

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

BUDGET SPEECH 2006-2007 : DEBATES

*Intervention of Minister of Housing and Lands*

Mr. Speaker, Sir,

Nobody owes us a living. We have to earn it.

Mr. Speaker, Sir,

I congratulate my Colleague the Deputy Prime Minister, Ministry of Finance and Economic Development on having in his Budget Speech 2006-2007 so objectively diagnosed the causes of the grave economic ills and difficulties faced by our country and on having prescribed bold remedies which are timely, opportune, and appropriate to cure these economic ills and ensure the future sound economic health of the Nation, without which our social fabric will continue to decay.

My Colleague's Budget Speech 2006-2007 mirrors the clear vision and meaningful, purposeful, strong, dynamic and pragmatic leadership of our Prime Minister, Dr. the Honourable Navinchandra Ramgoolam, heading a sagacious and positively thoughtful

Government caring for the future, and steering the State of Mauritius towards a safe, secure, sound, and prosperous destination.

Mr. Speaker, Sir,

The Budget Speech 2006-2007 constitutes a very carefully studied new approach, and a new concept in the reengineering process of Government. In fact, this new approach, and this new concept involve fundamental restructuring and radical redesign of Government processes to achieve tangible improvements in the central Government mechanism, and in the way Government governs in a rapidly modernizing and highly competitive global village.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, Sir, reengineering is not an option. It is a must. The cost of not reforming, of not changing, of Government not implementing changes opportunely is tantamount to changes being too costly and unsustainable in the future. Even then it will be too late to effect them.

It is no longer possible to play a new game with old rules. The 2006 Football World Cup is a striking analogy to show that players can no longer play the way they did in the 1970s'. If they do, they will, for example, be caught off side when they are on side.

The reengineering will ensure such positive performances in the economy as -

- cost-effectiveness
- assurance of quality
- betterment of service
- speed in execution and delivery

Mr. Speaker, Sir,

Fellow Honourable Members on the other side of the House may certainly and democratically continue to beg to differ, but I am sure that they will also continue to listen carefully to all the views expressed here on the 2006-2007 Budget Speech, participate fully in the debates, and come forward with positive criticisms and suggestions. But regrettably, and as at to date, the other side of the House has generally been nihilistic and negative in its attitude towards the Budget Speech and has been opposing just for the sake of opposing.

Monsieur Le Président,

“Le Petit Larousse” définit “héritage” comme un “ensemble des biens acquis ou transmis par voie de succession”. Dans ce sens, le régime qui nous a précédé ne nous a légué aucun héritage. Il n’a légué que des “passifs”, que des “liabilités”. Mais je m’empresse de concéder que ce n’est pas totalement de la faute du Gouvernement

précédent. La faute est dûe, dans une très grande et large mesure, à leur incapacité, à leur manque de vision, et surtout à leur manque de courage pour entamer le vrai processus de la transformation et de la modernisation de notre pays. Nous, nous avons la capacité, la vision, et le courage de préparer l'île Maurice de demain, pour que vive et prospère notre cher pays dans le concert des nations.

Le Budget 2006-2007 vient à point nommé.

My Colleague has boldly, pertinently, and honestly diagnosed the problems, risks, and threats to our survival and to our future, and prescribed a series of remedial actions which only a new course taken can enable and provide, and not the same path followed to date.

The country is thus in a pressing need for "changement" for transformation, which itself imperatively necessitates imaginative, innovative, and bold measures, and the doing away with procrastination, prevarication, laissez-faire, and laissez-aller in the governance and style of governance of the country, for the common good not merely for today, but, above all, for tomorrow, and the day after tomorrow.

We cannot prepare and ensure the future by adamantly wanting to live in the past, to cling to the past, adopting obsolete past

practices to modernize the country. We cannot thus afford to make of our country itself a very big Paradox.

To echo my Colleague the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development, it is time, indeed high time, I emphasize, for the nation to embrace radical change and build a new, open, and competitive service platform that is fully integrated into the global economy.

Surely, the brave, resilient, adaptable, and progressive Mauritian spirit will not accept to see the world go by while adopting the resistance-to-change attitude of Maître Cornille in Alphonse Daudet's "*Lettres de mon moulin*".

Of course, Mr. Speaker, Sir, it is human nature to fear and resist change at its face value. But, Sir, human nature is also such that it welcomes change when it comprehends, realizes, and recognizes the justification for change, the absolute need for it, the inevitability of preparing a better, happier, fairer, safer, and more secure future by bringing about absolutely vital changes, however painful they are or they may be as a starter, and at the initial stage.

My Colleague has not sought, in his Budget Speech, to sugar any pill. He has presented to the Nation the stark and harsh socio-economic realities, and showed the way forward. And the way

forward is clear: the bold steps and measures that imperatively and pressingly need to be taken to remove the country from the precipice on which it is perilously poised, and to take it to fresh woods and pastures new where there is plenty of oxygen, and where there is plenty of safety and security.

We need therefore to transform Mauritius through innovation and competitiveness on our way forward towards creating tangible prosperity and wealth for the whole nation.

Mr. Speaker, Sir,

I do not wish to take the time of this august Assembly to dwell at some length on the achievements of my Ministry since I assumed office in July 2005. Suffice it to say that actions have been initiated since that date –

First, to satisfy the housing and land needs of the people of Mauritius;

Second, to achieve more effective management and use of State Lands, and

Third, to support and encourage private sector development activities that are in the national interest and that also have social components.

These three are the most important of the several functions of my Ministry.

With your permission, Mr. Speaker, Sir,

I shall now do two things –

1. to have placed in the Library salient [details of these achievements](#); and
2. to dwell briefly on the CHA, Social Housing, Land Reform, IRS, and Campement Site Issues.

Mr. Speaker Sir,

Let me now touch on a few pertinent issues.

### CHA

In the wake of the letter and spirit of the 2006-2007 Budget Speech it is clear that public institutions which are lame ducks and white elephants have to be closed down or phased out. The announced closure of the DWC has been demagogically utilized as a rubber bullet in the gun of the Opposition within the Opposition.

How convenient it is to forget and to ignore the circumstances leading to, and surrounding the closure of the CHA. Since 13 years, ex CHA employees have been waiting for compensation, despite the

meeting of assurance that the CHA employees' Union had with the former Prime Minister on 26 December 2003, and the letter which the former Prime Minister addressed to the Union Representatives on 30 June 2005 for a meeting with Union Representatives after the General Election.

### Social Housing

- The Empowerment Programme (EP) will address the issue of housing families with modern income.
- This EP will acquire around 2,000 to 3,000 arpents of land across the country near existing agglomeration.
- Government proposes to sell service lots of an extent of 60 toises at affordable cost to the landless families earning Rs 8,500 monthly.
- The buyers will benefit from –
  - (a) choice from 4 - 5 prototype plans design;
  - (b) title deed;
  - (c) an approved building plan;
  - (d) clearances from public utilities;
  - (e) building permit from the relevant local authorities.

All these will lead to the beneficiaries being able to commence construction within a short time frame.

### Land for Small Entrepreneurs

- Some of the land acquired will be put at the disposal of small entrepreneurs on concessionary terms in the context of the Empowerment Programme.

### Land Reform

- The land Administration and Management Sector will be significantly reformed
- A modern land administration and management system will be provided .
- A National Land Information System (NLIS) will be established.
- Actions have already been initiated for the implementation of the Land Administration and Management System (LAMS).

### IRS

- It is maintained that the previous régime, through its fundamental policy regarding IRS, encouraged, although unwillingly, and unaware, land apartheid in our country.
- The IRS Scheme is in fact being reviewed and revisited.

- Regulations will be made to define the social obligations of promoters of projects under the IRS Scheme.
- In fact, as stated on the 2006-2007 Budget Speech, the new Regulations will indeed speed out the parameters for determining the level of contributions for the benefit of the local community, under the Planning Obligations Mechanism.

### Campement Site Lease

- The privilege of enjoying for a mere pittance, the State's and the Nation's wealth and property cannot be allowed to continue.
- The price to pay for such privileges must be in consonance with economic and commercial realities, and with equity and fairness for the whole nation.
- The poor returns on State Lands, in particular campement sites on Pas Géométriques, are ANACHRONISTIC, and constitute a really unfair arrangement.
- The country needs prime beach land, "pieds dans l'eau", for the country's tourism needs.
- The country needs to weigh the imperatives and desiderata of the Nation and the national and public interest, against the narrow needs, wishes, and interests of individual.
- The two options offered to lessees of campement are fair, equitable, and in the national and public interest.

After all, lest it be forgotten, we are all in the same ship. And we should all ensure that the Ship of State does not wreck on dangerous rocks or break in shallow waters.

Mr. Speaker, Sir,

The Budget Speech 2006-2007 has sent clear and unambiguous signals to the Nation. Times have changed, and we have to move with time. Times are hard, and we have to take hard and bold decisions to move away from a mentality proper and peculiar to that of a "*peuple assisté*". - We absolutely have to lift ourselves up from our bootstraps, roll up our sleeves, and do, not complacently what we think we can, but courageously what we ought to do to be kind to ourselves, to be kind to our children, to be kind to our families, to be kind to our country.

Today's formidable challenges are simultaneously formidable opportunities to charter a new road map for our country's tryst with destiny.

Monsieur le Président,

On a souvent fait ressortir ici et ailleurs que le peuple mauricien est admirable. Qu'il est sophistiqué. Intelligent. Capable de grands sacrifices pour assurer son avenir et celui de ses enfants. Faisons

justice à cette réputation, et, la main dans la main, préparons aujourd'hui même un avenir certain, heureux et prospère. Il faut sauver l'île Maurice. Et sauvons la, en étant partie prenante de grandes réformes enclenchées avec le discours du Budget 2006-2007.

Mr. Speaker, Sir,

Indeed, nobody owes us a living.