

No. 3 of 2007

RODRIGUES

SECOND REGIONAL ASSEMBLY

Debate No. 3 of 2007

Sitting of Monday 19 March, 2007

(Special Meeting)

The Assembly met in the Assembly House, Port Mathurin at 11.00 am.

(Mr. Chairperson in the Chair)

The National Anthem was played

RODRIGUES REGIONAL ASSEMBLY

MONDAY 19 MARCH, 2007

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**The Executive Council
(Formed by Mr. Johnson Roussety)**

Mr. Johnson Roussety	Chief Commissioner, Commissioner responsible for Finance, Economic Affairs, Central Administration, Civil Aviation (administration), Civil status, Customs and Excise (administration), Fisheries, Industrial Development, Information Technology and Telecommunications, Judicial (administration), Legal Services, Marine Services (administration), Meteorology (administration), Postal Services (administration), Registration, State Lands, Statistics in respects of Rodrigues, Town and Country Planning, Tourism, Trade, Commerce and Licensing
Mr. Gaetan Jabeemissar	Deputy Chief Commissioner, Commissioner responsible for Arts and Culture, Consumer Protection, Education (administration), Library Services, Museums, Archives, Historical Sites and buildings, Vocational Training
Mrs. Marie Thérèse CLAIR	Commissioner responsible for Social Security, Child Development, Family Welfare, Social Security (administration), Women's Affairs, Poverty Alleviation
Mr. Francean Aubret Grandcourt	Commissioner responsible for Environment, Housing, Infrastructure including Highways and Roads and Public Buildings and Utilities, Marine Parks, Transport
Mr. Jean Christian Agathe	Commissioner responsible for Labour and Industrial Relations, Youth and Sports, Employment
Mr. Joseph Allan Ladd Emilien	Commissioner responsible for Community Development, Co-operatives, Fire Services, Health (administration), Prisons and Reform Institutions (administration)
Mr. Louis Ange Perrine	Commissioner responsible for Agriculture, Food Production, Forestry, Handicraft, Plant and animal quarantine, Water Resources

PRINCIPAL OFFICERS AND OFFICIALS

Mr. Chairperson - Lamvohee, Mr. Joseph Chenlye

Clerk - Toulouse, Louis Richard

Serjeant -at-Arms - Louis, Mr. Jorgenson

Chairperson: May I invite the Prime Minister to take his seat?

Clerk: Welcome remarks by Mr. Joseph Lamvohee, Mr. Chairperson.

Chairperson: Distinguish Members, the Rodrigues Regional Assembly has been convened to a special sitting at the instance of the Chief Commissioner to welcome the Dr. Honourable Navinchandra Ramgoolam, Prime Minister of the Republic.

Dr. Navin Ramgoolam is also the Minister for Rodrigues and the Outer Islands. This very Ministry which was created in the year 1976 by his late father Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam who was then Prime Minister of Mauritius.

Dr. Navinchandra Ramgoolam is a friend to Rodrigues and has always shown keen interests in its affairs. We have in mind that while he was Prime Minister in the year 2000, his government came up with the Finance Act on the 7 August, 2006 making Rodrigues a Duty Free Island. The objective was in the words of the then Ministry of Finance was to make Rodrigues the Jewel in the crown of the Republic.

As a member of the National Assembly since the year 1991, he has had the opportunity to debate on many laws of the land including that which set up this Assembly. On the 18 November, 2001 together with all the elected members of his party he voted in favour of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly Act.

It is also my great privilege to extend our warmest greeting to Mrs. Veena Ramgoolam who is presently honouring this Assembly by her presence.

We also extend our warmest welcome to Dr. James Burty David, Minister of Local Government, who has been a couple of time the official Representative of the Prime Minister in this Assembly.

Honourable Prime Minister, you have the floor.

Prime Minister (Dr. the Honourable Navinchandra Ramgoolam):

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.

Mr. Chairperson, my colleague, the Minister of Local Government, the Chief Commissioner, the Minority Leader, the Members of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly, Members of the National Assembly, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

First of all let me say, it gives me great pleasure to entrust you this morning and to thank the Chief Commissioner for giving me this opportunity. I believe that this is the first time that the Prime Minister is actually addressing this Assembly. I also wish to thank the people of Rodrigues for the very warm welcome they have extended to me, to my wife and to my delegations since our arrival yesterday evening. I have been very impressed by the optimism energy of all those I met at the cultural show last night at Malabar in the context of the Celebration marking the 39th Anniversary of our Independence and the 15th Anniversary of our Republic.

This morning I had the opportunity to have a very fruitful session with the Chief Commissioner as well as a meeting with all the Members of the

Executive Council. I have been briefed on a short term plans of the Executive and also on the vision for the future of the island.

And I am heartened to note, Mr. Chairperson the determination of this new team at the helm of the affairs of Rodrigues to chart a new course, to make the island's even more productive and to work to the fullest extent possible for the island's economic autonomy.

The Rodriguans were long recognized for his individualism, his capacity for hard work and his entrepreneurial spirit. Qualities which I am glad you still possess and which need to be harnessed now and in the service of the development of Rodrigues.

The island possesses a precious fund of traditional knowledge and agriculture, in horticulture, animal husbandry and the management of scarce water resources that made Rodrigues the granary of Mauritius in the past. In fact, today they were reminded of this at our meeting and the wish that Rodrigues becomes the granary of Mauritius again.

As you know, Mr. Chairperson, it is my government's intention to disseminate as widely as possible an IT culture. The same programme which underway in Mauritius are underway in Rodrigues. Information technology will revolutionize the way work gets done in the next decade. Distance is not important anymore, it has been annulled and isolation is the concept of the past. It matters now little whether you work from Mont Lubin or from Manathan. The connectivity of the world opens vast new opportunities, we must ensure that we are prepared to take advantage of these opportunities.

The harmonious fusion of tradition and modernity constitutes for Rodrigues as it does for Mauritius the winning formula for the future.

Under a dynamic new team that is aware of the challenges ahead and resolutely looks to the future, Rodrigues is embarking of a new phase of his development. The island is poised to bypass the lower rung of industrial process and move directly to an IT enabled and IT based development.

The future we face is definitely a very challenging one but we have the most important of assets, our human resources and the will and the energy to succeed.

Later today I will meet Members of Civil Society and Representatives of the private sector to look at the, discuss with them their suggestions and proposals regarding the socio-economic development of the island.

My present visit and the meetings which I am having with all the Stakeholders in Rodrigues will enable me to give due consideration to the development which are taking place on the island.

Economic operators are once again showing their interest in the tourism sector. And, it is pleasure that I accepted to lay the foundation stone of two projects of this sector. And I have also noted the demand from the Chief Commissioner especially, about the airport, because you need to have, we have the same problem in Mauritius, Mr. Chairperson. And we need ensure that we have the carrying capacity to reach the target that I have put for Mauritius.

With a new of the promotion of Rodrigues in the National Tourist Fairs, the decline in tourist arrival has not been halted but in fact it has been reversed. I wish to reiterate to the Regional Executive and to the people of Rodrigues, my commitment to stand by them in the Assembly in the ambitious endeavours.

As I have said, I did in my first mandate I am glad Mr. Chairperson to remind us of my government's decision to make Rodrigues a duty free island. We also had plans for airport developments for the dredging of the port, for the main road Port Mathurin from Pte Corail. And I wish to say again, as I stated in my government programme and I want to quote Mr. Chairperson, Sir. If you allow me, I quote from the government programme *"special attention will be given to the development of Rodrigues and full support will be extended to the Rodrigues Regional Assembly"* end quote. As Minister for Rodrigues, I requested my colleagues Ministers to actively support the Rodrigues Regional Assembly. I would like to mention a few fields where such collaborations is giving positive results. A contract will be awarded shortly by the Mauritius Ports Authority for the desilting works at Port Mathurin and Pointe Monier. Secondly a hydrographic survey will be carried out shortly by the Indian Naval Ship at Port Mathurin. It is amazing Mr. Chairperson to similar to Mauritius, we have had no hydrographic survey since the time of the British in 1800. And it is essential that we have a proper survey so that your Port can become even a major and bigger ships can come in but the need to know they have a survey before they can move forward. Thirdly, the University of Mauritius, Consultancy Services will carry out a socio-economic study of the Fishing Community of Mauritius and also of Rodrigues. In this context, a team from the University visited Rodrigues from the 7th January to the 9th of March of this year. Fourthly, the Ministry of Agro Industry and Fisheries has commissioned the HLB Appavoo and Associates to carry a study in Handling Preservation and Marketing of the Fish in Mauritius and in Rodrigues. We have also upgraded the equipment at the hospital and also I have taken note of what improvement we can make although we have done giant steps, we need to improve again under the coverage of the MBC. I commend the initiate of the Chief Commissioner to associate

his counterpart from Mauritius in the recent launching of the Office du Tourisme and the Business and Invest Promotion Unit you may rest assured while considering your Drafts Estimates which are presently being discussed with the Ministry of Finance and which have had occasion to discuss today also. I want to assure you that the Cabinet will take also the matters which have been raised during our meetings. I also want to say that the people of Rodrigues have earned our admiration for the exemplary behaviour during the recent Rodrigues Regional Assembly election. As you are aware my government is pledged providing equal opportunity for all citizens of Mauritius whether they reside in Mauritius or Rodrigues or the Outer Islands.

Respected Members, although you are separated from Mauritius by 350 miles, of ocean, you can rely on my support and that of the government which I lead in all your undertakings for the welfare of the inhabitants of Rodrigues. I wish you well a success in all your endeavours. Thank you for your attention.

(Applause)

Clerk: Thank you Dr. Navin Ramgoolam. Vote of thanks by Mr. Johnson Roussety, Chief Commissioner.

Chief Commissioner: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, Rodrigues is deeply honoured today to the presence of Dr. the Honourable Prime Minister in this House. Mr. Prime Minister this young Regional Assembly we put on record that you are the first dignitary to have delivered a special address on its floor. It has in need be an immense privilege to listen to you and your visions of Rodrigues within the nation and the Republic. Mr. Prime Minister, Sir, you have gladly accepted to spend three days in Rodrigues to have working sessions with us and to participate in

numerous of our activities. I wish to thank you for such an interest and I pray for greater interaction between central government and the Executive Council of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly. Mr. Prime Minister, Sir, please rest assured that no stones will be left unturned to make this island a model of development based on economic and cultural integration. Mr. Prime Minister it is my privilege on behalf of Mr. Chairperson, of all Commissioners and Members of the Regional Assembly on both sides of the House. I am proud of this Assembly to thank you and Mrs. Ramgoolam for the distinct honour that you have placed on our Assembly by your presence and address. A day to be written with golden words in our History, Mr. Prime Minister. Thank you, Mr. Chairperson, Sir.

(Applause)

Chairperson: The House stands adjourned.

On its rising at 11.25 hrs, the House stands adjourned.