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No. 08 of 2022

RODRIGUES

FIFTH REGIONAL ASSEMBLY

PARLIAMENTARY

DEBATES

(HANSARD)

(UNREVISED)

TUESDAY 30 AUGUST 2022

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ADJOURNMENT

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The Executive Council

(Formed by Mr Johnson Roussety, G.O.S.K.)

| | |
|-------------------------------|---|
| Mr Johnson Roussety, G.O.S.K. | Chief Commissioner, Commissioner responsible for Central Administration, Civil Aviation (Administration), Education (Administration), Legal Services, Marine Services (Administration), Registration, Statistics in respect of Rodrigues, State Lands, Town and Country Planning, Cooperatives, Handicraft, Industrial Development, Trade, Commerce and Licensing, Vocational Training, Civil Status, Customs and Excise (Administration), Judicial (Administration), Postal Services (Administration), Marine Parks, Water Resources |
| Mr Franceau Aubret Grandcourt | Deputy Chief Commissioner, Commissioner responsible for Public Infrastructure including Highways and Roads and Public Buildings and Utilities, Transport, Environment, Community Development, Housing |
| Mr Louis Ange Perrine | Commissioner responsible for Agriculture, Fisheries, Food Production, Forestry, Plant & Animal Quarantine |
| Mr Jean Nicolas Volbert | Commissioner responsible for Health (Administration), Social Security (Administration), Fire Services, Prisons & Reforms Institutions (Administration) |
| Miss Marie Christiane Agathe | Commissioner responsible for Women's Affairs, Child Development, Family Welfare, Consumer Protection/Price Fixing |
| Mr Jean Alain Wong So | Commissioner responsible for Tourism, Employment, Labour and Industrial Relations, Information Technology & Telecommunications |
| Mr Joseph Varok Ravina | Commissioner responsible for Youth & Sports, Arts and Culture, Museums, Archives, Historical Sites and Buildings, Library Services |

PRINCIPAL OFFICERS AND OFFICIALS

| | | |
|--------------------|---|-------------------------------------|
| Mr Chairperson | - | Leopold, Mr Joseph Christian |
| Deputy Chairperson | - | Tolbize, Mr Justar |
| Clerk | - | Legentil, Miss Marie Lyndia Yannick |
| Deputy Clerk | - | Clair, Miss Marie Chrismélanie |
| Serjeant-at-Arms | - | Larose, Mr Georges Harold Banwell |

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RODRIGUES

Fifth Regional Assembly

Debate No. 08 of 2022

Sitting of Tuesday 30 August 2022

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

Mr Chairperson, accompanied by the Honourable, Prime Minister of the Republic of Mauritius, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communication, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity, Mr Pravind Kumar Jugnauth, preceded by the Serjeant-at-Arms, bearing the mace, and Miss Marie Lyndia Yannick Legentil, the Clerk of the Regional Assembly, entered the Chamber in procession.

Mr Chairperson seated the Honourable, Prime Minister of the Republic of Mauritius, to his right.

The National Anthem was played

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ANNOUNCEMENT

Mr Chairperson: I invite the Prime Minister to take his seat. You may be seated.

**HONOURABLE PRIME MINISTER, MINISTER OF DEFENCE,
HOME AFFAIRS AND EXTERNAL COMMUNICATION, MINISTER
FOR RODRIGUES, OUTER ISLANDS AND TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY,
MR PRAVIND KUMAR JUGNAUTH – REGIONAL ASSEMBLY – ADDRESS**

Mr Chairperson: Distinguished Members, it is my greatest privilege and honour to welcome on this day Honourable Pravind Kumar Jugnauth, Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communication, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity to the seat of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly.

Respected Members, as the Rodrigues Regional Assembly prepares to mark the 20th anniversary of its establishment, today's Prime Ministerial visit is loaded with significance as it is only the second time since 2002 that a sitting Prime Minister will address the House. This visit is a testament of a special relationship that exist between the Honourable Prime Minister and Rodrigues as well as his profound interest in its affairs. A special relationship which also remind us of the Late Sir Anerood Jugnauth who always showed a keen interest in favouring the development of Rodrigues.

The history will forever recall that it was under his prime ministership that Rodrigues was granted autonomy in 2001 through the adoption and subsequent enactment of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly Act.

The Honourable Prime Minister as a member of the National Assembly in the year 2001 had the opportunity to debate and vote in favour of the set of laws which set up this Assembly. The Honourable Prime Minister is a friend to Rodrigues and he has constantly reaffirmed his commitment for the socio-economic development of the island.

We also extend our warmest welcome to our distinguish guests forming part of the Honourable Prime Minister's delegation.

Honourable Prime Minister, you now have the floor.

**ADDRESS BY THE HONOURABLE PRIME MINISTER, MINISTER OF DEFENCE,
HOME AFFAIRS AND EXTERNAL COMMUNICATION, MINISTER
FOR RODRIGUES, OUTER ISLANDS AND TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY,
MR PRAVIND KUMAR JUGNAUTH**

The Prime Minister of Mauritius:

Mr Chairperson,

The Chief Commissioner,

The Minority Leader,

Members of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly,

Distinguished guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good morning.

I wish first of all, to thank the Chief Commissioner for inviting me, during our meeting in my office in March, to visit Rodrigues at my convenience.

I wish to thank the people of Rodrigues for the very warm welcome they have extended to me and to my delegation since our arrival on Sunday. Indeed, I cherish Rodrigues very much and as I said in my speech at the airport, Rodrigues is close to my heart.

It is, therefore, with great pleasure that I address this august Assembly following the regional elections held on 27 February 2022. I seize this opportunity to congratulate the elected members on both sides of the House and to also convey my best wishes to the Regional Assembly in fulfilling the aspirations of our Rodriguan sisters and brothers.

Mr Chairperson, my last visit to Rodrigues was in the context of the celebration of the 18th Anniversary of the Autonomy of Rodrigues in 2020 and since then, I could not visit my Rodriguan sisters and brothers due to the then prevailing sanitary restrictions in view of the outbreak of COVID-19 in Mauritius and Rodrigues. Now that the borders are no longer closed and the portfolio of Rodrigues being high on my agenda, I have made it a duty to visit the island and address the Regional Assembly. And, since my arrival, I have had the opportunity:

- (i) to attend the opening ceremony of the new Departure Lounge and Duty-Free Shop at Plaine Corail Airport and lay the foundation stone of the Rodrigues Duty Free Paradise Warehouse and Office Complex;

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- (ii) to lay the foundation stone of the Bank of Mauritius building at Port Mathurin, and
- (iii) to launch the MBC Channels and the CSU Radio Programme at Citronelle.

Yesterday morning, I had a very fruitful session with the Chief Commissioner and Members of the Executive Council. We discussed about priority sectors like, water, tourism, the airport, port, ICT, renewable energy, and bio agriculture amongst others.

It is a fact that COVID-19 has had a negative impact on the economy of Rodrigues. With the resurgence of cases of COVID-19 in Mauritius as from Friday 05 March 2021, we had taken the decision to suspend all flights to Rodrigues as from Sunday 07 March 2021 so as to keep the island free from COVID-19. Government has been very sensitive to the plight of our Rodriguan sisters and brothers who were stranded in Mauritius due to the suspension of flights to Rodrigues. To that effect, financial assistance was provided to all those residents of Rodrigues who were stranded in Mauritius and who were in dire need.

Accordingly, around Rs 2.1 m. had been disbursed to 210 heads of households. Moreover, pending the resumption of commercial flights, 19 repatriation flights to Rodrigues had been effected and around 1,175 passengers stranded in Mauritius have been repatriated for the period 01 July to 24 December 2021.

With a view to combatting the virus and putting the economy of Rodrigues back on track, the Ministry of Health and Wellness had several visits to the island to provide further technical assistance to the medical team regarding the implementation of treatment protocols and contingency planning.

As you know, Mr Chairperson, Rodrigues has witnessed unparalleled development during the periods when late Sir Anerood Jugnauth had been the Prime Minister. Be it the development of roads and other infrastructure, social amenities, health services, education facilities or law and order issues amongst others.

To follow in the footsteps of late Sir Anerood Jugnauth and to demonstrate my commitment for the continued development of Rodrigues, I have, in spite of all economic difficulties, already initiated action on the implementation of various developmental projects, namely the availability of fibre optic for high speed internet, the re-designing of the port infrastructure, the first Techno Park at Baladirou, the future construction of a new runway at the airport of Plaine Corail, amongst others, in collaboration, of course, with the Rodrigues

Regional Assembly, to modernise the economic infrastructure of the island and to further improve the standard of living of my Rodriguan sisters and brothers.

To that effect, government has provided in this financial year, an amount of Rs 4.79 billion to Rodrigues, of which some Rs 4.63 billion in the budget of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly, Rs 100 m. from the COVID-19 Projects Development Fund for the funding of track roads and Rs 60 m. from the National Environment and Climate Change Fund for the implementation of environmental projects.

In order to ensure that all the appropriate conditions prevail for the sustainable socio-economic development of the island, there was an urgent need to review and update the ten-year Sustainable and Integrated Development Plan for Rodrigues Report of 2009 in the light of the changing environment of the island. This study had as major objective, to develop strategies, programmes, projects and propose policies to be implemented in each sector to make Rodrigues become a sustainable island. The aim of such an integrated plan is to contribute to employment creation, poverty reduction, and improved standard of living while making sustainable use and conservation of the environmental and natural resources of Rodrigues.

To that effect, funds have been made available by the European Union under the Technical Cooperation Facility for the updating of the following documents:

- ten-year Strategic Plan, the Sustainable Integrated Development Plan for Rodrigues along with a Five Year costed Action Plan;
- Tourism Development Plan for Rodrigues which dates back to 2001, and
- Rodrigues Physical Development Strategy and Land Use Plan dating to 2010.
- The Contract for this assignment has been awarded to COWI Belgium and the final deliverables are expected to be submitted by December 2022.

Mr Chairperson, improving water production, storage, and distribution with a view to enabling all Rodriguans to have access to adequate water on a more regular basis remains a priority for my government. In fact, my government has always provided full support to the Rodrigues Regional Assembly to implement various measures and projects towards solving water issues in the island, including construction of five desalination plants, setting up of the *Observatoire de l'Eau*, Development of Rodrigues Water Resources Strategy and the definition of Priority Action Plan, amongst others.

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Moreover, in order to further address the longstanding water shortage in the island, Rs 1 billion will be invested in desalination plants by the Mauritius Investment Corporation. The aim of this measure is to bridge the gap between water supply and demand in Rodrigues and will comprise construction of desalination plants which will be strategically located at Anse Quitor, Baie Malgache, Pointe Venus, Pointe Cotton, and Songes.

Accordingly, the Rodrigues Public Utilities Corporation has been launched on 23 July 2022, which will be the executive arm of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly in the field of water production. The modalities for the financing and implementation of the additional desalination plants project are being worked out by the Rodrigues Regional Assembly and the Mauritius Investment Corporation. Moreover, an amount of Rs 36.3 m. has been provided in the budget of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly for the construction and upgrading of reservoirs, dams, and boreholes. Also, the rainwater harvesting scheme for all eligible households will be renewed.

Mr Chairperson, as part of the transformational development of the island, a new runway at Plaine Corail Airport will be constructed, enabling the development and the diversification of its economic activities. Thus, this landmark project will further improve air connectivity, boost tourism development, and significantly enhance socio-economic conditions in Rodrigues. Government is fully committed to implement this strategic project. Negotiations are underway by the Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development with a view to contracting a loan to finance the construction of the runway. Additionally, a Techno Park is being constructed at Baladirou to promote entrepreneurship and employment in the field of ICT. The contract for the construction of the Techno Park project was awarded to Laxmanbhai & Co (Mauritius) Ltd on 08 January 2021 for the amount of Rs 255 m. and construction works have already started in February 2021 with a duration of 18 months. An amount of Rs 125 m. is being provided for the completion of this project in early 2023.

Moreover, to further boost up economic development in the island, it is also imperative to address the issue of the cost of freight between Mauritius and Rodrigues. In this respect, the 20% rebate on the cost of freight between Mauritius and Rodrigues announced last year has been maintained. To increase competitiveness of local manufacturing products, exports from Rodrigues to Mauritius will also benefit from the Freight Rebate Scheme and the Trade Promotion and Marketing Scheme managed by the Economic Development Board.

Mr Chairperson, an amount of Rs 20 m. has also been provided under the budget of the Ministry of Agro Industry and Food Security for the operationalisation of a slaughter house. The existing building at Baie Diamant will be refurbished and equipped to allow the slaughtering of cattle, goat, and sheep according to norms.

An additional amount of Rs 5 m. has also been earmarked under the budget of the latter Ministry for the extension of all schemes for the agricultural and livestock sector in Rodrigues. Furthermore, with a view to supporting the tourism industry in Rodrigues, the subsidy on the Special Rodrigues Holiday Package and Subsidy on Airfare has been extended up to September 2023.

Mr Chairperson, these key game-changing projects and initiatives are expected to trigger major financial, socio-economic, and cultural development of Rodrigues with a dynamic economic growth and promote a shift from a traditional economy to a modern one. The current economic and sanitary crisis have brought to the fore the need to restore competitiveness and reinforce inclusiveness. The Assembly will agree that the future we face is definitely a very challenging one but our most important of assets being our human resources, we are confident to overcome the obstacles and pursue in our resolve to build a better future for our citizens in all the islands of the Republic of Mauritius.

I wish the Regional Assembly all success in its endeavours.

Thank you for your kind attention.

(Applause)

**VOTE OF THANKS BY MR JOHNSON ROUSSETY, GOSK
- CHIEF COMMISSIONER OF THE RODRIGUES REGIONAL ASSEMBLY**

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, Honourable Prime Minister, it has been an honour and a privilege to have Honourable Prime Minister and Minister for Rodrigues with us today in this Assembly. I wish to thank him for his commitment to Rodrigues and to the development of Rodrigues.

On 27 February last, we have had peaceful elections in Rodrigues and the people of Rodrigues have spoken for change. Change has been made democratically and on 05 March last, the new team and the new Members had their swearing-in. It has been, Mr Chairperson, Sir, merely six months since we have assumed office and I must assure and reassure that we will make our five years into office up to 2027.

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I am thankful to the Office of the Prime Minister and to the Government of Mauritius for their support in numerous areas, in the areas of health, in the areas of agriculture, with the help of many Ministers who have visited Rodrigues. We have been for example, able to break the deadlock in the exportation of live animals from Rodrigues. With the help for the Minister of Health, we have been able to move out of the COVID pandemic.

I wish to thank the Government under the Chairmanship of the Prime Minister for the support and for the recognition for the new team. I also wish to thank him for having received us at his office in Port Louis when we were first on mission in Mauritius after our election.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, as have been rightly said by the Honourable Prime Minister, it will be an honour for the whole of Rodrigues and the whole of this House to celebrate the 20 years of the decentralised process, the autonomy of Rodrigues which has started in 2002. For 20 years is the age of maturity for this Assembly and we hope that we expect that government in Mauritius will keep supporting this part of the territory of Mauritius with the same commitment as before. As has been said a lot of things have increased, prices have increased, the cost of projects have doubled. We have had the opportunity during this visit of the Honourable Prime Minister to expose to him our challenges, our needs and our ambitions as regards the port, the airport, and many other sectors.

I wish to reassure the Prime Minister, here in Rodrigues, that investment that the Republic of Mauritius is making in Rodrigues is profitable long term investment. I wish to thank him for this trust and for his commitment.

I also wish to thank all Members of this House who have accepted to postpone the agenda of the business of today for next week.

Thank you, Honourable Prime Minister for having accepted to address our House today. It has been a privilege. Than you, Mr Chairperson.

(Applause)

ADJOURNMENT

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I move that the House be adjourned to Tuesday 06 September 2022 at 10.30 a.m. Thank you.

The Deputy Chief Commissioner, rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

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Mr Chairperson: Respected Members are kindly invited to proceed to the Passenger Terminal where they will have the opportunity to meet the Honourable Prime Minister.

Mr Chairperson: The House stands adjourned.

At 11.08 a.m., the Assembly was, on its rising, adjourned for Tuesday, 06 September 2022 at 10.30 a.m.