with the help of the Global

Consultancy firm. This is to say that the MTEF concept now being proposed by the Ministry of Finance and consequently by the Rodrigues Regional Assembly for a longer term was already to a certain extent applied by the ex-Regional Government as far back as 2003. In fact, I should say that we were somehow ahead, and knew what we were heading for. In addition, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, following the budget consultations for financial year 2005/2006, there was already established a preliminary ceiling for capital projects up to financial year 2007/2008. This is a fact, because during that consultation there was already a proposed agreement with respect to new capital expenditures that were supposed to be incurred by the Rodrigues Regional Assembly.

Mr. Chairperson, Sir, the motion presented to the House by the Chief Commissioner has been triggered by the Ministry of Finance. The amendments proposed to the Rodrigues Regional Assembly Act concern mainly Section 44 of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly Act. I will have, nevertheless, to raise the following points.

Firstly, I firmly believe that together with the complete overview and transformation regarding the budgetary process, there should have been an obligatory and compulsory public consultation process. Some may say that it already exists, but yet, I would say that this is being done at the whims and caprices of those who are governing. I have here in mind, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, the visit last year of a delegation from the Decentralised Cooperation Programme on good governance, and they stressed lengthily on the participation of the population in the budgetary process. This is an international trend. While the government, as we are doing right now, may apply business-like techniques to enhance the efficiency and cost-effectiveness of a program, they should recognize at the same item that citizens have the right to influence decisions, evaluate policies and program outcomes.

Citizen involvement, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, in performance measurement is also necessary and beneficial. Reports of national surveys carried out in different countries have shown that citizen engagement methods such as informing citizens of the performance of public services, involving them in policy dialogues and discussions on controversial issues, and using surveys to solicit their preferences, reduces cynicism and builds stronger trust in government. Today, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, this is, to some extent lacking in Rodrigues and we are, at this very moment, experiencing this problem. Right now, there is a big struggle between the Regional Government and the civil society regarding the proposed reforms in the water

sector. The trade unions feel that they have been put '*devant des faits accomplis*' without prior consultations especially on the questions of introduction of a tariff for water consumption and proposed redeployment of public officers in other sectors. The Regional Government, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, is taking decisions that will affect the living conditions of the population and I believe that as far as possible consultations should take place "*au préalable*". The same problem occurred last year involving the local businesses when it was proposed to pass a Regulation for the introduction of a scavenging fee. This refusal to involve citizens not only reduces the political significance and credibility of the policies proposed, but also leads to social tension.

The second point I want to raise, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, concerns section 44 which stipulates the procedures to be followed for the presentation of the Budget in the Rodrigues Regional Assembly and for its subsequent submission to the Minister of Finance and Cabinet. The proposed new format of presentation as has been described in the proposed amendments is in line with the new budgetary format. However, based on past experiences, I would propose that a new subsection be included. Past experiences, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, is our teacher here. What has happened in the past? We have had the case where the Commissioner responsible for Finance did not, for personal conflicting reasons, meet the Minister of Finance or the latter refusing to meet the former for consultations on funds to be allocated to the Executive Council. The consultation was left at the level of the public officers with the result that no was reached as regards to the quantum to be allocated to Rodrigues. And we know what happened next. There has been an overwhelming increase in the quantum presented to the Rodrigues Regional Assembly leading to tension between the Executive Council and the National Government, and public attacks on each other. When we look at the new format that is being proposed, we note one point that gives us satisfaction. The new format proposes amendments to the effect that ministerial meetings for the setting-up of final ceilings will be statutory, which means that ministerial meetings between the Rodrigues Regional Assembly and the Minister of Finance will be a must. And I think that this is a very good proposal inasmuch as the manual regarding the programme based budgeting is concerned.

Thirdly, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, the overall philosophy of the PBB aims at reducing unnecessary expenditures and targeting efficiency and effectiveness as it is rightly put in the manual: "achieving the best results at the best costs." The very first step we should take in order to achieve this objective is to make it a must for government to apply fully the recommendations of the Audit Office Report and

take sanctions against officers from any institution who constantly and persistently violate financial instructions. We have had recently, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, the publication of the Audit Report for Financial Year 2007/2008 and I should point out that this is the worst report since the establishment of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly. Public officers should be made more accountable. This is why I welcome fully, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, the amendments that are being proposed in Section 52 where it is stated that public officers should comply fully with financial instructions failing which they may be sanctioned by the appropriate service commission. Such a measure, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, will compel accounting officers to improve data collection **(Gap in cassette)**in such a way that information becomes more accessible and useful. There will, therefore, be more accountability, and this is, I believe, the aim of the new budgetary format being proposed by the Ministry of Finance.

Mr. Chairperson, Sir, the new method will require the Rodrigues Regional Assembly, therefore each Commission, to submit documents comparing expenditures to be incurred during the following financial year and the results expected to the actual performance during the ongoing financial year. This means that greater emphasis will be laid on demand with regard to services, on the cost per unit of service and on the results obtained and expected. This is where the Commissions will have to be more accountable because the less you work in a financial year, the less you will get in the following financial year. This is where the biggest challenge lies, Mr. Chairperson, Sir.

The Executive Council will have to explain how each rupee has been spent, what are the activities that have been funded, and the outcome of these activities. Being a dynamic process, the PBB requires the Executive Council to identify the potential impacts of the proposed policy change, to make policy decisions that reduce costs while maintaining effectiveness, and to bring changes with a view to improving program effectiveness. As the measures are implemented and the information on the outcome collected, we will be able, after some time, to analyze the trend. There is no doubt, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, that this budgetary format will lead to a better governance, a vigorous control and an obligation to spend public funds in a serious manner. Gone will be the days where public funds are invested into projects which at the end of the day do not improve in any way the living conditions of our fellow citizens. Let's take, for example, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, the case referred to this morning where millions of rupees were invested in the siltation of dams in Rodrigues with the result that, as I said this morning, some parts of the

island, especially the northern part, have not seen any improvement in the frequency of water distribution.

Mr. Chairperson, Sir, all the Commissions of Rodrigues will henceforth be under constant scrutiny and there will be less scope for unnecessary expenses. This proposal is most welcome as it will help to meet the 3E's, that is Efficiency, Effectiveness and Economy. There will be no possibility of illegal transfer of funds to any deposit account without the Assembly or the relevant Ministry being made aware of the transfer. There will be less possibility, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, with the new budget format, for massive corruption of the electorate two or three months before an election, and for bribery, as every programme will have to be made public within a given timeframe and followed as scrupulously as possible afterwards. Therefore, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, a big change is coming. Since each program has a specific timeframe, it will be easier to identify whatever '*maldone*' there might be.

Mr. Chairperson, Sir, many countries have in the recent past applied the PBB system and have linked same with the Millennium Development Goals (MDG). Many more are converging towards this practice especially with the economic crisis which is hitting us. Every caring government is trying to see how to get the most from the least coin spent. The change in the budgetary practice will no doubt disrupt established norms and procedures. With the PBB system, those who are governing will be more accountable and will show more respect to the people. There have been instances, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, in previous years where in order to make *des effets d'annonces à la population*, the real capacity of work execution has been overwhelmingly overestimated. I have in mind, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, the budget speech of 2007/2008 where the sum of Rs 40 million was earmarked for the construction of 20 km of road while we know that 1 km of road cost above Rs 10 millions. *Comme dirait le seggaeman, Monsieur le Président,: Abats les mensonges et les menteurs.*

Mr. Chairperson, Sir, the Public Service and public officers are expected to become more effective. The whole system will have to be updated. Top level officials will need to think strategically about goals and priorities, and ensure that financial resources and allocations provided are used more effectively to serve the public. These goals and strategies should be customer oriented as this is the main target of the PBB. They should focus more on customer needs and expectations. The reform proposed by the Ministry of Civil Service in 2006 whereby each government institution was to set up a customer charter in order to better serve the

public and to become more customer oriented needs to be implemented here. Unfortunately, this is not of much purpose today as there has been no proper follow-up by the different departments and institutions of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly.

Mr. Chairperson, Sir, as I just said, many countries have turned to this new system. Even in the United States, this system has been applied during the recent years. And other countries are in the process of adopting this budgetary format especially with the financial crisis which is hitting the world. I think that the case of the State of Virginia in the USA may serve as an example. That State adopted this method by voting a law in 2003, known as the Virginia Government Performance and Results Act. This Act mandates each State agency to develop and continuously review a strategic plan identifying long-term agency goals and objectives as well as specific outcome measures reflecting the relative achievement of established goals as we are about to do here. A roadmap for the planning process for a long-term development vision was set up and, upon evaluation of the system last year, it was noted that the results were very positive and conclusive.

This is why I have no doubt that the MTEF programme that we are about to adopt on a 3-year rolling period as from the date of submission will, if the Executive Council so wishes, allow the Rodriguans to benefit from such a policy and see a change in their living conditions. It is for this reason that I call upon the Regional Government to take advantage of this golden opportunity to adopt a consultative approach towards the citizens who are at the time being going through a very hard time due to the problems caused by unemployment and the impact of the world economic crisis.

I thank you all for your attention. Thank you, Sir.

Commissioner for Youth and Sports (Mr. C. Agathe): Mr. Chairperson, Sir, while listening to the Member of the Minority Side, I was asking myself whether he has mastered the document that has been tabled by the Chief Commissioner or whether he does not understand fully what is meant by autonomy.

First of all, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, this document is very technical. It contains the amendments proposed by the Government of Mauritius to make the PBB applicable in Rodrigues. I think that it is just technical matter to have the PBB applied here in Rodrigues, and eventually align the financial year on the calendar

year. When we come to the presentation of the budget, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I think the Chief Commissioner will meet all the stakeholders, will call for the *participation démocratique*, and that all the people of Rodrigues will have their views heard. We will, of course, take on board the views of the public and take the decisions that we have to take.

M. le Président, cette motion fait suite aux amendements proposés par le Ministère des Finances afin de permettre à l'Assemblée Régionale de s'aligner sur la politique du gouvernement centrale avec l'adoption d'une nouvelle méthode de planification et de gestion budgétaire.

Les amendements proposés dans cette motion confirme l'ancrage et le positionnement de l'Assemblée Régionale dans la Constitution de la République. Il est à noter qu'en tant que législateurs, notre devoir est aussi de veiller à ce que toutes les provisions du *Rodrigues Regional Assembly Act* soit respectées.

Mr. Chairperson, Sir, with your permission, I will quote section 75E of the Constitution of Mauritius - alteration of any written laws. I quote: "Subject to the provision of the Constitution any law giving effect to this chapter and to any matter 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." Mr. Chairperson, Sir, this is very important.

Since 2003, Sir, several amendments have been brought to the RRA Act. We have, for example, Act No. 28 of 2002 which provides for Standing Orders of the Regional Assembly; Act No. 20 of 2002 amending the RRA Act to the effect that revenue be paid in the Consolidated Fund; Act No. 29 of 2002 which concerns the provision of more powers to the Island Chief Executive, and also the following three other amendments: the recognizance of all staff of the RRA as public officers, the vesting of the aerodrome of Plaine Corail, and the previous amendment to exempt Rodrigues from the application of PBB. All these amendments have been brought, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, without the concurrence of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly. It is the first time today that an amendment is requiring the concurrence of the RRA. And this amendment is the subject of the motion before the House today. This means that the RRA is giving its full backing in order to have PBB applied in Rodrigues.

M. le Président, au niveau de la Commission de la Jeunesse et des Sports, ce réalignement va éliminer la confusion qui a existé de tout temps parmi nos partenaires de la société civile qui travaillent bien souvent sur un calendrier annuel. C'est-à-dire, nous au niveau de la Commission, nous travaillons calendrier financier de juillet à juin, alors que les comités régionaux travaillent sur un calendrier allant de janvier à décembre. Maintenant c'est comme ci on va travailler sur une même longueur d'ondes, on va travailler ensemble et ça c'est bien pour le monde sportif.

M. le Président, il faut faire ressortir que le "*Programme Based Budgeting*" est une nouvelle méthode de mobilisation de ressources qui est basée sur des résultats alors que la méthode traditionnelle met l'emphasis seulement sur les dotations budgétaires.

L'adoption de cette nouvelle méthode est devenue nécessaire suite à l'émergence d'un contexte national aussi bien qu'international très difficile. Il faut nous adapter aux exigences émergentes à travers une méthode de gestion appropriée qui assure l'utilisation de nos ressources financières pour l'amélioration réelle de la qualité de la vie de nos concitoyens. Il faut faire la différence - le Commissaire, dans le temps, M. le président, utilisait l'argent public pour servir uniquement sa circonscription, alors que maintenant c'est pour servir toute l'île Rodrigues.

M. le Président, cette motion démontre l'accord du gouvernement régional pour l'adoption du "*Programme Based Budgeting*" et notre volonté ferme de tout faire pour répondre de manière efficace aux besoins de la population. L'adoption éventuelle du PBB par cette auguste assemblée nous permettra de mieux gérer notre budget avec un mécanisme de suivi plus performant. Ceci est devenu essentiel pour faire face aux différentes crises qui menacent le monde en ce moment.

A Rodrigues, nous ne sommes pas à l'abri de ces crises. Au contraire, due à notre insularité, nous sommes plus exposés et vulnérables. Il est donc impératif d'adopter ces amendements afin de nous permettre d'être résilients. Contrairement à la méthode conventionnelle, le PBB nous permet de répondre aux normes internationales de planification et de gestion financière en définissant notre stratégie d'intervention avec des objectifs clairs et des indicateurs de performance qui nous permettent un meilleur suivi de la mise en œuvre des différents programmes dans le temps voulu.

Pour conclure, M. le Président, pour que ces amendements soient vraiment efficaces, il nous faudra la collaboration de tout un chacun, en particulier nos amis de la fonction publique. Il est certain que le PBB aura un impact direct sur leur mode de travail.

Je fais un présent appel pour que tout le monde collabore et travaille dans le sens proposé par cette nouvelle méthode de gestion.

Je vous remercie pour votre attention.

Merci, M. le président.

The Chief Commissioner: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I would like to thank the Members from both sides of the House for their intervention on this motion. I can assure the Member of the Minority that all the points that he has raised have been noted and will be taken up during consultations between the officials of the Ministry of Finance and those of my office.

In fact, we have excluded some provisions contained in the original document submitted to us in order to preserve the autonomy of Rodrigues. One of the provisions which have been excluded concerned the powers of the Minister to reduce budgetary provisions allocated to sectors where targets have not been reached, and to increase budgetary provisions allocated to sectors where targets have been reached. This is not in line with the autonomy of Rodrigues and it is not up to the Minister to increase or decrease the provisions allocated to a sector. According to section 26 of the Act, it is this Assembly that decides.

Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I have taken good note of the comments made by of the Member. It is, of course easier, Sir, to criticize than to act. I still have in mind, Sir, the lengthy budget speeches that I had to listen to when I was on the other side of the House. I also have in mind all the declarations of good intention made at the start of a financial year which, in fact, remained only mere declarations. This is because even if we have already taken a policy decision a lot of difficulties may come in our way when the time comes to implement that decision. Where is the Planters Welfare Fund, Mr. Chairperson, Sir? Where are the welfare funds for fishermen and for people involved in handicraft? How many of the measures proposed by the previous government have never implemented, Mr. Chairperson, Sir!

Sir, I believe that the PBB will be a good tool, and that all of us will have to learn. And while learning we must bear in mind that nobody will do things for us here in Rodrigues. We will have to organize ourselves in order to meet by ourselves the objectives that we have set. As regards the comments made about having better control and public consultations, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, not everything has to be written in laws. Budget consultations form part of the traditional approach. Before drafting a budget you have to consult, you have to listen to people. And, of course, during consultations, we have spoken about reforms in the water sector. Some people are afraid, and I can understand that. But when we invite people for consultations, they tell us that they will not come to Cotton Bay, that this is not the place where consultations should be held. All the Members of the Minority have been invited to a seminar held last Monday at Cotton Bay Hotel to think and give their point of view on the reforms in the water sector. They chose to be absent, Mr. Chairperson, Sir. They chose not to come. Do you think that I will go to their house and ask them each of them one by one what they think of the reforms in the water sector? The Member mentioned trade unions in his intervention. What is the policy these trade unions, Sir? Some of them are leftist organizations that want everything free. They want free diesel, they want to benefit from pension; they want everything free! They don't want to make any effort! Who is going to pay for all this? Is there someone who is going to pay? Is an invisible hand going to pay for all the public services provided in Rodrigues? The point I want to make, Sir, is that there exists a proper forum for people to come and express their opinions. Those people who don't want to come should not think that we will implore them to get their point of view.

Mr. Chairperson, Sir, this government has a mandate and the mandate is clear. On page 14 of the electoral manifesto of the *Movement Rodriguais* published in 2002, mention is made of the creation of a Rodrigues Water Company. At paragraph 49 of our five-year plan presented in this Assembly on the 22nd of December, 2006, mention is made of the creation of a Rodrigues Water Company and of reforms in the water sector. Consultations are ongoing. To those who chose not to come, I will say: *Ne pensez pas qu'on va venir au chevet de votre lit pour vous demander: Qu'est-ce-que vous pensez? Qu'est-ce-que vous ne pensez pas...* When you are given the opportunity to speak, you have to speak. If you don't have anything to say, don't come afterwards and say that you have not been invited for consultations. Government has planned, has invited people to come and express themselves, has spent a lot of money in order to organize this workshop, and some people have chosen not to come and to boycott. They remained on the street. They should not now come and say that they have not been consulted. The train

will not wait for them. The boat is sailing, if they are not on board at the time of departure they will stay ashore, Mr. Chairperson, Sir. My point is that we have been mandated to carry out reforms in this specific sector, Mr. Chairperson, Sir.

Coming to the motion itself, Sir, as I said, PBB will bring positive results and it is up to all of us here to try and learn how to use this new tool. In Mauritius, people often learn by participating or by just listening. Departmental Heads, Commissioners including myself and the Members of the Minority have to do their homework. Government officers have to do their homework and learn how to use this tool. We should learn how to implement this new system and the different steps through which we have to go. We have no doubt that the results will be better. Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I thank all the Members who have intervened and I invite the House to vote for the motion.

Thank you, Sir.

On question put, the motion was agreed to.

Mr. Chairperson: Chief Commissioner, next motion, please.

FISHERS – REDEPLOYMENT SCHEME

The Chief Commissioner: I beg to move the motion standing in my name *“that this Assembly, with a view to relieving the ecological pressure on the lagoon and promoting sustainable alternative livelihoods for the beneficiaries, do approve the formula of the “Fishers Redeployment Scheme” which consists of the payment of a one off grant of Rs 25,000 to all registered fishers having reached the age of 60 years old as at 1st July 2008 and who accept to relinquish their fishing activities and for fishers below 60 years a one off grant of Rs 20,000 plus an amount of Rs. 1,000 for each year they have been registered as professional fisherman subject to a maximum of 20 years”.*

Mr. Chairperson, Sir, following a decision taken by the Executive Council, we are presenting a motion to be debated and approved by this Assembly regarding the situation of fishermen in Rodrigues.

Prior to the approval of the current budget a project write up with regard to various issues, including the Voluntary Relinquishment Scheme, was forwarded to

the Ministry of Finance and Economic Empowerment for discussion and consideration. I would like to remind Members of the House that that scheme, the Fishers Relinquishment Scheme, is included in our estimates at item vote 31.101.035, and has been voted by this Assembly. Members of this House are being invited today to give their point of view and to approve the decision that has been made by the Executive Council. As I stated in my first speech as Chief Commissioner, after the elections, we are going to submit motions to be debated by Members of the House whenever we feel that a motion requires the approval of the Assembly. In the budget speech presented to the House on the 28th of March, I have announced the setting-up of the said scheme. The Ministry of Finance and Economic Empowerment has, on 25th of April, 2008, given its approval of the draft estimates for Rodrigues for the year 2008/2009. The draft estimates have been approved by the Regional Assembly last year and have been submitted to Cabinet pursuant to section 46 of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly Act. These estimates have been incorporated in the Appropriation Act 2008/2009 in accordance with sub-section 44 (5) of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly Act.

On 2nd September 2008, the Executive Council has given its approval for the implementation of the measures concerning fishermen who wish to receive a sum of money against the voluntary relinquishment of their fishermen cards. The criteria for payment and the *modus operandi*, approved by the Executive Council, are as follows: the payment of a one-off payment of Rs 25,000. to all registered fishermen having reached the age of 60 at 01 July 2008 and who accept to relinquish their fisherman cards; and the payment of a fixed sum of Rs 20,000. to all fishermen aged under 60 who accept to relinquish their fishing cards plus a sum of Rs 1,000 for each of the years during which they were registered as professional fisherman subject to a maximum of 20 years. This means that the maximum compensation that will be paid to a fisherman who has been a registered fisherman for, for example, 20 years, is Rs 20,000. plus Rs 1,000. over a period of 20 years, that is Rs 40,000.

However, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, the Ministry of Finance and Economic Empowerment has, on 21st August, 2008, after the voting of the Appropriation Act in Mauritius, drawn our attention to the fact that the Government and Cabinet have expressed concern that the Rodrigues Regional Assembly has again been acting in contradiction with the decision taken by Government, and has been paying allowances to Rodriguan fishermen. We are not paying allowances. We have taken a policy decision that aims at saving the lagoon of Rodrigues, and removing the pressure on the marine ecology of Rodrigues.

On 18th September 2008, the Island Chief Executive submitted a brief to the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Local Government, Rodrigues and the Outer Islands, informing her of the number of persons wishing to join the scheme. In accordance with the criteria, we will be able to propose voluntary retirement to 351 fishermen aged below 55 years. I am tabling a list including the names of these fishermen as well as their age and gender.

Various consultations have been held including 3 meetings in Port Mathurin, Gravier, and Petite Butte with the fishers to explain to them the objectives of the scheme and they are all agreeable to this measure. The Rodrigues Regional Assembly, in line with the decision of the Executive Council and with the provisions of the budget speech for the current financial year, has, in accordance with the provisions of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly Act, applied on 07 November 2008 to the Ministry of Local Government, Rodrigues and the Outer Islands, for the release of funds. Funds will therefore be released as and when required for the payment of the one-off grant to fishers. Government has been trying to propose other alternatives, but not to our satisfaction. A joint working group comprising representatives of the Ministries of Local Government, Rodrigues and the Outer Islands, Agro-Industry and Fisheries, and Finance and Economic Empowerment has been set up to work out all the possible options regarding the payment of compensation to the lagoon fishers in Rodrigues. The working group has met on several occasions, but none of the proposals has been accepted and agreed to by the Executive Council and by myself.

On 3rd March, 2009, I requested the Manager of Financial Operations to ask the Financial Secretary to release the funds. On 4th March, 2009, the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Local Government, Rodrigues and Outer Islands has informed us that the Ministry of Finance and Economic Empowerment has already submitted officially the proposals to the joint working group. It is clear, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, that there is a sort of attempt to block policy decision already approved by the Executive Council and to prevent the Rodrigues Regional Assembly from implementing this scheme which has received the approval of the House. Members of the Minority have had nothing to say on this question, which I have proposed and explained in my budget speech.

Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I will come talk later on the "*raison d'être*" of the policy. My feeling is that the government, the Ministry of Finance and the Financial Secretary are not respecting the autonomy of Rodrigues. How can we be prevented to implement measures that we have decided to take! How can they

prevent us to implement these measures by threatening us with arguments of a financial nature! This is not autonomy, Mr. Chairperson, Sir! This is not what is provided in the law, what has been decided, what has been said by the former Judge, Robert Ahnee, in his first report - Decentralised System of Government for Rodrigues. We are autonomous! According to section 26 and to the first schedule of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly Act, Fisheries is an area of responsibility. Why are they not releasing funds which have been approved by the Regional Assembly and by Cabinet, and included in the National Budget, and approved by the National Assembly? I have had consultations with various persons and I would like here to place on record my appreciation for the comments made by the President of the Republic, Sir Aneerood Jugnauth, and addressed to the delegation who went to meet him. His interpretation of this issue is clear.

M. le président, ayant expliqué à la Chambre ce qui s'est passé, ayant mis les membres devant les faits, il ne me reste plus qu'à souhaiter que tous les membres de cette Assemblée se sentent interpellés par cette question car ils sont responsables et redevables envers leur électorat, envers leur administrés. Est que l'Assemblée Régionale et le Bureau du Chef Commissaire peuvent être traités de la sorte? On nous dicte, a travers les lettres que j'ai reçues à mon bureau, ce que nous avons à faire dans les détails. Maintenant on nous propose de payer Rs 10,000. aux pêcheurs concernés et de demander à ces pêcheurs de puiser de l'argent de cette somme de Rs 10,000. pour rembourser à la DBM l'argent qu'ils lui doivent. Est ce que le mot d'ordre : « *Rodriguais bizin décide pou Rodriguais* » sera respecté ? Ou bien doit-on se soumettre à la dictée, à la volonté des gens qui n'habitent pas Rodrigues et qui font, comme dans le passé, dans les années 60, avant la mise en place de l'autonomie de Rodrigues? Ils veulent décider pour les Rodriguais et pour Rodrigues à partir de Port Louis! M. le président, moi, personnellement, ainsi que beaucoup d'autres membres de cette assemblée et beaucoup de Rodriguais ne vont pas accepter une telle dictature de la part du Ministère de Finances. Il nous faut *stand up and defend the autonomy of Rodrigues!*

M. le Président, je voudrais encore une fois parler sur la justification de ces mesures. Comme vous, ainsi que tous les membres de cette Assemblée, le savent, le lagon de Rodrigues est un écosystème fini, un écosystème complètement détruit par la surexploitation, entre autres. Tous les rapports d'experts ainsi que toutes les observations ont conclu qu'il faut *relieve the pressure*, qu'il nous faut réduire au minimum le nombre de pêcheurs dans nos lagons, préserver nos lagons en pratiquant la pêche artisanale, mettre en place des réserves marines et les protéger, draguer des passes, et protéger nos lagons. Tout ceci, M. le président, fait partie

d'une politique de réhabilitation du lagon sur le long terme, sur 10 ans, sur 15 ans. Mais il nous faut commencer par dire à ceux qui sont concernés : « Voilà, on vous propose une compensation. Cette compensation qu'on vous propose, ce n'est pas « un argent de pêcheurs », c'est une reconnaissance de la valeur de la contribution des pêcheurs. » Ces personnes sont des pêcheurs et on leur demande du jour au lendemain de cesser de pêcher dans le lagon et de rendre leurs cartes. Il faut leur offrir premièrement, une compensation financière et deuxièmement, un moyen, même dérisoire, une petite somme d'argent allant jusqu'à Rs 40,000. afin de leur permettre d'acheter, par exemple, une machine à coudre, ou d'ajouter cet argent à un emprunt qu'ils pourraient contracter. Il faut aider ces gens-là en leur donnant de quoi commencer une petite entreprise, ou se reconvertir dans une autre activité. On ne dit pas que les pêcheurs ne doivent plus pêcher. La majorité des Rodriguais sont des pêcheurs, planteurs, maçons, travailleurs manuels. Ils sont polyvalents. Quand il fait beau temps, vous voyez toutes sortes de gens sur la mer. On ne dit pas qu'il ne faut plus aller pêcher. On peut aller pêcher mais il faut savoir ce qui est permis et ce qui n'est pas permis; quel type de pêche est permis dans tel endroit et quel type de pêche n'est pas permis. Quand vous regardez dans le lagon de Rodrigues aujourd'hui, qu'est-ce-que vous voyez ? Des bateaux de pêche qui sortent le matin et qui reviennent vides le soir ou à la mi-journée. Qu'est-ce qu'ils attrapent ? Des petits « ourites », très petits, des petits *conoconos*, des petits ceci, des petits cela. Les pêcheurs sont ainsi encouragés à s'engager dans la pêche illégale, dans la pêche sous-marine.

Il y a aussi, M. le président' ce système de *bad weather allowance* que je considère injuste envers les pêcheurs Rodriguais, et c'est cela qui a en quelque sorte posé problème. Je trouve qu'il est difficile aujourd'hui de soutenir une famille en travaillant comme pêcheur dans le lagon de Rodrigues. Qu'est-ce-qu'on doit faire, M. le président, en tant que gouvernement responsable, en tant qu'élus responsables ? On doit trouver des alternatives. Un *capital budget* de Rs 300 millions a été alloué à Rodrigues. Si Rodrigues n'était pas autonome, on aurait fait ce que Port Louis nous dicte. *Fair enough*. Mais un Conseil Exécutif a été élu en 2006 après des élections. Le conseiller légal de ce conseil exécutif a interprété les lois et a dit au Conseil Exécutif ce que la loi lui permettait de faire. Qu'est-ce qu'on voit aujourd'hui ? Je ne sais quel monsieur à Port Louis vient dire à l'Assemblée Régionale, à la Commission de la Pêche : *no, you can't do this, you have to do that!* Qu'est-ce que c'est, M. le président ? Est-ce-qu'on veut vraiment détruire Rodrigues ? Est-ce-qu'on veut vraiment détruire le lagon de Rodrigues ? C'est en quelque sorte ce qu'ils sont en train de faire, et il ne faut pas que nous allions dans ce sens. J'ai plusieurs fois eu, M. le président, l'occasion de négocier

avec différents ministres. On a écrit et on a parlé au premier ministre. Ensuite, il y a eu un autre ministre à qui j'ai écrit qui m'a dit qu'on aurait mieux que ce que nous proposons. Mais cela n'a pas eu lieu, M. le président. Et je suis désolé de le dire, mais cette façon de faire, cette façon cavalière de traiter Rodrigues et l'Assemblée Régionale de Rodrigues est une honte *for the Republic of Mauritius*! Attention must be given to Rodrigues and the autonomy of Rodrigues deserves respect. I am not the kind of person who will tolerate such attempts on our autonomy. I have not entered into the political arena, engaged myself in politics and social work to obey to orders coming from people who are entitled to give orders.

Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I believe that what we are doing is right. There may be criticisms to the effect that the persons appearing on the list have been chosen, but if you look at the list which I have tabled, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, you will notice that this is not the case. This list has been compiled giving priority to age and then to gender. We are proposing retirement to all those aged above 55 years, Mr. Chairperson, Sir. I invite all Members to come forward with criticisms and proposals, but to also bear in mind - and I would like to hear the views Minority on this point - do you agree with what is happening today, that is we have to beg them to release funds? This money belongs to the Regional Assembly, an institution of the Republic! Or does this money belong to someone else? Mr. Chairperson, Sir, all the organizations in Rodrigues should be aware of and should understand what is going on. I appeal to Members of this House to make a consensus and unite themselves and speak in one voice. I make an appeal to the Minority to think well about what they are going to say and not to further hurt the autonomy of Rodrigues by trying to get political gains out of this situation.

We have already, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, engaged consultations with the Legal Adviser of the Regional Assembly and other lawyers with a view to initiating legal action on behalf of the people of Rodrigues, and on behalf of the Regional Assembly. We are not getting the respect that we deserve, and I hope the Court will give us this respect.

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson, Sir.

I command this motion to the House, Mr. Chairperson, Sir.

Mr. Chairperson: Is any Member of the Minority going to intervene? Only one? You may have the Floor.

Mr. D. Spéville: M. le Président, avant de commencer mon intervention, je voudrais, au nom de la Minorité, souhaiter un joyeux anniversaire à Madame Olivie Jean de Manges qui fête ses 100 ans aujourd'hui. Nous lui souhaitons une longue vie. Il est dommage que nous ne puissions être à ses côtés en ce moment pour exprimer notre gratitude pour son dévouement pour le pays.

M. le Président, nous avons eu encore une fois aujourd'hui la preuve que le Chef Commissaire veut tactiquement prendre au piège la minorité en présentant cette motion qui n'est autre qu'une propagande politique et une promesse électorale. M. le Président encore une fois je vais saisir l'occasion pour dire haut et fort que nous ne sommes pas contre l'intérêt des pêcheurs de Rodrigues, comme l'avait dit le Chef Commissaire lors de la présentation d'une motion dans cette Chambre le 18 décembre 2007.

Mr. Chairperson, Sir, the Motion presented by the Chief Commissioner today does not explain in any way how the redeployment of these fishermen will be done and whether it will be sustainable. Giving Rs 25000 or Rs 20000 to them may sound helpful, but for how long? *On ne peut pas donner de l'argent aux gens pour faire la bouche doux!* What type of empowerment activities have been set up and scheduled for these fishermen? Nothing, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, practically nothing!

Mr. Chairperson, Sir, by bringing this Motion to the Assembly, the Chief Commissioner is simply informing the population of Rodrigues that he no longer has the support of the Central Government on this matter. He is trying, by presenting this motion, to support a *cas de mise en demeure* in Court. *Il est en train de générer un conflit* between the Central Government, our main *bailleur de fonds*, au détriment de la population.

Mr. Chairperson, Sir, since, the MR took power in Rodrigues, the question of fishermen *a fait couler beaucoup d'encre*. We had the issue regarding the payment of bad weather allowance, and now we have in front of us the Fishers Redeployment Scheme. On a même eu des manifestations, le Chef Commissaire d'alors fut agressé, des Membres du Conseil Exécutif et moi-même avons été sévèrement menacés par les pêcheurs qui sont venus vers nous avec des bouteilles à la main. Ou était le *Minority Leader* d'alors à ce moment là, M. le président? Quelles étaient leurs propositions? *L'allocation des pêcheurs vient du gouvernement japonais, et OPR ine vole tout !*

Auparavant, M. le président, il fallait qu'il y ait 3 jours consécutifs de mauvais temps en une semaine pour payer l'allocation de mauvais temps aux pêcheurs. C'est suite à une demande de Serge Clair quand il était Ministre auprès de Steven Obeegadoo, Ministre de la pêche, qu'on a commencé à payer cette allocation pour chaque jour de mauvais temps. Le gouvernement accéda donc à cette requête pour Maurice et pour Rodrigues et cette mesure est en vigueur jusqu'à aujourd'hui.

Mr. Chairperson Sir, many questions can be asked to prove that this motion has not been treated professionally. One of them is whether the Executive Council has written a policy document on this issue and submitted to the Prime Minister to be considered in Cabinet. We would like the Chief Commissioner to table such documents in order to enlighten the House on whether a written policy document has been prepared and submitted to the Cabinet for consideration, Mr. Chairperson, Sir. The reason why I am saying that is because, according to section 39 of the RRA Act concerning labeling policy, the Executive Council shall develop policy on matters relating to Rodrigues in relation to its functions for submission to the Prime Minister and the Executive Council may from time to time refer to the Prime Minister specific matters of policy relating to Rodrigues for the consideration of Cabinet. En 2005, M' le président, l'ex-gouvernement régional OPR avait fait une proposition au Ministère de la Pêche pour être considérée par le Cabinet. Les propositions dont nous parlons étaient les suivantes:

- (1) Diminuer le nombre de pêcheurs dans la mer par une formation et en leur offrant une compensation. Une compensation associée à la création du parc marin qui est de diminuer le nombre de pêcheurs dans le lagon, et...

(Interruptions)

The Minority Leader: Point of order, Mr. Chairperson, Sir. We have been listening attentively to the Chief Commissioner and I would like the House to listen carefully to what my colleague has to say on this motion.

Mr. Chairperson: Yes, the Minority Leader is correct; they have been attentive all through. Order, please!

Mr. D. Spéville: Je continue donc avec les propositions.

(2) Leur donner une compensation mensuelle pendant un certain nombre d'années en leur faisant faire un travail à terre. Surtout dans le domaine de l'environnement et de l'agriculture par le biais d'un vrai cadastre agricole.

Mais on ne voit pas cela, M. le Président. *We have practically no genuine activities prepared for the redeployment of these fishers.* Et, en raison des contraintes budgétaires, le Gouvernement Central n'a pu accepter aucune de ces deux propositions. Il a préféré revoir les critères en se basant sur le rapport du directeur de l'audit: état de la mer, les 4 zones, etc. afin que le budget de Rs 45 millions soit réduit à Rs 27.5 millions.

M. le Président, comme vous voyez, la démarche était d'alléger le lagon et en même temps assurer la survie de ces pêcheurs. Mais la motion présentée aujourd'hui *does not include the aspect of sustainability.*

Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I would also like to know whether there has been any consultations between the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Fisheries before going ahead with such a decision. I would like to remind the House that the decision to pay Rs 1080 to fishermen was taken by the Executive Council on 22 August 2006 to the detriment of off lagoon fishermen. The Hon. Minister of Agro Industry and Fisheries told the Chief Commissioner that advice had been sought and obtained from the Solicitor General concerning this issue and that fishermen are entitled to a payment of Rs 155 in respect of bad weather allowance. The Minister also said that any payment made over and above that sum can be treated as a decision that has been taken in an *ultra vires* manner. This is why the Chief Commissioner should think twice about the implication of this decision in the whole Republic. On peut être autonome oui, on peut taper fort pour Rodrigues, oui, mais il ne faut pas prendre des décisions qui peuvent nuire aux relations bilatéraux entre Maurice et Rodrigues car ce sera un danger pour l'avenir. Il nous faut agir avec plus de diplomatie. With regard to the issue of bad weather allowance, it was made clear in a statement by the Hon. Minister of Fisheries, Mr. Arvind Boolell, that a decision had already been taken by Cabinet, and that what is good for Mauritius is equally good for Rodrigues, the more so that we want equal treatment on this issue. M. le président, comme je l'ai déjà dit, nous n'allons pas continuer à nous souscrire à la motivation politique personnelle du Chef Commissaire en ce qu'il s'agit des pêcheurs.

Mr. Chairperson, Sir, we are talking about ecological pressure on the lagoon, but we can still see people collecting sea cucumbers "*barbarras*", and we

see illegal fishing going on even during daytime in front the Fisheries officers. And we are talking about ecological pressure! Quel paradoxe, M. le président ! Nous, de ce coté de la Chambre, nous trouvons cela comique qu'une décision prise par le Conseil Exécutif soit transformée en motion pour être débattue à l'Assemblée Régionale car c'est l'inverse qui aurait dû être fait. On aurait du prendre en considération les propositions de tout un chacun, puis prendre une décision, la rédiger en un *policy document* et présenter le document cela au Cabinet comme il est dit à la section 39(2). Et ensuite revenir avec des règlements spécifiques pour revoir la pêche à Rodrigues et, en même temps, faire le suivi d'*empowerment* de ceux qui ont accepté *to relinquish their fishing activities by giving them technical and other assistance*.

Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I would also like to know whether, as stated in section 52(2), the document containing the decision taken by the Executive Council with regard to instructions to effect payments, as described in the motion before the House today, has been laid in the National Assembly by the Minister concerned. Can the Chief Commissioner table such documents in order to enlighten Members of this Assembly?

M. le Président, avec la crise financière qui persiste dans le monde, on ne veut pas que les Rodriguais développent une mentalité d'assisté. Il faut leur inculquer une mentalité productrice, mais on n'est pas contre le principe d'une aide financière aux pêcheurs. Mais comme je l'ai dit, il nous faut au préalable développer un *empowerment policy*. Il nous faut une vraie politique de *redeployment* pour que ces pêcheurs puissent utiliser cet argent judicieusement, avec l'aide d'autres bailleurs de fonds comme le *Empowerment Programme* et l'IFAD. Il nous faut un vrai cadastre agricole et une vraie politique de transformation agricole ainsi que la création d'autres métiers. Mais comme tout cela n'est pas clair, on ne va pas nous associer à cette motion. We think that our fishermen deserve a better treatment, a well planned decision after good and appropriate diplomatic negotiations with other all the authorities concerned, but not just a simply tied rope to maintain the fishermen as a *capital politique*. Le Chef Commissaire a dit que le *redeployment scheme* est mentionné dans le discours du budget, mais était-il présent pendant les consultations budgétaires pour éclairer les ministres sur sa politique ?

Therefore, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, our stand is clear - we will abstain from voting this motion. I repeat that we are not against the fact that compensation should be paid to the fishermen, but we are asking for a financial compensation

together with a good empowerment policy. Since the redeployment scheme is up to now not clearly defined, we are afraid that it is not sustainable.

Mr. Chairperson, Sir, we don't want to be engaged in a political mess with regard to this issue. I will therefore clearly remind the majority group that any political campaign carried out to the effect that the OPR is blocking the payment of compensation and any move to discredit the Opposition *aura des retombées negatives*, because as far as the fishermen are concerned, this is the past, as they have already noted, through the different events that have been taking place since 2006, the lack of professionalism in dealing with this issue.

Mr. Chairperson, Sir, the majority will vote. We have an Executive Council. They can, therefore, go ahead. But our stand remains firm, and to confirm this we will abstain from voting. This is a true walk-out, which the press should report as such in order not to mislead the public, like for the last sitting.

(Interruptions)

Mr. Chairperson: Order!

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, first of all, allow me to congratulate the Chief Commissioner, mover of the motion, for his firm commitment in safeguarding the fishing sector in Rodrigues from over exploitation by coming up with special measures to relieve ecological pressure on the lagoon and to find alternative solutions to ensure the sustainable livelihoods of redeployed fishermen. Such measures will become effective after the House would have voted the motion for the "Fishers Redeployment Scheme" today.

Mr. Chairperson, Sir, it is worth noting that our island is enclosed by over 230 km² of fringing reefs encompassing a very shallow lagoon extending 13 km to the south-west and offering direct employment to more than 2000 families. However, the fishing practices and over-fishing are detrimental to the survival of the marine ecology. That's why we, as a conscious regional government has spared no efforts in coming up with different measures and policies to safeguard our marine resources.

There have been the Fisheries and Marine Resources regulation which was passed on 13 February 2007; the SEMPA regulations this year, that is on 17 February 2009, and the Fishers Redeployment Scheme.

Mr. Chairperson, Sir, if we have been able to pass such regulations, it is because the RRA Act 2001, under the fourth schedule section 26 gives us full autonomy in fisheries.

However, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, in spite of our autonomy in fisheries, we note with much concern that the measures we have taken in this financial year with a view to re-deploying fishermen from the lagoon have not obtained the clearance of the Ministry of Finance and Economic Empowerment and Financial Secretary for disbursement of funds already appropriated in the present Budget.

Mr. Chairperson, Sir, even before our accession to autonomy, the *Mouvement Rodriguais* party was fully conscious of our responsibility to preserve our lagoon from over-fishing and ecological degradation by all means. That's why in our electoral manifesto on pages 26 – 27, we proposed many measures for the fishermen to get out of the lagoon as one of the measures to relieve ecological pressure on it. Such measures, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, will, of course, become effective and efficient if necessary measures are taken to ensure a sustainable alternative livelihood for the fishermen who would have relinquished their fishing cards. Hence, once in power we have the obligation towards our mandate to implement such measures. That's why, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, during this financial year 2008/2009, our present majority presented, through the Chief Commissioner, the appropriate measures in the budget for the relinquishment of fishermen cards and provided for appropriate compensation. It is to be noted that fishing is one of the areas of responsibility of the Executive Council where we have full autonomy as per the RRA Act 2001. In spite having followed the different procedures as prescribed by the RRA Act before its implementation, such decision has been disallowed by the Financial Secretary's Office because, according to the Ministry's letter, it is not in line with government's policy.

Mr. Chairperson, Sir, this House will recall that the question of Rodriguan fishermen has always been a matter of contention between the Central Government and the Executive Council since the advent of autonomy. I wonder why, Mr. Chairperson Sir, no steps have been taken by the Central Government if Rodrigues had to follow the same policy as mainland Mauritius, to amend the RRA Act to remove the autonomy we have in fishing. By maintaining its position on this issue, the government is giving way to a constitutional conflict between Port Louis and Port Mathurin. Such a conflict can easily be avoided if good comprehension and mutual understanding prevail. That's why, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I invite the Ministers concerned and the Prime Minister to understand better the social and

economic situations of fishermen in Rodrigues as compared to their counterparts in mainland Mauritius before applying the national policy in fishing in Rodrigues. Everybody will agree that there are more job prospects in mainland Mauritius than in Rodrigues, and this explains the great difference in the standard of living between the two islands. We are fully convinced that the measures prescribed by the Empowerment Programme for Rodrigues are insufficient. We should be allowed to implement our own policy in the fisheries sector first and then allow the fishermen to choose other schemes if they want to.

Mr. Chairperson, Sir, if for the purpose of implementing the PBB, the government proposes to amend the RRA Act to be included in the “Additional Stimulus Package (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bills, and requires the concurrence of this Assembly pursuant to section 75 E of the Constitution of the Republic of Mauritius, it is strongly felt that it is high time that we propose other amendments to the Act, to render the RRA Act more manageable and more responsive to the needs and challenges facing our country.

Mr. Chairperson, Sir, after nearly seven years of autonomy, it is feared that some people at national level still do not know the specificities of Rodrigues. The Minority side knows very well what I am saying. That’s why, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I invite them to put aside their *orgueil politique* and to join us in that struggle to defend the cause of all Rodriguans especially today the cause of a very vulnerable section of our population, the fishermen.

Mr. Chairperson, Sir, we all know that very few fishermen have been able to succeed financially in their job, which is becoming more and more difficult due to the following reasons:-

- The increasing number of fishers in the lagoon;
- Non-respect of good fishing techniques resulting in the destruction of corals and diminution of fish; and
- The application of the same procedures for bad weather allowance as in Mauritius.

Moreover, most fishermen have contracted loans at the Development Bank of Mauritius for the purchase of fishing boats and other related items which have become more of a burden for them rather than a bread earner.

Mr. Chairperson, Sir, the only way to at the same time safeguard our marine resources and the livelihoods of the fishermen is to come up with a special redeployment scheme. Under the RRA Act, we are fully mandated to apply such policy decisions. It is the duty of one and all in this House today, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, to support such a motion. What the Empowerment Foundation proposes for fishermen cannot substitute the measures we are proposing, but is rather an additional support to fishers which I think they are free to join or not.

Mr. Chairperson, Sir, if one analyses the situation of the fisher's community today, one will see in what precariousness they are living. At the level of my Commission, I have given top priority consideration to them as regards financial support to preschool children aged three plus and financial assistance to students in tertiary institutions. However, we have noted with much concern that in spite of the above measures, many parents cannot send their children to school due to poverty. Indeed, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, the fishers community is one of the poorest in Rodrigues. That's why we are convinced that the measures we have taken in order to re-deploy them from the lagoon are fully justified. Those above 60 can no more compete with the younger generation, whereas the women fishers who do more harm to our corals due to their mode of fishing are easily prepared to shift to other more productive activities namely agriculture and farming provided we compensate them adequately and monitor their transition properly.

Mr. Chairperson, Sir, if we are not given the possibility to exert our autonomy as prescribed in the RRA Act, I think it's high time to amend it by deleting all the clauses which are no more applicable and by bringing in additional clauses to reinforce the Act and set up *garde fous* to prevent abuse from the Central Government.

Here are, Mr. Chairperson, a few examples which can guide us in our future way of action. There is a need, Sir, to introduce an Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) body which may provide a useful mechanism to resolve governance disputes between Central and Regional governments. This has to be included in the Constitution. For example, in Belgium, the Constitution was amended in 1980 to include a Court of Arbitration. This change was brought in recognition of Belgium's gradual transformation from a unitary to a federal state. Similarly, in South Africa, the constitution adopted in 1996, ending apartheid, established a Legislative Mediation Committee. The Greenland Home Rule Act, which established Greenland as an autonomous territory of Denmark, also established an Ad Hoc Board to resolve jurisdictional conflicts between the state and the territory.

To know more about the ADR, I refer you to the Dispute Resolution: Core Elements Quick Guide prepared by the Public International Law and Policy group November 2006.

Mr. Chairperson, Sir, allow me to present parts of the ‘Gross Project’ Parliamentary Assembly Council of Europe – Provisional Edition where it gives examples of positive experiences of autonomous regions as a source of inspiration for conflict resolution in Europe – Resolution 1334 (2003) [1] / 24 June 2003 (19th sitting).

Concerning tension, in paragraph 3, it is said that these tensions also reflect the inevitable development of the concept of the nation state, which viewed national sovereignty and cultural homogeneity as essential. Nowadays, particularly in view of developments in the practice of democracy and international law, states are faced with new requirements.

In paragraph 6, it is said that States must prevent tensions from developing by introducing flexible constitutional or legislative arrangements to meet their expectations. By giving minorities powers of their own, either devolved or shared with central government, States can sometimes reconcile the principle of territorial unity and integrity with the principle of cultural diversity.

In paragraph 11- the term “Territorial autonomy” applies to an arrangement, usually adopted in a sovereign state, whereby the inhabitants of a certain region are given enlarged powers, reflecting their specific geographical situation, which protect and promote their cultural and religious traditions. The term “cultural autonomy” implies enabling linguistic and cultural rights to be exercised. In the majority of cases, this should go hand in hand with the application of the principle of decentralization.

In paragraph 17, it is said that the successful autonomy depends on balanced relationships within a state between majorities and minorities, but also between minorities... and concerning the basic principles when granting autonomous status.

Paragraph 22 (vi), it is stated that arrangements on autonomous status must provide for funds and/or transfers of funds which allow autonomous authorities to exercise the extra powers conferred on them by Central Government.

Mr. Chairperson, Sir, if I have cited the different sources of legislation from the different countries, it’s because all autonomous regions in the world experience

the same problem as Rodrigues. If we want central powers to more recognize our rights, we have to fight, Mr. Chairperson, Sir. I am of the opinion that the Minority side is escaping from their duties today, Mr. Chairperson, Sir. Either they vote for the Majority because here we are defending the cause of all fishermen in Rodrigues or they abstain from voting.

Therefore, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, before ending I'd like again to thank the Chief Commissioner for his stand for maintaining the scheme that we have voted in the present budget and we will see to it, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, that the decisions that we have taken are given due recognition. I, therefore, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, invite all my colleagues and all the Members from the Minority side to be careful and to vote for the motion.

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson, Sir.

Mr. F. A. Grandcourt: M. le président, d'abord j'aimerais moi aussi me joindre à mon collègue pour féliciter le Chef Commissaire pour la présentation de cette motion. Je pense que les membres de la minorité ne comprennent pas l'urgence de cette motion, mais cependant je les comprends parce que même les syndicats à l'époque disaient qu'ils étaient contre tout ce qui est redéploiement des pêcheurs. Quelqu'un a dit quelque part que ces gens-là sont des gens aisés; qu'ils n'arrivent donc pas à comprendre. Je voudrais aussi dire que de l'autre côté de la Chambre ils sont tellement aisés qu'ils n'arrivent pas à comprendre les pêcheurs. Il y a quatre personnes de la minorité, c'est-à-dire 50%, qui perçoivent plus de deux payes, M. le président. Donc ils n'arrivent pas à comprendre.

Mais il y a une chose, M. le Président, qu'il faut comprendre. Il faut bien comprendre pourquoi aujourd'hui ils peuvent dire qu'ils vont s'abstenir, et qu'ils ne vont pas voter. C'est parce que ce sont eux qui ont créé cette situation dont nous, nous avons hérité. Qui, M. le président, a donné toutes ces cartes aux pêcheurs ? Pourquoi ont-ils fait de grands discours au départ ? Pourquoi ont-ils parlé d'accompagnement, de *policy for accompanying the fishermen* ? Et, finalement, M. le président, lorsqu'on va redéployer les pêcheurs, surtout les personnes âgées qui méritent quelque chose, ils s'abstiennent ! Il faut comprendre quelque chose, M. le Président, presque tous les pêcheurs à Rodrigues sont pêcheur-plantateur ou pêcheur-éleveur. Nous avons une Commission de l'Agriculture qui est *full-fledged* même si le membre de l'autre côté de la Chambre a laissé en partant de la Commission de l'Agriculture un tracteur et demi. A la Commission de l'Agriculture, nous avons maintenant des tracteurs et tous nos techniciens sont

formés. Nous pouvons donc nous permettre d'offrir aux pêcheurs et à tous ceux qui veulent être accompagnés les services dont ils ont besoin. La question d'accompagnement ne se pose donc pas parce qu'ils sont tous soit pêcheurs et éleveurs, soit pêcheurs et planteurs en même temps.

M. le président, il faut qu'on prenne en considération l'état de notre lagon et de nos ressources marines. J'aimerais, si vous me le permettez, M. le président, citer quelques chiffres. Si nous prenons par exemple *general fishing*, la pêche en générale, en 2000, on a pêché 2016 tonnes de poissons, et en 2005, 1039 tonnes, ce qui représente une baisse de 50%. M. le président, en 2000, le *average catch* des pêcheurs était de 8.7 kg de poisson par jour, et il est descendu à moins de 2.8 kg par jour. La pêche à la senne rapportait en 2000, 237 mille kilos de poissons, aujourd'hui c'est descendu à moins de 150 kilos, représentant une baisse de plus de 30%. En ce qui concerne la pêche aux *ourites*, en 1994 c'était 396 tonnes, et en 2005 c'est descendu à 244 tonnes, représentant une baisse de 40%. Qu'est ce qu'on doit faire devant un tel constat, M. le président? On doit agir. Nous savons que la politique de l'ancien gouvernement c'était d'attendre - comme ils ont fait quand il fallait résoudre le problème concernant ce pont. Ils ont démoli ce pont en attendant que quelqu'un d'autre vienne le rebâtir sous prétexte que ce pont faisait la honte de Port Mathurin. C'est quand nous sommes revenus que ce pont a été rebâti. L'autre exemple, M. le président, est le centre de Bigarade.

M. le Président, là on doit agir et je trouve juste que le Chef Commissaire, et nous-mêmes au niveau du Conseil Exécutif, ayons pris la décision d'agir. On a remarqué qu'un certain déséquilibre affectait notre lagon. On ne voyait ni les gros poissons, ni les petits poissons. Et quand il y a déséquilibre, cela entraîne forcément d'autres répercussions. M. le président ce qu'il faut aussi souligner c'est que nous avons dans nos lagons des espèces endémiques dû au fait que Rodrigues est isolée. Comment faire pour protéger ces espèces endémiques, parce que nous avons appris que les pêcheurs attrapent toutes sortes de poissons y compris les poissons et autres espèces endémiques Rodrigues. Il nous faut donc agir, M. le président.

M. le Président, je trouve juste ce que nous avons fait, et que c'est injuste de la part du gouvernement de Maurice de ne pas vouloir comprendre. Ils ne veulent pas comprendre la spécificité de Rodrigues. Ils ne peuvent pas décider à Maurice, comme l'ont si bien dit les précédents intervenants, de ce qu'il faut faire à Rodrigues. Et nous avons été très surpris de voir que l'Opposition joue leur jeu. Nous avons l'impression que la majorité de l'opposition se rangent du côté de

quelques officiers à Maurice, et qu'ils contribuent eux aussi à faire du mal aux pêcheurs. Qu'est ce qu'ils iront dire à ces pêcheurs-là lorsqu'ils leur demanderont pourquoi ils n'ont pas voté pour la motion? *We have abstained?* Les pêcheurs ne voudront pas entendre *abstain*, ils vont vouloir entendre pour. Parce que nous, de ce côté de la Chambre, nous défendons les intérêts des pêcheurs. M. le président, certains pêcheurs ont commencé à pêcher illégalement. Ils se servent de *used oil*, ils se servent de toutes sortes de pratiques illégales. Vous imaginez, M. le président, le nombre de pêcheurs qui posent des casiers un peu partout! Il ne faut pas oublier qu'il y a aussi le phénomène de *ghost fishing* - pêche fantôme, où des casiers disparaissent. Et tout cela contribue à tuer les poissons dans nos lagons et à accentuer la pression sur notre écosystème.

Au niveau de la MPA, M. le président, on est en train de former les pêcheurs. Une des raisons pour laquelle on est venu avec ce *scheme* c'est pour pouvoir faire sortir les pêcheurs, au nombre de 900 à peu près, de la MPA et, avec l'aide de l'UNDP, on est en train de travailler sur un programme spécifique d'accompagnement pour tous ces pêcheurs. Je suis convaincu, M. le président, que la formation et l'éducation peuvent aider ce gens-là à aller de l'avant. Mais il nous faudra d'abord faire l'éducation et la formation des gens de l'opposition.

M. le Président, je n'arrive pas à comprendre pourquoi ils se cachent et pourquoi ils ne veulent pas intervenir sur la motion. Pourquoi, M. le président ? Ils n'ont jamais, jamais soutenu les pêcheurs! Et ils ne peuvent pas comprendre parce que, comme je l'ai dit au début de mon intervention, ce sont des gens aisés. *They don't want to stand into the shoes of these fishermen and understand.* Il faut comprendre, M. le président, il faut comprendre la réalité. Je demanderai aux membres de l'opposition d'aller à Cité Patate, d'aller aux gens là-bas que *they have abstained*, qu'ils n'ont pas voté pour cette motion! Qu'ils aillent leur dire cela là-bas, M. le président ! Qu'ils aillent dire cela aux pêcheurs de Camp Pintade et de Baie du Nord, et ils verront leurs réactions!

M. le Président, si nous adoptons une telle attitude, nous n'allons pas sortir gagnant de cette lutte. Rodrigues ne va pas en sortir gagnant. Je fais donc un appel aux membres de l'opposition, et je leur demanderais de ne pas oublier que cette instance qu'est l'Assemblée Régionale est là pour défendre Rodrigues. Alors, défendons Rodrigues! Parce que sinon certaines personnes ne pourront pas demain répondre aux questions lorsqu'elles auront à faire face à la population dans la rue. Avec ces quelques mots, M. le Président, je terminerai en disant que je voterai pour la motion.

Je tiens aussi à remercier tous ceux qui ont travaillé sur la rédaction de cette motion, les techniciens qui nous ont fait comprendre les réalités. Je remercie aussi le Chef Commissaire pour sa bonne foi.

Merci, M. le Président.

Mr. C. Agathe: M. le Président, j'ai été écœuré aujourd'hui en écoutant le membre de la minorité lors de son intervention sur cette motion. Les membres de l'opposition se vantent d'être le père de l'autonomie, et aujourd'hui ils sont en train de combattre l'autonomie pour combattre la majorité. Je me rappelle ce qu'avait dit le Frère Remy un jour au collègue. Il avait dit : «Rodrigues a besoin d'hommes non pas d'omelettes, de femmes et non pas des femmelettes».

Monsieur le Président, permettez-moi d'intervenir sur la motion proposée par le Chef Commissaire concernant la formule pour le redéploiement des pêcheurs du lagon. Cette présente motion nous propose les détails de ce plan. Je voudrais féliciter le Chef Commissaire et tous les membres qui ont parlé avant moi. Je remercie le Chef Commissaire pour sa démarche démocratique et pour avoir jugé nécessaire de venir avec une motion pour consulter les membres de cette Assemblée sur cette question.

Je vais être bref, M. le Président, pour dire que pour ma part, je trouve que la formule proposée à travers cette motion est la plus appropriée si on veut encourager nos amis pêcheurs, surtout ceux qui ont atteint l'âge de la retraite à quitter leur métier, permettant ainsi à notre lagon de se régénérer.

Il est maintenant établi que notre lagon s'est appauvri. Si rien n'est fait maintenant, il sera peut-être trop tard après car la surexploitation et la dégradation de notre environnement marin ont atteint un niveau presque irréversible.

Il faut aussi noter que nos amis pêcheurs, qui ont nourri la population jusqu'à tout récemment, se trouvent dans des situations sociales très difficiles. Allez sur les cotes, M. le président, écoutez ces pêcheurs, ces parent parler ! La plupart d'entre eux vivent dans une situation de pauvreté absolue. Et nous, au niveau de la majorité nous sommes allés encore plus loin. Nous avons osé donner Rs 1000. Qu'est ce que c'est que Rs 1000, M. le Président? Savez-vous ce qui s'est passé, M. le président ? La minorité a écrit des lettres. Des questions ont été posées à l'assemblée nationale pour contredire la majorité. Et aujourd'hui regardez

où nous sommes. M. le Président, je les rencontre tous les jours sur le terrain. Ils souffrent, Monsieur le Président. Il nous faut agir vite et maintenant.

Je fais un appel à tous mes collègues membres de cette assemblée, y compris ceux de la minorité, afin qu'ils oublient nos différences politiques et que nous nous unissions sur cette motion pour l'intérêt de nos ressources, pour l'intérêt de l'autonomie et l'intérêt de Rodrigues. Peut-être que les membres de la minorité ont des rancœurs envers les pêcheurs, mais il ne faut pas, M. le président. Il ne faut pas nourrir les rancœurs, M. le président. Il faut savoir oublier comme des pères et des mères. Il faut savoir le faire. Nous sommes aujourd'hui en temps de carême. Faut pouvoir oublier, M. le président. Il faut agir vite et dans l'intérêt des pêcheurs. Je fais donc un appel aux membres de la minorité et aux pêcheurs de soutenir cette motion dans l'intérêt de Rodrigues, dans l'intérêt de la population, dans l'intérêt des pêcheurs.

Merci, M. le président.

Mr. A. L. Emilien: M. le président, je suis né dans un village côtier ; j'ai grandi dans un village côtier, et je vis toujours dans un village côtier. Et je pense que je vais aussi mourir dans un village côtier. J'ai donc toute ma vie côtoyé la communauté des pêcheurs et je dois dire que j'ai été témoin de beaucoup de changements, beaucoup de transformations dans la vie de nos pêcheurs à Rodrigues. Je me souviens, M. le président, étant enfant, j'accompagnais les pêcheurs tous les jours et les *ourites* d'un kilo n'étaient jamais pêchés. On se disait que plus tard on l'aurait quand il aurait atteint 2 à 3 fois sa taille actuelle. Mais aujourd'hui qu'est ce que nous voyons? Les pêcheurs qui cassent le corail pour faire sortir un pauvre petit *ourite* de 100 à 200 grammes! Pourquoi, M. le président ? Parce que la vie du pêcheur est devenue aujourd'hui plus difficile.

Je disais un peu plus tôt que j'ai côtoyé la communauté des pêcheurs pendant des années. Je dois vous dire, M. le président, que quand j'ai vu les prises des différentes pêcheries dimanche dernier, ça a été le pire 1^{er} mars que j'ai connu de toute ma vie.

Les prises sont en baisse. La dimension des prises baisse aussi, M. le président, ce qui amène les pêcheurs à utiliser toutes sortes d'astuces comme, par exemple, l'utilisation des tiges de bambous pour faire sortir les *ourites* de leurs cachettes, répandre de l'huile sur la mer pour voir un peu plus claire pour pouvoir dénicher des poissons et des *ourites*. Et d'autres astuces encore qui,

malheureusement, détruisent l'écosystème marin, ce qui fait que notre lagon s'appauvrit de jour en jour. J'ai été étonné, M. le président, d'entendre certains membres de la minorité sur une précédente motion et sur cette motion, étonné d'entendre aujourd'hui des gens qui se sont ...

(end of cassette 3)

Mr. Emilien: Où est-on, M. le Président? On n'est pas à Disney Land, on est dans une Assemblée ! Il faut qu'on soit plus sérieux ! Entendre dire que Maurice est un bailleur de fonds de Rodrigues, c'est vraiment le monde à l'envers! *Rodrigues is part and parcel of the Republic of Mauritius*. Comment Maurice peut être considéré comme le bailleur de fonds de Rodrigues? Tout ceci est, M. le Président, d'une incroyable bassesse!

Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I would like to highlight the important role played by the fishing sector in the social well being of the society. It is common knowledge that a well dressed and healthy population means that there is social stability in a society and means that hard working men and women are contributing to the economic development of the country. I have been inspired by an observation made in July 2005 by Kofi Anan, the former Secretary-General of the United Nations, concerning small islands like Mauritius. He stated, I quote: "many of the world's small islands are among the best loved places; their great beauty and rich cultures attract visitors from all over the globe. To many, they seem idyllic places, heavens of sun and sand set in clear breeze and seas. While there is some truth to this, it is not of course the full story. The world's small islands in developing stages are also on the front line of the global struggle to protect the environment and pursue sustainable development. The precious and fragile bio-diversity of the small islands is among the most endangered on earth. The islands small size often severely limits their freshwater resources, their capacity to dispose of waste and ability to develop institutions. They frequently depend on just a few crops or on streams. As custodians of vast areas of oceans, they suffer from the effects of over fishing. As leading tourist destinations, they reap not only the benefits but also the costs. They are especially vulnerable to natural disasters and their very existence is in peril by the sea level rise brought by global warning." end of quote. Mr. Chairperson, Sir, what the-then Secretary- General of the United Nations was trying to say was that small islands have limited reserves which need to be protected and preserved, and this is what we are trying to do in the island of Rodrigues. The climatic conditions prevailing in Rodrigues have considerably reduced its agricultural production. And as the port and industrial sectors are not

developed, fishing remains one of the largest employment sectors in Rodrigues. There are in Rodrigues some 2000 full-time registered fishers, that is nearly 20 percent of the total workforce, and a further 2000 casual fishers. The fisheries sector is therefore of utmost importance to the socio economic development of Rodrigues. Mr. Chairperson, Sir, a recent report from Shoals Rodrigues stated that “there is a clear need for a management strategy to conserve biodiversity and improve the sustainability of fisheries which will also protect the incomes and long-term security of fishers”. This is why the Regional Government is coming forward with the new regulation to relieve the ecological pressure on the lagoon and at the same time provide a sustainable alternative livelihood for fishers in Rodrigues. Mr. Chairperson, Sir, many among those present will wonder how the paying of a one-off grant of Rs 25,000 to all registered fishers having reached the age of 60 as at 1st July 2008 and who have accepted to relinquish their fishing activities, and for fishers below 60, a one-off grant of Rs 20,000 plus an amount of Rs 1000 for each year they have been registered as professional fishermen, subject to a maximum of 20 years, will be a solution to the problems in our fishing sector. The answer, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, is very simple. There are two ways in which such courageous actions will be beneficial to our island. Firstly, there will be ecological sustainability with the new way in which marine reserves will be exploited. A bit of common sense is enough to understand that with less fishing activities, there will be less pressure on the marine ecology in the lagoon, thus benefiting in both the short- and long-term the conservation of its biodiversity, the renewal of exploitable fish stocks, and therefore the sustainability of the fisheries sector. Secondly, this will help to reduce the level of poverty of the fishers` community as a decrease in fishing activities in the lagoon will increase the catch size.

Mr. Chairperson, Sir, this regulation will have multiple effects on our society. I must point out that almost half of the registered fishers are young women who are mothers whose children represent the future generation of Rodrigues. Being given that these women may generate more income through the new skills which they are going to acquire, the health of their families will improve, and this is an aspect to which due consideration should be given. The equation is simple, Mr. Chairperson, Sir. These working men and women will be engaged in jobs other than fishing and these jobs will provide more income to the families who will be better fed, better educated, better dressed and in good health. A stronger and healthier future generation means stronger arms and legs for the working class and therefore greater capacity to meet future economic goals. Needless to say that with a healthier population capable of looking after itself and

catering for its needs, there will be less pressure on the health services, and funds can be allocated to other critical sectors such as education, water resources and housing.

Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I therefore invite all the Members present in this House to dig deep into themselves and to think for one minute over our role in this Assembly. People have put their trust in us to change their lives for the better and we therefore have to honor this quest and to change their lives. I am therefore confident, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, that we can succeed into our quest for a better life for our people, especially those who today can hardly earn a living in the lagoon. I will end, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, by congratulating the Chief Commissioner and Commissioner responsible for Fisheries for his vision in devising ways and means to lighten the burden of our friends, the fishermen and their families. The measures proposed in this motion are long awaited by the fishermen community and will help them to start a new life.

Monsieur le Président, je me joins à mes collègues pour réitérer la requête faite auprès des membres de la minorité pour que, au moins une fois dans leur vie, ils soutiennent la communauté des pêcheurs qui traversent en ce moment des moments extrêmement difficiles. C'est trop facile de se cacher derrière la décision de ne pas voter, uniquement pour qu'on puisse dire qu'on n'a pas voté contre. Je leur demande de prendre leur responsabilité, d'agir en personnes responsables, et de soutenir la communauté des pêcheurs car Dieu sait s'ils en ont grand besoin.

Merci, M. le Président.

The Chief Commissioner: M. le président, si on avait besoin d'une preuve de l'irrationalité qui guide la minorité, je crois que le Membre de l'opposition qui a intervenu sur la motion nous l'a donnée. Nous avons eu la certitude aujourd'hui de leur manque de patriotisme et moi je dirai qu'ils sont des poltrons politiques!

Mr. Chairperson: The Chief Commissioner should refrain from going that far!

The Chief Commissioner: Parce que l'autonomie de Rodrigues est aujourd'hui menacée, Monsieur le Président. La pouvoir de prise de décision de l'Assemblée Régionale est menacée par le Gouvernement Centrale qui refuse de *release* les fonds pour la mise en exécution d'une mesure qui existe dans le discours du budget. Je suis surpris, Monsieur le Président, par la bassesse d'esprit

et l'ignorance flagrante de l'ex-Chef Commissaire Adjoint, qui est venu dire certaines faussetés à la Chambre sur cette motion. Il nous a parlé de la section 39 de la loi qui parle de «*Submission of Policy to the Prime Minister for approval*». Est-ce que son Conseil Exécutif soumettait les *policies for approval*? Est-ce cela l'autonomie? Un Membre, ancien Chef Commissaire, allons dire premier Chef Commissaire de Rodrigues vient dire que c'est au Premier Ministre d'approuver toutes les *policies*! *The policy has been submitted in the budget, Mr. Chairperson, Sir. The budget has come here; it has been sent to Mauritius, and has been approved by Cabinet. In fact, if it has been approved, has it not been submitted for approval, Mr. Chairperson, Sir?* Concernant le point soulevé par le membre à l'effet qu'on fait les choses à l'envers, M. le président. Est-ce que le Conseil Exécutif ne peut pas, à travers la présentation d'une motion, inviter la Chambre à débattre une décision qu'elle a prise afin de lui donner une force et une certaine légitimité? Voyons ce qui est dit à la section 35(3) de la loi? Il est dit que: *Decisions of the Executive Council may be implemented without the prior approval of the Regional Assembly*". This means that even if the Regional Assembly is the only authority higher than the Executive Council, the Executive Council may take decisions without the prior approval of the Regional Assembly, Mr. Chairperson, Sir. C'est une lecture erronée de la loi, Monsieur le Président. La honte, Monsieur le Président, c'est qu'un membre de l'assemblée puisse venir dire que le gouvernement de Maurice est le principal bailleur de fonds de Rodrigues! Comme ci nous sommes des mendiants, Monsieur le Président. Comme-ci cette île ne fait pas partie de la République de Maurice et qu'elle n'a pas droit à un budget! Rodrigues n'est pas un bail de Maurice. Maurice n'est pas un bailleur de fonds de Rodrigues. C'est une conception erronée et honteuse de la réalité politique entre les îles de la République de Maurice. Chaque île de la République a droit à un budget. Il ne faut pas voir Maurice comme un bailleur de fonds. Port Louis n'est pas la banque de Rodrigues et nous ne demandons pas la charité. Ce que nous voulons c'est que nos droits soient respectés et que notre part du gâteau nationale nous revienne, que ce qui a nous a été alloué par le Parlement Nationale nous soit donné sans condition quand cette allocation concerne un secteur l'autonomie de Rodrigues est reconnu. Et que fait le *Minority Leader*, Monsieur le Président? *Where is the Minority leader? Why doesn't the Minority Leader express himself when it is question of such a big threat on the autonomy of Rodrigues?* Pourquoi ce silence, M. le Président? Pourquoi déléguer un autre membre pour intervenir sur cette motion, Monsieur le Président?

M. le Président, si nous avons à faire face à ces problèmes aujourd'hui c'est parce que l'ancien Gouvernement Régionale a permis que l'autonomie de

Rodrigues ne soit pas respectée, et que certaines politiques soient imposées sur nous comme, par exemple, les quatre zones qui ont été mises en place dans le lagon de Rodrigues.

Qu'est ce qu'on entend sur le terrain, M. le Président? Quand Christian Agathe et Johnson Roussety vont parler aux pêcheurs, quand ils leur disent : l'autonomie de Rodrigues est menacée, il faut faire respecter notre autonomie, il nous faut nous organiser, il nous faut défendre cette autonomie? Quelle est la réaction du public, M. le Président ? Le public nous répond : oui on est derrière vous, on vous supporte. Et ces gens qui nous encouragent, M. le Président, ces gens-là viennent de tous bords politiques, y compris les partisans du parti de la minorité. Ils viennent nous dire : vous avez notre soutien, allez de l'avant, vous devez défendre l'autonomie de Rodrigues, vous êtes en train de bien faire et vous êtes en train de travailler. La population et les pêcheurs sont derrière cette politique. Aujourd'hui, pour ne pas voter contre cette motion, comme ils l'ont déjà fait avant, ils essayent de trouver une parade et ils viennent nous dire : on ne va pas voter; on va s'abstenir. C'est oui ou c'est non, Monsieur le Président! Il faut savoir se décider dans la vie. S'abstenir de voter c'est laisser tomber les pêcheurs. C'est laisser tomber les pêcheurs, comme toujours! C'est venir dire: oui on est d'accord pour qu'on viole l'autonomie de Rodrigues, on est d'accord pour qu'on ne respecte pas l'autonomie de Rodrigues. Il y des gens qui sont en train de le faire. Je me demande s'il n'y a pas certaines personnes à Rodrigues qui sont contentes que le gouvernement de Maurice ne veuille pas qu'on aille de l'avant avec ce qui a été décidé. Nous n'avons pas pris cette décision seul. Nous avons demandé conseil et nous avons consulté tous ceux concernés avant de prendre cette décision, M. le Président. Maintenant des gens refusent de nous laisser faire ce qui a été décidé et nous nous retrouvons dans une situation de *deadlock*. Et qu'est qu'on fait dans ce cas là ? On cherche à se faire respecter, M. le Président.

M. le Président, l'attitude de la minorité est déplorable, anti-rodriguais et antipatriotique. Il n'y a pas une personne à Rodrigues qui se dit défendre les droits des Rodriguais et qui refuserait de voter pour cette motion. Tous ceux qui défendent les droits des Rodriguais diront : oui, reconnaissons qu'il y a un problème, reconnaissons que dans beaucoup de secteurs il y a eu des atteintes à l'autonomie de Rodrigues et reconnaissons une fois pour toutes qu'il nous faut *stand up* pour défendre les droits des pêcheurs. Les pêcheurs sont des gens qui comprennent; ce sont des gens qui écoutent. Aujourd'hui les gens écoutent la radio, ils lisent les journaux et ils vont savoir que Monsieur le Membre de la Minorité, M. Spéville est venu dire qu'il n'est pas d'accord avec la politique qui

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visé à faire respecter l'autonomie et à compenser les pêcheurs. Nous, nous allons dire aux pêcheurs que ce monsieur de la Minorité a refusé de soutenir l'action du Gouvernement Régionale et il va rester dans l'histoire comme étant quelqu'un qui a refusé de défendre l'autonomie de Rodrigues, qui a refusé de venir de l'avant avec courage et de dire: oui, nous sommes d'accord, Port Louis est en train de violer l'autonomie de Rodrigues. Il nous faut arrêter cela. Ce combat, M. le Président, nous allons le mener, nous allons le mener sur tous les fronts. Vous allez voir comment pendant les semaines qui suivent les gens vont s'organiser afin de faire entendre la voix de Rodrigues. Entant que Chef Commissaire de Rodrigues, j'ai un engagement envers la population de Rodrigues. Soit on nous laisse faire notre travail, soit on nous explique ce qui ne va pas, pourquoi on refuse de nous laisser faire notre travail. On ne nous donne aucune raison ; on ne nous dit pas ce qu'il y a d'illégal dans cette décision que nous avons prise. On nous dit ce n'est pas bon de la part de la Minorité. Il est clair qu'ils sont venus ici avec un esprit négatif ; pour crucifier les pêcheurs, et ils nous ont clairement démontré encore une fois que les pêcheurs ne peuvent pas compter sur eux, qu'ils sont là pour leur propre intérêt, qu'ils sont là pour leur intérêt partisan et leur intérêt politique. On n'en a que faire de leur soutien; nous sommes soutenus par la population ; nous sommes soutenus par les pêcheurs, nous irons de l'avant, Monsieur le Président. Tout comme Nelson Mandela qui est allé de l'avant jusqu'au bout de ses convictions pour combattre l'apartheid. Combien de gens l'ont critiqué! Il a été emprisonné pendant des décennies, Monsieur le Président. Pourquoi ? Parce qu'il croyait qu'il avait raison et l'histoire lui a donné raison. Et, comme le dit Bob Marley: *Get up, stand up for your rights!* M. le Président, ces gens-là veulent que les Rodriguais courbent l'échine, mais les Rodriguais ne courberont pas !

Merci, M. le Président.

(Applause)

The motion was, on question put, agreed to.

ADJOURNMENT

The Chief Commissioner: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I move that the Assembly do now adjourn to Friday 17th April 2009 at 3.00 p.m.

The Deputy Chief Commissioner rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

At 4.43 p.m, the Assembly was, on its rising, adjourned to Friday 17th April, 2009 at 3.00 p.m.

CAMP DU ROI - WATER DISTRIBUTION

(No. B/60) Mrs. A. Perrine-Begue (The First Local Region Member of St. Gabriel) asked the Chief Commissioner whether, with regard to the water distribution at Camp du Roi he will, for the benefit of the House, state:-

- (a) When was water distributed via the network to the public for the last time before the 3rd of March;
- (b) What is the frequency of distribution for that village and whether any change in that frequency has been envisaged lately; and if so, the reason, thereof;
- (c) Whether any development is targeted to improve the quality and volume of water distributed in that locality?

(Withdrawn)

POINTE CANON FILTER PLANT RESERVOIR – WATER RUN OFF

(No. B/61) Mrs. A. Perrine-Begue (First Local Region Member of St. Gabriel) asked the Chief Commissioner whether as regards continuous run off and accumulation of water coming from the Pointe Canon filter plant reservoir which is causing water logging, damages and environmental concerns to the residents living on the northern boundary towards the Cardinal Gantin Allée, he will state:-

- the root causes of the problem;
- if it constitutes a threat to the residents and Cardinal Gantin Allée;

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- what immediate actions will be taken to remedy the problem?

(Withdrawn)

WATER REFORM - WORKSHOP

(No. B/62) Mrs. A. Perrine-Begue (The First Local Region Member of St. Gabriel) asked the Chief Commissioner whether, with regard to the workshop held at Cotton Bay Hotel on 2nd March on reforms in the water sector, he will state:-

(c) the outcome of same;

(d) whether any immediate actions in the water sector are contemplated, if any; and if so, to state which ones and by which means?

(Withdrawn)

FETE DU POISSON

(No. B/63) Mrs. M.A. Perrine-Begue (The First Local Region Member of St. Gabriel) asked the Chief Commissioner whether, as regards the organization of the “*fête du Poisson*” at Petite Butte this year, he will state:-

(d) the overall cost for that event and table the breakdown of same;

(e) whether any individual artist or group of artists was/were invited from Mauritius as guests to entertain in that event, and if so, to state the cost of their stay and performance, and

(f) the sum paid or to be paid to each local individual artist and group of artist to perform for the event?

(Withdrawn)

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

COMMISSIONERS & ADVISERS - DRIVERS

(No. B/52) Mrs. R.M.F. Gaspard Pierre Louis (The First Local Region Member for Grande Montagne) asked the Chief Commissioner whether, with regard to drivers attached to Commissioners and Advisers, he would give details to the House about:-

- (a) the amount of overtime paid for the period January 2008 to date; and
- (b) table the information, per Commission, regarding the above for the same period;

Reply: The drivers conveying Commissioners are in fact attached to the different Commissions and are also involved in other driving duties of these respective Commissions. Moreover no driver is attached to any Adviser employed by the Rodrigues Regional Assembly.

The total amount of overtime paid to the drivers, who among other duties convey the Commissioners, is Rs 693,867.52.

I am tabling details on the amount of overtime paid to Drivers attached to each Commissioner. **(APPENDIX...)**.