



SIXTH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

PARLIAMENTARY

DEBATES

(HANSARD)

FIRST SESSION

FRIDAY 20 FEBRUARY 2015

CONTENTS

PAPERS LAID

QUESTION (*Oral*)

MOTIONS

ADJOURNMENT

Members

Members

THE CABINET**(Formed by the Rt. Hon. Sir Anerood Jugnauth, GCSK, KCMG, QC)**

Hon. Sir Anerood Jugnauth, GCSK, KCMG, QC	Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs, Minister for Rodrigues and National Development Unit
Hon. Charles Gaëtan Xavier-Luc Duval, GCSK	Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism and External Communications
Hon. Showkutally Soodhun	Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Housing and Lands
Hon. Ivan Leslie Collendavelloo	Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Energy and Public Utilities
Hon. Seetanah Lutchmeenaraidoo	Minister of Finance and Economic Development
Hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth	Minister of Technology, Communication and Innovation
Hon. Yogida Sawmynaden	Minister of Youth and Sports
Hon. Nandcoomar Bodha	Minister of Public Infrastructure and Land Transport
Hon. Mrs Leela Devi Dookun-Luchoomun	Minister of Education and Human Resources, Tertiary Education and Scientific Research
Hon. Anil Kumarsingh Gayan	Minister of Health and Quality of Life
Dr. the Hon. Mohammad Anwar Husnoo	Minister of Local Government
Hon. Prithvirajsing Roopun	Minister of Social Integration and Economic Empowerment
Hon. Marie Joseph Noël Etienne Ghislain Sinatambou	Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade
Hon. Ravi Yerrigadoo	Attorney General
Hon. Mahen Kumar Seeruttun	Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security
Hon. Santaram Baboo	Minister of Arts and Culture
Hon. Ashit Kumar Gungah	Minister of Industry, Commerce and Consumer Protection
Hon. Mrs Marie-Aurore Marie-Joyce Perraud	Minister of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare
Hon. Sudarshan Bhadain	Minister of Financial Services, Good Governance and Institutional Reforms
Hon. Soomilduth Bholah	Minister of Business, Enterprise and Cooperatives
Hon. Mrs Fazila Jeewa-Daureeawoo	Minister of Social Security, National Solidarity and Reform

Institutions

Hon. Premdut Koonjoo	Minister of Ocean Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries, Shipping and Outer Islands
Hon. Jayeshwur Raj Dayal, CSK, PDSM, QPM	Minister of Environment, Sustainable Development and Disaster and Beach Management
Hon. Marie Roland Alain Wong Yen Cheong, MSK	Minister of Civil Service and Administrative Reforms
Hon. Soodesh Satkam Callichurn	Minister of Labour, Industrial Relations, Employment and Training

PRINCIPAL OFFICERS AND OFFICIALS

Madam Speaker	Hanoomanjee, Hon. Mrs Santi Bai
Deputy Speaker	Duval, Hon. Adrien Charles
Deputy Chairperson of Committees	Hurreeram, Hon. Mahendranuth Sharma
Clerk of the National Assembly	Lotun, Mrs B. Safeena
Deputy Clerk	Ramchurn, Ms Urmeelah Devi
Clerk Assistant	Gopall, Mr Navin (Temporary Transfer to RRA)
Hansard Editor	Jankee, Mrs Chitra
Serjeant-at-Arms	Badal, Mr Ramesh

MAURITIUS

Sixth National Assembly

FIRST SESSION

Debate No. 03 of 2015

Sitting of 20 February 2015

The Assembly met in the Assembly House, Port Louis at 3.00 p.m.

The National Anthem was played

(Madam Speaker in the Chair)

PAPERS LAID

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

A. Prime Minister's Office –

The Reports of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of the National Human Rights Commission for the years 2011, 2012 and 2013. (In Original)

B. Ministry of Finance and Economic Development

(a) The Customs Tariff (Amendment of Schedule) (No. 4) Regulations 2014 (Government Notice No.12 of 2015).

(b) The Annual Report 2013 of the Mauritius Revenue Authority. (In Original)

(c) The Annual Report 2013 of the Gambling Regulatory Authority. (In Original)

C. Ministry of Industry, Commerce and Consumer Protection –

The Rodrigues Consumer Protection (Control of Price of Taxable and Non-Taxable Goods) (Amendment No. 2) Regulations 2015 (Government Notice No. 13 of 2015).

D. Ministry of Social Security, National Solidarity and Reform Institutions

–

The Annual Report 2013 of the Senior Citizens Council. (In Original)

ORAL ANSWER TO QUESTION**TERRE ROUGE-VERDUN LINK ROAD (M3)**

The Leader of the Opposition (Mr P. Bérenger) (*by Private Notice*) asked the Minister of Public Infrastructure and Land Transport whether, in regard to the Terre Rouge-Verdun Link Road (M3), he will state –

- (a) the total sum paid to date to Colas Mauritius/Colas Madagascar and consultant EGIS BCEOM International;
- (b) if a tender for treatment of landslides was awarded in 2014;
- (c) why the original alignment was modified;
- (d) if a *prima facie* case of conspiracy has been established at the level of the Road Development Authority;
- (e) the temporary and permanent solutions that are being implemented concerning the cracks and settlement problems, and
- (f) the urgent measures being taken to ease traffic in and out of Port Louis North.

Mr Bodha: Madam Speaker, the project Terre Rouge-Verdun Link Road was designed in year 2006 to act as a bypass to Port Louis for traffic from the South/East to the North and to provide convenient and secured access for vehicles coming from the existing roads with the objective to relieve congestion on M1 and M2 Motorways. Consequently, this Link Road provides for a new corridor by bypassing Port Louis, taking into account the rapid economic development in Mauritius during the last decades. The project, as initially conceived, was referred to as Malinga/Crève Coeur Road and has, subsequently, been turned into the Terre Rouge/Verdun Phase I, and later, to Phase II of Terre Rouge/Verdun to address the issues of landslide works which was decided in 2013.

In regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed that the total amount paid to Colas (Maurice)/Colas (Madagascar) as contractor for the project was Rs3,028,859,365.53, whereas a total amount of Rs120 m. was paid to EGIS BCEOM, which was the consultant appointed for the project.

With regard to part (b) of the question, I am informed that following repeated landslides at around 1.5 km from Ripailles Roundabout to Valton Roundabout, it was decided to carry out slope stabilisation works in September 2013. Consequently, Sinohydro Corporation Ltd was selected as contractor for the project following an international bidding exercise. The project consists of slope stabilisation works and stabilisation of the landslide zones in four specific areas and the completion of the road and drainage works over the 2.5 km section of the southbound carriageway.

However, as a consequence of the embankment failure which has been identified lower at Valton in January of this year, my Ministry decided that comprehensive geotechnical investigations and tests should be carried out over the whole stretch of the road so as to establish the exact nature of the failure and to come up with appropriate reconstruction design for permanent remedial works. It was accordingly agreed to stop the slope stabilisation project being implemented by Sinohydro pending the completion of the geotechnical investigation and tests. This was done a few weeks back.

Madam Speaker, in relation to part (c) of the question, it was decided initially to implement the Malinga-Crève Coeur road project which would provide a link between the district of Moka and Pamplemousses by connecting the villages of Malinga and Crève Coeur. The detailed design and the tender documents were prepared by Luxconsult SA from Luxembourg.

However, after a Cabinet decision in December 2005, a consultant was nominated and the consultant recommended that the project be reviewed to take into account future developments in the region of Moka and to provide an alternative access to the development at Ébène and a link from the North to East and to Plaine Wilhems and to relieve traffic on existing motorways. A new alignment was consequently proposed extending from Terre Rouge to Verdun and this alignment was recommended for the following reasons –

- (i) it will reduce the travelling distance between the northern and eastern part of the island;
- (ii) that traffic load on the Motorways M1 and M2 will be reduced;
- (iii) it will provide an alternative link to the proposed new administrative city at Ébène, and

- (iv) it will generate development in the Moka and Pamplémousses area.

Madam Speaker, with regard to part (d) of the question, I wish to inform the House, that following the embankment failure which was observed on 18 January 2015, Government had, at its meeting held on 23 January 2015, decided to request the Ministry of Financial Services, Good Governance and Institutional Reforms to carry out a technical and financial audit into all the contracts awarded by the Road Development Authority since 2010. Furthermore, the Road Development Authority Board had, at its meeting held on 02 February 2015, decided to suspend two officers of the Road Development Authority who were directly involved in the implementation and monitoring of the project in their capacity as Site Engineer and Project Coordinator respectively and to set up an inquiry under the chairmanship of Me Ravin Chetty to investigate and to situate the responsibilities of the officers and of the RDA.

It is proposed eventually to refer the matter to the Police and to the ICAC, if need be, if it is established that there is any element for a *prima facie* case of conspiracy, and in the light of the findings of the technical and financial audit and the Enquiring Committee which has been set up at the level of the Road Development Authority.

Madam Speaker, concerning part (e) of the question, I wish to highlight that while I am fully aware of the daily hardships of road users caused by the closure of the Terre Rouge-Verdun Link Road, my main concern remains the safety of all road users.

The temporary and permanent solutions to be implemented would therefore depend on the findings of the comprehensive geotechnical investigations and tests which are being carried out now. It would consequently be available; the results will be available in three months and it would be advisable to wait for the results to determine the appropriate reconstruction design for any temporary and permanent remedial works because we have to know what is the cause of the failure.

Madam Speaker, with regard to part (f) of the question, the Traffic Management and Road Safety Unit of my Ministry and the Police Department have come up with the following measures with a view to easing traffic in and out of Port Louis -

- (i) Creation of an additional lane entering Riche Terre Roundabout to the Overhead Pedestrian Crossing at Roche Bois whereby the traffic are diverted to Abattoir Road into the ABC Motors Roundabout where the traffic have five options -

- to join the Motorway again at Quay D;
 - to join Farquhar Street parallel to the Motorway;
 - to join the South of Plaine Verte through Nicolay Street;
 - to join Route des Pamplemousses and the North of Plaine Verte, and last
 - to join Route des Pamplemousses, Boulevard Victoria, Old Moka Road and Camp Chapelon on Motorway 1.
- (ii) Part of the traffic using the Terre Rouge-Verdun Link Road are diverted from Valton Roundabout to Ripailles Roundabout through Long Mountain and Les Mariannes to reach Ripailles.
- (iii) Heavy motor vehicles are restricted to move from North to South on the Motorway during morning peak hours.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Leader of the Opposition!

Mr Bérenger: As far as the first part of my question is concerned, Madam Speaker, if I heard the hon. Minister rightly, the contract was awarded to Colas for Rs2.1 billion, and he said that to date Rs3 billion – slightly more – have been paid. Are there outstanding claims emanating from Colas and his consultant EGIS still being paid as a consultant?

Mr Bodha: From the information I have, Madam Speaker, there was a number of claims by Colas amounting to about Rs500 m., but then, there was the *Agence Française de Développement* and there was an independent arbitrator. Finally, the arbitrator decided on a sum of Rs93.3 m. and this was paid to the contractor and an extension time of nine months was granted. As regard to EGIS as well, there is no outstanding claim.

Mr Bérenger: My point is: are they still being paid as a consultant?

Mr Bodha: Are they?

Mr Bérenger: Are they still being remunerated, paid as a consultant?

Mr Bodha: No.

Mr Bérenger: As far as part (b) is concerned, Madam Speaker, I think here the hon. Minister tells us the value of the treatment of landslides award. Can he confirm that Sinohydro was awarded the contract for Rs800 m., that, up to date, 8% have already been

paid? He tells us that Sinohydro has agreed to stop works, on what conditions and is Sinohydro also being investigated into by the Committee and so on of hon. Minister Bhadain?

Mr Bodha: Madam Speaker, as regards Phase II of Terre Rouge-Verdun, I would like to enlighten the House on one fact. In fact, tests were carried out in 2006, 2010 and 2011. For the 3 test periods, the first period was 15 days, the second was 5 and the third was 3. For the whole project of Terre Rouge-Verdun, the tests which were carried out, Madam Speaker, lasted only 21 days. If I remove weekends, I think it must have lasted even less. The amount paid by EGIS to the geotechnical expert was 12,000 euros. It is clear, Madam Speaker, that the tests which were carried out at a site which is very complex and an area which is very wet, were totally inappropriate for such a project which were to cost Rs2.1 billion. After the implementation of the project in 2010, landslides occurred in the region where there were the cuts and the tests were done for 5 days – yes! But what I am saying is that, at one point in time, regarding the three lanes going southbound, the project was stopped, because the AFD and Government decided at that time that there could be no variation in the contract, because already the contract had moved from Rs2.1 billion to Rs3 billion. So, it was decided to have a Phase II of the project, just to cater for the landslide area. That was the contract which was allocated to Sinohydro for, as the hon. Leader of the Opposition put it, Rs800 m. Up to now, 5% of the works have been carried out and we visited the sites.

(Interruptions)

5% of the works have been carried out. We went on site and we have decided, together with the expert that we have chosen, ARQ from South Africa, to do the geotechnical tests, to stop the works, to do the tests again, to see whether the design and the remedial works for the landslides are the right ones and after three months, we will be able to say whether they can continue on that design and on those works.

As regards Sinohydro, I don't know whether the team of my colleague from the Financial Services has yet asked Sinohydro to come in to give their explanation. But, so far, only 5% of the works have been carried out and I need some confirmation as regards to whether there has been any payment made to Sinohydro.

Mr Bérenger: But my point is: has Government decided that Sinohydro will be amongst the dossiers that will be investigated into by that Committee chaired by hon.

Bhadain? Because we know the past performance of Sinohydro; this has been raised here. Has Government decided to include that file of Sinohydro in the files to be investigated?

Mr Bodha: The decision of Cabinet was, in fact, to include all projects which have been implemented since 2010. Well, Madam Speaker, I have been informed that there has been an advance payment of 10% against a guarantee to be furnished by Sinohydro.

Mr Bérenger: That is why I am interested to know the conditions that Sinohydro supposedly has agreed; they must have set conditions to stop works, because mobilising equipment and money. So, what are the conditions that Sinohydro has agreed to stop work?

Mr Bodha: Concerning the conditions, we have told them that we want to prove whether the design and the works that have been proposed by EGIS under the contract are right and adequate because we all agree today that it is a very difficult area, it is a very wet area and there have been landslides in 2010, 2011 and we have decided to ask Sinohydro to stop the works for three months.

Mr Bérenger: For three months?

Mr Bodha: Yes.

Mr Bérenger: Good! The next part of my question is that I tried to catch all the reasons that explained why there have been a change in *tracé*, in alignment of the road. Two questions! The officer responsible - who is still in post, he has not yet retired, I understand - Mr Kadress Dorsamy had stated that the alignment had been changed *pour attirer le trafic*, that the previous alignment would not have caught the traffic as it should. Is that confirmed and is it being investigated by, again, this all-powerful committee chaired by hon. Bhadain, whether there has been land speculation around that realignment, as was alleged publicly and here in the past?

Mr Bodha: Madam Speaker, the baby is here. There is a new alignment.

(Interruptions)

What I am saying is that the baby is here. Concerning the alignment, from what I understand, the MSM/MMM Government in 2000-2005 had decided on the road Crève Coeur-Malinga with four kilometers to go through Long Mountain. The Government which came after in December decided on the alignment to connect Ébène and to connect the northern part of the

island. Well, I don't have any information as regards land speculation or as to why the alignment, in fact, we ended up from Crève Coeur-Malinga and we ended up to Terre Rouge-Verdun.

Mr Bérenger: Well, we are interested to know. There have been inquiries all over the place and there have been clear allegations here, in the Minister's presence, in this august Assembly, that there has been land speculation. So, can I insist that Government should look into that also? We are looking into all sorts of excesses. This is a very serious allegation. Why will it not be investigated?

Mr Bodha: Madam Speaker, it will be investigated into.

Mr Bérenger: The next part of my question, Madam Speaker, I asked if a *prima facie* case of conspiracy has been established; now I understand that the case has not yet been referred to the Police. I have not heard the Minister say that anybody has been suspended. Which is which? There has been strong allegations by the hon. Minister himself. The words –

“On s’était évertué à me faire croire que everything was fine and then serious allegations were made.”

So, which is which?

Mr Bodha: The serious allegations are still there, Madam Speaker. We have evidence now that in 2010 already, there were some problems with the site where we have the embankment failure. Now, whether this was reported to the management under the Board of the RDA, we are investigating into the matter. In February 2013, there was a site visit by the two suspended Engineers when cracks were, in fact, observed and brought to the knowledge of EGIS, that is, the designer and the supervisor, and the contractor, in fact, proposed remedial works, but EGIS decided that the remedial works should not be done. That was in February 2013. So, we have proof that the cracks occurred and that there was no disclosure of this essential information by the Engineers. But we are taking the right procedure, we are having the investigation under the chairmanship of Me Ravin Chetty and, of course, we'll delve into the matter. I am convinced that we will come to the conclusion that the allegations will be proven.

As regards Mr Dorsamy, the Manager of the RDA, he requested to leave on preretirement. But Government decided not to grant this order to leave because we need him

in the investigation of the Terre Rouge-Verdun Project and, of course, in the investigation of the other projects which are being taken care of by my colleague, the Minister of Financial Services, Good Governance and Institutional Reforms.

Mr Bérenger: Outside this House, Madam Speaker, the hon. Minister was more precise. Here, he said February 2013, out there he made reference to correspondence dated 23 February 2013 in which Colas brought to the attention of the Engineers of RDA and of the consultant the very serious problem that was arising. Is he prepared to table copy of that correspondence received by the RDA and by EGIS?

Mr Bodha: I have no issue on that, Madam Speaker.

Mr Bérenger: There were also allegations that there was some kind of *trafic d'influence* since the contractor gave *privilège*, as it was stated, to not less than six Engineers. Is that part of the inquiry? Has this to date been established?

Mr Bodha: This is in the contract, Madam Speaker. In fact, in the contract between the contractor, that is, the builder and the RDA, you have one clause where six Engineers are granted a vehicle of their choice to do the site visits for three years and this is being investigated into.

Mr Bérenger: Comments in the press have been very tough. Is the hon. Minister, at this stage, telling us that this clause between Colas and the RDA was, if not illegal, unacceptable or is it current practice?

Mr Bodha: From what I have heard, it was in the practice of these contracts to have such a clause. But it is clear that this clause is totally unreasonable given that the Engineers are officers of the RDA which provides them with all the resources for the site visits. But what is also strange, Madam Speaker, is that the cracks occurred in February 2013, there were site visits between the Engineers and the contractor, but, to my knowledge, we do not know whether the two Engineers of the RDA were there. The most important thing is that why I made serious allegations is because in management meetings where I asked the question twice: “whether you were aware of cracks occurring on the road before the opening of the road in December 2013” and twice on those management meetings the answer to me was “no”. It was later that I got this evidence that, in fact, cracks had occurred in February 2013 and I informed the Cabinet about it.

So, what has happened, Madam Speaker, is that the RDA relied totally on the consultants and it relied totally on the tests which were carried out. It is very clear today that they were totally inadequate for such a project. Today, I have had a working session with the South African experts. The embankment, that is, the road infrastructure (which is about 7 metres) rests on natural ground, (which is about 20 metres) above the rock. Tests which have been carried out as regards the resistance of the natural ground to support the embankment has shown that the natural ground is too weak because they have a test called the standard penetration test and it is 10, it should be at least 30 on a scale of 0 to 50 . So, it is clear that the whole road was built on a natural ground which could not support that structure.

The other thing is there was no, I would say, appropriate test as regards the drainage pattern of that area. When we went on site, many of the planters there told us that, in fact, this was a very, very wet area. When the embankment collapsed, we did the drilling, the water level was only at 3.5 metres from the surface which means that the whole natural soil and part of the embankment was under water.

Mr Bérenger: The hon. Minister has been very tough on the RDA, on the contractor Colas and on the consultant EGIS and now relies heavily on the Japanese International Cooperation Agency and now we hear some South African experts. Can we know what is the staffing locally of the Japanese International Cooperation Agency? How equipped is the staffing to do that kind of assessment right now and who appointed those South African experts? Can we know who they are, their qualifications and who appointed them?

Mr Bodha: Let me explain this, Madam Speaker. When there was the collapse of the embankment failure, in fact, I wanted to understand what had happened. The experts of JICA - we have two Engineers who were working on the landslides in Chitrakoot and in the South of the island - were there. So, I took them to the site and they, in fact, investigated the embankment failure correctly and under their guidance we decided not to have any remedial works because they said it was very serious. In the meantime, ARQ from South Africa, which are geotechnical experts, building dams in India and Latin America, have been requested to provide the design and the remedy for the failure of Ring Road 1 which they are currently implementing. We went to the site together with ARQ and the Japanese experts to have a common opinion because my reading was that we should know what is the cause of the failure. Once we know what is the cause of the failure, then we can come with the permanent works because, at the end of the day, this road has already cost us more than Rs3.8 billion

and today the mess we are in is not the making of this Government, but decisions taken today will have a bearing on what is going to happen tomorrow and we do not want to have the same problems.

So, the ARQ team is already here to monitor and supervise the works at the collapse of Ring Road 1. The Ministry had requested them, together with the experts from the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), to work together to come to a common opinion to understand why this region is so dangerous.

Madam Speaker: One last question!

Mr Bérenger: The public wants to know urgently when this Terre Rouge-Verdun Road will be reopened. Today, the Minister tells us that the test will be available in three months' time, outside he said six months. The newspapers quoted him as saying: "in six months' time the results of the tests will be available." Now, he says three months. Even if it is three months, we had the test; we have to examine the test. Then we have to tender whatever we have to tender and so on. Can he give an indication to the country, to the road users, who need urgently to use that road again, when roughly will that road be reopened?

Mr Bodha: I think it is a genuine concern of the country, Madam Speaker. I do not know what the Press has reported. But I have always said that the tests have to be extensive and have to be final so that what we do as remedial works are going to be permanent. Now, I can say today that the tests are going to take three months and they will include the tests at the embankment failure, the revision of the design at the mountain cuts, that is, the Sinohydro project; they will also include all the other segments from the whole stretch from Valton to Ripailles so that, at the end of the day, after three months we will be able to say to Sinohydro that they can continue. We will also know exactly what is the design for the embankment failure and what are the permanent works at the site where we have the problem and also on the other segments of the road.

I understand from what I have been told by the experts that the tests will take three months and the works may take from nine to twelve months. In the meantime, to alleviate the traffic, because, as we said, 30% of the traffic going south goes through Terre Rouge-Verdun, we are working on the design of a track road of a diversion of about 400 metres which will allow vehicles to use the road south of Valton and north of Ripailles so that we will have better fluidity to the centre of the island and we are working on the design of this

track road which we will use during weekdays just to see to it that we do not have this huge congestion problem going through Port Louis.

But, Madam Speaker, I would like to say to this House that as regards the Government, the most important thing is that we should have a motorway which is safe. We have already spent almost Rs4 billion, we are doing the tests now and we hope to be able to come with a design which will see to it that it is a permanent road between Terre Rouge and Verdun.

Madam Speaker: Thank you. Time is over!

(Interruptions)

I am sorry, time is over!

Mr Bérenger: I am on the last part of my question.

Madam Speaker: I will allow the hon. Leader of the Opposition one last question!

Mr Bérenger: Urgently, traffic congestion must be solved in and out of north. Already we have had two flops. A *troisième voie* was tried, flopped and then a *diversion à travers* Camp Yoloff was tried and flopped. Now, we are told - I understand - a third solution to this urgent traffic congestion problem. Will a third flop occur and who is responsible at the RDA to coordinate with the Police at this stage as far as traffic congestion is concerned?

Mr Bodha: Madam Speaker, we did one day what is called a contra lane, that is, diverting the traffic to Port Louis on the lane which was bound towards the north and that created a national problem. But I must say that the diversion through l'Abattoir to Plaine Verte and to the centre of Port Louis going through Farquhar Street which we have opened is today being taken by one thousand vehicles during peak time and that is about 10% of the traffic entering Port Louis. So, that is a solution. The third lane is being worked upon and we are going to open it most probably in about ten days and we hope that will also bring some fluidity.

But, Madam Speaker, there is no magic solution! We have 9,000 vehicles entering Port Louis from the north and 10,000 from the south. So, at the end of the day, at the peak time, we have about 20,000 vehicles going through Place d'Armes. So, this has been a

problem with us for many years and the Terre Rouge-Verdun was one solution to it. We will work with the Police.

As regards the last question, I must say that the Police has been giving us a helping hand and the Traffic Management and Road Safety Unit as well. Well, the RDA has not been involved in all this. What they have been doing is to supervise the works throughout the third lane, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Time is over!

MOTIONS

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.

PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS – MOTION OF THANKS

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on the following motion of the hon. Second Member for Grand River North West & Port Louis West (Mrs D. Selvon).

"That an Address be presented to the President of the Republic of Mauritius in the following terms -

"We, the Members of the Mauritius National Assembly, here assembled, beg leave to offer our thanks to the President of the Republic of Mauritius for the Speech which he has addressed to us on the occasion of the Opening of the First Session of the Sixth National Assembly."

Question again proposed.

(3.41p.m.)

Mrs D. Boygah (Second Member for Vieux Grand Port & Rose Belle): Madam Speaker, I feel deeply privileged to stand today in this august institution, the National Assembly, that is, the symbol and hallmark of our democracy and make my maiden speech, as an elected Member to the Assembly from Constituency No.11, Vieux Grand Port and Rose Belle.

Allow me, at the very outset, to extend my heartiest congratulations to you, Madam Speaker, for occupying such a highly significant post and also extend my heartiest gratitude to the hon. Deputy Speaker and to all the Members of this Assembly.

I would avail myself this opportunity to thank, first of all, the Rt. hon. Prime Minister, Sir Anerood Jugnauth, who confidently confided his confidence in me, to the leader of the MSM, hon. Pravind Jugnauth, my colleagues from the party and all the components of l'Alliance Lepep.

Obviously, I place on record the support of the intelligent and reliable electorate from my constituency, who have placed their trust in me and heartfelt thanks to all of you 'Mam'.

On this auspicious day in early December, we sealed a pact with the people of the Republic of Mauritius. We agreed that we would fulfil those responsibilities vested upon us with integrity, commitment and all transparency.

Now that the elected period is behind us, now that the dust has settled, we all know that we have a job to do. We also know that we have the inspired leadership built on an elevated edifice of experience and know-how of our esteemed Rt. hon. Prime Minister, Sir Anerood Jugnauth, to guide us. In this Mauritian politics, Sir Anerood Jugnauth has always delivered what he promises.

We all know that he has done it in the past, enabling the country that was caught in an economic maelstrom to move out and become a beacon of prosperity and development.

And we all know that the hon. Prime Minister will do it again. We know he has the silver bullet to bring the country out of the terrible miasma it has been entangled in the past few years.

Madam Speaker, in the past nine years, our country had come to a point where the country as a whole had nothing but misgivings about the future.

The impact of one scandal had hardly had time to sink in before another one came along to piggyback it. The people whose will have to be served, become, in fact, subservient to the will of a few, a selected few of a coterie.

Ask any young person who had had some education; the first instinct was to find a way out of the country that could not offer any prospect for employment commensurate with their qualifications.

The grass always seems greener elsewhere because the Eldorado had ceased to exist in Mauritius.

Bogus universities shattered the legitimate dreams and aspirations of so many youths and parents who pinned their hopes for economic mobility on higher education that came at a cost.

I need hardly stress that institutional credibility had reached an unheard of low esteem in the public. Disillusion, demotivation and disenchantment had thus set in, flying in the face of a vision that we had all entertained of presenting our paradise, Mauritius, as a showcase of modernity and efficiency on the international scene.

Madam Speaker, the nine years or so, you will agree with me, was nothing, but a standstill of our motherland in all fields of life. We came across nothing, but social degradation; decline of moral values, and, needless to say, a very near economic crash. It was nothing, but a paradox, when the whole world was in the process of active mobility, we came to a point of standstill. During those years, scandals after scandals were the ingredients of the day, with crime rate and the nature of crime alarmingly increasing. I need not enumerate the numerous scandals which are being unveiled. "*Compter fini scandales rester*", and you know nowadays, Madam Speaker, "*Compter fini billet rester*".

Our living environment had been suffocating, children on one side, old people on the other side, but the true sufferers were our householders on whose shoulders, our daughters, our sisters, our young girls lie.

Madam Speaker, if today I am here in this august House, I do feel that I am the representative of so many thousands of citizens of this country who had been taken hostage for the past nine years, ruled under the leadership of a self-proclaimed lion and his cubs.

My voice today represents those voiceless victims who had been desperately struggling to voice out. These voiceless people were those sisters, housewives, daughters, who, in their attempt to survive, had to undergo unthinkable traumas of the infamous “*touse sali, mette bikini, danse Macarena*” episodes and to dance with the tune of those, whom today after our victory, have come to light and to some to shame.

Madam Speaker, in their attempt to retain power, not only the young womenfolk had been subjected to humiliation, pitilessly, even our grannies, our *nanis*, our *mawsis* had not been spared. In fact, they made a mockery of those old, innocent, naive elderly by bribing them to sing and dance to the glory of the self-proclaimed lion. In so doing, they made a mockery of the very root of our culture. God made them pay heavily for this and history bears witness.

I can't help myself, Madam Speaker, from voicing my disgust to what we are witnessing these days. While street children are striving for a meal, one in particular has thousands of millions of rupees in store for his petty expenses. An inquiry is on, I better don't dwell on this issue right now.

Madam Speaker, I could go on illustrating many more of these follies and foibles that have been engaged in by the previous regime, but that have resulted in slowing down our social progress and development in this country. But we have been elected by the population to optimistically look forward instead.

Madam Speaker, this new Government has brought along a feel good factor in the population. The Rt. hon. Sir Anerood Jugnauth incarnates hope for the poor people, unemployed and *les laissés-pour-compte* of our country. Ever since in charge, the Government has set itself to task. No stone will be left unturned to make this 300-point programme a reality, a happening in the next five years. Our Rt. hon. Prime Minister has set the example. *Il a placé la barre très haute, à nous, élus du peuple, de l'aider dans sa divine mission de mener le pays vers un deuxième miracle économique, Madame la présidente, et restaurer la moralité dans la façon de faire la politique.*

However, I think it must be stressed, Madam Speaker, that there are some cardinal lessons that the last elections have brought home to us all. One of them is the dominant, even overriding role played by the youths and women.

They are the ones who decided to throw in their lot with us and decided to carve and shape their own future and thereby achieve meaningful changes.

Here, Madam Speaker, I am not talking of youth and women from a specific ethnic group, race or creed. I am not talking about women with a specific dress style, is it sari, churidaar or minis. I am not talking about women applying lipstick of any color, is it red, purple, orange or of any color, Madam Speaker? Madam Speaker, we are talking here of people from all backgrounds and walks of life. We are united to say no to corruption, no to nepotism and no to cronyism. And when people are united in their rejection of what they see as fundamentally immoral, unethical, there is no stopping in the surge.

Madam Speaker, there is another lesson that we have garnered from the results of the last elections. It is simply –

“As a policy shaper and policymaker, we have taken a commitment to serve the people. But to do so, we should create conditions for innovative ideas and concepts to swarm up to us instead of believing that everything has to start from us”.

For it is obvious that the prized goals and objectives we have set for ourselves are the reflection of the heartfelt needs of the people. It goes without saying, therefore, that their implementation cannot be successfully achieved without the support of the people.

The Government has pledged very clearly its determination to “govern for the people with the people”, Madam Speaker. People empowerment, Madam Speaker, is therefore a new name of the game. And I, who have been bestowed with responsibility as a PPS, will ensure that this becomes a reality and I act as a facilitator of an effective interface between the people and the Government machinery. And the people have endowed us with a mission to transport the country so that the Second Economic Miracle and social and cultural spin-offs become a reality. In short, Madam Speaker, we have been mandated to ‘Achieve Meaningful Change’ which is the leitmotiv of our Government Programme 2015-2019.

Madam Speaker, a political manifesto is commonly defined as a public declaration of principles, policies or intentions of a political nature. It becomes a document that is based on

fundamental questions like, ‘What are the concerns of the people?’ ‘What do people expect from the party or parties wishing to be voted to power?’ and the like.

The manifesto of the ‘*Alliance Lepep*’, kept all these dimensions and all these concerns in mind and served as a blueprint for the Government Programme 2015-2019. It has been the brainchild of a dedicated collective team of thinkers, but also experienced practitioners who have been close to and systematically feeling the pulse of the people.

What was the music to the ears of the people is that, after 9 years of inanity and wishy-washiness, they are being told in a clear, genuine and no-nonsense manner that –

“Government is committed to concluding business on a principle of discipline, transparency, accountability and exemplary governance”.

This commitment alone, given the prevailing context of indisciplinary, opacity, non-accountability and wanting governance over the past nine years, explains the high level of possible positive accolade and receptivity that the Programme has received along the rank and file of the population.

Madam Speaker, I am proud to state that this Programme carries a host of pro-poor policies and the needs for genuine social inclusion.

Allow me to spell out just a few of them. To start with –

- The elaboration of a Marshal Plan to combat poverty and social exclusion;
- The review of sales by levy procedures;
- The reinforcement of laws relating to the protection and prevention of domestic violence which has become a bane in so many households today;
- The establishment of a system of visits by specialised nurses as well as dedicated counters in our primary health care centres and hospitals to cater for the needs of the elderly and disabled people;
- Full subsidies on SC and HSC examinations for all learners as well as a free hot meal for all the pupils.

Nor have the foundations of the economic transformation of the country been forgotten. The Government Programme places a premium on new growth poles like the development of Mauritius as a regional bunkering hub, the provision of a new fillip to the ocean economy and the creation of 15,000 jobs annually, among others.

Obviously, Madam Speaker, our economy will be at risk unless we develop our young jobseekers into a skilled and experienced workforce. Education is thus vital to a nation in what it helps accelerate the pace of development, both human and infrastructural and guarantees the scope of profitability and satisfying employment and paves the way for social mobility.

And no one will deny that it has become opportune and timely to both introduce a Higher Education Bill that will transform Mauritius into a genuine knowledge hub and rethink about the CPE and ensure that there is a proper institutionalisation and actualisation of a genuine “Learning for All”.

Madam Speaker, during the last nine years of the several economic factors that have had a very bad impact upon our people, one of the toughest has been underemployment and unemployment. When a country reaches a point where young people with Masters and PhDs have to drag their feet and their application for an odd job opening turned down, where they have to be recruited as service providers to perform tasks in Ministries under Service to Mauritius Scheme, we realise something is amiss and has gone tremendously wrong. Madam Speaker, if I have so far stressed the situation of youth, you will appreciate that I am also aware that there is an issue that concerns women as well.

As an entrepreneur myself, I am all too conscious that women have to labour under a double-jeopardy handicap, that women have for long been participating in the labour force is never questioned in Mauritius. In fact, gender equality in the workforce is a primary factor that guarantees a major human resource is not being wasted but rather contributes to the economic growth and, therefore, national development.

This is the influential role of gender equality at the workforce. But, Madam Speaker, what about the social and domestic fronts? Madam Speaker, all of us, hon. Members of this Assembly of both sexes are all aware of the heavy burden of some of our sisters made to carry on the domestic and social front. Violence against women can and should never be treated as a primary problem as we often tend to see happening in our country.

I remember reading a few years ago a series of aggravating factors listed by the *SOS Femmes* as related to the dynamic of domestic violence. Among these figured prominently alcoholism and drugs, financial problems and unemployment as well as the trivialisation of domestic violence.

Can we, hon. Members of this Assembly, honestly say that matters have changed much these days? The average crime perpetrated against women today is domestically related. The most vulnerable victims of chain-snatching on the road are the women and those who are less likely to secure a job after losing one are, again, women.

It is to be appreciated, therefore, that this Government Programme aims at redressing the situation, dealing with the issue of domestic violence, protecting further women and girls in dire circumstances and coming up, among other measures with a 'Back to Work Programme' to facilitate their re-entry in the world of work.

You will have noticed, Madam Speaker, that I have concentrated only on some facets of the Government Programme, but largely on the social ones. This time, Government has decided to lay much more emphasis on both women and children and people of all classes. Still, the House will agree with me that the ground has effectively been laid in our Government Programme for sound and further reaching policies to deliver a better social outcome.

Madam Speaker, it is beyond dispute that the Government Programme addresses the concern of every single Mauritian - as I stated before - of all ages, of all classes, of all social backgrounds. Every single measures included has no gut in itself to be dismissed. I am afraid for my friends on the other side to prove which single word of the Programme is out of tune, let alone our measures. Madam Speaker, how can anybody go against this Government Programme whereby such measures are being targeted and some already realised and materialised with standing ovation of the whole population?

Before ending, Madam Speaker, I would wish the House to reflect on the message inherent to the Government Programme for its 2015-2019 mandate. In its professed intention to drive the nation towards a tryst with its destiny, the following phrase in the preamble expresses all too clearly an unflinching and unflagging determination, I quote –

“To bring meaningful change to the daily life of our people and to lead them towards happiness, prosperity and a better future”.

Let nobody be fooled by the simplicity behind these words. These words are pregnant with significance in that they reflect the determination of the Government to scale-up and improve the sustainability - economic, social, human, cultural and political - of the nation as a whole.

In this venture, everybody is to be and will be taken on board. All persons have to be and will be integral to the fruitfulness of this enterprise. This is why, Madam Speaker, I will, through you, invite the hon. Members of the Opposition to join us in this mission that we have set for on board. All persons have to be and will be integral to the fruitfulness of this enterprise.

This is why, Madam Speaker, I will, through you, invite the hon. Members of the Opposition to join us in this mission that we have set for ourselves. They do not have to oppose all the time.

There are moments when reaching across the aisle can be beneficial rather than detrimental to the national interests. There are moments when, despite differences of opinion, people can still speak to one another. And if, in the interest of the people, we speak the same language and read from the same song script, then this augurs well for our democracy.

Pour terminer, j'aurais aimé partager avec vous, Madame la présidente, l'anecdote d'un de mes mandants. Pour l'anniversaire de son fils de 10 ans, son fils lui demanda un petit cadeau et le père lui répondit, et lui dit -

« Tone fini gagne to cadeau beta, to cadeau mone donne toi ça le 10 décembre quand mone vote l'Alliance LEPEP et quand mone mette toi dans la main Sir Anerood Jugnauth, to l'avenir ine fini assuré. »

With these words, I thank you, Madam Speaker.

(4.02 p.m.)

Mr D. Ramful (Third Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien): Madam Speaker, let me, first of all, congratulate you for your election as Speaker of this House. May I also congratulate hon. A. Duval for his election as Deputy Speaker and I have no doubt that you will make use of your good office to uphold the rules of this Assembly for the sake of democracy. Let me also congratulate hon. Mrs Boygah for her maiden speech.

Madam Speaker, I stand before you today in this august Assembly as a young Member freshly elected having at heart the future of my country and the faith of its people. So, my speech today will be the *vox populi*, that is, *la voix du peuple*, the voice of the people, beyond party politics. The people of this country have, on 10 December, elected the Government of the day to be in the driving seat. And this Government has chosen as their

destination the shaping of *un second miracle socio-économique* in the interest of one and all. The way forward, the path to follow to reach this heavenly destination, has been set out in the Government Programme. I, being the mouthpiece of my electorate and although being in the Opposition, I acclaim the choice of this destination, which is a second socio-economic miracle.

However, Madam Speaker, choosing a destination is one thing, reaching it is another matter. It requires commitment, committing yourself to the people and committing yourself to your programme. Creating a feel good factor just after the election is most welcomed, but that is not sufficient to attain our goals. Surely, doing exactly the contrary to what has been promised would slowly but inevitably instil in the minds of the very people who voted for this Government, a feeling that they have been betrayed and conned, in other words, a *sentiment de 'dévérer mam'*.

The recent U-turns...

(Interruptions)

The recent U-turns in Government decisions, in particular, depriving the consumers of the benefit they legitimately deserve as a result of the fall of petroleum prices on the international market and the recent appointments of CEOs and Chairpersons in parastatal bodies are just a few examples of deviations from the promises made to the people and, this, if it continues would tend to reinforce what the political analysts are saying outside, that the vote expressed by the people on 10 December was a vote *de sanction* against the previous Government, *et pas un vote d'attribution* to the present Government. If this theory is confirmed and if Government continues, mark my word,...

(Interruptions)

...nothing will stand in the way of the people for change.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Order, please!

Mr Ramful: Madam Speaker, I have read the chapter on economy; I can perceive that there are good intentions from the present Government. I sincerely hope that the Government of the day do achieve what they have proposed. The creation of new pillars for economic

growth, such as making Mauritius a regional bunkering hub, the development of the Ocean Economy, the implementation of the Duty-Free Shopping Paradise are not new to this Assembly. They have been invoked in the past by previous Governments.

The Deputy Prime Minister, hon. Duval, who was serving as Minister of Finance in the previous Government, did mention in the 2014 Budget, about making Mauritius a Marine Services Hub. He mentioned the creation of a Marine Services Platform as a new pillar centered on growing the bunkering facilities. He also mentioned that currently we attract bunkering traffic for only 300,000 tonnes and the demand for bunkering in the region is expected to rise to around 8.6 m. tonnes. And this is why the previous Government took the decision to liberalise the importation of bunker fuel resulting in more competitive tariffs. However, this won't be enough because there are other factors that should be considered such as the need to have the infrastructure and equipment and the human resource to support an efficient bunkering operation in the port. So, Madam Speaker, such a project should be given its utmost priority and I suggest that there must be an exhaustive study and we should follow the path led by Singapore which has now become the world's largest bunkering port.

The Ocean Economy is yet another pillar mentioned by the hon. Deputy Prime Minister, the then Minister of Finance, under the previous Government. A roadmap had been prepared and various opportunities were identified for the exploration of the 2.3 m. square kilometres of maritime zone, including petroleum and mineral exploration, seafood and aquaculture, deep ocean water applications, marine renewable energies and ocean knowledge. A National Ocean Economy Task Force was even set up to oversee the implementation of that roadmap. Even experts from World Bank were roped in to help in the realisation of this new pillar of economic development. And I congratulate this Government for their decision to continue with this project.

The Duty-free Shopping Paradise, again another laudable project initiated by hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth back in 2005 when he announced the abolition of 80% tax on about 1850 varieties of goods, including fabrics, electronics and jewellery. However, it is regrettable that this project has not really materialised. We still find most of our tourist visitors coming with their 10kg luggage and leaving the country with their 10kg luggage. Now, I believe that maybe this duty-free concept should be extended to more varieties of products to the taste and to the needs of the visitors, but, at the same time, we should be

Careful not to make things more complicated for those export-led industries, especially in the present context of the fall in the Euro.

The creation of an SME bank and earmarking Rs10 billion for the SMEs, again it is good intention to increase growth and create jobs, but until and unless these SMEs do not explore the right market to exhaust their products, no amount of fiscal alleviations would help them. Our market is too small for the survival of these SMEs and they should, therefore, be encouraged to export overseas. Measures should be taken by the Government so that these SMEs have easy access to information, advice and finance so that they can have the required technology to compete on the international market.

Madam Speaker, bringing our country to a higher level of economic development or attaining a second socio-economic miracle, whatever terms we use, what is important is that we should develop new strategies to maximise our opportunities in a new world environment. We cannot take any risk and formulate economic policies haphazardly. This Government cannot take any risk and it will have to fulfil the promise of making the economic miracle, otherwise the future of a whole generation will be wasted. This is why I suggest that maybe the present Government should consider the setting-up of an Economic Strategies Committee under the chairmanship of the hon. Minister of Finance comprising of experts. This committee should engage itself in obtaining views and suggestions from various stakeholders, including the industries, business chambers and associations, universities and think-tanks, unionists, professionals, entrepreneurs and members of the public. Proposals from this committee would then help to develop meaningful social and economic strategies to create growth.

Madam Speaker, only economic growth will help to create jobs. The Government has promised the creation of 15,000 jobs annually and a significant number of jobs in the public sector. We are all concerned with the number of unemployed school leavers and graduates who are struggling to find a decent job. Palliative measures such as the “Youth Employment Programme’ will not solve the problem. Government should make an assessment of the current ‘Youth Employment Programme’ to find out how many of those enlisted in that programme do retain their jobs after the completion of their one-year contract and then come up with reforms.

Madam Speaker, the quest for a second socio-economic miracle would not be accomplished if we do not come up with an adaptable and realistic reform in the education

sector. I am glad to see in the programme that Government is aiming at providing a high standard of academic education and skills for our youngsters. It is also encouraging to see that the education reforms will focus on curriculum review and performance improvement at all levels. The reforms should not only consider providing high standard of quality education but should also include value education. The level of discipline in our schools has been the subject of a lot of debates recently and this is what parents are saying outside. They are saying: ‘when a three or four-year-old child comes to school for admission, the child comes as a little angel but when the child, now a young adult, leaves the school at the age of seventeen or eighteen, he/she often leaves as a little devil.’ So, we have to bring meaningful change in the educational sector that would take account of both quality and value education.

When talking about quality education, I would like to draw the attention of the hon. Minister of Education and Human Resources to the book called ‘*Ti-Matou*’ that was introduced in the primary education curriculum last year with the blessing of the previous Minister.

(Interruptions)

This book, Madam Speaker – I have said I will speak with the voice of the people - has been a complete failure.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Order, please!

Mr Ramful: There have been a lot of complaints from parents about the contents of that book. Instead of raising their level of education, it has created confusion in the minds of young children at their tender age. How can a child, who is still struggling with learning words, be taught to read lengthy texts at the first year cycle? How can a child be taught to learn words without being taught syllables? How can educators be asked to work on a book without having been given proper and adequate training? I hope that the hon. Minister shall take immediate corrective measures as she did for the Enhancement Programme which was a complete waste of public money and which was being used by some parents working late hours as a ‘*garderie*’ for their children after school hours.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Jhugroo!

Mr Ramful: I take note of the Government's decision to introduce a 9-year basic continuous schooling and to replace the Certificate of Primary Education by an end of primary cycle assessment. However, before embarking on such a course, I would request the hon. Minister to come with an integrated roadmap or a green paper with concrete proposals so that there are constructive inputs from different stakeholders on such an important issue.

I also welcome Government's decision to come up with an Integrated Career Counselling Service to enable the young students to better plan their career. I would like to seize the opportunity to draw the attention of the hon. Minister that under my chairmanship when I was at the Human Resource Development Council, we have worked on this project for the setting-up of such a Career Counselling Service and the project has reached an advanced stage.

Madam Speaker, I cannot end my speech without referring to the Police inquiry against the former Prime Minister that led to the seizure of bank notes found in his safes. I shall refrain myself from engaging in a debate about the source of that money, since there is an on-going Police inquiry and, above all, we should not give the impression of being '*des hypocrites*' or close our eyes to the obvious. But there is....

(Interruptions)

...a public outcry that the time has come for the introduction of a comprehensive Bill on the financing of political parties.

(Interruptions)

It is a crude reality that with the increasing cost of election campaigns, political parties cannot survive on the relative paucity of membership contributions. Political parties have thus been forced to seek financial support from wealthy individuals, contractors and corporates.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Order, please!

(Interruptions)

Order, please!

Mr Ramful: This has rightly raised concern that elected members might become collectively more accountable to powerful donors than to their electorates thus giving the perception of corruption. Previous Governments have, time and again, promised the people for the setting-up of a regulatory framework and for bringing legislative reforms to empower the Electoral Commission to monitor political financing during electoral campaigns. This Government has made the same promise in its programme, for the introduction of a Financing of Political Parties Act and I do hope that this will be a reality in the near future.

Madam Speaker, I wish the present Government well in their endeavour to bring meaningful change, but I shall end by saying these cautionary words –

“Words can be twisted in any shape. Promises can be made to lull the heart and to seduce the soul. But the people will judge you by your actions.”

Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Soodhun, do you think you will be for long? For how long will you be? Half an hour? Okay, then! Hon. Soodhun!

(4.23 p.m.)

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Housing and Lands (Mr S. Soodhun): Madam Speaker, first of all, I would like to congratulate the hon. Members for their maiden speech, but only pity the previous orator. He is considered as *la brebis égarée*. I really pity the hon. Member because he knows himself what he is talking about and I hope he believes what he has said and I pray God that in future he will be enlightened. In this august Parliament, we learn a lot from elders like the Rt. Hon. Prime Minister and even the hon. Leader of the Opposition. That is how the Parliament has been an instrument where we can contribute a lot and also he can compare his own party. He has doubts as to whether this Government is going to realise what it has promised. He has to just go back to see what we have promised and the new Government has been appointed. I hope that one day any doubt that he has will be cleared.

By saying that, Madam Speaker, I join my colleagues, hon. Members, who addressed before me in this House, in congratulating you, on your appointment as Speaker of this august Assembly. It is for the first time that in the history of Mauritius we have a lady Speaker. Congratulations once again in the name of all the women of this country! I also

extend my heartfelt congratulations to our youngest Member, hon. Adrien Duval, for his election as Deputy Speaker.

Allow me, to have a special word of thanks for my constituents for having elected me, my two fellow candidates and also my good friend, hon. Dr. Sorefan, to be their representatives in the National Assembly. This is a fact; this is my seventh mandate in this Assembly.

I need also, here, to thank the whole population for the massive support which it has given to *L'Alliance Lepep*. This is more than a commitment on our part.

Madam Speaker, with the coming in of the new Government, it is literally a wind of change that is blowing over the country. The population and the hon. Members on the other side also can rest assured that with this Government of the day, the fundamental principles of democracy will be respected. Meritocracy will prevail. Economic growth will become a reality.

Madam Speaker, we talked during the electoral campaign, raising many expectations. Now, we walk the talk by concrete actions. We mean business.

The Government Programme contains a whole string of measures which cover all social and economic activities. These measures have been elaborated to allow this Government to create the necessary conditions for a second economic miracle, which Mauritius is eagerly looking for.

Madam Speaker, I am sure that the public at large has noted that we intend to promote democracy at all levels.

The former Government led by Dr. Navinchandra Ramgoolam had promised various legislations to assure the respect of democratic principles. For example, electoral reform. Lots of "*kozer kozer*" have taken place on the issue. But, at the end, nothing came out of the promises.

This present team led by the Rt. hon. Prime Minister, Sir Anerood Jugnauth, will live up to all promises made.

To promote democracy, the Government is engaging itself to come up with various legislations such as a new Declaration of Assets Act – hon. Members should not be worried – a Financing of Political Parties Act and a Freedom of Information Act.

We will give the Electoral Supervisory Commission the necessary powers to sanction fraud, corrupt practices and conflict of interest.

Madam Speaker, putting emphasis on education is one of the surest ways to empower our people, thus opening to them interesting employment opportunities, as mentioned by the previous orator.

The former Prime Minister, Navinchandra Ramgoolam, always stated: “One graduate per family. But after that, he forgot to add: “One unemployed per family”.

Ene somer par famille avek ene fosse certificat.

(Interruptions)

This is the unique country and the unique leadership of Navinchandra Ramgoolam where the setting up of “*Universités Marrons*” *avek certificat marron, certificat fosse* has been tolerated by the Labour Party.

(Interruptions)

The Labour Party Minister of Tertiary Education, what a shame! Today, we can go and see, the Director of “*Universités Marrons*”, whose family as well has been involved in this business.

Authorisation from international bodies, such as UGC of India, has been bypassed. Questions have been raised on the validity of degrees awarded by many institutions. All this resulting into Mauritius earning disrepute.

We will recall that the MSM in alliance with MMM during 2000-2005 has built nearly 46 additional secondary schools. Just imagine how chaotic the situation would have been today if such school infrastructure development had not been undertaken – *ti pu lire emba pied!* What would have happened?

(Interruptions)

Universités Marrons!

(Interruptions)

This present Government will continue to broaden access to education, while, at the same time, ensuring that quality is not compromised. A tangible example of our policy to provide access to education to each and every student is the provision of 100% subsidy for the examination fees for SC and HSC students, a measure which will, no doubt, comfort many needy parents. *C'est déjà* an initiative and an electoral promise for *l'Alliance Lepep* we are implementing. It is one among many.

Madam Speaker, with your permission, I shall now dwell on the Housing and Lands sector over which I have ministerial responsibilities. I have to thank the Rt. hon. Prime Minister who has appointed me and has also placed trust on me - and I am very thankful - for nearly 28 years. I can also say that in politics, people should always know and learn loyalty and sincerity. It is payable in politics. I thank him for the trust that he has placed upon me.

Madam Speaker, of late, we have been witnessing persistent representations and protests from different quarters about the way State land was being allocated. Since my arrival at the Ministry, I have examined numerous files where, during the past years, many procedures have been bypassed and twisted to allocate State land to certain persons. In many cases, Cabinet's approval has not even been sought. A middle-class person awaits a long time to get a building permit for residential purposes. But if you share close ties with the Labour Party Government which was in place, you are allocated State land in 24 hours!

(Interruptions)

24 hours! Not one *arpent*, 13 *arpents* in 24 hours! We even have a case where a former Minister of Labour who had been allocated a plot of State land, tried to use his power to proclaim a public beach as private! Do you know how he got the EIA licence? He stood up in front of a mirror and he asked for his...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker, he stood up in his own house in front of a mirror and he asked for an EIA licence. He said "I need an EIA licence." And it said: "Yes, you will get it tomorrow."

(Interruptions)

We had this type of Minister in the previous Government!

(Interruptions)

Yes, he himself answered!

(Interruptions)

Because he was the Minister who gave EIA licence!

(Interruptions)

Zot coz devant miroir ça! A political...

(Interruptions)

Listen to me, Madam Speaker...

(Interruptions)

... a political agent...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: I am listening to you, hon. Vice-Prime Minister!

Mr Soodhun: A political agent and her partners obtained almost 30 *arpents* of State land which has not been developed within the time frame set in the lease condition. But the former Government was okay with that. No problem! Why? If actions were to be taken, that agent would have said: “Do you know me?”

(Interruptions)

“Do you know who I am?”

(Interruptions)

Everybody knows who she is!

(Interruptions)

Government has already gained possession of the land.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker, many beneficiaries have indulged in a speculation with a view to make money out of State land. As soon as they signed their lease, they looked for foreigners to sell off the State land at an exorbitant price. Millions of rupees, I know! Millions and millions of rupees! Very soon, I am coming to this august Assembly with a statement giving all the details so that hon. Members know who they are. I will give the names, all the details and all the transactions which have been made. Most of them have not respected their contractual obligations. Some lessees do not even pay their annual rents which represent huge sums of money. We say that example comes from above. *L'exemple vient d'en haut*. Well, the former Prime Minister...

(Interruptions)

Bizin en colère! The former Prime Minister himself did not pay the premium and the rent since 2011!

(Interruptions)

He owed Rs6.8 m. for his bungalow. It is only after his defeat at the general elections on 12 December 2014 that he settled his account late at night!

(Interruptions)

Loup-garou!

(Interruptions)

I am referring to the file from the Ministry. I must add that even the *maîtresse* of the political agent has obtained State lands as rewards!

(Interruptions)

I am going to give all the details.

(Interruptions)

Can you imagine a plot of land in a cemetery being allocated to a person very close...

(Interruptions)

Cimetière aussi! Pe met piloti lor cimetière!

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Order! Order, please!

Mr Soodhun: A very close relative of the Prime Minister to set up an artisanal shop!
Mo krwar piloti lor cimetière...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker, in Mon Choisy even public toilets have been converted into a ‘snack’!

(Interruptions)

With the approval of Mr Seeruttun from the Beach Authority and without notifying the Ministry of Housing and Lands!

(Interruptions)

The perfect term to describe the situation is: *‘Braderie des terres de l’État!’*

Madam Speaker, many cases have been referred to the State Law Office to seek advice for corrective action. The Land Fraud Squad of the Police is already inquiring into 7 test cases.

My Ministry has decided to appoint a full-time lawyer for the first time, *telma ena volers, fine coquin*, who will assist us in examining all the files where procedures have not been respected. It will take me at least six months to clean the mess created by the previous Government in my Ministry. I can say that hundreds of cases are still waiting for legal clearance, to be referred for Police inquiry! I can go on and on about many cases where people who share personal and political ties with the former Government have been granted lease over State land, but time will not allow me to do that.

Madam Speaker, recently the State has taken possession of 58 *arpents* of land allocated to Neotown project. The promoter did not fulfill its contract obligations since 2009. Even in the case of Jin Fei, where 500 *arpents* are concerned, transfer to Jin Fei to Jin Jin, from Jin Jin to Sin Jin, and now Government has taken it.

(Interruptions)

There is Tianli and all types of names.

Madam Speaker, we all know that there is scarcity of State land. Therefore, State land must be used judiciously. Government is coming forward with a policy framework, which will govern the allocation of State land to ensure accountability, fairness and transparency.

Insofar as building sites are concerned, the new framework will focus on the most vulnerable and deserving families, who would be given priority of consideration, for the allocation of State land so that they can have a decent dwelling.

The new system also provides for the establishment of a State land register, which will be a component of the National Spatial Data Infrastructure.

With the State Land Register, each parcel of State land that can be developed for either commercial or touristic purpose, will be identified and then the information placed on the website of the Ministry, calling for expression of interest.

The promoters should satisfy a predetermined set of criteria, among others: financial credentials of the promoter, the proven track records of the promoter, the proof and justification of the amount of Foreign Direct Investment to be injected in the project. A certificate from a recognised banking institution would have mandatorily to be produced.

Madam Speaker, the first national level spatial development plans to guide and control development were prepared in the 70s. Successive Governments have since reviewed it from time to time.

The Government of the day considers that now is the time to move on and to introduce another dimension to the planning function.

My Ministry will come up with a revised National Development Strategy. The new National Development Strategy will assess the implications of the amount of land available for development, identify constraints and make proposals for an integrated public/private transport strategy, smart growth principles and address a range of urban planning and development issues.

Madam Speaker, my Ministry will also provide for an enabling planning legislation so that projects are implemented in a coherent manner. We will also be consolidating the other provisions for an effective and sustainable development.

The new legislation will scope the cost-sharing mechanisms within clearly defined parameters and establish its mode of operation. It is proposed to set up a strong Planning and Development Commission to replace the Town and Country Planning Board to advise on use of land, coordinate the management of land and infrastructure and oversee their implementation.

Madam Speaker, my Ministry is responsible for acquiring land for all public projects. Arrangement will be made for the legislation to provide for more clarity on matters related to claims for compensation as they are heavily dependent on planning decisions.

Betterment of land and windfall gains will also be covered so that any enhancement in private land values resulting from public works could be captured and apportioned between public and private investors.

Madam Speaker, during the electoral campaign, L'Alliance Lepep harped on its commitment to have 2,000 families to access to a decent housing unit every year. This has been duly reflected in the Government Programme. This Government will mobilise all the necessary resources and will put in all the required efforts to honour that commitment.

My Ministry has already started the identification of land for the construction of housing units. The budget will be catered for by the Ministry of Finance, I don't have any doubt about that.

I also had a meeting with the Mauritius Sugar Producers Association. I am following the matter closely with the MSPA, to ascertain that land to be acquired for the National Housing Programme is suitable for housing development.

Over the years, housing policy has become increasingly fragmented, with the result that, attending to the needs of the targeted segment of the population has been significantly obscured.

A mechanism for coherent cross-governmental policy development for housing, with a pre-evaluation element is missing. The housing system in Mauritius, as a whole, has not, unfortunately, become more robust, responsive and self-sustaining.

Government will, for sure, cater for housing for the low-income earners. On the other hand, we cannot ignore the fact that middle income groups also experience difficulties in securing a decent house at an affordable price.

As Minister of Housing and Lands, it is my prime duty to see that we develop the right strategies to provide a wide choice of housing types to cater for the different income groups. Therefore, Government will introduce different housing schemes to meet the needs for a larger clientele.

What have we seen over the years? Blocks of houses have been built and allocated. And as the time passes by, the environment was no more pleasant. It was as if just for the sake of accommodating people in social houses that this has been done. We cannot just dump people like that in social houses. That is confining them in a sort of ghetto.

We have to develop new housing strategies, bearing in mind that a decent house is a very important component in the social life of the families.

First of all, the environment has to be embellished. Other than basic amenities, we have to look at planting of trees, landscaping works, a central meeting hall/place for various activities of the residents, jogging park and children's playground.

In short, we will be implementing integrated housing projects, whereby community living principles are promoted.

In the process, I shall ensure that the National Housing Development Company Ltd is revamped so that it can assume its role and responsibility in the overall National Housing Programme.

At the same time, we have to make the residents of social houses aware of their responsibilities so that self-discipline is the "*maitre-mot*".

Madam Speaker, the Government housing policy will aim at motivating more people to own their home and help create new jobs in the housing sector. The private sector will also rope in our housing strategies.

I seize the opportunity to call upon hon. Members, be it of the Government or the Opposition, to cooperate with my Ministry. Whatever suggestions you have, whether it is at national level or in your respective constituencies, due consideration will be given thereto. The propositions of NGOs and the public at large will be welcomed.

For instance, I intend to meet Monseigneur Maurice Piat, who called upon the Government in his recent message in the pastoral letter, to take cognizance of his propositions for housing policies.

Madam Speaker, allow me to say a few words on squatters. The previous Government could not deal with this situation as it should have been done. Every time, it was like "*la tisane après la mort.*" My Ministry is currently working on a plan about how to tackle the issue. We will be coming up with various solutions.

Madam Speaker, as you are aware, I am also the responsible Minister for Hajj affairs. Allow me, Madam Speaker, Hajj is a sacred pilgrimage and it is one of the most important events in the life of every Muslim citizen. I have the responsibility to make sure that the religious trip of all hajjis happens in the most favourable condition. For the hajj organisation, after consultation with the hon. Prime Minister, I have set up an independent Hajj Committee whereby the members are completely apolitical. The committee will be presided by the former hon. Member, Mr Samiollah Lauthan, a noble man who is totally engaged in social works. I have no doubt that he is the right man at the right place. I must add that he has decided to do the work on a voluntary basis. It is for the first time that we are having the President of the Islamic Cultural Centre who has refused to be paid any allowance and will work without any remuneration. The Hajj Committee will make sure that there are no flaws in the organisation and that everything happens in a very smooth manner. I must also add that the Government has requested a meeting with the Saudi Arabian Authorities with a view to set up our Mauritian Embassy there. Once this project becomes a reality, it will greatly facilitate the trip of Mauritian hajjis in Saudi Arabia.

Definitely, Madam Speaker, I will keep all hon. Members who are concerned informed about this. I will keep in touch with them before my departure after having the meeting and we would like to share because it is completely, as I said, apolitical. I hope that I will have the collaboration of all hon. Members concerned.

Madam Speaker, I shall conclude here by reiterating to the House the commitment of this Government to uphold development aims and objectives which will give the necessary boost to the socio-economic development of Mauritius. I am sure, Madam Speaker, that with the relentless efforts and support of the population and, finally, with the great experience of the *miracle économique*, under the supervision and able leadership of the Rt. hon. Sir Anerood Jugnauth, we shall fulfil the agenda we have set up ourselves for the next five years.

Thank you very much.

At 4.53 p.m., the sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 5.32 p.m. with Madam Speaker in the Chair.

Madam Speaker: Yes, hon. Minister Bhadain!

The Minister of Financial Services, Good Governance and Institutional Reforms (Mr S. Bhadain): Madam Speaker, the Government Programme presented before this august Assembly on 27 January last translates the spirit of the electoral manifesto on which this Government has been elected. This is our commitment to the people for the next five years. It outlines the vision of this Government and the society we will build for the next generation. History begins anew for us; the history which we shall live and act and others will write about.

Madam Speaker, we have all suffered the pains of labour and hearts are heavy with the memory of this sorrow. Some of those labour pains continue even now. Nevertheless, the past is over and it is the future that beckons to us now. That future is not one of ease or of resting, but of relentless effort so that we may see the return of dignity, decency and pride in all aspects of public life through the fulfilment of the pledges in our Government Programme.

Madam Speaker, this programme is wide in scope and takes into account the needs of a future generation of dynamic and enthusiastic Mauritian citizens to the extent of what could be reasonably and realistically achieved during our mandate. Everyone has a legitimate right to be critical. As faithful democrats, we give due respect to any diverging views and we humbly accept constructive criticism.

Madam Speaker, since independence, a number of programmes have been presented before this House and we are aware that the extent of implementation has varied significantly. The fate of the programmes presented by the last Government is known to everybody. Most of the promises and intentions contained therein simply remain promises and intentions. We are all aware that over the last 10 years the focus was elsewhere and the implementation of the measures in the last programmes would have, to some extent, improved the plight of ordinary citizens, instead of any improvement. We have helplessly witnessed a gradual and sustained propensity towards wastage of public funds, favouritism,

corruption, fraudulent practices and shameless depravity. We have witnessed a continuous erosion of values and a degradation of the quality of life of the population in all respects.

Madam Speaker, since the advent of this Government, the winds of change are blowing and an aura of confidence and renewed trust has been instilled in the hearts and minds of all sections of the population. The obscurity which was pervading our country is now behind us. There is now clarity, Madam Speaker. The doors of the safes have now been opened. To borrow a quote from my friend, hon. Rajesh Bhagwan -

“‘*Chef Ali Baba*’ is no longer a ‘*chef*’ nor is he safe anymore.”

People are now voicing their feelings freely. Opacity has been replaced by transparency. The events that have unfolded so far prove beyond the shadow of any doubt that all the dangers we had referred to during the campaign and which our country had been confronted with were real dangers and the Sword of Damocles was indeed hanging over the heads of all Mauritian citizens. What I fail to understand, Madam Speaker, however, is how the allies of the previous Government who had already pledged to forget the past were apparently going to clean up our country whilst being wilfully blind to all the misdeeds of the Labour Government which had plagued this country.

Madam Speaker, everyone knows that money does not grow on trees, but the media has made all of us witness the unbelievable, shocking and outrageous cascading of US dollars, Euros and Mauritian rupees when the safes from the alcoves of Riverwalk were opened, bank notes ...

(Interruptions)

...travellers cheques, and dozens of credit cards spring out like worms which had been swelling in the entrails of a diseased animal.

Madam Speaker, it appears that this was only the tip of a melting iceberg. This Government will now track down every single cent of ill-gotten gain which has left our shores whether in suitcases, by electronic transfers, by the use of credit cards as bank accounts or the use of *prête-nom* to hold assets in other jurisdictions. All accomplices who have assisted in those unlawful transactions and have enriched themselves to the detriment of our nation, will be lawfully taken to task. We will track them down, smoke them out like rabbits from their dark hiding holes and bring them to justice whether they are hiding in

Parma, in Milan or even in the palaces of Venice. They can run or transfer the funds as much as they want, but they will not be able to hide as every financial crime leaves a trace and an audit trail.

This Government has already solicited the assistance of the US Government with regard to the millions of US dollars which have entered our country. The US Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) is in Mauritius as from today to look into this matter.

Madam Speaker, I need not elaborate more on the performance of the previous Labour Government as they have already been sanctioned by an admirable electorate and there is only one survivor of the previous regime in Parliament today. Credit to him, I might add, it would be inelegant to place the burden of all the misdemeanours and failures on the sole survivor as other hon. Members of the current Opposition are fully aware of the shady deals of Airway Coffee, Betamax, Neotown, CT Power, Bagatelle Dam, the unforeseen circumstances and outrageous variations paid for the collapsing Ring Road, the subsiding Terre Rouge-Verdun Road, the apparently dire need to purchase six airbuses and undertake the *Métro Léger* Project as a matter of priority, the leaking New Airport Terminal which had cost billions of rupees, the inclusive and exorbitantly expensive new Biometric ID Card System.

In the name of party line, young professionals amongst the flock decided to follow the irrational, absurd and most bizarre approach of their on-off shepherd who was only motivated by the sheer greed of becoming the Prime Minister of this country for the five consecutive years and in the process, in the name of a Second Republic agreed to grant extraordinary powers and immunity for seven years to someone who has now turned out to be a suspected money launderer, conspirator and liar whose alleged mistress has fled the country and disappeared into the dark alleys of suburb Italy, leaving Mr Bunker to hold all the bags alone.

Madam Speaker, this introduction was necessary to set the scene for the subjects of my intervention and to show that by associating themselves with an ailing and failing regime, those on the other side of the House have, of their own volition, forfeited the right to give lessons on how to govern a country. Madam Speaker, I shall be selective on the aspects of the Programme on the subjects relevant to my Ministry. The Rt. hon. Prime Minister, Sir Anerood Jugnauth, has translated his promise to the people of Mauritius to clean up our country by setting up the right tone at the top and having a dedicated Ministry for Financial Services, Good Governance and Institutional Reforms. *Parole donnée - parole d'honneur -*

parole sacrée! This is a bold and unprecedented step, not only in the history of Mauritius, Madam Speaker, but it is the first initiative of a kind in an African context.

Madam Speaker, in his first official visit to Africa, the President of the United States, Barack Obama, stated before the Ghanaian Parliament in Accra on 11 July 2009, and I quote –

-

“The essential truth of democracy is that each nation determines its own destiny. But what America will do is increase assistance for responsible individuals and responsible institutions, with a focus on supporting good governance.”

President Obama also stressed on the need for, and I quote –

“Concrete solutions to corruption like forensic accounting and automating services strengthening hotlines, protecting whistle-blowers to advance transparency and accountability.”

He further stated that, and I quote –

‘With better governance, I have no doubt that Africa holds the promise of a broader base of prosperity.’

Madam Speaker, this is where this Government is now heading after five years have been lost due to inaction of the previous regime.

A new Bill to protect genuine whistle-blowers to encourage reporting of accurate details of fraudulent malpractices and irregularities will soon be introduced and will be modelled on the UK Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 and the Indian Whistle-blowers Protection Act 2011, which also provides a mechanism to investigate misuse of power by public servants and protect anyone who exposes alleged wrongdoings in Government bodies, projects and offices. The Public Sector Efficiency Bureau has already been set up under the aegis of my Ministry and together with the Office of Public Sector Governance; new methodologies are being put in place to eliminate wastage in public sector organisation and State-owned enterprises.

The Internal Control Department of the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development has also been transferred to my Ministry and a dedicated team is being set up for the regular monitoring and performance evaluation of Chairpersons, Board members and

CEOs of parastatal bodies and State-owned enterprises based on predetermined Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), Self-Assessment Questionnaires (SAQs) and generally accepted performance evaluation methodologies and best practices. 360 degrees (360°) feedback principles will also be applied to all Boards where Chairpersons will appraise their CEOs and Board members, and *vice versa*.

In order to ensure that recommendations in the report of the Director of Audit are taken into consideration and promptly implemented, the responsible officers of each Government department and State-owned enterprises concerned will have to sign off on an agreed implementation plan and timeline that will be rigorously monitored by my Ministry and relevant actions will be taken in cases of non-compliance.

A special Investigative Unit is in the process of being set up to review the risk of malpractices and irregularities with regard to processes and procedures in awarding major Government contracts. Assistance has been sought through the UK High Commission from institutions such as the Serious Fraud Office in the UK with regard to capacity building and training of relevant officers. For the enhancement of the administration and management of public enterprises, my Ministry has already laid down a new framework which has been approved by Cabinet. The new framework provides for the segregation of duties and responsibilities of the CEO and the Chairperson of a Board. The functions of CEO and Chairperson will no longer be exercised by the same person after relevant changes are made to appropriate legislations, for example, in the case of BPML.

My Ministry has had several meetings with the representatives of the National Committee on Corporate Governance and the Mauritius Institute of Directors with a view to harmonising the new vision on good governance in both public and private sector and a new code is being drafted to replace the existing one.

Madam Speaker, the Programme places heavy emphasis on good governance and, *inter alia*, the efficient delivery of public service and elimination of wastage. These concepts, however, over the last decades, have fallen into oblivion and the consequences are now serious. We have inherited derelict public bodies where public funds have been spent with extreme impunity by those close to the regime. The Betamax case is only one of a series of scandals about which Mauritians have been shocked to learn. The prevailing opacity with regard to these contracts is even more disturbing and is nothing short of a potential conspiracy hatched in broad daylight with the participation of senior public officials who just

executed the orders of the previous regime passively. There was no attempt whatsoever to resist such orders either for fear of recrimination and retribution or in other cases to remain in the good books of those in power and, in the process, benefit from added perks. Ethics, good governance, transparency and the rule of law had been buried deep.

The State Law Office initially advised that the provisions of the Public Procurement Act had to be followed. These words, however, fell in deaf ears. Moreover, those responsible displayed wilful blindness. Madam Speaker, this is the kind of rot that this Government has to address. The system has been made completely dysfunctional. Public officers made a mockery of loyalty and misrepresented the facts to the detriment of public interest. This situation raises the fundamental issue of a culture of public services in Mauritius. Many services are provided by public bodies and funded by taxpayers' money. Despite many excellent public servants, the service offered is often patronising and arrogant. Some believe that as the service is free, everyone should be grateful for whatever they received even if it was sloppy.

There is a mentality in some part of the public service that no one has responsibility to provide a better service to the public unless they are gratified with more pay or shorter working hours. For years now, services have been run carelessly, wastefully, arrogantly and much more to the convenience of the providers rather than the users.

Madam Speaker, within a period of two months, this Government has demonstrated its determination to govern for the good of the people of Mauritius. The Betamax case has been resolved and the STC can now take advantage of market rates to import petroleum products. The land allocated to the promoters of Neotown has been retrieved. The land allocated for the Tianli-Jinfei project has also been retrieved. Old age pension has been increased as promised. These achievements already speak volumes in terms of their impact on society at large. Madam Speaker, other contracts and projects are currently being reviewed and scrutinised, including the purchase of airbuses by Air Mauritius, contracts awarded for the construction of a New Airport Terminal, Bagatelle Dam, variations paid to contractors for the Terre Rouge-Verdun Road and cases involving the dishing out of State lands.

Madam Speaker, it took Winston Churchill five years to win the Second World War and it took Clement Attlee six years to build the Welfare State in the UK. Surely, ten years were more than enough for the previous Government to get a grip on the problems that faced Mauritius today. The taxpayers contributed towards the payment of salaries and of the

privileges of the hon. Members of Parliament. The taxpayers have never defaulted in their obligations. However, instead of reaping the benefits accruing out of their contribution, they have been cheated. Promises have not been honoured and, to add insult to injury, the benefits were generously distributed to the close friends and relatives of those in power.

Madam Speaker, proper institutional reforms have not been undertaken. This Government understands the cry for a society of opportunity, a compassionate society, a society where the taxpayer feels that he is getting a fair deal, not because he is the relative of a politician, but because he honestly believes in his rights and responsibilities. Institutional reform, Madam Speaker, is imperative if we want to have a modern society.

A Financial Crime Commission (FCC) will be set up as an apex body, responsible for the investigation and prevention of all financial crimes in Mauritius, including fraud, corruption, money laundering, financial malpractices and other white-collar crimes. Over the last decade, there has not been any major case of money laundering investigated by the ICAC, relating to the global business sector, which has been successfully prosecuted before our Courts. Obviously, disseminations have been made by the FIU. The ICAC, however, has not been able to conduct any successful prosecution.

The House will appreciate that since the setting-up of the ICAC in 2002, the State has disbursed nearly Rs2 billion for the operations of the Commission. The previous Director-General and the members of the then Commission had their day and did enough to deprive the institution of any credibility. The results obtained are to say the least disappointing. With a total of about 130 convictions for petty corruption cases, the amount spent per conviction would amount to some Rs15 m. per case, successfully prosecuted. I leave it to the appreciation of the Members of this House as to whether value for money has been obtained and whether we should continue with such a model.

The Financial Crime Commission will be set up as an umbrella organisation to oversee the operations of a revised and enhanced ICAC model, the FIU and Asset Recovery Unit, the enforcement units of the FSC and the Financial Reporting Council relating to securities, insurance and financial reporting fraud, within a newly set up anti-fraud unit. This will bring the much needed harmonisation and structure in the fight against financial crime in Mauritius, will ensure better coordination amongst existing institutions and mitigate the risks of fraudsters exploiting loopholes in the functioning of institutions, such as in the recent cases

of Ponzi Schemes, where many innocent, but gullible persons have lost their hard earned money.

As an immediate measure pending the setting up of the Financial Crime Commission, an amendment will shortly be brought to the Asset Recovery Act and the Asset Recovery Unit will be removed from the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions and will be merged with the FIU, in a similar way, whereby the NCIS (National Crime Intelligence Service) in the UK merged with the Asset Recovery Agency to form what is now operating as the UK National Crime Agency.

Major reforms will also be brought within the Mauritius Police Force with the eradication of the abusive provisional charge system which has caused prejudice to many people who have been arrested on the basis of mere allegations, without any shred of corroborative evidence.

As I recall, my friend, hon. Dr. Joomaye, who was also a victim of the provisional charge system, as a tool to harass political opponents, had eloquently stated that “his constitutional rights had been butchered on the altar of the Central CID at Line Barracks by the Police of Navin Ramgoolam.”

Madam Speaker, a new and modern Police and Criminal Evidence Bill will be introduced to make the system fairer. Our Police Force will have to be trained to overcome this culture shock and will be provided with enhanced infrastructure, logistics and equipment to discharge their duties more effectively and efficiently. In the same regard, a new Police academy will also be created for Police Officers to be trained on the use of information technology and the latest investigative methodologies to combat crime in Mauritius. A few notes counting machines will also be provided to the Police Force.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker, in the suffocating climate which has prevailed recently, improving the quality of public service becomes a daunting challenge. However, I am confident that the situation will be reversed. The standard of governance and reforms in the public sector is vital and instrumental towards attaining our objective for an efficient and transparent public service. We lag behind tremendously in the field of governance. The absence of new methodologies and technologies is particularly embarrassing. The concepts developed in the aftermath of major scandals in Europe are still being applied in Mauritius, while these are

now obsolete. The novelty which was brought to my attention and seen as a major revolution is the concept of audit committees in the public sector. Well, the composition of such committees is itself an aberration. Just imagine an audit committee where the General Manager is a member or an audit committee chaired by a junior member of staff! These are the artefacts which we have as legacy.

Madam Speaker, after 47 years of independence, the rules governing the public service legated to us by the British are still in force. This is a self-imposed tyranny which is costing the public exchequer millions every year without any improvement in the quality of service. These inefficiencies are a drag to the economy.

Moreover, they waste time and money and cause frustration and pain. The time for reform is now or never. Both the structures and standards have to be revisited. We need to build a truly inclusive society where everyone should be able to go as far as his talent, ambition and effort takes him, without any reference to background, race, creed, religion or connection with politicians of the day. We should aim for a society of opportunity where people can have a better future for themselves and their families by their own efforts.

Madam Speaker, the Financial Services sector is today at crossroads and has, in the wake of the recent cases of suspected money laundering, become vulnerable. The ongoing Police investigations have made headlines worldwide, thus reducing the leeway for damage control. It is questionable whether it was essential for the Central CID to detain the former Governor of the Central Bank at Alcatraz in Line Barracks. Only the Commissioner of Police would have the answer to that one. Be that as it may, such events do not bode well for the international repute of Mauritius, especially when we have a daunting challenge ahead to re-launch our Financial Services sector, and we need the collaboration of all the stakeholders, both in the public and private sector. Too much is at stake and we have no right to fail!

It has to be admitted that the regulatory institutions in the Financial Services sector have fallen short of expectations to create new avenues to promote our Financial Services sector as a strong pillar of our economy. These institutions created years ago have simply tried to fulfill the obligations defined and intended by the legislator, without making any singular attempt to innovate and become forward-looking. The result is obvious. The framework, under which operations are carried out, is no longer appropriate. The Financial Services Commission has continued to tick boxes, to ensure compliance and perform certain inspections. The Financial Reporting Council has, on its part, remained passive, while at the

Financial Intelligence Unit, certain persons were more involved in romance and overseas travelling than tracking the movement of illicit funds and suspected proceeds of crime. Intelligence gathering on the personal life of the staff was the main focus of senior staff of the FIU.

At this juncture, it is worth mentioning that this Government has deemed it appropriate to reduce the excessive monthly salary of Rs238,000 attributed to the then Director of the FIU to Rs150,000, as well as eliminating the benefit of the chauffeur-driven car for both private and official use in addition to the Director having duty-free facilities to purchase a private vehicle.

Similarly, this Government has also reduced the salaries of the Board Members of ICAC from Rs180,000 monthly to Rs110,000 monthly and, again, eliminated the benefit of the chauffeur-driven car for both private and official use in addition to them having duty-free facilities to purchase their private vehicle.

Madam Speaker, it is a matter of regret that I have to make such statements and to bring everything in the public domain so that everyone appreciates the scale of the challenge before us. I am sure that this Government's faith in our democracy, which is the life blood of our nation, is shared by all Members of this House. I know that regardless of political affiliation, the Members of this House want our country to thrive as an integrated and sophisticated international financial services centre of substance. So, if the Opposition Members have valid and constructive proposals, this Government will listen to them.

In the field of Financial Services, we are, again, lagging behind, not only in terms of innovation and sophistication of our product offering, but also in terms of substance. The situation is serious enough to warrant immediate attention.

While we are faced with challenges, be it with the renegotiation of the Mauritius-India Tax Treaty, or the OECD's upcoming Framework Adoption for Base Erosion and Profit Shifting (BEPS), my Ministry believes that we can turn these potential threats into well identified opportunities to develop our financial services sector.

Madam Speaker, as an immediate priority, sustained efforts will have to be made to promote Mauritius as an international financial services centre and address growing opportunities provided by the development of a wealth management and asset management

sector to position Mauritius as a centre for private placements, trading of bonds and other sophisticated financial instruments.

In the same breath, the Stock Exchange of Mauritius will be positioned as an attractive capital raising platform for international and African focused financial products. Madam Speaker, I will ensure that the Financial Services Consultative Council which I will chair is adequately set up and operational as from next month so that we move forward rapidly.

Madam Speaker, another area which warrants serious attention and if not promptly attended to, may jeopardise the reputation of Mauritius is our anti-money laundering framework. It cannot be business as usual and we will monitor the situation closely to ensure that our reputation, as a clean, credible and reputable jurisdiction, is safeguarded. The creation of the Financial Crime Commission will go a long way to mitigate any associated risk. The National Committee on Anti-Money Laundering and the Combating of Financing of Terrorism will start meeting regularly to discuss and coordinate matters.

Madam Speaker, to conclude, I would refer to an episode during the general elections in Britain in April 2005. During an organised question and answer session, a student named Jessica Hague told Tony Blair, and I quote –

“It’s heartbreaking when you work so long to get a Labour Government in power and they turn into a Conservative one.”

Mr Tony Blair replied as follows, and I quote –

“If you measure any Government against perfection, you would vote for someone else, but you must measure us against the alternative which is the Conservatives.”

These words, Madam Speaker, aptly summarise the situation today. Our opponents will certainly try to measure us against perfection or performance level which they themselves could never attain. Well, then they should measure us against the alternative, if any. In short, Madam Speaker, this Government provides the best hope and the best scope to bring about growth with social justice, equal opportunities to all, creating productive employment opportunities for our youths, effective and efficient governance and, above all, cleansing our country of red-tapism, fraud, malpractices and corruption so that Mauritius becomes a better place to live and work.

Thank you for your attention.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Bhagwan!

(6.04 p.m.)

Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière): Madam Speaker, allow me first to congratulate you on your appointment as Speaker of this National Assembly, the more so that you are the first woman Speaker since Mauritius has obtained independence. Madam Speaker, having known you over the years, not only as a Senior Chief Executive, a Civil Servant/Senior Civil Servant, but also as a Member of Parliament, I know that we can rely on your impartiality for the good running of this august institution.

I would also like to thank my friends who have been elected for the first time at the National Assembly and also welcome those who have come back again in this very august Assembly, starting from the Prime Minister. I would also like to thank my good friend, hon. Minister Bhadain, for his maiden speech. I have taken good note how far he works and also I have noted with concern that he has not given us any single information of how he will conduct an inquiry on the inception over the CT Power Project which stinks corruption. So, I will come to that later on because we had the opportunity to discuss that problem before he was a Member of Parliament, as a citizen, as an inhabitant of Albion Village.

Madam Speaker, it is with a deep sense of pride, loyalty and history that I stand up again in this august Assembly to take part in the debates on the Presidential Address on the New Government Programme. A sense of pride because for almost a generation, more precisely 32 years soon, that I shall be serving my Constituency No. 20 of Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière as a Member of Parliament, in an uninterrupted manner. It is no mean feat, you will agree with me, Madam Speaker. I would like to thank my family, God and all my electorates, my Party for their support at all times.

Madam Speaker, a deep sense of loyalty because either as a Minister of Government or a Member of the Opposition, in this very same House, I have been nothing but loyal to my Party, to my constituents and to the country under the leadership of the Leader of the Opposition, hon. Paul Bérenger, who together with the Rt. hon. Prime Minister and hon. Ganoo are among the oldest serving Members of this House.

A sense of history, Madam Speaker, because since I was sworn in, I still remember, as a Member of Parliament after the august general election of 1983 in the *Salle du Trône* then, not only I have been witnessing history unfolding in the Chamber, but also have I been part of history in the making. That reminds me of the crude fact that some of the so-called opinion leaders outside the House who are crying night and day to instil a false sense of history were not even politically conscious nor to say, were not even born when I first joined my Party in the 80s, the MMM which is *parti intégrant de l'histoire contemporaine, un fait historique indéniable. N'en déplaise à ceux qui croient pouvoir écrire l'histoire avec un crayon papier dans la main droite et une gomme élastique dans la main gauche, je dirais tout simplement, Madam Speaker, que gold never rusts even it is old !*

Madam Speaker, we are starting a new session after the general election, we have taken the oath, here, in the National Assembly and we are all Members of the House, we have sworn allegiance to the public and in front of our names, we have hon. Member. I think too many things have happened these years that we have witnessed, in what sort of action certain hon. Members have been going into, causing disrepute to this very important function of Member of the National Assembly or *député*. We have witnessed over the years. We have also witnessed - I have heard my good friend talking about *Ali Baba* and *coffre-fort*. We will be around to see that there won't be a *politique* of *petits copains* and *petites copines*. The Government is having a crusade against what has happened over the past years and it is a fact. We have been witnessing ourselves all these big potentates earning millions and travelling a lot. Certain individuals who had been appointed as Chairpersons of Parastatal Bodies, Government-owned companies, instead of working for the State, have been going outside to buy horses! I will also, without being personal to the PMSD, remind them that up to recently they were in Government; I do not want to go into details about what I am saying. We had one Chairperson of the Mauritius Marine Authority and we all know the saga of what has happened.

We are entering a new era. The Government has clearly indicated in its Government Programme its vision for a better Mauritius, good governance and transparency. I will draw the attention of the Rt. hon. Prime Minister, the hon. Member has talked about *Ali Baba* and *coffre-fort*, but I know him personally and we all know him. We will be here around to make sure that there will be no new '*Alibaba*'s.' The first call as they are appointed: what type of cars they will have; what type of CCs; what type of office, what are the lists of official

functions that they will be having as Chairperson instead of coming to implement their own Government Programme and their own projects.

Madam Speaker, as I have stated, we will be around. In the MMM, we have accepted the verdict of the electorate. We know that we are in the Opposition. History has shown that each time the MMM has been in the Opposition, we have put the country first. We have been around. Hansard can prove, either through the PNQs that the Leader of the Opposition has asked in Parliament, through our questions or through our interventions in Parliament. We have made proposals. We have criticised. We will be criticising, Madam Speaker. We will be coming with PQs. We will be intervening at Adjournment time. These are tools which are given to us as Members of Parliament to, at least – I won't say harass - ask Ministers to reply. We will be around to see whether the Minister will come and tell that he needs notice or he has to compile. We have seen in the past, my friends in Government, when they were in the Opposition - you know better than me, Madam Speaker, how things were happening. So, we will see in the months to come whether we will have the same '*refrain*' like 'information is being compiled' or 'I don't know.'

Madam Speaker, as I have stated, we are starting a new session of Parliament under your Chairmanship. We will be called during the coming days to appoint Sessional Select Committees. We will be having these committees set up under your guidance during the coming weeks. We will be having a Committee of Selection. We do not have any problem. This is a Committee of Selection comprising Members from both sides. Then, we will be approving the setting up of a Public Accounts Committee. Over the years, the Public Accounts Committee and its report have been a matter of discussion, here, as to how do we implement its recommendations and the means which are given to the Committee to perform. And also, urgent need to bring amendments so that officers can be taken to task. There are sanctions which will be taken after the publication of its report and the Director of Audit's Report. I am sure my colleague will be intervening on that. So, there is an urgent need to give more powers and more tools to the PAC.

Madam Speaker, we have another one, that is the Standing Orders Committee. This Committee has not met for years. I'll give one example. In every session of Parliament, Members are allowed to have Private Members' Motion. We have seen in the past where a Private Members' Motion has been going on for four or five years. It has become a sort of '*farce*' and, at a certain period of time, we had decided that we would not intervene on the

Private Members' Motion. So, there is an urgent need. I am not saying only on one item, but there are other items also where there is need to upgrade the Standing Orders, not for the worst like preventing us from asking questions. We have seen in the past. Limitating the hours of Question Time; limitating the number of questions which we can ask. Then, we have the House Committee, which will be chaired by the Deputy Speaker, who is present here. I have been in that Committee, Madam Speaker. We go there and sit and we have no powers. That Committee has no powers. No powers at all! We can only suggest that there is a problem of rats in the underground of the Government House because we are suffering from what is happening down there. But this Committee has no powers. It is a Committee which is supposed to look at our welfare and not to make money. I am sure that the Deputy Speaker is taking good note. At least, it should not be a nonsense committee.

Lastly, Madam Speaker, the Parliamentary Committee on ICAC. I have been a Member of that Committee. I have gone on that Committee once, twice or thrice, but it has no powers, unless it is a question of interpretation. The Director comes and says that this is not within your purview. So, we are only there just to approve the budget. And then, there is a question of interpretation, and, the moreso that this Committee does not publish any report, so, there is a need to bring amendments so that this Committee - I am sure there will be a new Prevention of Corruption Act or whatever – which would be appointed and which would have the sufficient tools, and also Members who would be forming part of the Committee can, at least, see that whatever they are proposing are taken into account by the responsible person.

Madam Speaker, another suggestion, which is not personal is that we have seen in the past how we are invited in missions overseas. So, Parliament is never aware. We do not have any report on each and every mission that Members of the National Assembly are attending. A report can be circulated. We have the CPA Conference on Sustainable Development. So that those who go on missions, with due respect to you, Madam Speaker - even the Opposition is invited - can submit a report.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Bhagwan, I think we have discussed about these issues and I'll be coming shortly with ...

Mr Bhagwan: I think with experience, Madam Speaker, I can make a suggestion, at least, in the House here because we will be appointing Members to go there. Also, the African/Caribbean EU, Parliamentary group, we will be having one permanent Member. There also it is a very important Forum; the concern of Mauritius is being taken, our voice is

being heard. So, we, parliamentarians, we do not know what our representative is doing there. So, I think there also there is a matter for reflection.

Lastly, Madam Speaker, I raised the issue the other day and the Rt. hon. Prime Minister replied about live coverage on radio, TV and other media for the sittings of the National Assembly. The Rt. hon. Prime Minister replied the other day for the setting up of a new Select Committee which will take into consideration the Select Committee presided then by hon. Bodha and its recommendations. I think it is urgent for our democracy to become more modern, more transparent for the public. At least, the Government can come rapidly with proposals and the Opposition will contribute normally, I am sure. We have already contributed, at least, on this question of live coverage by radio and TV as far as PQs, PNQs, important matters, like it is in the case of the Lok Sabha, the UK Assembly, l'Assemblée Nationale Française and so on.

Madam Speaker, these were a few of my comments as we are starting a new session. I shall now come to a few comments on one or two specific subjects before concluding on my constituency.

Madam Speaker, I will be talking about environment because I was Minister of Environment for a period of time and I am very interested in this matter. Madam Speaker, in Mauritius, we also have a crossroad. We have our local problems as far as environmental matters are concerned. Today, we are talking about the *développement durable* concept. My good friend has been very active on that. This issue of environment is now global. We have the issue of climate change. We have the issue of beach erosion which is affecting our small island. We have the issue of Small Islands Developing States, especially as far as our common problems are concerned. I think this is one very important sector where Government and the Minister will make sure that there is progress, there is not only *des paroles*.

I take note of paragraph 52 of the declared commitment of Government to a sustainable and eco-friendly development. This is what is being mentioned. We have seen the same in the past years, but there have been so many contradictions at times in the implementation of a strategy. Indeed, Madam Speaker, just to take an example, there has been over the years a '*laisser-faire*' and '*laisser-aller*' with regard to the management of coastal zones. It is not a question of having State lands - I still remember the Environment Protection Act then, it still provides for an environment coastal zone management, to have a harmonious development of

the coastal zone and this is not the case. So, Government has started a *remise en ordre* not only as far as land is concerned, but there are other issues also which are under the responsibility of other Ministries. I hope that Government will take that into consideration because coastal zone is indeed a precious natural resource for our fishermen community, for the tourism industry and also the most popular recreational activity. So, the clean-up should start at the Beach Authority and the Ministry of Housing and Lands, where there should be an *action concertée* so that effective management can take place.

Madam Speaker, every new Government while assuming office always announces a review of the Environment Protection Act, which, in 2002, I brought to Parliament then and also new regulations. Admittedly, we need regular review of the legislative framework but pending the implementation of the regulations or whatever Act, this should not be an excuse for not ensuring effectiveness of existing environmental legislation.

There is existing environmental legislation which empowers the Ministry of Environment to take action with regard to so many environmental problems and it is clear, Madam Speaker, that there is urgent need for the Ministry to take *les taureaux par les cornes*. I know the hon. Minister is like a *TGV*. There is urgent need to take a concerted action. If I can take littering, *Maurice est sale. Je ne fais pas un procès d'intention*. The bad habits of Mauritians throwing here and there; illegal dumping in sugar cane field; lorries of industries going to throw *des morceaux de tissus dans les champs de cannes, les restes de construction, etc.* And this is why in year 2000, in our Programme, we created the *Police de L'Environnement*. The *Police de L'environnement* was created by me and the present Prime Minister in our Government then. It was a very important and effective tool from 2000 onwards and this Unit needs to be revamped. If you see the state of the vehicles of the *Police de L'Environnement*, *bizin prend l'environnement même contravention*. Only a few Policemen are there; incentives are not given to the Police Officers. Corruption has been taking place over the place. So, there is urgent need to revamp the *Police de L'Environnement*.

Mention is made in the Programme about the reinforcement of the *Police de L'Environnement*, but it should not become a Police parallel. I make an appeal to the hon. Minister that the *Police de L'Environnement* should get its environmental job – noise pollution, littering and illegal dumping. But, Madam Speaker, the *Police de L'Environnement* should not be used to harass people for other activities. This is why, Madam Speaker, on that score, we amend the legislation to fines – '*Ou jeter ou payer!*' So, this legislation should be

implemented, Police Officers should be everywhere, not as Gestapo, but, at least, to make people respect the environment, especially for our tourism industry.

Madam Speaker, no sustainable results will be achieved if each single Ministry works on its own. I have been witnessing that over the years; this is why the present Prime Minister presided three or four times over the National Environment Commission where all Ministers were convened, even the Minister of Finance to provide funds, where clear directives are given to the Ministries to implement one National Policy as far as Government is concerned.

Madam Speaker, at paragraph 62, it is said –

“Government will adopt a responsible and environmentally sustainable policy regarding energy production, waste management and physical infrastructural development”.

Madame la présidente, on a la nette impression que these crucial issues have merely been lumped together and that nobody can say that these issues have not been taken into consideration. Madam Speaker, the real time bomb today is our completely unsustainable solid waste management system. I think Mauritius should review; at least, the hon. Minister concerned should have a complete review of the solid waste management system, because so many problems crop up because of derelict systems; the presence recently of algae in the reservoir, water quality in our boreholes and rivers, lagoonal water quality, proliferation of rats and crows. These are the issues which should be addressed urgently not only for the safety of our population but also for our tourism industry.

Madam Speaker, the introduction of a sustainable waste management system will help to change the mindset of the population and our economic operators as well as consumers, especially with regard to sustainable consumption. Madam Speaker, with regard to unsustainable packaging and even products, we have to carry out live cycle analysis before determining whether these products can be put on the market. The environmental laboratory in Réduit should have a more proactive role and should be more present on the field. I still remember that Mauritius invested on a fixed mobile station within the precinct of Royal College, Port Louis and then we had mobile equipment going around the country, *dans les gares routières, dans les places publiques* to check the air quality and then publish reports. So far, I don't think we have seen all this.

On the energy front, Madam Speaker, I'll come only to CT Power and just say a few words. And right from the start, I can say, on the MMM side, we were the one, the pioneer of the CT Power project and I'll take all these PQs, starting from the PNQ of the Leader of the Opposition - Debate No. 24 of 15 July 2008. This is why I took note of the silence of my good friend, hon. Minister Bhadain, who is the new Colombo of the Government as far as fraud and corruption are concerned.

So, our Colombo has forgotten the CT Power, the more so that he is a resident of Albion. That project, Madam Speaker, stinks of corruption. I won't mention names; everybody knows who were the people. *Ça nom là mo pas capave pas dire*, Mr Dulthuman! He has been around Mauritius, around my Constituency giving donation of loudspeakers, bribing people of the region, of the Shivala, to come and give support for that project. I won't say other members of socio-cultural groups who, at one period of time, were doing press conference, forgetting the interest of the people of Albion village. And history will say - my colleague hon. Quirin is here, apart from the hon. Prime Minister and other colleagues - we have, weeks after weeks, been asking for information, querying the then Government, the Minister and alerting the population.

I would not go into as to how we have supported, in our way, the inhabitants of Albion. I just reiterate what I have said. We are against - as MPs of the Constituency - the setting up of that CT Power. If Government has been able to retrieve other big contracts, why would Government say that it is unable to do so? That project has not yet started and I would not go into what my colleagues...

(Interruptions)

...have said during the electoral campaign. If I go to what has been said, *les déclarations des candidats*, hon. Alain Wong Yen Cheong à *Pointe aux Sables* exhortait les habitants à ne pas voter en faveur de telle ou telle alliance pour boycotter le projet de CT Power. My good friend, hon. Alain Aliphon : *'Nous sommes en guerre contre CT Power.'* L'honorable Anil Gayan : *'Nous fine discute lor projet CT Power, nous fine décider pou remettre en question'*. He is here. It has been said. We have also canvassed against that. The people are against that project there. So, it is up to the Government now to find ways and means.

(Interruptions)

What we want to hear from Government is: why Government does not set up a Commission of Inquiry to look into...

(Interruptions)

'Pas presser. Attane to causer! Toi qui to pé causer, mo pé cause are toi là?'

Madam Speaker, why Government...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Please proceed, hon. Member!

Mr Bhagwan: *'Tone change parti couma chiffon!'*

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Don't interrupt the hon. Member, please!

Mr Bhagwan: *'Tone change parti couma chiffon, mouchoir ; pas cause are moi toi!'*

Madam Speaker, what I am saying...

(Interruptions)

'Tone change parti ene paqué fois.'

Madam Speaker: Hon. Bhagwan, please proceed!

(Interruptions)

Mr Bhagwan: *'Tone change parti toi.'*

(Interruptions)

Tone change parti ene paqué fois! To pas causer are moi !

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Members, please don't interrupt! Allow the hon. Member to proceed!

(Interruptions)

Mr Bhagwan: Madam Speaker, what I ...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker, what I am stating...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Henry, please!

(Interruptions)

Mr Bhagwan: *'Eta Gros Derek, ferme to la bouche do Gros Derek! Ferme to la bouche do !*

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Order, please!

(Interruptions)

Mr Bhagwan: *'Eta aller do, Gros Derek!'*

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker, what I am reiterating to the hon. Prime Minister is - Government is committed to clean, we are applauding, the population is applauding - to set up a Commission of Inquiry on the implementation of CT Power; who were the fundraisers and who were those who had money? I still remember once my good friend, hon. Bhadain, came to see me, we discussed about the *reçu d'affiche* and this has been canvassed in Court by certain people. The promoter of CT Power financed all the posters of the 2005 General Election of *l'Alliance Sociale* when hon. Sinatambou was a candidate then. I won't say others, the PMSD. This is clear; there is a case which has been lodged on the financing of that project.

(Interruptions)

So, Mr Colombo, you were a candidate...

Mr Sinatambou: On a point of order, Madam Speaker!

(Interruptions)

Yes, I do not know where this information comes from. I don't know of any financing.

Mr Bérenger: Madam Speaker, what is the point of order? He is giving a personal explanation. What is the point of order? Which Standing Order?

Madam Speaker: Hon. Minister, can you say whether it is a point of order or whether it is a point of personal explanation?

Mr Sinatambou: It is a point of order, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Yes. So, what is the point of order?

Mr Sinatambou: The hon. Member...

(Interruptions)

Will you please allow me to speak?

On a point of order, Madam Speaker, the hon. Member is casting imputations that my election was financed with dirty money. That is not true. I do not know where he is taking that.

(Interruptions)

It is an imputation. Where does he get that? This is nowhere to be found, nowhere to be seen and never evidenced. Maybe they are talking of their dirty money for this election.

Madam Speaker: Okay. So, I take it as a point of personal explanation and the matter rests there. Please, proceed, hon. Member!

Mr Bhagwan: May I say again, Madam Speaker that for the General Election of 2005 for the *l'Alliance Sociale*, the CT Power was one of the financing agencies, especially with regard to posters coming from each and every country and the documents are there at the Line Barracks, at the Central CID to prove. So, the Government is well placed to see all these records, the records are there, statements have been given to the Police and if Government has the will, he can set up a Commission of Inquiry.

As far as the inhabitants of Albion are concerned, a village in my Constituency, it is a fact, since years, that they have been against that project and *je me fais moi-même et*

l'honorable Quirin, ici, de notre côté, le porte-parole des habitants comme nous l'avons toujours fait et le Hansard peut prouver ce que nous avons dit.

Madam Speaker, this is what I had to say on CT Power and energy. I would not go into other problems. I have one small observation, Madam Speaker, at paragraph 256. I have been here in this House for many years, I have stated, I'm not blowing my own trumpet, I have seen history. So, I welcome this paragraph of Government -

“An ‘anti defection’ legislation will be introduced to make it more difficult for MPs to cross the floor.”

(Interruptions)

‘Eh, talère mo pou alle cause ça. Pas faire moi cause séki pas bizin!’

Madam Speaker: Order, please! Order! Hon. Bhagwan, please address the Chair!

(Interruptions)

Mr Bhagwan: I have taken...

(Interruptions)

‘Eh, mo pas encore fini! Ale paye la boutique ; la boutique, élection to pas encore fini payer, taxi, ale causer, ale payer!’

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Bhagwan, please sit down!

(Interruptions)

Please, sit down! I am on my feet!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Bhagwan, please sit down! I am on my feet! Can I appeal to hon. Members not to lose the time of the House? Please, allow hon. Bhagwan to proceed. You will have the opportunity to reply to him when you intervene.

Mr Bhagwan: I have not put my ‘*ti copine*’ everywhere, Madam Speaker. I don’t have any ‘*ti copine*’ or ‘*ti copain*’, so, I am very happy.

(Interruptions)

I have taken good note, Madam Speaker, of what hon. Collendavelloo stated publicly that he won't accept any *transfuge*. At least, he has said so, it is in writing. Madam Speaker, this is a fundamental question which has been discussed over the years. In 1982, it was not in the Programme. We still remember when there were *manifestations* and so on in 1982 and then onwards, I had been told - I was here - that it was difficult to legislate, to have a proper legislation. In other countries, they have had problems. In India, there is one model, I'm no expert on that, but, at least, Government must and should put that into our law, about this 'anti defection' legislation and Government will have our full support. I think Mauritius is right *pour empêcher le transfuge et c'est important pour la démocratie qu'il y ait une loi anti transfuge*.

Madam Speaker, I will end by talking on two small issues, the MBC/TV. I have a question on Tuesday, so, I am not going to be long. I have been watching the MBC/TV every day. Every day there is the episode of CID, so it's not my problem. It has been stated that there would be change at the MBC/TV. What the population wants to have, we are paying for the licences, we will have figures on Tuesday, the debts and the saga of Mr Hitler. I have been the one who has criticised Mr Callikan the most, here, in Parliament and we have even thrown him out of the House here.

(Interruptions)

In front of him! We have thrown him out. Yes.

Madam Speaker, what the population does not want to have, '*même produit ine change l'emballage*'. This is why, I know that the Minister responsible, hon. Jugnauth, has put up committees and so on, but there is urgent need to clean up the mess there and also to come with a new, modern legislation, with transparency, all the safeguards for those who pay these hundred rupees to have a better MBC/TV.

Madam Speaker, I will conclude on the Local Government. I have only one suggestion. We had in the past - when we were discussing about the new Bill regarding the Regional Assembly of Rodrigues with the present hon. Prime Minister - put up in the Constitution the existence of a Regional Assembly. I think it is time also to put in our Constitution - like it is in South Africa and in other modern countries - the existence of Local Authorities in Mauritius. I think it would be a progress. I know that there is a committee working on it.

We have had this fantastic piece of legislation when we were in Government, but it is now urgent for us, for the country to put the existence of the Local Government in the Constitution.

Madam Speaker, these were the few words that I had to say on the Government Programme and my suggestion as far as Parliament is concerned. We will be around. We will be, I would say, making *le bilan du gouvernement*. We shall not be anti-patriotic. We are Mauritians. We live here. So, we want our country first, but also, we want the Government to deliver and we will assess the performance of Government in actions during the days and the months to come.

Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Yerrigadoo!

(6.43 p.m.)

The Attorney General (Mr R. Yerrigadoo): Madam Speaker, allow me to congratulate you on your appointment as our first ever Lady Speaker of the House. It is indeed a great honour and privilege for me to address this august Assembly as a new Attorney General. I am grateful to the hon. Prime Minister for my appointment. Thank you, Sir.

The election results marked the end of an era and brought a new beginning. *Enn nuvo soleil finn lever*, Madam Speaker. But as Henry Wadsworth Longfellow once said, I quote -

‘Great is the art of beginning, but greater is the art of ending.’

I pay tribute to our enlightened electorate and wish to reassure them that we hear their message loud and clear and their message is: *‘nettoyer mam.’* As recent events unfold, Madam Speaker, the people are relieved and comforted to see that they did the right thing on 10 December last. They put an end to almost ten years of the reign of Labour Party which certainly was not working in the best interests of our people and our Republic. Labour Government conveniently overlooked the unemployment problem, especially the youths and women unemployment. They allowed all sorts of *universités marrons* to operate and duped parents and lured students into bogus schemes.

Madam Speaker, the waste of a country's most precious assets, the talent and energy of its people, makes it duty bound to Government to seek a real and lasting cure. There are many things to be done to set this nation on the road to recovery and I don't mean economic recovery alone, but a new independence of spirit and a zest for achievement. For that, we need to lay the foundations for recovery. We believe in our people and we all share common values of respect and hard work and I am confident that together we will bring our country back on track.

Madam Speaker, I am humbled by the fact that my office will have a key role to play in the implementation of our ambitious Government Programme. One of the basic tenets of the democratic State is an independent Judiciary. Our Government is fully committed to uphold democratic values, believes that the Judiciary should be fully equipped to operate effectively. In that respect, investment will be made throughout our tenure to enable a better service to the public.

Madam Speaker, any person who has been to a District Court will tell you that the buildings which house most of them, if not all of them, are in a pitiful state and do not have proper facilities. There is hardly any parking. There is no waiting space for the public to shelter from the sun or rain, no proper toilets, not enough information to first-time users. And yet, this is an important encounter of the public with our justice system as the bulk of our Court cases are, in fact, dealt with at the level of District Courts. I am pleased, Madam Speaker, to announce that following consultations from the Judiciary, Government has decided that all District Court premises will be reviewed and upgraded to ensure better services to all users and stakeholders. Some District Courts will be rebuilt completely. This is an ambitious and costly project which will be done in collaboration with the Judiciary and will last throughout our mandate. Government will also provide for the construction of a new building to house the Supreme Court and all its Divisions.

The current historical building will be restored as it bears witness to the legacy of our forefathers and our history. The Family Division of the Supreme Court will also be provided the required support services so as to improve the operation of its division which plays a key role in the resolution of family matters. The Family Division will be better equipped to be able to respond to the emerging challenges and to deliver a service which reflects the expectations and attitudes of our evolving society.

Reforms will aim to ensure that there will be speedy settlement of dispute regarding and relating to marriage and family matters. Counselling services will be made available to parties in proceedings before the Family Division of the Supreme Court and the Family Court will be empowered to appoint any medical expert or such other person including a person engaged in promoting the welfare of the family as the Court may think fit to assist the Court in the determination or settlement of disputes.

Madam Speaker, how many times have we heard ‘justice delayed is justice denied’? This legal maxim is the basis for the right to speedy trial and similar rights which are meant to expedite the legal system because it is unfair for the injured party to have to sustain the injury with little hope for resolution. The phrase has become a rallying cry for legal reformers who view Courts as acting too slowly in resolving legal issues either because the existing system is too complex or because it is overburdened. The Judicial Committee of the Privy Council which is our final Court of Appeal has yet again highlighted that it is troubled by the delay with which cases are disposed of before our Courts.

Madam Speaker, having said this, *il ne faut pas non plus faire de la démagogie*. All legal practitioners would agree that there is no simple solution to the question of delay. I am aware that the Judiciary is addressing this issue and there is already a lot of effort being put into better case management. But, Madam Speaker, we cannot lie back. We have to work together to bring further reforms to expedite the determination of Court cases and to improve the services provided to the public in the judicial field. These reforms will include the introduction of statutory time limits to deliver judgments. This measure aims to ensure that as a service provider the Judiciary provides a timely resolution of disputes. Decreasing time to dispose of judicial proceedings will not only reinforce the rule of law and public confidence in the Judiciary, but will have a positive impact on investments in Mauritius. The digital and audio recording systems of our Courts will also be upgraded to ensure accurate record-keeping and speedier delivery of justice.

Madam Speaker, access to justice is very important. We must ensure that those who cannot afford to pay for the services of Counsel and Attorney, be provided with same. The Barristers and Attorneys representing persons who currently received legal aid are currently paid a pittance. To make legal aid meaningful under our law, our Legal Aid and Legal Assistance Act shall be reviewed. However, it is important to ward off any abuse by proper checks and the right balance will have to be struck in the best interest of justice and fairness.

In the same vein, let me highlight that special schemes will be reinforced for our Courts to provide certain facilities to special categories of witnesses bearing in mind the vulnerability and fragility of some witnesses, especially children and victims of abuse. It is felt that Mauritius should not lag behind in improving the protection given to witnesses.

Madam Speaker, Lord Mackay, in his report, in 1998 made a number of recommendations regarding the structure of our judicial system. We are, today, in 2015 and a number of those recommendations have yet to be implemented.

This Government will, in line with the Mackay Report, introduce legislation to set up an Independent Court of Appeal, thus an Appeal Section and a separate High Court Section will be created in the Supreme Court. This measure heralds a new era for our justice system.

Madam Speaker, it is a great privilege to practise law. However, with privilege comes responsibility. Law practitioners have the responsibility to serve the public ethically, diligently and competently. It is their ethics and professionalism which will help in maintaining public confidence in the justice system by defending the rule of law and upholding their duties and responsibilities towards the Court.

Madam Speaker, I have received a lot of representations on the courses delivered to and examinations taken by our would-be legal practitioners. I intend to carry out consultation with all stakeholders with a view to addressing those concerns and dispel any doubt about the integrity of the process.

Madam Speaker, our Government believes that our laws have to keep abreast with social changes. Our *Code de Procédure Civile* which was adopted in 1808, still governs the procedure in civil matters and in the vast array of cases. The *Code de Procédure Civile* will be revamped to bring it in line with aspirations of modern Mauritius.

Madam Speaker, the Police and Criminal Evidence Bill is long overdue. This Government will bring together in one enactment, subject to certain exceptions, provisions which relate to the exercise by Police Officers of the powers to stop, enter, search, seize, arrest and detain, and a treatment and questioning of detainees, and will amend certain provisions relating to evidence in criminal proceedings. This should be done so as to better guarantee the citizens' constitutional right to liberty, protection of property, freedom of movement and protection of the law.

This Bill shall also increase the penalty for non-attendance of witnesses in Court, give a Court a general power to exclude unfair evidence, make it an offence to interfere with witnesses or potential witnesses in criminal matters, provide for the enforcement of the rights of victims of offences, introduce the concept of spent convictions for the purposes of sentencing and makes statutory provisions for the regulation of the admissibility of confessions.

Madam Speaker, another important measure that will be taken up by Government is the amendment of the Criminal Code. The way in which crimes used to be committed hitherto, has drastically changed. Technology evolves at an incredible pace. Offences related to the use of technology, financial crimes and other criminal offences, including those relating to Ponzi schemes, are more and more common and may go unpunished, if our Criminal Code is not amended to cater for those offences.

In addition, there are few if any offences which are committed today where technology is not used or where technology cannot be used in the elucidation of a crime. The Law Reform Commission will be further empowered and will be called upon to make proposals for the reform of other laws to ensure that they meet the aspirations and needs of contemporary Mauritius.

A further important amendment that will be brought to our Criminal Code is the provision for better legal framework for dealing with sexual offences. The procedural context in which such cases are currently dealt with, will also be enhanced. This amendment will go hand in hand with the amendment I referred to earlier regarding the protection of vulnerable witnesses. In particular, Madam Speaker, I am pleased to announce that the evidential laws and rules which are at the core of our justice system, will be revamped and codified in line with the recent developments in the Commonwealth.

Madam Speaker, as already announced, Government will bring amendments to the Certificate of Character Act with a view to increasing the employability of people convicted of minor crimes and misdemeanours. Government's policy is that minor criminal offences should cease to appear on the Certificate of Character of convicted persons after a period of one year, so that such persons who have been convicted of minor offences do not fall into the poverty track by being excluded from the job market, by reason of not having a clean Certificate of Character.

Government has a vision to modernise judicial system and will ensure that while the system is modernised, our citizens fully benefit from the advances in technology. Government will aim to introduce electronic bracelets as a tool to monitor detainees who have been released on bail. This measure will increase the range of measures available to Magistrates with regard to the imposition of conditions on detainees admitted to bail. To do the cost element involved in the implementation of such measure, Government will restrict this alternative to certain categories of offenders with a view to ensuring an optimal use of available bracelets. This measure will be introduced while the procurement process of a bracelet is completed and the monitoring facilities associated with the use of such electronic bracelets when operational.

Government will be adopting tough measures and crime and will come up with an array of measures to provide more protection to the most vulnerable fellow citizens. Thus, sentences for crimes committed on the elderly, women, children and physically challenged persons will be substantially increased.

As a Government which is intended in ensuring that law and order are stringently respected, these measures will send a strong signal to our non law abiding citizens and a clear message to would-be offenders is that this Government means business in relation to tackling the prevailing law and order situation in Mauritius. Such a measure will ensure that our citizens can go about their daily life without worrying about their safety and the safety of their dear and loved ones.

Another important measure will be adopted in the field of victim protection. Under our law, presently, victims cannot make any representations regarding sentencing. Legislation will be enacted, Madam Speaker, in particular, to provide that representations by or on behalf of victims would be taken into consideration at sentencing stage. Government will also, in consultation with the Office of the DPP, which has a dedicated Victim Support Unit, come up with measures which ensure that when victims depone in Court, they do so under the best possible circumstances. Further, best practices in Commonwealth jurisdiction with regard to treatment of victims in the judicial context, will be studied with a view to enhancing the way victims are treated in the context of judicial system.

Allow me, Madam Speaker, to deal with another measure referred to in the Government Programme. Government will introduce a Juvenile Justice Bill to provide for a more modern juvenile justice system. Our present Juvenile Offenders Act dates back to 1935

and it is outdated. The new Juvenile Justice Bill will give paramount consideration to the best interests of juveniles. The Juvenile Justice Bill will take into account recent United Nations Conventions, Guidelines and Rules, as well as reports produced by UNICEF and by local and foreign resource persons. The Bill will, accordingly, address the following issues –

- the minimum age of criminal responsibility;
- the setting up of a Central Juvenile Court which will have the assistance of trained professionals in the field;
- the duties of Police and other Public officers regarding the arrest, detention and release of minors;
- the possibility of divertory measures as an alternative to prosecution, particularly, for mediation and mentoring;
- timely prosecution and trial of juveniles;
- the requirement of a Presentence Report where a juvenile is convicted of an offence.
- the manner in which uncontrollable juveniles are to be dealt with;
- the provision of a periodic review of a detention of minors;
- the SCO protecting of privacy of juveniles as well as that of complainants and other witnesses;
- the range of choice of sentencing options where a juvenile is convicted of an offence;
- the institutions, another place is available for the detention of minors;
- the exceptional cases in which a minor can be detained after he reaches the age of 18, and
- of course, the setting up of one Central Juvenile Justice Committee which will assist and advise on the implementation of the Act and be responsible for supervising the management in operation of every institution.

Madam Speaker, the Curatelle Act will also be amended to make better provision for the administration of vacant estates. Amendments will be made to ensure that the approval of the Attorney General be sought before claim is made against a vacant estate is settled; the curator of vacant estates may sell an immovable property vested in him and a claim to which a curator is a party referred to in arbitration. Further, the Curatelle Act will be amended to

provide for an increase in the value of property which a curator is empowered to hand over on behalf of the minor or an interdicted person.

Madam Speaker, my Office will have a key role to play in the implementation of our Programme. We shall ensure that the Office is adequately and properly equipped in order to continue to function as a leading 21st century set of Chambers. I will shortly be embarking upon the restructuring of the Attorney General's Office and the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions, bearing in mind the provision of our Constitution, the recommendations made in the MacKay Report and the need to optimise our human and other resources in the legal service.

Madam Speaker, this Government has at heart the interest of the society and a strong and efficient justice system is the key to preserving the harmony of our society and in promoting sustainable development.

Let me end, Madam Speaker, by quoting a Maori proverb -

"Turn your face towards the sun and the shadows will fall behind you."

I thank you, Madam Speaker.

(7.02 p.m.)

Mr E. Boissézon (Third Member for La Caverne & Phoenix): Madame la présidente, je vous félicite pour votre élection et vous assure que je m'efforcerai de toujours collaborer avec vous. À mes collègues des deux côtés de la Chambre qui ont obtenu d'autres responsabilités dans l'hémicycle, je vous félicite et je vous souhaite plein succès dans vos nouvelles fonctions.

Respectueusement, je remercierai le Premier ministre, Sir Anerood Jugnauth et les *leaders* de l'alliance Lepep, faisant fi du slogan démagogique 60-0, 3-0 et autres quolibets tels que 'camion saleté', 'mercenaires' et autres mots que je ne dirai pas dans ce Parlement. Vous avez su créer un groupe et proposer un programme qui cadrerait avec les aspirations de la Mauricienne et du Mauricien.

Le discours programme reflète judicieusement les propositions que nous avons faites pendant la campagne électorale et a été acclamé par tous les quartiers. Je cite Aniff Peerun, président du *Mauritius Labour Congress* -

« Le programme de gouvernement est révolutionnaire ; c'est un programme qui répond aux aspirations du peuple. C'est la première fois que cela provoque une unanimité parmi la population, y compris le patronat. »

Nous avons été élus sur un projet. L'immobilisme et le conservatisme ne sont plus à l'ordre du moment, nous voulons que l'ambition fraternelle que nous avons inculquée pendant la campagne se concrétise le plus vite possible. Nous voulons que l'implémentation de nos projets se fasse en communion avec le peuple.

Nous avons cinq ans pour réussir notre pari ; cela paraît long mais très court dans l'histoire d'un pays. Aujourd'hui, nous avons constaté et constatons combien Maurice a été injuste envers la population pendant cette dernière décennie. Combien de crimes ont été commis au nom de la démocratie de l'économie ! Nous avons vu *Airway Coffee*, la conversion des rues en plage de pieds dans l'eau. Pas une semaine ne passait avant 2014, que le *Leader* de l'Opposition ne déterrait un scandale. Maurice avait perdu sa voie et était en voie de perdre son âme.

Les propositions incluses dans le Discours Programme du gouvernement sont les unes plus intéressantes que les autres, mais aujourd'hui je m'appesantirai sur le paragraphe 20 qui stipule –

“A medium to long term Marshall Plan will be elaborated to combat poverty and social exclusion”.

J'ai noté avec plaisir que le Premier ministre, Sir Anerood Jugnauth ait réitéré son intention d'une inclusion sociale avec l'élaboration d'un *Marshall Plan* dans son discours lors de la cérémonie de la commémoration de l'abolition de l'esclavage à Maurice au Morne.

La lutte contre la pauvreté et la raison d'être même du '*Muvman Liberator*'. Je voudrais exprimer notre solidarité avec ceux qui ont faim, qui connaissent la solitude, ceux qui sont confrontés à des conditions de vie difficiles. Nous vous assurons que notre pays se remettra sans cesse en question, tant que les droits fondamentaux ne seront effectifs pour tous. De l'immobilisme et le manque de justice sociale de ces dernières années, ce sont les pauvres et ceux qui n'ont pas de statut qui ont payé en premier, alors que certains remplissaient des coffres.

Autrefois, on était pauvre quand on n'avait pas de quoi s'éduquer, se nourrir, se soigner, s'habiller et avoir un toit. Mais comment qualifier celui qui travaille et qui ne gagne pas assez pour terminer le mois, qui doit emprunter pour payer le ticket d'autobus qui le mènera à son lieu de travail ? Cette situation est intolérable et ce gouvernement a bien fait de prendre l'initiative de résorber ce fléau, car trop longtemps cet enjeu social a été négligé. Nous avons une situation où le riche devenait plus riche et le pauvre plus pauvre.

Je félicite le gouvernement pour la révision des prestations sociales, et de l'uniformité de la compensation salariale et de faire provision d'un salaire minimum. L'exercice de compensation salariale et de l'uniformité des prestations sociales a coûté des milliards de roupies, n'en déplaise à certains mais a su créer un *feel good factor*. Même l'indice de la confiance des investisseurs a augmenté de 6.4% lors de ces trois derniers mois.

Je cite M. Renganaden Padayachy de la MCCI qui dit qu'il constate que la situation politique s'est apaisée après les élections générales du 10 décembre, et à créer un *feel good factor*. La Chambre de Commerce s'attend aussi à des meilleurs jours pour l'emploi et l'investissement.

Madame la présidente, si l'approche monétaire est pertinente pour calculer la pauvreté, la tendance générale est de dire qu'elle est insuffisante et qu'il faut prendre en compte d'autres indicateurs. Chacun a un droit à l'éducation, à la formation, l'emploi, le logement, la protection de la santé, la protection de la famille et de l'enfance. C'est au gouvernement de faire connaître ses droits, en prévenir l'exclusion et, plus globalement, assurer un épanouissement de l'individu dans la vie sociale. Nous devons nous fixer un objectif de réduction de la pauvreté et de l'exclusion dans la République, mettre des éléments de mesures. Je sais que c'est un exercice complexe et difficile, mais nous pouvons trouver les éléments d'un tableau de bord. Ce faisant, cela nous permettra de suivre notre avancement vers notre objectif. Cela nous permettra de voir où la pauvreté et l'exclusion sévit le plus, dans quelle tranche d'âge et dans quelle catégorie. Nous cernerons les tenants et les aboutissants, les causes et conséquences du mécanisme qui crée la pauvreté et l'exclusion. La lutte contre l'exclusion, au-delà du fait d'être un engagement politique, ce doit être une messe de la solidarité et de la fraternité. C'est l'affaire de tous. La solidarité c'est avant tout la proximité. C'est pourquoi aux côtés de l'État, les collectivités locales, le secteur privé et les ONG ont un rôle à jouer et ils devront être mis à contribution. Cet engagement sera long et il

sera difficile et complexe. Nous faisons confiance au gouvernement qui n'a pas froid aux yeux. Il sera donné un visage humain à la lutte contre la pauvreté.

Madame la présidente, venons aux droits. Je passerai plus de temps sur l'éducation faute de temps, le droit à l'éducation. Ayons un devoir de vérité en ce début de quinquennat et l'implémentation d'un gouvernement qui aborde une politique de vérité. Qui ne voit qu'aujourd'hui la réussite scolaire, dépend moins de notre système d'éducation mais plutôt à une certaine appartenance.

Que constatons-nous lors des résultats des examens de la HSC ? Qui sont les boursiers ? Enfants d'enseignants, de cadres supérieurs, du privé et du secteur public ! La bourse obtenue par le fils du chauffeur de camion ou du chauffeur de bus révèle de l'exploit. Pourquoi ? Parce que dès les premiers pas de l'enfant dans le système éducatif, il est mieux encadré. Nous avons une disparité criante entre le niveau de certains établissements. Ce constat n'est pas le résultat de la performance des établissements concernés seulement, mais des effets conjurés de l'environnement, de la position géographique des écoles, mais surtout d'un gouvernement qui au cours de ces dix dernières années, au lieu de préconiser une politique d'éducation équitable pour tous, priorisant et mettant plus d'effort et de ressources dans les établissements dits défavorisés pour qu'ils puissent rattraper leur retard, a remis le *rat race* de l'élitisme à outrance sur les rails. Je félicite le gouvernement d'abolir les examens de la CPE et la mise en application du *9-year schooling*.

Le succès d'un système éducatif ne devrait pas se mesurer sur le pourcentage de *pass* aux examens de la CPE, SC et HSC, encore moins sur le nombre de lauréats, mais par le nombre de *drop-outs*.

Combien de jeunes quittent le système éducatif sans qualification ? S'est-on déjà posé la question de la cause de cet échec ? Qui a échoué : le pauvre élève ou le système ? A-t-on mis en place un système de suivi de ceux qui ont échoué ? Ou les laisse-t-on avec leur mal pour des laissés-pour-compte ? Avons-nous essayé de comprendre le mal, le martyre de cet élève qui a déjà des difficultés à étudier, de comprendre ce qui lui arrive ? Déjà au cours de la première année où il redouble, il subit un mal psychologique. Malheureusement, il est seul, livré à lui-même, considérant le redoublement comme une punition. Exclu de sa promotion, c'est le premier pas vers l'exclusion.

Le deuxième échec, exclusion du collège même, s'il est parqué dans une institution pré-vocationnelle. Je dis parqué – je pèse bien sur ce mot - car ce lieu est bien souvent un purgatoire d'attente que l'élève ait les 16 ans légal pour quitter le système d'éducation. Une fois les 16 ans atteint, on oublie ces jeunes.

Il faut faire plus pour ces jeunes. Ils sont des Mauriciens qui sont minés par un sentiment d'oubli de notre contrat social, qui sont humiliés par l'absence d'avenir professionnel, au point de refuser les échanges avec ceux qui veulent les aider, pour devenir la proie facile des prédateurs tels que les marchands de drogues, d'alcool et de sexe. Rester sans réaction devant cet échec, c'est accepter l'inégalité et du ressentiment qui sera plus grand. C'est là le clivage invisible qui sépare la société mauricienne.

L'éducation a un rôle important dans l'intégration de tous les citoyens dans une démarche de fraternité et de solidarité nécessaire à l'avancement du pays. L'inclusion dans le système éducatif ne nécessitera pas un apport supplémentaire de financement, mais nécessitera un *paradigm shift*. Les parents des enfants fréquentant les établissements au taux d'échec important devront être formés quant à leur rôle de parents ; les enfants doivent être suivis de façon plus systématique. Le ratio élève-parent devra être revu et j'espère que le *Remedial Education, Primary School Readiness Programme* devienne une réalité.

Une fois qu'on s'est occupé de l'éducation de nos enfants, nous devons avoir une pensée à l'emploi. Ne pas travailler alors qu'on en a la capacité d'être en mesure de le faire est exclu. Les paragraphes 30 à 42 du récent programme démontrent la volonté du gouvernement, non seulement de créer 15,000 emplois annuellement, mais de s'assurer de l'encadrement nécessaire à la formation, la protection de l'emploi, etc.

Autre point c'est que nous devons faire un effort envers les exclus, c'est le logement et je ne serai pas trop long sur ce sujet parce que le ministre responsable du logement en a parlé. Mais nous devons noter qu'une des raisons des drames conjugaux et familiaux est le fait que trop de familles vivent en proximité. Chaque semaine amène son lot de drames. Combien de fois nous rencontrons des enfants qui n'ont jamais vécu sous un toit décent et dont les parents eux-mêmes n'ont pas eu droit à des logis dans lesquels ils auraient pu songer à construire un avenir.

Ici, j'ouvrirai une parenthèse. En ce moment, des appartements sont disponibles pour les familles à faible revenu, c'est-à-dire ceux touchant moins de R 10,000 par mois. Mais ils

doivent souscrire à un dépôt de R 40,000. Je prierai le ministre de voir la possibilité, au lieu d'un non-recevoir, d'étudier le cas par cas.

Le mauricien et la mauricienne ont droit à une protection de la santé. Encore une fois, j'ai été précédé par le ministre de la santé et je ne serai pas long. Mais le seul point que je dirai c'est l'accueil. Parce que nous disons du ministère de la santé que -

“Government is committed to providing universal, accessible and quality health services, free of any user cost, with emphasis on customer satisfaction”.

N'importe qui va à l'hôpital, est écœuré par l'état d'insalubrité des lieux. Le manque de dialogue entre le médecin et le patient. Combien de patients ne savent pas de quoi ils souffrent. Les deux points soulevés pourraient être résolus en mettant l'emphase sur la médecine de proximité.

Madame la présidente, nous notons aussi dans ce discours programme, que dorénavant c'est le Premier ministre qui aura la charge du *National Development Unit*. Cette unité fut utilisée auparavant comme outil politique et étant PPS responsable des circonscriptions 19 et 20, je peux noter aujourd'hui le retard du développement qu'il y a dans ces circonscriptions. Et pour cause, je ne veux pas faire de fleur aux membres de l'opposition mais nous savons que le ministre précédent, sachant que ces deux circonscriptions étaient sous la tutelle de l'opposition, n'a presque rien fait dans ces circonscriptions. Je demanderai que peut-être nous revoyions ces circonscriptions lors du prochain budget. A Coromandel, il y a un gros problème de drain et à la rue Berthaud, Quatre Bornes, il y a des développements qui ne sont pas faits.

Je vais terminer par citer Monsieur Barack Obama; décidément aujourd'hui il a la cote

-

“This is our moment. This is our time, to put our people back to work and open doors of opportunity for our kids; to restore prosperity and promote the cause of peace; to reclaim the American Dream and reaffirm that fundamental truth, that, out of many, we are one; that while we breathe, we hope. And where we are met with cynicism, and doubts and those who tell us that we can't, we will respond with that timeless creed that sums up the spirit of a people: Yes, we can.”

Merci.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Bholah!

(7.22 p.m.)

The Minister of Business, Enterprise and Cooperatives (Mr S. Bholah): Madam Speaker, at the very outset, like others before me, let me congratulate you on your appointment as Speaker of this august Assembly. You are making history as the first woman in the Parliamentary history of the Republic of Mauritius to accede to such a distinguished position. It is said that the Speaker is the beating heart of democracy in any country and I am confident that with your wide experience, dignified personal aura, in-depth knowledge of State matters and added to that your charismatic personality, you will give an added but deserved dimension to the function of Speaker.

I would also, like my other colleagues who preceded me, wish to thank His Excellency the President of the Republic for having, in a measured but solemn manner, laid down the architecture upon which we propose to build the Mauritius of the future and achieve that second socio-economic miracle which will usher us in yet another golden era of Mauritius economic history.

As I stand in this House, I feel humble but proud of the opportunity given to me because of the solemnity of the place which is the shrine of democracy in our Republic. We know that an institution is the lengthening shadow of a man. This institution is the lengthening shadow of all men and women who have been voted and sent as representatives here. To be part of the history of this House and to be counted among those men and women who have left their imprint on Parliamentary history is a dream that I could never ever fancy, even when awake.

Madam Speaker, in a democratic society, there is no greater honour than to be chosen as a representative of one's Constituency in Parliament. In this House, there are few known heroes, but there are innumerable unknown and unsung heroes out there on the ground. They believed in us, worked for us relentlessly night and day and with dedication and commitment. I wish to thank them all, and together with them, the inhabitants of GRSE/Montagne Blanche for conferring that honour upon me and my other colleagues. For those who voted for me, I hope my efforts over the next years will reward their faith. For those who chose otherwise, I will be working to earn their support and trust. In either case, I am here to serve.

Needless to say that when the National Assembly was dissolved on 06 October 2014 and the Nomination Day fixed for 24 November 2014, the stakes were very high, not on whether we would win, but on the extent and magnitude of our defeat. Some considered that we were not even an outsider in the race. For others, we were fighting a losing battle. However, under the able leadership and guidance of an accomplished political leader, in the person of Rt. hon. Sir Anerood Jugnauth, we slowly but surely managed to turn the tide. In the beginning, the target was to have a handful of our candidates to be elected. Then, we became more ambitious and aimed at preventing a three-quarter majority. Then, we found that success was within our reach and ultimately we knew that it will be a landslide victory. The rest is history.

Madam Speaker, what brought about this momentous achievement? It was the trust and faith the population had in our wisdom. We were not selling dreams. *Nous n'étions pas des marchands de rêves*. Our programme was readily assimilated by the population and *l'Alliance Lepep* and *lepep* became one entity. It is this programme which has now been translated into the Government Programme 2015-2019 read so gracefully on 27 January last.

Madam Speaker, the world is undergoing profound changes. Associated with those profound changes, there are a number of diverse and significant challenges which cut across all countries. However small and remote we could be in terms of size and location, we must realise that we are part of a global world and anything happening elsewhere will have an impact on us in Mauritius. We are not immune and we must brace ourselves to face these challenges frontally and fearlessly. These challenges include, among others -

- (i) growing income inequality and poverty;
- (ii) jobless growth and growing unemployment, mainly among the youth;
- (iii) environmental degradation and climate change;
- (iv) poor leadership and lack of good governance;
- (v) loss of moral values;
- (vi) weakening of the democratic structure.

In addition to these generic challenges, our country is also faced with the specific problems associated with ageism, lack of natural resources and limited human capital. The

Government Programme 2015-2019 is, therefore, meant to address the challenges and to provide the country and its people with the required tools to successfully address and tackle these challenges. Our focus will be on our people, their quality of life, the economy, an excellent leadership and governance framework associated with a strengthening of the democratic structure of the country.

Madam Speaker, if we want to tackle the challenges and problems associated with income inequality, growing poverty, unemployment among the youth, then there is no other option than to promote entrepreneurship among the population. While we equate inequalities with jobs, yet inequalities can be multidimensional, encompassing access to income, assets distribution, disparity of wages and access to other forms of resources and facilities.

During the last five years, there has been a remarkable increase in inequality in Mauritius and the Gini coefficient increased from 0.34 to 0.37, slowing down the pace of poverty eradication. As a result, relative poverty has increased from 8.5% in 2007 to 9.8% in 2012. More importantly, income growth of the bottom 40% of the population has been disappointing and increased at an annual rate of 1.8% compared to 3.1% for the population at large.

From my point of view, most of these disparities can be tackled if we embark on a structural transformation of the architecture of the economy where entrepreneurship is the focal point. We must, therefore, in parallel to promotion of entrepreneurship, address issues such as vocational training, technology transfer, access to financing and infrastructure, but also the institutional arrangements in place to assist the entrepreneurs in their efforts to become more competitive and to graduate to higher levels.

Madam Speaker, we have made it clear that we will spare a huge amount of our financial resources to promote entrepreneurship. We have the ambition of making SMEs the engine of economic growth over the next five years. We will be able to do so only if the institutions that provide Business Development Facilities align their vision and strategic orientations. Unfortunately, it is well documented that we have too many institutions duplicating their services to SMEs. Our challenge would be to rationalise and create an institutional environment where the entrepreneur is not lost in procedural issues but instead he can devote his time to do what he knows best. This is why a re-engineering of SMEDA and other Business Development Support institutions would be undertaken.

Madam Speaker, if we want to fight poverty and integrate the base of the pyramid into the value chain of enterprises, there is no best option than to promote inclusiveness. We have the ambition of creating an environment where the inclusive business approach is not only promoted but that it becomes one major way of doing business. In so doing we will integrate the base of the pyramid in mainstream business activities.

We are well aware that environmental degradation and the consequences of climate change are now considered as fundamental issues around the world. Mauritius is no exception to this.

It is important that on the business front, strategies are developed and put in place where enterprises would go green. This would ensure that we halt and reverse the adverse trend of environmental degradation.

We would need in this context to be innovative and think out of the box. But we cannot reinvent the wheel. There are many initiatives being developed around the world. It would, therefore, require our imagination to adapt and adopt them to suit the local context.

Madam Speaker, as regards the marketing of our products, either locally or internationally, there is need to develop a strong brand that can capture the uniqueness of the Mauritian products. We already have a national brand for the country but we need to harmonise with the private sector which is marketing its own brands. More than one brand is not in the interest of the business community. In this context, we will work with the private sector to find a common ground so that we do not shoot ourselves in-between our legs.

Madam Speaker, globalisation has many advantages, but it also brings together its lot of constraints. I have started visiting local enterprises and my assessment is that they face fierce competition from imported products, mainly from China and the other far-east countries. I feel extremely happy when I find that despite such level of competition, our local enterprises are still able to survive. I consider that it is the duty of any Government to do its utmost to protect the local entrepreneurs and help them to thrive in such a competitive environment. It is in this context that our forthcoming budget would be focussed insofar as SMEs and other local enterprises are concerned.

Madam Speaker, the handicraft sector must also be looked into with care and attention. The handicraft sector is vital for a country to display what is its cultural heritage. The demand for cultural goods or destination products will become more and more pressing

given that we are a tourist destination. It can also be a major source of employment creation for Small Island Developing States like Mauritius.

However, despite every effort, we find that more and more of our local artisans are faced with competition from imported products which are then resold as Souvenirs of Mauritius. The situation is going from bad to worse to the extent that even our “*la terre sept couleurs*” is being imported from China, in the form of keyholders and then sold to tourists as products of Mauritius. This is a serious cause for concern. Despite all the constraints we face to address this issue, I can assure the House that I will explore whatever possibility we have to protect our local and cultural heritage which is manifested in the form of destination products.

Madam Speaker, as regards the cooperative sector, I consider that it is a hidden treasure. For too long, it has been confined to a certain category of people and a primary form of business. However, it is my firm belief that cooperatives can play a catalytic role and make meaningful contributions to economic growth and social advancement. The cooperative sector in Mauritius has suffered for too long from a negative legacy and an inappropriate policy environment. In addition, there is a problem for them in terms of markets for their products. If given the right incentives the cooperative sector can also flourish and achieve its objectives.

While we are fighting an uphill battle for companies and other businesses to adopt a proper governance framework, yet we need to acknowledge that the cooperative movement has many values already embedded in the concept itself. The Cooperative Model of Business could be a valuable tool in building sustainable, grassroots agricultural businesses, as in the case in many parts of Italy for parmesan cheese, champagne production in France, milk production in India and so on.

Cooperatives are based on the values of self-help, self-responsibility, democracy, equality, equity and solidarity. In the tradition of their founders, cooperative members believe in the ethical values of honesty, openness, social responsibility and caring for others.

In fact, cooperatives are one of the most democratic forms of business that exist with the concept of one person one vote and I propose over the next five years to bring about a complete turnaround in the sector and restore its lost prestige.

We propose to embark on an aggressive information, education and communication campaign in order to further sensitise all our stakeholders, essentially the youth and women who are not aware of the advantages of the cooperative model of enterprise and join the Cooperative Movement. This will help to strengthen their self-esteem and solve unemployment problems. They will learn teamwork, leadership and communication skills as well as receive encouragement to become active members in the community. Since cooperatives do not figure in school curricula, young people may not realise that the products and services that they use may be provided by cooperatives.

The great Mahatma Gandhi has said, and I quote -

“Educate a man, you educate a person; educate a woman, you educate a family.”

Thus the Cooperative Movement which is already more than 100 years old will, once again, contribute towards economic empowerment and social harmony in Mauritius.

Madam Speaker, new sectors would be identified where the cooperatives model can be adopted and new markets would be tapped for co-operators to sell and channel their products.

In the field of basic supplies, there are many areas for cooperatives. For example, in the Consumer/Retail Sector, focus will be placed on the Fast Moving Consumer Goods (FMCGs) and also Fairtrade. Fairtrade has, so far, been very successful in Consumer Cooperatives dealing with sugar. This will be extended to other sectors such as pineapple and also honey production in Rodrigues.

The supply of green energy, catering in primary schools, repairs of roads and other public infrastructural works can very well be secured by cooperative societies. Some services in schools, hospitals and many other areas of public health, as well as care for the elderly, need not to be handed over to private investors. All these tasks can be accomplished by a cooperative society. The marketing of goods and services, housing, even the creation of jobs can be organised through cooperative societies for the mutual benefit of those involved. Banking itself, through credit unions, has been a stronghold of cooperative societies and could be taken back from the financial economy.

The values that count are self-help, responsibility, democracy, lawfulness, solidarity, honesty, openness, social responsibility and care for the other. Let us live these values and

become examples for the youth. Then the cooperative society can give us the network that is so crucial to shape a sustainable and peaceful human co-existence.

Let me here quote Hermann Schulze-Delitzsch –

“Who denies responsibility, denies also freedom. Responsibility and freedom are the bedrock of a moral, political and economic world.”

Madam Speaker, service to the people is service to God. So, Cooperatives, which are first and foremost community-based organisations, will assist in the formalisation of informal employment through collective voice and economies of scale and extension of social protection. This will be done through continuous training and capacity building programmes undertaken by the National Institute for Cooperative Development (NICE). NICE will partner with other academic institutions locally or abroad so as to deliver cooperative entrepreneurship training and education. This will help build competence for members of the cooperative movement and also employees allowing for job mobility and advancement both within the cooperative movement as well as skills that they can also carry with them to other enterprises. The capacity building programmes will be linked with support for cooperative start-ups in the form of business advisory services and access to finance.

Madam Speaker, the Government Programme for the next five years is extremely ambitious. We cannot not be ambitious. We have taken a commitment to transform Mauritius into a high-income economy. The population will judge us on our achievements in five years. As a Government, we have to perform. Our credibility is on the line. We cannot fail because the level of expectations is high. But how can we fail when we have such a dedicated and committed team working relentlessly night and day.

We have already delivered on many of our promises. Others will take some more time. But, nevertheless, under the able leadership of Sir Anerood Jugnauth, we are bound to succeed. And let me reassure hon. Ramful that we will travel and reach our destination.

Madam Speaker, every time I am in the company of Sir Anerood Jugnauth, I am overawed because I know that I am in the presence of wisdom and history. Wisdom because he is a man who has almost 52 years of political experience, 4 years as a Minister, 18 as a Prime Minister of this country, 9 years as President of the Republic and Head of State, more than 1,200 meetings of Cabinet and countless number of hours of Parliamentary sessions under his belt. During the recent electoral campaign, when all odds were against us, with his

calming presence he provided us with an anchor of comfort in a sea of political confusion. His wisdom is such that whatever he does in politics and those who rally around him found themselves on the right side of history.

In fact, we are not in the presence of an individual but an institution in his own right. Those who chose to leave and go for greener pastures elsewhere have chosen to be on the wrong side of history, to borrow an expression from President Obama.

No doubt he is history. One day when the political history of Mauritius will be studied, no serious student will be able to deny the fact that the December 10, 2014 General Elections provided the most remarkable turnaround. It will be quasi-impossible for students of history to come to terms with the fact that two of the most powerful political parties, which seemingly rallied more than 80% of the electorate, were squarely beaten.

For most political observers, it was a battle between David and Goliath. But as David, despite his small stature, defeated the mighty Goliath, likewise the *l'Alliance Lepep* under the leadership of Sir Anerood Jugnauth also made history by defeating a political Goliath. *Mais on ne le savait pas; c'était un géant aux pieds d'argile.* They thought they were unbeatable. But they had, unfortunately, never come across this beautiful but wise verse of Rumi, the Persian mystic, and I quote –

“Tie two birds together, they will not be able to fly even though now they have four wings.”

It is exactly what happened in Mauritius. Two mighty political birds tied themselves together believing that they would now fly more easily since they had four wings. But they could never take off and were defeated by the sage Sir Anerood Jugnauth. This is history. Pure and unalterable!

Thank you, Madam Speaker!

Mr Henry: Madam Speaker, I move that the debate be now adjourned.

Mr Boissézon rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

Debate adjourned accordingly.

ADJOURNMENT

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, I beg to move that this Assembly do now adjourn to Tuesday 24 February 2015 at 11.30 a.m.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Energy and Public Utilities (Mr I. Collendavelloo) rose and seconded.

Madam Speaker: The House stands adjourned.

Question put and agreed to.

MATTER RAISED

(7.45 p.m.)

**MONNERON SSS – RENAMING - ABDUL HAMID GOOLAM MOHAMED ISSAC
SSS**

Mr S. Mohamed (First Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East):
Madam Speaker, I take this opportunity which I thank you for giving me to address a matter of importance - in my view - to the House and it is that on 19 July 2013, Cabinet took the decision and agreed that Monneron State Secondary School be named after late Abdul Hamid Goolam Mohamed Issac also known as Gorah Issac. He was the Municipal Councillor from 1951 to 1953. He was elected as a Member of the Legislative Assembly from 1959 to 1963.

Mr Issac devoted much of his time to education of the youth, free coaching students who could not afford private tuition, and during his mandate he fought for the inclusion of Urdu and other Oriental Languages for the Cambridge and London University Examinations. He presented motions to the Legislative Assembly for sustaining private colleges and Madrassas so that they could operate more efficiently. I pray, therefore, Madam Speaker, to the hon. Prime Minister and also to the hon. Minister of Education and Human Resources, Tertiary Education and Scientific Research if that Cabinet decision could be implemented because it still hasn't been implemented even though it has been decided and we pray, therefore, that this could be implemented because Mr Issac is, indeed, a hero who should be remembered for what he has done for this country.

Thank you.

(7.47 p.m.)

The Minister of Education and Human Resources, Tertiary Education and Scientific Research (Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun): I have taken note and I will look into the matter and inform the House at a later stage regarding the issue.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Members, I wish to inform you that provision has been made for dinner.

At 7.48 p.m. the Assembly was, on its rising, adjourned to Tuesday 24 February 2015 at 11.30 a.m.