

PARLIAMENTARY QUESTION

B/679

The Honourable Second Member for Grand River North West and Port Louis West (**Mrs Selvon**)

To ask the Honourable Prime Minister, Minister of Home Affairs, External Communications and National Development Unit, Minister of Finance and Economic Development –

Whether, in regard to the visit of His Holiness Pope François, he will state where matters stand as to the preparation thereof, indicating if all the Members of the Assembly and prominent leaders of the local Catholic and other officially recognized religious communities will be invited to the welcoming ceremony on his arrival and to the other public ceremonies held in honour of His Holiness?

REPLY

Madam Speaker,

As the House is aware, His Holiness Pope Francis will, upon the invitation of Government, pay a visit to Mauritius, on Monday 09 September 2019 which has already been declared a public holiday. He is expected to arrive from the Republic of Madagascar at 1040 hours and expected to leave Mauritius at 1900 hours.

The programme of visit of His Holiness The Pope will comprise: -

- (i) welcoming ceremony at the airport;
- (ii) mass at Marie Reine de la Paix;
- (iii) hommage to the shrine of Blessed Father Laval; and

- (iv) official function at the State House.

With a view to ensuring that the momentous visit of His Holiness The Pope unfolds under the best auspices, a National Organising Committee under the chair of the Secretary to Cabinet and Head of the Civil Service has been set up to look into and coordinate all the preparations and logistic arrangements. The National Organising Committee comprises members of the Diocese of Port Louis and representatives of Ministries/ Departments concerned. Dedicated sub-committees have also been set up to look into specific arrangements for the different functions.

Madam Speaker,

The arrangements being made by the Government in the context of the visit include, amongst others: -

- (i) The construction of a vehicular access road behind the monument of Marie Reine de la Paix to facilitate access of His Holiness The Pope to the altar;
- (ii) A Media Centre with all facilities will be set up at Le Labourdonnais Hotel, to cater for both local and foreign journalists and live coverage of the events by MBC and Eurovision;
- (iii) Various upgrading/infrastructural works are being carried out at the shrine of Blessed Father Laval and adjoining areas;
- (iv) Air Mauritius will operate a special flight to convey His Holiness The Pope and his delegation, back to Madagascar; and

- (v) A special security deployment and traffic arrangements plan will be put up by the Police, in view of the huge public gathering anticipated at Marie Reine de la Paix.

Madam Speaker,

I am informed by the Diocese of Port Louis that all the Members of the Legislative Assembly, leaders of the local catholic and officially recognized Christian communities and members of the Council of Religions which includes representatives of all the recognized religious communities in Mauritius, will be invited for the Mass at Marie Reine de La Paix, which is the sole public ceremony being organized in the context of the visit.

Madam Speaker,

Given the solemnity of the event, the public can seize the opportunity to attend the mass to be officiated by His Holiness The Pope at Marie Reine de la Paix.

As regard invitations for the arrival ceremony and the function at the State House, the lists of invitees are still being worked out by my Office in consultation with the Diocese of Port Louis.

Madam Speaker,

An amount of Rs 50 million has been specifically provided in the budget of my Office to meet expenditure related to the visit. Moreover, Business Mauritius has been approached to look for sponsors to top up

expenses to be incurred by the Diocese for upgrading works at Marie Reine de la Paix.