

No. 11 of 2011



FIFTH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

PARLIAMENTARY

DEBATES

(HANSARD)

FIRST SESSION

TUESDAY 07 JUNE 2011

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Members

THE CABINET

Members

(Formed by Dr. the Hon. Navinchandra Ramgoolam)

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Members

Members

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Deputy Chairman of Committees

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MAURITIUS

Fifth National Assembly

FIRST SESSION

Debate No. 11 of 2011

Sitting of Tuesday 07 June 2011

The Assembly met in the Assembly House, Port Louis,

at 11.30 a.m

Mr Speaker, accompanied by His Excellency, The President of the Republic of Singapore, Mr S. R. Nathan, preceded by the Serjeant-at-Arms, bearing the mace, and Mr Ram Ranjit Dowlutta, the Clerk of the National Assembly, entered the Chamber in procession.

Mr Speaker seated His Excellency, the President of the Republic of Singapore, to his right.

The National Anthem was played.

ANNOUNCEMENT

HIS EXCELLENCY, THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF SINGAPORE, MR. S. R. NATHAN – NATIONAL ASSEMBLY – ADDRESS

Mr Speaker: Hon. Members, we are privileged and deeply honoured to have, in our midst this morning, His Excellency, Mr S. R. Nathan, President of the Republic of Singapore. We are also thankful to His Excellency for having kindly accepted to address the House.

Hon. Members, His Excellency, Mr S. R. Nathan, is serving a second mandate as President of the Republic of Singapore. His Excellency has had a fruitful and successful career in the Singapore Civil Service that started way back in 1955.

Throughout his long and outstanding career as a Civil Servant, His Excellency has had the opportunity to serve in various positions, and has been conferred with various distinctions and recognition for his commitment and dedicated service. The exemplary manner in which His Excellency has served his country as a career Civil Servant should no doubt be a source of inspiration and a model for all of us to emulate.

Your Excellency, your presence among us heralds a new era in the long standing relations between Mauritius and Singapore. While consolidating the existing friendly ties, it gives us the opportunity to develop new vistas of cooperation in numerous fields.

Your Excellency, on behalf of the hon. Members of the National Assembly of Mauritius and in my own name, I extend a special and very warm welcome to Your Excellency, the First Lady, and to all members of Your Excellency's delegation.

I have now the pleasure to invite Your Excellency to address the House.

ADDRESS BY HIS EXCELLENCY THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF SINGAPORE, MR S. R. NATHAN

The President of the Republic of Singapore:

Your Excellency, Rajkeswur Purryag,

Speaker of the National Assembly of the Republic of Mauritius,

Your Excellency, Dr. Navinchandra Ramgoolam.

Prime Minister of the Republic of Mauritius,

Your Excellency, Paul Raymond Bérenger,

Leader of the Opposition,

Honourable Ministers of Mauritius,

Honourable Members of the National Assembly of Mauritius,

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thank you, Honourable Speaker, for your gracious words of welcome and honouring me with this opportunity to address the Members of this august House. On behalf of the Government and people of Singapore, I would like to convey my warm greetings to the people of Mauritius.

I am indeed very privileged to be here. This is my first visit and I am struck by the beauty of your island nation. The Botanical Garden and the Ganga Talao, which I visited yesterday, are splendid sights. I now fully understand what Mark Twain meant when he wrote in 1896, that: “you gather the idea that Mauritius was made first and then heaven, and that heaven was copied after Mauritius.”

Since my arrival, I have been touched by the warmth and hospitality of the people of Mauritius. I was also impressed to learn about Mauritius’ rich heritage, which is a result of the blending of many cultures from your history. From the first discovery as an uninhabited island by Arab sailors in the 9th Century, Mauritius was re-discovered by the Portuguese in 1505 and subsequently settled by the Dutch, French and British before you gained your independence in 1968.

It is particularly interesting to me that your early beginnings and growth story since independence is one that mirrors Singapore’s own transformation from a fishing village in a colony to a bustling economy. Mauritius, like Singapore and other newly independent States, entered the post-colonial era with a high level of poverty. But since then, Mauritius has grown to what it is today, as remarked by renowned economist and Nobel Laureate Joseph Stiglitz, the “Mauritian economic miracle”. In 43 years, Mauritius transformed itself from a poor single crop

economy into one of the most successful countries in Africa. It was largely through Mauritius' combination of political stability, strong institutional frameworks and favourable regulatory environment that provided the foundation for this growth. In 2010, Mauritius was ranked first in Africa in the World Bank Doing Business Survey and this has consistently topped the Ibrahim Index of African Governance since 2007.

This remarkable success, I believe, did not come easily. Your visionary founding father, Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam, had reiterated the constant need to cultivate the spirit of unity and peace in the formative years of Mauritius' independence. He set the path for Mauritius to be a functioning multi-racial and multi-communal State. Today, Mauritius is home to descendants from diverse places such as Africa, China, Europe and South Asia, with different faiths and religions all living in harmony. A prominent example is Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam himself, the son of a poor Indian immigrant, who became a leading figure in the independence movement and rose to become your first Prime Minister. Under his guidance, Mauritius progressed to achieve stability, democracy and significant levels of economic growth. This is indeed a remarkable achievement.

Today, both our countries are hailed as economic miracles, perhaps because conventional wisdom had doomed us to failure after independence. But we know that it was more than just a miracle. It was because our founding fathers boldly defied the odds to build improbable countries from mere islands lacking in natural resources. They succeeded through political will, strong visionary leadership, hard work and good governance. Indeed, the multi-ethnic and multi-religious composition of the Mauritian people reflects the true spirit of representative democracy and is testament to the truth that diversity need not necessarily be incompatible with democracy, but rather, an essential counterpart. In this regard, Mauritius' parliamentary democracy is remarkable for the ability of parliamentary system to work together across party lines to reach consensus on what is the national interest for the betterment of your country.

Honourable Speaker, both our countries have forged close bonds of friendship and cooperation that date back to the personal friendship between our two founding fathers, Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam and Singapore's first Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew who visited Mauritius in 1979 as a guest of Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam. The similarities we share in terms of our vision and outlook have helped us to understand each other better and have brought our

countries together. I am confident that this will stand us in good stead and lead to a continued strengthening of our relations for many more years to come.

Honourable Speaker, as I conclude my speech, I want to commend Mauritius for being a beacon of success in Africa. I am deeply impressed by your stellar record of governance, economic reforms and effective management of State and business relations. All these have enabled neighbouring States to hold Mauritius in high regard and desire to emulate your development experience. Singapore, as a friend and a partner of Mauritius, is pleased to continue to work together with Mauritius to achieve the shared goals of peace, prosperity and stability in our respective regions and the world.

Honourable Speaker, I thank you once again for giving me this privilege to address this august Assembly.

(Applause)

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like, on your behalf, and on behalf of all the Members of this House, to express our heartfelt thanks to His Excellency, the President of the Republic of Singapore, for his enlightening and graceful address.

We wish to assure you, Excellency, that we have great admiration for the lofty ideals and noble ideals which you stand for. The depth of your humanity and your personal journey is a living example of the triumph of perseverance, courage and compassion.

Your distinguished presence in this Assembly today and your insightful speech bear testimony to the excellent spirit of cooperation and understanding that have always characterised the relations between our two countries.

Mauritius and Singapore are moving forward on the same trajectory; although we are at different levels of socioeconomic development, we face similar challenges in many respects. We must, therefore, continue to work together in order to further reinforce our bilateral relations. Your visit, Excellency, is a milestone in the relations of our two countries, and it will no doubt give a new impetus to our endeavours for closer economic and diplomatic ties.

Excellency,

It is my privilege on behalf of Mr Speaker, of all the Members of the National Assembly on both sides of the House, and the Clerk of the National Assembly, to thank you once again for

the distinct honour that you have bestowed upon us by addressing our National Assembly with your thought provoking and inspiring address.

This is the day that we shall always remember and treasure.

Thank you.

(Applause)

At 11.50 a.m. the Assembly rose and stood adjourned, as already resolved, to Tuesday 14 June 2011 at 11.30 a.m.