

PARLIAMENTARY QUESTION

B/497 The Honourable Second Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue (Mr. Lesjongard)

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

Whether, in regard to the Syndicat des Pêcheurs, he will state if he is aware of the allegations they have made in respect of their contributions to the National Pension Fund and, if so, indicate (a) the remedial actions that have been taken, if any and (b) if an inquiry has been carried out thereinto?

REPLY

Mr. Speaker Sir,

I am aware that the Syndicat des Pêcheurs has made an allegation in respect of their contribution to the National Pensions Fund.

2. A total of 1,551 out of 1,924 registered fishermen below the age of 60 are contributing out of their Bad Weather Allowance (BWA), on a voluntary basis, to the NPF Scheme since 2001. Every month the amount deducted from the BWA representing contribution of the fishermen to the NPF Scheme is submitted to the Treasury which in turn issues a cheque to the Ministry of Social Security, National Solidarity and Senior Citizens Welfare & Reform Institutions, together with all details of the fishermen, for crediting in their pension account. The Ministry of Social Security, National Solidarity and Senior Citizens Welfare & Reform Institutions then credits the amount deducted from the BWA to the fishermen's account.

3. In February 2008, representatives of fishermen, including the Syndicat des Pêcheurs, requested for a meeting with the Fisheries Division to seek clarification on the deduction that was being made from their Bad Weather Allowance for contribution to the NPF Scheme. Subsequently, a meeting was held on 4 April 2008 with officials of my Ministry, the Ministry of Social Security, National Solidarity and Senior Citizens Welfare & Reform Institutions and representatives of the fishermen to discuss and enlighten them on the issue.

4. At the meeting, the fishermen alleged that there was a discrepancy in some cases in the monthly amount deducted from their BWA for contribution to the NPF Scheme and the amount shown in the statements of account issued by the Ministry of Social Security, National Solidarity and Senior Citizens Welfare & Reform Institutions to them.

5. Following the above meeting, I am advised that the Ministry of Social Security, National Solidarity and Senior Citizens Welfare & Reform Institutions is compiling a list of fishermen with their respective contributions. On the other hand, my Ministry with the assistance of the Central Statistical Office, is preparing a statement reflecting the deductions of each fisherman per month since 2001 to date. The exercise will be completed by next week. Subsequently a reconciliation will be made with the figures of the Ministry of Social Security, National Solidarity and Senior Citizens Welfare & Reform Institutions and those of the Central Statistical Office to see whether there is any discrepancy in the amount contributed by fishermen and their accounts at the NPF.

6. After the above exercise an enquiry will be carried out if necessary.