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No. 8 of 2023

RODRIGUES

FIFTH REGIONAL ASSEMBLY

PARLIAMENTARY

DEBATES

(HANSARD)

(UNREVISED)

TUESDAY 22 AUGUST 2023

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PRINCIPAL OFFICERS AND OFFICIALS

Mr Chairperson - Leopold, Mr Joseph Christian, GOSK

Deputy Chairperson - Tolbize, Mr Justar

Deputy Clerk - Clair, Miss Marie Chrismélanie

Serjeant-at-Arms - Perrine, Mr Joseph Laval

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RODRIGUES

Fifth Regional Assembly

Debate No. 8 of 2023

Sitting of Tuesday 22 August 2023

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

The National Anthem was played

(Mr Chairperson in the Chair)

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ANNOUNCEMENT

**(i) VISIT OF HON. SPEAKER OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY,
MR SOOROOJDEV PHOKEER GCSK, GOSK – E-PARLIAMENT
PROJECT**

(ii) AIRPORT DEVELOPMENT PROJECT

Mr Chairperson: Respected Members, I have one announcement this morning.

On Thursday last, the Rodrigues Regional Assembly had the honour and privilege to welcome Hon. Sooroojdev Phokeer, GCSK, GOSK, Speaker of the Mauritius National Assembly, and a delegation therefrom, as well as the UNDP Resident Representative for Mauritius and Seychelles, Ms Amanda Serumaga, and her delegation for the launching of this House's E-Parliament project which ultimately aims at achieving a paperless Parliament.

Respected Members, the extraordinary advancements in communication and technology bear a significant impact on both the daily lives of individuals and the operation of governmental organisations. Indeed, there are more and more increasing expectations for our Parliament to be more transparent and responsive to our people; certainly, as a result of citizens' participation in the political process, as well as the extensive outreach sessions at community level, which the Regional Assembly has been leading for the past year.

Furthermore, the adoption of the e-Parliament initiative by our Parliament aims to bring a significant improvement in cost-cutting, efficiency, and effectiveness while promoting the ideals of the democratic parliament, namely transparency, accountability, and accessibility.

The Assembly is implementing the Rodrigues Regional Assembly E-Parliament System to enable respected Members to digitally access parliamentary documents through Digital Tablets which has been allocated to each respected Members and a training was provided on how to use the Digital Tablets and the specially developed applications.

In this context, a username and password are being provided to the Respected Members to enable their devices to be authenticated.

Respected Members, the provisions of section 60 of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly Act and Standing Order 13 of the Standing Order and Rules of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly indicate on the timeframe for the convocation of the House. Allow me to quote paragraph 1 of Standing Order 13, which reads:

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«The Clerk shall, not less than three days before the commencement of any sitting of the Assembly, send to each Member a copy of the Order Paper, stating the business to be dealt with at the sitting.»

Hence, same rule has been replicated within the Members Sitting Application software, whereby the Order Paper and related documents will be uploaded within said timeframe as the paper-based distribution system.

More importantly, respected Members are informed that they are required to adhere to the iPad/Digital Tablet Acceptable Use Policy, which includes, amongst others, the understanding that digital communication of the parliamentary documents is deemed to be communication of parliamentary documents within the meaning of the above-mentioned Standing Order.

It is important to acknowledge that implementing and managing such a system can be complex. The transitioning and familiarisation to this project may require ongoing support to ensure smooth adoption and utilisation of the E-Parliament System.

That's why, respected Members, I want to give a trial period of time before switching over to sending all parliamentary documents exclusively by digital tablets. During this trial period of time, needful guidance will be provided to ensure familiarity of Members and staff on the proper use of the electronic platforms.

I wish to place on record, for the House, my heartfelt gratitude for the Speaker and staff of the National Assembly, for the continuous expert support and guidance for the proper and successful implementation of such an important and revolutionary project at the Regional Assembly.

I thank you for your attention and rely on the kind collaboration of one and all.

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

EXPORT OF LIVESTOCK TO MAURITIUS

(No. B/94) Mrs R. M. F. Gaspard Pierre Louis, C.S.K (Minority Leader) asked the Commissioner for Agriculture and Others whether, in regard to the export of livestock to Mauritius, he will, for the benefit of the House, state if he has been made aware of the difficulties faced by the breeders since several weeks and, in the affirmative, to indicate the:

- (a) nature thereof together with details of the livestock ready for export per category, and the number of breeders concerned, and

- (b) remedial measures he is contemplating to take to alleviate the problems?

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, with your permission, I will answer the questions addressed to the Commissioner for Agriculture and Others. Mr Chairperson, Sir, the information is as follows.

As regards to part (a), a total of 180 animals which have already been tested FMD negative are ready for export. The details are as follows:

Cattle	57
Sheep	51
Goats	72

Mr Chairperson, Sir, I am informed that a total of 66 breeders are concerned. Mr Chairperson, Sir, since end of June, the captain of MV Rhino has refused to load animals on three different occasions due to bad weather conditions. The details of the different trips where animals were not shipped to Mauritius are as follows:

Departure from Rodrigues

BR 147	On the 18 July 2023
BR 149	On the 03 August 2023
BR 150	On the 13 August 2023

Mr Chairperson, Sir, I also wish to inform the House that the Mauritius Meat Authority (MMA) has also not ordered any cargo ruminants since 17 June 2023. On the 18 August 2023, an order has been received from the Mauritius Meat Authority for animals and a consignment of 120 small ruminants is leaving Rodrigues today and is expected in Mauritius on the 24 August 2023. Mr Chairperson, Sir, regarding part (b) of the question, the remedial measures undertaken by my Commission in order to alleviate the problems are:

- (i) Negotiations with the Ministry of Agroindustry are underway to ease the burden imposed on breeders due to the embargo;
- (ii) The FMD Zero Surveillance Programme is planned for early September 2023 with the assistance of the livestock veterinary division to determine the level of circulation of FMD virus post-vaccination. A decision will be taken thereafter concerning restrictions on import of live animals from Rodrigues.

- (iii) The movement of livestock from Rodrigues to Mauritius by registered butchers are also considered.

Veterinary Officers of the livestock veterinary division proceeded to Rodrigues on the 19 and 20 June 2021 to train officers of my Commission in pregnancy diagnosis of cattle and small ruminants so that females which are not pregnant could be moved to Mauritius.

Furthermore, Mr Chairperson, Sir, actions were being taken to operationalise the slaughter house by 2024. And finally, Mr Chairperson, Sir, the new vessel, Perros Vanos, which is expected to be in operation by the end of September 2023 will provide more space for the movement of animals from Rodrigues to Mauritius. Thank you.

Mrs Gaspard Pierre Louis: M. le président, dois-je commencer par féliciter le Conseil Exécutif, le Commissaire de l'agriculture ? Parce que pour comme le *Deputy Chief Commissioner* vient de répondre, à trois reprises, 18 juillet, 01 août et 11 août, il n'y a pas eu de *shipment of animals* et d'un coup, parce qu'il y a eu PQ, il y a no more *bad weather* et aujourd'hui, les animaux vont partir. Donc, félicitations à vous. On mettra plus souvent des PQs. Comme ça, on n'aura plus de problème.

M. le président, j'ai l'impression aussi que le *Deputy Chief Commissioner* un moment dans sa réponse, a été contradictoire en disant qu'il n'y a pas eu de commande de la MMA depuis le 17 juin alors qu'il a donné le chiffre de 180 pour les animaux *tested ready for shipment* alors qu'on sait que c'est seulement après la commande qu'il y a ces procédures qui sont mises en œuvres pour envoyer des animaux. Comment peut-il nous expliquer ça ?

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Moi, c'est la réponse que j'ai eue. Mais il faut comprendre une chose. C'est que revenant à la première partie de la question concernant les animaux qui vont être embarqués sur ce voyage. M. le président, on est en hiver et en hiver, il y a des mers houleuses et si le capitaine a cru bon de ne pas pouvoir prendre ces animaux-là, surtout les bétails. Donc, il a donné son avis et bien sûr, bon, peut-être coïncidence aussi, M. le président, là, lorsque vous posez la question, le temps est favorable et on a pu prendre bien sûr, ces animaux, ça veut dire les vaches, etcetera.

Donc, concernant la deuxième partie de la question, donc, je ne sais pas si le *Minority Leader* a bien écouté la réponse mais je pense qu'il n'y a rien de contradictoire dans la réponse donnée. Merci.

Mrs Gaspard Pierre Louis: M. le président, est-ce que je peux demander au *Deputy Chief Commissioner* de nous informer du manque à gagner des éleveurs étant donné qu'il n'y

a pas eu de *shipment* pour ces trois, les bateaux, les trois dates qu'il a mentionnées. Est-ce qu'ils ont pensé quel est le manque à gagner pour les éleveurs et comment ils font pour compenser ou pour remédier à ce problème-là ?

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: M. le président, c'est vrai il y a eu un manque à gagner. Bien sûr, si les éleveurs n'arrivent pas à vendre leurs animaux, c'est vrai qu'effectivement... Mais ce qu'on fait, comme j'ai dit dans la réponse concernant les différents *remedial measures* qu'on est en train de voir, donc, on va certainement... il y a l'embargo sur Rodrigues. On ne peut rien faire, une question de sécurité phytosanitaire mais il y a aussi la question de vaccination. Donc, ce qu'on fait là, on est en train de voir d'ici septembre 2023 on va prendre une décision concernant la levée de l'embargo sur Rodrigues.

Donc, c'est ce qu'on fait. Il y a eu aussi dans le passé, le subside sur les viandes à Rodrigues. On est en train aussi de voir ça mais pour vous dire, M. le président, qu'aussitôt, on croise les doigts, on reste positif, aussitôt qu'on va pouvoir lever l'embargo, bien sûr, il y a d'autres gens qui peuvent aussi venir acheter les animaux à Rodrigues et nous pensons aussi que ça ira très vite. Donc, ce ne sera plus un problème pour les éleveurs. Ce sera plus un manque à gagner pour eux.

Mrs Gaspard Pierre Louis: M. le président, c'est un sujet très important. Le *Deputy Chief Commissioner* a fait référence au FMD. Je crois qu'il se souviendra qu'en 2016, on avait eu justement une première épidémie de FMD. Il était de ce côté-ci de la Chambre et on avait vu qu'est-ce qu'il n'avait pas dit. Je me demande aujourd'hui. On avait eu en juillet 2016 cette épidémie de fièvre aphteuse et à la fin de 2016, en décembre 2016, plus précisément, j'ai essayé de fouiller dans mes archives, on avait commencé à réexporter les petits animaux : cabris et mouton. Et aujourd'hui, comme on sait, on a eu la deuxième épidémie en 2021. Et deux ans après, aujourd'hui, il parle encore de négociation pour pouvoir enlever complètement l'embargo. N'est-il pas là, une question de manque de sérieux ? Parce qu'après quelques mois en 2016, on a pu envoyer et maintenant, pourquoi est-ce qu'on a pris autant de temps pour négocier et pour finaliser cette question de levée d'embargo.

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Premièrement, M. le président, si j'étais elle, je ne serais pas revenu sur cette triste histoire de Rodrigues. Il y a eu l'abatage massif, barbare des animaux à Rodrigues. Nous, au moins, on est venu et on a traité les animaux comme il faut, les vaccins, etcetera. Donc, concernant sa question, je demanderais, parce que ça dépend de Maurice, au *Minority Leader* de demander au Membre Léopold de poser une question à

Maurice au ministre de l'Agro-industrie, d'aller poser la question et de demander pourquoi est-ce que... Parce que nous, M. le président, je sais, je parle au nom de M. Perrine, nous faisons tout notre possible pour pouvoir enlever l'embargo sur Rodrigues. On est tous des Rodriguais. On comprend le problème des Rodriguais. On comprend le problème des éleveurs. Nous faisons tout pour pouvoir effectivement, ça. Donc, ce n'est un peu, pas correcte de dire que nous ne faisons rien. C'est simplement que nous faisons notre travail mais ça dépend de l'île Maurice, des vétérinaires de Maurice, *Livestock Veterinary Division* et bien sûr pour pouvoir donner avec le ministère à lever l'embargo.

Mr Lisette: Mr Chairperson, Sir, if you allow me, we very well know that one of the hindrance for the exportation of animal from Rodrigues to Mauritius is the prevalence of FMD here in Rodrigues. I will refer, Mr Chairperson, Sir, to the answer given by the Commissioner for Agriculture on 31 May of 2022 where he stated that:

« M. le président, je dois dire parce qu'il fallait vacciner les animaux depuis décembre. (Ça veut dire décembre 2022. Depuis novembre, il rectifie que vous n'avez pas pu faire.) Là, nous avons placé une commande de 75000 vaccins.... Vaccins pour que nous puissions terminer la troisième dose. »

I would like to know from the Deputy Chief Commissioner knowing well that vaccination for the third dose started only in June 2023, I would like to know why there has been such a delay?

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: M. le président, la question relate de l'export des animaux sur Maurice. Il n'y a pas mention de vaccin. Je demanderais au respecté membre de venir la prochaine fois lorsque M. Perrine sera là, avec une autre question concernant les vaccins. Merci.

Mr Chairperson: Last question.

Mrs Gaspard Pierre Louis: M. le président, j'ai rencontré les éleveurs cette semaine qui me disaient comment ils attendaient une réunion avec le Commissaire de l'Agriculture lundi à 02h00 et qui a à la fin a décliné disant qu'il ne pouvait pas tenir la rencontre parce qu'il n'y a pas d'argent pour continuer à faire de l'exportation. Est-ce que le *Deputy Chief Commissioner* peut nous dire quelle est l'implication financière de l'Assemblée régionale au sujet de l'importation ? Est-ce qu'il y a une implication financière ? Si oui, est-ce que se sera maintenue et quelle est la teneur ? Quel est le montant ?

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: M. le président, honnêtement, je n'ai pas la réponse. Mais ce que je peux dire, c'est que nos officiers sont impliqués. Le montant exact, je ne l'ai pas mais je sais que nos officiers sont impliqués, surtout du bureau de service vétérinaire. Il y a aussi sur le quai toute la logistique, bien sûr, est derrière pour aider à exporter ces animaux sur Maurice. Il y a aussi l'aspect du screening. On fait aussi du screening avec tous ces animaux. Donc, bien sûr, l'Assemblée Régionale, à travers la commission de l'Agriculture, donne tout son soutien pour justement aider les éleveurs à exporter leurs bêtes à Maurice.

Mr Lisette: Mr Chairperson, Sir, another hindrance once again for the exportation of animals in the number of tests that has to be carried out in Rodrigues and which should be double-checked in Mauritius. There was the proposal of having two additional veterinaries from the FAO which was announced in the PQ of 31 May 2022 to back up the Veterinary Officer from Rodrigues, here. I would like to know where matters stand as regards to that.

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Yes, Mr Chairperson, Sir, they are coming soon, very soon.

Mrs Gaspard Pierre Louis: So, Mr Chairperson, Sir, I was telling the House that I recently met the breeders and there was the question of the payment, their payment after the export. We know that in the past when we were in office, we had the mechanism of... the MMA was transferring the amount to RTMC and within two weeks, the breeders were getting their money. And, actually, we see that there are breeders who have been selling their animals since 30 May. We are half - May, June, July - in August. As at yesterday, no payment was made. It seems that they received their payment only after three or four months. Has there been any change in the mechanism for payment of these breeders and, can he see to it that this is reviewed? Because the breeders are suffering from that.

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I would like to thank the Minority Leader for raising this point. We will look into the matter.

Mr Chairperson: Next question!

DIFFICULTIES FACED BY BENEFICIARIES – SOCIAL HOUSING PROJECT

(No. B/95) Mr L.D. Baptiste (Second Local Region Member for Grande Montagne)) asked the Deputy Chief Commissioner whether, he is aware of the difficulties faced by the beneficiaries of the Social Housing project to obtain timely delivery of construction materials and the financial constraints thereby to meet the labour costs and, if so, to state the remedial actions he envisages to take to remedy the situation?

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I wish to inform the House that at the time I took office as the Commissioner for Housing in March 2022, there were more than 300 vulnerable applicants; social aid recipients, applicants who were drawing an income less than Rs 10,000 monthly, who were unable to secure a loan from a financial institution to enable the construction of their housing units. As such, there had to be a change in policy since we couldn't leave these applicants unattended and keep on indebting the ones who are social aid recipients. As such, Mr Chairperson, Sir, the housing scheme has been reviewed and beneficiaries are granted phase-wise distribution of building materials for the construction of a new housing unit of 50 m² and a concrete water tank of approximately 8 m³ estimated at Rs 1.2 m. Under this new scheme, the beneficiaries are responsible for the remuneration of a builder for the construction of their housing unit as per the agreement they signed with the Commission on a self-help basis.

Basically, Mr Chairperson, Sir, the aim of my Commission is to implement effective social housing policies in view of providing proper housing for every family in Rodrigues. A special attention is given to vulnerable and low income families who were unable to secure a loan in the previous schemes and are still facing much difficulties to have a decent housing. The aim of this new policy is to facilitate access to an affordable housing fitted with basic amenities to those needy households.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, I wish to inform the House, that procurement procedures for construction materials have been completed and contracts awarded. Deliveries of construction materials are made by the suppliers under the supervision of the officers of my Commission upon completion of each construction stage.

The phase-wise delivery of construction materials on site for construction of new residential housing unit are made, after due inspection and signing off of the different stages of works by the inspector cadre.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, I wish to inform the House that since financial year 2021-2022, 104 beneficiaries are benefiting from construction materials. Mr Chairperson, Sir, we did experience a slight delay in delivery of some materials due to shipping and payment constraints. However, this issue was only temporary and delivery of materials is back on track. Besides, Mr Chairperson, Sir, my Commission does not possess any record of complaints received from the beneficiaries with regard to financial constraints to meet their labour cost.

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For the Financial year 2023-2024, it is targeted that a minimum of 100 beneficiaries will benefit from the scheme.

Thank you.

Mr Baptiste: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I would like to know from the Deputy Chief Commissioner out of the 104 beneficiaries who have benefited from these construction materials since 2022, how many of them have reached the casting of slab stage?

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: *Yes, Mr Chairperson, Sir, 12 of them have reached the casting of slab stage.* Pourquoi est-ce que vous rigolez ? M. le président, il faut comprendre une chose. Lorsque nous sommes arrivés au pouvoir, ces gens-là, ces familles, plus de 300, étaient mis de côté. Sous le régime de l'OPR, ces gens-là n'auraient jamais eu une maison. Nous sommes venus, nous avons discuté. C'est ça, la démocratie participative. On s'assoie, on discute avec ces gens-là Et eux-mêmes, ils ont demandé. Ils sont venus, M. le président, pour signer. Ils ont fait une demande et signé un *agreement* pour construire leur maison eux-mêmes. Et on n'a jamais eu... Il n'y a personne qui est venu me voir pour me dire qu'il a des difficultés.

Par contre, M. le président, ceux qui ont pris des *loans* à la banque, j'ai toute une liste dans mon bureau où des gens, ils viennent me dire, « *Nous avons eu une petite pension, le Commissaire (comment ils disent à l'époque) nous a dit de prendre un loan mais maintenant, on ne peut pas payer.* » Il y a beaucoup de personne à Rodrigues qui ne peuvent pas payer leur maison. Et on croise les doigts et j'essaye de parler à ces gens-là de payer leur maison parce que sinon, ça va être saisi par la banque, M. le président. Et nous, qu'est-ce qu'on fait ? On donne le temps. Il y a plusieurs stages. On donne les matériaux à ces gens-là. Ils prennent leur temps. Bien sûr, ils vont prendre leur temps parce qu'ils le font eux-mêmes. C'est leur participation. Ils ont voulu le faire et, ça, c'est notre politique à nous et bien sûr, il y a aussi RodPro qui va aussi venir avec d'autres types de maison pour ceux qui sont un peu plus aisés. Donc, M. le président, c'est tout à fait normal qu'il y a... Regardez, par exemple, jusqu'à deuxième phase, il y a 63 personnes. Donc, les gens font beaucoup d'effort pour pouvoir construire leur maison.

Mr Baptiste: I am surprised that the Commissioner is not aware but as I mentioned clearly in the question, some people are facing financial constraints. Is the Commissioner aware that some of these people who are beneficiaries of social aid have had to contract loans from other financial institutions to get part of the fund required to cover labour cost? I am talking about non-banking institutions which are charging higher rate of interest as compared to the

previous agreements that we had with the commercial banks and credit unions. Is he aware of this?

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: M. le président, la personne a signé le *agreement* pour avoir les matériaux pour construire sa maison. La personne, bien sûr... Premièrement, nous ne sommes pas au courant. Mais c'est la responsabilité de la personne de payer le maçon. Mais d'après le principe de donner par phase, je ne pense pas comme le dit le respecté Membre, que quelqu'un a dû prendre un emprunt etcetera à la banque comme eux, à l'époque, ils disaient aux gens d'aller prendre de l'argent à la banque et ils mettaient même de l'argent, M. le président, dans un *credit union*. Le gouvernement donne de l'argent à un *credit union* pour ensuite, demander à son peuple d'aller prendre de l'argent là-bas. M. le président, vous l'avez fait ! Vous l'avez fait, M. le président. Et l'audit a attiré l'attention. Plus de Rs 98 millions, l'argent du gouvernement a été pris comme garanti pour garantir toutes ces maisons.

Donc, on ne peut pas. Il faut être responsable à un certain moment, M. le président. Il faut être responsable et nous, nous sommes très contents et moi, je visite ces gens-là souvent. Bien sûr... peut-être que quelqu'un a vu, a voulu avoir un petit peu d'argent avec lui, lui dire... '*Li ene maçon.*' En tant que politicien, c'est un peu normal. Il y a aussi des gens qui viennent nous voir. C'est normal. Ce n'est pas ça. Il ne faut pas généraliser. Peut-être que la personne a dit il a pris un *loan*, '*done mwa ene ti larzan, M. Baptiste*', etcetera. Peut-être que c'est ça. Okay, il faut bien comprendre. Donc, si la personne surtout a voté pour M. Baptiste, M. le président. Mais de toute façon, le projet avance et bien sûr, jusqu'à la fin de l'année, il y aura des gens qui vont peut-être terminer leur maison.

Mr Baptiste: I know the Deputy Chief Commissioner might be happy with what he has done but people, if you go anywhere, you will see the difference as you mentioned in the PQ that I asked last year, you mentioned that within four years, we had provided more than 700 new social housing unit with our previous policy/scheme. And, people, beneficiaries of Social Aid also had been able to contract a loan and paying a very small amount to pay back over a long period of time. Is the Commissioner aware that as at date, so many people are unable to pay the labour cost and that the construction materials, there are for example, cements who have been spoiled because of lack of fund of these beneficiaries of social aid recipient. And, I would like also to add defeating the object of your new policy not to make these people run into indebtedness because I know many cases, they have been to institutions as I said earlier, charging higher and they are paying more than what they were paying previously.

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: M. le président, j'ai déjà répondu à la question. Donc, je ne sais pas pourquoi il insiste. J'ai effectivement déjà répondu à la question. Merci.

Mrs Gaspard Pierre Louis: M. le président, donc, je vois que le *Deputy Chief Commissioner* a mentionné personnes qui sont arrivées au stade de dalle. Est-ce que ces personnes ont déjà fait le casting, M. le président ? Sur le terrain, ce n'est pas le cas. J'invite le *Deputy Chief Commissioner* à vérifier cela. Est-il au courant que justement, les gens sont en attente de matériaux, ils ont leur ciment bien en avance et puis après, en dernier, ferraille ? Et est-il au courant qu'aujourd'hui, à l'heure où on vous parle, il y a beaucoup de matériaux gâtés ? Est-ce qu'il va donner de nouveaux matériaux pour que ces personnes puissent compléter leur maison ?

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Je veux prendre la question avec les officiers, M. le président, et bien sûr, si jamais il faut compenser ces gens-là, on va le faire. Mais de toute façon, comme j'ai dit dans ma réponse, il y a aussi la question de *shipping*. Il y a eu discussion avec shipping et aussi difficulté au niveau de paiement. Donc, on va voir. Mais moi, aussi, M. le président, je vais visiter ces gens-là, les bénéficiaires, et j'invite les membres de la minorité, si jamais vous avez quelqu'un, aussi en tant que citoyen, en tant que Rodriguais, appelez-nous à la Commission et bien sûr, on va voir comment aider ces gens-là. Parce que nous travaillons tous pour aider ces personnes-là comme l'a dit le respecté Membre Baptiste.

Il a donné 700 maisons. Mais je lui demanderais combien de ces 700 maisons sont en location en ce moment. Il y a beaucoup de ces maisons qui sont en location. Des gens sous loue la maison, loue la maison. Allez à Baladirou, vous allez voir. Un *social housing* est devenu gîte. C'est ça, votre objectif ? C'est ça, votre politique, M. le président ? Est-ce qu'on doit donner une maison à un *single* ? Allez voir la nièce d'un député qui a eu une maison. Qu'est-ce qu'on fait ? On donne ça à un *single* ou des gens, il y en a tellement qui ont des enfants, qui sont mariés qui ont des enfants qui ont besoin d'une maison. Donc, nous, on a été touché par ça et on va dans cette direction pour aider ces gens-là. Merci.

Mr Chairperson: Last question.

Mr Lisette: Mr Chairperson, I have noted that in almost 18 months, there has been no completion of a single house. No completion so far in 18 months, Mr Chairperson. And, if I refer to the answer of the Deputy Chief Commissioner, there is a batch of 104 which is already under construction and I would like to know from him when is the next batch about to be given their construction materials?

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: J'avais déjà répondu à la question. Je vais redire quand même. Donc, *for financial year 2023-2024, it is targeted that a minimum of 100 beneficiaries will benefit from the scheme soon. Very soon.*

Mr Chairperson: Next question!

PEACEFUL MARCHES & PUBLIC GATHERINGS – PORT MATHURIN

(No. B/96) **Mr N. Lisette (First Local Region Member for Baie aux Huîtres)** asked the Deputy Chief Commissioner whether, in regard to peaceful marches and public gatherings in Port Mathurin, he will inform the House on if there is any new policy therefor by the Rodrigues Regional Assembly and, if so, to state since when together with the details thereof?

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, any person wishing to hold or organise a public gathering shall give a written notice to the Commissioner of Police under the provisions of the Public Gathering Act 1991 by definition means a public meeting or a public procession. Moreover, Mr Chairperson, Sir, the Executive Council considers that in conformity with the provision of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly Act:

- (1) The Regional Assembly is a corporate Body (section 3).
- (2) Lands and other property located in Rodrigues vested in the state, have been transferred to the Regional Assembly (section 54(a)).
- (3) State Lands and Infrastructure (Highways, roads, public buildings and utilities) are areas of responsibility of the Regional Assembly.

And that under Section 26 of the Regional Assembly may do all such acts and take such steps as may be necessary to the exercise of its powers and duties.

Public safety, Mr Chairperson, Sir, under section 2 of the Public Gathering Act includes:

- (a) The securing of the safety of persons.
- (b) The maintenance of supplies and services essential to the life of the community.

Based on the above, Mr Chairperson, Sir, the Executive Council is empowered to come with such safety protocols.

I wish to inform the House that prior to any decision with regard to safety and security, this issue has been thoroughly discussed in the Road Safety Committee in the presence of the

Police. They have raised concerns and expressed some proposals regarding the organisation of public marches given the narrowness and exiguity of our streets.

Accordingly, Mr Chairperson, Sir, a paper was brought to the Executive Council for consideration and a decision was taken on the different options that procession may take place in the narrow streets of Port Mathurin. Thank you.

Mr Lisette: Mr Chairperson, Sir, as mentioned by the Deputy Chief Commissioner, section 26 of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly Act may be applied but it should not be in violation with national laws. This is one thing. I would like to know from the Deputy Chief Commissioner which observation has been made with regard to pacific marches or procession in Port Mathurin indicating the date where there has been congestion or other nuisance caused which has prompted the Executive Council to come up with their decision not to allow marches in Port Mathurin? Can he give us an example of such position?

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Yes. Mr Chairperson, Sir, the respected Member, he, himself, has been the Commissioner for Public Infrastructure. He knows quite well under the old Traffic Act, they established a committee which is the Road Safety Committee. And, which he, himself, I believe, has been the Chairman of this committee. And, in this committee, we meet regularly and we used to for example, to talk about the traffic in Port Mathurin. We have to note, Mr Chairperson, Sir, that as at date, there are more than 20,000 vehicles in Rodrigues, cumulative. So, this is an issue. And, this has been an issue that we have discussed in the Road Safety Committee.

Le respecté Membre me dit de venir avec des exemples. Il y beaucoup d'exemples. Moi-même, j'ai été le samedi au bazar de Port Mathurin. Vous voyez, on a vu quelle est la difficulté de sortir de Port Mathurin. Il faut comprendre, M. le président. Pour sortir de la rue gauche de Port Mathurin, il y a seulement une sortie. Et de l'autre côté, on a trois sorties. Alors, si on vient avec une manifestation et on passe en plein Port Mathurin, et nous, bien sûr, avec la contribution des techniciens, de la Police, de ma Commission, de la NTA etcetera, nous avons... *Le issue has been raised* et on s'est dit il y a un problème. Il faudra revoir entre autres les *pacific march* à Port Mathurin. Donc, on a pris la décision. Bien sûr, il y avait la Police qui était représentée dans ce comité. Il y avait trois et on a pris la décision de proposer dans l'intérêt de tout un chacun, dans l'intérêt du public concernant *Public safety, under section 2 of the Public Gathering Act* et on s'est dit on propose un des options. Nous avons proposé des options et bien sûr, il y a eu un cas en cour. Vous êtes allés en Cour et bien sûr, il y a eu un *order* et

bien sûr, on respecte le *order*. Mais nous, de notre côté, on continue à travailler avec la Police pour voir comment faire, trouver une solution à ce que demain, il n'y a pas d'accidents si jamais il y a une bagarre qui éclate à Port Mathurin.

Vous imaginez, M. le président, devant La Résidence, il y a une fonction et puis, on a un souci de *law and order*. Comment est-ce qu'on va faire ? Donc, tout ça, on a pris en considération, M. le président, mais dites-vous bien aussi que nous sommes une île autonome. Nous avons nos prérogatives et bien sûr, nous sommes là pour défendre nos prérogatives. Merci.

Mr Lisette: Mr Chairperson, Sir, the answer of the Deputy Chief Commissioner is quite contradictory in the sense that he is saying that there has been a ratification of a decision by the police in the Road Safety Committee and the same decision was not approved by the Commission of Police I mean by his attorney in the... Yes. So, I would like to ask him what is the rank of Police Officers which sit on the Road Safety Committee and if they are allowed to rectify the decision on the name of the Commissioner of Police?

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, there were two Police Officers and one Assistant Superintendent of Police. Okay? The question you put, I will invite you to ask your colleague, Mr Léopold, to go and put the question to the Prime Minister so he can get the answer. *Merci*.

Mrs Gaspard Pierre Louis: M. le président, donc, après avoir écouté religieusement le *Deputy Chief Commissioner* sur ce sujet, il a bien mentionné la décision du *Executive Council* et sa prérogative. Il a aussi fait mention du jugement de la Cour. Est-ce qu'en fonction de ce jugement qu'il y a eu, est-ce qu'il compte revoir cette décision de *Executive Council*, parce qu'il a dit qu'il respecte aussi les décisions de la Cour ?

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Je l'ai dit dans ma réponse, M. le président. Premièrement, il n'y a pas eu de jugement. Il y a eu un *order* parce que vous avez retiré l'affaire en cour. Et bien sûr, comme je l'ai dit dans ma réponse, on est en train de travailler avec la force policière à Rodrigues. Il y a eu tout dernièrement un *site visit*. Tant de *site visit* mais la dernière *site visit*, ça a été samedi et on va venir bien sûr avec une décision dans l'intérêt du tout un chacun, dans l'intérêt du public.

Mr Lisette: My question, in fact, Mr Chairperson, Sir, in my main question, I asked about the date when the policy was taken but I did not hear the answer. This is one and, second, we have had discussion on the relevant pacific marches. Now, we come to the place of meeting

which is ex-MCB square, now SAJ Square, Sir Anerood Jugnauth Square. I would like to know why there has been such a change in policy from the Deputy Chief Commissioner not to allow meetings whatsoever of any organisation at that particular place?

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, this is a policy decision and decision of the Executive Council. So, the matter has been already discussed in the Executive Council.

(Interruptions)

You have been a member of the Executive Council. How can I disclose discussions in the Executive Council? Okay?

Mr Chairperson: Okay, next question!

CAPITAL BUDGET 30 JUNE 2023 – PROJECTS IMPLEMENTED/COMPLETED

(No. B/97) Mrs R.M.F. Gaspard Pierre Louis, C.S.K (Minority Leader) asked the Chief Commissioner whether, in regard to the capital budget for the financial year ending 30 June 2023, he will state and table the list of the different projects implemented/ completed together with their respective costs, the budget earmarked and the amount paid and indicating the amount reallocated and/or unspent?

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, being given the voluminous nature of the information which is being requested, same is being compiled and will be tabled as soon as available. Thank you.

Mrs Gaspard Pierre Louis: Mr Chairperson, Sir, in this case, would the Chief Commissioner inform the House about the percentage of achievement, though it is being compiled, I am sure, we are now in August, the Chief Commissioner should be in a position to inform the House what is the percentage of achievement regarding the capital projects that he announced and which were budgeted?

The Chief Commissioner: The percentage is over 100%, Mr Chairperson, Sir. As expected, we had shortage of funds due to unexpected expenditures and also because again in the last financial year, we had to keep covering outstanding expenditure left by the former executive.

Mrs Gaspard Pierre Louis: In this case, Mr Chairperson, Sir, because I was referring to the project announced and budget earmarked, if the achievement is over 100%, how can he account for the fact that for example, for the technical school of Citron Donis, there was a

budget of Rs 10 m. nothing has been done? It has been in the project and still there has been over 100% achievement.

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, the Minority Leader should not mix up things. She asked for achievement in terms of expenditure. We exceeded the budgeted expenditure for the last financial year. It does not mean that we completed each and every project. As she is aware, specific projects have specific dynamics and therefore, if the technical school could not be achieved, it may be that the funds have been reallocated for example, to pay for the increase in the cost of the highly controversial construction at the primary school of Bay Malgache, at Roche Bon Dieu where we had to pay Rs 6 m. for the contractual breaches of the former executive and also for example, for the Rs 6 m. she herself, has dilapidated in a machine which now we owe, I think Rs 17 m. more and which they cannot pay, unfortunately.

Mr Baptiste: Yes, Mr Chairperson, Sir, we have in the past heard about this information being compiled but then, we never see these same information, tabled in the library. Can the Chief Commissioner give an indication about the timeframe for the completion of these compilation of data and to table it in the library of the Assembly here?

The Chief Commissioner: I think within one month, Mr Chairperson, Sir, or less, we will be able to provide the information in the library.

Mrs Gaspard Pierre Louis: Mr Chairperson, Sir, the Chief Commissioner has been informing the House about having spent over 100% though the details are being compiled, can we have an indication about the percentage of the increase in terms of capital budget that he has been spending?

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, we are in the month of July. Today, we are the 22 August. So, there has been only one and a half month since the beginning of the current financial year and as I have said, much expenditure had overlapped. We are still compiling the information. I cannot give a percentage now. But for example, in items such as, 'Bad Weather Allowance', we had I think, Rs 40 m. But the required amount was much more and this is why we had to reallocate funds pending that the Ministry of Finance reimburses the expenditure.

Mr Baptiste: The question was about capital budget and you have talked about bad weather allowance which is recurrent. Does it mean that money has been transferred from the capital budget to the recurrent budget?

The Chief Commissioner: Yes, Mr Chairperson, Sir. This was encouraged by the Ministry for Finance.

Mrs Gaspard Pierre Louis: Can we have an indication then? Because it is quite contradictory too. You have overspent and then, you have been given permission to transfer to recurrent. So, there is a contradiction. So, how can the Chief Commissioner account for that?

The Chief Commissioner: Of course, Mr Chairperson, Sir, this is another question.

Mr Chairperson: Okay, next! So, we move to next question.

**PAYMENT OF ALLOWANCES/OVERTIME TO OFFICERS
– FINANCIAL YEAR 2022/2023**

(No. B/98) Mrs R.M.F. Gaspard Pierre Louis, C.S.K (Minority Leader) asked the Commissioner for Health and Others whether, in regard to payment of allowances/overtime to officers of his Commission for the financial year 2022/2023, he will state and table the:

- (a) budget earmarked, the amount paid monthly and the item vote/s from which payments have effected, and
- (b) amount still due as at 30 June 2023?

Mr Volbert: Mr. Chairperson Sir, for this question, let me first provide a brief definition of the word allowance according to google definition:

‘Allowance refers to the amount of something that is permitted, especially within a set of regulations or for a specified purpose’.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, I am informed that there are several types of allowances payable to officers in the different departments falling under the aegis of my Commission such as On-Call Allowance, Night Duty Allowance, Meal Allowance, Subsistence Allowance, Out of Pocket Allowance, Bank Nurse Allowance, Risk Allowance and more than 64 other several allowances. As for the overtime paid to officers, being given that there are five areas of responsibilities falling under my Commission, I wish to inform the House that information is still being compiled and will be tabled at a later stage.

In the different departments of my Commission, the types of allowances payable to the officers differ depending on their nature of work. For this question, there is no specific mention of the types of allowances requiring a specific reply. If I have to list or tabulate all the different types of allowances which are paid to more than 1,200 officers pertaining to different grades

in all the departments under my Commission, it will take more than one day to do so. Therefore, I would suggest the respected Minority Leader to specify which types of allowances she requires information and I will make it available in the Library later on.

For part (a) of the question, a sum of Rs 605,000 was earmarked under Item 21 11 11 00 – Vote 5101: General, same Item, Vote 5102: Curative Services and Primary Health Care and Public Health sum of Rs 8 m. earmarked and the same Item and Vote 5105 Social Protection and 5107 Probation and Social Rehabilitation sum of Rs 200,000 and Rs 10,000 earmarked respectively. As mentioned above, the amount paid monthly is not available and is being compiled.

As for part (b) of the question, again, the requested information will be laid down in the library as soon as same will be available.

Thank you, Mr Chairperson, Sir.

Mrs Gaspard Pierre Louis: M. le président, ça a été du domaine public que récemment, les infirmiers/infirmières n'ont pas eu par exemple, leur *bank allowance*, plusieurs *allowance*, impayés. Le Commissaire a mentionné qu'*information are being compiled*, est-ce qu'il peut nous dire combien d'officiers ont été touchés par ce retard dans le paiement pour le mois de juin principalement ? Combien d'officiers au niveau de sa Commission ont été touchés par ce retard dans le paiement de leur *Bank Allowance* ou d'autres *allowance* dont ils parlent qui concernent ces officiers ?

Mr Volbert: Comme je disais dans la réponse, M. le président, comme la Minority Leader n'a pas donné spécifiquement quel genre d'*allowance she is referring to, I would invite her to come with a question next time and I will give the answer at that time.*

Mrs Gaspard Pierre Louis: Peut-il cependant, confirmer à la Chambre, si tous ces montants qu'il a cités, qui ont été *budgeted*, peut-il confirmer que ce montant n'a pas été suffisant et qu'il y a eu besoin d'avoir recours à d'autres réallocation ou autres choses ?

Mr Volbert: Non, je ne suis pas au courant, M. le président, comme j'ai dit. L'information est en train d'être compiler et on va avoir toutes les réponses à la fin.

Mr Baptiste: I think that it is one and a half months since the closure of the last financial year. I understand that is it quite complicated to compile the monthly data as asked by the Minority Leader but can we know the total, the actual expenditure incurred for this item for the financial year 2022/2023? At least the total amount.

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Mr Volbert: Je n'ai pas les informations et si besoin est, je vais déposer ensemble avec la compilation des *overtimes*.

Mrs Gaspard Pierre Louis: M. le président, il est aussi du domaine public qu'il y a eu des informations au niveau des fonctionnaires que désormais, il n'y aura plus d'*overtime* ou bien le moins possible, alors qu'on sait qu'il y a dans plusieurs niveaux, le *shortage of staff*: *Attendant, Nursing Officer*. Comment est-ce que le Commissaire de la Santé va entreprendre cette tâche difficile alors que s'il y a *shortage*, normalement, on a recours à *overtime* et déjà, il y a eu des informations, des circulaires je suppose, qu'*overtime would be limited* le plus possible.

Mr Volbert: Ce sera limité, c'est vrai, M. le président, mais on ne va pas arrêter. Donc, ça ne concerne pas la santé en général mais d'autres départements.

Mr Lisette: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I refer to the overtime for financial year 2022/2023 and would like to ask the Commissioner for Health whether, the delay with the payment of overtime of officers, especially in the health sector, whether it is true through a lack of fund?

Mr Volbert: Je ne pense pas, M. le président. Ça arrive pratiquement à la fin de toute l'année financière.

Mr Chairperson: Okay, next question!

RODRIGUES PUBLIC UTILITIES CORPORATION (RPUC)

(No. B/99) Mr N. Lisette (First Local Region Member for Bay aux Huîtres)) asked the Chief Commissioner, in regard to the Rodrigues Public Utilities Corporation (RPUC), he will state and table on the: -

- (a) total amount of funds transferred thereto from the Rodrigues Regional Assembly's budget since March 2022 by way of share capital, grants and others, indicating the item vote from which funds was made available, and
- (b) Assets transferred from the Rodrigues Regional Assembly thereto and their respective value, if any?

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, with regard to part (a), the total amount of funds transferred to the RPUC from the Rodrigues Regional Assembly's Budget since March 2022 to date is Rs 14,470,485 as follows: -

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Share capital: -

- (i) Equity fund of Rs 1 m. from item vote 32150009 Equity, Rodrigues Public Utilities Corporation Ltd.
- (ii) Funds of Rs 6 m. from item vote 32150009 Equity, Rodrigues Public Utilities Corporation Ltd after reallocation for refurbishment of two buildings at ex-Mont Venus hotel for use as a technical control centre.
- (iii) Provision of equity of Rs 3,275,485 from vote item 32150009 Equity, RPUC for payment of two 4x4 vehicles.

Grant for recurrent expenditure: -

- (a) Consultancy fees of Rs 575,000 for payment to Ernst & Young Ltd for the preparation of a Business Plan for submission to the Mauritius Investment Corporation, paid from Item Vote 22120031: Fees to Consultant for a Master Plan for the Water Sector Development Plan Feasibility Study.
- (b) Rs 1.7 m. for payment for operating costs, Service Fee in connection with Water Sector Development Programme.
- (c) Rs 1.92 m. for payment of operating costs, from Vote Item 22120034: Operation Fees to RPUC (Water Production and Distribution).

With regard to part (b), Mr Chairperson Sir, in view of enabling the company to fulfil its mandate in the field of water production and distribution, the following assets in terms of new vehicles have been transferred from the Rodrigues Regional Assembly to the RPUC during the last financial year in exchange for equity shares in line with Regulation 5 (2) of the RRA Investment Management Regulations 2008:

SN	Vehicles	Value (Inc VAT) Rs
1	Two double cab lorries	4,359,822
2	One backhoe loader	4,203,710
3	Three lorry water tankers	10,833,000
	TOTAL	19,396,532

I am tabling the requested information. Thank you.

Mr Chairperson: Next question.

GRANTING OF LEASES – COMMERCIAL & INDUSTRIAL PURPOSES

(No. B/100) Dr H. Agathe (First Local Region Member for Grande Montagne) asked the Chief Commissioner whether, in regard to granting of leases for commercial and industrial purposes, he will state to the House on the number thereof, new and for extension, currently being processed under the new procedure since he took office and the respective number thereof per stage of the procedure?

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, as regards question B/100, the House would recall as per my reply at the Regional Assembly's sitting of 15 November 2022 that the Executive Council at its meeting held on 30 September 2022 has decided to review the administrative procedures for the evaluation of commercial and industrial projects so as to ensure that all approved investments projects in Rodrigues are in line with the vision and the policy of the Executive Council. As such, the administrative procedures for the evaluation of commercial and industrial projects have been streamlined to include the following five distinct stages:

- (i) *First:* Application stage
- (ii) *Second:* Policy clearance stage
- (iii) *Third:* Technical stage
- (iv) *Fourth:* Land lease stage, and
- (v) *Fifth:* Approval stage

Since the implementation of the new procedures, I am informed that the number of applications processed at each abovementioned stage are as follows:

i) Application Stage

386 projects including 138 commercial/industrial and 248 trade projects have been received at Invest Rodrigues.

ii) Policy Concurrence Stage

Where the Executive Council gives its views and clearances. Out of the 386 projects, 269 were approved for further processing. The other projects require either additional information or additional documents or have been put on hold.

iii) Technical stage

To date, following receipt of views and clearances from the relevant authorities, 227 projects have been recommended by the Business Project Evaluation Committee and referred to the Commission for State Lands for consideration.

iv) Land Lease Stage

All projects will require planning views, sites confirmations, site surveys and appropriate recommendations prior to finalisation.

I am informed that the procedures for the grant of commercial and industrial leases are relatively longer than residential lease as it requires the assessment of rent from the Valuation Department from Mauritius to enable the Cadastral Department to finalise the lease agreement.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, it has been observed that most of the projects required for Commercial Lease pertained to small scale commercial activities such as Tobacco Shop (*Tabagies*), selling of cakes and refreshment, store for nautical base activities among others.

I am informed that the then Executive Council at its meeting held on 18 August 2017 has approved subject to clearance obtained from the Licensing Committee that licences be granted to new applicants of licence of retailer of manufactured tobacco, non-alcoholic, beverages, pastries, confectionery and cakes to operate in a fixed place pending the acquisition of a commercial lease. However, to date most of these applicants who are already holders of a Trade Licence are still awaiting for a commercial lease to regularise their activities.

Subsequently, I am pleased to inform the House that the Executive Council at its meeting held on Friday 11 August 2023 has approved that the Commission for State Land introduces the grant of land permits to occupy land subject to planning and relevant authorities clearances with a view to facilitate and enable small individual businesses to operate their activities such as cakes selling, vegetables, florists, fish outlets, tourism related activities such as, diving and kite surfing huts among others where a formal lease is deemed not necessary or long term occupation not warranted.

The main objectives for the introduction of a Land Permit are to:

- (i) ensure the efficient and effective use of land in Rodrigues which is a scarce resource;
- (ii) boost up entrepreneurship for income generating projects that do not require a lease formally to operate;

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- (iii) to relieve the Cadastral Office which has already a backlog of about 5,000 leases to process and finalise;
- (iv) to allow Invest Rodrigues to identify potential and successful business activities, and
- (v) to regularise small scale activities that are operating without an appropriate permit or lease.

A Guideline for the issue of Land Permit has been worked out to define the terms and conditions attached to the permit. The permit will be granted subject to payment of an annual fee to be determined by the Rodrigues Regional Assembly or to be assessed by the Valuation Department, with permission to place light removable structures. The Land Permit will allow the permit holder to apply for a Trade Licence for activity mentioned therein and also to apply for connection for electricity supply with the Central Electricity Board (CEB). However, there are certain restrictions whereby the permit holder will neither be able to sell, rent or transfer the permit to another party nor use the land for pledging purposes.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, in line with the revised procedures for evaluation and approval of commercial and industrial projects and the new mechanism being put in place at the Cadastral Department to increase the capacity for the grant of leases, it is expected that many small and medium enterprises will be able to regularise and obtain the necessary land clearance/authorisation to operate their activity within a legal framework shortly. Thank you.

Dr. Agathe: M. le président, j'ai écouté le Chef commissaire et je n'ai pas par contre entendu le chiffre concernant le nombre de cas en train d'être évalué au stade de *lease*. On n'a pas entendu de chiffre. J'aimerais savoir qu'est-ce qu'il en est ?

The Chief Commissioner: The Member is well trained and well placed that no mention means zero.

Dr. Agathe: Donc, le Chef commissaire avait mentionné dès le démarrage de sa prise de fonction lors de son Discours Programme qu'un comité allait être mise en place, un comité indépendant pour évaluer les demandes de bail et aussi, il avait mentionné ce problème auquel nous faisons face de non-disponibilité des terres et, il va falloir gérer ce problème-là. J'aimerais savoir si dans le but de pouvoir évaluer correctement les demandes, de façon impartiale et indépendante, si ce comité a été mise en place ?

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, the committee which has been put in place is the one which I have mentioned in my reply and, it is this committee which is at present – the processing is made according to the answer which I have already explicated to the House.

Dr. Agathe: M. le président, je n'ai pas bien compris, le comité indépendant, a-t-il été mis en place ?

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, the committee is independent, it is a technical committee where at the level of the Executive Council we screen the projects, for example, if we have a 1,000 room hotel project in Rodrigues, can we go ahead with it, knowing that we do not have the land or that the impact is not desirable on our tourism industry? We will at the level of the Executive Council defer the project, request for more information or merely refuse to go ahead with the project. From there on, the project processes to the Project Evaluation Committee, which looks into the different capabilities of the promoter including the financial background of the promoter, whether they will be able to implement the project and then from there, they move into the different steps and they move to the drawing of lease. Most of the projects which have passed these five steps, they are now moving to the lease being made for the promoters, those who have cleared all the five previous... I am not getting what committee exactly the Member is formally referring to. In any case, the procedures are those I have given today.

Dr. Agathe: De toute façon, c'est vous-même qui lors de votre dernier Discours Budget a encore évoqué de la mise en place d'un comité indépendant. Je pense qu'il est nécessaire pour prendre des décisions qui soient correctes, qui soient équilibrées, qui équilibrent a la dimension urbanisme, la dimension d'équité, la dimension de développement économique et la dimension de protection de l'environnement, d'avoir un comité indépendant en sus du travail qui est fait par le Conseil Exécutif dont un Conseil qui est composé des personnes qui ne font pas partis du Conseil Exécutif pour pouvoir réfléchir sur les différents impacts que peuvent avoir une décision d'allocation des terres.

Mr Chairperson: La question ?

Dr. Agathe: La question est donc de savoir si finalement ce comité sera mis en place ou non ?

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I have tabled the information and if the Member has had the opportunity to look at the answer. We are speaking the same language. The committee has been set up. It is called step 3 - the Business Project Evaluation Committee,

formerly the Entrepreneurship Committee. The committee aims to technically assess the project and to ensure compliance with the existing laws and regulations. So, in this committee we have, the Health Inspector, we have Agriculture, we have Planning and we have Environment. All these people, independent officials, they give their views which are taken into consideration, Mr Chairperson, Sir. So, the Member should read the information which has been tabled. We are speaking the same language. This is the independent committee, the Business Projects Evaluation Committee, and when we would have put in place the Geographic Information System (GIS) for Rodrigues, they will be called to meet in front of the GIS, in front of the map of Rodrigues where the proposed site will have to be shown and then they can see whether it is encroaching or taking the site when it is agricultural land or whether it is appropriate or it is on a curve. All the aspects to be taken into account and then the site will also be inputted in the GIS and will be present for all those who work on the map to see this site in the future.

Dr. Agathe: Je voudrais savoir si le Chef commissaire fait une distinction entre l’octroi d’un permis commercial, industriel et l’allocation de terre. Par exemple, en ce qui concerne les permis dont il a évoqué pour éviter aux petits commerces des procédures de demande de bail qui sont assez longues, comme vous avez dit, avons-nous un comité qui se penche sur les effets que peut avoir une allocation de terre, par exemple, lorsqu’on va donner des permis aux petits business, ce qui peut avoir des impacts en terme d’urbanisme, lorsqu’on va autoriser une conversion de terre ou une extension d’un bail, ça peut avoir des impacts divers...

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: On a point of order, Mr Chairperson, Sir. I think the respected Member is making a statement before he puts his question. I will invite you to...

Mr Chairperson: As you know today, as you have seen; I am very candid to anyone, but within certain limits. So, I am asking all Members to put your question, put it in the form of a question and not making a statement, please.

Dr. Agathe: La question est donc la suivante : Y-a-t-il a une distinction entre l’évaluation en fait, d’une demande pour un business et l’évaluation d’une demande de terre pour un *business*?

The Chief Commissioner: M. le président, je crois que le Membre veut nous faire tourner en rond. Il y a trois choses : l’obtention d’un permis ‘*Business Permit*’, c’est-à-dire, *business registration*, qui est guidé par le Rodrigues Regional Assembly Licences Regulations, permis de General Retailer, permis de Restaurant. Il y a aussi le *Tourisme Business*, ça c’est le

Tourism Licencing Office, Tourism Regulations. Donc, il y a deux règlements. Les règlements sur le permis commerciaux, tabagie, bureau d'avocat, etcetera, et les *Tourisme Licences*.

These are process by the relevant authorities, the Tourism Licences Office for the Tourism Permits and the Licencing Office for the other categories of permits, such as, shop keeping, wholesale and banks, etc. This is the first thing.

The second thing is, application for a lease. This is under process; I have already explained. And, this is ongoing and people are already getting their new leases, those who are renewing and those who have new leases. As I have said, there is a big backlog. The new concept we are introducing, is a concept emanating from English Landlord, which I invite the Member to consult. It is not a man title, it is a sort of non-possessory permit to occupy the land and to place something which is removable on it. Let me give you two examples. I have in Rivière Banane a very entrepreneurial young man, Mr Perrine, who is engaged in scuba diving with tourists and he is doing his job, I will not say successfully, but I see him very often and he is working. He is getting money out of his activity and he is proposing an ecological and safe activity to tourists who love diving in the wonderful coral zone of Rivière Banane. What is the problem of Mr Perrine? The problem of Mr Perrine is that he has to welcome his tourists so that they can put on their diving suits and keep their bags in a safe place, etc. So, can we give a lease to Mr Perrine on the beach? If they have to give him a lease, they will give him a lease inner in Rivière Banane. So, we cannot give him a lease. What we can give him, is a permit – he can build a small hut or place a decorated container or removable structure where he can place his boat engine, his boat gear and welcome his tourists there, build up a small '*lataniers*' huts or something like this.

Second example is, another very successful and dynamic young man who has a kite surf in Mourouk. There are many of them. Can we allocate a lease on the beach? They each want a space to put a container, to build a small hut to put their kite surf, to welcome their clients and to have a beer, etc. This is island life. So, what we do, we are giving them a permit, which is a temporary, cancellable permission to occupy that land, and with this they can have their trade licence but they will not be able to pledge it. Because it is not a land title.

Mr Chairperson: You mean an occupational permit?

The Chief Commissioner: Occupational permit, Mr Chairperson, Sir, thank you for asking the question. Occupational permit will take us far in terms of labour law. This is another issue; occupational permit is for the occupation. But if you want in the law title categories, we

have the three holt, which is private land and the absolute property, we have the lease which is a long term contract to occupy the land, and we have a land permit which is a licence to occupy the land and which is revocable. If there is misbehaviour, it is year on year in, every year renewable. A bit like an Agricultural Permit but to carry a specific business. For example, we will not give a Land Permit for a restaurant. We will not give a Land Permit for a shop or for a discotheque because this involve building something which is permanent. But for small people, *ti artisans*, to place a *tabagie roulante* to sell *roti*, to sell fried fish, to sell grilled fish, that is okay.

The Minority Leader: M. le président, le Chef commissaire dans sa réponse un moment a fait mention des chambres d'hôtel. Est-ce que je peux lui demander par rapport à ces *Industrial Lease under process*, est-ce qu'il y a parmi ces projets d'hôtels - qui avaient été repris ou bien qui étaient depuis 2012 en procédures pour reprendre - est-ce qu'il y a parmi ces projets de 'Industrial Lease', ces projets d'hôtels qui reviennent et, si oui, combien sont-ils ?

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I would need notice of this specific question. Yes, there are projects, some of which had been cancelled or have been put on hold. Now the promoters are asking that their projects be reconsidered. All this is in this 386 batch. But, of course, the policy of the Executive Council and the Commission for Tourism is to go for tourism projects which are proposed by the locals.

Mr Chairperson: Last question.

Mr Baptiste: I understand what the Chief Commissioner is trying to say with the sort of temporary permit, I do not know what is the name exactly. I would like to ask him whether this policy is in line with the existing laws and regulations and, if not, whether he intends to come forward with a piece of regulation so that we can avoid some form of abuse of floodgate and that there is really a framework? We do not want to see eyesore, for example, with all these policies.

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, this is *l'autonomie en fonction*, *l'autonomie fonctionnel*, which is I think you know very well. We have been given the responsibility for lands in Rodrigues. We are not engaging into a lease. We are not engaging into a contract; we are giving them a permit. For example, those who have a *tabagie*, they do not have any land tenure. So, if they get a permit to occupy this small square of land, not 400 m², 20 m² to occupy this, maybe later on if they are successful or if they want to they can apply for a lease, and if this is cleared, they can get their lease – this is cleared by Planning,

they can get their lease. There is no question of opening the floodgates or allocating these permits without control. It is a question of coming to help those people who needs this. For example, we have a small snack selling *boulette*, very good *boulette*, may be you are aware or you do not go through this road, near Rodnix. So, if the Police comes to this guy and tells him: Why are you here? You have to move; you have no permit to be here. He has no tenure. So, this is why somebody like this, he can get a permit and it is defined, particular space, what he can do, where he places his *tabagie* and then he can work. *Où est le mal?* This is an innovation, Mr Chairperson, Sir.

Mr Lisette: Mr Chairperson, Sir, my fear on the matter is how temporary is temporary? Because once the permit is given, and I am sure most of these businesses, small entrepreneurs, they have already applied for a lease in due form. My question is how temporary is temporary to allow these entrepreneurs who have applied for a lease which coincide with their activity, whether it is going to be taken on board, and how long it is going to take?

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, we are doing it on a yearly basis. So, it may be that when the person comes next year, we say no, we do not want to go ahead with the renewal. You have to move because there will be road going through here. We are going to dredge the area; we are going to build a waterfront on this zone. So, this is why it is on a yearly basis. And, the question of the person waiting for a lease does not arise. Because I have given the example of Rivière Banane, we cannot give a lease on the beach. A person by the nature of his business has to be near the beach where his boat is, where the tourists, the women, the men and the kids are changing their cloths to put on their *équipement de plonger, la patte canard*, and they have to be here. So, the person has to understand. If you want a lease, you have to be inland, not here. The allocating for a land permit, for example, in the conditions, does not give expectation for a lease. It could be expectation for a lease, for a small *tabagie* where there is planning clearance for giving a lease. And, I repeat, it is temporary structures. There has been discussion at the level of the Executive Council whether we should allow concrete floors. Some Commissioners have said that no, they should not put concrete floors, they should put wooden floors so that the whole thing is removable.

Mr Chairperson: Next question.

The Minority Leader: Mr Chairperson, Sir, in this case is the Chief Commissioner affirming that the one who will be given this permit is free to construct, as far as it is light, in any form, in any shape, is it the case?

The Chief Commissioner: No, Mr Chairperson, Sir. There will be guidelines. They have to use local materials, wood, iron sheets that is removable, and we will encourage '*latanier*' leaves, this sort of item. No concrete blocks and no concrete walls. If you go to La Digue, you go to Seychelles, you see these structures and even in Mauritius. People selling *ananas* and fruits, they have a small structure or they have a vehicle. What happen if you have a place at Pointe Coton where you usually come with your vehicle to sell something and everybody knows you are there. One day you come in the morning and somebody has taken your place, the site where you park your vehicle to sell fruit *confi*. You cannot fight. But if you have a permit, you know this is yours and you preserve your goodwill, people knows where to find you. Members should not mix up with lease. Do not think about a lease, it is different from a lease. And, most of the sites where these permits may be allocated are not leasable, will not be leased.

Mr Chairperson: We move to next question.

**LAUNCHING – SUSTAINABLE INTEGRATED DEVELOPMENT PLAN FOR
RODRIGUES/NEW LAND USE PLAN – MAY 2023**

(No. B/101) Dr H. Agathe (First Local Region Member for Grande Montagne) asked the Chief Commissioner whether, in regard to the launching of the Sustainable Integrated Development Plan for Rodrigues and a new Land Use Plan in May 2023, he will state to the House on the steps taken by the Commission for Land in order to grant land leases in a planned manner with a view to stop the conversion of agricultural land and natural spaces to other uses?

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, as the House is aware, the updated Sustainable Integrated Development Plan 2023–2032 for Rodrigues was launched on 11 May 2023.

The formulation of a SIDPR which was initiated under my chairmanship in 2008/2009 aimed at contributing to employment creation, poverty reduction, improved standard of living while making sustainable use and conservation of the environment and natural resources in Rodrigues.

However, Mr Chairperson, Sir, it is regrettable to note that most of the recommendations of the SIDPR have not been implemented resulting into several issues such as water production and distribution, land use planning and management, sustainable production amongst others not resolved in a timely manner and thus the need to start the processes anew.

Since our taking Office in March 2022, my Regional Government firmly believes that the updating exercise of the 2009 SIDPR is fundamental to ensure the sustainable development of the island and the more so the management of land within an updated and relevant framework. We aim at making Rodrigues an ecological and sustainable island in the Indian Ocean by promoting sustainable and integrated development in three key pillars namely, Economic, Environmental and Social with a view to improve the quality of life for all whilst ensuring that the limited resources are used in a sustainable manner.

Subsequently, it was decided that the updating exercise of the 2009 SIDPR should comprise the 2010 Land Use Plan and Rodrigues Physical Development Strategy as well as a Sustainable Tourism Development Plan. This strategic document was updated to take into account all the developments that have taken place in Rodrigues, so far, and to cater for all future developments.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, in the advent of the construction of a new runway in particular, all the other associated major developments that will impact the land use, that is, for tourism purposes, agricultural, domestic and any economic-related activities, it is of the utmost importance to ensure a good planning so as to have an optimal physical planning over the limited land area of the island. Consequently, this Land Use Plan allows the identification of alternatives for land use and adopting the best land use options during future procedures for the allocation of land, in order to meet the economic and social needs of people while safeguarding future resources. This new development strategy is accompanied by a Rodrigues Local Plan and area action and development plans.

As such, the Rodrigues Land Use Plan is intended to provide more specific guidance on how land should be used to achieve the goals set out in the Rodrigues Local Plan. It also provides a guidance to public authorities and bodies on how to approach policies on land use, transportation, housing, economic development, social and community infrastructure, and environmental protection; calibrated to respond to the challenges of climate change. Land use policies aim to guide the development of the island in a sustainable manner, balancing economic growth with the protection of its natural environment and unique character. These policies identify and prioritise the use of land for different purposes, such as residential, commercial, industrial, and agricultural uses. They also set out the criteria for the allocation of land uses and the conditions that must be met for development to take place. The policies aim to optimize land use, while protecting soil health and reducing the negative impacts of farming on the environment.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, with a view to ensure the successful implementation of the 2010 Rodrigues Development strategy and Land Use Plan, necessary action...

Dr. Agathe: On a point of order, please. I have asked a question; I am waiting to have a short answer. The answer is a little bit long.

Mr Chairperson: I am on my feet. Respected Member, I would invite you to read and know your Standing Orders. Right? I have control on the question. I do not have control on answers of Commissioners. Thank you.

(Interruptions)

The Chief Commissioner: Yes, Mr Chairperson, Sir, the Strategic Centre will also be a platform to host an Integrated System, namely the GIS to create, manage as well as map all types of data.

I wish to assure the House that as a caring Regional Government, we are fully conscious that to be able to promote inclusive and equitable development, bold policy decisions would need to be taken to ensure the future development of Rodrigues in a more sustainable manner.

It is expected that the implementation of the Rodrigues Land Use Plan will enable the promotion of sustainable land use practices in line with latest environmental policies; the management of land that supports sustainable economic growth and social development; the development of urban region in a way that minimises environment impact and increases social cohesion and promotion of the island's cultural heritage and identity. Thank you.

Dr. Agathe: On aimerait pouvoir savoir, comprendre clairement à partir de SIDPR et de la revue du plan d'utilisation des terres, comment vous comptez vous prendre pour résoudre ce problème de convergence de terre agricole, et si c'est possible de nous donner quelques chiffres ? On a une situation où vous avez dit vous-même, monsieur le Chef commissaire, qu'on arrive à une saturation de l'utilisation des terres. Donc, par rapport au demande actuelle des terres, comment vous comptez vous y prendre pour régler ce problème ? Quel volume de terre et où on a prévu pour des besoins résidentiels, pour des besoins industriels, etcetera ?

Mr Chairperson: One question at a time, please. This is the Standing Order.

The Chief Commissioner: Yes, Mr Chairperson, Sir, the problem of Rodrigues is that we have a lot of plans and they remain plans. I remember a lot of plans were made but when we were out of government all the plans were abandoned including the SIDPR, which was abandoned, and then as a condition of the airport project, the European Union did tell them that

/UNREVISED DRAFT/

they have to re-update the SIDPR. Today we have a global approach, a systemic approach to land use and planning in Rodrigues, including agricultural land. Our priority is to preserve at all cost agricultural land. This is why today, for example, when I am called upon to consider approval of residential leases, I request that the files of each applicants be sent with the request for approval. So, that we can see, where on the maps, on the plans, these people are planning to get a lease to construct their residence or other. There are criteria today and this is why all our hopes goes into this Geographical Information System (GIS), where we have different layers and one of these layers are the agricultural lands. One day, with the permission of my office, the Member can go and he can see the work which is being done. Of course, it is global. Okay? It is not my fault if Rodrigues does not have a true Cadastral Plan with all the residences, all the agricultural land. We have today, conflicts agricultural land permits have been allocated and then the former Commission for Agriculture did not input this into the system of the Cadastral Office, the Cadastral Plan of Rodrigues, which is at the Cadastral Office and then later on the Cadastral Office moves in and allocate leases on this agricultural permit. But for the law, what is recognised is the lease not the permit because as I told you earlier, a permit is not a land title. So, what we are doing, we are ensuring that this conflicts stop. This is why recently, the Commission for Agriculture plan to give 100 permits per month to accelerate agriculture, to give satisfaction to those young people willing to go into this. And at the Executive Council, we have decided that the allocation of this permit must be done together with the Commission for Land. So, this is where we have the role of the Centre for Integrated and Sustainable Development. Today we have a center for Sustainable and Integrated Development integrated together. So, the Commission for Agriculture, the officers of the Commission for Agriculture together with the Commission for Land, they have to sit together at Bois D'Olive in front of the Cadastral Plan of Rodrigues which is stored on the server of the administration but through network we can access from anywhere in Rodrigues, and which is a secured file. They have to sit together and say, okay, let us look at this zone of Baie Topaze, we have to block this land on the GIS, delimitate it as agricultural land and then the Commissioner of Agriculture knows these are agricultural land and that no other use will be put to these agricultural lands. And, of course, within that big lot, the Commission for Agriculture investigate who is occupying and then we grant permits and leases.

This is the integration we are doing and I will invite Members, even though I invited you for a cocktail with the Hon. Speaker of the National Assembly, only Member Agathe was present. I will invite Members to come and see the work, and of course, make proposals. But

the challenge, Mr Chairperson, Sir, remains with GIS. How do we integrate all these people together, all these layers together? And, some of them have not been updated. We have to put our faith in it. I invite Members, I invite all people interested in sustainable development and all Rodriguans, school children to put our faith in this GIS and to respect land planning and land use policies. We cannot take the agricultural backyard and say okay, we want to build a house for our son, we want to build a house for our daughter. People have to understand that we need to preserve these land because tomorrow this land will feed you. It sounds like I am speaking like somebody who were here formerly.

Dr. Agathe: Dans ce cas, je voudrais demander au Chef commissaire s'il peut déposer une copie du Local Land Use Plan for Rodrigues ici à l'Assemblée. Et puis aussi qu'on nous dise et informe formellement des procédures et politiques d'utilisations des terres qui sont en vigueur.

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, we already have a number of documents since there is administration in Rodrigues. This document is a public document. It has been released with the SIDPR documents. You can accede to it online. So, I thank the Member for his interest, of course, and this is cross-party politics. There must be things that all Rodriguans agree on, is it not? We must agree that we must preserve our *bassin versant*. Look at what is happening, Mr Chairperson, Sir. I am surprised how could this have happened. May be it is private land or may be the procedures are not strict enough. Look at what happened in the upper valley of Nassola, the place which I can say on the left of the road where the Minority Leader lives, all across from Mont Limon to the '*Kan John quincaillerie*' on the left. There is a concentration of building. Will we allow this to continue? And, there is much agricultural land there. This is why we must formalise ownership of these agricultural land. Agricultural land today we need to give the permits for one or two years and then we need to give the leases and we need to empower people to fence their agricultural land and to preserve it. And, I was in discussion with Mr Gheeseawon, who was Adviser with us, he was telling me that we can go for agricultural lease up to 18 years. We will consult and maybe we will go for this.

18 years' agricultural lease. Because if you have an agricultural project with a lease of ten years, the rate of return when you will repay your loan is not enough, we need a longer term for agricultural lease and we need people to take possession. I am telling people take possession of your agricultural land. If it was your family's land, we recognise this, cultural occupation, traditional, customary occupation. Even if it is a big land, it was your family's land, take possession of it, ask for your permit, ask for your lease, repair the walls and take the land, the

land is for the Rodriguans. But, of course, not the forest, not water catchment areas and according to planning.

Mr Baptiste: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I think that great plans and nice words and theories are not enough. I would like to ask the Chief Commissioner concretely when he expects to complete the setting up of all this GIS information system so that we can, once and for all, start to be more systematic in what we are doing. Because right now, yesterday I still see that the Cadastral Office is still measuring leases in places, agricultural leases and even uphill. I would like to know concretely when do you expect this GIS and other information system to be operational?

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, Rome was not built in a day! This is why I am appealing to the Members to come (when we are not having official business), you are invited to come to the Centre for Sustainable and Integrated Development. We can even put a small – there will be a consultant office there, visiting people, you can come there. We want it to be people's centre. What has happened, Mr Chairperson, Sir? We have all made errors, and one of the errors, the former regional government made was (they were right they wanted to facilitate rapid allocation of leases) with the contract given to a joint venture to measure residential lease. Go and look what has happened in Montagne Cabri where there is small extent of land in front of people's house and then there is a cliff. And, people here have a lot – it is the way of life we need to preserve some sheep. *Du jour au lendemain il voit des gens arriver et mettre des maisons dessus. Parce que joint-venture a mis des poteaux dans les terres agricoles.* Go and see what has happened to the Swee, Mr Swee of Patate Théophile. What has happened to Mr Swee? Mr Swee has a vast *espace* of land which is traditionally occupied by his family. We recognise this. Land was occupied by somebody - continuous occupation. We will give the permit provided they work the land. If they just keep the land with *piquant loulou*, we have to allocate to other people. Okay? So, what has happened to the Swee is that Cadastre has come and given – joint-venture, measured land everywhere. Everywhere! This is a big error. They wanted – of course, there was pressure. But that joint-venture his problem was not planning, his problem was being paid on the number of leases. This is why we refused to go ahead - with maybe some 1,000. Because there is no place to put these leases, there is no more *morcellement*. Okay? And, the next step after that, will be management of these lands. For example, those who are with Forest, we have the office of the Integrated Water Resource Management there, is to remove for example water stress trees, like Eucalyptus, remove these. So, it is a big job and you have to learn it and to accept it. And,

tomorrow you do not come because it was the former government who scratched it. No, we have to preserve it. It is above party politics.

The Minority Leader: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I have been listening to the Chief Commissioner referring to the case of Swee. May I invite him to go and visit to what is happening at Camp Pintade going in the direction of Plaine Mao, on the left there is the Momus families actually suffering from the same thing. They have been residing here for lot of years, having part of a land which they were occupying with their animals. And recently, few days ago, there have been people from the Cadastral Office and I do not know from where, they came and they put some hedges and this is the case. So, I invite you to go there and to see to it that this is not done.

The Chief Commissioner: Yes, Mr Chairperson, Sir. This is unfortunate. This is why I am very *a cheval* on this issue of historical customary occupation of land, which has been recognised in Australia, for example, where the aboriginal people have been given their land. Because when the British came to Australia they said it was terraneous, *la terre de personne*. And, the aboriginal people were not considered as human beings. I accept, that we have to look into this customary unregistered or non-lease. This is why there is a big job to be done. But if you put *baton dan nou la roue* each time, we will not succeed. If we come with regulations, we say okay, let us recognise customary occupation of land, Agriculture knows this. Some people have Rs 1 lease – *bail Rs 1*, yearly agricultural land, the big colonial paper is like this.

So, if there have been continuous occupation and they want to occupy the land to work it. Yes, it is not good to go and take people's land. Because in Rodrigues it has been like this. We have to look in the Momus issue. But the pressure is, Mr Chairperson, Sir, and I invite Members to look at it. How long will we keep going with this automatic issue of a residential plot to each and every person who attains the age of adult in Rodrigues? How long we will be able to allocated 400 m² to one and every Rodriguan. There is a time when all the land is finished unless we go into Cascade Pigeon, unless we take land which is not to be allocated for residential purposes. So, we have to adopt a policy. So, there is the Sustainable Development Committee, maybe the Member is in it, all this can be taken into it.

Mr Baptiste: Yes, Mr Chairperson, Sir, action speaks louder than words. I would also request the Chief Commissioner to go to Var Brûlé relating to the Casimir's family who were born there, traditional, they have lived there for so many years, they have gardens there, with water tanks, fenced and they have worked there for so many years and they have just received

a letter to ask them to vacate this land and to remove all the structures, the water tanks for agricultural land. They were born there.

The Chief Commissioner: Yes, Mr Chairperson, Sir, this is why we need to recognise people's occupation, tradition and customary occupation. If someone has to be moved, for I do not know, some public interest project, like the airport project, for which we are being congratulated by the World Bank. It is a good example, you started it. There were some glitches in it, we inherited it but we manage to put one and everybody – to put them agree. And, the World Bank is congratulating us. It is us today receiving the congratulation for the work we started. I remember with Mr Departmental Head, Mattan, in my first mandate as Chief Commissioner, we delimited the airport zone and we did not allocate new leases in this zone. It dates back to this period. Then you came, there was the resettlement of the Ste. Marie and today the thing is going. The airport is coming; it is a good thing. So, we have to look into all these cases, Mr Chairperson, Sir. And, of course, the tool for it is the GIS, if the person is not on the GIS, it means we do not recognise him. We will have an agricultural layer. You know what is a layer? In the map, in the digital map, if Mr X said this is my land but he is not in the GIS, he is not registered with the Commission for Agriculture. So, there is a lot of work to be done. We have to put this in place, recruit the officers so that they do this micro work on the maps, and map and reference everything.

Mr Lisette: Mr Chairperson, Sir, we still do not have the GIS as rightly said by the Chief Commissioner but as we stand now we have the Planning Unit at the Cadastral Office and we have the Surveying Unit at the Cadastral Office. And, the Surveying Office, it is most interested in giving leases while the Planning Unit have a futurist vision of what Rodrigues should be. Is there a coordination between these two units these days? As we are saying what is happening at Grand Var? This means that there is surveyor going, giving lease and there is no planning vision as regards to these land. Where does the relationship stand as regards to planning and surveying?

The Chief Commissioner: It is not true, Mr Chairperson, Sir, that we do not have a GIS. In fact, the GIS was set up by the FAO during their mandate and he is not even aware of it.

(Interruptions)

He is not aware, he said the GIS does not exist. But what was the issue they left it to sleep. Just like he left the Khroda Report in the drawer, they let the SIDPR die. He is not aware that there

is a GIS. And, I was like him when I became Chief Commissioner, I said we need to set up the GIS. And then, some IT persons, like Mr Augustin came and told me Mr Chief Commissioner, we already have a GIS but when it was designed they have never ensured that it got the resources, human resources, IT resources for it to be updated. A GIS is a dynamic thing.

(Interruptions)

Things are dynamic in a GIS, it changes every day. Okay? For example, if we are giving a land permit like we spoke earlier, this has to go into the GIS, the small plan of the place where it is, has to be in the GIS. It has to be specific colour; it has to get the name of the person on it, the extent maybe the link to the document, the permit itself, everything – whether that person has paid, everything has to be in this GIS. Put your hopes in it. We are working on it, Mr Chairperson, Sir. And, the issue today is to integrate the database of the maps of the Cadastral Office into the GIS. And, we have gone further than this. We have instructed Luxconsult, the Consultant, to work on the specific GIS for Rodrigues so that everything can be brought together. When you look at the map, they project it in front of you, you see that it is not difficult to do the things. When you remove the *bassin versant*, you remove the agricultural land, you remove the beaches, all the pasture land, you are left with *ça*. This is why there is another concept that we need to do is, densification. Densification, Mr Chairperson, Sir, in region like, La Ferme and like Mangues. Everywhere there are people scattered, there houses are 50 metres apart and there is no agricultural land between them. We have to put new leases in there. Densify and make maximum use of land.

Mr Chairperson: Last question.

Dr. Agathe: this is what I was expecting as answer from you. How you are about to deal with our actual problem of over utilisation of land in Rodrigues? What answer the SIDPR is proposing to manage this problem of demand of residential land? So, what the answer given - that we have to protect the agricultural land and other natural land, this was the gist of the question.

The Chief Commissioner: Yes, I told you, Mr Chairperson, Sir, recently at the Executive Council, the Commissioner for Agriculture came with a memo so that he has the means to grant Agricultural Permits rapidly. And, this is where we have taken the decision to have a joint working group, it is in the Executive Council's decision, a joint working team under the Chairmanship of the Chief Commissioner with the Commissioner for Agriculture and, then with their technicians, our technicians at the Cadastral Office, the Surveyors, the

Land Planner's, etc., and the people from the Agriculture, we will delimitate once and for all. It is already in there, but it is not exact. There have been many consultancies by FAO and people coming here just doing things grossly. But we have to go into the map and fix the areas for agricultural land and then come with Regulations also, or laws here so that these lands are protected. The surveys have to be done and the lands have to be protected. I rely on the collaboration of the opposition which, I see have a very keen interest in these issues. I also invite them, not to criticise when we say that we have reached the limit. The Minority Leader has catch up the statement I made that we are reaching the limits in terms of residential lease. What do we do? *Kot pou gagner?* We are reaching the limit; we should think how to provide housing to young people. But we are reaching the limit in terms of land. And, if you come and criticise, this means you are against sustainable development.

Mr Chairperson: Okay, thank you. We move to next question.

**SEGA TAMBOUR OF RODRIGUES – INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE
OF HUMANITY**

(No. B/102) **Ms M. N. Raffaut (Second Island Region Member)** asked the Commissioner for Arts & Culture and Others, in regard to the inscription of the Segá Tambour of Rodrigues on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity and the Rodrigues Regional Assembly's commitment to preserve its cultural heritage, he will, for the benefit of the House, state:

- (a) actions already taken by his Commission to conserve the authenticity thereof, and
- (b) any new measures that his Commission is envisaging to take to promote the Segá Tambour?

Mr Ravina: Mr Chairperson, Sir, the House will recall that the Segá Tambour of Rodrigues was inscribed on the UNESCO Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) of Humanity on the 07 December 2017 in Jeju, South Korea. This inscription brought sense of pride amidst the population and since then, measures have been undertaken to ensure the authenticity and promotion of the Segá Tambour.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, a series of actions have been taken by my Commission to safeguard the Segá Tambour of Rodrigues, in accordance with the list of safeguarding

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measures already stipulated in the nomination dossier. Several measures have been implemented since 2017 as such: -

- (1) Officially declaring that 07 December as the Segha Tambour Day, with the 1st Anniversary of Inscription of the Segha Tambour of Rodrigues as Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity by UNESCO held as from 07 December 2018;
- (2) Inauguration of the Segha Tambour Monument in 2018 and creation and inauguration of a '*Pārkour Istorik ek Kiltirel Segha Tambour*' starting from the entrance of the *Lieu de Mémoire de Tombeau Marragon* leading to the Segha Tambour monument in 2018. The second phase of the project will be completed in the financial year 2023-24.
- (3) Publication of a 'Rekey Segha Tambour', depicting the biography of the lead singers and the list of songs and lyrics, was funded and published in 2019 under the mentioned voted items.
- (4) The commemoration of the inscription of the Segha Tambour has become an annual feature and each year as from 2018-2022, 07 December is integrated in the main calendar of activities for the celebration of the *Festival Kreol* and activities relating to the transmission and promotion of our musical legacy, such as the organisation of atelier tambour for children and youths, the Segha Tambour Nights whereby around eight to ten traditional groups are gathered to showcase the Segha Tambour.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, as you are already aware, a new voted item on 'Safeguarding of the Segha Tambour' was created under the budget programme 8-104 – 22900991 in 2018 which has enabled the organisation of programmes, projects and activities for the preservation and promotion of the Segha Tambour.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, I wish to point out that since the taking over of office in March 2022, a list of measures was implemented to ensure the permanency and continuity of the implementation of the safeguarding measures. These programmes, projects and activities include: -

- (1) participation of the master tambour maker, his apprentice and two officials from the Commission in the Festival Moutya in Seychelles from 24 August to 02 September 2022;

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- (2) active participation of traditional groups for the organisation of the activities including spectacle marking the 20th Anniversary of Autonomy and making of the 5th Commemoration of the Segá Tambour Day through the organisation of ‘Atelier’ for the youths and children on 07 December 2022;
- (3) A circular was issued on 29 May 2023 to all Commissions of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly, traditional groups and socio-cultural groups to draw the attention on the importance of the use of goat skin tambour in Segá Tambour practice and official functions. In the same respect, the same circular has also been extended to the Commission for Tourism and Rodrigues Tourism Office, for the attention of the registered tourism enterprises to ensure that all the tourism enterprises are complying with the established internal guidelines to reinforce the safeguarding measures;
- (4) A series of consultations and working session, coordinated by the National Heritage Fund and the Independent UNESCO Consultant Professor Abungu were organised from 12 to 15 June 2023 in connection with the Periodic Reporting Exercise under the UNESCO 2003 Convention for the safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage. These meetings were an occasion to bring together practitioners of the Segá Tambour, tradition bearers and different stakeholders and discuss the state-of-art of the Segá Tambour and to express themselves on the challenges they are facing with regard to practice of the Segá Tambour and Intangible Cultural Heritage in general and also make proposals for ensuring transmission and safeguarding. A report is presently being compiled by the National Heritage Fund.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, I am very proud to inform the House that it has become a common practice by the Commissions of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly that the Segá Tambour component is present in all official functions, ceremonies and activities organised regularly. The Segá Tambour is also incorporated in the artistic performance of the participants in the International Games and Exchanges: for example: the music band Mannyok, in 2017, was awarded special jury mention with the artistic presentation on ‘*musique de création*’ based on the evolution of tambour, musical research and experimental music. In the same respect, the artistic performance of the selected participants of the ‘Jeux de la Francophonie’ in Congo in August 2023, included elements of our Segá Tambour for both the show case of Hip Hop and storytelling arts fields.

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Mr Chairperson, Sir, after consultation and technical advice solicited from Professor Abungu, UNESCO Independent Expert, the National Heritage Fund and other stakeholders, a list of non-exhaustive measures is being envisaged to promote the Segá Tambour. It is most urgent and more than essential that the following recommendations are executed: -

1. Proposing an institutional and legal framework for heritage in Rodrigues;
2. To liaise with Ministry of Arts and Cultural Heritage (MACH) for the consideration of the coral quarry and sites in the vicinity be considered on the tentative list of World Heritage Site;
3. Reviewing, updating the list of tangible and intangible heritage in Rodrigues and make it a must to enhance its preservation and make the population more aware of them;
4. Working in close collaboration with the Commission for Tourism to ensure optimum conditions for performance of traditional groups in hotel establishments;
5. Working in close collaboration with the Commission for Education for the inclusion of cultural elements; including the Segá Tambour, during curriculum development;
6. Adding our cultural elements; including the Segá Tambour, during curriculum development in view of encouraging the practice and transmission amidst the younger generation;
7. Creating a space and market to showcase all materials related to Segá Tambour and traditional music practice;
8. Finding a solution with regard to the scarcity of materials required for the fabrication of the Tambour.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, my Commission is presently reviewing the list of safeguarding measures that have already been implemented, is ongoing or has not yet started and will come forward with an implementation plan with regard to the inscription of the Segá Tambour of Rodrigues of the Representative of the ICH of Humanity.

Thank you Mr Chairperson.

Mrs Gaspard Pierre Louis: M. le président, quand j'écoute le Commissaire Ravina, je vois que c'est encore un bien bel héritage en termes de travaux déjà complétés par rapport à l'inscription du séga tambour sur la liste immatérielle et culturelle de l'UNESCO. Je vois que le Commissaire a parlé beaucoup de petites actions. Quoique je vois aussi bien sûr, depuis 2018, il y a eu beaucoup de choses importantes comme le *Séga Tambour Day*. Est-ce que je peux demander au Commissaire concrètement, étant donné que si on regarde à travers le monde, tous ces projets de préservations, *the cultural heritage*, ils font face à ce grand défi de, on appelle ça le *danger of extinction*. C'est vrai que c'est bon qu'il y a des petites actions. Concrètement, qu'est-ce que la commission de la Culture met en place pour assurer que Rodrigues peut relever ce défi de *danger of extinction* par rapport au séga tambour ? Puisqu'on sait aujourd'hui que la majorité de ces personnes qui joue, qui fait du tambour, qui danse le séga tambour sont d'un certain âge. Concrètement, qu'est-ce que le Commissaire met en place ?

Mr Ravina: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I have just talked with my Head of Department concerning the preservation of *séga tambour* in Rodrigues. We think to put a committee at the level of my Commission just to first and also for the transmission of séga tambour to other future generation.

Mrs Gaspard Pierre Louis: Tout ça, c'est bien beau mais comme je disais, il faut des objectifs bien plus précis. Donc, le Commissaire parle dans sa réponse d'un *legal framework*. Je pense que c'est une grande priorité après tout ce qu'on fait jusqu'ici. Quand on sait, par exemple, qu'aujourd'hui à l'heure où on vous parle, même dans les fonctions de l'Assemblée régionale, de la commission de la Culture elle-même dans ses fonctions ou bien dans d'autres fonctions où la Commission ou bien le gouvernement est associé, on peut encore voir le fameux tambour plastic alors que le Chef commissaire d'alors menait campagne contre. Parce que c'est contre l'esprit justement de cette préservation de notre culture. Quelle étape ? Où est-ce qu'on en est aujourd'hui par rapport à la mise en place de ce *legal framework* ?

Mr Ravina: Mr Chairperson, Sir, it has been brought to our attention that private and organisers are not conforming with the safeguarding measures and internal guidelines to reinforce these measures. So far, the sensitisation campaign conducted by my Commission targeted the Commission of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly, local institution, tourism enterprise, cultural association and groups on these safeguarding measures and internal guidelines as mentioned above. My Commission is working towards the establishment of an institutional and legal framework which will incorporate the enforcement of the safeguarding

measures and guidelines. The aim is to extend its content to private organisation and overseas organisation that regularly organise programme and event in Rodrigues.

Mrs Gaspard Pierre Louis: In fact, that is the question, Mr Chairperson, Sir. Where are we actually with this legal framework? Have we started something? At which step are we actually?

Mr Ravina: As I said, it is now that this legal framework is being worked at the legal stage just to implement this action.

Mr Lisette: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I understand the good move of the Commission for Culture when the Commissioner has stated that there is a circular which has been transmitted to all Commissions of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly to ensure that we stick to the use of goat skin *séga tambour* in all functions. But, unfortunately, we have seen lately that it is not the case. I do imagine that at some particular place, it is quite difficult to have the *tambour chauffé*. But we do understand also that there is the *chauffé tambour*. Normally, I know that it should be cultural that we heat our *tambour* using the log fire, boost fire whatever it is. But, if there is such a circular, I understand that we should be able to ensure to start with functions, I mean, governmental functions should adhere to that so that as you said, private individuals do also follow the guidelines that have been set by the opposition.

Mr Ravina: Mr Chairperson, Sir, it is why we have to send a reminder to all the institutions and all the Commissions to abide to this circular.

Mr Chairperson: Last question.

Mr Baptiste: Mr Chairperson, Sir, the Commissioner has talked about the safeguard measures. I would like to ask him whether at the level of his Commission, they have made an evaluation of all these safeguard measures and what urgent actions should be taken now to ensure that we preserve and conserve this *séga tambour* on the list because there are lots of threats as we have seen here. What is he envisaging to do urgently and whether he has made this evaluation?

Mr Ravina: Mr Chairperson, Sir, same is being done and it is not completed.

Mrs Gaspard Pierre Louis: Mr Chairperson, Sir, in his answer, the Commissioner mentioned the playing of *séga tambour* music in hotels. As he would note that for those groups or troupes that are performing in these hotels, they are most often being paid peanuts and that is why they are discouraged and this is a danger. The danger of extinction is also there when

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we cannot have traditional groups performing and having some revenues. What has the Commissioner done in respect to that? Because, I am sure, he is aware of the problem, to ensure that for people to continue to play, they should get value for money and what has been put in place, whether there has been a meeting with these hotel promoters and so on and what has come out from these meetings?

Mr Ravina: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I will look into the matter.

Mr Chairperson: Okay. Let us break for one hour.

At 12.51 p.m., the sitting was suspended for one hour.

On resuming at 1.55 p.m. with the Chairperson in the Chair.

Mr Chairperson: Respected Members, the House has been advised that due to some health problems, Commissioner Louis Ange Perrine will not be present for the whole of this sitting. Consequently, all PQs that have been addressed to him will be answered by the Deputy Chief Commissioner. Be advised also that the House has been informed that PQ B/109, B/125, B/126 and B/127 have been withdrawn. Yes, 109, 125, 126 and 127. Okay, let us move forward.

SOCIAL ILLS IMPLYING MINORS

(No. B/103) Ms M. N. Raffaut (Second Island Region Member) asked the Commissioner for Child Development and Others whether, in regard to social ills implying minors, she will obtain information to:

- (a) state and table on the latest statistics of reported cases, at the level of the police and her Commission, from January 2022 to date, and
- (b) outline the actions and the new policies of her Commission concerning same?

Ms Agathe: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I am tabling the statistics regarding reported cases implying minors as submitted by the Police and the Child Development Unit for the period January 2022 to date. Mr Chairperson, Sir, from the statistics provided by the Police, it can be noted that the offences for which there are more reported cases implying minors as victims and as accused are: 32 cases of sexual intercourse with minors under the age of 16 implying 29 minors as victims and three minors as accused. 21 cases are simple assaults implying 19 minors as victims and two minors as accused, 13 cases of causing a child to be sexually abused implying 12 minors as victims and one minor as accused, nine cases of attempt upon chastity implying six minors as victims and three minors as accused.

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As per the statistics from the Child Development Unit, it can be noted that the type of problems or social ills for which there are more reported cases for the period January 2022 to date concerns:

- Problem related to parents' divorce or separation, particularly cases of alimony, child custody and *droit de visite* with 92 cases of alimony, 125 cases of child custody and 119 cases regarding *droit de visite* dealt at the level of the CDU;
- Problems of family dispute, conflicts, domestic violence with 69 cases reported;
- Problems of children with behavioural concerns or child beyond control with 57 cases reported;
- Problems of psychological issues affecting minors with 35 cases reported;
- Problems of alleged child ill treatment and neglect with 38 alleged cases reported;
- 33 cases of teenage pregnancy;
- 10 cases of children not going to school and,
- 71 cases related to financial problems were also reported for period January 2022 to date.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, with regard to part (b) of the question, I will now outline the different actions undertaken by my Commission to combat the social ills affecting minors and protecting potential victims of these social ills. Regarding child abuse and sexual behaviours of minor:

- (1) 384 children of Basile Allas Government School have been sensitised on child sexual grooming and sexual abuse. The sensitisation campaign will be extended to other primary schools during the first and the second semester of the next academic year. Following the session at Basile Allas Government School, the Animators have identified that there is also the necessity to sensitise the parents on the subject. Sensitisation sessions are thereby planned in two villages, namely; Crève-Coeur and Roseaux as from next month.
- (2) The Comprehensive Sexual Education (CSE) Programme has been extended to all pre-primary schools this year. Studies have shown that comprehensive sexual education should begin as early as kindergarten and that comprehensive sexual education can prevent child sex abused, teenage pregnancy, STD and intimate partner violence. Comprehensive sexual education at early age has also led to

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improve self-protective skills, improve knowledge of appropriate or inappropriate touching, increase parent-child communication and increase disclosure of abuse.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, regarding the misuse of technology such as mobile phone and social media platforms, on 15 May 2023, the Commission launched a sensitisation campaign on '*La Place de l'Outil Informatique dans la Famille*'. About 100 parents attended the sensitisation campaign at Le Chou College and 20 parents attended the sensitisation campaign at Patate Théophile whereby, parents were exposed on the dangers associated with the misuse of technology among others. Other villages will be sensitised. The sessions were delivered in collaboration with the *Brigade pour la Protection de la Famille*, an IT Unit of the Police Force and were much appreciated by the parents.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, concerning the issues of separation, divorce and infidelity affecting children, the Family Counselling Officers of my Commission have delivered 510 counselling sessions pertaining to cases of family conflicts, disputes and domestic violence for period January 2022 up to June 2023. The programme, *Le Sens de l'Engagement au Sein du Couple* is ongoing in villages and 73 beneficiaries from five villages have followed the programme. The programme is actually being revamped and will resume in other villages. 11 male ambassadors, trainers have been trained on the mend as partner programme and are delivering session with boys and men around the island on issues pertaining to domestic violence and gender-based violence. Since the month of August 2023, 45 boys and men have benefitted from the session delivered by the ambassadors in the villages of Montagne Charlot and Citronelle. The revamping programme is having a lot of success. Men are now interested to attend the session as they feel more at ease when it is men like them who discuss the issues of gender-based violence and domestic violence.

Ms Truffaut: Mr Chairperson, Sir, can the Commissioner for Women inform the House if there are appropriate resource persons dealing with these serious cases at the level of her Commission apart from Counsellors?

Ms Agathe: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I would like that the Members elaborate on the cases that she is referring to. For example, she told that if there are relevant, the adequate persons at my Commission to help to deal with these cases. I know that the Family Counselling Officers, they are there to support and there are also the Psychologists and there are also the Family Welfare Protection Officer who is there to do everything that is concerned with the law and the

Court. I do not know if I have correctly answered to the question. Maybe you can rephrase it if it is not okay for you.

Mrs Gaspard Pierre Louis: Mr Chairperson, Sir, so, I would refer to the Papers Laid by the Commissioner for Women with regard to the cases recorded at the level of the place, at the level of her office. I can see that we have got more than 500 cases for the period January up to now. Can I know from the Commissioner regarding the data collection? We know that it has been an issue since long and with the advent of the progress in technology regarding fibre optic cable, we were working on a project to harmonise the way data is being collected. Because up to now, we are going to the Police Station and so on to have the figures. So, can I ask the Commissioner what is she doing concretely and when can we expect a better way of data collection regarding these issues because these are tools that are very important for decision-making?

Ms Agathe: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I know that as the Minority Leader rightly said, that there is an issue concerning statistics at the level of my Commission. Because if you know the Integrated Centre well, everyone here, you will notice that there is a door where everyone comes but there is also another way where the victims can come to the level of the Commission. There is also the issue of duplication of data here and we have done a meeting just to tell the officers to try to find ways to give appropriate data because there are people who need to go to counselling session and not to the Family Welfare Protection Officer. We have also found that there is also duplication of data for instance, in the level of my Commission and the Probation Services and as well as the Health sector. I agree that there is a need to work on a proper way to find the collection of data so that we have the right data for any problems here.

Mrs Gaspard Pierre Louis: Unfortunately, the Commissioner has not been able to tell me concretely when are we expecting that. So, I also can see that, of course, as we know, these types of problems of social issues, social ills, it concerns different partners and since 2013, we put in place *Service de soutien et de protection aux familles* at the level of the Commission which is as a one-stop shop at Malabar. Grouping - we have got the *Brigade pour la protection des mineurs*, we have got Police Family Unit, we have got the Psychologist, the Counsellors, the CDU, we have got the Family Unit. But, unfortunately, I tried to have some information and I can see that we are more than 17 months since the Commissioner is in office. At no point in time, she finds it important to meet all these stakeholders. Can I know from the Commissioner with regard to this one-stop shop *Service de soutien et de protection aux familles*, where many times, we have been taking as reference because Mauritius would like to

have these kinds of services and they cannot have so that people do not have to go everywhere to have recourse to facilities and services. She had not been meeting them up to now. Is she contemplating to meet them or what is her policy about that?

Ms Agathe: Yes, Mr Chairperson, Sir, I am contemplating to meet them because we have lengthily discussed about it in the office with my Departmental Head and other officers. Because there are certain issues that need to be worked, that we need to join all stakeholders together and we have the chance that at Malabar, the Integrated Centre, all these stakeholders that dealt with social ills, they are under the same roof. Yes, I am contemplating to do something on it.

Mrs Gaspard Pierre Louis: Unfortunately, it is taking long, Mr Chairperson, Sir, in the meantime, the figures are increasing. So, can I know from the Commissioner for Women whether the network of professionals working with children which we put in place because we know that we have got these stakeholders, official ones, but we have also other partners working with children on the field. We had the committee, the network of professionals working with children and it was shared by the Commissioner for Children itself, whether this committee has met since she is in office?

Ms Agathe: Mr Chairperson, Sir, my Commission is also reviewing the Child Mentoring Regulation to be in line with the Children's Act 2020. The draft of the new regulation has already been vetted by the Ministry of Gender and Equality and will be sent for vetting by the State Law Office this month. There are also other regulations that we have already drafted but that need to be vetted and we will bring it sooner in this House so that we can better address problems of minors and children.

Mrs Gaspard Pierre Louis: En effet, M. le président, je ne me réfère pas au *Child Mentoring Regulation of Committee*. Là, je parle de ce comité qui regroupe les représentants de l'éducation, les représentants de la santé, les représentants de ces bureaux dont j'ai mentionnés. Donc, les représentants de tous les ONGs travaillant en faveur des enfants. Il y avait ce comité parce que de temps en temps, donc, je pense on se rencontrait chaque trois mois, c'était l'occasion pour nous d'avoir un meilleur aperçu de la situation par rapport aux enfants et de voir comment harmoniser nos actions. Donc, c'est ce comité à quoi je me réfère. Est-ce que la Commissaire a rencontré ce comité ?

Ms Agathe: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I have not really met this Committee but I would like to reassure the House that we are working on a Child Coordinating Panel Regulation so that we have all these set up in one regulation. Thank you.

Mrs Gaspard Pierre Louis: M. le président, donc, je pense que c'est aussi important par rapport aux enfants, on sait que la majorité sont dans les institutions éducatives. Est-ce que la Commissaire peut nous dire dans le cas où on a les *social ills at schools, manifested at school, what are the procedures?* Comment est-ce que cela se passe pour que nos enfants aient recours à ce service ? Comment ça se passe au niveau des écoles pendant l'heure de l'école ?

Ms Agathe: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I think that the Minority Leader already knows the procedures that we have social workers that go to school frequently and there are the educational Psychologists also that goes to school frequently. The Social Workers and the educational Psychologist refer the cases to the level at my department. We are going to do all necessary steps to help these children. Thank you.

Mr Lisette: Mr Chairperson, Sir, one of the social ills that we are seeing these days in Rodrigues is the presence of minors in discotheque, which is a big issue - minors in discotheque. I would like to know what action the Commissioner will be taking against that.

Ms Agathe: Mr Chairperson, Sir, as the House already knows, I work for the child protection and there are also many services that we need to... As the Minority Leader said, we have to work together so that we can reinforce the law that should be respected. For instance, for minors going to discotheques, I would like to invite parents also to be more responsible so that the minors do not go to discotheques. And, also, we are working on helping, especially girls, through leadership programmes also, to know what is good for them and what is not good and I also think that the Police, they also have a mandate to ensure that the laws are respected, that minors do not go to these places and also, I would like to stress that directors or the person responsible for the discotheques, they should bear in mind that they should always respect the law and they cannot admit children below 18 years old come to discotheques. Thank you, Mr Chairperson, Sir.

Mrs Gaspard Pierre Louis: *In fact, Mr Chairperson, Sir, in these Committees, we have the police also where we regularly passé en revue la situation et on a attiré l'attention de ces cas et je vois que malheureusement, aujourd'hui, même si la Commissaire me parle de ce panel qu'elle va mettre en place, je sais que ce panel émane du Child Act 2020 qui a été promulgué en 2022, début 2022. Donc, c'est un comité très important et très urgent. La*

Commissaire maintenant contemple de la mettre en place après encore une fois presque 17 mois de prise de bureau. Est-ce que la Commissaire peut nous donner la garantie que dans les jours qui viennent, elle va mettre en place ce panel et enfin avoir une approche plus holistique de ce problème qui touche nos enfants, qui touche l'avenir.

Ms Agathe: Of course, Mr Chairperson, Sir.

Mr Chairperson: Next question!

COMMUNICATION BY INTERNET – OUTCOME

(No. B/104) Mr J. P. Spéville (Fourth Island Region Member) asked the Commissioner for Information and Communication Technology and Others whether, in regard to communication by internet, he will state the outcome of his recent mission and that of a delegation from his office to meet stakeholders in Mauritius, in view to provide better capacity to members of the public?

Mr Wong So: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I would like to inform the House that as Commissioner responsible for ICT, I led a delegation comprising of senior officials of my Commission and the Chairman of the Rodrigues ICT Development and Promotion Company Ltd for an official mission to Mauritius earlier this year from 03 to 06 April 2023.

The objective of the mission was to meet key stakeholders in Mauritius to discuss issues pertaining to ICT development. This sector needs to be fully developed so that it can play a key role in the socio-economic growth of Rodrigues. It is one of our top priorities of this present Regional Government in order to create the appropriate enabling environment that will successfully lead Rodrigues to the new era of digitalisation.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, one of the main factors which is constraining the development of the ICT in Rodrigues is the underutilisation of the Fibre Optic MARS Cable.

The cable has a capacity of 8 TBps while only 100 GBps have been activated up to now as available bandwidth between Mauritius and Rodrigues as National Lease Circuit. 2 GBps of internet bandwidth is currently activated. Out of the 100 GBps activated, only 14.4 GBps are currently being allocated to Internet Service Providers. This is why the connectivity speeds in Rodrigues remain low and does not attract investors.

This state of matter is unfortunately a result of the failure of the former Regional Government to implement and operationalise the Rodrigues ICT Development and Promotion Company Ltd as recommended in the Auditax Consultancy report dated since 16 March 2019.

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The latter report made recommendations to set up the company which would operate as a Network Service Provider and properly manage the bandwidth capacity of the MARS Cable.

Mr Chairperson Sir, in order to address this issue, as a responsible Regional Government, we have reconstituted the Board of Directors of the Rodrigues ICT Development and Promotion Company Ltd with a new Chairman who is a professional cadre in the field of ICT. As at date, procedures have already been initiated to enable the company to recruit its key personnel and apply for the Network Service Provider license from the Information and Communication Technology Authority known as ICTA, to start its operation.

In the meantime, during our mission in April 2023 as stated earlier, we had discussions respectively with the Hon. Minister of ICT and his senior officials. We have also meeting with the Deputy Financial Secretary of the Ministry of Finance, the ICTA, the Mauritius Telecom and Emtel, among others, pertaining to internet connectivity and increase in bandwidth for a better digital communication in Rodrigues.

The main outcomes of discussions held were as follows: -

- (i) Both Mauritius Telecom and Emtel which are the sole service providers in Rodrigues, have agreed to provide additional bandwidth to increase customer's bandwidth in Rodrigues with new packages subject to the additional cost is subsidised by government;
- (ii) The Minister of ICT has approved to put a request to the Ministry of Finance to support the request of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly to subsidise additional cost implying the increase of customer's bandwidth to be provided by the Network Service Providers;
- (iii) The Ministry of Finance during discussion held, has raised no objection to provide the appropriate support subject to a Strategic and Action Plan for the Development of the ICT Sector in Rodrigues is developed, and
- (iv) The ICTA has agreed to provide the necessary guidelines to enable the Rodrigues ICT Development and Promotion Company Ltd to comply with all requirements necessary to become an eligible Network Service Provider and operate as such.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, my Commission is ensuring necessary follow up on these outcomes. As at date, the Terms and Reference for the recruitment of a Consultant to develop

a 5-Years Strategy and Action Plan for the ICT Sector in Rodrigues is being finalised and will be floated shortly. Once the Strategy and Action Plan document is prepared, same will be transmitted to Government to consider providing the appropriate financial support to enable the increase in bandwidth to customers by Network Service Providers, among other measures.

I thank you, Mr Chairperson, Sir.

Mrs Gaspard Pierre Louis: Mr Chairperson, Sir, just I would like the Commissioner to precise, I do not know whether I have understood well, whether in his answer, he is telling that the ICT company will become a service provider. Yes? Can we know when is he envisaging so?

Mr Wong So: M. le président, à l'état actuel des choses, la commission de la Technologie n'est pas considérée comme un *Network Service Provider*. Il y va de notre ressort, bien sûr, on n'est pas un *Network Service Provider*, NSP. Maintenant, avec la venue de la nouvelle compagnie de *ICT Development Information Company Ltd*, on a eu des pourparlers avec ICTA à Maurice lors de notre séjour tout dernièrement. Et lorsque ICTA est venu à Rodrigues, on a eu des sessions de travail pour demander à ce que Rodrigues soit un NSP. Il n'y a pas d'objection de ce côté venant des autorités. Quel sera éventuellement les conséquences d'avoir le *ICT Development and Promotion Company Ltd* comme un NSP ? Veut dire que les opérateurs opérant à Rodrigues devront payer les redevances dorénavant à cette compagnie au lieu de le faire directement au *Mauritius Telecom*. Ce seront des sources de revenus qui reviendront directement avec la Commission au lieu d'aller vers *Mauritius Telecom* comme vous le savez déjà.

Mrs Gaspard Pierre Louis: M. le président, parce que c'était la discussion qu'on avait eue au départ et c'était un peu difficile de convaincre. Donc, je suis contente si le Commissaire a pu convaincre et que désormais la compagnie sera *Network Service Provider*. Donc, on espère que ce sera pour très bientôt. Mais je vois aussi que le Commissaire avait mentionné ici un moment que son objectif, c'est de doubler la capacité des familles pour le même tarif. Donc, est-ce que c'est ça qui a été agréé par le ministère des Finances ? Si oui, quand est-ce que se sera opérationnel ?

Mr Wong So: Merci, M. le président, de me permettre de répondre à cette question. Ça a été mentionné justement dans le libellé de ma réponse. Lors des discussions qu'on a eues avec le Ministre de ICT et avec éventuellement les *high officials* du ministère des Finances, il a été fait mention de faire provision éventuellement d'une allocation pour qu'on puisse quand

même venir compenser. Parce que si on est en train d'augmenter le *bandwidth* pour les *users* en général à Rodrigues, il y a un coût à encourir et que *Mauritius Telecom* et Emtel sont disposés à le faire moyennant subside qui est imposée par l'Etat qui vient compenser justement dans le paiement aux opérateurs. Ce qui fait que c'est en bonne voie. On espère le ratifier très bientôt mais ça ne dépend pas de nous. Comme vous le savez très bien, Madame, vous avez été à ce poste. C'est que malheureusement, ça dépend du gouvernement central, le bon vouloir du gouvernement central de pouvoir nous accorder cette facilité afin que le peuple de Rodrigues puisse en bénéficier.

Mrs Gaspard Pierre Louis: Donc, en fonction de ça, je pense quand cela arrivera, ce sera une très bonne nouvelle pour la population. Donc, est-ce que le Commissaire peut nous dire aujourd'hui - parce que pour pouvoir bénéficier de cela, il faut déjà être connecté. Ou bien, est-ce que je peux savoir aujourd'hui combien de familles sont déjà connectées à la fibre et qui éventuellement vont bénéficier de cela aussitôt que la mesure est en vigueur ?

Mr Wong So: Malheureusement, M. le président, je n'ai pas les chiffres en tête pour vous donner exactement le nombre exact des *users* de l'internet à Rodrigues. Mais je le ferais. Je déposerais ça à la librairie de la Chambre. Simplement, ce que je peux vous dire, que d'après les calculs qui ont été faits avec les *service providers* actuels, si on vient doubler la capacité, le tarif va augmenter dans les Rs 200 à Rs 250 à peu près par *user*.

Mrs Gaspard Pierre Louis: Parce que dans ce cas, je pense c'est qu'une discussion très précise qui a été faite. Parce que ça implique les finances, je suppose qu'il y a des chiffres qui ont été discutés. Parce que le ministère de Finance ne va pas accepter quelque chose comme ça dans l'air. Par rapport à ce service au public dans ce cas-là, quelle est votre politique par rapport à ces familles qui ne sont pas connectées valeur du jour ?

Mr Wong So: Alors, les familles qui ne sont pas connectées sur internet, en ce moment-ci comme vous le savez très bien, il y a des *free wi-fi zone* qui sont en ce moment-ci, *scattered around the island*. Ce qui fait que bon, ceux et celles qui ne peuvent pas se connecter sur la ligne directe qui leur appartient, éventuellement, ils ont la possibilité de pouvoir quand même utiliser le réseau qui est mis à la disposition de la population par l'état. Donc, ce qui fait que si vous voulez avoir un chiffre qui a été mentionné mais qui n'est pas exacte, ça tournerait dans les Rs 24 millions par an à peu près comme un chiffre qui a été mis de l'avant par les autorités pour dire que si on doit encourir les frais, d'augmenter le *bandwidth* par 100%. Si on a à investir 50 GBps, on aura 100 GBps. Donc, ce qui fait que bon, ça va coûter dans les Rs 24 millions.

Mrs Gaspard Pierre Louis: Si je comprends bien, le Commissaire de l'Information a parlé de 14.4 GBps déjà *being used on the 100 GBps*. Je voudrais bien être éclairé que les 85 GBps *also* restant sur les 100 GBps alloués sur le câble MARS, ce sera ça qui sera distribué à la population. Et bien sûr, éventuellement comme vous dites, subventionner par le gouvernement central. C'est ça dont on parle ?

Mr Wong So: Ça pourrait être les deux à la fois. Tout dépendra de la demande de la population par rapport à ce nouveau service qu'on va *provide* dans le sens que si on peut travailler dans les 100 GBps *available*, tant mieux mais si ça dépasse, éventuellement, on va devoir quand même faire nos requêtes de l'ICTA pour allouer d'autres créneaux de 100 GBps. Merci.

Mr Chairperson: Next question!

MISS RODRIGUES GRAND FINALE 2023

(No. B/105) Ms K. Roussety (Second Local Region Member for Baie aux Huîtres) asked the Chief Commissioner whether, in regard to the organisation of Miss Rodrigues Grand Finale 2023, he will obtain information and state to the House on the:

- (a) composition of the organising committee/body;
- (b) role and responsibility of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly in the activity, and
- (c) total cost incurred by the Rodrigues Regional Assembly in connection thereto, giving details thereof?

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I am informed that the Miss Rodrigues Beauty Contest Organising Committee is a private organisation composed of eight persons which is supported by the founder and President of Miss Mauritius and Miss Rodrigues National Organisation.

As regards to part (b) of the question, I would like to inform the House that the Rodrigues Regional Assembly does not have any direct role and responsibility in the organisation of the event as same fall under the sole purview of Miss Mauritius and Miss Rodrigues National Organisation. However, upon request of the organiser, the following facilities were put, that is, the disposal in connection with the organisation of the Miss Rodrigues Grand Final 2023, the Cultural and Leisure Centre including sound system and sound light operators and the services of a photographer.

With regard to part (c) of the question, I would like to inform the House that the only cost incurred by the Rodrigues Regional Assembly is the payment of overtime to the Sound and Light Operators, the Photographer and an Office Auxiliary. I seize this opportunity to congratulate the new Miss Rodrigues 2023, her runners-up and all other participants.

Ms Roussety: M. le président, on savait tous dans le passé qu'une préparation préalable avait lieu. Les jeunes Miss étaient encadrées et accompagnées. D'ailleurs, si je ne me trompe pas, il fallait un certain nombre de candidature, de candidates pour que le concours ait lieu. Est-ce que le respecté Commissaire peut-il nous éclairer un peu plus ?

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I cannot shed light on something for which we are not responsible. Any organisation wishing to organise cultural shows, activities, beauty contests, weightlifting contests, they can apply to the Rodrigues Regional Assembly for facilities. I repeat, we were not and we are not involved in the direct organisation who participated, what was their height, their weight or whatever. We are not concerned with this.

Mr Baptiste: So, I understand that you will not be able to give all the details but if the Rodrigues Regional Assembly is financing at least part of this activity, I think that at least, you should expect some outcome. Are you satisfied with the organisation after having given your helping hand for this event? Because I know this is a *quand même un miroir pour Rodrigues*.

The Chief Commissioner: We did not finance anything, Mr Chairperson, Sir. To finance means to disburse money, to pay for things for them. We only give our Leisure Centre and we paid for the overtime of the staff. This does not amount to finance the event. Of course, we could have participated much into this event but due to budgetary constraints and other factors such as, the rapidity this was organised, we could not maybe bring all the support necessary to the event. But I repeat, this is a private event. Just like you have Miss Ronde, you have Mr Rodrigues. How are we concerned with this? This is people's initiative. We support to the extent that we can but such organisations, they also have private sponsors.

Mrs Gaspard Pierre Louis: M. le président, bien sûr, on comprend que le Chef commissaire veut dire que c'était une initiative privée. Je suis sûre que le Chef commissaire aussi est courant ou bien a eu des représentations par rapport à l'organisation de cette activité, de cet évènement parce qu'on sait par exemple que la Miss Rodrigues, normalement jusqu'ici, elle est après partie prenante de tout ce qui est promotion touristique. Donc, de loin ou de près, l'Assemblée régionale à travers l'Office du Tourisme est très concernée par ce projet. Donc,

on avait commencé. Il y avait une demande au départ et je pense que cette demande a été réitérée pour qu'il y a un *autonomous body* à Rodrigues qui organise ces événements.

Au lieu qu'aujourd'hui, après 20 ans, on a des personnes, des *private* de Maurice qui viennent nous imposer quelque chose qui après fait grand bruit au niveau de la population, est-ce que le Chef commissaire... - même si on n'a pas investi beaucoup en termes d'argent, mais c'est un projet qui a un impact aussi sur après, tout ce qui est par rapport à la promotion touristique, est-ce que le Chef commissaire a pensé que désormais, ce serait bon que c'est Rodrigues qui prend cela en charge et ne pas faire venir des gens pour après avoir toutes sortes de choses?

The Chief Commissioner: M. le président, nous n'avons fait venir personne. Ce qu'il faut comprendre, c'est que la respectée Membre a eu 10 ans. Durant la dernière décennie, elle aurait pu prendre cette initiative elle-même. Maintenant qu'elle est dans l'opposition, c'est facile de venir dire que moi, Chef commissaire, je dois aller organiser des concours de beauté. Est-ce que c'est le rôle du Chef commissaire est d'aller organiser des concours de beauté ? Il y a un décorum quand même pour le Chef commissaire, M. le président. Un Chef commissaire qui va aller organiser des concours de beauté ? D'ailleurs, on m'a demandé de signer des certificats de participation et j'ai signé parce que c'était à la dernière minute.

M. le président, n'importe qui peut organiser n'importe quel concours : concours de beauté pour homme, pour dame, Miss Ronde. D'ailleurs, j'ai bien apprécié Miss Ronde la dernière fois. C'est quelque chose à refaire. Mr Rodrigues et Mme Rodrigues aussi, non ? Comment s'appelle ? Les *'barbelistes'* là. Est-ce que c'est le rôle du Chef commissaire de s'impliquer dedans ? Le Chef commissaire doit se placer au-dessus de ces choses, je dirais, mondaines et avoir une responsabilité plus officielle. J'ai demandé au Commissaire Wong-So par exemple, de s'y associer. Lui aussi, il a été un peu pris au dépourvu. Les organisateurs ont voulu organiser leur affaire vite. On leur avait demandé d'attendre un peu l'année prochaine le temps de bien organiser mais c'est leur droit d'aller de l'avant. On a donné le coup de main qu'il faut. Mais...

(Interruptions)

M. le président, ce qu'il faut comprendre, c'est que c'est une propriété intellectuelle, Miss Rodrigues. C'est une franchise. Tout comme il y a des marques comme Coca Cola, Pepsi etcetera. Je ne peux pas au jour demain, faire une boisson et écrire Coca Cola dessus et puis, aller mettre ça sur le marché. La franchise appartient à *Miss Mauritius National Pageant*, à

Mme Obeegadoo qui d'ailleurs a fait un très bon travail malgré son âge avancé. On ne peut pas, nous, maintenant voler la propriété, la franchise de quelqu'un d'autre et dire que Miss Rodrigues, c'est pour nous maintenant et c'est moi le Chef commissaire, je vais organiser et choisir peut-être qui sera Miss Rodrigues. Ce n'est pas mon rôle.

Mrs Gaspard Pierre Louis: Est-ce que je peux savoir dans ce cas-là, le Chef commissaire, qui c'est qui a nommé ces représentants de Rodrigues sur le comité sachant que ces réunions ont été tenues à l'Office du Tourisme ou à La Résidence ? Donc, si les premières rencontres, M. le président, je peux citer le nom des membres, qui c'est qui a nommé ces personnes avec conférence de presse voilà, qui c'est qui a nommé ces personnes si l'Assemblée régionale ou l'Office du Tourisme ne s'est pas associé à cela ?

The Chief Commissioner: M. le président, comme je vous ai dit, on a donné un coup de main. Moi-même, j'ai reçu Mme Obeegadoo avec plaisir. Malheureusement, je lui ai fait comprendre que de par mes responsabilités, mes engagements personnels et familiaux, je dois me reposer. Je n'aime pas trop la mondanité, aller dans les fonctions et la musique etcetera. Je crois que vous avez été parfait dans le rôle. Oui, M. le président, il faut organiser le meilleur mais il faut respecter ceux qui ont les droits pour organiser Miss Rodrigues. C'est comme un *trade name*. Demain, je ne peux pas faire un journal et l'appeler 'Le Vrai Rodriguais' parce que ça existe déjà. C'est la propriété d'une autre personne. Donc, ça, c'est pareil.

Si on veut organiser ensemble, il faut travailler avec ceux qui ont les droits ou bien racheter les droits et à quel prix. Mais je répète, ce n'est pas le rôle de l'Assemblée régionale d'aller s'impliquer directement dans l'organisation de concours de beauté. C'est le rôle des organisations, peut-être culturelles, avec des sponsors d'organiser ces concours. Le premier concours, vous avez des Miss Rodrigues qui ont été Miss Mauritius. Par exemple, dans les années 70, il y a eu une Miss Rodrigues, une chinoise, je ne me souviens plus de son nom, qui a été Miss Mauritius. Vous avez des gens comme Stéphanie Augustin de ma classe de HSC qui a été je crois, première ou deuxième dauphine de Miss Mauritius. Je répète, ce n'est pas le... Vous m'accablez de questions mais ce n'est pas le rôle du Chef commissaire d'aller organiser des concours de beauté, encore moins, de répondre qui fait partie des comités. Le comité a été constitué par le comité organisateur... la personne concernée et même si le Commissaire est au courant. Et je suis d'accord il faut mieux organiser la prochaine fois. Il faut mieux organiser. Oui. Il faut mieux organiser et il ne faut pas juste critiquer. Parce que ces gens-là, ils ont organisé leur concours avec les moyens de bord qu'ils avaient et il faut honorer la Miss Rodrigues et ses dauphines bien évidemment.

Ms Roussety: Ce jour-là, Rodrigues a été primé devant. Pour la partie culturelle, on a vu que les candidates avaient des tenues inappropriées pour le séga tambour. Je ne sais pas si M. Varok a vu le spectacle ce jour-là. Je pense que dans les années à venir, la commission devra apporter un plus pour ce grand évènement.

Mr Chairperson: Vous avez oublié la question, là.

Ms Roussety: C'est juste pour dire au Commissaire si dans les années à venir, l'année prochaine pour l'évènement de Miss Rodrigues, est-ce que la Commission pourra plus apporter... voilà, pouvoir aussi concernant les tenues, surtout pour le séga tambour Rodrigues, si les tenues sont appropriées ou pas ?

The Chief Commissioner: M. le président, je n'étais pas présent et je n'ai pas regardé le concours. Je ne sais pas de quoi elle parle. Elle parle tenue appropriée. Donc, je ne peux pas répondre pour la tenue que *Mamzel X* ou Mme Y aurait porté et je répète, ce n'est pas le rôle de l'Assemblée régionale d'aller faire le *censorship*. Nous ne sommes pas dans un pays communiste, ni dans un pays je dirais, d'extrême droite ou pire encore, pour aller décider de la tenue de X ou Y.

Je crois que s'il y avait eu des tenues indécentes, la Police aurait déjà fait son travail pour arrêter ces gens. C'est la liberté d'expression et la liberté artistique que je demande à tous un chacun de respecter. Je me souviens quand j'étais plus jeune, l'ex Chef commissaire, Leader de l'OPR disait que le 'Tambour Rodriguais', ce n'est pas comme les grandes jupes de Maurice. Et c'est vrai. Grande jupe de Maurice, là comme ça, quand vous voyez ça en Australie les gens viennent danser, ce n'est pas notre Séga Tambour. Séga Tambour à la Rodriguaise, c'est une dame qui danse avec un jupon et elle soulève que la jupe et le jupon reste. Il parlait de ça souvent. Je ne sais pas si on a vu des jupons là-bas ou comment c'était. Mais je répète, c'est la liberté d'expression, ce n'est pas à moi d'aller dire qu'est-ce qu'ils doivent porter ou ne pas porter, ils sont accés grands.

Mr Chairperson: Next question.

PROCUREMENT – POINT OF CARE (POC) DIAGNOSTIC DEVICES

(No. B/106) Mr J. R. Ramdally (First Local Region Member for Saint Gabriel) asked the Commissioner for Health and Others whether in regard to the procurement of Point of Care (POC) diagnostic devices by his Commission, he will enlighten the House on:

- (a) the procurement method adopted therefor;

- (b) number of each type of device procured and their total cost, and
- (c) if all officers are qualified to operate same and, in the negative, to give details thereof?

Mr Volbert: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I am informed that there are different types of Point of Care Testing apparatus such as Trop-I, Trop-T, Glucometer, Thermometer, Pregnancy Test Device, etc. Since there is no specification concerning the type of point of care diagnostic devices, the respected Member is referring to, I am not in a position to state the:

- (a) procurement method adopted therefore, and
- (b) number of each type of device procured and their total cost.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, as regards to part (c), I am informed that for the time being, all the point of care apparatus or diagnostic devices actually being operated by qualified personnel as this form part of the training they undergone. Thank you.

Mr Ramdally: M. le président, la question c'était sur le POC *devices*, donc sur tous les *devices*. Donc, pourquoi vous n'arrivez pas à répondre à une question comme ça ? C'est surtout les *devices*, pas un *device* spécifique.

Mr Volbert: Comme je l'ai dit, M. le président, il y a beaucoup de *devices* à l'hôpital. Donc, s'il vient avec une question précise, à ce moment-là... Mais beaucoup de *point of care devices*, comme j'ai expliqué quelques-uns, *Trop-I*, *Trop-T*, *Glucometer*, *Thermometer*, *Pregnancy Test Device*, etc. Il y a tellement beaucoup, des milliers. Comment vais-je donner cette réponse. Venez avec une question spécifique. A ce moment-là, je vous répondrai.

Mr Ramdally: M. le président, tout récemment, le Commissaire, dans les médias, avait parlé des *point of care devices* qu'il allait mettre dans les dispensaires. Donc, là je parle du dispensaire de Petit Gabriel, Mont Lubin, Isolation, Roche Bon Dieu, Rivière Coco, Port Sud Est et Cascade Jean Louis. Donc, un *commissioning* qui a été fait, *certificate of commissioning* qui a été fait le 17...

Mr Chairperson: But I am sorry. Sorry, I am on my feet. The Commissioner already answered the question. And, this question that you are asking right now, it is not related to the main question. I am sorry.

(Interruptions)

I have said that it is not related to the main question.

Mr Ramdally: M. le président, donc, tout récemment on a entendu le Commissaire parlait de POCT. Est-ce que le ministère de la Santé à Maurice a donné son *approval* pour utiliser ces équipements dans les *health institutions* à Rodrigues ?

Mr Volbert: M. le président, je ne pense pas que le ministère doit donner son assentiment pour servir un thermomètre ou *a pregnancy test*, ce sont les POC. Donc, si le respecté Membre, a une question précise de quelle POC, *he is referring to, I will answer.*

The Minority Leader: Est-ce que le Commissaire de la Santé peut nous dire s'il y a eu des équipements distribuer récemment dans les différents centres de santé pour faire les tests, qu'on utilise pour faire des tests, par exemple, HB – hémoglobine ? Est-ce qu'il y a eu récemment des nouveaux équipements distribuer ?

Mr Volbert: On ne sait pas si la respectée Minority Leader fait référence au glucomètre, etc., ben oui, je pense qu'il y a des glucomètres, d'autre appareils qui ont... je ne sais pas à quel appareil vous faites référence, mais si vous avez un nom, vous me le donnez et vais vous répondre.

Mr Lisette: I would like to ask the Commissioner for Health, whether there has been lately procurement of POC and which has been placed in health institutions around Rodrigues, and if yes, to name some?

Mr Volbert: J'ai déjà répondu cinq fois à la question, M. le président. Je ne pense pas pouvoir faire comprendre à ces respectés membres de l'autre côté que le POC n'est pas une marque, n'est pas un appareil spécifique.

Mr Chairperson: Next question.

KITE SURF FESTIVAL 2023

(No. B/107) Ms K. Roussety (Second Local Region Member for Baie aux Huîtres) Commissioner for Tourism and Others whether, in regard to the organisation of the Kite Surf Festival 2023, he will, for the benefit of the House, give details about the role and financial contributions of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly for the activity and the expected outcome thereof?

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Mr Wong So: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I would like right at the outset, table a paper concerning all the data concerning tourists' arrival in Rodrigues for the last 12 months.

(Interruptions)

Mr Chairperson: Order please!

Mr Wong So: Mr Chairperson, Sir, the Rodrigues International Kitesurf Festival (RIKF) is an initiative of the Rodrigues Kitesurfing Association (RKA) which started in 2013. The last edition was organised in 2019, before the COVID-19 pandemic which severely impacted on the world's travel and tourism industry.

Rodrigues island is ranked among the best spots for kitesurfing in the Indian Ocean. The Rodrigues International Kitesurf Festival is well-known among water sports lovers internationally and as such, it is an opportunity for the Rodriguans kite surfers to compete with high level international competitors with an objective to professionalise kitesurfing in Rodrigues and to encourage the young generation to practice this blooming sport.

The other objective of this festival apart from competition, is the visibility and promotion of the island as an eco-nature tourist destination.

As regards the role of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly in this activity, Mr Chairperson, Sir, I wish to inform the House that the Commission for Tourism has as objective to encourage the development of sports tourism on the island and the promotion of the destination. Subsequently, following the proposal received by the Rodrigues Kitesurfing Association to organise the Rodrigues International Kitesurf Festival 2023, and as the aspect of the activity is in line with our marketing and promotion strategies for the development of the tourism sector in Rodrigues, my Commission (Tourism) has decided to support this initiative. Hence, Mr Chairperson, Sir, the Commission for Tourism and the Commission for Youth and Sports mutually agreed to lead the organisation of the festival with the technical assistance of the Rodrigues Kitesurfing Association.

As a result, thereof, an Organising Committee chaired by myself as Commissioner for Tourism and co-chaired by my colleague, Commissioner for Youth and Sports, was set up to look at the organisational aspects of the festival including, amongst others: -

- Promotion of the different activities (marketing, communication, displays);
- Arrangements pertaining to guests, journalists and officials attending the events;
- Logistics and support including events logistics and cultural animation;

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- Technical aspects of the different races;
- Protocol and prize giving, and
- Sponsors.

The Organising Committee was composed of officers and representatives from the following Commissions, organisations and NGOs: -

- (i) Officers of the Commission for Tourism and the Commission for Youth and Sports and Others;
- (ii) Commission for Public Infrastructure and Environment;
- (iii) Executive Members of the Rodrigues Kitesurfing Association;
- (iv) Rodrigues Tourism Office;
- (v) Rodclean Co. Ltd;
- (vi) SEMPA;
- (vii) Police Force;
- (viii) Shoals Rodrigues, and
- (ix) Mauritian Wildlife Foundation.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, with regard to the financial contribution of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly, I am pleased to inform the House that both the Commission for Tourism and the Commission for Youth and Sports, Arts and Culture have financially supported the 08th Edition of the Rodrigues International Kitesurf Festival with a financial contribution to the tune of Rs 700, 000.

The Commission for Tourism agreed to a financial contribution of Rs 350,000 to cover the costs of air tickets and accommodation in favour of international guests, journalists and officials attending the Kitesurf Festival. The agreed amount was earmarked under Sub Head: 7-102 22900990, Vote Item: Major Tourism Events. However, with additional costs pertaining to administrative arrangements and logistics for the organisation of the event, the real cost amounted to Rs 644,862.

On the other hand, Mr Chairperson, Sir, the Commission for Sports and Others agreed to a financial contribution of Rs 350,000 to cover the costs of t-shirts, sound system for the five days of the event, rental of security boat for the different races, transport facilities and provision

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of local artists for the concert on the last day of the event. The agreed amount was earmarked under Sub Head: 8-103 22900942, Vote Item: Promotion of Sports Activities, but only a total expenses amounting to Rs 297,816.80 was incurred and paid.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, it is noteworthy here to also highlight the other sources of financial support from our sponsors, namely Air Mauritius, Mauritius Tourism Promotion Authority (MTPA), the Mauritius Commercial Bank, Courts Mammouth, Trimetys Group (Tekoma Hotel), Chez Jeannette, Origin Eco Chalet, Auberge Le Racine; Rêves des Iles, and Phoenix Beverages Ltd which sponsored the entire organisation of the concert for the closing ceremony.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, with your permission, I would like to express on my own name and on behalf of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly, my heartfelt thanks and gratitude to the above named sponsors for their support and contribution as well as all the stakeholders concerned and the Organising Committee for their dedicated support to making the Rodrigues International Kitesurf Festival 2023a real success.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, with regard to the expected outcome of the Rodrigues International Kitesurf Festival 2023, I wish to point out that we have achieved our two main objectives, namely:

- (i) Enhancing the visibility and promotion of Rodrigues as the best spot in the Indian Ocean for kitesurfing, and
- (ii) Providing an activity (a platform) to enable the Rodriguans Kite Surfers to compete with international competitors with an objective of professionalising kitesurfing in Rodrigues and encourage the young generation to practice this blooming sport.

As I mentioned above, Mr chairperson, Sir, generally the festival has been a success. The races were organised during the weekend, Saturday 29 and Sunday 30 July 2023, since the weather was not suitable for kite surfing on Thursday and Friday.

This festival has been a great opportunity to showcase the beauty of Rodrigues as well as a golden opportunity to further professionalise this event in the Indian Ocean region so that Rodrigues becomes '*La Référence*' in terms of kitesurfs festival organisation in the region and around the world.

The festival has welcomed 37 kite surfers; among them we have 22 kite surfers from Rodrigues.

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In this respect, Mr Chairperson, Sir, I feel honoured to announce in this august Assembly that the overall winner of the different competitions which were organised during the weekend, Saturday and Sunday is one Kite Surfer from Rodrigues.

In addition, I am further pleased to inform the House that the Rodrigues International Kitesurf Festival has had the honour to welcome His Excellency, Mr Henry Victor Jardine, Ambassador of the United States of America in Mauritius and a delegation of the US Embassy for the official opening ceremony of the kitesurf festival. The Ambassador gave keynote remarks at the opening ceremony and highlighted the shared vision of the United States with respect to the festival's theme: 'Go Green'.

The media coverage of the festival was made by local journalists but also journalists from Mauritius, Reunion Island, Madagascar, Vietnam and France. For instance, eight journalists and image reporters travelled to Rodrigues to cover the Rodrigues International Kitesurf Festival 2023 event, namely Messrs Christophe Karghoo from 5-Plus Mauritius, Manjato from Madagascar, Serge Marizy and Lionel Guigui from Zone Austral Reunion Island, Glen Bowden from Vietnam, Joey Nicles, Arnaud Segade and Clement from France.

The Rodrigues Tourism Office has received high quality images and videos from the photographers which will be used for the promotion of the Rodrigues destination.

The communication campaigns started in March 2023 with the publications of different articles and several posts on existing social platforms, Facebook and Instagram. During the period March 2023 to end of May 2023, there have been 39 publications and reportages. As such, from the opening of the festival on the 26 July up to 05 August 2023, there have been 16 publications about the event.

Finally, Mr Chairperson, Sir, I further wish to inform the House that in line with the Theme 'Go Green', different competitions have also been organised at the level of pre-primary and primary students of the 'Alliance Française' as well as secondary institutions. The three competitions were as follows: -

- Dessine-moi une île Rodrigues écolo ;
- Raconte-moi une île Rodrigues écolo, and
- Prix du Jeune reporteur de l'environnement *won by the Rodrigues College.*

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

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The Minority Leader: M. le président, est-ce que le Commissaire du Tourisme peut nous dire qui a financé le déplacement de l'Ambassadeur ? Est-ce que la Commission ? Comment ça s'est passé par rapport à son logement, etcetera ?

Mr Wong So: M. le président, je ne suis pas en mesure de répondre à cette question pour l'instant à la Chambre.

Mr Chairperson: Anyway, time is over. The Table has been advised that PQ B/112, B/114 and B/118 have been withdrawn.

SILTATION OF LAGOON – SCOPE/NO. & SITE

(No. B/109) Mr N. Lisette (First Local Region Member for Baie aux Huîtres) asked the Commissioner for Fisheries and Others Whether, in regard to the siltation of the lagoon, he will state on the work undertaken by his Commission since February 2022 to date, specifying the scope thereof, the number and the site of navigational channels and/or boat passes that has been desilted?

(Withdrawn)

FOYER MARIE MADELEINE DE LA CROIX – BALADIROU/INCIDENT

(No. B/112) Ms M. N. Raffaut (Second Island Region Member) asked the Commissioner for Child Development and Others whether, in regard to the Foyer Marie Madeleine de la Croix of Baladirou, she will obtain information and state, for the benefit of the House, on if any incident recently occurred thereat and has been reported to the Police and, in the affirmative, indicate any new policy regarding the establishment as a result thereof?

(Withdrawn)

PREVALENCE TEENAGE PREGNANCY

(No. B/114) Ms M. N. Raffaut (Second Island Region Member) asked the Commissioner for Child Development and Others whether, in regard to the prevalence teenage pregnancy, she will

- (a) state and table on the statistics per age group for the past 3 years, and
- (b) provide the action taken since she is in office and the policy of her Commission regarding same?

(Withdrawn)

**GLOBAL CLIMATE CHANGE ALLIANCE PLUS (GCCA+) CLIMATE-SMART
AGRICULTURE PROJECT – MT. DU SABLE**

(No. B/118) Mr L.D. Baptiste (Second Local Region Member for Grande Montagne) asked the Commissioner Social Security and Others whether, in regard to the Global Climate Change Alliance Plus (GCCA+) Climate-Smart Agriculture Project at Mt du Sable, headed by his Commission, he will, for the benefit of the House, give details relating to any progress of work made since July 2022 to date, including procurement procedures carried out in connection thereto, if any and their outcome?

(Withdrawn)

MEASURES – NATIONAL FOREST POLICY

(No. B/125) Mrs M.A.L. Allas (Fifth Island Region Member) asked the Commissioner for Forestry and Others whether he will inform the House of measures proposed in the National Forest Policy being implemented in Rodrigues and, if not, to state the reform he proposes to introduce to reorganise the Forest Department in Rodrigues?

(Withdrawn)

MARKET VALUE – RODRIGUAN LIME (CITRUS AURANTIFOLIA)

(No. B/126) Mrs M.A.L. Allas (Fifth Island Region Member) asked the Commissioner for Agriculture and Others whether he will inform the House of actions being taken by his Commission to increase the market value of the Rodriguan Lime (Citrus Aurantifolia)?

(Withdrawn)

VISIT – HON. MINISTER OF BLUE ECONOMY & OTHERS/

(No. B/127) Mrs M.A.L. Allas (Fifth Island Region Member) asked the Commissioner for Fisheries and Others whether during the visit of the Honourable Minister of Blue Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries and Shipping to Rodrigues, from 04 to 09 August 2023, disclosures were made as regards: -

- (a) the outer lagoon Fisheries Development programme;
- (b) the Blue Economy, and

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- (c) Bad Weather allowance to fishers and the zoning system?

(Withdrawn)

STATEMENT BY COMMISSIONERS

**VISIT OF HON. SOOROOJDEV PHOKEER, GCSK, GOSK, SPEAKER OF THE
NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I will have two short statements to make today. First, regarding the visit of the Honourable Speaker of the National Assembly. As you are aware we have had the honour to welcome Hon. Sooroojdev Phokeer, GCSK, GOSK and Speaker of the National Assembly to our beloved island during the past week.

The Hon. Speaker had several high level meetings, the crux being the official launching of the E-Parliament project for the Rodrigues Regional Assembly. Yourself and the Hon. Speaker also launched the Report of the Baseline SDGs of the Sustainable Development Committee of this House.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, I wish to congratulate your office on the successful launching of the E-Parliament project which has led to the paperless dealings with Members and much other aspects of our work. I also wish to thank the House of Assembly of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly for putting iPad devices as well as the accompanying App which is already sending Order Papers and other official communications to respected Members of this House. With this move, our young Assembly is positioning itself as a pioneer in the use of digital technology for its work. We are also, at the level of the Executive Council, willing to go paperless which will facilitate the production of documents and their digital despatch to Commissioners. This avoids printing of, at times, bulky documents which most of the time are read only once and then filed. This will reduce the carbon imprint of our work at all levels. Today mastering the digital tools is a must and we must at all levels in Rodrigues make the best use of this potential.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, to honour and thank the Hon. Speaker and the members of his technical team who help implement the project and train Members of this House in the new digital tools, I gave a small reception at the Residency last Friday in the early evening and, I would like to thank yourself, the Deputy Chief Commissioner and my colleagues Commissioners and Members as well as the only minority Member present to wit, Dr. Henri Agathe for their attendance. Together with your office, we will observe the use of the new digital tool and bring as and when necessary updates and improvements.

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Mr Chairperson, Sir, serving this House is an honour which is a privilege to those who have been elected as Members by the people of Rodrigues. I appeal upon Members for more respect and more solidarity for the common causes of this House and to participate fully in all aspects of our parliamentary matters. At the same time, I reiterate my appeal towards all Members of this House to believe that the majority in this House has been obtained legitimately through elections.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, without doubt it is up to Members to learn and make the maximum potential out of the new tools and also to observe the necessary rules accompanying the use of same. Also, I put on record, my deepest appreciation towards the Hon. Speaker for his friendliness, decorum and the valuable contributions made during his visit, which in fact was his first ever visit to our island.

AIRPORT RUNWAY PROJECT

My second statement, Mr Chairperson, Sir, concerns important stages reach in the airport runway project. Mr Chairperson, Sir, I wish to apprise the House of the important development which has arisen in the past weeks regarding the construction of the new runway at Plaine Corail Airport. Members will recall that following the refusal of the former financing agency to go ahead with the financing of this special project for the future of our island, we immediately approach the World Bank to consider the project.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, people, men and women are at the centre of any successful project. The project is now in its final stages of consideration before approval potentially by the board of the World Bank in September next.

Last week we have had the visit of Mrs Idah Pswarayi-Riddihough, World Bank Country Director for Mauritius accompanied by the new Senior Country Economist and country representative for Mauritius and Seychelles, Mr Sjamsu Rahardja. As from today a multi-disciplinary team of ten specialists' consultants is in Rodrigues for three days' mission to pre-assess all the details of the project which now comprises not only the financing of the runway and the associated infrastructural works to an estimated cost of US\$170 m. but also a supplementary component which will concern the Rodrigues Regional Assembly more specifically. The project will indeed additionally comprise these two components which concerns the Rodrigues Regional Assembly. About US\$10 m. to assist in the implementations of the Sustainable Integrated Development Plan (SIDPR). We will focus on food security and the water reforms and a support for the upgrading of the current level of our tourism sector

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with emphasis on training and possibly direct grants to registered and eligible tourism enterprise, to encourage them to upgrade and present a higher value added product. Another US\$ 10 m. is currently being proposed for this component. The project also makes a budget of US\$10 m for technical assistance for the project implementation and sector reforms.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, the works at the Plaine Corail Airport are expected, if all goes as plan, about mid 2024 for the construction of the new 2100 metre runway. The socio-economic set up of the people of Rodrigues will change when the construction of the new runway starts as well as when same is operational. This major infrastructural project will represent tremendous new opportunities when there will be an increase flow of passengers and tourists towards our island. As it is rightly put repetitively by Mrs Idah Pswarayi-Riddihough, World Bank Country Director for Mauritius, Rodriguans must prepare themselves to tap the enormous opportunities that will arise and upgrade the tourism standards towards more value added services as compared to a low cost, low grade destination. At the same time, we must be on the alert from the environmental and societal risks being associated with an increase flow of tourists. This is why we must get prepared but we need to think and act with caution to reap the benefits but also to ensure that the identity of the past and culture is preserved and used as an asset.

The current mission of the ten World Bank specialists is the final stage of the project appraisal before consideration by the board of the institution soon. We are meeting with these specialists as from this afternoon, up to Thursday, to provide to them all the final details and clarification in line with the requirement of the bank for such a project. At the same time, this regional government is proud of the high level achievements which have been attained rapidly on this project. In particular, I wish to put on recall our appreciation for the handsome and pragmatic approach by the official of the World Bank and the high level of commitment towards the progress of the project put in by Mrs Idah Pswarayi-Riddihough and her team who we believe are now true friends of Rodrigues. Thank you, Mr Chairperson, Sir.

(Applause)

ADJOURNMENT

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I now move that the House be adjourned to Tuesday 24 October 2023 at 10.30 hours.

The Deputy Chief Commissioner, rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

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Mr Chairperson: The House stay adjourned. Adjournment time is open today for the sitting.

MATTERS RAISED

REGIONAL MEN'S FOOTBALL LEAGUE 2022-2023

The Fourth Island Region Member (Mr J. P. Spéville): Je vous remercie, M. le président, de me permettre d'intervenir dans cette auguste Assemblée. Avant de faire mon intervention, j'aimerais souhaiter bon courage à tous nos athlètes qui participeront à la 11^{ème} Edition des Jeux des Iles de l'Océan Indien à Madagascar.

Ma requête aujourd'hui s'adresse au Commissaire des Sports concernant la ligue de football régionale homme 2022-2023 qui a pris fin en juillet dernier. D'après le classement final, le 'Rising Sporting Club' devrait être proclamé comme nouveau champion de Rodrigues. Mais depuis ce temps la population est dans le flou car aucune équipe championne n'a été désignée officiellement et aucun trophée n'a été remis à l'équipe gagnante.

M. le président, j'aimerais à travers cette intervention attirer l'attention du Commissaire des Sports car il y a beaucoup de questionnements dans le public sur cette situation bouleversante qui risque de créer de la frustration, la déception et la démotivation au sein des supporters, les footballeurs, les équipes et allant même compromettre le bon fonctionnement de notre sport roi. Cependant, au nom de notre sport roi, j'espère qu'une solution soit vite trouvée pour le bien-être des supporters, de nos footballeurs et du sport en générale. Merci.

Mr Ravina: M. le président, je suis très au courant de tous ces problèmes qu'il y a autour du football à Rodrigues. La semaine dernière, j'ai rencontré le membre du MFA à Maurice concernant ce problème, juste pour dire qu'il y a une équipe parmi la ligue de la première division qui a fait une plainte au niveau de l'Ombudsman concernant qui à remporter la ligue à Rodrigues. C'est pourquoi pour le moment, je ne peux rien dire, je dois attendre le *ruling* d'Ombudsman avant de prononcer sur l'équipe qui a gagné la ligue à Rodrigues. Mais en tous les cas, d'ici une semaine, on va avoir la réponse.

OCCASIONAL LICENCE – ORGANISATION OF CONCERT

The Second Island Region Member (Ms M. N. Raffaut): Mr Chairperson, I thank you for allowing me to speak today on behalf of the Rodriguan artists who have been trying to voice out to concerned Commissions since the decision dated 16 June 2023 has been taken,

that is, no Occasional Licence will be issued for organisation of concert and other related activities as from October to November.

With regard to this, I want to put on record that this side of the House is not against the decision taken but our concern is mainly due to the fact that since the beginning of this year 2023, there has been no concerts and this has led to financial difficulties for many artists. This is a threat for the future of artists in Rodrigues. We all know that since the pandemic COVID-19, the artists has been impacted negatively.

I make an appeal to the Commissioner for Arts and Culture and would remind him that no concert has been granted approval since the beginning of this year. Organisation of such events is beneficial not only to the singers and artists but also for the entrepreneurs who sell food and drinks, those who provide transport services like taxis and vans. So, Mr Commissioner please, find a fair balance for these artists' community who depend solely on these special events and concerts to meet their family needs and all those who also earn a living from these activities. They feel that they have been penalised as they said they have not been consulted before taking this decision and that no alternate measures have been taken to assist them during this period. I thank you, Mr Chairperson.

Mr Ravina: Mr Chairperson, I am fully aware of this situation but it is an Executive Council's decision that during exams no permission is granted for any concert around the island. But I can say that as from 26 August, we have the concert of Malabar and the situation is now okay, no problem for this.

'LAMPADAIRES' (STREETLIGHTS)/CLAIM BY CEB

The Second Local Region Member for Baie aux Huîtres (Ms K. Roussety): M. le président, merci de me donner la parole pour informer la Chambre sur un sujet préoccupant qui affecte la population de Rodrigues et qui concerne la commission des Infrastructures Publiques. Malheureusement, monsieur le Commissaire n'est pas là. Merci beaucoup.

Depuis plusieurs mois, nul ne peut nier que beaucoup des lampadaires installés aux abords de nos routes sont hors d'usage depuis pas mal de temps. C'est vraiment un problème sérieux pour les habitants et pour nos visiteurs.

M. le président, nous le savons tous, que même si certaines lampes ne sont pas en état de fonctionner, le CEB réclame à la commission des Infrastructures Publiques la consommation de ces lampes. Cela équivaut à une perte importante, voire considérable, pour la commission

des Infrastructures Publiques et donc on peut dire que c'est un exemple flagrant de gaspillage de fond public.

M. le président, nous avons constaté que le camion élévateur dort au *car park* de la commission depuis belles lurettes. De ce fait, M. le président, je fais un plaidoyer auprès du Commissaire responsable de faire le nécessaire pour que les lampes soient réparées. La population rodriguaise et mêmes les visiteurs qui sont dans notre île méritent d'avoir un service adéquat.

PROJET – CONSTRUCTION/ROUTE DE PAVE LA BONTE

M. le président, permettez-moi de dire quelques mots sur encore un sujet préoccupant. C'est le projet de construction de la route de Pavé la Bonté, cela concerne le Commissaire des Infrastructures Publiques. Ce projet dont le budget s'élevait à Rs 17 millions avait démarré sous le mandat de l'OPR. Les travaux étaient d'ailleurs en bonne voie. Cependant lorsque le gouvernement l'Alliance a pris le pouvoir la commission des Infrastructures Publiques n'a pas cru bon de continuer le projet. L'arrêt de ce projet apporte jusqu'aujourd'hui une grande désolation dans le cœur des villageois de cette localité. Cette route allait leur apporter une grande facilité et un réel soulagement. Suite à ma dernière intervention dans cette Chambre, le Commissaire Grandcourt avait annoncé que le projet allait être relancé en mars cette année, mais jusqu'ici, arrivée presque à la fin du mois d'août, à zéro, aucun travail n'est en chantier. M. le président, les personnes de toutes âges rencontre toujours des difficultés pour se déplacer. J'invite le respecté Commissaire de faire une visite. Pendant cette période hivernale l'accès est glissante et dangereuse.

M. le président, les familles de Pavé la Bonté attendent toujours leur nouvelle route. Et, les travailleurs dans le domaine de construction attendent à avoir un petit boulot pour subvenir à leur besoin.

M. le président, je lance un appel à nouveau au Commissaire des Infrastructures Publiques pour qu'il apporte une attention particulière à ce projet de construction de cette route. Avec ces mots, M. le président, je vous remercie pour votre attention.

'SITUATION D'EAU – RIVIERE BANANE'

The First Local Region Member of Grande Montagne (Dr H. Agathe):

M. le président, je vous remercie de m'accorder la parole. Je voudrais attirer l'attention de la Chambre et des Commissaires concerner, concernant une situation de crise sans précédent de l'eau à Rivière Banane. Un lien entre les villageois de Rivière Banane et leur vallée est brisé.

Cela avait été relayé la semaine dernière par divers réseaux sociaux. Et les villageois ce week-end m'ont dit qu'aucune autorité n'a pourtant été venue voir la situation. Pendant des décennies, les villageois de Rivière Banane ont pu compter sur leur vallée pour s'approvisionner en eau en toute circonstance. Cette fois le réservoir de la vallée s'est assécher en raison de rétention d'eau en amont. L'eau de Mourouk ou de dessalement de Pointe Coton n'arrivant plus à Rivière Banane, les villageois se trouvent dépourvu en eau. J'ai pu visiter un certain nombre de famille ce week-end. Des nombreuses familles n'ont plus d'eau, ils doivent s'acheter un petit peu d'eau, souvent un mètre cube seulement. Ils achètent de l'eau pour pouvoir cuire à manger. Il y a des linges qui s'accumulent, qui ne peuvent plus être lavé parce qu'il n'y a plus d'eau. Les familles ont du mal à préparer des repas par manque d'eau. De l'autre côté aussi, il y a des planteurs notamment ceux qui sont en haut de la vallée, qui n'ont plus d'eau aussi pour l'irrigation, ce qui met en danger leurs activités.

Je voudrais donc faire un appel à l'Assemblée Régionale, au autorité, pour qu'ils aillent voir ce qui se passe à Rivière Banane puisque le problème est urgent.

SUBSIDES – PLANTEURS D'OIGNONS – NON PAIEMENT

The First Local Region Member of Saint Gabriel (Mr J. R. Ramdally):

Merci, M. le président, de me donner la parole. Donc, j'ai deux *statements*. Un *statement* au Commissaire de l'Agriculture.

Des planteurs d'oignons nous ont rapportés du non-paiement des subsides dues. Ces planteurs disent que la Commission vient de payer les subsides dues depuis la saison d'avant. Donc, avec tous les problèmes qu'ils rencontrent tel que l'augmentation du prix des intrants et le manque d'eau et certains sont découragés de continuer et en appel à la Commission pour les soulager en rapport à ces subsides.

STIPENDS – PATIENTS/TRAITEMENT A MAURICE

Le deuxième *statement* c'est pour la commission de la Santé. Ça concerne les *stipends* pour les patients qui vont à Maurice pour des traitements. Selon les représentations qu'on a eues, il y a de gros retards et il y a même des patients qui n'ont pas reçu leurs *stipends* depuis l'année dernière. Je connais même un patient qui a été à Maurice en janvier, il est retourné en février, il est reparti à Maurice en juin pour des traitements, toujours, il n'avait pas encore reçu son *stipend* de janvier.

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Donc, je fais un appel au Commissaire pour qu'il voie une fois pour toutes où est le problème et de faire que ces personnes reçoivent leurs *stipends* car cette mesure constitue une bouffée d'air frais pour beaucoup d'entre elles.

Mr Volbert: Ce sont les patients admis à l'hôpital qui reçoivent ces *stipends*. Mais, c'est vrai, qu'il y avait un gros problème, c'est pour ça qu'on a bougé certains officiers de là. Et là, je vous garantis que ça marche et qu'on est arrivé jusqu'au mois de mai et d'ici une ou deux semaines, ça va être *okay*.

DEMANDEURS DE PENSION D'INVALIDITE

The Second Local Region Member for Grande Montagne (Mr L. D. Baptiste): Merci, M. le président. Ma requête s'adresse au Commissaire de la Sécurité Sociale par rapport à un problème auquel font face les demandeurs de pension d'invalidité. Donc, en effet depuis quelque temps, on note qu'il y a un délai assez conséquent entre la date d'application et le rendez-vous pour passer aux examens médicaux en vue d'obtenir une pension d'invalidité.

Donc, il y a des demandeurs de pension qui vivent déjà dans des situations très précaire comme, ce monsieur de Mont Lubin, qui est alité depuis plusieurs semaines et qui a fait une application le 11 juillet 2023 alors, ce n'est que le 8 novembre qu'il a eu son rendez-vous pour le 'Medical Board', soit quatre mois plus tard. Et puis, si on considère le temps qu'il faut pour les officiers pour traiter ces dossiers, donc probablement se sera fin de décembre ou janvier. Donc, je considère que ce temps est trop long et je demande au Commissaire responsable de la Sécurité Sociale de se pencher, avec urgence, sur ce sujet afin de trouver une solution. Par exemple, de programmer des *boards* supplémentaires pour pouvoir justement raccourcir ce délai. Donc, merci pour votre attention. Parce que ces gens sont vulnérables et ils attendent ça.

Mr Volbert: Par plus tard que cette semaine-ci, c'est-à-dire, la semaine dernière, vendredi dernier, j'ai appelé les officiers de 'Medical Unit' et on a parlé là-dessus pour faire le nécessaire.

REFRIGERATED COFFIN SERVICE

The First Local Region Member for Baie aux Huîtres (Mr N. Lisette): Yes, Mr Chairperson, Sir, my intervention is directed this afternoon to the Commissioner for Health and I have a simple request for him. The subject matter relates to the provision of refrigerated coffin to families to keep their corpse at home. I am informed that such service is provided at the cost of about Rs 6,000 per day by a private supplier and it is a burden these days for some of the families to procure same. So, I think that it would be much appreciated if such a service

is restored because in the past such a service was available to families. Probably the coffins have broken down but I think that it would be to the best of the population that such a service is restored. Thank you, very much.

Mr Volbert: Je ne sais pas, M. le président, c'est très étrange. Pas plus tard que jeudi on faisait un *site visit* à l'hôpital et la question a été abordée et on a même pensé qu'il faudra avoir une personne spécifique pour aller déposer ça chez la famille et ramener ça à l'hôpital. Parce que dans la plupart des cas, les gens, quand ils ont besoin, c'est vrai ils ont besoin, ils viennent à l'hôpital et il récupère le *refrigerated coffin* mais après ces gens-là met ça à l'arrière de leurs cours, dans la pluie, dans le soleil et ça s'abîme. Donc, on a parlé de ça jeudi et c'est coïncidence, encore une fois, que vous soulevez ça ici. On va faire le nécessaire.

ENTREPRENEURS – PRODUITS IMPORTES

The Minority Leader: M. le président, mon intervention sera à deux niveaux. Donc, je serais très brèves. En effet, le premier sujet de préoccupation que je souhaiterais remarquer ici, c'est par rapport à nos entrepreneurs, plus précisément les artisans qui nous font des jolies tentes, des jolis sacs en aloès et en vacoas et qui souffrent de plus en plus avec l'envahissement des produits importés de Chine ou de Madagascar et sur lequel est mis 'Made in Rodrigues'. Donc, on est bien au courant qu'il y a toute une question d'accord commerciale par rapport à la République de Maurice mais nous pensons que le Conseil Exécutif prend la responsabilité de trouver des idées ingénieuses pour pouvoir assurer que ces gens, ces hommes et ces femmes qui gagnent leurs vies de par cette activité très noble, qui fait quand même l'honneur de notre destination touristique, doit être considéré et surtout protéger. Dans le passé on avait commencé un projet pour un marché spécial que pour les produits rodriguais où le visiteur, le touriste seraient invités à visiter et à acheter au lieu que de voir. Si on voit au niveau du marché ces produits sont là avec d'autres produits qui sont importés et qui sont souvent beaucoup plus cher parce que nous savons qu'il y a une question d'économie d'échelle et de capacité de production.

Donc, je lance un appel pressant au Commissaire de l'Entrepreneuriat et aussi assurer que le Commissaire du Tourisme vous annoncez beaucoup que le touriste vient en grand nombre mais comment le rodriguais bénéficie et prend avantage de ça pour vraiment être parti prenant de ce grand projet de destination touristique ? Ça c'est mon premier sujet.

TOURISTE - VIOLEE

Le deuxième c'est toujours par rapport au tourisme. On a appris cette semaine, un jour très spécial pour nous, le 15 août, où nous fêtons Marie, le malheureux incident d'une touriste, d'une jeune dame Réunionnaise violée. C'est vrai que la Police a fait un travail formidable parce que j'ai appris qu'avant même qu'elle ne parte, le lendemain, elle voulait partir toute suite, il y a pu avoir l'identification du présumer agresseur. Mais je pense que s'est important de comprendre comment ce genre d'incident peut avoir un impact négatif sur notre industrie touristique, qui est très fragile, et de bouche à l'oreille ces informations peuvent passer et Rodrigues prend le risque d'être considéré comme une île où il n'y a pas de sécurité.

Je n'ai pas entendu le Commissaire du Tourisme parler de ce malheureux événement qui doit nous préoccuper tous et comment il peut aussi mettre en place des choses pour assurer qu'on limite. Je ne peux pas dire qu'on va empêcher que ça arrive mais qu'on prend des décisions qui peuvent aider à ce que ces genres d'incidents n'arrivent pas dans le futur. Nous avons mis en place la Police du Tourisme. Pourquoi ne pas penser à augmenter le nombre de personnel de ce service qui pourrait être à travers Rodrigues et assurer la protection de nos enfants aussi. J'ai aussi appris qu'il y a eu un incident, malheureusement, je ne sais pas, par rapport à madame la Commissaire. Donc, il y a la protection de nos enfants, des familles rodriguaise mais aussi la protection de nos visiteurs qui est très, très important.

Donc, je profite aussi pour dire que peut-être en pensant à renforcer ce service de Police du Tourisme, on pourrait faire venir ces Policiers/ères, des Rodriguais qui sont affectés à Maurice et qui souhaite venir chez eux dans leurs cadres familiales pour travailler. Donc, je lance l'appel au Commissaire du Tourisme et au Conseil Exécutif pour prendre ce sujet très au sérieux. Merci.

Mr Wong So: Merci, M. le président, de me permettre de répondre aux propos du Minority Leader. Concernant le *branding* de Rodrigues comme entité, ce qui fait qu'on travaille dessus au niveau de la Commission. On va reprendre le slogan 'Rodrigues Naturellement', de faire en sorte à ce qu'on arrive quand même à promouvoir Rodrigues sur ce plan-là, pour pouvoir quand même palier au manquement que vous avez énoncé éventuellement - des articles qui viennent de Chine et de Madagascar, qui viennent entrer en compétition avec les produits locaux, qui mérite, à mon humble avis, à votre humble avis aussi, qu'on vient les soutenir dans cette entreprise. C'est tout à fait normal.

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Pour revenir au cas que vous avez mentionné. La tolérance zéro, on l'applique au niveau de la Commission mais malheureusement, incident zéro, on n'a jamais, valeur du jour pouvoir prévoir ainsi. Ce qui fait, il est de notre devoir au niveau de la Police du Tourisme de s'assurer à ce que les touristes soient en sécurité mais incident zéro à Rodrigues, on ne pourra pas le faire, parce qu'il y a des facteurs qui sont au-dessus de nos moyens et qu'on arrive pas à tous contrôler.

Je dois vous dire que cette personne qui a été victime justement d'un cas de viol est arrivé le même jour. Elle est arrivée le matin et que le soir elle a été vraiment bousculée. Donc, ce qui fait, on est peinée de la situation. On a demandé à la Police du Tourisme de faire quand même le nécessaire. Ils ont été e très *tactful in the process* et nous remercions tous ceux et celles qui ont aidés. Et que nous n'avons pas voulu ébruiter l'affaire, pour ne pas avoir plus de *collateral damage* par rapport à cette incident. Concernant le personnel, c'est sûre si on pouvait avoir plus d'aide de ce côté, on aurait été content.

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

TRAINING PROGRAMMES/OFFICERS RRA – PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA

(No. B/108) Mrs R.M.F. Gaspard Pierre Louis, C.S.K. (Minority Leader) asked the Chief Commissioner whether, in regard to the training programmes for officers of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly (RRA) in the People's Republic of China, he will state to the House on the:

- (a) eligibility criteria and the mode of selection for designated officers;
- (b) the total cost incurred or to be borne by the RRA, providing its breakdown, if any, and
- (c) table the list of the selected Officers, together with their post held and their respective training courses to be followed?

Reply: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I am informed that the Rodrigues Regional Assembly (RRA) is normally apprised of training courses to be held abroad by the Secretary for Public Service, Ministry of Public Service, Administrative and Institutional Reforms who invites the RRA to submit nomination of suitable candidates for the courses as per the requirement of the donor country.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, I am tabling the eligibility criteria requested by the Chinese Authorities for training programmes in the People's Republic of China.

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The nomination of suitable candidates is made at the level of the different Commissions taking into consideration inter alia the nature of the training courses title of the training programme, the age criteria, the post occupied, duties performed and posting. Moreover, the final decision to award a fellowship to a nominee rests solely on the donor country.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, as regards to part (b) of the question, all costs of participation are met by the People's Republic of China with exception to the costs of travel from Rodrigues to Mauritius and back and accommodation in Mauritius which are borne by the Rodrigues Regional Assembly.

I am tabling the breakdown of costs incurred by the Rodrigues Regional Assembly for period 01 July 2022 as at date as well as the list of the selected officers, together with their post held and their respective training courses to be followed for the information of the House.

**AMBULANCE SERVICES –AMBULANCES/BROKEN DOWN/OPERATIONAL/
NO. OF AMBULANCE DRIVER & ATTENDANT**

(No. B/110) Mr L.D. Baptiste (Second Local Region Member for Grande Montagne) asked the Commissioner for Social Security and Others whether, in regard to ambulance services in Rodrigues, he will, for the benefit of the House, state on the:

- (a) outcome of the assessment exercise of the 13 ambulances broken down at the Mechanical Workshop as announced in the Budget Speech 2022-2023;
- (b) total number of ambulances that are operational as at date, specifying where they are attached, and
- (c) number of ambulance drivers and ambulance attendants posted at the Commission as at date?

Reply: Mr Chairperson, Sir, a delegation from the Ministry of Health and Wellness headed by the Senior Manager, Operations Support comprising of the Acting Workshop Supervisor and a Tradesman Assistant in Motor Diesel Mechanic conducted an inspection mission in Rodrigues in June 2022.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, Mr Chairperson Sir, at the time of inspection on 14 June 2022, it was reported by the team that 11 ambulances were grounded at the Mechanical Workshop with their engines completely dismantled. It was further reported that several ambulances were long stay and beyond economical repairs.

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Mr Chairperson, Sir, I am summarizing the major findings of the inspection of the ambulances. The report highlighted among others unavailability of logistics and supports in terms of technical competence and lack of facilities and infrastructure at the Mechanical Workshop. The report pointed out that following an onsite visit at the Mechanical Workshop where the ambulances undergo repairs did reflect a long history of neglect going back to some 30 years.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, report also made the remarks that the ambulances were operating under extreme pressure on a 24 hours' basis each and recommended to have additional ambulances so as to have rest periods and the availability of ambulances to undergo servicing and maintenance.

As a result, the report further notified that several ambulances were grounded due to overheating of engine.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, the report also pointed out the following points and abnormalities with six of the ambulances inspected:

- Water expansion tank missing.
- Water hose missing.
- It was noted that the cylinder head was removed and skimmed.

It was a wrong decision made by them as water gallery was already heavily pitted and beyond use.

- Front near side suspension arm was missing and not in place.
- Engine parts missing: Temperature sensor and crank shaft sensor.
- Fuel pump priming already dismantled.
- White diamond liquor bottle cap was used as expansion tank cap.
- Water pump clutch fan defective.
- Sludge at expansion tank cap.
- Cylinder head gasket damaged.
- Turbo actuator & potentiometer pedal faulty, turbo hose leakage, engine inline fuel filter and suction valve on fuel injection pump.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, in that regard, to solve the problem of overheating of engine and to ensure availability of ambulances during servicing, maintenance and repairs, my

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Commission has acquired 13 ambulances since March 2022 to date as compared to only three ambulances before that period.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, my Commission has already contacted the VIPSU officers from Mauritius to dispense training to the existing drivers to ensure proper handling of the ambulances and to increase their driving skills.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, with regard to part (b), I am informed that seven ambulances are presently operational and they are posted as follows:

- Queen Elizabeth Hospital: 2
- La Ferme Area Health Centre: 2
- Mont Lubin Area Health Centre: 2
- Plaine Corail Airport: 1

Mr Chairperson, Sir, I also wish to inform the House that my Commission has just acquired eight new ambulances, including one mortuary van and one 4x4 ambulance.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, I further wish to inform the House that six ambulances are awaiting spare parts for repairs.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, as regards to part (c), I am informed that there are 26 Ambulance Drivers (on shift) in post and two on assignment and 21 Ambulance Care Attendants (on shift) in post and one is being assigning duty to the grade.

List of ambulances awaiting repairs

SN.	COMPLAINT	CAUSES	REMARKS
1	Engine Warning Indicator – light on dashboard and engine lack of power engine dismantled completely	Turbo actuator and potentiometer pedal faulty, turbo hose leakage, engine inline fuel filter and suction valve on fuel injection pump.	
2	Engine overheating		Water expansion tank missing and water hose missing.

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SN.	COMPLAINT	CAUSES	REMARKS
3	Engine overheating	Water pump clutch fan defective. Sludge at expansion tank cap. Cylinder head gasket damaged.	
4	Engine overheating		It was noted that the cylinder head was removed and skimmed. It was a wrong decision made by them as water gallery was already heavily pitted and beyond use. Front near side suspension arm was missing and not in place.
5			Engine parts missing: Temperature sensor and crank shaft sensor. Fuel pump priming already dismantled.
6	Engine Overheating Cylinder head overheated	White diamond liquor bottle cap was used as expansion tank cap	

RED BEANS PRODUCTIONS – EXPECTED HARVEST

/GUARANTEED MARKET

(No. B/111) Mr J. R. Ramdally (First Local Region Member for Saint Gabriel) asked the Commissioner for Agriculture and Others whether, in regard to red beans production in Rodrigues, he will state to the House on:

- (a) the expected harvest for this year and

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- (b) if the Rodrigues Regional Assembly, through the Rodrigues Trade and Marketing Company, will provide a guaranteed market for the produce, in the affirmative, to give details thereof?

Reply: Mr Chairperson, Sir, the production of bean for the past three years are as follows (figures for 2022 not official):

Year	Area/Ha	Production/Ton	Yield (Ton/Ha)
2021	25.3	22.3	0.9
2020	38.1	35.7	0.9
2019	18.9	16.6	0.9

The expected harvest for bean for this year is 25 tons, and the area planted under bean this year, up to June, is 62.72 A (26.13 Ha).

This year, yield was below normal due principally to the following reasons:

- adverse climatic conditions (erratic/lack of rainfall, strong wind)
- presence of pests and diseases (mainly bacterial blight and bean flies)

Mr Chairperson, Sir, as regards part (b) of the question, I must say that the Rodrigues Trading Marketing Company Ltd (RTMC) which falls under the Chief Commissioner's Office is a company and has its own marketing strategy. However, my Commission has raised the question of guaranteed market with the Agricultural Marketing Board. A pre-market survey has been carried in Mauritius. Hopefully, the Agricultural Marketing Board will offer a guaranteed price for Rodriguan beans for the next growing season. It is to be noted that my Commission has also requested that a stall be reserved for Rodriguan product for the National Wholesale Market at Wooton.

I table list of red bean planters 2023. As an alternative this year, RTMC is offering cold storage facilities to planters who are willing to store their red bean seeds for the next growing season.

RENTING OF BUILDING/OFFICE SPACES – PRIVATE OWNER

(No. B/113) Dr H. Agathe (First Local Region Member for Grande Montagne) asked the Commissioner for Agriculture and Others whether, his Commission is renting

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building/office spaces from any private owner and, if so, (a) since when, (b) the purpose, and (c) the rental cost, duration of contract and any other conditions attached thereto and table a copy of the contract?

Reply: Mr Chairperson, Sir, the Fisheries Protection Service and the Marine Academy and Research Centre have been operating in isolation as two separate departments since years and both are dealing with the same sector. This constitute a fragmentation approach leading to lack of coordination and synergies.

Since my taking of tenure, my Commission has started to re-organise the Fisheries Sector so that the Fisheries Protection Service and the Marine Academy and Research Centre work in synergy.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, in a spirit of improving the working environment of the Fisheries Officers and Technicians, my Commission has decided to rent a building at Camp du Roi to house the Fisheries Protection Service and the Marine Academy and Research Centre under the same roof. Having noted the deplorable state in which these officers are being called to work, I could not tolerate this anymore.

As regards part (a), my Commission launched tender for the rental of a building to accommodate the Fisheries Department in 2022.

As regards part (b), the purposes thereof are: -

- (i) The re-organisation of the Fisheries Protection Service and the Marine Academy and Research Centre into a full fledged Fisheries Department;
- (ii) To provide the whole Fisheries staff with good convenient working environment, and
- (iii) For better management of the Fisheries Sector.

As regards part (c), the contract has not been finalised yet and no payment has been effected so far.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, I will not table a copy of the contract for ethical and confidential purposes.

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RODRIGUES PUBLIC UTILITIES CORPORATION (RPUC)

(No. B/115) Mr N. Lisette (First Local Region Member for Baie aux Huîtres) asked the Chief Commissioner whether, in regard to the Rodrigues Public Utilities Corporation (RPUC) he will, for the benefits of the House, obtain and provide information as: -

- (a) the current composition thereof;
- (b) the monthly remuneration payable thereto; and
- (c) any specific/conditions/facilities provided to any member, including air fares and accommodation, detailing the corresponding amount incurred therefor item-wise and per member, from February 2022 to date?

Reply: Mr Chairperson, Sir, the Board of Directors of the Rodrigues Public Utilities Corporation (RPUC) is composed of the following persons: -

SN	Name	Status	Grade & Organisation
1	Mr Claude Emmanuel Wong So, OSK	Chairman	Former Island Commissioner and Island Chief Executive
2	Mrs Zeenat Kaushar Guness-Goolbar	Director	Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Energy and Public Utilities
3	Mrs Bimla Gunnuck-Jeetun	Director	Assistant Permanent Secretary, Prime Minister's Office (Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial integrity)
4	Mr Jean Carlo Botsar	Director	Acting Departmental Head, Commission for Water Resources
5	Mr Joseph Robertson	Director	Office Management Executive, Chief Commissioner's Office (Water Resources and Others) representing the civil society

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SN	Name	Status	Grade & Organisation
6	Mr Antonio Leong Lone	Director	Retired Educator representing the consumers
7	Mr Kevin Waterstone	Director	Branch Manager, CEB Rodrigues
8	Mr Pritham Kumar Benee	Director	Lead Analyst, Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development

Mr Chairperson, Sir, there is one post of Director of the Board, which is currently vacant. In fact, Mr Amarnath Jagannath, Deputy General Manager (Technical) was the representative of the Central Water Authority (CWA) on the Board. He has retired recently and actions have already been initiated to replace him by another person to be delegated by the CWA shortly.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, with regard to part (b) of the question, the monthly fees payable to the Chairman and Directors of the RPUC are: -

- (i) Chairman - Rs 40,000 per month plus travelling of Rs 5,000 per month, and
- (ii) Directors - Rs 5,000 per month except the Acting Departmental Head of the Commission for Water Resources who receives no remuneration.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, with regard to part (c), the RPUC pays a daily per diem allowance of Rs 4,000 to the Chairman or any Director who is on official mission such as attending Board meetings in Mauritius or Rodrigues and who opts not to stay in a hotel accommodation during that period. The per diem allowance varies depending on the number of days spent in Mauritius or Rodrigues.

The RPUC also pays for air tickets of the Chairman, Directors and Secretary on official duty.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, I am tabling the requested information.

RODRIGUES NATURE COMPANY

(No. B/116) Dr H. Agathe (First Local Region Member for Grande Montagne)
asked the Chief Commissioner Whether, in regard to the Rodrigues Nature Company, he will state the:

- (a) when same was incorporated;
- (b) if any recruitment exercise has been initiated indicating the number of positions and their respective minimum required qualifications;
- (c) the number of candidates who applied and was selected for each position respectively;
- (d) the budget for the payment of salaries to the staff and fees to the board members, and
- (e) the item vote from which the fund will be/have been taken from the Rodrigues Regional Assembly?

Mr Chairperson, Sir, I would like to inform the House that Rodrigues Nature Company Ltd is a Rodrigues Regional Assembly fully owned private company, it was incorporated on the 29 November 2022 as a private company limited by shares in accordance with the Rodrigues Regional Assembly (Investment Management) Regulations 2008.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, I would like to draw the attention of the House that at its meeting on 30 September 2022, the Executive Council has approved the setting up of Rodrigues Nature Company Limited to the executive arm of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly to assist the latter in the implementation of its policies and programmes in the field of Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) and Watershed Rehabilitation.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, the objectives of the company are to:

1. Build fences, retaining walls and similar items;
2. Perform agro forestry works and control of invasive species;
3. Run nurseries and perform planting of trees;
4. Perform thinning, pruning, harvest timber, etc.;
5. Ensure security and watchmanship of sites entrusted to the company;
6. Build nature related attractions for locals and tourists and manage them;

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7. Engage and assist in sensitization/educational campaigns related to IWRM and the environment in general, and
8. Assist in rehabilitation programmes.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, as regards to part (b) of the question, I wish to inform the House that the company has initiated procedures for the recruitment of the Manager, Supervisors and General Workers. The qualification requirement of these posts is being tabled.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, the number of candidates who applied and selected for each post are as follows:

Post	Number of applications	Number selected
Manager	23	1
Supervisor	442	4

Mr Chairperson, Sir, the selection exercise for the 1,474 applications for the post of General Workers have not yet been completed.

With regard to parts (d) and (e) of the question, Mr Chairperson, Sir, the estimated budget for the payment of salaries of the staff will be kept within the provision of Rs 10 m. under the Item: Sustainable Watershed Maintenance and Management Programme. The House may also wish to note that an amount of Rs 3.6 m. has been provided as Equity Item 32150.013 for the acquisition of plant and equipment for the company.

CONSTRUCTION – BUS TERMINAL/RIVIERE COCO

(No. B/117) Mr J. P. Spéville (Fourth Island Region Member) asked the Deputy Commissioner Whether, in regard to the construction of the Bus terminal at Rivière Coco, he will, for the benefit of the House, state where matter stands regarding the completion of work?

Reply: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I wish to inform the House that the construction of bus layby and footpath at Rivière Coco have been completed.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, I have had site visits accompanied with technical staff of my Commission regarding this project. It was observed this site should be viewed as a sub terminal and consequently the concept around this site has been reviewed. Mr Chairperson, Sir, in order to provide a proper service to the bus users, the size of the proposed bus stop has been reviewed

and increased including provision of toilet facilities and a shelter for a bus regulator will be undertaken under this project.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, the abovementioned works will be done in-house and the procurement of all required materials has been completed. According to information foundation works are starting during this week itself.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, I can inform the House that some metal works have already been completed at the Public Infrastructure's Workshop for this project. Accordingly, Mr Chairperson, Sir, this project is expected to be completed by end of November 2023.

PATIENTS UNDER TREATMENT - HYPERCHOLESTEROLEMIA

(No. B/119) Mr J. R. Ramdally (First Local Region Member for Saint Gabriel) asked the Commissioner for Health and Others whether, in regard to patients under treatment for hypercholesterolemia he will state to the House:

- (a) the number of patients under treatment in Rodrigues per age group;
- (b) the name of the medication being provided to them;
- (c) if there is actually a lack of that specific medication and, in the affirmative, to give the reasons thereof together with the measures his Commission is contemplating to remedy the situation?

Mr Chairperson, Sir, as at date, there is no statistical data concerning the number of patients following hypercholesterolemia treatment in Rodrigues. However, according to NCD Register, 967 males are following or have ever followed medical treatment for hypercholesterolemia against 1,558 females in our clinics of Queen Elizabeth Hospital, Mont Lubin Area Health Centre and La Ferme Area Health Centre. These cases mainly fall in the age group of 18-75 years with less than 1% in the age group over 75 years.

In addition, I am informing the House that we have no updated data at the Nutrition Unit, School Health, job on site surveys, home visits as well as Community Health Centres level. Our system does not make provision for collection of data in terms of age group for hypercholesterolemia.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, as regards to part (b) of the question, I am informed that the name of the medication being provided to the patients are Atorvastatin and Bezafibrate.

Mr Chairperson Sir, regarding part (c), I am informed that for the time being, there is no lack of these two medications in Rodrigues.

MISSIONS TO MAURITIUS/ABROAD – SINCE MAY 2022

– COMMISSION FOR HEALTH

(No. B/120) Mr J. R. Ramdally (First Local Region Member for Saint Gabriel) asked the Commissioner for Health and Others Whether in regard to missions he fielded to Mauritius and/or abroad since May 2022, he will state and table to the House on the:

- (a) purpose of each mission together with its number of days;
- (b) outcome/s of each mission as at to date;
- (c) composition of the delegation for each mission, and
- (d) detailed breakdown of the costs incurred for each mission?

Reply: Mr Chairperson Sir, I wish to inform the House that the purpose of each mission is listed hereunder, the parent ministries of four out of five areas of responsibilities falling under my aegis are established in Mauritius and we have to comply to the national policies of each ministry concerned and we are bound to work in close collaboration with.

Very often, we are invited to attend to working sessions or to participate in several activities organised by the ministries. The number of days of each mission is being worked out and will be tabled later. Each time we proceeded on mission, the outcome for Rodrigues in general was positive such as:

- (a) The acquisition of an ambulance from the Ministry of Health and Wellness. At the time, we have only three ambulances in good running condition.
- (b) A security dog for the Rodrigues Prison's Dog Unit as well as a van;
- (c) A mobile dental caravan from the Ministry of Health and Wellness. Working session with the Minister of Health and Wellness and other officials of the ministry concerning the setting up of a Child Friendly Dental Clinic at La Ferme, Rodrigues and the posting of a third Dental Surgeon.
- (d) Finalisation of procedures for the signature of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Rodrigues Regional Assembly and the Cardiac Centre for Trust Fund concerning the setting up of a Cardiac Unit in Rodrigues. On-job training for eight officers at the Cardiac Trust Fund.
- (e) Attend WHO Workshop and meetings where discussion were held on the participation/involvement of the Commission for Health in activities organised both at local and national level by the WHO.
- (f) For some specific and urgent issues, we have to attend meetings and workshops.

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- (g) Meeting with Board of Directors of Breast Cancer Care and signature of an MOU concerning the accommodation/handling of Rodriguan women suffering from breast cancer.
- (h) Meeting and signature of MOU with the Global Rainbow Foundation concerning the setting up of a Foot Care Clinic and the fabrication of Prothesis in Rodrigues.
- (i) Meeting with the Consultant in Charge, Neurosurgery Unit concerning the visit of Neurosurgeon in Rodrigues on a more regular basis.
- (j) Meeting with the Commissioner of Prisons in Mauritius concerning the posting of five additional Female Prisons Officer to Rodrigues to enable the full time operations of the Rehabilitation Youth Centre for Girls (RYC Girls).
- (k) Meeting with the Director of SAMU, Victoria Hospital in the context of the setting up a SAMU Unit in Rodrigues.
- (l) Meeting with the Minister for Social Security concerning the possibility of launching a Security Application on Mobile Phone for Elderly in Rodrigues.
- (m) Meeting with the Japanese Embassy concerning the provision of equipment to the Rodrigues Prison for the setting of a Bakery at Pointe La Gueule Prison.
- (n) Meeting with the Hearing Aid Association concerning the screening of patients with hearing problems in Rodrigues.
- (o) Meeting with Autism Association concerning the detection of autism in Rodriguan patients and future collaboration between the Rodrigues Regional Assembly and the Mauritius Autism Association.
- (p) Meeting with the Indian Deputy High Commissioner concerning the recruitment on contract of Indian Specialists in Gynaecology.
- (q) Meeting with the French Embassy concerning the on-job training of two Rodriguan Fire Fighters in Reunion Island in First Aid/rescue (urgentis).
- (r) Meeting with the Rodriguan Patients who are following long term treatment in Mauritius and who are accommodated at Sikamifer Hotel.
- (s) Meeting with the management of Link to Life Association concerning the collaboration between my Commission and the association for management of cancer patients and the mega cancer screening including the detection of prostate cancer which will be held in Rodrigues in mid-September.
- (t) Meeting with the Mauritius Alzheimer Association concerning the probable signature of an MOU between my Commission and the association on the early

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detection of dementia and Alzheimer and also on the training of local staff to enable the setting up of a branch in Rodrigues.

- (u) Meeting with the management of Global Rainbow Foundation for the recruitment of staff to be posted at the Foot Care Clinic and concerning the finalisation of procedures for the acquisition of a new adapted van (15 seaters) for Rodriguan amputees.
- (v) Finalisation of procedures for the shipment of a new van 15 seaters donated by the WHO to the Commission for Health.
- (w) Meeting with the management of '*Ti Diam Association*' concerning a collaboration between Type 1 patient from Mauritius and the Rodriguan patients for a better management of Diabetes Type 1.
- (x) Meeting with Permanent Secretary for the posting of a second Physician in General Medicine in Rodrigues.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, as regards to parts (c) and (d), information is being compiled. Same will be tabled in a later stage.

SAFETY AND HEALTH AT WORK – FROM JULY 2022

(No. B/121) Mr L.D. Baptiste (Second Local Region Member for Grande Montagne) asked the Commissioner for Labour and Others Whether, in regard to safety and health at work from July 2022 to date, he will state the: -

- (a) total number of workplaces visited, and the number of workers covered;
- (b) number of cases of accident at work reported, together with the details relating to sites of work concerned, and the nature of same, and
- (c) number of contraventions, legal actions or other measures taken by his Commission to ensure compliance with all the appropriate labour laws?

Mr Chairperson, Sir, with regard to the first part of the question, I wish to inform the House that, for period starting from 01 July 2022 to date, the Occupational Safety and Health Unit has carried out 135 visits at some 75 workplaces to ensure compliance with the provisions of the Occupational Safety and Health Act No. 28 of 2005 and its subsidiary legislations, covering a total of 1,187 workers and comprising some 1,002 male and 185 female workers.

As regards, to part (b), 10 cases of accident at work on different sites have been reported to the Occupational Safety and Health Office during the period 01 July 2022 to date.

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Mr Chairperson, Sir, concerning part (c), one contravention has been booked for non-compliance with the provisions of the Occupational Safety and Health (Employees Lodging Accommodation) Regulations 2011.

Furthermore, Mr Chairperson, Sir, the House is informed that in order to ensure compliance with the different provisions of the Occupational Safety and Health Act and related Regulations, the following measures are being taken and implemented by the Occupational Safety and Health Unit:

- (i) Issuing of written recommendations to employers with regard to matters of non-compliance identified and on which follow ups are done to monitor implementation. For instance, during the period under review, some 640 recommendations were issued to employers to ensure they are complying to the provisions of the law;
- (ii) Recommendations are issued to applicants wishing to build new commercial and industrial buildings to ensure that their buildings are compliant with the legal provisions when they will start operation. And as a result thereof, a total of 62 new commercial and industrial buildings have been examined to ensure compliance with the legal provisions as from 01 July 2022 to date, and
- (iii) Recommendations are also issued to applicants for trade licences to ensure that their trade premises are in accordance with standards prescribed in the law before coming into operation. Follow up is being done by the Occupational Safety and Health Unit of my Commission in collaboration with other enforcing authorities, namely the Public Health Office, Fire and Rescue Service and the Enterprise Licensing Unit by way of site inspections. Consequently, 362 new trade premises/licensees have undergone this process since 01 July 2022 to date.

I thank you Mr Chairperson, Sir.

POST-SECONDARY STUDENTS – FINANCIAL YEAR 2023-2024

(No. B/122) Ms K. Roussety (Second Local Region Member for Bay aux Huîtres) asked the Chief Commissioner whether in regard to facilities available to post-secondary students for the financial year 2023/2024, he will state and table to the House on the:

- (a) list of scholarships, schemes and other measures together with the eligibility criteria;

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- (b) number of eligible students' level-wise per scheme per institution as at now, and
- (c) total number of students' level-wise per institution for the current financial year?

Reply: Mr Chairperson, Sir, with regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed that my Commission facilitates the award of the following scholarships offered by the Rodrigues Regional Assembly, the Government of Mauritius and other donor countries:

SN	Name of Scholarship	No.	Donor
1	Scholarship in Technical Fields	02	Rodrigues Regional Assembly
2	Distance Learning Scholarship	05	Rodrigues Regional Assembly
3	Scholarship to Best Performing Boys and Girls of REDCO college	06	Rodrigues Regional Assembly
4	Medical Scholarship	03	Rodrigues Regional Assembly
5	Paramedical Scholarship	01	Rodrigues Regional Assembly
6	Veterinary Scholarship	02	Rodrigues Regional Assembly
7	Scholarship to best performing students at HSC Professionals Exam	02	Rodrigues Regional Assembly
8	Post Graduate Medical Scholarship (Intended for Medical Health Officers/Senior Medical Health Officers)		Rodrigues Regional Assembly
9	Rodrigues Open Scholarship	04	Government of Mauritius
10	Additional Scholarship Scheme	02	Government of Mauritius
11	Scholarship tenable at the University of Mauritius	03	Government of Mauritius
12	Scholarship to children from Vulnerable Families (SRM)		Government of Mauritius
13	Aid to Africa Scholarship	05	Government of India
14	Post Graduate Scholarship	01	People's Republic of China

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Mr Chairperson, Sir, in addition to the abovementioned scholarships which are offered to those students with outstanding performance, my Commission also offers through several schemes, financial assistance/sponsorships to post-secondary/tertiary students with a view to encourage their learning process whilst alleviating the financial burden on parents and ensure that financial difficulty is not a deterrent to post-secondary studies as follows:

- Payment of registration fees/tuition fees up to a maximum of Rs 55,400;
- Grant of Rs 20,000 for acquisition of Laptop;
- Monthly internet package allowance of Rs 300;
- Monthly financial assistance of Rs 4,000/month;
- Monthly grant for lodging;
- One-off grant at the start of studies;
- Accommodation facilities;
- Sponsorship to students ranked among the 10 best at Higher School Certificate;
- Top Up Medical Sponsorship Scheme for Laureates;
- Sponsorship for studies in Architecture, and
- Sponsorship for post-graduate studies.

I am informed that several requests for sponsorship are received from students who are having difficulties to complete their undergraduate studies or postgraduate studies for various reasons. One among them is the social and economic background of the family who is no longer able to fund the studies of their child. Moreover, following the outbreak of COVID-19 and the economic crisis which preceded it, course fees as well as transport and accommodation costs worldwide have risen at an unprecedented rate.

Subsequently, Mr Chairperson, Sir, I would like to also inform the House that the Executive Council at its meeting held on 28 April 2023 has decided to approve the modalities to provide sponsorship facilities based on family revenue on a pro-rata basis to suitably qualified Rodriguan students undergoing their undergraduate or post-graduate studies so as to enable them to pursue their professional development in specific fields that fall under the indicative list for priority field of studies for Rodrigues.

With regard to parts (b) and (c) of the question, I am informed that there are 434 post-secondary students including one at NC4 level, 254 at Diploma level and 179 at Degree level who are benefiting from the different schemes being provided by my Commission. I am further

informed that one student may benefit from more than one scheme depending on the eligibility criteria.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, I am hereby tabling the list of scholarships, schemes and other sponsorship measures together with the eligibility criteria and the total number of students' level-wise per institution including the number of eligible students per scheme for the current financial year.

**ITEM VOTE NO. 22140.01 – VOTE 5-1: MEDICINE, DRUGS AND VACCINES
– APPROVED ESTIMATES 2022-23**

(No. B/123) Mr J. R. Ramdally (First Local Region Member for Saint Gabriel) asked the Commissioner for Health and Others Whether, in regard to Item No 22140.001 of Vote 5-1, Medicines, Drugs and Vaccines, of Approved Estimates 2022-23, he will state:

- (a) what was the provision for this item used for, stating the allocated amount to same;
- (b) if all the amount was disbursed as at 30th June 2023 and
- (c) to table a detailed breakdown of all the expenses incurred under this item

Mr Chairperson, Sir, I am informed that the provision made in regard to Item No.22140.001 of Vote 5-1: Medicines, drugs and vaccines for the financial year 2022/2023 was Rs 33,800 000.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, with regard to part (b) of the question, I wish to inform the House that as at 30 June 2023 all the amount has been disbursed.

As for part (c), a detailed breakdown of all expenses incurred under the items are:

Vote 5102: Curatives Services and Primary Health Care and Public Health

Item 22140.001: Medicines, Drugs and Vaccines

The detailed monthly amount disbursed is as follows:

Month	Amount disbursed	Voted Provision
July 2022	102,311	33,800,000
August 2022	9,775,204	

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Month	Amount disbursed	Voted Provision
September 2022	9,104,511	
October 2022	2,284,007	
November 2022	3,599,877	
December 2022	2,107,841	
January 2023	749,412	
February 2023	626,318	
March 2023	13,832,168	
April 2023	270,575	
May 2023	37,800	
June 2023	5,663,164	
	48,153,189	48,153,189
Shortfalls		-14,353,189

ACQUISITION OF VEHICLES – MARCH 2022 TO DATE

(No. B/124) Mr J. R. Ramdally (First Local Region Member for Saint Gabriel) asked the Chief Commissioner Whether, in regard to the acquisition of vehicles for the period March 2022 to date he will state and table the different:

- (a) vehicles concerned, together with the procurement method, the date the tenders were floated, the successful bidder, the costs, and the amount already paid.
- (b) item votes from which payments were made therefor?

Reply: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I have to inform the House that since March 2022 to date, 28 vehicles have been acquired by the Rodrigues Regional Assembly as hereunder:

- Six pick up double cab vans

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- Three motorcars
- Four double cab lorries
- One lorry with crane
- Four water lorry tankers
- One backhoe loader
- One water lorry for Fire and Rescue Service
- Seven ambulances
- One mortuary van

The details concerning the procurement of the vehicles are being tabled for the information of the House.