

## Baie du Cap: Part I When IRS Monroze Eats into a Mountain

In the coastal village of Baie du Cap, there is an *Integrated Resort Scheme* called *Monroze* preparing to wind down, snake-like, into the village and right down to the seafront. Only the public road now separates the IRS plan from the lagoon used by fishermen and families (see Photo 1).



The intention is clear to all: the so-called “developers” are intent on getting their fangs right into the seawater.

Then their 74 lots, advertized on their billboard recently put up brashly in the middle of Baie du Cap, will be sold to millionaires who intend, no doubt, to become settlers, with “*pieds dans l’eau*”.

The 14 families, meanwhile, who were originally living with leases on State Land to the right of the IRS, when looking landwards, and who are still living there, will, it is clear, be uprooted from their land. Probably one-by-one. Probably not unlike the removal of people from Diego Garcia. The State has even already begun the same process of neglecting them that the British used in Diego Garcia. The people already have no proper road access to their houses – but a set of steep concrete steps. Nothing has been done, despite promises, to protect them from rocks higher up the mountain being dislodged in heavy rains. No drains canalize the water, which just runs down the mountain dangerously after heavy rainfall. And now, the “promoter”, is cutting a huge gash into mother earth (see Photo 2), and has cut off the road that came near the second layer of seven houses of the inhabitants of Baie du Cap.



And what kind of an Environment Impact Assessment (EIA) is it that permits this gouging out of a mountain? How was it ever given? The accusation against former Minister Raj Dayal, who has resigned as Minister, gives a hideous insight into possibilities as to how EIA's are, in fact, granted.

And is the EIA, once given in 2011, being respected now? Or flouted?

What kind of overseeing is there by the State when this kind of massacre of the environment, the actual cutting up a mountain, takes place?

Are these "promoters" what the Government considers *developers*? People who come and cut a village in two, cut its inhabitants in two, gouge a hole in a mountain? With their beady eyes, all the time, set on the seafont? Or are they rather *destroyers*?

People in Baie du Cap say what they want is proper jobs. By this they mean not the kind of "contract" jobs that they are left with – after the closing down of Bel Ombre and St Felix sugar mills and with the VRS (Voluntary Retirement Scheme) lay-offs of labourers and Blueprint lay-offs of mill workers. And with the closing down of nearly all the free zone factories in the vicinity that employed so many people.

The people of Baie du Cap are calling on the Government to oblige the Sugar Estates in the area to diversify their plantation in the fields and, at the same time, to set up food preservation plants to replace the sugar mills, and to take people on in proper employment. Land owners cannot be left free to monopolise the land and at the same time be allowed to just destroy employment, and continue ignoring the need for food security.

And the people of Baie du Cap are calling on the Government to organize for bigger and safer fishing boats, so that fishermen can go father afield, and at the same time re-populate the lagoons with fish and other life, as the State has started to do in Rodrigues.

And of course, they are calling for the withdrawal of the permit given to this “developer” to destroy a village and its natural heritage. They also call for the ordinary, almost natural, things that villagers demand of the State: a road, a social centre, drains, and dealing with dangerous rocks.

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for LALIT, 24 March 2016.