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No. 09 of 2022

RODRIGUES

FIFTH REGIONAL ASSEMBLY

PARLIAMENTARY

DEBATES

(HANSARD)

(UNREVISED)

TUESDAY 06 SEPTEMBER 2022

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The Executive Council

(Formed by Mr Johnson Roussety, G.O.S.K.)

Mr Johnson Roussety, G.O.S.K.	Chief Commissioner, Commissioner responsible for Central Administration, Civil Aviation (Administration), Education (Administration), Legal Services, Marine Services (Administration), Registration, Statistics in respect of Rodrigues, State Lands, Town and Country Planning, Cooperatives, Handicraft, Industrial Development, Trade, Commerce and Licensing, Vocational Training, Civil Status, Customs and Excise (Administration), Judicial (Administration), Postal Services (Administration), Marine Parks, Water Resources
Mr Franceau Aubret Grandcourt	Deputy Chief Commissioner, Commissioner responsible for Public Infrastructure including Highways and Roads and Public Buildings and Utilities, Transport, Environment, Community Development, Housing
Mr Louis Ange Perrine	Commissioner responsible for Agriculture, Fisheries, Food Production, Forestry, Plant & Animal Quarantine
Mr Jean Nicolas Volbert	Commissioner responsible for Health (Administration), Social Security (Administration), Fire Services, Prisons & Reforms Institutions (Administration)
Miss Marie Christiane Agathe	Commissioner responsible for Women's Affairs, Child Development, Family Welfare, Consumer Protection/Price Fixing
Mr Jean Alain Wong So	Commissioner responsible for Tourism, Employment, Labour and Industrial Relations, Information Technology & Telecommunications
Mr Joseph Varok Ravina	Commissioner responsible for Youth & Sports, Arts and Culture, Museums, Archives, Historical Sites and Buildings, Library Services

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PRINCIPAL OFFICERS AND OFFICIALS

Mr Chairperson	-	Leopold, Mr Joseph Christian
Deputy Chairperson	-	Tolbize, Mr Justar
Clerk	-	Legentil, Miss Marie Lyndia Yannick
Deputy Clerk	-	Clair, Miss Marie Chrismélanie
Serjeant-at-Arms	-	Larose, Mr Georges Harold Banwell

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RODRIGUES

Fifth Regional Assembly

Debate No. 09 of 2022

Sitting of Tuesday 06 September 2022

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

The National Anthem was played

(Mr Chairperson in the Chair)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- (i) APPOINTMENT – MISS MARIE CHRISMÉLANIE CLAIR/DEPUTY CLERK**
- (ii) REVAMP – RODRIGUES YOUTH PARLIAMENT**
- (iii) ATTENDANCE – GRADE 13 STUDENTS**

Mr Chairperson: Respected Members, I have a few announcements this morning.

Firstly, as all respected Members can observed, the Table is welcoming an additional member of staff, who joined the service on 01 August 2022. Indeed, it is my pleasure to inform respected Members that Miss Marie Chrismélanie Clair, has been appointed as Deputy Clerk of the Regional assembly. Our best wishes to Miss Clair for her career here at the service of the Regional Assembly.

Secondly, I am pleased to welcome in our midst today some youths who have been elected by their peers to constitute the Rodrigues Youth Parliament 2022. I wish to inform respected Members that as from this year, the Rodrigues Youth Parliament is undergoing a revamp, and that henceforth, the programme will spread over a period of one year. This revamping aims at better familiarising our youths on all the workings of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly and to further sensitise the population at grassroots level on the role of this Assembly.

In that regard, it is expected that the Rodrigues Youth Parliament 2022 cohort will sit at least three times over the next 12 months and during which period, our young parliamentarians will look closely at the House's functioning for general guidance. They will therefore, have you respected Members, as their prime role models. I rely on the patience and usual collaboration of all Members on both sides of the House for the smooth running of the programme. I have been officially informed by the Commissioner for Youth and Sports and Others, who remains the patron of the programme that the Rodrigues Youth Parliament 2022 cohort has been dully constituted and may begin its business. I am therefore, please to inform the House that Rodrigues Youth Parliament 2022 will hold its opening session on 30 September 2022.

Finally, we also extend our warmest welcome to a group of Grade 13 students of Ananias André Le Chou College and accompanying staff who are also in attendance.

I thank you for your attention.

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PAPERS

Report of the Director of Audit on the accounts of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly for the Financial year 2020-21 together with the Certified Annual Statements thereof (original).

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

ADMINISTRATIVE BLOCKS – MONT LUBIN

(No. B/62) Mrs R.M.F. Gaspard Pierre Louis, C.S.K. (Minority Leader) asked the Commissioner for Social Security and Others whether, in regard to the administrative blocks at Mont Lubin, he will inform the House as to the initial purpose of each block, stating if there has been any change thereto and, in the affirmative, to give reasons thereof?

Mr Volbert: Mr Chairperson, Sir, can I the permission to remove my mask, please?

Mr Chairperson: Yes.

Mr Volbert: Thank you.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, with your permission allow me to answer questions B/62 and B/64 together, as they both treat the same subject matter.

Mr Chairperson Sir, I am informed that the administrative block at Mont Lubin as per its Project Request Form was for the decentralisation of the different services of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly including the Commission for Social Security, improving service delivery by providing a one-stop shop services, decrease the yearly recurrent cost on rental of buildings and ease access to services to facilitate the socio-economic development process of Rodrigues. However, it is to be noted that a big area was reserved for the former Commissioner's office which can be compared to "*Chateau de Versaille*".

Mr Chairperson Sir, I am informed that the contract was awarded by the Commission for Social Security on 03 July 1997 to the client for the sum of Rs 96,365,894 (Exclusive VAT).

I am also informed, Mr Chairperson, Sir, that on 07 December 2021, the site was handed over to the Commission for Health, not the Commission for Social Security, following a site visit of members of the then Executive Council, the ex-Island Chief Executive, officers of Health Services, Hospital Administrator, Consultant and representative of the contractor.

Mr Chairperson Sir, I wish to draw the attention of the House that the then regional government decided to hand over the building to the Commission for Health to provide health

services at the said administrative block. However, at the site meeting of 07 December 2021 the building was handed over to the Commission for Health for the setting up of a Health Centre.

Mr Chairperson Sir, I can now confirm to the House that there has been a change in the purpose of the administrative block at Mont Lubin on 07 December 2021 by the previous government to run health services instead of providing social security services at the said location. As regards to the reasons thereof, I cannot provide any answer as it was a decision of the previous regional government. I was at that time sitting on the other side of the House.

Mr Chairperson Sir, as regards to the services provided to the population thereat, I am informed that for the time being, services that are offered are different from that of Mary Gontran Senior Citizen. It is 24-hours basis service compared to Mary Gontran Senior Citizen which stopped at 22.00 hours.

The health services provided are as follows:

- Casualty (accident and emergency);
- Specialist clinics;
- Dressing;
- Ante natal care;
- Family planning;
- Well baby clinic;
- Vaccination;
- NCD;
- Pharmacy;
- Flu clinic;
- Foot care;
- Records;
- Ambulance services;
- Dental care will be provided as soon as dental chair will be installed, and
- Retinal screening will start as soon as apparatus will be made available.

Thank you.

The Minority Leader: M. le président, j'ai écouté attentivement les réponses du commissaire de la Santé où il a fait mention les objectifs de ce bâtiment de manière, de manière

élogieux d'ailleurs. Il a parlé de décentralisation, de confort, de '*one-stop shop*'. Est-ce qu'aujourd'hui le commissaire peut nous confirmer si ce bloc administratif sera converti en permanence pour les services hospitaliers ?

Mr Volbert: M. le président, le bloc administratif peut rester opérationnel sous le *Health Service* aussi longtemps que ça doit être.

The Minority Leader: M. le président, est-ce que je peux demander au commissaire de la Santé, étant donné que ce bloc administratif comprenait différents départements qui touchait différentes commissions, est-ce que c'est le Conseil Exécutif qui a pris cette décision de ne pas mettre ces autres départements dans ce complexe administratif ? Si, oui, quand ?

Mr Volbert: M. le président, la décision a été prise, comme je vous ai dit dans ma réponse, depuis le 7 décembre 2021, pour que Mont Lubin soit converti en un '*Health Centre*'.

The Minority Leader: M. le président, tout le monde sait qu'à Rodrigues, les deux dernières années on a été, comme le monde entier, victime de la pandémie et on avait dû prendre des décisions d'urgences parce que le Zita Jean Louis Health Centre a été converti en un '*isolation centre*'. Donc, c'était une décision temporaire que de déplacer quelques services de la santé au niveau de ce bloc. C'est pour ça que je demande, est-ce qu'aujourd'hui, quand le Commissaire vient dire que cette décision a été prise en décembre, je veux assurer la Chambre que c'était une décision temporaire, est-ce qu'aujourd'hui cette décision, si ça a été prise par le Conseil Exécutif, est-ce que c'est permanent ?

Mr Volbert: M. le président, le Zita Jean Louis Health Centre, qui est un '*isolation centre*', et ça va rester comme tel pendant beaucoup d'année encore. Parce que ça s'est préconisé par le 'World Health Organisation (WHO)'. Donc, pour faire le bâtiment administratif de Mont Lubin comme le *new health centre*, la décision a été prise en décembre 2021 et ça va être comme ça jusqu'à ce que le Zita Jean Louis Health Centre ne soit plus décréter comme '*isolation centre*'.

Mr Chairperson: Put your mic on, please?

Mr Lisette: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, can the Commissioner describe the context under which the decision was taken to allocate part of the building for the setting up of the Domiciliary Monitoring Unit (DMU)?

Mr Volbert: The decision has been taken since, as I have just said, 07 December 2021 and I can table a copy of same.

Mr Baptiste: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I think that the question was cleared. We have talked about each block. I understand that one block has been handed over to the Commission for Health, can the Commissioner give us information relating to the other blocks in the complex?

Mr Volbert: M. le président, j'aurais aimé ne pas répondre à la question mais je vais faire plaisir au respecté Membre. Parce que s'il veut avoir la réponse, il peut venir avec une autre question. Mais d'emblée, je vais dire que la décision a été prise en décembre 2021, et nous, nous allons améliorer, on ne va pas rester là avec ce que nous avons fait jusqu'à maintenant. On va améliorer, on pense même qu'il faudra avoir la salle d'admission et la salle d'opération. Donc, ne vous en faites pas respecté Membre Baptiste, le bâtiment sera utilisé comme il le faut.

Mr Baptiste: Mr Chairperson, Sir, we have talked about the initial purpose of each block, I understand that there are several blocks. So, what will happen to the other blocks which were not handed over to the Commission for Health? I understand that there were other services, other division of Rodrigues Regional Assembly that were supposed to be housed in this administrative complex. Can we have information about what were the initial purpose of the other blocks which were not handed over to the commission?

Mr Volbert: The initial purpose of the other blocks, decision has been taken from Council, it is a Council decision. And so, as I have just said – it will be used as whole part of the area health centre.

(Interruptions)

Mr Chairperson: Order, please!

Mr Ramdally: I would like to ask the Commissioner, whether this building has obtained its Fire Service Permit?

Mr Volbert: Yes, Mr Chairperson, Sir.

The Minority Leader: M. le président, est-ce que je peux savoir quand est-ce que cette démarche a été fait et quelle est la date à laquelle on a eu ce Fire Service Permit – qui est essentiel pour l'opération d'un hôpital ?

Mr Volbert: Je n'ai pas la date en tête. La respecté Minority Leader peut venir avec une autre question la prochaine fois.

Mr Baptiste: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I would like to know, being given that part of this block has now been converted, at least it is operational as a new Area Health Centre, I would

like to know whether any risk assessment was carried out and that the different requirements as per the Occupational Health and Safety Act have been respected?

Mr Volbert: Yes, Mr Chairperson, Sir.

Mr Baptiste: I have been to this specific Area Health Centre. As I know, according to legal requirements, for example, there should be clear signs and indication relating, for example, to fire exit and assembly points but I have not seen all these. So, can the Commissioner confirm whether all clearances have been obtained from different authorities including the Fire Certificate relating to this conversion into a hospital?

Mr Volbert: You have not seen but it is there. Yes, Mr Chairperson, Sir.

The Minority Leader: *M. le président, je reviens sur ce* Fire Service Certificate. Can I know from the Commissioner for Health who is the authority who gives this Fire Certificate?

Mr Volbert: The authority of Fire, the Fire Services which falls under my Commission.

(Interruptions)

Mr Baptiste: Anyway, we will confirm this information. I would like to know being given that I was the commissioner responsible for this building. We know that there are different division having difficulties in relation to the spaces provided, for example, for office works, such as, Employment Office, Education and so on. And, we had consultations and meetings with all of them...

The Chief Commissioner: I have a point of order. There are two questions which are being answered and the Member is introducing new matter to the questions stating, according to him there are division which were to be housed there. We are not aware of this; I am not aware. And this is new information, new matter being introduced in supplementary question which should not be allowed, Mr Chairperson, Sir. Thank you.

Mr Chairperson: Finish your question, I will see whether it is allowable or not.

Mr Baptiste: I would like to know whether there has been consultation with these other departments who were concerned because the design was prepared in accordance with each division and with specific requirements, such as, the Civil Status Office, Employment Office and Labour and Occupational. I would like to know whether decision has been taken with these divisions and what will happen to them?

Mr Volbert: Mr Baptiste, you were here! And now we are here! You must accept! We are in the government, we are driving! It is your decision but now it is our decision to keep how it is now. Thank you.

Mr Chairperson: I allow two further questions.

The Minority Leader: M. le président, je voudrais demander au Commissaire de la Santé, étant donné qu'il y avait d'autres départements qui était compris, qui devait bouger pour aller dans ce bloc et sachant aussi, par exemple, la commission des Femmes avait entrepris des travaux pour aller dans ce bâtiment. Est-ce qu'on peut savoir maintenant quel a été le coût de ces travaux entrepris pour transformer ce département pour la commission des Femmes pour ensuite après dire qu'il n'y aura pas ce département-là ?

Mr Volbert: M. le président, je pense que la question doit être adresser à la Commissaire de la Femme.

Mr Chairperson: Last question.

Mr Ramdally: M. le président, concernant les services qui vont être donner dans ce centre, j'aurais aimé savoir du Commissaire quelle est l'autorité qui est habilitée à nommer un tel centre comme un Area Health Centre ?

Mr Volbert: I do not understand your question. We are the authority, the Commission for Health authority, the regional government authority. I do not know where you are coming. Please, ask your question anew.

Mr Ramdally: So, it is you who has decided that you will name this building an Area Health Centre?

Mr Chairperson: Address the Chair, please.

Mr Volbert: De toute façon la question a été soulevé au Council. Et donc, si le respecté Membre a un nom à nous proposer, il est le bienvenu.

The Minority Leader: M. le président, est-ce que je peux demander au Commissaire de la Santé, étant donné qu'au départ il y avait des objectifs bien précis quand on avait fait la conception de ce projet, ce bloc administratif, maintenant il y a eu un changement, pour ne pas dire un détournement justement de la fonction première du bâtiment. Est-ce que, par exemple, des départements comme le Health and Safety, qui normalement justement, font des *risk assessment*, est-ce que c'était la contribution de ces personnes de ressource ont été mise à profit dans le cadre de cette reconversion de ce bâtiment ?

Mr Volbert: Oui, M. le président.

Mr Chairperson: Next question. Next question? You do not want to ask your question? Okay.

(Interruptions)

Mr Chairperson: Chief Commissioner, puts your mic off, please. Thank you.

**RESTRUCTURATION PROCESS – EMPLOYMENT INFORMATION CENTRE
INTO A NATIONAL EMPLOYMENT DEPARTMENT**

(No. B/63) Mr L. D. Baptiste (Second Local Region Member for Grande Montagne) asked the Commissioner for Employment and Others whether, in regard to the restructuration process of the Employment Information Centre into a National Employment Department, he will give details about the project and provide information to the House as to where matter stands?

Mr Wong So: Mr Chairperson, Sir, as the House may be aware, the National Employment Act 2017 was enacted on 10 November 2017 for the Republic of Mauritius to provide inter alia for a more appropriate and modern legislative framework to address the needs of the labour market. The National Employment Act 2017 provides for the setting up of a National Employment Department (NED) to replace the Employment Information Centre to meet the new challenges of the labour market.

The National Employment Department (NED) proposes to modernise the actual Employment Information Centre (EIC) so as to better suit the demand of the population. As such, Mr Chairperson, Sir, the Employment Information Centre (EIC) main objectives amongst others are to: -

- (i) provide jobseekers with clear, timely, comprehensive and accurate information on jobs and the world of work;
- (ii) match demand and supply on labour market;
- (iii) process vacancies and conduct job matching;
- (iv) promote placement and training of job seekers through approved programmes, and
- (v) promote labour migration.

With the implementation of the National Employment Department (NED) the following aspects have been added namely: -

- (i) Provide assistance and guidance with regard to employment prospects, including future employment prospects, and
- (ii) Encourage and promote home-based work.

The House may wish to note that the main services offered by the Employment Information Centre (EIC) are as follows: -

- (i) Registration and placement of jobseekers including the redeployment of laid-off workers;
- (ii) Channel jobseekers interested in entrepreneurship, example, *Plan de Prestation Transitoire* (PPT);
- (iii) Training and placement of jobseekers under the different programmes, such as, the Youth Employment Programme (YEP) and the Employment Relief Programme (ERP);
- (iv) Facilitate overseas employment opportunity including circular migration programme;
- (v) Assist jobseekers as regards to online vacancy (using the IT Corner to apply online when there are vacancies, example, on the website *mauritiusjobs.govmu.org*), and
- (vi) Supply database on unemployment for statistical purposes.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, with the implementation of the National Employment Department (NED) these aspects have been added, namely: -

- (i) Online registration and placement of jobseekers including the redeployment of laid-off workers;
- (ii) Manage a central database of jobseekers as well as employers, and
- (ii) Provide an integrated counselling service to jobseekers (including one-to-one counselling and follow up, assist jobseekers in job search, writing CV and prepare for interview through workshops), conducting data cleaning on a monthly basis and to follow up all jobseekers from registration to placement.

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I am informed, Mr Chairperson, Sir, that the implementation of the National Employment Department (NED) was done progressively in Mauritius and with the COVID-19 outbreak in 2020, the process was accelerated.

I am further informed that the restructuration process was completed in Mauritius with the provision of new grades in the 2021 PRB Report.

With respect to Rodrigues, Mr Chairperson, Sir, the process has started and with the advent of COVID-19, it was not possible to complete same.

Moreover, I am also informed that the PRB Report 2021 has failed to align the grades under the Rodrigues establishment to match those of the National Employment Department (NED) despite the fact that representations had indeed been made at time of the PRB consultation. Hence, I am informed that submissions have already been sent to the PRB for consideration in the Errors and Omissions Report relating to PRB Report 2021 with respect to alignment of grades in Rodrigues.

I am further informed, Mr Chairperson, Sir, that following training delivered by 'Pôle Emploi' from 2017, staff of the Employment Information Centre (EIC) of Mauritius and Rodrigues, the restructuration process has been initiated on a pilot phase with respect to one-to-one counselling, profiling, follow-up and conducting workshops. However, with the outbreak of COVID-19 in Rodrigues in January 2022, the office was closed till March 2022.

As the House is aware, Mr Chairperson, Sir, with the coming in office of the new regional government in March 2022, there has been major policy decisions with respect to the distribution of portfolios as well as shifting of offices to accommodate same. As such, Mr Chairperson, Sir, with the reorganisation of various commissions and divisions, the Employment and Labour and Industrial departments falling under my responsibility is under transitional process whereby office space is being reorganised to accommodate all the officers accordingly.

I am aware, Mr Chairperson, Sir, that the process has been quite long and painful for the officers and the public at large. I wish to inform the House that once the allocation of office is done in the coming weeks the services will resume accordingly.

I wish to inform the House that further to the mission of the Director of the ILO Country Office to Rodrigues last week, various avenues of collaboration in terms of training and technical expertise have been discussed and agreed for the team in Rodrigues. Therefore, Mr Chairperson, Sir, despite the fact that the restructuration process has been delayed in Rodrigues

due to COVID-19 and all the reasons elaborated previously, I am confident that once the officers will be settled in the new office and with the training planned, by end of 2022 the National Employment Department (NED) will be implemented fully in Rodrigues. Thank you, Mr Chairperson, Sir.

Mr Baptiste: Yes, Mr Chairperson, Sir, I think that the Commissioner has given a very good description of the work that we have started and which is very important. But in this process of restructuration of the Employment Office into a National Employment Department (NED), I know that one important component of this process would be the set up, the layout of the office and, this has been worked out in consultation with the expert of the 'Aide Française de Développement (AFD)', Pôle Emploi Reunion and France as well as the Ministry for Labour and Employment. I would like to know whether, the Commissioner is aware about this layout and whether it will be followed according to what has been worked out?

Mr Wong So: Merci, M. le président. Faut-il dire dans cette Chambre, quand le travail a été bien fait, il faut quand même le mentionner. Je dois vous dire concernant justement le département de l'emploi, il nous a été demandé à un moment donner de se déplacer parce qu'il fallait absolument se libérer des espaces. Ce qu'on a fait exactement comme il fallait. Comme j'ai dit dans ma réponse qu'effectivement je réalise que certains officiers n'ont pas eus la possibilité de pouvoir travailler dans des conditions correctes. Je l'ai dit dans ma déclaration. Simplement, on est en train de travailler dessus. Je peux rassurer la Chambre, que d'ici quelques semaines on fera le nécessaire pour que tout soit dans l'ordre et que les employés puissent quand même retrouver l'espace nécessaire pour s'exprimer.

Faisant référence à votre mention concernant l'espace qui est réservée justement dans le *set up*. Puisqu'on a été déplacé, c'est vrai que le *set up* a été déplacé et dérangé. Mais on fera en sorte à ce qu'on remet le même système dans le même cadre, dans le même environnement dans les prochaines semaines.

The Minority Leader: M. le président, il est clair que dans la réponse du Commissaire de la Santé juste avant, il avait mentionné que cette unité, ce département devrait être à Mont Lubin, dans un bloc. Est-ce que déjà, le Commissaire peut nous dire s'il a déjà identifié un endroit qui va substituer l'espace qui avait été prévu à Mont Lubin pour ce département ?

Mr Wong So: M. le président, dans le cadre des réorganisations des *office space*, c'est vrai, il y a eu des consultations pour qu'on bouge dans divers endroits. Je peux vous dire à la Chambre que ce n'est pas seulement l'endroit que vous avait cité, qui a été identifié, il y a

quand même pas mal d'endroits. Mais le fait, on réalise aujourd'hui, ce n'est pas réalisé et donc on va devoir quand même nous, à notre niveau faire en sorte que nos employés du département de l'emploi retrouvent quand même les espaces nécessaires.

Mr Lisette: Mr Chairperson, Sir, the Commissioner has mentioned that the traditional period, the catch up period is very long since as he is stating almost six months. May I ask the Commissioner whether the place that is to be allocated to the offices has already been identified?

Mr Wong So: Vous parlez que la période de transition est relativement longue. Je peux dire à la Chambre que pour avoir un ordinateur, moi j'ai pris quatre mois, pour avoir un ordinateur dans mon bureau. Maintenant, la commission que j'occupe personnellement, c'est une commission qui a été nouvellement créé.

(Interruptions)

Mr Chairperson: Allow the Commissioner. You asked question, allow the Commissioner to answer, please.

Mr Wong So: *Respected Member*, dans le sens de la mise en place d'une telle commission comporte quand même pas mal d'élément.

Mr Chairperson: Commissioner address the Chair, talk to me.

Mr Wong So: Merci, M. le président. Je vais dire par là, il nous a pris pas mal temps. Mais rassurez-vous, je rassure la Chambre que d'ici peu on va pouvoir rétablir les faits et vous verrez quand même que les gens vont être mis dans les endroits comme il se doit, digne de leur fonction pour pouvoir s'exprimer correctement.

Mr Baptiste: Mr Chairperson, Sir, we are talking about job seekers, people looking for jobs which is very important for more than 4,500 job seekers. Only this morning from the region of Grande Montagne who used to go for registration at Grande Montagne was told that it is no longer operational and...

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, each time the Member is taking the time of the floor to ask a question, he is making a speech, informing us of what is happening and not happening. May I remind him that since 28 March last, he is no longer a commissioner and therefore, not allowed to make a statement. He must go to his question, ask questions not make statements. Thank you.

Mr Chairperson: Mr Chief Commissioner, you make your point of order, I am going to make the ruling. Because I was about to tell you go straight to your question. We have been nice enough. It is good this morning, everybody is nice to each other, continue on this path. So, put your question.

Mr Baptiste: I was just introducing, just to see that whether the Commissioner...

Mr Chairperson: Yes, put your question now.

The Chief Commissioner: There is no introduction to a question, there is a question. Ask your question. The Standing Order do not provide for introduction to questions.

Mr Baptiste: So, whether the Commissioner is aware about the pitiful situation of the actual office. He has been there to see how it is not save because there are all sorts of wiring and 'extension' everywhere. Is he aware about the situation that the jobseekers are facing and the difficulties they are facing to register? And, just now I have learnt that they cannot even registered because the office not operational.

Mr Wong So: M. le président, je crois savoir que le *respected Member*, n'est pas au courant des déroulements. J'informe la Chambre que les départements de l'emploi ont bougé tout récemment pour occuper un autre espace qui était à notre disposition. On la fait d'une façon transitoire pour permettre à tous ceux et celles de pouvoir travailler dans les conditions maximales et qu'ils seront dans leur bureau respective d'ici peu quelques semaines.

Mr Chairperson: Last question.

The Minority Leader: M. le président, j'ai entendu à la radio justement, cette période transitoire dont parlait le Commissaire où les officiers ont bougé. Et, je connais cette espace, à côté du CSL, qu'on avait aménagé pour d'autre raison. Je connais aussi l'accès pour mener vers ce bâtiment...

Mr Chairperson: Put your question, Minority Leader.

The Minority Leader: Je voudrais savoir du Commissaire étant donné qu'au deuxième étage, un accès étroit, sachant que le bureau de l'emploi et autre est appelé à recevoir toute sorte de personne, dès fois des personnes avec mobilité réduite. Donc, est-ce que le Commissaire peut nous dire si ce bureau restera longtemps là-bas, puisque ce n'est pas accessible à tout le monde ?

Mr Wong So: M. le président, je dois dire au Minority Leader, que j'ai fait dans ma déclaration suivante, que c'est pour une période transitoire. Ça va durer que quelques semaines.

/UNREVISED/

Je ne sais pas quelle est la dimension des gens qui vont passer par cette porte mais on a mesuré, c'est 4 pieds 3. Donc, vous me direz qu'éventuellement s'il y a des gens un peu surdimensionnés qui vont passer. M. le président, je réalise par contre pour les gens qui ont des difficultés de déplacement, ça va être un problème. Mais comme je l'ai dit et je le rementionne, valeur du jour, c'est transitoire, pour quelques semaines et puis on verra par la suite. Merci.

Mr Chairperson: Next question. We move to next question.

**NEW AREA HEALTH CENTRE/MONT LUBIN
– ALL HEALTH SERVICES PROVIDED**

(No. B/64) Mr J. R. Ramdally (First Local Region Member for Saint Gabriel) asked the Commissioner for Health and Others whether, in regard to the opening of the new Area Health Centre at Mont Lubin, he will enlighten the House about all the health services being provided to the population thereat?

(Vide reply to PQ B/62)

**COMMISSION FOR LABOUR & OTHERS - COMPLAINTS
REGISTERED/EMPLOYEES LAID OFF**

(No. B/65) Ms. K. Roussety (Second Local Region Member for Baie aux Huîtres) asked the Commissioner for Labour and Industrial Relations and Others whether, in regard to industrial relations, he will state and table the number of:

- (a) complaints registered at his Commission since March 2022 to date, giving details on the nature thereof, and
- (b) employees laid off per sector and the corresponding reasons therefor?

Mr Wong So: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I have been informed that according to our records, a total of 431 complaints have been registered at the Labour and Industrial Relations Office, which operates under the aegis of my commission for period March to July 2022.

The nature of the complaints varies from Termination of Employment (Laid Off), End/Expiry of Contract (E.O.C), Non Payment of Wages (N.P.W), Reduced Payment in Wages (R.P.W), Gratuity on Retirement (G.O.R) to Other Miscellaneous complaints and the complaints received are being tabled.

With regard to part (b) of the question, Mr Chairperson, Sir, I wish to inform the House that a total of 74 employees have been laid off during the same corresponding period. The

sectors concerned include mainly the economic sectors ranging from the Baking, Construction, Catering & Tourism, Cleaning, Distributive Trades, Domestic, ICT, Light Metal & Woodwork, Private Security Services, Public Transport, Road Haulage to Workers' Rights Act.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, it is to be noted that the reasons thereof are mainly due to ceasing of operation of enterprise, financial constraints faced by the employer, misconduct and poor performance of employees, failing to provide work/remuneration and others with no apparent valid reasons Same is now being tabled.

I thank you for your attention, Mr Chairperson, Sir.

Mr Baptiste: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I would like to know whether the Commissioner has information relating to the number of employees laid off in the construction centre? Can he inform the House whether there is particular sector which has been affected by this?

Mr Wong So: As I mentioned earlier, there are 74 workers who have been laid off. *Je vous donne la répartition, le nombre et les catégories.*

• Baking	-	1
• Construction	-	10
• Catering and Tourism	-	10
• Cleaning	-	1
• Distributive Trades	-	23
• Domestic	-	5
• ICT	-	1
• Light metal and wood works	-	3
• Private Security Services	-	2
• Public Transport	-	8
• Road Haulage	-	6
• Workers' Rights Act	-	4

Ce qui nous fait un total de 74 personnes qui ont été *laid off* pendant cette période de mars à juillet 2022.

Mr Chairperson: Next question.

**WASTE WATER TREATMENT PLANT – QUEEN ELIZABETH
HOSPITAL/FULLY OPERATIONAL /CONTRACT VALUE/ADDITIONAL WORK**

(No. B/66) The Second Island Region Member (Mr J. Tolbize) asked the Commissioner for Health and Others whether, in regard to the waste water treatment plant at Queen Elizabeth Hospital, he will, for the benefit of the House, state:

- (a) if same is fully operational;
- (b) the contract value of the project and the date of commissioning thereof, and
- (c) if there has been any additional work since its commissioning and, in the affirmative, to state the cost thereof?

Mr Volbert: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I am informed that the contract for the construction of a Waste Water Treatment Plant at Queen Elizabeth Hospital, Crève Coeur was awarded to Laxmanbhai & Co (Mtius) Ltd on 08 December 2017 for the sum of Rs 18,918,912.39 (Exclusive VAT). The completion date was 04 August 2018.

The scope of the project was for the construction of a sewer treatment plant comprising of a primary setting tank, an anaerobic tank, an aerobic tank, 2 No. MBBR tank, chlorine contact tank, lifting stations and other refurbishment works.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, despite the completion date scheduled to be on 04 August 2018, it was only on 30 September 2019 that a site meeting for handing over was carried out.

On 30 July 2020, some two years later, the attention of the Project Manager was drawn to the fact that the waste water treatment plant at Queen Elizabeth Hospital are not working as assessed by a site visit effected on 21 July 2020 by the Resident Engineer, the Site Technician and the Contractor. The Commission has had to have recourse to waste water lorry of the Commission for Public Infrastructure which is not very cost effective.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, on 28 September 2020, the Commission submitted a request to the Consultant to provide these additional technical details for tendering procedure for the following works:

- (i) To install filters and primary setting basins before each lifting station;
- (ii) To install a grit chamber before the waste water treatment plant;
- (iii) To install grinder pumps in the four lifting stations, and
- (iv) A maintenance contract for the proper management and monitoring at the treatment plant.

On 19 November 2020, Mr Chairperson, Sir, an additional contract was awarded to Blue Zone Ltd for the Design, Manufacturing and Installation of removable basket strainers at the four Lifting Stations for the sum of Rs 478,900 (Exclusive VAT).

In addition, another operating and maintenance of the Sewage Treatment Plant System including the lifting stations for a period of one year for the sum of Rs 198,900 (Exclusive VAT).

Mr Chairperson, Sir, the project of Waste Water Treatment Plant at Queen Elizabeth Hospital is the project that sum up the '*bilan du précédent gouvernement régionale*' which is a total failure at all levels.

M. le président, c'est la première fois que je vois un tel état de choses. On a alloué un contrat pour la construction et l'installation d'un '*Waste Water Treatment Plant*' pour se rendre compte plus tard que ladite plant n'est pas connecté au réseau d'eau usé du Queen Elizabeth Hospital.

L'eau usée provenant de la morgue et celle du 'Male Ward' ne sont pas connecté au *manhole*. De ce fait, M. le président, on a dû avoir recours au *cesspool emptier* de la commission de l'Infrastructure Publique pour retirer l'eau usé qui projette une odeur nauséabonde dans l'enceinte de l'hôpital et tout ça a un coût exorbitant en heures supplémentaires.

M. le président, les différents rapports des experts ont démontré qu'une étude aurait dû être faite au préalable pour déterminer les types et quantités de déchets médicaux provenant des différentes salles allant au *manhole* pour être traité au Station de Traitement.

M. le président, les différentes pompes n'étant pas approprié et adapté pour traiter ces genres de déchets ayant pour résultat le dysfonctionnement des pompes et du système de traitement.

Je n'arrive pas à comprendre, M. le président, comment on a pu allouer un contrat de plus de Rs 18 millions (Exclusive VAT) pour la Construction d'un Waste Water Treatment Plant pour après réallouer d'autre contrats pour rendre fonctionnel tous les systèmes. Comment a-t-on pu dépenser l'argent des contribuables d'une façon aussi irresponsable et irréfléchi, M. le président. Les coupables devront répondre de leurs actes.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, I have instructed my Departmental Head to refer the case to the competent authority for appropriate action.

Mr Chairperson: No supplementary? Nest question.

**REPORT SUBMITTED – PROF. GEORGE KRHODA OKOYE – WATER
SECTOR/RODRIGUES**

(No. B/67) The Second Island Region Member (Mr J. Tolbize) asked the Chief Commissioner whether he will inform the House on the report submitted by Prof. George Krhoda Okoye as regards the water sector in Rodrigues and of the actions his Commission intends to undertake therewith?

The Chief Commissioner: Mr. Chairperson, in 2012, Professor George Okoye Krhoda, a Kenyan Hydrologist and Water Scientist specialised in Water Resources Planning and Development submitted his report entitled ‘Comprehensive Water Resource Development Plan with Emphasis on Climate Change Adaptation and of Action Plan for Rodrigues’.

The report highlights the vulnerability of our island with regards to climate change and the need to work out a *plan d’aménagement du territoire*, redefine land use priorities through appropriate legislations/regulations and replacement of forest covers not adapted to water production.

After making an assessment of the existing water situation, policies and strategies, and taking into account climate change, Prof. Krhoda’s report proposes an action plan as follows:-

- (i) Rehabilitation of present water systems;
- (ii) Policy reviews, legislative reforms and coordination of the water sector by the Rodrigues Regional Assembly, including new water governance structure;
- (iii) Establishment of a water sector reforms secretariat and steering committee;
- (iv) Rainwater harvesting for domestic and supplemental agriculture;
- (v) Water resources assessment including data acquisition, database development, research and information and Meteorological Services;
- (vi) Capacity building;
- (vii) Water for domestic and food production;
- (viii) Watershed and coastal management, and
- (ix) Project management cost including monitoring and evaluation.

In fact, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, Professor Khroda recommends that an integrated approach to water management be developed, with emphasis on the effects of climate change.

It is unfortunate to note that my predecessors, have not seen it useful to implement the recommendations of the Report and as a result, Rodrigues has lagged behind. We are seeing the effects today with the water crisis prevailing in Rodrigues.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, since I took office earlier this year, I have activated the report. The first action taken was the setting up of a Water Steering Committee under my Chairmanship since March 2022. The main roles of the committee, which has already met on three occasions, are as follows: -

- (a) Devise policies and actions for the water sector so as to improve production and distribution;
- (b) Mobilise support across sections and groups for sustainable water management, and
- (c) Monitor progress on decisions taken in the water sector.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, the Steering Committee is focusing on the rehabilitation of watersheds for the recharge of our water resources. In this context, an action plan has been prepared for the rehabilitation of Cascade Pigeon. It will be presented at the next steering committee and submitted to the Executive Council before moving forward with the support of the local community.

The Cadastral Office is also working on Regulations to protect our watersheds. In essence, construction of buildings and rearing of animals inter alia should be prohibited within a delimited zone surrounding watersheds.

Other actions mentioned in the Report will be implemented in due course. Thank you
Mr Chairperson, Sir,

Mr Lisette: Mr Chairperson, Sir, may I ask the Chief Commissioner whether he is aware that for the financing of the '*observatoire de l'eau*', which was financed by the '*l'Agence Française de Développement (AFD)*', that we used the financing for this '*observatoire de l'eau*', emanates from this report itself?

The Chief Commissioner: I did not get the last part. Emanates from?

Mr Lisette: Emanates from the report.

The Chief Commissioner: I am not aware, Mr Chairperson, Sir. The '*observatoire de l'eau*' is an initiative funded by the '*Observatoire de L'Eau*' of Réunion and it is just one aspect of the report, which is attempting to put in place real time data to monitor the water sector, the

water parameters, reservoirs, dams and boreholes. I must state, Mr Chairperson, Sir, that this report is like a Bible, is like the *New Testament*, for the Water Sector in Rodrigues and, I would state that the first Luxconsult's Report of 2000 is the *Old Testament*. He is aware of what I am speaking about. It is time, Mr Chairperson, Sir, that we solve this water bottleneck severely affecting Rodrigues, not only in draught periods but now on a permanent basis. We cannot keep going with this lack of water. This is why we are undertaking water reforms, the launching of the Rodrigues Public Utilities Corporation (RPUC) and as you are aware during the last visit of the Prime Minister and his officials, we have the support of the government to go ahead into the projects proposed. Mr Chairperson, Sir, there is no doubts that availability of natural water sources on Rodrigues will not be sufficient, not only in draught periods but all over the year now, to meet the demands of the population. We therefore, have a permanent demand for water from desalination. And, we are in the process of identifying how we are going to go ahead in the desalination process. What I invite the population to do is, first of all, to be aware of the situation. We have inherited this situation. I am not blaming the former Commissioner but I believe that if certain decisions had been taken in the time, for example, the decision not to put four desalination plants scattered around Rodrigues where today we see that the desalination plant at Baie Malgache, Anse Goeland is not working. We have to relocate it. So, we have to see – Rodrigues is a small island, we have to see the network, we have to come with smart water meters, we will ensure that the population, that each family, each Rodriguan citizen, person living in Rodrigues gets a minimum amount of water, free of charge and then if that person or this family exceeds that quota, they will have to pay. Water is scarce, it is an economic good, it is also a merry good, something which needs to be provided up to a certain level, free of charge to people. It is a big adventure that we are engaging again. It is unfortunate that the Water Company was dismantled by the team over there in 2012 and that we have again to work completely anew from scrap on this.

Mr Lisette: Mr Chairperson, Sir, it is nice to note that the Chief Commissioner has agreed for the setting up of the '*observatoire de l'eau*'. Nevertheless, I would like to ask him whether he is still aware that as regards to the Krhoda report, that we used that report once again for the financing of the consulting services for the Development of Water Resources Strategy and the definition of a priority plan financed by AFD and which was being or may be it has been completed conducted by the BRLI (*BRL Ingénierie*). Is he aware of that?

Mr Lisette: Mr Chairperson, Sir, it is nice to note that the Chief Commissioner has agreed for the setting up of the '*observatoire délo*'. Nevertheless, I would like to ask him

whether he is still aware that as regard to that order report, that we use that report once again for the financing of the consultancy services for the development of water resources strategy and the definition of a priority plan financed by AFD and which was being or maybe it has been completed conducted by the RLI. Is he aware of that?

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I am aware of the report of the BRLi Report. I do not know whether, Mr Chairperson, Sir, I can say it or if it is in order but we are very disappointed with the AFD etcetera. We have no time to lose, Mr Chairperson, Sir. We must move forward. We cannot keep going with consultancies, reports which do not materialise. We do not have time to lose. People are waiting. This is why Mr Wong-So, Mr Claude Wong-So, the Chairman of RPUC, has stated that some reports are just there to lay on the shelves. So, we want a pragmatic approach. We know Rodrigues. When there is time for consultancy, we will go ahead with a specific consultancy. For example, I want a consultancy to assess the underground water resources for Rodrigues and we are thinking to allocate if the report is conclusive in the BRLi, it seems that the underground water resources of Rodrigues are not enough exploited.

There are potentials which are not being used. We have some businesses, for example, bakeries. We have also organisations like schools, colleges, Maréchal College for example which sits on or nearby water tables. So, we are proposing after strategic thinking to allow specific organisations or specific businesses to have their own boreholes so that they can get water in a sustainable manner but of course, it will be under control. The RPUC will have to put a meter on it. They will have a quota of water that they can exploit per month or per day and they will have, of course, to pay for that water. So, we want to have an integrated. This is what we call integrated water resource management. Have the public or has this House heard of integrated water resource management during the mandate of the last Commissioner for Water? I have not heard of it.

Mr Chairperson: Okay, we move to one last. I said one last. Put your mic on, please.

Mr Lisette: The first thing as the Chief Commissioner has said, BRLi contradicts Krhoda. on the question of underground water. That is for sure. My question is as regard to the report itself, the action plan and measures to be taken for the different projects amount to USD 30,027 which amounts to almost Rs 1.2 b. I would like to know from him how he will go forward with the financing of the different projects he mentioned under Krhoda.

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The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, the Krhoda Report is interesting in terms of puts a scientific approach into an examination of the water issues in Rodrigues. On the issue of cost, we have to invest, Mr Chairperson, Sir. If we do not invest, we will not get the results and we have to invest carefully not to invest in broken, rusted, useless desalination plants. We have to invest in people, in equipment, in network, in software, in all sorts of things that will produce. The end result is to bring water in a satisfactory manner to the consumer. It is not me, Mr Chairperson, Sir, who said that during their mandate in 2022, before 2022, water will be available at least once per week. It is not me; it is him who said it but he has utterly failed. We have to understand the dynamics of the water production because, Mr Chairperson, Sir...

(Interruptions)

Mr Chairperson: Order, please. Let the Chief Commissioner answer.

The Chief Commissioner: Things have changed. With climate change, things have changed. The funds as the Member will know, will come from our budget. There was a year, Mr Chairperson, Sir, I think it is 2014, where they put Rs 500 m. half of their budget into the water sector. Look at the situation today. The OPR's Government has been throwing money out of the window with the water sector. Look at all the boreholes today! They are all... Either they are not working or because they have not been maintained properly. Where is your maintenance team? They put a borehole into the well and when it breaks, they throw it away. Never maintained, never removed for checking and there is no team, there are not technicians for it. This is what Krhoda says. There is a human factor. There is no workshop. So, the money will come if he wants to know, from our budget, from funding, external funding from government. We have for example from the MIC. We are in negotiation with them. They are very positive. The MIC will fund the water sector. It includes the things in the Krhoda Report and also, we may also negotiate for *ça* but part of the money must be recovered from consumers, Mr Chairperson, Sir. We cannot give hundreds of metre cubes of water for example to a business like a hotel, any business in Rodrigues and they do not pay. They have to pay for their water and this is where we will get the money to fund the system.

(Interruptions)

The Chief Commissioner: Tell me in which country!

Mr Chairperson: Order, please!

The Chief Commissioner: In which country, Mr Chairperson, Sir, hotels, businesses, all sorts of businesses, restaurants, they get water free? We have the courage to reform the sector. They have the courage to keep the system into its archaic state.

Mr Chairperson: Okay, next question.

NEWLY LAUNCHED RODRIGUES PUBLIC UTILITIES CORPORATION

(No. B/68) The Third Island Region Member (Mr J. Tolbize) asked the Chief Commissioner whether, in regard to the newly launched Rodrigues Public Utilities Corporation under the trade name ‘Rodrigues Water’, he will inform the House on:

- (a) the responsibilities assigned thereto and the reasons therefor, and
- (b) how same will be funded?

The Chief Commissioner: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, with regard to part (a), I am pleased to inform the House that the Rodrigues Public Utilities Corporation (RPUC) incorporated as a Private Company on 18 June 2021, in the context of water reforms to enhance production and improve distribution was launched on 23 July 2022 by the Honourable Minister for Energy and Public Utilities, Mr. Georges Pierre Lesjongard and myself.

Mr. Chairperson, Sir, the RPUC is a special propose vehicle fully owned by the RRA. The objective is to act as the executive arm of my Commission in the field of water production and storage, water treatment and water distribution in Rodrigues and also in other fields of Public Utilities. Following a request from the RRA, Cabinet at its meeting of 20 August 2021, has agreed that RPUC negotiates funding to the tune of Rs 1 billion from the Mauritius Investment Corporation (MIC) to finance projects in the water sector, essentially desalination plants.

The RPUC will be assigned responsibilities for water production and storage, water treatment and water distribution. The purpose is not at all to replace but to complement the Water Resources Unit, which lacks capacity to manage and operate infrastructure such as desalination plants, boreholes, springs and dams efficiently and effectively. By the end of the day, what matters is a continuous water supply to the population. The RPUC will work in that direction.

Mr. Chairperson, Sir, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to be signed between the RRA and the RPUC. It has been drafted and submitted to the Legal Adviser for vetting. It will define the responsibilities of both parties.

Most people will appreciate that we cannot continue with the present state of affairs in the water sector. We need more efficiency and effectiveness. The RRA right now is not in a position to provide water, a basic human right, regularly to the population. We expect that with the creation of the RPUC, the recruitment of qualified personnel and the investment in the MIC in terms of redeemable preference share capital, both production and distribution of water will improve drastically for the welfare of the population.

With respect to part (b), the projects to be undertaken by the RPUC in the water sector will be funded by investment by the Mauritius Investment Corporation (MIC) and the budget of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly. The RPUC has already launched a Request for Proposal among six recognised accounting firms for the preparation of a Write-up of a Business Plan for Rs. 400 m. investments over the next three financial years 2022-2025. The Business Plan is a requirement of the MIC for the provision of funding.

As far as the operating expenses of the RPUC is concerned, this will be financed through the provision of equity share capital by my Commission.

Thank you.

Mr Lisette: I would like to know from the Chief Commissioner, Mr Chairperson, Sir, being given that during budget debate here, they opposed when I was speaking about the MIC and they said that we are not going to take any loan.... I would like to know from the Chief Commissioner why after so vehemently opposed to my decision, why is it that now, I see that there is a change of policy as regard to these Executive Council?

The Chief Commissioner: We are not taking any loan, Mr Chairperson, Sir. It is not a loan from what I have replied. Thank you.

Mr Lisette: Yes. I would like to... Yes, I know it is equity share whatever it is but it is... grant. Yes. I would like to know from the Chief Commissioner with respect to the timeline that has been set for the setting up of the... not the setting up but the granting of the loan from whatever it be in the form of redeemable preference share, whether it is in forms of equity, I would like to know what is the time-lapse that he has directed the RPCU to adopt for the setting up of these measures.

The Chief Commissioner: There is no timeframe yet, Mr Chairperson, Sir. In my reply, I have stated we are working with consultants, big accounting firms of Mauritius on the feasibility. We have to submit a project feasibility but this money from the RPUC, we are planning to use it for all the capital investment we need for the water reforms in Rodrigues. We

have to put in place a borehole management section which will manage boreholes with a scientific approach. We will have in my mind, a borehole control centre, with remote control all information, real-time information on boreholes. We need to monitor them, what is the volume of water being pumped and all the other parameters on boreholes. We need to know where the water is going. We need to equip all our reservoirs with same equipment so that we can control how much water there is in a reservoir and to prevent waste during, for example, overflow of reservoirs.

We need to rework our water distribution network. The water distribution network, for example, we need to put new bigger pipelines underneath the earth, bury them. We need to bury existing pipelines. Importantly, we need to put in place water treatment facilities which work. Yours are not working. We need to put in place maybe networks for transfer of raw water from one place to another to the treatment plant. For example, treatment plant, this is why we need a report. We need experts to work on it. We need hydrologists to work on it and of course, we need to invest in water storage facilities. That is, concrete water reservoirs to make the thing happen. And, also, we need to invest in a major desalination plant which we think should be at Cotton Bay, Pointe Cotton where the quality of water is good and the yield is good or as recommended by the Cheney Report at Grenade.

With gravity, Mr Chairperson, Sir, the water can be pumped from either Grenade or Pointe Cotton or even Songes to the upper hills, Petit Brûlé for example. We need to have big storage there and from there, can go, Commissioner is aware, to any part of the Island. We need maybe to have intermediate pumps. We need to put the smart meters at the consumer's point of entry at his home. There is a lot of work, Mr Chairperson, Sir. It is a lot of work. It is like building a pyramid for Rodrigues. So, I am working. My team is working and we know where we are heading. And, this is why I will seize this opportunity *pour dire à la population qu'il faut être patient*.

Je ne suis pas responsable de la situation. Nous ne sommes pas responsables de cette situation. C'était une situation qui malheureusement comme j'ai dit, aurait dû être améliorée mais parce que certaines personnes à partir de 2012 jusqu'à 2022 ont pris des décisions d'annuler par exemple, la RPUC et des mauvaises décisions d'investir dans des dessalements et des petits dessalements au lieu des dessalements plus grands se concentraient par exemple sur Songes et Pointe Cotton ou même ce que j'ai dit à Grenade. Ils sont allés faire des petits dessalements qui n'ont pas marché. C'est pour ça que la population souffre aujourd'hui. Vous avez le dessalement de Baie Malgache qui n'a jamais marché. Et chez moi par exemple, je n'ai

pas eu l'eau pendant trois/quatre mois. Il faut acheter de l'eau. Et les gens qui ont un business doivent acheter de l'eau.

Ce n'est pas moi qui est responsable, M. le président. Ce n'était pas moi qui était Commissaire et c'est pour ça qu'on fait un appel à la population. Donnez-nous le temps de travailler. Nous sommes là que depuis six mois. On sait ce qu'on fait. On a eu la chance d'avoir M. Wong So qui est quelqu'un de très *committed* et on va venir de l'avant avec des résultats bien avant la fin de notre mandat et des résultats concrets, tangibles avant la fin de notre mandat.

Mr Chairperson: Last question on this matter. Put your mic on, please.

Mr Lisette: We have Rs 1 b. to invest and the investment is to be made on capital investment and the Chief Commissioner has been speaking about different scenarios in terms of boreholes, dams and desalination plant. I would like to know from him being given that there is a feasibility study that he said is under preparation and that there was one which was already prepared and available at the Commission, it is his right to change the policy but there is a feasibility study as regard to the investment to be done with the Rs 1 b. which is available at the Commission, I would like to know from him being given that he has different scenarios, how is he directing the RPUC with respect to the proportion to be adopted to the different sectors of the water in terms of investment in the groundwater, investment for surface and the investment for desalination plant. How is he proportioning to all these?

The Chief Commissioner: Yes, Mr Chairperson, Sir, the new feasibility report is more of a financial feasibility report. As you are aware, the MIC is a lending agency and they want to lend money. Mr Chairperson, Sir, there has been, I would say controversial issues with this issue of MIC. I share the views of those people stating that the water sector should be funded from public funds. And, we have pressed with the Prime Minister recently that there is need to give more budget money for Rodrigues in this sector. The MIC is a plus but it will not be sufficient for the whole ambitious water reforms that we have for the Island. Now to answer the question is how we have...

The Commissioner must be aware how a Rodrigues' company work. A Rodrigues Regional Assembly company is guided by the investment management regulations that we passed I think in 2008 and within the investment management regulations, you have the Commissioner who is the responsible Commissioner for the RPUC and the Commissioner himself reports to the Executive Council. Therefore, to answer his question which he should

know, is that decisions taken, strategic decisions taken at the RPUC, will emanate from the Commissioner and the Executive Council.

Mr Lisette: So, Mr Chairperson, Sir, just in line with the same question that I have asked, I asked him being given that we have Rs 1 b. to invest in the water sector, I would like to know as Commissioner for Water, how he is directing the RPUC to proportion this investment within the different sources of production.

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, we do not have Rs 1 b. We have more. We need more than Rs 1 b. We need maybe according to my estimate, Rs 2 to Rs 2.5 b. to invest. We do not have a fixed and quantified project value for each thing I have stated before, how much money we will need for the installation of meters, how much money we need to repair and put in order the network, how much money we need to invest in *des réservoirs*, how much money we need to put into desalination and all the other aspects. So, it is the feasibility report and maybe, we need another physical consultancy to decide what will be all the capital investment that we need to put and then, we will have the priority but we know what are the aspects and we know for example, that desalination plants are costly and they will exceed for example, the money that we need to put in rehabilitation, modernisation of the water network. All this is unfolding in front of our eyes. In the coming month, in the coming years, the Member will see how as a responsible regional government, we will unpack these reforms and bring the results.

Mr Chairperson: Okay, next question.

NINE YEAR SCHOOLING PROGRAMME

(No. B/69) The Third Island Region Member (Mr J. Tolbize) asked the Chief Commissioner whether, in regard to the nine year schooling programme, he will, for the benefit of the House:

- (a) State and table the pass rate for the last National Certificate in Education Examination; and
- (b) What his Commission is contemplating to do in regard to the students of Grade 9 who are to follow the vocational or technical route after having sat for the examination for this ending academic year?

The Chief Commissioner: Yes, Mr Chairperson, Sir,

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- (a) As the House is aware, the Nine Year Continuous Basic Education (NYCBE) was implemented in the Republic of Mauritius as from January 2017 and is part of a whole set of reforms aimed at strategically transforming the education system. The overall goals of the NYCBE are to ensure that all children complete nine years of quality relevant education and achieve relevant learning outcomes and successfully complete the secondary education cycle, whether General or Vocational or Technical.

With the reforms in the education system, secondary students at the end of their Nine Year Basic schooling have to sit for the National Certificate of Education (NCE) Assessments. This will serve for the progression of students to upper secondary and orientation to general or technical vocational education. As such, students upon successful completion of the Nine Year Basic Education cycle, can:

- i) Either continue their academic studies in Grade 10 in the same secondary schools they are currently attending or join an Academy, if eligible;
- ii) They can also choose to follow a skilled based education and professional training in a Vocational Training Centre.

Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I am informed that the first National Certificate of Education (NCE) assessments were held in March/April 2021. Out of the 950 students who took part in the assessments, 495 students had successfully attained the National Qualification Framework (NQF) Level 2 and were promoted to Grade 10 for the Academic Year 2021/2022.

I am further informed that the overall pass rate for Academic Year 2020/2021 was 52.1% with a percentage pass rate of 59.6% among girls compared to 45.4% for boys. The performance of eight secondary schools in Rodrigues is as follows:

- | | |
|----------------------------|---------|
| 1) Rodrigues Colleges | - 98.5% |
| 2) Le Chou College | – 86.9% |
| 3) Marechal College | – 65.4% |
| 4) Mont Lubin College | – 50.4% |
| 5) Grande Montagne College | – 31.5% |
| 6) Songes College | – 19.7% |
| 7) La Ferme College | – 19.0% |

8) Terre Rouge College – 13.2%

I am hereby tabling the overall pass rate for Rodrigues including the performance of the eight secondary schools at the last National Certificate in Education assessment for Academic Year 2020/2021.

With regard to part (b), it is notable that the Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) is being called upon to play an important role in the context of the reforms in the Education Sector.

However, as the House is aware, the TVET sector in Rodrigues needs to be developed. As a matter of fact, the delivery system is fragmented and there is a lack of TVET providers on the island. In addition, there is a lack of capacity in terms of seat capacity, types of training programmes, variety of training programmes and levels of training programmes.

I am also informed that according to a study namely “*Etude de Faisabilité d’un dispositif de formation professionnelle initiale et continue renoué à Rodrigues*” carried out by the *Académie de la Réunion*, the TVET sector in Rodrigues is considered as an ‘*orientation subie*’ instead of ‘*orientation choisie*’ by most students.

Moreover, in line with the TVET Strategic Development Plan for Rodrigues 2021 – 2025, there is the need to revisit the TVET System in Rodrigues with a view to:

- (i) reduce the mismatch of skills;
- (ii) address the issue of the students’ dropout from Grade 9;
- (iii) cater for the training needs of some 400 SC school leavers (Grade 11) who do not meet the necessary requirements to be promoted to Grade 12 following the amendment in eligibility criteria.

Nevertheless, I am informed that at present, students who may opt to follow the vocational or technical route after Grade 9 can attend the following public institutions in Rodrigues:

- i) Mauritius Institute for Training and Development (MITD);
- ii) Atelier de Savoir;
- iii) Centre Formation Agricole Frere Remi (CAFR); and
- iv) Maison Familiale Rurale (MFR)

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However, out of the TVET institutions that can welcome students after Grade 9, the MITD is the only one providing an Award Certificate but the seat capacity is limited to 150 students only.

As regards the other three vocational institutions namely Atelier de Savoir, Centre de Formation Agricole Frere Remi, necessary procedures have been initiated since last year to proceed with their recognition and registration with the Mauritius Qualification Authority (MQA). A delegation will be in Rodrigues shortly to evaluate their progress in terms of remedial action needed to be undertaken.

I would like to inform the House that due to lack of TVET providers in Rodrigues, and in view of expanding opportunities for the vocational path as from Grade 9, the collaboration of various training institutions in Mauritius have been sought to supplement the existing Training Centres in Rodrigues.

The following private institutions have been approached:

- Wisdom In Tech for a proposed programme NCE level 3 Diploma;
- Fashion & Design Institute for a proposed programme of NC2 level in Jewellery, Fashion and Design;
- College Technique St. Gabriel for a proposed programme of NC2 level in Mechanical, Welding, Electrical Works and Food production.

Mr. Chairperson, Sir, my Commission is also contemplating to provide short courses for post Grade 9 students in connection with professional competencies for our youth in some specific skills such as Agriculture, Pastry, Cooking, IT and Fishing. The services of professional from Mauritius will be contacted to develop tailor made programmes based on our specificity.

Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I would like to inform the House that according to the proposed pathway for the Technical and Vocational orientation in Rodrigues, students after Grade 11 may also join Polytechnics Mauritius Ltd or Lycée Agricole St. Gabriel if they opt to follow the vocational or technical path.

Thank you.

Mrs Gaspard Pierre Louis: M. le président, je suis plus que contente que je vois que les projets qu'on avait initiés continuent. Est-ce que le Commissaire de l'éducation, le Chef

commissaire peut nous dire quelle est sa politique concernant dans le cadre de *Nine-Year Schooling*, les académies à Rodrigues?

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, the Member is aware that we have the responsibility of administration of education in Rodrigues and not to make policies. Policies are made in Mauritius and I must state that there is a sort of *flou* in Mauritius, a sort of cloudy issues where we do not know exactly how we are going to proceed with some of these students. There is a, as I have said, a number of students who need to go to these TVETs and there is a lack of TVET. Maybe we can invite some people instead of doing live radios, criticising one and everything, looking for each and every opportunity, they are qualified in TVET, they can launch TVET school or TVET programmes that we can send these students there. As the Member is aware also, the question of academy is a sensitive question being given the setup of Rodrigues itself. We have the Rodrigues College which is the most performing college. Then, we have a number of REDCO Colleges which are also good which we are encouraging and giving them all their chances. The question of academy is the question which needs to be examined carefully and we need of course to do it if we are going to do it with the collaboration of all stakeholders.

Mrs Gaspard Pierre Louis: M. le président, si c'est vrai que nous avons que l'administration de l'éducation. Je crois que dans le cadre de l'autonomie, connaissant notre spécificité, nous avons le devoir aussi de faire comprendre qu'il y a des choses qui sont applicables à Maurice et qui ne sont pas nécessairement applicable à Rodrigues et c'est ce que nous avons fait dans le cadre des académies après avoir consulté les recteurs. Est-ce que le Commissaire de l'éducation est au courant qu'il y a eu une rencontre avec la Ministre de l'éducation en 2020 dans ce sens pour montrer la position de Rodrigues dans le cadre de cette réforme du *Nine-Year Schooling* et qu'est-ce qu'il en pense de cette rencontre qu'on a eu ou on a discuté avec le ministre, on a donné la position de Rodrigues ?

The Chief Commissioner: M. le président, le problème... J'ai eu l'occasion d'enseigner dans un autre pays en Australie comme vous savez. Le problème du système éducationnel mauricien et par extension, Rodriguais, c'est l'emphasis sur les diplômes. Là où j'ai enseigné en Australie, l'emphasis est sur l'enfant. Peu importe sa performance, on est là, l'enseignant, les encadreurs sont là pour accompagner les élèves. Il y a toujours eu cette obsession ici à Rodrigues et à Maurice, surtout à Maurice, une obsession : la course aux diplômes, la course à SC et la course à la HSC. Et bien sûr par après, la course au diplôme universitaire. Mais ce que moi, j'ai constaté où j'ai enseigné, c'est que même si les enfants, ils

ne réussissent pas dans leur cursus, ils ne réussissent pas pleinement, mais ils ont une vie pleine et ils ne sont pas frustrés et la société ne les regarde pas comme étant des rejetés du système scolaire.

C'est ce qu'il faudrait : un changement vers la reconnaissance des aptitudes de chaque enfant et non pas que le système éducatif soit comme une machine où on met comme des bouts de bois ou des bouts de ferrailles et on s'attend à ce qui sort soit de l'or, de l'argent, du bronze ou je ne sais quoi encore. Donc, c'est pour ça qu'il faut. Je suis d'accord avec le membre, il y a des spécificités rodriguaises et que le système comme a été dit dans le rapport fait par les réunionnais, c'est un système subi qu'on est en train d'imposer sur des élèves. Un cursus qui est désigné, qui est fabriqué par Cambridge et qui par la suite, est académique, sur des élèves qui eux, auraient voulu faire autre chose. Je suis d'accord avec elle qu'il faut continuer à militer pour des formations où l'on puisse créer des compétences et des compétences réels et pratiques. Et pendant ma réponse, je pensais par exemple, à l'académie de pêche que le Commissaire de la pêche ici présent a pour projet de mettre en place.

Aujourd'hui, si on peut former des professionnels de pêche au nombre par exemple de l'Union Européenne, on pourrait avoir des jeunes pêcheurs de Rodrigues qui partiraient sur des bateaux de pêche de l'Union Européenne à partir de La Réunion, à partir de n'importe quel autre point et qui iraient pêcher. Mais ils doivent avoir la formation et les compétences ainsi que les accréditations nécessaires pour cela. Qu'est-ce qu'on doit faire par exemple dans le domaine de la pêche ? C'est mettre en place cette école de pêche, cette académie de pêche pour transformer les pêcheurs, pour transformer la mentalité des pêcheurs non seulement savoir pêcher comme dans beaucoup de domaines, savoir planter mais savoir gérer le business de la pêche aussi. Donc, le monde est ouvert aux Rodriguais. C'est à nous comme je dis de mettre en place les infrastructures et de créer les structures nécessaires pour former ces gens.

Regardez par exemple, M. le président, j'étais bloqué malheureusement et je n'ai pas pu y aller. Il y a deux jours il y avait pleins de thons. Il y eu deux jours de beau-temps. Je crois mercredi et jeudi. Il y avait pleins de thons migratoires. C'est des thons qui ne restent pas là ; ils passent. Et beaucoup de pêcheurs qui savent pêcher, ils ont eu 200-300 kilos de thons. Vous avez vu sur Facebook, n'est-ce pas ? Les gens vendaient leurs thons à Rs100 la livre, d'étripés. Mais où sont les pêcheurs ? On a vu quelques-uns mais les thons, quand ils passent, ils ne passent pas quatre thons ; ils passent 1000, 2000, 5000 thons un coup. Des arpents et des arpents de thons. Où sont les pêcheurs formés ? Vous voyez ?

On a autant de pêcheurs hors-lagon mais quand on va en haute mer, on ne voit personne. Donc, il faut. Je suis d'accord avec la *Minority Leader*, il faut sortir nos Rodriguais de cet aspect collège, anglais, français, mathématiques, économiques, ceci cela mais qui après, les gens se retrouvent sans *skills*. En Australie, ils ont pareil les *vocational and educational training* où les élèves, ils vont apprendre à être des charpentiers, des soudeurs, des maçons etcetera et dans certains domaines, vous voyez que beaucoup de *jobs manuals*, ceux qui ont des *manual jobs*, ils ont des revenus et des richesses beaucoup plus que ceux qui ont des jobs comme on dit, *white collar*.

Mr Lisette: Mr Chairperson, Sir... But also on this side of the House, we are against that rat race towards academic qualifications. Nevertheless, I should ask the Chief Commissioner that there has been a point in time the emergence of the idea that one of the colleges of REDCO, they geared towards that vocational training itself. I would like to know what is his standpoint as regard to that matter.

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I think that the mission of the REDCO is to work within the parameters of secondary academic education. It could be the REDCO but if we give this to the REDCO, I am not blaming the REDCO, we will have the same approach. I am not saying, Mr Chairperson, Sir, that we should not promote academic education. This morning, I received Mr Joey Labour, for example, who as you are aware, a PHD candidate and he got his PHD candidate and I asked him what he is doing now and to my astonishment, he told me that he is reengaging his studies in a master to become a medical physicist. Medical physicist, where, I have tried to understand him but I have failed because it is not my field. Money is my field. And, he is one of the most brilliant student.

We have in mind also Dr Casimir. I do not know where he is. We have a number. We have Dr Agathe here who was my fellow comrade at the University of Reunion in 1994. We have to promote as far as possible academic education. If you are a data scientist today, you study mathematics and statistics, you become one of the most well-paid professional in the world. If you are an IT Technician, if you are good in your field and you work in it, you will succeed. You can go to America, to Australia, to France, everywhere, you will be recognised. But there is the bulk which is below this that we need also to promote them. Today, Mr Chairperson, Sir, let us take the field of construction for example in Rodrigues. Who is trained in construction in Rodrigues? Who is trained?

You have *maçon*. Many *maçons* in Rodrigues, if you are not behind their back, they will lay the blocks not levelled. They will lay it with the ground not levelled. They have not been taught to think and to find solutions. They are not aware of the mixtures grades of cement for example. They are not aware about basic structural issues. They cannot even read plans properly. Have they learned to read plans? They cannot read plans properly. They can see dimensions but they cannot read plans, technical plans properly. This is why you have at times, major faults. This is a field, for example, where you can educate your people, make them become business *maçons*, business builders and some of them can go to Mauritius. There is a big lack of construction workers in Mauritius and they make good money out of this and there is a lot of people here who work in this field. But who is teaching them? Who is teaching people fishing, making all the knots in fishing, knowing when to fish, reading the weather, interpreting the weather and knowing how to run a fishing *ça*?

Mr Lisette: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I do understand the Chief Commissioner is speaking about his policy but my question was a direct one. There was the emergence of the idea of the setting up of the vocational... of gearing and college towards a technical...

Mr Chairperson: This is your point of order?

Mr Lisette: The question is...

Mr Chairperson: No, no. Is it your question or a point of order?

Mr Lisette: It is a point of order.

Mr Chairperson: He was still answering.

Mr Lisette: It is a point of order but we want direct answers.

Mr Chairperson: Okay. Now, I am on my feet. Mr Chief Commissioner, even if I do not have control over answers, it is very interesting what you are telling to the House but you know, I am accountable also to all the other Members concerning the number of questions that you have to answer. Even here on this side of the House, I will tell you we put two or three supplementary question on a question, it is fair, so that we can give the chance to others and I will make a plea to all Commissioners try to be brief because you are short in time for the question time. So, do we have more supplementary questions on this? I allow one more. Member, please! I am on my feet. I allow one last question on this. Minority Leader, go on. Last question.

Mrs Gaspard Pierre Louis: Mr Chairperson, Sir, because it is the last question, I will try to have two questions in one.

Mr Chairperson: No, it is not allowed by the Standing Order, please. You know the Standing Order.

Mrs Gaspard Pierre Louis: In fact, it is related. In fact, Mr Chairperson, Sir, we know that if we go to the question part (b), we know that for the first time this year, we will have nine plus students taking the NYCE Examinations and I would like to know from the Chief Commissioner with regard to the number of seats available immediately for the students who will not make it for the NYCE, what is the number of seats will require immediately and we also started some preventive measures. For example, we had afterschool programme where emphasis was to be laid on literacy and numeracy. We had another preventive measure for preventive programme on pedagogical network to allow teachers to have exchanges and share practices. I want to know from the Chief Commissioner, Commissioner for Education where are we with regard to these.

Mr Chairperson: But I am sorry, concerning the number of seats, I think that you should come with a substantive question for this. It is not in the main question, I am sorry. But if the Chief Commissioner is agreeable to answer, I have no problem.

The Chief Commissioner: Yes, Mr Chairperson, Sir, allow me to say one word about what the Member Lisette has been proposing. Yes, it could be one thing to ask the REDCO consider setting up a department, a division for vocational training. But I must say, Mr Chairperson, Sir, one of the things we face is competencies. You have set up a *lycée agricole*. Do we have the competencies, people to staff it? Will the PSEU, the funding authority accept to pay for it? This is another question. So, we have for example, the IVTB, the MITD already doing agriculture. So, we should not duplicate but the idea asking the REDCO to see where this goes on, we have to think about it and of course, I am making an appeal to private sector, training persons to come and set up training organisations, training institutes for these students. And, to answer the second, the other part by the Minority Leader, as I have said, we have had the experience of the 2021. We will wait for the results for this year and then, we will act accordingly. But I must assure that we will do our best to help all those concerns, that is those students who unfortunately do not pass the extended stream to go into year 10. We will see to it that each student is taken care of.

Mr Chairperson: Okay, we move to next question.

WORKING COMMITTEE ON DRUG ABUSE – RODRIGUES

(No. B/70) Mr Speville (Fourth Island Region Member) asked the Commissioner for Youth and Sports and Others whether, in regard to the working committee on drug abuse in Rodrigues, he will for the benefit of the House state:

- (a) the number of meetings held since January 2022 to date;
- (b) if there has been any case of dangerous drugs reported thereto and, in the affirmative, to state their market value therefor, and
- (c) if it has been any report of law enforcement officers involved in drug dealing in Rodrigues?

Mr Ravina: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I wish to inform the house that there is no working committee on drug abuse set up by the Commission for Youth and Sports. Consequently, part (b) and (c) of the question does not arise.

Mrs Gaspard Pierre Louis: M. le président, donc, je ne sais pas si c'est le nom '*working committee*' mais on sait que le Commissaire de la jeunesse, il préside un comité avec les partenaires travaillant sur le sujet de drogue. Donc, est-ce qu'on peut savoir ? Donc, c'est justement de ça dont on parle. Est-ce qu'on peut avoir les réponses par rapport à ça ?

Mr Ravina: Mr Chairperson, Sir, this is not a committee; it is a meeting held by my Commission on the 25 May. It is not a committee; it is a meeting.

Mr Chairperson: So, we move to next question.

(Interruptions)

Mr Chairperson: Next question! Dr Agathe.

**WINTER TWO-MONTH TEMPORARY CLOSURE
– OCTOPUS'S FISHERY**

(No. B/71) Dr H. Agathe (First Local Region Member for Grande Montagne) asked the Commissioner for Fisheries and Others whether, in regard to the winter two-month temporary closure of octopus's fishery, he will, for the benefit of the House, state:

- (a) the reasons why the closing date has been delayed, and
- (b) the method used for the selection of supervisors and fishers to be involved therewith?

Mr Perrine: Mr Chairperson Sir, Members of this House will appreciate that the Octopus closing season has been introduced to allow the replenishment of the octopus' population...

Mr Chairperson: Put your mic on.

Mr Perrine: ...through spawning and recruitments with new juveniles. The peak period of spawning starts with the onset of summer season, in September to November.

The present winter closing of the octopus' fishery started yesterday 05 September and will last up to 03 November 2022. The peak period for hatching of octopus eggs to produce juvenile occurs in February as evidenced by scientific studies. As such, there is no delay in the closure.

Moreover, I propose to recruit a Consultant for biological evidence to support seasonal closures designed to protect key life stages of the species. The Consultant will submit a report on the reproductive cycle of the Octopus Cyanea (Big Blue or Day Octopus) in Rodrigues and the implications for Fisheries Management.

As regards to part (b), Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I wish to inform the House that the previous Regional Government signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with an NGO for the provision of Regional Supervisors and Supervisors for the implementation of Alternative Livelihood Programme at the intention of those involved in the Octopus Fishery during its period of closure.

We have considered this method does not give opportunity to all qualified persons to at least compete for their services as Regional Supervisors and Supervisors in the implementation of the Alternative Livelihood Programmes.

Mr. Chairperson, Sir, in its meeting held on 05 August 2022, the Executive Council decided to cancel the existing MOU with the NGO referred to and to launch an expression of interest to the public for the recruitment of Regional Supervisors and Supervisors based on well-defined eligibility criteria.

The invitation for expression of interest was published through radio communiqué. Upon the closing date, a panel comprising officers of the Marine Academy and Fisheries Protection Service was set up to evaluate all applications received and to make recommendations for the award of contract to the most eligible candidates.

Mr. Chairperson, Sir, the recommendation of the Evaluation Panel was examined and approved by the Bid Evaluation Committee chaired by the Departmental Head of my Commission. Contract was awarded to candidates at the level of Regional Supervisors and Supervisors respectively.

As regards to the enlistment of fishers for the alternative livelihood programme, a registration exercise was effected at the Fisheries Post of Pointe Monier, Petite Butte and Gravières from 23 to 27 August 2022 on the following basis criteria:

- people involved in the octopus' fishery; and
- operators in the octopus processing activities.

Dr Agathe: Je voudrais demander au Commissaire s'il est au courant qu'il y a des études qui ont été menées à Madagascar et à Rodrigues aussi par le professeur.... de l'Afrique du Sud et qu'il y a eu du monitoring qui a été mené pendant des années par Shoals qui montrent que les ourites sont plus gros en hiver et que cela voudrait dire qu'ils pondraient plus aussi en hiver et c'est la raison pour laquelle on appelait cette fermeture, une fermeture d'hivers et que commencer cette fermeture maintenant serait peut-être un peu tard et que cela comporte des risques concernant les résultats qu'on pourrait obtenir.

Mr Perrine: M. le président, je pense qu'il n'y a pas de délai dans la fermeture de la pêche. Vous savez, l'ourite, l'espèce qui existe à Rodrigues se trouve aussi en pacifique surtout en Hawaï et ce qu'on appelle *big blue or day octopus*. L'important, c'est de savoir suivre l'évolution. Vous savez, l'ourite, le type que nous avons, l'espèce que nous avons à Rodrigues peut pondre jusqu'à 700000 *eggs* et notre devoir est de protéger. C'est pourquoi je dis *larve stage*. Vous savez, l'ourite, c'est *fastgoing species*. C'est pourquoi deux mois aussi, il faut vérifier. C'est pourquoi nous allons faire l'étude. Parce qu'en Hawaï, il y a plusieurs *short-terms projects*. Je vous dis, il faut suivre les stages. Et moi, je dois faire ressortir aussi, M. le président, que depuis 2013, je crois on a fait la fermeture et nous n'avons pas de données scientifiques d'études pour vous dire *a way forward*.

C'est pourquoi nous avons à mettre sur pieds à travers la réforme, une base des données sur le nombre de pêcheurs que nous avons, sur la quantité d'ourites qu'on pêche aussi et aussi suivre l'évolution si ça augmente, ou ça baisse. Je vois qu'il y a une « augmente » dans la production. L'année dernière, on a produit... exporté si vous voulez, plus de 600 tonnes comparé à 500 dans les années précédentes. Mais il faut savoir aussi si cette fermeture est bénéfique à la production ou la protection, la conservation des stocks que nous avons. C'est

pourquoi je pense l'expert qui va venir travailler sur le plan, le site de reproduction de l'espèce que nous avons à Rodrigues et aussi nous dire la conservation et nous conseiller aussi sur *closing structure, short closing period* pour soit deux mois, trois mois qu'on dit. Comme je vous dis, on est en train de mettre en place une base de donnée et à travers la réforme, on va voir quel type. Parce que vous savez, l'ourite *is economically very important in Rodrigues*. Deuxième type de pêche que nous pratiquons. Il y a beaucoup de personnes qui gagnent leur vie. Et c'est pourquoi il faut être très professionnel en approche et ne pas faire n'importe quoi.

Dr Agathe: J'aimerais simplement dire avant de poser ma prochaine question que quand même, il y a énormément d'études qui montrent que la fermeture en hiver est bénéfique, que ça a permis d'améliorer le stock d'ourite et que ce qui nous a permis par la suite, de faire une deuxième fermeture pour pouvoir consolider en fait, les résultats obtenus lors de la première fermeture, de reproduction. Maintenant, je voudrais poser une question concernant le recrutement des pêcheurs. On avait dans les années passées, pendant les 10 dernières années autour de 1200. Pourriez-vous nous dire la quantité de pêcheurs qui travaillent cette année sur le programme des activités alternatives ?

Mr Perrine: D'après les enregistrements qu'on a faits, M. le président, il y aura 14.

(Interruptions)

Mr Perrine: 1400.

Dr Agathe: Ce chiffre est quand même assez important. Qu'est-ce qui explique cette différence de 200 pêcheurs en plus ?

(Interruptions)

Mr Perrine: M. le président...

(Interruptions)

Mr Chairperson: Order, please! Let the Commissioner answer the question! You want to take the place of the Commissioner? You want to answer in his place? Allow the Commissioner, both sides, allow the Commissioner to answer his question.

(Interruptions)

Mr Chairperson: Order, please! Commissioner, answer the question.

Mr Perrine: M. le président, permettez-moi de... Vous savez, on dit que *the quieter, the more you can hear*. Je pense qu'il faut appliquer ça. Alors, j'ai même oublié la question.

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(Interruptions)

Mr Perrine: 200. Parce qu'il n'y a pas de bases de données. Je ne sais pas comment l'ancien gouvernement a recruté ces pêcheurs. Il n'y a rien du tout. On a dû commencer quelque part. A partir de là, on va travailler. C'est les personnes. Et puis, je dois dire que c'est un petit peu... Les gens qui ont été victimes de l'ancien gouvernement, ils ont pu venir.

(Interruptions)

Mr Perrine: Des décès, il y a eu. *Yes.* En tout cas, ce que j'ai vu, les gens, c'est la démocratie.... C'est-à-dire, tous ceux qui sont concernés par la pêche ourite, ils ont pu venir. A partir de là, on va travailler la liste. C'est une base de donnée qu'on va garder.

Dr Agathe: Je crois que quand même, on doit reconnaître que pendant 10 ans, on a travaillé, que quand même, il y a des acquis, il y a eu l'appropriation de ce projet. Et êtes-vous au courant qu'il y a des personnes qui avaient l'habitude d'être sur cette liste, en fait, des personnes travaillant pour le programme d'activités alternatives qu'hier, ne retrouvaient pas leurs noms sur la liste. Comment ça se fait ? Malgré qu'il y a eu une augmentation du nombre de pêcheurs.

Mr Perrine: M. le président...

(Interruptions)

Mr Chairperson: Let the Commissioner answer the question, please!

Mr Perrine: Le communiqué a été publié depuis le 23 au 27 octobre invitant tous ceux concernés par la pêche de se faire enregistrer. Mais si les gens ne viennent pas se faire enregistrer, on ne peut rien faire.

Mr Chairperson: Last question.

Mrs Gaspard Pierre Louis: M. le président, on le constate souvent, le Commissaire de la pêche est souvent dans les reproches du passé. Lui, par rapport à cette fermeture, je crois que c'est la dixième fermeture, est-ce qu'il est satisfait du déroulé de la situation étant donné que hier, c'était un chaos sur tous les sites et aujourd'hui, il n'y a personne qui sait où il va travailler. Est-ce qu'il est satisfait de ce déroulé de cette fermeture ?

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, this is a false allegation. A Member coming here and stating that '*personne ne sait où il doit aller travailler*'. It is false! This is a false statement!

(Interruptions)

The Chief Commissioner: Because everybody... I am in the Executive Council. Everybody knows where they have to go. You are putting false information here!

Mr Chairperson: Mr Chief Commissioner. Mr Commissioner, you will answer the question? Okay.

Mr Perrine: Vous savez, je sais, il y a des gens qui sont venus...

(Interruptions)

Mr Perrine: Je vais répondre. J'ai vu, M. le président, j'étais à Petite Butte. Sur la radio, on m'a annoncé qu'il y a Vangar etcetera. Mais c'était là-bas. Et il y avait malheureusement des personnes qui voulaient faire des *lives*. Et je remercie le Dr Agathe qui appliquait dans... C'est une que moi je crois, '*Fools rush in where wise men never go*'. C'est-à-dire, qui n'était pas là-bas pour aller faire du spectacle ? Il n'y a pas eu aucun de disqualification. J'étais là-bas. En cinq minutes, tout le monde...

(Interruptions)

Mr Chairperson: Order, please!

Mr Perrine: Mais vous voyez ce que vous voulez voir. Mais seulement, ayez un peu de décence. Laissez-nous travailler et puis, après, quand arrive le moment de faire un bilan, vous avez pouvoir critiquer. Je vous remercie.

Mr Chairperson: Okay. It is time to break for lunch for one hour.

At 12.30 p.m., the sitting was suspended for one hour.

On resuming at 1.38 p.m. with the Chairperson in the Chair.

CHILDREN FACING DISTRESSES – EXISTING FACILITIES/NEW MEASURES

(No. B/72) Mrs R.M.F. Gaspard Pierre Louis, C.S.K. (Minority Leader) asked the Commissioner for Child Development and Others, whether, in regard to children facing distresses and/or behavioural problems, she will:

- give details to the House about the existing facilities/ programs for their protections / rehabilitation thereof, and
- enlighten the House about new measures that she is envisaging to undertake in relation thereto?

Ms. Agathe: Mr Chairperson, Sir, the Commission for Child Development and Others through the Child Development Unit ensure that the right of the child is upheld as per the Convention for the Rights of the Child and as embedded in the Sustainable Development Goals. The State through the Child Development Unit (CDU) is mandated by law to ensure that the child is protected from any type of mental, physical, violence, injury or abuse, neglect, maltreatment or exploitation while he or she lives in the care of parents, legal guardians or any other person who has the care of the child.

The Child Development Unit of my Commission is implement the Children's Act 2020 with regard to children facing distresses and/or behavioural problem for their protection and rehabilitation. Children in needs of assistance, care and protection are dealt with under Part 4 section 31 of the Children's Act 2020 which was promulgated in January 2022. As such, to ensure its protective and welfare role for the child, the Child Development Unit offers the following facilities and services: -

- Protective services for victims of violence, neglect and abuse on a 24 hours seven-day basis;
- Hotline service in respect of reporting cases and counselling as appropriate;
- Provide victims with follow-up session and psychological support to ensure recovery from trauma and thereafter the reinsertion in society;
- Prepare and support children victim of violence for legal encounter;
- Provide alternative care to abuse children including those victims of child prostitution, sexual intercourse under 16, sexual harassment, sexual abuse, abortion, teenage pregnancy, attempt upon chastity and rape;
- The alternative care consists of temporary placement at the Foyer Marie Madeleine de la Croix for Children at Baladirou and fostering caring;
- Provide tardy declaration of birth services to children who have not been declared within the prescribed time delay;
- Provide periodic review of inmates placed in the shelter, and
- Provide trained mentors to children seen to be distressed because of mild behavioural problems.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, in addition to the services provided by the Child Development Unit, I just mentioned, regular child protection programmes including training and other outreach programmes are also being organised in favour of representatives of schooling

institution and other institution working for the welfare and protection of children to empower them and build their capacity to collaborate for the welfare and protection of children. These programmes are being delivered with the collaboration of the Ombudsperson for Children Office among others.

Parenting skills are also conveyed to parents to strengthen the parent/child bond and to help parents better understand their children through the Parental Empowerment Programme also known as 'Ecole des Parents', implemented with the financial assistance of United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the collaboration of the Rodrigues Council of Social Services (RCSS). Training programmes '*En le sens de l'engagement au sein du couple*' and 'Men as Partners', are also being organised to enhance the relationship between parents and empower parents with the capacity to manage and develop coping mechanism with regard to their family problems thus promoting healthier family life and a more conducive environment for upbringing of the children.

There is a close collaboration with the 'Brigade pour la Protection de la Famille' of the Police Service to assist in the identification of victims and providing them support. The services of the 'Brigade pour la Protection de la Famille', Child Development Unit and Family Welfare Unit have been placed at the same location, that is, the Integrated Family Centre at Malabar to ensure an integrated approach to child protection and also rapid response to reported cases of child abuse.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, with regard to children with behavioural problems that are beyond control of parents prior to January 2022, they were dealt with under the Juvenile Offenders Act 1935, which is now repealed. Hence, section 41 of the Children Act 2020, now makes provision for children with serious behavioural concern and those children are dealt with at the level of the Probation Services.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, with regard to part (b) of the question, concerning new measures that my Commission is envisaging to undertake in relation to children facing distresses, as the House is aware, to address child protection this requires a multi-dimensional approach, that is, working through other sectors essential for child protection, such as, education, health, social protection and youth amongst others. The involvement of NGOs, civil society and the community at large is also essential to support inclusive and accessible social care, particularly, for the vulnerable families whose children are more at risk of being deprived of their rights.

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My Commission is therefore working towards the strengthening of its Child Protection Systems and Services. During the official visit I effected as Commissioner responsible for the subject of women affairs, family welfare and child development in Mauritius at the end of May 2022, contacts were established with UN agencies, European Union and other agencies to help the Commission to professionalise the Women Family Welfare and Child Development Unit, to offer a better service to families and children in need of care and protection.

My Commission is also in the process of preparing its Strategic Plan 2022-2027. The main objective thereof is to establish the strategies of offering the highest quality services which will focus primarily on supporting families and protecting children at an early stage at the grass root level to prevent harm and improve family life and create a child safe environment.

Following the last visit of the UNFPA representatives in Rodrigues during the week ending 26 August 2022, the UNFPA Head of Office for Mauritius and Seychelles has humbly been requested to support and has favourably accepted and will provide technical support to my Commission for the drafting of the Strategic Plan 2022-2027. Stakeholders meeting will be held from 19 to 23 September 2022 and the final report is expected by the end of the year 2022 for consideration and implementation.

Parallely, Mr Chairperson, Sir, the engagement and evolvement of the community to provide child protection and welfare is being strengthened. For example, the collaboration of the '*responsable des familles*' of the Rodrigues Council of Social Services has been sought and obtained to assist in the identification and reporting of cases of families facing difficulties. Much emphasis is also being laid on the empowerment of girls, women, adolescents and youths in collaboration with other partners through life skills programmes to promote healthy relationship as well as violence prevention.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, in addition to the measures, I just mentioned, the Commission for Child Development is orienting its services to facilitate family based modalities of care with a view to limit institutionalisation to a minimum and to progressively eliminate the use of residential care for children. Parallely, in view of creating a more conducive and safe environment for those children who require alternative care, the Commission for Child Development together with the *Congregation des Filles de Marie* is working progressively on the reform of the Foyer Marie Madeleine de la Croix to improve the physical environment of the foyer and empowering its staff.

Thank you, Mr Chairperson, Sir.

The Minority Leader: M. le président, on a écouté longuement la réponse de la Commissaire de la Femme. Est-ce que je pourrais demander à la commissaire de nous donner son appréciation ou son constat par rapport à la tendance général, par rapport au nombre de cas d'enfant rapporter qui ont des difficultés ? Donc, est-ce qu'on peut avoir son appréciation ou son constat par rapport à la situation actuelle ?

Ms Agathe: Mr Chairperson, Sir, as I have already said, that is, we are working towards the Strategic Plan 2022-2027 because we are not satisfied with the actual situation. This is to improve the situation. That is why we are working towards this.

The Minority Leader: Si je comprends bien, M. le président, Madame la commissaire n'est pas en mesure de nous dire est-ce qu'il y a un nombre grandissant d'enfant victime ou bien il y a une baisse. Nous avons mis en place sachant que la RRA toute seule ne peut pas combattre ce problème d'enfant en détresse ou d'enfant avec des problèmes de *behaviour*, de comportement, nous avons mis en place, le *Child Network* regroupant tous les partenaires et institutions ONG travaillant en faveur des enfants. Est-ce que je peux savoir si la commissaire a eu l'opportunité de présider un tel comité pour avoir une meilleure vue de la situation depuis son installation ?

Ms Agathe: Mr Chairperson, Sir, as at date I have not been working with this, what the Minority Leader is saying, perhaps she may handle more information about it. Thank you.

The Minority Leader: M. le président, nous avons aussi voté ici, à l'Assemblée Régionale, le *Child Mentoring Regulations*, est-ce que je peux savoir de la commissaire, est-ce que le *Child Mentoring Committee*, est-ce que la composition a été changée depuis l'installation du gouvernement et est-ce qu'il y a eu des rencontres par rapport à ça ?

Ms Agathe: Mr Chairperson, Sir, as I have said at the start, that is, there has been the new Children Act 2022, which was promulgated on January 2022 and there are many things in the Regulations that needs to be worked out. That is, the commission is working on the Regulations also. Thank you.

Mr Lisette: Mr Chairperson, Sir, through her answer to the House the Commissioner for Child Development states that she intends to strengthen the Child Development Unit and the services but she has not given the exact strategies that she wants to admit. Will the House please inform specially what she wants to do in order to strengthen that unit?

Ms Agathe: The strategies will be given in a statement afterward. The strategies will be found also on the Strategic Plan. Because everything is in my mind, I will not reveal everything to you but you can have the statement afterwards. No.

Mr Baptiste: Mr Chairperson, Sir, the Commissioner mentioned that she had meetings with the UN Agencies, can she give more details about the avenues of cooperation she discussed and which field she wants exactly the UN Agencies to help us in our strategies?

Ms Agathe: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I will recommend the respected Member Baptiste to come with a substantive question next time. Thank you.

The Minority Leader: M. le président, une dernière question juste pour savoir auprès de la commissaire, quel est le problème particulier dont fait face nos enfants aujourd'hui ? Quel est le problème le plus criant ?

Ms Agathe: Mr Chairperson, Sir, can I table the information requested to the Minority Leader?

Mr Chairperson: Okay, next question.

BUILDING/MON PLAISIR – ALLOCATION/RODRIGUES FIRE RESCUE SERVICES & RODRIGUES EMERGENCY OPERATING COMMAND

(No. B/73) Ms K. Roussety (Second Local Region Member for Baie aux Huitres) asked the Commissioner for Social Security and Others whether, in regard to the building constructed at Mon Plaisir, he will inform the House if:

- (a) the whole building will be allocated to the Rodrigues Fire Rescue Services and the Rodrigues Emergency Operating Command (REOC), and
- (b) all civil works thereof have been completed and commissioned?

Mr Volbert: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I wish to state at the outset that the contract awarded was for the construction of Fire Station and Disaster Centre at Mon Plaisir. Upon inauguration of the building by the Prime Minister last week, all spaces initially earmarked for Fire Station have been made available for the service of the Fire and Rescue Services.

Rodrigues Emergency Operating Command (REOC) has not yet been granted any space as several outstanding works, such as, data point access and radio control command have not yet been installed.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, at no point in time, there was a building constructed for REOC. The rest of the building was constructed for Disaster Management and REOC is part of the Disaster Management as other services such as Health, Fire, Social Security, Public Infrastructure, Local Stakeholders, Police etc.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, coming here to state that the building constructed for Disaster Management should be allocated to REOC is simple ignorance of the functioning of the Public Service.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, recently I was in Mauritius, I visited the National Emergency Operations Command (NEOC) in Mauritius and I was amazed to see how the NEOC is functional in terms of different working stations.

The one designed in Rodrigues is basically a hotel with emphasis being laid on resting and sleeping rather than managing disasters. It is as if the former government was thinking of sleeping before working. In Mauritius, officers are provided with camp beds for inlying whereas in Rodrigues a wing of the whole building for the purpose of sleeping. Each room is provided with a bathroom, toilet facility and privacy.

I have requested that the Officer in Charge of the NEOC, ACP Budhoo, to field a mission to Rodrigues to assess the proper installation of REOC. Upon his observation and recommendation, adjustment will be made so that REOC can be allocated with appropriate office spaces.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, as regards to part (c), all civil works as per contract have been completed and commissioned. However, several civil works which were not possible to cater under the past contract is still ongoing namely:

- (i) Partitioning;
- (ii) Metal gratings over the drains;
- (iii) Fixing of data point;
- (iv) Fixing of electrical outlets;
- (v) Telephone services, and
- (vi) Entry gates.

Thank you, Mr Chairperson, Sir.

The Minority Leader: M. le président, dans la question c'est mentionnée, *whether the whole building will be allocated to the Rodrigues Fire Rescue and Services and REOC.*

Est-ce que le commissaire peut nous confirmer si tout le complexe de Mon Plaisir sera dédié pour le Fire Service et pour le Rodrigues Emergency Operations Command ?

Mr Volbert: J'ai déjà répondu à la question. Je vais répéter pour la respectée Minority Leader.

I wish to state that at the outset that the contract awarded for the construction Fire Service and Disaster Centre at Mon Plaisir, upon inauguration of the building by the Prime Minister last week, all spaces initially earmarked for Fire Station have been made available for the service of the Fire and Rescue Services.

Mr Baptiste: According to the plan that I have, I know that it was clearly stated that it was for REOC but anyway it has been also, as you mentioned, for Disaster Management and REOC, will the purpose of this building be only/solely for Disaster Management and REOC and Fire Rescue Services or other offices from outside will be housed there?

Mr Volbert: Nothing has been decided so far as to whether the building will be used for REOC and Fire Services only. Nothing has been decided until now.

Mr Lisette: Mr Chairperson, Sir, has the Commissioner somehow question about the modernity of the building itself. Is he aware that it has happened in the past and it may happen in the future that REOC members may have to stay in office for more than three to five days if ever there is a ... which prevail on the island for such period of time?

Mr Volbert: Yes, I am aware. That is why at the beginning of my answer I stated that I visited NEOC in Mauritius and there, I was amazed to see that NEOC as what you have done here. There are only two camp beds... Because we are command by the NEOC. REOC is part of NEOC from Mauritius.

Mr Chairperson: Address the Chair, please.

Mr Baptiste: Is the Commissioner aware that while designing this building, there was also the contribution of NEOC? And, is he not happy that Rodrigues is beyond what is there in Mauritius or we should stay like second class citizen with old things?

Mr Volbert: The contribution of NEOC or the Officer in Charge of NEOC at that time? Sorry?

Mr Chairperson: We move to next question, please.

(Interruptions)

Mr Chairperson: Member Lisette? You have the floor.

**‘ZE PLAN MARSHALL’ – RODRIGUES INFRASTRUCTURAL DEVELOPMENT
PROGRAMME (RIDP)/GOVERNMENT PROGRAMME 2022-2027**

(No. B/74) **Mr N. Lisette (First Local Region Member for Baie aux Huitres)** asked the Chief Commissioner whether, in regard to the setting up and the financing of '*Ze plan Marshall*' (Rodrigues Infrastructural Development Programme - RIDP) as announced in the Government Programme 2022-2027, he will state on the implementation thereof and give details on the different deadlines in relation thereto?

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, as announced in the Government Programme 2022-2027, we started consultation with the Central Government for the financing of a Marshall Plan (Rodrigues Infrastructural Development Programme) for the period of ten years to ensure the development of public infrastructures in Rodrigues. The programme has not yet been finalised. I will inform the House on development thereon in force. Thank you.

Mr Chairperson: Next question.

EX-POINTE VENUS HOTEL

(No. B/75) **Mrs R.M.F. Gaspard Pierre Louis, C.S.K. (Minority Leader)** asked the Chief Commissioner whether, in regard to ex-Pointe Venus Hotel, he will state and table details on:

- (a) the amount agreed for its acquisition by the Rodrigues Regional Assembly, and
- (b) any new policy decision taken in connection thereto by his regional government?

The Chief Commissioner: Yes, Mr Chairperson, Sir, Mr Chairperson, Sir, I am informed that in the year 2017, the Rodrigues Regional Assembly acquired the Ex-Pointe Venus Hotel from Mauritours Ltd for the sum of Rs 55 m. as compensation for added value to the land excluding furniture, plants and equipment for the implementation of the Technopole project. The amount paid was determined by the Government Valuation Department.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, I would like to inform the House that during a consultation meeting held in Rodrigues by the delegation from the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development (MOFED) headed by the Honourable Prime Minister in March 2018, discussions were held on a request made by the Employees Welfare Fund (EWF) to MOFED with regard

to their intention to acquire the ex-Pointe Venus Hotel complex for its re-operation as a hotel in Rodrigues.

An agreement in principle was reached and it was decided that subject to the taking over of the complex by the EWF, the proceeds generated from the acquisition would be invested into the construction of a Technopark at a site to be determined by the RRA. A new site was then identified at Baladirou for the construction of a Technopark.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, on 10 May 2018, a negotiation meeting was held between representative of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly and a delegation from the Employees Welfare Fund with regard to the proposal for the acquisition of the building. During the discussions, the EWF agreed for the acquisition of the complex for an amount of Rs 75 m.

The then Executive Council, at its meeting held on Friday 25 May 2018, approved the proposal for the acquisition of the complex by the EWF. Further to the approval of the Executive Council, the approval of the MOFED was sought and obtained to finalise the transaction with the EWF. In that respect, as a preliminary agreement, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between the RRA and the EWF on 12 April 2019.

The RRA and the EWF were in the process of finalising the sales transaction and the service of Notary Public was retained to finalise the sales deed. The final transaction has not been possible due to the closing of borders (flights) in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In the meantime, there was a change in the EWF Board and the new board has revisited all the process. The board has requested for the re-evaluation of the property. Following the re-evaluation, the EWF made a reduced offer of Rs 65 m. apparently based on a new valuation report.

The RRA requested the EWF to maintain the initial agreed sales price but the latter maintained its proposal. The RRA accepted the reduced offer and requested the EWF to finalise the deed of sale at the earliest.

As at date, the deed of sale has not yet been finalised. It is deplored that the previous Regional Government has allowed the complex to be ripped off of everything except what could not be looted. A copy of the valuation report and deed of sale is being tabled for the information of the House.

As regards to part (b), when we took office, the Executive Council has re-examined the matter and decided not to proceed ahead with the sale and to rehabilitate the complex to provide

office space and other amenities for the different Commissions of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly. We are also contemplating the possibility of using the amenities therefore for the facilities of the government.

The EWF has been informed that an alternative site will be allocated to them for the implementation of a hotel project. They have been invited to send their representative to Rodrigues to identify the site. Thank you.

The Minority Leader: M. le président, je remercie le Chef commissaire pour le très bon récit par rapport à ce projet. Est-ce que je peux demander au Chef commissaire, s'il y a eu un service de gardiennage 24/7 à Pointe Venus depuis qu'on a fait acquisition de ce complexe ?

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I do not have this information at hand. I think the Member, if she wanted the issue to be ... the issue of watchman, she should have asked the question specifically. I am aware that during a visit, some maybe one month ago, there was no watchman there and things were hostile being looted from the site and we have arranged that ... be placed there.

Mr Chairperson: Next question. I did not here the number of your question. Thank you.

STOCK OF DRUGS – QUEEN ELIZABETH HOSPITAL/AREA HEALTH CENTRES & HEALTH CENTRES

(No. B/76) **Mr J. P. Spéville (Fourth Island Region Member)** asked the Commissioner for Health and Others Whether, in regard to the stock of drugs at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, the Area Health Centres and Health Centres around Rodrigues since March 2022 to date, he will: -

- (a) give a detailed breakdown of the drugs that are/were out of stock or expired, if any and, if so, indicating the period thereof, and
- (b) state if representations have been made in relation to expired medicines delivered at Queen Elizabeth Hospital recently and, in the affirmative, to state the measures his Commission has undertaken in relation thereto to prevent the occurrence thereof?

Mr Volbert: Mr Chairperson, Sir, as regards to part (a) of the question, since the detailed breakdown of drugs relate to some 700 to 800 different types of drugs, the data is being

compiled and will be tabled to the Assembly Library. It is a complicated exercise in eight different locations around Creve-Coeur.

As regards to part (b) of the question, no representation has been received at the level of my Commission. However, I am aware of a malicious and false allegation from a “Political Web Radio” from a lady who has occupied a high post relating to one...

The Minority Leader: *M. le président*, I have got a point of order. I think this is not allowed in the Chamber, here.

Mr Chairperson: Just withdraw the word ‘malicious’.

Mr Volbert: I withdraw the word ‘malicious’. Can I continue? ...relating to one case of expired “Zentel”. Mr Chairperson, Sir, this case has brought major embarrassment to the other side so much that the related post on Facebook has been removed. I would request those with representations to make so in a responsible manner. By making cheap allegations against the dedicated personnel of the Health Services, this brings discouragement and demotivation. This is the reason why they are sitting on the other side and we are here on this side. I would request Members of the minority to respect those Health Services personnels *qui contre vent et marée luttent pour offrir un meilleur service de santé à la population*.

Mr Baptiste: I think that this is a serious issue. The Commissioner has said that there has been no official representation. But I can still remember that the Member, my colleague Ramdally draw the attention of the Commissioner about some drugs which were out of stock and he in replied after adjournment said that he will look into the matter. I think there has been some two months since. May I know what the Commissioner has done? And, whether investigation has been made to confirm whether there were really drugs which were out of stock?

Mr Volbert: *M. le président*, une enquête a été faite et jusqu’à maintenant on ne m’a pas informé s’il y a des cas de manque de *drugs* à l’hôpital de Crève-Cœur.

Mr Baptiste: But anyway, as I have said, it is a serious issue, it is the public health. I can confirm that there are some drugs which are out of stock. I would like to know what measures the Commissioner intends to take to avoid such problem in the future?

Mr Volbert: *M. le président*, si le respecté Membre a les informations, il peut me les communiquer. A ce moment-là, on va faire le nécessaire.

Mr Baptiste: Mr Chairperson, Sir, not more than yesterday there was a patient who prescribed iron for a child at Mont Lubin Health Centre and these were not available yesterday and same was not available some months back. She has been made to understand that there is only expired iron available, which has expired in September.

Mr Chairperson: Put your question, please.

Mr Baptiste: I would like the Commissioner to confirm whether there are some drugs which are still missing and I have giving example. I can table, if you want.

Mr Volbert: Je ne peux pas confirmer, parce que je suis commissaire je ne suis pas technicien dans les pharmacies, je ne suis pas technicien en pharmacie. Si vous avez les reponses, le respecté Membre Baptiste, *come forward and give it to me and we will enquire and give you the answer afterwards.*

Mr Chairperson: Next question. Next question, please! Time is going fast, so let us move!

**GLOBAL CLIMATE CHANGE ALLIANCE PLUS (GCCA+) CLIMATE-SMART
AGRICULTURE PROJECT**

(No. B/77) Mr L. D. Baptiste (Second Local Region Member for Grande Montagne) asked the Commissioner for Social Security and Others whether, in regard to the Global Climate Change Alliance Plus (GCCA+) Climate-Smart Agriculture Project, headed by his Commission, he can for the benefit of the House:

- (a) give a brief description thereof;
- (b) state the specific objectives of the project, and (c) specify the scope of works and update on the status thereof?

Mr Volbert: Mr Chairperson, Sir, allow me to state at the outset that I failed to understand how a project on Global Climate Change Alliance Plus (GCCA+) and Climate-Smart Agriculture Project has landed at Social Security not at the Commission for Environment and Agriculture under the previous regime.

Upon assumption of office, I was made aware of the project and I called for a meeting amongst officers of my commission. Mr Chairperson, Sir, I regret to inform the House that officers of the Commission of Social Security were not aware of the project and worst the project was not submitted by the Commission for Social Security to the European Union. From information gathered, it appears that even the former Commissioner (he is on the other side)

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for the Social Security was not aware that his commission has submitted a project to the European Union.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, a quick encounter with officers has revealed that upon announcement of the call for project by the European Union, the then Commissioner for Agriculture, Mr R. P. requested that no commission should submit projects as the Commission for Agriculture has a well-designed project to be funded under this call for proposal. However, it appears that someone has decided that he would replace policy makers and decide on behalf of the policy makers for Rodrigues. You know whom I am talking about.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, this is a serious matter and today we found ourselves in a very delicate situation to have benefitted from a project that we have no idea on how to implement same. The worst part of it is that today Social Security has no technical expertise or officer to implement environment and agricultural projects.

I am informed that there are two files at the Commission for Social Security with no project write-up and no clear policy on what the project wishes to achieve.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, I must admit that it would appear that there were two... (not to same that, I know you will point of order. I move forward).

The first folio f(1) of the file RRA/COM/SOC/RB/W1/7 of 2019/2020 starts with a letter from the Civil Engineer dated 28 May 2020 stating, I quote:

“As agreed during meeting held on 15 May 2020 with Commissioner, the tender will be split into separate smaller tender in view to start the construction works the soonest possible.”, unquote.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, according to law, splitting of tenders is illegal, the more so, it should have come from the Departmental Bid Committee (DBC) not from a Commissioner.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, the second file starts at folio (1) with a notes of meeting of the DBC for the setting up of a Lime and Honey Farm at Anse Ally, Rodrigues. In the absence of a full project write-up submitted to the European Union which is not available in the file at my Commission. We have sought a report from the EPMU.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, the EPMU informed that the Global Climate Change Alliance (GCCA+) established by the European Union (EU) has launched a call for proposal under the flagship initiative “Supporting Climate Smart Agriculture for small holders in the Republic of Mauritius” on the 03 July 2017.

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Mr Chairperson, Sir, I am informed by the EPMU that Climate Smart Agriculture (CSA) firstly integrates climate change and its effects into the planning and development of sustainable agricultural systems. A project proposal was submitted following a call for proposal under the flagship initiative GCCA+: Supporting Climate Smart Agriculture for small holders in the Republic of Mauritius on 29 June 2017 entitled “Setting up of an Integrated Organic Chilli Farm at Mt du Sable and Lime and Honey Farm at Anse Ali”. The project comprises of the following two components: -

- (i) Setting up of an Integrated Organic Chilli Farm at Mt du Sable (Target: 28 beneficiaries), and
- (ii) Setting up of a lime and honey farm at Anse Ali (Target: 15 beneficiaries).

Mr Chairperson, Sir, I am also informed by the EPMU that the total cost of the project as per signed contract is Rs 51,634,058.70 out of which: -

- (a) EU Contribution: Rs 29,716,141.28 representing 76.92 % of the contribution.
- (b) RRA Contribution: Rs 11,917,914.42 representing 23.08 % of the contribution.

The contribution of each partner (EU and RRA) is to be disbursed to a common bank account as follows: -

- 1) Initial pre-financing payment: Rs 12,591,497.71
- 2) Further pre-financing payments: Rs 23,152,997.03
- 3) Balance of the final amount of the grant: Rs 3,917,600
- 4) Disbursement of pre-financing by EU in July 2018 to the tune of Rs 12,592,162.71.
- 5) Second disbursement by EU in March 2021 amounting to Rs 5,593,000 and in December 2021 to the tune of Rs 19,899,032.72.
- 6) Disbursement of RRA contribution to the tune of Rs 10.9 m. in April 2021.
- 7) Closing Balance on project Bank Account as at 25 February 2022 is Rs 26,349,235.05.
- 8) Payment of VAT amounting to Rs 0.6 m. already paid in Financial Year 2021/2022.
- 9) Remaining contribution of Rs 1.1 m. of RRA Contribution will be deposited on project Bank Account.
- 10) Provision of Rs 0.8 m. is being budgeted for next Financial Year 2022/2023.

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Mr Chairperson, Sir, I am informed that the overall objectives of the project are to rehabilitate the valleys of Mt du Sable and Anse Ali through the setting up of model and modern farms for the cultivation of high valued products by vulnerable groups of the region including women in distress, the unemployed enrolled under the Employment Relief Programme (ERP) and beneficiaries of the Unemployment Hardship Relief (UHR).

Mr Chairperson, Sir, updated status of the projects: -

- (1) I am informed that the training Activities for both Anse Ali and Mt du Sable beneficiaries have been completed in 2021. The overall progress of the projects are as follows:

Anse Ali:

SN	Components	Status	Remarks
1	Track Road	Completed	
2	Fencing	Completed	
3	Construction of nursery	Completed	Awaiting approval from CEB for installation of photovoltaic panels
4	Construction of rainwater harvesting	80% completed	

Mt du Sable:

SN	Components	Status
1	Track Road	Completed
2	Fencing	Completed
3	Construction of rainwater harvesting	55% completed up to
4	Construction of goat pens	Site handed over to contractor in 2022. Works scheduled for completion within three months. Not yet completed up to now.

The project is not completed yet, Mr Chairperson, Sir.

I must add here, Mr Chairperson, Sir, that the list of beneficiaries of the project has not been done in total transparency. It is why I have instructed the Departmental Head of my commission to refer this matter to appropriate authority for a full enquiry and to take appropriate action as necessary. Thank you.

Mr Baptiste: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I am quite surprise by the answer on the first part of the question by the Commissioner. May be he does not know how it works with the European Union. But this was really a call for proposal and it was a form of competition between commissions of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly written by competent persons of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly. That is why, the Commission for Social Security sought advice of the ... So, but anyway, can the Commissioner confirm whether the Commission for Social Security set the concept notes and made application for this particular project to the European Union? And that the organisation, the EU disbursed money and agreed with the project?

Mr Volbert: Comme je vous ai dit, M. le président, dans le *file* à la commission, il n'y a pas de *project Write up*. Donc, je ne connais de ce que vous...

Mr Baptiste: I know where it is available, I can give it to you. We have copies of it. But anyway, is the Commissioner aware that the Ambassador of EU came to Rodrigues on 02 July 2018 for the signing of this particular document with the Commission for Social Security, Mrs Marjaana Sall, signed by the representative of the Commission, the Departmental Head not the Commissioner. And, I would like to ask the respected Commissioner whether the Ambassador of EU will come to sign a document which has not been submitted or without a project proposal written from...

Mr Chairperson: What is your main question?

Mr Baptiste: I would like to know whether a project was submitted by the Commission for Social Security to the European Union, a call for proposal for this project at Anse Ali and Mt du Sable, as he mentioned?

Mr Volbert: M. le président, je n'ai pas les informations. Et, comme je vous ai dit, dans les files il n'y a rien. C'est pour ça je ne peux pas répondre à la question. Si le respecté Membre veut, qu'il vienne avec une autre question une prochaine fois. A ce moment-là, je vais chercher les informations qu'il veut. D'ailleurs, je pense qu'il connaît tous les informations, il était là. Donc, à ce moment-là, je vais voir si j'ai les informations, et répondre à la question.

Mr Baptiste: I know that your Departmental Head knows very well. He can contact the Departmental Head who was there before.

Mr Chairperson: Ask your question, respected Member!

Mr Baptiste: But I would like to ask the Commissioner whether he will go ahead to ensure that the project is completed according to the contractual agreement because we are talking about an international agency, whether he intends to go forwards with the project and to complete same in collaboration with the Commission for Women, as it is clearly mentioned, which was the co-applicant of the project and the Commission for Agriculture for technical assistance in this specific project?

Mr Chairperson: Thank you.

Mr Baptiste: I have a copy here and it is available in files at your commission.

Mr Volbert: You have taken it from the *dossier* before leaving. Mr Chairperson, Sir, I think according the...

(Interruptions)

Mr Chairperson: Silence, please!

Mr Volbert: ...to the question of the Commissioner, we will see to it whether we are going with the Commission for Agriculture. We will see whether we can jointly do something. We will see, we will see. And, *à ce moment-là on va voir si on va continuer ou... Je ne peux pas répondre là, parce que comme je vous ai dit, le file, il n'y a pas de project write up, on ne sait pas qui a fait la demande auprès de l'Union Européenne. Donc, je ne peux pas répondre là comme ça.*

Mr Chairperson: Next question.

**PATIENTS SENT TO MAURITIUS – FURTHER TREATMENT
– MARCH 2022 TO DATE**

(No. B/78) Mr J. R. Ramdally (First Local Region Member for Saint Gabriel) asked the Commissioner for Health and Others whether, in regard to patients sent to Mauritius for further treatment since March 2022 to date, he will inform the House about the:

- (a) number of patients sent together with the number of accompanier per patient;
- (b) type of illness concerned and the criteria applicable therefor;
- (c) total amount paid for the different allowances in connection thereto, and

- (d) amount paid or due for those accommodated together with their accompanier/s at the Sikamifer Hotel and/or any other institution, if applicable?

(This part of replies from Mr Volbert is not on records): Mr Chairperson, Sir, the number of patients sent to Mauritius for treatment from March 2022 to date are as follows:

	March	April	May	June	July	August	September
Number of patients with accompanying relative	46	51	66	65	59	77	6
Number of patients without accompanying relative	3	5	7	7	4	5	-

Mr Ramdally: Mr Chairperson, Sir, what about part (b)?

Mr Chairperson, Sir, as regards to part (b) of the question, I wish to inform the House that patients are transferred to Mauritius for specialised treatment and investigation for different illness such as:

- (i) MRI (Magnetic Resonance Imaging),
- (ii) EEG (Electro encephalogram);
- (iii) Mammography;
- (iv) Specialised treatment for Eye problem, ENT and Radiotherapy; and
- (v) Pregnant women with complication whose new-born will need neonatal intensive care.
- (vi) Cancer care

For ethical reason and in respect of those suffering from severe illness, I'm not going to elaborate further on this.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, as regards to part (c) of the question, I wish to inform the House that only subsistence allowance is paid to patients in Mauritius and that the total amount of subsistence allowance paid from March 2022 to date is Rs 2,131,660.

And part (d) of the question, Mr Chairperson, Sir, the total amount paid for hotel accommodation from March 2022 to 15 August 2022 is Rs 7,035,750. And we are processing for the payment of the outstanding amount from 16 to 31 August 2022. Thank you.

Mr Ramdally: Mr Chairperson, Sir, can I ask the Commissioner, who now at the level of his Commission recommend for the transfer of a patient to Mauritius?

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Mr Volbert: Of course, it is not me, it is the doctor, the specialist. The specialist recommends someone to go for specialised service in Mauritius.

Mr Ramdally: Can he confirm to the House if it is only the specialist or there are other persons that recommend...?

Mr Volbert: *Moi, je sais que c'est le spécialiste. Si le respecté Membre a quelqu'un d'autre, c'est son affaire, moi je connais les spécialistes.* He has the ability to recommend and transfer patients to Mauritius for further treatment and if he has someone else, I do not know. Perhaps, you have the answer.

Mr Lisette: I would like to re-ask the question in another words. Whether the Commissioner can confirm if all patients who have been transferred to Mauritius have had the recommendation from specialist or there are other persons who are doing this?

Mr Chairperson: Sorry. This question has already been canvassed and the Commissioner already answered the question. This question is not allowed.

Mr Ramdally: Mr Chairperson, Sir, can I ask the Commissioner about the number of accompaniers for one patient. How many accompanier is allowed?

Mr Volbert: I do not have the answer. Perhaps one or two. If a mother is proceeding with a child and the mother is admitted in hospital, perhaps two, I do not know. I do not know, I say. But I will seek for the information and table it for you the next session.

The Minority Leader: M. le président, est-ce que je peux savoir du Commissaire, est-ce qu'il y a en ce moment des personnes qui sont en attentes de leurs allocations par rapport à l'occasion pour le déplacement à Maurice. Ils attendent depuis des mois. Est-ce qu'il est au courant ?

Mr Volbert: Je ne sais pas s'ils attendent depuis des mois mais oui, il y a des gens, des patients qui sont admises à l'hôpital, ils attendent leurs *subsistance allowance*. Mais je ne sais pas pour combien de mois.

Mr Chairperson: Next question. Okay one last.

The Minority Leader: M. le président, le Commissaire a parlé de 'Hotel Sikamifer'. Nous savons que la décision pour avoir cette établissement pour l'accueil des patients étaient prises dans une conjoncture bien spécifique lorsque les patients n'arrivaient pas à bouger à cause du confinement et de la pandémie. Est-ce que le Commissaire compte maintenir ce *working arrangement* avec Sikamifer ?

Mr Volbert: Nous travaillons dessus pour voir si on va continuer ou on va chercher d'autre moyen à travers des *tenders* etc. Vous connaissez bien comment ça a été retenu, le service du Sikamifer.

Mr Chairperson: Okay, next question.

OPENING – CARDIAC DEDICATED UNIT/RODRIGUES

CARDIAC DEDICATED UNIT - RODRIGUES

(No. B/79) Mr J. R. Ramdally (First Local Region Member for Saint Gabriel) asked the Commissioner for Health and Others whether, in regard to the opening of a Cardiac Dedicated Unit in Rodrigues, he will inform the House on where matters stand in relation thereto?

Mr Volbert: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I wish to inform the House that as soon as my assumption of office on 05 March 2022, I was made aware that the Cardiac Centre which falls under the aegis of the Cardiac Centre Trust in Mauritius was interested to sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Rodrigues Regional Assembly with a view to facilitate the treatment of patients suffering from cardiac issues in Rodrigues. I immediately give instruction to my Departmental Head to enquire the state of affairs.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, I was apprised that this offer was made to the previous regional government but as per conversation with the Head of “Cardiac Centre”, the project was put on hold due to *la manque d'intérêt de la part du gouvernement de l'époque*.

Being part of a responsible and caring regional government, I raised the matter with the Chief Commissioner and he immediately saw the potential of this project. I therefore fielded a mission to Mauritius to discuss amongst others the issue of setting up of a Cardiac Unit in Rodrigues.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, during the meeting with the Chairman and Director of Cardiac Services on 25 April 2022, a copy of the said MoU, dully vetted by the State Law Office was handed over. Same was approved by the Executive Council for signature on 06 May 2022. Mr Chairperson, Sir, I am pleased to announce that the MoU was signed on 15 May 2022.

Following the signature of the MoU, a site visit was effected at Queen Elizabeth Hospital, and an appropriate location was identified thereat for the setting up of the Cardiac Unit. However, one of the exigencies of the Director of Cardiac Services, Dr. GUNNESS was that the Cardiac Unit should be a global service inclusive of SAMU (Service d'Aide Médicale d'Urgence) services and Intensive Care Unit (ICU) in close proximity. Mr Chairperson, Sir, the

Cardiac Unit requires different types of medical equipment compared to normal services as well as new set up and trained personnel.

In this connection, Expression of Interest have been launched to select two Medical Officers (Rodrigues) and nine nursing staff (Rodrigues) for on-the-job training at the Cardiac Centre for a period of three to six months. Mr Commission is working with Cardiac Centre Trust to have our Rodriguan Cardiologist Dr. Andy Alain posted to Rodrigues on a permanent basis.

My Commission is finalizing the structural design recommendation of Dr. Gunness and the list of equipment to be procured. During the visit of Dr. Honourable Jagutpal from 19 to 23 August 2022, the project was presented and received the green light of the ministry. Mr Chairperson, Sir, I can assure the House that before the end of year 2022, the Cardiac Unit will be a reality.

Mr Ramdally: Mr Chairperson, Sir, can I ask the Commissioner what will be the exact role of this Cardiac Unit.

Mr Volbert: The types of surgical operation to be carried – the role as you just said – intensive cardiology, coronary, angiography, coronary angioplasty and pacemaker in sessions, cardiac surgeries, coronary artery by-pass, grafting and heart valve surgery.

Mr Ramdally: Can I ask the Commissioner, Mr Chairperson, Sir, if a cost value for this project has been done? The cost of the project.

Mr Volbert: Je n'ai pas les informations, M. le président. Le Membre peut venir avec une autre question la prochaine fois.

The Minority Leader: M. le président, le Commissaire vient de nous informer qu'il aura différents services qui seront offerts, qui vont nécessiter la mise en place d'une unité. Est-ce qu'on peut savoir s'ils ont déjà décidé où va se trouver ce Cardiac Dedicated Unit ?

Mr Volbert: M. le président, le Cardiac Dedicated Unit sera – will be housed into the ancient operating theatre at Queen Elizabeth Hospital.

Mr Ramdally: M. le président, est-ce que je pourrais demander au Commissaire actuellement quel est l'état de la situation concernant les patients cardiaques, c'est quoi le chiffre des personnes qui...

Mr Chairperson: Sorry, but you do not have this in your question. Next question. You do not have it in your main question. This is the Standing Order. Do you have an answer, Commissioner?

Mr Volbert: No.

Mr Chairperson: So, we move to next question.

**PARTNERSHIP – COMMISSION & LOCAL PRIVATE DRUG STORES
- RODRIGUES**

(No. B/80) Mr J. R. Ramdally (First Local Region Member for Saint Gabriel) asked the Commissioner for Health and Others whether, in regard to the announced partnership between his Commission and the local private drug stores in Rodrigues, he will enlighten the House about:

- (a) the terms and conditions set between the parties together with the duties and responsibilities thereof, and
- (b) a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) or any other document signed between the parties and, in the affirmative, to table a copy thereof?

Mr Chairperson, Sir, I cannot understand why the respected Member is coming with the idea of a partnership between my commission and local private drug stores in Rodrigues. From what I can understand from the question, is that the respected Member is suggesting that my commission has been engaged into some kinds of favouritism or corrupt practices (you have said it in your web radio). I would invite you to go and report a case to the authority not to hide behind Parliamentary Immunity. I would invite Members from the other side to observe some restraint and respect the dedicated personnel of the Health Services and more specially those of the Pharmacy Section. There is no need for any kind of partnership or MOU between government institutions and profit making organisation. This simply cannot be done by law. Therefore, there is no need to reply to parts (a) and (b) of the question. However, with a view to provide better services to the population, I had a meeting with the two Pharmacy Operators in Rodrigues to propose them to extend their opening hours on Sunday. They have all unanimously accepted to establish a system of *pharmacie de garde*. The system of *pharmacie de garde*, Mr Chairperson, Sir, has been practiced in Mauritius for years.

Procurement of drugs, Mr Chairperson, Sir, and medicines from local private pharmacy is an individual choice that should be provided to all Rodriguans. Kindly note that all local

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drug stores are presently opened from 08.00 to 16.00 hrs on week days and Saturdays and from 08.00 to 11.00 hrs on Sundays and Public Holidays. We have agreed to extend this opening time on weekdays and Saturdays for all pharmacies and Sundays and Public Holidays to remain open up to 18.00 hrs. Thank you.

Mr Chairperson: Next question.

Respected Members, the Table has been advised that PQs B/81, B/82, B/83, B/84, B/87 and B/88 have been withdrawn by the respective Members. Next question.

BAIE MALGACHE COMMUNITY SCHOOL

(No. B/81) Mr N. Lisette (First Local Region Member for Baie aux Huitres) asked the Chief Commissioner whether, in regard to Baie Malagche Community school, he will state:

- (a) if construction has been completed thereof;
- (b) if there has been delays and, to state, if any, the amount of liquidated damages to be paid in relation thereto, and
- (c) when the primary students will be admitted thereat?

(Withdrawn)

**ONGOING CONSTRUCTION – NEW/ADDITIONAL FACILITIES
PRE-PRIMARY & PRIMARY SCHOOLS**

(No. B/82) Ms M. N. Raffaut (Second Island Region Member) asked the Chief Commissioner whether, in regard to the ongoing construction of new/additional facilities in the different pre-primary and primary schools in Rodrigues, he will state and table:

- (a) to whom and when the respective contracts were launched and awarded therefor, and
- (b) the schools concerned and the scope of works for the respective facilities under construction thereof?

(Withdrawn)

BOOK LOAN SCHEME - RODRIGUES

(No. B/83) Ms M. N. Raffaut (Second Island Region Member) asked the Chief Commissioner whether, in regard to the Book Loan Scheme for Rodrigues, he will state for the benefit of the House if there are new guidelines being followed and, if so, the reasons thereof?

(Withdrawn)

CONSTRUCTION – MONTAGNE CABRIS TO ST. FRANCOIS ROAD

(No. B/84) Mr N. Lisette (First Local Region Member for Baie aux Huitres) asked the Deputy Chief Commissioner whether, in regard to the construction of the Montagne Cabris to St. François road, he will, for the benefit of the House state:

- (a) the scope of works executed and payment made therefor as at date, and
- (b) if he intends to proceed further with the construction of the road leading to St. François?

(Withdrawn)

FIRE OUTBREAK – ROCHE BON DIEU WASTE DISPOSAL GROUND

(No. B/85) Dr. H. Agathe (First Local Region Member for Grande Montagne) asked the Deputy Chief Commissioner whether, in regard to the last fire outbreak at Roche Bon Dieu waste disposal ground, he will for the benefit of the House, state the:

- (a) origin thereof;
- (b) means available on site for firefighting, and
- (c) time and cost for extinguishing the fire thereof?

Mr Chairperson, Sir, we all know that Solid Waste Management is a vital ongoing public system which affects people's health, the aestheticism and health of our environment. Wastes are generated through consumption of resources by human beings and continuously need to be managed in order to minimize impacts of wastes on humans and on the environment. We also know about the regular fire outbreaks that occur at the dumping site and the impacts on nearby residents.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, as regards to part (a) of the question, a fire outbreak was recorded on the Roche Bon Dieu Dumping Site on 28 July 2022 at 4.30 a.m. The Fire Services were immediately alerted of the issue and firefighting operation started at about 05.00 a.m. on the same day. The origin of the fire is considered as 'unknown' as per investigation of the Fire Services.

As regard to part (b) of the question, Mr Chairperson, Sir, the following measures have been taken by my Commission in order to help in case of fire thereat:

- (i) Two water tanks on site for prompt fire response. The water tanks were used in the firefighting operation early in the morning of 28 July pending the arrival of lorry water tank.

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- (ii) Installation of solar light. In view to ease supervision of the site solar lightings are installed thereat.
- (iii) An untarred ring road is constructed in order to facilitate movement of vehicles and logistics around the dumping site in the event of fire emergency.
- (iv) Rodclean personnel are present on site and a watch post is being set up for more efficient supervision of all activities at dumping site at all times.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, as regards to part (c) of the question; private lorries were contacted in order to extinguish the fire in the minimum time. My commission has just completed an Expression of Interest exercise in order to have the services of private lorries as and when required. Unfortunately, only seven water tanker lorries responded to our request. Most of the water tanker are taken up in the provision of water to households and others due to the prevailing dry season. In addition to the seven private water tanker lorries, one private excavator and two government logistics namely, an excavator on chain and a D6 were also mobilized for the operation.

Sea water was used as well as water provided by the Agricultural Services from the Saint Gabriel breeding Station. Some 1,100 cubic metres of water was needed to light out the major fire. Mr Chairperson, Sir, the firefighting exercise took a period of ten days. Mr Chairperson, Sir, the costs of operations to circumcise the fire outbreak amount to Rs 398,450 as follows:

- Rs 266,000 for the services of water tanker lorries;
- Rs 60,000 for the transfer of logistics to the dumping site; and
- Rs 72, 450 for the services of private crawler.

Dr Agathe: Si on prend un petit peu dans la réponse, c'est que vous avez mentionné qu'il y a souvent des incendies là-bas. Et on voit que lors de ce dernier incendie, l'incendie a quand même durée 10 jours. Alors qu'il aurait été possible peut-être d'éviter...

Mr Chairperson: Come with your question, please!

Dr Agathe: ... que le feu dure autant de temps. Alors, est-ce que sur place, les moyens dont vous avez mentionnés ont été vraiment mobilisés pour pouvoir éteindre le feu à son début ou bien en réalité, il y a eu des manquements ? Est-ce qu'il y avait de l'eau dans les bassins ? Est-ce que la lettre a été donnée correctement ? Est-ce que les pompiers ont effectivement commencé à travailler à cinq heures comme vous avez mentionné ?

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: D'après la réponse que j'ai, M. le président, effectivement, ils ont commencé à travailler dès cinq heures du matin. Donc, tout est fait pour justement minimiser les effets de cette incendie mais il faut comprendre aussi, M. le président, que ce dépotoir-là, il fallait être faisable depuis longtemps. C'est le reproche que, moi, je peux faire à l'ancien gouvernement, à l'ancien Commissaire : ils n'ont pas pris la bonne décision de fermer ce *dumping site*. Qu'est-ce qui se passe lorsqu'on mélange le déchet ? Il y a bien sûr, l'émanation des gazes qui fait que ça peut prendre feu à n'importe quel moment. Ce qu'on va faire, là, nous, qu'on avait fait dans le passé, on va faire un contrat avec quelqu'un qui va venir, qui va compacter le déchet, il va mettre de la terre dessus afin qu'il n'y ait pas d'accumulation de gazes.

Donc, tout est fait. On travaille dessus et parallèlement, ce qu'on fait, M. le président, on est en train de travailler sur le tri des déchets. Donc, il y a une plateforme qu'on a déjà construit à Grenade. Donc, Rodclean, là, commence le tri des déchets pour justement diminuer la pression sur ce dépotoir-là. Donc, qui aurait dû être *phase out* depuis longtemps. Donc, on a hérité de ce dépotoir. Il y a eu le feu. On a fait ce qu'il fallait faire. On a dépensé beaucoup d'argent : Rs 300,000, presque Rs 400,000. Donc, on ne peut pas continuer comme ça. Il faut trouver une solution et bien sûr, on va trouver la solution.

Mrs Gaspard Pierre Louis: M. le président, le Deputy Chief Commissioner a mentionné que *the origin of the fire is unknown*. Peut-il confirmer s'il y a eu un officier ou des officiers sanctionnés en raison de ce *fire outbreak*, suspendu ou quoi que ce soit ?

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: A ma connaissance, non, M. le président, mais j'ai dit à mon officier responsable de l'environnement de mener une enquête et bien sûr, on aura bien sûr, le *output* de cette enquête.

CONSTRUCTION MATERIALS – INDIVIDUALS/VALLEY ASSOCIATION/ VILLAGE COMMITTEES – FINANCIAL YEAR 2020-21

(No. B/87) Mrs M.A.L. Allas (Fifth Island Region Member) asked the Commissioner for Agriculture and Others whether, he will inform the House on construction materials delivered by his Commission to individuals, valley associations and/or village committees during financial year 2020-21 under schemes available thereat and, in the affirmative, to indicate: -

- (a) the number thereof together with the date, name and address of each beneficiary, specifying the type and quantity of materials delivered thereto, and

- (b) if there have been any discrepancies, and if so, to consider that an in-depth inquiry be carried out thereinto?

(Withdrawn)

(No. B/88) Mrs M.A.L. Allas (Fifth Island Region Member) asked the Commissioner for Social Security and Others whether, he will inform the House if any new policy in entertainment facilities have been provided to the elderly recently?

(Withdrawn)

Mr Chairperson: Okay, time is over.

STATEMENT BY COMMISSIONERS

FINANCING OF NEW RUNWAY – PLAINE CORAIL AIRPORT

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, with your permission, I wish to make a statement regarding the recent announcements for the construction of the new runway at the Plaine Corail Airport. Members of this House and the public and the economic community at large in Rodrigues would recall that the project to build a new runway at the Plaine Corail Airport dates back to more than one decade in the time of, I would say, our first mandate 2006/2011 where we had the support of government to build a new runway different from the existing one and longer. In view of improving air access to Rodrigues, the new runway of 2100 metres long by 455 metres wide with an additional ICAO compliant 300 metres on both ends for the runway end safety area was in the pipeline and still is in the pipeline.

The Airport Development Project also comprises of the upgrading of the airfield, infrastructure at Plaine Corail Airport and the various airport facilities, namely, a new air control tower, a new fire station and sea rescue facilities to support operations of Airbus A320 and Airbus A321 neotypes aircrafts. Mr Chairperson, Sir, all businesses and economic agents engaged in tourism activities in Rodrigues know about the air availability bottleneck and the economic community as well as the Regional Assembly, we are awaiting eagerly for the starting of this project. The estimated cost for the project has climbed to Rs 4 b. over years excluding VAT and in the context of the Airport Development Project, we have together with the Government of Mauritius undertaken.

First, the relocation of the inhabitants of Sainte Marie Village which when I was in my first mandate as Chief Commissioner, we earmarked land for the reallocation and the construction of the new runway had entailed the relocation of 15 households residing at Sainte

Marie Village, four fishing post owners and one boathouse owner in the vicinity of Sainte Marie, Pointe Corail and Bangelie Village and 11 nonresidents having agricultural activities in the vicinity of Sainte Marie Village. As at date, relocation process of the households and fishing posts have been completed. There is one remaining. During the site visit, it was identified there is also another site, another house which needs to be relocated. We are working on it. The relocation process of the agricultural activities of both residents and nonresidents involved in such activities is in progress.

Tri-party agreements have been signed between 20 beneficiaries and their selected contractors and Rodrigues Regional Assembly with regards to relocation. Works have started on site in April 2022 and completion rate is at 40%. The relocation of agricultural activities is expected to be completed by December 2022. For both the allocation process, funds were provided accordingly since financial years 2019/2020 and 2021/2022 and are under the RRA's budget. Actually, a total amount of Rs 75.5 m. have been disbursed in this context. For financial year 2022/2023, a provision of Rs 19 m. has been made available in the budget of the RRA for the relocation of the agricultural activities and outstanding households relocation payments. We have therefore attained much progress in the relocation of households, residences and agricultural activities which lie on the path of the proposed new runway.

Secondly, Mr Chairperson, Sir, there was the issue of the relocation of endangered fauna. Flora, sorry. Among the prerequisites of financing agencies, the AFD principally, *l'Agence Française de Développement*, in view of the financing of the Airport Development Project, a strategic and action plan with regards to conservation and protection of native and endemic species located on the perimeter of the new runway had to be elaborated. Those species have been identified in environment and social impact assessment report by SETEC Ltd. In line with the above, RRA decided to proceed with the signature of an MoU with the MWF in July 2021 for the development of this document and for the implementation of the conservation and protection actions.

As per the sign MoU, it was agreed that a sum of Rs 3,392,113.69 to be disbursed to the Mauritian Wildlife Foundation. Relevant actions would be undertaken under a three-tier strategy, covering human resources, equipment, supplies, transportation as well as foreign expertise, fees, flights accommodation and per diem aspects. During financial year 2021/2022, an amount of Rs 0.9 m. has been disbursed, to start implementation of the project, funds have been provided under the RRA budget to the tune of Rs 2.5 m. for the ongoing activities as per the strategic and action plan. There, Mr Chairperson, Sir, four plants initially to be relocated

and given the state and expertise of organisations like the Mauritian Wildlife Foundation, we were planning to remove; not destroy but to remove these plants and to relocate them to the nearby Anse Quitor, a nature reserve. During further visits by the MWF and our own services, we noted that there are about six plants that need to be relocated. We must stress out.... these plants, of course, are classified as endangered but these plants do exist in other parts of Rodrigues and are being reproduced in the nurseries in Rodrigues. One of these plants is the Bois Pure.

We have been on site and we have had a look at the plants, the mature plants there and we are convinced that the Mauritian Wildlife Foundation with its team, would have been able to relocate these plants, Mr Chairperson, Sir. However, Mr Chairperson, Sir, in communications which are being received from official authorities from France, we have seen that the AFD and the French authorities are not agreeable for the relocation of these plants and they are even speaking... they have been speaking of *la nécessité de détruire des individus d'espèces végétales endémiques placés en danger critique d'extinction par l'Union internationale pour la conservation de la nature*.

I must state, Mr Chairperson, Sir, that there may have been a misunderstanding somewhere but it was not question of destroying any plant. It was question of carefully taking time to dig around the plants, to keep the soil with it, to secure it and then, to put it safely on trucks or tractors and replant it in other parts, in another area, in the same area for it to get the same climate. It is therefore not accurate to state that the airport project would destroy plants. It would involve relocation of plants, Mr Chairperson, Sir.

Thirdly, Mr Chairperson, Sir, consultancy services for detailed design and supervision of the new runway at Plaine Corail Airport. Further to the request of the proposed launch by the Airport of Rodrigues Ltd, for the above consultancy services on 01 September 2020, following the EOI of July 2018, contract was awarded to give Mauritius Ltd in October 2021. The start date for the consultancy services was 25 October 2021 for a duration of nine months. Status as at to date, the consultants have already effected their mission to Rodrigues in May 2022 for consultation with stakeholders to finalise the mechanical and engineering design requirements of the different building facilities and.... the requirements with respect to communication and navigation equipment required for Aircraft operations.

The airport planner was on mission in Rodrigues in June 2022 for the design of the runway Evaluation of bids for additional geotechnical investigation has been completed and

contract is expected to be awarded shortly. The geotechnical investigation contractor is expected to mobilise to the airport in September 2022. Consultancy report is expected in October 2022 and tender document by November 2022. This is to say that the Government of Mauritius as well as the Rodrigues Regional Assembly as pointed out by the honourable Prime Minister during his last visit to Rodrigues, is fully committed and is serious about this project.

Fourth, Mr Chairperson, Sir, the AFD themselves and the EU requested a review and update of the 2009 Sustainable Integrated Development Plan for Rodrigues prior to the signature of the proposed loan with AFD for the financing of the construction of a new runway at Plaine Corail, it was agreed with the Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development that several conditions were to be fulfilled by the Rodrigues Regional Assembly amongst which the updating of the Sustainable Integrated Development Plan for Rodrigues. Funds have been made available by the EU under the technical corporation facility of the European Union for the updating of the 10-year strategic plan along with a five-year costed action plan.

The Tourism Development Plan for Rodrigues which dates back from 2001, the Rodrigues Physical Development Strategy and Land Use Plan dating from 2010, actually, contract for this assignment has been awarded to COWI Belgium and the duration of the assignment shall be on the 18 months, that is final deliveries to be submitted by December 2022. Financing. The project was expected to cost some €100 m. for about Rs 4 b. Initially, same was to be co-financed by sovereign loan of Rs 85 m. from the *Agence Française de Development* over a period of 20 years with five-years grace period and by subsidy of €15.6 m. from the European Union. It is to be noted as per correspondence dated 05 August 2022 from the Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs of France, the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development has been made aware and has informed the Rodrigues Regional Assembly that funds through the AFD will not be able to finance the project due to environmental reasons that I have explained earlier.

In the context of the debates of the budget 2022/23, the Honourable Prime Minister announced that as part of the transformational development of the Island, a new runway at Plaine Corail Airport will be constructed and provision has been made in the budget for an amount of around Rs 4 b. for the project over the next five years. Mr Chairperson, Sir, after five years of arduous meetings, consultations and negotiations and fulfilling of all AFD conditionalities and endless demands, especially the environmental and social aspect of the project, Government of Mauritius and the Regional Assembly have been informed will not go

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ahead and finance this important project, critical for the socio-economic development of Rodrigues. All the latest documents related to the environmental and social aspect of the projects have been submitted to AFD, were accepted by the latter. At the request of the AFD, the Government even provided information on the measures being taken by Government to maintain the air connectivity between Rodrigues and Mauritius and how the tourist industry in Rodrigues will be revived following the COVID-19 crisis.

The last document transmitted to AFD was the strategy for the protection and conservation of the biodiversity. This document contains all the measures, actions that will be undertaken to ensure preservation and conservation of the biodiversity targeted more specifically to the three endemic plants that are located on the project site. Mr Chairperson, Sir, it is loadable to place on record the decision of the European Union to maintain its subsidy of Rs 15.6 m. and its recent communiqué expressing its commitment to the project. It is also appreciable that the Honourable Prime Minister and the Government of Mauritius has publicly stated that they want to go ahead with the project. It is regretted deeply that the Earth Day has withdrawn from the project for reasons that we do not understand. Our Regional Government headed by myself and my Deputy Chief Commissioner will liaise with Government in Mauritius and with the Ministry of Finance who is also committed to the project and who has stated that the project must go ahead. Government during the double presence of the Prime Minister and the Minister for Finance here in Rodrigues the week before have stated that they will approach other financing and donor agencies so that the project can go ahead. I wished to inform the House about these views. Mr Chairperson, Sir, thank you.

(Applause)

ADJOURNMENT

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I move that the House be adjourned to Monday 10 October 2022 at 1.00 p.m.

The Deputy Chief Commissioner, rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

Mr Chairperson: The House stands adjourned.

I have been informed that there are three intervenees during adjournment time. So, I request first, Member Lisette.

MATTERS RAISED

GENERAL CONDITIONS OF CERTAIN ROADS - RODRIGUES

The First Local Region Member of Baie aux Huîtres (Mr N. Lisette): I would like to make a plea for this statement adjournment to the Deputy Chief Commissioner who is responsible for public infrastructure. I think that many of you, of us in fact, who drive along in Rodrigues have noted that there are some potholes in some areas around Rodrigues, which represents a threat to road safety. I have here in mind, potholes uphill from the college of Le Chou towards Petit Gabriel where I have been informed that that there have been two accidents that occurred there recently. So, I made a plea to the Deputy Chief Commissioner to make the need for rectification of same. In the same line, Mr Chairperson, Sir, many of us who have noticed also road of autonomy, *la Route de L'Autonomie* from *Contour Kiosk* towards VATEL, part of the road has been resurfaced but from *Contour Kiosk* up to some part, you can see that the base course is being eroded and the same is being observed from *la croisée* de Vanguard towards VATEL.

You will see that the base course with potholes is also being eroded. So, if we do not act quickly, there is much chance that we will have to invest more for the resurfacing and... not only the resurfacing; for the repairs of the road itself. So, I should say just to end up, that we have been very lucky in Rodrigues, that normally, such a road, life span is for 10 years but for Rodrigues, even there is much pressure on that road, it has remained more or less in good condition for the last 20 years. So, I am making an invitation, a plea to the Commissioner for Public Infrastructure if it is possible, *dans le cadre de l'autonomie*, if at least we can resurface that road and make it a better place for driving for our users. Thank you very much.

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Je remercie le respecté membre d'avoir attiré l'attention, de montrer son intérêt. C'est vrai qu'on vient de faire des *patchings* sur différentes routes à Rodrigues. La route côtière et bien sûr la route allant vers Cygangué. J'ai déjà donné des instructions pour justement faire le *patching* sur cette route à monter de Le Chou. Et bien sûr, M. le président, ce tronçon de route, c'est-à-dire, Solitude nous préoccupe parce qu'il n'y a pas que le *resurfacing* qu'il faut faire. Mais on voit qu'il y a des fissures et on voit que la base à n'importe quel moment, si jamais il y a une grosse pluie, on peut avoir ce qu'on a vu à Montagne Charlot. Donc, c'est sérieux, oui et on est en train de voir aussi comment faire un troisième *lane*. On étudie la possibilité d'avoir un troisième *lane* sur ce tronçon de route pour justement décongestionner Mont Lubin, Port Mathurin etcetera. Donc, nous travaillons dessus.

Il y a l'équipe de la RDA qui arriveront bientôt et bien sûr, je rassure le membre qu'on va travailler dessus et bien sûr, on va ce qu'il faut. Merci.

Mr Chairperson: Miss Roussety, please.

LACK OF LIGHTING - RODRIGUES

The Second Local Region Member of Baie aux Huîtres (Ms K. Roussety): M. le président, je vous remercie de me donner la parole de parler des difficultés qu'engendrent les villageois et les usagers de la route principalement la nuit. Beaucoup de lampes de rues, les *street lightings lanterns*, ne s'allument et beaucoup de villages sont dans le noir. Les lumières de rues luttent contre l'insécurité, empêchent les voleurs dans leurs actions. Je ne vais pas mentionner les villages qui ont ces problèmes. La liste est très longue. C'est pour cela que j'attire l'attention du Commissaire des infrastructures publiques qui en a la responsabilité de la maintenance car l'Assemblée régionale est en train de payer pour les lampes défectueuses et la population souffre. Merci, M. le président.

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: J'aimerais aussi remercier la respectée membre d'attirer l'attention. C'est vrai, j'ai posé beaucoup de questions, moi, lorsque j'étais de ce côté-là, de l'autre côté c'est-à-dire. Oui et je comprends mais ce que je n'ai pas compris, il y a une chose que je n'ai pas compris, M. le président, lorsqu'on a pris le pouvoir le 05, on a prêté serment. Ce lundi-là, je suis arrivé au bureau, j'ai posé la même question. J'ai dit : « Qu'est-ce qui se passe ? Pourquoi est-ce que c'est comme ça ? » Et là, ils me disent qu'il n'y a d'ampoule en stock. Il n'y a rien. Rien n'a été fait. Toutes les lampes défectueuses n'ont pas été remplacées. On n'a pas acheté. Même il n'y a pas d'ampoule en stock. Donc, ce qu'on a fait, nous, on a acheté. Ça nous a pris un peu de temps avec tous les problèmes qu'il y a en Chine etcetera. Ça nous a pris un peu de temps et là, on vient de recevoir les ampoules ; seulement que les ampoules et on est en train de changer. Donc, je pense que vous avez déjà remarqué dans certains villages, on a déjà remplacé ces ampoules et on est en train de continuer. J'ai même discuté avec la CEB pour leur demander si eux-mêmes, ils peuvent le faire. Donc, on est en négociation avec la CEB. Donc, on travaille sérieusement là-dessus. Il y a des endroits aussi où il n'y a pas de lampes et on est en train aussi d'acheter des lampes solaires pour placer en cas de pannes des autres lampes. Donc, on est en train d'acheter pour justement remplacer les lampes.

Mr Chairperson: Minority Leader.

TARDY SETTLEMENT OF BILL
– RODRIGUES REGIONAL ASSEMBLY DEPARTMENTS

The Minority Leader (Mrs Gaspard Pierre Louis): M. le président, je voudrais intervenir en deux mots pour attirer l'attention du Conseil exécutif, principalement, le Chef commissaire qui est aussi Commissaire des finances et Commissaire d'entrepreneuriat au sujet du clavaire et de la misère que vivent les entrepreneurs, les personnes, les entreprises qui offrent leurs services à l'Assemblée régionale dans différentes circonstances en termes, donc, j'ai parlé des services. Sur le terrain là où on va, on entend des gens parler des : on attend notre argent, que ce soit des restaurateurs, ce qui louent des voitures, donc, des *caterers*, des éleveurs et ça leur frêne, même les contracteurs aussi. Si c'est vrai qu'il y a des procédures à suivre, donc, attendre trop longtemps, ça n'aide pas les entrepreneurs à continuer à mener à bien leurs projets. Donc, je souhaite que le Chef commissaire qui est le Commissaire des finances et d'entrepreneuriat qu'il travaille dessus avec les différents commissaires et qu'au plus vite, on peut payer ces entrepreneurs, ces personnes à a recours pour des services afin qu'ils puissent continuer leur travail comme il se doit.

The Chief Commissioner: Oui, M. le président, nous sommes au courant de ce problème. Depuis que nous sommes entrés en fonction, il y a ce problème. Il y avait premièrement, un problème de liquidité. On n'avait pas de liquidité pour payer ces gens et nous avons même fait porter cette doléance lors de la réunion du Conseil exécutif avec le Premier ministre s'il n'y a pas de liquidité à temps pour payer parce que le système financier budgétaire de Rodrigues, c'est qu'on reçoit des factures et à partir de ces factures, on soumet au Ministère des finances qui eux, mettent l'argent par la suite, à disposition. On a demandé qu'un *Reconciliation and Suspense Account*, an *advanced money* soit toujours à la disposition de l'Assemblée régionale, quelques Rs10 millions ou Rs20 millions ou Rs25 millions soient à notre disposition dans le cadre du budget et à partir de là, tous ces paiements qui ne sont pas des gros paiements peuvent être faits. Comme vous le savez, c'est le Ministère des finances qui donne les instructions financières.

Mais j'ai aussi demandé à l'*Island Chief Executive* et je demande ici à tous les *Departmental Heads* de faire en sorte que tous les petits contracteurs surtout locaux et pour des petits paiements, peut-être Rs10000, Rs15000, Rs20000 qui fournissent des services à l'Assemblée régionale, que ces paiements soient faits dans un délai raisonnable. Il importe à chaque membre, le fonctionnaire de chaque commission et à chaque *Departmental Head*. C'est aux *Departmental Heads*, M. le président, de faire leur travail et de veiller à ce que le paiement

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soit fait dans les normes nécessaires. Les membres de l'opposition savent très bien les procédures financières. Les fournisseurs ou les prestataires doivent soumettre leurs factures. Ces factures doivent être vérifiées et contrevérifiées et à partir de là, les paiements doivent être faits. We are elected Members. There are officials paid by the Regional Assembly to do that work. I expect as Chief Commissioner that the work be done.

If the Minority Leader is raising the point here, she is right because a lot of people has been waiting for their money and they have not got their money because of these issues of bureaucratic. I will not accept this. Departmental Heads are required as from now to be careful about this and to proceed with the processing of payments. They have staff. When they do not have staff, they have to look with the Island Chief Executive so that payments are made. And, I would propose that people who submit bills to the Regional Assembly add a penalty if the bill is not paid within 30 days which is the standard credit, 21 days he is saying, 21-30 days, the standard credit... And, anybody of course, who has issues with payments can come and see any Commissioner, the Commissioner concerned. If it concerns tourism, if it concerns anything and we can look into that payments be made. Thank you.

At 3.15 p.m., the Assembly was, on its rising adjourned to Monday 10 October 2022 at 1.00 p.m.

WRITTEN ANSWER TO QUESTION

**SETTING UP OF LEARNING CORNERS
IN COMMUNITY CENTRES – RODRIGUES**

(No. B/86) Mrs R. M. F. Gaspard Pierre Louis, C.S.K (Minority Leader) asked the Commissioner for Information Technology & Telecommunications and Others whether, in regard to the setting up of learning corners in community centres around Rodrigues, he will:

- (a) State and table the list of villagers where the facilities thereof are already available;
- (b) Indicate if the project is ongoing and, in the affirmative, to state and table the: -
 - (i) list of villages benefitting therefrom, and
 - (ii) timeframe and costs thereof?

Reply: Mr Chairperson, Sir The House may be aware that the Learning Corners is a project initiated on 2012 which constitute in the provision of 03 Computers as well as Internet facilities to Community Centres.

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The main objectives of this project is to facilitate access to computers to the population even in remote areas as well as encourage computer literacy in Rodrigues.

I am informed Mr. Chairperson, Sir, that initially 24 Learning Corners was set up in different villagers. Thereafter, some 22 additional ones were set up in 2019.

As at date, some 46 Learning Corners have been set up and are fully equipped as well as connected to the internet. With respect to Part (b) of the question, I am informed that all 46 Learning Corners are operational.

Moreover, Mr Chairperson, Sir, since my coming into Office in March 2022, I have requested by Office to conduct a full survey on the existing facilities in the 46 Learning Corners and more specifically about the use of same by the community.

Based upon the outcome of the survey, my Office will then determine whether this project is still viable and require the extension of same in other villages.

The list of villages equipped with the Learning Corners is hereby tabled.