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RODRIGUES

THIRD REGIONAL ASSEMBLY

Debate No. 2 of 2012

Sitting of Friday 24th February 2012

The Assembly met in the Assembly House,
Port Mathurin, at 15.00 hours

(Mr. Chairperson in the Chair)

The National Anthem was played

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Debate No. 2 of 24.02.2012

RODRIGUES REGIONAL ASSEMBLY

FRIDAY 24 FEBRUARY 2012

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ADJOURNMENT

The Executive Council

(Formed by Mr. Louis Serge Clair, G.C.S.K.)

Mr. Louis Serge Clair, G.C.S.K.	Chief Commissioner, Commissioner responsible for Central Administration, Civil Aviation (Administration), Civil Status, Customs and Excise (Administration), Judicial (Administration), Legal Services, Marine Services (Administration), Meteorology (Administration), Education (Administration), Arts and Culture, Historical sites and Buildings, State Lands, Town and Country Planning, Fire Services, Prisons and Reform Institutions (Administration), Cooperatives, Agriculture, Food Production, Plant and Animal Quarantine, Statistics in respect of Rodrigues, Registration, Postal Services (Administration)
Mrs. Rose Marie Franchette Gaspard Pierre Louis	Deputy Chief Commissioner, Commissioner responsible Child Development, Family Welfare, Women's Affairs, Handicraft, Vocational Training, Information Technology and Telecommunications, Industrial Development
Mr. Simon Pierre Roussety	Commissioner responsible for Infrastructure including Highways and Roads and Public Buildings and Utilities, Housing, Transport, Water Resources
Mr. Louis Daniel Baptiste	Commissioner responsible for Social Security (Administration), Employment, Labour and Industrial Relations, Consumer Protection, Trade, Commerce and Licensing
Mr. Ismael Valimamode	Commissioner responsible for Health (Administration), Sports
Mr. Jean Richard Payendee	Commissioner responsible for Environment, Forestry, Tourism, Marine Parks, Fisheries
Ms. Marie Rose de Lima Edouard	Commissioner responsible for Youth, Community Development, Library Services, Archives, Museum

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PRINCIPAL OFFICERS AND OFFICIALS

Mr. Chairperson	-	Sooprayen, Mr. Soopramanien
Clerk	-	Parsooramen, Miss Marie Cristelle Joanna
Serjeant-at-Arms	-	Constant Perrine, Mr. Stenio

Proclamation No. 5 of 2012

**TO FIX THE PLACE, DATE AND TIME
AT WHICH THE REGIONAL ASSEMBLY SHALL MEET
FOR THE PURPOSE OF SECTION 56
OF THE RODRIGUES REGIONAL ASSEMBLY ACT 2001**

SIR ANEROOD JUGNAUTH
President of the Republic

The Right Honourable
SIR ANEROOD JUGNAUTH

- By the Right Honourable SIR
ANEROOD JUGNAUTH, *Grand
Commander of the Order of the Star and
Key of the Indian Ocean, Knight
Commander of the Order of Saint
Michael and Saint George, Queen's
Counsel, President of the Republic of
Mauritius.*

&c.,

&c.,

&c.

WHEREAS by section 71A of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly Act, it is enacted that the President may, by Proclamation, fix the place, date and time at which the Regional Assembly shall meet for the purpose of section 56 of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly Act.

NOW, THEREFORE, I do hereby proclaim that the first ordinary meeting of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly shall take place at the Rodrigues Regional Assembly at Port Mathurin on Friday 24th of February 2012 as from 15.00 hours.

Given at State House, Le Reduit, this 16th day of February 2012.

Debate 24.02.2012

STATEMENT BY COMMISSIONERS

AUDIT – FINANCIAL SITUATION OF RRA

The Chief Commissioner: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, on my assumption of office as Chief Commissioner and Commissioner responsible for Finance of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly, I am requested for an audit of the financial situation of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly.

Allow me, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, to share with this House the preliminary findings of this ongoing exercise. Mr. Chairperson, Sir, at the very outset I will say that the last five and a half years have proved that the safeguards for effective financial management in the Rodrigues Regional Assembly have been subject to flagrant and crude distortion leading to wastage of public funds, breach of the established procedures and maladministration. Certain programs/items whose voted provision are for the Fiscal Year 2012 have been blatantly, willfully, carelessly and maliciously overcommitted, obviously for the purpose of embarrassing and limiting the scope of the incoming government. This is a lack and a poor commitment to fiscal responsibility and good governance. This is also, what happened when petty politics considerations are allowed to have precedence over ethics and good governance expected from responsible and caring governments.

Mr. Chairperson, Sir, the National Assembly has approved the appropriation of an amount of Rs 1,670,000,000 under Programs Based Budgeting 2012 through the Appropriation Act 2012. Sound financial management requires that not a single cent from that sum of money should have been committed during fiscal year 2011. This money is due to be spent under the Recurrent Expenditure and in investment projects during the fiscal year 2012 and not to supplement the previous years' mismanagement budget.

Mr. Chairperson, Sir, unfortunately, this legal and moral obligation has not been respected by the outgoing fallen government thus leading to chaos.

Mr. Chairperson, Sir, allow me now to provide the following information to the House:-

Investment Projects formerly Capital Projects - out of the Rs 360M voted for the fiscal year 2012 as much as Rs 280M have already been committed by the outgoing government in terms of contracts already

awarded at the very end of their mandate leaving the incoming government with only a meagre Rs 18M.

Mr. Chairperson, Sir, most of these are contractual obligations for projects which have been completed or nearing completion, worst there is no documentary evidence that financial clearance has been sought and obtained for these projects in line with the provision of the Financial Management Manual. In the rare cases where such clearances are sought a “*No Fund Available Certificate*” was dully given by the Finance Section. However, the former Executive Council has issued instruction to implement its decision without following the procedures or taking on board the views of the Finance Section. In line with the Finance and Rodrigues Act, expenditure appropriated for any projects should be limited to the ceiling imposed under that program. However, out of the Rs 280M that has been committed ...

[Interruption]

The First Local Region Member of Marechal (Mr. J. C. Agathe): Mr. Chairperson, Sir, on a point of order, please.

Mr. Chairperson: Sorry Chief Commissioner. What is your point of order please?

Mr. J. C. Agathe: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, the Chief Commissioner is relating to decisions taken by the Executive Council. These decisions taken by the Executive Council are very strictly confidential and how come that the Chief Commissioner has got into all the account that we have because the information we gathered from the Executive Council is strictly confidential and cannot be disclosed.

Mr. Chairperson: To which section of the point of order are you referring?

Mr. J. C. Agathe: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, the Chief Commissioner is relating to the former Executive Council.

Mr. Chairperson: Yes, which section?

Mr. J. C. Agathe: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I am waiting for your ruling before the Chief Commissioner to proceed.

Mr. Chairperson: My ruling is first of all you have not said which section of the Standing Order so I ruled out and you may proceed Chief Commissioner.

The Chief Commissioner: Thank you, Mr. Chairperson, Sir. In line with the Finance and Rodrigues Act, expenditure appropriated for any projects should be limited to the ceiling imposed under the program. However, out of the Rs 280M, that has been committed by the end of 2011, an amount of Rs 114M has been committed over and above the voted provision for the related program.

Allow me, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, to quote the legal definition of appropriation as provided at page 5 of the budget, which has been voted by the Assembly. I quote: *“Authority granted under law by the Legislature to the Executive to spend public funds up to certain limit and for specified purpose during the fiscal year”*.

M. le Président, la conduite de cet ancien gouvernement déçu par rapport aux finances de l’Etat est un flagrant manque de respect des Loi de la République de Maurice et du statut de cet auguste Assemblée.

M. le Président, permettez-moi de citer quelques exemples pour illustrer ces cas de mauvaise gestion de finance publique:-

- (i) *Item – Construction of Roads*
Sur une provision de Rs 70M nous nous retrouvons avec une ardoise de Rs 112M à payer pour l’année financière en cours. Donc, Rs 42M en plus à trouver.
- (ii) *Item – Improvement/Renewal and Minor works in villages*
Sur une provision de Rs 25M nous nous retrouvons avec une ardoise de Rs 42M à être payer. Donc Rs 17.5M additionnel à trouver.
- (iii) *Item – Water Resources*
Sur un budget de Rs 29.2M on se retrouve avec une ardoise de Rs 67.3M à être payer soit un excédent de Rs 40M à trouver.
- (iv) *Concernant les projets d’infrastructures dans le domaine de l’éducation*
Sur une provision budgétaire de Rs 29M des dépenses de Rs 40.6M sont déjà engager. Une somme de Rs 11.6M doit être trouvée.

Recurrent Expenditure

Mr. Chairperson, Sir, my government believe in the sound management of public funds. Ce que je viens d'énumérer plus haut n'est qu'une partie du squelette que le gouvernement sortant déçu a laissé dans l'armoire derrière lui.

With regard to the Recurrent Expenditure, which caters, for the day to day running of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly a short-fall of around Rs 65M is being anticipated. *Ce déficit de Rs 65M sera nécessaire pour encourir entre autres des dépenses dans les domaines suivantes:-*

- Rs 4M additionnel pour payer les frais d'électricité;
- Rs 2.5M additionnel pour les gasoils;
- Rs 4M additionnel pour garantir les salaires des travailleurs de la Compagnie Rod Clean jusqu'à décembre;
- Rs 12M additionnel pour le Rodrigues Water Company également;
- Rs 14M additionnel pour le Social Aid; et
- Rs 5M additionnel pour l'allocation de mauvais temps destiné aux pêcheurs hors lagon.

Mr. Chairperson, Sir, in addition to the immoderate spending I have enumerated above, the outgoing government also found it suitable to rush in the setting up of a number of Rodrigues Regional Assembly owned private companies, like the Rodrigues Water Company and the Housing and Development Property Company. But did not even bother to make provision for the funding under the appropriate program. In some instances, recruitment, promotion and even contracts like, doubtful security services to watch reservoirs have been awarded solely to help outs one's pal.

Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I have been informed that a monthly contract of Rs 300,000 for security services has been awarded to Rodrigues High Security Agency Ltd. by the inefficient Rodrigues Water Company without the approval of the then Executive Council.

Mr. Chairperson, Sir, such flagrant departures from established procedures, such misappropriation of public funds, such disrespectful attitude towards our institutions and towards public officers in their duties have unfortunately been sanctioned in time by the wisdom of the population of Rodrigues on the 5th February last. The electorate has in its wisdom vested in my government a clear mandate – *'l'espoir et libération'*. *L'OPR le grand retour pour consolider et réussir l'autonomie en s'engageant dans une voie de*

rupture avec le passé et libérer Rodrigues de l'étiquette de la mauvaise gestion afin que Rodrigues retrouve ses principes de bonne gouvernance.

Mr. Chairperson, Sir, we must catch up and surpass the best in initiative, in entrepreneurship, in imagination and in efficiency. My government came to power to achieve the best and we believe in our future. We have the will to change; we have the vision, the plan and the drive in putting first the population we serve. Members of my government and myself are not in power to be served we are restoring efficiency and trust in our institutions.

M. le Président, Rodrigues est géographique petite mais l'intelligence de son peuple est très grande. L'ambition du gouvernement OPR, c'est de reconstruire Rodrigues et rétablir notre territoire et notre patrimoine qui font notre fierté. Ceci malgré cette situation de crise financière, empiré par l'irresponsabilité de certain et de la dette publique sans précédente pour Rodrigues.

M. le Président, j'ai toujours affirmé avec une profonde conviction qu'il faudra toujours faire mieux avec le peu qu'on a et de dépenser de manière judicieuse chaque sous que le gouvernement centrale accorde à Rodrigues.

Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I intend to fulfill that pledge. Thank you, very much.

[Applause]

Mr. Chairperson, Sir, further to my previous statement on the precarious financial situation of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly I wish to inform the House that the Executive Council has in its meeting of today taken the first of a series of measures to restore proper and sound financial practices throughout the Rodrigues Regional Assembly.

M. le Président, nous avons pendant la campagne électorale prit des engagements envers la population. Nous avons dit que mon gouvernement sera un gouvernement responsable et au service du peuple de Rodrigues. Qu'une fois arrivait au pouvoir nous allons les servir car nous ne sommes pas venus pour être servi. Dans cette optique une première décision majeur que mon Conseil Exécutif a prise est de revoir à la baisse certains privilège accordait aux Membres de cette Assemblée.

[Applause]

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Auparavant les Membres de cette Assemblée bénéficiaient des privilèges additionnels suivants:-

- Un Grant de Rs 25,000 chaque cinq ans pour l'achat des équipements informatique, tel qu'un PC ou un lap top, appareil de fax, telephone etc.
- Une allocation mensuelle de Rs 1,500 pour les Membres et Rs 2,000 pour les Commissaires pour encourir les frais de telephone, fax etc.

Grande a été notre surprise de constater que ces privilèges ont été augmentés de manière exorbitante le 6 janvier 2012 et ont été révisé à la hausse comme suit:-

- Un Grant de Rs 50,000 pour l'achat d'un PC ou un lap top;
- Un Grant additionnel de Rs 15,000 pour l'achat d'un appareil fax et l'allocation mensuel pour les frais de telephone etc. a été réviser à Rs 5,500 soit une augmentation de 350%.

M. le Président, ces privilèges ont été payés avec effet retro actif à partir de janvier 2011 mais les dépenses sont encourues dans ce budget de 2012.

Ce petit jackpot a couté la bagatelle somme de presque Rs 1M au contribuable de cette île ou tant de gens souffre de la pauvreté

M. le Président, je tiens à informer cette Chambre que nous avons immédiatement revu cette décision afin de réduire ces privilèges et de retourner à l'ancienne formule. Cela nous permettra de faire des économies de plus de Rs 2M sur ce budget.

M. le Président, sachez que Rs 2M représente deux mois de salaire des travailleurs de la Rodrigues Water Company. Et aucune prévision budgétaire n'a été faite par le gouvernement sortant.

Je vous remercie pour votre attention, M. le Président.

[Applause]

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY 2012

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I am pleased to inform the House that my office in collaboration with the Commission for Youth will celebrate the International Women's Day 2012 on the 8th of March 2012 at the Cultural and Leisure Centre, Mon Plaisir. In this context, I had a meeting on Thursday 16th of February 2012 with all stakeholders comprising of representatives from the Commission for Youth, different women's associations, Action Familial, Centre Carrefour, SMEDA, Officer in Charge of the MITD and other colleges.

The theme of the International Women's Day 2012 is "*Connecting Girls Inspiring Future*". In this context, two competitions are being organized, namely a drawing competition on the theme "*ki ou vision lor place femmes Rodriguaises dans l'avenir*" and an elocution contest on "*Teenage Pregnancy*" – causes, recommendations and the implication of youth to alleviate the problem.

Mr. Chairperson, Sir, it is with great sadness that I have to inform the House that since 22nd September 2006 a final report has been handed over to the Commission for Women's Affairs on teenage pregnancy in Rodrigues. No trace is available about how such report, has been implemented and we are five years now nothing has been done regarding the sensitization and how we can do to alleviate the problem of teenage pregnancy.

Ce que nous voulons faire, M. le Président, à travers ces concours c'est donné la chance aux jeunes eux même de venir dire ce qu'ils pensent de ce fléau et leurs laissent dire ce qu'ils sont en train de faire ou ce qu'ils peuvent faire pour mieux s'impliquer pour la sensibilisation. Trop de fois, M. le Président, on passe à côté de la racine du problème et on cherche des solutions ailleurs, on ne prend pas le temps de demander le point de vue de ceux concernaient. Juste pour vous donner une indication de la situation, je vais prendre quelques chiffres pour les dernières années de 2006 à 2010 par rapport à la prévalence de la grossesse précoce à Rodrigues.

En 2006, il y a eu 137 cas, en 2007 - 131, en 2008 – 134, 2009 – 123 et en 2010 – 118. Donc il est très important que nous entreprenons quelques choses de concret pour réduire ce problème.

In the same context, my office in collaboration with the Commission for Public Infrastructure we are relooking the Malabar region, which can be considered as the island's educational heartland. Thus, we have taken the decision to upgrade the buildings and yards of the Family Integrated Centre, the

Human Resource Centre, the SMEDA building and other buildings just around the Family Integrated Centre.

Mr. Chairperson, Sir, with a view to sensitize the public on the theme “*Connecting Girls Inspiring Future*” and to ensure that the International Women’s Day is not considered only as a one-day festivity, the Commission intends to pursue activities regarding women up to the 15th of May 2012, day on which the International Family Day will be celebrated.

I would like to draw the attention of Members, here that the different women’s associations are also organizing activities at their level and that the Commissions are providing some facilities to them.

From the 8th to 15th March 2012 the works presented by the participants in the another contests will be shared with other students in the different colleges. The price giving ceremony for the drawing competition will be held on the end of March in the college, which wins the elocution contest. We look forward to have the full participation of our youths to mark this important activity.

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson, Sir.

PUBLIC TRANSPORT SYSTEM

The First Local Region Member of Baie aux Huitres (Mr. S. P. Roussety): Mr. Chairperson, Sir, with your permission, I would like to inform the House of the present situation pertaining to the public transport system in Rodrigues. As of now, some sixty-eight (68) buses are licensed to operate throughout the island as follows:-

- Along Route 204 from Port Mathurin to Grand Baie there are four licences. These buses also provide school services from Hauteur Accacia.
- Along Route 205/A & B from Port Mathurin to Baie du Nord which are serviced by four licences. Out of which one is off road since October 2011 and two others are frequently off road due to breakdown. This situation is causing dire hardships to travelers particularly students.
- 18 licences have been issued on Route 206/A between Port Mathurin and Plaine Corail via Mangues and

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Montagne du Sables and Route 207/A & B from Port Mathurin to Pointe Palmiste through Anse Quitar and Baie du Nord.

- Eight licences have been granted along Route 208 & 208A between Port Mathurin to Pointe Coton and St. Francois with extension to Rivière Banane. Passengers encounter difficulties when some buses are off road.

Mr. Chairperson, Sir, this Regional Government will give priority to enlarge the road leading to Rivière Banane so that the request of the families living in this region for a regular public transport service could be entertained.

- 10 licences have been issued along Route 209 between Port Mathurin and Rivière Coco via Mourouk.
- Seven licences have been granted on Route 210 from Port Mathurin to Gravières with extension to Montagne Cabris, Patate Theophile and Montagne Cherie.
- Four licences have been issued on Route 211 between Port Mathurin and Citron Donis via Eau Vannée.
- One licence is operational on Route 212 between Port Mathurin and Montagne Malgache via Lataniers.
- Route 213 between Baie du Nord to Mourouk via Rivière Coco is serviced by five buses.
- Route 220 between Port Mathurin and Soupir via Mont Lubin is serviced by three buses.
- Route 224 between Port Mathurin and Baladirou via Mont Lubin there are four buses.

Mr. Chairperson, Sir, when all these licensed buses are operational the service is barely enough to meet the demand. Besides, as some of the buses are in operation more than 19 years and many buses are regularly off road due to mechanical breakdowns. Since 4th August 2006, that is, 5½ years before the Regional Government formed by the MR party has managed a traffic system with a disastrous manner. There has been an archaic way. During this period, the population has been living a nightmare when on road. No discipline!

“Qu’est-ce qu’on voit sur nos routes? Beaucoup de nid de poule! Pour éviter ces trous les chauffeurs font beaucoup d’efforts sur leurs volants afin de ne pas provoquer d’accident. When buses and lorries continue to run on that type of road they encounter great difficulties. Many vehicles go on break down. Longer periods are taken to repair buses when spare parts are not available on the local market. What we see when buses are broken down the owners are in Mauritius and are not interested in the repairs of their buses thus causing inconveniences to our travelers. During the second week of February 2012, eight buses went on break down causing great inconveniences to our public transport causing our children to be late at school, employees to be late at work affecting our economy. The main reason as I have said earlier of these break downs are the old age of the vehicles and the bad status of some roads. The previous government remains static for more than five years. No proper road development was initiated during that period. We will revisit the policy of bus licences and allowing bus to operate not more than 20 years. Just recently on the 12th February 2012, there was a serious road accident near Restaurant Coralie La Difference involving a bus, where there were 13 victims causing one death. This House presents its sincere sympathy to the family of the deceased. To that effect, I wish to put on record the prompt action taken by the Health Services attending the accident and the mass casualties. The nature of the accident was so violent that the consequences could have been much more serious.

To alleviate the hardship and difficulties faced by users of public transport it is proposed:-

- (i) to licence an additional bus on Route 204 to cater for the increase in passengers with the recent opening of the Terre Rouge Secondary School;
- (ii) to licence two additional buses and redesignate Route 207A to provide public transport through the road Piments to Cascade Jean Louis and create an extension to Dans Coco via Cascade Jean Louis, Piments, Montagne du Sable and Baie Malgache;
- (iii) to create an extension to Nassola as soon as the road presently under construction is completed;
- (iv) to licence:-
 - (a) one additional bus on road 209 to bring the fleet to 11 buses;

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- (b) two additional buses on Route 210 and create an extension to Montagne Cherie;
- (c) one more bus on Route 211 and provide an extension via Roseaux;
- (d) one more bus each on Route 212 and Route 213;
- (e) 15 seater buses along Route 220 via Montagne Charlot and Soupirs.

M. le Président, certaine route comme Brûlé vers Pointe Coton, Pompée vers Port Sud Est, Rivière Coco vers Songes et d'autres routes encore cause beaucoup d'inconvénient aux véhicules surtout aux autos buses.

The previous Regional government has not found it necessary to construct new road amongst the mentioned above. Their obsession was only to construct track roads and everybody knows the reason.

As regards to taxi services, it is considered that the existing fleet of 29 vehicles is sufficient to meet the demand. However, my Commission will step up control over the transport of passengers in the box of double cab taxi vehicle in view of the hazard it represents to the person travelling in the box.

Mr. Chairperson, Sir, my Commission will assess the situation relating to bus contract and contract car licences and would if warranted take relevant action to increase licences so as to provide adequate service to further boost up our developing Tourism Sector.

In view of the rugged topography of the island and the steep gradient on our roads and also to prevent accident such as the one which occurred on 12th February 2012 we shall strictly enforce existing norms in respect of the conditions of public service vehicles and introduce new measures to ensure that vehicles beyond the prescribed number of years are not imported or used as public service vehicle.

We have noted the justified complaints of road users who have to wait for buses in the open exposed and vagaries of extreme climatic conditions and would do our level best to extend the construction of bus shelters wherever required giving priority to the places with higher numbers of road users particularly our young students. When a government has no vision, its population suffers. Rodrigues has suffered for more than five years.

I thank you, Mr. Chairperson, Sir.

OVERVIEW - COMMISSION FOR SOCIAL SECURITY

The First Local Region Member of Grande Montagne (Mr. L. Daniel Baptiste): Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I would like with your kind permission to address the House. Monday 6th February 2012 was a memorable date. Everybody knows the verdict of the Regional Elections. The OPR party is back to power and we now have a clear five-year mandate.

Now the hardest task is ahead and it is our duty to work together for the benefit of all Rodriguans with a view to pave the way forward.

Since my nomination on Saturday 11th of February 2012 as Commissioner for Social Security and Others, I have started to put all the necessary efforts to meet the expectation of the people.

It is an agreed fact that there is presently a public outcry. Many complaints and criticisms are leveled against the delay in effecting payment of various allowances and pensions due to beneficiaries, as well as the provision of various facilities to the needy persons.

Mr. Chairperson, Sir, let me right from the outset deny all the political propaganda spread during the electoral campaign relating to the disallowance of social aid benefit and pensions with the event of the coming in power of the OPR Government. This is very cheap politics but such malicious rumours have created a state of confusion and fear in the minds of a small section of the population.

I wish to remind the House, Mr. Chairperson, Sir, that the granting of such benefits are regulated by various existing Acts, namely the National Pensions Act of 1976, the Social Aid Act and the Unemployment Hardship Relief Act of 1983. Some 15 forms of payments (pension, allowance, income, support, etc) are being effected to beneficiaries.

I therefore, wish to reassure the public in general that all their rights, which are guaranteed, by the Law and the Constitution will not be withdrawn from them.

Mr. Chairperson, Sir, since my assumption of duty, I have noticed regular, unusual long queues at my office with people querying in regards to delay or disallowance of Social Aid and pensions and other benefits. All these people are living/have lived in a real “*calvaire*”. I have immediately requested

for an internal enquiry related to these issues and the results reflect the poor management of the outgoing government in the management of the affair of Rodrigues.

The enquiry effected has enabled me to take cognizance of the fact that as at yesterday there are some 705 outstanding cases of benefits for renewals, dating back to 2011, before I assumed office and thus causing delay in payments.

Some additional 239 new cases dating back to January 2011 are still pending, that is; they have never been examined to assess the eligibility or not of the potential applicants.

You would be shocked to learn that an updated list has revealed that some 48 applicants have had recommendation for a wheel chair (from December 2010 to January 2012) and nothing has been done for them.

Cases of severely handicapped persons are still awaiting domiciliary visits for Medical Board since July 2011. These are cases that I have seen when I assumed office. Such a state of affairs is simply inadmissible, Mr. Chairperson, Sir. It is clear that, somewhere, somehow, someone has failed to carry out his/her duties properly.

My chairperson, Sir, in line with the vision of this government to provide efficient Social Security services to the vulnerable groups and needy persons instructions have already been given so that urgent remedial actions are taken to clear all these backlogs in the shortest possible delay. Procedures for the purchase of new wheelchairs have already been initiated.

With regard to cases of Appellants to be heard by a Medical Tribunal, I am pleased to inform the House that a batch of 53 will be heard by the Medical Tribunal scheduled for Friday 2nd and Saturday 3rd March 2012 after almost one year.

I wish to ensure the house that necessary steps will be taken so that such bottlenecks do not occur again in the future.

Finally, I would like to make a special appeal to everybody and particularly the respected Members of this august Assembly to act in a responsible manner and not to exploit people, particularly those of the vulnerable groups just for political gain.

Let us educate these people and empower them, this would be better for Rodrigues.

Mr. Chairperson, Sir, thank you very much.

**PORT SUD EST LARGE NET FISHING
CO-OPERATIVE SOCIETY**

The Second Local Region Member of Baie aux Huitres (Mr. J. R. Payendee): Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I am pleased to announce to the House that through “*démocratie participative*”, I have been able to find a solution for the problem of 14 fishermen of the Port Sud Est Large Fishing Net Cooperative Society who were in the dark following the coming into force of the SEMPA Regulations since the 16th of July 2011.

In fact, the head fisherman of the Port Sud Est Large Net Fishing Cooperative Society called at my office on 21st February 2012 so as to know what to do in view of the impending opening of the 2012 net fishing season. Following the promulgation of the South East Marine Protected Area Regulations on 16th July 2011 whereby they are no longer allowed to practice large net fishing in the SEMPA.

It is to be noted that the fishermen who are members of the society have been practicing large net fishing in the area that have become part of the Marine Protected Area. They are understandably worried for their livelihood given that they will no longer be allowed to fish in that area. What is astonishing is that since 16th July 2011 the previous Regional Government has done nothing to channel the fishermen concerned into alternative income-generating activities such as agriculture, eco-tourism etc.

The head fisherman proposed that a compensation of Rs 300,000 be paid to each member of the society. He was told that this is not a rate approved by the National Government. After discussion with him and the Project Analyst of SEMPA, it was suggested that a special permission might be granted to them in view of enabling them to fish within the Multiple Use Zone for a period of six months.

I had a meeting yesterday with them and the members of the Cooperative Society at Port Sud Est to explain their proposal and get their views before proceeding further. During the meeting, I have also informed them clearly that as per existing laws; they are entitled to a compensation of Rs 70,000 each in case they opt to relinquish their net licence, and gave up their net fishing

activities. I told them that this is the rate that has been approved by the National Government.

They were informed that they had two options:-

- (i) To fish in the Multiple Use Zones for a period of six months subject to the approval of the Executive Council. This special permission will apply for only one year. Afterwards, they will not be allowed to fish anymore in this Marine Protected Area;
- (ii) Relinquish their net licence and gave up their net fishing activities against payment of compensation to the tune of Rs 70,000 each. In this case, my Commission will work in collaboration with other Commissions, such as, Agriculture and Land to support them in case they decided to invest in alternative economic activities.

The members finally decided to accept the payment of compensation. At the same time, they requested that my Commission make necessary arrangement so that they could complete the practical part of the training so that they could obtain their certificate to be entitled to off-lagoon fishing cards and practice off-lagoon fishing.

[Applause]

My Commission through the Fisheries Research and Training Unit has already initiated appropriate actions for the training of the fishers as soon as possible.

Mr. Chairperson, Sir, this shows that how through “*démocratie participative*”; I have been able to find a peaceful settlement for a problem which is long overdue. The outcome of my discussion with the fishermen is at the same time the best outcome for the protection of a marine environment, particularly, the lagoon, which has been regenerated for the sustainable development of Rodrigues. This shows that in only one day of discussion I have been able to solve a problem, which was overdue for at least six months.

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson, Sir.

[Applause]

/UNREVISED/

ADJOURNMENT

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I beg to move that this Assembly do now adjourn to Friday 30th March 2012 at 15.00 hours.

The Deputy Chief Commissioner rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

At 15.50 hours, the Assembly was, on its rising, adjourned to Friday 30th March 2012 at 15.00 hours.