No. 10 of 2019

REPUBLIC OF MAURITIUS

SIXTH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

PARLIAMENTARY

DEBATES

(HANSARD)

(UNREVISED)

FIRST SESSION

THURSDAY 13 JUNE 2019

CONTENTS

THE CABINET

(Formed by Hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth)

Hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth	Prime Minister, Minister of Home Affairs, External Communications and National Development Unit, Minister of Finance and Economic Development
Hon. Ivan Leslie Collendavelloo, GCSK, SC	Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Energy and Public Utilities
Hon. Sir Anerood Jugnauth, GCSK, KCMG, QC	Minister Mentor, Minister of Defence, Minister for Rodrigues
Hon. Mrs Fazila Jeewa-Daureeawoo	Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Outer Islands, Minister of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare
Hon. Yogida Sawmynaden	Minister of Technology, Communication and Innovation
Hon. Nandcoomar Bodha, GCSK	Minister of Public Infrastructure and Land Transport, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade
Hon. Mrs Leela Devi Dookun-Luchoomun	Minister of Education and Human Resources, Tertiary Education and Scientific Research
Hon. Anil Kumarsingh Gayan, SC	Minister of Tourism
Dr. the Hon. Mohammad Anwar Husnoo	Minister of Health and Quality of Life
Hon. Prithvirajsing Roopun	Minister of Arts and Culture
Hon. Marie Joseph Noël Etienne Ghislain Sinatambou	Minister of Social Security, National Solidarity, and Environment and Sustainable Development
Hon. Mahen Kumar Seeruttun	Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security
Hon. Ashit Kumar Gungah	Minister of Industry, Commerce and Consumer Protection
Hon. Maneesh Gobin	Attorney General, Minister of Justice, Human Rights and Institutional Reforms
Hon. Jean Christophe Stephan Toussaint	Minister of Youth and Sports

Hon. Soomilduth Bholah	Minister of Business, Enterprise and Cooperatives
Hon. Marie Roland Alain Wong Yen Cheong, MSK	Minister of Social Integration and Economic Empowerment
Hon. Premdut Koonjoo	Minister of Ocean Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries and Shipping
Hon. Soodesh Satkam Callichurn	Minister of Labour, Industrial Relations, Employment and Training
Hon. Purmanund Jhugroo	Minister of Housing and Lands
Hon. Marie Cyril Eddy Boissézon	Minister of Civil Service and Administrative Reforms
Hon. Dharmendar Sesungkur	Minister of Financial Services and Good Governance

PRINCIPAL OFFICERS AND OFFICIALS

Madam Speaker	Hanoomanjee, Hon. Mrs Santi Bai, GCSK
Deputy Speaker	Lesjongard, Georges Pierre
Deputy Chairperson of Committees	Jahangeer, Hon. Ahmad Bashir
Clerk of the National Assembly	Lotun, Mrs Bibi Safeena
Deputy Clerk	Ramchurn, Ms Urmeelah Devi
Clerk Assistant	Gopall, Mr Navin
Clerk Assistant	Seetul, Ms Darshinee
Hansard Editor	Jankee, Mrs Chitra
Serjeant-at-Arms	Pannoo, Mr Vinod

MAURITIUS

Sixth National Assembly

FIRST SESSION

Debate No. 10 of 2019

Sitting of 13 June 2019

The Assembly met in the Assembly House, Port Louis at 11.30 a.m.

The National Anthem was played

(Madam Speaker in the Chair)

OBITUARY – SIR RAMESH JEEWOOLALL

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, on Friday 24 May last, Sir Ramesh Jeewoolall, former Speaker of this august Assembly, passed away at the age of 78. I am sure that all of us who have known Sir Ramesh Jeewoolall, in the different capacities in which he has served this country, have been saddened on learning of his demise.

Madam Speaker, history will recall that Sir Ramesh Jeewoolall who has had the immense privilege of occupying the Chair of this temple of democracy, both as Speaker and Deputy Speaker over many years, has had an illustrious career.

Indeed, after he was called to the Bar at the Middle Temple in London in 1969, he practised law in Mauritius as a barrister until 1971, and thereafter held office as Magistrate until 1972.

In 1972, Sir Ramesh Jeewoolall was appointed Chairperson of the Tea Development Authority, a position he held until 1976.

Madam Speaker, in the political field, Sir Ramesh Jeewoolall has also had a long career. He ran for the General Election on numerous occasions.

In 1976, he stood as candidate under the banner of the Independence Party in Constituency No. 7 - Piton and Rivière du Rempart, and was elected First Member. In the course of that mandate, he was elected to serve as Deputy Speaker, a post which he held until 1979, a year in which he was in turn knighted by Her Majesty The Queen and then elected to serve as Speaker of the Assembly, following the demise of Sir Harilal Vaghjee.

In 1982, he stood as candidate under the banner of the *Parti de l'Alliance Nationale*, but was not returned. He did not contest the 1983 General Election.

In 1987, he stood as candidate under the banner of the MSM/Mauritius Labour Party Alliance in Constituency No. 8 - Quartier-Militaire and Moka, and was returned First Member. In the course of that mandate, he was appointed Minister of Housing, Lands and Environment, a portfolio which he held until 1990.

In 1991, he stood as candidate under the banner of the Labour and PMSD Alliance in Constituency No. 20 - Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière, but was not returned. He did not contest the 1995 General Election.

Madam Speaker, on 23 January 1996, Sir Ramesh Jeewoolall was elected Speaker of the Assembly anew subsequent to the Constitutional amendment brought in 1996 that

allowed a non-elected Member to hold office as Speaker. He held this high office until the year 2000.

Thereafter, Sir Ramesh Jeewoolall resumed his professional career and held office as Chancellor of the University of Mauritius from 2005 to 2014.

Madam Speaker, Sir Ramesh Jeewoolall was honoured for his dedicated and distinguished services in the social and political fields, and thus, on 12 March 2007, he was elevated to the rank of *Grand Commander of the Order of the Star and Key of the Indian Ocean.*

Sir Ramesh Jeewoolall was also an avid reader. This passion for reading led him to publish two books entitled 'Who Owns Your Agenda?' in 2013 and 'The Passing Away of a Gentleman' in 2015, after years of service in politics and legal practice.

Madam Speaker, Sir Ramesh Jeewoolall will, I am sure, be remembered for his long and distinguished services to this country. May I kindly request you to direct the Clerk to convey the deep-felt condolences of the Assembly to his family.

The Leader of the Opposition (Mr X. L. Duval): Madam Speaker, we are also terribly saddened by the passing of Sir Ramesh Jeewoolall. I, therefore, associate myself to the tribute made by the hon. Prime Minister and request the Clerk to convey our condolences to the bereaved family. Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Members, I associate myself to the tribute paid to late Sir Ramesh Jeewoolall, former Speaker of the National Assembly, by the hon. Prime Minister and the hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Indeed, we are very saddened by the demise of Sir Ramesh Jeewoolall, who has been a dedicated Member of Parliament and a conscientious Speaker of this august Assembly. I direct the Clerk to convey to the bereaved family the deep-felt condolences of the Assembly.

PAPERS LAID

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, the Papers have been laid on the Table.

A. Prime Minister's Office

The Income Tax (Amendment of Schedule) (No. 2) Regulations 2019. (Government Notice No. 97 of 2019)

B. Ministry of Energy and Public Utilities

The Report and Accounts of the Central Electricity Board for the 18-month period ended 30 June 2017.

C. Ministry of Local Government and Outer Islands
Ministry of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare

(a) The District Council of Grand Port (Jawaharlall Nehru Square Open Market) Regulations 2019. (Government Notice No. 98 of 2019)

(b) The Annual Report of the National Women's Council for the year ended 2015.

D. Ministry of Technology, Communication and Innovation

The Financial Statements of the Independent Broadcasting Authority for the year ended 30 June 2018.

E. Ministry of Public Infrastructure and Land Transport,
Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade

The Road Traffic (Crop Season) Regulations 2019. (Government Notice No. 92 of 2019)

F. Ministry of Health and Quality of Life

(a) The Report of the Director of Audit of the Morris Legacy Fund for the period ending 30 June 2018.

(b) The Dangerous Drugs (Amendment of Schedule) Regulations 2019. (Government Notice No. 93 of 2019)

(c) The Allied Health Professionals Council (Levying of fees) Regulations 2019. (Government Notice No. 94 of 2019)

G. Ministry of Social Security, National Solidarity, and Environment and Sustainable Development

The Environment Protection (Display of Fuel Consumption and CO_2 Emission Label) Regulations 2019. (Government Notice No. 95 of 2019)

H. Ministry of Industry, Commerce and Consumer Protection

(a) The Consumer Protection (Control of Imports) (Amendment No. 2) Regulations 2019. (Government Notice No. 91 of 2019)

(b) The Rodrigues Consumer Protection (Control of Price of Taxable and Non-taxable Goods) (Amendment No. 15) Regulations 2019. (Government Notice No. 96 of 2019)

I. Attorney General's Office, Ministry of Justice, Human Rights and Institutional Reforms

The Financial Statements of the Curatelle Fund for the year ended 30 June 2018. (In Original)

MOTION

SUSPENSION OF S.O. 10(2)

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, I beg to move that all the business on today's Order Paper be exempted from the provisions of paragraph (2) of Standing Order 10.

The Deputy Prime Minister rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS

CHAGOS ARCHIPELAGO - UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY - RESOLUTION

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, the House will be aware that, on 22 May 2019, the United Nations General Assembly adopted, by an overwhelming majority, Resolution 73/295 to give effect to the Advisory Opinion which the International Court of Justice gave on 25 February 2019 on the legal consequences of the separation of the Chagos Archipelago from Mauritius in 1965.

In its Advisory Opinion, the International Court of Justice, *inter alia,* concluded that –

(a) the decolonisation process of Mauritius was not lawfully completed when it acceded to independence in 1968, in view of the unlawful excision of the Chagos Archipelago from Mauritius;

(b) the UK is under an obligation to bring to an end its administration of the Chagos Archipelago as rapidly as possible, and

(c) all Member States are under an obligation to cooperate with the United Nations in order to complete the decolonisation of Mauritius.

The International Court of Justice also stated that it was for the General Assembly to determine the modalities for the completion of the decolonisation of Mauritius. In this regard, Senegal tabled, on behalf of African States Members of the United Nations, a draft resolution for the implementation of the findings of the Court.

The draft resolution was considered by a plenary meeting of the General Assembly on 22 May 2019, and was introduced by the Permanent Representative of Senegal on behalf of African States Members of the United Nations.

During the debate, I made a statement to call upon other UN Member States to vote in favour of the draft resolution. In my statement, I recalled the conclusions of the International Court of Justice and pointed out that while the Advisory Opinion did not create a new legal obligation, it had, in fact, recognised and confirmed existing legal obligations that emanate from international law. The Advisory Opinion had, therefore, legal consequences for UN Member States, including the United Kingdom, as well as for the General Assembly and the United Nations and its specialised agencies.

I also referred to the forcible removal by the United Kingdom of the former inhabitants of the Chagos Archipelago and recalled that the International Court of Justice had observed that the resettlement of Mauritian nationals, including those of Chagossian origin, had to be addressed during the completion of the decolonisation process of Mauritius.

Moreover, I underscored the need for UN Member States to uphold the integrity of UN institutions and the sanctity of the International Court of Justice. I further pointed out that while the UK was now putting forward defence and security considerations as the overriding reason for holding on to the Chagos Archipelago in a manner inconsistent with international law, Mauritius had made public commitments at the General Assembly and before the International Court of Justice that it is prepared to enter into a long-term arrangement with the United States, or with the United Kingdom and the United States, which would permit the unhindered operation of the military base in Diego Garcia in accordance with international law.

In all, 21 countries took part in the debate, amongst which the United Kingdom, the United States, Maldives, India and Seychelles. Both the United Kingdom and the United States expressed their opposition to the draft resolution and reiterated their position that the Chagos Archipelago issue is a bilateral sovereignty dispute between Mauritius and the UK. The UK also stated that the Advisory Opinion was not legally binding. The UK reiterated its position to the effect that it has sovereignty over the Chagos Archipelago and the United States expressed support for that position.

As for Maldives, which also expressed its opposition to the draft resolution, it indicated that the draft resolution could prejudge the implications for the submission which it had made in July 2010 to the United Nations Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf and to which Mauritius had objected. Mauritius made a right of reply to clarify that it had engaged in discussions with Maldives in October 2010 on maritime boundary

delimitation but that the discussions were inconclusive. We also pointed out that when Maldives made its submission to the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf, Mauritius had drawn its attention that the submission could overlap with the potential exclusive economic zone of Mauritius and requested that Maldives makes an amendment to its submission. However, Maldives had not so far done so. Mauritius also indicated that it had recently invited Maldives to a second round of discussions on maritime delimitation, but that there had so far been no reply.

On the other hand, India recalled its steadfast support to decolonisation and called for an early conclusion of the decolonisation process. India also indicated that it shared with the international community security concerns relating to the Indian Ocean, but highlighted that ensuring the security and prosperity of the Indian Ocean was a separate matter, on which it urged the concerned Governments to reach an understanding.

For its part, Seychelles called for an early and orderly implementation of the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice. It recalled that Aldabra, Desroches and Farquhar, which had also formed part of the so-called "British Indian Ocean Territory", were returned to Seychelles when it gained independence. Seychelles urged that the same precedent be applied in the case of Mauritius.

The draft resolution was adopted by a recorded vote of 116 in favour and 6 against, with 56 abstentions. The draft resolution attracted votes from countries from different regions of the world, namely Africa, Asia, Latin America, Europe and the Middle East.

A number of countries which had abstained on UN General Assembly Resolution 71/292 of 22 June 2017 seeking an Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice or did not participate in the vote on that resolution voted in favour of the draft resolution. These countries include China, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Jamaica, Liechtenstein, Monaco, Norway, the Russian Federation, Spain, Sweden and Switzerland.

It is noteworthy that nine States which had voted against the resolution seeking an Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice, namely Afghanistan, Albania, Bulgaria, Croatia, Japan, Lithuania, Montenegro, New Zealand and South Korea, abstained on the draft resolution.

The resolution which was recently adopted by the General Assembly is another important milestone in our fight to complete the decolonisation of Mauritius. In that resolution, the General Assembly has, *inter alia*, affirmed that the Chagos Archipelago is an

integral part of Mauritius, and demanded that the United Kingdom withdraws its colonial administration from the Chagos Archipelago unconditionally within a period of not more than six months. It has also urged the United Kingdom to cooperate with Mauritius in facilitating the resettlement of Mauritian nationals, including those of Chagossian origin, in the Chagos Archipelago and to pose no impediment or obstacle to such resettlement.

Moreover, the General Assembly has called upon all Member States to cooperate with the United Nations to ensure the completion of the decolonisation process of Mauritius as rapidly as possible, and to refrain from any action that will impede or delay the completion of the process of decolonisation of Mauritius in accordance with the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice and the resolution.

The General Assembly has further called upon the United Nations and all its specialised agencies as well as all other international, regional and intergovernmental organisations to recognise that the Chagos Archipelago forms an integral part of the territory of Mauritius, to support the decolonisation of Mauritius as rapidly as possible and to refrain from impeding that process by recognising or giving effect to any measures taken by or on behalf of the so-called "British Indian Ocean Territory".

The General Assembly has also requested the United Nations Secretary-General to submit a report to its next session on the implementation of the resolution, including any action taken by the United Kingdom and other United Nations Member States.

Madam Speaker, I would like to express our deep appreciation to African States Members of the United Nations which jointly tabled the resolution. I also wish to thank Argentina, Bolivia, Cuba, Nicaragua, Syria, Vanuatu and Venezuela, which co-sponsored the resolution.

I would further like to convey our warmest thanks to all United Nations Member States which voted in favour of the resolution. Their vote for the resolution no doubt testifies to their support to the international rule of law and respect for international institutions, including the International Court of Justice. I must also express our deep disappointment at the stand taken by the UK on the resolution.

Moreover, I would like to thank our external lawyers as well as the team of officials, and in particular our Permanent Representative to the UN in New York and his staff, for the excellent work which they have done.

Madam Speaker, I would also like to inform the House that I had a meeting with the Rt. Hon. Jeremy Corbyn, UK Leader of the Opposition, on 20 May 2019 in London. I commended him for the position which he took on the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice and sought his support for maintaining the pressure on the UK Government so that it respects the Advisory Opinion. The UK Leader of the Opposition reiterated his support for the implementation of the findings of the International Court of Justice. I also wish to express our appreciation for the stand which he took following the adoption of the General Assembly Resolution.

Thank you.

CT POWER PROJECT - PRIVY COUNCIL JUDICIAL COMMITTEE - JUDGMENT

The Deputy Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, I wish, with your permission, to make a statement on the circumstances leading to the judgment which the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council composed of Lord Reed, Lord Kerr, Lady Black, Lord Briggs and Lord Sales, gave last Monday, 10 June 2019. The judgment was a judgment on appeal from a decision of our Supreme Court composed of Their Ladyships A.F. Chui Yew Chong and R. Teelock and delivered on 07 July 2016 in the matter of an application by The (Mauritius) CT Power Ltd for the judicial review of a decision taken by Government not to proceed with the CT Power project.

This judgment has far-reaching legal and political implications and is poised to become a leading case in Mauritius administrative law as well as in the law of the United Kingdom and of several countries of the Commonwealth.

Madam Speaker, in December 2005, a few months after the installation of a new government following the July 2005 elections, the Board of Investment received an unsolicited proposal from CT Power (Malaysia) Ltd for the implementation of a 2x55 MW coal power plant. The project was to be implemented by a local subsidiary.

In April 2006, i.e. four months after receipt of this unsolicited proposal, the Board of Investment issued a letter of intent to the local subsidiary, The (Mauritius) CT Power Ltd, which had been incorporated on 15 March 2006. BOI's letter of intent indicated that the 3x50 MW, i.e. 150 MW coal based power station, may be accommodated in CEB's Power Expansion Plan. The project also included a jetty for coal handling at Pointe aux Caves, Albion. The letter of intent was valid up to 22 October 2006.

On 29 June 2006, i.e. half a year following receipt of the unsolicited proposal, the Ministry of Housing and Lands approved the grant of an industrial lease of approximately 80 acres of land at Pointe aux Caves, Albion to the Central Electricity Board for the purpose of setting up a coal power plant.

Less than one month later, i.e. 26 July 2006, the CEB Board approved that discussions be initiated with the company for a 100 MW instead of a 150 MW plant.

On 30 September 2006, the Board of Investment extended the letter of intent to October 2007.

In October 2006, the Ministry of Energy and Public Utilities gave approval for the project.

In October 2008, the then Government agreed to lease 92 acres of State land at Pointe aux Caves to CEB at the nominal value of Rs480,000 per annum, to be adjusted every three years by cumulative inflation rate. The CEB would sub-lease the site to The (Mauritius) CT Power Ltd at full market rate as assessed by the Director of the Valuation Department and use the funds from the sub-lease of the land for an equity participation in the CT Power Project.

In the same year, the CEB incorporated a subsidiary, known as CEB Investment Company Ltd (CEBICL), which signed a Shareholders' Agreement on 23 December 2008 with The (Mauritius) CT Power Ltd. It was to hold 26% equity participation and have three Directors on the Board of the company.

On 23 December 2008, although no EIA license had yet been obtained, the CEB, represented by its then General Manager signed -

(a) A Coal Supply Agreement providing for CEB to be responsible for the procurement of some 350,000 MT of coal annually to be imported from South Africa and for The (Mauritius) CT Power Ltd to be responsible for unloading, handling, storage and transfer of the coal to the power station. The Mauritius Ports Authority put at the disposal of the CEB, a plot of land of about 1.3 hectares in the Port compound, to be sub-leased to The (Mauritius) CT Power Ltd for the unloading and transfer of coal.

(b) A Power Purchase Agreement providing for CEB to buy electricity from The (Mauritius) CT Power Ltd at an agreed tariff, for a period of 20 years and thereafter the transfer of the power plant to CEB at a nominal sum of 1 USD.

(c) An Interconnection Facility Design and Build Agreement relating to the design and construction of a sub-station at Pointe aux Caves and the transmission network up to La Chaumière sub-station, estimated at USD 9.9 m. to be executed within 23 months.

Madam Speaker, an application for an EIA was made in 2009 at the Ministry of Environment, which obtained UNDP assistance to appoint an independent Consultant, Mott Mc Donald, to evaluate and assess the application. In May 2009, the Consultant submitted its report, based on which the EIA Committee requested the promoter to carry out additional studies which, in addition to the environmental concerns, included the technical viability of the socioeconomic assessment and cost benefit analysis.

On 16 June 2010, the promoter submitted the additional report and, in January 2011, the EIA Committee recommended to the Minister that the EIA License should not be issued.

On 16 July 2012, following an appeal by the promoter, the Environment Appeal Tribunal gave its ruling in favour of The (Mauritius) CT Power Ltd and, on 23 January 2013, the Ministry of Environment issued the EIA License with 31 conditions, including Condition 15, that the promoter, I quote -

> "to provide proof of its financial capabilities for the duration of the project to the satisfaction of the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development."

In December 2013, the CEB, represented by its Chairperson and General Manager, signed an amended Power Purchase Agreement to incorporate the requirements of the EIA. The purchase price of electricity would be Rs4.58 kWh, which was to include the annual cost of lease of the land and coal delivered at the Port. It excluded the cost of transportation of coal from the Port to the power station, amounting to 0.10cts kWh, and the power transmission from the plant to the substation at La Chaumière estimated at 0.17 cents kWh. The price would change on the basis of indexation formula over 20 years.

Madam Speaker, the CEB's commitment in the project included an amount of USD18 m. as equity participation, Rs700 m. for the construction of a jetty and Rs600 m. for underground cables as well as cost of obtaining way leaves. These way leaves were subject to Court cases.

The effective date of the Power Purchase Agreement was subject to the signing of an Implementation Agreement.

The Implementation Agreement served as Government guarantee for the payment obligations of the CEB and is, therefore, a financial commitment for Government. The Ministry of Finance and Economic Development at that time, therefore, asked the (Mauritius) CT Power Ltd to submit a Letter of Comfort from its banks to confirm its financial capacity.

The letter submitted by the promoter was not to the satisfaction of the Ministry of Finance. Thus, in March 2015, Government decided not to proceed with the CT Power project.

Madam Speaker, on 25 May 2015, the (Mauritius) CT Power applied to the Supreme Court for leave to apply for judicial review of the decisions of Government, of the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development and of my Ministry. The proceedings were also directed against the Minister of Finance and Economic Development and myself, in my capacity as Minister of Energy and Public Utilities. The Central Electricity Board was joined as an interested party.

On 07 July 2016, the Supreme Court, composed as aforesaid, ruled in favour of the (Mauritius) CT Power and held that my decision as well as that of my Ministry not to sign the Implementation Agreement was "misconceived, unreasonable and irrational, and in breach of the legitimate expectation of the company." A similar finding was made against the Minister and the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development.

The Supreme Court was of the opinion that the (Mauritius) CT Power had the legitimate expectation that the Implementation Agreement would be first signed and that the (Mauritius) CT Power would have nine months after signature to provide proof of its financial capabilities. As regards the Ministry of Finance, the Supreme Court was of the view that its decision was equally "misconceived, unreasonable and irrational, and in breach of the legitimate expectation" of CT Power.

In March 2017, that is, after the judgment of the Supreme Court, the (Mauritius) CT Power entered a claim for damages for some Rs4 billion. The claim is directed against the State of Mauritius as well as other parties. The matter is still pending.

The State of Mauritius appealed against the judgment of the Supreme Court to the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council.

In its judgment of 10 June last, the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council unanimously quashed the judgment of the Supreme Court.

I am tabling a copy of the judgment of the Judicial Committee and draw attention especially to paragraph 65 of the judgment, in which the noble Lords held, *inter alia*, that, as Minister, I was, I quote –

> "entitled to have regard to a wide range of considerations, including political considerations"

adding that, and I quote again –

> "entering into the Implementation Agreement would involve a commitment requiring substantial payments of public money. There is inevitably a possible political dimension to such questions which it would be legitimate to take into account. In the present case - continued the noble Lords - it appears that the incoming government after the General Election of December 2014 may have been less convinced than the former government that the project was a good idea and that the commitment to be given in the Implementation Agreement was justified."

I repeat 'may have been less convinced'.

At paragraph 67, the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council also held that I was, I quote –

> "entitled simply to take the view that, all things considered, CT Power did not appear to be a satisfactory counterparty and that it was undesirable for the Implementation Agreement to be entered into."

The Judicial Committee of the Privy Council has, therefore, quashed the order made by the Supreme Court and has given judgment in favour of the State of Mauritius, in favour of the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development, the Ministry of Energy and Public Utilities and their respective Ministers. It is expected that the (Mauritius) CT Power will have to pay the costs of the case.

PUBLIC BILLS

Second Reading

THE APPROPRIATION (2019-2020) BILL 2019

(NO. X OF 2019)

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on the Appropriation (2019-2020) Bill 2019 (No. X of 2019).

Question again proposed.

(12.13 p.m.)

The Leader of the Opposition (Mr X. L. Duval): Madam Speaker, before I start, and relating to the Chagos case, I would like to say that we, in the Opposition, are very pleased at the successful outcome of the Resolution of the United Nations and that, whether in Government or in Opposition, we were fully supportive of the actions of Mauritius in that sphere. I would also say, Madam Speaker, that I met …

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Please!

Mr X. L. Duval: We did just now!

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Please don't interrupt!

(Interruptions)

Mr X. L. Duval: We did not want you to get the wrong impression before.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Order, please, on this side! Please, don't interrupt the hon. Leader of the Opposition!

Mr X. L. Duval: Madam Speaker, I must say that, before the hon. Prime Minister, I had taken the trouble to meet on two occasions hon. Jeremy Corbyn, Leader of the Opposition - he once invited me for lunch at the House of Commons - and, on both occasions, we spoke of the Chagos, and I was convinced at that time that he was genuine and he is still genuine in helping Mauritius to regain our sovereignty on the Chagos.

Pas tape lamain? Non ? Ok.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker, it is an honour for me…

(Interruptions)

Just a minute! It is an honour for me, once more, to be the first orator to reply to the Budget Speech, and I wish to contribute to the ongoing, sometimes very heated debates on some of the points raised in that Budget Speech. My role, Madam Speaker, it is what I get paid for, is to highlight the many failings and shortcomings in this Budget, which took about two hours to read. And I am going to do that as usual, without any fear and without any favour, Madam Speaker. There will be various aspects of my intervention. The first aspect will be my firm belief that Mauritius is more stuck than ever in the middle income trap, and I will come to that. We have very, very little sign of ever, with these measures, coming out of that middle income trap. On the contrary, Madam Speaker, we seem to be stuck in the gloom and doom of that very famous middle income trap, in which many other countries are also - not just Mauritius - but certain, few countries have managed to get out of the middle income trap.

Madam Speaker, I am also going to speak of the social aspect - our citizens. Here, I am going to ask you, Madam Speaker, whether you have read - you may have read - the famous book by Charles Dickens called 'A Tale of Two Cities'. I do not know if you read it. I will quote from that, Madam Speaker; a little quote. It goes like this –

> "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair."

Madam Speaker, I think this perfectly sums up the position of Mauritius after this Budget Speech. I am also going to talk on a number of measures that have made headlines, some of which, Madam Speaker, have shocked the population. So, we are stuck in the middle income trap, and this Budget provides no analysis, no strategy and, therefore, no solution. The only solution that is offered by the Minister of Finance, the Prime Minister, is subsidies. You have a problem in tourism, we will subsidise the China flight, no problem! It is taxpayers' money. You have a problem on sugar? It has been going on for what? Two and a half years, the drop in the price of sugar, we will subsidise it, no problem. And that is the only solution, Madam Speaker. So, what I am saying here is that the season of hope is over. At the beginning of the mandate, public opinion was highly in favour of the Government with very, very consequential, huge promises made to the population. But the Government has failed to deliver on these promises, and let us look at them.

Growth – they failed to deliver the promise, Madam Speaker, *c'est à dire la croissance, la création de la richesse.* They failed to deliver that. This Budget has no

measure at all to give any hope to boost the productive sectors which are all performing less well. All of them are performing less well than they were doing in previous years, except one, that is, fish processing. I will come to that.

Madam Speaker, I heard someone say the other day that the Budget was not a macroeconomic Budget. The Budget that was presented was, in fact, an action plan for the NDU because apart from an action plan for the NDU, it contained no reform and nothing substantial, as I mentioned, Madam Speaker, to boost the productive sectors of this country.

Hon. Sir Anerood Jugnauth, in the famous Economic Vision Statement of August 2015, had said that, as from 2017, as from two years ago, we would enjoy in this country, Madam Speaker - most of us believed, some of us did not - a growth rate of 5.5% per annum. That was in August 2015. That was after his then Minister of Finance, Vishnu Lutchmeenaraidoo, in his first and only Budget - thank God perhaps - had predicted that, as from 2016, we would have a growth rate of 5.7%. Actual turnout, according to the Minister of Finance for this coming year, 3.8%, I think. Most economists would tell you it is not true. It is overstated. We are running about 3.6%. Basically, the same has been going on in the previous Government, Madam Speaker. So, that is the first failure; the failure to deliver on the promise made to the people of Mauritius on economic growth.

But there is more than that. The failure, Madam Speaker, to deliver the promise to increasing income levels. We promised the population that we would increase their wealth. Again, hon. Sir Anerood Jugnauth had promised that the GDP per capita would rise to $13,500, Madam Speaker, a few years later. But, now, four years after, we are at USD11,000. So, again, Madam Speaker, grossly exaggerated, grossly overpromised. We failed, therefore, Madam Speaker, to deliver the promise to increasing income levels. I am only judging results from what was promised black on white by the Government in the Economic Vision Statement, which I attended, and the first Budget of the Minister of Finance.

But more than that, we failed to deliver, Madam Speaker, on our objective to revive the manufacturing sector; the manufacturing sector which contributes so much to our wealth. The Minister of Industry, in fact, is only a Minister of Trade. He never ever speaks about industry. He is a good friend. He only speaks about trade. And what happens to the manufacturing sector? The Rt. hon. Minister Mentor, at the time Prime Minister, had wanted it to increase from 18% to 25%. In fact, Madam Speaker, if we look at this year's Budget, it

has shrunk from 18% to 12%. Far from increasing from 18% to 25%, it has shrunk to 12%, without any surprise at all from the present Minister of Industry.

Madam Speaker, perhaps the most worrying is all the hype about supposedly having reduced unemployment in Mauritius, the rate of 6.9% and all that. What is this, Madam Speaker? The truth, Madam Speaker, is that last year, 2018, official figures, there were 1,400 less people in employment than at the beginning of that year. In December 2018, there were 1,400 people less working in Mauritius than there were in January 2018. These are official Statistics of Mauritius figures, Madam Speaker. Can you imagine that we have supposedly achieved a 3.8% growth, yet employment has contracted? What sort of economics is that? Madam Speaker, the unemployment rate has fallen to 6.9%, not because of tremendous increase in the number of jobs created, no - less probably than the previous Government; not because of that - but because there are 22,000 people who have left the job market. 22,000 people have left the job market either through retirement or they have just lost hope and said: 'I give up looking for a job'. That is the only reason why the unemployment rate has fallen, nothing else - less people in employment, as I say, than a year ago. So, I hope now, Madam Speaker, that that is clear. So, they have failed to deliver on the 100,000 jobs that the then Prime Minister, hon. Sir Anerood Jugnauth promised to the nation in Ebene. I remember I was there, as I said, at BPML, Ebene - 100,000 jobs. I think 25,000 jobs in Ocean Economy. None, zero jobs were created, we all know that. But that is what was promised to the nation, Madam Speaker, and, of course, they have failed to deliver that.

But, on the subject of employment and labour force, let me just say a few things which are troubling. I know you are interested in gender issues, very interested probably. You will realise then, Madam Speaker, that the activity rate, the number of women working or available for work in Mauritius is below 50%. In fact, it is only 45%. Do you know how much it is in the UK, Madam Speaker? It is 75%.

Imagine there, the human resource that is not active in Mauritius! Okay, probably you will say some are looking after their home, etc. Well and good! But for the economy, imagine the number of women not working, out of work, therefore, not looking for work. I would have expected, - not the facetious remark that unemployment rate has fallen - a good analysis of the problem relating to women.

Now, Madam Speaker, when we talk about unemployment, 40,000 people unemployed in Mauritius at the moment, why do we just look at unemployment? Let us look at something

else also, let us look at underemployment. We all know of so many qualified youth, especially youth who are looking for a job; they are graduates, they are engineers, but they are working on low paid jobs in call centres, etc. That is called underemployment, Madam Speaker. We have 40,000 unemployment at today's date; end of 2018. There are also 39 youths mostly underemployed, not working up to the capacity. And if you add, Madam Speaker, to that, something else which I want to bring to your attention, which is time-related unemployment, people who are working - underemployed - only two or three hours but could be working a whole day, if you all add all this together - I don't want to go too much into figures, it is just a start - you will end up on nearly 140,000 people, one in four people in the labour force in Mauritius who are either unemployed or underemployed.

This is why, Madam Speaker, a Budget must come with an analysis. This is the solution. Just don't put a coat of veneer on the issue. There is a serious problem in unemployment and underemployment in Mauritius. Every single Minister who receives the public on Wednesday will not deny this, and this has, Madam Speaker, to be addressed. So, bold action! The next Government will need to take bold action on the unemployment, underemployment and human resource issues in Mauritius.

But, Madam Speaker, let us go further. I asked quite a few PNQs on education. We have failed, Madam Speaker, to deliver on quality education, and I will give you one set of figures only, that is, a drop in the number of students actually achieving a credit at Senior Cambridge, at SC. In 2014, Madam Speaker, at the start of this Government's mandate, in English, Maths and French, there were sometimes much more than 50% of the students passing in these three main subjects. More than half of the students taking part passed, sometimes 55%, sometimes 60%. I looked at the last Senior Cambridge Exams 2018, Madam Speaker. In all the subjects, English, Maths and French, less than half of the students passed. Is this progress in education? Less people achieving good results than before? In fact, if I take Travel and Tourism - that is not in the first three, but still - do you know what percentage achieved a credit status? 28%. Is this is a world class education that we owe to our population? No, Madam Speaker.

So, Madam Speaker, a future Government - next Government - has got to give the value to the youth through world quality education, which we are not giving, to fantastic and on the job training, motivation, entrepreneurs' skills, Madam Speaker. And one thing that is often lacking in our youth today is ambition. Give them ambition to succeed. Many of the people in Mauritius today, the youth, just want to have a soft job - That is what they think is a

soft job - probably in a parastatal body, in Government. We all know that. They don't have the ambition to succeed. And if we want the economy to grow to higher income status, it is firstly by creating the ambition and the motivation in our youth.

Madam Speaker, the Government failed to deliver - this is the sixth failure - on social housing, which is a basic human right. 10,000 houses were promised by the Government at the start of its mandate. I was shocked when I reread just now an answer to a PQ the hon. Minister of Housing gave in April of this year, a few months ago. And you know, Madam Speaker, the number of houses started, completed and delivered at the date of that PQ in April 2019 is 703. Go and check! Hon. Rutnah can check my arithmetic. 703 only; started, completed and delivered, Madam Speaker.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Rutnah!

Mr X. L. Duval: That is what has happened. 703 houses only out of 10,000 promised. Of course, there are promises - I am sure the Minister will come to it, that so many have been delivered now and then and all that, but to that date, only 703.

Madam Speaker, worse, adding insult to injury, not a single of these houses has been delivered to the absolute poor under SRM as had been promised. 10% had been promised by the Government to be delivered to the absolute poor under the Social Register of Mauritius, which has started. Not one - that came out in the PNQ - was delivered, Madam Speaker. That is an absolute shame. And we know, Madam Speaker, that social housing is a major cause of generational poverty, generation to generation, because people cannot study, they cannot live properly and they fail and they fail and they fail. And Government, Madam Speaker, has failed to take care of that section of the population.

Madam Speaker, alleviation of poverty, let me take that, and I will say also why I think, on the ground, *sur le terrain*, Government has failed in its alleviation of poverty. I will quote here from something that was published just a few days ago. It is called "*L'envers du décor à Rivière-Noire*". It is a public document - *logement social ; étude conduite pour Kolektif Rivier Nwar*. Madam Speaker, I will not read it, I can table it if you wish, but it is a public document. What does it say? It says, Madam Speaker - these are independent people - « *nous voulons signaler l'accentuation des inégalités ces dernières années* ». This is the report - Rivière-Noire. Hon. Sinatambou, I hear, may wish to stand there in the next election. I

suggest he has a good look at this report before taking that risk, Madam Speaker. So, it was asking for urgent social measures and decrying the lack of social projects.

Madam Speaker, now I come to the economy itself and, as I mentioned, the failure of the Government to boost income generating sectors, which I will call the eighth failure. Madam Speaker, King Sugar is on its knees! The price for a ton of sugar is what? Rs8,800! And it has not fallen just there. In last year's Budget, we were talking about it. In last year's Budget, we were promised a committee. Before last year's Budget, a committee has started. Nothing! Not a single - I am aware of - decision taken and, Madam Speaker, the cost of production of a ton of sugar is at least twice. Of course, there are some add-ons that the planters received. So, we have been waiting for Government to deliver on some sort of promise, some sort of outlook, some sort of hope, the spring of hope. Where is the hope for the planters of Mauritius, especially the small planters who have, we all know, higher operating cost because the land is small, etc.? Where is the hope? Is the hope only in giving an additional subsidy from taxpayers of what, Rs8,000 per tonne, additional subsidy, which will cost something like what, Rs500 m. per annum? Is that the only thing that the Government can have done after so many years of the crash in international sugar price? You will say better late than never, we have got something. But, Madam Speaker, *on est en train de condamner les planteurs à la disparition*.

Who, in his right mind, is going to start labouring a field now and wait for every year's Budget, what subsidy he will get? Sometimes, he will, sometimes, he will not. This is no way to run a country, Madam Speaker. We need a survival plan for the sugar sector, and - because this Government has not done it - the next Government, Madam Speaker, will need to look and come up with a survival plan for the sugar industry, and I am sure the Minister of Agriculture will not disagree with me.

I am proud, Madam Speaker, to have been instrumental, through a PNQ, to have been able to generate something like Rs450 m. of compensation for bad weather - and also bad weather everywhere - to the 10,000 planters in Mauritius, small and large - 10,000 planters. Rs450 m., Madam Speaker, for crop year 2017. Nobody in this House, even most of the sugar estates, big/small, were not aware of it because they have been fooled by the Sugar Industry Fund Board, which had attempted to keep the money for itself rather than distribute it to the planters who were rightly entitled to this amount because of a fall in productivity or whatever it is in the three sugar areas that were affected. So, I am proud to have done that. I am also happy that when we raised it, the Government *n'a pas fait la sourde oreille.* There

was a Committee; the Committee did its work well. There is more, there is the land and all that, I know, overvalued. I do not have time to go into all this, but I am proud to have been instrumental in this aspect, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, textiles, back again to industry, do you know that we have lost 5,000 jobs in textiles over the last five years? 5,000 jobs! Not a word ever on textiles. The only thing seems to be 'Well, tell them to go to Madagascar now. We do not want them now. Get them to the Textile City in Madagascar', because I see nothing or except, maybe, subsidy on airfreight. What is it called? Speed to market. That's all.

Financial services, Madam Speaker, the jewel in the crown. After the India DTAA, the new DTAA, financial services is no longer enjoying the sort of growth it was enjoying before, 5.9% and more. We are now down to 3.8% forecast for this year, less, therefore.

ICT, Madam Speaker, also lower growth; growth is also slacking in ICT. Madam Speaker, *la vérité sort de la bouche des innocents*, as we know. This is what GNews says - because I was talking about the performance of all the income-producing sectors. I was very surprised to see this in GNews. At page 20, under the title *Exportations 2015-2018*, this is what it says –

> *« En dépit des conditions économiques difficiles sur le plan international, le Seafood Hub est le seul secteur où l'exportation a connu une hausse entre 2015 et 2018. »*

This is what GNews says of Government's performance in the export sectors. *Seul secteur* is fish. So, Madam Speaker, I say that GNews places hon. Koonjoo, not in the Court of Justice, not in the food court, but *dans la cour des grands*. According to GNews, he is the only person to have achieved this sort of status, Madam Speaker. Nobody else in Government has been able to do so. *Dans la cour des grands*, and I am sure hon. Sinatambou, who will be speaking after me, will agree with that, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, I come now to the tourism industry. I have been three times Minister of Tourism. So, maybe I know a little bit, maybe I don't. But I find it very distressing because the tourism industry has not got to where it is now without effort in the private sector, all the workers. Madam Speaker, the World Travel & Tourism Council says that the tourism industry, with its subsectors, you know, the planters, the hawkers, the fishermen, etc., accounts for 24% of GDP and that 131,000 people directly and indirectly earn a living from the Mauritius Tourism Industry. It is not a small figure. It is not my figure also. The World Travel & Tourism Council says so, and it is a recent figure.

So, with regard to the negative growth in arrivals since the beginning of the year, -4.3% came out, I think, a day before, for May only, and -3% for January to May. That is extremely worrisome, extremely grave, Madam Speaker. Arrivals by air - I am happy now that the Minister of Tourism probably understands the difference - have been going up. What is the difference between arrivals by air and arrivals by sea? We had some problem during the PNQ to explain that.

Arrivals by air, Madam Speaker, they spend on average 11 days in Mauritius, in our hotels, in our villas, etc. People come by sea, they come in cruise ships - I created that - and they stay just one night, probably in the cruise ship. So, you cannot mix the two together; one staying 11 days and one staying one night. You cannot just mix the two together. You have to take them separately, and I am happy that after the PNQ, Statistics Mauritius now publishes statistics by air and by sea separately, as do most countries, which they were not doing before.

Madam Speaker, let us talk about arrivals by sea. They are hardly existent in Mauritius. Madam Speaker, when I was president of the Îles Vanille, together, I must say, with the then Minister Alain Saint-Ange and the present President of the *Conseil régional à la Réunion*, Didier Robert, we got the cruise tourism to take off in Mauritius, and I think that's 90% increase for the first five months of this year. It is not a coincidence that the cruise terminal in the port is called Christian Decotter. It is not a coincidence because we created that. I am happy that it is happening and it is going on now. But, what is worrisome, Madam Speaker, remains that drop in tourist arrivals in Mauritius. But what could be even more worrying than a drop of 4.5% - I am taking the first three months - in tourists arrivals? You said nothing more! There is something more worrying, because the drop in receipts from these tourists has fallen by 11%, by Rs2 billion.

So, what am I saying? Not only there has been drop in tourists of so much, but the drop in receipts, in revenue has fallen even more, by 11%. What I am saying, therefore, Madam Speaker, is this. The number of tourists is falling, but the quality of the tourists is falling even more, and this is what we need to understand in this House. This is what is distressing. Number is falling, quality even more. Even those who are coming now, fewer are not spending as much as the ones before, *et cela* is worrying, Madam Speaker. It can be reversed, and it has to be reversed. What is the reason? Have we lost our reputation as a high-end destination? I hope not! It is on the cards. If it continues like that, it is on the cards.

Madam Speaker, I think there is also this overconcentration on China. I don't understand it. It's as if the only problem is in China. I will take, Madam Speaker, the last statistics that were out a few days ago, Tuesday, I think; the top 10 source markets for Mauritius. Do you know, Madam Speaker, that out of the top 10 source markets sending us tourists, eight of them are in distress? Eight of 10 of our source markets are in distress! Not just China; China is probably the worst. Let me go through it. France, Madam Speaker, stagnation, 1% increase. Okay, someone will say yellow shirts or whatever. There is always a reason; but it is never us, it is always them. *Pas moi sa, li sa.* Germany, Madam Speaker, it is -10% for the first five months of this year. Do you know the performance of Germans in Seychelles? Would you like to know? It is 48% increase, same five months. -10% in Mauritius, 48% in Seychelles. Why are they leaving Mauritius for Seychelles? Seychelles is more expensive. Is that why also our tourism receipts are falling? Because the quality is going elsewhere. UK, Madam Speaker, -3%! Is it Brexit? Why is Brexit not affecting Seychelles or Maldives? Seychelles, 20% increase, same period, five months. I can go on like this, Madam Speaker. South Africa -3%, Reunion -5%. Are we going to blame lack of planes? Reunion -5%, Switzerland -8%; 34% increase for Seychelles. China, I agree, -35%, India -15%. Madam Speaker, for the first five months of the year, Mauritius has known a decrease of 3%; Seychelles, overall, a 9% increase. Maldives, for the first four months - May's figures are not out - have achieved an increase of 19%, Madam Speaker. So, it is only Mauritius basically. Obviously, Sri Lanka has its problems now. But out of all these islands, it is only Mauritius that is being affected? Why? What reason? What do we have special in Mauritius that is turning away the tourists? You tell me. And China, Madam Speaker! I am surprised that the decision of the Minister of Finance to put so much money on subsidising a flight to China, because China is one of the only source markets which is performing badly in many islands of the Indian Ocean, meaning the Chinese are probably turning away from the Indian Ocean. They are not coming to Mauritius. They are not going to Seychelles; they are going less and less to some of the other islands, Madam Speaker. So, when you subsidise a flight like this, you are putting Rs160 m. for China, and Kenya did not split the bits. We would be putting money - I think one previous Chairman of the MTPA always told me "only fish where the fish are biting, do not fish where the fish are not biting". If they do not want to come to Mauritius or the Indian Ocean Islands, why do we put so much money there? I had started, Madam Speaker, the subsidy for Air Mauritius to China because the subsidy is meant to jumpstart, is meant to give a help at the start of an operation, not for the whole life of the operation. And, therefore, Madam Speaker, I will ask the Government not to put good money

where bad money already is and to be very careful, not to waste money. Although flights to Kenya, I think in the Africa Strategy, if we can jumpstart flights to Kenya, that will be a positive thing.

And also, Madam Speaker, it is too easy just to blame airlift. Tell me how many flights have we cancelled from Switzerland? How many flights from Germany? How many flights from these places? None! So, it cannot be just airlift. There is another problem. And as I mention again, this Budget has no analysis of the problems. It has just the solution: subsidy. If it is in problem, put taxpayers' money behind it and then we will see some other time!

So, Madam Speaker, the next Government will have to work on attractiveness of the product, accessibility, visibility and, *bien sûr*, sustainability; climate change. Madam Speaker, the product, if you ask me - I won't be so long on this - what was the main issue we had to look at, it is the product. People come to Mauritius; it is a destination. It is like going to Switzerland, going to Seychelles. It is a product. The product has become old. The product has become a bit stale. The product no longer attracts. We have to look at the product again. We need a decent entertainment industry. We need decent museums. We need decent places to visit. We need to look before, above all, at the product match and exceed expectations of our new visitors. We need new attractions, even new types of hotels, not the same ones, new and more exciting hotels. I will come to hotels in a moment. We have to be very careful.

Madam Speaker, I said before that Seychelles is beautiful and clean. Take Canada or Switzerland, beautiful and clean. Mauritius, it is beautiful and dirty. So, who is going to come? When you have a choice, - even Rodrigues is beautiful and clean - will you go to a place that is beautiful and clean or a place that is beautiful and dirty? The cleaners' campaign is welcome. But at the end of the mandate, what does it say? It says that we have failed for the first four years to clean the island, and we have to do it now. But at least it is welcome, and I hope some mind-sets are changing. It is not just the Government's fault. The population is at fault here also, Madam Speaker. And then - just quickly - visibility. I have nothing personal against no one, but to say that you put a junior member of a hotel staff in charge of the MPTA, and you hope that he is going to be able to manage it! We had a decent fellow there who was related to the present Minister of Tourism. Don't ask me why he could not work with his relative. But he did not and he left. And it is a shame! I recruited him without any interference from the Minister in question. He was a good man, and I am sorry that he

left and joined Business Mauritius and that we replaced him now with a junior fellow, who, no doubt, is going to do his best, try to do his best. But, obviously, he is not achieving.

Madam Speaker, finally, building more hotels when occupancy rates are falling can be disastrous. It will only lead to more hotel rooms chasing fewer tourists. Therefore, a drop in quality, a drop in revenue and, eventually, maybe, even hotel closures. So, the Government, we had started together the moratorium; one and half years. It ended, I think, two and a half years ago. I ended it myself when there was a boom in arrivals, but we have to be very careful about this, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, to end on this issue of the economic side and before I talk about climate change, I will say one thing. Madam Speaker, what characterises a nation stuck in the middle income trap? It is this, Madam Speaker. The fact that we are no longer a low wage economy, but neither are we a high innovation, high technologic country. That is called the middle income trap. You are here in the middle; you are no longer lower wage, you do not have access to technology and innovation, and you are stuck here, and this is what I have expected the Budget to address. And of course, unfortunately, in the World Innovation Index, Mauritius has *dégringolé* from 48th rank to 75th. Perhaps the Minister of Technology, Communication and Innovation will tell us at some time why and what we can do about it. So, instead of improving on innovation, according to the World Index, we have fallen substantially, Madam Speaker. So, that will have to be addressed by a future Government.

Madam Speaker, before lunch, I will take the issue of climate change because that is another area where we need urgent, urgent action, because the effect of climate change will be pervasive throughout the economy - we already see it - and also for our society. And climate change is not going to happen, it is already happening. We have seen the floods, the rains, fruits that used to be seasonal, you get them all year round, things like that, Madam Speaker. Climate change is upon us, it is affecting our economy, it is going to affect our tourism through the weather, throughout beaches which are disappearing, through the coral reefs which are dying, the agriculture, Madam Speaker, is going to be affected. At the same time as we have floods, we also have droughts, and this is happening today, not to mention the water resources. Apparently, water no longer falls on Mare aux Vacoas. When it falls, it falls elsewhere. So, action needs to be taken, Madam Speaker, before it has even more pervasive effects on our nation. And I will deplore, Madam Speaker, this attitude of not caring sufficiently for people in distress who have to take refuge in our social centres during a storm, during a flash flood. They are human beings. It costs hardly anything to treat them

well, hardly anything. You cannot have two mattresses for 50 people. They are not cattle; they have to sleep decently. What is the problem with putting a shower, allowing them to go clean to work the next day? What is the problem there? Isn't that humane to do so? And, therefore, Madam Speaker, there have been some efforts, I don't know exactly what, after PNQs, etc. But here, it is not politics, it is being humane. We need, Madam Speaker, to give a decent treatment to the weakest, weakest persons in our society who, at every storm, start to tremble in their house, have flash flood risks for their lives, and they run to these social centres. And these social centres should be equipped like our neighbour in Reunion, equipped decently, for people to live decently for a few days and then return to their house.

Of course, they will have to return, but when they are guests of the State in those, we have to treat them as such, and I am happy, I think now they get some sort of meal, etc. So, that attitude, Madam Speaker, must change.

Madam Speaker, the next Government will have to allocate significant funds. And here, the problem is not just to have renewable energy. If renewable energy is going to take funds out of adapting our country, our nation, our economy, agriculture, our towns and villages to effects of climate change, better put money there in adaptation to protect our economy and our people.

When you have spare money, then you use it to stop *réchauffement de la terre* because Mauritius is about 10th most vulnerable country to climate disasters resulting from climate change, but we are more than 150th in terms of a polluter. So, Madam Speaker, the urgency is here, not there. Of course, by all means, if technology allows it, if we can spare the money - and this is my fight about the gas turbine, etc. - we have to protect our population, our economy against climate change. Whatever is left, we use to stop polluting. It is up to China, to India, to USA, all these, these are the players. They can afford it as well, and we can't afford it, Madam Speaker.

But we need to carefully look at climate change. We need to prepare for super storms that will eventually come to Mauritius, that have destroyed countries, and these countries have been on their knees for years, economy destroyed. Our building norms, acceptable now to face a super storm! My own house has thatch. Nobody has told me anything about it yet. But should I? Am I not in danger? Are we still not constructing thatched houses, hotels, etc.? Shouldn't our building norms change? Have we really addressed the issue of flooding? Have we really told Mauritians where to build and where they should not build because there will

be floods? So, Madam Speaker, there needs to be again an analysis of the risks we face with climate change, and real money needs to be put to prepare our nation to face what is already upon us, not what is going to come, but what is already, unfortunately, upon us and can only get worse. If you don't believe me, look at Mozambique and look at Rodrigues. I will talk about Rodrigues briefly later on, Madam Speaker. So, the inaction here must be reversed.

If you allow me, Madam Speaker, I have still some time left. You want me to carry on?

Madam Speaker: Please do, I don't want to interrupt you.

Mr X. L. Duval: Okay, fair enough.

Madam Speaker: For how long do you think you have?

Mr X. L. Duval: I will do this bit, which is the Bank of Mauritius, and then I will come...

Madam Speaker: After lunch.

Mr X. L. Duval: Okay, thank you.

Madam Speaker: Okay.

Mr X. L. Duval: Madam Speaker, I wanted to talk about this very furious debate on the reserves of the Bank of Mauritius, and I deplore - although I am an accountant, I must say - there is as if deliberate attempt, some attempt to fudge the issue. We are talking about what? We are talking about using the Special Reserve Fund of the Bank of Mauritius, to take that Fund, give it to the Government of Mauritius for it to repay its debts. The foreign exchange, that's another question. The foreign exchange reserves of the Bank of Mauritius, whether there are 100 billion, 200 billion, they don't belong to the Government of Mauritius. It belongs to all the creditors of the Bank of Mauritius. The Bank of Mauritius has hundreds of billions of rupees of assets in foreign currency and in rupees, but they don't belong to the Government of Mauritius.

It has got hundreds of billions of rupees of creditors, and it has to pay these creditors. My friends accountants will understand what I am saying. There are only two things which belong to the Government of Mauritius in the accounts of the Bank of Mauritius. One is its share capital, Rs2 billion, and the other one is its accumulated profits of Rs16 billion. Another name for accumulated profits is reserves. I am not saying anything stupid up to now. Reserves are accumulated profits, Rs16 billion. Now, unfortunately, the accounts of the

Bank of Mauritius - I have them here - don't show you the breakdown between the General Reserve, which is up to 85% available to Government to take as dividends, and the Special Reserve Fund.

So, there is Rs16 billion. I cannot tell you what is the split between the two, but I understand that the majority of that Reserve Fund, accumulated profits are, in fact, special reserve, because the rest is distributed anyway. So, you would expect that to be the majority. So, that is it and that Special Reserve Fund, which I understand accounts for about Rs13 billion of the Rs16 billion of reserves of the Bank of Mauritius. What is that Special Reserve Fund? Why has somebody else had the brilliant idea to take that money? It just happens to be now that someone has said: "Okay, it is there, let's take it, nobody else, in the last 50 years independence has taken it", let's say. I have not checked that, I presume. Why? Because that Special Reserve Fund, Madam Speaker, is a special type of profit. It is not profit like you and I know, which is I bought something for R1, I sell it for Rs2, I have a R1 profit. That is called a realised profit. It's in my pocket. It is not the type of profit, Madam Speaker. I hold - Mr Lutchmeenaraidoo is not here - an ounce of gold, it is worth Rs100 or Rs100,000 today; at the end of the year, the balance sheet date, it's worth Rs50,000 more. I have made a paper profit of Rs50,000. I made a paper profit. I have not sold the ounce of gold. That ounce of gold is still with me, but I have made a paper profit. That paper profit, that Rs50,000 goes in the Special Reserve Fund. All Rs13 billion of it, paper profits. That is what it is; not realised. You know, as well as I do, that gold will go up. It will go down depending on how safe the world is, how unsafe it is. It goes up and it goes down.

That is why gold is such a good speculative currency. And, Madam Speaker, the money, as I understand it, that the Government wants to take to repay its debts, is this paper profit. It's unrealised profit made by the Bank of Mauritius. Now, since it is unrealised, it can actually, when the transaction actually happens, make a loss. It can make a loss and you find yourself, therefore, back, worse than you were before. But if the profit was there, the unrealised profit will cancel against the realised loss and you will be back to zero. But what happens if you have given that profit away and then you make a loss? You go bankrupt...

(Interruptions)

Hon. Boissézon does not agree, but you do! Believe me, trust me on that. I have done a lot of study on that. You go bankrupt, and that is the issue.

Madam Speaker, money is there, it is unrealised, it is a buffer. But there is more than that, and to show, Madam Speaker, that that money can go up and down, we just need to look at the accounts of the Bank of Mauritius themselves. I have them in front of me. For 2016, there were in the reserves, this unrealised reserve, most of it, Rs23 billion. In 2017, the Bank of Mauritius made this paper loss of more than Rs5 billion. So, this unrealised reserve fell by Rs5 billion in 2017 and a bit more again in 2018. So, this money can disappear like a mirage because, as I have mentioned - I don't want to repeat myself - it is paper issue. It is not real. It is just an estimation. It can go up and down, and if you look at the Bank of Mauritius accounts, it is going down. But one thing that the law allows in section 47 of the Bank of Mauritius Act, for you to do with that money is to increase your share capital one day or to use it exceptionally for monetary policy. And it does say the word 'exceptionally', not just say 'use it for monetary policy'. No! No! This is what it says –

> "The Special Reserve Fund may be used by the bank in exceptional circumstances and with the approval of the Board for monetary policy purposes."

That money disappears from the Bank of Mauritius, Madam Speaker. It's extremely dangerous for Mauritius. It's extremely dangerous for the Bank of Mauritius. Last year, the Bank of Mauritius spent Rs2.3 billion in conducting monetary policy. Previous year, Rs1.9 billion. Rs2.3 billion and Rs1.9 billion. Huge amounts are spent to protect the rupee or to mop up excess currency because it affects the financial system. Huge amounts and that money disappears. Where then did the Bank of Mauritius get the money? I hope that the Minister of Finance has a solution and tells us, eventually in his summing-up, where is the Bank of Mauritius going to find, because my understanding is that it is making Rs600 m. loss for this financial year.

So, here, we have this. So, that is why, Madam Speaker, most of the economists in Mauritius are saying that we are putting the country in danger, we are putting our rupee in danger, because the Bank of Mauritius needs these funds to conduct monetary policy to protect the Mauritian Rupee. As I mentioned, Rs2.4 billion spent last year.

Madam Speaker, you will say: 'Well, why does it ever need to protect the Mauritian Rupee?' I will take you back, Madam Speaker, to 1992, Bank of England. In September 1992, there was an action led by some speculators against the Pound Sterling. They wanted to break the Bank of England, and they broke the Bank of England. They defeated the Bank of

England because they were more powerful; they had more money to spend to make the Pound crash than the Bank of England had to support the cash. That is the Bank of England.

Madam Speaker, the Bank of England, in trying to defend the Pound Sterling, raised interest rates to 15% to try and keep Sterling, people to invest in Sterling. 15%! Can you imagine? The bank rate going up to 15% to protect the Sterling there? So, it is a real issue; it is a real concern that Mauritians have. That not only there will be a perception, with a weak Bank of Mauritius, that the Bank of Mauritius will not be able to support the rupee, therefore, it will depreciate, and you know these things value, perceptions become reality or, why not, we may face some speculators tomorrow who will wish to attack the Bank of Mauritius with its pooled tree reserves, I don't know how much will be left. And then, if tomorrow, the Bank of Mauritius spends money defending the rupee, the reserves come to nil, that's it! No more!

You cannot use the 200 m. or billion foreign exchange. That's not ours! You can only use the Rs16 billion that is there, and most of it would have gone to the Treasury. So, what will it do? It is taxpayers again who will have to come and give money to the Bank of Mauritius, increase its share capital to defend the rupee. This is the danger of using, firstly, unrealised profits – it can go up and down; secondly, depleting the Bank of Mauritius reserves which were there by law for some reason, I hope, and which are necessary to defend our currency and our financial system.

So, my appeal, Madam Speaker, to the hon. Prime Minister, is to look at this again. I will finish on one thing, because I understand yesterday there was this talk of previous governments having taken money at such, such rates, etc. There are two ways that Mauritius can raise funds, Madam Speaker. In fact, three ways, but we never use open market operations, borrowing from banks, etc. We never use that because that is probably more expensive. The last one, I think Mr Sithanen did that in 2009 or something like that. We don't use that. All we do, we raise money from multilateral or bilateral agencies or directly in connection with projects.

Multilateral and bilateral agencies, all give money to Mauritius at concessionary rates. They give them at concessionary rates, and so do countries which want us to use people to construct our projects. Concessionary rates, Madam Speaker, and that is important. I will ask you one thing before I finish, before lunch. Why has the Ministry of Finance historically been against lines of credit? Why? I remember when, after the election, we had a visit from

overseas and we were offered $100 m. line of credit by a friendly country, the then Minister of Finance said: 'No, Prime Minister, I don't want that money.' I said the same as much as I could to previous Prime Ministers when I was Minster of Finance. The Ministry of Finance has always been against lines of credit for two or several reasons. One, it's often *bon marché coûte cher* - and from everywhere I say it - because you are forced to buy from that country mostly; sometimes, you can get derogation, but mostly it is from that country. By definition, there is limited tendering procedures, sometimes no tendering procedures and, therefore, often, *bon marché coûte cher,* you pay for test quality. Here, I don't talk about hanky-panky and all that; just basics. You pay for something because competition is less, because your choice is less. By definition, you can end up with something which is worse than if you were to look for it in international open tender. That is why sometimes it is better to take the money from the multinational agencies, World Bank, etc. – I think IMF does not lend this money – and African Development Bank, etc. They have very tight procurement procedures and you end up with value for money, Madam Speaker.

So, I wanted to raise that issue, and I will make an appeal just now to the Board of the Bank of Mauritius because they are, according to the law, completely independent. I want to say this, Madam Speaker. In spite of all that we have seen and heard these few years, I want to pay tribute to a number of institutions which have maintained their independence. Hats off to them. We talk about the DPP, we talk about the Judiciary, the Director of Audit, and I will also add the Tertiary Education Commission. I have, as Leader of the Opposition, Madam Speaker, nothing to say. The Director of Audit did a fantastic job; the Tertiary Education Commission did a fantastic job on UTM, etc.

We have independence in some institutions remaining, and I am going to make an appeal to the Board of the Bank of Mauritius to join these people. They have not been very good up to now. They have not been up to the mark up to now. What is the word? *Ressaisir*! This is the time now that they will show to Mauritius that they are independent, that I am not just talking rubbish. At the end of the day, it will be up to the Board of the Bank of Mauritius to make that final call, that final decision.

Madam Speaker, can we go for lunch and I come back shortly after? I will not be long after.

Madam Speaker: So, I will suspend the sitting for one and a half hour and then we will come back for the intervention of the hon. Leader of the Opposition.

At 1.17 p.m., the sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 2.53 p.m. with Madam Speaker in the Chair.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Leader of the Opposition!

Mr X. L. Duval: Madam Speaker, thank you. I have about half an hour now and I will be finished.

Madam Speaker, before I complete the section on the economy, I would just like to say that I believe there is an unhealthy debate as to the level of debt in Mauritius. The level of debt should be something which should not be questioned by every Tom, Dick and Harry or every Member of Parliament because the truth is it is putting question, because everything that the Government has done in terms of guaranteeing, particularly SPVS, in terms of whether guarantee the whole amount, each annual payment, what has been guaranteed, nobody understands whether they have used redeemable preference shares and whether these redeemable preference shares are included in debt. There is total confusion. It is unhealthy for the country. So, my appeal, Madam Speaker, is that we should have complete transparency on debt. It never used to be like this, never in my career have I seen so much confusion about something as important as our level of debt and it is creating anxiety in the population.

Madam Speaker, as we have seen, none of the productive sectors are doing well. All of them have had the best years in the past; the next few years are going to be very difficult. No one expects that sugar will be performing better in few years; no one expects that textiles will be performing better in two/three years; tourism is going down; the financial services sector, we have been overtaken by Singapore in a big way, and ICT also appears to be slowly down.

So, the productive sectors, the ones that produce money, have seen their best years behind them. And this worries the population when we hear of the high level of debt. Some people have gone up to say that the actual level of debt is 70%, but I think the Minister of Finance should come clean and provide not an explanation, but also all the supporting documents relating to that.

Madam Speaker, I must say that, as the public and the Members of Parliament do not have the supporting documents, neither does the IMF, because the IMF only gets what Government wants to discuss with them when it talks to them. About a year ago, I wrote to the IMF. I told them that I was worried about the situation and to have a look at it. Some

people thought, you know, they will take me as a fool, they are not going to respond to me, etc. It is nothing! Out of decency, I kept it a while. I did not want to publish a letter for some time, but they did write to me, Madam Speaker. The same person I wrote to, that is, Mr Selassie, Director of African Department, wrote to me on 12 September 2018, and I will table this letter so that everybody can see. This is one sentence from there, Madam Speaker - 'It is our understanding that during the staff visit, there have been developments regarding the treatment of some key infrastructure projects in public debt'. Now, this is what the IMF wrote to me on 12 September, and I hope that puts an end to the debate of whether IMF ignored or IMF did nothing. IMF told me that, following my letter – as we understand English – there have been developments concerning the treatment of some key infrastructure projects. With your permission, I will table this letter. So, let us move on from debt.

Madam Speaker, I want to talk about *le grand absent du budget. Qui est le grand absent du budget ? Le grand absent du budget*, Madam Speaker, is a report of the Drug Commission, a report of Lam Shang Leen, ex-Judge. I have not heard a single word about that Commission Report, about what they did and about all the recommendations. All the work they did costs millions upon millions of rupees. In my view, we cannot say it is 100% good, but I say that 90% of what they said were valid points which ought to have been taken into account, especially since Government since the election was going on and on and on about the Lam Shang Leen Report. So, not a single word about the National Drug Policy Commission, about *Juge d'application des peines*, about the abolition of ADSU. All these things, nothing has been mentioned in the Budget. I think, out of decency, Government should tell us now what they have accepted from the Drug Commission Report and what they have thrown away so that the population will be able to judge as to Government policy in respect of drugs. As it stands, there is no hope for drug consumers in Mauritius, no hope of a brighter future, no spring of hope, Madam Speaker.

Electoral reform - I am going to talk about a different aspect of electoral reform. I am going to talk about electoral reform that has never been included in electoral reform, and I will tell you why. I think it is important, Madam Speaker. It will require an amendment to the Constitution. I, for one, am happy and willing to participate in that if Government decides that there is some wisdom in what I said.

Madam Speaker, every Commonwealth citizen, provided he is resident 10 years in Mauritius prior to the registration date, after just two years, can register and can vote in

Mauritius. This is the Constitution, Madam Speaker. I will read to you very quickly. Section 42 states –

> "(1) (…) a person shall be entitled to be registered as an elector if (…) –
>
> (a) he is a Commonwealth citizen of not less than the age of 18 years; and
>
> (b) (…) he has resided in Mauritius for a period of not less than 2 years immediately (…)"

Prior to the registration date, two years.

Madam Speaker, we are now an open economy; we are now an open country. Just in the Budget Speech, we are announcing now that we are going to give post-study work visas of three years to whoever wants to come and work in Mauritius after their studies. There are tens of thousands of foreign workers in Mauritius. Some are from Madagascar, some are from other countries, but many of them are from the Commonwealth. Now, I raised, the other day, the issue of Bangladeshis. I do not want to pick on them, but every single one, whether they are South Africans, Bangladeshis, people from India, anywhere. There are thousands and, in particular, the largest group, probably 24,000 or so are Bangladeshis. And I said that I deplore the way that they are being treated presently. Of course, the Government has made - previous Government also - some improvements after we have been severely criticised by the international organisations. Now, Bangladeshis and everyone else, Madam Speaker, South Africans - I just do not want to pick on them - all these Commonwealth citizens, after merely two years, they can register and vote. Some may have already registered.

We saw some of them apparently in a public meeting on 01 May. We were laughing, but maybe they are registered and they wanted to go and listen because they will vote. I think, Madam Speaker, that this short delay is unreasonable - the two years - for everyone. I am not picking on anyone. For any Commonwealth citizen, after only two years remaining in Mauritius, I think it is not acceptable, and we should review the Constitution. *Gouverner, c'est prévoir*. Maybe, there are not many who are registered at the moment, but someone might have the bright idea tomorrow in his constituency. The register is closed for this year, but for the next election, municipal elections whatever, someone might have the bright idea of going around and registering all these persons and getting them to vote. Is it appropriate for that to happen? I do not think so. I think we need to tighten the law and to make sure that, although it is absolutely right for people who are resident in Mauritius to vote, but I do not think that, in that situation, and after only two years, we should do this, Madam Speaker.

I come quickly to the Tale of Two Cities, which I had mentioned before. Madam Speaker, what bothers me about this Budget is that it creates two classes of citizens: those who have been favoured by the Budget and those who have been ignored. Madam Speaker, we have 85,000 public officers; about 50,000 public officers and about 35,000 officers working in parastatal bodies. That's 85,000 out of a total workforce of 584,000. But you cannot cater just for a part of them and leave the rest. You cannot have a Budget that gives something here and totally ignores the 500,000. I think this is wrong to have a Budget *ciblé de cette façon-là.* It is not right, Madam Speaker. I am talking here of the Rs1,000 special pay, special increase, whatever you want to call it, that is being offered to public officers and to parastatal workers. That is good!

I have worked, Madam Speaker. I have been a Minister for about 12 years. I have had fantastic help, support from all - some of them were in the thousands - the Civil Servants that work in different Ministries that I looked after. I have a lot of respect for them and I think they deserve to receive the money. I have no problem with that, even the PRB is far away. Okay! But what about the rest? Are we saying that the people who work in the industry, that the people who work around the island are less deserving, they should not receive the money? Why? Madam Speaker, let us say a Civil Servant earns, at least the minimum wage, Rs9,000. Giving Rs1,000 is equivalent to raising the minimum wage for the Civil Service alone to Rs10,000. But if I was a worker in the private sector, I would rightly so be upset.

My neighbour, he is going okay! He is going to get his Rs5,000 a month, from January. I get stuck as I am? Why? Have I been underserving? I believe, Madam Speaker, this is creating a divided nation. Madam Speaker, it is also an economic heresy – I am not being offensive – because we know the difficulty of the private sector to recruit workers in Mauritius. We know that the private sector today is begging for workers from overseas. They are absolutely begging for workers from overseas because they cannot find Mauritians to work. And to increase this disparity is going to starve further the private sector from labour, Madam Speaker. I will take a few examples to give you an idea. There was an article in *Le Mauricien* recently, on 08 June 2019, and this is what they said.

> "Applications were called by the PSC for five posts of Physiotherapist or Physiotherapist Assistant. 1,100 people applied for five posts. For the four posts of Ticketing Officer, 1,500 applied. For one job as Library Clerk, 2,000 people applied, and for one job as Archives Officer, another 1,200."

I can go on like this. What it means is that the labour force is overtly favouring working in the public sector because of the divide that is being created in a nation between salaries and other benefits in the public sector and salaries and other benefits in the private sector. We must have a level playing field. Now, the title of the Budget is "Embracing a brighter future together (…)".

(Interruptions)

Forget 'the Nation'. Together! We don't forget 'together'. We cannot have a nation without 'together'. Why are we forgetting the 'together'? Just one bit embracing a brighter future and the other bit *rest lor la gare?* It is not correct, Madam Speaker. It is not acceptable, and it is wrong to divide the country. This is my point, Madam Speaker. The Rs1,000 special allowance must be granted. Why not? If the taxpayers are happy to pay this special allowance, let the taxpayers do it. I don't know how to do it. I am not saying to put the burden on the private sector; I am not saying to do it for all company directors. Do it for those who are earning the Rs9,000; do it for those who are earning Rs9,000 to Rs10,000! Be decent, don't let them down. I am not asking for a pay increase, I am asking, Madam Speaker, for the very lowest. They should not be left out. They should be together in embracing a brighter future, Madam Speaker.

Now, we don't end there, of course, because we go now to the medical insurance. I know there has been a lot of things against that, but there are some good points with the medical insurance. Let me talk about the medical insurance. Firstly, Madam Speaker, announcing that only public officers will get either full medical insurance or 50% medical insurance, again, divides a nation. It's like in the UK, saying that the National Health Service, National Insurance will only deal with Civil Servants in the UK and everybody else is not going to get National Insurance. If we are going to give insurance, then let it be for everyone or for no one. Everybody is entitled to a level playing field. *Et là,* Madam Speaker, in terms of *effet d'annonce*, I would like to say this. The announcement that we were going to give free medical insurance – take away the 50%, that's ok – to anyone in the Civil Service earning Rs10,000 or less. How many people in the Civil Service earn Rs10,000 or less? I looked for it. About 1,400 people. So, it is a very small number of people, and it was announced as if – maybe, after this Rs1,000 increase, if it is put in the calculation, no one will actually. So, we have to avoid *effet d'annonce* also.

Madam Speaker, my point is a very serious point. We need to have a level playing field. And also, of course, on this chapter, I will talk about our brothers and sisters who are fishers; men and women. They deserve also to be in the boat that is going forward. To offer them Rs30 increase is not appropriate. I won't use a worse word. In Parliament, some time ago, one Member, in response to a question by Adrien Duval, said this: '*taler nou nourri zott'*. Because Adrien Duval had asked for an increase. *C'est zott ki nourri nou, pas nou ki nourri zott.* Fishermen, today, get up at 4.30 in the morning – I live in Melville, Grand Gaube. They get up at 4.30 in the morning, in the cold, rainy weather, windy, dangerous. They go and get the fish that we need to eat. Z*ott ki nourri nou*! And we have respect for them as we respect every other community. It is important, Madam Speaker, and this Rs30 that has been offered is not adequate.

Madam Speaker, on this subject, I will finish on the Rodrigues Budget which was announced some months ago by the Chief Commissioner. One line struck me. He said: *'L'économie rodriguaise plus forte que jamais.'* Obviously, he could not predict that there would be two nasty cyclones just after. But today, *l'économie rodriguaise ne s'est jamais portée aussi mal*. And that is the truth. Agriculture is on its knees; so is rearing of animals. Tourism is not well. It has never been well and it is even worse. So, Madam Speaker, I have a special thought for Rodrigues. We put the cable. I announced the cable. We were going to install it at a much smaller price. The price had finally...

(Interruptions)

No! You want me to go into it? Do you?

Madam Speaker: Please! Do not interrupt on this side!

Mr X. L. Duval: It was going to cost Rs600 m. How much did it cost finally, and why was it cancelled? You go and look into it and you will find the answer. If you ask me, I will always answer. We will never run away from a question. Madam Speaker, that cable is not operational. Internet is as bad as ever, but the cable was going to go ahead. It has gone ahead and, hopefully, it will finally get connected to every house and every business. But *le modèle économique rodriguais doit être repensé.* We cannot continue there with primary industry, that is, agriculture, and every time a cyclone comes and wipes out everything. So, we need to look at it again, but I just wanted to tell our friends in Mauritius who may not be aware, that the situation in Rodrigues is dramatic, poverty is around the corner. There is

already poverty. It will worsen if something is not done to analyse the cause, again, and find the reason for the problem in Rodrigues.

Madam Speaker, before ending, I would like to touch two little things which are important for me nevertheless. One, I would like just maybe to reiterate how, presently, we are enjoying some of the fruits of what I did as Minister of Finance. I raised the issue of cruise tourism before, but let us look at some other things, Madam Speaker. And again, I will turn to GNews, if I may. GNews, here, on page 12, talks about the bunkering sector, which I created back in 2013. And this is what GNews had to say…

(Interruptions)

Who wants to ask another question? No one? Okay!

> *« Le volume de bunkering a enregistré une croissance remarquable en franchissant la barre de 550,000 tonnes, soit une croissance de 36%. »*

This is bunkering. Look at it back. It was liberalised and taken care of and promoted from the 2013 Budget, Madam Speaker.

Regarding film production, I have a few issues with the Film Rebate Scheme nowadays. It was not started by this Government. Film production was started back again in 2013. It is slightly different, but it is proven to be an important sector, a sector with potential.

As far as the Youth Employment Programme is concerned, 22,000 people are working. The Prime Minister himself said in his speech that 95% of the people in the Youth Employment Programme are retained by their employers. When was that done? This Government or when I was Minister of Finance?

(Interruptions)

Even more important!

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Rutnah!

Mr X. L. Duval: It is okay! I mean, he is harmless. Let's talk about some other things. The SME Loan Scheme is the only loan scheme to SMEs which has worked. Today, it is very transparent because it is published on the website of the Bank of Mauritius. The SME Loan Scheme to date has given Rs10 billion of loans to 7,000 SMEs and it is still operating and is still working well. We can go to many things. I just want to say one or two

things which are close to my heart; assistance to people who have to have operations overseas. I say it as it is. At that time, hon. Bérenger asked me why we did not increase. We increased from Rs200,000 to Rs500,000 per person. And then, we increased it to Rs800,000. So, in that one mandate, we went from Rs200,000 to Rs800,000. Before that time, people were begging in the streets: 'Please, I have a sister, I have a child who is sick, give me money.' It is not completely a thing of the past, but it has been largely dealt with.

And we can go on like this. The African strategy, Madam Speaker, we gave it real meaning, abolishing tenants' tax. Every tenant in Mauritius now is no longer paying tenants' tax in the municipalities. It was 15%; it was a burden. Ébène Accelerator, shift system for doctors, etc. I don't want to go into that, but I will just mention the examination for doctors. Before that, any doctor, whichever university provided, was recognised, could come and practise in Mauritius; there was no examination. I was behind that. We organised for the Indian Examination Board to examine our doctors in Mauritius. At least, we know there is a minimum level. It is not an easy examination to pass, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, I have nearly finished. The future, because we are after all at the end of the mandate. There will be elections in a few months, and we need to think about the future. What will the next Government do? Madam Speaker, the next Government will have a huge task to make Mauritius a high productive, a high investment economy by instilling leadership, ambition, innovation in our youth especially. We need to have this confidence in our youth and, of course, fostering a knowledgeable, flexible and entrepreneurial workforce. Our capital is the workforce. We are ignoring them too much. We are not giving them enough attention. Building a country is not just about concrete, building this, building that, building other. Building a country is building the people, Madam Speaker. We need – and I will say this – to invest in a world class education system, primary, secondary and tertiary, and reverse that current downward spiral that I mentioned earlier in my speech and, in particular, Madam Speaker, the use of IT in the delivery of education. We are far behind countries like Singapore and Finland.

As far as the public sector is concerned, I would say we need to reinvent the operational method of the public sector and its Boards. It is time, Madam Speaker, that they are not filled with people who are rewarded politically. It is time that they are filled with independent and credible men and women.

As far as our investment promotion policies are concerned, Madam Speaker, they are not working. All we are doing is bringing people to buy lands, buildings and houses in Mauritius. It is as if we have nothing more to sell, now we are selling parts of our country. Of course, it is good. In moderation, it is good, but in excess, it is not good. You only have to take *l'Express Property* on whatever day of the week it comes out and you will see the hundreds of houses there that are for sale, mostly to foreigners. How long can this go on before we get a bubble? So, we need to design our investment policies.

Madam Speaker, of course - I mentioned institutions - good governance and efficient institutions are more important for economic growth than tax breaks and subsidies. Of course, Madam Speaker, we need to give priority of place to economic diplomacy and focus on firms overseas that will bring proper investment to Mauritius.

I have talked about the issue of climate change, Madam Speaker. I believe it should be on top of the agenda to protect our population from all this flooding that has happened and protect our economy and our environment. It is clear, Madam Speaker, that the population can only bear so much of the flooding, and the next Government, I believe, will have, within the next three years, to fully address the issue of flooding in our towns and villages.

Madam Speaker, we need above all a more inclusive and just society, free from discrimination, prioritise diversity. Diversity is an important word used a lot in the UK at all levels. We give real attention to poverty alleviation, gender equality, provide housing for the needy, not just housing in the air, but actual houses for the people, and I think it should be done, Madam Speaker, nowadays, with the help of the NGOs so that they remain decent places to live.

Madam Speaker, above all, I think we should reintroduce CSR. It was a wonderful idea from the previous Minister of Finance, Rama Sithanen, *peaufiné au fil des années,* and now completely destroyed by this necessity to give 75%. I don't want to talk badly about anyone, but 75% to NEF and all this rubbish, whatever is called that committee. It is completely destroyed. A beautiful tool that we had in Mauritius *pour le volontariat,* CSR, and it needs to be reintroduced.

Madam Speaker, I end by saying that let there be no doubt that a gigantic challenge awaits the next Government. The elections are coming. Our citizens, Madam Speaker, will soon need to decide whether we are, in fact, in a spring of hope or in a winter of despair. May the Almighty provide guidance to our citizens! God bless Mauritius.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

(3.23 p.m.)

The Minister of Social Security, National Solidarity, and Environment and Sustainable Development (Mr E. Sinatambou): Allow me, Madam Speaker, at the very outset, to congratulate the hon. Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development for this very explicit and well-balanced Budget which indisputably provides opportunities for one and all and indeed no one – no one I repeat - has been left behind.

When he started his discourse, the hon. Leader of the Opposition referred to Charles Dickens 'A Tale of Two Cities.' If there is one thing I know about Charles Dickens is that he writes fiction and I believe that we have for quite some time substantially been dealing with fiction. They want this country to believe what they imagine and I strongly challenge this type of action. However, if ever part of this country were to wish fiction to become reality, then I would indeed intimate to them that if we refer to Charles Dickens, we should be referring not to 'A Tale of Two Cities', but to 'Great Expectations'.

Indeed, Madam Speaker, the Budget has done justice to as whole as a nation. We have already achieved several milestones which had been set out in our Government Programme. Our sustained progress over the last four years in the various spheres of Mauritian society will no doubt enable Mauritius achieve a new, modern, inclusive and resilient nation that we all want. This Budget, Madam Speaker, will no doubt take our country further on the pathway of sustainable development towards the achievement of Vision 2030 and the sustainable development course. Now, why am I so insistent that this country should not go on the lines of the Opposition? And to be able to understand that, Madam Speaker, I want to refer the House, the country and the nation as a whole to what I believe is the backdrop of the attitude of the Opposition whenever it comes to the important affairs of this country. You have heard on many occasions that reference/that syndrome of *narien pa bon* on their side and the new syndrome of *jamai assez.*

And I would like to take the example of our fight/our struggle for recognition of our rights as a country and as a nation concerning the Chagos Archipelago to show how they will indeed find nothing good if things were left to them. Here, Madam Speaker, I have six occasions. The first one starts on 26 of March 2019 when the hon. Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development mentions the request to the International Court of Justice to give its advisory opinion on the legal consequences of the separation of the Chagos

Archipelago for Mauritius. Indeed, that statement showed to the country how successful Mauritius had been and guess what? While this side of the House was so happy for the country, tapping on the table - everyone on this side of the House, not one Member of the other side of the House tapped on the table. That was the 26 of March 2019. If you had seen their faces, they were, as if, angry that this country had succeeded.

(*Interruptions*)

Madam Speaker: Order!

Mr Sinatambou: Madam Speaker, that was the first of the six times. After the 26 of March 2019, there was another statement made before this House by the hon. Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development. This time it was the 03 of May not far ago just about a month ago. Here we again shared with this House, the country and the nation another successful step in our endeavour to recover what is, after all, part of our country. Again, what happened? Everyone on this side of the House tapped on the table, was happy; not one single person on the benches of the Opposition said one single thing. In fact, again, if you just look at the attitude again.

(*Interruptions*)

Madam Speaker: Order!

Mr Sinatambou: Again, you can see when it is said, what are they going to say later on, that they applauded, they did not. And if we now hear those ramblings and rumblings over there, it shows that *la vérité offense.* As if this was not enough just the next three times were on three occasions on the 10 of June, the day of the Budget Speech. When the hon. Prime Minister, in his Speech, reminded the nation of the landmark Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice which had confirmed our long-standing position that the Chagos Archipelago is and has always formed an integral part of the territory of the Republic of Mauritius, paragraph 408 of the Budget Speech; this side of the House was so happy about what we had achieved for this country. What about the other side of the House? Again, grins if not to say that the faces but not one single show of applause – third time. Fourth time – when the hon. Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development spoke of the adoption by an overwhelming majority of votes of a UN General Assembly resolution on the 22 May of this year to give effect to the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice stating how it was another important milestone in our endeavour to complete the decolonisation process in Mauritius. This side of the House showed how great an

achievement this was for this country; tapping loudly on the tables; again the other side of the House, this Opposition which always tries to give lessons which it ought not to do was just totally silent. You were wondering whether they were envious of the success of Government or whether it was jealousy which made them not have a tap at all. Worst of it all. When the hon. Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development said that he was making a special provision for the first time in a Budget of our country after 50 years, a special provision of Rs50 million, *inter alia*, to meet expenses relating to the preparation for eventual resettlement on some of the islands of the Chagos Archipelago. The whole country should have been happy but the Opposition was not. Well, fortunately, we now have, after eight successful electoral defeats, I think…

(Interruptions)

For at least, I must say four Members of the Opposition. Today, when the hon. Prime Minister, for the sixth time this year, spoke of the Chagos Archipelago, highlighting our success following this UNGA Resolution which was passed by an overwhelming majority of 116 against 6, this time, four Members of the Opposition, I saw tapping on the table together with Government.

Yes, well done, well done, well done! At long last…

(Interruptions)

At long last, I can see…

Madam Speaker: Order! Order please! Order!

Mr Sinatambou: At long last, I can see that some people, the word that we used, *se ressaisisse.* Very good! However, the reason I am pointing out all this, Madam Speaker,…

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: No crosstalking, please! No crosstalking from a sitting position!

Mr Sinatambou: I was about to read the Chagos, but those remarks actually make me say what the other side, what the Opposition - this has to go for posterity, Madam Speaker – was saying? They were saying, I quote –

« Le dossier est très mal géré par l'actuel gouvernement. Petard to enkor p aster ek la Chine, to pu alle laguerre ek Americain ek Anglais »

That is the type of silly arguments they were coming up with and they were saying –

« *Le timing n'est pas bon. Nous nous préparons à aller en guerre mais d'avance nous dévoilons nos plan à l'ennemi. Cela démontre l'incompétence et l'amateurisme…*»

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Minister, you are quoting from what? I think hon. Bérenger is asking …

Mr Sinatambou: This is a newspaper article.

Madam Speaker: Can you just say you are quoting from which paper?

Mr Sinatambou: 16 April, 2017, from Le Défi. If the hon. Member wants a copy, I can send him one.

Now, it was being said –

« *Cela démontre l'incompétence et l'amateurisme de ce gouvernement à gérer un dossier aussi important que les Chagos*. »

So, I believe *ils devraient au moins être silencieux et reconnaître leur erreur, ils se font encore plus…*

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Minister, you said it was from which paper, but did you say who said it?

Mr Sinatambou: 2017, Le Défi. Navin Ramgoolam *a été accueilli en fanfare par ses partisans* and he is the one. *Navin Ramgoolam promet ainsi de reprendre avec tout le sérieux ce dossier une fois qu'il reviendra au pouvoir.*

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Order! Order on this side! Hon. Jhugroo, please! Yes, hon. Minister!

Mr Sinatambou: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Now, anyway, he should be a little bit more quiet. Yes and you were begging him for an alliance. So, what are you talking about?

Madam Speaker: Order! I can't even hear what he is saying and if he says something wrong, I won't be able to stop him.

Mr Sinatambou: Now, the point is that, as we say in Creole, *to pet ne vaut pas mo ret*, because they are as bad when they sit and show grins, don't applaud when this country reaps successes after successes in the Chagos Archipelago. Now, that was…

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Uteem!

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Order! Order! Order please! Can we have some order? No comments from a sitting position, please! You will all have the opportunity to intervene. Can you, please, not make any comments from a sitting position? Now, hon. Rutnah, I just said that no comments from a sitting position!

Mr Sinatambou: Madam Speaker, I have been very polite. I have been acting properly and with courtesy. I don't take it lightly that someone over there calls me *imbécile*. So, you have to take it back.

(Interruptions)

Ala li la kuyon! Take it back. The hon. Member has to withdraw. He called me *kuyon* now, Madam Speaker.

(Interruptions)

Mr Rutnah: Madam Speaker, is the word '*imbécile'* a parliamentary word? Is it? So, I ask the hon. Member to withdraw the word *'imbécile'*.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Bérenger, did you say that hon. Rutnah is an '*imbécile'*? Did you say? Did you say? Did you say?

(Interruptions)

No, but did you say that he was an '*imbécile'*? I don't know. I don't know, hon. Bérenger. He has raised a point of order and it is only to ask you whether you said. If you say you didn't say, then the matter is settled, but we will have to check then.

Mr Rutnah: Madam Speaker, I heard. I heard and he replied *pas toi, Rutnah sa*!

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: So, what I will do so that we may proceed with the debates, I will allow the debates to proceed, I will check and then I will come with a ruling. Please proceed!

Mr Sinatambou: Madam, on another point of order. When I stated to you that the hon. Member had told me I was an *imbécile*, he said *pas toi sa, p dir Rutnah, kuyon*. So, this time, it is not me the *imbécile*, me the *kuyon.* What is this?

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Please, order! Hon. Minister, I have already given my ruling. What I will do is that I reserve my ruling after I have checked what happened. I will check what happened because the hon. Member has said he didn't say it. So, I'll check and then I'll come with a ruling. Please proceed!

Mr Sinatambou: This is not on his point but on my point also, please.

Now, why am I being so insistent is because if you heard the commentary of both the hon. Leader of the Opposition, the current one and the former one, there is one thing which struck me as being so wrong and that is why I referred to the backdrop of the Opposition's attitude. They said *ce budget est décevant.* Of course, if now you take the backdrop, and that is why I went on the Chagos to show that this is the biggest achievement of this country as a nation over the last 50 years and even if it is so, they have been acting in such a wrong manner. When you look at the five, six instances I just referred to and I use this as a backdrop to show to you that they are bound to give the perception that this budget is disappointing, and indeed perception. I came across the best definition of perception lately, it says that perception is *quand ce que les gens croient est plus important que la vérité.* And this is, I believe, what they will try and do, is they are going to try and build perceptions by being demagogic sometimes, sometimes perhaps misleading, but they will try to create the perception that this is a disappointing debate, and this is not. This is not because when you take the total budget of this country, an expected Rs123.7 billion, what is most important for people normally?

Normally, it's their children. I think people are prepared to suffer if they can actually ensure a better living for their children and this Budget puts more than Rs17 billion for the education of our children, pre-primary, primary, secondary, tertiary, vocational and professional. Rs17 billion, if I am not mistaken.

After our children what do we, people, what do families, what do normal men and women look after? After their children, they look after the health and the health of their families. And what do we see in this Budget? We see a Budget of more Rs13 billion for the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life. So much money, therefore, being put for education and health.

Now, after our children, after our health, who do we look after? We look after our parents, we look after our old aged citizens, we look after the vulnerable ones, and this

Budget puts nearly Rs27 billion for old aged people, widows, orphans, the disabled and the vulnerable ones.

So, after the health of our families, after the education of our children, after the welfare of our parents and grandparents, what next do we look at? Normally, we want accommodation, and in this budget, the hon. Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development has put Rs11.4 billion to build 6,000 housing units over the next two years. So, I heard a 'huh'.

(Interruptions)

Let us, therefore, leave housing aside, if that disturbs some people.

Let us, therefore, retain social security, education and health. This makes Rs57 billion for the people of this country, our children, our health, our parents, our grandparents and those who are vulnerable, Rs57 billion out of Rs123 billion. In addition, if one is sensible, one should accept, yes, not all the Rs11.4 billion will be spent in one year, or for 6,000 housing units, but one should, at least, recognise if one does not suffer from the syndrome I repeat so often, one should recognise that a Budget like this cannot be disappointing. A Budget like this should be applauded. We are not claiming to be perfect, but we are saying: 'don't try and leave the perception that the imperfections here and there are colossal, they are not.' We acknowledge, on this side of the House, that yes, there are always imperfections, but what we will not accept is that the other side of the House creates the false perception, *que ce budget est décevant*.

Let me give another example to show the attitude, and which is why I am so often annoying to them because I tell them the truth. Let me give you something which is so important, at one moment in time, nearing the end of his Budget Speech, the hon. Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development made announcement that not only this Government welcomes the visit of Pope Francis, but this Government has also decided to declare that the 09 September will be a public holiday.

(Interruptions)

Yes, this was our way, first of all, of paying tribute to the head of the Catholic Church, to acknowledge our appreciation to the 24% of this country who are Roman Catholics, but also to give an opportunity to the whole country as a nation to welcome one of the most important personalities of the world. Public holiday! This side of the House again applauded...

(Interruptions)

Tone demandé, selmen to pas aplaudi. Imbécile!

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Uteem!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Uteem!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Uteem!

(Interruptions)

Order please! Order!

(Interruptions)

Order please!

(Interruptions)

Order, I said!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Uteem!

(Interruptions)

You finished?

(Interruptions)

Mr Rutnah: On a point of order, Madam...

Madam Speaker: No, I am standing, please sit down!

Hon. Uteem, please reframe from making comments form a sitting position.

Mr Rutnah: Yes, on a point of order, Madam Speaker, now. But hon. Bérenger, again, from a sitting position used the word '*imbécile*' to the address of my very good friend, the Chief Whip. Is it now a practice to use the word '*imbécile*'? If that is the case, then I will also use.

Madam Speaker: I will again ask hon. Bérenger...

(Interruptions)

You are withdrawing. He is withdrawing. Okay, please proceed!

Mr Sinatambou: Hein, *asize* withdraw *aster*.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Bérenger, at least, please stand up and withdraw.

Mr Bérenger: I withdraw.

Madam Speaker: Okay!

Dr. Boolell: Madam Speaker, on a point of order. The Prime Minister cannot from a sitting position give instructions to the Chair.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Dr. Boolell, this is not a point of order!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Dr. Boolell, this is not a point of order, and I don't take instructions from anybody.

(Interruptions)

No, I don't take instructions from anybody and I don't want you to put words in my mouth, Okay. Yes, please proceed!

(Interruptions)

And I don't want people form a sitting position to interrupt the...

(Interruptions)

Please, hon. Minister, I have not finished, please sit down!

When the hon. Leader of the Opposition was intervening, everybody was silent on this side. With due respect to the hon. Leader of the Opposition, I would expect same now. Please proceed, hon. Minister!

Mr Sinatambou: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I must say, I was flabbergasted to hear someone from the Opposition say that they asked for the public holiday. Now, I tell you why, because if that was the case, when it was announced to the nation you should not have kept seated and making a face which fell.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Please!

(Interruptions)

Please! There are so much noise.

(Interruptions)

Order please!

(Interruptions)

Order!

(Interruptions)

I can't hear anything!

(Interruptions)

Now, let me say that you are making so much noise that I can't even hear what he said.

(Interruptions)

I did not gather what you said. Can you repeat it? I will then decide whether there is something that you should withdraw or not.

Mr Sinatambou: Madam Speaker, yes, let me say - I hope I have enough silence to say it. I explained that I was flabbergasted that someone on the other side claimed that they had asked for a public holiday.

(Interruptions)

And now - of course not, and I'll say why. I'll explain why.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Do not get excited!

Hon. Bérenger!

(Interruptions)

Please, calm down! He has the right to say what he wishes to say just as the hon. Leader of the Opposition did, just like any other Member on this side will do, provided you

are within the bounds of what we can accept in this House. If he is not within the bounds of the parameters of what he can say, I will stop him. But please calm down! Don't get excited!

(Interruptions)

Mr Bérenger: On a Point of Order, Madam Speaker. It is easily checkable. At a Press conference weeks ago, four, five weeks ago, I formerly made a request that that date when the Pope will be in Mauritius to be a public holiday. This was reported all over the place and now the Minister comes here and lies.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Bérenger, please sit down!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Bérenger, I understand that you will intervene also on the Budget. Now, what he is saying, you will have ample opportunity when you are intervening to dispute what he said. You should not do that now. Please, keep cool! You should not get excited for the time being. You will have ample opportunity when you intervene to say what you wish to say. Please!

Mr Bérenger: On a Point of Order, Madam Speaker. They cannot impute improper motives. What is he saying, that we are motivated by the fact that we are not pleased when the Pope comes here, we are not pleased when it is a public holiday. We made public statements to the contrary. He can't impute motives like that. My Point of Order is he can't impute improper motives.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Bérenger, did the hon. Minister mention honourable so and so said that? If he did not, then he has the right to say that the Opposition said that. And whoever feels aggrieved by that comment which he made, then during the course of your intervention you can say that you don't agree and you said that and that.

So, he may proceed.

Mr Sinatambou: And I will say it again that when the hon. Prime Minister announced that the 09 September is going to be a public holiday, if you saw how faces fell on the other side of the House. While we were applauding…

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Minister, please!

(Interruptions)

Please! You have…

(Interruptions)

Please, calm down! Please! Hon. Minister, you have made that point. Please, proceed further.

(Interruptions)

Mr Sinatambou: Why am I insisting every time for posterity to have that on record is because when it is announced, when we *tape* on the tables, no one *tape* on the other side of the House. No one did on the Opposition side. So, today, as very often, it is good to declare other people's babies, but the point remains, and I will show to you why it is so improper that they did not *tape* the tables. I will tell you why. Because I made it an effort to try and estimate what the wage bill is for a public holiday. To try and say that, okay, it is a public holiday, fair enough; we are welcoming His Eminence the Pope. Yes, it is a public holiday, the whole nation acknowledges his arrival and we actually acknowledge to the 24% of Roman Catholics in this country, but what does it cost? Because they often say we spent this, that or the other. Let's see what it costs. When I took what the benefit of a holiday to the workers of this country would amount to, there are two methods. It comes to nearly Rs500 m. And here we have, that is why I am even more flabbergasted when they actually stand up and object like that. Because when Rs500m. were actually being given to our countrymen for one public holiday, they were not showing any appreciation. And, indeed, if for two events like the Chagos and Pope Francis, this appears to have been the reaction, what are they not going to say for the Budget? If two events of international importance, of global magnitude are seen to be treated like this by the other side of the House, what will they not try to do in terms of creating false perceptions on this Budget?

Let me come to the Rs57 Billion for the budget for Education, for Health and for Social Security. Let us add law and order. Law and order, the Police will have a budget of Rs8.86 Billion. this year. Why am I taking this is because if you take the Rs57 Billion that I just mentioned earlier to the Rs8.86 Billion for law and order, we reach above Rs65 Billion. Therefore, half this budget is for the education of our children, the health of our families, the welfare of the vulnerable and our grandmothers and grandfathers, and for our security. How can this be disappointing? I believe it is a disgrace to alledge that this Budget is disappointing.

Now I believe that when I mentioned what I had to say about the Chagos, I in a way accepted the wake up, and the waking up of the Leader of the Opposition for now, today, has said that he is pleased of the outcome in this House. Before that, on the five previous instances where the Chagos was raised, he was no way at all to state that he was pleased. So, at least, thank you for acknowledging the truth.

Let me come to some other things which the Leader of the Opposition has said, which I believe cannot go without being rebutted. The first one I believe which should be addressed is growth. It says a lot about growth and when we look at growth, I would like to compare his performance, because he has been Minister of Finance and Economic Development for three years: 2012, 2013 and 2014. Now, there are two ways to look at performance; either you say that our performance is disastrous and then we have to look at yours to say how much better you were. Or we start the presumption of regularity being what it is, we start by saying that he was a very good Minister of Finance and then we compare how we have been doing in comparison to his performance. So, I took the years 2012, 2013 and 2014 where under his leadership, it depends where you stand, one could say under his able leadership or one could argue the opposite and say under his disastrous leadership. It depends.

So, if we speak of his able leadership, then as Minister of Finance and Economic Development, in 2012, our economic growth was 3.5%; in 2013, it was 3.4%, and in 2014, it was 3.7%. That was under his able leadership. What has it been in 2016, 2017 and 2018, because this year is still an estimate? In 2016, official figures, like in his case, state that economic growth was 3.8%. So, it is better than 3.5%, better than 3.4% and better than 3.7%. In 2017, it was again 3.8%, which is better than 3.5%, 3.4% and 3.7%.

(Interruptions)

I don’t take orders from you, Sir. Take orders from your leader! I don’t take orders from you! Yes.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Lepoigneur, please!

Mr Sinatambou: Thank you. I don’t take orders from you. Okay. I take orders from the Chairperson.

Madam Speaker: No! Hon. Minister, I don’t think you should engage in any conversation with them.

Mr Sinatambou: But they can't…

Madam Speaker: Let them say what they wish; I will stop them. Okay?

Mr Sinatambou: I am being harassed; it has to stop. So, 2017, once again, economic growth is 3.8% which is better than 3.5%, 3.4% and 3.7% for 2012, 2013 and 2014. And for the third comparative year 2018, once again, it is 3.8%, which is, once again, better than 3.5%, 3.4% and 3.7%. The point I am trying to make is that if his time as Minister of Finance and the time of the hon. Leader of the Opposition was an able Ministership, surely when one does better than him, it cannot be disappointing; it has to be better. If we take the other side that it is alleged wrongly and fallaciously that this performance by this Government is disastrous, then what will you call theirs? Because theirs was worst.

That's for growth, it's just to show that they used words right, left and centre creating false perceptions, but when you look at the reality of the figures, it is nowhere near that. Let me take inflation because there has been an attempt to stay, yes, I heard one of the Members of the Opposition say that we are *dans un état d'urgence économique,* isn't it? Yes, just listen!

For inflation, in 2012, inflation was 3.9%; in 2013, it was 3.5% and in 2014, it was 3.2%. So, under the able Finance Ministership of the hon. Leader of the Opposition, the average inflation over those three years of his Ministership was 3.5%. So, under his able Ministership and for the same number of years, 2016, 2017 and 2018, the average under this Government is 2.6%. Nearly 1% less than under his performance! So, it baffles imagination! How one can perhaps be of such bad faith and I believe that this must stop, this country must know that and as if this was not good enough. That 2.6% is the average for these three years, the estimate for this year is an amazing 1.5%. I am just trying to show, Madam Speaker, that at least they should acknowledge or he should acknowledge if his performance as Minister of Finance was a very able one, the one now of the hon. Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and Economic Development is even better and if they keep alleging that the performance here is disastrous, *état d'urgence économique, qu'est-ce que c'était quand vous étiez au pouvoir?* I see hon. Dr. Boolell not hearing very well, but he was the one using the words '*état d'urgence économique'*.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: You see you are…

Mr Sinatambou: Sorry! Say it louder!

Madam Speaker: Hon. Minister, you are looking for comments. Right! I have told you not to look for comments but to proceed with your speech.

Mr Sinatambou: I just have to rebut those false allegations that this country *est en état d'urgence économique.* They were in Government together. The former Minister who said that, was in alliance, he was actually Minister in the Government where the Leader of the Opposition was then the Minister of Finance. So, today he cannot just try to say…

(Interruptions)

He just said it on live radio.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Hurreeram!

(Interruptions)

But no, if you want to joke, we can joke then. We can stop this session and then you continue with your conversations if you want.

Mr Sinatambou: Let me come to this. There is something which is striking me. Like my late father used to say, *wadire zonn gagne ene bon lezo*. It is now becoming such an apparent scandal that the Bank of Mauritius that funds over there, is going to be used to repay external debt. And here, I have made it a point, Madam Speaker, to go and get the Annual Report of the Bank of Mauritius for the year ended 30 June 2018. Because I must say, I got worried at some stage when the Leader of the Opposition made his discourse regarding the Bank of Mauritius, because he was saying that we are actually not using realised profits, that we are taking paper profits and that there is impropriety in this.

So, I made it a point to go and get the report to see what is said about the reserves of the bank and there is a note at page 144 where you have the balance sheet of the Bank of Mauritius regarding the reserves. It is Note 5 and Note 5 when you refer to it at page 160, says as follows –

"Special Reserve Fund - In terms of section 47(1) of the Bank of Mauritius Act 2004, the Special Reserve Fund is a reserve built up from any net realised gains."

So, I heard him all this time building his argument on the fact that we are going to take money, not from the realised profits of the Bank but from paper profits but yet when I look at the note at page 160, it is clear that the Special Reserve Fund is built up from realised

gains. So, with all due respect, I believe that - I won't accuse him of misleading the House, no, but I will say that I believe he has been misled because it is totally inappropriate when you look at page 144 where you find the balance sheet of the Bank.

At page 160 you have the note concerning the reserves, it is improper to say that the reserve is not composed of realised gains. Now, once this is so, it is clear that everything else he said cannot stand. If all his worries were actually built on the fact that this is no realised gain, you are using fictitious gains, paper gains, well that is not the case - pages 144 and 160 of the annual report.

Further this nonsense should stop because they are trying to make out that, you know, unprecedented. One of the Members of the Opposition said *la mesure la plus indécente de ce gouvernement.* Not indecent. I think that statement would have been ridiculous, I will tell you why, Madam, because the Bank of Mauritius issued a statement on the 12 of June, yesterday, which reads as follows –

> 'Following media reports on the use of the reserves of the Bank of Mauritius in the context of the Budget Speech 2019-20, the Bank of Mauritius wishes to inform members of the public that (…)'

I stress

> '(…) it is an acceptable international practice by central banks to hold official foreign exchange reserves in support of a range of objectives including, *inter alia*, (…)'

I stress

> '(…) to assist governments in meeting their external debt obligations.'

How can they? I don't know whether all of them are bankers or all of them are financial experts but if they are, they are very loose ones. Furthermore, a former Governor of the Bank of Mauritius, political nominee on the side of the Opposition, whose son was a candidate for a party of the Opposition, stated on the radio that there is nothing wrong…

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Baloomoody!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Baloomoody, would you continue? I am addressing myself to you.

Mr Sinatambou: Although he may not now be a Governor of the Bank of Mauritius, I believe he knows better that many on the other side, if not all.

(Interruptions)

En tou cas li pli koner ki twa. Now, coming back to this matter of reserves, Madam, there is one thing which I would like to say where again I made a comparison because I am told - I also went to do some homework - that the norm in terms of reserves is to have between…

(Interruptions)

the norm in terms of reserves is to have between four and six months of reserves. Because this is the amount which is required in a country to ensure, let's say, a fair way of doing things. But, in this particular case, I went to check where do we stand and what I found out is that indeed, as announced by the Hon. Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development, we have now reached reserves of 11.2 months as at May 2019 which is equivalent to an amount of 11.2 months.

(Interruptions)

Yes, a record ever. As stated by the Bank of Mauritius, it is an acceptable international practice to use reserves but for repaying external debt.

So, the principle is internationally accepted. Let us see now whether the level of prudence because you expect the decision makers to have prudential rules. I am told the prudential rule is between 4 and 6 months. So, I tried again. Since it was a subject of criticism by the hon. Leader of the Opposition, I went to check what were the reserves when he was Minister of Finance. So, in 2012, it was equivalent to 4.9 months. In 2013, it was equivalent to 5.2 months and in 2014, it was equivalent to 6.2 months compared to 2016, 2017 and 2018. Again, I want us to address it fairly. This may be called able ministership but then the first year – I am taking under reference, I took the last 3 years. I took his 3 years, I took the last 3 years.

So, in 2012, he was 4.9 months. In 2016, we were 9.3 months. In 2013, he was 5.2 months of reserves. In 2017, we were 9.7 months of reserves and in 2014, he was 6.2 months of reserves and we were 10.2 months of reserves. So, we have more than 4 months nearly 5 months now of extra funds if you apply the prudential rule of 4 to 6 months of reserves. So, if it is acceptable international practice to use reserves to fund, to repay external debt because the return on the reserves is very low when the interest on the debt is much higher. It makes

no sense to keep extra reserves in excess of the norm and then keep repaying interest to debtors.

As I hear the hon. Minister saying, it is basic and yet, they are trying to make of it - that's why I said *zot krwar zot ine gayne ene bon lezo* - the scandal of the year. So, you see that's why I use the Chagos first, the Pope second is to show how we are going to have this doomsday scenario, this gloomy looking picture but which is only perception, not truth. So, I believe that this should actually settle matters as regards the issue of the economic figures.

Let me just check one thing, Madam Speaker, sorry. Yes, there is one other thing I want to share with this House in terms of a measure which struck me because the Leader of the Opposition made a lot that we leave out people - some have been left out, some have been considered, when this is not at all the case. And I am choosing here to refer to basic commodities. Let's look at basic commodities, Madam. I want to refer in particular here because it is most striking. I want to refer in particular to the price of the 12kg cooking gas cylinder. Again no applause on the other side of the House when the hon. Prime Minister announces that, as from the next day of his Budget Speech, the 12kg cooking gas cylinder is going to be reduced from Rs240 to Rs210. But what is shocking to me and by the way one should know that the estimated cost of this measure is going to be more than Rs650 m. for the welfare of the people of our country.

For the coming financial year, it is going to be nearly Rs640 m. which is being given to the people of this country, and they find fault with this. But what did they do? That is why I want to take this figure, Madam Speaker. What did they do? When the hon. Leader of the Opposition was Minister of Finance, the price of the 12 kg cooking gas cylinder from January to December 2011, it was Rs300. But then, with effect from 03 March 2012, it became Rs330. They increased the cost of the 12 kg cooking gas cylinder, and it was kept at Rs330 for his whole mandate. It was only brought down, when this Government took office, from Rs330 to Rs270, then, from Rs270 to Rs240, and this year from Rs240 to Rs210. So, we had just reached Rs57 billion for education, health and social security. We added law and order which is another Rs8 billion. If you add another nearly Rs2 billion, you can see how much is being given to the people of this country. Yes, there are things where we will not be able to do as well as we would like, but don't you come and dare say that this is disappointing.

There is one aspect which I believe I should also come to - which the Leader of the Opposition touched - which is climate change. Yes, he did say, at one stage, that climate change is something which is very important, which is bringing very adverse and negative effects on the country, but I must say no other Government before this one has taken as many steps whether it be in legal, institutional or monetary terms. When we took office in 2015, to reckon with the problems of climate change, we actually came up with the review of the National Disasters Scheme. The National Disasters Scheme constitutes a protocol which say what has to be done, the *modus operandi* before, during and after a natural disaster, whether it be an earthquake, a cyclone, you name it. There is now a protocol under the National Disasters Scheme since 2015 and it is to be reviewed regularly.

In addition, again in 2015, under the, what is known as the UNFCCC, the United Nations Framework Conference on Climate Change, in December 2015, we can unpledged to the conference of parties, the 21st Conference of Parties in Paris, we made our pledge in what is known as the NDC, the Nationally Determined Contributions. In other words, we have ascertained what are our requirements both in terms of mitigation and adaptation measures. It is a hefty bill. Our pledge, as contained in our NDC which has been submitted in December 2015, in Paris, would cost four mitigation measures 1.5 billion dollars and four adaptation measures, more than four billion dollars. These are the estimated cost. That was in 2015. We received some money, we have done a lot, but there is still more to do. In 2016, to deal with the seriousness of climate change, we came up and pass before this House, the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Act of 2016 which creates the institutional structure to tackle the effects of climate change, the problems which bring the disasters that it actually brings along. We now have a National Disaster Committee, we have a National Emergency Operations Command, we have reagionalised what is called Local Emergency Operations Command. We have even set up what is called – we have a life threatening flood-prone site and in this budget 40 of them have been identified and the hon. Prime Minister has put Rs650 m. to take the corrective measures. But until and unless you take the corrective measures, they remain life threatening flood-prone sites, don't they? So, what we have done, we have come up with something called the CDRT, the Community Disaster Response Team. If we cannot render the site disaster free, we can, at least, get the team which is going to save the people and evacuate them if the danger comes. So, that was in 2016.

In 2017, we came up - because we realised that for decades the drain problem has not been solved or has not been adequately solved. So, what we did? We came up with the Land Drainage Authority Act 2017, and with that Act, what we see, we now have a coordinating body, the Land Drainage Authority. Because traditionally, we have had three different entities, the Road Development Authority, the National Development Unit of the Prime Minister's Office and the Local Authorities. There are three entities that are actually responsible for drains. But we needed a coordinating body which is now the Land Drainage Authority to coordinate the system. Among its obligations, it has to come up with a mapping of all the manmade and natural drains. When you have the mapping, then you will be able to prioritise. Similarly, among the other decisions, a tender has already been launched. This year, we will be doing an audit of 23 rivers and 232 reviewlets because we need to know their carrying capacity, their maximum threshold capacity in order to assess the dangerability whenever there is torrential rain. So, that was for 2017.

In 2018, I am afraid to be slightly long on that, Madam Speaker, because a lot is being made about climate change. Yes, it is right, but don't try and make believe that this Government is not doing what it should be doing because it has done, in fact, more than any other Government. So, I come back to 2018. In 2018, we passed the Local Government (Amendment) Act 2018 where we make it a very serious offence with a hefty penalty and custodial sentence for anyone who does unlawful things near canals, lakes, rivers, reviewlets and drains. That was for 2018.

In 2019, this year, what should we do? This year, Madam Speaker, I am happy to state that we will be introducing before this House the Climate Change Bill. It is part of our electoral programme. I know one of the Members of the Opposition, three years after our Government Programme, said that we have to come with a Climate Change Bill. Well, let me inform the House that the draft of the Bill has already been in existence. But we need to refine it, to polish it before it is brought before this House during this financial year. That was until 2019.

And for 2020, the Prime Minister, in his Budget Speech, has announced that he is putting a sum of Rs20 m. because we cannot look at all this just on standalone bases. In 2020, we need to come up and we will come up with a reviewed National Environment Policy, then a National Environment Strategy, then we devise a National Environment Action Plan and we draw up an Investment Programme for the years to come. So, that is so much to say regarding the climate change argument.

Maybe, I should now approach the Budget of the Ministry of Social Security and National Solidarity because, indeed, it does take nearly more than 20% of the Budget, the lion's share of this Budget. As the hon. Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development stated, this is his way of showing to the old aged people of this country, the vulnerable people of this country, the disabled people of this country, it is his way of showing them his respect and his gratitude, and alongside with his, ours. So, I feel very sorry for those who still find this Budget to be disappointing.

Now what is also important is that I made it a point to check, Madam Speaker - we know that, and I say that because there is an attempt and there will be, that is going to be a continuous attempt by some people to downplay the importance or to downplay the very fact of having increased the pensions of the people of this country. From Rs3,623 per month for any person aged 60 to 89, we will now reach Rs6,710. For anyone aged 90 to 99 from Rs10,789 , we will now reach Rs16,710. And for centenarians, we are now moving from Rs12,300, under the previous regime, to Rs21,710. And what do you hear? *R 500 trop tigine*.

Look at the drastic difference! It is even worse. I cannot remember exactly. I think disabled people were earning, under the previous regime, Rs3,200 and something, I think it is Rs3,273, I cannot remember exactly. But, now, they will also be earning Rs6,710 per month. But what is important is that this amounts to a 105.4% increase. So, they are trying to play down as much as they can in order not to lose face. What did they say on the other side of the House before election? They said: 'That is not possible. *Pe van reve.'* Isn't it? Well, the hon. Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development has made dreams become true.

I am not trying to be the salesman of the Government, but I want to defend this Government against those who make, what I consider to be false allegations, judgments which are erroneous. I am happy to debate with any other Member of the Opposition because there are so many good things. Just to take one example. There is this decision where we have actually ascertained that there are too many people who actually need carers.

What we have found, Madam Speaker, is that, first of all, we have to acknowledge that the happiness of our society is not to be judged only in terms of our GDP, but, particularly, in terms of how we treat our elderly. That is why I believe that this Government should be here for some quite time again. Now, what happens is that a number of our elderly is actually assailed by degenerative diseases and that is why the hon. Prime Minister has

decided, in his Budget Speech at paragraph 264, to increase the carer's allowance for the elderly from Rs3,000 to Rs3,500. Now, this will come and soothe 23,000 bedridden pensioners. And you know, Madam, just that measure is going to cost another Rs150 m. How can that be disappointing? I strongly disagree.

I think, Madam, there is quite a lot to see, but I believe that I should stop here. What I would like to finish with, Madam Speaker, is with the following, I believe that what is disappointing is if we try to tell this country that this Budget is not a good Budget. I believe that you ought not to be disappointed ladies and gentlemen of the Opposition, that *après les 12,880 écoliers des grades 1 à 3, ce sera au tour de ceux qui se trouvent en grade 4 de recevoir des tablettes gratuitement en janvier prochain.* I believe that you should not be disappointed that the hon. Prime Minister has put Rs300 m. for water tanks to be provided to 37,500 families in this Budget. I believe that you should not be disappointed if Rs300 m. are being put to finance the free tertiary education of our youth. I believe that you should not be disappointed that Rs138 m. has been put for NGOs running Special Education Needs Schools. I believe that you should not be disappointed that taxi operators will benefit from a duty-free car every four years instead of five years. I believe that you should not be disappointed that the hon. Prime Minister has provided Rs1.7 billion as subsidy to maintain the retail prices of rice, flour and LPG. I believe that you should not be disappointed that Rs50 m. *seront destinées à transformer 50 écoles primaires des régions pauvres en* Fortified Learning Environment Schools, *puisque l'idée est d'aider des enfants des grades 1 et 2 des régions pauvres dans leur transition du préscolaire au primaire*.

By the way, perhaps a little note which amused me. The Leader of the Opposition, I understand his party intends to challenge election in Rodrigues. I believe Rodrigues will not be disappointed that, henceforth, Rodriguans will benefit from eleven channels from the MBC instead of four. And I believe that this measure will make that the PMSD will not go there to stand for elections.

(Interruptions)

That's why I was amused. I believe that they ought not to be disappointed that the hon. Prime Minister has extended the suspension of trade fees of up to Rs5,000 to 300,000 businesses. If the license fee is Rs5,000 and 300,000 businesses are exempted from it, it makes Rs1.5 Billion. This is an exemption which has lasted three years already and he has just extended it for another three years. I believe that they ought not to be disappointed that

for microenterprises the maximum loan amount for DBM micro credit loan scheme has been increased from Rs250,000 to Rs500,000. I believe that it is totally improper for them to be in the slightest disappointed if this Government has actually decided that public companies and statutory bodies should have at least one woman on their Board of Directors. I believe it is wrong for them to be disappointed in the light of such a measure. I believe it would be improper for them to be disappointed in view of *la mise en place d'un* wage guarantee fund *en vue de remunérer à hauteur de R 50,000 tout employé qui perd son emploi en cas d'insolvabilité de sa société.*

I believe, Madam Speaker, that we should now make sure that there is another demagogic argument which should be dispelled. The Leader of the Opposition, before ending his speech, said that it is so wrong that Rs1,000 has been given to employees of the public sector prior to the PRB report…

(Interruptions)

Correct me then! So, I believe…

(Interruptions)

Not at all! *Ni moi mo per toi*!

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: You see, you are making provocations! You are making provocations and that's why he is replying. So, you want to cause disturbance in the House.

Mr Sinatambou: We will try to find out exactly what he said then.

Madam Speaker, at some stage in his discourse, he came to the Rs1,000 advance payment pending the PRB report. And he said as follows. He said 'Are we saying that the others are less deserving?' Well, we are not. The point of the matter is that the PRB report is due when it is due. And we all know that the PRB report will pay people in arrears. So, what we are saying is that, whatever they are getting now, will be discounted from what they get. So, there is nothing sinister as they are trying to make out. There is absolutely nothing sinister. And, in fact, it is unfortunate that every time, as opposed to reap rational reasonable arguments, they go to work on the emotions of people. That is the definition of demagogy. That as opposed to using rational, reasonable and logical arguments, you take arguments which appeal to the emotions, which make people react. Of course, people will react if we tell them, hey, *li p gagn Rs1,000, to pas p gagn Rs1,000.* But he works in a particular system,

where the salary scale is worked out by the PRB. The private sector works in a system where salaries are worked out by the NRB. So, it is just normal that the PRB applies to the public sector and the NRB applies to the private sector. So, this is why I believe that I was right to start what I had to say on the basis of the two examples of the Chagos Archipelago and the visit of His Eminence Pope Francis from the Vatican. Because when you look at the behaviour, at the reaction, at the countenance, at the hue of those people when we were dealing with matters of global magnitude which make this country rate high in the league of nations, what is it going to be when now we deal with inside matters where they can try and manipulate the people of this country. I just believe that this side of the House will be able to convince the people of this country, the nation as a whole that truth lies on this side, that efforts lie on this side.

And on a concluding note, Madam Speaker, I would say that this Government has achieved over the four and a half years that we took office, what several Governments could not do since independence. You name it. The minimum wage…

(Interruptions)

Yes, but it has succeeded. Whether I was in it or not in it, we have succeeded.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Abbas Mamode, you will intervene on the budget or not?

Mr Abbas Mamode: I will.

Madam Speaker: You will. So, wait for your turn!

Mr Sinatambou: Whether it be the minimum wage, whether it be the Negative Income Tax, whether it be this very good measure where the middle class people earning until Rs50,000 pay 10% of income tax, lowest ever, whether it be a record social security budget of nearly Rs27 Billion, you name it. This Government has, indeed, achieved what several Governments could not do since independence. Mauritius is on the move, Madam. One should be blind in order not to see the development taking place in every nook and corner of the country. I have the strong conviction that under the able leadership and guidance of the hon. Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and Economic Development, this country has many years of glory and success to come. And I have no doubt that the population at large will support him and his team. The 2019-2020 Budget of the hon. Prime Minister allows new hopes, new aspirations and new benefits which will open up to each and every Mauritian against a multitude of challenges that we have to face as a nation. I will urge Mauritians to stand by the hon. Prime Minister and to support him in his continuing effort to

work for a better, more prosperous, unified and forward looking Mauritius. A real Statesman is judged not by words, not by *de beaux discours* and what others write on him, but by his actions and concrete measures. I am of the view that the hon. Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development *a réussi ce que l'on peut appeler un tour de force.* My first comment when I was interviewed on a radio was to say *un budget brillamment dosé.* Sustainable development is the order of his agenda and sensible and responsible people would have said nothing more but 'Congratulations, Mr Prime Minister!'

I was hesitating, but I think I will end on a quote of Benjamin Franklin, one of the founding fathers of the United States of America, who said –

"Any fool can criticise, complain and condemn."

And he added –

"And most fools do."

I will not say that this applies to the Opposition, but I will say to them, please, don't criticise foolishly.

I believe, to end, that Prime Minister, I can only say one thing to you, 'Bravo!

Thank you, Madam.

At this stage, the Deputy Speaker took the Chair.

(4.56 p.m.)

Mr J. C. Barbier (Fourth Member for GRNW & Port Louis West): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I believe it is a shame that the Minister of Social Security is not aware that pensions for handicapped people, for old-age pensioners and for widows have always since decades been aligned on the same level and the same amount. That is not the first time that these pensions are being paid on the same level; it is since decades. So, it is a shame that the Minister of Social Security is not aware of such facts.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is a shame also that the Minister of Social Security is not aware that subsidies which are being provided for rice, flour and LP Gas, these are collected directly on the tax that we have on diesel and fuel and to give you an indication, I do not have the updated figure. Answering to a Parliamentary Question in 2017, let me remind that in 2016, we collected Rs13.2 billion on tax on diesel and fuel to subsidise rice, flour and LP Gas. I am surprised that a Minister who has been part of this Government and the other

Government too, when he is talking he seems to forget that he has been at times on both sides of this House. He seems to forget how it is financing.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Silence, please!

Mr Barbier: It is also a shame that the Minister of Social Security is encouraging this in the direction of the bad budgeting practice which we have in some other countries where we are using the balance of payment surplus to pay debts. This is very bad.

(Interruptions)

I know what I am talking about. I will come back to this issue, but it is a shame.

The Minister mentioned…

(Interruptions)

Listen!

The Deputy Speaker: Quiet!

Mr Barbier: Listen! The Minister, I think, is encouraging the Minister of Finance to go in the bad direction, just copying what has been the practice in some African countries. I am not going to name these countries, but it is in some countries where we have this bad budgeting practice and we cannot encourage Mauritius to go in that direction.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, sometimes Economists might interpret a trade deficit as being an indication of a high consumption of foreign goods by consumers of specific countries. But, according to me, this is not the case for Mauritius because while applying the reducing tariff policy from year to year by successive Governments as per the WTO recommendations on imports of goods, at a point in time we have been going too far. This continuous policy of reducing tariff or even abolishing the custom duty today has brought the country in a state of economy where we have put many of our local manufacturers in big economic difficulties. Many have closed down and others who are striving for survival cannot compete with foreign manufacturers, especially those of the Asian countries. We lost our competitiveness in favour of the Asian manufacturers. Our competitors have the raw materials and also they have a cheaper labour. So, the factors of production give them a competitive edge on our manufacturers in our country. The result is that today we are at a point where it is very difficult to redress our balance of trade. It could have been otherwise if

in the past years we would have concentrated our efforts in raising revenue through other pillars or consolidating and innovating in the existing pillars of our economy.

But, unfortunately, since this Government took office, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, nothing has been done to address the issue of the balance of trade. As a result thereof, year after year, we have enlarged our deficit of the balance of trade. Instead, Government has focused on the growth rate as its only economic objective and adapting such a philosophy of budgeting, the Government has chosen to boost growth by massive injection of fund in public infrastructures. This might be good as a part policy for worth, but using such a strategy as a single track economic policy, result in a mid-term and a long-term stress on our economy and this is what our country is living right now.

In fact, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, even this massive funding of public infrastructural projects has not met the objectives of Government. Growth which was supposed to climb up to 5% of GDP has not been achieved. The reason is that the Government neglects all other components of the economy, for example, the tourist sector, the manufacturing sector, the blue economy, agriculture and even the financial sector could have done much better if we have had the right strategy and the right person, an honest person at the command of the FSC.

Unfortunately, all the other sectors of the economy have simply been neglected by this Government. The only two things which Government has been able to contain are inflation rate and unemployment. As for unemployment, it depends how the data are collected because there are so many ways to do it. Data can easily be manipulated to reach the figure of 6.9%. Other methods of calculation with additional data will give higher figure. This Government has failed throughout this mandate to raise additional revenue to be able to subscribe for the payment and service of our debts. As a result, the Government has no other alternative than to use our reserves to service on debts. This is very dangerous. It is a bad signal for our economy and we must not go in this direction.

This present Budget also did not address the problem. It goes within the same budgetary philosophy and going in the same direction will bring us in a very difficult economic situation in the years to come. It is clear now that the Government today has not the necessary *cadre* and intelligence to solve the problem where we are today in this bad economic situation. The country is in need of a new economic agenda together with capable policymakers and capable technicians to set a new strategy to establish and consolidate our economic policy. We cannot continue to manipulate our Budget for only electoral purposes,

putting aside the main problem of the country. This is very dangerous and if we continue that way, I am afraid for the future generation of this country.

D'autre part, M. le président, c'est étonnant que vu cette situation économique chaotique dans laquelle nous nous trouvons les membres de l'autre côté de la Chambre pour un oui et pour un non tapent la table - *tookmaria baisser tape la table, grains de lin baisser tape la table, trente roupies pêcheurs tape la table, saagoo baisser tape la table et attention hein aplon baisser tape la table.*

(Interruptions)

Mais je viens de vous dire par rapport au gaz. Les consommateurs sont en train de payer directement du prix de l'essence tous les jours…

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: No crosstalking, please!

Mr Barbier: Plus de 1.5 milliards par an - aller voir les tableaux. Donc, le gouvernement, vous savez, fait baisser tous ces ingrédients que les Mauriciens se servent pour faire des rafraichis pour pouvoir laver ces amertumes de l'estomac des Mauriciens. *Allez, alle bwar rafraichi pour kpav lave sa bann malpropretes ki finn mett dan nou le corps la*.

(Interruptions)

trente roupies aux pêcheurs *tape la table*. Attention, vous avez vu lors de la présentation du budget lorsqu'on oublie de taper la table, on vous lance un regard.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Address the Chair!

Mr Barbier: Vous avez vu ? Obliger *tape la table* sinon ils ont droit à un regard méchant du Premier ministre et ils se remettent à *tape la table*. Donc, le budget ce n'est pas une farce. Au contraire, c'est le moment le plus important de notre responsabilité parlementaire. Ce n'est pas un jeu. Le Premier ministre et ministre des finances joue sa dernière carte budgétaire de ce présent mandat. Il avait placé la barre si haute sans se rendre compte de la difficulté actuelle.

Vous savez, Monsieur le président, dans mon entourage, dans ma famille, ils disaient avant le discours du budget: '*tu sais nous pour alle vote sa gouvernement lamem parski finn*

dire pour gayne R10 000 pension'. Kot R10,000 la? Alors finalement aujourd'hui quand ils se réunissent, eh bien ils ne parlent plus du tout. Ils sont silencieux et en colère parce qu'ils s'attendaient à rs10000, rs9000, rs8500 - des chiffres qui ont été jonglés partout, dans tous les journaux et finalement à l'arrivée c'est la déception totale par rapport à ceux qui s'attendaient vraiment à avoir un budget beaucoup plus important par rapport aux pensions.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker : I have said no cross-talking please!

Mr Barbier: C'est ainsi que ça a été pendant la campagne de 2014 comme c'était dans le discours préélectoral de l'alliance Lepep en 2014. Par exemple, effets d'annonce et ça il y a des vidéos. Le Ministre mentor en sait pour quelque chose qu'il n'y aura pas de métro express : *ki fer pour bizin fer metro express*. On allait dépenser beaucoup trop…

(*Interruptions*)

métro léger, métro express mais à la place le Ministre mentor proposait des *flyovers* qui allaient coûter beaucoup moins cher que tout le monde, que tout le pays allait pouvoir disposer et ajouter aussi dans la vidéo - *enn poignée dimounn pour voyager tout l'ile Maurice pour payer non*. Donc voilà que deux mois après les élections, tout le pays allait être approvisionné. Où est l'honorable Collendavelloo ? Aux quatre coins du pays, on allait avoir de l'eau 24/7. Anne, ma sœur Anne, *attann* toujours. On nous a promis télévision privée, freedom of information et deuxième miracle économique vous autres. Alors les deux magiciens et leur assistant ont disparu. Ils ne sont même plus Premier ministre et ministre des finances et on attend toujours le deuxième miracle économique. Allez réaliser maintenant comment actuellement la population va pouvoir avoir confiance dans tout ce qui a été énuméré dans ce présent papier - ce n'est même pas un budget, c'est une *shopping list* d'intentions et qu'ils ne vont pas pouvoir réaliser en quelques mois vu que les élections ne vont pas tarder. C'est quoi tout cela. Ce n'est pas acceptable. Ce n'est que du bluff et du bluff pour épater l'électorat. Je me base sur ce qui s'est passé depuis 2014 comme faits pour faire une analyse concrète par rapport aux différents - mais j'y reviendrai. On n'est pas en campagne électorale encore mais je vais y revenir sûrement sur toute la liste de promesses que ce gouvernement a fait durant ces derniers quatre ans. Donc, il recommence pareil les mêmes formules, le peuple attend avec patience sa revanche. Vous allez voir ce qui va se passer. Donc il y a en ce moment un sentiment de dégoût pour la chose politique. Des personnes de toutes communautés confondues se sentent délaissées. Elles crient au scandale.

Elles se sentent discriminées parce qu'elles ne sont pas de la famille proche du pouvoir donc elles ne peuvent pas avoir de faveurs et elles constatent que les gâteaux se partagent en famille, entre clics. La population dans toutes les régions du pays aujourd'hui ne se sent pas en sécurité. Les délits liés à la consommation de la drogue dure et de synthétique se répandent partout. Les parents aujourd'hui ont peur. Ils sont maltraités physiquement et moralement. Des fois ils sont tués. Dans la rue on se fait attaquer et quand il y a un drogué dans la famille c'est la souffrance permanente et une extrême souffrance pour les parents. Le Premier ministre a fait de ce combat contre la drogue sa priorité mais comment expliquer que des personnes proches du Premier ministre qu'on voit sur des photos qui s'affichent – je pense que j'ai le droit de citer monsieur Dewdanee…

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Address the Chair hon. Barbier!

Mr Barbier: Il est impliqué directement. C'est dans les journaux.

The Deputy Speaker: Please address the Chair!

Mr Barbier: C'est dans les journaux. Comment ce monsieur a-t-il pu avoir caution ? Il s'affiche sur pas mal de photos sur les réseaux sociaux avec le Premier ministre et ce monsieur qui est directeur…

(*Interruptions*)

The Deputy Speaker: Please be seated. Yes! What is the Point of Order?

Mr Rutnah: The point of order is that the hon. Member is imputing motives. Insofar as bail is concerned, it is the premise of the judiciary. The Prime Minister has got nothing to do with it. He is implying that the Prime Minister must have…

(*Interruptions*)

So, that's improper motives.

The Deputy Speaker: Can you?

Mr Barbier: I am relating facts of a person which I have seen in so many photos on the social media where he accompanied the Prime Minister. This is my point and these are facts. Donc, comment peut-on gagner la bataille contre la drogue si on est entouré des malfrats que leurs compagnies mêmes sont impliquées dans l'importation de la drogue dure.

Donc, c'est un gimmick. Donc, le pays, les habitants, les Mauriciens perdent confiance quand il y a de telles transactions louches dans le pouvoir.

On se demande si c'est un hasard que ce monsieur a pu avoir une caution et a été libéré, donc, on suit de près, M. le président. La population a perdu confiance complètement dans ce combat que mène supposément le Premier ministre. M. le président, la mauvaise gestion et gaspillage des fonds publics, d'année en année, nous en avons eu des rapports de l'audit accablants, révoltants, scandaleux et jusqu'à maintenant personne ne paie pour ces crimes commis aux fonds publics et je ne vois absolument rien dans ce présent budget qui essaye de corriger tous ces maldonnes au niveau de dépenses des fonds publics. La situation est de mal en pis et je ne vois pas des mesures appropriées dans ce budget pour redresser la situation. Certes, ce n'est pas facile mais il faut commencer quand même quelque chose de sérieux et c'est très important que tous ceux qui ont fauté soient sanctionnés, au cas contraire, on va continuer à regarder impuissant les abus au niveau des gestions des fonds publics.

M. le président, au niveau des logements sociaux, il faut qu'on arrête à proposer que des chiffres qui ne se réalisent jamais. Le gouvernement avait promis 10,000 maisons en fin de mandat et je pense qu'il y a eu au maximum 4,000 qui ont été construites.

(Interruptions)

Même pas ! Pour une fois, je n'ai pas les mauvais chiffres. Et ce gouvernement a le culot cette fois-ci de venir proposer 6,000 maisons. Pensez-vous que la population continuellement va avaler ces genres de couleuvres ? Enfin, il ne faut pas prendre la population pour des cons quand même. Donc, M. le président, ce sont des promesses qu'on entend, qu'on réentend et qu'on ré-réentend. Donc, ils viennent, ils jettent des chiffres 6,000. Donc, M. le président, croyez-vous que la population est si dupe que ça ? Enfin, il faut quand même un minimum de respect à la population.

The Deputy Speaker: I have said no crosstalking.

Mr Barbier: M. le président, concernant la communauté des pêcheurs, je suis vraiment triste, c'est de l'insulte ce qu'on a fait dans ce budget. C'est un mesure de plus en plus difficile et souvent je vois certains rentrer bredouilles ou avec deux ou trois kilos de poissons après une longue journée ou une longue nuit de travail. C'est l'incertitude totale dans ce secteur. Des fois, ils arrivent à faire une bonne prise mais c'est rare. Très souvent, ils n'arrivent même pas à couvrir les frais des carburants et là, quand je leur vois abattu, triste, ça me fait de la peine, M. le président. Mais hélas, ce gouvernement n'en fait pas un cas de leur

difficulté et pourtant ils font de leur mieux pour mettre du poisson frais dans les assiettes des Mauriciens. Plusieurs parmi ces pêcheurs n'arrivent pas à payer leurs *loan* qu'ils ont contractés pour l'achat de leur pirogue, pour leur moteur, pour les équipements de pêche, parce que tout ça coûte, de nos jours, très cher, M. le président.

Alors, nous, de ce côté de la Chambre, on a tout fait cette année-ci pour attirer l'attention du gouvernement sur ce problème. Mais hélas, le gouvernement continu à faire le sourde oreille et c'est vraiment triste. Tout ce que le gouvernement a donné, une augmentation de *tape la table*, *bad whether allowance*.

Donc, du côté d'art et culture, nous abordons le dernier six mois de ce présent gouvernement et hélas, il est triste de constater aussi qu'il n'y a toujours pas un directeur à la MASA. Donc, ça fait quatre ans et plus que le directeur a été suspendu et jusqu'à maintenant, jusqu'à la fin de ce présent mandat, on attend toujours, *Anne, ma soeur Anne*.

Ainsi, les problèmes de *royalties* au niveau international. Donc, personne ne travaille pour qu'on puisse régler ce problème. La visibilité internationale des artistes via le SizeNet système, pourtant, ce n'est pas sorcier, il suffit d'avoir quelques informaticiens pour régler ce problème mais ça fait quatre ou cinq ans qu'on tourne en rond. La promotion internationale de nos artistes, alors, la participation de nos artistes au niveau des événements musicales et internationales.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Can you sit down, hon. Barbier? Can I know which phone has been ringing? Is that yours, hon. Ganoo?

(Interruptions)

Thank you. You can resume!

Mr Barbier: M. le président, quand est-ce qu'on aura des infrastructures appropriées pour que nos artistes, nos musiciens à Maurice puissent organiser des festivals de musique et des concerts dans des salles fermées, appropriées, un peu partout dans l'île pour qu'ils puissent participer pleinement dans leur business de musique. La musique aurait pu être un de nos industries qui auraient pu emmener beaucoup d'argent dans le pays. Malheureusement, depuis des années, il y a eu des négligences. J'avais plein d'espoir sur ce nouveau gouvernement parce que j'avais l'intention au départ qu'ils allaient vraiment apporter des solutions qui s'imposent dans ce secteur mais malheureusement tout est resté au point mort et

au bout de cinq ans bientôt. Donc, on n'a pas même bougé d'un millimètre et c'est grave. Comme je vous dis, on aurait pu faire de cette industrie musicale, une révolution pour nos artistes et musiciens Mauriciens. Le gouvernement a investi beaucoup dans l'industrie cinématographique, des centaines de millions, mais à côté, des miettes pour l'industrie musicale. Pourquoi ? Pour quelles raisons ? Donc, on n'arrive pas à comprendre et tous les autres compartiments de l'art Mauriciens restent toujours les parents pauvres de notre budget national. Ce budget qui devrait être un budget de la bouche doux n'a finalement engendré beaucoup de déception, très peu de content et surtout un échec total du point de vue économique et un lot de promesses qui ne se réaliseront pas d'ici la fin de ce mandat.

Je dirai pour terminer, M. le président, *that you have fooled the population in 2014. You can't fool the population anymore, it is now time to have a responsible Government to take over for the sake of our future.* Le peuple en a marre, le peuple en a ras-le-bol. J'ai terminé, M. le président.

The Deputy Speaker: I suspend the sitting for half an hour. May I request hon. Members either to switch off or put on silent mode their mobile phones while they are inside the House. Thank you.

At 5.24 p.m., the sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 6.08 p.m. with Madam Speaker in the Chair.

Madam Speaker: Please be seated! Yes, hon. Rughoobur!

(6.08 p.m.)

Mr S. Rughoobur (Second Member for Grand'Baie & Poudre d'Or): Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, to start with, let me, first of all, congratulate the hon. Prime Minister for the presentation of an excellent Budget, qui *a été très bien accueilli parmi la population*.

Madam Speaker, during these few days, I have had the opportunity to listen to people from various quarters. If we had to narrow down the critics that have been levelled against the Budget, especially from some prophets of doom, Madam Speaker, can be summarised as follows *que, premièrement, c'est un budget électoraliste,* we will see, I will come to it in a few minutes. Secondly, the economic indicators are in the red that the level of debt is so high, and third, that there is no value addition to the economy, *et qu'il y a que des effets d'annonce*.

Madam Speaker, let me come to the first critic levelled against the Budget and the Budget proposals. Madam Speaker, I think some people have not learned their lessons of 2014. When people were claiming 60-0, they were treating the population as fools. Madam Speaker, what happened in 2014, they have not learned their lessons. When we say that *c'est un budget électoraliste*, we are insulting this population outside there, Madam Speaker. The hon. Prime Minister was on TV yesterday to explain the Budget, and he said that we, at the level of the Government, and he personally has been, *il a toujours été consistant dans son approche.* Just have a look at our budgetary proposals, year in, year out, we have been consistent. *Et c'est insulter la population*, if we say that with the proposals that we have in this Budget that we can easily fool them. *C'est une insulte.* So, what we are saying, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, I came across the autobiography of one of the business tycoons recently in the UAE. And do you know what he had to say, Madam Speaker? He said something really beautiful in his autobiography, that God has given us two ears and one tongue. It's not for nothing, Madam Speaker!

(Interruptions)

It's not for nothing! And let me tell you, Madam Speaker, that there has been...

(Interruptions)

Let me tell you, Madam Speaker, that some people when they are saying, *que c'est un budget électoraliste*, do you know what they want to say? That the vote - and this is important - of our elders is worth Rs500. This is what they are saying. When we are proposing Rs500 to our elders, do you mean to say this Rs500 is what is their vote worth of? This what we are saying? Are we are saying, Madam Speaker, that the vote of taxi drivers is worth a little effort that this Government has been doing in terms of giving them this duty-free benefit? Are we saying, Madam Speaker, that the vote of the majority of our civil servants is worth this Rs1,000 increase in their salary? This is what we want, this is the signal that some people are sending to the population. It's because they have not learned their lesson, Madam Speaker, 60-0, 40 plus 40 = 80 voting. Madam Speaker, is it what we are saying? No, Madam Speaker!

I was listening also to the Prime Minister newly elected, Shri Narendra Modi who stated that, Madam Speaker, he never considers the electorate as a vote bank. He is there to serve the entire population irrespective of the colour of their skin, of the political party they belong, of the social status they represent, he is there to serve everybody. It is in that spirit

that our Prime Minister has prepared this great Budget and presented to the National Assembly, Madam Speaker. And not this year only, year in, year out this has been the case I'll come to those people who are saying that it's *effets d'annonce*, I come to that Madam Speaker. But, let me come to the critics levelled against the management of public affairs, critics levelled against this Budget and the economic indicators today.

Madam Speaker, there are two extremes. You know, some people, when they are in the Government, they are as realistic as possible and when they go into the Opposition, they are more than idealistic, this is what they are. And lately, Madam Speaker, I came across what Hillary Rodham Clinton, very beautiful line after, in one of her latest books, what happened. Do you know what she said, Madam Speaker? That the challenge of a leader is to strike the right balance between being idealistic and being realistic. And this is what we have been doing, year in, year out, Madam Speaker. So, every year since 9-10-11 years, we will say to the population: 'You know, the economic indicators are in the red'. I come to what happened during the nine years that the LP Government was in power. In my constituency, I'll come and then I'll show what we did during these four years, Madam Speaker.

What are the critics that are being levelled against this Government, Madam Speaker? Economic indicators, lack of transparency in our fiscal and public debt management, competitiveness of our country, drivers of growth is in the red, we are stuck in the middle income trap. The overall average target for employment creation is well below expectation. These are series. Year in year out, we have been saying the same thing to the population, Madam Speaker, and this since ten years. But when we were campaigning in 2014, we said something different. We said that, irrespective of these economic indicators, we will bring development; we will ensure that we keep our promise. But how are we going to do this, Madam Speaker? Are we going to repeat the same exercise that the former Government did? Are we going to tell them, 'Look, we are entirely in a very difficult economic situation?' No, Madam Speaker! This is what the Prime Minister and this Government has been doing, trying to strike the right balance between being realistic and being idealistic. And in this exercise, Madam Speaker, what have we been doing during these recent years? You will remember, I had the opportunity to mention this, when the Prime Minister was appointed Minister of Finance. I told you earlier, Madam Speaker, we have got two ears and one tongue. For a reason, God gave us two ears and a tongue. The Prime Minister decided to visit every constituency and took stock of what were the problems that the people were facing, and he came in our Constituency as well. Madam Speaker, since he was appointed Prime Minister,

he took a series of measures and ensured, along with us, that those promises were kept. And what were those promises, Madam Speaker?

Madam Speaker, I will come to those promises in a minute. So, the first critic, Madam Speaker, as I mentioned earlier, was this issue of *un budget électoraliste*. Second, everybody is saying that the economic indicators are in the red, that the Budget has not made any provision for addressing those indicators. The third critic that is being levelled against this Government: no value addition, *effet d'annonce,* nothing is happening. So, let me come to my Constituency and let us see if this is true. Let us see whether the Prime Minister has been able to strike this balance between being idealistic and realistic. And what I want to show, Madam Speaker, is what those figures are worth. Let's for a minute agree that between 2009 and 2014, the figures in different sectors were better than us. It is not enough to say this. You have also to say how the population benefitted from those figures. You need to justify what worth those figures were, and we are going to tell the population what worth our figures are today, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, when we were campaigning in 2014 - I will take some villages in my constituency. Do you know, Madam Speaker, Poudre d'Or is the only village where during a football match, you take a corner kick from a classified road? That was the situation in 2014, this is the reality and Poudre d'Or is famous for this. And they told us that we are waiting since 20 to 25 years for a proper football ground. And what we have done? What has the Prime Minister done, Madam Speaker? He allocated more than Rs5 m. And I have to thank Compagnie Mont Choisy and Compagnie St Antoine which contributed almost Rs2.5 to Rs3 m. and a plot of land. Next month, Madam Speaker, the football ground with all the amenities, lights and everything would be ready.

Goodlands! Madam Speaker, at the very beginning of our mandate we understood that the people there needed badly a proper market fair and a traffic centre. We discussed with the Prime Minister and the hon. Minister of Public Infrastructure collaborated fully with us. He delegated two engineers; we worked with the Chairman of the District Council in the north. During three years, plans were prepared, we negotiated with St Antoine and we got 11 *arpents* of land free of charge. Madam Speaker, the Prime Minister personally intervened and he told us that he wants this project done during our mandate. And you know what has happened, Madam Speaker? I have the latest information: the letter of award is being issued for Rs300 m. in one week's time. Work is going to start in less than one month. This is striking the right balance. Figures that Mr Sithanen is mentioning in the papers, what are

they worth? You have got better figures during the nine years the LP Government was in power? Do you know what these figures are worth? In Goodlands, a bypass and a mediclinic. Only this in nine years and I challenge them to come and challenge what I am saying. Madam Speaker, only a mediclinic worth, I think, around Rs40 m. and a bypass less than Rs100 m, maybe Rs75m. Rs150 m. in nine years on projects! I will come to what we have invested and what we are going to invest because projects have already been awarded.

Madam Speaker, hon. Adrien Duval is there, he is my mandate. He was insisting that we have to improve the road network in Calodyne, Grand Gaube. He knows perfectly well what the situation was from Goodlands to Calodyne and all the way from Calodyne to Trois Bras. In these three years, Rs40 m. has been spent in the resurfacing and the road network has been improved. He has to admit that we have been working, Madam Speaker. This has been done and this was the aspiration of the population in 2014, and we have met that aspiration, Madam Speaker.

Let me come to Cap Malheureux. In Cap Malheureux and Pereybere, there has been improvement in the water supply and more than Rs150 m. has been invested. And you know, when we were just elected, - my hon. friend Fowdar can confirm - every week we heard of the acute problem of water in these regions like Pereybere, Grand Baie and Cap Malheureux. Madam Speaker, since a year, all these problems have been resolved and the Deputy Prime Minister personally followed up this project. I know it and I would like to thank him for that. Madam Speaker, more than Rs150 m. worth of projects there for the improvement in water supply. Now, the work has started for the Cap Malheureux bypass project, Rs200 m. Work has already started, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, when the Prime Minister, as Minister of Finance, visited Pereybere and Camp Carole after the flood problems there, immediately he gave instructions to the NDU to make a survey and ensure that these flood problems are solved at the earliest. In these three years Madam Speaker, consultants have been working, tender has been floated and works started. In fact, works are about to be completed. It is a project of almost Rs90 m. Rs55m. in Pereybere and more than Rs30m. in Grand Baie. This is what our figures are worth, Madam Speaker. When we talk of economic indicators, this is what our figures are worth.

Now, I come to Fond du Sac. Madam Speaker, everybody knows that the flood problem has not started since 2014. It was there since long and the Prime Minister had the

opportunity to comment on a statement made by a former Minister of Public Infrastructure which was false. They issued tender and then it was cancelled. But we started, Madam Speaker, in 2014-2015, and here, we have to pay tribute to those civil servants who have been working in extreme conditions. Our colleagues and I were there in the CAB Office and every month we were making a follow-up with these civil servants and the consultant as well. They have been working extremely hard. We have been successful in securing the plot of land from the planters and a project of Rs102 m. The contract has been awarded and work has already started at Fond du Sac, Madam Speaker. When we visited Fond du Sac, again we saw the condition of that market fair. And I must say, Madam Speaker, once again that even if there are budgetary constraints, the hon. Prime Minister agreed that we have to provide a new market fair at Fond du Sac. And that is, Madam Speaker, something which again for more than 20-25 years those inhabitants have been waiting for. And again this is the collaboration between the private sector and the Government which is extremely interesting.

The Mont Choisy company, Madam Speaker, we have to pay tribute to them, they have accepted to give us a plot of land of five acres for the construction of a market fair and the MoU is being signed and funds are earmarked for the construction of a market fair and if you look at its deplorable state on which this market fair is, Madam Speaker. There is no structure. On rainy days, it is muddy everywhere, no structure; it is in an open air, in 2014, 2015, 2016, Madam Speaker, you can't accept this. I am happy that we are providing a solution to these people and very soon there also people of Fond du Sac are going to get a proper market fair for them, Madam Speaker.

Finally, in the Constituency, Madam Speaker, I am listing these projects only to show that we are walking the talk since 2015. It is not only *l'effet d'annonce.* All these projects that I have mentioned *sont en chantier*. Some have reached up to 80%, Madam Speaker.

Finally, in Vale and Petit Raffray, construction of village halls which have been completed, new lighting facilities to the Vale football ground and a multipurpose complex in Petit Raffray and another one very near in Reunion Maurel very soon. I forgot also, Madam Speaker, that very soon inhabitants of Grand Baie are going to get their Health Centre because the plans, drawings are ready and the tender is going to be floated.

Madam Speaker, we have got a lot of projects. I was mentioning Petit Raffray. Most of these projects, Madam Speaker, *sont déjà en chantier*. Only to tell you, Madam Speaker, again that we are walking the talk. It is important when we talk of economic indicators we

ask ourselves what these economic indicators are worth. It is important for us to ask this question, Madam Speaker, but, Madam Speaker, I am not going to be long.

I have been mentioning those three issues that I consider we had to reply to them and I believe that this Budget is a budget that is for the population and it is not *un budget électoraliste*, it is not a budget that is there for the coming election, We are convinced, Madam Speaker, that the promises that we have been taking in 2014, we have been keeping them, we have been very sensible to the problems of the population and, Madam Speaker, as I said earlier, this Budget has been prepared in a spirit to bring development and prosperity to the nation, to the people irrespective of what I said earlier of the background, or irrespective of the social status, irrespective of which political party they belong and before resuming my seat, Madam Speaker, let me conclude by saying this.

Madam Speaker, everybody knows that the hon. Prime Minister during his mandate has been going through extremely hard times and it is important for me to end by saying a few lines that is not mine but that of Nelson Mandela and this is a tribute to the youth of this country and a way of saying thank you to the hon. Prime Minister for what he has been doing during these four and a half years because without his support, nothing would have been possible. All the projects that I have just mentioned, nothing would have been possible without his support. And let me quote Nelson Mandela, Madam Speaker –

> "If our expectations, if our fondest prayers and dreams, are not realised then we should all bear in mind that the greatest glory of living lies not in never falling but in rising every time you fall."

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Jhugroo!

(6.31 p.m.)

The Minister of Housing and Lands (Mr P. Jhugroo): Madame la présidente, je tiens à féliciter le Premier ministre pour avoir présenté son septième budget qui a été très apprécié par toute la population sauf l'opposition. *The country today is very lucky to have got one of the best Ministers of Finance and also one of the best Prime Ministers.* Ce budget vient corriger la réforme faite par le tandem, Sithanen-Ramgoolam qui n'avait aucune considération pour ceux qui sont au bas de l'échelle.

Ce n'est pas un budget électoraliste *ou ki p fer la bouse doux*, c'est un budget présenté par quelqu'un qui a à cœur les personnes démunies et qui ont besoin un coup de pouce de l'État. Notre Premier ministre est en train de changer la vie de nos citoyens depuis qu'il a pris le flambeau. Sans se vanter contrairement à l'ancien Premier ministre qui voulait changer - l'ancien Premier ministre, l'ancien régime qui voulait changer notre vie en 100 jours. Ce gouvernement a pu prendre beaucoup de décisions qui ont grandement aidé la population, surtout ceux qui sont au bas de l'échelle. Le salaire minimal, le *Negative Income Tax*, des *schemes* pour venir en aide aux petits planteurs de cannes, planteurs de thé aux agriculteurs et pour les pêcheurs.

J'avais entendu le leader de l'opposition dire : 'que représente une augmentation de R 30 en 2019 ?' Il a été ministre des Finances plusieurs fois, plusieurs années, laissez-moi lui rappeler, en 2012, il avait donné une augmentation de R 15 seulement ; en 2013, une augmentation de R 10 ; en 2014, que R 9.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker, when hon. Xavier Duval is in the Opposition, he thinks differently and he has got very brilliant ideas, but surprisingly when he is in Government, he does the contrary. As Minister of Finance for many years, why has he constructed only 2,496 housing units for the past 10 years? I would like to ask him if he knows about the existence of Cité Longère at Baie du Tombeau where 150 families have been living in absolute poverty for more than a decade. *La circonscription de l'ancien Premier ministre de l'ancien régime,* was he aware of the unhygienic conditions in which these families were living with regard to toilets and bathrooms. *Il y a 40 familles qui utilisaient une toilette.* I will come to it later on in my speech. I wish to point out that the former Government had constructed 2,496 housing units of an area of only 39m^2 and targeting only one category of income earner of those only less than Rs8,500 monthly. But since our Government is in power, my Ministry has developed several policies to meet the demand for housing, targeting families with different income threshold whereby the beneficiaries do not pay the full cost of the unit.

In the year 2015-2016, our Government revised the housing policies in order to target a wider range of beneficiaries earning a monthly household income of up to Rs20,000 monthly. In this Budget, our Prime Minister has again reviewed the income threshold to target families having an income up to Rs30,000 monthly. As such, the overall housing scheme shall be as follows as from now –

i. Families, earning up to Rs10,000 monthly and who are found eligible under NEF Housing Scheme, will benefit from 75% Government subsidy on purchase of NHCD housing unit;

ii. Families, earning up to Rs10,000 monthly and are found eligible under the NHCD Housing Scheme, will benefit from 67% Government subsidy on purchase of NHCD housing unit;

iii. Families, earning between Rs10,001 to Rs15,000 monthly, will benefit 60% Government subsidy;

iv. Families, earning between Rs15,001 to Rs20,000 monthly, will benefit 30% of Government subsidy;

v. Families, earning between Rs20,001 to Rs25,000 monthly, will benefit 25% of Government subsidy, and

vi. Families, earning between Rs25,001 to Rs30,000 monthly, will benefit 15% of Government subsidy.

The NHDC has embarked in the construction of very smart residential units across the island to meet the Government Vision 2030 of alleviating poverty.

The housing units comprise, not like before *boite zalimet*, of, at least, $50m^2$, to accommodate two bedrooms, a living and dining room, a modern kitchen, a beautiful bathroom, toilet, facilities for electricity and water supply. Provision has also been made for the beneficiaries to extent the housing unit *tout en respectant le cahier des charges*. I wish to mention that in all NHDC Housing Estates, this Government is providing all necessary social and recreational amenities where required such as –

- Pétanque court;
- Children's playground;
- Community Centre like at Pointe aux Piments;
- Badminton court, we have got two at Henrietta, and
- Green space.

Since 2015 - just to reply to the Leader of the Opposition - 1,979 housing units have been completed and construction of 3,230 housing units is in progress and will be completed by December 2020. 1,050 housing units are at tender stage and construction works will start by the end of this year.

Coming to the question of the hon. Leader of the Opposition, I wish to inform him that, out of 1979 housing units constructed, 1449 houses have already been handed over to the beneficiaries with their title deed. Before 2015, this was not the case, Madam Speaker. I admit there is a delay due to the fact that many beneficiaries do not submit the required documents in time to prepare their title deeds. Why are we giving them their title deed, while handing over the housing unit, this is because they can apply for a loan, if however they wish to extent their housing unit.

Furthermore, 16 sites have been identified across the country for the construction 6,000 housing units over the next 3 years. Madam Speaker, it is our Government that had taken the decision to construct 150 housing units at Cité Longères, Baie du Tombeau and I have to admit that after election, my 3 colleagues from Constitution Number 5 went to see the Prime Minister and then we started this project of construction of houses there and the former Prime Minister, Navin Ramgoolam, had forgotten his own Constituency. The project cost is around Rs250 m. Construction works have already started since January 2018. 90 housing units are expected to be completed by January 2020 and the remaining by December 2020. I wish to highlight that, during the construction phase, families have been relocated in decent, temporary shelters connected with water and electricity supplies and having an individual toilet and bathroom which was not the case in the past years.

Madam Speaker, there are many families who already own a plot of land and are having difficulties to construct a concrete house or others who want to improve their existing ones but, due to financial constraints, they are unable to do so. So, this Government, through the Prime Minister, will continue to provide grants schemes to these families for either to cast their roof slab or for the purchase of building materials. Despite the fact that the schemes were reviewed last year to target a wider range of households having an income up to Rs20,000 monthly, this Government has again revised the scheme as follows. First, families, earning up to Rs10,000 monthly, can now benefit a maximum sum of Rs100,000. Thank you, hon. Prime Minister for the casting of roof slabs and of purchase of building materials.

Second, families earning from Rs10,001 to Rs15,000 monthly can now benefit a sum of Rs70,000 for casting of roof slabs and purchase of building materials which were not given before. The same thing applies to families earning between Rs15,001 to Rs20,000 monthly. They can now benefit a sum of Rs50,000 for casting of roof slabs and purchase of building materials. *Un ouf de soulagement à tous ceux qui font de l'effort pour construire une maison et on dit merci au Premier ministre.*

Moreover, the Building Materials Grant Scheme and the Roof Slab Grant Scheme will also be extended to the NEF beneficiaries of a housing unit and to families occupying an ex-CHA house containing asbestos. Since 2015 to date, 5,715 applicants have benefitted from these schemes which amount to Rs376 m. For this financial year, an amount of Rs125 m. is being earmarked for beneficiaries under these schemes.

Madam Speaker, a sum of Rs130 m. has been earmarked for the rehabilitation of wastewater disposal system for 10 NHDC sites throughout the island. A contract for works for five sites has already been awarded at a cost of Rs106 m. As at date, 11,413 families have already become owners of the plot of State Land on which stands an ex-CHA house. For the financial year 2018-2019, 206 families have finalised their title deeds and became owners of the plot of land.

Au niveau des infrastructures, il y a beaucoup de projets à travers le pays et comme on dit l'île Maurice est devenue un grand chantier et sans doute, mon collègue, l'honorable Bodha, en a parlé dans son discours. Mais comment ne pas parler du méga projet, le Metro Express, un projet qui marquera l'histoire du pays. On critique beaucoup le projet de *safe city*, mais je vous assure que la population saura son importance au moment où le projet sera opérationnel.

Madame la présidente, dans tous les coins et recoins du pays, il y a un *feel good factor* parmi la population. C'est grâce aux bons travails de ce gouvernement et ils nous disent : *rester mam, continuer zotte bon travail*. Je souhaiterai faire ressortir que c'est sous le gouvernement MSM/ML qu'une commission d'enquête sur la drogue a été mise sur place. On ne doit pas oublier le nombre record des saisis des drogues qui a eu lieu. Dans le passé, le Parti travailliste n'avait jamais eu le courage de le faire et aujourd'hui, il vient dire qu'il faut légaliser le cannabis, *dum maro dum*. Quand le MSM est au pouvoir, le pays témoigne la réalisation de nombreux projets qui sont faits dans l'intérêt des citoyens et aujourd'hui, il y a des développements non seulement à Maurice mais à Rodrigues et Agaléga.

Parlant du dossier Chagos, l'île Maurice est très reconnaissante envers Sir Anerood Jugnauth et notre Premier ministre pour leur détermination. Ils ont réussi à faire trembler les grandes puissances telles que l'Amérique et l'Angleterre. Bravo Sir Anerood ! Bravo Pravind ! Après cette éclatante victoire de votes du soutien de 116 pays pour le retour de Chagos à l'ONU. Quand le MSM est au pouvoir, le peuple est soulagé. Quand le Parti travailliste est au pouvoir, *le peuple rane gaz*. Le prix du gaz ménager qui était à Rs330 sous

le règne du Parti travailliste/PMSD avant décembre 2014 a considérable baissé sous ce gouvernement et aujourd'hui se vend à Rs210.

Quand le Parti travailliste était au pouvoir, nous avons eu des autobus de la CNT hors nombre qui ont été source des accidents fatals. C'est grâce à nous que la CNT s'est procurée des bus *semi-floor* qui sont confortables pour les usagers de la route. Notre gouvernement est en train de changer des tuyaux de l'amiante à travers le pays et qui datent des centaines d'années. Il y a plusieurs *spots* de wifi gratuit à travers le pays et 11,000 familles qui sont sur le SRM *register* vont avoir accès gratuit à l'internet.

Madame la présidente, je suis d'avis que lorsque quelqu'un travaille avec sincérité et honnête pour son pays, il y a toujours une main divine qui l'aide à faire des miracles, la victoire de Chagos, le projet de Betamax et le jugement de *Privy Council* sur CT Power.

Tout comme l'Inde a eu Modi comme Premier ministre qui a accompli beaucoup de progrès pour les indiens, Maurice a de la chance d'avoir Pravind Jugnauth comme Premier ministre qui est en train de faire le même pour notre pays. C'est sans nul doute que pour les prochaines élections générales, Pravind sera reconduit comme Premier ministre tout comme Modi en Inde. Cette grande foule présente le 01 Mai à Vacoas est la preuve que la majorité des Mauriciens vont soutenir notre gouvernement.

Madame Speaker, since our Government is in power, many projects have been initiated across the island and I must say that my constituency and the constituency of my colleague, the Government Chief Whip, hon. Hurreeram, has not been left behind as it had been under the previous regime. *Pendant les dix dernières années, rien n'a été fait dans la circonscription no. 12 comme venait de mentionner, mon collègue, l'honorable Rughoobur, dans sa propre circonscription. Un des projets les plus remarquables est le* flyover *construit sur l'autoroute de Mare d'Albert vers l'aéroport pour soulager les usagers de la route durant les heures de pointe.*

Des infrastructures sportives ont été aménagées dans le but de promouvoir le sport parmi les jeunes et de combattre le fléau de la drogue. Deux *mini soccer pitch* ont été construits à Mare d'Albert et à Tombeau Mahebourg pour la somme de R 2.2 millions et de R 2.16 millions. Un autre projet similaire est en construction à Plaine Magnien. Il y a trois qui vont être construits bientôt à Carreau Esnouf, Trois Boutiques et Mare Tabac.

Dans ce même contexte, nous avons pris l'engagement d'éclairer plusieurs terrains de foot. Trois terrains de foot seront éclairés très prochainement à Grand Bel Air au coût de R

6.2 millions. Trois Boutiques R 5.5 millions et Petit Bel Air R 500,000. A noter que le terrain de volley-ball de carreau acacia sera également éclairé. Un terrain de foot à Plein Bois. Merci, M. le Premier Ministre. Sans oublier le complexe sportif de Beau Vallon, comme mentionné dans le budget. *A multi-complex hall* a été construit à Camp Carol. Celui qui travaille beaucoup pour sa circonscription, Rakesh Koolchand. Beaucoup d'années il a voté pour le Parti travailliste, et il m'a dit *banne la ine mari couyon li*. Heureusement que le MSM est là et nous avons concrétisé son rêve à Camp Carol. Et il dit : *'Aret couyon dimoune, banne Parti travailliste à travers le pays'*. *A multi-complex hall* de Camp Carol a été construit pour la somme de R 8.1 millions. Un autre bijou encore, à Ville Noire, au coût de R 8. 4 millions. Un troisième à Trois Boutiques. Quatrième à Beau Vallon. Un *sub-hall* à Le Bouchon pour la somme de R 4.3 millions.

A noter que nous avons déjà enclenché les démarches pour l'acquisition d'un terrain à des places pour la réalisation d'un projet similaire. La foire de Plaine Magnien au coût de R 13 millions. Merci, M. le Premier ministre. *Banne la ine mari couyon dimoune*.

Madam Speaker: Mind your language, hon. Jhugroo!

Mr Jhugroo: Excuse me, I apologise.

La construction de la foire de Mahebourg au coût de R 85 est au *tendering stage*, va devenir une réalité grâce au Premier ministre. Un incinérateur à Tombeau, Mahebourg au coût de R 8 millions qui est en construction. La construction de la place taxi de Shandrani pour la somme de R 1.5 millions. Et je dois aussi féliciter notre PPS, notre formidable PPS, l'honorable Madame Boygah. Entre initiative historique et la régularisation des titres de propriété a une centaine d'habitants de Camp Carol et qui date de plus de 50 ans. Le docteur Bunwaree pendant combien d'années, il n'a pu rien faire. Et c'est nous, mon collègue et moi qui sommes en train de réaliser ce rêve pour eux, sans oublier les travaux de construction des drains dans des endroits affectés de différentes régions, l'aménagement des trottoirs et l'asphaltage des routes. Une nouvelle terminale de 50,000 mètres carrés sera construite pour permettre d'accueillir près de 8 millions de passagers. Une nouvelle route qui va rallier le village de Mahebourg à l'aéroport sera construite.

Le budget fait aussi mention de la construction d'un *airport city* avec des nouvelles infrastructures pour permettre la formation des pilotes et les autres professionnels de l'aviation civile. Une ferme solaire sera construite dans l'enceinte de l'aéroport pour prôner l'énergie verte.

To conclude, Madam Speaker, I would say that we are very proud of our Prime Minister for having taken bold measures to improve the standard of living of the population. Our Prime Minister is a man of vision. He came with the same objective of putting our country on the right track again, and we are sure that by the great work being carried out, he is attaining his goal. Since Pravind Jugnauth took the command of the country, we are getting positive feedback from the population across the country. I am very confident that MSM/ML will be back *en force* in this august Assembly after the next general elections.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Mrs Selvon!

(7.00 p.m.)

Mrs D. Selvon (Second Member for GRNW & Port Louis West): Madame la présidente, les objectifs de ce budget sont un taux de croissance de 4,1%, un déficit budgétaire de 3,2% et une dette publique de 63,4%. Ce sont là des objectifs macroéconomiques fondamentaux contenus. Quant aux mesures prioritaires énoncées, elles touchent au social, à l'infrastructure et aux petites entreprises. Notons, toutefois, que dans son *Staff Report for 2019*, l'article 4 'Consultation', le Fonds Monétaire International parlait avant le budget d'une croissance de 3,8% en 2017 et aussi en 2018, je cite: *« Real GDP expanded by 3.8% in 2017 and is estimated to have grown at a similar rate in 2018 »*.

Si j'accueille positivement certaines mesures, je m'expliquerai ici, en tant que député No. 1, où il y a un très grand nombre de personnes et de familles vulnérables en raison de la pauvreté, d'un âge avancé et de diverses maladies. A ce titre, j'accueille surtout les mesures qui aideront ces familles. Avec une hausse de leurs maigres revenus et quelques prix réduits, comme celui du gaz ménager, qu'ils soient retraités, petits travailleurs ou pensionnaires, ils seront soulagés, Madame la présidente.

Cependant, je me fais aussi le porte-parole des pêcheurs professionnels de ma circonscription, qui n'ont reçu que des miettes, soit seulement R 30 d'augmentation de leur compensation pour chaque jour de perte de travail pour cause de mauvais temps.

Par ailleurs, j'accueille deux mesures que j'ai suggérées, à travers des interpellations parlementaires posées cette année et qui ont été acceptées, à savoir, premièrement, un congé public pour la visite du Pape.

My parliamentary question was on 16 April 2019 and is as follows –

"Whether, in regard to the forthcoming visit of His Holiness Pope Francis, he will state if –

(a) consideration will be given for the 9 September 2019 to be proclaimed public holiday, and

(b) our security services will be provided with all required equipment and means to ensure maximum security therefor."

Et, deuxièmement, Madame la présidente, un hôpital dédié aux soins des reins ou hôpital rénal, en raison de l'épidémie actuelle du diabète qui est caractérisé par une mortalité croissance, des centaines d'amputation chaque semaine auxquelles s'ajoute une complication mortelle du diabète avec une explosion des cas de maladie rénal chronique qui est non-guérissable. C'est une bonne chose que l'inclusion sociale des défavorisés pour leur mieux-être reste une priorité. Pour les jeunes, l'amélioration de leur employabilité par un apprentissage renforcé et aussi une considération budgétaire importante. L'entreprenariat fait également l'objet, avec raison, des mesures incitatives avec l'idée de renforcer les PME et les investisseurs dans ce secteur. Madame la présidente, étant fermement encrée dans l'opposition, il est de mon devoir également d'avoir une approche critique en soutien à mes collègues de ce côté de la Chambre, je dirai même que je manquerai à mes responsabilités sans accomplir cette tâche. Tout d'abord, une des plus grosses critiques contre le discours du budget vient des économistes, Pierre Dinan et Eric Ng Ping Chuen, cités comme suit dans la presse au sujet de l'annonce, que, pour payer la dette publique à l'avance, le ministre puisera dans un fonds spécial à la Banque de Maurice. Je cite, ici, ce journal –

« Légalement, le ministre des Finances en a le droit, mais ceci dit la Banque de Maurice aura moins d'argent à sa disposition pour gérer la monnaie », avance Pierre Dinan. Ce qui le pousse à se poser la question suivante : cette décision ne vient-elle pas réduire la capacité de la Banque de Maurice à gérer de jour en jour et de mois en mois la valeur de la roupie ?

Une crainte que partage Eric Ng, directeur du cabinet PluriConseil. « Ce n'est pas une bonne pratique. C'est un mauvais signal pour le marché. Les réserves de la Banque de Maurice sont là pour défendre la roupie. Avec une telle décision, il y aura beaucoup de pression sur la monnaie locale. Je ne serais pas étonné que la roupie se déprécie dans les mois à venir », avance l'économiste. »

L'année 2014 fut celle des grandes promesses de l'alliance Lepep, aujourd'hui décédée. 2015 fut celle du renouvellement et de la répétition à satiété dans le discours présidentiel et le discours du budget de 2015-2016, de ces fameuses promesses surtout, un deuxième miracle économique, moins le projet tramway des travaillistes, moins aussi des décisions cachées à venir, telles qu'il y aurait deux Premier ministres et trois ministres des Finances, et pour corser le tout, deux Présidents de la République. Mais pourquoi pas un troisième, je dirai, à ce train-là ? Le miracle économique promis à répétition aurait été, en fait, non pas le deuxième, mais le troisième économique de notre histoire postindépendance. Le premier fut réalisé de 1971 à 1974. Le deuxième économique se produisit dans les années 80, sous Sir Anerood Jugnauth, quand des investisseurs de Hong Kong et des pays avoisinants comme Taiwan et Singapour, paniqués par l'imminente rétrocession de Hong Kong à la Chine, se ruent vers notre zone franche exportation. Le discours du budget de 2015 est totalement oublié aujourd'hui, mais le discours du budget 2018-2019 se veut quand même une continuation de par son titre, '*A continuation of the vision to transform Mauritius into a high income economy*.' Soit un troisième miracle économique serait toujours possible, selon le troisième ministre des Finances, mais d'ici 2023.

Une des firmes de comptable qui commente le budget pose une question pertinente, je cite –

> *"The vision of a high income country by 2023, with a GDP per capita of USD 13,600, implies that our economy will have to grow by an average of over 6% per year. Given the forecast growth of 4.1% for next fiscal year, there will have to be new avenues of incremental economic growth to help achieve this vision in the longer term. In such a future state of affairs, one would eventually question if the pursuit of a prudent transformation will be enough? Or should we as a country, be bolder with less reliance on government?''*

Madame la présidente, puisqu'on nous demande de voter ce nouveau budget, nous pouvons ne pas parler du fléau de la corruption qui se chiffre en multi milliard et le cancer du gaspillage sans retenu, auquel le gouvernement avait promis de mettre fin, peu avant et peu après sa prise au pouvoir.

Aujourd'hui, quatre ans plus tard, toute personne qui tape en anglais les mots 'Mauritius, a corruption…', le premier site internet qui apparait sur l'écran de votre

ordinateur s'associe aux deux mots comme deux synonymes sur Wikipédia. Dans son *Staff Report*, cité plus haut, le FMI écrit ceci, et nous met en garde, je cite -

> "Recently, there has been a slight deterioration in some aspects of institutional quality indicators, including an increase in the perception of corruption. Staff urged the authorities to maintain a strong and independent institution to remain an attractive investment and employment destination."

De son côté, la Banque Mondiale, tout comme le FMI, écrivait le mois dernier sur des allégations de *financial impropriety* au plus haut niveau à Maurice.

Revenons à la situation économique et financière du pays qui reste fragiles, Madame la présidente. Il y a quelques jours, l'économiste mauricien, très respecté, Eric Ng Ping Chuen, a eu raison de se moquer de ce qui s'est passé et qui a fait perdre à Maurice sa vocation de pays producteur, et l'a fait ressembler aujourd'hui à La Fourmi de la fable de Monsieur de la Fontaine. Je me réfère, ici, à son étude, intitulée, 'Maurice, La Cigale', avec sur la couverture une cigale dessinée sur une carte de Maurice.

> « La Cigale, ayant chanté tout l'été, Madame la présidente, se trouva fort dépourvue quand la bise fut venue. Elle alla crier famine chez la Fourmi sa voisine, la priant de lui prêter quelque grain pour subsister jusqu'à la saison nouvelle.
>
> Je vous paierai, lui dit-elle, foi d'animal, intérêt et principal. La Fourmi répondit : Que faisiez-vous au temps chaud ?
>
> Vous chantiez ? Et bien ! Dansez maintenant. »

Eh bien, le temps est venu pour nos ministres des Finances de danser maintenant ! Qu'est-ce que nos trois ministres des Finances chantaient durant l'été, Madame la présidente, en 2014-15 ? Ils chantaient des promesses ! Puis, nos ministres, ils ont dansé tout l'été et se sont permis de jeter à la poubelle un projet d'investissement de dizaine de millions de dollars pour faire accéder Maurice et ses planteurs à un marché mondial de plusieurs milliards de dollars de cannabis médicinal. Cela, alors que le Sénat Français vient d'approuver ce cannabis, non intoxiquant à l'unanimité, pour au moins deux ans d'évaluation. Ce gouvernement a choisi d'ailleurs de maintenir le cannabis industriel sous un tarif douanier favorable et incitatif aux producteurs agricoles étrangers au détriment des planteurs mauriciens, jugés inaptes pour une telle activité économique, qui, en Australie, comme je le dis depuis 2015, a été proposé pour renforcer le secteur agricole et même sucrier, surtout au Queens land, où le cannabis a été expérimenté en entreligne de canne avant d'être légalisé d'abord pour usage médical. Aux

Seychelles, on est aussi en avance de loin sur Maurice. La '*Seychelles National News Agency'* du 01 juin 2019 a annoncé, je cite –

> *"The Seychelles' Constitutional Court on Friday ordered the Government to make regulations for the medical use of cannabis, ruling in favour of a patient who uses the drug to help with the effects of Alzheimer disease.*
>
> *The Court gave the Government of Seychelles (…) 24 months to make regulations under the Misuse of Drugs Act 2016, which authorises the use of any controlled drug for medical purposes.*
>
> *Friday's ruling relates to a petition filed by Ralph Volcere in October 2017 on behalf of his mother, Marie-Thérese Volcere, who suffers from Alzheimer's disease and relies on the use of cannabis oil for treatment."*
>
> *Volcere had petitioned the Constitutional Court to seek a declaration that the Minister responsible for Home Affairs, MacSuzy Mondon, had violated three articles of the Constitution - Articles 15, 16 and 29 - by refusing to make the regulations since the law was enacted in 2016. The petition said the lack of action denied her mother and other patients who are terminally ill access to legal cannabis treatment."*

Madame la présidente, je conseillerai donc aux Mauriciens qui ont des parents souffrant d'Alzheimer de les amener soigner soit aux Seychelles soit en Angleterre où les hôpitaux du gouvernement donnent le cannabis médicinal dans les prescriptions du *National Health Service* ou *NHS*. Maurice continuera à afficher son ignorance prévalant au plus haut sommet de l'État.

Le budget qu'on nous demande de voter a ainsi rater une occasion pour offrir à certains malades de nouvelles avenues pour soigner l'asthme, l'Alzheimer et le cancer qui viennent d'être découvertes.

Parmi les promesses mirages les plus spectaculaires figurait aussi un miracle économique avec une croissance dépassant 5% par an, une fourniture d'eau permanente, soit 24/7 et aussi le plein emploi. Avec la disparition totale du chômage par la création de 20,000 emplois par an jusqu'à la fin du mandat, soit une promesse de 100,000 nouveaux emplois en cinq ans de mandat.

Aujourd'hui, alors que les deux miracles économiques des années 70 et 80 furent l'occasion pour Maurice de produire massivement et exporter plus que la valeur de ses

importations, c'est l'inverse qui s'est produit, sont toutes un miracle économique à l'envers. Selon le dernier rapport du Directeur de l'Audit, le cancer du gaspillage, Madame la présidente, a atteint des records jamais égalés en 50 ans d'indépendance. Cela alors que le dernier rapport trimestriel de *Statistics Mauritius* publié le 29 mars 2019, nous informe que Maurice fait l'inverse du miracle économique promis par ce gouvernement en nous informant que Maurice importe plus qu'elle n'exporte. Durant la période janvier à mars 2019, alors que pas moins de trois ministres des Finances et deux Premiers ministres ont garanti aux mauriciens un troisième miracle économique, le pays a importé pour R 212 milliards et exporté pour une valeur de seulement de R 83 milliards. Le déficit de la balance commerciale pour les trois premiers mois de cette année était de R 129 milliards contre R 112,1 milliards en 2018 durant le premier trimestre de 2019, un déficit massif qui nous entraine très loin des promesses des trois ministres des Finances et des deux Premiers ministres. Qu'ont-ils promis, Madame la présidente ? Tout ce que j'ai déjà cité, mais les mauriciens ne cessent de demander à haute voix tous les jours dans les rues au lieu du miracle économique tant de fois promis et chanté *ad nauseam*, que se passe-t-il ? Nous vivons de dons et de dettes massives. Pire! Les discours officiels sont tous l'occasion maintenant pour la défunte l'alliance de se frapper fièrement la poitrine pour avoir copié le projet travailliste, réparer et améliorer le projet travailliste de la Route Verdun et d'avoir réalisé une croissance économique autour de 3% par année comme affirmait l'ex-grand argentier Vishnu Lutchmeenaraidoo. Cela au lieu de 5,5% promis. Le miracle économique n'a pas eu lieu et encore moins le plein emploi. L'ex-ministre des Finances, Vishnu Lutchmeenaraidoo disait ceci dans son discours du budget 2015/2016, je cite –

> "In regard to the domestic economy, we note that growth has continued to oscillate around an anaemic 3 per cent for the last decade. Such a low growth rate cannot generate enough employment and improvement in living standards. At this rate, we will soon be overtaken by other countries. In 2014, the unemployment rate stood at 7.8 per cent, with a high concentration of jobless among our youths and women. Here it is worth noting that in the latter part of the 1980s, it took a growth rate of around 6.5 per cent to achieve full employment."

Et le ministre ajoutait ceci, je le cite –

> "For 2015/2016, we expect GDP growth to go up to 5.3 per cent and for 2016/2017, we are targeting a growth rate of 5.7 per cent. As I announce the policies and

measures in this Budget, this House and the nation will better understand my optimism."

Et maintenant qu'il est parti, Lutchmeenaraidoo et que son optimisme s'est évaporé, je redemande à son successeur : où est passé donc la promesse de miracle économique?

Je remercie la Chambre de m'avoir écoutée, Madame la présidente.

Madam Speaker : Hon. Sawmynaden !

The Minister of Technology, Communication and Innovation (Mr Y. Sawmynaden): Madame la présidente, merci de me donner l'occasion d'intervenir sur le Budget 2019/2020, quatre ans et demi après l'arrivée de ce gouvernement au pouvoir. Ce dernier exercice budgétaire pour ce mandat fait, une fois encore, la part belle au social et au progrès via l'innovation.

Let me, first of all, congratulate the Prime minister for another excellent Budget. This country has been blessed to have a Prime Minister of his caliber and thank you to Sir Anerood Jugnauth for giving this country his son and as a father he should be proud of him.

Ce n'est pas un hasard si la toute première mesure annoncée par le Premier ministre lors de son discours fut l'injection de R 100 millions dans le National Innovation and Research Fund.

Dans son discours, le Leader de l'opposition mentioned that there has been a drop in the ranking of our country n innovation and I would like to bring some clarity to the House on this matter.

The Global Innovation Index (GII) ranking for Mauritius was 64th in 2017 and 75th in 2018.

The Global Innovation Index is based on 80 sub-indicators and one of them being 'cost of redundancy dismissal'. This indicator is the one which showed the greatest decline for Mauritius.

In 2017, we were 36th in the world for the 'cost of redundancy dismissal' and we were 124th position in 2018. The technical definition of 'cost of redundancy dismissal' is: "the cost of advance notice requirements and severance payments due when terminating a redundant worker, expressed in weeks of salary."

For Mauritius, the 'cost of redundancy dismissal' was based on the figures reported in the 'Doing Business Report' of the World Bank. In this report, the number was 6.3 salary weeks in 2017 and increased to 69.3 salary weeks in 2018.

Following an in-depth analysis of the Employment Rights Act 2008, the Mauritius Research Council concluded that there could be a misreporting of data to the World Bank. A meeting was convened on 30 May 2019 by the MRC to discuss the matter with –

- EDB;
- the Ministry of Labour, Industrial Relations, Employment and Training, and
- my Ministry.

The misreporting of data was confirmed and, following the meeting, the EDB sent an official letter to the World Bank on 31 May 2019 to report on this faulty information and we requested that corrective action be action. Consequently, we expect our ranking in innovation to be revised in the next edition of the index.

Madame la présidente, je pense que j'ai été très clair là-dessus et maintenant je continue. En effet, notre pays, sous ce présent régime a déjà entamé sa marche vers la modernité mais sa complète transformation nécessitera de l'innovation à tous les niveaux, que ce soit au niveau de nos citoyens, de nos entreprises et du gouvernement.

Et dire que certains dans l'opposition, des oiseaux de mauvais augure, disaient que ce gouvernement était voué à l'échec. N'est-il pas vrai que l'honorable Bérenger avait pris l'habitude d'annoncer et d'espérer la chute de notre alliance. A ma connaissance, il l'avait dit en 2015, en 2016, en 2017, en 2018, élection derrière la porte, et cette année aussi. Après, le PMSD s'est joint à lui après leur départ du gouvernement pour dire que les élections arrivent bientôt.

Mais, envers et contre tous, l'alliance MSM-ML est restée solide et va compléter son mandat tout en restant concentrée sur la Vision 2030, qui est la transformation de Maurice en un pays inclusif et à hauts revenus.

Madame la présidente, ce parcours a toutefois été semé d'embûches. La principale fut sans conteste l'affaire Medpoint. Nos adversaires attendaient avec impatience et voracité le jour où Pravind Jugnauth serait incriminé pas parce qu'il était coupable mais c'était leur seul espoir de se débarrasser de lui car tant qu'il sera là, leur traversée du désert sera plus longue ou même interminable. Qui ne se rappelle pas des gestes de l'honorable Rajesh Bhagwan au Parlement, signifiant que le *leader* du MSM allait être menotté? Ce député, père de famille de

surcroît, n'a pas réfléchi sur l'impact qu'un tel geste pouvait avoir sur les enfants de Pravind Jugnauth.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Tarolah, please, don't make provocations.

(Interruptions)

Can everybody calm down please? Hon. Bhagwan, please! I have called to order hon. Tarolah. Please calm down. Yes!

Mr Sawmynaden: Laissez-moi me répéter, madame la présidente. Qui ne se rappelle pas des gestes de l'honorable Rajesh Bhagwan au Parlement, signifiant que le *leader* du MSM allait être menotté?

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Jhugroo! You are on Government side. I expect you to be silent when the hon. Minister is intervening.

(Interruptions)

Hon. Bhagwan, please!

Mr Sawmynaden: Ce député, père de famille de surcroît, n'a pas réfléchi…

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: If you continue, then I'll suspend the sitting, then I'll allow you to continue your small talk till you finish and then we come back.

Mr Sawmynaden: Il n'a pas réfléchi sur l'impact qu'un tel geste pouvait avoir sur les enfants de Pravind Jugnauth. Madame la présidente, l'honorable Bhagwan l'a si tant dit pendant tant d'années : je ne serai pas là l'année prochaine. Je ne serai pas là l'année d'après. Je ne serai pas député. Madame la présidente, quarante ans qu'il est au parlement, qu'il a été au MMM. Et laissez-moi vous dire. Toutes les prédictions de Rajesh Bhagwan ont été fausses jusqu'à aujourd'hui.

(Interruptions)

Mais, heureusement que même pendant ces moments difficiles, l'objectif de l'honorable Pravind Jugnauth est de rester constant : le progrès de notre pays ! Ceci caractérise l'âme

d'un grand leader, jamais intimidé et faisant fi des brimades pour se concentrer sur le travail à accomplir.

Le pire, Madame la présidente, était que certains dans l'opposition savaient pertinemment que Pravind Jugnauth était innocent. Mais ceux-ci, dans leur cynisme, souhaitaient quand même son malheur. Ils ont dû bien rire jaune lors du jugement définitif prononcé par le Privy Council le lundi 25 février dernier. Ce jour restera dans la mémoire des mauriciens car, en effet, ce fut aussi le jour où la Cour internationale de justice de La Haye donna son avis favorable sur le dossier Chagos. Cela ne peut être une coïncidence, moi, j'y vois l'intervention de Dieu. *Madam Speaker*, one day, a great swami in India told me: "*Nothing is called coincidence, everything is meant to happen*." And it happened.

Là-aussi nous devons nous souvenir de ce que certains de nos opposants avaient dit sur la démarche de Sir Anerood Jugnauth. Ils avaient osé insinuer que notre dossier était mal ficelé et que c'était peine perdue. J'espère de tout cœur qu'ils ont réalisé leur erreur lorsque Maurice remporta haut la main le vote au niveau de l'Assemblée Générale des Nations Unies le 22 mai dernier.

On peut se demander si certains sont de vrais patriotes car pendant la lecture du Budget, quand Pravind Jugnauth avait félicité Sir Anerood Jugnauth, ceux-ci n'avaient même pas eu la décence et le respect de l'applaudir. Je pense que nos frères et sœurs chagossiens les ont bien vus y compris la population mauricienne.

Madame la présidente, J'aborderai maintenant une autre victoire de notre pays. Je parle bien sûr de l'affaire Betamax, un des plus gros scandales à mettre à l'actif du précédent régime. Alors que notre gouvernement menait un combat au niveau judiciaire devant la Cour suprême, il semblerait que les Ali-Baba à l'origine de ce contrat mafieux rêvaient d'empocher des milliards au frais des contribuables mauriciens. Et dire que ces vautours rêvent aujourd'hui d'accéder de nouveau au pouvoir ! Heureusement que notre Cour suprême a rendu son jugement le 06 Juin dernier en signifiant que ce contrat était illégal et que les signataires avaient donc une mauvaise intention dès le début. La population ne sera pas dupe pour leur faire confiance une fois de plus.

Finalement, Madame la présidente, le jour de la présentation du budget, nous avons pris connaissance du jugement du Privy Council concernant l'affaire CT Power, *enkor enn goal*. Une fois de plus, ce sont des milliards de roupies que nos concitoyens n'auront pas à

financer de leurs poches. The Deputy Prime Minister has already made a statement so I will not linger on that.

Je voudrais aujourd'hui rendre un hommage à notre partenaire, le Muvman Liberater d'Ivan Collendavelloo. Depuis 2014, le MSM et le ML font cause commune pour le développement du pays. Notre allié n'a jamais failli à son engagement, et cela ne m'étonne guère car il a à sa tête un homme de conviction. Ivan Collendavelloo est un vrai patriote, un homme sincère, un des rares militants qui ont eu le courage de ne pas suivre Paul Bérenger en 2014, lorsque ce dernier s'est jeté dans la gueule du loup nommé Navin Ramgoolam. Ivan Collendavelloo n'est définitivement pas un suiveur mais, en tant que vrai *leader*, il a su prévoir la catastrophe qui se profilait à l'horizon pour les Mauves. Même moi, en tant qu'ancien militant du MMM, je suis très triste pour les militants qui sont toujours sur le coaltar.

Madame la présidente, il faut reconnaître que Maurice a connu ses plus belles heures de gloire et de développement sous un gouvernement avec le MSM comme moteur. Cela personne d'honnête ne peut le contester.

Depuis 1983, sous le leadership de Sir Anerood Jugnauth, notre pays a décollé d'une manière extraordinaire avec l'avènement de nouveaux secteurs économiques. Le textile, le tourisme furent les ingrédients de la transformation du pays, avec le plein emploi qui généra le boom économique. Ce fut une période faste qui vit l'apparition de lecteurs de vidéos, de chaines P-compo, de plaques à gaz au sein des foyers locaux.

Dans les années 2000, une fois encore Sir Anerood Jugnauth et le MSM furent à la base de la naissance d'un nouveau secteur, le TIC. Qui ne se souvient pas de la litanie des travaillistes à ce sujet, ils l'appelaient l'éléphant blanc. Aujourd'hui, la cyber-cité est remplie de gratte-ciels, les TIC représentent le troisième pilier de notre économie et les 850 entreprises de ce secteur sont là pour en témoigner. Là encore c'est une belle réussite, un *game changer* avec la cyber-cité devenue aujourd'hui le poumon économique de l'île avec environ 50,000 personnes qui y travaillent.

Je pose la question à la population : quel nouveau secteur a émergé de 1995 à 2000 ; de 2005 à 2014 quand le PTR était au pouvoir ? Rien. Par contre, émeutes 1999 oui. Des valeurs morales laissées par nos ancêtres étaient complètement en baisse. Et maintenant ils parlent de libéralisation du cannabis, le nouveau secteur économique.

Madame la présidente, le budget 2019-20 s'inscrit dans la continuité de la stratégie du gouvernement. En tant que Premier ministre et Ministre des finances, l'honorable Pravind Jugnauth avance avec intelligence vers sa vision, et la nôtre aussi, d'une Île Maurice inclusive à hautes revenues. Cette vision s'appuie sur deux facteurs essentiels : une gestion économique sérieuse et des mesures salvatrices visant à soulager les couches les plus vulnérables de la population. Tous les budgets présentés sous ce mandat ont été le reflet du savant mélange de ces deux éléments. Je ne citerai que deux mesures phares pour illustrer mes propos, l'introduction du salaire minimum et la constante augmentation de la pension de vieillesse.

Madame la présidente, les chiffres sont édifiants en ce qu'il s'agit de cette pension. Imaginez-vous qu'en 2005, à l'arrivée au pouvoir de l'alliance sociale de Navin Ramgoolam, nos aînés touchaient R 2,200 comme retraite. En dix années de règne, ce montant n'augmenta que par R 1,423.

(Interruptions)

En dix ans, R 1,423 !

Madam Speaker: Hon. Jhugroo! Hon. Jhugroo, I wish to draw your attention a second time. You had the floor, you had the opportunity to intervene, now, don't interrupt others.

Mr Sawmynaden: Dès notre arrivée au gouvernement, afin de rendre leur dignité à nos illustre aînés, l'alliance Lepep augmenta immédiatement cette pension à Rs5,000. C'est-à-dire, nous avons pris deux semaines pour faire ce qu'ils ont pris 10 ans à faire. Et depuis cette année, ce montant a augmenté pour atteindre Rs6,710 en janvier 2020. Donc, d'un côté vous avez un gouvernement travailliste qui n'accorde Rs1,423 en dix ans et de l'autre côté, vous avez notre gouvernement qui augmente cette pension par Rs3,087 en espace de quatre ans et demi, c'est-à-dire, 85 % d'augmentation. N'oublions pas que cette mesure est couplée à divers réductions dans les prix de produits et de première nécessité, comme celle du gaz ménager passant de R 330 à R 210 durant ce mandat.

Madame la présidente, notre gouvernement *means business,* nous agissons pour le bien-être de toute la population. Sous la houlette de Pravind Jugnauth, ce pays est armé pour mieux envisager son futur. Dès l'entame de son mandat, le gouvernement MSM-ML a misé sur la relance de l'économie. Des grands chantiers ont été lancés, notamment le plus gros projet jamais réalisé à Maurice, le Metro Express, le barrage de bagatelle a été inauguré, il y a eu un investissement massif en vue de fluidifier le trafic routier, avec pas moins de Rs50

milliards consacrés à la construction d'échangeurs, de *flyovers* et d'un pont qui reliera Coromandel à Sorèze. Et comme dit l'adage, quand la construction va, tout va. Nul besoin de demander à Solange d'emmener son *diary* parce que le *diary* est déjà rempli ou peut-être demander à Solange d'emmener la tablette.

Madame la présidente, on ne peut faire mentir les chiffres. Les statistiques sont officielles, les statistiques officielles sont là pour prouver mes dires, le chômage est à la baisse. Notre gouvernement a pu renverser la tendance en créant de nouveaux emplois, ramenant le taux de chômage à 6.9%, son niveau le plus faible depuis 2001. Demain, comme l'a démontré ce budget de l'honorable Pravind Jugnauth, nous entrouvrons un autre pilier de notre économie en misant sur la région de Côte d'Or. A cet effet, je dois dire que cette localité se trouvant dans ma circonscription et les projets conséquents qui s'y réalisent actuellement font l'objet de critiques de la part de l'opposition. Le 07 Mai dernier, dans un *Private Notice Question* adressé au ministère de la Jeunesse et des Sports, il voulait avoir des précisions s'agissant de la construction du *sports complex*. Je tiens à lui rappeler que c'est moi qui avais initié ce projet au moment où j'étais ministre de la Jeunesse et des Sports. Initialement, il était question d'une piscine olympique et d'un gymnase qui allaient faire aussi salle de concert, mais avec la vision du Premier ministre, qui à l'époque ministre des finances, après une rencontre avec le Premier ministre Chinois, proposa de nous financer la construction d'un complexe sportif de niveau international, une structure qui n'a pas son équivalent dans la région.

Madame la présidente, si le gouvernement chinois avait la moindre redoute que l'argent donné allait atterrir dans un coffre, vous pensez qu'ils allaient nous aider? Le sport, je tiens à le rappeler, est avant tout un formidable vecteur d'unité nationale et maintenant nous pouvons d'une part attirer les meilleurs sportifs du monde entier à venir s'entraîner mais aussi révolutionner la pratique du sport au niveau de nos concitoyens. Je tiens aussi à faire savoir que l'organisation des dixièmes jeux des îles est l'affaire de tous les mauriciens, c'est un enjeu national, un événement qui servira de vitrine pour notre magnifique île. Mais je ne peux m'empêcher de souligner qu'à chaque fois qu'un gouvernement MSM est au pouvoir, Maurice à l'honneur d'accueillir ces magnifiques jeux. Tel fut le cas en 1985, en 2003 et cette année. Là je laisse le soin à la population de tirer leur propre conclusion. Il ne faut pas oublier que lors de la précédente édition de 2015 à la Réunion, alors que j'étais ministre des Sports, Maurice y enregistra sa meilleure performance de toute l'histoire des jeux en gagnant 66

médailles d'or. Cette même année, notre pays réussit sa meilleure performance aux jeux d'Afrique avec huit médailles d'or.

Le Premier ministre s'est engagé à doter cette région d'un vrai bijou en matière d'infrastructures sportives. Le *Sports Complex* de Côte d'Or aura notamment une piscine aux normes olympiques, sans oublier son bassin d'échauffement, ainsi qu'un *walking track*. La piscine sera un atout majeur pour la région après les jeux car il sera facilement accessible et aussi pour répondre à la question du *Leader* de L'Opposition, laissez-moi l'informer que bientôt la region de Saint Pierre sera dotée d'une nouvelle gare vis-à-vis de l'ancienne gare, c'est-à-dire plus près du complexe sportif, alors ce sera *easily accessible.*

Et en parlant de piscine, nous ne pouvons que saluer la proposition du Premier ministre de donner aux personnes âgées un accès gratuit aux piscines publiques à travers le pays afin de promouvoir l'activité physique. La région de Côte d'Or connaîtra d'autres développements majeurs dans les années à venir, elle accueillera aussi l'académie d'excellence de football qui sera construite en collaboration avec la fameuse équipe de Liverpool, gagnante de la dernière Ligue des Champions.

Madam Speaker, …

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker,…

Madam Speaker: Hon. Quirin!

Mr Sawmynaden: *Attane toi*!

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Quirin, you seem to ignore that I am calling you to attention.

Mr Sawmynaden: Madam Speaker, you will never walk alone when MSM is in Government.

(Interruptions)

You will never walk alone when the MSM is in Government. Laissez-moi aussi dire à la Chambre que pendant mon passage au ministère de la Jeunesse et des Sports, beaucoup de fédérations internationales avaient émis le souhait de faire de Maurice leur training camps. Avec ce complexe sportif, je suis sûre que Maurice sera le training camps de beaucoup de fédérations sportifs internationaux et cela rapportera beaucoup d'argent au pays. De plus,

Côte d'Or se transformera aussi en un *education hub* avec la création d'une académie pour les enseignants et le transfert de l'Université de Technologie et du *Mauritius Institute of Education*.

Madam Speaker, I will now come back to the Budget Speech of our hon. Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and Economic Development which I am sure will be remembered for years to come as a visionary budget. Since the coming into power of the MSM-ML Alliance in 2014, our vision has remained constant to transform Mauritius into an inclusive high income country well before 2030. As such, the measures contained in this budget come at an opportune time as they will no doubt contribute to achieve this vision with true prosperity for all. This is why as soon as the Budget Speech ended on Monday, people from all walks of life have positively commented on the measures announced.

Permettez-moi, Madame la présidente de citer quelques réactions post- budgétaire glanées dans la Presse. Ainsi, Madame Jaqueline Sauzier, secrétaire général de la chambre d'agriculture, parle d'un budget social, environnemental et tourné vers le peuple. M. Jocelyn Kwok, CEO de l'AHRIM, évoque pour sa part des mesures visant à redonner à Maurice ses qualités premières alors que M. Kevin Ramkaloan, CEO de Business Mauritius, met en avant les mesures dans le domaine de l'innovation qui pourraient booster la productivité.

Madam Speaker, allow me to talk about Governmental e-services where our motto has become to make services digital by default and, therefore, accessible online. Government has since the last two years move into the next stage of digital Government, that is, from e-Government to m-Government. Our citizens, who all own a smart phone, already heavy app users, as such it is important for Government to create our support mobile apps to offer a wide range of services to the public. As such, my Ministry has, in collaboration with many other Ministries and departments, come up with creative ways of using mobile apps for Government and, today, our citizens have access to eight mobile apps. They are the Emergency Alert app, the Smart Police app, the Smart Traffic app, the Consumer Rights app, the Family Welfare app, the School Companion app, the Search Government app and the newly launched Mokaro app.

All these apps can be downloaded for free from mauritiusapps.govmu, from the Google and Apple app stores.

The *Family Welfare app* is yet another example of a Government reacting promptly to a social evil. Child abuse or domestic violence cannot be tolerated in a modern country like

Mauritius. This is why I insisted on having an app, called the ‘Family Welfare app’, which potential victims can use to report any suspect individual for immediate action to be taken by the appropriate governmental body.

This app has a panic button which someone in danger can press, it will automatically link that person to the concerned authority for immediate action. This app was released in 2018.

The MoKaro app has been recently launched by myself in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture, our planters now have in their pocket a tool which enables them to determine precisely.

Avec cette App, Madame la présidente, la communauté des planteurs évitera de subir des pertes et aussi éviter les gaspillages. Cette App permettra en un clic de savoir le tonnage d’un légume déjà planté, alors si le seuil est déjà arrivé, alors il peut shifter sur un autre produit, et madame la présidente, le jour de lancement de cette App, cette App n’a jamais été rapportée dans la presse. Pourquoi? Un outil technologie donné aux planteurs, mais si mêmes planteurs étaient sur la rue, là oui, toute suite. Madame la présidente, je laisse aux planteurs le soin de juger eux-mêmes. Je pense que mon collègue, le ministre de l’Agriculture et mon ministère, on a travaillé en étroite collaboration et laissez-moi vous dire que la communauté des planteurs est enchantée.

Another example of an app which has proven to be very useful is the Emergency Alert App. The app has been used extensively during the two recent cyclones in Rodrigues, Gelena and Joanina.

I am pleased to inform the House that the Smart Police app and the Emergency Alert app have been ranked in the top five apps at the World Summit of the Information Society (WSIS) forum of the ITU this year.

On a similar note, the Info-Highway has been awarded the WSIS Champion 2018 prize for being in the top five in the world in its category. Info-Highway is a secured data exchange platform for Ministries and Departments.

Info-Highway has proved to be a very versatile tool which is used throughout Government. For example, it powers the IT system used since the introduction of negative income tax in November 2017.

Today, Info-Highway hosts some 400 e-services and supports about 30 Ministries and Departments. Of course, as citizens go more and more online to transact, they are more exposed to cyber threats and cybercriminals. This is why we are setting up a Cyber Defence Centre to better protect the Government Online Centre (GOC), where most of the critical systems of Government are hosted. Additionally, we are setting up a Disaster Recovery Centre in Rose Belle to provide for continuity in case there is a catastrophe.

Madame la présidente, depuis 2014, ce gouvernement a apporté des changements profonds dans toutes les facettes de notre société, qu'il s'agisse de la sphère sociale, de notre environnement, de l'écosystème business et, bien sûr, la technologie. Nos citoyens ont bien compris les efforts que le gouvernement a déployés au cours des quatre dernières années et demie pour améliorer leur vie.

En tant que ministre de la Technologie, de la Communication et de l'Innovation, j'ai le plaisir de dire à la Chambre que, si les différentes mesures contenues dans les quatre derniers budgets n'avaient pas été prises, notre secteur des TIC n'aurait pas atteint le niveau de développement formidable que nous connaissons aujourd'hui.

Afin de suivre le rythme de l'évolution rapide du monde, mon ministère a publié trois documents de stratégie importants l'année dernière -

- La Digital Mauritius 2030 Strategy;
- La Digital Government Transformation Strategy 2018-2022, and
- Et la Mauritius Artificial Intelligence Strategy.

Comme nous le savons tous, le paysage technologique change constamment et un pays qui ne prévoit pas ces changements sera à la traîne. C'est pourquoi nous avons formulé une Digital Mauritius 2030 Strategy qui définit des objectifs clairs pour l'infrastructure des TIC, la cyber-sécurité, l'innovation et la gestion des talents à Maurice.

De même, le mode de fonctionnement des gouvernements évolue également. Notre Digital Government Transformation Strategy 2018-2022 met l'accent sur la nécessité de s’appuyer sur des données concrètes pour la prise de décision au sein du gouvernement. La stratégie fournit des pistes pour transformer notre gouvernement en un *digital government* à part entière.

Madame la présidente, nous sommes à l'ère de la quatrième révolution industrielle. Nous sommes tous à constater comment les technologies émergentes ont un impact considérable sur la société et l'économie mondiale.

Reconnaissant ce fait, le Premier ministre, l'honorable Pravind Kumar Jugnauth, a annoncé dans son discours sur le budget pour 2018-2019 que le gouvernement favoriserait le développement de nouveaux facteurs de croissance, tels que Internet of Things, le Big Data, Blockchain Technology , la Fintech et Artificial Intelligence.

La formulation de notre Mauritius Artificial Intelligence Strategy fait suite à l'engagement du gouvernement à faire de l'AI un élément fondamental de notre prochain modèle de développement. L'Intelligence Artificielle a le potentiel de doper notre économie tout en améliorant la qualité de vie de nos citoyens.

En novembre 2018, nous avons organisé le World AI Show et le World Blockchain Summit qui ont eu un succès phénoménal. L'audience était majoritairement constituée de professionnels mais nous devons nous accorder pour dire que, pour de nombreux Mauriciens, voir Sophia, le robot humanoïde, pour la première fois, a été un grand et magnifique déclic.

Des petits enfants aux PDG de groupes privés les plus puissants, en passant par, j'ose le dire, les ministres, nous avons tous compris que notre avenir était brillant, à condition que nous déployions tous les efforts nécessaires pour maîtriser la science et la technologie.

Au lieu d'être uniquement des utilisateurs, nous devons devenir des créateurs. Ce pourquoi je suis particulièrement heureux d'informer le Parlement que pas plus tard que la semaine dernière, le gouvernement a approuvé la création du Mauritius Artificial Intelligence Council.

Les membres du Conseil formuleront d'abord un plan d'action conforme à la stratégie de Maurice en matière d'intelligence artificielle. Ensuite, après un examen approfondi des solutions prêtes à l'emploi pour l'intelligence artificielle, les solutions les plus utiles seront rapidement mises en œuvre à Maurice. Nous voulons des résultats tangibles!

Une de nos priorités sera d'explorer sur une base pilote l'intelligence artificielle dans nos plantations en vue d'augmenter leur rendement.

Madame la présidente, permettez-moi de dire brièvement quelques mots supplémentaires sur certaines initiatives qui ont été mises en œuvre et qui sont appelées à créer un changement majeur dans le paysage des TIC à Maurice -

- Pour assurer que Maurice se développe sur le mode inclusif, les 11,000 familles, qui sont sur le *Social Register* de Maurice, bénéficieront d'un accès totalement gratuit à l'Internet à haut débit. Ce sera un pas géant pour combler

la fracture numérique et sera financé conjointement par le gouvernement et le Mauritius Telecom.

- La robotique n'est plus de la science-fiction pour nos enfants grâce au Mauritius Research Council, qui relève de mon ministère. Environ 1,200 étudiants âgés de 11 à 25 ans ont été initiés à l'électronique et à la construction de robots, y compris Rodrigues. Ces enfants seront ceux qui créeront nos propres versions de Sophia dans le futur.
- De même, nos élèves en primaire et au secondaire ont appris la programmation. Cette compétence est maintenant essentielle dans le monde moderne. En effet, les programmeurs sont ceux qui créé les applications Mobiles et Web que nous utilisons tous les jours. Grâce au National Computer Board, opérant sous l'égide de mon ministère, et à son Youth Engagement Programme, 2,500 jeunes Mauriciens ont été formés à la programmation et constitueront très probablement le gros des software engineers de demain. Une conséquence positive de l'apprentissage de la programmation à un jeune âge est que les enfants développent également leurs capacités de *critical thinking*, de créativité, de déduction logique et de résolution de problèmes.

Madam Speaker, according to the Internet Society, many Small Island Developing States face challenges in Internet connectivity due to their remoteness and high cost of crossing open sea, combined with small population, low population density, consequent low economies of scale which often lead to high connectivity costs.

Mauritius has been fortunate to have a strong network of stakeholders which have not hesitated to connect Mauritius to many other countries in mainland Africa, to Far East countries, to Asian countries and Europe. This international internet connectivity has become a critical element for booming our ICT and BPO sectors.

Let me remind Members of the House that Mauritius now has 100% coverage with Fibre To The Home (FTTH). Fibre optics is everywhere since December 2017. And we should all be proud that Mauritius is the 8th country worldwide to have such coverage.

By early 2020, we will be witnessing the coming into operation of two more submarine cables, namely, IOX and METISS to complete the existing two submarine cables, SAFE and LION. This will, once, again allow our citizens to have a faster internet and we believe that, because of added competition, prices will also decrease.

Naturally, the digital divide has not only been addressed in Mauritius, but also in Rodrigues. Since February 2019, the two islands are linked by MARS cable which allows people in Rodrigues to enjoy the same kind of internet bandwidth we now take for granted in Mauritius. Provision of Fibre to Home in Rodrigues is currently in progress. Agalega, on its side, is now connected to the internet by satellite. This clearly indicates how our Government cares for the people in Rodrigues and the Outer Islands.

Coming back to Agalega, in addition to internet, major infrastructural developments are being done there. It is a pity that in this august Assembly itself, Opposition Members instead of showing their patriotism for our Republic, preferred practising India-bashing simply because this country was helping us. *Dans cette même optique, le Premier ministre a prévu un budget pour nos frères et sœurs Chagossiens.*

Madam Speaker, let me now come to some of the measures announced in Budget Speech 2019-2020 concerning areas under the responsibility of my Ministry. Conscious of the fact that the digital transformation is the new norm, I thank the hon. Prime Minister for rightfully preparing the country and our citizens for this new shift towards digital world.

My Ministry will endeavour to implement the innovative measures proposed in the Budget Speech in the spirit of citizen facilitation such as –

- Applying for and securely obtaining extracts of birth certificates and marriage certificates online at no cost.
- The online payment of utilities such as the CEB and CWA bill
- And in the same spirit, parents will be able to apply online for seats for their children in primary and secondary schools.
- Private candidates wishing to seat for SC and HSC Examinations will be able to complete their registration online, including the payment of examination fees.

Since the 22 November 2018, vehicle owners pay their road tax online (*la declaration).* This has considerably reduced their burden, and sooner, *Madame la présidente*, they will be able, when they purchase a new vehicle, to register same online. No need to move from door to door - the registration becomes possible from the comfort of their homes.

Madam Speaker, ICT in education is a prime importance. I have already mentioned Digital Youth Engagement Programme of the National Computer Board to introduce programming to primary and secondary levels. Now, after Grades 1, 2 and 3 pupils, Grade IV

students will also benefit from the use of tablets as announced in the Budget. This will provide teachers with the possibility for more interactive sessions compared to talk-and-chalk approach we had in the past. Our kids will thus learn in an environment close to what exist in richer countries.

For our young adults pursuing studies at university level, the teaching of Computer Science, Software Engineering and Information Technology has also received a boost with the doubling of intake at the University of Mauritius. I strongly believe that the number of young people going to STEM subjects for their higher studies will increase thanks to the introduction of free tertiary education in the public universities. This ground breaking measure announced by the hon. Prime Minister at the beginning of the year is surely the reflection of a man of vision wishing to equip the country with the highly skilled people it requires.

Madam Speaker, as we all know, we need to support SMEs and start-ups as they are the best vectors for jobs and wealth creation. The Mauritius Research Council has been supporting our SMEs and start-ups since 2015 with the introduction of matching grants. Today, the MRC is managing a portfolio of over 150 projects initiatives to the tune of Rs358 m. of which more than Rs200 m, that is, 56%, is committed in cash and in kind by the private sector and other partners. We expect these numbers to increase in the coming years.

Furthermore, after having set up two 3D printing centres, one in Port Louis and one in Coromandel, the National Computer Board will shortly set-up a Fab Lab, that is a fabrication laboratory, offering digital fabrication facilities which will be equipped with an array of flexible computer controlled tools with the aim to make almost anything in various materials. Thanks to this Fab Lab, we will witness the emergence of a new breed of SMEs and start-ups.

This Government has unarguably been in the forefront of innovation for the continued development of the economy, the creation of new areas of economic activities with the ultimate aim to improve the quality of life of our citizens.

Innovation became an integrated part of our Ministry as from December 2014 and, ever since, there has been marked improvement in the whole ecosystem of research and innovation and would be opportune to highlight some of the major milestone achieved.

To give research and innovation a greater thrust for the benefit of the country, this Government announced that the Mauritius Research Council will be fundamentally reviewed

and restructured to transform it into the Mauritius Research and Innovation Council (MRIC), the Council to set the national direction in terms of research and innovation.

As I already mentioned, Rs100 m. has been injected in the National Innovation and Research Fund managed by this new Mauritius Research and Innovation Council. One key element will be the involvement of the private sector. The Act also makes provision for extensive changes in the way intellectual property is managed. Inventors and creators will own their Intellectual Property. This in itself will act as a big catalyst for innovation.

Madam Speaker, last but not least, we should not forget the MIR-SAT1. It is indeed a matter of pride for the whole nation that Mauritius will be launching its first satellite in space at the end of the year. The initiative is an important first step geared towards exploring the potential of space technology for socio-economic benefit of the country.

One year ago, a multi-institutional team, led by the Mauritius Research Council won the first prize at a contest organised by the United Nation Office for Outer Space Affairs (UNOOSA), and the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA) KiboCUBE Programme 2018, for the design and the building of the first Mauritius Cube Satellite.

Since then, MIR-SAT1 is being assembled in the UK, based on designs created by the team led by the Mauritius Research Council (MRC). The assembly and testing will be finished by September this year and the cube satellite will then be transported to Japan to be subsequently launched in space. As soon as it starts operating, the MIR-SAT1 will collect images of Mauritius, surrounding regions using a long wave infrared thermal camera. The data from the satellite will be collected by main ground station situated in the MRC premises. This station will also collect data from other satellites passing over our territorial waters. Having our own satellite orbiting planet earth will be a massive achievement for a small island nation such as Mauritius. Once again, it is proof of how the MSM and the ML team innovates.

Madame la présidente, avant de conclure, je voudrai rendre un hommage particulier à Sir Anerood Jugnauth. C’est bel et bien un véritable mentor pour tous ceux qui sont en politique. C’est sous son leadership que j’ai eu l’opportunité de servir mon pays en tant que ministre. Cela a été un vrai privilège, une vraie leçon de vie de travailler sous la houlette de cette légende vivante. Et désormais, c’est l’honorable Pravind Jugnauth qui marche dans ses pas. Notre Premier ministre nous a démontré durant son premier mandat que c’est un homme sérieux, un homme en qui on peut avoir confiance. Au contraire d’un ancien Premier ministre

qui batifolait à droite et à gauche au son de la macarena, Pravind Jugnauth est un *family man.* J'ai beaucoup appris à ses côtés. L'honorable Pravind Jugnauth est un homme d'honneur, quelqu'un de très loyal et qui a une seul parole. Homme d'action qui prend le premier avion disponible pour se rendre auprès des rodriguais touchés par le cyclone. Il part constater sur le terrain puis il vient avec des mesures concrètes pour soulager les sinistrés. Résultat, paragraphe 397 du budget, je cite –

> *"A new housing scheme will therefore be introduced to upgrade and strengthen the Corrugated Iron Sheet and ex-Trust Fund houses."*

C'est ça la touche de Pravind Jugnauth, un *caring Prime Minister.* Pas comme le Premier ministre '*touss Sali'* qui été porté disparu pendant 72 heures lors des émeutes de février 1999. Madame la présidente, l'honorable Pravind Jugnauth et moi-même nous travaillons dans la circonscription No. 8 depuis 2006. L'honorable Madame Leela Devi Dookun-Luchoomun nous rejoint quelques temps après. J'ai eu la chance de servir cette circonscription maintenant en tant que député/ministre aux côtés du Premier ministre et de l'honorable Madame Leela Devi Dookun-Luchoomun. Nous trois nous travaillons ensemble parce que notre principale priorité demeure le développement de notre circonscription. Aujourd'hui, nos mandants nous qualifient comme le *dream team.* Ceci parce que bien des travaux qui n'ont pas été effectués au cours des 15 années ont été achevés et d'autres sont en cours d'être complétés. Les faits sont là, une cinquantaine de routes ont été goudronnées et ré-asphaltées. Les travaux conséquents ont été réalisés pour les drains. Plusieurs bâtiments publics ont été construits et rénovés, des terrains de foot et des jardins d'enfants clôturés, sans oublier le marché 5-étoiles de Saint Pierre et de Quartier Militaire, le gymnase dernier cri de Quartier Militaire...

L'honorable Rughoobur, dans son discours, avait mentionné un terrain de foot dans sa circonscription, où le joueur en question devait aller sur la route pour prendre un *corner kick.* Chez nous, c'était pire, Madame la présidente, il fallait aller dans les toilettes pour prendre le *corner kick.* Le résultat final n'a rien à voir avec ce que les anciens députés travaillistes ont laissé comme héritage. Madame la présidente, vous n'allez pas me croire, il y avait des routes asphaltées qu'à moitié, parce que l'autre moitié c'était des partisans de l'opposition. Les drains été construits à moitié parce que les autres mandants de l'opposition devraient se noyer. Voilà la mentalité !

Mais nous, Madame la présidente, on travaille pour la circonscription, on travaille pour le peuple et pour tout le monde. Tout ceci n'aurait pas été possible sans une équipe dévouée. L'honorable Pravind Jugnauth, malgré son emploi du temps chargé de Premier ministre, s'est toujours fait un devoir d'être présent aux diverses activités organisées dans sa circonscription. Je tiens aussi à saluer le travail de nos partisans et agents. Ils sont les baromètres sur le terrain. Sans leur aide, nous ne pourrions arriver à ce résultat. Le dernier meeting du 01 Mai est une indication claire. *Travay la in faire, pe faire, pour continier faire.* Même ceux qui ont voté contre nous sont avec nous aujourd'hui.

Madame la présidente, le gouvernement MSM/ML présente un bilan plus que positif après quatre ans et demi au pouvoir. Un mandat qui s'inscrit sous le sceau du travail et de l'accomplissement. Cela alors que nos adversaires n'ont fait que réclamer des élections anticipées, et ce depuis 2015. Aujourd'hui, c'est la débandade totale au sein de cette opposition. Au lendemain de la présentation du Budget, Navin Ramgoolam et ses chamchas du Travailliste ont critiqué le fait de puiser dans les fonds de la Banque de Maurice pour éponger la dette publique. Voilà que contre toute attente, Dan Maraye, l'ancien gouverneur de la BOM sous l'ère travailliste, vient le contredire en indiquant que c'était tout à fait faisable. Mon collègue, honorable Étienne Sinatambou, en a déjà parlé.

Pour sa part, le leader de l'opposition à, lundi, qualifié ce budget de 'raté'. En fait, c'est bien lui qui a raté le train de la modernité car il ne fera pas partie de l'équipe qui inaugurera le Métro Express en Septembre. Je pense qu'il regrette amèrement d'avoir quitté ce gouvernement. Il a aussi utilisé le terme 'recyclé'. Est-ce du recyclé quand on donne accès gratuit à l'Internet à 11,000 familles ? Qui d'autre l'a fait avant nous ? Sans oublier les 350 bornes Wi-Fi déjà en place et les 250 additionnelles qui arrivent bientôt.

Pour sa part, le leader du MMM a parlé d'un budget 'bien décevant'. Madame la présidente, est-ce décevant pour lui de ramener le prix de la bonbonne de gaz de R 330 à R 210 ou de doubler le prix de la tonne du sucre pour les premiers 60 tonnes produites, augmenter la pension de vieillesse pour permettre aux personnes alitées d'avoir la visite des médecins, permettre aux chauffeurs de taxi de changer de voiture chaque quatre ans, décevant parce que les *School Bus* auront des bus hors-taxes, baisse du *road tax* pour eux, c'est-à-dire pour le bien-être de nos enfants, c'est ça décevant, Madame la présidente ?

J'en viens maintenant à l'ancien Premier ministre, ça ne vaut même pas la peine. À tous ceux dans l'opposition qui persistent à dire qu'ils n'ont rien entendu ou vu de valable

dans ce budget, j'ai une excellente nouvelle pour vous, Messieurs les membres, le nouvel hôpital d'ENT de Vacoas sera bientôt ouvert et bientôt nous aurons aussi un nouveau Eye Hospital au Réduit *Triangle.* Cela nous permettra de voir encore plus.

Pour conclure, Madame la présidente, je réitère mes félicitations à l'honorable Premier ministre, ministre des Finances et du Développement Économique, l'honorable Pravind Jugnauth, pour sa détermination à ouvrir la voie à une nouvelle ère de développement dans notre parcours de transformation. Visionnaire, cohérent, respectueux, humble, Pravind Jugnauth en étant tout cela devient incontournable pour ce pays. Comme il a l'habitude de le souligner lui-même, il fait ce qu'il dit. *He walks the talk.* Sans oublier son combat contre les trafiquants de drogues afin de protéger nos enfants.

Je ne doute pas que l'enthousiasme avec lequel le Budget 2019/2020 a été reçu, les réactions positives générées de tout côté, nous, en tant que gouvernement, ainsi que le peuple mauricien, nous sommes tous prêts à envisager ensemble un avenir meilleur en tant que nation. Et laissez-moi vous dire, chers amis de ce côté de la Chambre, l'année prochaine on sera encore là pour débattre le prochain budget du gouvernement Pravind Jugnauth. The Prime Minister not only has our full support…

(Interruptions)

Pas presser! The Prime Minister not only has our full support and that of the population, but he has the support of God also.

Merci, Madame la présidente.

At this stage, the Deputy Speaker took the Chair.

(8.11 p.m.)

Mr M. Hurreeram (First Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, allow me to congratulate our Prime Minister for this Budget that my colleagues have already described as an enlightened one for the country. I would want to say more but I am sorry, Mr Prime Minister, my words can't do you any justice. So, allow me just to salute and bow down to this enlightened leadership that you are for this country.

We often witness these information, campaigns orchestrated by anti-patriotic individuals and groups. They deliberately confuse and manipulate our citizens through dishonest but sensational information. The aim of these despicable - in Hindi we say that *beiman* person - is to destabilise the country and hold back its progress for their sole political

agenda and gain. They are the ones who turn out to shout the loudest, they are the ones with personal attacks, they insult this House, they insult its Members and very sadly, they very often insult our forefathers who have built this country with their sweat and blood. My good friend, hon. Ravi Rutnah, the Deputy Whip has been victim of these insults. What is more worrying is that all this is done with the complicity of a certain Press, who clearly has placed their bets on one horse; I am very much tempted to say a dead horse…

(Interruptions)

…with an open hate agenda. They have to get to power at whatever cost, even if it means burning and dividing our beloved and united Mauritius, I would advise these people who have the responsibility to bring balance in our democracy and through the words of Desmond Tutu: don't raise your voice, improve your arguments!

M. le président, les exercices budgétaires précédents de ce gouvernement avaient ouvert la voie à la mise en œuvre de la nouvelle Vision 2030 d'une République de Maurice inclusive à revenu élevé. En 2016, nous avons annoncé les fondations pour une nouvelle ère de développement et en 2017 nous avons mis en avant les mesures pour relever le défi de nos ambitions, alors qu'en 2018 nous avons élaboré les moyens pour poursuivre notre quête de transformation.

Aujourd'hui, nous nous engageons ensemble en tant que nation pour un avenir meilleur. Voilà déjà le quatrième budget de notre Premier ministre, l'honorable Pravind Jugnauth et l'opposition continue à feindre de ne pas comprendre la vision autour de laquelle sont taxées les actions de ce gouvernement. Notre philosophie est évidente, le progrès économique en tandem avec l'inclusion sociale pour une société juste et équitable. C'est donc dans la continuité que s'inscrit le Budget 2019/2020. Pour ceux qui ne le savent pas, le Larousse définit le vocable 'continuité' comme le caractère de ce qui est continu, soutenu et qui ne subit pas d'interruption dans le temps.

Pour faire progresser un pays et tout un peuple, il faut des actions dans le temps, des actions continues, soutenues qui amèneront de vrais résultats. Dans ce gouvernement nous ne sommes pas fanatiques des coups d'éclat, des annonces tonitruantes, de changements en 100 jours alors que, dans la réalité, le changement était pour 100 familles en un jour avec des mesures pour leur apporter plus de richesse et de les faire payer moins de taxes. Nous nous souvenons toutes du tandem Sithanen/ Ramgoolam et de leur réformes qui ont fini par créer une nouvelle classe dans ce pays.

Les pauvres et les encore plus pauvres qu'ils appelaient *absolute poverty*. Ce sont eux le Parti travailliste avec le PMSD en alliance qui ont créé ce *absolute poverty*. Au sein de notre gouvernement, nous sommes entrés dans la réalité de nos citoyens et parlons vrai, M. le président, nous l'avons aussi souvent mantelé, notre ambition ne se borne pas à une échéance électorale mais à corriger 10 ans d'injustice sociale. En tant que gouvernement, nous souhaitons marquer l'histoire dans le même acabit que Sir Anerood Jugnauth et consort comme les pères du développement et de la prospérité économique de la république de Maurice pour tous. Cette phrase de Sophocles grand dramaturge grec et je cite : le succès dépend de l'effort. C'est bien à ce gouvernement contrairement à l'opposition qui a retenu des pièces de théâtre de la Grèce que le goût du mélodrame et le sens du tragique jouant les Cassandre prédisant chaque semaine depuis 2015 une tragédie grecque à la sauce mauricienne sur fond du débat économique. Ça me fait penser aux commentaires de l'honorable Arvin Boolell et cela fait plus de quatre ans qu'elle joue cette pièce et je suis tenté de dire : Anne, ma chère Anne, ne vois-tu rien venir ? Et j'en passe de leur élection derrière la porte chaque six mois.

(Interruptions)

Mais j'en suis sûr, le bon Dr. Arvin Boolell aurait fait un bon leader mais il va falloir commencer par d'abord avoir le courage de faire face aux tapeurs de son leader actuel.

(Interruptions)

Pourtant le PIB réel de Maurice a progressé en moyenne de 3,7% depuis 2015 et a passé le seuil du trillion de roupies cette année. Un taux de croissance 3,9% est même attendu en 2019. Et ce même si la FMI, la banque mondiale ont révisé le taux de croissance c'est très important de comprendre cela. Ils ont révisé le taux de croissance mondiale à la baisse à 3,3% et 2,6 %, respectivement.

M. le président, alors que des travées de l'opposition retentissent modèle économique dépassé, budget sans vision, décevant et j'en passe. Nous sommes en droit de nous demander qu'est-ce que ces messieurs/dames enlèveront des œillères qui les empêchent de voir au-delà des prochains scrutins et élections.

La République de Maurice, M. le président, ne vit pas en vase clos. Nous évoluons dans un environnement international difficile où les changements économiques, politiques et technologiques sont rapides et souvent imprévisibles. Il nous faut demeurer vigilants avec les menaces comme le terrorisme. Le monde change et nous devons suivre le pas.

Pour survive et devenir compétitifs, il était impératif que Maurice ait un nouveau modèle économique, ouvert sur le monde. Dans l'optique de réussir cette ouverture, il a fallu mettre en place à travers les budgets précédents les infrastructures adéquates non seulement physiques mais institutionnelles, sociales, organisationnelles et surtout numériques.

Nous nous sommes donnés les moyens et nous avons investi au fil des budgets dans le système de transport public, le réseau routier, l'énergie - en particulier l'énergie renouvelable, le développement portuaire, l'éducation de nos enfants, la santé, le logement, l'information de notre ressource humaine. Bref, nous avons renforcé les catalyseurs de développement en vue d'une croissance à visage humain à long terme.

M. le président, nous concédons que certaines mesures ont pris du retard dans leur implémentation mais il fallait bien reprendre les défaillances délaissées par l'ancien gouvernement, notamment la remise en état de projets défectueux comme la route Terre Rouge – Verdun, le Ring Road qui termine avec une montagne, qui tourne en rond, qui nous emmène rien du tout, la réfection de Bagatelle Dam et que je qualifie d'oubli majeur. On a construit Bagatelle Dam mais on a oublié la station de traitements qui va avec le barrage. Cela sans compter la pagaille et les gabegies. Nous pouvons même désormais parler d'une décennie de perdue avec des projets aux compte-gouttes, des réformes et restructurations qui auront surtout favorisé les bonnes affaires des copains et des nantis, est fini de creuser les inégalités entre mauriciens et de multiples déclarations de bonnes intentions à travers des conférences qui ont été suivies de discussions sans fin sur plusieurs thèmes, parmi démocratisation de l'économie, le *seafood hub*, *knowledge hub*, *land based oceanic industry*, Maurice île durable qui était censés devenir des moteurs de croissance et de nouveaux piliers économiques.

Et pour clôturer tout ça en beauté, M. le président, cette décennie de procrastination n'oublions pas une année de *koz kozer* en vue de négocier des ambitions folles, de septennat pour un mandat présidentiel. Aujourd'hui, ces investigateurs de la décennie perdue, propagandistes de demi-mesure et de demie-vérité se disent prêts à reprendre le pouvoir, se gargarisant de leur pseudo proposition de rupture, de manifeste électoral sur Facebook, de congrès en petits comités ou de programme électoral dit solide. Ne dit-on pas, M. le président, que l'enfer est pavé de bonnes intentions. Sur papier, que des initiatives avec les mesures intentions du monde mais dans la réalité nous avons tous été témoins du zéro sens de l'effort plus occupés à faire fructifier les intérêts de qui? De maîtresse, beau-frère, camarade, copain, copine.

On en a tout vu et les conséquences ont été désastreuses avec des projets aux coûts faramineux dont les ruptures de contrats entraînaient des indemnités au détriment des contribuables ; des universités marrons, un niveau scolaire en baisse avec des étudiants qui se contentaient du moindre effort en ne visant que trois crédits, de jeunes adolescents en perte de repères et une grande injustice sociale avec des réformes qui étaient avantageuses seulement pour les plus riches. C'est alors que les Mauriciens ont découvert à quelle sauce de discours creux, de voeux pieux et des paroles en l'air que nous avons été servis de 2005 à 2014.

Au vu de cette décennie perdue, il n'est pas étonnant que les nouvelles orientations de notre gouvernement, du gouvernement de notre Premier ministre Pravind Jugnauth, si résolument tournées vers la modernité, ont déboussolé les vieux routiers politiques rompus à débattre *ad nauseam* sur les secteurs et les modèles de développement traditionnel comme le sucre, le textile et le touriste et à négocier pendant des jours pour ne pas dire des semaines et des mois durant leurs alliances politiques. Il n'est guère étonnant que cela peine à suivre le rythme. Mais, M. le président, les preuves parlent pour ce gouvernement et on ne peut que constater les faits.

La république Maurice entière est un site en construction. De 2014 à 2019, les réalisations de ce gouvernement sont nombreuses et relèvent du concret, une liste non exhaustive. Je ne propose pas d'y rentrer dans ma liste puisque mes amis avant moi ont déjà parlé de tout ce qu'on a fait - *negative income tax*, salaire minimum, l'impôt négatif sur les revenus, les maisons de la NHDC beaucoup plus grandes.

Citizen Support Unit, la loi sur déclarations des avoirs, développement des secteurs et des plateformes économiques vers les pays Africains, service internet Rodrigues, Agaléga, promotion de l'énergie durable à travers le plan solaire résidentielle et commerciale, les allocations mensuelles pour les anciennes gloires sportives, création *Economique Development Board*, positionnement Maurice sur le continent Africain avec la création des zones économiques spéciales et j'en passe, la liste est trop longue.

Bientôt, ce sera aussi le déploiement du *Safe City* pour assurer la sécurité de nos citoyens. La mise en opération des hôpitaux, remplacement des vieux tuyaux, Metro Express, la liste est encore très longue et mes amis avant moi en ont déjà parlé. Mais dans tout cela, M. le président, c'est bien normal de faire un minimum de sacrifice inévitable si nous voulons réussir la transition vers un pays à haut revenue qui bénéficie à tous les Mauriciens et promet le développement humain, économique et social. Exploiter la frustration de la

population face à des problèmes et tenter de la transformer en mouvement de colère et manifestation violente relève de la bassesse et le sinistre de certains profiteurs comme ce fut le cas à Saint Paul.

M. le président, malgré les nombreuses secousses au niveau international telles que la guerre des taxes entre les Etats Unies et divers puissances mondiales, notre économie continue à faire preuve de résilience avec une croissance stable au cours des quatre dernières années. Nous commençons déjà à récolter les fruits de nos efforts et les mesures prises pour jeter les bases pour un niveau de développement. Les indicateurs montrent que notre économie peut passer à une vitesse supérieure, ainsi notre taux de chômage continue à baisser.

Concernant le taux d'inflation, même si nos détracteurs ont crié au loup, quand nous avons mis en œuvre le salaire minimum et l'impôt négatif sur les revenues, le moyen était de 2,3% en 2015 et 2018 alors qu'un taux d'inflation de 1,5% est prévu pour 2019. Derrière tous ces projets, initiatives, chiffres et réalisations, nous trouvons un homme, le Premier ministre, Pravind Jugnauth, qui s'est donné pour mission de faire connaitre au pays une nouvelle phase de développement pour le bien de tous les mauriciens et construire une république dynamique, moderne et prospère où nous vivons en sécurité et où chaque citoyen a l'opportunité de progresser. La vraie bataille de ce gouvernement, qui est contre la pauvreté et les inégalités sociales, repose sur la conviction de notre Premier ministre et de son engagement pour une amélioration de la qualité de vie et de bien-être des citoyens que ce soit en encourageant un style de vie actif par la pratique d'un sport et à travers la lutte contre la prolifération de la drogue ou la mise en œuvre des mesures sociales où l'utilisation de la technologie numérique qui cadre avec la vision fondamentale de faciliter la vie de nos citoyens, le Premier ministre assume un leadership responsable contrairement à d'autres.

Les obstacles légaux et juridiques dont Medpoint n'en ont rien entamé la prémature de Pravind Jugnauth. Et permettez-moi d'emprunter cette phrase qui est connue dans l'Hindi, qui dit : *jako rakhe sayian maar sake na koi.* Ce qui veut dire on ne peut pas finir celui que Dieu protège. Sa force tranquille, sa combativité et ses convictions politiques bien arrêtées …

(Interruptions)

… n'ont pas seulement donné un second souffle à notre pays, mais ont conduit à l'avènement d'une plus grande dimension internationale, avec un nombre conséquent de votes en faveur

de la restitution par le Royaume-Uni de l'Archipel des Chagos a la République de Maurice dans six mois au plus tard. Dans ce combat de David contre Goliath, je tiens à rendre hommage à tous ceux qui ont apporté leur contribution à ce combat et surtout à présenter mes sentiments de respect et d'admiration a Sir Anerood Jugnauth pour sa détermination à reprendre notre souveraineté sur notre territoire.

Permettez-moi d'emprunter ces mots du Premier ministre Indien qui décrit si bien cette combattivité de notre Premier ministre et il disait – *na ruke, na thake aur na jhuke,* c'est-à-dire, il s'est pas arrêté, il s'est pas fatigué et il s'est pas courbé. Ces mots résument bien l'attitude de notre Premier ministre tout au long de cette lutte, malgré les oiseaux de mauvais augures qui continuent à souhaiter le malheur de notre pays. Notre Premier ministre n'avait qu'un objectif en tête, souveraineté de notre République.

M. le président, les mesures annoncées dans le budget 2019-2020 font foi d'un gouvernement humain, responsable se souciant d'encadrer les plus vulnérables. Le Premier ministre le dit souvent, il n'est pas acceptable que dans un pays qui ambitionne d'être a revenue élevé, des personnes vivre dans la misère absolue. C'est pourquoi le gouvernement s'efforce de faire en sorte que tous les Mauriciens de toutes les classes sociales se retrouvent dans le model économique. Le budget que nous avons présenté va au-delà des chiffres, n'en déplaise à certains qui ne voient que des dettes, PIB, performance économique. Un homme de vision, M. le président, est un homme qui anticipe sur l'avenir. Pravind Jugnauth était venu de l'avant avec un institut de biotechnologie, mais comme le dit le proverbe, nul n'est prophète en son pays. Les mesures fut hélas mises à côté par le précèdent gouvernement qui n'a su déceler l'avant-gardisme de cette entreprise. Cette fois encore il me semble que le Premier ministre est en avance sur son temps car celui comprend la portée, la valeur, le rôle important, l'intérêt considérable et l'influence de l'intelligence artificielle. Beaucoup déplorent le manque de nouveaux piliers économiques et de vision dans ce budget. Pourtant, l'intelligence artificielle est en elle-même porteuse de croissance économique, plus rapide quand nous savons l'exploiter.

Le deuxième miracle économique est à la portée de nos mains si nous adoptons une perspective plus large et ne nous restreignons plus à une vision étroite de la réussite économique. Après les mesures de l'an dernier, le budget 2019-2020 fait la part belle à l'intelligence artificielle, à travers l'influence des technologies, peut réaliser des changements significatifs par ses objectifs d'imiter et d'augmenter l'intelligence et ses capacités humaines avec des machines et d'autres applications. Nous développons ainsi l'écosystème pour

encourager l'innovation. La législation est en place et le budget 2019-2020 apporte le capital d'amorçage de R 100 millions au *National Innovation and Research Fund* afin que le *Mauritius Research and Innovation Council* puisse concrétiser l'initiative de *l'Innovative Mauritius*.

Un des autres facteurs clefs pour favoriser l'émergence d'une République innovante et innovatrice est la formation. Pour que nos jeunes puissent participer et avoir toutes les chances de réussir dans la course à l'innovation, l'Université des Mascareignes proposera un Master en Intelligence artificielle et robotique en collaboration avec l'Université de Limoges et l'Université de Nice. La HRDC sera elle aussi partie prenante de la formation en intelligence artificielle avec un programme sur six mois pour une centaine d'étudiants. Les usages de l'intelligence artificielle sont différents et multiples. Elle peut engendrer la transformation fondamentale de nos secteurs traditionnels comme la canne à sucre et le textile.

La vitesse dans le traitement et le stockage d'immenses volumes de données, les applications pour le public, la robotique, le *deep learning* sont autant d'enjeux industriels susceptibles de changer la donne et de contribuer à des réponses rapides et des solutions adéquates, que ce soit au niveau de la santé, météorologie, océanographie et au réseau de transport.

Pour ceux qui ont des difficultés de comprendre l'étendu du champ d'action de l'intelligence artificielle, je donnerai en exemple tous les services de Google, par exemple, que ce soit les moteurs de recherche, le service du courriel, Google Translate, il y a aussi les robots, comme l'a dit mon ami, l'honorable Sawmynaden, comme Sophia, DIA et les drones.

M. le président, en dépit de toutes ces initiatives, mesures et incitations apportées par ce gouvernement, les critiques de l'Opposition vont aller en crescendo, il n'y a pas de surprise. Alors que le gouvernement continue de trouver des moyens pour aider chaque secteur, chaque citoyen, malgré son âge, il est dommage que certains acteurs de la société civile et de l'industrie se laissent prendre dans la vague défaitiste et démagogique de l'opposition.

Tout ne relève pas du gouvernement. Les mentalités, les comportements doivent changer. La campagne *'Moris nou zoli pei'* et maintenir la propreté du pays à long terme ne pourront se faire qu'avec la participation de tous les citoyens. Nous sommes tous appelés à apporter notre pierre à l'édifice de notre république unie et souveraine. Nous connaissons les

objectifs de l'opposition, tenter de tuer dans l'œuf toutes les réformes, comme ce fut le cas en 2005, pour pourvoir continuer à exploiter librement le peu de ressources de ce pays. C'est de la bonne guerre que notre adversaire se démène pour mettre des bâtons dans la roue, mais de là mettre en péril l'harmonie sociale, la réputation du pays, les relations avec les pays amis, nous disons assez. Un des derniers exemples où l'opposition a recours à des actions basses et mesquines a trait aux réserves de la Banque Centrale.

Depuis que ce gouvernement a pris ses fonctions, le Premier ministre l'a dit, et je tiens à le souligner, les réserves du pays ont battu tous les records de R 117 milliards pour atteindre R 241 milliards, soit une augmentation de 94% et représentant un niveau de réserves permettant à couvrir 11, deux mois d'importation. C'est un des niveaux les plus sûrs que le pays n'ait jamais connu. La Banque Mondiale, le FMI recommandent des réserves de six à huit mois. Ceux qui sont professionnels dans le secteur, pas les experts auto-proclamés, trouvent judicieux d'utiliser le surplus pour assurer le service de notre dette bien avant les échéances. Pourtant, du rang de l'Opposition s'élève des voix criant : 'Haro, sur les initiatives du gouvernement pour rembourser la dette'. Ce qui est abjecte, c'est que ces mêmes personnes critiquent le gouvernement sur le taux d'endettement, parlant de situation d'urgence et catastrophe imminente. Mais la population et ce gouvernement font peu cas des calomnies et de ces *fake news* visant à semer la terreur et le doute.

M. le président, aujourd'hui, sans langue de bois, je peux dire que la population mauricienne a déjà choisi qui sera le prochain Premier ministre, et c'est nul autre que Pravind Kumar Jugnauth.

Je voudrais, ici, exprimer ma gratitude pour les projets qui amélioreront grandement la vie de mes mandants et leur permettront de participer aux développements socioéconomiques de la communauté et du pays, et ces projets, il y a toute une longue liste. Mon collègue, l'honorable ministre Jhugroo, a déjà mentionné. Peut-être je n'ai pas entendu, mais il y a aussi un centre de formation moderne pour la MITD à Beau Vallon au coût de R 219 millions. Jamais auparavant, dans un budget, presque chaque endroit, dans la circonscription No. 12, a entendu le nom de leur endroit dans le budget. Il y a même un petit endroit Carreau Acacia de 200 habitants, il y a un projet pour eux. Le Premier ministre a pensé à tout le monde à travers le pays

(Interruptions)

Non, bien sûr, parce qu'effectivement c'est mon collègue qui siège au sein du Cabinet et c'est lui qui a apporté les projets.

(Interruptions)

Absolument, pas de souci!

(Interruptions)

Non, mais à ces commentaires, M. le président, il y a entre homme de caractère et de valeur, c'est normal qu'il y a des étincelles des fois, mais la sagesse prévaut. Alors que nous nous attelons à mener ce pays vers la modernité, nous devons jouer avec une Opposition surannée, pire une Opposition aux abois, prête à recourir à toutes les subterfuges avec le but purement politique de faire choir le gouvernement. Toutefois, l'objectif de départ de ce gouvernement reste le même. M. le président, assurer que le pays soit placé sur une trajectoire de croissance supérieure pour une prospérité partagée et une qualité de vie améliorée pour tous les mauriciens…

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: May we have some silence please in the House?

Mr Hurreeram:…dynamisme, modernité et constance soutenant chacune des actions, chacun des projets de ce gouvernent.

Je terminerai avec ces mots de Harold Wilson. A l'intention de mes amis de l'Opposition, je cite: « Qui rejette le changement est l'architecte de la déchéance. La seule institution humaine qui rejette le progrès est le cimetière.'

Merci, M. le président.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Leopold!

(8.42 p.m.)

Mr J. B. Leopold (Second Member for Rodrigues): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

(Interuptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Can we have some order in the House, please?

Mr Leopold: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

First of all, I have to thank the people of Rodrigues, my Constituency, No. 21 for having put their trust in me and my party, the OPR party (*Organisation du Peuple de Rodrigues)*.

It is, indeed, a great privilege given to me by the people of Rodrigues to be able tonight, for the fifth consecutive occasion, to participate in the national Budget debate 2019-2020. This Budget, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, displays the Government willingness and dedication for the improvement of quality of life of the citizens of the Republic of Mauritius.

This Budget expresses equality, fair distribution allocated to all fellow citizens of the Republic. And I stand, here, tonight, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as a democratically elected representative for the people of Rodrigues in Parliament.

My role in this House has been always to promote democratic process engaging in the implementation of good governance. I am so privileged that the people of Rodrigues have given me the opportunity to get into Parliament so as to play such an important role in representing their views and needs by articulating their aspiration, by articulating their expectations. Therefore, Mr Deputy Speaker, it is my expectation also to hold the executive's account on its most important economic policy tool, that is, the budget. And to ensure that the budget matches the nation needs with available resources.

In this 2019-2020 Budget, Mr Deputy Speaker, a sum of Rs3.8 Billion has been allocated to Rodrigues, where details of the allocation had already been debated in the Rodrigues Regional Assembly and voted, and it is in the national budget tonight for further scrutiny and approval. I would like to take this House a little down to memory lane from the date of the emancipation of slavery in Rodrigues to the independence of the Republic of Mauritius, in regard to the political and economic, the particularity and specificity of Rodrigues which had urged us, we, Rodriguan people, into the process of political awakening which have brought us to the status of what we are today.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the abolition of slavery was proclaimed to all British colonies on 01 February 1835. In Rodrigues, the news of announcement of the emancipation of slavery was done four years later. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it was done on 04 June 1839, as I have said four years later. What did that mean at that time, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir? It means a lot of things to us. Rodrigues, because of its geographical isolation, since the period where slavery was abolished, has long been forgotten. It is a very small island, 110 km sq. We asked ourselves, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, why Rodrigues is so late in its social, economic

and political development, compared to the island of Mauritius, despite the fact that Rodrigues forms an integral part of Mauritius since 1968? This is the question, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Yes, Rodrigues is certainly physically small. If you look at it in its physical dimension, of course, but, we cannot, when you have inhabitants on an island, take the physical dimension alone in response to its development. The size of an island no matter how small it is, cannot be deprived from the importance of human and political level. That was where it started, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. That was where Rodrigues started to ask questions on its economic and political destiny, its treatment and status within the State of Mauritius. Rodrigues being isolated in the Indian Ocean, 600 km away from Mauritius Island has its own specificity with a distinct community. Mr Deputy Speaker, nature has never been kind to us, that is what has given us our distinct particularity in tackling problems, becoming resilient to adversities and to always try to rise up again as quickly as we can when tragedy strikes.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we are more prone to cyclone conditions, compared to Mauritius. The island is very steep. So, we suffer from severe consequences of soil erosion. We were hit by a severe drought in the 1970s, which have led us to a consequential diminution of our surface water, which was already scarce at that time. That was a severe blow to our agricultural sector, leading to the regression of agricultural production. Well before the disastrous drought period, Rodrigues was self-sufficient in our cultural production. At that time, we were producing in surplus to the point where we were sending the excess production to Mauritius. It is only after the severe period of drought that the difference in living standard between the two islands tends to increase sharply. And we started to import more and more for subsistence to the point where we were importing more than exported. That was when some people were of the view that Rodrigues was economically dependent on Mauritius. And the question of whether Rodrigues is a source of profit or financial burden to Mauritius arose in that period. During all these questionings and confusions, there was also close to this period the creation of the OPR party, leading by Louis Serge Clair, who is also the founder. In November 1976, during the electoral campaign, the OPR party launched its first electoral manifesto under the title : '*Projet socio-économique, politique de l'Organisation du Peuple de Rodrigues*'. A political programme, which lays emphasis on the necessity to define -

- a new political relationship with Mauritius revolving around a policy of training and information for the Rodriguan people whose material and intellectual isolation of the origin of a lagging behind;
- a policy on the economic independence on the economic independence of the island with a sense of initiative and cooperation, and
- the elaboration of a new administrative structure to look after the social projects of the island.

In the General Election of 1976, the OPR party did not go through the election and as with the custom of faithful to its opportunist characteristic, PMSD won the two seats of Rodrigues. PMSD won the election by immorally and unethically using fear tactics and false information in taking the advantage of the material and isolation of Rodrigues of those days by instilling the feeling of fear in the in the mind of the Rodriguans. So many of them…

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Please! I am on my feet!

Hon. Members, I do tolerate a certain degree of crosstalking or comments, but do not abuse the situation; otherwise, I will be left with no other alternative than to act as per Standing Orders.

You can resume your speech!

Mr Leopold: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. As I have said, we lost that election in 1976, and as I have said also, with the opportunistic character of PMSD, they won the 2 seats of Rodrigues. The PMSD won the election by immorally and unethically using fear tactics and false information, in taking advantage over material and isolation of Rodrigues of those days, by installing the feeling of fear in the mind of the Rodriguans. So many of them fled to Australia and PMSD has urged the rest of the people to vote against the independence of Mauritius, by telling lots of rubbish to the people, rubbish which I will not mention in my speech, as their campaign were based on racial and religious hatred. That's why Rodriguans voted for PMSD at that time. Because they instilled fear in the minds of the Rodriguans. Unfortunately, PMSD made the majority of Rodriguans to vote against the independence of the State of Mauritius. At that time, PMSD was encouraged…

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Can I have some order in the House, please?

Mr Leopold: …by the Rodriguan people. Do you know what they encouraged the Rodriguan people to do against the independence? They wanted us to annex with a colony,

Great Britain. That is what they said in Rodrigues. At that time, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, they encouraged Rodriguan people for annexation to the British. Do you know what the PMSD did, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir? They used the votes of the Rodriguans, they left the Rodriguans behind, they ignored the Rodriguans, got to Mauritius, contract an alliance with the Labour party which rightly so campaigning for independence. This is treason, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, and treason is punishable by death penalty.

(Interruptions)

Yes, at that time.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon Rutnah, let him make his speech!

Mr Leopold: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, PMSD wants to repeat history now as if the damage they have caused to the Rodriguan people was not enough. They wanted in the 21st century to cause more harm and more division to the Rodriguan people and they have changed their language now. They are now using war language. They are coming, they said, to conquer Rodrigues. They said: *'on est des fous, des défroqués, des loups garous.'* Things that they don't know, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, Rodrigues is no longer intellectually or materially isolated.

We are nowadays benefiting from the same educational system. We are as educated as anyone else. Geographic distance is no longer an issue. Today, people of Rodrigues are watching us live. PMSD will never ever be able to divide us anymore. PMSD does not have an economic agenda for Rodrigues, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. If it were so, they should have done that a long time ago. Their only agenda is to eliminate OPR political party. What type of agenda is that? Okay, let's continue, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. I have enough with PMSD now.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon Henry, you will have the opportunity to rebut these arguments.

(Interruptions)

You will do it when you take the floor.

(Interruptions)

But he is so passionate about his country.

Mr Leopold: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, at all times, the OPR party continues to criticise with vigour and without any complex our economic dependence on Mauritius. And the current system at that time of the representation of the island in the Legislative Assembly by two representatives who do not reside in Rodrigues, who do not belong to a political party in Rodrigues and who do not originate from Rodrigues.

Being felt betrayed by the PMSD, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is only in 1977 that the people of Rodrigues became conscious of the real situation and that is when the great awakening of the people of Rodrigues began and, therefore, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, little by little, the OPR party gained in more and more popularity and it became very clear in the minds of the Rodriguan people on the real objectives of the OPR party. It is in 1977 that the destiny of Rodrigues was taken into our own hands together. It was at this point that the long struggle began so as to have a differentiated status that responds to a fully asserted Rodriguan identity. And that the two islands established a developed and fruitful dialogue that in any event one must stay tuned to Rodrigues.

The long march for autonomy started from 1976 and it was a Tuesday, on 20 November 2001, that Members of the National Assembly under the coalition Government MSM/MMM under the leadership of the Rt. hon. Sir Anerood Jugnauth and hon. Paul Raymond Bérenger that Parliament voted the Rodrigues Regional Assembly Act which gives Rodrigues the status of autonomy. This was also due to the efforts of Members, of Delegates of OPR party on 03 April 1977 adopted the Resolution *pour une île Rodrigues nouvelle*.

One of the Resolutions stated that OPR wants to set up a creative and productive mind in Rodrigues so as to ban the fight of dependence that is detrimental to the future of Rodrigues.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is true that as from 1974 to 1978, there has been budget increase by the Government of Mauritius to Rodrigues. It was only at this time for the first time that a plan was elaborated for the development of Rodrigues but despite that most of the allocated funds were for the day-to-day running of Rodrigues, were for some Government employees there and other workers. Therefore, the project of autonomy, the decentralisation of power, with a proper deliberative body and an Assembly of elected representatives by universal suffrage which will be called the Regional Government within the Republic of

Mauritius aiming at establishing a policy of human, social, economic and cultural development of the island was long overdue.

Since 2002, we have had a succession of four regional elections, out of which the OPR party has been in command for three mandates, up to now, making a total of 13 years that OPR is in charge of the administration of Rodrigues with an unprecedented eight consecutive budget exercises done by the Chief Commissioner, Louis Serge Clair.

Since then, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is obvious that the socio-economic development has considerably improved and it is translated in the improvement of the quality of life of the Rodriguan people. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, therefore to continue with the efforts of developing Rodrigues into creating a conducive environment or its economic development and to maintain the wellbeing of its people, during the last consecutive years, the budget allocation to Rodrigues has been constantly on the rise for its development, fulfillment and continuous programme.

I will, therefore, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, seize, once again, the opportunity to thank the hon. Minister of Finance on behalf of the people of Rodrigues for the consideration he has given to us in allocating the sum of Rs3.8 billion to us, out of which Rs975 m. for further development of Rodrigues. I am so thankful to the Minister of Finance for having been physically present in Rodrigues to meet the Executive Council prior to the presentation of the Rodrigues Regional Government Budget on 22 March 2019 in the Rodrigues Regional Assembly. The allocated sum will be used by the Rodrigues Regional Government to continually improve progress made in human capital of Rodrigues, to continually enhanced sustainable development and increase our capability to palliate the consequences of climate change.

As I have said earlier, nature has never been kind to us with low rainfall compared to Mauritius. Mauritius has 40% more rainfall than we do annually and prolonged drought we have no choice in the short term to invest in the desalination plant as advised by various expert reports so as to maintain the required amount of clean and safe water supply to the population with an established standard set by WHO. In addition to that, there are other schemes set up to continually encourage people to have means to harvest rainwater.

With the sum allocated to the health services in Rodrigues, Rodrigues will need to collaborate with Mauritius through its health strategic plan to continually improve the quality of health, care delivery by improving and providing proper infrastructure. Funds have been

made available for the construction of a state-of-the-art hospital to provide the increasing demand of high standard quality care delivery service so as to keep the population healthy, reduce unnecessary admission, improve patient experience and hence patients safety, and to be equipped with appropriate diagnostic tools so as to reduce waiting time for treatment and managing illness promptly.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I do welcome the idea of the hon. Minister of Finance in prioritising gender equality and the inclusion of sections of the population in his policies on development. It is important that the Republic of Mauritius continues to make the efforts of organisational change and the shift in institutionalised culture, especially in incorporating gender into politics and decision-making. The Rodrigues Regional Assembly is following the same path and trend with regard to gender equality in its policy. I am glad to say that in all our cooperative boards of directors in Rodrigues, we already have women representatives. I don't know if I can say that, we are once again a step ahead in that matter.

Waving restriction on maternity leave and getting more flexible on the nursing of children who are still breastfed to mothers of working-class is not only a measure which promotes gender equality, it is also important for the economy of the country as this measure will contribute to combat our rapidly ageing population, thereby continuously maintaining and providing a working class population. Ageing population is not because people are living longer due to improvement in healthcare but it is also because of a decline in the fertility rate. Therefore, this budgetary measure not only will always allow mothers to take advantage of the increased opportunity of employment; it will also allow them to have more children if they choose to.

I also welcome the incentives that the Budget brings and the sum allocated to the Rodrigues Regional Assembly as well as to the SME sector. Small and medium enterprises with their various incentives have held a lot in the absorption of women in the labour market. So we need to bring further incentives as it has been done in this Budget so as to enhance more women empowerment and maintain the contribution on the sustainable development of the Republic. The incentives and policy on SME are helping women, both Rodrigues and Mauritius, to become entrepreneurs, therefore, bringing additional incomes to households and more support to families.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Rodrigues was hit by two heavy cyclones and torrential rains recently. We have shown our resilience to the adverse condition. If the same two cyclones

with the same intensity came to hit Rodrigues 15 years back from now, the outcome would not have been the same. We would have ended up with more casualties. These two cyclones have proved to all the people of Rodrigues that the OPR Government is right head-on on its housing policy to the most vulnerable - *enn famille enn bon la caze*. Our housing policy is to eliminate all corrugated iron sheets houses and replace by cyclone resistant concrete housing. In the last 13 years, we have made lots of progress into implementing this housing policy. That is why we don't have people stay in refugee centres after cyclones have passed. Most of the houses which were affected during the passage of the last two cyclones were those types of ex-Trust Fund houses with concrete base and corrugated iron sheets on the top. We are very delighted that the hon. Prime Minister and Minister of Finance had agreed to provide funds for the provision of a new housing scheme so as to upgrade and reinforce the ex-Trust Fund type of houses in Rodrigues and over 200 families will be benefiting from this measure.

The Central Government is doing a fantastic job through the Ministry of Education in further easing access to tertiary education so as to facilitate social mobility. However, I would like to highlight one issue which I am sure the hon. Minister of Education may be aware of. It is about exam fees paid for SC and HSC students. I would like to ask the hon. Minister to extend the scheme to students who have passed with three credits or less; if they want to re-sit for exams to pay their fees, especially to those people coming from low income families or those who are on the social register of Mauritius. As it is now, only

students, who have failed their exam, are allowed to have their exam fee paid a second time by Government. It would be great that the Government recognises the effort made by the students who have passed the exams, but with low grade and gives them the chance to re-sit for exams to improve the exams results, especially for those who cannot afford to pay. That would be great.

The people of Rodrigues also, among so many measures for Rodrigues and nationwide which will make a positive difference in their lives, welcome the increase in the TV channels by the MBC in Rodrigues. However, we would be very delighted that continuous training be given to the MBC personnel of Rodrigues so as to enhance the quality service in Rodrigues. I am strongly of the view that lots of efforts still need to be made on this side.

Mr Deputy Speaker, yes, Rodrigues is a territorial continuity of the Republic of Mauritius. Rodrigues is not and no longer a financial burden for the Republic of Mauritius. Rodrigues has an economy which generates money. We participate in the economic contribution of the Republic of Mauritius. In order to contribute further, lots of efforts are being made both by the Regional Government and the National Government into the setting up of required structures in occurrence the extension of railway, port developments and the connection of Rodrigues to fibre-optic cable so as to bring the economic development to the next level so as we can preserve what we have already and continue with our economic progress. Rodrigues, Agaléga, Tromelin, St. Brandon and we are about to get the Chagos Archipelago back which will make us as bigger as Europe in terms of our maritime boundary delimination and continental shelf.

Let us, therefore, with the huge potential which that represents, do this together as a nation that is embracing our future.

Many thanks for your attention, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Dr. Joomaye!

Dr. Joomaye: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I move that the debate be now adjourned.

Mr Hurreeram rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

Debate adjourned accordingly.

ADJOURNMENT

The Prime Minister: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I beg to move that this Assembly do now adjourn to Friday 14 June 2019 at 3.00 p.m.

Mr Hurreeram rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

Madam Speaker: The House stands adjourned.

MATTERS RAISED

(9.16 p.m.)

EBENE SSS GIRLS – LACK OF TEACHERS

Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière): Merci M. le président. Je voudrais attirer l'attention du ministre de l'éducation concernant une requête que j'ai reçue hier d'une élève de Ebène SSS. Si je peux lire cette requête –

> « Je suis en lower six et malheureusement mes camarades de classe et moi faisons face à un grave problème. Il y a un manque atroce de professeur à notre école, Ebène SSS Girls. Depuis la rentrée nous n'avons pas de professeur surtout dans nos sujets *main* comme *Economics and Accounts.* Ce n'est pas seulement notre classe mais plusieurs autres classes ont ce problème. Nous avons essayé de parler à la directrice mais elle nous a dit que cela c'est du ressort du gouvernement, c'est-à-dire le ministère et malheureusement c'est notre éducation qui en souffre. »

Je voudrais faire un appel à Madame la ministre. Si le problème est réglé, c'est tant mieux. Cela a été repris dans la presse et si Madame la ministre peut nous informer.

The Minister of Education and Human Resources, Tertiary Education and Scientific Research (Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun): Le problème a été réglé.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Ameer Meea!

ROAD HUMP – ZAMZAM MOSQUE

Mr A. Ameer Meea (Second Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. The issue I am raising tonight is addressed to the hon. Minister of Public Infrastructure and Land Transport.

I have received several complaints and representations for the installation of only one road hump what we call, *ralentisseur ou obstacle* at the seat of ZamZam Mosque which is situated at Ail Doré Street, Port Louis, Plaine Verte. What happened is that many vehicles, especially motorcycles, tend not to stop on this one way street and also they don't stop at the pedestrian crossing of this busy road. I also wish to point out that it is not only the mosque, it is an Islamic centre which have a pre-primary school, a primary school and also the mosque which is vis a vis the Islamic centre. They conduct five times daily prayer. So, it is a very busy street and I would appeal to the hon. Minister to act urgently to remedy to this situation. Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker.

Mr Sawmynaden: I will pass on the message to my colleague, the hon. Minister of Public Infrastructure.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Quirin!

BEAU BASSIN – DR. REID STREET - ROAD ACCIDENT

Mr F. Quirin (Fourth Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière): Merci M. le président. Ma requête normalement devrait s'adresser à l'honorable ministre des Infrastructures publiques, mais comme il n'est pas là, avec votre permission, pourrais-je adresser ma requête à l'honorable Collendavelloo, *Deputy Prime Minister*?

En fait, ma requête a trait à un grave accident qui s'est produit le 20 mai dernier à la rue Dr. Reid, à Beau Bassin où une voiture roulant à vive allure est conduite par quelqu'un qui - d'après ceux qui était sur place et qui connaissent la personne qui conduisait - était sous l'influence de la drogue, paraît-il. Donc, cette voiture qui ne s'est pas arrêtée, a percuté à un arrêt d'autobus, un garçon de quatre ans et sa grand-mère qui attendait l'autobus.

Comme je disais donc, cette rue, Dr. Reid est une rue très fréquentée, très passagère, autobus, voitures, motocyclettes, bicyclettes, piétons, une rue où il y a deux écoles maternelles, un collège confessionnel, La Confiance, une mosquée et un shivala entre autres. Donc, vous devinez, M. le président, tout le trafic quotidien aux heures de pointe en particulier. Donc, pas de passage pour piétons, ni de ligne jaune, de ralentisseur, absolument rien et bien souvent les automobilistes se garent n'importe comment au grand dam des piétons.

Donc, j'avais aussi le 03 mai dernier, insisté auprès de l'honorable Bodha, afin que des ralentisseurs soient installés à la rue Albatros, au morcellement de la Confiance qui n'est qu'à quelques mètres de la rue Dr. Reid. Donc, c'est un quartier que, comme je l'avais

malheureusement anticipé, a connu un très grave accident ou un enfant de quatre ans et sa grand-mère, comme je l'ai dit, ont failli trouver la mort. Donc, rue à sens unique, passage pour piétons, ralentisseur, ligne jaune, autant de mesures à prendre, rapidement à la rue Dr. Reid et dans tout le quartier. Merci.

The Deputy Prime Minister: Evidemment, nous sommes tous choqués par ce drame. Il y a très peu de choses qu'un gouvernement, de par le monde, peut faire contre les criminels de la route. La justice doit être plus sévère, évidemment mais l'indépendance de la justice est telle qu'on ne peut pas faire de commentaire très pointu. Je prends note des requêtes de mon ami, l'honorable Quirin, et je transmettrai à l'honorable Bodha, bien évidemment.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Mrs Perraud!

BAIE DU TOMBEAU, RICHE TERRE, TERRE ROUGE, ETC. – WASTE TREATMENT PLANT

Mrs A. Perraud (First Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue): Ma question ce soir est adressée au ministre de l'Environnement, du Développement durable, l'honorable Sinatambou. Depuis quelques jours, les habitants de Baie du tombeau, Riche Terre et les alentours vivent dans une psychose depuis qu'ils ont compris qu'une usine de traitement de déchets est en phase d'être construite à moins de 600 mètres des habitations. Les habitants craignent pour leur santé parce que l'incinérateur de Veolia Recycling and Environmental Services (Mauritius) Ltd va recycler les restes d'hydrocarbures, éliminer les déchets médicaux, débarrasser des carcasses d'animaux, traiter la terre contaminée et traité 3000 kg de déchets par jour. Cet incinérateur est une menace pour la santé des milliers d'habitants de plusieurs régions telles que Baie du Tombeau, Riche Terre, Terre Rouge, Le Hochet, Arsenal, Ste Croix, Balaclava et Port louis.

M. le président, ce soir les habitants veulent savoir si la compagnie Veolia Recycling and Environmental Services (Mauritius) Ltd a fait une demande de permis EIA, *Environmental Impact Assessment*, auprès du ministère de l'environnement. Ces milliers d'habitants qui seront directement touchés, affectés par ce projet, se posent la question et ce soir, je pose la question au ministre : est-ce que le gouvernement va faire la sourde oreille ? Est-ce que le gouvernement va rester insensible face à cette menace réelle, à ce danger imminent que représente cet incinérateur dans cette région hautement résidentielle? Donc, nous attendons une réponse claire du ministre ce soir. Merci.

The Deputy Prime Minister: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, may I?

The Deputy Speaker: Yes.

The Deputy Prime Minister: This matter raised on adjournment concerns me more than the Minister of Environment. Of course, it concerns him as well, but I know the file. So, I take the liberty of taking the floor.

Let me reassure all the inhabitants and the hon. Member in particular that these fears have been expressed and, of course, we know how Mauritius is, we always see scarecrows everywhere. But let me reassure the hon. Member that the Wastewater Management Authority will take all steps because that is part of a project, the whole project of sewage because sewage is an important environmental matter, we need to have sewage treatment plants but everything is being done to ensure that the state of the art principles are complied with. We will follow that very carefully.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Dr. Boolell!

SODNAC & BELLE ROSE-QUATRE BORNES - PETTY CRIMES-EMERGENCY RESPONSE SERVICE

Dr. A. Boolell (Second Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes): Thank you very much, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. The matter I want to raise is addressed to the Rt. hon. Minister Mentor, Minister of Defence and Minister for Rodrigues, but I know the Deputy Prime Minister will take it up with the hon. Minister Mentor.

My attention has been drawn to the increase in the incidence of petty crimes in Sodnac and in other specific quarters of Belle Rose-Quatre Bornes. Unfortunately, the Emergency Response Service is not too responsive. Allegedly, there is a shortage of vehicles and not enough Police officers on the beat. I am sure that the Deputy Prime Minister will take it up with the Rt. hon. Minister Mentor. The matter has to be addressed in a more forceful manner.

Thank you very much.

The Deputy Prime Minister: I will, of course, transmit the statement to the Rt. hon. Minister Mentor. I am not too sure about the allegation of shortage of vehicles, but let us see what the Rt. hon. Minister Mentor says.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Osman Mahomed, you made a request to raise an issue concerning your constituency. You have the floor.

(9.26 p.m.)

RENGANADEN SEENEEVASSEN SSS – ACCOUNTS TEACHER

Mr Osman Mahomed (Third Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central): Yes, thank you. I am highly appreciative of you letting me speak tonight.

My request is addressed to the hon. Minister of Education about Renganaden Seeneevassen SSS in Port Louis whereby there appears, from what I have been told, there is a shortage of Accounts teacher.

So, I have been told of a particular case of a class Form IV which is preparing for SC next year, they don't have Accounts teacher at this point in time. And my request to her is to kindly request the administration of the Ministry to have an Accounts teacher deployed at the Renganaden Seeneevassen School at the earliest possible convenience because the students really need a teacher there, they are preparing for Form V next year.

Thank you.

The Deputy Prime Minister: As we know, my hon. colleague was here, but since her Ministry didn't appear, I say that by way of explanation for her absence.

I shall take note and transmit its Accounts teacher that we don't have.

At 9.27 p.m., the Assembly was, on its rising, adjourned to Friday 14 June 2019 at 3.00 p.m.