

Sitting of Friday 02 April 2004

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

(Mr Chairperson in the Chair)

The National Anthem was played

No. 04 of 02.04.2004

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MOTION

Recurrent and Capital Budget 2004/2005

MOTION

RECURRENT AND CAPITAL BUDGET 2004/05

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Recurrent and Capital Budget 2004/05

Question again proposed

Mr Chairperson: Hon. Members, the debate will resume from the stage it stopped on the last occasion, that is, on 30 March. I am not in possession of the list of Members who would be intervening today and their order of priority. So, the debate will start with one member from the majority side, the other one from the Minority side and so forth. On the last occasion, the Chief Commissioner intervened in support of his motion. A Member from the minority side may intervene now.

Thank you.

The Minority Leader (Mr J. Roussety): Thank you, Mr Chairperson, Sir. It is with pleasure that this side of the House would be intervening on this motion for the approval of our Draft Estimates for the financial year 2004/2005. I wish to extend my congratulations to the Chief Commissioner for his Budget Speech and also to all members of the public service, the Island Chief Executive, all the Heads of Departments, the personnel of the Finance Department, the Section of Public Administration, as well as those who, in one way or the other, have contributed to the presentation of this Budget.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, my thought also goes to our colleague, Mr Allan Ladd Emilien, who is undergoing medical treatment in Mauritius. He has undergone a surgical operation and he is now recovering. Our thought from this side of the House is with him and I think that he, on his bed there, is thinking about us.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, we have the second Budget of the present Chief Commissioner and Commissioner for Finance. I wish to express right from the start my overall disappointment with regard to the proposed measures concerning the Budget estimates, which have been proposed last year - which I will show you afterwards. In fact, the results are very disappointing.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, with regard to the economic situation in Rodrigues, the Budget estimates which have been proposed have nothing new to remedy our severe, I would say, serious economic situation of our island, specially as far as employment and job creation are concerned.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, allow me to present a brief review of the economy of the island. As I have said last year, in Rodrigues it is the role of the Commissioner for Finance - in Mauritius it is the Ministry of Finance - to look into the situation of the economy before going into his Budget. This has not been the case. I don't know whether the serious situation has had some influence over that, but I will do it for him once more, Mr Chairperson, Sir, because we have serious economic problems here and about which nobody seems to care. Every year we come to this House, we hear good declarations of intentions, we hear that things are going to be done, institutions are going to be created, such and such roads are going to be built, but when we come to the results, the analysis, we see that in final it is only words, spoken words. The result, the evaluation is zero! Mr Chairperson, Sir, true it is that they have expressed very good intentions, but the fact is that when we look at what has been done, we see that nothing serious has been done.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, analysing the economic situation would imply looking at some variables. The first thing I am taking is the external trade front of Rodrigues. On the front of the balance of payments of Rodrigues, the island is still importing all sorts of goods and services and when we look at our exports we don't see very important improvements, we don't see valuable things being imported. So, we have what we call a severe balance of payments disequilibrium. This has been ongoing since the transformation of the economy from an agro self-system based economy to an import based economy. What is being done, Mr Chairperson, Sir? What has been proposed in the Budget for export promotion in Rodrigues? What are we producing today in this island? Most of our traditional sectors namely, fishing, agriculture and handicraft have declined. So, exports have fallen

sharply and in contrast we have had a lot of imports. This is serious. Disequilibrium is ongoing in the balance of payments.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, apart from tourism, which is experiencing a good growth, what can we say about the other sectors, specially as far as the impact of Kalundé is concerned? What agricultural products do we export? Zero! Exportation of poultry also is being cancelled due to restrictive regulations that are being imposed by the authorities.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, insofar as unemployment is concerned, especially unemployment of the youths, what is being done for them in this Budget? What has been proposed in the Budget for job creation? It is too vague to come to the House and say we are going to create jobs in SMEs, in the private sectors. How will this be done? What are the targets of this Budget, Mr Chairperson, Sir? How many jobs will be created? What is the growth target for the economy of Rodrigues? I made a *plaidoirie* last year for the building up of the macro-economic statistics on growth, on imports and exports, on output in Rodrigues. Even this has not even been done. This is economic mismanagement, Mr Chairperson, Sir, for an autonomous country, which wants really to be called like that.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, the cost of living has risen sharply basically after the rise in prices. Today, this affects specially the poorer segments of the community. For those living *au bas de l'échelle*, what can they have today with Rs100 in Rodrigues? Rs100 is not sufficient to meet the rise in prices of the commodities. *Combien ça coûte aujourd'hui pour envoyer un enfant à l'école? Combien ça coûte aujourd'hui pour payer le transport, pour lui donner son argent de poche?* What is the cost of milk? What is the cost of rice, which is going to be increased most probably? What is the cost of feeding a family? What are the costs of clothing, electricity and gas? All these costs have increased. What is being done to help those people, who are *au bas de l'échelle*, the poorer segments of our economy? Nothing is being done! Nothing is being proposed! What is being done for the redistribution of income for better equality in the country? Some people have big contracts of millions of rupees, others have big salaries, tenths of thousands of rupees. But what about those who earn Rs2000 or Rs2,500?

(Interruptions)

Mr Chairperson, Sir, what about the globalisation threats on Rodrigues? What have these people done since they have come into power to make Rodrigues emerge, at least, I would say in the Indian Ocean Zone? What can we propose in the Mascareigne? What is our contribution in the Indian Ocean zone? When people come to Rodrigues, they say: "Ah, you are an autonomous island!" OK, we are proud of it, but our economy is our strength. So, we have no strength. We are an autonomous island with no economic strength on the international front. Therefore, because of all this bad economic situation, unemployment is on the rise, poverty is on the rise, frustration is on the rise, Mr Chairperson, Sir. This is the economic situation today, lack of vision, economic mismanagement, no fine-tuning of the economy, Mr Chairperson, Sir, no management of the economy. Our aggregate expenditure on what is the economy here in Rodrigues, spent, Mr Chairperson, Sir? On what do Rodriguans spend their salaries? Consumption is on what, Mr Chairperson, Sir? It is basically on imported goods. We, therefore, have a very high propensity to imports. What about the imports substitution? I have not heard about it in this Budget? Aggregate expenditure is being spent mostly on imported goods. If you go to the shops in Rodrigues, you see imported fish, imported poultry and also all sorts of food, while in Rodrigues we could produce all these. What is being done for imports substitution and for job creation? Things that could be produced here in Rodriguans and could be bought by Rodriguans. In Mauritius, they have gone into a campaign for 'buy Mauritius'. In Réunion island I noticed the same thing when I was there. It was '*acheter Réunionnais*', '*acheter Mauricien*', '*produit pays*'! What is being done here in Rodrigues? No strategy in this sense to encourage consumption of domestically produced goods. And we want to create employment with all our spending going on imported goods, Mr Chairperson, Sir! Will we continue with our spending here, make people in other countries and in Mauritius work? Can't we produce poultry here? Indeed, we have a very bad economic situation.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, I would like to review last year's proposals and appropriation which have been made. In last year's Budget, there was a very good institutional set-up, which was being proposed. I have in mind all the institutions which were proposed for a better coordination of development, be it tourism, fishing, economic development, etc.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, out of thirteen items, thirteen institutions, funds, organisations, committees which they proposed to set up, none has been set

up. Mr Chairperson, Sir, not one, has been set up. With your permission, I will quote some measures announced in 2003/2004. It looked good on paper, institutional set-up for the economy of Rodrigues. Economic development is based on very good institutional set-up. As far as the long-term Integrated Economic and Social Development Plan is concerned, we have never heard of it. We have never seen it here on the Table of the Assembly. Nobody came here with statements or with, at least, something to debate about it. It has not been made. This is the first point.

The Rodrigues Economic and Social Committee, with representatives of civil society and economic operators, has not been set up. The Rodrigues Economic Development Committee to promote investment in collaboration with the Board of Investment has not been set up.

The Rodrigues Marketing and Trade Agency to promote processing and marketing of local products with particular emphasis on exports has not been set up. The Rodrigues Tourism Promotion Authority or, at least, they could have set up a Rodrigues Tourism Office. It has not been done, Mr Chairperson, Sir, while tourism is becoming one of the backbones of our economy. So, who is going to promote tourism for Rodrigues? There was money appropriated for that. Nothing has been done, Mr Chairperson, Sir.

Concerning the one stop-shop, Mr Chairperson, Sir, to facilitate those who want to set up small and medium enterprises - we have this in our electoral manifesto also – where we could go to have application for the lease for work permits and where all the services will be offered to small entrepreneurs and entrepreneurs, in general, would be regrouped. This has not been done. I don't know whether it is invisible.

Craftsmen Welfare Shop Fund – there were a number of funds announced - was announced last year and it was not set up. Rodrigues Planters Welfare Fund is not set up. We have not seen the marine protected area at Mourouk yet.

At the level of Arts and Culture, Mr Chairperson, Sir, Regional and Cultural Leisure Centre is not done. The Cultural Council is not yet seen.

Troupe culturel de Rodrigues is not yet done. Under the Ministry of Women's Affairs, Family Welfare and Child Development, the Rodrigues Children Council is not done. The Rodrigues Women's Council is not done.

J'ai recensé treize items, M. le président. Out of these thirteen items, not even one has been realised. So, what is the seriousness of announcing a number of measures which, on paper, seems very interesting and then afterwards, not realisable? We have not proposed this; they came to the Assembly for this; they voted for this Budget and they should have realised it. Nothing has been done, Mr Chairperson, Sir. There has been a loss of time.

As far as infrastructural projects are concerned, Mr Chairperson, Sir, the construction of a number of roads was announced in last year's Budget. Much money is being left unspent. Members may refer to page 16 of the Budget Speech – Infrastructural Development. The road from Corail to Coco is not done. The road from Piment to Cascade Jean Louis is not done. The road from Rivière Coco to Rivière Coco cemetery is not done. The road from Palissade Ternel to Pont Sud-Est is not done. Even the small part of the road in local region no. 6 from the shop, on the top of the hill, to the other side of the valley adjacent to the football ground, where the Chief Commissioner has been elected, has not been done, Mr Chairperson, Sir. The Budget has been appropriated. What is the problem, Mr Chairperson, Sir?

On the water side, I don't know any small dam which has been desilted during the last financial year, Mr Chairperson, Sir. As far as desalination plant is concerned, it is true that it is a very serious project, but until now *c'est resté des déclarations d'intention seulement*.

At the level of the environment, Mr Chairperson, Sir, for the local region of La Ferme, it was announced that there will be a local plan for La Ferme in the cadre of the National Development Strategy. This has not been done, Mr Chairperson, Sir. There is no local plan actually. At least we have not seen it under the National Development Strategy for the region of La Ferme.

Under the Commission of Health, Mr Chairperson, Sir, at page 24, renovation of community health centre at Oyster Bay, which is in a very bad state of *décrépitude*, is not done, Mr Chairperson, Sir. Regarding the renovation of maternity ward and the operating theatre - this year, they are repeating it again - the money which was appropriated last year, is coming back again.

Upgrading of Mont Lubin and La Ferme Area Health Centre, which was supposed to be done last year was not done, Mr Chairperson, Sir. Renovation of concrete alleys at Queen Elizabeth Hospital which were scheduled for renovation in last year's Budget, have not been done. Even that has not been done, Mr Chairperson, Sir. What have they done with the money?

(Interruptions)

Mr Chairperson, Sir, we have much money being left unspent. Allow me to address the House on a number of items. For the promotion of tourism, Mr Chairperson, Sir, in the Estimates for year 2003/2004 at page 1, Rs1 m were scheduled; they have spent Rs290,000; they proposed to spend Rs300,000. which means 70% of the Budget for the promotion of tourism is left unspent. Rs700,000, Mr Chairperson, Sir, for the promotion of tourism was left unspent.

At page 1, item 014 – Rs5 m, Mr Chairperson, Sir, were proposed last year for dredging of the lagoon. And I believe in the memorandum, they said that this project makes provision for the cleaning of Rodrigues lagoon which has been filled with imported erosion materials and coral sand. It is a priority project for the Rodrigues Regional Assembly in a move to bring back marine life in the lagoon and encourage sailing as a tourist attraction even at low tide. Last year, Rs5 m were scheduled. They have spent up to February 2004 Rs387,300 only, that is...

(Interruptions)

Mr Chairperson, Sir, they have spent less than 10% of the Budget which was scheduled for the lagoon regeneration project. We know that pleasure craft boats have a lot of difficulties to have access to Rivière Coco, when we know that fishermen in the south-western part of the region have difficulties to navigate with their boats. What is the problem? Why have they kept all the money and not spent it?

For water supply project, it is the same thing. At page 3 of the Draft Estimates for this year, they scheduled Rs25 m for last year. Only Rs9,569,501 have been spent. They are revising when they could spend up to about Rs16 m. So, Rs9 m are not being spent on water. When we know that dams at Fond Labonté, at Accacia, in Fond Baie Malgache, dams in all parts of Rodrigues are silted with all sorts of materials. Why have they not given small contracts to small contractors and, at the same time, *faire d'une pierre deux coups, nettoyer les barrages et, en même temps, créer de l'emploi pour ceux qui sont au chômage, M. le président? Pourquoi laisser l'argent du budget dormir comme ça?*

For housing and rehabilitation programmes, it is the same thing. *On avait prévu R 15 millions en 2003/2004 et ils ont dépensé seulement R 10 millions, M. le président. Je ne sais pas qu'est-ce qu'ils vont faire avec R 5 millions, alors que pour certaines personnes les conditions de logement sont très défavorables, M. le président.*

For the Regional Agricultural Leisure Centre, Rs9 m were scheduled last year. They proposed their revised estimates of expenditure that they would be able to spend only Rs500,000. So, at least Rs8,500,000 have not been spent on this item. We see, Mr Chairperson, Sir, that their capacity of implementing projects is very restricted; and when we look at the development of capital items which have been spent last year, there is no overall proximity of realisations of regional government policies. What has improved in the island over the last year? We still don't have any bins in Port Mathurin. In Baladirou there are bins with no bottom. When you put litter in them, it falls down. Is this serious, Mr Chairperson, Sir? Are they only concerned with meetings, with seminars, with travelling, with *lafaya*, with fête? Or are they concerned with things which touch people in their everyday life?

When school children go to school, they have to walk in mud. I have in mind that part of the road at Citronelle, which passes across the Bambous Guest House going towards the MBC. Mr Chairperson, Sir, how can people use such a road in the third millennium in Rodrigues, when money is left in the Budget? They have a serious lack of implementing capacity in their government and this cannot be warranted, of course.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, allow me now make a sectoral analysis under the areas of responsibilities which our group has attributed to me, because we have divided our work so that each member can deal with a specific item. As far as State lands are concerned, before the OPR Executive Council, we have had witnessed a very sharp decline in the backlog of the applications for leases. The Central Government which was then in charge of leases had invested massively and had made much effort to eliminate that backlog. When the OPR took the affairs under the Regional Assembly, what did they say, Mr Chairperson? They said that they would stop the procedure. It is true we had a problem insofar as the interpretation of the allocation of State land is concerned. But this is not a reason to justify such inaction. All sorts of manipulation, changes and discrimination have taken place, Mr Chairperson, Sir, in the allocation of residential, industrial and commercial leases.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, many persons have applied for a lease during the last ten years and have not obtained it. Some of them have left for Mauritius; some are discouraged, frustrated, because they have valuable projects in their minds; they have dark ideas in their minds; they want to take revenge, but we are here to discourage them to do so. We want to work according to democratic means. Mr Chairperson, Sir, people whom we have never heard of have come to Rodrigues and, in less than three months, they had got the best parts of our land. They have been allowed to build big houses where they want. Mr Meunier of Baie du Nord, a fisherman fishing on the banks of St Brandon for a number of years, has got married and as the house of his parents is small, has applied for a lease and has not received any answer yet. He has built a small house made of iron sheets on a portion of land adjacent to his parents? After some time, he received a letter, threatening him that his house will be demolished. Do we have a Regional

Government here in Rodrigues, which threatens to demolish people's house? When people ask for a plot of land and they do not get it, what should they do? That is why, Mr Chairperson, Sir, we were on the streets on 20 March. I avail myself of this opportunity to thank all those who were not afraid and who participated in the demonstration.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, there has been a saga in the allocation of State lands in Rodrigues. There has been a squander of our best lands, which have been given to strangers and some with 'dirty hands'. This land issue is very serious. It is not normal that a person who applies for a lease receives a letter after some time informing him that his application cannot be entertained. The application has not been approved without any reason. We understand that it is the case for industrial leases, because not every person has the means to set up a business. But for residential leases, people working in public service, young couples and head of families are affected by this policy. People working in the private sector and hotels are entitled for a long-term loan of over twenty years at the Mauritius Housing Corporation to build up a house, but they are not given the lease. The freezing of lease allocation has a negative impact on the economy. This is very serious, because the construction sector employs informally a great number of people. I have in mind those persons employed in block-making, macadams and also those who sell building materials as well those who transport those materials. It has a multiplier effect on the construction sector. I know that we need to protect the environment. I do not mean to say that we should give leases in all parts of the island. Have they made a plan for residential housing in Rodrigues? *Est-ce qu'il y a un plan d'aménagement du territoire dont on fait référence à chaque fois?* Where will we build houses and how many houses will be built in each location? In some places where leases have been given, there is no infrastructure such as electricity, water, telephone or roads. And they say that they care for the Rodriguan population! We know that an Adviser accompanies some privileged people in residential areas to help them choose their plot of land. Is this serious when we know that there are *ti-dimounes* who are waiting for a lease since ten years? There is a lot of frustration among young couples, Mr Chairperson, Sir, who want to build their houses, but, unfortunately, they are not being granted with a lease. There is a situation of *ras le bol, un sentiment d'impuissance*.

M. le président, la terre de Rodrigues appartient à tous les Rodriguais, peu importe leur statut social, leur travail, leur couleur, et non pas uniquement à une partie de la population. A travers des communiqués à la radio, on a menacé de démolir les maisons.

Mr Chairperson: I really do not want to stop the hon. Member, but the Member should come back to the motion.

Mr J. Roussety: It concerns the general policy of the Executive Council. I do not want to argue with the Chair, but I bow to your ruling, Mr Chairperson, Sir.

Mr Chairperson: The Member may proceed, but he should bear in mind the object of the motion.

Mr J. Roussety: The object of the motion is the Budget and the Standing Orders provide that the debates shall be restricted to the general policy of the Executive Council. What I am saying concerns the general policy of the Executive Council.

Mr Chairperson: I thank the Member for drawing my attention to that.

Mr J. Roussety: Mr Chairperson, Sir, these threats have created a feeling of frustration and this is why some people have expressed - and we support them - their intention of having recourse to justice. We congratulate them for that.

The second point on which I shall intervene is tourism. We have a Tourism Development Plan, Mr Chairperson, Sir, which has been made by consultants from Deloitte & Touche before the advent of the Regional Assembly. But, up to now, we do not know the strategy for the implementation, or partial implementation, of this plan. There is no Master Plan for tourism development in Rodrigues.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, one alarming thing is the increasing number of assaults on tourists, especially women visitors in Rodrigues. This situation did not exist before. It is becoming more frequent now. It will have a negative impact on our reputation. The tourist operators in Rodrigues sell tranquility and peace and this is being threatened, because tourists are being raped. This will not promote the destination of Rodrigues.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, the RRA Government seems to give priority to big projects where big sums of money are involved. I would like to underline that tourism concerns not only big hotels with presidential suites, and rooms at Rs10,000 per night, but is also *le tourisme de marche, qui vient voir le mode de vie des Rodriguais. On a découragé grandement ce genre de tourisme. Il y avait un bouillant secteur, il est vrai informel, d'accueil, d'hébergement, qui avait commencé à se développer. Malheureusement, avec toutes sortes de menaces, on a tué cet esprit de développement du tourisme où chacun essayait de voir comment il pouvait offrir quelque chose aux touristes.* This is killing the free enterprise, the free market spirit and today jobs are threatened in the tourism industry. Are members aware of the industrial relations in big hotels? Employees get their salaries on the 3rd or 4th of each month. They do not have holidays and some of them work as slaves. When they say that they will set up a trade union, their jobs are being threatened. They are being told that if they want to go, they are free to do so, because there are other people waiting for the jobs. Tourism is a promising sector, but is it contributing to the economic and social affairs in Rodrigues?

Mr Chairperson, Sir, no tourism office has been set up. Last year, there was provision for the setting up of a Tourism Authority. But this has not been done. We have had feed-back from tourists who have visited Rodrigues. They say that Rodrigues is not tourist-friendly. For example, at Pointe Cotton, there is no public telephone service. The tourists do not know where they are and what is the plan of the region. They do not know where are the beaches. They do not know where to go and what place to visit. In countries, like Réunion Island, for example, tourists are well informed; there are indicators to guide the tourists. There are also booklets to inform them about attractions all over the island.

As far as immediate environment is concerned, Rodrigues is not user friendly. One thing, which has been underlined, is that there is not enough expenditure on the part of tourists visiting our island. There are lots of visitors who come with foreign currency and on what do they spend their money? There are only one or two good restaurants where they can go. What about developing under the duty-free zone, Mr Chairman, Sir, things like jewellery, luxury goods, which they can buy? Linking tourism with that duty-free zone would be a good strategy. It will be more interesting for the tourists to enjoy sun, sand, and sea and benefit also from a good shopping. This is not the case today. What can they buy at the moment? *Quelques tentes, quelques chapeaux, des pots de piments. Croyez vous qu'ils seront intéressés avec cela ? Nous avons besoin de développer les entreprises sur lesquelles les touristes pourraient dépenser leur argent, leur devises étrangères quand ils viennent à Rodrigues. Il y a aussi la nécessité dans ce secteur de créer de nouvelles attractions. Les jeunes surtout y viennent souvent pour visiter les caves, l'île aux Cocos et faire le tour de l'île et il n'y a rien ensuite. Ils sont donc forcés de partir bien vite. Je pense que s'il y avait d'autres attractions, naturelles et non-naturelles, on aurait pu les encourager à rester et donc dépenser plus d'argent.*

En ce qui concerne l'agriculture, M. le président, comme je vous ai dit au début de mon discours, il n'y a pas assez d'incitation, surtout après le cyclone Kalundé pour aider les agriculteurs. Les agriculteurs doivent faire face à des coûts très élevés et en contrepartie quand ils vont vendre leurs produits, parfois il n'y a pas de marché pour les garantir ou bien les prix sont très bas au bazar. Il y a un secteur spécifique de l'agriculture sur lequel je voudrais m'accentuer, c'est l'apiculture. Il n'y a rien de prévu dans le budget pour accroître la production de miel. Kalundé a fait de grands ravages; certains opérateurs dans ce secteur sont très mal en point. *There is nothing provided in this budget for this sector.*

Mauritius imports honey from Rodrigues and what has been done to promote honey production? We have market in Mauritius and honey from Rodrigues is well appreciated all over the world. We have got medals for our honey in London. The Chief Commissioner as well as the Commissioner for Agriculture seems to pay no attention to the difficulties faced by this very promising sector, Mr Chairperson, Sir.

As regards water resources, Mr Chairperson, Sir, I was visiting some persons recently who told me that they do have pipes. Investments have been made, but unfortunately there is no water flowing in the pipes. What is the need then of spending millions of rupees when there is no water going into the pipes? Is it only to show that the pipes have been laid!

Mr Chairperson, Sir, water production is still a big problem, a bottleneck in Rodrigues economic development. We would propose and we foresee the need for a proper institution to manage the production and the distribution of water. Mr Chairperson, Sir, as we have mentioned in our electoral manifesto, that institution could be a Rodrigues Water Company or Rodrigues Water Authority; it would have *une marge de manoeuvre, indépendante, qui pourrait travailler sous la commission des infrastructures publiques pour être responsable de la distribution, la production et du captage de l'eau, parceque la gestion de l'eau, M. le président, est quand même une science. Le Water Unit, je pense, est dépassé par les besoins actuels et les besoins futurs que nous prévoyons dans ce secteur.*

Concerning the desalination plants, I would like to know if there is really a true solution, Mr Chairperson, Sir. Shall we not repair the small dams and reservoirs when we know that the setting up of the desalination plants will have much strain on our budget both in terms of initial capital investments and recurring costs? Who would pay for that? They do not even know what are the costs? Therefore, there is need for proper reflection before going ahead with these projects.

As regards Pistache Dams, it has not even been mentioned in the Budget Speech. We do not see very big improvements as far as the water sector is concerned. We see that money is being left unspent in the Budget.

I will now turn to the ICT, Internet and Communication Technologies, Mr Chairperson, Sir. Though they enunciated ten priorities, there are no incentives, no measures to improve the ICT culture in Rodrigues. The RRA, which exists two years now, does not even have its own web site. There is no provision made for this. So, if somebody is in Spain and wants to know who is the Chief Commissioner, the Chairperson, and the Clerk or wants to know about provisions of the RRA will not be able to search on the net. The only thing that he has is to write whereas if we have our own web site at the

RRA, all the necessary information, the list of the Members and their email addresses can be found on the net.

Mr Chairperson: I am sorry to interrupt you, but I think we do have a web site, which has just started.

Mr J. Roussety: It is a big surprise for me, Mr Chairperson, Sir. There is a problem of communication then, because as a Minority Leader I have not assisted to its launching.

Mr Chairperson: We do appreciate your comments.

(Interruptions)

Order, please!

Mr J. Roussety: I was not aware, Mr Chairperson, Sir. There is a problem of communication in the House.

Mr Chairperson: It is not at the Commissioners' end, but as the Assembly's seat, here.

Mr J. Roussety: You will give me the address afterwards.

Mr Chairperson: Of course.

Mr J. Roussety: I will go and have an immediate look at it and see whether the Minority has been duly represented on the site, because otherwise we will make representations.

Mr Chairperson: I will see to it. I note your comments.

Mr J. Roussety: We will appreciate that if such things happen in the future, we are informed...

Mr Chairperson: Yes, of course.

Mr J. Roussety: ... and our views given, because construction of web site is a serious matter and we do not know whether we have our picture there.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, in Mauritius we have Government on line. You can apply for jobs to the PSC through the net. Is the Executive Council on line? There are many persons of Rodriguan origins in Australia who are interested to know what happens here. Will they be able to know the decisions of the Executive Council? Are they on line? I do not know. I have never seen it.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, the cost of IT materials, of hardware as well software and the cost of connection to the Internet is still very high. This is a very big impeachment on the development of access to Internet. The speed is also very low. So, we have no project for RRA on line. I have just been informed that there is web site for the RRA. Rodrigues, in general, is not making use of the big door open on the world, which is the Internet, the new technology.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, we have heard that SAFE, the South African Far East cable, will come to Rodrigues. Someone from the Mauritius Telecom has made a deliberation on that, but since then we have heard nothing. We are already isolated geographically, but today it is not impossible for us to be open on the world with good technologies. Job prospects are immense in that sector, but proper strategies are needed and, of course, we have heard nothing on this.

The last item on which I would like to intervene and which falls under our areas of responsibility is commerce and licensing. Mr Chairperson, Sir, again there is a freezing of licences. There has been a freezing of licences with all sorts of constraints being imposed on entrepreneurs. They face a lot of difficulties to obtain permits. There are all sorts of restrictions and these are, of course, against the principles of free markets and free enterprises. The Commission responsible for this has killed a number of projects and is still killing them. To obtain a licence we must produce all sorts of papers. There are all sorts of administrative procedures. The decision must be taken jointly by the Police, the Fire Services, the Sanitary Services and it takes months for somebody to obtain a permit to operate. Mr Chairperson, Sir,

this is not serious. In a market economy, there is what we call very often, especially in developing economies, a very great contribution, which is made by informal sectors. By informal sectors, Mr Chairperson, Sir, I mean people obtaining their lives in informal sectors, for example, making cakes and selling them somewhere, near a school, near a factory or in a busy street. These people should be allowed to earn their living, Mr Chairperson. Do we need a permit for everything? Si on veut vendre des brèdes demain, avec un panier sur la tête, est-ce qu'on doit avoir un permis? Est-ce la politique de répression économique qu'on veut installer à Rodrigues? C'est cette politique de répression économique qui cause encore plus de chômage. Il y avait des gens qui vendaient des CDs, des *fancy goods* à la gare routière et on leur a demandé de stopper. On estime environ 100 emplois directs et indirects qui ont été détruits, *destroying job*, Mr Chairperson, *this is what the regional Government is doing*.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, allow me to bring to the House a small theoretical contribution about economic growth which was made by Paul Samuelson, Nobel Prize in Economics in 1970, which I think, is a contribution to the minds of our friends from the majority. He spoke about the four wheels of economic growth; in Rodrigues, this is applicable. He asked himself what is the recipe for economic growth. He says that economists who have studied growth have found that the engine for economic progress must ride on the same four wheels and no matter how rich or poor the country is, these four wheels or factors of growth are -

Human Resources, that is, the labour force, the education, the discipline and the motivation of the labour force, the quality of labour inputs, the skills, knowledge and discipline of the labour force.

The second item is the natural resources. These include the natural wealth of the country such as oil, gas etc. and it is said, Mr Chairperson, Sir, that we should not accept that fatality. I have heard a number of speeches being made to the effect that Rodrigues is a small island of 104 square kilometres. Singapore is smaller than Mauritius, but it is a giant in South East Asia, in the world. It has no water and it imports water from uplands, but it is a leader in the world. Our political leaders acknowledge that we are small and we cannot do development. This is fatality and we refuse it. So,

the possession of natural resources is not necessary for economic success in the modern world. Many countries that have virtually no natural resources, such as Japan, have thrived by concentrating on sectors that depend more on labour and capital than on indigenous resources. Hong Kong, for example, which is a tiny fraction of land in China, has actually a larger volume of international trade than its giant neighbour.

The third thing is capital formation. Of course, capital is crucial as it enables the widening of the productive capacity of the economy. Economists often speak of gross fixed capital formation annually to qualify the addition to a total stock of capital of a country. What is the addition to capital stock of Rodrigues in the last Budget? Has it been estimated? The Minister of Finance speaks of it when he presents his Budget in Mauritius. There is need for social capital and need for private capital also.

The fourth and last wheel is technological change and innovation, that is, the level of technology in a country and, of course, if the technology is low, economic growth is low. We are concerned with economic growth here – our target. Economic growth inevitably rides on the four wheels of labour, natural resources, capital and technology, but the wheels may differ greatly among countries and some of them combine them more effectively than others. In Rodrigues, Sir, our four wheels of growth are present. What is the state of economic growth here as far as each wheel is concerned? In our schools, our colleges, alarmingly in some primary schools we have very low pass rates. This is carelessness by the Commissioner for Education. What is the poverty situation in regions like Rivière Coco? What is the situation in primary education also today in Rodrigues, when we know that the World Bank recommends that emphasis be laid on basic primary education, because this is the main motor for literacy and growth in the future?

There is also discipline at work, Sir, not only in the public service, but in the private sector. What about productivity in Rodrigues? What is being done? What has been done? What has been proposed in this Budget to enhance the productivity culture? The NPCC which was doing a good work in Rodrigues is dead. We do not hear about them.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, we must point out that our human resources are our greatest assets, what can truly make Rodrigues emerge out of the third

millennium. However, human resource development is being neglected. We have the land and the sea as our main resources. There is more and more pressure on it for construction purposes. We have not heard anything in the Budget proposals for town and country planning. It seems that the priority of the regional Government is to curtail the symptoms of the illness only and not to provide a cure for the elimination of the problem.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, it serves nothing to threaten people with the demolition of illegal constructions if, on the other hand, the issue of leases is being frozen. The specific social conditions here have always allowed for people to be granted residential leases, to build their house, grow some crops and raise some animals around the house. This is the specific Rodriguan lifestyle and it must be preserved, of course. If you freeze the leases, you prevent the people from living as they are so eager to defend when the *festival créole* comes. But they do not give the people the means to live that culture. The solution, Mr Chairperson, in the issue of land is not to threaten people with law and regulations, but to provide the necessary framework in which they can operate correctly. People, especially the youths - like anywhere else in the world - have dreams. They want to build their house, get married, have children and a family of their own. The OPR Regional Government is destroying young people's dreams and ambitions by not granting permits, freezing everything. Moreover, leases are being screened so that the applications of political opponents are thrown to the bin or simply delayed. Every time the leases are being re-examined, building permits *l'escalier pas gagne droit mettre dehors; femme pas capave gagne bail*.

(Interruptions)

This is the story you invented...

Mr Chairperson: Order please!

Mr J. Roussety: *The polls will speak by themselves in due course.* L'hégémonie de l'OPR est terminée. La population a compris ce que c'est qu'un vrai débat politique. Les nouveaux camarades, les militants qui nous rejoignent, qui ont vu clair, parlent maintenant de liberté ou d'ouverture d'esprit alors qu'il n'y avait que frustration, incompréhension et déception.

M. le président, la mer est notre deuxième plus grande ressource naturelle mais qu'en est-il de sa mise à contribution pour notre développement économique. On a beaucoup parlé de port de pêche à Port Sud Est et à Pointe Monier, rien n'est suivi.

M. le président, j'ai des reproches *on policy* à faire et je crois qu'elles sont justifiées; et ceux à qui elles s'adressent le méritent. Maurice avec le Joint Economic Council et le secteur privé mauricien viennent dénoncer leurs ambitions de devenir un *seafood hub* dans la région de l'océan indien. C'est bien pour Maurice! M. le président, que font nos dirigeants dans ce secteur? Quelle est la vision stratégique pour la pêche, la production de poissons. Clairement, M. le président, à cause de l'inertie et l'absence de stratégie active dans ce secteur, Rodrigues va perdre un de ses plus bons éléments dans son développement, c'est-à-dire, le secteur de la pêche hauturière.

M. le président, mon équipe avait parlé dans son manifeste électoral aux élections régionales de 2002, de faire de Rodrigues une plaque tournante pour l'industrie de la pêche dans les îles Mascareignes et dans l'océan indien en général. Cela aurait inclu la pêche elle-même, le transbordement du poisson, la transformation etc. Savez-vous combien d'emplois directs et indirect auraient pu être créés dans cette stratégie? Beaucoup, M. le président. Malheureusement Port Louis, Maurice, le secteur privé mauricien a été plus rapide que nos soi-disants génies du conseil executif. C'est Rodrigues qui perd substantiellement un créneau de développement durable et soutenu. Je ne pense pas que si Rodrigues avait exprimé son intention de devenir un centre régional de la pêche pour le *seafood products* qui ont une forte valeur ajoutée dans l'océan indien, Maurice, Port Louis formerait partie de cela parce que Port Louis est déjà un port franc. Le volume de fret qui transite par Port Louis est déjà élevé; ils veulent encore développer. Mais si Rodrigues avait exprimé son intention de se spécialiser dans la pêche ce sont ces services qui auraient pu être délégués à Rodrigues, car c'est la même économie nationale. Que va-t-on faire? On va regarder Maurice se développer de loin. Pourquoi? Maurice a des interactions, des politiques économiques qu'ils appliquent; ils vont à l'étranger chercher des technologies et des investisseurs qu'il faut alors que nous nous asseyons!

Concernant formation du capital, much has been done on the side of road development. However, in general the social capital stock of the island is getting all the need replacement. The big problem is maintenance which, in fact, is practically non-existent. Private capital formation also is not enough. Rodrigues imports a lot of motor vehicles, for example, but not enough machinery and equipment.

Finally, the fourth wheel of growth in Rodrigues is technological change and innovation. As a small island, we've limited opportunities for industrial-led growth. Rodrigues cannot benefit from the economies of scale made available for the use of mass production, technologies. The future of our economy lies in the hands of SMEs, which, in fact, are the largest providers of jobs even in big economies like the USA. What do we have to favour and inculcate the technological culture in SMEs? Technological enhancement in that Budget. There is the SME diffusion scheme, which was adjacent to the office of the SMIDO. It is closed.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, if really the Executive Council wants to further boost the economic growth in Rodrigues, we need to rethink our strategies as it serves nothing to come to the Assembly, to present a Budget every year, with good intentions and then not to realise them. Employment will not be created if we do not fine-tune our economic policies. But, what are the targets for employment creation with regard to that Budget? What are the targets for growth? What are the targets for agriculture? Nothing! We don't see anything!

Mr Chairperson, Sir, I would end my speech by saying that this Budget is very deceiving. C'est un budget cosmétique. On a maquillé un document pour faire croire à la population qu'on a vraiment l'intention de le développer. L'intention est là, c'est vrai, mais la capacité, la compétence de cette équipe, qui nous gouverne aujourd'hui, est très limitée. On en juge par les résultats de l'année dernière. Le chômage a augmenté; il n'y a pas de croissance économique. La balance de paiement est en déficit. Il y a de la frustration dans le pays; il y a la frustration dans le secteur public. Beaucoup de gens partent à la retraite prématurément à cause de certaines pratiques.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, I would end by saying that actions speak louder than words.

Thank you, Mr Chairperson, Sir.

The Commissioner of Social Security, Labour and Industrial Relations (Mr R. Mercure): Mr Chairperson, first of all, I would like to make a small comment on what has been said concerning industrial relation in hotels. The Minority Leader may wish to know that many working sessions were organised in different hotels on a roaster basis. I, personally, attended each session to sensitise the employers to set up trade unions.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, during the different sessions pamphlets were given insofar as the rights of workers are concerned. Recently, an Occupational and Safety Inspector went there to talk about the health and safety aspects. We are encouraging employers to set up trade unions. So far, our office has not received any complaints with regard to abuse.

Secondly, I would like to draw the attention of the Minority Leader to the fact that the financial year 2003/2004 is not over yet. Up to February 2004, a sum of Rs248.3 m. was spent and Rs141.4 m. was committed in different projects. I would suggest the Minority Leader to read page 11 of the Budget Speech of the Chief Commissioner – it is in simple English - and to please do a simple addition.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, let me, at the very outset, express my deep appreciation and congratulate the Chief Commissioner for his second Budget Speech that has successfully identified the priorities of Rodrigues and the measures required for consolidating and strengthening our socio-economic development programme.

Some of the measures announced originate from ideas and suggestions of the civil society during the consultation stage and I avail myself of this opportunity to join the Chief Commissioner in thanking all stakeholders, especially the NGOs who have brought their fruitful contributions.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, I am particularly appreciative to the social dimension of this budget, which demonstrates the preoccupation and commitment of this Executive Council to ensure a people-centered development process that does not leave behind people, but empower them to participate and get along in our development programme.

Tackling poverty and social exclusion remains an urgent priority for Rodrigues. This Budget provides the necessary framework for action in various sectors, including education, training, health, infrastructures and others in order to facilitate access to the poor and vulnerable segment of the population to these services.

I am convinced that the measures identified to boost up the productive sectors such as tourism, agriculture and fisheries will be an impetus to our job creation strategy. These altogether will support our ongoing poverty alleviation and social inclusion programme and offer an integrated approach towards achieving these objectives.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, as Members of this Assembly are aware, this year has been declared as “*L’Année de la Culture de l’Entrepreneuriat*” by the Executive Council. This Budget is being presented with the objective of promoting and sustaining the spirit of entrepreneuriat amongst our population, especially the youths.

Employment creation is indeed very high on the agenda of the present governing Executive Council and is one of our priority objectives. The merit of this Budget is that it addresses this issue in a productivity perspective and the proposed reform of the public sector is aiming towards this goal. There is no doubt that the measures announced to boost up our economic sectors such as agriculture, fisheries and tourism, coupled with the development of the announced water supply projects, will stimulate the creation of more small and medium enterprises.

The proposed establishment of a Rodrigues Chamber of Commerce will be one of the main drives that will lead to the consolidation and strengthening of the SMEs and the private sector in general.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, I am particularly sensitive to the special attention that has been given in this Budget to the vulnerable groups, particularly the disabled and the elderly. This shows our determination to provide adequate

social protection in the face of the difficult economic context that the world is facing.

Despite the fact that measures have been adequately set forth to consolidate our economy, we should at the same time reckon that there is still need to provide direct financial assistance to those who are in need. The provision of Rs18 m. in the recurrent estimate for the payment of social aid is indicative of our commitment to protect the poor. This provision will be used as financial assistance to be paid to the poorer section of our society and those who are unable to earn a living.

Other categories of people who require financial assistance are our senior citizens, the invalid, and those unemployed persons who have family responsibilities and whose income are not sufficient to meet their needs. Necessary provision to the tune of Rs111.4 m. has been made for these requirements despite budgetary constraints.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, our senior citizens are the people who have strived and worked very hard under extremely difficult conditions for the construction and advancement of our society. All of us here in this Assembly are the products of their struggle during the course of our history. They deserve better attention and care from us, the younger generation. New items have thus been introduced to reach that goal. Our objective is to ensure that our elder people are not placed at the risk of poverty and can enjoy a decent standard of living, that they share the economic well-being and can participate actively in the public, social and cultural life.

As announced by the Chief Commissioner, we will set up six health and nutrition clubs throughout Rodrigues. These clubs will be based in community centres and will be animated by Community Nursing Officers, Community Health Agents and representatives of the Rodrigues Council of Social Services and the Senior Citizen Associations.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, these clubs will be provided with simple apparatus to enable regular health checks for hypertension and diabetes. Regular education programme will be organised for the benefit of the elderly on the appropriate nutritional culture. We want them to age in dignity and in good health.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, I am very pleased to note that another item has also been introduced with a provision of Rs200,000 to enable a proper commemoration of the International Day of the Elderly.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, protection of the disabled persons also has a high place in our social protection agenda. A grant-in-aid to the tune of Rs90,000 to the Rodrigues Association of the Disabled has been maintained. In addition, a new provision has been included with a view to assisting the Association for the Mentally Handicapped Children to run its training programme for the benefit of children having mental handicap.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, I have personally visited this centre at Citronelle and I have been impressed by the laudable work which is being done to reintegrate these children in the society. There has been remarkable progress in this connection although the association is facing financial difficulties to continue its programme. This Budget brings an important support to the initiative of this association through the provision of a grant-in-aid to the tune of Rs150,000.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, I would like to draw the attention of the respected Members of this Assembly that, so far, we have been facing serious difficulties in meeting the demands of the disabled persons for assistance in kind such as wheelchairs, spectacles and auditive apparatus. There is an urgent need to provide an appropriate centre for both the elderly and disabled persons so that they may have appropriate recreational and training facilities.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, I would like to thank the Chief Commissioner, who has been particularly sensitive to this need, and has provided in this Budget, a Capital Estimate Provision of Rs1.5 m. to meet these demands. Part of this sum will be used as consultancy fee for the construction of this centre, which will be the recreational and training hub for the elderly and the disabled.

As announced by the Chief Commissioner in his speech, we are setting up a Network Support Services Unit to be located at Mont Lubin very soon. This is a project funded by the Lux-Development Programme and the Rodrigues Regional Assembly, and two members from our staff are being trained in Mauritius with a view to accompanying those who have social difficulties.

The objective is to bring existing competence and service facilities to these persons instead of *vice versa*. The Unit will, therefore, act as a one-stop shop that will coordinate individual needs. The Network Support Services Unit will also, where appropriate, encourage individuals to identify projects and coordinate their realisations with a view to helping these persons in achieving social and economic autonomy.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, we are aiming at reducing the overall risks of poverty and social exclusion during the years to come. We are convinced that the investment we are making in our social policies, alongside sound economic and employment policies, as contained in this budget, will lead to lower levels of poverty and social exclusion.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, with regard to social protection, there are a series of other measures that have been introduced. The creation of a new post of Principal Social Security Officer in the recurrent estimates prepares for the eventual setting up of an Award Unit in Rodrigues. This will significantly accelerate access to existing schemes of benefits/pensions to those who are in need.

Provision is also made for the recruitment of one Trainee Labour and Industrial Relations officer and one Occupational Safety and Health Officer. This will enable the strengthening of a proper structuring of the Labour Office into a full-fledged Labour and Industrial Relations Division that will better ensure a proper and decent work environment that promotes social dialogue and productivity.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, I would qualify this Budget as being highly innovative and original. It has successfully addressed the real challenge that we will have to meet.

It provides the appropriate momentum to ensure that those who are most at risk do not suffer disproportionately from the economic growth that it will entail.

It offers a consistent link between our social inclusion strategies and the economic and employment policies and ensures that they are mutually reinforcing.

The Chief Commissioner, in his speech, has rightly highlighted the vital importance of our human resource. This Budget provides the necessary mechanisms for the protection and empowerment of our people. We all need to look in the same direction as this is an investment for to-morrow's peace, security and development.

Thank you for your attention.

Mr F. A. Grandcourt (The First Local Region Member for La Ferme): Mr Chairperson, Sir, first of all, I would like to congratulate the Minority Leader, who has made an on-spot analysis of the situation in the island.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, before considering the shortcomings of this Budget, I would like to show my appreciation about the decision of employing in the near future 187 employees for the Anti Erosion Programme and this has always been the wish of the Minority and I hope

(Interruptions)

Mr Chairperson: Order, please!

Mr Grandcourt: I repeat, this has always been the wish of this Minority and the first question I asked in this Assembly was about the employment of these anti-erosion workers on the Rodrigues establishment.

(Interruptions)

Mr Chairperson: No interruption please.

Mr Grandcourt: Mr Chairperson, Sir, let us now consider one of the issues which has not received Government's attention in this Budget, which is our environment. Mr Chairperson, Sir, since Rodrigues is a very small island, it has got a very fragile ecosystem and we believe that money should be spent whenever necessary to preserve our resources; and it seems that this Governing Executive Council does not understand the importance of such an issue. In the estimates 2003/2004, out of Rs1 m earmarked for the protection

of the environment, only Rs141,770. have been used up to February this year.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, we believe that this money could be used to realise small projects, for example, sensitisation programmes in schools and the installation of more public bins in the streets of Port Mathurin and other public places around the island.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, can someone in this House tell me where along the street of François Leguat a public bin has been placed?

(Interruptions)

No one, Mr Chairperson, Sir, because there is no bin along the street of François Leguat. And this is a shame, especially towards those visiting our country.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, another important issue that has not been given due consideration is soil erosion. This has been considered last year by a Member from the majority side as an evil. It is still an evil and they are feeding this evil.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, the actual situation is a simple disaster and the amount earmarked to control soil erosion in the estimates 2003/2004 was Rs20 m whereas for this year, we see that it is only Rs1 m. It has dropped from Rs20 m to R1 m. We strongly believe, Mr Chairperson, Sir, that Rs1 m is not enough. Fortunately, Mr Chairperson, Sir, we have had international funds and expertise to control this problem. However, Mr Chairperson, Sir, it is aberrant to note that while international funds are being used to combat soil erosion, what are the local authorities doing? They are dumping excavated solid waste in the sea.

(Interruptions)

We are not against development, Mr Chairperson, Sir, but we believe that it should be as environment friendly as possible.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, another simple example which shows the lack of seriousness of this Local Government towards combating soil erosion is the disposal of excavated soil from the construction site of Maréchal swimming

pool. This excavated soil has been deposited everywhere on the island, as I have just stated, even in the sea. The dumping has been carried out for weeks without any proper control from the authorities.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, all those responsible for the monitoring of our environment are to be blamed, even if in his Budget Speech, the former Chief Commissioner, Jean Daniel Spéville stated, I quote -

“The *Police de l’Environnement* will be strengthened to exercise better control over illegal dumping and polluters”

(Interruptions)

What are they doing today, Mr Chairperson, Sir? It is simply the contrary. Indeed, it is noted with great concern....

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

Mr Grandcourt: It is noted with great concern that no concrete actions have been taken to stop polluting the environment. Talking about pollution, what have the authorities done to combat pollution at Montagne Plate? This is causing not only harm to the inhabitants of Anse Nicolas, but to the sea as well. In this area, Mr Chairperson, Sir, sedimentation due to pollution has caused a lot of damage to marine ecosystem; and in this Budget, we noted that only Rs2 m. have been earmarked for dredging works in the lagoon compared to Rs5 m. in the last year’s Budget. What is most striking, Mr Chairperson, Sir, is that out of the Rs5 m. earmarked only Rs387,300 have been used up to February this year.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, we have serious doubts about the real reasons why the cleaning of the lagoon has not yet started though it should have been considered as a priority project. It is stipulated on page 30 item 30-101.014 – Lagoon Regeneration Project of the draft Capital Budget for this financial year, but the project could not be implemented due to lack of dredging equipment. However, it is interesting to recall Question No. B/397 raised by the First Local Region Member of Rivière Coco, Mr Emilien about the digging of canals around the island where the Chief Commissioner has replied that the dredging works are done manually.

When it is obvious that works to be done manually require only simple tools like spades, forks, buckets and so on.

Secondly, taking into consideration the fact that money has been earmarked for the project, why is it that dredging equipment has not been ordered in time?

Mr Chairperson, Sir, another environmental problem affecting marine ecosystem is coastal erosion. However, in this Budget, no provision has been made to reduce soil erosion on the main land as well as surrounding islands like Ile aux Cocos and Ile aux Sables.

However, Mr Chairperson, Sir, we have noted that no intensive and long-term reafforestation programme has been envisaged within this Budget as well as the control of invasive plants like *piquant loulou* which is accelerating the soil erosion process. I don't know whether on the majority side they are aware that Rodrigues is becoming a *piquant loulou* island, Mr Chairperson, Sir, and nothing is done.

We have also noted, Mr Chairperson, Sir, that no programme has been set up aiming at discouraging people from using plastic bags as stated by the former Chief Commissioner one year back.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, let us now move on to the fishing sector. Nowadays, with the increase of unemployment, more and more Rodriguans are depending on marine resources to earn a living. This results in the catching of smaller fishes and the destruction of marine fauna and flora. We are of the opinion, Mr Chairperson, Sir, that the fishing sector has been completely neglected in this Budget. No alternative occupation has been proposed as to how to reduce pressure on octopus fishing, especially for the fisherwomen. No provision has been made to exploit the shrimp net fishing sector, which shows a good production capacity. Some shrimp fishing permits have not been issued in due time. Out of 15 permits allowed by the Government, there are still four permits, which have not been issued yet.

It is noted that no provision has also been made to provide shelter for boats around the island during cyclonic seasons. Moreover, Mr Chairperson, Sir, no provision has been made to provide end-of-year bonus to fishermen eligible for bad weather allowance.

Our issue relating to this sector which requires our full attention, Mr Chairperson, Sir, is illegal fishing. It seems that no provision has been made to combat illegal fishing. With the coming into force of the RRA, we thought that this problem would be solved, but instead, Mr Chairperson, Sir, it has been increased considerably. Mr Chairperson, Sir, the problem of illegal fishing is concentrated in one or two areas of the island only and it is being performed by some people only. Net fishing activities in some parts of the island occur all year round and have developed into a sort of mafia causing fear among our fishermen, especially when they operate at night. Mr Chairperson, Sir, there are *fantômes* operating in this country. Mr Chairperson, Sir, it is unfortunate to say that this mafia is headed, amongst others, by Fisheries Protection Officers causing much harm...

(Interruptions)

Mr Chairperson: These are very serious allegations that the Member is making in this Assembly. Probably, it is at the back of the people concerned. If the hon. Member has got a case, I suggest that he refers the matter to the Police or to the appropriate institutions.

Mr Grandcourt: Mr Chairperson, Sir, it is unfortunate, but I had to say it. The facts are the facts. It seems, Mr Chairperson, Sir, that the authorities concerned have no control over such a situation and have got no solution to solve it.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, as far as agriculture is concerned, this Budget shows many shortcomings. Everybody knows the situation of agricultural sector in Rodrigues. If we look at the statistics, agricultural production and marketing have declined considerably. Even nowadays poultry farmers are facing difficulties to sell their products. We believe that if this regional Government wants to really boost agriculture, more money should be earmarked for irrigation. The sum of Rs2.8 m. is not enough. It is surprising, Mr Chairperson, Sir, that no provision has been made for any irrigation project in the western part of the island like Camp Pintade and Baie Topaze where most of our agricultural lands are found. It is more surprising, Mr Chairperson, Sir, that no provision has been made to use water from Telbert dam for irrigation in the area. It has not even been mentioned.

Another shortcoming noted in this Budget, Mr Chairperson, Sir, is that no provision has been made to provide planters with proper mechanical equipment to plough their land. Actually, there are some planters who are still waiting for the land to be ploughed by Government tractors unless the Commissioner, Mr Chairperson, Sir, intends to introduce the cart and bull method to plough the land.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, to conclude, I would say that this Budget shows no long-term master plan for the conservation of our resources and to cope with the future development of this country.

Thank you, Mr Chairperson, Sir.

At 12.15 p.m. the sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 1.15 p.m. with Mr Chairperson in the Chair.

The Deputy Chairperson (Mr J. Pierre Louis): Mr Chairperson, Sir, this year we'll be celebrating the second anniversary of our autonomy and only 17 months have elapsed since the setting up of the Regional Assembly and the Executive Council.

However, it is interesting to note that our island is developing in every sense of the word. It is rather amazing to hear from the Minority Leader that the result is zero whilst, on the other hand, the total sum earmarked for the Budget will be used to the utmost. What sort of analysis has he made? We can understand clearly why the poor children from Citron Donis have very poor results in Economics.

Mr J. Roussety: Sir, on a point of order.

Mr Chairperson: There is a point of order.

Mr J. Roussety: My profession is teacher at Citron Donis. I would not allow the Member to attack my professional integrity and, at the same time, Mr Chairperson, Sir, attack the integrity or reputation of school children. I am a professional, I hold a PGCE Post-Graduate Certificate in Education, a Master in Economics, B.Sc. in Econometrics. I won't admit

that he attacks my personal integrity. If he has things to say on my ideas, I welcome it. I would ask him to withdraw his words and to present his apologies to the management of REDCO and Citron Donis College.

Mr Chairperson: Has the Member anything to explain in support of this?

Mr Pierre Louis: I withdraw, Mr Chairperson, Sir.

Mr Chairperson: I need to give my ruling first. Of course, thank you for withdrawing these words. I do understand that you are on a point of developing an idea and I have not even got the whole subject matter of it, but there has been a point of order. I understand that the Minority Leader has well taken the point. He anticipated what probably you might have in mind. So, it is not permissible to make a speech or to debate on a subject of personal matter. If it is really personal, then I won't allow it.

Mr Pierre Louis: Mr Chairperson, Sir, one who has been abroad for five years cannot believe his eyes when he comes back here. The development here is palpable. The greatest transformation we have observed is probably social, economic and cultural. There is a greater awareness of our responsibility to forge ahead, economic in the sense that now there is a promotion of self-reliance which hopefully see the springing up of small enterprises which will eventually provide job creation all over the island.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, there is also a political transformation, the consciousness that our destiny lies in our hands. The Chief Commissioner's Budget Speech contains, in the essence, the basic political belief and will. We fully believe in the success of our autonomy, which lies on efficiency, discipline and hard work.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, we have struggled for our autonomy and we have no intention of swimming with the waves. We know where we want to go and we are determined to keep on that path. We don't believe that the best way to ensure the poor to have a better life is to provide charity. Li Kwan Yu, the former Prime Minister of Singapore said: "Give a man a gold coin, he will spend it and will ask for more." We believe that all men and women in this country must be given a chance to make the fullest use of

their own talents by keeping at their disposal the appropriate education, training and support.

(Interruptions)

Mr Chairperson: No interruptions, please!

Mr Pierre Louis: Mr Chairperson, Sir, it is just 17 months that this Government is in office, tremendous efforts are being made to ensure a better life for our citizens. After just 17 months, Mr Chairperson, Sir, the Regional Assembly has improved considerably the road network and it is still under way. Reservoirs and dams are being built and the distribution network is being improved to give adequate water supply for both domestic and irrigation purposes. Youth and sports facilities are being upgraded and a new sports infrastructure is being constructed. New *Ecoles des Sports* are being created. There is the construction of the secondary school at Mon Lubin, completion of Citron Donis College and the extension of Le Chou and Marechal colleges.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, the social aspect has also not been neglected. There has been the payment of bad weather allowance to fishermen to the tune of Rs56 m. in the present financial year. There is the construction of 83 low cost housing units for low-income earners. More than Rs5 m. have been made available to provide for the costs of labour to the 65 housing units donated by the Trust Fund to victims of cyclone Kalundé.

Much effort is being made to preserve our environment. Mr Chairperson, Sir, land resources issue is a major issue that the Executive Council will have to consider. It has to be managed judiciously in order not to jeopardise the future of the island's economy.

John Rawls, an English philosopher says "We have to leave enough and as good for the next generation" while our friends on the other side of the House say: "*Arrange zotte lacaze cotte zotte envie, si zotte gagne problème vine guette nous.*" We are only 104 square kilometres and we cannot afford to build houses anywhere and at any time. We are not trying to avoid unjust criticisms. We do not have the tendency to play safe and to create a climate of sycophancy fancy. Plain truth has been said and the

people will judge who is bluffing. The Chief Commissioner is wise in his approach and he is acting according to law.

The draft estimates for the year 2004/2005 before the House and presented by the Chief Commissioner is, in fact, a very good Budget. The budgetary measures are for equity and equality. No one, Mr Chairperson, Sir, has been left unattended, even prisons have been given due consideration.

I am going to list some of the measures, which augur well the future socio-economic activities of the island. Employment, Mr Chairperson, Sir, of 187 labourers are now working under the Anti Erosion Programme in July this year by the RRA.

Second, the School Feeding Project for primary schools – I understand that milk, local fruits and eggs to the tune of Rs2.2 m, more than 5,000 children, especially the poor will benefit from the project on the one side and on the other side, a market will be created for fruit planters and fruit production will be increased.

Third, to promote the transfer of knowledge, know-how and technology, investors from outside Rodrigues will be encouraged to create joint ventures with Rodriguan entrepreneurs. Much effort is being made to preserve our environment. This Budget has made a provision of Rs5 m, especially to upgrade the public beaches at Pointe Cotton and St. François and the creation of a solid wastewater disposal site.

Fifth, modernisation of agriculture and the setting up of a Young Farmers Entrepreneurs Scheme for the ex-IVTB students to facilitate access to capital and land to all those who have been successful in agricultural study; and there is a provision of Rs1.8 m as incentives for agricultural livestock and food production. A sum of Rs2.2 m has been allocated for the extension of our prison as I mentioned earlier. The sum earmarked for the 2004/2005 will be nearly fully utilised.

To conclude, Mr Chairperson, Sir, I would like to make an appeal to all our citizens to have faith. Time is running and we invite you all therefore to set to work and get involved fully in the development of our country. The OPR third Budget is a realistic one. We are confident that the Cabinet will give due consideration to it.

Finally, Mr Chairperson, Sir, I would like to thank the Chief Commissioner, the Commissioners, Departmental Heads, the financial cadre and all the persons who have worked very hard to finalise this Budget.

Thank you for your attention.

The Chairperson: Is there anybody on the Minority side to address this House?

Mrs J. Prosper (The Sixth Island Region Member): Mr Chairperson, Sir, after hearing the Chief Commissioner in his speech and after scrutinising the project presented for the financial year 2004/2005, the Budget is, in fact, merely cosmetic. We can clearly see that it is a remake of Budget 2003/2004. Many provisions had been made in some sectors, but how many of these have been realised? As we say ‘more haste, less speed’! We expected realisation in many key sectors. Progress cannot be achieved *par des mots*. It is high time to improve the standard of living of our people. Incentives should be given to encourage productivity. Sectors like agriculture, fishing and water could have been developed to generate finance, thereby improving the lifestyle of Rodriguan people.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, health is a sector which preoccupies everybody. This sector *est très malade*. In the last Budget, provisions were made for the renovation of maternity ward, the operating theatre and the upgrading of the sewerage system of Queen Elizabeth Hospital. Unfortunately, Sir, these items are still in the present Budget. We did see in the last Budget the post of nutritionist and the said post was filled. It has been noted that a remarkable work was being done. Unfortunately the nutritionist left Rodrigues and since then the post is still vacant.

Concerning community health centres, not a word has been said. *La situation de certains dispensaires laisse à désirer*. Mr Chairperson, Sir, from day to day, we are having so many tragic circumstances causing death. From my point of view, a permanent forensic surgeon should have been mentioned in the present Budget, the reason is that when we need the service, it takes time to come.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, a nation without a strong environmental health, vision and create plans is a nation without economic growth in the future. Mr Chairperson, Sir, as far as family welfare is concerned, we all know that women play a key role in the economic and social development of this country. It is indeed with a great sense of regret that I noted that women have not been given great consideration in this present Budget as expected.

As for the child development, I have also noted, Sir, that in some regions of the island, where transport facilities are not available, children walk kilometres daily to reach school such as Soupir, Montagne Malgache, etc. We firmly believe that education is the key to success. What will a child of 5 to 12 years do in class after having walked a long distance to reach school?

Mr Chairperson, Sir, nobody can remain indifferent to the increasing percentage of teenage pregnancy. Once again, no consideration has been taken regarding this problem. Mr Chairperson, Sir, we have taken notice of the strategic plan for the protection of the Rodriguan child launched since last year. Much money has been invested for consultancy and meeting at international level. Up to now, as far as this plan is concerned, it has not been implemented. *A ce jour, à l'île Rodrigues, les femmes n'ont aucun encadrement légal. Il n'est nul besoin d'énumérer ici les nombreux problèmes auxquels elles ont à faire face.* Mr Chairperson, Sir, provision has been made in this present Budget, I quote –

“The Family Counselling Service will now operate with full fledged staff, thus offering more professional and continuous services.”

Mr Chairperson, Sir, it is high time that the service of a legal adviser for women be available among the staff. Women must be given a better chance so that they can play a significant role in the economic development of the country so that their action can mould their future for a better life and can bring the responsibility of their children and children's children.

Thank you, Mr Chairperson, Sir.

Mr Chairperson: I understand that the Commissioner for Arts and Culture will now address this Assembly.

The Commissioner for Arts & Culture (Mrs Perrine-Bégué: Mr Chairperson, Sir, this Budget will serve as a catapult to urge me a step further and a step higher in the different areas of responsibilities contained within my various portfolios. Indeed, Mr Chairperson, Sir, it would be worth noting that my Commission has been awarded a total amount of Rs43.4 m. which represents 2.7% of the overall RRA Budget Estimates. Last year, the total budgetary provisions amounted to Rs20.6 m. given the tight budgetary constraints at national level – we all know about it now and the fact that through community development and the alleviating poverty schemes, my Commission can, in collaboration with the village communities and other NGOs, have access to international funds, I consider that my Commission has had a fair share in this Budget to allow us to take off to reach the various goals that we have set ourselves.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, last year's budget served as a spring board which allowed to prepare the ground in a fit and proper manner and to lay the foundation stones whereupon will be built the sectorial developments which have been entrusted upon me. What foundation stones am I talking about? You may well ask! Allow me then to enumerate a number of them spread across my eight areas of responsibilities. There have been massive consultations with women from all walks of life, including women opinion leaders and this right from the birth of my Commission. These mass consultations, sometimes with the help of local national and international experts, have led to the drafting of a final document in the shape of an Action Plan which will serve as a credible and democratic document allowing us to approach funding agencies for assistance in the near future. Here, let me mention the imminent coming into operation of a programme *de coopération décentralisée* set under the European Union/Government of Mauritius bylateral agreement which will allow the Rodrigues Regional Assembly to deal directly with European Union Agencies being a non State Institution. The International Community, having now opened its door wide to Rodrigues as an autonomous island to allow it to evolve as far as possible on the international stage, in the same way the Rodriguan women have started to climb the international social economic ladder. As from last year, a seat has been reserved for the Rodriguan woman in all future fora. This will bring about an overture for the Rodriguan woman to pull herself up, to reach the same international standards and dynamics leaving gradually behind her unprofitable economic practices.

The other achievement concerns children. A strategic plan on the protection of the Rodriguan child has been drafted effectively and publicly launched last November.

This is a three cornered plan which comprises -

- ◆ firstly, the setting up of a decentralised child watch network, in the 6 regions of the island;
- ◆ secondly, the construction of a shelter for victims of domestic violence, and
- ◆ thirdly, a Parental Empowerment Programme, which aims at supporting the Rodriguan parents in the more and more challenging role as “*Educateur de la génération future*”.

Et sur ce point je voudrais ajouter, M. le president, que ce plan stratégique a été préparé sans que le gouvernement de Rodrigues, l'Assemblée Régionale, n'ait eu à payer un sou. Beaucoup de plaidoyers ont été faits, beaucoup d'organisations internationales ont contribué et ces plans seront stratégiques justement pour accrocher des fonds internationaux. Par rapport au Child Watch Network, comme vous le voyez vous-même, dans le précédent budget - et le fait que le Civil Establishment Order pour Rodrigues n'a toujours pas encore été effectif - les postes nous le pensons, avec la concrétisation de cette loi qui sera amendée nous permettront de pouvoir mettre à exécution ces différentes mesures qui ont été dites dans le plan stratégique qui contient trois grandes mesures pour justement protéger l'enfant sur le plan de la prévention, des problèmes qui peuvent lui arriver, sur le plan de traitement de ceux qui ont déjà des problèmes et sur le plan d'aider les parents à réussir dans leur rôle de pouvoir *bring up the future generation*.

- Coming to arts and culture, the biggest foundation stone laid in this very first year of the autonomy, in my point of view, however, Mr Chairperson, Sir, remains the Coat of Arms. The Coat of Arms is meant to be the rallying symbol of each and every Rodriguan. For many days the Chief Commissioner, Commissioners and some other patriots, staff of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly and some

artists put their heads together, restlessly, to give birth to this heritage of prime importance.

In the years to come undivided attention must be concentrated “*pour faire vivre la devise de Rodrigues de façon à ce que chacun s’y retrouve et se l’approprie*”. *Parcequ’il ne suffit pas, M. le président, d’avoir une devise, même définie grâce à la démocratie participative. Une devise est le principe de base d’un pays et elle doit devenir la force motrice de toute la génération contemporaine et future.*

“Travail, Solidarité, Fierté” notre devise, devra aussi être la source d’inspiration du développement socio-économique de Rodrigues.

My Commission will come forward during the financial year 2004-2005 to sensitise the Rodriguan children and the community at large on the Rodriguan motto so that they can drive their inspiration from it, as it is meant to be.

As far as Community Development is concerned much has been done to promote community mobilisation throughout our village communities. We are aiming towards a reborn interest for voluntary community work. The umbrella NGO, the Rodrigues Council of Social Services is undergoing structural reforms to put the village communities back on an even footing with the new Rodriguan set up, pending the required law.

Some Rs6 m. has been disbursed towards community empowerment during the last financial year, mainly in track roads and social infrastructures.

In the same breath, let us talk about alleviation of poverty. Needy people now know on which door to knock in their quest for advice and assistance. They are better taken care of through cross-sectorial approach within the Executive Council. Before proceeding further, I would like to answer a number of criticisms *qui ont été faits à mon endroit* during the first part of the debate.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, as regards the integrated centre for women which has not yet been constructed and for which provision has been made fully in this Budget, I would like to say that we must be able and we must

know how to read the memorandum that is attached to these provisions that are made. The Rs1.5 m. that have been made cannot cater for all the construction of an integrated centre for women. In the memorandum last year, it was said, it was for starting designs and procedures for the integrated centre and we have done it; it is on track.

As regards the Rodrigues Children Council, I would like to tell you, because we mean business on this part of the House, the Rodrigues Children Council Bill is ready since the first semester of 2003, but we are stuck to the law due to slow procedures at national level, at the State Law Office. Being stuck with one specific word, I have had discussions personally at the State Law Office and representatives of the State Law Office have come to Rodrigues where we have had discussions and discussions are still under way. Commissioners have met the Prime Minister, on the ruling of the SLO on this issue, because I think that when we would be able to pass this very first law, then all the other problems will be cleared. But I don't think the problem is at Port Mathurin. The problem is at the SLO level and discussions are still under way. I will tell you three meetings, three steps have been made by myself and by the Chief Commissioner, because he was with me at two occasions; and that is why when we talk about the different Councils that have been proposed in the last Budget, for example, the Cultural Council and the Woman Development Council, these laws have not been drafted and have not been passed in this Assembly, because we are still awaiting that all the necessary legal procedures are cleared for the Rodrigues Regional Assembly *pour justement commencer à entamer son rôle législatif*.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, I would also like to comment on the Rodrigues Cultural Leisure Centre, because the Minority Leader seems to think that we are not doing our work well. Provision was made under the 2003-2004 Budget for Rs9 m. effectively, but as you know, being on the other side of the House and not in House, it is so easy to say things and so easy to propose, but I don't think *que par un claquement des doigts, les choses peuvent se faire*.

(Interruptions)

Money does not mean anything. Technical procedures take time and you do not control these things.

(Interruptions)

You will be the first person to bring me to ICAC if I don't follow procedures.

(Interruptions)

I am following procedures. I am a proper woman. The Commission, as well as the RRA is doing its best, but I would like to say that there has been a lack of local engineers ...

(Interruptions)

I'll come to that point; and that you have taken some time to have the consultancy services which now are helping us to go more rapidly. Already when you look at the Budget, the number of projects that have been executed or the money that has been compiled for use before the end of this financial year, you will see that as compared to the other system, a lot has been done. However, I think that there has been an error in the drafting of this paper, because in the sixth column, on the fifth page of the Capital Budget, it is said that Rs500,000 the revised estimates ...

(Interruptions)

Mr Chairperson: Is it a point of order?

The Chief Commissioner: The Members on the other side are continuously interrupting the speech of the Commissioner.

Mr Chairperson: No interruption is allowed from a sitting position. If any Member has a point of order or whatever he has to rise on his feet and then address the Chair. No more interruption, please! The Commissioner for Arts and Culture can continue with her speech.

Mrs Perrine-Bégué: Mr Chairperson, I think that may be there must have been a typing error on the sixth column of the Capital Budget Paper, on the fifth page and the sixth column 'Revised Estimates for 2003-2004' because the bids will be opened next Wednesday for the Regional and Cultural Leisure Centre and we think that before the end of the financial year

at least Rs4 m. will be used, because since the advance fee that has to be given ...

(Interruptions)

Yes, as regards the Regional and Cultural Leisure Centre, not only Rs500,000 will be used until the financial year, but at least Rs2 m. for advance and mobilisation fees. This I would like to say.

Coming to the *Troupe Culturelle*, it is true that it has not been set up yet, but as my colleague, Commissioner Mercure, said the financial year is not over and procedures are still under way. But you will appreciate the setting up of an *association des comédiens*. Training in play acting is important *pour préparer l'opération du premier théâtre de Rodrigues*. *Nous travaillons avec Maurice et La Réunion pour former activement les jeunes de même que les artistes qui sont actuellement actifs dans le domaine de l'art dramatique parce que c'est nécessaire qu'ils deviennent autonomes, qu'ils sachent se diriger et qu'ils prennent avantage de ces grands développements, sur le plan infrastructure, qui seront mis à leur disposition. Il y a eu aussi beaucoup d'autres projets qui n'avaient pas été mentionnés dans le Budget et sur lesquels nous avons été pro-actifs.*

M. le president, je voudrais aussi dire que dès par les différentes actions que nous avons prises, j'aimerais ici affirmer ici que ma Commission, à travers recherche de fonds de *sponsorship*, outre le budget, a permis à Rodrigues, dans le domaine culturel de la femme et de la pauvreté, de dépasser le nombre de projets et le montant de dépenses pour le développement effectif de Rodrigues. D'autre part, à part les problèmes légaux qui nous empêchaient de créer les institutions para-publiques pour provoquer ce qu'on appelle le PPP, le *Public Private Partnership*, tous ces *Councils* dont on parle, il y a les considérations techniques qui nous dépassent et nous pensons qu'avec l'arrivée des *consultancy services* qui sont là depuis quelques mois, une mesure qui a été prise, Rodrigues va faire un grand pas en avant. Mais je voudrais *challenge* ...

Mr Chairperson: No, you can't challenge. You can continue your speech.

(Interruptions)

Order, please!

Mrs Perrine-Bégué: I would like to challenge, Mr Chairperson, Sir.

Mr Chairperson: The Commissioner can't challenge.

Mrs Perrine-Bégué: A number of these criticisms that have been made ...

Mr Chairperson: You may rebut them.

Mrs Perrine-Bégué: Yes, because I think that by the end of this financial year not a single item will remain untouched under my Commission without a proper explanation. Although I have only two Executive Officers, one Departmental Head, one Organising Officer, two Clerks and two Word Processing Operators for eight areas of responsibility, we have provoked irreversible changes in this country. And we have not been afraid to face challenges and to take our responsibility.

My reflection also, Mr Chairperson, Sir, is that we are talking of *budget cosmétique, mais dans les théories - les théories aussi peuvent également être cosmétiques et nous n'attendons pas moins des personnes qui ont été formés pour parler des théories - mais je ne pense pas que la réalité marche aussi facilement que les recettes toutes faites que l'on présente. Venir ici parler des big paradigms, envoyer de la poudre aux yeux des gens* is something *mais attraper la "manche poêlon" comme on dit en créole* is another one.

May I now comment on how I am going to approach the financial year 2004-2005 in lieu of the budgetary provisions made to my Commission. As I said, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I am going to put flesh on the skeleton already erected in the different sectors of my responsibility.

Woman

The overall percentage for both capital and recurrent budget for women has increased by 58%, that is, from Rs4 m to Rs8.5 m. New services will be created and introduced, mainly a shelter to provide temporary protection to the victims of domestic violence and the proper running of the Family Counselling Service, the Child Development Unit, the Domestic Violence And the proper running of the Family Counselling Service, the Child Development Unit, the Domestic Violence Intervention Unit and the Women's Unit. These five services will be run by one Organising Officer, two Family Welfare Officers, a Clerical staff, Policeman and Police Woman and Legal Advisors on sessional basis.

It is expected that these new services will also absorb some young men and women among the 187 future recruits as General Field/Office Premises workers who may work as wardens, cook and gardeners in these services. A building has already been renovated by the Commission for Public Infrastructure at Baie aux Huitres for the purpose of the shelter. On behalf of the Rodriguan women, I would like to extend our heartfelt thanks to the Chief Commissioner and Commissioner for Finance, who, in spite of prevailing financial constraints has made it a point of honour to allocate sufficient funds to set up new structures and strengthen the institutional support towards women and children.

Indeed still better provisions are being made to cope with these situations and promote the economic and social development of women. Procedures are already in motion for the design of the integrated centre for women in the centre of the island. The design will be completed before the end of this actual financial year. This centre will serve as a focal point to address woman issues. This will incorporate a number of offices and training units.

As regards the economic empowerment of women, professional training will remain our utmost priority. To date a programme enrolling some 500 women for training in economic orientations, family welfare and health education, according to their choices has already started. My aim in the long run is to build up these courses towards professionalism, in close collaboration with the Human Resource Centre, the IVTB, the SMIDO, the NHPA and national and international experts, to allow women raise the quality of their products and face the exigencies of local and international markets and quality.

One of our strategies to overcome marketing problems for local woman products will be the compilation of a “*Repertoire des Femmes Entrepreneurs*” which will be reproduced on a web site. Registration has already been completed since last month. These marketing tools will contain information on different women entrepreneur, individuals and organisations, their names, their addresses and telephones, photographs of their products and about their production capacity.

And, finally, I would like to say that my aim would be to help promote women enterprises and industries from micro to medium stages. Women in the agricultural sector will also be one of our priorities for 2004-2005. My Commission is aiming at a blueprint on the processing of women agricultural products for added value on benefits. By so doing, we will bring women in the agricultural sector to becoming the supporting pillar of the tourism industry.

To close this chapter, let me also mention some other innovations as regard women development in this budget. The actual Women and Family Centre at Malabar will be extended and renovated to cope with growing expectations and development. The consultancy service is actually redesigning the building and a tender will be launched thereafter.

New items have been introduced to strengthen the status of women in the Rodriguan society. Rs100,000 have been allocated to the Rodrigues Regional Women Committee. This envelope will be of significant importance to women NGOs and will allow this federation of some 110 women associations to offer a better support to their member organisations.

Moreover, a sum of Rs50,000 has been maintained for women and children in distress, namely the victims of domestic violence who were forced to leave their roof; widows, whose husbands have died suddenly. Also a provision of Rs300,000 has been included in the budget to provide for participation of one woman entrepreneur from Rodrigues on the monthly meetings of the National Women’s Entrepreneurs Board in Mauritius, among others.

Culture

Mr Chairperson, Sir, I am proud to proclaim that never before had our culture been given such a prominent place on the local, national and

international scene. With the advent of the autonomy, our culture is being pushed to the fore as being the salt of our earth and the very fibre of our identity. This is the vision of the Executive Council. Smoothly and gradually we are building the Rodriguan pride and spirit.

In one year we have accomplished many measures contained on this chapter in our electoral manifesto. There now is established the Coat of Arms, our motto, the Rodrigues Day. We have started with the award of the Honorary Freeman *pour institutionaliser notre tradition de dire merci quand il faut et à qui le mérite*. The construction of a series of Cultural and Leisure Centres according to each region's specificity will start this month. And a provision of Rs12 m has been provided in this budget to complete the Lataniers Centre.

A study is about to start this month, to be carried out by a French expert who will have as terms of reference first to make an analysis of the various facets of our culture and propose ways and means of preserving them for posterity in the face of globalisation and the threats of cultural invasion. And secondly, to propose strategies for the development of the cultural industries aiming at making of cultural and artistic productions and economic activity on its own right. This is the point No. 1 in our manifesto as regards Arts and Culture. The study is about to start.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, as I said, major development has occurred as regards Arts and Culture during the very first year of our autonomy. The Artist Assistance Scheme proposed in this Budget has become a reality already and some 10 projects have already been approved.

Two other cultural projects have also been realised, that is, the setting up of an intergeneration dialogue to promote traditional transmission from one generation to another. A first experience occurred during the Family Day Celebration in May last year and it will be renewed.

In our electoral manifesto, we also talked of the upgrading of the Malabar recreational complex. Part of it has already been done and we are thankful to the Deputy Chief Commissioner and the Commissioner for Youth and Sports who were instrumental in realising this project.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, I am happy and more than satisfied with what we have achieved on the cultural front during the very first year of our mandate,

given the absence of technical staff required. I am thankful to my administrative staff and all the benevolent patriots who sit on my Commission's numerous Organising Committees for their contribution to Rodrigues night and day. *Grâce a ces comités des pas géants ont été faits en avant. L'autonomie, nous l'avons voulu et nous ne donnerons aucun prétexte et aucune chance à qui que ce soit de venir nous dire que c'était une erreur. Au prix de notre vie, nous relèverons tous les défis qui se présenteront, advienne que pourra.*

I am thankful to the Chief Commissioner for the attention he gave to the cultural development of his country. "*Malgré les contraintes*" he has made sure that another new measure has been introduced for cultural development this year. This measure, Mr Chairperson, Sir, will, in the long run, consolidate our artistic and cultural preserves and development. Some Rs300,000 have been allocated for the recruitment of some six cultural animators. They will go in schools, colleges, youth centres, community centres to dispense cultural education, namely in local history, traditional dance and music, paintings, play-acting and songs. They will be attached to the cultural centres to give it life.

Closing this chapter on Arts and Culture, I would then say that the regional government is heading steadily towards the realisation of its ambition in this field.

Community Development and Alleviation of Poverty - Mr. Chairperson, Sir, these two disciplines, as you know, are cross-sectoral issues. Each and every measure contained in Mr Serge Clair's budget, Commission-wise, are geared towards these two issues, so that even if my Commission is the physical structure where specific measures can be taken, queries put and advice sought on these matters the whole Executive Council is on the alert.

It should be put on record however that my Commission has devoted considerable amount of time and energy in receiving, listening, guiding the poor people and the NGOs to the various appropriate services of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly and towards International Funding Agencies operating in Rodrigues.

I am quite conscious of the great responsibilities bestowed upon us as regards this portfolio and I would like to inform the assembly that some

eight kilometres of track roads in 12 villages and 25 other community infrastructures, mainly centres, have been constructed during the actual financial year to the tune of Rs6 m. The effective cost of the development undergone with this government loan money is more than 3 times the actual amount disbursed thanks to the self-help criteria set with the community.

Indeed, Mr Chairperson, Sir, the performance of voluntary labour in Rodrigues remains a pillar in our socio-economic life. As at date one cannot quantify the historical contribution and participation of the community of Rodrigues towards development.

This year with the mid-term review of the IFAD programme and our IFAD budget proposals, actually under preparation at the Ministry of Finance, my Commission has proposed a series of measures which will boost up economic, social as well as community empowerment.

First, the Introduction of Micro-Credit Schemes.

Second, power extended to our local programme Steering Committee to approve local community as well as fisheries and agricultural projects of more than Rs500,000 and to a ceiling of not more than Rs1 m. per project.

Third, training projects may be financed not only in the agricultural sector but also for women and in the production sector in general.

Fourth, the IFAD Programme Management Unit will recruit the necessary staff such as field workers and Finance Controller to better cope with the accelerated and more diversified scope of work.

Last but not least - Public Library Services. As the Chief Commissioner mentioned in his speech, a new building estimated at about Rs15 m. will be constructed, whereby the whole public library will move in a modern and more appropriate building where the public, including the handicapped and children, will have an easy access. This project is a provision of the Deputy Chief Commissioner's Office and will be completed by the end of next financial year 2004-05.

Another innovation will be the setting up of a multi-media centre at the Lataniers Cultural and Leisure Centre, which will include a library.

My Commission also intends to introduce internet access to the readers and students in all the public libraries in Rodrigues during the course of 2004-2005 and also to approach funding agencies to obtain the necessary resources to run a mobile library service specifically dedicated to small children who cannot reach public libraries on their own. I think that the Budget will be strategic in the sense that reading is strategy to young people from 0 to 6. That is why, Mr Chairperson, Sir, I consider that these projects under Library Services will help Rodrigues moving a step forward in education overall.

Finally the opening hours of the libraries will be reviewed soon to attract more readers therein.

Avant de terminer, je voudrais dire, M. le président, mon appréciation et ma satisfaction que les différentes mesures au niveau macro-économique et, également, sectoriel, contenues dans le budget de Rodrigues pour la prochaine année financière, vont pousser le développement en avant, tout en structurant la direction à prendre. Il y avait trop de laisser-faire et, on le sait tous, la responsabilité ne rime pas avec le laisser-aller. C'est tellement facile de faire plaisir et de penser au court terme pour ses propres intérêts! De telles pratiques ne sont payant qu'à court terme. Mais prendre les taureaux par les cornes, prendre la partie de l'avenir et de la postérité, c'est être courageux, c'est agir en patriote, c'est savoir prendre la responsabilité qui nous est confié, et c'est se sacrifier quelque part soi-même à l'autel de la durabilité et de la préservation de nos acquis pour demain.

Pour moi, l'essentiel est là, dans les grandes mesures annoncées par le Chef Commissaire.

- (i) Un plan stratégique pour le développement durable de Rodrigues avec en vision 2010.
- (ii) Des concessions faites pour attirer l'investissement étranger et favoriser ainsi l'emploi dans divers secteurs dont le tourisme, les industries et la pêche.
- (iii) Favoriser le partenariat économique entre investisseurs externes et locaux.
- (iv) Meilleur accès à l'informatique.

- (iv) Un développement conséquent du réseau de captage, stockage et distribution d'eau, notamment dans la région l'ouest, la plus aride de Rodrigues.
- (v) Nouvelles mesures environnementales pour garantir la durabilité touristique.
- (vii) La protection de nos ressources foncières en respectant le plan d'aménagement du territoire, que nous avons reçu l'année dernière, tout en mettant 3 million de roupies pour un cadastrage accéléré effectué par des professionnels privés sur une base contractuelle, des terres de l'Etat, pour une répartition professionnelle qui mènera à une distribution équitable et rapide de nos terres.
- (viii) Compléter l'asphaltage des principales routes et construire en parallèles plusieurs dizaines de kilomètres de *track road*.
- (ix) De nouvelles avenues de financement et de nouvelles infrastructures pour soutenir les pêcheurs avec une Marina, le dragage des passes, le décret de zone de protection marine et la construction d'une dizaine de petites infrastructures pour les pêcheurs.
- (x) La professionnalisation de l'agriculture pour permettre à de véritables industries agricoles d'émerger.
- (xi) Des mesures très significatives au niveau de la santé et de la sécurité sociale.
- (xii) La part du lion pour la jeunesse avec l'investissement dans l'éducation, la formation orientée, et les infrastructures et d'autres mesures sportives.
- (xiii) La Réforme dans la fonction publique et des postes additionnels pour supporter la capacité d'exécution des projets des Commissions.

- (xiv) Et la volonté de jouer sur le tableau régional et international en jouant à fond la carte de l'autonomie pour profiter des accords bilatéraux de Maurice. J'ai le sentiment que Rodrigues déjà méconnaissable après un an, est en train de passer l'accélérateur pour atteindre des horizons qui surprendront les sceptiques.

Ceux qui disent, M. le président, que dans la fourchette budgétaire qui nous a été confiée, nous n'avions pas su jauger les besoins de Rodrigues et y répondre selon les priorités, sont en train de leurrer la population rodriguaise vers des utopies et des recettes toute faite qui ne seront jamais atteintes.

Ce budget M. le président, est plus que courageux. Nous avons provoqué une mouvance d'initiatives de changement d'attitude et d'actions. Ce budget consolidera les premières bases installées de notre nouvelle ère et réveillera la capacité de l'homme Rodriguais et de la femme Rodriguaise. Je crois dans le Rodriguais, M. Le président, en sa capacité de compréhension de l'importance de la discipline et en sa capacité de se placer dans le cadre des exigences des nouvelles perspectives d'avenir, que ce soit sur le plan local, national ou international. Ceux qui préfèrent faire l'autruche en miroitant uniquement le positif des défis qui se présentent aux pays, en refusant de les attaquer de front, sont des antipatriotes.

Je suis confiante que la population Rodriguaise saura discerner à court et à long terme qui agit dans son intérêt.

Merci, M. le président.

Mrs M. T. Meunier (Second Island Region Member): Mr Chairperson, Sir, we beg the money that we are going to spend in this country and I do not know why, on the other side of the House, they are so proud of it. We know the most that they could do in this direction is to cut and paste, because it is quasi impossible to reduce. This is what is left to the Government after seventeen months. For them, it is a short time, but for people living in very poor condition, facing unemployment, with no housing, no means to cultivate their land and no water, it is a long, long time.

The alternative that has been left to them is to produce only a copycat of the 2003-04 Budget. It is judicious only to people who are blind. The

wisdom of this Regional Government's policy concerning our economic problems has to be seriously questioned. Certainly, there is nothing unusual in this new Budget. Indeed, people have got used to their style.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, everybody knows that there is no gold mines in Rodrigues. Everybody knows it! Nevertheless, I think that we must make use of what is so kindly offered to us by our bretheren in Mauritius in a very productive way. Since the advent of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly and the OPR Government, it is alarming to see the devastating way funds have been used, as has been stated in the Report of the Director of Audit.

For example, in the anti-erosion programme, which some people so fully boast of, funds were not fully utilised. 81% of the approved budget was unutilised as at 30 June 2003, with regrets we should say. Until February 2004, nothing seems to have been done to remedy the situation.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, often we see that the complaints in the report of the Director of Audit said that proper record of Government's contributions were not maintained. Significant differences were noted between the figures of the Project Management Unit and the finance section of the RRA.

(Interruptions)

I do not know what they are proud of!

(Interruptions)

There are so many discrepancies that if we go into detailed explanation we will have to spend a month or two in this Assembly to discuss the issue and these shortcomings do not only apply to one sector. It is repeated in most of the accounts audited.

Mismanagement of funds will not allow our island to be autonomous *dans le vrai sense du terme*, but to remain entirely independent on motherland Mauritius.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, my comments on that Budget will be on the three main Commissions, that is, Education, Health and Arts and Culture.

Education, Mr Chairperson, Sir, is the key to our progress. It is the sector where great attention should be directed. However, we can see that the budget for the Commission of Education has considerably decreased compared to last year by almost 30%. Last year, despite constant appeal from the minority side, we had been shocked to see that the construction of a college at Songes was excluded in the Budget proposals and we were hoping that this year, some consideration would have been given to those people living in the south of the island, who have to climb the hills and go down to attend a college. Unfortunately, the cut and paste method has been applied there too. Funds have been concentrated in one area. As the report suggests, there has been misused of funds at the Mont Lubin SSS at the expense of these poor pupils living in the region of the south. We know that the sun has to shine brighter in some places of this island, because there are some people's interests over there. In other places, the situation has to prevail. Thus, we would see again the acrimonious situation which will continue and it will be said that it is those responsible in Mauritius who are to be blamed.

In the 2003-04 Budget, the Chief Commissioner spoke about the link between the agricultural production and education where local produce will be given to primary school pupils, thus, opening a market for local products and providing students with healthy food. *C'est un effort louable, M. le président! J'espère que cela ne restera pas cette année au stade d'effort seulement*, but the pupils will really benefit from it.

On the other hand, I disagree strongly with the Chief Commissioner when he boasts of the uplifting of the environment in several primary schools. I think he should pay a visit to these schools in each of the regions concerned. For example, in the newly named Basile Allas Government School at Port Mathurin, the yard as well as the football ground at the back of the school is in an abandoned state. There are even scrapped metal pieces from the Works Division which lie there since a long long time back. *Avis au commissaire des infrastructures publiques!* I do not see where the environment of the several schools has improved. In most of the Government primary schools, there is a pre-primary section and nothing is provided in this Budget for the purchase of outdoor games facilities, recreational facilities for pre-primary schoolchildren. We should not only concentrate our effort on nutrition and academic performance, but we should

think of offering our young pupils with recreational and sport facilities which will help them keep fit and make them more healthy.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, Rs1.5 m. are being provided for the SSR scholarship in the Recurrent Budget. I am a bit at a loss with this matter. Perhaps the Commissioner for Education will enlighten me later on. I remember that when this issue of scholarship was raised in this same House, he affirmed that this scholarship would have been lost last year since if nothing has been done and that he had to find funding. So, he had to thank students from the 2002 batch and now the students have already attended a school. Who is funding their studies for the period of March 2004 to June 2005?

If funds had not been raised in last year's Budget for that scholarship, why was this scholarship not advertised? What is this bluff?

(Interruptions)

Mr Chairperson, Sir, there seems to be a total lack of transparency in this matter. Students who really deserved those scholarships have had their rights wrong. Some of them have had to try by all means to find funds to go and study on their own; and we know that is a burden for families.

This Regional Government, in front of us, should make sure that all decisions they take are conducive with values such as merit, strong transparency, truth and trust. The students of Higher School Certificate, at this very time, are asking themselves a lot of questions about their future.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, Rs3.5 m. have been earmarked under the item Human Resources Centre for training programme and the Commissioner again stated in his Budget Speech that *l'orientation des jeunes Rodriguais pour des études tertiaires se fait. Il ajoute aussi que "la commission d'éducation et de formation offrira un service d'orientation professionnelle aux étudiants". Je ne sais pas si on est en train de le mettre en pratique.*

(Interruptions)

On attendra!

When he talks about career guidance, Sir, towards tertiary education, where and how that has been done? Is it not time really to run courses in career guidance as a subject integrated in our school curriculum for secondary school students given the specificity of our island that so many on the other side of the House boast about? Is it not time to put into place an educational policy to meet the needs of our country?

Mr Chairperson, Sir, another issue, which has been completely neglected in that Budget proposal, is the issue of oriental languages. What steps are being taken? Is it going to be implemented? Parents are waiting; children are waiting to know what is their fate in this matter. I am not an advocate of oriental language, but we have to know. We cannot live in a vacuum.

The next issue is about the regionalisation of education and the fate of our island in this matter, how will it function in this system? Are we going to stay as a region or will there be a regionalisation for Rodrigues?

To conclude, Mr Chairperson, Sir, on the issue of education, I will state that there are many measures, which are not clear, and many measures need to be mended afterwards.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, in the health sector, the Chief Commissioner gladly outlined that great emphasis is being laid on health promotion, as the provision is being substantially increased. However, he should have informed the House that among the projects earmarked in the health infrastructure development project of 2003/2004 provisions had already been made for renovation of maternity ward, operating theatre, resurfacing of alleys, construction of toilets, cloakroom and bathrooms and only Rs900,000 were spent out of the Rs4 m. earmarked in last year's budget. In eight months, less than a quarter of the Budget has been spent. And they expect to complete the project so that Rs4 m. are spent! Well, we know that Lucky Luke shoots faster than his shadow. Is he not putting the cart before the horse in this House? The Commissioner for Health will surely voice the contrary. We will wait and see again; we have been used to wait!

Mr Chairperson, Sir, we can see by many projects earmarked last year were not really attended to in this sector. So, in this Budget we have a repetition of the same project. There is a slight difference, a kind of shade of meaning in the wordings used, instead of "renovation", we see "upgrading".

(Interruptions)

This is why they are talking about cosmetic approach!

Mr Chairperson, Sir, the inhabitants of Oyster Bay will be happy to know that the project of renovating their Community Health Centre, as mentioned in last year's Budget, has finally been eaten by rats. Many complaints have been received about the movement of patients from the orthopaedic, the casualty to the other wards in the hospital compounds of Queen Elizabeth. Nothing has been done to make a flyover or a covered structure to allow patients to move, especially under bad weather condition, *contre vents et tempêtes, cyclones, les patients traversent la route sur les stretchers, je dis bien, la route, très fréquentée par des bus, toutes sortes de véhicules à longueur de journée*; and we know the risk! This should have been duly considered. I hope, Mr Commissioner for Health, that the projects that had been earmarked last year and coming back again this year are not going to go into bins, like so many others have gone.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, let us have a look at the services under the Commission for Arts and Culture. We are glad to see that there is the intention of an improvement of services offered to women as the Budget has been substantially increased, but we hope that *la période de gestation de l'embryon ne sera pas trop longue*.

Autre chose, M. le président, contribution to Rodrigues Children Council and Women's Development Council which was separate last year, instead of increasing the amount had been combined in the Recurrent Budget into an amount of Rs100,000. I think these two items should have been taken separately. I do not think the sum of money earmarked is enough to deal with the growing problems, especially child labour, single mothers where sensitisation and information campaign should have been an ongoing process and where a lot of funds is required. The sum of money earmarked in the Capital Budget under the item Arts and Culture amounts to Rs10.5 m. last year; only Rs426,000 has been spent from 2003/2004. And the Commission expects to spend an additional Rs800,000 in the rest of the year. How will this be spent in four months' time worries me a lot. And I hope that the Commissioner for Arts and Culture has really got a strategic plan as she has said earlier.

As far as arts and culture is concerned, Mr Chairperson, Sir, the amount of money earmarked for the promotion of arts and culture in the Recurrent Budget, especially for assistance given to artists under the Artist Assistance Scheme amounts to only Rs150,000. Poor things! I think artists will never reach a full-fledged career, even when they become old and grey at this rhythm! Artists in whole sectors - music, drama, poetry, paintings - have been known to find little consideration and have received little incentive from the authorities so far. More attention should have been given to promote their works, writings and art. Rs150,000 is a ridiculous amount of money in our days. What are they going to do while they wait for the completion of the Art and Leather Centre *qui est toujours au stade embryonnaire*, given the tortoise pace at which projects are executed by the Regional Government, our artists will never be able to catch global attention with this sum of money.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, the failure of the Regional Government to reach most of its main objectives in the 2003/2004 Budget where – although they boast of it - only Rs248,000 m. have been spent so far is giving rise to some alarm, where it seems that it is only an embryo Government which may mean a threat to economic progress. The drop in agriculture naturally has considerably reduced the purchasing power of our people. The lack of industrial breakthrough is increasing unemployment at a faster rate. The social scene is calamitous. Small businesses are caught up because of the delay in having licences to operate and anxiety about their uncertain future. Unemployed youngsters wander in the streets. A feeling of total disorder and mismanagement is prevalent. Beyond all these supposed attempts lies the pursuit of individual vested interests. We, on this side of the House, would not entrust the general prosperity of our island to a *laissez-faire* system without stamping our feet, but we have to question the very principle of efficient governance and leadership and say no to inefficiency.

Thank you, Mr Chairperson, Sir.

Mr Chairperson: I understand that the Commissioner for Education will now address the House.

The Commissioner for Education (Mr L. Roussety): Mr Chairperson, Sir, I have to come to the conclusion, during the course of the

debate so far, that the OPR Government can do the impossible, but, as far as miracles are concerned, the Minority Party will have to wait a little bit longer until the end of this particular mandate.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, the Budget 2004/2005 has come at a time when the island of Rodrigues is on the move towards sustainable development, which, no doubt, describes the vision of the Chief Commissioner and the Executive Council.

The OPR, since its foundation, has been working for the welfare of the Rodriguan population to the development and enhancement of capacity building of its human resources, which are, in fact, the wealth of our beloved island.

This Budget has, amongst others, made various provisions to meet the demands of our population in terms of education, training, employment and other relative fields, which is line with the philosophy of our Party.

M. le président, il est louable de noter que l'éducation primaire et secondaire ont reçu toute l'attention nécessaire car une somme de R 65,5 millions a été allouée au secteur éducatif malgré les grandes difficultés financières du gouvernement central.

Il est vrai, M. le président, que nous n'avons pas de ressources naturelles, que nous n'avons pas de mines d'or, mais nous voulons certainement nous servir de ce budget avec beaucoup de sagesse tout en montrant notre reconnaissance envers le gouvernement central.

Sur le banc de la minorité, on a fait allusion, au fait que rien n'a été fait en ce qui concerne la construction d'un collège sur la côte sud de l'île, à Songes, plus précisément. Je crois, M. le président, que dans notre sagesse, nous avons pu constater que le moment n'est pas encore venu pour que nous construisions un hôtel dans cette partie de l'île.

(Interruptions)

Parce que le collège de Mont Lubin vient d'être construit et cela va prendre encore quelques années avant que l'on puisse remplir trente salles de classe. Je suis convaincu que les R 65,5 millions qui ont été allouées, seront utilisées à bon escient pour la mise en oeuvre des projets suivants –

- (a) l'achèvement des travaux au collège de Mont Lubin;
- (b) l'extension de collège de Grande Montagne et de Maréchal;
- (c) l'achat du mobilier pour le collège de Maréchal et de Le Chou, et
- (d) la construction d'une école communautaire dans le sud ouest du pays.

Je voudrais faire ressortir le fait que le collège de Grande Montagne est le Cendrillon de la communauté collégienne de Rodrigues. Le collège de Grande Montagne n'est doté qu'un seul laboratoire et il est dans nos intentions de pourvoir les collèges de deux laboratoires additionnels, d'ateliers, parce que les collèges dispensent des cours aux enfants dans le pré-vocationnel et aussi un laboratoire informatique.

M. le président, le gouvernement régional a également à coeur la santé de notre population estudiantine et une somme de R 2,2 millions a été prévue pour offrir un complément d'aliment aux enfants des familles défavorisées. Nous voulons faire ressortir par là le fait que chaque enfant recevra un quart de lait pour re-suppléer à son alimentation. Il est vrai que jusqu'à l'heure nous n'avons pas pu mettre en place notre programme de distribution de fruits, mais soyons réalistes quand même le cyclone Kalundé a fait beaucoup de dégâts.

The primary schools' environment has been embellished and upgraded. Nearly all the primary schools have been freshly painted. All these schools have been provided with electric fans and fax machines with a view to providing a safe and conducive working and learning environment. I would invite our colleagues on the Opposition benches to take a look around the countryside and to see that the school buildings have received a fresh coat of paint. My Commission has further adopted a new policy for the award of small contracts for the implementation of several minor works. These facilities did not exist before and we want to render life easy for the school population at large. The damages caused to these schools by cyclone Kalundé last year have been promptly attended to for the benefit of the school community at large.

M. le president, le taux de réussite au CPE a malheureusement accusé une baisse malgré tous les efforts déployés. Ma Commission, consciente de

l'envergure de ce problème, a décidé de conduire, avec le support d'une expertise externe, une étude pour déterminer les causes de l'échec au niveau du CPE. Les résultats de cette étude aideront le gouvernement régional à prendre des mesures correctives afin de trouver une solution durable. Cette étude permettra aussi à tous les acteurs de l'éducation – parents, corps enseignant, RCEA, Association des Jeunes, etc à travailler en partenariat afin d'améliorer davantage le taux de réussite au CPE.

Quelques minutes de cela, allusion a été faite à l'introduction de l'enseignement des langues orientales dans nos écoles. La politique est une politique nationale. Or il a été dit qu'il faudra au moins un budget de R 5 millions par an pour loger les professeurs qui auront à charge de dispenser ces cours. Rodrigues, n'étant pas une communauté où l'on parle aucune de ces langues, elle n'a pas les ressources humaines pour dispenser ces cours. Tous les professeurs concernés devront nécessairement venir de l'île Maurice. Or, il faudra les loger; comme je viens de dire, cela coûtera la somme de R 5 millions qui sera prise de notre budget. Malgré cela, nous avons proposé au ministre de l'éducation qu'il n'y a pas de salle de classe disponible pour la conduite de ces cours en langues orientales. Il avait été suggéré que l'on introduise cela sur une base pilote à Port Mathurin. Cela avait été suggéré l'année dernière, mais malheureusement les admissions ont été très nombreuses à l'école de Port Mathurin de sorte que la bibliothèque, la salle de *computer* et même le *staff room* doivent être mis à la disposition des élèves pour les classes ordinaires.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, my Commission is extending facilities to the RCEA in view of building a stronger partnership with the latter, hence improving the well-being of the school community as a whole. This Regional Government aims at fostering *un esprit de corps* among different stakeholders in the education sector.

L'éducation secondaire est également au centre de notre préoccupation. Un montant de R 67 millions a été dépensé au courant de cette année financière pour la construction du collège de Mont Lubin, pour compléter les travaux de construction du collège de Citron Donis et également à la construction d'une extension aux collèges de Le Chou et de Maréchal.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, the Executive Council, in its attempt to promote tertiary education has made a provision of Rs1.5 m. to enable two Rodriguan

students to undertake medical studies at the Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam Medical College in Mauritius. It is the strong wish of the Regional Government to promote academic and professional education of the young Rodriguan elites so that the latter can contribute towards achievement of the sustainable development of the autonomous Rodrigues in the years to come. This Rodrigues Regional Assembly Scholarship is open to all Rodriguan students having completed their studies either in Rodrigues or elsewhere.

Besides, my Commission has travelled hard to make available some twelve scholarships to the Rodriguan youths as well as to ensure that twenty-two seats are reserved at the Polytechnic Schools in Mauritius.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, the Human Resource Centre has been organising counselling services for the benefits of students willing to pursue higher studies in Mauritius and abroad. Working sessions are regularly being held with representatives of the University of Mauritius, the University of Technology of Mauritius, *le Conservatoire National des Arts et des Métiers* of Reunion Island and the Association of Chartered and Certified Accountants.

Moreover, young students are guided towards career orientation and relevant information is put at their disposal in the Documentation Research Unit. Furthermore, my Commission is acting as facilitator for the promotion of distance learning which has become a new mode of learning today. As far as training is concerned, Mr Chairperson, Sir, education and training are at the heart of the Regional Government's vision and it means providing the best learning opportunities available for the Rodriguan youths, regardless of their economic and social background. Young Rodriguans need exciting and flexible pathways from school to work, training of further education. Hence, the Human Resource Centre, which falls under the purview of my Commission, has been vested with the mission of enhancing the capacity building of the people of Rodrigues to date. It has successfully carried out the following activities –

- (1) the implementation of the job skills training project for some 250 out of school leavers. This project aims at providing basic job skills to the young Rodriguans so as to facilitate their integration on the labour market;

- (2) the organisation of information training sessions with a view to providing young unemployed with job searching techniques. These sessions are run in collaboration with the Employment Exchange Office, the establishment section of the Central Administration and representatives of the private sector;
- (3) the setting up of a Documentation and Research Unit whose mission is to facilitate the training/learning process as well as to liaise with other training institutions;
- (4) undertaking with the support of UNICEF and external expertise, a study on the professional integration of youths in Rodrigues;
- (5) the organisation of a Job Fair in September 2003 to provide information and guidance on training and career opportunities;
- (6) project write up for the establishment of a Career Guidance Unit in Rodrigues, whose mission will be to cater for the increasing needs of youths for career guidance services;
- (7) project write up to fight against illiteracy in Rodrigues;
- (8) training and availability of a pool of hosts and hostesses for the Rodrigues Regional Assembly;
- (9) the running of a certificate in Management Course by the University of Mauritius for 33 professionals of the public, private and para-statal sectors;
- (10) vision of logistic support for the organisation of ICT training for some 500 public officers in the context of the public sector's reform.

I would like to ask my colleagues, on the minority benches, to refer to page 19 of the Chief Commissioner's Speech for more and lengthier details.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, my Commission is presently undertaking a survey on available human resources in different fields of specialisation. I

am confident that this survey will enable the Regional Government to better plan the future human resource development of Rodrigues.

The setting up of Career Guidance Unit

During this coming up financial year, my Commission will set up a Career Guidance Unit with the expertise of our French partners. This unit will be called upon to work in full partnership with the secondary institutions, technical schools as well as the Commission for Youth and Sports.

In the domain of employment, Mr Chairperson, Sir, the Regional Government is closely monitoring the employment sector. As at 2002/2003, the employed population amounted to 13,617, out of which 3,383 were engaged in the public sector. Therefore, it clearly shows that the public sector can hardly cater for 25 percent of the workforce. Hence, our determination to inculcate a sense of *entreprenariat* so as to enable the population to come up with viable projects, which can generate employment.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, the conservation of a National heritage is a must to any civilised nation. Therefore, Rodrigues does not make exception to the rule and the Regional Government is determined to shoulder its responsibility in this field. If we go down the memory's valley, we shall be proud to learn that we have a very rich national heritage. Let me quote, amongst others, **Maragon's** grave and the slave cemetery at l'Union, "*La Résidence*" in Port Mathurin as well as the old administrative building. This Budget makes the provision of Rs1 m. for the preliminary consultation of studies in view of the construction of the museum.

M. le président, je n'ai aucun doute que les réalisations dans le domaine de l'éducation et de la formation traduisent la vision du Chef Commissaire et de son gouvernement régional pour une île Rodrigues intelligente et autonome. Dans cet élan, je voudrais lui exprimer et à son Conseil Exécutif toute ma gratitude dans la dotation de ce budget à la Commission de l'éducation et de la formation.

It would be remiss of me if I did not also thank my Departmental Head, the Chief of Divisions in my Commission, the secretaries, the typists

and everyone who have worked so hard to provide me with all the necessary information in the compilation of this speech.

Thank you, Mr Chairperson, Sir, for your attention.

At 3.10 p.m. the sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 3.25 p.m. with Mr Chairperson in the Chair.

Mr G. Jabeemissar (Second Local Region Member for La Ferme):

Mr Chairperson, Sir, we all know that preparing a country's Budget is not an easy task at all, especially when we have financial constraints as is the case here. However, Mr Chairperson, Sir, bearing this in mind, one should know that the greatest difficulty arises, not only because of financial constraints but mainly on how to manage the funds we have properly.

The Minority Leader has made a very professional analysis of the Budget. In many cases, there seems to be over-budgeting which is, of course, a very bad policy. That is to say, Mr Chairperson, Sir, we must cut our coat according to our cloth. If we go through last year's budget, we compare it to this year's proposals, we can't see any innovation nor any new ideas; that's why we say that it is a remake of the previous Budget.

I am now, Mr Chairperson, Sir, going through some items of this Budget focussing mainly on the following -

- (1) public infrastructure;
- (2) water resources;
- (3) agriculture, and
- (4) education.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, when we look at the different items under the Public Infrastructure Division, we can discover many discrepancies as regards the estimates for 2003/2004 as compared to the actual sums spent on roads, Government's quarters, buildings, construction of bridges and infrastructure to residential *morcellements*. We can see that out of the estimates very little were spent. Let us take the estimates of 2003/2004 for

roads. Out of Rs64 m. only Rs47,686.141 have been spent and the revised for same after June 2004 amounts to Rs64 m. How is such a big sum going to be spent within a period of only four months? In last year's proposals, the Chief Commissioner also responsible for finance, stated on page 16 of his Budget Speech, I quote –

“We will continue to invest massively in the road sector.”

However, it is to be noted that none of the following access roads, which could have had due consideration because of the difficulties faced by the people there in rainy days have not started it yet, namely Corail, Dans Coco, Cascade Jean Louis, Piments to Cascade Jean Louis via Reposoir, Rivière Coco course to Rivière Coco cemetery and Palissade Ternel to Port Sud Est. Although these have been mentioned for this financial year, again, they were on top priorities in the 2003/2004 Budget.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, the regional Government should know that during the presentation of the Budget people expect to see their expectations come true. Delaying measures will inevitably make them lose confidence in Government's intentions and policies. That's why we say the road infrastructure policy of this regional Government is a fiasco. It's only eyewash.

Let me, Mr Chairperson, Sir, voice out some feelings of the population as far as road infrastructures are concerned. Why no provisions have been made for the construction of bus stop shelters, for the construction of roads in Morcellement, for example, at Baie Malgache? It's a pity to see such beautiful houses with no good road access! There is no provision for a comprehensive road maintenance programme. *Il y a des nids-de-poule partout*. Moreover, why nothing has been earmarked for the construction of toilets at our central market and the drains of Port Mathurin?

As regards the housing and rehabilitation programme for this regional Government, Mr Chairperson, Sir, there are lots of *zones d'ombres* we can say surrounding its implementation.

In last year's proposals, some 108 housing units were to be constructed and some 200 more low cost housing units were to be identified for a Budget of Rs15 m. The Chief Commissioner has announced the

completion of 83 low cost housing units by May this year, and the estimates for 2004/2005 amount to only Rs2 m. Can we understand that the Housing and rehabilitation programme for year 2004/2005 will remain at consultant stage only?

I now come to water resources. Mr Chairperson, Sir, as far as water is concerned, let me quote last year's speech of the Chief Commissioner on the matter at page 70. I quote –

“One of the top priorities is the provision of sufficient water to each and every family. And two of the short-term measures were to rationalising the water networks and minimisation of water wastage.”

I wonder, Mr Chairperson, Sir, how the Executive Council has been able to reach these objectives when we know that many families are still deprived of potable water due to poor water networks and lack of fittings, thus causing defective means and encourage loss of water at many places, especially in the western region. I can assure the House that by now, the time I am speaking, at the region where I live water has not been distributed for three weeks.

(Interruptions)

Mr Jabeemissar: Even in this House, very often, there is no water in the toilets.

(Interruptions)

Long-term measures are identified for the setting up of big pipes. In the region where I live, I know that there is a project of pipe laying, but people do not need pipes, but they need water for everyday use.

(Interruptions)

The existing pipe, the existing network....

(Interruptions)

The problem is not about the pipe, Mr Chairperson, Sir; it's about a proper water management; this is what is lacking. We need proper water management.

(Interruptions)

Although big dams have been constructed, if the water distribution is not managed well, we will have the same problem; this has always been the same problem. That's why, Mr Chairperson, Sir, I have had to intervene through questions and statements on different occasions in this House concerning the water issue. They still don't understand why, up to now, in the coastal region, though some improvements have been done, there are still problems there. As far as water at La Ferme is concerned, the inhabitants are always complaining of lack of fittings, lack of lorry tankers, etc. In this Budget nothing has been earmarked in order to purchase spare parts for lorry tankers.

Moreover, Mr Chairperson, Sir, it's a pity to note that fibre glass tankers installed at places where there are water problems have never been filled with water...

(Interruptions)

The water unit, as I said before, is always complaining of lack of fittings and other requisites. I wonder for how long such situation will prevail.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, even if long-term measures seem to be quite promising in terms of water output, rationalisation of present water resources is of utmost importance for all the reasons we know. It is, therefore, deeply felt that provisions should have been made for a modern water management unit. As the minority Leader this morning pointed out.

I now come, Mr Chairperson, Sir, to agriculture. Undoubtedly, agriculture is and should remain the backbone of our economy. But in order to cope with increased demand of food for our population, tourists visiting us, we should have a more aggressive agricultural policy; and this Budget does not seem to provide opportunities for agricultural take-off.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, the figures speak for themselves. When we look at the estimates for 2003/2004 which amounted to only Rs1.8 m., only Rs880,045 were spent and for 2004/2005, a sum of only Rs3,800,000 was earmarked. Mr Chairperson, Sir, I don't know whether the executive council are aware of the great challenges facing us in this sector.

Now, with the frequent visits of ships and container facilities, vegetables, fruits, frozen meat and fish are easily available here. They are facing great competition with our local products. Although we note that in the absence of local food, which normally is of better quality, it is better to use imported food, provided the price is competitive.

However, Mr Chairperson, Sir, such practice is a great threat to the policy of encouraging our local planters and farmers to produce more. I would say, Mr Chairperson, Sir, that this Budget does not make any provision to guarantee the efforts of our planters and farmers.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, I wonder whether the regional Government is aware of the problems facing our farmers and planters to sell their products, their '*ti piments*', their poultry and pigs; they are now facing market difficulty. It is worth knowing how the sea fret rebate schemes of previous Budgets have been very beneficial for importers and exporters. Should it be reviewed in order to be more beneficial? Has this Budget taken this into consideration? Mr Chairperson, Sir, these questions are intended to make the Executive Council aware that we must avoid situations which entangle the policy of encouraging Rodriguans to stand on their own feet.

Moreover, Mr Chairperson, Sir, there is a recurrent dreadful situation concerning cash crops, such as onions and garlic. We are told that once these products are exported, soon after we have to import them again from Mauritius. And, of course, they are more expensive than the local ones. Is this a good policy? Should it continue? I think, Mr Chairperson, Sir, that this Budget should have taken into consideration all these little things, which, in fact, are the causes of the major problems we encounter in the social economic field.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, another major apprehension concerning the agricultural sector is no doubt the decrease in animal production, especially cattle, goats and sheep. We expected the Budget to pay more attention to farmers. If I take, for example, the Director of Audit's Report for period

ending 30 June 2003 on the accounts of the RRA, in connection with the support to construction of stables, it is found that it did not reach the required objectives.

It is a pity to note that in the two subsequent Budgets allocated for this activity, no amount was spent. And the observations indicate clearly that there is a lack of seriousness in formulating policies on the part of those concerned. Yet, we all know that free grazing system used by cattle farmers has proved to be destructive to the environment of our island. What has the Budget provided if due consideration is to be given to encourage an eco friendly farming? Is there a real integrated approach in the policy of the preservation of our environment?

Mr Chairperson, Sir, I now come to education. As in mainland Mauritius, we can say that education is the sector where Government invests much money. Although we know that the Commission for Education looks after the administrative aspects only, normal things falling under its purview could have been done if necessary attention were given to them. Apart from the construction and extension of colleges mentioned in this Budget and the improvement of several primary schools environment, I wonder, as has just been proposed by my colleague, Mrs Meunier, whether this project make also provision for outdoor game infrastructure. Does it also make provision for adequate water supply in schools? Mr Chairperson, Sir, there seems to be too many paradoxes in this Budget. This is not acceptable. On the one hand, a swimming pool is being built at Maréchal, which will certainly need a lot of water, on the other hand, new toilets built at Maréchal College cannot be used due to lack of water. How can we accept such a situation?

(Interruptions)

When the swimming pool will be operational, I wonder whether there will be a shortage of water. The Budget neither provides incentives to teachers nor gives any indication as to the recruitment of teachers. Why is the construction of the secondary school at Songes is not mentioned in this Budget? The Commissioner has just maintained his policy of providing schoolchildren with our local products such as fruits and vegetables also. But I have to draw his attention to the fact that production of fruits and even vegetables is done on a seasonal basis due to the different reasons that we know. But the Commissioner should know that he would have to rely on

imported fruits. When these fruits will not be available locally, does it mean that our children will be deprived of fruits? I want to draw the attention of the Commissioner not to forget to include this item in his Budget.

To conclude, Mr Chairperson, Sir, I wish also to thank the Central Government for its continuous support to our autonomous island. I hope that the Executive Council will find ways and means to be less dependent on Mauritius financially by setting up the right policies for the economic take-off of Rodrigues.

M. le président, les mots sont creux s'ils ne sont pas accompagnés d'actions concrètes. Il faut savoir que, si on prive un handicapé de ses béquilles, il ne pourra se tenir debout. Donc, je dis que le petit Rodriguais, malgré ses bonnes volontés, fait face à beaucoup de problèmes. Il a des difficultés à écouler ses petits piments, ses petits limons. Il faut l'aider à surmonter ces problèmes à travers un accompagnement soutenu si on veut qu'il réussisse.

With these words, Mr Chairperson, Sir, I thank you for your attention.

The Commissioner for Health (Mr S. Soopramaïen): Mr Chairperson, Sir, the draft estimates of recurrent revenue, recurrent expenditure and capital revenue and capital expenditure for the financial year 2004-05 presented by the Chief Commissioner last Tuesday contain funds from Mauritius that will contribute towards the improvement on the living condition of our population. There is a revival in every sense in the life of each Rodriguan.

M. le président, quand j'ai écouté les membres de la minorité, ils donnent l'impression que le gouvernement régional OPR n'a rien accompli. Mais soyons réalistes, ouvrons les yeux, et ne soyons pas toujours négatifs!

My Commission is responsible for the medical and health services, co-operatives, prisons, reform institutions and fire services. On my part, I would like to intervene on the realisation and vision that we have for these sectors. The medical and health services play a crucial role in the life of our people. It provides preventive and curative services. The objective of this service is to provide better health care and promote a healthy lifestyle to our

population. The overall objective is a higher healthy life expectancy for our people. The health services are provided by Queen Elizabeth Hospital, two area health centres, and the four community health centres throughout the island. The Rodrigues Regional Government of the OPR, composed of determined and responsible persons, is well aware that the health care services require proper infrastructure, adequate equipment and trained manpower. Human resources will no doubt remain the most important factor to determine health outcome.

However, during this current financial year, my Commission has laid emphasis on improvement of infrastructure and purchase of essential equipment. In order to improve infrastructure at Queen Elizabeth Hospital, the following projects and activities are being carried out –

- (i) The alleys of Queen Elizabeth Hospital were in bad condition and patients faced a lot of inconvenience when they were transported in trolleys and stretchers, especially patients undergoing surgical operations. Thus, the alley has now been resurfaced to the benefits of one and all.
- (ii) an underground electrical network is being installed. Works have already started and are progressing smoothly. With the installation of the network, we will have no problem during cyclonic season. Additional ambulances have been acquired for the medical health services.

(Interruption)

Mr Chairperson: Order, please!

Mr Soopramanien: In addition to two ambulances donated by the Luxembourg Government, my Commission has already ordered a new one.

- (iii) The construction of a well-wishers hall to shelter visitors has been completed and is fully operational.
May I here, Mr Chairperson, Sir, inform the Assembly that the Minister of Health and Quality of Life and his delegation were on mission in Rodrigues last month and they placed on record that the hall will serve as a model to be replicated in the island of Mauritius.

- (iv) Other equipment such as a heavy-duty x-ray film processor for the X-Ray Department, gastroscope for the operating theatre and semi-automated two-channel for the laboratory have also been ordered.

The OPR Government is implementing these projects.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, the infrastructure development and equipment are of no use to our patients if appropriate qualified personnel with dedication to human services is not available. During the calendar year 2003, the number of patients attending our health institutions is 163,346. These patients were served by our devoted medical and paramedical personnel, including medical specialists, medical health officers, nursing officers, laboratory technicians, dispensers, hospital servants, among others. We also care for the security of our patients. As from 01 April, security services are placed on a 24-hour vigilance at Queen Elizabeth Hospital, Mont Lubin and La Ferme Area Health Centres.

(Interruptions)

Human Resources are the most important factor responsible for the proper running of health services. The Health Services have increased the nursing personnel. We have already sent four nursing officers for training in mental health with a view to improving mental health care at Queen Elizabeth Hospital and three nursing officers will soon leave Rodrigues for a one-year training course in midwifery in Mauritius.

In order to improve the curative services, we have increased the frequency of visiting specialists to Rodrigues, especially in new areas such as oral surgery and hand surgery. Last year, two eminent specialists, namely, Professor Kalangos, paediatric cardiac surgeon, and Dr. **Niper**, a plastic surgeon, visited Rodrigues and examined patients.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, it was a risk for patients needing urgent surgical intervention by specialists to wait for nursing officers to be called from their place of residence. As we value the life of every patient, a 24-hour coverage by qualified nursing officers has been introduced in the operating theatre. It has been a practice to send patients for specialised treatment and further

investigation in Mauritius when such services were not available in Rodrigues. Such referrals have decreased considerably by the posting of additional specialists and the short-term visits of cardiologists, orthodontists and dermatologists, among others.

M. le président, c'est bon de noter que l'année dernière, en 2003, nous avons envoyé 325 patients à Maurice parmi lesquels trois ont succombé. Out of 325 patients sent to Mauritius three of them passed away and this Commission bore all the repatriation costs. It was observed that out of 325 patients, 128 of these cases required the intervention of an orthopaedic surgeon.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, I am pleased to apprise this Assembly that as from early March, this year, an experienced orthopaedic surgeon has been posted full-time at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital. And this measure will greatly reduce the number of patients being referred to Mauritius, thereby pertaining the mental suffering of the parents and children left behind.

Mr Chairperson, improvements have also been made in other services such as physiotherapy, dialysis, electrocardiography laboratory and radiologist, that is the Regional OPR Government is moving in the right direction.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, medicines and drugs, free of charge, are provided to all patients.

(Interruptions)

There is a need to encourage judicious prescriptions and patients are encouraged to use medicine as prescribed. To reduce wastage, measures have been taken to prescribe medicines in the appropriate quantity. Patients are also advised to take the correct dosage at the right frequency. I have the pleasure to inform the Assembly that improvements have been observed here also.

The Regional Government wants everybody to get the right service when calling at the hospital and health centres. Some in-patients need some extra care, which can be provided by health care assistants. Thus, we are

looking forward to have the following medical health services - 10 health care assistants among other new posts. Health is wealth - that is the motto.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, besides our curative services, my Commission is laying a lot of emphasis on the preventive medicines with screening for NCD and promotion of health lifestyle. In fact, the *Caravane de Santé* has already visited 146 sites across the island and 8,666 individuals were screened. The *Caravane de Santé* is now scheduled to visit work sites in an effort to screen those who were left out. Medical sessions are being held at Queen Elizabeth Hospital and the two area health centres for NCD patients. My Commission will continue to lay emphasis on preventive services throughout the island.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, I will now come with new proposals. I would like to give a glimpse of vision, the vision of the OPR Regional Government for the medical and health services to further improve them for the benefit of the whole population. A provision of Rs141 m. has been made for both Recurrent and Capital Expenditure in the Budget Estimates for the year 2004/2005. Out of this sum, provision has been made to improve the sewerage system at Queen Elizabeth Hospital, upgrading the maternity ward. The Minority Leader and other members of the Minority have pointed out that nothing has been done for the maternity ward and Oyster Bay Community Health Centre.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, let me inform the Assembly that the delay in the construction of the maternity ward is attributed to the non-availability of an adequate building to shift patients, the ward pending renovations. We have the good intention, but I can assure the Assembly that this project is taken into account as the one other priority.

As regards Oyster Bay, let me inform the Assembly that some works have already been done ...

(Interruptions)

...and I invite the Minority Leader to go and have a look there.

(Interruptions)

The Medical and Health Services require an adequate stock of medicines, surgical supply, foodstuff, food items and stationery. Budgetary provision for these items has been subsequently increased to cope with the increase in demand of the population. For storage facilities of these bulky items, the stores need to be upgraded. In the first instance, we are proceeding with the construction of a fully equipped store for food items.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, appropriate equipment are also required to modernise our services. Provision has, therefore, been made for the purchase of blood transfusion service equipment. In fact, we want to assure safe blood collection and transfusion service. With the launching of 25 clubs, many persons have shown great interest to donate blood for which the demand has increased due to the increased surgical interventions by Specialists. A technical team of Victoria Hospital has carried out an evaluation of the laboratory services. In addition, a Bio-Medical Engineer has made a survey of existing equipment at Queen Elizabeth Hospital and has recommended the purchase of equipment for which provision has been as follows - 1 transport incubator and 3 baby incubators among others.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, I have three Divisions under my responsibility. Though they consume a small part of our budgetary allocation, these services are most essential for the running of the island. They are co-operatives, prisons and fire services. Capacity building of staff of the co-operative services has continued. In fact, the post of Principal Co-operative Officer was upgraded into that of Officer-in-Charge. In August 2003 the Co-operative office was transferred to a more suitable building at Pointe Monier. Four Co-operative Officers followed a training programme at the National Training Centre, Terre Rouge, Mauritius, organised by the Ministry of Commerce and Co-operatives in collaboration with a Co-operative College of Malaysia. In addition a three-day training course was held for school leavers, unemployed, young entrepreneurs together with co-operators at the Human Resource Centre, Malabar.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, co-operatives are predominant in the food sector marketing and finance. The Rodrigues Agricultural Marketing Co-operative Federation plays a crucial role in the food crop sector. It imports inputs such as seeds, fertilisers, insecticides and other materials, which are sold to planters through its five outlets. During the month of October and November 2003, the federation has purchased 162,675 kg of onions amounting to Rs1.7 m. on behalf of the marketing Board.

In the livestock sector, the *Fédérations des Associations Co-opératives des Eleveurs Rodriguais (FACER)* imports animal feed, veterinary products and day-old chicks for resale to producers of livestock breeding in Rodrigues. By so doing, it enables many families to earn their living. In the year 2003/2004, the turnover of FACER was Rs16 m. and the import of animal feed was 1.927 tons and the number of chicks imported was 50,000. The credit unions also play an important role in the co-operative sector. Some of them have improved their management structure to provide other services against acceptance of fixed deposit scheme from its members. Two new co-operative societies, namely the Rodrigues Seafarers Co-operative Society Ltd. and the Petite Fleur Multi-purpose Co-operative Society Ltd. have been registered; they group fishermen and women dealing with the handicraft activities respectively.

A provision of Rs475,000 has been made as grant to the co-operative federations to support them in their activities and to continue with capacity building of co-operators.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, major upgrading works have been carried out to prisons. It is now more secure. The following works have been completed –

- Construction of a kennel to house a new lister
- Upgrading of the enclosure,
- Construction of guard post.

The prison building will now be extended to enable the separation of convicted and remand detainees. The plans are being finalised in collaboration with the Commissioner of Prisons in Mauritius.

During this financial year, the probation service has already supervised 16 adults, 8 juveniles and four referred cases to the Rehabilitation Youth Centre in Mauritius.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, the Community Service Order has been introduced in Mauritius and it is an alternative to imprisonment. The Probation Service supervised the first Community Service Order in Rodrigues in collaboration with the Queen Elizabeth Hospital. During the next financial year, provision has been made for the establishment of a

Rehabilitation Youth Centre for the detention of both convicted and unconvicted juveniles.

The Fire Services protect our life and property from fire. During this financial year, we have been able to upgrade the Fire Services Headquarters and acquired radio communication equipment and a tanker. During the next financial year provision has been made for the construction of a new store for the storage of fire fighting equipment, which are very expensive. New fire fighting equipment will also be purchased. Provision has also been made for the creation of a Post Station Officer to upgrade the administrative set-up to ensure continuity.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, I will conclude by saying that our young and autonomous Rodrigues Island will keep on developing thanks to the determination of the Rodrigues Regional Government headed by the visionary Chief Commissioner who puts MAN at the centre of all decisions taken.

Thank you, Sir.

Mr D. L. Guillaume: Mr Chairperson, Sir, this Budget has not given due consideration to the agricultural sector, because it has not made provision for a long term integrated socio-economic development for Rodrigues. The Executive Council is not conscious of the problem of unemployment in Rodrigues. It is to be noted that unemployment is one of the causes of poverty in Rodrigues.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, let us see the budget allocated to agriculture. The Chief Commissioner was right in saying that agriculture is the backbone of our economy, but the Capital Budget allocated to agricultural diversification programme has remained the same. Only Rs1 m compared to last year's Budget 2003/2004, this sector has suffered during the past 20 years due to a lack of good governance. Given the damage caused by Kalundé on agriculture, the Executive Council should have thought of a more sustainable development in agriculture.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, there is an economic mismanagement in the island and the agricultural sector has not been very productive in spite of the culture of higher productivity for the local market as well as export of

products like onion, bean, garlic and potatoes. Mr Chairperson, Sir, a lack of self-sufficiency in food, a bad economic structure of the sector, this perception results in a disactivation of the global agricultural economy. The lack of interest from the younger generation in agriculture confirmed it. This Budget does not take concrete action to restart agriculture due to a lack of good will.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, this Budget does not account for a *service d'équipement agricole* which can provide better services to planters. The Executive Council does not have the political will for agriculture in the island and want to relax while the agriculture sector has not reached the level of the 21st century. We still have an agriculture, which depends only on two old tractors, which are not really in good condition. Can we call this sustainable agriculture?

Mr Chairperson, Sir, the technical economic approach allows a uniform cost of production and allows to save time. Given the geotropical position of our island and in spite of soil often rocky, the Budget of 2004/2005 has not made provision for the purchase of tools and machinery for mechanisation of agriculture in the island, for instance, derocking of soil. Sir, this Budget has provided irrigation in some valleys only. Given the lack of vision in agriculture, the policy of collecting water in the island has vanished.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, irrigation will therefore be absent in all other valleys and plains such as Camp Patate, Maréchal, Baie Malgache, La Ferme and Anse Baleine which are also essential for the economy of Rodrigues. If irrigation is not thought of in a global manner, it will not give the required result during the next decade.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, for many years no Budget has been able to bring forward a *Centre Innovation/Transfert Technologie* for SME in agriculture. This year Rodrigues has received direct flights from Reunion Island. However, our small and medium enterprises have not been innovated, because of lack of technical services to transform and conserve products to support SMEs.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, where is the Pest Control Unit in this Budget 2004/2005? No provision was made for efficient phytosanitary services. Pest is a great hindrance in Rodrigues to the development of agriculture, for

example, white flies and slug. The phytosanitary problems will accumulate due to our geographical location and the commercial exchange between Rodrigues, Mauritius and Reunion Island. Sir, the great variety of vegetable production introduced and the absence of natural control of species favour the presence of important number of pests, which infests the plantation. This phytosanitary problem creates important economic loss, which affects agricultural revenue.

Sir, this Budget has not made provision to employ entomologists and phytopathologists. The Executive Council quickly forgets *les vers blancs de l'île de la Réunion*. Sir, where is the Rodrigues Marketing and Trade Agency which will be set up to promote processing and marketing of local product?

(Interruptions)

As stated in 2003/2004 Budget given this activity which is exposed to variation of the weather and natural disaster, where is the Rodrigues Planters and Welfare Fund?

Sir, I must stress the interest of proposal and the importance to continue the research on sustainable agriculture. It is deplorable to note that agriculturiers have not yet received the professional cards and bad weather allowance. This Budget has not clearly mentioned the security of agriculturiers. Mr Chairperson, Sir, in this Assembly, I have asked a question on the deplorable slaughter house at Port Mathurin; and the Commissioner responsible has made a lengthy speech on the means to solve the problem in the 2003/2004 Budget and the bad smell will be controlled. By reading the 2003/2004 and 2004/2005 Budgets where is the innovation? This is to say, Sir, that no provision has been made to address the above problem. In addition no provision has been made for the construction of a well-conditioned public toilet in the vicinity of the said market.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, this Budget does not mention ways to encourage co-operative planters. The price of onion seeds and garlic imported from Mauritius and Reunion Island are not subsidised and the price of onion seed has reached Rs1,000 per half kilo. This results in the slow down of the cultivation and export of these local products. This means that there is no solution to reduce the high cost of production faced by planters.

Thank you, Sir.

Mr François: Mr Chairperson, Sir, it was my intention to clarify a point, to challenge since Commissioner Sooprayen raised it. It concerns the community dispensary. In fact, two Members from this side said that nothing has been done concerning renovation works. Since the Commissioner said that some work has been done, this is renovation. I personally take the Commissioner, his Departmental Head and we met the watchman and the responsible person of the dispensary on the spot. We visited the whole building and compound, the Departmental Head took some notes of all works, which need repairs, maintenance, repaint etc. Two days later, the works started. What was said on the other side is totally false and malicious. As the Rodriguan people say in their maternal tongue, "*faire di moune croire li zour pou à soir*". *Heureusement que les rodriguais ont vu clair depuis plus de 25 ans, M. le président.*

(Interruptions)

Mr Chairperson: Order please!

Mr François: Mr Chairperson, Sir, there is no doubt that the presentation of the Rodrigues Regional Government annual Budget Estimates is becoming by far the most important event in the life of a country as it is the talk of the day since Tuesday last when it was presented at the Rodrigues Regional Assembly House by the Chief Commissioner.

Sir, I would like first to congratulate the Chief Commissioner for his 2004/2005 Budget Speech and same goes to all those who have been closely involved in the presentation of this very good piece of work. Before taking into consideration the different provisions of this Budget, I would like to express my appreciation to the fact that the rehabilitation of Fond Acacia Dam, including new filtration and chlorination equipment for a better quality water distribution has been taken into consideration in the Capital Budget of this year under the item "Water Supply Development Project". It is for sure that the people living in Acacia Village and the surrounding, including the Minority Leader will appreciate as this was long overdue. We all know that a bird's nest is not built in one day. Unfortunately it is a pity for those who still believe that projects can be planned overnight and realised the next

morning! So, the ten priority point programme proposed by the Regional Government with clear views of our priorities for this yearly Budget where fair financial resources will be provided are very strong signs from the majority side to create much more better condition for the social and economic advancement of all compartments of our society. This has been highly appreciated by the Rodriguan people especially the idea from the Regional Government to reinforce its policy of protection and support of the vulnerable groups to facilitate the integration in our society.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, I should like to congratulate the majority side to come very soon with the setting up of a network support service also known as *le projet réseau* with the objective to guide all persons with socio-economic problems where and how to identify projects which they could realise with the support of the Regional Government and which will lead them to a better situation in which they will find themselves less economically dependent on social aid as the Regional Government policy discourages the attitude of *assistanat et cette mentalité de se croiser les bras et attendre*.

Concerning water supply in the island, Mr Chairperson, Sir, it is with great pleasure that one can note - and it is to be seen and seen to be done - that a lot of work has been implemented since the advent of autonomy. The setting up of all the water storage projects namely Anse Raffin, Grenade, Pavé la Montée, Pistache Dam, the desiltation of old dams and small reservoirs, the coming of the desalination plant, installation of rehabilitation of filtration plants, the repair and maintenance of our distribution of water network and the laying out of new network for a better water distribution in Rodrigues are clear signs of this responsible Regional Government to solve this acute problem. All the measures announced in this Budget concerning water storage and distribution in Rodrigues strongly reflect the intention of this Government to honour its engagement contracted with the Rodriguan population during September 2002 regional elections. There is no doubt, Sir, knowing the determination and capacity of the majority group to deal with the problem of water in Rodrigues, I am overconfident that we will meet this challenge and that in a very short time water problem in Rodrigues *sera chose du passé*.

Now I should like to comment on the tourism sector, which will constitute the backbone of our economic development. This sector, if well planned and worked out in all its aspects will, no doubt, boost up the

agricultural fishing, agro-processing, small and medium enterprises, handicraft as well as other productive sectors which will, in turn, provide employment opportunities to many people in Rodrigues. The coming into operation of the direct regional flight to and from Réunion Island, the five hotel project, the setting up of the Rodrigues Tourism Committee, the Tourism Act of 2002, the giant tortoise reserve and cave project, *les chambres d'hôte*, the boarding houses etc. the promotion of ecotourism with the collaboration of ARTO as well as the financial support provided in this Budget to promotion campaign with respect to Rodrigues as an ecotourism destination are very important measures taken as the island will depend on this vital sector for its economic take-off, growth and development.

Concerning education, Sir, I am very proud to express my satisfaction for the Budget proposals made by the Chief Commissioner for the construction, completion and extension of Mont Lubin, Citron Donis, Le Chou and Maréchal secondary schools. It is to be noted, Sir, that the number of secondary schools in Rodrigues is increasing since early 80s when the OPR Party under the leadership of the actual Chief Commissioner began to form part of the National Assembly. In fact, at that time we started with only one college and now we have five secondary schools operating fully and a sixth one is expected to be ready for occupation very soon and the construction of new colleges are in the pipeline.

M. le président, tout cela c'est grâce à nos efforts et notre vision pour l'éducation de nos jeunes. Permettez-moi, M. le président, d'ouvrir une parenthèse en ce qui concerne les bourses d'étude tertiaire. Il est intéressant de noter qu'il n'y en avait pas avant la présence de l'OPR au Parlement national. Que voyons nous aujourd'hui? Quatorze bourses d'étude tertiaire sont mises à la disposition de nos jeunes pour une formation plus poussée dans les différents domaines afin qu'ils puissent, après leurs études, mieux servir le pays. C'est grâce à la vision de l'OPR que ce grand pas a été réalisé dans le domaine de l'éducation. Venir dire le contraire serait que baliverne.

M. le president, l'orientation de nos jeunes pour des études tertiaires se fera grâce à un service d'information et de conseil en collaboration avec les institutions, telles que l'Université de Maurice, le Conservatoire National des Arts et des Métiers de l'Ile de La Réunion and the Association of Chartered and Certified Accountants, tandis que la Commission de

l'Education et de la Formation offrira un service d'orientation et d'insertion aux étudiants. M. le président, l'éducation primaire en ce moment connaît un grand chamboulement avec la réforme en vigueur. En sus de cela, toutes les écoles primaires connaissent en ce moment des travaux de rénovation au bâtiment, sans oublier le *School Feeding Project* pour les élèves du primaire, prévu dans le budget, et qui assurera à l'enfant un complément d'alimentation équilibrée pour son épanouissement dans ses études car l'avenir de notre île dépendra de notre jeunesse. Un peuple bien formé, bien éduqué et en bonne santé sera un peuple productif.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, as regards the health sector which is above all a very important one, the budget provisions mentioned in the Draft Estimates, presented by the Chief Commissioner, contain excellent policy measures which will contribute towards enhancement in the living conditions of our population. The increase in the capital and recurrent expenditure for the health sector will surely help to improve medical services, health promotion campaign and preventive medicine.

Concerning the infrastructure health development project, provisions have been made, among others, for the implementation, the upgrading of sewerage system, maternity ward, operating theatre, psychiatric ward and kitchen at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital. The extension of Mont Lubin Area Health Centre will also be implemented during the 2004/2005 Budget Estimates.

Medical and health services cannot be provided without adequate equipment. Mr Chairperson, Sir, nevertheless, this responsible and caring Government is aiming at greater improvement in the field of health services, thus by providing equipment for laboratory and blood transfusion service, dental equipment for La Ferme Area Health Centre and industrial dialyser Machine at Queen Elizabeth Hospital, one more ambulance for a better service to the population.

It is also to be noted with great satisfaction that provision made for the purchase of medicines and surgical accessories has been increased by more than 50%. Mr Chairperson, Sir, I have a plea of an utmost importance to the Commissioner responsible for health. It is of my opinion that this could have been an omission as nobody is perfect, only the Almighty is. This concerns the maintenance of old hospital equipment. Too often, complaints have been received from indoor and outdoors patients for the inadequate and poor

medical services due to defective equipment. A productive society depends on the state of health of its population. Without education and good health, a country cannot progress and this is by far the most important for Rodrigues as one of the main resources that we have is human resource. All the measures taken in this Budget show the visionary approach of the regional Government as far back as 1982, since the OPR party has realised that human resource development is of vital importance for the future of our country.

To conclude on this chapter, Mr Chairperson, Sir, there is no way out that this regional of Government is condemned to maintain medical services in Rodrigues in good health.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, as far as women's affairs are concerned, here, I wish to express my full appreciation at the strong political will shown by this regional Government to promote this sector. Women have always played an active role in our society which, in fact, represents more than 50% of our population. In addition, family welfare and child development, which has also been attributed to the same Commission under the responsibility of Mrs Perrine-Bégué, where huge efforts are being made to uplift the status of women, children and the Rodriguan society in general.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, all the provisions made in this annual budget estimate show the importance that the Regional Government attaches to the improvement of the conditions of women and children. Among others, one can note that the increase of 45% for this year's Recurrent Estimates, is a clear sign that the construction of an integrated centre for women, the setting up of a shelter at Baie aux Huitres for victims of domestic violence; the Child Development Unit, the Family Counselling Service, the maintenance of the Financial Assistance Scheme to Women and Children in distress, the increase of the grant-in-aid to women's associations are examples of clear messages of hope for a better condition of living. But, Mr Chairperson, Sir, as one cannot live only on social aids, '*ti pension*', subsidy, financial assistance, it is the Regional Government policy, since the advent of our autonomy, to offer incentives to stimulate productive sectors of our economy with a view to generating employment to many people, especially that 50% of our population that is composed of women.

What has been done and what is being proposed since 12 October 2002 to promote this concept? One single example is that agricultural land lease is being given to women, single or couples, with well-defined projects for crop and animal production. This is new, Mr Chairperson, Sir. Small and medium enterprises where support services like advice, training and finance are provided, have an important role to play in raising the overall level of employment in the country.

With the coming into operation of new hotels for tourism soon, the handicraft, fishing, agricultural and manufacturing and food processing units, will be sources of employment and economic revenue for many people, including women.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, insofar as matters concerning youth and sports, I would rather leave that issue to my friend, hon. Commissioner Lisette, as this is his domain. Since I am convinced that what he will deliver will be like a Beckham's direct ...

(Interruptions)

I have a strong feeling, Mr Chairperson, Sir, that Rodrigues is taking the direction we, the OPR Regional Government did plan for it, the road to success, as it is a well-known saying, success is a matter of hard work and sacrifice, not selling dreams and rumours.

I should like to conclude, Mr Chairperson, Sir, by saying that for this annual budget estimates presented by the Regional Government, Rodrigues is being well prepared to know a brighter future.

Thank you, Mr Chairperson, Sir.

Mr J. C. Agathe (Second Local Region Member for Marechal):
Mr Chairperson, first of all, let me refer the respected Member of the majority side to the Capital Budget of last year, where it is mentioned ‘construction of community health centre at Oyster Bay’ There is a difference between ‘construction’ and ‘renovation’.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, first and foremost, let me congratulate the Chief Commissioner. He has made an anti-clockwise turn of 360°, that is, from Roger Garandi to Father John Pope II.

(Interruptions)

Mr Chairperson, Sir, I am rather surprised to hear a Commissioner saying to the House that the Budget contains errors. We trust public officers at the Finance Cadre and we hope that the accounting figures about the Regional, Cultural and Leisure Centre reflect the reality. One Commissioner is saying that the figures, which are presented by another Commissioner, are wrong ...

(Interruptions)

Can we trust such people to manage our public funds?

(Interruptions)

First of all, the amount of money appearing on the deposit account mentioned in the adverse report of the Director of Audit is nowhere to be found. It seems that there are 20 such individual accounts, among the deposit accounts, which the Director of Audit suggests to carry out an investigation to determine the reasons justifying the continued inclusion as deposits. The one which worries us is Cyclone Kalundé Relief Fund, which as at 30 June 2003 amounted to Rs6,560,643. Some farmers and planters who have been deprived of their dues are still claiming for the death of their herd of animals and the complete destruction of their fields respectively. Consequently, Sir, some people have sought financial assistance from the National Poverty Alleviation Programme, namely IFAD, *A Nu Diboute Ensam* to start an agricultural project, that is, rearing animals so as to earn a

living. Unfortunately, Mr Chairperson, Sir, some of them have lost their animals during cyclone Kalundé. I make an appeal to the Chief Commissioner, who is responsible for finance, since in the event of the money which is deposited on the deposit account is not available for expenditure, except for the purpose which they have been deposited, to use the sum to write off the loan undertaken by the poor segment of our society. Added to that is our wish to know what is the other deposit account. What are the reasons behind the non-credited to the revenue account of these deposit accounts in spite of the lapse of five years?

Mr Chairperson, Sir, allow me to compare the Budget 2003-2004 to 2004-2005. The last financial year for Capital Estimates was Rs400 m and Recurrent Estimates Rs720 m amounted to Rs1.12 m. Today the Capital Estimate is Rs427 m and Recurrent Estimates Rs807 m respectively. There has been an increase of Rs114 m. The increase in Capital Budget is Rs27 m, that is, Rs427 m less Rs400 m for last year. Out of the amount of money granted for last year's Capital Budget, about Rs70 m or more will be unused. Does this mean that this Budget allocation has been over budgeted? If same is true, where is the seriousness of the responsible Commissioner? Following the logic of the Commissioner responsible for finance, with the 2003-2004 Budget, we do have funds for two and a half years more, that is, Rs70 m divided by Rs27 m increase. The Recurrent Budget is mainly due to the implementation of the PRB Report. As the Chief Commissioner rightly said, the salary increase was Rs40.5 m adding Rs70 m as unused capital expenditure for 2003/2004 and Rs40 m for the implementation of PRB by 01 July. What is left, Mr Chairperson, Sir? Only Rs4 m. The remaining Rs4 m can be raised in the island of Rodrigues itself, *pas la peine d'aller quémander ailleurs car nous avons* Rs 15,523.047 dans le *deposit account*.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, since the Capital Budget Estimate has been increased by 6%, we are of the view that the Budget allocated to each Commissioner would have been increased accordingly. Compared to last year's Capital Estimates, there has been a considerable decrease of 21%. Since there have been consultations between the Ministry of Finance and the Commissioner, the Assembly must know what are the budgetary constraints at the national level to prevent us from obtaining 27% or more compared to last year. What is more surprising is the consequent decrease, the Commissioners have to amend their original budget proposals. Concerning the education sector, mostly our schools are facing a lot of dilemma arising from the society.

Depuis plus d'un siècle, la république et l'école se sont construites l'une avec l'autre. L'école a relevé le rêve de la république et reste sans aucun doute la plus belle de ses réussites. Elle permet à chaque esprit de conquérir sa liberté, faire vivre l'égalité des chances, donner corps à la fraternité en donnant à tous les élèves, les enfants de la même république le même savoir et la même culture. Voilà les objectifs que la république mauricienne s'est fixée lorsqu'elle a instauré l'enseignement gratuit et obligatoire. Ce n'est pas dans la nostalgie que l'école forgera son avenir, c'est en regardant devant elle avec confiance qu'elle restera fidèle à son héritage en souhaitant que les enfants qui entrent aujourd'hui en maternelle, quitteront le système éducatif vers 2020. Le monde contemporain, la société change et l'école comme à toutes les étapes de son histoire a le devoir d'anticiper ce changement: un nouvel environnement, une nouvelle ambition et surtout une nouvelle méthode. L'école le zone de tous les défis qui traversent notre société, défis d'un monde toujours plus ouvert. Pour les jeunes, l'horizon n'est plus loin, sans faute celui que dessine nos frontières, ils auront besoin de clés nouvelles pour maîtriser leurs destins. Pour faire face à cette mondialisation riche de promesses, mais aussi d'interrogation et d'inquiétude, défis de la société du savoir. La connaissance est la clef du développement individuel et l'effondrement de la richesse des nations. A mesure que l'âge de l'information succède à l'âge industriel, l'ignorance est est plus encore qu'hier synonyme d'exclusion. Notre école a le devoir de préparer les générations futures et à cette évolution majeure de nos économies, leur donner les ressources nécessaires pour se former tout au long de la vie et se mouvoir avec aisance dans cette société du changement et de l'échange.

Dans les 20 ans qui viennent, l'île Rodrigues aura besoin de plus de savoir, de plus de compétence, de plus de qualités, de plus de diplômés pour assurer la croissance et l'emploi. Elle doit résolument poursuivre l'élévation du niveau des connaissances. Elle doit faire naturellement le pari de l'intelligence. Notre pays ne rendra jamais suffisamment hommage à toutes celles et à tous ceux, instituteurs, professeurs, personnel d'encadrement, personnel administratif et technique qui font de leur savoir-faire mais plus encore de leur engagement, ont su accueillir et former les générations toujours plus nombreuses. Grâce à leur rôle de passeur, M. le président, l'école n'est plus celle des héritiers.

M. le président, aujourd'hui nous avons un problème à l'école pré-primaire. Nous avons ce qu'on appelle des "*ti miss*"; il y a deux types d'enseignantes, mais elles font le même travail. Certaines attendent la manne des parents pour pouvoir faire vivre leur famille et d'autres sont payés des caisses de l'état. Tous ces enseignants voudraient être sur le même pied d'égalité que leurs collègues vu que les écoles maternelles sont presque vis-à-vis des écoles primaires, le commissaire responsable de l'éducation pourra négocier d'une formule équitable avec le Pre-primary School Trust Fund. Il y a des institutrices qui ont suivi des cours à distance avec la Mauritius Institute of Education sur la Early Childhood Education.

This Budget, Sir, does not encounter for that, it is something very painful. Year in year out, Sir, I am talking of the ZEP project, but unfortunately it goes to the ear of a deaf man...

(Interruptions)

Though the education sector is facing such dilemma, the Commissioner for Education has decided to reduce his Capital Budget compared to last year by Rs27 m. It is more possible for a Chief Commissioner to ask a Commissioner to step down rather than to decrease his Budget by 30%, a decrease more than the increase earned on the Capital Budget Estimates.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, *l'enfant gâté de ce budget est le commissaire de la jeunesse et du sport*. The latter has his Budget increased by 135%! What's funny compared to his counterpart, the Commissioner for Education, who has his Budget decreased by 30% from the Capital Budget of Rs32 m. *l'enfant gâté* has performed only 3% of his work. Today we have only two months left, I wonder how the latter could achieve 58%. If ever same is true 42% of his Budget will elapse. These 42% could have helped rodriguan sportsmen and sportswomen. During the sitting of Friday 04 April 2003, the Commissioner of Youth and Sports boasted his Commission with all sorts of verbs in regard to the Minority side. Today, Mr Chairperson, Sir, *crache en l'air tombe lors néné!*

Up to the end of 03 March 2004, only 10% was carried out by his Commissioner. Due to the poor works carried out at La Ferme handball or volleyball ground, *je fais un appel pressant à la majorité pour qu'une commission d'enquête soit instituée afin d'éclaircir la grosse somme*

dépensée. Everyone will appreciate the type of work that has been carried out under that Commission as regards that playground. This Assembly will recall that due to the multiple questions asked to upgrade the playground and to develop *sport de masse*, lighting is very, very crucial. Supplementary questions regarding lighting of La Ferme sport complex, the Commissioner of Youth and Sports answered that funds were not available. Today sportsmen and sportswomen of La Ferme will recall that Rs113,500,000 will go to the recycle bin.

Since the setting up of a Commission for Youth and Sports, Mr Chairperson, Sir, sports in general were at a decline in the island of Rodrigues.

First of all, let me congratulate the ex-Chairman and the new Chairman of the Rodrigues Regional Sports Committees with their teams who have done a remarkable work in Rodrigues. Rodrigues will always remember the football team, which has won the gold medal at the *Jeux des Iles* of 1985. Some were even considered as ‘Jean ti-Ghana Rodriguais’, Mackenzy, Josy, Roland, etc.

(Interruptions)

I am not talking of Beckham. Henforth, a monument was erected in the vicinity of Camp du Roi Stadium to commemorate the event. A member present in this House saw this differently. At that time, he even ordered the destruction of same. The mishap of the football players did not end there. During the 6th Indian Ocean Islands Game they were not invited to handle the torch.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, we have noticed that some information gathered from the Chief Commissioner and the other Commissioners’ office are misleading. Either their answer is misleading or they are trying to provide us with false information. One example amongst others is that the Chief Commissioner has considered the Indian Ocean Islands Games as international sports when we know that it is not the case ...

(Interruptions)

Mr Chairperson, Sir, the Sports Act rightly states that there should be respective sports federations under which there would be regional sports committee and, at grass root level, the sports clubs. This process is well known to Rodriguan sportsmen and sportswomen. Nowadays, the Commissioner for Youth and Sports, surrounded by some '*tonton macoute*' wants to introduce politics in sports. He sets up a committee parallel to the legal one. Everybody presents in this Assembly will recall that the Commissioner for Youth and Sports has said that the Judo Steering Committee was set up for the organisation of the Indian Ocean Islands Games. Once the games were over, another committee was set up with the same members who were previously on the Steering Committee, now renamed as the 'Judo Coordinating Committee', in spite of a legal Rodrigues Regional Judo Committee.

Paradoxically, Mr Chairperson, Sir, the Chairman of the Judo Coordinating Committee is the Commissioner responsible for sports himself. I will remind him, again, that according to the Sports Act, no person who is actively involved in politics can be the Chairman of a given sports committee. Worst! The Commissioner, himself, is the Chairman of that sports committee. Any sportsman or sportswoman who practices to do another sport activity, other than judo, is tempted to say that more facilities or funds are allocated to judo instead. It would seem that there is the political interference of some '*tonton macoute*' in the vicinity of the Commissioner.

Mr Chairperson: The Member has repeated twice '*tonton macoute*'. I don't know these words.

Mr Agathe: They are political agents, Mr Chairperson, Sir. They are in the vicinity of the Commissioner for Youth and Sports; they forced the latter to squeeze some Rodriguan Sports Regional Committee members to vacate their seats unless they are doing fundamental voluntary works. They are setting up in parallel an illegal committee, which is not affiliated to the respective sports federations, and are using public funds to do so/

Mr Chairperson, Sir, I wish to draw the attention of this Assembly to the way public funds are being made use of under the Commission for Youth and Sports. In a short lapse of time, the Departmental Heads of the Sports Commission went to Mauritius and personally bought about 100 kimonos without going through the stores requisites. Secondly, but not last, on 12

March 2004, a team of six judo experts, 4 male and 2 female, participated in a tournament, financed by the Ministry of Sports. One male judo expert was back on 15 March. Paradoxically, Mr Chairperson, Sir, the Manager of Seaview Hotel sent a bill for six persons. When we inquired about the reason, it was mentioned that 3 men and 3 women went in the hotel instead of 3 men and 2 women ...

(Interruptions)

Mr Chairperson, Sir, I now move to the item regarding sports complexes. The upgrading of a football ground at Baie aux Huitres and a dojo at Le Chou are most welcomed. At the Baie aux Huitres football ground, supporters used to watch the football match on the road and thus blocking same. Mr Chairperson, Sir, we are worried that it could become a swimming pool during heavy rains due to its height above sea level. We should be much obliged to the Commissioner of Youth and Sports if he could give us the reason why a gymnasium is constructed at Grande Montagne instead of Roche Bon Dieu, as mentioned initially.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, let me refer to my last Budget Speech. I am proud to note that this Budget has catered for children whose behaviours are beyond control. In fact, mention is made that a Rehabilitation Centre will be constructed shortly. I just hope that there won't be long delays before the setting up of such a centre. In meetings, which I had with the Chairman for the senior citizens, I also raised the issue of setting up training and recreational centres for the senior citizens. We hope that this would not be a dormant project.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, with regard to sports practised and due to the availability of someone in the calibre of Mr Eddy André, Nursing Officer, formerly posted to the Mauritius Sports Medical Unit, no mention of same was given in the Budget. People in the north of the island of Rodrigues were penalised both in sports and youth infrastructure. The Pointe l'Herbe handball players have to use the parking in front of the Camp du Roi Stadium as handball ground. Since I was a youth animator, the people in the north region were struggling to at least have a youth centre where they could have meetings. With the election of a new administration block in the 1990s, the Rodriguan people will recall that till the year 2004/2005, no public garden

was earmarked to replace same. The practice of handy sports was inexistent in the island.

M. le président, la natation est le sport le plus onéreux à Rodrigues. Cette même discipline n'a ni comité régional et encore moins une fédération. Il n'y a qu'un ad hoc comité avec une infrastructure de R 90 millions.

(Interruptions)

A Maréchal, lors de la pose de la première pierre, faute de droit à la parole aux membres de la minorité, le Commissaire aurait fini par nous noyer, et cela en face du Premier ministre, l'honorable Paul Bérenger ...

(Interruptions)

A force de vouloir noyer son chien, il finit par dire que son chien a la rage, disait l'adage.

M. le président, la population sportive a été choquée d'apercevoir, tout comme moi, vu que le comité régional de natation est inexistant qu'il n'y ait pas un seul adhérent, un poste de *sport coach* fut alloué. Alors depuis belle lurette, le handball, le badminton, le judo, les deux tennis, y compris des milliers de membres n'avaient pas de *sport coach*.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, I am not against that, but priority should have been given to the discipline mentioned above. The players and members of Hearts sporting club are still waiting for their Reunion Island's ticket.

(Interruptions)

As far as promotion of sports is concerned, this amount, Mr Chairperson, Sir, is mainly for air tickets only. The youths of our island are presently facing a number of problems, namely leisure and employment. To crown it all, this Regional Government is not at all providing them with the means to master their destiny. It takes years for a young small entrepreneur to obtain a lease or a licence to operate a business, even the slow pace at which these are delivered. Every citizen has a right to employment on this island. Half

of our working population are unemployed. It is a paradox - I say it again - to see hundreds of foreign workers employed in the construction industry to do jobs like carpenters, masons, etc. when most of our youngsters are exiled to Mauritius to do the same work, leaving their families, homes, etc.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, a plague is threatening the future of our youths. Hard drugs have been introduced and are causing a lot of harm on our island. What is the Commissioner for Youth and Sports planning to do to stop the propagation of drugs?

Concerning the prisons, it is a pity to see many substitute female Prison Officers leaving the public service at the age of 60 without earning any compensation, compared to their counterparts. Their services are easily available on a 24-hour basis, but when there are no female prisoners, they stay at home without receiving any allowance. I should be grateful to know the Commissioner's view on this.

Thank you, Mr Chairperson, Sir.

The Commissioner for Trade, Commerce and Licensing (Mr N. Lisette): Mr Chairperson, Sir, I am honoured to be delivering my first Budget Speech to this august Assembly at this historic moment of our society's development.

Mr Chairperson, we are on the verge of completing the second year of our political status and this juncture presents us with an appropriate opportunity to take stock of what we have achieved during the first year and to see what we are going to do in the coming years. We must also consider what lies ahead for us and determine the direction that we should head for.

The people of Rodrigues, Mr Chairperson, Sir, have to be proud of what we have achieved in the second year of our autonomy. In the first two years of the new political status of the island, the Regional Government, and our people, have faced enormous challenges and problems. However, what we have done as a nation is remarkable.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, before I dwelve in the essence of my speech, I would like to react to what has been said from the other side of the House, especially by the Minority Leader and Mr Agathe about the sports aspects.

I'll deal with that topic later on. I find something very surprising, Mr Chairperson, Sir. If I remember well, last year, in the very first sentence of the Minority Leader's speech, he stated that 'We are not going to vote the Budget.' before even listening to the interventions of the different Members of this side...

(Interruptions)

Mr Chairperson, Sir, this year in his speech, the Minority Leader came forward and said that there were very good measures that have been taken, but have not been implemented.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, he even went further stating a proverb "actions speak louder than words". That is right, but there is one thing that he should realise that before an action is taken, there should be a few things, and whatever projects we have mentioned in the Budget, we are going to achieve them, Mr Chairperson, Sir.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, after listening to the speech of the different Members of the House, I realised that they really don't know about the administrative and financial procedures.

(Interruptions)

Mr Chairperson: No interruptions, please! Order!

Mr Lisette: This is understandable, Mr Chairperson, Sir, because it is a fact that they have never been in power and I wonder if they would ever be.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, the Budget that was presented by the Chief Commissioner before this Assembly last Tuesday, makes many key interventions in support of development and the war against poverty.

Firstly, this Budget is strongly oriented towards the empowerment of our people themselves. Secondly, it provides for an intensification of means for alleviating poverty. We have steadily increased budget allocations to special, targeted poverty-relief and employment-creating programmes. I am

here referring to the school feeding project which is going to be the catalyst for agricultural development and other such projects, Mr Chairperson, Sir.

Thirdly, there is increased investment in infrastructure, particularly in the sports, - which I am going to comment later on - water and road infrastructure.

Fourthly, emphasis has been laid on education, tourism and protection of the environment. I would like to congratulate the Chief Commissioner to have given priority in such fields, as they are vital for our future and to promote a sustainable development.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, I am now going to comment on some of the items which are very beneficial to the youth, which I feel that the youth are going to benefit from. Education, Mr Chairperson, Sir, we cannot sit and expect things to change. Every one of us has to take part in the fight against poverty, whether rich or poor. Poverty reduction assumes a radical change of the mindset of the people in general, Non-Governmental Organisations and politicians from the grassroots to the highest level. In the fight against poverty, petty jealousy and mere talk without action will lead to nothing. I, therefore, wish to make an appeal to Rodriguans to learn to emulate and harness those that make progress and support them. The regional Government will have a deliberate policy to economically empower vulnerable people to get them out of the poverty trap.

The most important contribution Government makes to long-run growth and development is vesting in people. The training that would be provided at the Human Resources Centre, coupled with the setting up of a service *d'orientation et insertion professionnel aux étudiants* sets the primary framework for developing our country's skills base. Reshaping our schools and colleges, improving learning and teaching in schools and creating new skills development programmes for workers and work-seekers are among the key elements of the strategy for human development. Rs3.5 m. have been earmarked in this Budget for that purpose and it reflects our political will to achieve in this field.

Moreover, the number of scholarships for our youths has doubled since the accession of our country to the status of autonomy and I firmly believe, Mr Chairperson, Sir, that Rodrigues would be welcoming its own professionals in different fields in the coming years.

We consider the pursuit of education as the fundamental basis for human resource development. In terms of budgetary allocations, education, therefore, has been among the highest priority. For financial year 2004/2005, an allocation of more than Rs65 m. in development budget has been earmarked combined with a recurrent budget of more than Rs82 m. for the Commission of Education and Training. This represents an overall increase of 12% in the recurrent budget and it is worth noted over last year's budget.

Public infrastructure

Facing the infrastructure challenge and investing in economic development and increased funding of physical construction is again prioritised. The appointment of the global consultancy has been a step which has been taken to improve capacity to spend and hence speeding the execution of projects.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, it is worth pointing out that since the appointment of global consultancy, more than 18 major projects have been designed. Apart from the communities that have benefited from access to more decent infrastructural facilities, the building phase of the project designed has allowed unskilled workers in the communities to have access to employment which is one of the purposes of this exercise. Through these projects, we have managed to provide jobs to hundreds of job seekers. Of course, many hundreds more, the dependents of those who were employed, benefited from the project.

Well-designed investment in economic infrastructure and services has significant potential to enhance growth and improve services and opportunities for poor people. Development is not only about large scale infrastructure projects, wide-reaching income support or high profile health campaigns. For many, Mr Chairperson, Sir, real developments happen when people's access to services and opportunities within their own communities improves. When they are able to open the door to their house, have access road to their houses and watch their children kick a soccer ball around the community soccer ground.

This is why, I believe, that the regional Government is seeing that such community projects are put to the facilities of the community. I refer to the speech of the Commissioner for Community Development where it was stated that Rs6 m. have been spent from the IFAD project and where 8 kms of trunk road have been constructed. This is a significant change, Mr Chairperson, Sir, that we want to provide more facilities to people within the communities themselves.

Handicraft

We are right now, at the Commission, working on the writing up of a Memorandum of Understanding with the NHPA in order to strengthen the development of handicrafts in Rodrigues. In a view to promoting our locally made products, the Commission intends to organise an *expo/vente* for locally made products. We intend to organise this *expo/vente* in collaboration with SMIDO and NHPA.

In this financial year, Mr Chairperson, Sir, we will be strengthening training courses for handicapped persons with the collaboration of the Commission of Education and NHPA, namely in the food processing sector. In addition, the “Anti Erosion Programme” in Rodrigues is working on the identification of marketing possibilities for goods produced in Rodrigues. In this connection, they have launched a competition for the creation of a Rodrigues label. The Rodrigues labels would promote the specific traditional and natural qualities of the products.

Trade, Commerce and licensing

Mr Chairperson, Sir, it has been said by the Minority Leader that my Commission, which is responsible for licensing, is preventing people from having their licences. I want to say loud, right now, to everybody can hear me that no such policy is being practised at my Commission. I am the authority responsible for providing licences to those who ask for it and it is my duty to see that all conditions in respect to issuing licences should be abided to. This is very important, Mr Chairperson, Sir. It is not in our intention to grant licences to people to have political gain or just to make them happier. We have to see that conditions like public security be prevailed. For the year 2003/2004, Mr Chairperson, Sir, more than 100 trade licences have been delivered. So, I cannot understand why the

Minority Leader comes here and says that we are freezing licences. It is a fact, Mr Chairperson, Sir, that there are rules and regulations, laws that have to be applied to before giving licences. As a responsible and caring Commissioner, I will see that such rules and laws be abided to.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, one of the Members of the Minority also asked what the Commissioner for Youth and Sports is doing against the proliferation of drugs. Mr Chairperson, Sir, we have had experience from other countries that hawkers operating in the streets or persons illegally operating in the streets are sometimes the people who help in the trading of drugs. So, if we want, Mr Chairperson, Sir, to prevent the proliferation of drugs, I believe that it is very important that trade licences, especially those operating in the streets, be given to the right people. This is very important, Mr Chairperson, Sir.

As regards consumer protection, the next financial year, Mr Chairperson, Sir, emphasis will be laid on consumer education in villages, women centres and secondary schools with a view to sensitising consumers on their rights and responsibilities. Regular checks will continue to be performed in trading enterprises to ensure that consumer protection laws are better enforced. It is worth noting that during this financial year the Commission has made it possible to fix prices every fifteen days.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, I remember from the speech of the Minority Leader that he stated that the regional Government is decreasing the enthusiasm about the tourism industry, because we are imposing norms which are very important. In my opinion, Mr Chairperson, Sir, what is going to reduce the enthusiasm of the tourism sector is when tourists from other countries come to our country and they are hosted in deplorable places. So, it is very important, Mr Chairperson, Sir, that as a caring Government we see that norms are followed so that when these tourists leave our island, they act as ambassadors for our tourism industry.

Sports

Mr Chairperson, Sir, let me now come to the essence of my speech, namely sports. In the course of my speech on the Budget of 2003/2004, I stated that I have dedicated my entire tenure to, namely transformation in sports. I have referred to this many times before and even during my speech on the previous Budget. I have already intimated about the extent to which sport is a visible reflection of the progress what we are making in the

transformation of our Rodriguan society. Activities related to sports and physical education are essential components of human resource development, helping to promote good health, comradeship in a spirit of friendly competition which in turn has a positive impact on the overall development and the personality of the youth. Excellence in sports, Mr Chairperson, Sir, enhances the sense of achievement, national pride and patriotism. Sports also provide beneficial recreation, improve productivity and foster social harmony and discipline.

It is recognised, Mr Chairperson, Sir, that the management and development of sports in Rodrigues are the functions of the Commission for Youth and Sports in collaboration with the different regional sport committees. The Commission and committees have, therefore, to work together harmoniously and in a coordinated manner to fulfill the objectives of my sport policy. At the same time, regional sport committees will have to demonstrate orientation towards the achievement of results and ensure tangible progress in the field of sports, keeping in view organisational structures as formulated and proposed by the Commission which may be set up in consultation with them. Of course, we have been experiencing a range of problems in some regional sport committees recently. We also concede that we need to build an environment of stability, that is, a prerequisite for achieving success in sports. Nonetheless, Mr Chairperson, Sir, I differ strongly with those who come to say that sport is on the brink of collapse. In this context, I have recognised the need for regional sport committees to be run more professionally. Regional committees are the primary delivery agents for sport and recreation in our country. Indeed some of them are currently facing serious problems as a result of divisions and power struggles within the ranks of administrators in their structures. These problems will have to be rooted out for the interests of our athletes who are suffering as a consequence of it.

I have accordingly charged the Sports Coordinating Committee to eliminate these problems and to empower the regional committee and I am going to say here, Mr Chairperson, Sir, I will not allow anybody to hijack any discipline in this country. As we are heading for elections in the different sports committees this year, I will see to it that administrative courses be provided to all the new office bearers to ensure maximum efficiency in their administration. In this context, we will make use of all available local resource persons to run the courses.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, our efforts to exploit the potential of sports to achieve positive outcomes will not, however, succeed without the active involvement of volunteers. Sport, in general, is largely dependent on volunteers and a powerful spirit for sports. I would like, Mr Chairperson, Sir, on this auspicious occasion, to thank and to make an appeal to all those who are actively helping voluntarily for the promotion of sports in various disciplines. This is evidence, Mr Chairperson, Sir, that there are people in Rodrigues who still have “*un esprit de volontariat*” and who are willing to commit themselves selflessly in the service of the common good. I believe that every one of us should lend a hand in doing the simple things that will make a difference in the lives of our youth.

The Chief Commissioner has introduced a budget of Rs75,5 m. for capital expenditure for this financial year representing an increase of 136 % as compared to last year’s budget, the largest ever provided for sport in this Assembly. This shows that this Regional Government is committed to boost up the level of sports on the island.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, we have witnessed one of the most exciting competitions in our country last year - the 6th Indian Island Games. While the performance of our athletes in the competition was satisfactory and encouraging, the competition itself was a resounding success and I want to congratulate the Organising Committee of COJI-Rodrigues which worked in close collaboration with my Commission for a well done job! We have proven to the world that, as a nation, we can host major sporting events successfully. That bodes well for future bids that we may want to embark upon such organisation as often as possible in this country.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, I will take the opportunity to give details of the broad outline of our achievements for financial year 2003/2004 which I should point out is not yet over. I don’t understand how, from the other side of the House, it is said that at my Commission’s level, only 10% of the Budget has been used up. I am going to say it right now, this is wrong information, Mr Chairperson, Sir, because when I look at the figures – in March 2004, Rs6.5 m. have been paid for swimming pool. Next week, Mr Chairperson, Sir, we are going to disburse another Rs6.5 m for swimming pool and we are still left with two long months.

(Interruptions)

This is why I said, Mr Chairperson, Sir, that they don't know really about administration and financial matters. If a work has not been done, I cannot pay any contractor for that job. It is only after the work is completed that I can proceed to pay for that particular work.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, let me proceed with my speech. In last year budget speech, I highlighted the following measures –

- (a) the setting up of a Sports Awards committee;
- (b) the provision of training stipend for athletes pre-selected for the Island Games;
- (c) the renovation of Malabar gymnasium for the Island Games;
- (d) the renovation of La Ferme and Mangles sports complexes;
- (e) the creation of two posts of sports officers;
- (f) the upgrading of Oyster Bay football ground, and
- (g) the construction of a swimming pool at Marechal.

These are the things that I highlighted in the last Budget 2003/2004

(Interruptions)

I can wait at any time for any *commission d'enquête*. That is not a problem. Mr Chairperson, Sir, I am very proud to note that most of the objectives that my Commission aimed at during financial year 2003/2004 has been achieved.

(Interruptions)

Mr Chairperson: Please, do not distract the Member anymore.

Mr Lisette: I would like to spend some time on each project, Mr Chairperson, Sir. For Oyster Bay Football Ground, we have already launched tenders and, at this particular moment, we are awaiting the evaluation report from the Central Tender Board. Once the report from the Central Tender Board will reach my Commission, we will award the contract to the successful contractor; and I believe that if this is sent to my Commission shortly, we will start work, maybe by the end of April. In addition, we have renovated La Ferme football ground, which was not mentioned last year. Furthermore, we have set up not less than 10 new ‘*écoles de sport*’ in different disciplines in remote villages like Port-Sud-Est, Vangar, Montagne Goyaves and Rivière Coco. The number of these *écoles* has increased from 15 to 27 and the number of *stagiaires* attending these *écoles* has increased to about 1500. This is enormous, Mr Chairperson, Sir. Moreover, my Commission has spent about Rs500 000 for the purchase of equipment to ensure that the basic necessities be provided to these *écoles* for their smooth running. *C’est sans précédent, M. le Président!* Talk to any athlete attending an ‘*école de sport*’ and you will be told, on any score, that the effort and facilities provided by the Commission *est sans précédent, M. le président. C’est aussi sans précédent que le Conseil Exécutif a approuvé l’allocation d’un ‘football grant aid’* to all football teams which are affiliated to the Regional Football Committee. This fund will prove to be useful for the different teams to buy basic equipment for their smooth running. With respect to this policy, Mr Chairperson, Sir, it is worth noted that the Council has agreed to pay a sum of Rs11,000 to First Division Team; Rs7,000 to Second Division Team and Rs6,000 to unclassified teams. This will amount to a total of Rs402,000 which is going to be disbursed to the different football clubs, including feminine clubs of course.

As for volleyball, Mr Chairperson, Sir, two ‘*centres de formation*’ have been set up for both boys and girls; and these are running full fledged at Malabar gymnasium. A ‘*centre d’entraînement d’athlétisme*’ has also been set up and a ‘*sélection de football*’ has just been put in place. These centres of excellence have been set up to identify and train outstanding sport persons where young and talented sport persons will be groomed to achieve higher levels of performance. Approval is now being awaited for the recruitment of 10 additional animators for monitoring of activities in these structures.

M. le président, toutes ces raisons expliquent que ma Commission se soit focalisée dans un premier temps à déterminer des orientations ainsi qu'un cadre structurel et institutionnel qui lui permette de s'inscrire dans un projet clair et cohérent. L'adoption d'une telle mesure est fondamentale pour doter notre politique sportive d'un cadre et d'une cohérence qui permettent d'attirer aussi bien l'investissement des jeunes eux-mêmes que celui des différents bailleurs de fonds.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, allow me now to present the framework for our sports programme for the financial year 2004/2005.

Les perspectives que ma Commission va viser sont -

- continuer la tenue des assises du sport;
- l'aménagement d'infrastructures sportives;
- la construction d'un gymnase à Grande Montagne;
- la dynamisation des activités des comités régionaux et nous ferons tout pour l'amélioration de notre représentativité dans les équipes nationales;
- nous encouragerons l'échange avec les autres îles de l'océan indien, et
- mettre en place une sélection de volleyball et un centre de formation pour le judo.

Sports activities, in which Rodrigues has potential strength and competitive advantage, need to be vigorously promoted. Towards this end, Sports should be integrated more effectively in primary and secondary schools. The sports coaches, at my Commission level, will be encouraged to deliver courses in their respective disciplines in the colleges. Moreover, tournaments such as football, volleyball, badminton, tennis and handball will be organised for the benefits of the students. This will improve the spirit of friendship among them.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, for the coming years, my Commission will also aim at the prioritisation of sports discipline, because I consider this as very important. My Commission will focus attention on achieving Excellence in

Sports at the national and international levels. Various sport disciplines will be prioritised on the basis of proven potential, popularity and international performance. Particular emphasis will be placed on the development of such priority disciplines and the prioritisation reviewed from time to time. The Commission would accord higher priority to such disciplines and areas of potential and particular disciplines will be identified and timely steps will be taken to harness the existing and emerging talents.

Another measure that my Commission will aim at is the training and development of administrators, coaches, sports judges and referees. The policy of my Commission recognises that the standards of coaching and scientific back-up in the country and those pertaining to coaches, judges and referees need to be upgraded. The Commission also recognises that local competencies may be used intensively for running courses to upgrade knowledge. Concerted steps will be taken to train coaches, referees in line with the national and international standards. In addition to developing such expertise on an institutional basis within the country, the deputation of promising persons to training courses, conferences, seminars, workshops and tournaments abroad as far as possible, will be encouraged so that they remain abreast of relevant developments in their fields. Coaches would receive rigorous training for the upgrading of skills and may also be deputed overseas for that purpose.

Bourses d'Etudes to Sports Persons

Mr Chairperson, Sir, incentives provide recognition and financial security to distinguished sports persons, and also motivate the youth in the serious pursuit of sports activities. On the 17 January of this year, we hosted a very successful Sports Awards Ceremony at the Residence. During that ceremony, there was introduced a Cash Prize Scheme of Rs500 per month granted to the two youngest best athletes who were selected.

Mr Chairperson, Sir for the next Sports Awards ceremony, I will be providing two additional cash prizes bringing the total to four. Not only will I increase the number of *bourses d'études aux sportifs*, but I am also increasing the amount from Rs500 to Rs700 per month.

Exchange with Islands in the Region--Regionalisation

As Rodrigues has confidently enters its new political status, sport will be increasingly utilised as a medium for promoting cooperation and friendship in the region, and also globally. Sports exchange programmes will be pursued with all friendly islands, with emphasis, on the one hand, on advance training for sports persons and coaches in sports and games.

Youth

M. le président, ce qui concerne la jeunesse relève de plusieurs Commissions : jeunesse et sport, bien sûr, mais aussi culture, éducation, la santé et l'emploi.

We believe that the huge investment in education, information and communication technology and training will better empower our youth to face the ever changing challenges that lie ahead. As stipulated under the heading for education above, much is being provided for the benefit of the youth.

The main achievements and objectives in the youth sector are -

- (1) The setting up of six *ateliers de savoir* for 100 out-of-school youth. For financial year 2004/2005, it is worth noted that an amount of Rs250 000 has been earmarked as assistance to the *ateliers de savoir* project.
- (2) The participation of 7 young persons in the Gold Award of the National Youth Achievement awards. I would also like here to point out the participation of two young Rodriguans in the Gold exchange expedition in Dubai February last. Mr Chairperson, Sir, I would personally see to it that the Award programme be revamped. A special committee would be set up to disseminate the Award Programme. This programme, Mr Chairperson, Sir, as you are aware, is a four section activity based mainly in skills development, participation in physical recreation and adventure and involvement in community service. It will greatly help our young people to become leaders in their respective villages, clubs and regions.
- (3) The organisation of the traditional 'village on the move' programmes in various villages and the "*special vacances*" - The "*special*

vacances" programme held in November and December every year is constantly under review to meet the needs and aspirations of the youth. It has reached more than 2000 young people last year. This is not only an excellent opportunity for youth to be involved in environmental activities, but it also provides for their training as guides for mountains and forest hikes, camp craft and the management of risks and hazards existing in outdoor activities.

- (4) During this financial year, Mr Chairperson, Sir, we have had also the setting up of a Rodrigues Youth Task Force for combating drug abuse among the youth. This is why I would like to inform the Member on the other side, who asked a question about what the Commission is doing to prevent the proliferation of drugs. It is clear and certain, Mr Chairperson, Sir, that my Commission has already taken steps because we have already set up a Rodrigues Youth Task Force, which is working in close partnership with the NATReSA in the development of sensitisation and training programmes pertaining to drug issues. For the next financial year, my Commission will provide funds to the Committee so that they may carry out their activities more successfully.
- (5) The organisation of various courses such as club management, communication skills, sexual and reproductive health has also been our achievement during this present financial year.
- (6) As the Executive Council has declared this year "*l'année de la culture de l'entrepreneuriat*", my Commission will embark actively in providing training in *entrepreneuriat* this year to inculcate such a culture in the mindset of the youth. In this aspect, we will seek the expertise of competent stakeholders.
- (7) It is also worth noted, Mr Chairperson, Sir, that, in the financial year 2004/2005, funds have been earmarked for the Youth Counselling Centre amounting to Rs223,000.

Youth Rehabilitation Centre

One of the measures that has been taken in the present Budget for the benefit of the youth is the setting up of a Youth Rehabilitation Centre. This is why I would like to spend some time on this issue.

I wish to state from the very start that my Commission will work closely and extend its help as far as possible to the Commission responsible for prisons' reforms to make this project successful.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, we have to create a culture that will motivate offenders to become law-abiding and productive citizens. They need to be reintegrated back in the community, because we want them to contribute to the good of all. The youth, our nation's future, are especially important in that regard. This is why I welcome warmly the initiative of the Commission of prisons' reforms to renovate the existing building at Maréchal to start a Youth Rehabilitation Programme and I note that a sum of Rs1 m. has been earmarked in the present Budget.

Centres of this kind put the emphasis on youth development rather than on imprisonment. Mr Chairperson, Sir, persons under the age of 18 years are extremely vulnerable. They are also at an age when they are most likely to respond positively to efforts aimed at mending their young lives and preparing them to be worthy and valuable citizens. However, it does not mean that we have to ignore offenders. They have wronged society and have to be dealt with accordingly. They are part of our society's problem and rejecting them is not going to solve the problem of not abiding to law. They are human beings too; they are our brothers, sisters, our sons and daughters who have disappointed us. They have the right, however, to a chance to unlock their potential to better themselves. So, we have an enormous responsibility as Rodriguans towards our prisoners, especially young first-time offenders who have their lives ahead of them.

One of the ways in which the Youth Rehabilitation Centres will contribute to our objectives is by changing prisons into safety institutions in which youth offenders are separated from older prisoners. Gone will be the days, Mr Chairperson, Sir, when juvenile offenders were at the mercy of hardened criminals and had to share facilities with them. Not only did this hold great danger for their personal safety, but it also led to our prisons becoming schools of crime.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, if the establishment of youth development centres is to succeed in creating an atmosphere that is conducive to learning and development, we must foster co-responsibility for personal development and growth on the part of the juveniles themselves as well as their families.

They will have to make this the turning point of their lives. We are developing this kind of institution, because we are confident in what youth offenders can become. They just have to take up the challenge to earn their rightful places in the community.

Another measure that has been taken in this proposed Budget is the young farmers entrepreneur schemes. I have noted, Mr Chairperson, Sir, that there has been a new item introduced in the heading of agriculture where funds will be provided for youngsters who have studied at IVTB. This, Mr Chairperson, Sir, reflects the goodwill of this Regional Government to encourage them to create their own enterprises and hence increasing employability. My Commission will ensure that the schemes be well known to the targeted groups by providing information in the different youth centres and sensitising youth persons in taking advantage of such facilities.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, this Budget makes an important contribution to achieve a more caring, more compassionate and more prosperous society; a society with the imagination to achieve solidarity, freedom from poverty and human dignity; a society that nurtures its children, that respects and cherishes its elderly; a society that draws deeply on its motto and the qualities of its struggle – *travail, solidarité et fierté*. These values are deeply rooted in the psyche of our nation. They guide us now and they will guide the future generation.

In conclusion, let me say that I am pleased to report that there is excellent and voluntary compliance to the principle of good governance and in this respect, I would particularly like to thank my colleagues of the Executive Council and their departments for the hard work that they are putting in. Through our combined efforts, we are making a positive difference in the lives of Rodriguans both in terms of providing the skills and direction needed for the development of our country, but also in providing the facilities necessary for their well being.

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

Mrs L. Castel: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I beg to move that the debate do now adjourn.

Mr P. François rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

Debate adjourned accordingly.

ADJOURNMENT

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I beg to move that this Assembly do now adjourn to Monday 05 April 2004 at 10.30 a.m.

The Deputy Chief Commissioner rose and seconded.

At 6.00 p.m. the Assembly was, on its rising, adjourned to Monday 05 April 2004 at 10.30 a.m.