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MOTION

Estimates October 2002-June 2003

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ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

ARTICLES – DUTY EXEMPTION

(No. B/53) Mrs J. Prosper (Sixth Island Region Member) asked the Commissioner for Commerce –

- (a) whether he can give a list of articles sold in Rodrigues which are exempted from payment of duty; and
- (b) state whether the prices of these articles are regularly controlled.

Mr Lisette: Mr Chairperson, Sir, the list of articles is exhaustive. All articles imported and sold in Rodrigues are exempted from payment of customs duty under the Finance Act (No. 25) 2000, except for the following items –

- (i) alcoholic beverages;
- (ii) cigarettes & tobacco products;
- (iii) jewellery & precious stones;
- (iv) arms & ammunitions;
- (v) yacht & other vessels for pleasure and sports;
- (vi) watch, straps, bands & bracelets; and
- (vii) furniture

As regards part (b) of the question, according to the Consumer Protection Act 1998 (price & supplies control), there is a list of 47 items, which prices are fixed by the Price Fixing Unit and which are regularly controlled by officers of the Consumer Protection Unit.

**QUEEN ELIZABETH HOSPITAL – MATERNITY WARD -
HYGIENIC CONDITIONS, DAMAGED EQUIPMENT, ETC**

(No. B/54) Mrs J. Prosper (Sixth Island Region Member) asked the Commissioner for Health -

- (a) whether he will state if conditions regarding hygiene in the maternity ward of the Queen Elizabeth Hospital are appropriate;
- (b) whether there are any damaged items of equipment in the same ward and since when they have been damaged; and

- (c) whether they have been replaced or repaired, as appropriate.

Mr Sooprayen: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I am informed that -

- (a) Hygienic conditions at the maternity ward of the Queen Elizabeth Hospital are satisfactory. The building of the maternity ward includes two toilets, one bathroom, and one sluice. These are being cleaned on a daily basis, even several times during the day if the need arises. Soiled materials are cleaned in the sluice also on a daily basis.

The ward is cleaned after visiting hours at 08.00 a.m and 2.00 p.m, and also when required. Patients are instructed to keep the ward clean and not to soil the toilet and bathroom after use. Swabs are taken on regular basis from different spots in the ward building and analysed to detect the presence or not of micro organisms. If harmful micro organisms are detected, disinfection of the ward is carried out. On the other hand, I have also been informed that hygienic conditions in the labour ward are excellent.

It should be noted, however, that the outpatient clinic is not fitted with toilets. Patients who are undergoing antenatal treatment have to use the public toilets found in front of the hospital. In the general renovation of the maternity ward, which is in the pipeline, separate toilets for the outpatient clinic will be constructed.

- (b) I am informed, Mr Chairperson, Sir, that the air-conditioner in the labour ward has been out of order since January 2002. Up to date, this has not been repaired. Two wall fans are being used in place of the said conditioner. I have sought information whether this is a source of discomfort for women in the labour ward, especially during the hot weather season, but I am informed that there have been no complaints up to now. Anyway, action has already been taken to purchase a new air-conditioner that will be installed at the labour ward at the end of this month, to provide the best comfort to patients. There is also one incubator in the nursery which has been out of order since January 2002. It has been sent for repairs in Mauritius. It has been sent back since August, and is functioning properly.

**MONT LUBIN & TERRE BORNE BUS TERMINUS –
TOILET FACILITIES**

(No. B/55) Mr G. Jabeemissar (Second Local Region Member for La Ferme) asked the Chief Commissioner whether, as regards toilet facilities at the bus terminals of Mont Lubin and Terre Borne, he will say -

- (a) if he intends to build a toilet complex there and, if yes, when, and
- (b) why the toilet project once started at La Ferme has had no follow-up.

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson Sir, the answer is as follows -

- (a) I am informed that the public toilet of Mt Lubin was pulled down in the process of the ongoing resurfacing works of the Grand La Fouche Corail-Port Mathurin Road, as it was situated within the new road alignment. A new public toilet will be constructed after the completion of the road construction works.
- (b) In the case of Terre Borne bus terminus, a public toilet was being constructed in 1995, but was stopped following representations from the persons living in the surroundings. The neighbours protested against anticipated smell pollution which was confirmed by the Public Health Office, and no alternative suitable site could be identified.

Mr Jabeemissar: Mr Chairperson, Sir, according to the reply of the Chief Commissioner, it seems that, for the time being, there is no provision for the construction of a toilet at La Ferme. But, I have been informed that there are acts of vandalism at night, where people soil the bus shelter. Can the Chief Commissioner use his good offices and to ask for Police patrol there?

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, normally the commuters using Terre Borne bus terminus use the public toilet adjacent to La Ferme Area Health Services, situated about 100 metres from the bus terminus. But, following information given by the Member, I will give instruction to the Police to do the necessary.

CITE LA FOUCHE MANGUES – ACCESS ROAD

(No. B/56) Mr G. Jabeemissar (Second Local Region Member for La Ferme) asked the Chief Commissioner whether, for the benefit of the House, he will say –

- (a) why the access road to Cité La Fouche Mangles, which was being reinstated during the electoral campaign prior to 29 September last, stopped midway, and
- (b) if he intends to complete same and, if yes, when.

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I am informed that the access road leading to Dans Limon via Cité Grand la Fouche Mangles road was being levelled to enable access to the site at Dans limon (Fond Mt. Du Sable) where 11 low-cost housing units will be built shortly. However, after the breakdown of the excavator on 03 October 2002, the levelling of the road has been put in abeyance until the repair of the equipment.

I am further informed that the spare parts for the excavator have been ordered from abroad and the levelling of the road will resume upon repair of the excavator.

Mr Jabeemissar: Mr Chairperson, Sir, can the Chief Commissioner give to the House the exact date as to when the excavator will be repaired? Because, now, people of the above mentioned regions are complaining to the effect that this has been a sort of political bribery...

Mr Chairperson: The Member should not impute motives. What is the question?

Mr Jabeemissar: My question is the following. We are now at the beginning of the rainy season, and these people have been constantly complaining about the bad access to their village. I think that this matter should be considered as a priority. Will the Chief Commissioner say when he intends to start reinstating this road again, so as to make it easily accessible to the village?

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, as regards the date the excavator will be repaired, I will give the information soon.

Mr Jabeemissar: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I repeat my question again. I would like to know whether the Chief Commissioner intends to have the road repaired in the immediate future.

Mr Chairperson: This question has already been answered. Next question, please.

STE MARIE VILLAGE, PLAINE CORAIL - WATER SUPPLY

(No. B/57) Mr G. Jabeemissar (Second Local Region Member for La Ferme) asked the Chief Commissioner whether, as regards water supply to the village of Ste Marie, Plaine Corail, he will say -

- (a) why the reservoir of the Airport does not provide the villagers there with water; and
- (b) the frequency at which water is being supplied to the village.

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I am informed that the reservoir at Bangelique, which serves amongst others the village of Ste Marie, was supplied with water from a small intake across river Anse Quitar. I am further informed that since April 2000 the river has completely dried up and, therefore, no water could be pumped to feed the said reservoir.

I have further been informed that the Water Unit is now providing water to the villages once every two to three weeks by lorry water tankers. In order to relieve the hardship caused to these villagers, I have requested the Water Unit to look at the possibility of extending the existing Water Distribution network from Plaine Corail Airport to Bangelique reservoir.

Mr Jabeemissar: Mr Chairperson, Sir, according to the people of the village, this reservoir has not, since a long time been supplying them with water. But we know that the problem of water in that part of the island is very serious. Now the people are asking themselves how is it that there is a white elephant in front of them, what is the purpose of building that reservoir if it is not used. What immediate action will be taken so that this reservoir can supply water to that region?

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, I will look into the matter.

STE MARIE VILLAGE, PLAINE CORAIL - ROAD ACCESS

(No. B/58) Mr G. Jabeemissar (Second Local Region Member for La Ferme) asked the Chief Commissioner whether, as regards road access to the village of Ste Marie, Plaine Corail, he will say -

- (a) what provision is being made, with the construction of the Airport for road facility to the village; and
- (b) whether there is a possibility of providing the village, especially school children there, with transport facilities.

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I am informed that further to the extension of the runway at Plaine Corail Airport, provision has already been made by the Airport of Rodrigues Ltd. for a road access to the village of Ste Marie. I am further informed that existing track has been leveled over a certain distance. The possibility of further improving the road access up to the village will be taken into consideration in the light of the establishment of the list of priority for a road construction/road upgrading.

As regards the provision of transport facilities, especially the school children, I am referring the matter to the Commission responsible for public transport and the Commission responsible for education so as to submit a report on the technical and financial implications of same.

Mr Jabeemissar: Mr Chairperson, Sir, as we know school will resume next week and the school children will still have to face transport problems. Will the Chief Commissioner say whether he intends to consider this matter as very urgent in order to provide these pupils with transport facilities, though this will cost a lot?

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I'll discuss the matter with the Commissioner responsible for transport and education.

Mr Jabeemissar: Mr Chairperson, Sir, regarding the road access again to the village of Ste Marie, I know that provision will be made to continue to tar the road leading to Plaine Coco and as you know Plaine Coco, Anse Quitor and Ste Marie are not so far. Will the Chief Commissioner consider the possibility of having a bridge built across Anse Quitor so as to make a better link to Ste Marie without waiting for the airport to be fully constructed.

The Chief Commissioner: As I have said before, the construction of roads and bridges should appear in the priority list. If it is not so, it will be done in the course of the next Budget.

Mr J. Roussety: Mr Chairperson, concerning the question of roads in this Assembly we have been hearing about a priority list. Can I ask the Chief Commissioner to table the priority list as soon as possible so that we are informed about the roads and bridges to be constructed.

Can this priority list be finalised and tabled? We want to have more details about it, we want it to be published.

Mr Chairperson: If it is completed, of course.

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, the priority list has already been given in the course of my maiden speech in this House.

FISHERIES OFFICERS - POSTS

(No. B/59) Mr F. Grandcourt (First Local Region Member for La Ferme) asked the Chief Commissioner whether, for the benefit of the House, he will say -

- (a) the number of Fisheries Officers in Rodrigues working -
 - (i) in the Fisheries Department office;
 - (ii) at the fish landing stations;
 - (iii) as patrol officers.
- (b) if there is a shortage of Fisheries Officers working in the sectors mentioned in part (a) above.

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson Sir, the information is as follows: -

- (a)
 - (i) 10 Fisheries Officers are working at Pointe Monier Fisheries Headquarters.
 - (ii) A Fisheries Assistant is posted on each of the 23 fish landing stations.
 - (iii) 20 Fisheries Officers carry out patrols to control illegal fishing.
- (b) The number of officers responsible for the protection of the lagoon has to be increased. Recommendation for the creation of additional posts of Fisheries Officers to strengthen control of illegal fishing was not retained in last budget exercise due to financial constraints. The recommendation will be reconsidered during the next budget exercise.

PIMENT/LAS VEGAS - ACCESS ROAD

(No. B/60) Mr F. Grandcourt (First Local Region Member for La Ferme) asked the Chief Commissioner whether, for the benefit of the House, he will -

- (a) state the length of untarred access road linking Piment to Las Vegas;
- (b) and as a priority, consider the tarring of that part of the road as a second access road to Plaine Corail.

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I am informed that the length of the untarred access road linking Piment to Cascade Jean Louis is about 1500 metres long.

I wish once more to point out that road construction and upgrading of roads in Rodrigues will now be effected on the basis of a priority list which is presently being worked out after taking into consideration due accounts of funds available and in line with the electoral programme of the OPR party.

The tarring of that road will be considered consequently on the basis of the above criteria.

Mr Grandcourt: Mr Chairperson, I am talking about the second access road to Plaine Corail Airport. I would like to ask the Chief Commissioner to reconsider tarring that part of access road to Plaine Corail as it is an urgent matter. What will happen if there is an accident at the airport?

Mr Chairperson: Is the Member making a request or asking a question? Put your question clearly, please.

Mr Grandcourt: I would like to ask the Chief Commissioner when will he reconsider tarring that part of the road?

The Chief Commissioner: Sir, the question has already been answered.

Mr J. Roussety: Mr Chairperson, Sir, *si j'ai bien compris, je l'ai entendu dire* "the priority list is being presently worked out..."

The Chief Commissioner: Yes.

Mr J. Roussety: ... "given financial constraints". In reply to the last question, he just said that the priority list has been explained in his maiden speech. Can I have more clarification, please? He says one thing just before and some minutes later he says another thing. So, can I have some explanation about this list? Because he just said that it is presently

being worked out and some time before he said it has already been worked out and he mentioned it is in his maiden speech. This is not clear.

The Chief Commissioner: As I have said, the tarring of that road will be considered consequently on the basis of the above criteria. It can be now and it can be afterwards. There will always be criteria of priority list for road construction. If it is not in the list now, it can be in the list afterwards and for this we'll have to wait.

Mr J. Roussety: The question was whether the priority list has been finalised as was said earlier or whether it is under the process of finalisation. This is my question.

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, the priority list has been mentioned in my speech and if the Minority Leader wants to have the priority list, I will table it in the House at the next sitting.

Mr Agathe: There is only one airport in Rodrigues. For example, if there is an accident at Las Vegas.....

Mr Chairperson: No hypothesis, please! This is question time. The Member should put his question.

Mr Agathe: We must consider the construction of the road as an urgency because if there is an accident, ...

Mr Chairperson: This is question time. I am sorry! The Member should put his question, please!

Mr Agathe: We want to know when exactly will the road be constructed.

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, there are many roads to be constructed in Rodrigues. As I said, we should wait for the time for them to be constructed as a priority.

Mr Agathe: Mr Chairperson, Sir, this is of great importance for us. We want to know exactly when.

Mr Chairperson: This question has already been answered.

PORT MATHURIN/ENGLISH BAY - ROAD SAFETY

(No. B/61) Mrs M. T. Meunier (The Second Local Region Member) asked the Chief Commissioner whether he can state measures

he intends to take to improve safety on the road from Port Mathurin to English Bay given the fact that two fatal accidents have occurred at a year's interval on that road.

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, with your permission, I would like to convey my deepest sympathy and that of this House to the parents and families of Miss Daflorence Edouard who passed away following a road accident at Mont Venus on 24 November 2002.

I have been informed by the Chief Officer of Police that the frequency of mobile patrols along the coastal road from Port Mathurin to English Bay will be increased. Moreover, speed checks as well as alcohol tests will be effected regularly especially during weekends.

I further requested the Public Infrastructure Division to look at the possibility of installing road humps at certain spots along the road. Additional traffic signs will be provided.

PORT SUD EST - SPORTS GROUND - CONSTRUCTION

(No. B/62) Mrs M. T. Meunier (The Second Local Region Member) asked the Commissioner responsible *inter alia* for sports whether he will state -

- (a) since when the sports ground at Port Sud Est has been undergoing construction;
- (b) whether all markings and installation of equipment have been completed; and
- (c) when, if ever, the sports complex will be completed.

Mr Lisette: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I have been informed that the contract for the tarring of sports ground at Port Sud Est was awarded on 19 January 2000 and the tarring work was completed on 6 June 2000.

As regards part (b) of the question, the markings and installation of equipment have not been effected todate.

As regards part (c), Mr Chairperson, Sir, it is a fact that there are many football grounds which have been constructed without completing the markings and the installation of equipment during the past years. A preliminary assessment and report of each of these grounds has been effected immediately after my coming into office. These grounds are

found at Grand La Fourche Corail, Tammes, Trèfles, Palisade and Port Sud Est.

There is no doubt that the markings and installation of equipment will have to be completed in due time. So far, the markings of the volleyball ground at Coromandel has been completed and my Commission is giving instruction for the upgrading and the marking of the other pitches.

Mr J. Roussety: Can I ask the Commissioner whether these works were carried out on contract or by Government labour and services?

Mr Lisette: Mr Chairperson, Sir, the Rodrigues Regional Assembly has the Public Infrastructure which is responsible for minor repairs of sports infrastructure.

As a matter of fact, my Commission, due to lack of funds, will, in the first instance, consider the repairs of these sports infrastructure by the Public Infrastructure.

Mr J. Roussety: I was asking whether works on the football and volleyball grounds, etc. have been executed by contract or by Government labour.

Mr Lisette: Actually, Mr Chairperson, Sir, the tarring of the ground was awarded to A. J. Maurel Co. Ltd.

Mr J. Roussety: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I am in Rodrigues. *J'ai vu ces éléphants blancs un peu partout. Les terrains...*

Mr Chairperson: How did you call them, *éléphants blancs*? Can the Member avoid these expressions and try to be clearer?

Mr J. Roussety: We have seen these playgrounds, etc., whatever we can call them. There is no marking. There is only the playground. There is no basket to put the ball, there is nothing. So, contracts have been awarded. How can we award contracts for sports amenities only for tarring the ground, whereas for the fencing there is nothing provided? Should we not carry out an inquiry into that? The Commissioner is saying that these grounds have been tarred since 2000, you tar the grounds and then you let them here. Who will play on that? Birds? So, it is a serious matter. In this Assembly, we have procedures for control over funds of Government. Can I ask the Commissioner when these contracts were awarded? Would he please table the list of all these sports amenities?

Mr Chairperson: I am sorry to interrupt the Member. I understand from the question that contracts were made only for the tarring of grounds. When the Member refers to contracts, he should be more specific. He can put his question.

Mr J. Roussety: It was contract for sports grounds and not roads, if I understand well. The question is whether an inquiry is going to be carried out together with the Commissioner responsible for infrastructure into that matter to see whether Government's funds, which were allowed for these projects have been judiciously used.

Mr Lisette: Mr Chairperson, Sir, as I have been informed, the markings and the installation of equipment were not in the contract of the company which tarred the sport grounds. The markings and the installation of the equipment were to be done by the public infrastructure. So, I cannot see how the Minority Leader is coming with the fact that there has been loss of public funds. The contract was awarded for tarring of grounds and it has been done by the company.

RAPE CASES

(No. B/63) Mrs M. T. Meunier (The Second Local Region Member) asked the Deputy Chief Commissioner whether with regard to the rape cases in Rodrigues, she will state -

- (a) the number of such cases for the year 2002;
- (b) whether any of these suspected rapists have been released on bail; and
- (c) if the answer to part (b) is in the affirmative, the amount of the bail per offender.

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, (a) I am informed by the Police that there have been four rape cases in Rodrigues during the year 2002.

(b) Two of the suspected rapists have been released on bail.

(c) The amount of bail paid by each offender was Rs 10,000.

MORCELLEMENTS - RESIDENTIAL LEASES

(No. B/64) Mr J. Roussety (Minority Leader) asked the Chief Commissioner whether, as regards Government *morcellements* in Rodrigues for residential leases he will -

- (a) state the number of *morcellements* set up since 1990, their respective locations, the total number of lots and the number of unallocated lots, if any, per *morcellement*;
- (b) ascertain whether or not some leaseholders are without domestic water supply and/or electricity and the reasons thereof and the number of leaseholders concerned, and
- (c) state the measures he intends to take to remedy the situation.

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, with regards to part (a), I am informed that 16 *morcellements* have been created on State land since 1990 and the details on the total number of lots and the number of unallocated lots are as follows -

SN.	Locality	No. of Lots	No. of Lots Unallocated
1	Pointe La Gueule	28	0
2	Port Sud Est	78	13
3	Baie Malgache (A)	60	0
4	Baie Malgache (B)	53	1
5	Petite Butte/Corail	14	3
6	Citronelle	8	0
7	Roche Bon Dieu	84	26
8	Batatrand	118	84
9	Baie Malgache (C)	4	0
10	Terre Rouge	61	16
11	Mourouk	100	94
12	Anse Goelland	95	13

SN.	Locality	No. of Lots	No. of Lots Unallocated
13	Montagne Cabris Est	92	87
14	Baladirou	14	12
15	Anse Aux Anglais	8	0
16	Pte Butte	112	98
	Total	929	447

As far as part (b) is concerned, as a matter of fact some lessees of the *morcellements* are not provided with basic services such as water, electricity and water supply.

With regard to part (c), provisions are being made in the Budget, which will be presented to the House today, for the provision of basic services like road, water and electricity in some *morcellements*. At our meeting of the 20 November 2002, the Executive Council decided that such services should be provided in the *morcellements*.

Mr Jabeemissar: Mr Chairperson, Sir, according to the last reply of the Chief Commissioner, some *morcellements* will be provided with these facilities. Can the Chief Commissioner tell the House how he intends to assess the importance of allocating these facilities to some *morcellements* and not to the others?

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, according to the funds available, we are looking into the *morcellements* where there are more lessees and where it will cost less for water and electricity to reach them. The other *morcellements* will be provided with such services in the long run.

Mr J. Roussety: Mr Chairperson, Sir, it is known that the list of applicants for lease in Rodrigues is quite long. Some of them are waiting since a number of years, even decades. There is a paradox, for example, in *morcellements* like Batatrand: 84 lots are free, Pte Butte: 98 and Mourouk: 94.

Mr Chairperson, Government makes several *morcellements*, spends money, pays overtime to workers from the Cadastral Unit and surveyors from Mauritius, etc. and then they leave the *morcellements* free. On the other hand, we have a lot of applicants on the waiting list, including myself...

(Interruptions)

Mr Chairperson: Order! Put your question, please.

Mr J. Roussety: My question is: what measures does the Chief Commissioner intend to take to bridge this gap between the demand and the supply of leases as there is an excess in the demand? May we ask the Chief Commissioner whether he will consider taking immediate measures to reconcile these matters because it has serious repercussions? For example, some people - valuable resource persons - no longer wish to stay in Rodrigues and wish to live in Mauritius just because they don't have a lease in Rodrigues.

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, for a period of time, there was no State Land Committee here. Now that it has been set up, we are looking into the matter to grant leases to these persons on good criteria set out for them to obtain a grant. People wishing to have a lease, and who are married - and either the husband or the wife has already obtained a lease - will understand that it will be difficult to obtain two leases in the same family....

(Interruptions)

Mr Chairperson: Order, please!

Mr Jabeemissar: Mr Chairperson, Sir, will the Chief Commissioner please table copy of the list of the people forming part of the State Land Committee?

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I'll look into the matter shortly.

HIV/AIDS - CASES DETECTED, TREATMENT, ETC.

(No. B/65) Mr J. Roussety (Minority Leader) asked the Commissioner for Health whether, as regards the AIDS disease in Rodrigues, he will -

- (a) make a statement on the situation on the island specifying the number of cases detected locally to date, the treatment available to HIV positive patients, and
- (b) consider the possibility of intensifying the educational and prevention campaign to help educate people especially the youth about this serious disease.

The Commissioner for Health (Mr S. Sooprayen): Mr Chairperson, Sir, with regard to part (a), despite our relative geographical isolation, we must be aware that given the increased movement of people between mainland Mauritius and Rodrigues, and visitors to and from abroad, there is a high probability of contamination by the AIDS (Acquired Immuno Deficiency Syndrome) epidemic. However, available statistics indicate that the situation is not alarming for the time being. Only one case of HIV positive has been detected to date. I bring to the information of the House that on routine tests performed on 3000 blood samples in the year 2002, no new HIV positive case was detected. These routine tests are carried out in the case of pregnant women, blood donors, persons undergoing voluntary blood screening and those undergoing medical fitness tests. The ELISA test (Enzyme Linked Immuno Sorbent Assay) - a medical test - is carried out for screening of blood samples. Another test, called the WESTERN BLOT, is used to confirm positive results arising from the ELISA test.

As regards to treatment, the same kind of treatment provided by the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life in Mauritius is being provided here. The treatment that has been applied to the only HIV-positive patient detected so far includes –

- (i) prevention of mother to child transmission,
- (ii) anti-retroviral therapy as and when needed.

Post exposure prophylaxis, which is a treatment, is also available, especially for hospital personnel, including doctors and nursing officers, who are the most exposed to possible contamination. If ever, an accident happens and the person is in doubt of possible contamination, post exposure prophylaxis provides for the rapid preventive treatment.

With regard to part (b), the rapidly increasing number of people affected by the HIV (Human Immuno Deficiency Virus) epidemic in our region - I am speaking of the Indian Ocean region - demands that we meet the challenge of the epidemic with a renewed and sustained sense of urgency and vigour. Meeting the challenge of the HIV epidemic means, first and foremost, that we must face up our own behaviours, prejudices and pre-conceptions. Public education campaigns are an integral component of the programme of the health sector to prevent HIV (Human Immuno Deficiency Virus) infection in Rodrigues. Efforts of all non-government organisations working in HIV prevention will also be supported in order that deprived and marginalised groups do have access to the necessary information.

In line with the Action Plan for sexually transmitted diseases/HIV-AIDs prevention and control programmes for Rodrigues for the year

2002-2003, educational and prevention campaigns are currently ongoing. A youth network has been set up at the Youth Counselling Centre and 20 peer educators have been trained in December 2002. These peer educators will conduct an information and education programme on HIV/AIDS/STD among the youth in Rodrigues. It is firmly believed that accurate information is an important step to increase awareness of the risk of HIV infection and forms the basis of eventual behaviour change among the youth and the high risks groups.

Mr Agathe: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I would like to ask the Commissioner if he is aware that the media has talked of 20 cases of Rodriguans who are HIV positive in Mauritius?

Mr Sooprayen: Mr Chairperson, Sir, as a responsible Commissioner, I am fully aware, but for the time being, it has got nothing to do with our island. We are taking all necessary measures to combat it. For the time being, only one case of HIV has been detected.

Mr Jabeemissar: Mr Chairperson, Sir, being given that he is aware of the situation in Mauritius, will the Commissioner please tell the House - our people on the mainland are not controlled when they come to Rodrigues - what measures he will take in order to control that situation?

Mr Sooprayen: We are aware of it. As I have just said, we are preparing a programme. There will be public/educational campaigns for everyone, for the young people and others. We are aware of it and are doing everything to prevent an increase if ever it comes in Rodrigues.

Mr Jabeemissar: Mr Chairperson, Sir, yes, I am satisfied with the answer of the Commissioner, but he is giving us a solution for the long-term. Suppose now, one of these HIV positive.....

Mr Chairperson: There is no use for hypothetical cases, would the Member put his question?

Mr Jabeemissar: My question is: if one of the people, who has been presumably affected by HIV, comes to Rodrigues now, how will the health services in Rodrigues control whether this person will not contaminate other people?

Mr Sooprayen: What the respected Member is telling us is purely hypothetical.

Mr Chairperson: Yes, of course, it is.

Mr Sooprayen: The reply has already been given; it is the right answer.

Mr Jabeemissar: Will the Commissioner say whether he has got an official list of the people he has mentioned?

Mr Sooprayen: Mr Chairperson, this is of high confidentiality. We cannot give the names of the twenty persons.

Mr Chairperson: But the question is whether you received the list.

Mr Sooprayen: No, we have not received any list yet.

Mr Jabeemissar: My last question is whether the Commissioner will wait until we have a second case then he will take action.

Mr Chairperson: No, this question is not allowed. It is out of order.

Mr Agathe: Mr Chairperson, Sir, referring to the answer of the Commissioner, it is said that it is not alarming, but, in Mauritius, we have got 20 positive cases and in Rodrigues, we have 2 positive cases. Is it not alarming for the Executive Council?

Mr Sooprayen: To begin I think that the respected Member has not listened to what I said. There is only one case.

(Interruptions)

Mr Agathe: Is it not alarming that in an island like Rodrigues we know....

Mr Chairperson: Are you saying whether it is alarming? I think this question is clear. It is alarming to each and every one of us. Put your question properly please!

Mr Agathe: The Commissioner said it is not alarming, for us, it is alarming because even if there is only one case, it is alarming for an island like Rodrigues. Therefore, is it not alarming for them?

Mr Chairperson: Yes.

Mr Sooprayen: From 1998 to 2003 there was only one case. I think it is not alarming to our island because we are coming with a new

programme, the educational and prevention campaigns, to control this situation as far as possible, but we are not God.

Mr J. Roussety: I will apologise if the answer has already been given. Could the Commissioner tell us what are the facilities offered to those who want to have an HIV test and in which hospitals are these tests available? What are the procedures to be followed for those who want to have this test done?

Mr Sooprayen: I have already given the answer. Those who want to undergo the HIV test have to go to Queen Elizabeth Hospital where they will get the right information.

STANDING COMMITTEES - SETTING UP

(No. B/66) Mr. J. Roussety (Minority Leader) asked the Chief Commissioner whether, as regards S. 59 (5) of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly Act 2001 providing for *inter alia* the setting up of a Finance Committee, a Public Health and Environment Committee, a Works, Planning and Development Committee, an Education, Culture, Welfare, Sports and Leisure Committee, he will state the reasons for the non setting up of same.

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson Sir, the Standing Committees which the Minority Leader has referred to in his question relate to committees which normally exist within Municipalities or District Councils in Mauritius. Policy decisions are taken at Council level on recommendations or advice from these Standing Committees.

However, Mr Chairperson Sir, the matter has already been considered and procedures are being made and in a very near future, the Commissioner concerned will come with the appropriate motion for the setting up of the different Standing Committees.

UNEMPLOYMENT - REGISTERED, BENEFITS, ETC.

(No. B/67) Mr. J. Roussety (Minority Leader) asked the Commissioner responsible, *inter alia*, for matters of employment and Labour whether, as regards unemployment in Rodrigues, he will -

- (a) state the number of registered unemployed genderwise to date;
- (b) state what is the estimated active/working population at present;

- (c) whether unemployment benefits are paid and, if yes, the amount paid per unemployed person and the criteria used for same; and
- (d) state what measures or policies are being envisaged to increase job creation in the island.

Mr L. Roussety: Mr Chairperson, Sir, with regard to question No. B/67, I am informed that the number of registered unemployed genderwise as at the end of August 2002 are as follows -

- (a) Male: 1538
Female 1471

Total : 3009

As regards part (b) of the question, the estimated active working population according to the latest digest of statistics on Rodrigues published in July 2002 are as follows:

Year 2000		Year 2001	
Male	Female	Male	Female
9199	3841	9326	3906
Total : 13,040.		Total: 13,232	

Referring to part (c) of the question, I am informed that according to existing regulation, unemployment benefits are paid only to heads of household registered as unemployed and upon application to the social security office.

The monthly approved quanta paid are as follows -

- (1) claimants allowance: Rs 205
- (2) spouses allowance: Rs 205
- (3) charge allowance -
 - (a) for every child up to the age of 10 : Rs 80
 - (b) for every child between the age of 10 and 15 : Rs 95
 - (c) for every child from the age of 15 to 20 who is receiving either full time education or unable to earn a living due to any physical or mental disability : Rs 135

- (4) rent allowance of 50% are paid by claimant up to a maximum of Rs 160
- (5) minimum hardship relief: Rs 110

Mr Chairperson, Sir, as regards the last part of the question, I would humbly appeal to the Minority Leader to be patient for a few minutes for the presentation of the Budget Speech whereby the Chief Commissioner will apprise the House of the measures and policies being envisaged to increase employment on the island.

Moreover, the respected Minority Leader may refer to the Electoral Manifesto of the OPR to be apprised of the OPR Government policy on job creation.

Mr J. Roussety: The Commissioner asked me to be patient until the presentation of the Budget by the Chief Commissioner which we are all waiting patiently.

But allow me, Mr Chairperson, Sir, to make a pre-budgetary comment. It is not a question. It is a pre-budgetary comment.

From the figures given by the respectful Commissioner for Employment ...

Mr Chairperson: Which figures are you referring to?

Mr J. Roussety: Figures concerning unemployment. He has just given the figures.

Mr Chairperson: This is out of order. Put your question.

Mr J. Roussety: The Commissioner has said that there are about 3000 unemployed on a working population of 13,000. This makes a rate of unemployment of more than 25%, a double digit unemployment which is very alarming for an economy. So, with the presentation of the Budget, I do hope that the rate will be reduced to the normal rate which is about 2 to 3%.

Mr L. Roussety: This is our expectation, Sir!

Mr Chairperson: We now move to the next question.

LA SOURCE TIGOMME TO ANSE FEMIE VIA GRAVIERS - WATER SUPPLY

(No. B/68) Mr L. Emilien (First Local Region Member for Marechal) asked the Chief Commissioner whether, as regards the modification works made to the water distribution network from La Source Tigomme to Anse Fémie via Gravières, particularly at Mr. Joseph Emilien's place, as a result of which the latter has suffered substantial loss through the diversion of the water distribution network, he will state:

-

- (a) whether a site visit has been made and if yes, state the date and names of Officers involved;
- (b) whether Mr Emilien was informed about the visit;
- (c) the reasons why these modifications have been made;
- (d) whether he is aware that, as a consequence of such diversion, Mr. Emilien's crops were lost; and
- (e) whether he intends to carry out an inquiry into the matter and envisage compensation.

The Chief Commissioner: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, following a complaint made to me by the First Local Region Member from Grande Montagne to the effect that part of the village of Anse Fémie was deprived of a fair and equitable water distribution due to illegal tapping and tampering on the network, I carried out a site visit with the Departmental Head responsible for the water resources on 04 December, 2002 at about 14.00 hours in company of the respected member for Grande Montagne.

Complaints were received from the villagers of Anse Fémie that one Mr. Emilien was tampering with the network on each and every time water was being distributed. In fact, we were astonished to note on our arrival there on that date that the said Mr Emilien was busy tampering with the network. Moreover, we noted that there were three water prises connected to the network within a few metres distance out of which one was of one inch (*ene pouce*) instead of half inch as per existing regulations.

For the information of this House it is worth noting that *une prise d'un pouce est l'équivalent de quatre prises de demi pouce*. More amazingly, the network was laid in such a way that it effected a large *detours* to pass around Mr Emilien's premises instead of being laid in a straight line. A main stop valve controlling the flow of water to the village of Anse Fémie was installed just after the above water prises. Any handling of the valve will either increase or decrease the flow of water towards the village of Anse Fémie. This House will appreciate what would have happened should Mr Emilien been informed of the visit and

what is normally happening whenever water is being distributed on that network.

It is and will always be the policy of the Regional Government to provide an equitable and fair distribution of water to all people connected on the same network. Instructions have been given to realign the network to bypass Mr Emilien's property and to secure the main stop valve. All the water prises, which were formerly on the network, were reconnected, except for the one-inch prise. The said prise was replaced by a half-inch prise as per existing regulations.

Moreover, firm instructions have been given to the Water Unit to ensure forthwith that water distribution along this network is done equitably. Mr Emilien is now being provided with water at the same amount and frequency as every family on that network is being supplied with and as they would, in normal circumstances, have been obtained. Therefore, there is no justification for the payment of any compensation whatsoever to Mr Emillien and the question of carrying out an inquiry does not arise.

Mr J. Roussety: Mr Chairperson, Sir, severe allegations have been made in this House against Mr Emilien who is a civil servant. I visited Mr Emilien whom I know very well. The Chief Commissioner said that there has been illegal tapping and tampering of water resources by Mr Emilien. But if that is the case, is he the Police to go and cut the water supply of that person ...

Mr Chairperson: No argument, please. The Member should put his question.

Mr J. Roussety: On the famous day of the Chief Commissioner's visit together with some of his officers – we know who they are – has Mr Emilien, who is a citizen of this country, been informed? The Chief Commissioner leaves his office to visit a tap in Graviers when there are 25% unemployed in this country, and hundreds of leases are not being allocated. Was Mr Emilien informed of his visit? The Chief Commissioner holds a constitutional post, he leaves his office and goes on the property of a person ...

Mr Chairperson: The Member should not impute motives. He should put his question.

Mr J. Roussety: Did the Chief Commissioner inform Mr Emilien of the measures being taken? Did he have the opportunity to explain himself? Shame!

My question is whether Mr Emilien was informed and whether he had the opportunity to explain himself before measures were taken.

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, a thief is never informed before he is caught! Mr Chairperson, Sir, if all households begin to do illegal tapping and tampering on the public network, what will happen? The Minority Leader always comes with questions on water supply, but, at the same time, he wants to tolerate illegal tapping of public utilities.

Mr Chairperson: The Chief Commissioner should not impute motives. He should give a direct answer.

The Chief Commissioner: The question has been answered. He will not be informed. The Commissioner has the right to go with his departmental heads to control public utilities.

(Interruption)

Mr Chairperson: Order, please!

The Chief Commissioner: It is our duty. He is opening the doors prison cells for his party ...

(Interruption)

Mr Chairperson: I understand there has been a question and there has been an answer. Is the answer complete, Chief Commissioner?

The Chief Commissioner: Yes, Sir.

Mr Emilien: Mr Chairperson, Sir, if the Chief Commissioner can go to a place where ...

Mr Chairperson: The hon. Member should put his question. He should not impute motives.

Mr Emilien: Will the Chief Commissioner do site visits on mains where there are leakages of water? We are talking about wastage of water.

Mr Chairperson: The hon. Member should put his question.

Mr Emilien: Will the Chief Commissioner use his powers to go on all mains where there are leakages, where water is being lost every day in this island?

Mr Chairperson: This question is not allowed.

Mr J. Roussety: Sir, I will insist; I would like to know whether Mr Emilien was informed of the visit of officials to his residence as far as this matter is concerned.

(Interruptions)

Mr Chairperson: Order, please! The answer to this question has already been given. Next question, please!

GRANDE PASSE – NAVIGATIONAL AIDS

(No. B/69) Mr J. Emilien (First Local Region Member for Maréchal) asked the Chief Commissioner with respect to navigational aids installed at Grande Passe (Port Sud Est) which are not in operation at present, he will state -

- (a) why no navigational aid is operational at *Grande Passe*
which is the most important *passe* in the island,
causing
much inconvenience to fishermen and putting their
lives at risk;
- (b) what measures have been taken to remedy the
situation
and when these will be completed; and
- (c) the dates installations were effected and the
expenditure
incurred?

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson Sir, as regards part (a), I am informed that the poles on which navigational aid at Grande Passe were installed have been tilted by rough sea condition about six weeks ago. The navigational aids were picked up by some divers to protect it from damage.

In regard to part (b), the beacon light has been handed over to the Port Supervisor for repairs and the latter has indicated that spare parts have to be ordered from Mauritius. It is expected that the navigational aids will be operational within a month after receipt of the spare parts.

As far as part (c) is concerned, the navigational aid was installed in November 2002. It was received in donation from a private organisation (the Mauritius Commercial Bank) which also provided materials for the installation.

Transport and installation of the equipment was carried out by some fishermen of Port Sud Est under the supervision of the Fisheries Protection Services. An amount of Rs2900 was paid to the fishermen for their input.

VEGETABLE SELLERS – STALLS – ALLOCATION

(No. B/70) Mr D. L. Guillaume (Third Island Region Member) asked the Chief Commissioner whether, in view of the difficulties farmers face to sell their vegetables, he will state -

- (a) how many tables are allocated to farmers and the amount paid for each table yearly;
- (b) whether there are two categories of permit holders with exposed different rights e.g. some inside the market and others exposed to the vagaries of the weather; and
- (c) what measures he intends to take to give equal treatment to one and all; and
- (d) state the distance between the nearest public toilet and the market.

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, with regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed that 165 stalls have been allocated to vegetable sellers for an annual rent of Rs360 each as follows -

<u>Market</u>	<u>No of stall</u>
Port Mathurin	127
La Ferme	15
Petit Gabriel	23

There are about 13 vegetable sellers who are operating at Mont Lubin market from whom no rent is being collected. In addition to the above, two community markets are operational at Marechal and Oranges since last year while a third one will become operational at Quatre Vents early next month.

As regards part (b) of the question, Mr Chairperson Sir, 66 stalls at the Port Mathurin market are not covered. These stalls were added by the then Rodrigues Administration to cater for additional demand.

With regard to part (c), in accordance with the Master Plan on Port Development, the market of Port Mathurin will have to be relocated in due course and adequate space will be provided for all vegetable sellers. More regional markets will be constructed to encourage sale of vegetable in larger villages on a regular basis.

As regards part (d), Mr Chairperson Sir, a public toilet is found at about 90 metres from the market.

PORT MATHURIN – SLAUGHTERHOUSE

(No. B/71) Mr D.L. Guillaume (Third Island Region Member) asked the Commissioner for Health whether, with regard to the bad smell emanating from and the deplorable conditions of the slaughterhouse at Port Mathurin, he will state -

- (a) how many stalls are allocated to slaughterers and the amount paid for each stall yearly;
- (b) whether each stall is constructed in conformity to Health regulations and, if not, whether remedial action is envisaged.

Mr Sooprayen: Mr Chairperson, I have been informed the following -

(a) As regards the current situation at the Port Mathurin slaughterhouse, seven stalls have been allocated as follows -

- In the beef section, 2 stalls have been allocated for a payable annual fee of Rs3,600 per stall.

- In the goat section, 1 stall for an annual fee of Rs4,100.
- In the pork section, 2 stalls for an annual fee of Rs13,600 for stall no. 1 and Rs15,300 for stall no. 2.
- In the poultry section, 2 stalls for an annual fee of Rs4,100 per stall.

(b) I have been informed that the stalls were not originally constructed in conformity with health regulations. I would, however, bring to the attention of the House, that the Executive Council has viewed with concern the hygienic conditions at the market place abattoir sections, not only in Port Mathurin, but at Mt Lubin and La Ferme market places as well. I have personally visited the premises - accompanied by my departmental head - of the slaughterhouses at Port-Mathurin with officers of my Commission, and I have informed the Executive Council of the situation prevailing there. A decision was subsequently taken by the Council to have the abattoirs cleaned and disinfected after normal working hours on Saturdays by manual workers posted at the Public Health Division. Following this decision, the exterior part of the abattoir is now clean and in a satisfactory condition.

However, Mr Chairperson, Sir, with regard to the interior of the stalls where meat is sold, it is the responsibility of the stall-holder to clean the premises at the end of market days. It would seem, Mr Chairperson, Sir, that the occupants of these stalls do not take their responsibility to clean the premises after use. Action will be taken to include new conditions in the next award of stalls, which will take place next February, to compel stall-holders to clean their premises. I am also aware that the present conditions inside these stalls are most deplorable. The necessary will be done to have the tiles on tables, where meat is sold, replaced by aluminium toppings. The walls will be covered with tiles up to seven feet high. More hookers will be installed to allow hanging of meat carcasses, instead of having them laid on tables, which is most unhygienic. The corrugated iron sheets on the roofs of some of the stalls will be replaced. Provision of skid proof floor, fly proofing of all openings, doors with automatic closing devices, sinks equipped with running water, renewal of chopping blocks after wear and tear are other measures which must also be taken to upgrade the existing infrastructure, so that it is conform to health regulations.

However, Mr Chairperson, Sir, the bad smell from Port Mathurin market place emanates from a septic tank, situated at the rear of the market place. This septic tank collects all wastewater coming from the slaughterhouses after cleaning operations. The capacity of the septic tank

is at present insufficient, and there is frequent overflow, thus causing the bad smell. A new septic tank of a larger capacity will be dug out at the rear of the market building, for better disposal of wastewater and to eliminate the bad smell.

Mr Jabeemissar: Mr Chairperson, Sir, will not the Commissioner agree that if such problems arose, it is because these animals are slaughtered at the place where the meat is sold? Would it not be wise to construct a slaughterhouse at a site other than the market place?

Mr Sooprayen: Actually, if the cleaning is done regularly and properly, there won't be any problem. But, we are thinking to have a slaughterhouse elsewhere in the near future.

Mr Jabeemissar: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I don't think the Commissioner has replied to my question. What I said is that if the septic tank is insufficient to absorb the effluents from the slaughterhouse, it is because the place is not appropriate. Would it not be better to have a slaughterhouse built at another site, rather than at the market place itself?

Mr Chairperson: This question has already been answered.

FIRE SERVICES – FIREMEN, SENIOR OFFICERS, ETC...

(No. B/72) Mr J.C. Agathe (Second Local Region Member for Maréchal) asked the Commissioner for Fire Services whether, with regard to the Fire Services in Rodrigues, he will state –

- (a) the number of firemen per grade; and
- (b) the number and grades of senior officers who can take charge of the fire services should the current officer in charge be incapacitated.

Mr Lisette: Mr Chairperson, Sir, the number of firemen per grade is as follows –

- (i) Head Officer – 1
- (ii) Station Officer – 4
- (iii) Sub Officer – 5
- (iv) Firemen – 46

Mr Chairperson, Sir, as regards part (b), whenever the officer in charge is on leave and is not attending duty, the practice so far is that the senior most among the four Station Officers takes over.

SOCIAL AID - BENEFICIARIES

(No. B/73) Mr J.C. Agathe (Second Local Region Member for Maréchal) asked the Deputy Chief Commissioner whether, for the benefit of the House, she will state -

- (a) the number of beneficiaries of social aid who have not received their aid for the month of December; and
- (b) if remedial action could be taken as a matter of urgency.

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, the answer is as follows -

- (a) I am informed that only two persons have not received their social aid in December 2002. One of them has left for Mauritius while the second one has not called to the Social Security Office to collect the social aid.
- (b) Both beneficiaries will be paid as soon as they call at the Social Security Office of their locality.

FISHERMEN'S CARDS - ALLOCATION

(No. B/74) Mr J.C. Agathe (Second Local Region Member for Marechal) asked the Chief Commissioner whether, with regard to the allocation of the fisherman's card, he will state -

- (a) the number of cards delivered monthly for period September to December 2002, and
- (b) the addresses and names of holders of the fisherman's card delivered in December 2002.

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson Sir, no fisherman's cards were delivered during September to November 2002 and I am handing over to the Clerk a list of 23 fishermen who received their cards in December 2002.

Mr J. Roussety: Can I ask on which dates these cards were delivered?

Mr Chairperson: Will the Clerk show the list to the Minority Leader? Any more questions?

Mr J. Roussety: I note that 20 fishermen's cards were delivered. For the sake of transparency, may I ask the Chief Commissioner whether there is any coincidence between the election which was held on 14 December and the delivery of these cards?

Mr Chairperson: This question is not allowed.

At noon the sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 12.30 p.m. with Mr Chairperson in the Chair.

MOTION

ESTIMATES OCTOBER 2002 - JUNE 2003

Mr Chairperson: Members of the Assembly, a small typing mistake has crept into the motion. I am sure intelligent you Members have already corrected that fact. Section 44 (b) should be read as Section 44 (6).

Thank you.

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I beg to move the motion standing in my name which reads as follows -

"This Assembly resolves that for the purposes of section 44 (6) of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly Act 2001, there is approved the first draft Estimates for Recurrent and Capital expenditure for period starting October 2002 to end of June 2003."

Mr Chairperson, Sir, the two booklets containing the recurrent expenditure and capital expenditure estimates have already been circulated among Members.

I beg to move the motion.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, the Budget Review provides for the redistribution of funds, as per the priority of the Governing Executive Council for financing Recurrent and Capital expenditure for the period October 2002 up to June 2003.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, it is with a deep sense of duty towards the Rodriguan people that I have the honour of presenting today the first Budget of the OPR first Governing Executive Council of this First

Rodrigues Regional Assembly in my capacity of Chief Commissioner and Commissioner for Finance.

Governing is about managing change efficiently and sustainably, whilst still allowing for change, flexibility and innovation. This first Budget review exercise, which comes along this line, is aimed at using financial resources already allocated to Rodrigues by the Central Government to the best of our possibilities and in accordance to our new priorities so as to implement major developments that can have a wide range of impacts on the island. The OPR party under the leadership of Serge Clair went to the electorate last September on the pledge - "*Avec l'OPR ensemble vers l'avenir pour le grand changement*" - whereby we were given a clear mandate by the electorate. Very committed to initiate that paradigm shift and to show our capabilities, we took strong remedial actions immediately after assuming office, to deal with the most pressing social and economic issues facing the Rodriguan people. And, in a relatively short period of time, we succeeded in this endeavour and in creating an environment which is favourable to economic development and social progress. This was demonstrated as a **blow** during the last national by-elections whereby the OPR candidate was greatly plebiscited thus confirming the positive results of the so-called referendum requested by the minority party on the performance of OPR governance.

We are now again called upon to take the necessary measures to face the challenges ahead and to lead Rodrigues to a brighter and prosperous future with much more confidence.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, the task ahead is by no means easy, considering the sheer magnitude of the economic and social problems inherent to Rodrigues.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, the present juncture calls for urgent and courageous decisions and this is why the governing Executive Council is fully shouldering its responsibilities. We are starting with a judicious and rational approach as regards Government finances and public policies, to create the necessary environment for a good start in the economy and open up new avenues of development. At the same time, we will, as a caring governing Executive Council ensure continuity in taking the necessary steps to protect the most vulnerable groups of our society. *La politique de l'OPR a été toujours celle de la vérité.*

We are introducing the new style of management spelt out in our electoral manifesto. Our approach is characterised by proactive management, good governance, transparency, productive dialogue and the enhancement of individual and collective responsibility, all based on a participatory approach. Mr Chairperson, Sir, we have chosen to have

continuous, frank and meaningful consultations with all stakeholders. We do not wait nor will we wait for Budget Time to adjust ourselves to the priority of the day and take the necessary decisions. Although this is not a matter of debate in this House, for the sake of transparency, I am tabling the Draft Estimates Recurrent Revenue for the period starting October 2002 up to June 2003.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, I must stress, right here, that the same efforts will have to be relentlessly pursued over the coming years in view of the numerous emerging challenges ahead. I am confident that we will continue to have, in this formidable task, to make *maximum autonomie* a success, with the full trust and support of the population, for there is no other way out.

The key fundamentals of this Budget are –

- Creation of an enabling environment for the stimulation of high and stable levels of economic growth and employment.
- Provision of development opportunities for national and international investors.
- Investment in people as well as in infrastructural support.
- Social progress, which recognises the needs of all Rodriguans.
- Reintegration of the vulnerable groups in the mainstream of development through empowerment.
- Maintaining and enhancing the quality of the environment.
- Striving for a more sustainable pattern of development, which captures the special essence that is Rodrigues itself.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, the challenges Rodrigues will confront over the coming years are enormous. Major investments will be required in the field of public infrastructure, namely roads, water, housing, electricity, town and country planning, air and seaports. Clearly, Mr Chairperson, Sir, tackling those challenges will necessitate a thorough review of our economic and social policies. In formulating our policies for the coming years, the overriding consideration has been to enhance the employment-generation potential of the economy with a view to raising the quality of life of the Rodriguan people. However, this OPR governing Executive Council is fully aware that the necessary time will have to be taken for the new areas of activity being developed to really start creating jobs on the scale required.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, in order to attain the above objective, we will have to invest massively in education and training, tourism, agriculture, fisheries, cottage/manufacturing/agro-industry as well as in bringing the infrastructure and facilities necessary to transform Rodrigues into an investment-friendly island. The new phase of our development will be driven by tourism, agriculture, the fishing sector and small-scale industries. We want to put in place a highly competitive economic structure where the winning edge will lie in the specificity, skills and talents of our human resource.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, it is clear that the task facing us will be a tough one indeed. And, let me repeat, it will have to be pursued relentlessly and with determination, year after year, over the next five years. All of us, irrespective of our political opinion, will have to work in discipline, with commitment and dedication, year in year out, in order to reach our final goals.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, the priority of priorities is to raise the overall level of employment in the economy, both to absorb new job-seekers and to gradually eliminate the existing high rate of unemployment. This will call for a reverse in the trend of growing unemployment. However, we are convinced that we can realise this ambitious objective only by creating a new dynamism in our economy. Same will be achieved by massive investment in public infrastructure, tourism, the fishing sector and in the development of a *culture d'entreprenariat* in Rodrigues. Thousands of jobs will be created in the years ahead in the tourism sector in general, either directly or indirectly. Other major areas of employment creation will be construction, Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), the fishing sector, micro enterprises and self-employment. We will overhaul our vocational and technical training system to better prepare job seekers and the workforce to adjust to changing labour market requirements. We want to reduce skills mismatch and promote lifelong employability through enhancement of multi-skilling. The Human Resource Centre will be called upon to play a key role in that respect. A hi-tech information technology laboratory is being set up at the centre. This laboratory will be used to promote distance-learning courses *via* internet and visio-conference. In this endeavour, industry and business will be called upon to play a more active role in the continuous training of their employees. Schemes already devised will be propagated so as to deepen collaboration between enterprises and educational and training institutions so as to bridge the gap between the academic world and the world of work.

A Rodrigues Development Authority will be set up shortly. This Body will, among other functions, act as one-stop shop for investors to facilitate the obtention of all necessary clearances and licences for their

business. Moreover, the promotion of existing financial packages will form part of the mandate of the Rodrigues Development Authority.

Rod07/P11/mt/4

A critical thrust of our programme is to foster productivity growth in all sectors especially at all levels in the public sector, which is still the backbone of developments here. This will require promoting a productivity culture and bringing about positive change in our attitude to everything we undertake - at home, at the workplace, in the office or in the field. It also means doing things smartly. The success of the *autonomie* will ultimately depend on our ability to create a totally new culture at work. The governing Executive Council will introduce programmes to sensitise the population on the need to keep on improving productivity. We need to mobilise the collective energies of our enterprises and institutions within both the private and public sectors towards this paradigm shift.

Our enterprises will be given full support in their efforts to modernise production systems and improve product quality through the use of appropriate technology. Schemes will be devised and introduced to accelerate the pace of motivation and technological upgrading and encourage investment in research and development.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, another key of our vision is to strengthen and modernise our physical infrastructure to meet the needs of our economy and the aspirations of our population. The road sector is one where massive investment will continue to be made. A comprehensive programme of road upgrading and construction will be undertaken. Road safety will be improved and improved traffic management measures taken to ease traffic movement.

Our priority is to improve access to remote villages. Improvement of access roads to the following villages is our top priorities - Corail to Anse Quitor, Piments to Reposoir, Tammes to Mourouk and Palissade Ternel to Port Sud Est. Measures will be taken to regulate building set-back along major roads and inter-village roads. Planning for strategic transport improvements will be seen in the overall context for the island development planning. In view of the pivotal role that air transport plays in the development of the main income generating sectors of the economy - tourism, manufacturing services and agriculture and in line with international development - liberalisation, deregulation, privatisation, emergence of regional hubs, AGOA, GATTs, etc. the surface access facilities and services to cater for long-term airport growth at Plaine Corail within planned limits and further extension should be sustainable. We will come forward with an integrated development strategy, with a

complete revision of the existing local plan. A special use zones will be created to include the airport area and adjacent Plaine Corail and the highway junctions in order to plan for the orderly growth of the airport and its environment over the long-term, including demand for future storage, warehousing and distribution activity. I will here pay tribute to the former Minister Benoit Jolicoeur for kick starting the airport project. For history, it is good to remember that the setting of the company "Airport of Rodrigues Ltd." was effected under the mandate of Mr Jolicoeur and that the extension of the runway was also conceived under his mandate. A Port Master Plan to 2015 for the port area is being finalised and will take into account the pressing needs for port facilities, access improvements, appropriate site for storage needed to meet changing market requirements. The port development will be integrated with the islands strategic transport network to facilitate economic growth and in particular export-oriented industries. Consideration will also be given to the construction of the fishing harbour at Port Sud Est, consistent with the overall development principle of clustered growth and rural regeneration.

The agricultural sector will be called upon to modernise. A major reorganisation of the agricultural division will be carried out so that it responds to the needs of the farmers. A training centre in agriculture will be set up at St. Gabriel. A Rodrigues Farmers Welfare Fund will be created to assist farmers in case of cyclones, floods and droughts. Land classified as highly or moderately suitable for agriculture will be safeguarded from development. Lease conditions will be reviewed to ensure sustainable development that will be closely monitored with special attention to occupation, crops grown, erosion control, maintenance of fertility and pest and weed control. Agricultural diversification and protection of pasture land is considered as a priority in order to contribute to successful development of the agricultural sector. Cattle rearing and pig breeding will be allowed within defined fenced plots with due environmental consideration given to their locations. Specialised agricultural zones devoted solely to the pursuit of organic production will be identified and developed. Alongside planting schemes and tree cover in mountains and degraded forestlands will be enhanced to improve our forest cover for improved soil conservation, protection of water catchment as well as conserving flora and fauna.

As we will strive for higher economic growth, our natural environment will increasingly come under severe strain. Unless sound environmental practices are followed, long-term growth prospects may be jeopardised. We need to protect our natural capital - air, land and water - so that our children enjoy improved quality of life and the tourism industry continues to flourish. The Governing Executive Council will spare no efforts for this purpose. Particular attention will be paid to the

preservation and proper management of our lagoons, islets and coastal zones. The National Physical Development Plan and the outline schemes are being finalised.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, it is the firm conviction of this Executive Council that the creation of a strong Rodriguan economy must go hand in hand with the building of a fairer and more caring society - that is, a society in which the vulnerable groups are adequately protected, where there is a more equitable distribution of wealth; a society in which everyone obtains his share in the economic prosperity, and has an equal opportunity to realise his or her full potential and legitimate aspirations. We cannot allow the gap between the rich and the poor to widen further nor can we tolerate pockets of poverty to persist. That is

why the Governing Executive Council is giving top priority to the co-ordination of all National Action Plan for poverty alleviation activities. We will also formulate special programmes to meet the needs of persons suffering from disabilities. By so doing, Mr Chairperson, Sir, we will achieve social integration of the most deserving vulnerable and create a more humane society.

As regards housing, we are fully aware of the backlog and difficulties faced by the low and very low income groups in obtaining land as well as the necessary financial resources to construct their houses. This Regional Government is determined to bring a lasting solution to their predicament. In a first instance, 108 low-cost housing units will be constructed in twelve regions of Rodrigues. The construction is scheduled to start early next month. However, future housing provision in terms of public housing and building sites and provision of community facilities and services will be clustered in key settlements and villages. A strong development control and enforcement system will be put in place in order to ensure that unauthorised and sporadic development measures, which are not environmentally and economically sustainable, does not continue to occur over the island.

This Governing Executive Council will also review and modernise social aid programmes to enhance their effectiveness and ensure that resources are directed to the most needy in priority.

The health infrastructure will be upgraded and modernised. The OPR Governing Executive Council is totally committed to the Health Sector Reform Programme. The provision of an efficient health care delivery system to the entire population is one of the pillars of our social policy programme. Substantial improvement works will be carried out at Queen Elizabeth hospital, Mont Lubin and La Ferme health centres.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, we will set up an Economic and Social Council. It will provide an institutional forum for consultation, consensus building and dialogue on issues of national interest between the Regional Government, trade unions, employers, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), academic and civil society. Consultations will be held with all parties concerned. This forum will play a key role in our participatory approach form of Government. The Governing Executive Council proposes to put in place a series of programmes to develop the cultural aspect of Rodriguan life. We consider that culture permeates all sectors of human activity. It reflects the desire of people to use their values to meet the demands of our future. Our culture is the soul of the Rodriguan people. The Governing Executive Council will contribute with the support of cultural institutions and NGOs to the development of culture, leisure and the conservation of our heritage.

Budget Proposals

Mr Chairperson, Sir, I now turn to my Budget Review Proposals for the period October 2002 to June 2003.

Education - Mr Chairperson, Sir, it is our duty to ensure that our education system is relevant to the fundamental values of our society and it is geared to equip our young people with the skills that they will need in their world of work. To do this, we must employ sound policies to effectively manage and develop our island's most valuable resources, our young people.

If we are to transform Rodrigues into a knowledge-based people, we must enhance the technological capability of our schools. This will require that our schools be properly equipped with IT facilities.

First, provision is being made for the completion of a new secondary school at Mont Lubin and Songes, the extension of Le Chou College and Maréchal college and the completion of Citron Donis HSC College. This school development program will have to be completed by December 2003 and will cost Rs 700 m. A provision of Rs 58 m. is being made in this Budget review. In the next budget, we will have to provide for the balance of this massive investment. This will more than double school intake capacity in Rodrigues at Form I level from 460 to 1,025 by 2003.

Training and skills development

Let me now turn to my proposals for training and skills development. Rapid changes in skill requirements for existing jobs and the demand for higher skills in new jobs will make lifelong learning vital for the labour force. As our industries restructure to cope with competitive challenges of the global economy, large-scale training, retraining and re-skilling programme will need to be devised to promote the employability of job seekers and ensure the sustainability of our emerging economic sectors.

In this context, the Human Resource Centre will be equipped with a kitchen/cafeteria so as to be able to dispense courses in the field of cookery. A memorandum of understanding will be signed with the IVTB, which will be called upon to manage a scheme specific for Rodrigues.

We expect the private sector to be more actively involved in national training efforts. The National Human Resource Development Certificate Scheme will be promoted. The use of the facilities at the Human Resource Centre against a nominal fee will be encouraged.

Infrastructure

To make a quantum leap into the next phase of our development will necessitate the putting in place of modern, reliable and efficient infrastructure. This is yet another area where Government will have to invest massively over the coming years. In this budget exercise, we are providing increased resources for the timely implementation of ongoing projects and the launching of new ones.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, one of the major problems faced in the implementation of projects has been the lack of technical staff for the design, supervision and execution of projects. To overcome this problem, the Executive Council has decided to appoint a consultancy team to design, supervise and execute development projects in Rodrigues until such time Rodrigues will be fully autonomous in that field.

First, water supply. Total budgetary provision of Rs 64 m. is being made for the improvement of water distribution networks, maintenance and rehabilitation of dams and water treatment. The provision will also cater for expenditure in connection with the construction of the first major dams in Rodrigues at Anse Raffin. The dam will have a capacity of about 65,000 m³. Construction works will start early next month and will be completed in 12 months. There has been so much debate about the construction of a major dam at Pistaches. This Governing Executive Council has decided to award the contract for consultancy for a technical feasibility study of constructing the dam. The Water Unit will be restructured so as to meet the needs of the population. The Governing Executive Council has further decided to accelerate procedures for the commissioning of two desalination plants in Rodrigues.

Furthermore, this Regional government will encourage collection of rainwater at household level. In this context, loans will be provided by the DBM at concessionary rates of interest for the installation of individual rainwater collection systems, including gutters and concrete water tanks.

Secondly, the electricity network will have to be strengthened to increase the reliability of power supply. In this context, the Governing

Executive Council will facilitate the promotion of the use of renewable energy and will assist the CEB in setting up wind farms.

Third, the road network. Work on the Second phase from Port Mathurin to Plaine Corail will be completed by May 2003. Works along La Ferme - Quatre Vents Road via Mangues will be completed shortly. A total provision of more than Rs 90 m. on road has been made. Moreover, preliminary earthworks on the following roads will be carried out - Tammes - Mourouk; Palissade-Port Sud Est, Corail-Anse Quitor, Piments-Reposoir.

The above provision includes the tarring of the Malabar-Le Chou road as well as the Grande Montagne-Coromandel road.

Fourth, the Governing Executive Council has created a new vote item, "Infrastructure to Residential Morcellement" with a project value of Rs 30 m. The project consists of the provision of basic infrastructure, namely electricity, roads and water to government residential morcellement. A provision of Rs 3 m. is being made to provide the facilities at Roche Bon Dieu and Songes morcellement.

Fifth, our objective is to make Plaine Corail airport, "*La vitrine de Rodrigues*". Full support will be given to the Airport of Rodrigues Ltd for the successful completion of ongoing development works.

Environment

Mr Chairperson, Sir, we are conscious of the need to promote economic development in an environmentally sustainable manner, without jeopardising the future of the coming generations and our tourism potential. We have already initiated a number of actions to protect our natural environment that we share.

A provision of Rs 5.5 m. is being made for the payment of present refuse collection contract and also to cater for the extension of the services to cover the whole island of Rodrigues. Provision is also being made for the construction of a visitor's complex, the upgrading of the entrance at Caverne Patate, and the revalorisation of Ile aux Coos.

A provision of Rs 16 m. is made to accelerate the anti-erosion program which includes amongst others the construction of a dam at Grenade, the introduction of land use management and planning tools and new irrigation schemes.

The "*Police de l'Environnement*" will be strengthened to exercise better control over illegal dumping and polluters. Alongside a sensitisation campaign on the responsibility of the public to preserve and protect the environment will be intensified. Special programmes aimed at discouraging the use of plastic bags and minimising littering will be devised and implemented.

Public sector reform

Mr Chairperson, Sir, we expect a lot from our public service which as I said before, is still the backbone of development in Rodrigues. We want our civil servants to be dynamic agents of change, capable of meeting the challenges of taking Rodrigues to a brighter future. A special programme will be undertaken, in collaboration with the Rodrigues Productivity Committee of the National Productivity and competitiveness Council, to foster a culture of continuous improvement among civil servants. All commissions and divisions will be encouraged to work out their customer charter to better inform the population on the quality of services they provide.

A complete reorganisation of the Rodrigues Administration is being carried out. The Finance Division is being completely overhauled and will be called upon to play a key role especially in the setting of a proper financial system in view of the setting up of the Rodrigues consolidated fund and Rodrigues Capital Fund.

Investment facilitation

Mr Chairperson, Sir, the Rodrigues Development Authority will have as mandate the promotion of investment in Rodrigues and act as a facilitator for investors. It will conduct a thorough review of all licences, permits and clearances that are presently required by investors and streamline procedures that need to be followed for their obtention. The objective is to reduce the number of licences as well as the processing time to the strict minimum.

Moreover, the authority will act as the investment arm of the Governing Executive Council of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly. A project value of Rs.50 m. is being provided for that purpose.

Agriculture

We are also investing in the improvement and extension of the irrigation network, which will include the implementation of a *retenue collinaire* at Port Sud Est as a pilot project.

Vegetable growers will be encouraged to adopt advanced technologies like drip irrigation and hydroponics to improve yields. A demonstration greenhouse is being set up to that effect at Oyster Bay by the Agricultural Division with the technical support of Agricultural Research and Extension Unit (AREU). Agricultural diversification will be promoted with special emphasis on fruit production.

Tourism

Tourism will be called upon to be the most dynamic sector of the economy and will be a major driving force in the creation of employment opportunities. The Governing Executive Council is fully committed to facilitate the implementation of hotel projects and to creating the right environment for the sustainable development of the sector.

With the projected increase in air seat capacity, room capacity will have to be increased. We are fully conscious of the risks associated with *un développement à deux vitesses* in tourist zones. That is why this Executive Council will fully support a tourism development plan whose main objective would be to make tourism a positive force for environmental conservation and for social/cultural enhancement.

The Governing Executive Council will also be putting in place the appropriate regulations specific to Rodrigues for a planned development of tourist-related services. A legal framework to regulate the activities of tourism and tourist-related enterprises, including bungalows, guesthouses and villas for renting purpose will be introduced to ensure a high standard of services and safety to tourists. Provision is being made for the recruitment of two tourism enforcement officers.

Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs)

Mr Chairperson, Sir, SMEs have a critical role to play in raising the overall level of employment in the country. The SMEs of today, if properly guided and supported, can develop into major enterprises of tomorrow. They are also the testing ground for the new breed of enterprising and risk taking Rodriguans who can take Rodrigues to the next phase of its economic development. These entrepreneurs deserve our full support.

First, the Regional Government will vulgarise the National SME Support Framework. The objective is to ensure that business support services like advice, training, finance and marketing are provided in an effective and co-ordinated manner. The Rodrigues branch of the Small and Medium Industries Development Organisation (SMIDO) will be strengthened to act as a gateway for SME support and a one-stop shop for start-ups with investment.

Second, the Rodrigues Venture Capital Fund will be revamped. We also need to encourage Rodriguan entrepreneurs to enter into joint ventures with Mauritian and overseas partners to benefit from their know-how and access to markets. The Venture Capital Fund will provide loans for equity participation.

The training of our artisans and provision of adequate infrastructure will be provided to ensure the take-off of the handicraft sector to a higher standard. This regional Government will reorganise the Rodrigues Branch of National Handicraft Promotion Agency. A national handicraft competition will also be organised on a yearly basis.

Fisheries

Mr Chairperson, Sir, we are fully committed towards the improvement of the welfare of the fishermen community. Provision is being made for the construction of a fishing port at Port Sud Est. Marine parks and fishing reserves will be created to protect the livelihood of local fishermen and to assist in replenishing fish stocks within the marine ecosystem. Coastal dredging will be effected regularly in order to sustain the lagoon fishing industry. The development of new sand quarry will not be permitted. The Development Bank of Mauritius is providing loans at concessionary rates to encourage outer-reef fishing and the governing Executive Council will invest in the training of fishermen and the establishment of more fish aggregating devices. The recommendation of the pre-feasibility study on sea weed farming will be considered for implementation to provide an alternative occupation to fisherwomen so as to reduce pressure on octopus fishing.

Health

First, we are increasing the personnel of our public health sector to improve customer care. Four additional posts of Hospital Attendant,

eight posts of Ambulance Driver and 5 posts of Hospital Servant are being created.

Second, we are ensuring that shortage of medicines and other medical requirements no longer recur in our hospitals. Budgetary allocation for purchase of medicines is being increased by 50 per cent to Rs6 m. At the same time, the Commission responsible for Health will enforce stock management with a view to preventing shortages and wastages.

Third, we are upgrading and extending public health infrastructure. The maternity ward at Queen Elizabeth Hospital will be renovated. Covered corridors will be provided between the wards and a well-wisher's hall will be constructed. A complete review of the infrastructure at La Ferme and Mont Lubin Hospital will be carried out and a renovation/upgrading programme set up.

Fourth, we are modernising hospital equipment. I am providing Rs2 m. for the acquisition and installation in equipment and furniture in our hospitals.

Fifth, the Regional Government will intensify anti-smoking and anti-alcohol campaigns. The NGOs involved in such campaigns will be financially supported.

Action Plan for Poverty Alleviation

Mr Chairperson, Sir, I stated earlier our firm determination to fight poverty and promote greater social justice this year. The Action Plan we propose to implement aims at empowering the poor and place at their disposal the means they require to undertake activities that will afford them a stable and decent income. It also lays emphasis on the improvement of their living conditions. Let me now spell out the key elements of this Plan.

Micro-credit programmes

The greatest urgency is to break the vicious circle that keeps the poor in a situation of perpetual poverty and prevents them from climbing out of the poverty trap. These are the people who are most in need of

credit for undertaking income-generating activities, but are often denied access to loan schemes because of their inability to offer the required collateral security.

Two major micro-credit schemes for low-income groups are presently available. The first scheme funded by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) will target women entrepreneurs, the unemployed, fishermen, landless farmers and small planters. The second scheme is being spearheaded by the Trust Fund for the Social Integration of Vulnerable Groups. The responsible Commission will ensure that the disbursement of fund under the above two projects are properly and timely managed. There is no doubt that Rodrigues will become a reference in micro-credit in the Indian Ocean by the end of our mandate.

Very low-cost housing

Equally pressing is the need to provide housing to the very low-income groups and the homeless. The needs of this segment of our society have been ignored for too long. Again, because of their poverty, they are not in a position to meet the repayment terms of housing loans, even though these are highly subsidised. This regional Government is fully aware of their helplessness and despair, and proposes to find a durable solution to their problem.

We have given considerable thought to this matter. We consider that this genuine social issue is being addressed meaningfully through a major shift in housing strategy, that is, the construction of core houses on a large scale for the very low-income group and the homeless. During this financial year, 108 such houses will be built and the Trust Fund for Social Integration of the Vulnerable Groups will finance another 500 social housing units.

Women's rights, child development and family welfare

Mr Chairperson, Sir, the position and role of Rodriguan women in society have considerably evolved. They are active participants in the economic development of the island. There is, therefore, a need to create the necessary mechanism and facilities to support them in the discharge of their multiple responsibilities at home, in society and at the workplace.

A multi-purpose complex will be constructed at Malabar to house all the services to women and child development. A provision of Rs100,000.00 is being made to cater for preliminary consultancy works.

Youth and Sports

Mr Chairperson, Sir, one of the first priorities of this Government was to create the necessary conditions for the resumption of football matches. I am pleased to announce that due to the considerable efforts of the Commissioner for Sports, football competition is resuming shortly.

In this Budget, a special grant of Rs2 m. is being provided for the promotion of sports activities. An additional Rs1 m. is being provided to the Commission of Youth & Sports for the promotion of youth related activities.

A total of Rs10 m. is being allocated for the expansion and improvement of our sports infrastructure. An olympic swimming pool will be constructed at Maréchal instead of Port Mathurin. The newly constructed hall at Grande Montagne will be equipped with all necessary equipment and furniture. A Dojo will be constructed at Le Chou, and existing sports ground will be upgraded.

Arts and Culture

Mr Chairperson, Sir, we are proud of Rodrigue's rich cultural heritage, and we are determined to preserve and promote it further. This Government is providing Rs1 m. in the Budget to start the construction of a Regional Cultural and Leisure Centre at Lataniers. Provision will be made in the centre for a multi-purpose cum theatre hall capable of accommodating 300 persons at a time, as well as a *médiathèque* and social hall.

This regional Government is going ahead with the construction of a building to accommodate the National Library, the National Archives, the museum and the National Art Gallery under one roof. A suitable site is being identified for that purpose.

Leisure

Mr Chairperson, Sir, as we develop facilities for overseas tourists, we equally need to provide our population with beach and other leisure facilities of high quality. The Governing Executive Council is, therefore, establishing a body, which will be responsible for the management of amenities and leisure facilities on public beaches. Provision has been made for the creation of two posts of Leisure Officer.

The Governing Executive Council plans to develop the Malabar village as recreational and tourist sites. The Malabar podium will be renovated and the immediate surroundings upgraded.

Fire Services

Mr Chairperson, Sir, our Fire Services should be fully equipped and be ready at all times to respond quickly and effectively to any emergency situation. We are conscious that the response time to uphill requests should be decreased. I am allocating Rs1 m. for the construction of a new fire sub station at Mont Plaisir.

Land Lease

We cannot allow the applications for land leases to pile up. Government will speed up the processing of these requests to eliminate the backlog and facilitate the early grant of leases. The Executive Council has also decided that, as a matter of transparency, the criteria of eligibility for the allocation of a residential lease be published.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, allow me here to extend my deep gratitude to the MSM-MMM Government, especially the Prime Minister and the Deputy Prime Minister for their continuous and unflinching efforts in providing the necessary funds to support the required investments, to my colleagues of the Executive Council for their advice in the preparation of this Budget. I also wish to thank all those who submitted memoranda and suggestions. Special thanks go to the staff of my Commission who constituted the Budget Review team, especially the Island Chief Executive, the Departmental Heads and the Chief Finance Officer and their respective staff who have put in long and arduous hours of work in assisting me.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, allow me to point out that while preparing this Budget exercise, as a patriot, I have been guided solely by the long-term interests of the autonomous Rodrigues island and the everlasting motto of the OPR party *“Ensemble vers l’avenir pour le grand changement”*. *Cet exercice budgétaire est le début d’un vaste programme pour construire les bases solides d’une île Rodrigues autonome. Nous avons la volonté de réussir, nous avons une équipe solide, nous avons la jeunesse d’esprit et je le dis avec certitude, nous réussirons.*

M. le président, ce premier exercice budgétaire est, sans nul doute, l’exemple concret d’une maturité à assumer notre responsabilité historique, par le biais des pouvoirs qui nous ont été conférés par la loi

régissant l'autonomie administrative et financière. C'est pourquoi, M. le président, je terminerai en disant ceci –

Vive l'autonomie de Rodrigues!

Vive le peuple admirable de Rodrigues!

Vive la république de Maurice!

With these remarks, I commend the motion to the House. Thank you, Mr Chairperson, Sir.

The Deputy Chief Commissioner rose and seconded.

The Minority Leader (Mr J. Roussety): Mr Chairperson, Sir, allow me, on the occasion of my first speech in this Assembly and on the occasion of the New Year, to wish all the staff and Members of the Regional Assembly a Happy New Year 2003.

The minority, acting collectively, has studied the motion under consideration, and after acute discussions, I noticed a number of irregularities as far as budgetary practices are concerned.

Our motive in such a situation is not at all to deter the House, and, least of all, the Chair, from carrying out its business properly or concerned with any delaying tactics. We are, in fact, convinced that things should have been done another way, and this is why we are expressing our views as follows without, at the same time, opposing fundamentally the Budget.

The motion refers to Section 44(b) of the Regional Assembly Act which, we have been made to understand, refers, in fact, to Section 44(6) which concerns the transmission to the Minister for Rodrigues of the first draft estimates of the Budget for Rodrigues within three months from the date of swearing in of the first Rodrigues Regional Assembly.

Our first point is about Section 44 of the 2001 Act, which concerns the draft estimates to be submitted for the next financial year. We have to give all its importance to the word ‘estimates’. Estimates in budgetary terms are things to come, which we do not know exactly at present but for which we are making a realistic provision.

As far as the definition of Budget is concerned, allow me, Mr Chairperson, Sir, to give an elementary definition of that term. I quote Longmans Dictionary of Economics & Commerce, Sixth Edition. For that dictionary, a Budget is, and I quote –

“An estimate of Government expenditure and revenue over the ensuing financial year”.

It is, therefore, understood that a Budget is an account of estimated future revenue and expenditure of Government. The OPR Regional Council has succeeded, in my opinion, in introducing into this House the contradictory concept of what I am tempted to call retrospective budgeting. How can we budget for expenditure that has occurred in October? Is that a new...

Mr Chairperson: I am sorry to interrupt the Member. Are you challenging that...

Mr J. Roussety: I am not challenging anything; I am just making some observations and I'll comment...

Mr Chairperson: But, if these observations are meant to challenge the ruling of the Chairperson to include it in the Order Paper, it is totally out of order.

Mr J. Roussety: My second point concerns the steps to be taken in case this Budget is adopted.

Mr Chairperson: Yes, but I have ruled that if you proceed with this, you would be challenging the ruling of the Chairperson, and you cannot do that.

Mr J. Roussety: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I note with concern that this motion relates only to expenditure. No serious provision is made for estimates of governmental revenue in Rodrigues. Only central dotations from Central Government are made. *Cela donne l'impression d'un gouvernement régional dépensier, insouciant des efforts nécessaires pour assainir et structurer les finances publiques de Rodrigues.*

Mr Chairperson, Sir, despite the fact that you are not allowing me to express my views before the Regional Assembly, which I understand...

Mr Chairperson: But, this point is in conformity with the Standing Orders.

Mr J. Roussety: We are participating in the debates. Our Assembly is still in an embryonary state and, therefore, we are all here to learn. The Chief Commissioner said that there have been pre-budgetary consultations and invitations were sent to submit memoranda. As far as I know, we have never received any invitation to submit any memorandum.

An analysis of the first draft estimates for the Budget of Rodrigues for the period under consideration shows nothing innovative. The Regional Government is giving us a photocopy of the national budgetary estimates for 2002/2003 for Rodrigues taking care to modify certain sums, for example, reducing by Rs 5 m the provision for the swimming-pool project and the increase of expenditure on vehicles for Commissioners from Rs 2 m to Rs 12 m.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, such cosmetic budgetary measures are irresponsible for our young Assembly as there are no realisations on their balance sheets. We are under the impression that Commissioners are more concerned with their own comfort than solving the problems of the population. The opportunity costs of the Rs 12 m should be for more sports facilities, more ambulances etc. instead of Commissioners buying cars. A Budget is in today's economy not only a mere account of revenue and expenditure, it is also a strong and principal policy tool which is widely used to contribute to the creation of a favourable economic atmosphere within a country. Allow me to make a brief review of the present state of the economy of Rodrigues being given that we are examining the budget.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, the present state of the economy of Rodrigues is a serious matter for concern. Public finance is not yet a matter of concern. In these days some people are more concerned with glorifying their leader who has lost and they have done so each time they have had the opportunity to speak. This island is financed - the estimates under

consideration are here to prove - wholly the budgetary provisions from the central Government. It is clear today that financially Rodrigues is far from being autonomous. The contribution of Rodrigues in the GDP of the nation is insignificant as well as fiscal revenue from Rodrigues when we contrast with Government expenditure in Rodrigues over the past years. The traditional economic sectors as farming, agriculture and fishing have declined considerably sometimes putting at risk the natural environment. Tourism has experienced some development, but cannot be relied upon as being the only viable economic sector. Over the past decades, the economy has moved from a quasi subsistence economy to an import-oriented economy without any serious sectoral development within Rodrigues. Unemployment has increased while some people, especially the youth and the middle-aged have been forced, and are still being forced, to emigrate to Mauritius to earn a living. We have just heard of a 25% rate of unemployment. This is partly the result of the economic mismanagement and the total lack of vision from the part of all those who have had in their hands the public affairs of Rodrigues over the past decades. Today the island has no commercial arguments at all and the comparative advantages that we had in fishing and agriculture, for example, have disappeared.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, the economy of Rodrigues being import-oriented has no multiplier effect, most of the significant Government expenditure that is made is done on imported items. Money does not circulate enough to enable the creation of dynamism in the economy, the production of goods and services is not enough locally to meet, at least, partly the aggregate demand of the island. The Chief Commissioner is speaking of increasing job creation, this is not done *ex nihilo*; these are just words. Job creation will be boosted up only if we can direct consumption and investment expenditure, local consumption and investment expenditure towards what is produced in the island. This is not the case actually as we do not have national accounts figures, GDP

etc. specifically for Rodrigues, but practical observations reveal that most of what is consumed here is imported. Certain products should be produced locally. Today Rodrigues is importing massively food supply such as eggs, chicken and even fish. Why are they not produced locally? This would create employment, generate income for the people. In fact, Rodrigues after the so-called *20 ans de pouvoir* is a very weak and vulnerable island on economic grounds. We are wholly dependent on external provisions for our survival and it is high time to reverse this course of history as today no country can carry on without solid economic arguments. I am glad, Sir, that the idea of a Rodrigues Development Authority which I have been proposing in my economic agenda for Rodrigues in year 2000 has finally obtained some considerations.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, I repeat that this Budget is not the baby of the regional Government. Nothing has changed fundamentally in the content and the presentation of that Budget. For the people in Rodrigues the standard of living is sometimes far below the national standard with a great number of cases of acute poverty. Housing and access to water are other serious problems. Today there is a tendency for unproductive behaviour in Rodrigues. Productivity is, in fact, very low starting from the Government service. Some people have been taught to wait for everything, for example, pension, *carte pêcheur*, *bassin*, *tôle*, etc. This is why the *Mouvement Rodriguais* in the general elections of September last had come with an economic agenda for Rodrigues, because we believe that in today's global and competitive environment, every country or every region has to make

efforts to produce wealth and experience economic growth. This is the only path if we want to increase the standards of living of people who live in Rodrigues. It is high time for us to reinvent our economy and to face challenges ahead. Our programme for economic revolution provided for a policy mix that would have created increased awareness about productivity and competitiveness, increased and promoted foreign direct

investment and greater jobs creation locally, especially for those at the lower level. A whole set of institutional and administrative reforms were to be undertaken within the new framework of the Regional Assembly. We are thankful to all those who have trusted us.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, a country needs investment. What has been provided for in the current Budget for private investment? Investors need to be identified, welcomed, motivated and attracted into the country. Given the deficiencies of finance market in Rodrigues we need investments and the governing Executive Council should review also project appraisal procedures and other administrative procedures such as the access to a lease for business purposes. Many significant investors in various sectors, including tourism, fishing and agriculture have gone away from Rodrigues, partly because of the cumbersome administrative procedures and long delays in administrative matters.

The idea of creating a Rodrigues Development Authority is wise. However, the appellation "Authority" could be misleading as again it sounds bureaucratic and we'll also need a legal act to pass it. Now, the terms of references as well as the practical goals of this institution will have to be set up. Let us hope that we will receive our invitation for our comments in due time.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, the Regional Government is increasing the Capital Budget by Rs 9,700,010 as compared to original estimates appropriated by the National Assembly for 2002/2003 Budget. Total budgetary provisions for capital expenditure are being increased from Rs 363,300,070 to Rs 373,000,080.

The Commissioner for Finance has reallocated the original sums appropriated. The increase in Capital Budget is increased by things such as purchase of cars for Commissioners. Savings are being made on important projects such as sports amenities like the swimming pool at Maréchal.

The Capital Budget for the services falling under the Commission for Youth and Sports is being reduced by as much as Rs 5 m. Our sportsmen in Rodrigues will certainly take careful note of that.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, another surprise of this Budget, still as far as Capital Estimates are concerned, is the reduction of the vote for the housing and rehabilitation programmes. National Budget, as approved by the National Assembly, provided Rs 15 m. for housing and rehabilitation. The Commissioner for Finance is irresponsible. This provision is merely being reduced to Rs 5 m. in his Budget. This is pitiful when we know that housing conditions for a category of the population are of low standards.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, with the withdrawal of these Rs 10 m., we have a clear idea of what this Regional Government has in mind. Housing is not a priority for them.

As for the desalination project, despite repetitive declarations in the media that this project is being boosted up, we note that the Regional Government, again modifying the National Budget, is decreasing the appropriated estimates from Rs 35 m. to Rs 15 m. It is understood, however, that part of this money is being used for the construction and rehabilitation of dams and reservoirs. This is a wise decision like we have always been advocating.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, when I was listening to the Budget Speech, I heard the Chief Commissioner say that he is making provision for the construction of a fishing port at Port Sud Est. I understand that this Budget is from October 2002 to June 2003. I have gone through the relevant items in the Capital Budget. I can't see where these provisions are. There is not even a token vote for the item Fishing Port at Port Sud Est.

The total Budgetary Estimates as provided for in this Budget from October 2002 to June 2003 are Rs 313,744,169 for Capital Expenditure and Rs 493,544,579 for the Recurrent Budget.

Allow me, Mr Chairperson, Sir, to comment on the presentation of the Budgetary Estimates for the Recurrent and the Capital Budget, because these could be misleading for laymen.

The Recurrent Budget caters only for Estimates concerning the period October 2002 to June 2003, that is, the budget in the current financial year. When one reads these Estimates, one has no idea of the total provisions for the whole financial year. More dangerously, the newly appropriated figures cannot be compared to the original National Assembly items and their respective estimates for 2002/2003. I believe that this could be corrected on the grounds of fairness, presentation and accuracy. There should have been a column for Estimates 2002/2003 as provided by the National Assembly and a column for the new Estimates for the whole financial year, that is, including the changes made by this majority.

The same comments apply to the Capital Budget. There is no addition to show new Estimates for the whole financial year. We have Estimates for nine months. Expenditure has been calculated from July 2002 to October 2002. So, it would be wise that the new Estimates, as they are proposing to amend, are shown for the whole financial year.

En passant, puis-je attirer l'attention de notre Chef Commissaire Adjoint sur le fait que le salaire de sa fonction a été sous-estimé dans le budget courant. This is surely an error and it is to be corrected.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, we are all aware of the often low spending capacity of the administration in Rodrigues. This has led to the well-known expression "*l'argent budget retourné*". It is comprehensible that Government procedures can be long and delaying. However, no efforts could be spared in using money that has been appropriated. A number of projects in the past have not been implemented, because our planning and implementation capacities are too small in Rodrigues. Such planning services should be reinforced with more qualified personnel in project management and execution. I have heard that the Chief Commissioner is

planning to contract out to consultancy services the planning of projects. Can I suggest that priority be given to Rodriguan personnel in these affairs?

Mr Chairperson, Sir, the great English Economist, John Maynard Keynes in the preface to his Book "The General Theory of Employment, Interests and Money 1936" wrote -

"It is astonishing what foolish things one can temporarily believe in if one thinks too alone."

The majority of one person at present should seize the opportunity of the preparation of a Budget to bring more consensus in Rodrigues. We strongly regret that the Finance Committee has not been set up. If it existed, I believe that the Members of the Minority would have had the opportunity to bring valuable contribution to the contents and, if possible, to the preparation of this Budget. We should not forget the finality of the Regional Budget. Let us hope that the 2003/2004 Budget that is to be approved shortly by this Assembly, according to what we have learnt, will go more towards people in the villages and in the solving of their daily problems. Please stop thinking alone! Start thinking globally! We can help.

For our part, Mr Chairperson, Sir, this Budget contains under procedural grounds as well as in the contents far too much controversy that the Minority has decided not to express his vote.

As I explained earlier, we are not satisfied with this procedure and for which, according to me, this Assembly had no power of modification. Also we cannot caution budgetary reallocations in which sports amenities and housing for the poor are being sacrificed to purchase cars for commissioners.

Thank you, Mr Chairperson, Sir.

Mr L. Roussety: Mr Chairperson, Sir, it beholds me in a rather privileged capacity to extend my heartfelt congratulations to the respected Minority Leader in delivering his maiden speech in reply to the Budget Speech by the Chief Commissioner. In many ways, I am proud of him and I would like this to be noted.

Thank you, Mr Chairperson, Sir.

The Deputy Chief Commissioner (Mrs A. Perrine-Bégué): Mr Chairperson, Sir, when the Governing Executive Council took office, the funds for financing Recurrent and Capital Expenditures for this ongoing financial year were already allocated to Rodrigues under different vote/ items in the 2002-2003 Estimates.

The Governing Executive Council could have folded its arms and waited for the end of this current financial year to start the preparation of its annual Budget for the next financial year. But, in view of the contracts the OPR party entered with the population in the first regional election, it was not possible for the Governing Executive Council to sit down and cross its arms.

We feel that it is our duty and sacred responsibility to *construire les bases solides d'une île Rodrigues autonome* by using all the means and powers conferred upon us by the Rodrigues Regional Assembly Act 2001. Here, I would like to stress that this present Budget is only a recurrent one, reallocation of funds over 2002-2003 Budget, a sort of reallocation according to the funds already voted in the National Assembly. It is, in fact, in our Budget Estimates for 2003-2004 that this Governing Executive Council will be given full latitude to start implementing its ambition and vision.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, I am very appreciative of the priorities identified and of the measures contained in this Budget review exercise, which is a concrete example that the OPR Governing Executive Council

means business, as compared to the farfetched go-slow etiquette put to us by those paid Members, who, paradoxically boycotted the historical presentation of the very first regulation adopted by this House last week.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, I leave this childish boycott for local people to make their conclusion on the real willingness, sincerity and commitment of the paid Members of the minority side of this House to work in the interest of Rodrigues and its economy, as their said Leader never missed to proclaim from house-tops. On my part, Mr Chairperson, I'll only point out that in Rodrigues, *pour certains, la politique n'est malheureusement qu'un simple jeu, tandis que pour d'autres, la politique est un réel enjeu*. The proof is that, while our colleagues in the National Assembly were celebrating the new year, after a well-deserved year of hard work, we, the Governing Executive Council, have been working very hard to sort out the Budget for the rest of the financial year and to set the priorities which deserve our foremost attention.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, this Budget gives a strong signal of the work that we want to tackle in favour of women. Our aim is to direct women towards an economy-oriented attitude. It is a matter of fact, Mr Chairperson, Sir, that women constitute the mainstay of the emerging private sector. For instance, they are at the base of almost all cottage industries, but they need to have confidence in what they are doing to believe in their capacity and to innovate. For this, Mr Chairperson, Sir, my Commission's motto will be training *par excellence*. That is why in this Recurrent Budget, the women's budget provision for promotion of women and other operating expenses, at the women's centre, has been increased fivefold, that is, from Rs100,000 nearly to Rs500,000.

On top of that, in the Capital Budget, provision is being made for the building of a comprehensive women centre to englobe all the different facets of women skills and development in their pursuance of the creation of the modern economy. As you know, Mr Chairperson, Sir, woman is

an institution in herself for she represents members of her own sex. She has to work, cater for children, for her husband, for her home, sometimes extended families and she is the one who manages the social and cultural obligations in her society. That is why, in addition, this comprehensive centre is going also to accommodate all services affecting women.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, the measures announced by the Chief Commissioner, in this budget review exercise, as regards reintegration of the vulnerable groups through access to micro-credit schemes and empowerment, is most welcome.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, the major transformation in our rural economy and society has been men's access to an independent cash income, through public expenditure, first in wartime when men were engaged in the army, then in peacetime after the prolonged droughts. This poverty alleviation measure was a response to the poverty created as a result of interaction between environmental degradation and declining agricultural productivity.

The Rodriguan economy was based on a traditional division of labour in farming based on age and gender. In turn, the employment of men in the public sector has altered the traditional division of labour and thus interdependence between men and women. Women have not been able to replace men in planting and land preparation where a substantial bottleneck and labour shortage persist.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, the dominant pattern in Rodrigues is of male headship of household to the extent that it is associated with single parents, Woman-headed households are economically vulnerable. Rodrigues has long suffered from very low level of socioeconomic development resulting in high unemployment level, which is a root cause of all of our societal problems, mainly income and human poverty.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, before such situation, the most urgent responsibility of this Governing Executive Council is indeed to create an enabling environment which will enable those who are outside the

mainstream of developments and the emerging private sector to engage in a wider range of entrepreneurial activities. This Budget exercise is opportune as it augurs the required enabling environment both for the vulnerable group through the micro-credit schemes and for the young private sector, through the Rodrigues Development Authority and the one-stop shop to be set up shortly as the Chief Commissioner has just said.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, with the micro-credit schemes proposed by Government, a door is now opened for women heads of household and the single teenage mothers to enable them to increase their incomes, reduce their stress and difficulties and earn dignity and a decent living for their family.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, no doubt, the measures which are being introduced will bring in more private sector participation in the economy of the island for a substantial reduction of dependence on Mauritius.

Hotel sector and small business associated with it would have some potential for creating both employment and self-employment. I consider the creation of productive jobs as a top-priority and I am rather for a combination of job creation both in the private sector, especially in the tourism sector, in the other services linked to tourism and in the public sector, in mainly self employment through micro enterprises as this seems to be the more likely solution to the problem of poverty and unemployment in Rodrigues.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, the streamlining of procedures regarding the grant of State land lease for residential, commercial and agricultural purposes will no doubt benefit women. The access of women heads to economic resources in the form of land leases and ability to obtain credit is an important influence on their economic situation and prospect.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, in all employment sectors in Rodrigues, men outnumber women. The share of employment in main sector agriculture has declined while that of services and construction is on the increase. However, the definition of economic activity is problematic. In Rodrigues, the approach of farming system includes all activities - crops, fishing, livestock, agro-processing, and other income generating activities in their part-time activities; if their part-time activities are taken into account, then for every one man involved in farming in some capacity there are three women. This budget review exercise recognises the contribution of women in the overall cash income of the family and in the improvement of the quality of life in Rodrigues. Economic diversification will offer alternative employment to women.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, women have formed the backbone of economic activities in Rodrigues, at the same time, they have been very active in community management investing much time and energy to ensure that their traditional role as carers and in human resource development is fulfilled. The range and level of services and amenities and a feeling of cohesion, purpose and involvement in village life is very much dependent on energies and commitment of women, for example, through the women's associations, the community health workers and the basic education for adolescents. These initiatives at grassroots level will continue to be facilitated by increasing the Rodrigues Regional Assembly's provisions of financial support and infrastructure at macro level.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, the improvement to be brought to the health services as announced in this Budget review will have positive impact on the health of women and their children. The health status of women and their children is an important indicator of the well-being of the population. The high prevalence of hypertension, diabetes and obesity

among women are cause for concern. Lifestyle changes in dietary and leisure habits may worsen this health profile.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, there is a challenging task ahead to ensure that women are not marginalised by the development process in Rodrigues. With the invaluable support of my colleagues of the Executive Council, my Commission will ensure that we have an integrated treatment of the triple load of women in production, reproduction and community management in formulating strategies to raise women's status in the process of developments.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, under my mandate as Commissioner for Family Welfare, I will ensure that, for the sake of efficiency and equity gender awareness, the recognition of an inter relationships and differences between the position of men and women will underpin our development strategy.

Coming to the next portfolio - arts and culture, Mr Chairperson, Sir, it is an undeniable fact that the cultural differences and geographical distance was the moving force behind our accession to self-government. In that context, this OPR Government will invest a great deal to develop and preserve our cultural heritage, which is, in our point of view, a jewel in the sky of our being.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, the OPR Government is going to have a two-pronged strategy of development, the first based on economic progress and the second one is the proclamation and development of our cultural identity and values. As it is being published in our electoral manifesto, we are indeed providing every possible means for the development of all aspects of our cultural heritage. The first thing is to come up with is a position paper where all the stakeholders in the sector in our island, experts from Rodrigues, Mauritius and neighbouring islands, are going to put their heads together and work on the programme proposed and come up with a consensus.

Among the measures warranted, we have to provide suitable, national and regional infrastructures to allow for both promotion of our culture among the population and to transform arts and cultural activities from a folkloric point of view into a dynamic, economic sector bearing in mind that it is going to be a very valued commodity that will have to sell the tourist industry which is expected to expand several times over during this very year of 2003. We believe that culture is the grain of salt that will proclaim the Rodriguan existence in the world. It is the vision of the OPR, Mr Chairperson, Sir, to see the flaming Rodriguan torch burning high and bright in the zenith of the world cultural heritage.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, apart from education, the provision for the development and preservation of arts and culture has known the strongest transformation. For instance, the recurrent budget for promotion of arts and culture has been increased from less than Rs200,000 to Rs2.5 m. As for the capital budget, it is being doubled. Provision is being made for the construction of a Museum Cum/Art Gallery and the first of six proposed regional cultural centres. In addition to the construction of new cultural infrastructures, this Budget makes provision for the creation of four new posts of Arts Officer in Rodrigues. At present, we do not have the necessary human resource, the necessary staff to realise our ambition.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, the courageous measures spelt out in this Budget and at this very first semester 2003 and the considerable increase in the budget of arts and culture is an expression of the will of this Government to give the utmost values to our cultural being.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, as you can see, we, the OPR Government, are, therefore, giving our Rodriguan people *les moyens d'être et de devenir ce que nous sommes*.

Merci.

Mrs M. T. Meunier: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I would like to congratulate the Deputy Chief Commissioner for her speech.

MOTION
SUSPENSION OF S.O. 10(2)

The Chief Commissioner: Sir, I beg to move that all the business on today's Order Paper be exempted from the provisions of paragraph (2) of Standing Order 10.

The Deputy Chief Commissioner rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

At 2.10 p.m., the sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 3.40 p.m. with Mr Chairperson in the Chair

Mrs M. T. Meunier (Second Local Region Member) Mr Chairperson, Sir, we are here today because, first of all, we are citizens of the Republic of Mauritius determined to assert ourselves as citizens of this Republic to the fullness of its meaning. We are here also because of our love for democracy and I strongly believe that democracy transposed from a thin piece of paper to a sound action is the greatest form of Government.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, I think that I am here today thanks to the electorate. I am therefore determined on the same seat that I am now sitting to work and to struggle for justice and law so that the rights and expectations of the people that have placed their hope in this Assembly are not flouted.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, I regret to mention that the minority has been severely criticised by the Deputy Chief Commissioner, because we

refused to participate in the last meeting. We are proud of our decision, because we will not tolerate violation of democracy and parliamentary practices. Normal sittings of the Assembly are on Tuesdays. The behaviour of the majority is shameful. We were, in fact, being deprived of the exercise of Question Time. They were starting to refuse to answer the questions concerning the welfare of the people. Please, rest assured each time you decide to make an abusive fixing of the dates on sittings we will react because we are strong believers in democracy.

Indeed, history will recall, in the island of Rodrigues and in the Republic of Mauritius and all over the world, the 12 October 2002. Indeed we took an oath to work for the welfare of the people of this island. It is a memorable date for a citizen of the Republic of Mauritius. Rodrigues has long sought for recognition as a separate entity in the Republic of Mauritius with specific needs.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, today the fate of our island lies in our hands. The task that lies ahead is not an easy one. Despite the fact that we have not been given opportunity in the minority to debate on a programme which should have been presented by the majority when the Rodrigues Regional Assembly has met for the first time to hear the speech of the Chief Commissioner, Mr Chairperson, Sir, we were really expecting a speech whereby the direction which the majority wants to lead the country will be clearly defined. This should have been, Mr Chairperson, Sir, written in golden letters in the history of Rodrigues Regional Assembly. Our members, on this side of the House, wanted to bring its share of proposals so as to help in the gearing of our country to a better future. But, unfortunately, the first speech of the majority at the first sitting of this Assembly, was *une occasion ratée!*

Mr Chairperson, Sir, we have all, on both sides of the House, missed the opportunity to share our views and ideas. This is why history will have it that only now, after three months - I say after three months, Mr Chairperson - that we have the opportunity at long last to have a

Budget presented to allow us, on this side of the House, to express our views and to make, as we say, our maiden speeches - *après trois mois seulement, M. le président.*

Mr Chairperson, Sir, I am sorry for this long introduction, but I think after three months, *c'est très compréhensible.*

Coming to the Budget, Mr Chairperson, Sir, what a Budget? *Sans fil conducteur vers le redressement tant attendu de l'économie! Ils ont dit qu'ils ont la vision.* But how much time should our people wait? Mr Chairperson, Sir, today if the soul of our country is poisoned, the autopsy will reveal that the main cause of this poisoning is water - water shortage, bad water distribution and non potable water. This soil will not be saved if priority is not given to this sector.

If we look at this Budget, Mr Chairperson, Sir, I wonder why the majority is so keen to build a swimming pool at Maréchal when we know that region is facing problems of water shortage. It seems that solving the problem of water in this region is not the priority of the majority in this House and we know why! Because it is reputed to be an MR region! It would be cruel, really cruel, Mr Chairperson, Sir, to see women and men with pails of water on their heads from distant water tanks when next to them lies a beautiful blue swimming pool full of water. We wonder!

Mr Chairperson, Sir, I just want to remind you that I am not against the construction of that pool, but we must see what is our priority. We should also wonder why the Budget for the construction of this pool has been brought down from Rs 12 m. to Rs 7m. while the Budget for the purchase of vehicles for Commissioners has been increased from Rs 2 m to nearly Rs 12 m. *Une augmentation vraiment exorbitante et je dis bien pour le bien-être des commissaires!* Is this the priority of those on the other side of this House when we know, Mr Chairperson, Sir, that all the Members of this House have sworn to work for the welfare of the population and not to satisfy their own ambition? Where are we going? Where are we leading this country, Mr Chairperson?

Allow me to comment further on this Budget. The lack of proper economic planning during these last twenty years to encourage production has led our country to the edge of a precipice. Today the level of unemployment of our country is really high and I just want to thank my colleague, Johnson Roussety, for having mentioned it - 25% of unemployment. It is really an alarming situation, but if we look at the Draft Estimates presented by the majority, it seems that there are very few incentives to make our economy take off. For example, Mr Chairperson, concerning agricultural diversification programme it is earmarked only about Rs 995,000 - not million, Mr Chairperson, Sir! Hear me well, only Rs 995,000! When we compare this again with the Rs 11 m. for the buying of cars for the members of the majority, *cela démontre les intentions de ceux qui sont de l'autre côté de la chambre. Si on ajoute les R 4 millions pour l'agricultural rural development project, cela ne fait même pas R 6 millions* when we all know that agriculture is the key sector for Rodrigues' economy. We do not have any revenue, except from Mauritius.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, let me draw the attention of the House to one sector that I really have at heart, that of women's welfare and there the Deputy Chief Commissioner has mentioned an increase of about Rs 500,000, but in the Budget I do not really see that, unless I am blind! Unfortunately, the women's welfare does not seem to be the concern of the Deputy Chief Commissioner. We all know that *les femmes sont les piliers de la famille et de la société* and the Deputy Chief Commissioner has talked about that. Very little has been laid down in this Budget concretely concerning the protection of women and children - I have mentioned earlier, about rape and other abuse in a Question to the House. What we need is a well-equipped centre with resourceful persons, but I do not think with Rs 100,000 mentioned in the Budget, we will achieve such an objective. If all services for women and children and their development are to be accommodated under the same roof with the cost

of Rs 100,000, I do not see how we are going to solve the problem faced by our women.

Furthermore, in the Budget, the Chief Commissioner talks about preliminary expenses for the construction of a building, but if I heard the Deputy Chief Commissioner well, she mentioned a consultancy in his speech. Mr Chairperson, Sir, it is not the time for hollow projects and political illusions. It is time for action. What our people need is an appropriate strategy that will allow a thorough change, a tactical programme that will allow the Rodriguan citizens to be up to date with global development. If we do not take these facts into account, we would be left with solutions that would answer anything and explanation that would not explain anything.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, I feel deeply concerned about the future of our island. We all have a task to perform on both sides of the House. But we, on this side of the House, are not going to be satisfied if our country continues to suffer from hypertension *dans le domaine des croyances politiques* and continues *à se montrer anémique dans le domaine des actes*. We are not going to be satisfied until the forces of justice have smashed the wall that stands between the rich and the poor. We are not going to be satisfied until our exile fellow citizens, forced to leave beyond the frontiers of their beloved island, be reintegrated in our society. We are not going to be satisfied until the slums in which dwell our people be thrown *dans les poubelles de l'histoire*, and unless each Rodriguan family possesses a decent accommodation, unless all men and women be judged for their skill, judgment and ability and not according to their political belief.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, I would conclude to say that the minority feels that this Budget is an overall disappointment and we strongly feel

that if the majority does not retreat and mend its way of directing the business in this House, Rodrigues economy and its autonomy will only be a farce.

Thank you, Mr Chairperson, Sir.

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I have understood this morning that it is tradition to congratulate people from the other side of the House when they have made their maiden speech and good manners urge me to congratulate the Second Island Region Member, Mrs Meunier, for her speech, but allow me, Mr Chairperson, Sir, to correct something.

In the recurrent budget ...

(Interruptions)

Mr Chairperson: Does the hon. Member want to say something?

Mr J. Roussety: Sir, the Deputy Chief Commissioner has already spoken on the Budget speech. It was agreed this morning that she would only congratulate Members and would not make a speech.

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: I am waiting for the ruling of the Chair.

(Interruptions)

Mr Chairperson: A Member who has spoken on a main motion reserves the right to speak again.

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Thank you, Mr Chairperson, Sir. I was saying that in the recurrent budget ...

Mr Chairperson: **I am sorry. Is the Deputy Chief Commissioner moving for a special leave to reply to what the respected Member has said?**

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Of course!

Mr J. Roussety: Mr Chairperson, on a point of order, if the Deputy Chief Commissioner wants to reply to the Member, she has to come with a point of explanation or she can make a statement at Statements' time. Now, we are debating the Budget speech.

(Interruption)

She has already spoken.

Mr Chairperson: Mr Roussety, if you want to raise a point of order, please be clear.

Mr J. Roussety: The Deputy Chief Commissioner has spoken once. I believe she has used her right and, as I have said, we agreed that she would congratulate the Member. If she wants to make a statement, she can do it later on after the motion.

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, I am still waiting for your ruling.

Mr Chairperson: Deputy Chief Commissioner, by virtue of section 35 (5) (a), special leave is given to you, but you must restrict yourself to some comments only. Please proceed.

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Referring to the recurrent budget, as I said in my speech, the item for women and family welfare has been increased. If you look at the recurrent budget, you will see that, as far as women are concerned, there has been promotion of family welfare. A sum of Rs100,000 was earmarked in the initial budget. Now the provision for promotion of family welfare has almost doubled and a sum of Rs233,981 has been provided. In addition, a new item “*other operating expenses*” has been introduced and a sum of Rs225,512 has been earmarked. When we add the amounts provided for these items, it comes nearly to Rs500,000. I wanted to make that point clear.

I want also to say that it seems to me that the speech of hon. Mrs Meunier was prepared well before she came and listened to what the Chief Commissioner said, because pertaining to water, she made criticisms which, according to me, is not *acceptable*. She said that we are constructing a swimming pool in the region of Maréchal, but she should be glad, because this is the region where she has been elected first.

As far as water is concerned, we have reallocated money for the construction of a new dam, the Anse Raffin Dam, which will serve this very southern region. If the Member has listened clearly to what the Chief Commissioner said, she would have understood. But history will recall that Mrs Meunier spoke against the swimming pool of Maréchal. One thing that the House must know is that we have decentralised this project, making it available, *plus proche des gens qui se trouvent en haut et qui n'ont pas accès à beaucoup de facilités sportives. Je m'attendais à plus de fair play et à une certaine critique positive de ce côté de la Chambre.*

As regards cars once again, I think that as we will say in Creole, *lé coeur faire mal*.

(Interruptions)

We have struggled a lot for this country to accede to the status that it has today.

(Interruptions)

No, no. Do you want us to go into reconditioned *minimokes*? The problem is that this country *a accédé à un nouveau statut*. We are a mini Parliament; we have the same status as our colleagues in Mauritius and I believe the same facilities that are being given to our colleagues there in Mauritius should be extended to us.

(Interruptions)

Mr Chairperson: No interruption from a sitting position, please!

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: She also said, Mr Chairperson, Sir, that nothing has been provided in the Capital Budget as far as women are concerned. If we look at the Capital Budget, we will see that there is a provision of Rs100,000 to introduce a project. I think this is correct. Do you think that in six months' time we will be able to construct a whole, comprehensive building? I did not want to fool this House by coming up and announcing that a sum of Rs10 m. is being provided. The project value is Rs 10 m. When people on the other side of the House will come to this side of the House, then they will understand what is meant by procedures. Those who are on the other side of the House are the same people who will come up and talk about corruption if one day we breach the procedures. We have to follow the administrative procedures. I believe that a sum of Rs 100,000 is enough to start the procedures for the construction of a comprehensive building for women. Concerning the protection of women, of course, we have taken measures. But what we are trying to say is that we must start somewhere. We

should be able first to offer all the necessary services, and then we can talk about specific infrastructures. Thank you, Sir.

Mr J. Roussety: I would like, Sir, to refer to item 35(v)(a) and I request the permission of the Chair to comment on what has just been said.

Mr Chairperson: I understand that another Commissioner has the intention to intervene. After his intervention, I will give my ruling on your request.

Mr Lisette: Mr Chairperson, Sir, the crucial stages in the preparation of this very first budget review started in the aftermath of the double victory of the OPR party in the regional elections of September 2002 and in the recent National Assembly by-elections. These two most recent victories, which form part of a series of victories since 1982, have demonstrated clearly and unequivocally the confidence that the Rodriguan people have in the OPR Executive Council and the ability of our *grande famille* to frame the history and destiny of Rodrigues.

The population, Sir, does not have any doubt in this OPR Executive Council's ability to manage efficiently the affairs of Rodrigues. This expression of trust has a double significance. As the Chief Commissioner rightly observed, the election of the OPR candidate in the by-election was a sort of referendum on the performance of a young Executive Council and is, therefore, a renewal of mandate for it to carry on.

I am particularly happy to note that this first budget review reflects the philosophy of the OPR and its deep commitment to bring lasting prosperity in our island. Mr Chairperson, Sir, if we cast a glance at what

has been taking place during the last decade, we will note that the OPR has been *à l'avant-garde* to influence and direct the course of things to reach the level where we are today.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, not later than last week, this Assembly adopted its first Regulations on trade licences, which is very pertinent as far the economic development and future of Rodrigues are concerned. The priorities identified in this budget review exercise will no doubt create the environment that will enable our fellow citizens to be engaged in a wider range of entrepreneurial activities to enhance the local trade network.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, the setting-up of a Rodrigues Development Authority is most welcome as this will not only increase investment, but will also act as a facilitator for investors. The setting-up of this Authority will no doubt bring industrial development and the full utilisation of the industrial buildings at Camp du Roi and La Ferme. Industrial development and the development of small-scale cottage industries will generate employment and thus decrease unemployment. Agro-industrial based activities like processed fish, honey, pickle and chillies will help to increase exports.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, the measures contained in the budget regarding the improvement of our forest cover, as mentioned by the Chief Commissioner, will benefit the small industries concerned with the manufacture of handicraft products from local raw materials. Marginal lands and mountain slopes can be planted with "Vacoas" trees, Vetiver and Aloe plants for the manufacture of handicraft products.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, the vulgarisation of national SME support to ensure that business supporting services are provided in an effective and co-ordinated manner will fill a big gap as SMEs clearly play a very

important role in the economy. They provide significant employment and are the entry point for entrepreneurs. My Commission has plans to encourage clustering of SMEs in order to help them diversify their products and enter expansion markets partnerships with foreign firms.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, the setting-up of a one-stop shop will expand trade activities in Rodrigues. Presently, only a handful of operators are controlling the importation and distribution of a wide range of products. There is a need to break this monopoly in the interest of the local consumers. The expansion of the local trade network with the measures taken in this Budget exercise should bring in a high degree of competition at retail level and the availability of an increased range of goods and services to the local population. It is also essential that consumers get value for money in terms of price, quality of our products and conditions of purchase.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, I will further insist on the considerable role that the trade sector has to play to increase its efficiency to meet consumer needs at least costs. This need for efficiency applies still more strongly to trade with non-residents as this sub-sector holds better prospects for strong growth.. In the coming months, with the introduction of two international flights to Rodrigues from Reunion Island and the neighbouring countries, Rodrigues will find itself engaged in international trade. With flexible and responsive policies and adequate institutional support, the autonomous region should be able to benefit from an increased trade flows. More local trades should be in a position to benefit from the under-exploited custom duty-free zone to make of Rodrigues a shoppers' paradise. The onus will therefore be on the trading community to set up and control the modern shopping facilities and market of high quality products, which are expected to be in demand by a high level *clientèle* which will be brought by our selective tourism policy.

Mr Chairperson, the expansion of our trade network will bring in its wake some inconvenience too. The most important one will be a rapid increase in the number of both local and Mauritian hawkers in the streets of Rodrigues and other public places. It is an undeniable fact that the activities of hawkers do represent a hazard to the safety of road users and to the health of fast food consumers. Besides they will contrast negatively with the image of the island as an upmarket destination. There will be a deterioration of the environment and traffic congestion and this will tarnish the image of Port Mathurin as a quality retail centre. There is, therefore, need to create a retail friendly environment and a traffic zone in Port Mathurin.

Mr Chairperson, the construction of a dojo and a swimming pool at Le Chou and Maréchal respectively will encourage our sportsmen to attain a higher level of professionalism. It seems to me that the Members from the other side of the House have a lot to say about the swimming-pool. Before I proceed further, I would like to express my gratitude and appreciation to the Chief Commissioner for transferring this Budget item from the Public Infrastructure to my Commission. After preliminary consultations with SPDC, it was found out that the allocation of Rs 12 m could not be used within the six months' time until the next Budget. As a result we found it very important and useful to re-allocate some of the funds to other items, not for the cars of the Commissioners, but rather for the construction of Anse Raffin dam. The reduction of the Rs 5 m is due to the shift of the swimming-pool from Port Mathurin to Maréchal. The construction of the swimming-pool on the land will require a very strong basement which will cost a lot of money. I feel that what the other Members of the House said is really bad for our sportsmen. The Minority Leader commented upon the decrease in the Budget provisions and said that the sportsmen will take notice of the decrease in the amount

allocated. The sportsmen of this country will appreciate the fact that this OPR Government is setting up the building framework over the coming of the *jeux de Rodrigues* that this Government intends to introduce in the coming years. Given the complexities of modern living, adults and youths require leisure. It is in this context that my Commission is putting in place a series of programmes for adults and youths. The construction of the Dojo and the swimming-pool is a step towards the decentralisation of sports activities and aims at achieving greater equity in the distribution of sports facilities between the urban and rural areas. These two infrastructures will promote Rodriguan participation in national, regional and international sports. Here, I would like to say that the Members of this Assembly should note that the construction of the swimming-pool at Maréchal will somehow *liaise* with the Maréchal College over there, whereas the construction of the Dojo will somehow be near to the Le Chou College and as a matter of fact, the students will get access to these facilities.

Sir, you may be aware that part of the judo competition for the forthcoming *Jeux des Iles de l'Océan Indien* will, for the first time, be held in Rodrigues. I should here voice out my pride to welcome the flame of the game here in Rodrigues in August next year. The Rodriguan people should also be proud of the fact that many of our sportsmen from Rodrigues will substantially contribute in strengthening and helping the athletics and judo teams of the Republic of Mauritius. The gymnasium of *Balava* will undergo a complete renovation in the context of the said games.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, until recently, about 75% of the Budget allocated for the promotion of sports was spent on air tickets in respect of sports activities held in Mauritius and elsewhere. I am well aware of the fact that our sportsmen need to compete at national and international level for more experience. However, Mr Chairperson, Sir, it should be noted that the extension of our network of youths and sports infrastructure will,

no doubt, curtail expenses on air tickets as sports events of regional and national character may be held here. This will not only enable us to attain experience by a larger participation of our local sportsmen, but will also be beneficial for the local spectators as a means of enjoyment and leisure.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, as for the youths, my Commission will have as target and at heart a programme which will encourage change for a more responsive and challenging youth. Presently, Rodrigues is divided into four zones and one Youth Officer is attached to each zone for the planning, organisation and implementation of activities programmed in the four zones. However, La Ferme, zone 2, is too large to be catered for by only one Youth Officer; and the workload has increased substantially in volume and complexity. I am proposing to divide zone 2 into two thus creating a fifth zone because, at present, we have only four zones. The fifth zone will comprise youth clubs of the following villages in the southern part of Rodrigues: Rivière Coco, Anse *Raffin*, Port Sud Est, Songe and Mourouk. The additional Youth Officer that has been earmarked in the Budget will, therefore, look after the youth clubs of this zone region and will be in charge of the Malabar Centre. Until a Youth Centre is erected in the zone 5 region, the Malabar Youth Training Centre will provide adequate facilities and amenities to the youth club of the region for the organisation of youth and leisure activities. Furthermore, the new service is operating three Youth Centres, namely at Grande Montagne, La Ferme and Petit Gabriel and one training *centre d'accueil* at Malabar. At each centre, two Youth Centre Attendants are required, thus necessitating a total of eight Youth Centre Attendants. At present, there are still six Attendants in post and in this present Budget review, two additional posts will be created thus enabling the new service to extend the hours of opening of the youth centres. Through these youth centres, we are therefore helping young Rodriguans to learn the skill they need to lead in to-morrow's Rodrigues. This means, expanding leadership programmes or encouraging organisations of students against whilst

drinking and driving whilst drunk. It means creating opportunities for young Rodriguans to provide input into the development of Government policy. It means a new and more open arts and culture policy that supports young people who want to express themselves, it also means creating opportunities for progressive young people to have their voices heard in mainstream development.

M. le président, il est aussi question de la citoyenneté pour nos jeunes. Quelle démocratie réelle, concrète, effective, comment se fonder sur les valeurs, éviter la dispersion des réalités et surtout l'absence des repères dans la société. *This is part of a challenging job that my Commission aims to undertake for a better future.*

Thank you, Sir.

Mr Chairperson: Concerning the motion made by the Minority Leader for special leave to speak again, I wish to inform him that he can speak again.

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: I think that the First Member for La Ferme wanted to congratulate our Member here.

Mr Chairperson: Yes, proceed please!

Mr Grandcourt: Thank you. Mr Chairperson, Sir, I would like to seize this opportunity to congratulate the Commissioner for Sports for his speech and I hope that he will build the swimming pool as soon as possible.

Mr Chairperson: Yes, Minority Leader please!

Mr J. Roussety: Those who don't know swimming should start learning!

Mr Chairperson, Sir, the attitude of the Deputy Chief Commissioner is deplorable. *Comme une fille sur les bancs de l'école, quelqu'un a parlé.....*

Mr Chairperson: The hon. Member should restrict himself to the Motion, please!

Mr J. Roussety: We have a Budget. If we look at the vote for her Commission, we have vote item *30-101.050 Museum, Archives and Art Gallery* which is Rs 1 m. Expenditure from July to September 2002, is 0. Rs 1 m. are provided. Item *30-101.051 Regional Cultural and Leisure Centre* which was not provided by the National Assembly and which we are providing now is Rs 1 m. Item *30-101.052 Integrated Centre for women* is Rs 100,000.

As I said this morning, does the Deputy Chief Commissioner think we'll be able to guess by how much she has increased the Recurrent Budget when she does not give the figures? How would we be able to guess that she has increased it by Rs 500,000? She does not give the figures. There is only one column in the Recurrent Budget. Who prepared her Budget?

(Interruptions)

Mr Chairperson, Sir, this is irresponsible. They are accusing the Minority of not knowing things that they have not given! We don't have the information about this. This is why I was saying that the Capital Budget has been increased by Rs 100,000 only. Which posts have been created in her Budget? Do you think I have the details of the Budget prepared by the National Assembly in my head so that I can compare and know immediately what you have increased? This is why I was saying that you should

Mr Chairperson: The hon. Member should address the Chair and not directly the Commissioner.

Mr J. Roussety: I am sorry, Sir. Mr Chairperson, Sir, in the Budget itself, the Commissioner for Finance should have put the figures for 2002-2003, their modifications and what they have created and then we would have been able to compare what improvements they had made.

Here, we can't guess; the Recurrent Budget is all a mess. Even if I have a look at the Recurrent Revenue which was on one page - I received it this morning on my table - there was even a deficit. I am not criticising public officers only, because it concerns the whole work of the Executive Council.

As far as contribution from Central Government is concerned, are they going to come with that in their next budget? He was speaking about the Regulations that he passed concerning fees and licences and he said that these will cause economic development. I don't see how. Do you think when you pass Regulations about licences people will go and make a lot of businesses? No! Therefore, for revenue it should be detailed. What do you think the Government is expecting from you? Don't forget that we are paid from Government funds! Therefore, it is high time for us to show Government that *les recettes fiscales de Rodrigues, il y a quelque chose à gagner même si c'est petit. Je suis au courant que c'est environ R 90 millions, même pas R 100 millions par an, même pas 10% des dépenses.* If we want this country to progress and to deepen the autonomy, we have to look at all the procedures. In the Budget, we have 10 Mauritians and you call it maximum autonomy!

Therefore, we have to be responsible, not only cater for expenditure, but also for revenue. This is why I am calling upon you in your next budget for the next financial year to give description of all revenues.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, the Commissioner for Youth is glad and happy. I have fear, unless I am becoming blind, dotations for 2001/2002 under all the services which fall under the control of the Commissioner for Youth and Sports are Rs 17 m. Expenditure until September 2002 was Rs 275,488. In the Estimates for 2002/2003 which we are considering, for nine months we are providing Rs 11,734,512. When we add to expenditure which has already been incurred, this makes a total of

Rs 12 m. So, Regional Budget was Rs 17 m. Now, the new Budget for his Commission is Rs 12 m. and he is happy!

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: On a point of order, Sir.

Mr Chairperson: Yes.

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I think you have given the opportunity to the Minority Leader to answer back to my comments made after what the Second Island Region Member said about women, but I think that he is extrapolating.

Thank you, Sir.

Mr Chairperson: Minority Leader, you can proceed please!

Mr J. Roussety: Thank you, Sir. So, before I was interrupted, I was speaking of

(Interruptions)

The Commissioner is glad that his budget is being decreased from Rs 17 m. to Rs 12 m! This is the point. It is here. I have worked it out. You have reinvented the concept of financial year. Financial year is from 01 July to.....

Mr Chairperson: Address the Chair, please!

Mr J. Roussety: Yes, Mr Chairperson, Sir. Have they reinvented the concept of financial year? The financial year starts from 01 July to 30 June. So, I believe that this budget, as I said this morning, should have given the new total estimates for the financial year. I have worked it out myself.

To come back to the last item in this budget, the Commissioner for Youth and Sports, we have to learn from the Memorandum that he is going ahead with the construction of Dojo, etc. at Le Chou. As I said this morning, the National Budget is a global one. The vote for Rodrigues is just a small vote; they just pass over it. But now for us we have to be

more specific, otherwise you'll come here in three months' time before 31 March, you'll say that the budget is Rs 1.2 m.

(Interruptions)

I don't know, but any project that you may have, because Rodrigues is a very small country. If you want people to understand that you are working and have good projects, well, put the projects here. How much will cost a Dojo? You are providing sports complexes to the value of Rs1,908,860. Will that be sufficient for a Dojo? Do you know how much equipment itself cost? So, we have to review the way in which this Budget has been prepared, because it is not correct.

(Interruptions)

If you know that you won't be able to build, you don't put it!

(Interruptions)

Mr Chairperson, Sir, I repeat, this Budget is a total mess! The point which I have not been allowed to raise - I understand your position....

(Interruptions)

Thank you, Mr Chairperson, Sir, for allowing me to raise these matters.

(Interruptions)

Mr Chairperson: Yes, Deputy Chief Commissioner, would you like to say something?

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: I thought the Minority Leader was going on again. It seems to me that he is repeating himself. He is commenting the Budget all over again and trying to compensate his lack of inspiration this morning.

Mr Chairperson: I allowed the Minority Leader to speak again, but I didn't restrict him on any matter and this is why I allowed him to cover the Budget itself. Yes, Chief Commissioner?

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, the comments made by the Minority Leader is completely a mess. For us, it was not an obligation to pass this Budget in the Assembly here. It could have been sent directly to Mauritius. This is not a new Budget, it is a Budget which has been reviewed and we want it to be done in transparency, because there are funds that are being reallocated in the Budget, and which are already voted in the National Assembly. Mr Chairperson, Sir, as you will see, where there have been reallocations, the project value of the items remain the same.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, concerning the comments made by the Minority Leader, I would like to make the following statement on vehicles to be purchased under vote 30-101.002 under Capital Expenditure. Under the Rodrigues Regional Assembly, (allowances and privileges) Act 2002, the Chief Commissioner, the Deputy Chief Commissioner, the Commissioners and the Chairperson shall be granted a Government vehicle with the services of a driver. The vehicles presently put at their disposal are not appropriate for all purposes considering the state of roads and topography and they will have to be returned to Mauritius in the near future. The cost of Rs11 m. will be for the purchase of a 16-seater van for transport to and from Plaine Corail Airport and for the purchase of appropriate vehicles for Commissioners, etc, as well as purchase of new vehicles to be posted at each Commission. Thank you, Mr Chairperson, Sir.

Mr Chairperson: Any amendment to the motion, Chief Commissioner?

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I move that the No. 66 which appears in the third column on page 5 of the Estimates of the Recurrent Expenditure be left out and that No. 63 be substituted therefore .

Mr Chairperson: Anything else from the other side?

Mr J. Roussety: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I did not get the proposed amendment.

(Interruptions)

On question put, the amendment was agreed to.

Mr. J. Roussety: Mr Chairperson, can we move for amendments

....

Mr Chairperson: If the Minority Leader moves for amendments, he has to remember his earlier statement not to vote at all. If you move for amendments, you have to consider your position when you said you are not going to vote at all. So, proceed with the amendments, please.

(Interruptions)

Mr J. Roussety: Can I proceed?

Mr Chairperson: Yes, do proceed, please. Do you have any amendment?

Mr J. Roussety: No.

(Interruptions)

Mr Chairperson: Unless somebody wants to say something, I'll put the question.

"This Assembly resolves that for the purposes of section 44(6) of the Rodrigues Act 2001, there is approved the first Draft Estimates of Recurrent and Capital Expenditure for the period starting October 2002 to end of June 2003, inclusive of the amendments which have been approved by the House."

On question put, the motion was agreed to.

ADJOURNMENT

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I beg to move that this Assembly do now adjourn to Tuesday 04 February 2003, at 10.30 a.m.

The Deputy Chief Commissioner rose and seconded.

The motion was, on question put, agreed to.

*At 4.37 p.m., the Assembly was, on its rising, adjourned to Tuesday
04 February 2003 at 10.30 a.m.*