

PARLIAMENTARY QUESTION

B/573 The Honourable First Member for Mahebourg and Plaine Magnien (**Mr Varma**)

To ask Dr the Honourable Minister of Agro Industry and Fisheries:-

Whether in regard to the fishermen of Mahebourg and Plaine Magnien, he will state where matters stand as to the measures proposed to solve the problems they are facing, in the exercise of their trade?

REPLY

Mr. Speaker Sir,

I am advised that fishermen of the Mahebourg and Plaine Magnien region basically face two problems:

- (i) access of their boats to navigable waters from the Mare Chicose Fish Landing Station especially at low tide;
- (ii) repairs and upgrading of the jetty at Mare Chicose;
- (iii) fishing by persons not registered as fishermen in the Blue Bay Marine Park.

2. (i) In the light of diverging views of fishermen of Mahebourg regarding the dredging of the boat passage at Mare Chicose, several meetings were held with them in May 2002, May 2004, July 2004, August 2004, August 2005 and in 2007.

(ii) It was finally agreed in August 2007 that consideration would be given to the re-opening of boat passages at Remy Ollier and Mongelard in the first instance instead of Mare Chicose. Both Remy Ollier and Mongelard are to the south and near the Mare Chicose site. Most of the fishermen, except two were agreeable to the proposal.

(iii) In the wake of the recommendations made by officers of my Ministry, to protect the ecosystem at the Mongelard site, it has been decided in February 2008 that priority would be given to dredging of the boat passage at the Remy Ollier site. However, due to financial constraints the project cannot be carried out in this financial year. It is proposed to carry out the works in the 2010/2011 financial year and the cost is estimated at around Rs 12 Million.

3. Mr. Speaker Sir, as regards the jetty at Mare Chicose which is part of the Mahebourg Waterfront, the fishermen of Mahebourg complained that the jetty was too high especially at low tide and as such it was not practicable and that they

were not making use of same. Several meetings have been held with representatives of the associations of fishermen of Mahebourg to look into the issue. However, no consensus was reached as the fishermen had divergent views and some were not in favour of the modification of the jetty. In the meantime the state of the existing jetty is deteriorating.

4. Hence, the Ministry of Industry, Small and Medium Enterprises, Commerce and Co-operatives and the Mauritius Fishermen Cooperative Federation have proposed to repair the jetty after further consultation with the fishermen.

5. I am given to understand that a meeting was held on 19 May 2008 under the Chairmanship of my colleague, the Minister of Industry, Small and Medium Enterprise, Commerce and Cooperatives, with representatives of fishermen, the Ministry of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping and the Mauritius Fishermen Cooperative Federation. At the meeting the fishermen expressed the view that before effecting repairs to the jetty, dredging of a boat passage to it should be considered first as their boats face difficulties in approaching the jetty at low tide. I thus, intend to raise this issue with the fishermen representatives during a Consultative Committee meeting scheduled for Friday 30 May next.

6. Concerning fishing activities in the Blue Bay Marine Park these are allowed as follows:

- (a) line and basket trap in the multiple use zone; and
- (b) pole and line from the shore line within certain demarcated areas;

to holders of a permit including fishers.

Presently there are 31 registered fishers and 89 non-registered fishers, the latter mostly from Plaine Magnien, fishing with permits in the park.