



SEVENTH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

PARLIAMENTARY

DEBATES

(HANSARD)

(UNREVISED)

FIRST SESSION

MONDAY 24 FEBRUARY 2020

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PRINCIPAL OFFICERS AND OFFICIALS

Mr Speaker	Hon. Sooroojdev Phokeer, GOSK
Deputy Speaker	Hon. Mohammud Zahid Nazurally
Deputy Chairperson of Committees	Hon. Sanjit Kumar Nuckcheddy
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MAURITIUS

Seventh National Assembly

FIRST SESSION

Debate No. 04 of 2020

Sitting of Monday 24 February 2020

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

The National Anthem was played

(Mr Speaker in the Chair)

PAPERS LAID

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

A. Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development

- (a) Virement Warrants Quarter 2 (October - December 2019) Nos. 4-11. (In Original)
- (b) Virement (Contingencies) Warrant Nos. 2 & 3. (In Original)
- (c) Virement Certificates - Quarter 2 (October - December 2019)
Vote/Sub-Head (Certificates Nos.): 1-1(1, 2), 1-12(1), 1-15(2, 3), 2-106(1, 1A),
2-107(1), 2-701(4-6), 3-1(6, 7), 6-1(1-3), 7-1(1, 2), 7-3(2), 8-1(1,2), 10-1(1-5),
11-103(1), 12-2 (2), 12-3(2), 13-1(2-4), 14-1 (2,3), 15-4(3), 16-1(4-8), 17-1(2-5),
17-103(1), 21-1(1), 24-1(1-3), and 25-1(3). (In Original)

B. Ministry of Financial Services and Good Governance

The Annual Report 2014 of the Financial Reporting Council.

C. Ministry of Technology, Communication and Innovation

The Annual Report 2011 of the Mauritius Research Council.

D. Ministry of Arts and Cultural Heritage

- (a) The Annual Report of the Conservatoire National De Musique Francois-Mitterand Trust Fund for the period 01 July 2017 to 30 June 2018.
- (b) The Annual Report and Financial Statements of the English-Speaking Union for the period 01 July 2018 to 30 June 2019.

ORAL ANSWER TO QUESTION

MOTORCYCLIST/LRV – ACCIDENT – 23.02.2020

The Leader of the Opposition (Dr. A. Boolell) (*by Private Notice*) asked the Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail whether, in regard to the Light Rail Transit System, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to if –

- (a) a road traffic assessment and impact analysis were carried out to identify risks for road users and, if so, when;
- (b) the Traffic Management and Road Safety Unit and Metro Express Limited have apprised members of the public of safety precautions that need to be taken at accident-prone areas such as the Beau Bassin Junction, and
- (c) the cause of the accident, which occurred between a person on his motorbike and a tram at the Pope Hennessy Junction, Beau Bassin, at 18:57 hours on Sunday 23 February 2020, has been established.

Mr Ganoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, it is with deep regret that I learnt that an unfortunate accident involving a motorcyclist and a Light Rail Vehicle (LRV) occurred at 18:57 hrs on Sunday 23 February of this year, at Pope Hennessy junction in Beau Bassin. On my own behalf and on the behalf of Government, I convey my deepest sympathy and condolences to the bereaved family.

(Interruptions)

I also convey my sympathy and condolences to the family of the victim of the accident which happened this morning itself at Goodlands.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to the accident involving a motorcycle and the LRV, I am informed by MEL that as per established protocols, the Emergency Services comprising of Police, Mauritius Fire and Rescue Services and SAMU were contacted immediately and the Operations and Safety staff of MEL were present on site for assistance and coordination. The metro service was immediately stopped and MEL is fully collaborating with the Police, which are investigating into the causes of the accident.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as regards part (a) of the question, I wish to apprise the House that the Metro Express project is a Light Rail Transit (LRT) system connecting major town centres along the ex-railway corridor from Curepipe to Port Louis. The reference design of the system commenced in 2012 based on the state-of-the-art LRT technology that is capable to operate and integrate within the urban/suburban environment.

Along Phase 1 of this LRT alignment between Rose Hill and Port Louis, there are seven road-rail intersections which have been constructed to accommodate the new mode of transport.

The LRT alignment is the product of planning and engineering design that has considered various options and satisfies various criteria such as safety, risk, operational efficiency, engineering, space, affordability and urban integration.

The intent of this alignment is to maximise the opportunity and the capability of LRT technology to integrate within the urban environment, while ensuring the sustainability of the LRT system. Detailed analysis has determined that the introduction of level crossings (i.e. rail-road intersections), were deemed to be necessary in line with the principle of LRT efficient and safe operations with a view to a better integration with other modes of transport.

As a result, the seven intersections along the Phase 1 alignment have been determined to be at-grade across the design development. The safety aspects of level crossings are to be managed through effective traffic signalised system design, safety management procedures, along with progressive sensitisation exercise and strict enforcement rules.

The design of the level crossing considers two key aspects: safety and capacity of the traffic. The design of the level crossing has incorporated various design inputs, which require early involvement, effective cooperation and communication of all stakeholders (the TMRSU, the Police, the RDA and the local authorities) in order to identify the safety hazards and the related risks.

These hazards and risks are then analysed to allow mitigation via engineering control. The hazards and risk mitigation process has been iterated through the whole life of the project, i.e. at concept stage, design stage, project execution, implementation stage and post-implementation stage, including operation and maintenance, all this to ensure that the safety of the system across the asset lifecycle is properly monitored and managed.

In 2013, the Singapore Cooperation Enterprise undertook a risk assessment, which was done on the safety aspect of the reference design and documented the risks associated with the LRT operation and interface with the road users. Both implementation and operation mitigation measures identified included the establishment and the enforcement of road rules with line marking, traffic signals and appropriate signages and public education and sensitisation, geometric design based on international standards, careful selection of Train Captains, robust and adequate training with safe operating speed and procedures.

Taking the above into consideration, the engineering requirements for traffic and safety is part of the project implementation. The road engineering geometric design was

done according to international standards and to the local requirements of the Road Development Authority and the TMRSU.

The intersections are designed based on the road and rail interfaces with due consideration to the following: signalised road intersection, changes to road direction, road or intersection geometrical changes, shared zones between road vehicles and trains, footpaths, traffic lanes and shoulders, slope, site distances, grades and clearances. The design also considers road and pedestrian crossings of the LRV corridor and the speed of the LRV with respect to other road vehicles.

The traffic signalling is designed based on Traffic Signalling Priority System (TSPS) giving priority to the train movement.

All the intersection layouts, including the facilities, the road furniture, traffic signals, phasing of the traffic signals of the road/rail interface were discussed thoroughly and approved by all the relevant authorities such as the TMRSU, the RDA, the Police, etc. For example, along the Vandermeersch Street, the left or right turning movements on some lateral roads at some of the intersections were banned to improve traffic flow as well as safety.

The Contractor, Larsen and Toubro Ltd, as part of the contract, ensured that a Road Safety Audit (RSA) was conducted for the full extent of the works by an independent qualified road safety audit team as part of the Preliminary Design and detailed Design and also in advance of opening any part of the works to traffic. The corrective actions highlighted in the Road Safety Audit Report have also been implemented before operation such as improvement of signages, channelling of pedestrians, installation of speed breakers and additional warning signs.

Given the complex and the multi-engineering aspect of the Metro Express System, Mr Speaker, Sir, there was also an independent safety assessment carried out by Metro Transit Solutions from Singapore, which mobilised experts in different engineering disciplines such as Signalling, Power, Operation, Track Work, Rolling Stocks, among others.

Based on their assessment and observations, the ISA team recommended that the system is safe for normal operations and revenue passenger service.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (b) of the question, I am informed that there are different levels of communications in the form of a multi-stakeholder communication cell at the Prime Minister's Office and communication teams at MEL, Larsen and Toubro Ltd, TMRSU and Police. The structures in place ensure a constant flow of information to the public since the inception of the Metro Express Project.

Since last year, over 20 meetings have been held specifically on Stakeholder Meeting - Safety and Security along the Metro Express Railway Corridor where Sensitisation on Safety at Intersections are discussed and agreed collaboratively with the TMRSU, Police and other stakeholders concerned.

Metro Express Ltd (MEL) started its education, sensitisation and awareness campaigns since early 2019 through radio, TV, print and digital media. Over 50,000 leaflets and 5,000 posters specific on road safety at the rail and road intersections have been distributed to road users, the public in general as well as directly to over 72 organisations such as ministries, parastatal bodies, schools, universities and other organisations.

Moreover, multiple videos have been realised with the help of the MBC under the Metro News item. Specific videos on the sensitisation of traffic signs and warnings at junction/intersection have also been produced to ensure that a maximum of people are sensitised on how to interact with the LRV system where it intersects with the road. For example, Mr Speaker, Sir, I have different instances where all these communication exercises were held and I will not go through all of them, it will take me too much time, but it started on -

- 30 May 2019 - Metro News - there was a new layout Gool junction with Police and MBC;
- Raoul Lejeune junction reconfiguration;
- Focus programme on TV on Metro Express project.

I can go on, Mr Speaker, Sir. Up to last week, 13 February 2020, there was a news item on road safety specifically for pilgrims of Maha Shivaratree.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as regards part (c) of the question, I am informed that the Police are investigating into the matter and the Train Captain has already given his statement. The cause of the accident is yet to be established officially.

However, preliminary observations from the staff of Metro Express Ltd at the Operation Control Centre (OCC), who were instantly aware of the accident through the CCTV system, present at the junctions, have confirmed that all traffic lights at the junction were red for all road users and the LRV had priority to proceed. From the video footage, it is established, Mr Speaker, Sir, that the LRV had already engaged through the junction when the motorcyclist involved, unfortunately, did not observe, respect the red traffic lights and

proceeded through the junction, which resulted in the collision with the LRV. The Train Captain immediately applied the emergency brake and the train stopped. MEL will be providing all the evidences necessary, including the footage to the Police and all other concerned Authorities.

Furthermore, Mr Speaker, Sir, it is to be noted that at all the junctions, the LRVs run at a reduced speed of less than 20 Km/h and the Train Captains strictly follow the established safety protocols. Such was the case before the accident took place yesterday afternoon.

There are multiple levels of warning signs at approaches of a level crossing. There are signs indicating a level crossing ahead, traffic signal warnings and on spot signs at the level crossing itself.

In the meantime, Sir, as already informed, the Train Captain involved in the accident has already given his statement to the Police of Beau Bassin on the day itself, and, as per established protocols, the Police carried out necessary alcohol test on the Train Captain, which revealed to be negative.

According to the Police, the body of the motorcyclist was conveyed to Princess Margaret Orthopaedic Centre (PMOC) for autopsy, which is being carried out today, 24 February, by Dr. Gungadin.

MEL is fully cooperating and collaborating with the Police and other concerned Authorities. An enquiry is ongoing at the level of the Police and a Police Investigation report is being awaited.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Metro Express Project has been widely acclaimed by the population as it has proved to be a modern, reliable, safe, user-friendly and environmental friendly mode of public transport. So far, nearly 800,000 commuters have travelled safely on-board the LRVs of Metro Express for both free passenger and commercial service.

I can assure the House that in the implementation of this project, there has been no compromise on safety and quality, as I have already clearly established in my answer. Unlike the project of the former Government, Sir, which would have cost Rs37 billion, interests and provisions for currency fluctuations taken onboard, we are implementing the Metro Express Project at Rs18.8 billion, without jeopardising the safety and quality aspects. I think this Government has acted responsibly without putting a financial burden, which the population would not have been able to bear. Comments suggesting that the initial project had been sacrificed due to cost reduction is baseless, Mr Speaker, unwarranted and demagogical.

Light Rail Systems are designed to integrate with other modes of transport. Adaptability, a new culture to the new road-rail configuration and discipline of road users are, of course, key to the efficient integration between the light rail and other road users. I wish to inform the House that an assessment has been carried out by respective authorities and MEL with regard to additional safety measures to be implemented at the junctions, including the installation of barriers. MEL held a multi-stakeholder workshop, which was held on 14 February 2020 on the matter and all the stakeholders, including technicians, experts and other professionals recommended that additional measures could be implemented, and all stakeholders viewed that the preferred option of geometric improvements such as combination of raised kerbs, improved road markings, extension of yellow boxes, removal of pedestrian crossing in front of the Beau Bassin market together with the introduction of flashing Red light warning signals were found to be the most optimal solution in order to mitigate the safety risk identified thereat. However, given the risks associated with road users' adaptation period and their unexpected behaviours, the use of safety barriers is being considered as a temporary safety measure until our road users would have adapted to the new road-rail configuration. I wish to make an appeal to all road users...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker, Sir, to conclude, I wish also to make an appeal to all road users and the public in general to act responsibly when it comes to matters involving public lives and public safety.

Dr. Boolell: Thank you very much, Minister. But it is amazing how when one switches side, one becomes selective in one's reply. Can I ask the Minister - and I hope that there will be no compromise on safety, security and probity and, therefore, there will be full disclosure of information - to lay on the Table of the Assembly a copy of the Road Safety Audit?

Mr Ganoo: I have no problem, Mr Speaker, Sir. As I said earlier on, there was a Road Safety Audit which was carried out by L&T. I will, of course, contact L&T, which is the contractor, and we should not forget that. There is no problem. I can even ask the hon. Leader of the Opposition to come and have a look at this Safety Audit REport.

Dr. Boolell: No, to lay it on the Table of the National Assembly for everybody to have a look at, and we want the name of the company also. Since the Minister has stated that, you know, everything started since 2012 - but what is amazing and upsetting - why is it that what was in the original plan when the Labour Party was in Government, why is it that the

original plan, which makes provisions for elevation structure from Vandermeersch to Barkly next to the football ground, why is it this has not been taken onboard if the Minister is so sensitive in respect of safety and security?

Mr Ganoo: This is not true, Mr Speaker, Sir. At the place where the accident took place...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Let the Minister reply!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Assirvaden!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Assirvaden!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Assirvaden! Quiet please! Let the Minister answer.

(Interruptions)

Mr Assirvaden: He is shouting!

Mr Speaker: No, you are shouting! You are shouting! Be quiet! Hon. Minister, answer the question!

Mr Mohamed: Just a point, hon. Hurreeram was also shouting. Why don't you see him?

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: That was shouting and crosstalking, this is my ruling! My ruling is not to be questioned! Hon. Minister, continue with your answer!

Mr Ganoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Leader of the Opposition ...

(Interruptions)

Mr Assirvaden: *Commission pe marsé!*

Mr Speaker: This is serious allegation! You withdraw the word!

Mr Assirvaden: *M. le président ...*

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: If you can substantiate, bring documents!

(Interruptions)

Withdraw or else ...

Mr Assirvaden: *M. le président...*

Mr Speaker: Withdraw! No explanation!

Mr Assirvaden: *M. le président...*

Mr Speaker: No explanation! This is serious allegation, withdraw your word!
Withdraw your word! I am on my feet; you sit down first and you withdraw!

(Interruptions)

One Member speaks at one time.

(Interruptions)

Mr Assirvaden: Can I stand and speak?

Mr Speaker: You have the floor, you withdraw. If you don't withdraw...

(Interruptions)

Allez-y!

Mr Assirvaden: *M. le président, j'ai adressé ...*

Mr Speaker: No explanation! Withdraw unconditionally, hon. Member!

Withdraw unconditionally!

Mr Assirvaden: *Je n'ai pas le droit de dire un mot ici, dans cette Chambre?*

Mr Speaker: Withdraw unconditionally because this is very serious allegation. You sit down, I am on my feet!

Mr Assirvaden: I withdraw.

Mr Speaker: Thank you.

Mr Ganoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, the Leader of the Opposition has so far been behaving in a dignified manner. I listened to him yesterday night. I hope that the Members of the Opposition understand that we are dealing ...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: You are starting again.

Mr Ganoo: ... with a very serious matter and if he starts with such types of comments, 'commission' and so on, we can also reply back, Mr Speaker, Sir.

(Interruptions)

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I just heard the hon. Member Assirvaden saying 'Al dimane to Premier ministre'. I move that he withdraws this comment.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: There is a point of order! No second point of order!

Hon. Assirvaden, please withdraw the word!

Mr Assirvaden: *M. le président, mais qu'est-ce que j'ai dit? Le Premier ministre, dans une conférence de presse, a parlé de commission. J'ai fait référence à ça, c'est tout !*

Mr Speaker: You have to withdraw.

Mr Assirvaden: *Dans une conférence de presse, il l'a fait.*

Mr Speaker: Hon. Member, you have to withdraw the words you said.

Mr Assirvaden: *Mais je n'ai pas le droit de dire quoi que ce soit dans cette Chambre !*

Mr Speaker: This is not a point of order. You withdraw!

Mr Assirvaden: What is the point of order?

Mr Speaker: You withdraw whatever you said!

Mr Assirvaden: Once again, I withdraw.

Mr Speaker: Thank you very much.

The Prime Minister: And I move that he withdraws what he has said later on, that I made a comment that there was commission. He has to withdraw that also.

Mr Assirvaden: I never said that.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Hon. Shakeel Mohamed, quiet! Quiet!

(Interruptions)

Quiet! Hon. Patrick Assirvaden, you have to withdraw what you said.

(Interruptions)

You have to withdraw.

(Interruptions)

Mr Mohamed: *To memwar inn gagn beze.*

The Prime Minister: *Ale dota! Ale dimann to papa!*

Mr Mohamed: *Ale dimann tor pa twa!*

Mr Speaker: I am on my feet! Can you resume your seat? Hon. Shakeel Mohamed, you said: '*To memwar gagn beze*'. Withdraw that! Unparliamentary!

Mr Mohamed: Let me withdraw his own memory, therefore.

Mr Speaker: Unparliamentary! Withdraw! You withdraw it.

Dr. Boolell: Mr Speaker, Sir, the Prime Minister also has to withdraw the unwarranted remark he has made vis-à-vis Shakeel Mohamed.

The Prime Minister: *Vine dir nimport kwa ici!*

Dr. Boolell: Sorry? Did I hear any unwarranted voice making unfair comments?

Mr S. Mohamed: He makes comments about my father and you do not see anything!

Mr Speaker: Do you have a point of order?

Mr Mohamed: You see only one side!

Dr. Boolell: The hon. Prime Minister has to withdraw the unparliamentary comment he has made vis-à-vis hon. Shakeel Mohamed.

Mr Speaker: There are no unparliamentary comments.

Mr Mohamed: Mr Speaker, Sir, on a point of order. He makes comments, to ask my father. But what I find extremely strange, maybe I will try to help you, is that you do not seem to hear whenever he makes comments. You do not seem to hear when hon. Hurreeram makes comments, but you hear very well everything else.

Mr Speaker: You resume your seat. I can hear very well when there are serious allegations and this is unparliamentary. It cannot be tolerated in the House.

Mr Ganoo: To answer the hon. Leader of the Opposition, I must correct him, Mr Speaker, Sir, and insist on that what he is saying is totally incorrect. There was no elevated structure from Vandermeersch Street to Beau Bassin and this section was never on an elevated structure; it was always upgrade.

Dr. Boolell: Mr Speaker, Sir, unless the hon. Minister does not have the relevant information, and there are witnesses to this, can I ask him to submit to the House the original plan? There is an original plan and there are people in Government who can vouchsafe for this, and I can drop the name of those people. If he wants, I can do it publicly or I can give the name to him.

Mr Ganoo: I have answered what I had to answer, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Dr. Boolell: I am asking the hon. Minister to table the original plan. Either the hon. Minister is being misled or he is misleading the House.

Mr Speaker: Do you have anything to answer to that?

Mr Ganoo: I have answered already.

Dr. Boolell: Well, we are waiting for him to table. At least, naked truth is written on the wall. Table the original plan as it stands. There is an original plan, unless the hon. Minister is being misled.

Mr Ganoo: As far as I know, there is one plan, Mr Speaker, Sir, which confirms that, and I can table the plan that I have. The hon. Leader of the Opposition can take cognizance of this plan.

Dr. Boolell: Mr Speaker, Sir, I will come back to this again. Either fake information has been given to the hon. Minister or he is deliberately trying to keep the truth from the members of the public and from Members of this House.

Mr Ganoo: This is a comment that the hon. Leader of the Opposition wishes to make. Mr Speaker, Sir, I don't have to say anything about it.

Dr. Boolell: Can I ask the hon. Minister whether an emergency procurement was awarded to a firm from Singapore following withdrawal of allocation of a tender which was awarded to one of the best safety and security company known as Italcertifer?

Mr Ganoo: Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir, I have made reference to that issue on different occasions in the past. That is correct. In fact, it is the Mass Transit Solutions, which is a

Singapore-based Railway Consultancy Company with more than 30 years of transit experience. In fact, when Italcertifer failed come up with the required documents that the Ministry was asking, by its own behaviour, it put an end to the agreement with the Ministry, then we had no choice than to have recourse to another bidding exercise because the Metro Express had to be launched by the end of December. In fact, no contract was ever signed with Italcertifer, Mr Speaker, Sir. Therefore, we had recourse to an emergency procurement. There were three bidders; it was a new bidding exercise. A competitive exercise was carried out and it was in this context that MTS was chosen and issued the certificate later on.

Dr. Boolell: Can I remind the hon. Minister of what his predecessor said in this very House? He announced in Parliament that Italcertifer would submit its certificate of safety on 25 September 2019.

Mr Ganoo: Yes, because if Italcertifer had respected all the conditions, that would have been the case. But they did not proceed to sign the contract, they did not submit documents as requested in the Letter of Award and in the bidding documents. To make things worse for them, they insisted on the Ministry to amend the clauses of the contract when the bid has already been given to them. This would have been unfair to the other bidders. We could not agree to that, that is, amending the clauses of the original bid. Therefore, we could not agree to these conditions being imposed upon the Ministry and MEL informed that it could not, in that situation, continue to send documents, which were highly sensitive ones, in the absence of a signed contract. I must also remind the hon. Leader of the Opposition that it was in the light of legal advice received from the State Law Office that Italcertifer was apprised that these requests should have been made at bidding stage and, at this juncture, changing the clause of the contract could be perceived as being unfair to the other bidders as well as those who did not bid specifically because of the original clauses in the bid. So, in these circumstances, the Ministry had no option other than terminate the assignment of Italcertifer pursuant to section 46 of the Public Procurement Act, following consultations with the Attorney General's Office, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Dr. Boolell: Again, Mr Speaker, Sir, from information which I have, it is MEL which is taking Government for a long ride because it was MEL which refused. Is he aware that it was MEL which refused to submit information and documents to Italcertifer?

Mr Ganoo: Well, again, I have said what I had to say, Mr Speaker, Sir. I must also inform the House that when Italcertifer insisted on the amendment of the clauses of the bid,

the Ministry was legally not able to do that. The advice of the Attorney General's Office was sought anew and my Ministry sought to be guided on the way forward. And acting upon the legal advice tendered by the Attorney General's Office, Mr Speaker, Sir, the Ministry issued a final letter of termination on 26 December, last year, to cancel the assignment, and since then, Italcertifer has not reverted back to us; three months now have elapsed by, Mr Speaker, Sir. We had no choice. We could not be at the beck and call of Italcertifer; we had to launch the project. That's why we had recourse to this other bidding exercise.

Dr. Boolell: Mr Speaker, Sir, a contract following an emergency procurement, and it is good that the public is made aware. Does the hon. Minister know - and I am sure he knows fully - that it was awarded to Metro Transit Solutions, which has no acumen at all in safety and security of transit? And it is not even allowed to issue a certification of safety and security.

Mr Ganoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have just said that MTS is a Singapore- based railway company with more than 30 years of transit experience. The company's range of consultancy services include turnkey solutions for railway companies and operators, covering all aspects of feasibility study, security, safety, operation, maintain, design of new system, among others. The company has delivered solutions to several overseas transport authorities and operators, namely in India, Macau, Thailand, Malaysia, Taiwan, Singapore, Indonesia, among others. This is the track record that we have of this company.

Mr Speaker: Last question!

Dr. Boolell: Mr Speaker, Sir, it is so efficient that it acts expeditiously and gives a safety...

Mr Bhagwan: On a point of order, if you will allow me!

(Interruptions)

Ekoute mwa! Laisse mo koze! Am I not allowed to speak?

On a point of order; I am asking the Chair. This is a question of national interest. It concerns my constituency and my colleague's constituency. You are saying that it is the last question. Somebody has died. So, I think, in the public interest, we have the right to ask questions because it is our constituency.

Mr Speaker: But what can I do?

(Interruptions)

What can I do? I asked the hon. Member to give way for further questions from the other side. If it is his...

Dr. Boolell: Mr Speaker, Sir, you have to be fair because the Minister has had more than ample time to reply to all the questions, and I have said that we are going to make room for our friends to put supplementary questions. Last question before my friends on the other side will put questions. How is it that an alleged safety assessor like Metro Transit Solutions issued a certificate within 23 days? And this is highly scandalous, Mr Speaker, Sir!

Mr Ganoo: Perhaps the hon. Leader of the Opposition does not know that. This company, MTS (Metro Transit Solutions) was also shortlisted among one of the bidders during the first procurement exercise. So, MTS did not just appear when Italcertifer shied away. This company, the MTS was also a bidder; it was chosen as No. 2, in fact, is one of the best bidders during the first procurement exercise, Mr Speaker, Sir. So, MTS was on the list of potential bidders and this is why when we launched this exercise, MTS bid again and was awarded the bid.

Mr Speaker: So, I will allow you one question.

Mr Bhagwan: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Since 2018 and 2019, in Parliament here, my colleagues and myself, as MPs of the constituency, we have raised issues concerning security of the public; roundabout at Beau Bassin, Minister Bhoda was replying, he has given us assurances and so on.

Ce que nous pouvons témoigner aujourd'hui, M. le président, en même temps nous sympathisons avec les membres de la famille, de ce côté-ci de la Chambre. C'est une famille qu'on connaît de Belle Rose, Avenue St. Louis. Il y a une situation de peur. Le ministre a des informations que le Metro Express lui donne. Mais sur le terrain, *on the field, at the different junctions*, c'est différent, ce n'est pas réel. Alors, moi, ce que je demanderai au ministre, par exemple, tous les *crosshere*, il n'y pas de peinture, il n'y a pas de *road marking* sur les *crossroads*. Et c'est pourquoi, le Premier ministre qui est responsable de la police, peut faire vérifier. Qu'est-ce qui arrive aux gens qui utilisent les cannes blanches ? Il y a l'école des aveugles dans les environs. Il y a, à côté, où il y a eu l'accident, l'école des sourds. Rien n'a été prévu par Metro Express. Metro Express fait distribuer des tracts. Nous, les membres du Parlement, les membres de cette circonscription...

Mr Speaker: Question, please!

Mr Bhagwan: *Alors*, can I ask the hon. Minister, from what has happened, to refresh his memory about - he was the Leader of the Opposition in 2013 - *ce qu'il avait dit, le 7 mai 2013, à propos de l'accident de Sorèze.*

“Mr Speaker, Sir, I will ask the hon. Minister whether he agrees that an independent inquiry (...)”

We are asking for an independent inquiry, not from Metro Express, not from that company; that an independent inquiry should be set up to look into all the loopholes concerning the security aspects. And the then Leader of the Opposition asked the Minister that he should seriously think of “vacating this office and giving place to another Minister” pending the inquiry. Can I ask hon. Ganoo - well, he is ready, he said it this morning, *li pas attasé ek poste* - whether he is prepared to vacate his office and have another Minister appointed and have an independent inquiry...

(Interruptions)

Ki to riye! Mars lor simin twa kone ki beze ki ena!

Mr Speaker: Put your question, hon. Bhagwan!

Mr Bhagwan: So, I am asking hon. Ganoo to adhere to what he said in 2013. *Li pas attasé ar poste!* But vacate the job if you cannot do it!

Mr Speaker: Put your question!

Mr Bhagwan: Give it to Bodha again! I am asking him to vacate his office as per what he has said in 2013.

(Interruptions)

Mr Ganoo: Mr Speaker, Sir...

(Interruptions)

Mr Bhagwan: *Pas rode lamerdemen! To dire gran matin to pas attasé are poste! Beh, fer lenquete!*

Mr Speaker: Quiet, please! You want an answer! Give time for an answer!

(Interruptions)

You are answering for him? You put a question, you give the answer, you make a lot of noise! Other people have the same right!

Mr Ganoo: M. le président...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Please!

Mr Ganoo: Of course, this is a serious matter that has taken place yesterday. I can assure the House that Government, my Ministry and all the other stakeholders, we are alive to the introduction of the Metro...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Quiet!

Mr Ganoo: ...in a new system of transport in Mauritius. And I can assure the House, there is no place for complacency. A lot has been done. I have just referred to all the meetings that are held nearly every day by the different stakeholders at my Ministry, at MEL and at the other departments, Mr Speaker, Sir, we see to it that there should be no place for complacency. Our MEL officers, the Police, the TMRSU, our consultant, they carry out regular assessment, regular visits to check and improve and make good, Mr Speaker, Sir. We are alive to our...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Quiet, please!

Mr Ganoo: We are alive to our responsibilities. Two weeks ago...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Quiet, please!

Mr Ganoo: Two weeks ago, hon...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Quiet, please!

(Interruptions)

Quiet, please!

Mr Ganoo: We are here to listen, Mr Speaker, Sir. Hon. Quirin raised a point at Adjournment. Two days afterwards, the whole team and myself, we went on the spot and tried to correct that situation. Therefore, there is no room for complacency. We are doing everything to protect the travelling public, Mr Speaker, Sir. And I can assure the House that

the Opposition should be careful not to fall into cheap demagoguery and try to make politics out of the death of a young man. And you know, what troubles me more, Mr Speaker, Sir, is that out of all the fatal accidents that we have in the world and even in our country, 59% involve young people from 16 to 29 years. We are twice aggrieved by the fact that this accident took place yesterday, and another young man passed away, Mr Speaker, Sir.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Quiet!

Mr Ganoo: So, I can assure the whole nation and the country at large, Mr Speaker, Sir, that this Government, the Prime Minister, my Ministry, we are ever alive to the necessity to come up with new plans to improve public safety in this country, Mr Speaker, Sir, and no one has to teach us any lesson. Thank you.

Mr Speaker: Time is over!

MOTION

SUSPENSION OF S.O. 10 (2)

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I 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.

(12.19 p.m.)

STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS

FATF PLENARY MEETINGS 2020 – MAURITIUS AML/CFT SYSTEM - OBSERVATIONS

The Minister of Financial Services and Good Governance (Mr M. Seeruttun): Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I wish to make a statement to inform the House of the outcome of the review by the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) of the Mauritius Post Observation Period Report, which sets out the progress made by Mauritius in implementing the recommended actions contained in the ESAAMLG Mutual Evaluation Report (MER), published in September 2018.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I led a delegation to the FATF Meetings which were held in Paris from 16 to 21 February 2020. The FATF considered the progress made by Mauritius in improving its technical compliance with the FATF Recommendations and increasing the level of effectiveness of its Anti-Money Laundering and Countering the Financial Terrorist (AML/CFT) system during the one-year observation period which started in October 2018 and ended in October 2019.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to remind the House that Mauritius underwent a prior assessment in 2007 under the FATF Methodology of 2004. The assessment was focused on technical compliance with the then FATF 40 + 9 Recommendations and the MER was published in August 2008. Several deficiencies were identified therein, in particular regarding the AML/CFT regulation of the Designated Non-Financial Businesses and Professions (DNFBPs), including casinos, real estate agents, legal and accounting professionals. However, limited action was taken to address these deficiencies.

Worse still, in 2012, the FATF reviewed its Recommendations and countries were requested to initiate actions to ensure compliance with the revised Recommendations, that is what we now call the 40 FATF Recommendations. But again, no action was initiated by the authorities at that time and this resulted in the 2018 MER with modest ratings. Mauritius was rated largely compliant or compliant with only 14 out of the 40 FATF Recommendations. With respect to effectiveness assessment, the FATF has adopted an approach focusing on a hierarchy of 11 defined outcomes and Mauritius was found to have either a low or moderate level of effectiveness against all the 11 Immediate Outcomes.

Consequently, following the adoption of its MER, Mauritius embarked on an extremely ambitious exercise to overhaul the AML/CFT legal framework to ensure compliance with the FATF standards. This exercise was fully supported by the Prime Minister and resulted in the adoption of new laws and regulations, a comprehensive National AML/CFT Strategy and a National Action Plan.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the FATF noted that since the adoption of its MER in 2018, Mauritius has made significant progress in addressing most of its MER recommended actions to improve technical compliance with the FATF 40 Recommendations and to increase the level of effectiveness of its AML/CFT system, including by completing its national Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing risk assessment, enhancing domestic coordination and international cooperation, developing and implementing an AML/CFT risk-based supervision

framework for financial institutions and the implementation of the United Nations targeted financial sanctions related to terrorism and proliferation. The FATF has also recognised that Mauritius has taken measures to enhance the transparency of legal persons by amending the legal framework to require legal persons to disclose beneficial ownership information and improve the processes for identifying and confiscating proceeds of crimes.

After a period of one year, we are now rated compliant or largely compliant with 35 out of 40 FATF Recommendations, including the so-called Big Six Recommendations. The House will recall that the MER identified technical deficiencies in three out of the six Big Six Recommendations, namely Recommendation 5 on criminalising terrorist financing, Recommendation 6 on targeted financial sanctions related to terrorist financing, and Recommendation 10 on customer due diligence.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with respect to effectiveness, let me be clear: in practice, after a country has undergone its mutual evaluation, it is expected that it will address all its technical deficiencies within the first two years following the adoption of its MER. Thereafter, the country has up to three years to improve its level of effectiveness. In fact, given our inaction from 2008 and subsequently 2012, a large number of technical deficiencies were highlighted in the Mauritius MER and we were rated low or moderate against all the 11 Immediate Outcomes.

To address this situation, we created working groups involving all relevant competent authorities for each of the 11 Immediate Outcomes. These working groups have reviewed, developed and implemented comprehensive measures and practices to improve the level of effectiveness, including by enhancing national coordination at both policy and operational levels.

As at date, that is, within a period of one year, Mauritius has been able to fully or largely address about 80 per cent of the key Recommended Actions, that is, 53 of the 58 actions identified in the MER to improve the level of effectiveness of its AML/CFT system.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the FATF has recognised our substantial progress in relation to Immediate Outcomes 1, 2, 6, 8 and 9, as well as on some Recommended Actions relating to the other remaining Immediate Outcomes.

Mr Speaker, Sir, Mauritius remains committed to uphold the integrity of the domestic and international financial systems and as such is and will continue to fully implement measures to improve the level of effectiveness of its AML/CFT regime. Mauritius has made a

high-level political commitment to the FATF to resolve swiftly the remaining shortcomings and will work closely with the FATF and the ESAAMLG to implement its action plan within agreed time frames. In its public statement, the FATF has identified five action items which Mauritius must implement to improve the level of effectiveness of its AML/CFT system.

Mr Speaker, Sir, to conclude, I would like to reassure the House that my Ministry is coordinating the implementation of the FATF Action Plan and has already obtained technical assistance from international partners, including the European Union and the Government of Germany, to further support the work that has already started. We are also embarking on a recruitment process to ensure that all institutions are fully manned to undertake their AML/CFT obligations.

Thank you.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: You are speaking from a sitting position!

Dr. Boolell: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have the right to seek clarification from the Minister.

Mr Speaker: Yes.

Dr. Boolell: I heard nothing in relation to the list of countries which are on the grey list.

Mr Seeruttun: Mr Speaker, Sir, I made a statement to inform the House of the process that was reviewed at the level of the FATF. You can go by the statement that has been issued by the FATF itself and you will see that the facts that I have mentioned here are as per what has been stated in the statement by the FATF.

Dr. Boolell: I then reserve the right to lay copy of the FATF on the Table of the Assembly in respect of definition of 'grey list'.

(12.29 p.m.)

MR THOMAS GOSLING & OTHERS V/S MAURITIUS – ARBITRATION PROCEEDINGS

The Attorney General, Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security (Mr M. Gobin): Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I have a statement to make concerning arbitration proceedings between Mr Thomas Gosling and others against Mauritius. This case concerns a dispute submitted to the International Centre for Settlement of Investment

Disputes (“ICSID”) on the basis of the Agreement between the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the Government of Mauritius for the Promotion and Protection of Investments which entered into force in October 1986 (i.e. the “BIT”) and the Convention on the Settlement of Investment Disputes between States and Nationals of Other States.

The claimants in this case are five in number, namely –

1. Mr Thomas Gosling, a person having the nationality of the United Kingdom;
2. Property Partnerships Development Managers (UK) Limited (“PPDM”), a company incorporated in England and Wales;
3. Property Partnerships Developments (Mauritius) Ltd (“PPD”), a company incorporated in Mauritius;
4. Property Partnerships Holdings (Mauritius) Ltd (“PPH”), a company incorporated in Mauritius, and
5. TG Investments Ltd (“TGI”), a company incorporated in Mauritius.

The respondent in the case is the Republic of Mauritius.

This dispute relates to the Claimants’ alleged investments in two real estate and tourism developments in Mauritius.

The Tribunal was composed of –

1. Dr. Andrés Rigo Sureda, a national of Spain, the President, appointed by the co-arbitrators in consultation with the Parties;
2. Prof. Stanimir Alexandrov, a national of Bulgaria, appointed by the Claimants, and
3. Prof. Brigitte Stern, a national of France, appointed by Mauritius.

Ms. Anna Holloway, ICSID Legal Counsel, was designated to serve as Secretary of the Tribunal. The place of proceedings was Washington, D.C. The Applicable Laws applied by the Tribunal were the provisions of the Bilateral Investment Treaty as interpreted in accordance to the rules of interpretation set forth in Article 31 of the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties. This notwithstanding, there are matters underlying the claims such as the conditions to acquire rights to land in Mauritius or to its development, to which Mauritian law applies.

A hearing on Jurisdiction and the Merits was held in Washington, D.C. from June 17 to June 25, 2019. The proceedings were closed on 04 February of this year.

The dispute concerns two areas in Mauritius, namely Le Morne Brabant and Pointe Jérôme.

In the Le Morne case, Mr Speaker, Sir, in the beginning of 2003, Mr Gosling explored possible investments in Mauritius. The opportunity to develop Le Morne site arose as a result of Mr Gosling's relationship with the local landowners, the Cambier family, which held land through Société du Morne Brabant. On 21 April 2004, PPDM (UK) and Société Morne Brabant entered into a Cooperation Agreement with a view to carrying out a tourist development at Le Morne. On 07 May 2004, the Claimants presented the Le Morne Project to Mauritius.

However, at about the same time, Government of Mauritius was actively pursuing the idea of establishing Le Morne as a National Heritage as well as a World Heritage site. In fact, on 04 May 2004, Le Morne Heritage Trust Fund Act was enacted. It adopted the core and buffer zone boundaries proposed in the Saliba Report and established Le Morne Heritage Trust Fund, which came into force on 01 July 2004.

On 23 June 2004, Société Morne Brabant applied to the Board of Investment for an Investment Certificate, pursuant to the Investment Promotion Integrated Resort Scheme Regulations.

Le Morne Project was discussed at the Fast Track Committee dated 08 September 2005, chaired by the then Prime Minister.

A Letter of Intent was issued by the then Board of Investment to LMB on Friday 30 December 2005. Another Letter of Intent was issued to SMB on 03 January 2006.

On 30 June 2006, LMB purchased the property at Le Morne and PPH entered into a shareholders' agreement with SMB, which set out the ownership of LMB, and the entitlement to profits of the UK investors.

Le Morne was designated a National Heritage site by the Ministry of Housing and Lands on 24 January 2006 and in early July 2008, UNESCO inscribed Le Morne Cultural Landscape as a World Heritage Site. Under the applicable Planning Policy Guidelines, i.e. the Revised PPG2, no development was permitted on the land of Le Morne Brabant.

As part of a restructuring in 2009, TGI succeeded to PPH's interests in LMB. However, the then Prime Minister never authorised PPH and TGI to own shares in LMB.

The Claimants claim that Mauritius had breached Article 5(1) of the Bilateral Investment Treaty by indirectly expropriating their investment in Le Morne. According to the Claimants, the Respondent (i.e. Mauritius) changed its policy when it issued Revised PPG2 contrary to specific assurances to the Claimants and the Letter of Intent.

The Claimants insist on the inconsistency of the Respondent's actions by stating, I quote –

“On the one hand, in December 2005, the Government specifically assured that their development could proceed and the Board of Investment issued the Claimants with a Letter of Intent. On the other hand, the Ministry of Housing and Lands prohibited development on the Claimants' land by issuing Revised PPG2 in September 2007.”

The Claimants claimed that Mauritius had violated Articles 2, 3 and 5 of the BIT in relation to their investments in Le Morne Project and prayed the Tribunal to order Mauritius to pay damages and compensation to the tune of EUR 18 m. The Claimants also claimed, *inter alia*, interests and costs.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Tribunal found that the Letter of Intent, on which the Claimants had placed great significance in the arbitration proceedings, did not confer any development rights to the Claimants. The Tribunal further found that no Investment Certificate was ever issued and the Claimants did not acquire development rights, interference with which may have given rise to a justifiable claim for compensation.

In the Pointe Jérôme Project, Mr Speaker, Sir, the project concerned an area of about 13 hectares which had been leased to Pointe Jérôme Development Limited, a company controlled by Mr Yves Tostee, under the terms of an industrial lease for a tourism development project. The lease required that construction of the development start within 15 months from signing and be finished within three years. The period to start construction had been extended a “final” time for six months. Thus, it was due to expire on 07 February 2006. In October 2005, PPDM (UK), that is, Claimant No. 2, entered into a share purchase agreement with Mr Tostee for Pointe Jérôme Project. An extension of time to start construction was requested by the investors but, on 20 September 2007, the

Ministry of Housing and Lands rejected the request for an extension and cancelled the lease.

The Claimants claimed that Mauritius had violated Articles 2, 3 and 5 of the BIT in relation to their Pointe Jérôme investments and claimed damages and compensation in the amount of EUR 5.7 m. as well as, *inter alia*, interests and costs.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Tribunal found that “while the process could be improved...”, Mauritius was within its contractual rights to cancel the lease. Furthermore, the Tribunal concluded that the lessee had breached the lease and Government had the right to cancel the lease *de plein droit* as permitted by the terms of the lease and, therefore, without exercising any other rights than its contractual rights.

To conclude, Mr Speaker, Sir, the Tribunal for the reasons given in the Award, decided, by majority, to dismiss all claims on the merits. The Tribunal further ordered that each party shall pay for -

- (a) its own arbitration costs, and
- (b) 50 % of the fees and expenses of the members of the Tribunal and the administrative fees and direct expenses of the ICSID Secretariat.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I must add that one of the arbitrators, namely Professor Stanimir Alexandrov, a national of Bulgaria, who was appointed by the Claimants, signed a dissenting opinion both with respect to Le Morne Brabant and Pointe Jérôme.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to thank the team of officers at my Office, as well as our external lawyers at Foley Hoag and Essex Court Chambers for their sound professional legal advice. I also wish to place on record the unflinching support of the hon. Prime Minister all throughout the proceedings.

Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

(12.39 p.m.)

PRESIDENT’S ADDRESS – MOTION OF THANKS

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on the following motion of the Fourth Member for Belle Rose and Quatre Bornes (Mrs M. A. T. Diolle).

“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 Presentation of the Government Programme 2020-2024 on the occasion of the Opening of the First Session of the Seventh National Assembly.””

Question again proposed.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Minister Maudhoo!

The Minister of Blue Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries and Shipping (Mr S. Maudhoo): Mr Speaker, Sir, I feel greatly honoured to speak before this august Assembly in front of many astute and experienced Members.

I seize this opportunity to congratulate you, Mr Speaker, Sir, as well as His Excellency Prithvirajsing Roopun, for his election as the President of the Republic of Mauritius.

I can assure you all that I will do my best to uphold the dignity and traditions of this House and yet I look forward to your counsels and that of the Leader of the House, the hon. Prime Minister. Whenever, you deem it that I required them, I will wholeheartedly welcome your counsels.

I say this in all humility and sincerity because I am not *myssye konn tou*, Mr know all. I am not also one who holds the monopoly of all knowledge, either about politics or parliamentary principles and practices, like some politicians feign to, obviously we know where. I am here to learn, understand and act in the greater interest of the country, so I am ready to learn.

For me, the country and its people take precedence over everything; a non-negotiable principle, repeatedly reminded to me by my leader, the Prime Minister, Pravind Kumar Jugnauth, who encouraged me to stand for the election and gave me the opportunity to serve in what I believe is a great reforming government, what I sincerely think is under an outstanding Prime Minister. He is outstanding, I say, because he never falters from the chosen path of virtuousness, of *dharma* and of what he considers is right for the people and the country. He never breaks a given promise. For him, promises made are promises kept. I need not expatiate on this. Examples are too many and too well-known by the population and Members of this House. I better skip on this.

Mr Speaker, Sir, allow me to pay special tribute to a great son of this soil, a great soul, a man who shapes the destiny of this country with an iron fist, the architect and builder of modern Mauritius and the first ever recipient outside India of one of the highest civilian awards, the Padma Vibhushan Award by the Republic of India for exceptional and distinguished service.

The man with iron fist is no other than Padma Vibhushan Sir Anerood Jugnauth, who has now retired from active politics only after ensuring that the helm of the country is in the safe hands of a right and trustworthy person. And has he not himself said –“*Mo kone Pravind pu fer bien. Li p fer pli bien ki mwa.*” Pravind will do better than me; he is doing better than me.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am a product of that school, a school of Mauritian political thought lead by Sir Anerood Jugnauth, a man to put it in the Mauritian language – “*pas ti ena kachakacha*”, no hanky-panky business with Sir Anerood. He is a man who taught and shaped a generation like us to be just, yet firm, to be impartial and never to do anything that goes against the principles and practices of the Constitution, that disregards its spiritual values and mores of our society. What Sir Anerood has given us remains even today, our hopes and aspirations what we can achieve together, *ansam*, for this country. Sir Anerood remains for me a man of his word, a man of high integrity, firm in his action, a man of no retreat, no surrender and a man who knows the value of a promise.

M. le président, Sir Anerood Jugnauth reste toujours un homme de principe avec des convictions. Pour lui parole donnée, c’est parole sacrée. Après les élections de 2000, vous vous souviendrez, malgré une compagne communale féroce et acerbe des adversaires, l’alliance MSM/MMM remporta les élections.

En 2003, malgré toute sorte de pressions externes et internes, Sir Anerood Jugnauth cède le poste de Premier ministre à l’honorable Paul Bérenger pour deux ans comme promis. J’en suis sûre le MMM n’oubliera pas si vite cette grandeur d’âme et la générosité de Sir Anerood envers le leader du MMM de sitôt. C’est la seule fois que le leader du MMM devint Premier ministre pendant tout sa carrière, pendant 50 ans comme politicien.

En 2012, voyant la descente aux enfers avec le gouvernement Parti travailliste bien sûr, à 82 ans, Sir Anerood Jugnauth quitte le Réduit pour sauver le pays. Mais survient ensuite, l’épisode que tout le monde connaît l’épisode de ‘faire mange gato’, la plus grande trahison de l’histoire politique de l’île Maurice.

Sir Anerood formed his Government and went on a large battle on the international forum. He went to complete a last task which, for him, was injustice: the Chagos Archipelagos and in 2017, Sir Anerood put the destiny of our country in someone to pursue the works he started and that person cannot be anyone rather than his own son, our actual hon. Prime Minister, Pravind Kumar Jugnauth.

The Opposition used to call it deal '*papa-piti*'. Cet argument n'a jamais tenu la route, tout comme la plupart de leurs arguments bien sûr. Car Pravind Jugnauth emboita le pas de son père et alla dans les élections générales en novembre dernier pour accroître un nouveau mandat de cinq ans. Et c'est sans équivoque que la population Mauricienne, dans son ensemble, a plébiscité Pravind Jugnauth comme le nouveau leader exemplaire.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I come from a small village called Lallmatie in the district of Flacq, that a well-established journalist from the same village one described it as *le village de mon extase*. The village of my ecstasy is inspired by the famous work of local poet and writer Marcel Cabon, *KelibeKeliba*.

My interest in politics began way back from my college days. I read about what was going on at the local, national, regional, international levels. I listened to debates, talks by politicians and non-politicians. All these helped me to reach informed decisions and reinforced my desire to join politics. I entered politics in the late 80s. I was elected to the village council, served at the District Council and also served as adviser in a Government led by Sir Anerood. These provided me with the much needed experience to understand how local and national Governments operate.

However, I do not pretend to know all that one has to know about the workings of Government. I have still a long way to go, and with your timely advice, I feel I can contribute positively to the development of this country.

Until now, however, I must add, not everything has been smooth sailing for me. I have known many ups and downs. The political road so far has been, uneven, bumpy and at times full of potholes.

I still remember, in 1998, while I was campaigning for Sir Anerood for the by-election in Constituency Number 9, Flacq/Bon Accueil, from where I am elected now. The then Labour Government under Navinchandra Ramgoolam, had me and my 70-year old, ailing father, arrested and thrown in Alcatraz. I will never forget that.

That arrest has left a bitter taste and a deep scar in my heart that refuses to heal until today. I saw my father lying, crying, helplessly on the floor, in Alcatraz. I cried, but could do nothing.

My father is no more. The weight of the arrest was too much for him to bear. After our release, my dad always wanted to know the reason of the arrest and the treatment we underwent, but he could never know it. And we know for which reasons. Everybody knows. The case was struck out in Court and I still do not know the reason for throwing me and my dad in Alcatraz.

During that hard time, I never stop believing in divine justice. It did come, albeit belated.

Those who tried to dig holes for me, are today themselves in the 6 feet six inches political hole from where their political soul will never escape. And yet, I bear no one any grudge.

Like Narendra Modi Ji, Prime Minister of India, I quote –

“Each one of us has both good and evil virtues. Those who decide to focus on the good ones succeed in life. You can see the change you want to, be what you want to be.”

Mr Speaker, Sir, in spite of all that I underwent, I thank the almighty; I am still around, to serve my constituency and the country. I live and grew up in the constituency. I know each and every home and most people by their first names. I am Sudheer, they call me Sudhear because I am so dear to them. I am one of them, no honorable or minister. I will stay like that always, a friend to everybody, to those who voted for and for those who did not even vote for me.

I am everybody’s MP in my constituency where I stood as candidate for the general election in November last year, for the first time, and I was elected. My sincere thanks to all my constituents.

Mr Speaker, Sir, this country has known free and fair elections since 1948. The majority of the people have been voting ever since and everyone has been, in all humility, accepting the verdict of the electorates.

The international observers and community are all praised for our electoral machinery that ensures no hanky-panky business during voting time. And yet, what do we hear after the results of the last November poll were announced? *Election mardaille, election coquin* and a

host of shameful phrases and qualifications to deliberately cast a slur on the excellent democratic principles and practices that this country has enjoyed so far.

Shame on such people who try to dirty their own linen to eventually wash it in public and start crying wolf! Shame on those prophets of doom!

Mr Speaker, Sir, when I hear the hollow, baseless and vitriolic assertions by such doom and gloom prophets, I am reminded of what the British philosopher and political economist, John Stuart Mill says in his treatise, *Utilitarianism*, and I quote –

“It is better to be a human being dissatisfied than a pig satisfied; better to be Socrates than a fool satisfied. And if the fool, or the pig, is of a different opinion, it is only because they only know their own side of the question.”

Mr Speaker, Sir, also a French author and member of the Académie Goncourt, most famous for the works *Poil de Carotte* and *Les Histoires Naturelles* once said, and I quote –

“La vérité vaut bien qu’on passe quelques années sans la trouver.”

That is, “Truth is more valuable if it takes you a few years to find it.”

Fortunately, it didn’t take much time or many years for our population to know the truth and the vicious, sullied intention of a Machiavelli lion to cause harm to our national prestige.

In any case, Mr Speaker, Sir, I do not hate such people; I pity them for they know not what they are in their unquenchable thirst for power by hook or crook.

Mr Speaker, Sir, let me tell the Members, my colleagues on the other side of the floor, Pravind Kumar Jugnauth is the last person who will ever do any unlawful or unethical act for his personal interest.

He has on so many occasions proved that he is a man of high morals, discipline and convictions. Most of you know this.

Malheureusement, quelques membres de l’opposition, ici et ailleurs, ne peuvent toujours digérer leur défaite lors des dernières élections générales. Je dirai à tous ces gens-là, les élections sont maintenant derrière la porte, rassemblons nos efforts pour faire avancer le pays vers des nouveaux horizons.

For like British Politician, Jeremy Corbyn, let us all understand that, I quote –

“Parliament is supposed to be serious. It's not a place for jingoistic cheering.”

So, please, no jingoistic cheering henceforth please.

Let us join our competencies to create a new political demand and supply curve again as Prime Minister, Narendra Modi Ji says, I quote –

“We walk together, we move together, we think together, we resolve together, and together we take this country forward.”

I am not asking you to leave your party to join us, though that would have been most welcomed. All I am saying, let's work together for the welfare of our people and our country.

This is also the wish of the population outside. In one of the local daily, one writer had this to say, I hope hon. Members came across this daily.

Je cite –

« C'est votre rôle en tant que membres de l'opposition de critiquer les actions et inactions du gouvernement, mais il convient aussi de faire des propositions constructives afin d'aider notre pays à progresser. Vous, qui avant les élections aviez enfin si l'on croit en votre sincérité »

C'est pas moi c'est lui qui le dit.

« Tous les remèdes et solutions à tous nos maux et problèmes vous seriez beaucoup plus utile ; je pense, au pays et selon l'expression de votre formule favorite « dans l'intérêt supérieur du pays » de faire profiter au pays vos recettes et solutions bien gardées de comment vous alliez faire si vous étiez au pouvoir afin de –

1. Augmenter la croissance ;
2. Réduire l'endettement ;
3. Diminuez le déficit budgétaire ;
4. Créer des emplois productifs pour nos jeunes ;
5. Baisser les prix des commodités même si leurs coûts au plan mondial sont en hausse ;
6. Augmenter les pensions ;
7. Réduire la pollution sous toutes ses formes ;
8. Accroître le pouvoir d'achat des travailleurs ;

9. Combattre la corruption ;
10. Combattre le trafic de drogue ;
11. Réduire le nombre d'accidents.

Croyez-moi, la nation vous aurait été plus que reconnaissante et vos efforts certainement plus productifs que de boycotter le discours-Programme que vous avez faites ».

This is why I say, like the market supply and demand curves that will intersect at a point, the equilibrium point, to indicate the price at which we could predict the market will operate.

Let us also, as Members of this House, plot our graph of vision and ideas, a demand and supply graph of political vision and aspiration with its equilibrium point where both sides of the House can operate in the best interest of our country.

We may not agree on all that comes in our way, but, with debates and civilised discussions, we may reach the equilibrium point, to help the country move ahead.

Let us rise above party politics and petty interests.

Let us join hands and work for the betterment of our people and the prosperity of our nation.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I now wish to turn to the Government Programme 2020-2024. It underscores inclusive development to accelerate growth of the Mauritian economy. People also want more inclusive development.

Having said this, Mr Speaker, Sir, as I am addressing this august Assembly, I am motivated by a deep sense of honour, dignity, pride and above all a strong "*sense du devoir*". I am conscious that the expectation of the population from this Government is very high and in the years to come we have to perform and give the desired results.

This reminds me of what Winston Churchill once said, and I quote –

“It is of no use saying we are doing our best, you have got to succeed in doing what is necessary.”

Mr Speaker, Sir, this Government has been elected on only one basis, this is results. Results that triggered actions and actions that produced achievements.

That is why we need to continue on the same track. But we need new ideas, innovative policies, creative plans and inclusive programmes that will take into account the increasing exigencies of our people, their legitimate aspirations as well as the emerging challenges facing us as a nation.

The Government Programme 2020-2024 is the official blueprint of the Government with a triple objective of converting Mauritius into an inclusive high income country while ensuring that we remain united as a nation and our environment is preserved and protected. Thus it has set the tone and pace within which our country under the visionary and exemplary leadership of the Prime Minister will continue to progress to carve its niche in the league of nation.

I should also mention here the underlying principle that characterised the Government Programme 2020-2024 which is continuity and farsightedness, novelty, inclusiveness and togetherness. It is, indeed, daring and caring. It is aimed at bringing more happiness, prosperity and peace of mind to one and all. Economic, social, cultural and ecological development should touch each and every Mauritian. No one should be left behind. Allow me here to quote Mahatma Gandhi who said, I quote –

“Power comes from sincere service.”

We should provide our people with genuine services, facilities and privileges so that there is a level playing field and the gap between the haves and the have nots is shortened.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am very grateful to the hon. Prime Minister, who has entrusted me with the Ministry of Blue Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries and Shipping. It is indeed a large portfolio - as vast as the ocean. But the ocean and the marine lives have always fascinated me and I am amazed to look at the potential that the blue economy represents to our nation. My Ministry has as mission to fully optimise in a sustainable manner the immense potential of our Exclusive Economic Zone and develop the blue economy as a new pole of growth and is thus called upon to play a very important role in the future economic development of Mauritius. It is no coincidence that my Ministry has been mentioned for more than a dozen times in the Government Programme 2020-2024.

The Blue Economy concept is a concept of the 21st century which gained momentum since Rio+20 (Summit on Sustainable Development in 2012) where the need was recognised to conserve oceans as “sustainable development spaces” to meet the demands of the present without damaging the interests of future generations. The main Blue Economy resources

include fish, other living organisms, aquatic resources, minerals and other non-living substances. It also extends to offshore energy and a number of marine services namely, transport, tourism and communication. We know that over the year, the oceans have been used to meet the many essential needs of humanity. But we need to make a judicious and responsible use of its resources. Sustainability is the key factor when we talk of Blue Economy. As a new Minister, I am aware the blue economy can contribute to our food security and alleviate many of the difficulties that we are going through.

I think that our fishing industry and our local fishermen should play a major role in the development of the blue economy and I look forward to their unstinted cooperation.

I, therefore, take the commitment here, in this august Assembly, Mr Speaker, Sir, to do my utmost best in my capacity as Minister to help the fishermen community. The fishermen community can rest assured that they would always be on top of my agenda and I will always be '*à leur écoute*'. The Government will help them in improving their daily life and in improving the conditions of living of their families. Mr Speaker, Sir, Mauritius is a coastal island of 2.3 m. km² of Exclusive Economic Zone. Yet, we are still importing 60% of fish for local consumption, amounting to 23,000 tons annually. This is a paradox that I want to address. I remember last year, the hon. Prime Minister once rightly said, we should reduce our imports of fish and increase our local production. Yes, I fully concur with his views.

Mr Speaker, Sir, today we have some 1700 local registered fishermen, and I firmly believe that with bold decisions and joint collaboration with the Government, they can help us in tackling this issue. We should only keep on empowering them and giving them the right incentives and the right equipment to venture at sea or for land-based production.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we cannot speak about developing our Blue Economy without including one of the major actors who are our local fishermen. Currently, our fishermen are benefitting from different incentives. For instance, the Bad Weather Allowance has been increased from Rs210 in 2015 to Rs365 daily in 2019. Since 2015, the Government has disbursed more than Rs260 m. for the payment of Bad Weather Allowance. Decision has also been taken to empower fishermen to start fishing off lagoon. Let me also remind you that the fishermen cards and training for fishermen had gone into oblivion from 2005 to 2014. This is no longer the case today.

My Ministry has introduced the Canotte Scheme and the semi-industrial off-shore fishing scheme, whereby more and more fishing boats are being acquired by individual fishermen and cooperative associations.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I sincerely feel it is unacceptable that foreigners keep on fishing our Tuna, within our fishing zone, and selling them abroad at high prices while paying us peanuts for the fishing licence to fish in our EEZ. I intend to review the conditions of fishing licences given to foreign boats. Foreigners can't take what is more precious in our EEZ while our local fishermen continue to suffer. Our local fishermen should have their own boat to fish in our EEZ. This is what the Government wants to achieve and this is the aim of the Semi-Industrial Boat Scheme.

The key objective for the Fisheries Sector is to support the transition to off-lagoon operations by transferring the required knowledge to small fishers by building up a semi-industrial and industrial fishing industry. Mr Speaker, Sir, I am happy to inform the House that the Government, through the Mauritius Ports Authority, will be constructing a *Port de Pêche* to the tune of Rs2.5 billion at Fort William. This *Port de Pêche* will be a modern and well-equipped one which will accommodate around 120 fishing vessels. There will be a cold room, ice machine maker and all other facilities for fishing vessels to unload their catch in Mauritius. We want them to become entrepreneurs.

My Ministry will, therefore, invest in empowering the fishermen. We cannot offer to them grants and then let them deal with the projects on their own. We will have an Information Desk at the level of the Ministry to help them. Furthermore, we will train our local fishermen for this type of fishing. My Ministry will recruit a Fishermen Master to educate our local fishermen and provide them training in long line fishing.

In the same endeavour, the Government, with the assistance of the Government of Australia, has acquired a new multi-purpose support vessel. This new multi-purpose support vessel of 18.6 m in length has been jointly funded by the Government of Mauritius and the Government of Australia under its Australian Food Aid Programme. The vessel has been constructed and commissioned in Australia at the cost of Rs57 m. It is expected to be in the Port Louis harbour by the end of this month. All going well, the launching ceremony will be held by the hon. Prime Minister, Pravind Kumar Jugnauth on 05 March 2020.

With the help of this vessel, several projects have been identified to develop the Fisheries Sector such as deep water shrimp fishery, swordfish fishery, deep demersal slope

fishery and especially long line fishing fleet for tuna, which will increase our local production.

I wish to point out also that at present there are four cooperative societies benefitting from this scheme with a grant of Rs4 m. each for the acquisition of semi-industrial fishing boats. Two boats have already started fishing in the banks. Up to 10 tons in one fishing campaign of 10 days. They are doing very well, with fruitful campaign at sea.

Today, we have 50 semi-industrial local fishing boats fishing in our banks. Our vision is to increase the number further. This would enable them to fish in open sea, increase their catch levels while preserving endangered lagoon species. Succeeding in this project would mean that our imports of fish will surely go downward and our local production will surely increase. This is the only way we could generate revenues in the Blue Economy for now.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Seafood Hub remains the most prolific sector. We have the Princess Tuna generating a turnover of Rs16 billion, representing 25% of Mauritius exports. Moreover, this sector contributes 3% to our GDP growth. The Private Sector is doing well in our region. The Government intends to attract investors to develop this sector with more technologies.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the fishermen community is among one of the most important stakeholders of the Ministry. Fishermen have always been placed at the center of development of the fisheries sector. My Ministry is very conscious about the fishermen community and its contribution to the economy and has provided many incentives and introduced many schemes with a view to assist them and increase their contribution to the sector.

To this end, the Fishermen Welfare Fund will be revisited. My Ministry will increase the scholarships offered to children of fishermen. They cannot be deprived of their shares. Since 2014, the Government has disbursed more than Rs2.5 m. for the scholarship to children in primary, secondary, tertiary and even post graduate.

Other facilities include: FAD (Fish Aggregating Devices) are set and maintained to encourage fishing in the off-lagoon. Training courses are and will be provided to artisanal fishermen at the Fisheries Training and Extension Centre. Moreover, fishermen were granted ice box, safety jackets since 2014. The Government intends to increase these facilities to fishermen by providing them more equipment. My Ministry will launch tender for the supply of a mobile phone to every registered fisherman, so that we can locate them through GPS.

We also intend to come up with a scheme helping fishermen to buy all their equipment from the Federation of Mauritian Fishermen who will be authorized to import nets, hooks, ropes and other fishing accessories for their members. Obviously, this will be for their benefits.

Moreover, the Seafarer's Welfare Fund will be reviewed to ensure that the fund is being used to promote the welfare, comfort and recreational facilities of the Seafarers. As from February 2020, the monthly grant offered by the Seafarer's Fund to the Mauritius Sailors Home Society has increased from Rs100,000 to Rs300,000 monthly for them to meet their expenses. The office of the Seafarers Welfare Fund as well as the two associations which cater for the welfare of seafarers, namely Old Sailors Association and the Professional Seafarers Association, will be accommodated at the Seafarers Centre at Mer Rouge (Trevessia House), with a view to providing welfare and recreational facilities to both local and foreign seafarers under one roof.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the prime strategy to reduce our imports and to increase food security is by increasing our local production. Under Section 82 of the Government Programme 2020-2024, the Government has announced that it will support the development of a sustainable aquaculture and fishing industry through capacity building for semi-industrial and industrial fisheries and also for artisanal fishers.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the fisheries and aquaculture sectors have high trade potential and socio-economic impact. From 2017 to 2018, the total fish production increased by 28.7 %. This increase was attributable to the production of other catch and to the production of fresh coastal fish catch. There is an urgent need for Mauritius to diversify its export market to move away from preferential access to global competitiveness. The strategy will be to consolidate the current market share of the country in the traditional EU market, while gaining market share in emerging markets.

Mr Speaker, Sir, my Ministry will look into the mass production of fingerlings to promote backyard aquaculture for small-scale fisheries farming to improve food security among all the people of Mauritius. To this end, I would like to share a success story of a Mauritian Citizen with you in this House today. One, Mr Khemraj Persand, who is a genuine entrepreneur residing in the north, is producing oyster through aquaculture, since more than 10 years now. Normally, a juvenile oyster needs three years to be consumed. 8 or 9 years ago, this person started this production and waited 3 years to harvest for the first time. His passion

pushed him to learn more about oyster. He went abroad and mastered himself in this field. Gradually he went on to enlarge his business bearing all costs himself with the technical help and guidance of the AFRC. Today, he is producing more than 600,000 units per year and intends to extend his production in this sector. All hotels around Mauritius run after him today to buy these oysters.

This is the future Mr Speaker, Sir. We want to encourage more and more fishermen and investors to embark in such projects. Furthermore, besides oyster production, my Ministry will promote the production of crabs, fish, *camarons* and prawns through aquaculture.

The Aquaculture Division of the Albion Fisheries Research Centre aims to promote and develop aquaculture to meet growing demand in fish through the development of the following projects for culture of high value species: sea cucumber production, hybrid grouper production, female freshwater prawn production, lobster would be undertaken. I am sure everyone is fond of seafood in this House. I would like to stress on the production of local prawns in Mauritius. I am sure everyone did taste the ‘Rosenbergii’ which are now a bit rare on the market, but the Albion Fisheries and Research Centre produces juveniles of these prawns and then sells them to farmers for aquaculture at the price of Rs1.25 per unit. It takes 8 to 12 months for these prawns to become adult and to be marketable. Today, half a kilo of these same prawns is sold between Rs300 to Rs400 on the local market. My Ministry will encourage farmers in this endeavour and will increase the production of fingerlings each year.

Additionally, seaweed cultivation and value addition could lead to a viable business model providing jobs and wealth creation to the fisherman community. I still remember we were getting a system from the Japanese Government on this seaweed cultivation.

Mr Speaker, Sir, our aquatic resources are under severe stress and heavily affected by climate change, global warming, human activities, pollution and depletion of habitats. The achievement of sustainable development of our maritime space depends on an effective governance system steered and managed by public and private actors at every scale. We need coordinated action and cooperation due to the complex and trans-boundary nature of ocean-related economic issues and challenges.

Providing social and economic benefits from the ocean is one of the greatest and defining challenges of our age. Our focus will be on -

1. Strengthening our research agenda to advise policies in the sector;

2. Providing incentives to investors in this field;
3. Creating an enabling environment to encourage fishers and the public to participate and contribute in this Blue initiative.

At the same time, we need to restore, protect and maintain the quality of our marine ecosystem. My Ministry has already started many projects related to coral plantation in our lagoon. The Mauritius Oceanography Institute has embarked on an extensive community based Coral Culture Training Programme.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as mentioned in the Government Programme 2020-2024, the Government of Mauritius is committed to increasing our marine protected areas and ultimately increasing the biomass of our marine life. The Republic of Mauritius has, so far, proclaimed 18 Marine Protected Areas, which have been classified as Marine Parks, Marine Reserves and Fishing Reserves.

The fight against illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing is high now on our agenda. It is an area where the combination of science, technology and international cooperation hold the key to success.

As rightly projected in the Government Programme 2020-2024, the setting up of a marine biotechnology hub will bring in numerous benefits to the country. It will include job creation, potential avenues for medicinal products and research development amongst others.

Mr Speaker Sir, I am coming forward with an amended Fisheries Bill that will ensure proper management and sustainable development of our marine resources. It will also tackle the problem of illegal fishing in our lagoons with new regulations.

Mr Speaker Sir, unfortunately, as rightly pointed out by Jacques Yves Cousteau, the Oceanographer and I quote -

"The sea is the universal sewer and the culprits are us humans who are dumping millions of tons of garbage everyday into the oceans. The ocean is getting sicker every year".

I would like to make an appeal to my colleague, the hon. Minister of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change, hon. Kavi Ramano. He has set the trend and adopted a prompt and laudable approach in this fight. Please see to it that the amount of waste, biocides and plastics reaching our lagoons from land decreases.

This should be a wake-up call, Mr Speaker, Sir. Who remembers what happened in the Atlantic Ocean? How the ocean was polluted and overfishing was at its peak. We don't want the same destiny for the Indian Ocean.

If we do not treat the oceans with respect, man will become extinct. When we protect our ocean, we are protecting our future.

I would like to conclude by reading a message of the ocean to us, humans from Harrison Ford –

“I do not owe human being a thing, I give, they take it but they take more of their share. They poison me, they suffocate me and they expect me to feed them. If the ocean is not kept healthy, humans won't survive. It is as simple as that. The oceans are not too big to fail, if they die, so you will, so will us.”

I believe with this Government we will transform Mauritius in a sustainable way with the guidance of our hon. Prime Minister, Pravind Kumar Jugnauth. I just want to add that during the Maha Shivratri, I came across two sayings from our holy scriptures namely the Bhagavad Gita and Ramayana.

In the first one, Lord Krishna says to Arjuna, I quote –

“*Ek Sahi Neta Wohi Hota Hein Jo Karma Ko Pradhan Maanta Hein*”. Which means a leader who believes in action is a true leader. While in the Ramayana, Lord Ram said and I quote –

“*Raja Ka Param Dharma, Apne Praja Ke Sukh, Suvidha aur surasksha ka dhyan rakhna hai*”

Which translates into the prime duty of a king or a leader is to care for the well-being of his people.

Today I attribute these qualities to our hon. Prime Minister, Pravind Kumar Jugnauth, who has always been caring and proved to be a very good leader. And I would suggest Members on the other side of the House to join us in this mission otherwise for the next General Election, again, it was *Viré Mam, Ansam Tout Possibe* and as Minister for Fisheries, I suggest one, if you will be against us, then it should be -

‘ENSAM NOU PIK ZOTTE OURITE’.

I thank you for your attention.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Members, I suspend the sitting for one and a half hours.

At 1.23 p.m., the sitting was suspended.

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

Mr Speaker: Hon. Dr. Aumeer!

Dr. F. Aumeer (Third Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central): Mr Speaker, Sir, it is an honour and a privilege for me to address this House as a new Member of Parliament following my election during the November 2019 contest. I wish, at the outset, to congratulate you for your nomination as Speaker of the House.

I take great pride in representing the people of Constituency No. 2, also known as Port Louis South and Port Louis Central, and I am deeply grateful for the support, faith and trust that the people of Constituency No. 2 have given to me and I promise to work as hard as I can for them and the communities at large, irrespective of their party politics. Needless to say I would not have been here had it not been the hard work, the commitment and the efforts of my campaign team led by one charismatic youngish campaign organiser who believed in the message and the vision that I had for the people of Constituency No. 2. To them, I say thank you.

I wish also to express my thanks to my relatives, my friends, my patients all over the country, anybody who has been of help to me for my success, my *colistier* Osman Mahomed, and also to my close family members, my two sons and daughters who made the journey from UK to be by my side. But last and not least, the one who for the last 25 years has been by my side, believing in my aspirations, my commitment, my desire, my will to help my people, my community. Thick and thin, she has been with me throughout the ascent of my successful professional career and also today, at the dawn of a political era. She is none other than my wife, to whom words will never be enough to say thank you. My mother's blessings have always been with me and I am sure, as I am speaking now, she must be watching me on TV. I also extend my close thanks to everybody who has made it a determination for them for me to be present in the House today.

Mr Speaker, Sir, gratitude is a virtue that I was taught by my parents during my early days and it would be befitting that I extend my thanks to the Leader of the Labour Party, Dr. Navinchandra Ramgoolam, former Prime Minister who gave me the opportunity to stand as a candidate, and rightly so, I proved it right as I got elected.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I will be the voice of the people of Constituency No. 2 on issues that will affect their lives, their livelihoods and their health, and I promise that I will work on their behalf for an open, tolerant and just society that I strongly believe in, and I will bring a relentless effort on that part of the city whenever I am in this Chamber.

Mr Speaker, Sir, it is now more than 50 years since our independence and the legacy of the Welfare State to the present generation is more than ever valued. Free education, free health care, pension for the old age, free transport for students and the elderly and the democratic right to vote will always bear the prints of the Labour Party. It is that fundamental right to vote, which has been denied to some during the last election, that has brought a legal petition to contest results in certain constituencies. As to our absence during the speech programme, which is so much commented in the different speeches, as heard from the other side of the House, let me remind you that this was done as a purely symbolic gesture, and be certain we will fully play our role as guardian of democracy and will comment, criticise, propose when the need arises. Unwarranted comments will not discourage our determination to voice our opinion in the most gentleman way.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Government Programme of 2020-2024 theme “Towards an Inclusive, High Income and Green Mauritius Forging Ahead Together is indeed attractive and only time will say whether its implementation has been effective and worthy of budget expenditure. At present, they are good intentions that need to be materialised.

As quoted by Mahatma Gandhi –

“The true measure of any society can be found in how it treats its most vulnerable members.”

Looking at the Government Programme of 2014 at point 20, I quote –

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

It is very unfortunate that these measures have not been felt in the deprived areas of my constituency and some other regions of the country. The current Government Programme now mentions at point 19 to -

“(…) step up the implementation of the Marshall Plan against Poverty”. And I hope that the dramatic scene that we have seen at Baie du Tombeau squatters, the scrambling for life, the quest for survival, the poor living circumstances of these people, that we can also see

in other places in my constituency like Tranquebar, Camp Manna, Cotteau Raffin, Pointe-aux-Sables, Terre Rouge, among so many pockets of extreme poverty across the island, become now a priority of the promised restructuring of the New Empowerment Foundation so that these people can have a decent life with an acceptable standard of living in a new environment.

Mr Speaker, Sir, what I am describing, I have seen for my own self, with my own eyes and I have been present physically. These people have a quest for survival. They struggle every morning for survival because they do not even have the means to sustain a daily food.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as mentioned in the Government Programme, our country is now on track to cross the high income threshold in the coming years and takes its step as a First World nation. However, the building of such an economy for the future must have as priority bridging the gap between the poor and the rich so that those at the low end of the economy can have an increasing buying power to sustain, at least, their family needs; improved policy and shelters for the needy and the impoverished ones; opportunities for jobs, be it for those who are skilled, semi-skilled, unskilled.

And using the exact words of the 2014 Government Programme, “freeing our society from corruption, nepotism, favouritism, political interference, and conducting business on the principles of transparency, accountability and exemplary governance”.

Keeping in mind, my friends on the other side of the House, that nearly 65% of the population did not vote the Government, it is, therefore, very important that Government upholds, this time, to that 2014 pledge I have just mentioned and puts in place a strategy that works for everyone, with zero tolerance of discrimination, favouritism. Otherwise, the high income country will be a distant dream, bearing in mind that our public sector debt is now 64.9% of our GDP.

Mr Speaker, Sir, inclusive education is a right, not a privilege nor a dream. And this is echoed in Article 24 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities. The current 2024 Programme is aiming to improve access to educational facilities to students with disabilities, and Government must, therefore, be seen to be prepared to invest substantial resources at the outset on a system reform such as specialised training for the staff and the teachers; adaptive and reasonable accessibility plans as to cater their specific needs, for example, not only in terms of mobility, but also in terms of visual aids and hearing

equipment; feeder buses need to be equipped properly with facilities to enable wheelchair users to get access so that they too can benefit of the Metro Express, and finally, the introduction of assistive technology will surely be a big plus in the quality of education given to these people.

Mr Speaker, Sir, during his Budget Speech in June 2017, the hon. Prime Minister mentioned that Rs1.8 billion is being allocated from the Government of India's financial support for the construction of social and low-income housing units, and a further Rs5 billion is being earmarked for the housing sector in the next three years. I pledge Government to introduce a housing scheme for persons with disabilities who rely solely and uniquely on basic pension so that they too can have a decent, acceptable accommodation, with specialised amenities.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to the Medical Board assessing people with disabilities, a serious review must be undertaken as to the criteria being validated for people with disabilities to have a pension. This is a routine unanswered query that can be heard on all private radios every single morning and I am sure hon. Bablee, who is, unfortunately, not here, who has been a very strong advocate of these concerns during his days as *Explik ou Ka*, will, surely due to his privileged position, now improve matters for them. For example, people with Down syndrome, autism, who have lifelong disability, cannot be assessed repetitively, every year, for the same condition they have. This is surely not conducive to good practice. Compassion must be seen to prevail.

Mr Speaker, Sir, much is being said and discussed about the education reform these days. I wish to remind the House that I was sent to this House with no gilded lineage. I am the son of two civil servants, educators, who had a very strong belief in education; not education as a start in life, but education as a foundation for a country's prosperity and progress. And I wish that all children in this country can aspire to attain the career dream of their life, like I did, and able to make full use of the free education provided by Government till completion of their tertiary studies. Unfortunately, nearly 70% of students, who have completed their 'O' level this year, are faced with the dilemma of either not making the grades or have to be directed to our MITD related Polytechnic institutions. The question that I have been asking myself from a personal basis is: do we really need to have an 'O' level now, within such reform, which is two years after completing the New National Equivalent exam? This is a question that demands deep reflection.

I humbly request *Madame la ministre de l'éducation* to feel the plight and concerns of parents who make so much sacrifice for their children, and common sense now prevails so that an acceptable and decent solution be found while listening to suggestions from all quarters so that no child is left behind unfairly. I am not a pedagogue nor an educator, rather a new politician, but above all, a father, a parent who feels the pain, the trauma and sheer difficulties which these parents are enduring to secure the best education for their kids.

Mr Speaker, Sir, a recent meeting only days ago between *Madame la ministre* and Mr Jean-Yves Le Drian, the French Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs, indicates that a Memorandum of Understanding has been agreed with regard to having a network of French higher studies in Mauritius. It is, therefore, now possible for a Mauritian student to study the French system from primary till tertiary without having to go to France. This is amazing news, especially for those who do not have the means to go abroad and sustain for themselves. It is, therefore, high time also that we have a parallel system of the Baccalaureate as an option in all State colleges, which will give fair chances to all students to complete the Bac exams. Let us think for one second about the 70% of children who do not make the 5 credits, were they given the chances to sit for the Bac exams. I am sure all of us will say: 'Not 70% will fail'. I am sure quite 50% of them will have made it and passed the Bac exams. This is not wishful thinking; this is stark reality. Unfortunately, access to private schools, as we all know, is due to financial resources. Doing what needs to be done, *Madame la ministre* - if you were here - would not have made everybody happy at her Ministry, but, surely, would have made her great.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I will now focus on health issues that are highly important for the welfare of our citizens. Whilst we are faced with the spectre of Coronavirus, COVID-19, and so much debate is ongoing on a daily basis about it, I will, due to time constraint, focus only on a few important issues.

Firstly -

Communication strategies from the Government and Ministry of Health is extremely important and vital so as to -

constantly reassure the population as to the monitoring of screening and surveillance in place;

regular updates as to the number of suspected cases in quarantine or, if any, placed in isolation, particularly when rumours spread like wild fire in our small country;

the availability of N95 face masks in the country; where, how, how much;

testing facilities available at the Virology Lab at Candos Hospital with regard to Coronavirus. We need to have communication about what is going on about certain tests that are being carried out;

whether contacts have been made with research laboratories, pharmaceutical companies as to the future availability of drugs and vaccines that are to be proven effective against Coronavirus. We need to be *avant-gardistes*; we just can't be expectant in the face of a pandemic facing us.

Secondly –

It is extremely important that the type of testing carried out in our laboratory is in conformity with the very well-known Reverse Transcriptase PCR testing that was initially designed in Berlin University Hospital. Our test should have the specificity, the sensitivity that it needs and be on par, same as in renowned centres. The sensitivity of this test is what will make us knowledgeable in regard to if we were, unfortunately, to have one single infected cases.

Thirdly –

The number of people tested, whether the tests were done initially on otherwise healthy but individuals who have been in high risk areas, persons in contact with suspected or infected persons or on symptomatic flu-like individuals.

Fourthly –

The transparency of the results is paramount as to the essence of good practice while at the same time for the confidence of the population.

A social and psychological accompaniment of those health care staff, working within high risk areas in those very demanding circumstances must be ensured and extended to their close relatives and loved ones at home. The sense of fright and panic that can, unfortunately, be with those in contact with persons in quarantine or isolation cannot be underestimated.

Mr Speaker, Sir, it is high time that the lessons of SARS in 2004, MERS in 2012, AH1N1 influenza virus, Ebola virus be learnt and we become proactive in ensuring that Mauritius is fully equipped and fully compliant with isolation units in terms of negative pressure and exhaust air adaptive system in a separate block within a designed hospital, but not on the same floor, not in contiguity with wards or rooms assigned for quarantine.

While we are fully adherent with WHO Regulations, Mauritius must take all steps in the interest of the nation by setting proper isolation units compliant with international specifications, and we do not have to wait any further, particularly the number of fatalities have risen to more 2,460 in China and more than 100 outside mainland China.

As a responsible Government, funding must be allocated to get works underway. I understand that in Mauritius, we have the local medical engineering expertise to set up isolation units which are conform, and such units have been set and commissioned already during the then construction of Apollo Hospital in Moka. I do note that the Ministry of Health's intention to have further quarantine unit, which I personally recommended in a mini interview on *L'Express* on 27 January this year, and I now suggest that we have dedicated outpatient department for flu-like symptomatic patients in each regional hospital in an area not in proximity with other outpatient departments, and equipped with the necessary basic protective logistics until this epidemic is over. This will be a step further in the global approach to screening and prevention. Consideration must also now be given to home screening of patients - and I mean home screening of patients - suspected with COVID-19 virus as this will be a further attempt to stop the people travelling with infection and transmission and limit COVID-19 spread. This has already been started 48 hours ago in the United Kingdom.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as a doctor, as a clinician, for those who know me as a gynaecologist, who swears by the Hippocratic Oath, it is in my DNA to ensure the best health care for the people of my country, and during such difficult times and as a patriot, I will do whatever to help Government or any other to make sure that we curtail this virus.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I will now elaborate on the subject of well-being and quality of life of citizens as listed in the Government Programme. Government intends to upgrade and modernise public health care facilities, including a new University Hospital and Medclinics. While it is a commendable gesture, and I repeat it is a commendable gesture of Government to have improved health structure and the latest of art medical equipment, I regret to say that I have not seen anything coming in terms of proposals to the training of health care personnel, mainly doctors, nurses, and paramedical staff. Unless we have proper accredited training, continuous training either offered both locally and internationally with the help of reputed medical institution, new health care infrastructure on its own will not, unfortunately, be able to deliver evidence- based practice, which is now the prime measure of clinical efficacy. Similarly, a complete revamp of the medical staffing in the high risk specialities in our public

hospitals is a matter of urgency since most alleged complaints of medical negligence occur during emergency on-call hours. The introduction of a middle grade doctor/registrar, even paediatrics, obstetrics and gynaecology, cardiology, surgery and anaesthesia is long awaited, particularly during on-call hours.

Mr Speaker, Sir, an increase in pension scheme for our elderly by any government is welcome so long it is budgeted within the parameters of good financial governance. However, the health status of our elderly is an aspect that all of us sitting in this Chamber need to be concerned about. They are the ones who toiled a lifetime to give us today the economic and infrastructural development that we are so highly enjoying. While having an extra sum of money at the end of the month is definitely an added plus, I can assure the House, as a doctor, as a clinician, as a citizen of the country, that every pensioner's, elderly's main concern is not just money; it's their health status. In this context, I request my hon. friend, who is absent for the time being, the Minister of Health to ensure that a dedicated Geriatric Unit staffed by specialised geriatricians be available in each of our regional hospitals in line with the vision of modernising public health care.

The set-up of dedicated counters, as mentioned before, is a far cry from the therapeutic needs and inpatient and outpatient care of the needs of the elderly. Our elderly have complex medical conditions and spending one whole day roaming from one outpatient department to another outpatient department in the hospital is not only distressing and demanding for our elderlies, particularly when so many of them have difficulty to mobilise. The time of our elderly clinging to three to four outpatient cards, from the yellow to the pink and the green and the blue, and its tribulations of getting to hospital on different days of the week just to attend to one specialised clinician should be things of the past. Let us give them the ultimate gift of retirement: a specialised health care for them.

Mr Speaker, Sir, newly qualified medical graduates who wish to undertake their pre-registration training in public hospitals are subjected to the Medical Council Act, section 24 and section 22, whereby they have to have an entry examination and an exit examination after completion of 18 months of clinical training. Over the years, there have been differences of opinion by various professionals as to the expectations of these exams on our newly qualified doctors. The exit exam has always been prepared by the National Board of Examinations of New Delhi, to which we are all very thankful, and it is my information that Memorandum of Understanding came to an end a couple of months ago. Once again, Government has a duty

towards these newly qualified doctors to come up with clear information as to how the exit exams will be conducted in the future.

Mr Speaker, Sir, it is high time that consideration be given that this exit exams be organised in Mauritius as the contents will reflect the commonest pathological and medical conditions that attend our busy Emergency Department every day which our junior doctors face in their daily routine. I request the Minister of Health to advise the Medical Council to arrange for a more practical examination that will reflect the clinical aptitude of our junior doctors, particularly after having just completed clinical training. That exit examination must be in the form of an OSCE (Objective Structured Clinical Exam) which is designed to test clinical skill performance and competence in a Trainee Doctor. This type of assessment, the OSCE one, is the current norm of assessing junior doctors in many developed countries and the western world.

Mauritius has produced very highly skilful medical Consultants and surgical ones, coming from different parts of the globe. They need to be empowered and they are well capable of organising such exam and this will be – as put in the Programme itself - a fabulous start for Government to pledge to have a University Hospital in Mauritius. Let's start! Before setting up a University Hospital, have the Board of Examiners assess our own trained doctors so that they could be the future consultants of tomorrow.

Many of our Health Care Consultants, be it in the private or public sectors, have achieved clinical *excellence in line* with those in many advanced medical institutions. And they have nothing to look up to them. They are at par with them.

Any further delay in arranging the exit exam or assessment can only undermine the confidence of our junior trainees and I hope the hon. Minister will look into this very important issue soon and make amendments.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I cannot be more pleased to see that Government will introduce a code of conduct for Members of the National assembly and, rightly so, because the decorum of our temple of democracy has to be respected. I am sure the episodes of cheeky pinch and tongue selfies are still vivid in certain minds and as respected Parliamentarians, we can do without these uncouth behaviour. Both our physical demeanour and language should be a prime example for the population watching us and the future younger generation who wants to join politics.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the intended review of Regulations governing the Public Service Commission, the Disciplined Forces Service Commission and the Local Government Service Commission is long-awaited as mentioned in the Government Programme. These bodies have always attracted criticisms from applicants, who unfortunately, did not either secure an interview or get a post. A clear transparent process of recruitment must be proposed so that the perception of favouritism, nepotism, racism and *noubannisme* is no longer felt by applicants. I humbly recommend the newly appointed President of the PSC that a process be put in place to inform unsuccessful applicants of the reasons as to why they did not make it an interview or they did not secure a post so that they can improve in the future in their quest for another job in the public sector.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I will conclude on my constituency. A bird's eyeview of my constituency, anyone who knows my constituency will attest to the fact that it has got its own share of social challenges with lives blighted in circumstances that begin with unemployment, poor education outcome - it seems that their ticking clock is Form III of the school - drug abuse, poor housing facilities in certain specific areas, family breakdown and surely certain communities that feel isolated and ignored.

Many here, on this side of the House or even on the other side of the House, must be questioning the voting pattern of people in my constituency during the last two elections, 2014 and 2019. To me, during that very short campaign, that I had three weeks, the writings were on the wall. They felt ignored and they believe in people who feel their plight, their daily difficulties and a quest for a better living, not in false promises.

Constituency No. 2 is that part of the city that I personally grew up and worked most of my life, and nothing could make me prouder of serving the people, a mixture of different communities that I take so much pride in representing. The diversity and tolerance among people of all faith, beliefs and background in Port Louis Central and Port Louis South, is to be cherished, but sadly so, there is also diversity in terms of socio-economic inequalities, housing problems, scourge of drugs and unemployment that cannot be tolerated anymore.

I am sure parliamentarians of both sides of the House will agree that we face serious challenges as a nation and we must consider the type of society - a just society that works for everyone, zero tolerance of discrimination. That means that we are making sure that our increasingly diverse society of all creeds and races is more cohesive. That means that the

poorest among us deserve the right to live not just in decent, safe housing but have the right to aspire to own a house of their own in the community we are building.

That means that the application of law and order is not discriminatory to one particular group of our society, particularly I mean the brutal and aggressive approach towards the hawkers who form a substantial part of the community of one specific area of my constituency. That means law and order enforcement units have to be fair, just and respectful of people's rights and their religious beliefs and yet firm in maintaining social order. That means we have to clamp down heavily on drug dealers and ensure that the supply of hard drugs and the new psycho active substances which is a major issue in part of my constituency, is curtailed. Unless we are free from the scourge of drugs, we cannot build a society where everyone feels valued and able to contribute. These are the challenges of our age; these are the challenges that we need to meet. I look forward with colleagues on both sides of the House of meeting challenges in our time.

I am honoured to be part today of a team of Labour MPs' under the leadership of the Opposition Leader, hon. Dr. Boolell, with whom I share many similar objectives and views. One of my passionate ambitions is to find ways to bring the marginalised in that part of the city back into some form of social life, support them to find housing and employment, help them to end their addictions, give them improved sport facilities and ultimately give them the greatest gift of all, self-respect, so that they no longer need to feel dependent, but can hold their head up and proudly contributing to our society.

What an opportunity, Mr Speaker, Sir, I had to listen to the voices on the doorsteps during my only 17 days of campaign and from many ordinary mouths came one extraordinary message - we must listen, and we must act. And I hope Government will listen and act

I thank the Almighty for his guidance this afternoon and I thank you all for your attention.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Dr. Padayachy!

(3.25 p.m.)

The Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development (Dr. R. Padayachy): Mr Speaker, Sir, on 07 November, the people of Mauritius have made a historic decision. They have chosen hope and continuity. It is a historic victory under the leadership of the hon. Prime Minister, Pravind Kumar Jugnauth. I am, indeed, privileged to be here with you as Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development.

Before I continue, let me, Mr Speaker, Sir, congratulate you for your election. I am sure that you will be serving this role in the best interest of our democracy. Let me further congratulate hon. Nazurally for his election as Deputy Speaker.

I would also like to thank all the people of Constituency No. 13, for trusting me and giving me the opportunity to serve them to the best of my abilities. On 07 November 2019, the people of Mauritius gave a clear mandate to a dynamic team to take our country to its next level of development.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Government Programme spells out our vision and commitment for the future of Mauritius. It is a forward-looking vision, based on the triptych - inclusiveness, sustainability and wealth creation. This is the core of our philosophy. Our resolve to win the battle of social inclusion is as powerful as our endeavour to make of Mauritius a model in this part of the world.

Mr Speaker, Sir, governments, across the world, do more or less the same things. They design policies, enact legislations and conceive development agendas. Then, why is it that some governments deliver while others don't? For sure, the quality of policymaking matters. But what matters most is the trust that a Prime Minister brings to a country. Trust is fundamental to progress. Trust emanates from strong leadership. Trust also originates from le *sens de l'écoute*.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Prime Minister has all those qualities and he has shown it, time and again, since the very beginning of his mandate as Prime Minister back in January 2017. Leadership and confidence-building go hand in hand. Thanks to the trust that the Prime Minister has instilled in the country, the economy continues to grow and both unemployment and inflation continue to fall.

Today, we are building on the feel-good factor the Prime Minister has brought in to advance our development agenda.

M. le président, il n'y a absolument aucun doute aujourd'hui que notre équipe incarne la confiance et la sérénité. Le peuple a fait son choix. Il a choisi de croire dans le destin de son pays ; il a choisi une majorité qui est à l'écoute de la République de Maurice dans sa globalité. À ceux qui doutent encore que Maurice ne pourra pas surmonter les défis qui se dressent sur la route de son développement, je les renvoie au bilan du gouvernement sous le mandat premier ministériel de Pravind Kumar Jugnauth. Jamais, je dis bien jamais, auparavant un gouvernement ne s'est autant intéressé au bien-être de sa population. La

philosophie est limpide: placer l'humain au cœur de la stratégie de développement de notre pays.

M. le président, mettre la croissance économique au service de l'homme, c'est cela ma profonde conviction. J'en ai fait le fondement même de mon action politique et de mon engagement. Cette sensibilité socialisante, je la tiens de mes origines. C'est cette sensibilité qui a motivé mon choix sur le thème de mon doctorat en économie. Je peux vous dire qu'en axant ma thèse de doctorat sur la pauvreté, j'ai été en mesure d'appréhender la situation qui prévaut à Maurice. C'est ce qui m'a permis d'approfondir ma réflexion sur le lien entre le développement économique et l'épanouissement de l'être humain. Ce lien est fondamental à la bonne marche de la société et de l'appareil de production. Ces deux outils ont pour mission de créer la richesse de notre pays.

M. le président, dans cette auguste Assemblée, j'affirme avec la ferme conviction de mes idées – « Qu'il soit tout à fait possible et légitime d'imaginer une République de Maurice prospère, durable et inclusive ».

Le Premier ministre a déjà enclenché ce vaste chantier d'inclusion sociale avec l'introduction de l'impôt négatif, du salaire minimum et de la *solidarity levy*. Nous aurons, de ce côté de la Chambre, la volonté politique de poursuivre l'action de répartition de la richesse nationale.

M. le président, les études ont prouvé que les transferts directs sont la façon la plus efficace pour réduire les inégalités sociales. Cela veut dire que ceux qui ont prôné, pendant des années, la théorie de ruissellement, se sont non seulement fourvoyés, mais pire! Ils ont grandement contribué à l'accroissement des inégalités dans notre pays. Les défenseurs de cette théorie nous ont longtemps fait croire que la seule solution aux inégalités était de créer les richesses au sommet de la pyramide sociale afin qu'elles ruissellent vers les couches inférieures.

C'est un crime, M. le président! Pour mieux visualiser la situation, il n'y a pas mieux que le coefficient de Gini car c'est la mesure des inégalités. Selon la Banque mondiale, le coefficient de Gini a augmenté de 0,36 en 2006 à 0,386 en 2012. Cette hausse des inégalités a été provoquée. Elle trouve son origine dans une politique qui consistait à favoriser les plus hauts de la pyramide sociale en disant que cela bénéficiera aux moins aisés, *in fine*. Or, cette notion est obsolète.

La preuve, grâce aux mesures prises par le gouvernement issu des urnes en décembre 2014, le coefficient de Gini a baissé, passant de 0,386 en 2012 à 0,365 en 2017. Et en 2020, selon les dernières estimations, dernières projections de la Banque mondiale, ce chiffre devrait encore baisser à 0,34. Cela, grâce à l'introduction de l'impôt négatif, du salaire minimum et de l'augmentation de la pension de vieillesse.

M. le président, il y a eu toutes sortes de critiques, parfois très violentes, concernant la volonté du Premier ministre d'agir sur les inégalités, surtout de ceux qui défendaient la théorie du ruissellement. Or, ils étaient tellement contre les idées du Premier ministre qu'ils ont fini par les adopter. La preuve tangible est l'exercice de copier-coller de nos propositions durant la campagne électorale.

Mais revenons à notre philosophie. Savez-vous que si nous avons laissé la situation se détériorer davantage, nous aurions pris des risques avec notre croissance économique ? Ce n'est pas moi qui le dis. Ce sont de nombreuses études économiques réalisées par les experts des institutions internationales. Ils l'ont démontré de manière empirique.

Une hausse des inégalités, M. le président, a un impact négatif sur la croissance économique. Les chiffres de l'OCDE sont clairs. Ils indiquent qu'une hausse du coefficient de Gini de 0,03 - soit une hausse des inégalités - peut entraîner, à terme, une baisse de la croissance économique de 0,35 point de pourcentage.

M. le président, c'est la raison pour laquelle je fais ici un appel à plus de solidarité de la part de ceux qui le peuvent envers ceux qui en ont besoin. Je plaide pour un effort constant de la part de nos compatriotes les plus aisés. Nous devons, j'en suis convaincu, dès aujourd'hui, penser au 'nous' au lieu du 'je'.

Permettez-moi, ici, de citer le milliardaire Américain Warren Buffet qui a invité son pays à le taxer davantage. C'est avec cet esprit de partage que nous arriverons à bâtir une société plus équitable et plus efficiente. Certains à Maurice gagneraient à s'en inspirer, parce que je pense que l'on conviendrait qu'il n'y a rien de gratuit.

Nous travaillerons, pour être plus efficaces, avec une gestion optimale de nos finances publiques et en étant rigoureux dans les dépenses. Nous proposerons les politiques économiques conjoncturelles et les réformes structurelles qui nous permettront –

- de rester sur la trajectoire d'une croissance économique forte et équilibrée, proche de la croissance potentielle;

- d'augmenter notre potentiel économique;
- d'améliorer nos recettes publiques, et surtout
- de maintenir les dépenses à un niveau souhaitable.

Au niveau de la dette publique, que n'a-t-on pas dit ? Certains veulent créer une psychose sur le sujet. Or, M. le président, la dette publique –

- ce sont les routes;
- ce sont les hôpitaux publics;
- ce sont les écoles publiques;
- ce sont les outils pour assurer la sécurité publique;
- c'est l'amélioration de la distribution de l'eau et de l'énergie;
- c'est, surtout, investir dans l'avenir de notre pays, d'autant plus que la conjoncture y est favorable avec des taux d'intérêt bas, plus bas que le taux de la croissance économique.

Nous défendrons de toutes nos forces les actions visant à affiner notre modèle économique afin de la rendre plus équitable, plus inclusive et ainsi plus efficiente. Protéger la population ne veut pas dire ignorer les défis qui le guettent.

M. le président, le prix Nobel de l'économie, James Meade, n'avait pas tout à fait tort lorsqu'il avait fait son analyse. Mais il s'était trompé d'époque. Il s'était aussi trompé sur la capacité de notre population à s'adapter aux changements sur le plan économique.

Mais aujourd'hui, l'analyse de Meade prend toute son importance.

Alors qu'il y a à peine un mois, le FMI tablait sur une stabilisation de la croissance globale, le coronavirus est venu frapper à notre porte. Et maintenant, c'est toute la planète qui s'inquiète. Cette épidémie classée « ennemie publique numéro un » par l'OMS, menace plus que jamais d'ébranler la reprise annoncée.

Les économistes, à travers le monde, prévoient jusqu'à un impact de 0,5 point de pourcentage sur la croissance mondiale. Ce risque exogène aura un effet sur notre économie.

Le drame, M. le président, c'est que le risque n'est pas que sanitaire. Il y a aussi les tensions géopolitiques, les effets du changement climatique et les obstacles au commerce. Ces éléments nous imposent de nous remettre en question.

Face aux menaces et aux défis qui guettent notre pays, nous devons mener à bien toutes les réformes nécessaires pour améliorer la résilience de notre économie et assurer notre état providence.

Quels sont donc ces défis ? Nous les connaissons tous, et ils ne datent pas d'aujourd'hui. Mais maintenant, nous ne pouvons plus continuer comme si de rien n'était.

M. le président, un des enjeux majeurs de cette décennie sera certainement démographique. Contrairement aux prédictions de Sir Naipaul à l'effet que –

« The barracoon is overcrowded; the escape routes are closed. The people are disaffected and have no sense of danger »

il se trouve qu'aujourd'hui nous sommes plutôt confrontés au risque d'une baisse de notre population. Selon les projections des Nations Unies, notre population atteindra son plafond d'ici 2023 et passera sous la barre du million d'ici à 2070.

Certes, ce n'est pas un phénomène isolé affectant uniquement notre pays. N'empêche, nous devons agir car avec une population en déclin, nous ne serons pas en mesure de soutenir un développement économique équilibré. La clé de la réussite, c'est l'ouverture. Ouvrir aux compétences, ouvrir à l'expertise, ouvrir aux investissements. C'est s'ouvrir aux talents. Ce n'est qu'ainsi que nous porterons le pays à une étape supérieure de son développement.

M. le président, nous sommes tous des descendants d'immigrés dans ce pays. Il nous incombe donc de ne jamais oublier l'apport de ceux qui viennent d'ailleurs dans notre succès économique. Esclaves, travailleurs engagés, aventuriers de la première heure, commerçants, ce sont tous nos ancêtres. Et nous en sommes fiers.

Que seraient nos piliers économiques – l'agro-industrie, la zone franche, le tourisme, les TIC, les services financiers, sans cette ouverture sur le monde ? Cette ouverture dont je vous parle comprend également la facilitation des affaires.

Dans un monde où la concurrence fait rage pour attirer les investissements, le climat des affaires s'avère être un aspect primordial de notre stratégie économique.

L'ex-Président de la Banque mondiale, Jim Yong Kim, disait, et je cite -

« Un meilleur climat des affaires permet aux entrepreneurs de développer leurs entreprises et de réinvestir dans leurs communautés, ce qui est essentiel à une croissance économique aussi bien locale que mondiale. »

M. le président, nous en sommes plus que conscients de l'importance de la facilitation des affaires. D'ailleurs, nous avons travaillé pour améliorer notre environnement économique. Et nos efforts ont fini par payer. La preuve, Maurice a fait un bond gigantesque passant de la 45^{ème} place en 2017 à la 13^{ème} place en 2020. Cette performance mérite d'être saluée, peu importe où l'on se situe politiquement, à moins de ne rien comprendre aux subtilités économiques.

Désormais, nous aurons un objectif clair : poursuivre les réformes pour améliorer l'environnement économique et placer le pays parmi les dix premières destinations pour faire les affaires dans le monde.

M. le président, cette politique de facilitation des affaires a certainement eu un impact positif sur nos fondamentaux économiques à l'instar de l'investissement. L'investissement est primordial à une croissance durable. Il est indispensable pour renforcer les capacités productives, transformer la structure de l'économie et créer des emplois.

Après une contraction de l'investissement entre 2012 et 2015, sous l'ère travailliste, les réformes conduites par le gouvernement de Pravind Kumar Jugnauth ont permis une croissance de l'investissement d'un peu plus de 27 pourcents sur les quatre dernières années. Cela démontre la confiance dans notre économie.

Ce regain d'optimisme fait que les opérateurs privés augmentent leurs investissements d'une année à l'autre.

Kenneth Arrow, prix Nobel d'économie en 1972 disait déjà –

« La confiance est une institution invisible qui régit le développement économique ».

C'est en maintenant ce choc de confiance qu'ensemble nous porterons notre pays sur sa nouvelle trajectoire économique.

M. le président, la croissance mondiale était exceptionnelle pendant la période 2000 à 2011, avec une moyenne de 4,1 pourcents. Mais depuis 2012, la tendance s'est inversée et nous nous sommes retrouvés avec des taux de croissance globale de 3,3 pourcents en moyenne. Pour 2020, le rythme de la croissance économique devrait être au mieux à 3,3 pourcents. L'effet de la crise financière n'a pas été sans conséquence sur la potentialité économique globale.

Mr Speaker, Sir, despite this global slowdown in economic expansion and uncertainties, our economy has so far remained strong. Last year, our country achieved a

GDP of more than Rs500 billion. A remarkable achievement. Let me say it again, Rs500 billion.

At the same time, Mauritius has seen its lowest inflation rate ever at 0.5 per cent only! Again, this is a historical achievement.

M. le président, je dois ici insister sur le fait que l'inflation est un impôt pour les pauvres. Pour rappel, en 2008, sous le précédent régime, l'inflation était de presque 10 pourcents, avec les conséquences que nous connaissons sur le pouvoir d'achat des consommateurs.

Quand un pays est exposé à des taux élevés d'inflation, les personnes vulnérables sont les plus affectées. Ils n'ont pas d'autre choix que de chercher à baisser les dépenses les plus basiques; la nourriture, l'éducation, la santé. Pour nous, cela est inconcevable. Nous ne sommes pas de ceux qui prendront aux plus démunis pour protéger les plus aisés ! Il est aussi très important de parler du chômage. Maurice a enregistré le taux de chômage le plus bas depuis l'an 2000, à 6,7 pourcents! L'ère de la fameuse «jobless growth» est révolue. Savez-vous ce que cela veut dire ? Eh bien nous avons aujourd'hui une croissance équilibrée; une croissance qui génère de l'emploi sans générer une forte poussée inflationniste.

M. le président, d'ici 2040, nous pourrions atteindre un PIB d'un trillion de roupies. C'est un objectif réaliste et réalisable car nous sommes une nation résiliente, un peuple qui a su jusqu'ici s'adapter aux conditions difficiles que nous imposent les cycles économiques et les chocs structurels. L'histoire économique nous apprend, en effet, qu'en période de basse conjoncture, les opportunités demeurent. Nous pouvons nous référer au concept de la « destruction créatrice » de Schumpeter qui désigne le processus continuellement à l'œuvre dans les économies et qui voit se produire de façon simultanée la destruction et la création d'activités économiques. Il est de notre devoir d'aller chercher et de saisir les opportunités qui s'offrent à nous.

M. le président, une des opportunités qui se présente à notre petit État insulaire se trouve dans l'économie verte. Le verdissement de notre économie nous permettra non seulement de faire face aux dangers du changement climatique, mais c'est également la clef de voûte de notre croissance future. C'est la capacité de créer des emplois durables et des opportunités entrepreneuriales dans le cadre d'une transition vers une économie plus verte.

M. le président, le mois dernier, le monde est resté terrifié face à l'ampleur des incendies de forêts en Australie qui ont détruit sur leur passage une superficie supérieure à 40

fois la surface de Maurice. Le FMI a déjà tiré la sonnette d'alarme concernant l'impact du changement climatique sur l'économie. Selon cette institution, une augmentation de la température d'un degré Celsius diminue la croissance économique dans la même année par presque un point de PIB. C'est énorme, et nous, à Maurice, nous ne sommes pas à l'abri de ce phénomène. Nous ne pouvons pas rester insensibles avec ce défi qui peut affecter notre économie. Nous devons être ce changement pour le bien de nos concitoyens, de notre pays, de notre région et aussi de notre planète.

L'économie verte est un ensemble. Et à ce titre, nous devons soutenir les initiatives visant à promouvoir le développement durable. Si pour certains, les déchets constituent un véritable fardeau, d'autres, en revanche, y voient une ressource dont nous pourrions et nous devrions utiliser.

M. le président, certaines estimations évaluent le potentiel de nos déchets à un peu plus de R 270 millions par jour, soit un cinquième de notre PIB. L'économie circulaire est aujourd'hui une réalité, une opportunité que nous devons saisir. Elle nous contraint à repenser notre façon de faire et de revoir nos modes de production et de consommation. Pour faire court, l'économie circulaire crée l'espace nécessaire à l'émergence de filières nouvelles; des filières qui ouvrent des alternatives au plastique, que l'on croit très souvent indispensable.

Toutefois, dans tout ce débat, nous ne pouvons faire abstraction de notre appareil de production, soit l'outil qui produit la richesse nationale. Que l'on veuille ou non, Maurice est entrée dans un nouveau cycle; un cycle économique où la croissance mondiale reste modeste.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we are at a stage of our development model where growth will depend on only one thing - our ability to innovate and transform our economy. An economy driven by innovation will not only help to accelerate economic growth, but, more importantly, raise the production capacity.

Innovation transforms economies, creates new industries and builds new competitive strength in the country's production tools. It sets the foundation for a strong knowledge economy which promises highly-paid jobs and technology-driven entrepreneurial opportunities for the youths.

We need to build an economy based on innovation; one which integrates new technologies - AI, Robotics, and Blockchain into our industries. According to the latest research, an increase in Innovation and R&D expenditure has a multiplier effect of 2.2. That is, if we increase R&D by 1 per cent, our output might increase by 2.2 per cent.

M. le président, nous nous penchons actuellement sur les réformes économiques pour cette mandature. Ces réformes vont dans le droit fil d'une économie plus performante, soit une économie forte et résiliente aux chocs externes potentiels et qui soit à même de créer des emplois pour nos jeunes.

Mr Speaker, Sir, it is time for Mauritius to rise to its aspiration.

It is time for the divisions and fractures that run through our society to be overcome.

It is time for the world to see Mauritius as an industrial powerhouse;

as a leader in the green economy;

as a model of inclusiveness in the world;

as a powerful innovation hub for the southern hemisphere.

M. le président, certes, la route sera longue.

Mais il n'y a jamais eu autant de force et d'espoir.

Le peuple de Maurice y arrivera.

Tous ensemble, nous y arriverons.

Merci pour votre attention !

Mr Speaker: Hon. Ramchurrun!

(3.55 p.m.)

Mr P. Ramchurrun (Third Member for Savanne & Black River): Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Mr Speaker, Sir, allow me first of all to congratulate you for your election as Speaker of the National Assembly and my friend, hon. Nazurally, to be elected as Deputy Speaker of the House.

At the very outset, I would like to thank the Prime Minister and the Leader of *l'Alliance Morisien*, hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth, for the trust placed in me as candidate in Constituency No. 14 and by conferring upon me the responsibility of Private Parliamentary Secretary for Constituency Nos. 8 and 14. He has shown his trust in the younger generation of our nation and as a young politician, I take the solemn obligation to listen, learn and consistently deliver. I also salute my senior colleagues who have been keenly mentoring us since our first day within the premises of this august Assembly.

Also allow me to convey my heartfelt thoughts and appreciation to the President of the Republic of Mauritius, His Excellency Prithvirajsing Roopun, for having presented an ambitiously promising and unprecedented Government Programme for the period 2020-2024 on 24 January 2020. His journey till the highest post of responsibility of the Republic is a remarkable example that hard work, determination and loyalty are crucial principles in one's life. Indeed, he is an example to be followed by our younger generation.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am glad and deeply honoured to be on my feet today for my maiden speech in this august Assembly. It is indeed a real honour in representing Constituency No. 14. Even if I have been representing my constituency since only last November, it has now become my home; a home where I am constantly surrounded by my family, my brothers, my sisters and elders in the constituency.

Mr Speaker, Sir, allow me to say a few words about my Constituency which is an exceptional and a model in itself.

Constituency number 14 Savanne/Black River is the largest one in Mauritius, representing nearly a quarter of our country starting from Quatre Bornes up to Surinam through Bambous and Chamarel and even Flic en Flac and all the villages in the western coast. It is a formidable blend of urban and rural areas with a beautiful and colourful population operating at all levels of the economy.

M. le président, Savanne/Rivière Noire est la plus grande circonscription en terme de superficie de l'île et la deuxième en terme d'électeurs avec 63,500 ; une circonscription modèle avec des sites chargés d'histoires comme le Morne Brabant qui est inscrit comme patrimoine mondial de l'UNESCO, aussi connu sous le nom de paysage culturel du Morne. Il y a aussi le pont Maconde, la Tour Martello de la Preneuse entre autres. La plupart de ces villages sont habités par des pêcheurs et de nombreux artistes et beaucoup aussi gagnent leurs vies en travaillant dans les hôtels dans la région.

M. le président, je remercie de tout mon cœur l'électorat de la circonscription numéro 14 pour avoir placé leur confiance en notre équipe et avoir voulu que la circonscription ne soit plus dans l'obscurité, c'est-à-dire, dans l'Opposition. Ils ont vu le développement et la vision de notre *leader* Pravind Kumar Jugnauth et ont cru en ce gouvernement.

M. le président, les résultats des dernières élections de novembre 2019 en sont la preuve tangible. De par le score des trois premiers candidats et les suivants, des trois candidats de l'Alliance Nationale suivis par les trois du MMM.

M. le président, j'aurais aimé ajouter un point très important: que l'électorat de la circonscription numéro 14 n'était pas à vendre. Leur conscience n'était pas à vendre. Leur dignité était ferme et constructive même s'ils vivaient dans des conditions difficiles. Ils voulaient tout simplement développer leur localité et placer l'avenir de leurs enfants en de bonnes mains.

Mr Speaker, Sir, when Members of the other side of the House talk about money politics, I would ask them to enquire who played that dirty game in Constituency number 14, who covered the Constituency with blue and red banners, who distributed thousands of red shirts.

Mr Speaker, Sir, this election proved that money politics or T-shirts are not enough to buy the integrity of our population who were wise enough to make the right choices.

Pour moi, c'était le *challenge* d'un portefeuille contre un coffre-fort. Indéniablement, l'électorat de la circonscription numéro 14 est un électorat éclairé, intelligent et exemplaire.

A un mois des élections générales du 07 novembre 2019, j'étais dans la circonscription pour une bataille entre des candidats qui habitent la circonscription. Et là, je profite pour remercier mes deux colistiers qui m'ont aidé énormément, notamment l'honorable Alan Ganoo qui a été un mentor et un guide exemplaire et aussi l'honorable Sandra Mayotte, qui comme une artiste accomplie, a été très bien accueillie.

Mr Speaker, Sir, it was a great honour to be a candidate with the one and only hon. Alan Ganoo, who has been in his Constituency for nearly 40 years and has been elected for the ninth consecutive general elections.

Je vous remercie honorable Alan et honorable Sandra pour la campagne formidable qu'on a vécue ensemble et en équipe. L'attente de l'électorat de Savanne/Rivière Noire a été respectée en toute humilité, unanimité et légitimité.

Maintenant, c'est notre devoir de tenir et respecter les engagements promis et aussi d'être à la hauteur de la confiance placée en nous. Il n'y a pas de doute quand on suit les directives et on est sûr des pas d'une personne qui tient les promesses engagées, un leader qui est connu pour parole donnée parole sacrée, mon leader, l'honorable Pravind Kumar Jugnauth.

Je remercie aussi toute la population pour avoir placé leur confiance en notre équipe l'Alliance Morisien pour la continuité. On va faire de notre mieux pour garder cette confiance

placée en nous. En tant que PPS de la circonscription, je veillerai de très près afin que tous les projets infrastructurels soient dignement implémentés. En effet, mes chers colistiers et moi-même avons déjà mis en place un plan de travail. Je donne l'assurance à la circonscription numéro 14 que les projets de développement infrastructurel verront un grand coup d'accélérateur.

Mr Speaker, Sir, this Government under the able stewardship of hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth represents the aspirations and trust of each and every segment of the society. This new and vibrant team reflects the change of a modern and competent society that our fellow citizens want to have for a better multi-ethnic Mauritius; a perfect representation of unity in diversity.

Mr Speaker, Sir, allow me to welcome the newly elected MPs from the other side of the House. However, since the debates started I have keenly listened to the hon. Members from the other side of the House who keep claiming that there were no free and fair elections. It is indeed unfortunate to see that the Opposition has chosen to question the legitimacy of the November 2019 general elections. If we analyse carefully the arguments, it is baffling to note that, for the first time in our electoral history, we have an Opposition which is unfortunately not agreeable with the fact that they have been themselves duly elected. By challenging the results of the elections, they are also claiming that the election results are illegitimate and are thus challenging the legality. One either agrees or disagrees with the election results but one cannot sit on the fence by having one inside this august Assembly and the other one outside.

Democracy has sacred rules, Mr Speaker, Sir, and the latter cannot be changed to suit the whims of the Opposition who might well be going through an existential crisis. The Labour Party, for instance, is already divided from within its own leadership but it is bent on trying to divide our country again. It is unfortunate that they are refusing to focus on their own internal ills. They talk about allegedly undemocratic elections when the party, itself, is one of the most undemocratic internally. In fact, even if the population rightly punished them during the last elections, it seems that they are still not willing to learn the correct lessons.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the population has made its clear choice, that is, between a former Prime Minister who spent years talking loud without any actions and our current Prime Minister whose actions speak louder than words.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the population has accepted the outcome of the election and the Prime Ministership of hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth. The latter, being a statesman, has invited fellow citizens who did not vote for us to join us and the population has positively responded to his appeal. On the side of the House, since our election, our relentless work for the all population irrespective of voters of l'Alliance Morisien or not has been unflinching.

For instance, the Metro Express is for the benefit of each and every citizen and so is the increase of the pensions and the minimum salary. The hon. Prime Minister has healed the wounds of the population and united them through his unique vision. However, the Opposition is still united in dividing our population by opening healed wounds. As the hon. Prime Minister has said several times, the Opposition should accept the democratic elections with dignity and focus on playing the roles as a responsible Opposition.

Mr Speaker, Sir, our democratically elected Government has been entrusted with the solemn duty to honour the confidence of the people of Mauritius and we will leave no stones unturned to over-deliver our 2020-2024 Programme. The situation is clear and indisputable as Abraham Lincoln famously once said –

“We are a Government, Of the people, By the people, For the people.”

Mr Speaker, Sir, we have had electoral observers during the electoral campaign from reputed international, organisations and neighbouring countries and the outcome of their on-the-ground observations were undisputed. Mauritius has reliable and lively democratic institutions. It has already been clearly stated by them that during the elections, Mauritians have, through their exemplary behaviours, ensured that the elections took place in a spirit of fair play without any abuses. Honestly, if hon. Members from the other side of the House think and have enough evidence to substantiate that the election was not free and fair, then all of them sitting in this Assembly should not have been here.

As my friend, hon. Avinash Teeluck mentioned during the last sitting, how come hon. Woochit got elected in No. 5? How come, hon. Dr. Gungapersad got elected in No. 6 and so on? So, on this side of the House, we never chose to qualify their election as illegitimate, instead our candidates and our alliance accepted the defeat with dignity. The same defeated candidates are despite the electoral setback still with the same population which did not elect

them and supporting them day and night. Wherever l'Alliance Morisien did not get its candidate elected, the same candidates are showing the example of not abandoning their constituencies and I applaud them, Mr Speaker, Sir. One example is Dr. Luchoo who is not present here and has been consistently working in the constituency for Maha Shivaratri and Cavadee and is close to the constituents of No. 5.

Mr Speaker, Sir, this is the true meaning of dedication to the population. The same l'Alliance Nationale should ask itself where are its defeated candidates; actually, they are nowhere to be seen on the ground. Mr Speaker, Sir, in fact, our inherent culture on this side of the House is to be together with the population through thick or thin and not be opportunistic by using them.

Hence, I would invite hon. Members to be truly honorable in their duties and oath, and to accept the results as they happened and not as they would have wished them to be. We should bear in mind that in our democratic system the verdict of the electorate is final and irrevocable. It should be duly respected.

Mr Speaker, Sir, free and fair elections are the lifeblood of a democracy. It is a matter of great pride for all of us that our nation has once again demonstrated their unshakeable commitment to hold the principles of democracy and their unflinching support to l'Alliance Morisien. Let us not blame or put at stake the country's most reputable institutions which are ran by world-class professionals. I will not say *de bons perdants*, but I will say as *de bons patriotes*. I would invite the Opposition to sweep away any acrimony and bitterness they might still have and join hands in building our beautiful nation.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we are all sitting here in this august Assembly, have a common commitment, that is, to give our motherland a stable, responsible and performing Government. Our nation may rest assured that this Government is committed to deliver in all fairness without any abuse of power or false promises. *Sans laisser le pouvoir nous guider, bien sûr.*

Mr Speaker, Sir, since the launch of the ambitious Vision 2030 roadmap by hon. Sir Anerood Jugnauth in 2015, the hon. Prime Minister has relentlessly pursued its commitment, implementing the Vision 2030 to transform our country. Hence, a series of initiatives were rolled out under the Public Sector Reform Program. Mr Speaker, Sir, please allow me to applaud our hon. Prime Minister who has shown firm determination in implementing these reforms. One of the clear success stories has been the re-launching of the Citizen Advice

Bureaus in Mauritius. Allow me to pay a humble tribute to Sir Anerood Jugnauth, our former Prime Minister and Minister Mentor, who was the brain behind the setting up of Citizen Advice Bureau.

In fact, in 1989, his assessment was very stark, he noted that there was a disconnect between the population and the Government. Hence, inspired by the British model, he gradually set up a network of 35 CABs throughout the island as well as one in Rodrigues. Through the CAB offices, Government was closer to the population to be able to advise and support them in dealing with their daily struggles.

On a side-note, let me take a few minutes to bow to the unique vision of Sir Anerood Jugnauth, who was formidably able to foresee a solution to help the day- to-day lives of fellow Mauritians. In fact, the long list of achievements of Sir Anerood Jugnauth in Mauritius are well-known and celebrated. However, it was the historic moment recently for our motherland when its own most illustrious son was awarded with the second highest civilian award of the Republic of India, namely, the Padma Vibhushan Award. It must be noted that since its inception in 1954, only 314 individuals have been conferred with this award. As a nation, as a *bon patriote*, we hope that one day our hon. Prime Minister will make our motherland proud again by receiving the Bharat Ratna Award, which is the highest civilian award in the Republic of India.

Coming back to the topic of the CAB Offices, we are grateful to the hon. Prime Minister for having taken the flambeau from Sir Anerood Jugnauth in revolutionizing the functioning of the CAB Offices. The Citizen Support Unit, which was launched by the hon. Prime Minister, not only allows the Citizen Advice Bureaus to step into the digital era but also opens new avenues for the citizen to have a direct mechanism of communication for complaints, issues and feedback to the Prime Minister's Office and respective institutions.

The Citizen Support Unit empowers our Citizen Advice Bureaus through a modern and practical platform. The Citizen Support Unit also allows the Government to feel the pulse of the citizens, identify the main bottlenecks clogging their lives and enables us to devise appropriate policies to tackle inefficiencies in delivering our public services.

The recent launch of '*Ensam avec CSU*' has been a clear success. Our CAB offices have been rejuvenated and we must congratulate the CSU team for their innovative approach to enhance the platform to be closer to the population through radio programmes. The success of the CSU has been unprecedented to the extent that we have been approached by

Lesotho to help set up a similar unit in their country. With a view of moving citizen services closer to the people, it could also be envisaged to replicate the one-stop shop model launched in Flacq and the other regional hubs of the island, such as Saint Pierre, Rose Belle, Rivière du Rempart, Pamplemousses, Souillac and Bambous.

In 2014, the hon. Prime Minister made a solemn promise to our fellow Mauritians to empower them, to give them their voice back and make their lives simpler. This Government can proudly say that it has once again, through the re-energised CAB network, been able to give a voice to our citizens through a modern and simple platform. The hon. Prime Minister has given us the direct responsibility of following up on the CSU logged complaints and suggestions for our respective constituencies. Through the PPS Council, we will ensure that no stone is left unturned in working for the benefit of the population.

As a Private Parliamentary Secretary, Mr Speaker, Sir, other than getting involved in the day to day running of CABs and the CSU portal, the development of infrastructure, including drains, asphaltting of roads, new markets, medi-clinics, sports complexes, kids and leisure spaces, renovations of existing amenities, among others, are my priorities, similar to all other PPS. At the level of the NDU, the hon. Minister Hurreeram, Project Managers, RDOs, SRDOs, engineers, quantity surveyors and all stakeholders for development and building a modern and better Mauritius are working on a better and efficient framework agreement that will facilitate and ease the procedures to accomplish projects faster and better. The LDA, that is, the Land Drainage Authority, the MPI, RDA and other stakeholders are working hand-in-hand and we promise we will issue work orders when and where are needed and we also promise not to issue any Stop Orders putting at stake the life of poor inhabitants. An important point to note is that, since our Prime Minister has taken office and taken charge of the NDU, injection funds has been tremendously high, as well as in the local authorities.

Mr Speaker, Sir, Section 142 of the Government Programme 2020-2024 shows the commitment to adopt a responsible and environmentally sustainable development policy.

This Government or any other Government in the world cannot stop the impacts of the global warming on our climate, especially our small island which is most vulnerable and exposed to climate change. As mentioned in our Government Programme section 144, this Government's new development policy will be based on four pillars, namely –

- (1) investing extensively on use of clean and renewable energy;
- (2) shifting to a cleaner and greener Mauritius;

- (3) mitigating risk from climate change, and
- (4) protecting our marine resources.

Mr Speaker, Sir, this Government believes in the urgency to tackle this crisis and will listen to the young generation by putting in place a Youth Environmental Council under the aegis of the Prime Minister's Office. Mr Speaker, Sir, my message today on this alarming situation of global warming is that we are in a state of emergency. There is a lack of awareness, especially amongst our youth, and we need to react to trigger the required change. Indeed, there is hope for change, but it cannot be done solely by the Government and the private sector. Our population should react and should react fast, there is hope, and people are ready to change. When I say ready to change, I will mention a quote by Dr. Abdul Kalam, who once said –

“You cannot change your future, you can change your habits. And surely your habits will change your future.”

Mr Speaker, Sir, the key area of my speech is to build a peaceful, safe and secure place to live in.

As mentioned in Section 124 of the Government Programme, this Government, under the Prime Ministership of Pravind Kumar Jugnauth, has already proven its competency by placing nearly 2,000 safe city cameras in every nook and corner of the country. A costly investment for the betterment of the nation at large. These cameras today have helped solve so many cases quickly and efficiently. According to statistics, Police Officers have been provided with a great tool in tasks and the direct consequences have been a fall in the rate of criminality.

Mr Speaker, Sir, before pointing out fingers against the Law and Order and the Police Force of this country, I ask hon. Members to think twice and even thrice. I must say, we are today, all sitting safe and sound in this House and must thank the Police Officers who are out there for our security. Even at night, when we are enjoying our comfort at home, we must thank our Police Officers who are working sometimes in difficult conditions outside so that we remain safe inside. When we are enjoying our public holidays, may it be Christmas, New Year's Eve, 01 January, Police Officers leave their families to ensure our safety and security. Even in the most severe cyclonic conditions, Police Officers leave their families, kids and parents to ensure our safety. So, thank you, Police Officers.

Il faut surtout ne pas oublier que le leader des rouges avait traité la force policière de 'pourri'. Moi, je dirais un grand merci et bravo à la force policière et surtout les limiers du CID, les limiers de l'ADSU et ceux d'Anti-Robbery Unit.

M. le président, j'ai aussi pris note des déclarations de l'honorable David, à l'occasion du 84^{ème} anniversaire du Parti travailliste tenu hier. Au moins, les rouges ont pu fêter quelque chose après très longtemps, et à part ce genre d'évènement, je ne vois rien. Je ne vois pas d'autres célébrations à venir. L'honorable David a déclaré que les valeurs du Parti travailliste sont toujours intactes et aujourd'hui le leader du Parti travailliste mène une lutte contre la pauvreté. Il ne faut pas aussi oublier que les valeurs du Parti travailliste aussi sont intactes ! Même après sa défaite, il ne semble pas avoir ouvert ses yeux et ses oreilles pour considérer les messages directes de la population envers lui. Son style de leadership et ses frasques ne le quitteront jamais. Comment un parti ose-t-il parler des valeurs quand ils ne peuvent eux-mêmes parler ouvertement à leur leader pour qui les valeurs personnelles comme la lenteur, la paresse, l'arrogance, la folie de la classe, l'attachement avec les coffre-forts et le non-respect des femmes sont encore graves dans la mémoire des mauriciens. Ce même simple mauricien qui travaille très dur nuit et jour, mais qui maintenant peut souffler grâce aux mesures implémentées par le Premier ministre actuel.

Je pense que l'honorable David a, soit une amnésie sélective après son absence durant des nombreuses années au pays, est à côté de la plaque.

Il faut savoir que c'est le gouvernement, dirigé par le MSM/ML et ses partenaires, qui a fait de la lutte contre la pauvreté une priorité absolue. Et nous ne faisons pas que des discours, mais nous les avons réalisés en si peu de temps. Laissez-moi vous rappeler que l'écart entre les riches et pauvres s'est agrandi durant les règnes du Parti travailliste. Par exemple, les plus faibles taux de compensations salariales ont été octroyés quand le Parti travailliste était au pouvoir.

Par contre, en cinq ans, le gouvernement sortant a mis en place le salaire minimum, introduit le *Negative Income Tax* visant à aider les plus démunis et a considérablement augmenté la pension de vieillesse et d'autres allocations sociales, jamais un gouvernement a fait autant.

S'ajoute à cela, les manuels scolaires gratuits et d'autres facilités visant à offrir l'opportunité à chaque enfant de notre République d'étudier, de rêver, de croire et d'avoir des ambitions légitimes.

Des ambitions légitimes qui n'existent pas dans la culture travailliste, mais un leader qui ne mettrait jamais en cause son mauvais leadership et qui, aujourd'hui, se fie à ses piètres contestations en cours des défaites successives qu'il a connu face aux MSM et ses partenaires.

M. le président, il y a quelques jours que nous avons commémoré le mort du chanteur Kaya. Une des pages les plus sombres de notre histoire, je ne sais pas si c'est une coïncidence, mais, encore une fois, M. le président, c'était le fameux Navin Ramgoolam aux commandes du pays. Des émeutes paralysant le pays, des tensions mettant en péril notre harmonie culturelle et la fraternité de la nation mauricienne. Ça fait 21 ans.

M. le président, si le Parti travailliste a des valeurs sociales, comme le prétend l'honorable David, ces valeurs sont restées dans leur coffre-fort et n'ont jamais été transmises dans la vie des mauriciens.

Mr Speaker, Sir, to conclude, in November 2019, our Government was entrusted with sacred mission by an overwhelming majority of Mauritians. The Government of hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth was elected again after having set the country on the right tracks through firm and discipline leadership.

Mr Speaker, Sir, this Government Programme 2020-24 will go down in history as one which has silenced the Opposition. If we look at the track records, the arguments against our Government Programme is only *du réchauffé*. May they rest assured that we, on this side of the House, understand their dilemma!

Today, it is clear that the hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth has single-handedly silenced the Opposition and opened the doors of our population to ensure a new era of selfless, dedicated and focused leadership.

Mr Speaker, Sir, this Government, under the leadership of hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth, means business, not for very special friends and coffers, but for each and every citizen of this country and for many and many mandates to come.

I thank you for your attention.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Mrs Navarre-Marie.

(4.31 p.m.)

Mrs A. Navarre-Marie (Fourth Member for GRNW & Port Louis West): Merci, M. le président. Permettez tout d'abord que je remercie les électeurs de la circonscription

numéro 1 qui m'ont fait confiance depuis 1995 à ce jour, avec une petite parenthèse entre 2015 et 2019.

M. le président, après les élections, je m'étais réjouie du fait qu'il y a pas mal de nouveaux parlementaires, du sang nouveau ; le Parlement allait accueillir une certaine fraîcheur, des idées nouvelles, mais je me suis très vite ravisée.

Alors que certains se sont contentés de faire un discours autobiographique, d'autres ont joué à la grenouille des fables de La Fontaine, et on vient de le voir justement ; c'est à qui impressionnera le plus. Alors que nous nous attendions à de nouvelles idées, que les jeunes parlementaires nous donnent une vision de l'avenir, parler de l'âge numérique, la technologie Blockchain, le 4.0 et l'intelligence artificielle, dans lesquels domaines les jeunes excellent, grande fut ma déception de constater qu'ils ont vite fait d'imiter les vieilles habitudes des certains anciens et que l'on a pris les nouveaux pour présenter comme du neuf, et certains se sont montrés d'un superbe et d'une prétention effarante.

M. le président, nous avons l'habitude d'entendre certaines vieilles personnes se disant vieux, oui, mais avec un esprit jeune. Or, j'ai trouvé des jeunes parlementaires avec un état d'esprit dépassé. Ce sont les mêmes produits dans un emballage différent.

La même chose s'applique au discours-programme prononcé par le Président de la République ; une incantation de bonnes intentions. Le produit est le même que celui présenté les années précédentes. Même produit, mais l'emballage est différent. L'intitulé du discours mentionne une société vers l'inclusion. Le gouvernement aurait donc l'intention de faire de Maurice une société inclusive. Une politique inclusive s'adapte aux différences de la personne, va au-devant de ses besoins, afin de lui donner toutes les chances de réussite dans la vie. Les dépenses publiques liées aux politiques pour l'inclusion sont un investissement et non une charge pour une société durable.

M. le président, tout le monde s'accorde à dire que l'éducation est le moyen par excellence pour sortir de l'exclusion. Or, notre système éducatif n'a pas été à la hauteur de ses ambitions, vu le budget colossal alloué à ce secteur, R 17 milliards, et le nombre d'étudiants se retrouvant sans issue, 13,141 cette année.

Nous assistons à une véritable cacophonie dans ce secteur, confirmant un manque de planification. L'incidence des 5 *credits* obligatoires pour monter en HSC ; pagaille dans l'exercice des transferts d'enseignants et de recteurs ; la circulaire '*after-thought*' envoyée le 14 février aux écoles payantes sur l'exigence des 5 *credits*, alors que des parents avaient déjà

payé la scolarité pour une année, et la rentrée des classes déjà faite. Ne serait-ce pas là, M. le président, une persécution des étudiants qui n'auront pas eu 5 *credits* ? Serait-ce une manière de créer un goulot d'étranglement, vu le nombre de places limitées à l'Université de Maurice ?

Controverse autour du niveau des examens de grade 9. On ne sait pas qui a eu la responsabilité de préparer les *specimen papers*. Est-ce le MES ? Est-ce les fonctionnaires du ministère ? Est-ce que l'on va continuer à fonctionner sur *trial and error* et continuer à utiliser nos enfants comme cobayes ? N'y a-t-il pas incohérence entre vouloir, d'une part, une baisse du niveau de la NCE, si baisse il y a, et les 5 *credits* d'autre part ?

Remue-ménage au MITD, morcellement de la MITD sous différents ministères. Cela démontre un manque de considération totale vis-à-vis des formateurs. Jamais n'aura-t-on vu, M. le président, une telle pagaille dans ce secteur, et le ministère pêche par arrogance et manque de communication.

En insistant que ceux qui n'ont pas obtenu 5 *credits* n'auront pour seule option que la filière technique, le gouvernement perpétue la perception que les emplois à col-bleu sont dégradants et destinés à ceux n'ayant pas réussi leur scolarité.

Et les écoles ZEP, n'en parlons pas. Je crois que tout le monde a été choqué par l'état de l'infrastructure de l'école primaire de Nicolay et le taux d'échec de 100% aux derniers examens de la PSAC. Si le gouvernement a déclaré que l'annonce des 5 *credits* obligatoires a été faite 2 ans de cela, il est un fait que la rénovation d'infrastructures et la mise à niveau des cours valables et l'augmentation de places dans le MITD et autres polytechniques n'ont pas été faites en parallèle. Il s'agit, entre autres, M. le président, d'une bonne planification et, en même temps, de valoriser la filière technique avec un diplôme reconnu au niveau international comme le *City and Guilds*. La formation technique et vocationnelle est en complète déphasage par rapport à nos besoins dans le monde du travail et devrait être revue. Cette filière doit être introduite dès le primaire d'une manière valorisante, permettant ainsi à tous nos enfants une meilleure utilisation de leurs talents car seule une éducation de qualité permet aux gens de trouver un emploi.

Combien d'enfants se retrouvent-ils dans la rue malgré le fait que l'éducation soit obligatoire jusqu'à l'âge de 16 ans ? Il faudrait peut-être commanditer une étude pour découvrir le nombre d'enfants dans cette situation et ce qui est advenu d'eux. La réalité, ce

sont des milliers d'enfants, de jeunes étudiants jetés sur le pavé et en proie aux différents fléaux de notre société.

Combien de nos jeunes, M. le président, sont tombés dans l'univers infernal de la drogue ? Ce qui est effrayant c'est que cette drogue synthétique est entrée dans nos établissements scolaires et fait des ravages. Des jeunes de moins de 15 ans y ont laissé leur vie. Comment vaincre ce fléau ? Les parents sont désemparés et ne savent pas comment sortir leurs enfants de cet enfer. Les enfants deviennent violents et vont même jusqu'à utiliser la violence vis-à-vis des parents pour avoir de l'argent et se procurer leur dose quotidienne. C'est inquiétant.

Comment peut-on parler de société inclusive lorsqu'une étudiante non-voyante, fréquentant un collège SSS, ne reçoit pas son manuel de mathématiques en braille pendant 2 ans, la Forme I et la Forme II, avec pour résultat, bien sûr, qu'elle a échoué dans cette matière? Aujourd'hui, en Forme III, au 12 février, elle n'avait toujours pas eu son manuel de mathématiques en braille. C'est ce que le professeur Armoogum Parsuramen écrit dans un article intitulé : *'How far is the GM Programme 2020-2024 inclusive ?'* Il écrit ceci, je cite –

“For 3 consecutive years, the Government failed to deliver its educational inclusiveness to the visually impaired student mentioned, who ultimately could not cope in the absence of a textbook. And, I am here apprehensive and vexed about the condition of our visually impaired students in secondary schools who face the same predicament in Maths.”

Plus loin, il ajoute, se référant au discours-programme –

« The concepts of inclusiveness and disabilities are merely stated on an entirely superficial level. »

Le gouvernement, M. le président, a le devoir de limiter le nombre de jeunes mis hors du circuit scolaire. C'est cela une société inclusive.

J'ose croire que le gouvernement a de belles intentions. Or la mise en pratique est la plus importante. La réalité du terrain, M. le président, c'est cette jeune mère célibataire de 2 garçons. N'ayant pas de maison, elle fait une demande auprès de la NEF pour faire construire une maison en tôle, CIS, sur le terrain de sa grand-mère. Elle soumet les documents requis, le préposé trouve qu'elle est éligible, on lui demande de jurer un affidavit pour prouver que la grand-mère lui donne cette autorisation, les officiers de la NEF font des *site visits*, on confirme son éligibilité. J'ai personnellement intervenu à plusieurs reprises l'année dernière

auprès de la NEF, et cette année encore. Le dossier est complet mais le problème c'est qu'il n'y a pas de contracteur. Pas de contracteur pour construire une maison en tôle, M. le président. Et cela fait 9 ans depuis qu'elle a fait cette demande auprès de la NEF qui n'est qu'un éléphant blanc, parce qu'elle ne répond pas aux besoins des démunis. Et je crois comprendre que le *Chairperson* de la NEF, candidat battu de *l'Alliance Morisien* aux dernières élections générales est pressenti pour être nommé dans un corps paraétatique important.

La réalité c'est aussi cette dame séparée ou divorcée, de son mari avec à sa charge 3 adolescentes et habitant un faubourg de la capitale. Cette dame travaille comme *cleaner*. Voulant s'échapper de ce quartier tristement réputé pour des problèmes liés à la drogue, elle se dirige vers la NHDC pour trouver un logement ailleurs. Evidemment, elle a économisé un peu d'argent pour un dépôt que la NHDC ne trouve pas suffisant. Elle fait des sacrifices, économise encore pour avoir suffisamment d'argent pour le dépôt. Elle se présente encore une fois à la NHDC. Cette fois, l'âge de la dame est trop avancé. Il lui faut donc une somme plus importante pour le dépôt. Elle arrive tant bien que mal à rassembler la somme demandée et se dirige encore une fois vers la NHDC. Elle tombe des nues quand le préposé l'interroge sur la provenance de cet argent, en la menaçant de la référer à l'ICAC et on parle d'inclusion, M. le président !

M. le président, pour aller vers une société inclusive, seules les bonnes intentions ne suffisent pas. Il faut agir au plus tôt à la racine pour palier aux inégalités déjà très prononcées et changer notre *mindset*. J'ai été sidérée, le mois dernier, lorsque les parents de 2 enfants fréquentant une école primaire de la capitale, école dite *5-Star*. Les parents m'apprennent que les camarades de classe refusent de jouer avec leur enfants parce qu'ils appartiennent à telle ou telle communauté. Je n'étais pas au bout de mes peines, de ma surprise lorsque j'apprends les réparties des uns et des autres, purement communales, M. le président. Ce ne sont encore que des enfants. J'en frémis. Nous nous devons donc de tout revoir. La petite enfance devrait constituer une priorité phare dans notre système éducatif et l'exemple devrait surtout venir d'en haut.

M. le président, le chômage se féminise et devient de plus en plus inquiétante et la violence à l'égard des femmes est- on ne peut plus - encore plus grave lorsque la victime se retrouve en situation de dépendance économique vis-à-vis de son agresseur. Il est important de dénoncer les agresseurs. Il y a eu trop de victimes de violence conjugale ces jours-ci. Je

dénonce les bourreaux et présente mes sympathies les plus profondes à ceux et celles qui ont perdu une proche surtout une maman.

La dépendance économique est une des raisons pour lesquelles nous avons introduit le concept de micro crédit de 2000 à 2005. Le concept ne visait pas uniquement les victimes de violences conjugales mais toutes les femmes. Alors que la législation prévoit des *protection orders* et autres provisions légales qui ne sont malheureusement pas toujours respectées par les agresseurs, d'autres femmes pas nécessairement victimes de violences de leur conjoint, se doivent aussi d'être *empowered* et protégées.

J'ai le cas de cette maman de Pointe aux Sables dont le mari s'est retrouvé derrière les barreaux. La dame, mère des trois enfants, habitaient chez ses beaux-parents. Lorsque le mari se retrouve en prison, les parents la somment de quitter la maison avec ses enfants. Sans ressources, sans travail, la dame cherche désespérément un abri. Or les abris ne recueillent que les femmes battues. Comme il y a 3-4 maisons de la NHDC inhabitées dans la région de Pointe aux Sables, la Sugar Planters, j'ai pris contact avec la NHDC. Un responsable m'a confié que la dame doit d'abord se diriger vers la NEF pour ouvrir un dossier. Elle se dirige donc vers la NEF mais bien sûr la NEF ne peut rien pour elle. Depuis, la dame vit chez une amie à Petite Rivière, accompagne personnellement chaque jour ses deux enfants de cinq et neuf ans à l'école primaire de Pointe aux Sables, de peur que ses enfants ne soient confiés à la CDU.

Je salue l'intention du ministère d'encourager les femmes à se lancer dans des micros projets mais, aujourd'hui, il faut aller beaucoup plus loin, voir plus grand. Les femmes ne peuvent plus se cantonner ou se contenter de petits projets. Récemment, lors de son séjour à Maurice en janvier de cette année, Nicole Ameline de la CEDAW disait ceci et je cite – «le potentiel des femmes est la ressource la moins exploitée au monde. Je pense qu'on se prive considérablement d'une chance». Elle ajoute également que, je cite – «les droits des femmes sont aussi au service d'une croissance inclusive». C'est tellement vrai lorsque nous constatons les nombreux défis économiques à relever.

En parallèle, il est grand temps de sensibiliser la problématique de la violence à l'égard des femmes dès la petite enfance, encore une fois ; idem pour l'éducation sexuelle à l'école, vu le nombre grandissant de grossesses précoces et les conséquences qui s'en suivent. Nous attendons l'ébauche finale du Children's Bill car il semblerait qu'il y aurait encore des amendements au projet de loi déjà présenté en première lecture à l'assemblée.

Le cas de ces deux enfants de 14 et de 17 ans où la jeune fille s'est retrouvée enceinte devrait nous interpeller. Le gouvernement a aussi mentionné le Gender Equality Bill. Il y a de ces sujets, M. le Président, qui ne peuvent être abordés de manière futile et à l'emporte-pièce mais nécessite au contraire une consultation large et un examen à tête reposée. Au MMM, nous nous sommes en plusieurs occasions exprimés sur ces deux projets de loi et nous aurons l'occasion de nous exprimer davantage cette fois devant la Chambre. En attendant, où en est-on avec le projet de bracelet électronique, annoncée plus tôt et les nouveaux *shelters* pour les femmes? Est-ce que nous allons continuer à demander aux victimes de quitter le toit conjugal ou alors est-ce que ce sont les agresseurs qui doivent le faire? La législation dans son ensemble doit être revue pour une meilleure protection des femmes, de même que l'application de la loi.

L'initiative que le Premier ministre préside un comité sur la violence à l'égard des femmes est fort louable. Nous souhaitons que les résultats soient ressentis au plus vite car il y a urgence.

La protection des victimes ne serait-elle pas plus efficace avec une décentralisation des *shelters* qui seraient pris en charge par les collectivités locales? Pour ce faire, il est nécessaire d'augmenter l'enveloppe budgétaire des Municipalités et *Districts Councils*.

Sur le plan de la représentativité des femmes, il est malheureux qu'il n'y ait pas une bonne réforme électorale avec une dose de proportionnelle qui permettra un système de quotas pour augmenter le nombre de femmes en politique. Le quota est nécessaire jusqu'à ce que l'équilibre se rétablisse de lui-même.

Le discours programme, M. le président, fait mention d'un nouveau pilier économique, maintes fois annoncé dans le passé et fait état de prospections pétrolières en mer, d'extraction de minéraux et de recherches biotechnologiques marines. La pêche étant une industrie prometteuse, les différents *stakeholders* dont les pêcheurs peuvent et doivent y jouer un rôle important. Rien qu'en 2018, nous avons, selon Statistics Mauritius de la mi-janvier de cette année, exporté pour près de R 15 milliards de poissons et de produits marins. Parallèlement, en termes de tonnes exportées, nous sommes en régression.

Une société inclusive, M. le président, c'est également impliquer les pêcheurs. Nombreux dans la circonscription numéro 1 à Bain des Dames et Pointe aux Sables. Les pêcheurs à Maurice sont malheureusement les éternels parents pauvres de notre société. Il est du devoir des autorités de le mettre *on board* sur toute politique concernant l'économie bleue.

Mais le projet de *blue economy* comporte un risque sur le concept de Maurice Ile Durable. Il faut donc trouver le bon équilibre entre d'une part l'exportation de nos richesses marines à des fins économiques et d'autre part la sauvegarde de notre environnement car, en puisant de nos ressources marines, nous mettons en péril notre environnement. Il faut donc une table ronde comprenant les autorités compétentes, la communauté des pêcheurs et les environnementalistes pour élaborer une feuille de route sur ce projet.

Je pense également à la communauté des artistes, M. le président, bien nombreux dans ma circonscription. À Maurice, malheureusement, ils ne sont toujours pas considérés à leur juste valeur et sont souvent mis sur la touche.

M. le président, pour faire de Maurice une société inclusive, nous nous devons non seulement de jeter un regard compatissant sur la communauté Chagossienne mais faire en sorte qu'elle se sente à l'aise sous le drapeau de la République. Lorsque nous parlons de la souveraineté des Chagos, il nous faut gagner cette communauté à notre cause.

Née de parents Chagossiens, il me peine de voir que mes proches ne vivent pas à Maurice. Beaucoup de Chagossiens, il est malheureux de le dire, sont partis ne se sentant pas compris car il y a encore de forts préjugés à leur égard et ils s'intègrent difficilement à Maurice. Certains sont partis pour une nouvelle vie or l'Angleterre n'est pas leur patrie. Ils y vivent comme un deuxième exil. Il est de notre devoir de les accueillir, de faire en sorte qu'ils se sentent chez eux à Maurice. Tout projet de *settlement* sur les Chagos doit être fait en concertation avec la communauté Chagossienne. Le gouvernement doit éviter le risque de perpétuer une société non-inclusive ou une espèce de ghetto, les Chagos pour les chagossiens, l'île Maurice pour les mauriciens. Au contraire, il faut que chacun puisse faire le choix de vivre au Chagos et à Maurice.

Je vais conclure. M. le président, à Maurice, malheureusement, il existe de profondes inégalités sociales et économiques. Une importante section de la population, et cela dans toutes les composantes de notre société, n'est pas sortie de la pauvreté et leur situation est précaire. Les richesses étant inégalement réparties.

Il ne s'agit pas uniquement de construire des hôtels, le tramway, des *buildings* de prestige, mais encore faut-il que la population puisse bénéficier des retombées positives en y participant pleinement et être rémunéré de façon juste.

Il faut un développement à visage humain, un équilibre entre, d'une part, le développement et une distribution équitable de la richesse d'autre part. Chaque citoyen doit

avoir la possibilité de contribuer selon ses capacités et compétences au développement de notre pays.

Pour se faire, il nous faut un système éducatif de qualité et inclusif et un accès à l'emploi. Or, nous constatons que les mauvaises habitudes ont très vite rattrapées ce gouvernement avec les récentes nominations politiques des candidats battus de l'Alliance Morisien dans des corps paraétatiques et des ambassades, la MBC, la banque de Maurice, le Mauritius Duty Free Paradise et j'en passe. Les emplois sont réservés aux *happy few*.

Alors que pendant les deux campagnes électorales, vous aviez promis la transparence dans le recrutement, on n'entend plus parler du *Freedom of Information Act*. Comment voulez-vous, M. le président, que nos jeunes, qui font des études tertiaires à Maurice et à l'étranger, surtout ceux qui font des études à l'étranger, ne veulent plus rentrer au pays ? Il n'y a pas de débouchés pour eux. Les emplois sont réservés aux *blue-eyed boys*, au *blue-eyed girls*.

M. le président, beaucoup de promesses ont été faites pendant la campagne électorale. La population s'attend à ce que ce gouvernement tienne parole. Tout en ayant le devoir moral de tenir ses promesses, il incombe à ce gouvernement également la responsabilité de ne pas mettre en péril l'avenir de la génération à venir.

Merci, M. le président.

Mr Speaker: I will suspend the sitting for some 30 minutes.

At 5.01 p.m., the sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 5.36 p.m. with Mr Speaker in the Chair.

Mr Speaker: Dr. the hon. Ms Chukowry!

(5.36 p.m.)

Dr. Ms D. Chukowry (Second Member for GRNW & Port Louis West): Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Mr Speaker, Sir, at the very outset, I would like to congratulate you for your election as Speaker of this august Assembly. I would like to convey my words of thanks to you for affording me the opportunity to deliver my maiden speech on the Government Programme 2020-2024. I wish to seize this golden opportunity to thank the hon. Prime Minister, Pravind Kumar Jugnauth, for gracefully bestowing on me the opportunity to stand as a candidate for the last general election and for appointing me as Parliamentary Private Secretary for Constituency Nos 1, 2 and 20.

I would also like to thank my husband Vijay, my two sons, Vicky and Vivek, my mum, my dad, my brother and my whole family for supporting me in whichever step I take. I would also like to put on record that the hon. Prime Minister has been the architect of this indisputable and straightforward victory. I would also like to put on record that the hon. Prime Minister has been the Architect of this indisputable and straightforward victory.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I started my political career by the side of my husband in the year 1999. For the 2012 Municipal Election, I was elected as Councillor under the banner of the remake 2000 and served as Deputy Lord Mayor and Lord Mayor successively.

M. le président, mon passage au sein du MMM n'a pas été de tout repos.

Mr Speaker, Sir, if I have to refute hon. Uteem's, hon. Mrs Navarre-Marie's and hon. Foo Kune's interventions, it would defeat the purpose of meaningful debate, and I will spend a lifetime drowning everyone here in the House with examples, so let me sum up through a fitting but brief response.

The MMM party takes inordinate pride in stating that gender equality, women emancipation, meritocracy and democracy feature high in its agenda.

Well, I cannot forget even if I choose to, the callous and undiplomatic way in which the First Woman Lord Mayor was bluntly denied access to the political bureau of the MMM. For your information, before 2014, all the respective Lord Mayors have always secured a seat in the political bureau of the MMM! Hon. Foo Kune said she will, I quote –

“Réparer les injustices”.

I wish she could. I really wish she could. Hon. Uteem souhaite qu'il y ait plus de femmes dans des positions de responsabilité. Où était-il quand il y avait vendetta politique contre la première femme Lord Maire orchestrée par les dirigeants de la circonscription No. 1?

Let me bring to your attention, Mr Speaker, Sir, that many women with great potential have left the MMM party! *Pour quelle raison ? A qui profite le crime ?*

Secondly, on 01 May 2013 on the Labour Day Political gathering of the MMM, the Ag. Lord Mayor, was not allowed to access the stage in the very yard of the City Council of Port Louis where she was officiating as the first Magistrate of the city.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker, Sir, one may not like the character, but at least the minimum decorum should be accorded to the office attached thereto. Therefore, hon. Colleagues, I think it would be more than necessary to practise what you preach, because of the smacks of paradox, ideological contradictions, and prejudice, rather than the *faux-semblant* of equality that serve to glorify the actions of a select few who have carved their positions in the party out of solid rock!

Mr Speaker, Sir, I could have taken many more examples, but I have refrained myself from hitting below the belt. I want to remain smart as usual.

Mr Speaker, Sir, on 08 November 2019, the icing on the cake was when the electorate of Constituency No.1 - Grand River North West and Port Louis West - vigorously lobbied me as MP of the said Constituency.

Je saisis cette opportunité qui m'est offerte pour remercier les mandants de la circonscription No.1. M. le président, permettez-moi donc de transmettre mon plus profond sentiment de gratitude et de reconnaissance à tous ceux qui ont choisi de croire en moi et permettez-moi de les rassurer que je les servirai avec courage, humilité et dévotion. Et pour ceux qui n'ont pas voté pour moi, soyez rassurés vous aussi car je suis la député de tous les habitants de la circonscription No. 1. Tout comme notre Premier ministre est le Premier ministre de tous les Mauriciens.

Mr Speaker, Sir, Constituency No. 1 was the closely guarded turf of the MMM. I repeat, Mr Speaker, Sir, it was and it is no more "la Citadelle Mauve"

Mr Speaker, Sir, it is the very first time in History post-independence that no MMM candidate has been returned at the first past the post system for the last General Election. As a result, the election of 07 November 2019 has been a landmark and a halt for the so-called Dinosaur of Constituency No. 1. Mr Speaker, Sir, I belt the cat to whom concerned but he took it with a pinch of salt.

M. le président, 19 mois avant les élections générales, j'avais informé les dirigeants mauves d'un déclin de popularité des dirigeants mauves de la circonscription No.1.

15 mois avant les élections générales, j'avais prédit la défaite des mauves avec le Premier ministre, l'honorable Pravind Kumar Jugnauth. Et aujourd'hui, le MMM demande un *recount* et n'accepte pas le verdict des urnes!

Mr Speaker, Sir, the essence, reliability and validity of a Government lies in its will to bring about concrete and meaningful changes for its people; and this Programme, hon. Colleagues, is no less than a visionary course of action that shall propel the country into the league of developed clubs. This programme puts the human element at the centre. Governments have come and gone, but at some point in time, we have to realise that there is a crucial need to steer our common destiny towards a future that holds the promise of security, advancement and progress.

On this aspect, I wish to quote the immortal Martin Luther King, who stated that –

“Democracy transformed from thin paper to thick action is the greatest form of government on earth”.

This Programme stands as an exemplary script that charts out our goals and objectives to consolidate the domestic socio-economic architecture while reaffirming our commitment to upgrade our citizenry in all spheres of activities.

As a daughter of our sacred motherland, I have to applaud the hon. Prime Minister, individually and on behalf of the whole nation, for having engineered innovative and realistic measures to shepherd the country towards the forefront of progress.

This Programme which is a caring and daring one, spells out the vision of a Government that is deeply committed to upholding the aspirations of its people. We have long nurtured the dream that Mauritius will become a harbinger of advancement, both regionally and internationally. The initiatives laid out in the Programme pave the way for a better, cleaner and stronger Mauritius. In fact, it is a tribute to the collective efforts of our people, and gives purpose to the engagement of the Government in transforming Mauritius into a high-income economy.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the heart of any progressive nation is powered by its human capital. The Government Programme seeks to leave no stone unturned when it comes to providing a decent and dignified standard of living to each Mauritian family. The upward review of the old age pension, the basic widow’s pension, the invalid pension and the basic retirement pension cannot be a more tangible proof of giving back to those who have painstakingly built our foundations. Mr Speaker, Sir, poverty is never nice.

L’honorable Foo Kune a dit qu’elle a pleuré quand elle a vu la misère. M. le président, moi, j’ai pas vu ; moi, j’ai vécu dans la misère et ce que ces personnes ont besoin, ce n’est pas de nos larmes, c’est des actions concrètes. On doit agir.

I am speaking from the heart, and from experience, since I came from a financially challenged family; but we never faltered in the face of adversity and with grit and temerity, we marched ahead because we were taught to value our efforts.

The Programme effectively translates this precept through the provision and upgrade of decent shelters to families in need while consolidating our purchasing power through a bottom-up approach and activating the Marshall Plan against poverty.

The alleviation of poverty may have featured in many past national agendas but I am proud to affirm that it is the very first time that we have a programme which will catalyse the process and objectives of attaining financial empowerment through a series of concrete undertakings that aim to radically change the socio-economic landscape of Mauritius.

Indeed, Mr Speaker, Sir, a country which seeks to leap ahead and stand out from the lot needs to place its citizenry at the core of its developmental priorities. For far too long have the financially-deprived been left on the margins of the society and the Programme pre-emptively emphasises the engagement of a Government to do what it does best: promoting and safeguarding the welfare of its people above all else, irrespective of cost or constraint, creed or community.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Programme's focus, across its length and breadth on the education portfolio merits, in all senses of the term, our invariable praise. May I quote at this juncture Benjamin Franklin who stated that "an investment in knowledge always pays the best interest."

Mr Speaker, Sir, our educational system has undergone the process of infancy, puberty and old age. We have developed an almost automatic affinity to emulate the Singaporean model of socio-economic transformation; our Asian counterpart has risen on its own through a dedicated and stalwart determination in up-skilling its human capital. This Programme has, therefore, geared itself in the right direction: facilitating accessibility to quality education through supportive actions, methods, legislation and infrastructure.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as a rector with 27 years of experience and as an international researcher in the field of education I wish to bring forward some positive criticism about Dr. Gungapersad intervention.

My close involvement with educational management and leadership as well as research and academia affords me the vantage of casting an objective perspective on the measures enunciated in the Programme. There is no better testimony of a government's desire

to outreach to its people than by thoroughly including them in all stages of domestic fortification by means of providing empowering facilities to acquire knowledge.

Mr Speaker, Sir, Dr. hon. Gungapersad has underlined the efficiency of some school systems, mainly Denmark, England, Malaysia, Germany and India. Let me draw his attention to two features of those systems: the success narrative of these systems have been essentially graded and benchmarked as per international standards. Remember, Dr. hon. Gungapersad, one should always compare like with like. Albert Einstein said that everybody is a genius but if you judge a fish by its ability to climb a tree it will live its whole life believing that it is stupid. May I advise the hon. Member to further his research on the subject so as to get better acquainted with a wider, more comprehensive and more objective context other than that of developed countries. Moreover, at the end of his speech, he proposed to make use of differentiated teaching in the class. For his information, teachers working in extended streams have started to prepare differentiated lesson plans so as to cater for differentiated abilities since last year. May be he is not that updated.

We are, after all, trying every possible avenue to make the system responsive to our own context. Moreover, Dr. hon. Gungapersad stressed that 30% of learners failed their SC and HSC and less than 50% students managed to score a credit in English and Maths. Here, I wish to point out that grades don't measure intelligence. Let me take one living example. Bill Gates failed his exam in some subjects but his friend passed. Now, his friend is an engineer in Microsoft and Bill Gates is the owner of Microsoft.

On a second count, let me share with the House that there is no magic "one size fits all" potion for educational success. What we perceive as a successful pedagogical attainment might be construed as insignificance by other borders. The simple reason being that each country, each mind-set, each teacher, each school, each parent is unique, just like each and every Mauritian child is unique.

Mr Speaker, Sir, it is high time that we take our destiny in our hands and learn to adapt our educational undertakings to our socio-economic needs. It's not the opportune time to indulge in incongruent and utopian emulation of what others are doing because their context is different and their needs are also different. Education, in the truest sense of the term cannot be a cut, copy and paste process. Mauritius is striving how best it can, to produce meaningful citizenship. Let us be patient, hon. Members. Let us be vigilant enough to afford

it the time it needs. Remember this saying: 'There is no comparison between the moon and the sun. They shine when it is their time.'

Mr Speaker, Sir, what qualifies a true and genuine politician is the ability to remain faithful to the truth, no matter what. Sorry, my friend, I have to take example of you somewhere.

Mr Speaker: Address the Chair, please!

Dr. Ms Chukowry: Okay. Sorry. On this note, allow me to put into perspective hon. Dr. Gungapersad's statement that we have to review our stand for five credits as requisites for promotion to Grade 12. Hon. Members, after hon. Dr. Gungapersad's intervention, late at night, I received a few phone calls and a few SMS from ex-students of RTSS whereby I was informed that during the tenure of hon. Dr. Gungapersad as the then Rector of the above-mentioned establishment, the former would rigidly ascribed to the requirement of not five, but six credits for promotion to Grade 12. And without trying to rub the salt in the wound, he even went further

Dr. Gungapersad: Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to raise a point of order.

Mr Speaker: Do you have a point of order?

Dr. Gungapersad: Yes, on this issue.

Mr Speaker: Go ahead.

Dr. Gungapersad: This is not fair. Because she is a Rector ...

(Interruptions)

Please, allow me to explain.

Mr Speaker: What is your point of order?

Dr. Gungapersad: I am making ...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Please sit down. A point of order, when there is a procedure, Standing Order has been flouted. Raise your point of order.

Dr. Gungapersad: The hon. Member is imputing motives. For example a Rector does not decide the policies about promotion and so on. She is imputing motives.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Member, this is fair play, *de bonne guerre*. Please continue!

Dr. Ms Chukowry: And without trying to rub the salt in the wound, he even went further to encourage those with five credits or four credits to consider repeating. Now, ironically enough, is it because he is seated on the other side of the fence that he has suddenly realized that it would be more worthwhile or let me rephrase, more politically worthwhile that he rather settles for a three credits requirement at the detriment of entire generations which will be faced with the bleak prospect of being considered unfit or ineligible to career opportunities simply because they were made to believe that acquiring three credits would be enough? One wonders the extent to which people can go for their political gains to the expense of vulnerable citizens.

There was a time where I was against this measure, I admit, but after much thought, I realised that it is in the best interest of our children and the country as a whole because we are teaching students to become global students and later on global workers. Our children are going to work in hundreds of countries around the globe. So, we need to keep a certain standard.

This Government has upscale the academic standards because what we need is a competitive and productive workforce that will chart our undertakings towards meaningful progress. I need not mention the disastrous consequences of former ill-thought and reckless planned measures to widen access to education through the quashing of fundamental requisites for promotion to higher stages of learning, under the false guise of opportunity for all. Fortunately, this Government has cut short this farce: Mauritius needs a highly skilled labour capital to withstand the fierce and unforgiving competition of other markets, and hence, we cannot afford to lower our academic standards.

We need to remind ourselves that in the wake of climate change and dwindling resources, a productive and attractive human resource pool will posit as a fixed asset for our economic endeavours.

The provision of free curricular materials to Grade 7 to Grade 9 students will ensure that no child is ever left behind due to financial impediments. Vocational training is being given accrued importance, and thus will serve to positively upscale our labour market capabilities and further accelerate the autonomy of the sector, while furthering industrial diversification. The improvement of pedagogical strategies and methodologies through the medium of digital technology is an important cornerstone in bringing about significant

changes in the learning environment, and will create pods of capacity-building interfaces through the educational sector.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the program takes in its stride the holistic development of the student, ranging from the preprimary to the tertiary sector. On a side note, let me underline that the latter has been re-dynamised, with the quashing of the university fees for undergraduate students, subject to specific conditions.

Educational reforms and curricular changes should not be the end product of hap hazardous planning as was the case in the past. This program presents no less than a solid and well-grounded repository that aims to create the most optimum conditions on the pedagogical, cultural, environmental, psychological and infrastructural fronts so that the future generations emerge as forward-thinking, intellectual, responsible, smart, ethical and capable citizens.

Let us never forget the sacred duty of a teacher, the key actor, in our nation-building enterprise. Educators are the ones that raise and rise nations, and they hold the key to our future by equipping us with the right compass to chart our destiny forward. The Educators' Council Bill could not come at a more opportune time and will seek to establish a dynamic repository to professionalise the status of our educators while giving them the requisite incentive to support the Governmental drive in shaping our domestic architecture into a robust knowledge economy. In the same line of thought, the prescription for continuous professional development for educators has become no less than a necessity. If we want to generate a citizenry that is highly adaptable, competitive and dotted with the right credentials to migrate our development endeavours towards newer heights.

After all, Mr Speaker, Sir, this Government has chosen to move away from a beaten track that has become long outdated. I can proudly affirm that we attain what many former Governments have not been able to formulate and establish - placing the child right in the centre of our vision!

In 2014, when our Government came to power, it was gifted with a dreadful inheritance: a bedridden and disoriented health sector that had been left to fend for itself and which failed the expectations of the people in practically every aspect. But the patience, strategic thinking and planning, diligence and above all else, integrity of leadership helped immensely and we now have a health sector that has been revitalised to respond to the demands of our population.

At the end of the day, Mr Speaker, Sir, let us not, or rather, let us never forget that everything boils down to the security of our citizenry and environment. The safety of our people can and should never be compromised, as was, unfortunately, and otherwise the case in the past.

On a last count, Mr Speaker, Sir, and, hopefully, that shall do justice to my exposé; the Government has been no less than a trendsetter in pioneering a legislation on the declaration of assets as part of our wilful compliance to sunshine laws.

This is what the desire for integrity and transparency looks like - unlike the opacity that almost blinded our *raison d'être* in the past.

Mr Speaker Sir, and hon. Members of the Parliament, on this, let me seize this opportunity to thank you for your patience, indulgence and attention. God bless our Prime Minister, his Government and his people! Long Live Mauritius!

Thank you.

The Speaker: Hon. Ramkaun!

(6.10 p.m.)

Mr S. Ramkaun (Second Member for Pamplemousses & Triolet): Mr Speaker, Sir, at the first outset, I would take the time of this House to congratulate you, Mr Speaker, Sir, on your election as Speaker of this August Assembly and, secondly, I would like to congratulate hon. Zahid Nazurally, Second member of Constituency No. 10, to be elected as Deputy speaker.

My most sincere thanks goes to our leader, Pravind Kumar Jugnauth, who has again placed his trust in me and my other colleagues of *L'Alliance Morisien*. I wish to assure the hon. Prime Minister that as always I shall ensure that responsibility assigned to me will be attended with due diligence.

My congratulations also to all elected Members of this House and hope that members on the other side of the House bring forward their positive contribution in the interest of our population. We shall on this side of the House strive hard for the well-being of our population and more so those of Constituency No. 5 who have again placed their confidence in me.

It is an undeniable fact that following the general elections of 07 November 2019, a strong Government of the people, under the very able and visionary leadership of hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth, has been elected by the people for not only to safeguard the interest

of Mauritius, Rodrigues, Chagos Archipelago and the outer islands forming part of our nation, but also to ensure the well-being of all individuals bearing the Mauritian nationality.

It is in this context that I, in tandem with my electorate of my constituency, Pamplemousses-Triolet, and the population at large, do convey our thanks to the President of Republic of Mauritius for his speech on the Government Programme 2020-24 entitled “Towards an Inclusive High Income and Green Mauritius, Forging Ahead Together”.

In a nutshell the President of the Republic of Mauritius clearly emphasised that no stone should remain unturned as the Government of the day means business. This Government cannot and should not waste time in trivial and frivolous issues because this is not what the population is demanding. What they are aspiring at, have been stated by the President in his speech on Friday 24 January 2020 at this National Assembly.

The President of the Republic deserves our Kudos when he lays stress on the necessity to protect our environment; to promote organic agriculture, reduce our dependencies on the excessive use of chemicals on food and other productions; to reduce drastically and ultimately ban the use of plastic bags and other pollution prone products; to have recourse to renewable energy; to have a judicious and intelligent approach on the consumption of electricity, water and other sources of energy; to drive Mauritius towards a high income economy and maintain sustainable economic and social developments; also to manage our natural resources in terms of land, water, marine assets, rivers, lakes, etc. and above all, our human resources.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we have a very intelligent population who firmly and rightly believe that the desired socio-economic development of the country cannot be achieved if the Government pays heed to scenarios and regular acts and comedies stogged by the Opposition inside and outside the Parliament.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I firmly believe that the population has the right to benefit from the fruit and achievement of the present Government from time to time and as and when available just as the Metro Express. Talking about the Metro Express, an accident happened yesterday and some Members of this August Assembly were present there, stating that this has to be reviewed. I think all Members who were present there knew that there was a stop sign and a motorcyclist crossed without taking note or without taking heed that the Metro Express was coming. Similarly, previously a car which did not have the right to turn left, turned on the left and hit against the Metro Express. So, is it the fault of the Government, or

should we now educate those drivers on the routine road signs, and how to drive on the roads?

Others which we are giving to our children; free education at public universities, as appropriate; free distribution of college textbooks to the students of Grades 7, 8 & 9; monthly pension of Rs9,000 to our senior citizens, widows and handicapped persons; a decent minimum salary of Rs10,000 per month and a myriad of other measures.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the speech of the President of the Republic of Mauritius on the Government Programme for the next five years has been welcomed by the Mauritian society, including those who are working in foreign countries. The proposed “Climate Change Bill” and “Education Council Bill” are being worked out for submission to this National Assembly. Further facilities and incentives will be provided to the youth in their endeavour to become entrepreneurs and nation builders of tomorrow.

The pace at which the economic development of the country is being witnessed, has necessitated the eminent setting up of the Economic Research and Planning Bureau as voiced out by our President of the Republic.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as Parliamentary Private Secretary for Constituency No. 4 and Constituency No. 5, I feel it my duty to convey to my mandates broad map of the future developments within this area. As rightly said by the President of Republic of Mauritius in his speech, this country needs an infrastructure that fits the aspirations of an innovative economy and society. It was the previous Government under the leadership of hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth as Prime Minister who presented a Bill in the august Assembly on 28 March 2017 for the setting up of the Land Drainage Authority. This Authority was set up in 2018 and is now investigating on the infrastructures needed to minimise the impact of floods on people’s property, agriculture and the environment. To this effect, the Land Drainage Authority is preparing a Master Plan through the use of modern digital technology to map the flood prone areas. Some 29 flood prone areas have been identified and are being considered for urgent attention.

Les travaux ont déjà commencé dans les régions à risque, tel que les travaux à Cottage sont presque terminés et les travaux à Fond du Sac sont aussi avancés. Les risques d’inondation dans ces régions sont du passé maintenant.

As being responsible for infrastructures within these constituencies, these risks shall not be shifted from one place to another location, but instead with a complete digital study of

the catchments, this Government under the guidance of the Land Drainage Authority shall continue these drains to a safe outlet.

Works have started in Pamplemousses and Calebasses whereas design of drains and other infrastructures for Mount, Mon Goût and Bois Rouge are ready for implementation. It is proposed to construct a retention bassin on 15 hectares of land at Mount and the surplus run off shall be channelled to canal Ville Bague. The consultants and the Government *travaillent en concert avec Terragris Ltee pour que ces eaux soient canalisées dans un système sans que la population, ni les plantations soient affectées.*

On connaît aussi la région de Terre Rouge, Kestrel lane. Cette région fut inondée récemment après les grosses pluies de l'année dernière. Le projet est estimé à R 228 millions est dans le processus de procuration et serait implémenté en phases dans les jours à venir.

I have to add here that this region has been affected because the previous Labour Party Government under Navinchandra Ramgoolam had issued a permit to a promoter to construct a filling station over an existing drain, thus resulting in flooding of part of Riche Terre and Terre Rouge regions. Due to complexity of this project, this will also be implanted in phases.

We have not forgotten Baie du Tombeau and Pointe aux Piments severely affected during heavy rainfall and flash floods. Part of Baie du Tombeau being practically at the sea level resulting in difficult discharge of run off to the sea. It is now being imperative to construct a retention basin and pump out the water to avoid any flooding.

En parlant de Baie du Tombeau, en parlant de la circonscription numéro 5, on savait qu'avant 2014, il y avait trois ministres dans cette circonscription. Il y avait le Premier ministre et deux autres ministres. Mais qu'ont-ils fait dans cette circonscription ? Et nous, nous sommes arrivés en 2014, il n'y avait pas de centre de santé, un centre de santé en bâtiment en décrépitude, il n'y avait pas de plage, il y avait des personnes résidents dans les longères depuis 1994, après le cyclone Hollanda.

So, what did the previous Government do for these people? Nothing! When we came, we started for the construction of an area health centre and now it is ready to be inaugurated incessantly. The people from *longère tôle and longère blanc* have now a temporary residence - temporary, because NHDC buildings are under construction and they will be given those buildings under concrete slab.

Out of the 96 families who will be given, 80 will be left and the second phase will consist of construction of other buildings for NHDC.

Et puis, il n'y avait pas de plage publique dans cette région. C'est avec l'aide de mon colistier, l'honorable Soodesh Callichurn et moi-même, nous avons approché, le ministre des Terres de cette époque, on a pu déclarer cette plage comme une plage publique. En parlant d'autres bâtiments dans cette région, il y avait d'autres bâtiments à faire, par exemple, le centre de Santé de Triolet, il y avait le centre de Santé d'Arsenal, toujours dans leur bâtiment loué. Il y avait le centre de Santé de Calebasses dans leur bâtiment loué.

The Police Station at Pamplémousses, the building was in a very bad state and nothing had been done. When this Government came under the leadership of our very able Prime Minister, we managed to construct a new building for the Police Station. The Intermediate Court of Pamplémousses and Rivière du Rempart which were in rented building, have not been shifted to SIB building at Pamplémousses.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Quiet.

(Interruptions)

Quiet! No crosstalking, please!

Mr Ramkaun: Maintenant, il y a aussi des travaux à faire et le gouvernement, comme vous savez, avec une vision claire et nette, a l'intérêt de faire tout pour la population de circonscription numéro 5.

I wish also to reassure the residents of Vallée des Prêtres in Constituency No. 4 where after every heavy rainfall, the wastewater network becomes inadequate, as a result. All the rainwater is diverted in the system. My colleagues, elected Members for constituency No. 4, are working with the Wastewater Management Authority to review the design of the sewers to avoid recurrence of these overflows.

Similarly projects in Cité la Cure and Le Hochet are already in the process of procurement and works will start in days to come.

Mr Speaker Sir, this Government has taken a pledge for taking out our country to greater heights for development and to achieve this *sine qua non* conditions in a modern, vibrant and innovable economy that delivers sustainable and inclusive growth.

Now that progress made down the past five years has brought our country back on track, next objective is to cross the high income threshold in the coming years. This will create a window of opportunities for our youth and entrepreneurs and to fully tap these opportunities as they unfold.

Mr Speaker, Sir, to conclude, I am highly inspired by the famous English author Charles Dickens and conclude that the people of Mauritius and the Government is striving for the best of the time, age of wisdom and spring of hope whereas the Opposition associates itself with the worst of time, age of foolishness and the winter of despair.

Thank you for your attention.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Richard Duval!

(6.27 p.m.)

Mr R. Duval (Fourth Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien): M. le président, je tiens tout d'abord à vous féliciter pour l'accès à votre nomination au poste de président de cette auguste Assemblée.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as a Member of Constituency No. 12, I wish to extend my warmest greetings to one and all for a happy and prosperous year 2020. Let's hope that we, parliamentarians, put our heads together to work for a better Mauritius. We should aspire to be a role model in terms of justice, equity, equal opportunities as well as boosting our economy to develop new job creations. We should also not forget about our mission to alleviate poverty and to provide for an ecological island.

Mr Speaker, Sir, so far, we have not heard anything from the Minister of Finance as to measures to cut and reduce down the public debt. I am really scared for the future generation of my country. I am really scared, Mr Speaker, Sir. The debt is unserviceable. It represents Rs360 billion, around Rs300,000 per inhabitant.

M. le président, notre pouvoir d'achat s'effrite. Quelle sera la valeur de la roupie mauricienne dans quelques mois ? Qu'advient-il de notre pouvoir d'achat trop souvent malmené ? M. le président, notre économie va mal. Tout le monde le sait et cela remonte bien avant l'émergence du nouveau coronavirus, bien avant. Une dépréciation vertigineuse de notre roupie semble être la seule et unique option du gouvernement à ce jour. Entre autres, peut-être augmenter les recettes de la TVA. M. le président, 9% de dépréciation face au dollar américain, 9% ! Et cela sur une période seulement d'une année. 3% depuis les élections de

2019, 3% M. le président. Loin, M. le président, d'être un miracle économique, bien loin. L'île Maurice fait face à un vrai dilemme à en devenir, M. le président.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to talk about Mahebourg, my constituency. The southern part of the island, specifically the village of Mahebourg, has been and remains a forgotten part of Mauritius in terms of development. With the exception of the airport and some hotels, *et à part d'avoir un waterfront décapotable*.

Mais, M. le président, nous avons besoin de revaloriser impérativement cette authenticité déjà présente et de remettre en valeur ce village de Mahebourg, avec tant de sites historiques.

Et des exemples, I remember Mahé de La Bourdonnais, Mr Speaker, Sir, who marked our island's history with its first development, to whom the British named the village of Mahebourg after his doing. Admiral Guy-Victor Duperré is mentioned on a monument in Mahebourg. His single victory in 1810 on Royal Navy at Grand Port is acknowledged on the *Arc de Triomphe*, Mr Speaker, Sir, in Paris and his statue overlook the harbour of his native, La Rochelle.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Government has announced that Mahebourg was to become a tourist village and this Minister, who is no more a Minister, he is a former Minister of tourism, Anil Gayan, stated, during the meeting with the inhabitants of Mahebourg, that he is going to develop Mahebourg as a tourist village. But, Mr Speaker, Sir, what we found out? We found out that it was a big *effet d'annonce*, the biggest ever.

Où est donc, M. le président, le fameux village touristique comme annoncé dans le budget ?

Mr Speaker, Sir, Mahebourg is for me one of the best tourist area in terms of cultural, historical, even on our island. It is one more reason to preserve and develop this region.

Mr Speaker, Sir, another issue of my constituency is drug. Unemployment is the biggest issue that the inhabitants of Mahebourg are actually facing. The second issue is water supply which is irregular; problem of repair of water pipes is long overdue. And the third thing that I wanted to emphasise is the infrastructural problem. The Mahebourg people talked to me. The other issue is a proper gymnasium, multi-complex, the renovation of Harry Latour Stadium, which is still the same, *et un centre récréationnel à côté du musée de Mahebourg, qui est long overdue aussi*. The Cavendish Bridge, *la rénovation du Cavendish*

Bridge où le ministre a fait un *site visit*, je le remercie pour cela. Upgrading and renovation of the road lighting.

M. le président, Mahebourg a toujours été reconnu comme l'un des berceaux de nos athlètes de l'île Maurice. Ned Charles, par exemple, Queland Tombé et tout récemment Fabrice Bauluck au Championnat du Monde de *kickboxing*, entre autres. Mais, malheureusement, pendant les 5 dernières années, rien n'a été fait en termes de développement dans le milieu sportif à Mahebourg. M. le président, j'espère de tout cœur que le ministre des Sports, présent là, fera de tout pour avancer et promouvoir le sport, particulièrement dans la circonscription où sa responsabilité sera sollicitée.

Mr Speaker, Sir, there is a big concern about the road infrastructure in Mauritius and it has been a persistent issue for decades. Mr Speaker, Sir, when you think about the new roads with their new resurfacing which has been just tarred and the next day, or the week after, like it has already been the case, the CWA, the CEB or the Wastewater, they come and start destroying the road, bulldozing the road, those same new roads, again, Mr Speaker, Sir. There should be consensus. There should proper planning. There should be communication between the RDA and those institutions. It's time. It's about time because, Mr Speaker, Sir, who is going to bear the costs every time? It has been persist for decades like I said and millions of rupees have been wasted from tax payers' money.

Again, Mr Speaker, Sir, I am not here to down-toe anyone, any Minister or Ministry. It's only constructive suggestion for a future and proper planification.

Again, Mr Speaker, Sir, I am not here to down-toe anyone, any Minister or Ministry. It's only constructive suggestion for a future and proper planification.

M. le président, je fais un appel à l'honorable ministre s'il pourrait envisager de nous présenter un plan directeur ou un *Master Plan* pour les 5 ou 10 ans à venir afin de minimiser ce gaspillage qui dure depuis des décennies.

Un autre sujet qui me préoccupe, M. le président, c'est le problème de la cruauté envers les animaux. Le problème suivant qui mérite sincèrement d'y porter notre attention est selon moi la cruauté qui sévit envers les animaux à l'île Maurice. Il est grand temps, M. le Président, que notre gouvernement intervienne, que ce gouvernement intervienne pour assurer leur bien-être, leurs protection et leur procurer un certain respect. Comment n'avoir pu y penser plus tôt. Chaque jour nous voyons dans la presse, nous constatons sur les réseaux sociaux et d'autres médias comme la maltraitance envers les animaux de tous poils augmente.

Des chiens qui se font brûler vifs. Des chats qui se font dépecés vivants, d'autres pendus entre autres. Je pense que le gouvernement devrait considérer à mettre en place une clinique, voir un refuge pour les animaux domestiques qui viendrait en support et serait accessible à la population en général.

Les animaux errants, M. le Président, seraient pris en charge et placés dans les endroits affrétés aux standards internationaux et ils seraient en sécurité, traités, voir même être accessibles à ceux qui souhaiteraient se procurer un animal de compagnie.

M. le président, cela réduirait les maux qu'ils causent dans nos rues et leur donnerait une seconde vie. Les cliniques pour animaux de compagnie ou chenil municipal comme préconisé en France devraient être encouragées surtout pour les propriétaires qui pour une raison ou une autre ne peuvent plus s'en occuper. Il y en a plein. Éventuellement, la collaboration et le support de la MSPCA et d'autres organismes veillant au bien-être de nos bêtes à poil devraient être sollicités pour encourager à la mise en place d'un tel projet. M. le Président, j'espère que ce gouvernement fera l'effort dans son prochain budget en incluant ces projets.

M. le président, je souhaiterais soulever votre attention de nouveau sur le sort des Rodriguais. C'est mon vœu et celui de tous les Rodriguais que Rodrigues devienne le grenier de l'île Maurice. M. le Président, cette île a un énorme potentiel dans le secteur de l'agriculture et celui de la pêche. Notre objectif est de mettre les Rodriguais au premier plan.

M. le président, pour ce qui s'agit de l'agriculture, il existe de grandes possibilités et pourquoi pas le développement d'aliments bio à grande échelle à Rodrigues. Pourquoi pas ? Nous devons pour cela responsabiliser et donner les outils nécessaires ainsi que tout le support Rodriguais et les inciter davantage à cet égard. De toute évidence, M. le président, pour dynamiser le secteur agricole, l'eau est une nécessité or c'est une denrée rare à Rodrigues. Il faudrait faire quelque chose dans ce sens.

M. le président, le discours de l'honorable Léopold, j'arrive, était certes rempli d'émotion quoique peu convaincant, à mon avis. De belles paroles tout simplement, téléguidé parfois, télécommandé à distance par son chef suprême, je suppose. Mais si la ferveur pour le peuple Rodriguais est si concernée, M. le président, comment se fait-il que l'OPR soit toujours au pouvoir pendant 35 ans et que...

(Interruptions)

40! Ah c'est bon, *plis bez enkor!* Et que le problème l'eau n'a jamais été résolu. Jamais! 40 ans! L'honorable Léopold parle d'une population de 40,000 habitants, non, à Rodrigues mais où sont les 30,000? Pourquoi ils ont quitté l'île Rodrigues? Pourquoi est-ce qu'ils partent? Pourquoi? Je vous pose la question. Répondez-moi.

Mr Speaker: Address the Chair, please!

Mr R. Duval: *Okay, Sir.* Cela démontre, M. le président, qu'il n'y a jamais eu de bons développements économiques, aucune nouvelle voie n'a été créée. Cela explique pourquoi tant de Rodriguais quittent le sol natal. Pourquoi est-ce qu'ils quittent le sol natal? Pourquoi ils vont immigrer en d'autres terres? Pourquoi?

(Interruptions)

Toi, trop 35 ans dan PMSD, twa!

Ils quittent leur propre maison, M. le président, leur propre propriété pour devenir locataires à l'île Maurice, d'accepter. Cela approuve votre échec. Il faut avouer. On aurait pu s'attendre à ce que l'honorable Léopold soit imprégné de valeurs humaines et profondes. C'est regrettable que les Rodriguais aient été laissés pour compte. On aurait pu s'attendre à ce que l'honorable Léopold adopte les principes d'humilité. On connaît l'humilité des Rodriguais. On aime les Rodriguais. On va à Rodrigues, on aime Rodrigues. Au moment de son discours, il parlait de décentralisation des pouvoirs et accuse le PMSD. Il accuse mais il est dommage de noter, M. le président, qu'il n'est pas au courant des réalisations du PMSD à Rodrigues. Et je vais lui dire. Sait il que les PMSD a créé leur ministère, le premier ministère en 1967, à Rodrigues? Le premier réseau routier en 1977 avec l'aide de l'Afrique du Sud. Le premier hôtel, Cotton Bay. Construction de l'aéroport que vous avez voulu changer le nom. Quelle ingratitude! Quelle ingratitude! La construction vous avez- je suis sûr que l'honorable Léopold va à l'hôpital, non? L'hôpital de Mont Lubin.

(Interruptions)

Infirmer là-bas?

M. le Président, la liste est plutôt longue. Je pourrais continuer ainsi encore et encore. Certes, il peut être pardonné. Il peut être pardonné. Le PMSD a toujours adopté une politique de proximité avec les Rodriguais. Depuis des décennies, des âges, des années...

(Interruptions)

Et tonn bwar, non? Tonn bwar di vin la?

L'OPR a toujours décrit le PMSD comme un parti enclin d'intimider et berner les Rodriguais. Ceci est totalement irrespectueux à l'égard de l'immense contribution de Sir Gaëtan Duval à Rodrigues. Pas de reconnaissance ! Ingratitude ! Nous devons au moins faire face d'un minimum de décence, d'humilité et de respect. Le PMSD avait une grande vision pour le captage d'eau, la création d'une radio, la création d'une médi-clinique de dialyse et des laboratoires spécialisés.

(Interruptions)

Non, tone kozer to bizin gagner! Une institution spéciale a été créée pour gérer les terres de Rodrigues pour que l'attribution de ces terres soit faite d'une manière plus juste et plus équitable. Malheureusement, M. le président, *si ou pas OPR ou pas pou gagne la terre dans Rodrigues. Ou bizin ene OPR pou ou gagne la terre dans Rodrigues.* La vérité, M. le président.

Mr François : Mr Speaker, Sir, on a point of order. I think what the hon. Member is saying is totally untrue, incorrect and that is not the case for Rodrigues. And I will ask him to withdraw what he just said about OPR Party with regard to land allocation. This is a pure allegation with regard to land allocation in Rodrigues.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Member, this is a very serious allegation, withdraw it.

(Interruptions)

Mr R. Duval: M. le président, c'est de bonne guerre, il faut accepter les critiques en politique. Il faut savoir ...

Mr Speaker: Withdraw it!

Mr R. Duval: ... prendre des coups en politique. Accepter !

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Withdraw it, and then you continue, please!

Mr R. Duval: I withdraw. If you want me to withdraw, there is no problem. We are talking about the hon. Member now, in Rodrigues.

Mr Speaker: Have you withdrawn it, hon. Member?

Mr R. Duval: Yes, I have withdrawn. No problem.

(Interruptions)

If you want, I withdraw again. I can withdraw again, and again and again.

(Interruptions)

En sachant, M. le président, que c'est exactement ce que fait l'OPR depuis 35 ans, ils ont l'audace.

(Interruptions)

40 ans, sorry ! 5 ans de plus !

Avec tout le respect que je vous dois, M. le président, c'est l'OPR qui ne mérite aucune confiance et je terminerai sur Rodrigues. Je ne vais pas être long. Ça fatigue, non !

M. le président, je tiens à part et mets un point d'honneur pour le peuple Rodriguais. Pour moi, le constat est clair, à ce jour Rodrigues - on est franc, il faut dire la vérité quand il faut le dire - n'a pu obtenir son indépendance économique et financière car il se contente uniquement d'une certaine autonomie administrative et c'est vrai. J'aimerais terminer en remerciant les mandants de Rodrigues pour leur support aux derniers élections.

(Interruptions)

27%! To vini, sa mem to pe peur!

M. le président, le PMSD est l'alternative pour un changement et sera toujours là pour soutenir les initiatives en vue des développements à venir pour l'île Rodrigues. Ce sont des îles qu'on parle en ce moment-ci. On vient sur Agaléga.

Mr Speaker, Sir, there is a big problem that touches upon the very foundation of our democracy. It is with regard to lack of transparency concerning the fate of Agaléga. Mr Speaker, Sir, when Government is not playing the card of transparency, when the public is being kept in the dark and being taken for granted, that is the very essence of democracy which is being jeopardised from my point of view. Let us take an example of the situation in Agaléga and the deal with the Indian Government for setting up a military base. I don't know, Mr Speaker, Sir, why this opacity in the construction of a military base in Agaléga. Hope I am saying the right thing. Why the Government is building a runway, a jetty when we all know this is the foundation of a military base?

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Government is hiding behind the mantra of development to justify their deal on Agaléga with India. Why, Mr Speaker, Sir, is this being done behind the back of

the Mauritians? What is there to hide, Mr Speaker, Sir? Did we discover gold, diamonds, petrol?

M. le président, est-il vrai que l'Inde a découvert des réserves de pétrole et de gaz dans nos mers près d'Agaléga? C'est écrit dans la presse en Inde. Ce n'est pas à moi de vous dire, le Premier ministre viendra nous répondre. Pas de problème, Exact !

M. le président, notre intégrité territoriale et notre souveraineté ne sont-elles pas des sacrosaints ?

Surely, Mr Speaker, Sir, if it was a good deal for Mauritius, the Government would have bragged about it, what they did for Metro Leger. Fair enough! Media, TV, radio, bill boards!

So, clearly, Mr Speaker, Sir, there is a problem of transparency and accountability with this Government. If the Prime Minister sincerely believes in his conviction of being a democrat - I know he is a democrat – then, democratic principles dictate that he should promote transparency. I know. And come with clean hands about Agaléga.

Mr Speaker, Sir, Mauritius is a sovereign State. Can we allow our sovereignty to be traded off for security and defence without any public consultation or consensus?

Je terminerai, M. le président, par dire que notre pays risque de s'abîmer, voire même perdre le sens de ses valeurs, de son image. M. le président, notre pays tient sa force de sa diversité culturelle, de son unité, de sa grande valeur, de sa liberté. Je voudrais, M. le président, rappeler que la politique dans une démocratie, est le sens de l'honnêteté, le respect de l'autre. La politique, c'est d'aussi défendre un idéal, être au service des concitoyens, être à l'écoute des concitoyens et surtout, M. le président, avoir un esprit de responsabilité envers le peuple.

Merci, M. le président.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Mrs Jutton!

Mrs T. Jutton (Second Member for Vieux Grand Port & Rose Belle): Mr Speaker, Sir, it is not without trepidation albeit with a deep sense of pride that I rise today to deliver my maiden speech in this august House.

Allow me, first of all, to congratulate you on your election as Speaker. It goes without saying that you will draw on your unparalleled experience to maintain the decorum in the House.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I also wish to congratulate the President of the Republic of Mauritius, His Excellency Prithvirajsing Roopun, GCSK as well as the team under the visionary leadership of our hon. Prime Minister for crafting such an excellent Government Programme where the citizens of the Republic of Mauritius is at the heart of all the actions that this Government intends to take.

Mr Speaker, Sir, at the very outset, I would wish to thank the hon. Prime Minister and Leader of the House for having placed his trust and confidence in the youth and women. This is in line with the SADC and the SDGs of the United Nations - causes I have myself been advocating for over the years.

Mr Speaker, Sir, following our passion is what truly makes us feel alive and adds meaning to our lives. And I am grateful that I found mine which is to touch lives and this is why, Mr Speaker, Sir, I have always been involved in service to our country through various ways, trying to leave a positive impact in the lives of people.

Being asked to stand as candidate for the general elections, offered me a tremendous opportunity to influence lives positively as an active politician and my subsequent election as a Member of Parliament for Constituency No. 11, coupled with my new assignment as Parliamentary Private Secretary which opened a window of opportunities to impact more lives by serving not only my fellow constituents but the population at large.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the campaign was short and intense and being a newcomer, I had to sail through stormy waters and learn to ride the waves, even if sometimes the tide was against us. Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to point out that the backbone which gave me the resilience to fight till the end like a warrior, oblivious to what the results would be, was the conviction I had, I have in our Party, the MSM and, in particular, the values set out by our great Leader; which I fully endorse.

Our Leader, the hon. Prime Minister, Pravind Kumar Jugnauth is -

- a man of valour;
- a man of principles;
- a man of his words, and
- a man of dignity, verily an inspiration.

Mr Speaker, Sir, it is with heartfelt gratitude and a deep sense of honour that I stand today on this side of the House, as the youngest parliamentarian in the House and the torchbearer of hope to the youth.

When my dad passed away 6 years back, being the eldest daughter in the family with my mum as a housewife and my small sister, I knew I had to shoulder the responsibilities and people used to question and to see three women living alone as vulnerable but we refused to be victims of circumstances and we decided to take control of our lives. Things were not easy but we always had full faith and I kept forging ahead each day incrementally taking one step closer to my dreams and I knew up there in the sky, my dad would be showering his blessings and would feel proud of me and my achievements.

Coming from a very modest background with only the fervent will to serve and giving my 200 percent, I hope, our youths out there are inspired too, to keep thriving because dreams do come true when there is a Prime Minister who believes in the capabilities of the youths and gives equal chance to all! This side of the House is a reflection of the trust placed in our young capable youths.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to share that being in this august House resonates with my being as I know I am living on purpose and I feel that I belong. I believe that I have found my tribe, my brothers and sisters on this side of the House who share the same zeal as I have, the same determination to bring forward positive transformation and make the world a better place to live.

I hereby seize the opportunity, Mr Speaker, Sir, to thank the people of my constituency, Vieux Grand Port and Rose Belle for their unwavering faith in me and I reiterate my unflinching commitment to serve their best interests and uphold my oath.

I also wish to thank my two *colistiers* who have embarked with me on this journey and we have been sailing together, hon. Mahen Kumar Seeruttun and hon. Ms Naveena Ramyad. Thank you guys, you were fantastic.

Mr Speaker, Sir, before moving to our programme, I can't resist the temptation of going back to recent events whereby some people had been clamouring on roof tops that the hon. Prime Minister had no legitimacy to run the affairs of the State, but on 08 November 2019, Mr Speaker, Sir, the *peuple admirable* of this country has not only proved beyond any doubts that our hon. Prime Minister has always had full legitimacy.

In fact, Mr Speaker, Sir, this very *peuple admirable* has used its power to transform the self-proclaimed wildest roaring lion into an emaciated cat left to purr at a decrepit London fireplace, while lapping milk in a *katori*.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as far as the Leader of the Opposition is concerned, that's history, not to say pre-history. Let's get back to the present and focus on the future. And needless to say that the future is us, this side of the House in whom the people of this country have vested full confidence. And, let it be said, Mr Speaker, Sir, that we are here not only for the next five years, but for many, many years to come under the undisputed leadership of our hon. Prime Minister, Pravind Kumar Jugnauth.

Coming to the Programme, Mr Speaker, Sir, I had the opportunity to recoup feedback of my constituents on our Government Programme.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker, Sir, I can confirm that people from my constituency and the nation at large are happy. Happy because the Programme reflects the Care of the Government towards its citizens, with the fairer access to prosperity and wealth distribution as well as enhanced standards of living for every citizen while taking Mauritius higher in the leagues of nations.

Beyond happiness, Mr Speaker, Sir, the Programme inspires confidence because it effectively translates the promise of *l'Alliance Morisien* to cater for the well-being of each and every Mauritian, independent of colour, creed, religion and sex. Without any doubts, the pillars for an inclusive and green society have been laid.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the measures are bold, daring, *sans équivoque*! It goes without saying that it all stems down from the vision of the hon. Prime Minister, from which a full-fledged strategy has been formulated and this programme has been carefully crafted.

Clarity precedes mastery and as such, everything being clearly laid out, people trust that these will be effectively translated into actions. This is because the whole nation knows that the hon. Prime Minister and his Government walk the talk, where others have failed miserably and only given false hopes and fake promises for over 10 years.

Mr Speaker, Sir, today our people, our kids can dream because this Government turns dreams into reality.

Today, Metro Express is a reality.

Today, equal opportunity is a reality.

Today, youngsters in politics is a reality.

Today, Mauritius being ranked 1st in Africa for ease of doing business is a reality.

Today, free tertiary education is a reality.

Today, valuing our elderly where pension is at Rs9,000 is a reality while others undervalued the sacrifices and hard work of our elderly. This was sheer disrespect.

Mr Speaker, Sir, our Government does not hit below any belt. We have a clear vision and we hit the bull's eyes directly.

Mr Speaker, Sir, some people turned into experts in opening and breaking wide gates but they did not care about trying to open those little closed doors to happiness in our citizens' hearts.

Yet this is what they were supposed to be doing.

On the other hand, putting people first has become the hallmark of the Government of the hon. Prime Minister Pravind Kumar Jugnauth! Giving everyone the share that they deserve rather than filling "*coffre-fort*" or sharing with "*copains-copines*" only!

Hence, Mr Speaker, Sir, people feel safe as they trust the pilot who will be taking the airplane safely to its destination.

Mr Speaker, Sir, people also feel relieved as the future of their kids and future generations is assured.

Whether we consider the child, who is benefitting from a conducive school environment with free textbooks and tablets or the 'Afterschool' program, for young people aged 8 to 14 years, whereby new activities such as the practice of arts, stimulating creativity and learning about our national cultural heritage are all embedded - all these ensure that our kids will be groomed into all rounded citizens.

On the other hand, the future of many of our youths was put at stake with '*universite marrons*' whereby innocent children had been led by deceit to believe in fake promises and parents sadly invested their whole lives' savings into these bogus institutions. *«Monsieur Le président, Nous avons aussi pleuré et souffert avec ces familles qui ont perdu toutes leur économies».*

More so, our Government took action. For instance, for medical students, we had to have recourse to team of experts from the Imperial College of London for evaluation.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as hon. Dr. Dorine Chukowry mentioned. They allowed people with three credits to go for HSC and 'A' level, but they did not even change the entry requirements for jobs and they are reciting data about unemployment. They are responsible for this level of unemployment and after having threatened employees, threatened the children of this country, and thank God that we have an able leader like the hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth who, once again, came with right solutions including the setting up of Polytechnics Mauritius Ltd. and others. We want to stop pushing students into the black hole of frustration so that they can live a life of dignity.

Mr Speaker, Sir, this programme also ensures that people live a life of dignity and we have witnessed the tears of happiness rolling down the cheeks of those who now benefit from the minimum salary - which was brought to Rs9000 and today up to Rs10,200.

Mr Speaker, Sir, to bring change to existing legislations, to break glass ceilings, this requires guts and only our hon. Prime Minister and his Government had the courage to come up with the minimum salary, the negative income tax, flexitime and the Workers' Rights Bill.

As a past member of the 'Employment Relations Tribunal' (ERT), I can confirm that there are so many employees who have been tolerating cases of injustice and today so many lives have changed with these measures.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Redundancy Board, set up under Workers' Rights Act 2019, is an instance. It deals with all cases of reduction of workforce and closure of enterprises.

After the closing down of the (TCSB) Termination of Contracts of Service Board, what is commonly known as the 'hire and fire' period led to many injustices being caused to employees who were subject to being redundant without any judicial scrutiny.

The (EPPD) Employment Promotion and Protection Division came to rescue the situation but still it was by referral from the Ministry of Labour and Industrial Relations that finally the Tribunal could be seized of the matter.

Now, the employer who intends to reduce his workforce or close down his enterprise has a duty to notify the Board accordingly.

Mr Speaker, Sir, being a fervent gender advocate and having pledged to support SDG 5 which is about gender equality, I have been involved in a series of activities for empowerment of girls and women, for instance, promoting entrepreneurship. And I can bear testimony to the fact that it is with immense gratitude that ladies have welcomed this

Government's initiative of providing unsecured loans of up to Rs500,000 to help them transform their passion into a bread-winning vocation and allow them to be independent 'entrepreneurs'.

Mr Speaker, Sir, during the last few years, I also had the opportunity to conduct pre-budget consultations with women in social welfare centres across the island in collaboration with the Ministry of Gender and the National Women's Council, further to which reports were sent to the Ministry of Finance. I can confirm that the budgetary measures show that the requests of ladies were heard.

For instance, Rs11 m. was allotted for the Women's Empowerment Centres to be revamped with additional facilities such as -

- equipment to promote wellness;
- Day Care centres for elderly women;
- an "Atelier des Métiers et de Savoirs" for the unemployed and vulnerable women as well as
- maintaining the crèche scheme to regularise the Child Day Care Centres.

The World Bank Mauritius outlook for 2018 stated that one of the key levers to bring Mauritius out of the middle-income trap is to redress the gender gap. This has multiple benefits ranging from economic to social ones.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the intent of our Government to address the gender gap can be exemplified in the following measures -

- making provision to implement gender mainstreaming programme in government ministries and departments;
- removing restriction on maternity leave which was limited to 3 confinements in the public service;
- moreover, the decision of Government to come up with the National Gender Policy 2019-2029 clearly demonstrates that the foundation to build a gender-inclusive society as well as attaining the set targets of Agenda 2030 has been set.

Mr Speaker, Sir, coming to domestic violence, the firm resolution of our Government to combat and help prevent domestic violence is clear.

Allow me to quote from Paragraph 136 of our Government Programme which reads as follows -

“Government will be relentless in its fight against all kinds of violence, including domestic violence.”

The hon. Prime Minister is himself chairing a high-level committee to formulate a new strategy to eliminate gender-based violence. The legal framework will also be strengthened and a new national sensitization campaign implemented and along the same veins, the hon. Minister Koonjoo-Shah is leaving no stones unturned.

We have to understand the issues from the roots to be able to eradicate them: which is why this Programme recommends the setting up of the ‘National Social Observatory’.

Our Programme also highlights family values as the firm foundation from which children grow and as mentioned recently by our hon. Prime Minister at an event -

“The responsibility for the development of our children does not rest solely on the mother. The pillars of the family are both: mother and father.”

Mr Speaker, Sir, about the role of women in politics, previously we had only 8 women MPs and today we have 14 women MPs, out of which 10 are from the majority with three ladies as Ministers and three as PPSs and one as Chief Whip.

All these measures clearly show that our Government has a firm intent of reducing the gender gap and encouraging female participation in politics which will definitely allow for more women to be part of the policy dialogue, thereby making Government more democratic and representative.

Being a young woman myself, it is a huge honour and a privilege to be given the opportunity to be part of the change; verily embodying the change.

Mr Speaker, Sir, Mauritius can be a key game-changer by developing its areas of competitive advantage through deepening of its core competencies and key resources which is our human capital.

It is important to empower our youth and help them become independent and instead of being job seekers, be actually job-creators. Hence, the spirit of entrepreneurship needs to be fostered and all this is embodied clearly in paragraphs 61 to 65 of our Government Programme; from promoting digital entrepreneurship, innovation, R&D to supporting youth led start-ups.

Moreover, the setting up of the Institute of Technical Education will not only create opportunities and pathways for students to pursue studies in technical education but it will also ensure that the SMEs can have access to affordable, qualified technical staff.

The National Skills Development Strategy 2020-2024 will definitely also serve to boost employability of our youth.

Mr Speaker, Sir, allow me to share a little anecdote from my life as a lecturer; it is with deep pain that we had lost one university student who chose to put an end to her life. According to statistics, every 30 seconds, someone in the world is committing suicide due to depression. Mental health is as important as, if not more important than physical health.

To my students out there who used to ask: ‘Who Cares?’

I want to remind them. We care. This Government cares.

For those struggling, let me remind you that it is this Government under the leadership of the hon. Prime Minister, Pravind Kumar Jugnauth, who heard the plea and understood the importance and the need for a proper Mental Health Bill. I have myself been leading a series of campaigns on ‘Mental Health Awareness’ to destigmatize speaking on mental health issues and help prevent suicide. I hereby seize this opportunity to thank the then Minister of Health and Quality of Life, hon. Dr. Husnoo, at that time for supporting the cause and currently hon. Dr. Jagutpal for taking it forward. As reflected in the Government Programme, Specialised Care Homes for those suffering from mental illnesses will be set up.

All this show that our youth matters, their voice counts. *D’ailleurs*, this is clearly reflected by the setting up of the National Youth Environment Council under the aegis of the Prime Minister’s Office.

Mr Speaker, Sir, those making unfounded statements about the lack of intent of our Government to tackle the challenge of climate change have clearly failed to read Chapter 7 of our Government Programme and the intention of our Government to come up with a New Climate Change Bill and a River and Lake Authority Bill, amongst other measures. This Programme also contains laudable measures and fixed targets such as development of renewable energy to reach 40% in 2030.

Greening Mauritius is vital because if each country adopts sustainable practices, we can curb down the disastrous effect of climate change. On this side of the House, we are really

concerned. This is why I invite Members on the other side of the House to collaborate and to stop wasting time in futile discussions *et démagogies!*

Else, as much as finding the antidote to the Coronavirus has become a *sine-qua-non*, we need to find the antidote to the virus of *démagogie* from which the other side of the House suffers from.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the construction of a breakwater and an island terminal as well as a Unified Regulatory Framework, an Offshore Petroleum Bill, a Seabed Mineral Bill as well as the setting up of a marine biotechnology hub to accelerate the development of our blue economy, all these clearly demonstrate that the team on this side of the House have taken the oath to shape a vibrant future for the Republic of Mauritius.

There are also several initiatives that reflect the desired innovation and creativity necessary to transform Mauritius into a high-income country such as the promotion of artificial intelligence, robotics, blockchain and the internet of things.

Mr Speaker, Sir, hon. Mrs Navarre-Marie stands on the failure of Members on this side of the House to talk on technology, blockchain, A I is unfounded or maybe I believe they chose not to hear. For instance, hon. Balgobin not only mentioned numerous times about blockchain and industry 4.0 but also on artificial intelligence, internet of things, big data, etc. Or maybe they don't understand.

Mr Speaker, Sir, replying to hon. Ms Foo Kune's take about retired athletes falling into depression, I would like to remind that under the aegis of the Ministry of Youth and Sports, there is the TFES which is the Trust Fund for Excellence in Sports which actually ensures that there is an allowance for retired athletes, for those who have recorded outstanding performance at senior level at African and International Games and Championships. They even have a monthly allowance ranging from Rs3,000 to Rs10,000 and Mr Speaker, Sir, any sports person benefitting from this scheme will not be deprived of any other benefits or allowance as well.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I truly wish to see the entire House working together for the benefit of the country. And I truly believe that there are more significant issues to delve into rather than checking the brand of clothes that hon. Members are wearing.

M. le président, la Bhagavad Gita ne cesse de mettre l'accent sur le devoir et son accomplissement. Pour ce Gouvernement aussi, le devoir envers le peuple est un devoir sacré et nous ne reculerons devant rien.

Ainsi, si L'honorable David maintient ses propos, Je demande aussi –

« Que ce qui nous rassemble soit plus fort que ce qui nous sépare »

J'exhorte ainsi à l'amour universel pour nos confrères et nos sœurs, pour notre patrie.

Et que nous soyons parfaitement unis dans un même esprit envers ce devoir sacré de protéger notre patrie.

M. le président, afin qu'on puisse justement travailler dans cet esprit, j'invite encore une fois l'honorable David à passer ce message, un extrait de Rudyard Kipling, à qui veut l'entendre. Je cite –

« Si tu peux rencontrer triomphe après défaite et recevoir ces deux menteurs d'un même front, si tu peux conserver ton courage et ta tête quand tous les autres les perdront, alors les rois, les dieux, la chance et la victoire seront à tout jamais tes esclaves soumis, et ce qui vaut bien mieux que les rois et la gloire, tu seras un homme mon fils ! »

To conclude, Mr Speaker, Sir, let it therefore be reminded again and again that the citizen is at the heart of all actions that this committed, caring and compassionate Government intends to take.

Therefore, let us forge ahead and soar higher together and contribute in leaving behind a legacy making the world a better place ...

Mr Speaker: No crosstalking!

Mrs Jutton: ... where our children will feel safe, happy and where the future generations will respect the elder generations and value its roots.

Mr Speaker, Sir, allow me to conclude the last few words in Hindi –

“Pravind Sarkar kaa naam suna heri akcharon mein likha jaeega aur itihaas gava rahega ki eysa bhi pradhan mantri hai jo jaan laga kar praja ke liye kaam kar raha hai.”

Merci beaucoup.

(7.26 p.m.)

Mr D. Ramful (First Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien): Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Mr Speaker, Sir, I have chosen to speak about the economy because as a representative of the people, I must say that I am concerned as many Mauritians out there,

about the present economic situation. Although I have to admit that I am not an expert on economy but when I look at figures, when I look at statistics, when I read reports on the economic situation and when I listen to the experts out there, I have to say that the situation is contrary to what the Minister of Finance has said earlier on whilst intervening.

In fact, when you look the way at which the economy is evolving, both locally and internationally, Mr Speaker, Sir, you can only conclude that the greatest challenge in this new decade that the Government will be facing is the economic challenge. Now, the reason why I am saying this is beyond what was highlighted by the hon. Minister of Finance about the Metro Project, about the urban terminals, the Phoenix interchange, hospitals, etc., those public investment projects, which tend to give the erroneous impression that there is a buoyancy in the economy, lies the hard truth about the present economic situation. I will come to those hard truths later on during my intervention. But let me first deal with the global economic situation.

The global economic climate does not seem to be helping either. The IMF in its World Economic Outlook Report, which came out in January this year, has forecast a sluggish recovery of the global economy from an estimated global growth of 2.9% to 3.3%, bearing in mind, Mr Speaker, Sir, that this forecast did not take into account the effects of the Coronavirus on the worse economy. We have to bear in mind also the impact of Brexit on our future trade relations with the UK. We have to bear in mind also the trade war between the US and China, although it seems, according to the latest news, that there are some positive development in that respect. And now, the ripple effect of the Coronavirus as a result of its impact on China's economy. The Economist that came out last week has used the terms Corona mix, which is the cost of fear of the impact of the epidemy on the world economy. All these factors do not favour the evolution of our economy in the near future.

I have had a look at the Government Programme, and it is very unfortunate that the Government Programme does not help either. There is a whole chapter on the economy, which is titled: 'Building the Economy of the Future'. Unfortunately, it lacks vision and concrete policies that are required in the present context to take us to new heights in this decade, and pave the way towards what Government is saying: 'Towards an Inclusive, High Income and Green Mauritius'.

Well, I have listened to hon. Minister of Finance. He said: 'Those who are pessimist about the current situation should refer *au dernier bilan du gouvernement de l'honorable*

Pravind Kumar Jugnauth. And I am afraid to say when I look at the performance of the Government for the last five years, and what they are now proposing in their new Government Programme, I am even more pessimist. Since the hon. Minister of Finance has made reference to the past performance of the Government, let us go back, let us look at the economic achievement during those five years. Because it is good to remind the people of the economic agenda that was set by the previous Government, and allow them the opportunity to assess the credibility of what the present Government is proposing. It is good that we remind the people.

And let us go back five years, look at their programme back in 2016, Government Programme 2015-2019, what they had promised to the people on the economy, what was their economic agenda. Let us see, and you will be surprised, Mr Speaker, Sir, how many of those measures that they had promised, have remained unaccomplished and dead letters. They had remained dead letters of this Government Programme. Let me take an example. They talked about the creation of new pillars of development. At paragraph 177 of their 2015 programme, and I read –

“Government will develop new pillars for economic growth, such as the launching of a regional bunkering hub, the development of the ocean economy,(...)”

I will come to the ocean economy. Unfortunately, the Minister of Blue Economy is not present.

“the implementation of the duty-free shopping paradise initiative and the ICT Enabled Services sectors.”

This is what they had promised five years back and after five years, the people of this country are justified to ask, firstly, how many new pillars of economic development has the Government created? Zero! Where is the regional bunkering hub?

(Interruptions)

How many? The Minister is not here. Maybe he could have enlightened us. How many more vessels have come for bunkering in Mauritius since 2014? What development has occurred in the ocean economy sector? Well, with all due respect to the then hon. Minister of Ocean Economy who is not in the House and who has retired from politics, I understand. Apart from a few discourse on sharks and whales, we had nothing from the then Minister in terms of development of the ocean economy. You would be surprised, look at the statistics! We don't even have statistics on growth in that particular sector. And they have said that this is going

to be the sector of the future! I ask the present Minister of Blue Economy, give us figures, tell us, what is the percentage growth in that particular sector? Nothing! He can't even answer that question. Because there is no such statistics, unfortunately. So, after having failed to honour their commitment, what they had promised five years back, they are now coming back under the new programme. You know what? Under the new programme, Mr Speaker, Sir, *bis repetita*. At paragraph 80, the same promise. They are now saying, after five years, and I quote –

“As part of its new industrial and trade policies, Government will also focus on developing new economic pillars.”

So, five years, they had promised the people that they will develop economic pillars. Five years they did nothing. After five years, in this new programme, they are again promising the people of this country that they are going to build new economic pillars. Anyway! We will wait and see. Now, they are talking about - I have listened to this - big words, AI Technology. They are now talking about, Mr Speaker, Sir, AI Technology and Innovation. Let me put this question: do we have professionals? Do we have the human resource today to develop that sector?

You know how many – they had a meeting with the representatives of the IMF and the people of the IMF have said: we don't produce that much energy for this particular sector to develop. This is the hard truth and they are promising AI Technology and innovation to the people. Let us see what they had promised on agriculture, you will be surprised. They said back in 2015 –

“Government will accelerate the reforms already started in the cane industry to make it sustainable and financially viable.”

With all due respect to the then hon. Minister, he did come with a few palliative measures. I have to admit. He came with a few, what have we called, palliative measures but nothing concrete came out. We had a report on the re-structuring of the sector jointly chaired by someone from a private sector, but it was rejected by all the stakeholders. Now, we are asked to wait till the World Bank come up with the report and then we will address the difficulties of the cane industry.

In the meantime, Mr Speaker, Sir, sugar cane planters are facing tremendous hardship to sustain their sugarcane fields. In the meantime, small sugar planters are still fighting to have a fair share under the IPP Agreement with regard to production of electricity from

bagasse. In the meantime, Mr Speaker, Sir, small planters are still awaiting more consideration from the Government with regard to the fixing of the price of molas.

(Interruptions)

Yes, there was.

More importantly, the demand of the small planters, this has been overlooked, they have been fooled for five years, they have been asked to wait. Now, they are being asked to wait for the report of the World Bank and you will be surprised, Mr Speaker, Sir. That sector is facing so much difficulty. In the present programme, there is only one paragraph on that sector, three lines. At paragraph 73 what are they saying now?

“A new reform package will be implemented for the cane industry, while encouraging the shift to modern organic and niche production in agriculture. A plan for optimising the use of agricultural land will be developed.”

There is nothing concrete for the cane industry. Well, we wait for the World Bank report.

The ocean economy, again, at paragraph 218 of the 2015 Programme –

“A legal framework and a unified regulatory body will be put in place to license, supervise, monitor and regulate the activities of ocean related economic operators.”

Where is the Bill, Mr Speaker, Sir? Forget about the Bill on Licensing of Marine Activities. The then Minister did not come before the House with a single Bill for five years. Not a single Bill. *Pendant cinq ans*, not a single Bill on ocean economy and we said back in 2015 that this sector is going to be the sector of the future and they talked about new pillar. Emerging sectors, without a single Bill? Well, let’s come to the sector on financial services, which is in the news, at paragraph 229 in the 2015 Programme, this is what they said –

“Government will strive to extend the network of Double Taxation Agreements and Investment Partnership and Protection Agreements.”

Instead, what did we witness? We witnessed the trading off of the DTA agreement with India for Rs12.7 billion. This is what happened. Trade off. We have recently the Global Bank in India as custodian of foreign funds taxing Mauritius as a high-risk jurisdiction. The now Minister of Financial Services just said in his statement: in September 2008 the ESAAMLG Evaluation Report highlighted 12 specific areas of the FAFT Recommendations where Mauritius had to improve compliance. And on the 21 February, FAFT placed the Mauritian

jurisdiction on the grey list, would you imagine this, with countries such as Yemen and Syria, in view of our strategic deficiencies in our regimes to counter money laundering, terrorist financing and proliferation financing. And if corrective measures are not taken immediately, Mr Speaker, Sir, we run the risk of being blacklisted both by the EU and by the Securities and Exchange Board of India. This is what is awaiting us if we continue down this path, and not to forget, I think hon. Uteem mentioned those financial scandals in the off-shore sector that hit us during those five years, Alvaro Sobrinho, Dos Santos, etc giving a bad image to our sector.

Tourism: at paragraph 196 of the 2015 Programme –

“The tourism sector will be called upon to play a pivotal role towards achieving the targeted second economic miracle.”

This is what they said to the population: that particular sector is going to play a pivotal role to achieve the second economic miracle.

You know what, Mr Speaker, Sir, when you look at the real graph for 2019, before Coronavirus, for accommodation and food service activities, which gives us an indication of growth in the tourism sector. You know what is the growth rate for 2019? Zero percent. The growth rate for 2019 for accommodation and food services *pour 2019 zéro pourcent* and this sector is supposed to contribute to us achieving the second economic miracle.

In fact, they have been no well-defined strategy in this sector over the last five years. Do you know what was the growth rate for Maldives in the past five years: 15.4%. Seychelles 6%, as well as Sri Lanka. They have shown positive growth in the tourism sector, *et chez nous le secteur a été en chute libre pendant ces cinq années.*

Mr Speaker: One speaker.

Mr Ramful: He is helping me with some words. For the last five years, what have we been doing? We have been opening and closing airways, air corridors. There has been no restructuring of the national air flight. And this was promised in their programme. There has been a decline of the number of tourist arrivals by air and there has been no revamping of the Mauritian Tourism Promotion Authority. The last time I think the Chairperson vacated office. That was back in 2016. No one was appointed in a substantive capacity since last week. And such a sector is facing enormous difficulty with coronavirus, etc. And whom they have appointed as Chairperson of the Mauritian Tourism Authority? An unreturned candidate of *l'Alliance Morisien!* I have nothing personal against that person. But then what expertise does

that person have in promotion of tourists when that particular sector is facing so much difficulty?

(Interruptions)

And guess who is his Advisor? Mr Teeruth Moosun! What is his expertise in tourism when the tourist industry is *en chute libre*? Mr Teeruth Moosun, Advisor!

(Interruptions)

This is the way.

(Interruptions)

Cross talking.

(Interruptions)

You like it when they talk.

(Interruptions)

Anyway, it is a pity!

(Interruptions)

Let me come to the manufacturing – this is an important sector as well - investment and export-oriented industries. As at June 2019, I remember putting a question to the hon. Prime Minister, Rs189.6 m. have been reimbursed to the export-oriented enterprise under, what they call, the ‘Speed to Market Scheme’. Hon. *zanas*, what is his name?

Mr Speaker: Now you start!

Mr Ramful: No, sorry.

Mr Speaker: Now you start!

(Interruptions)

Look at me and talk! I ...

(Interruptions)

Mr Ramful: The first Member of No.10. He is in the business of pineapples, and he knows, he has benefitted, his company, sorry, has benefitted under that scheme. I am not saying anything wrong. He is aware of this.

(Interruptions)

And the textile industries as well they have benefitted under that scheme. Millions...

(Interruptions)

Millions of public money...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Quiet, please!

(Interruptions)

Let the hon. Member talk!

Mr Ramful: *Laisse mo kozer! Zonn bien kozer!*

Mr Speaker: Address the Chair, hon. Member! I am protecting you!

(Interruptions)

Mr Ramful: Yes. Millions of money have been dashed out and what have we seen? *Pendant ces 5 dernières années*, what have we seen? Closure of textile factories; hundreds of people have lost jobs!

(Interruptions)

And you will be surprised when you look at the - the hon. Minister, I think, said it in an interview, he does not believe in figures. When you look at Statistics Mauritius, the real growth for the export-oriented enterprise in 2014 was positive 2.5%. That was when they took over. And in 2018, would you believe this? It is negative 4.5%. It is forecast, I cannot...

(Interruptions)

It is forecast.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: No conversation! Address the Chair, hon. Member!

Mr Ramful: Negative 4.5% for 2018. Our trade deficit has been increasing year in, year out. If you look at the bilateral trade with the US, under the AGOA Agreement, you will notice that year by year, our export to the US is decreasing. Year by year, our export under the AGOA Agreement, is decreasing. The Economic Development Board was set up in 2017. Unfortunately, it has not delivered to our expectation. Yet, an international candidate, Mr François Guibert, the rare bird, was recruited, handsomely paid from public funds and what happened one year after? His contract was terminated. He was asked to go back home.

Mr Speaker, Sir, when we look at the performance of Government for the last 5 years, one wonders if it was not for this financial support of a total amount of Rs35.2 billion, the grant and the loan, everything, financial assistance from India, which they had used to implement their public investment programme, I ask the question, what would have been the economic growth in this country? What would have been the economic growth in this country? In fact, for the past 5 years, we have been bailed out by India, Rs35.2 billion. Now, the economists are saying *que l'heure de vérité a sonné*. Now that the public investment projects are coming to an end, the money from the loans have been exhausted, what do we do next? What do we do next, Mr Speaker, Sir? And I have not heard the hon. Minister saying a single word about the transfer from the BoM. Maybe that transfer of Rs18 billion taken from the BoM to the Consolidated Fund, maybe that is an indication that *l'heure de vérité a bien sonné*. I have had a look at the circular from the Minister of Finance justifying the transfer of the Rs18 billion in December last. Apparently, Rs7.1 billion have been used for early repayment of the loan to African Development Bank. And the rest will be used to reimburse loan, when? In December 2020! The money has been retrieved now. The loan will be reimbursed in December 2020. Where is the money now? My question is: why ...

(Interruptions)

Dans coffre Sun Trust!

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Continue, please!

(Interruptions)

Mr Ramful: The answer from the hon. Prime Minister is evidence that there is something fishy. Why take the money now? And where is the money? Let me remind the Minister of Finance, well he is aware, that according to Section 47 of the BoM Act, funds from the Reserve Fund can only and strictly be used solely for monetary policy and repayment of external debt but not for any purpose and certainly not to pay pension, not for recurrent expenditure and not to be placed in commercial banks to earn interest. Any Act contrary to section 47 would amount to misappropriation of funds belonging to the BOM and those responsible for that, those behind that misappropriation should be held responsible.

Mr Speaker, I won't be long. Let me refer to a few statistics on the economy and I shall make particular reference to the sectoral real growth rates which have been published by Statistics Mauritius. Maybe it's good that we go through this for the public to know. In 2014,

the growth in the agricultural sector was +3.7%. In 2018: -1.3%. Manufacturing: +1.8%, now 0.7%. If we look at sugar, it is -19%. If we look at textile, it is -6.3%, negative growth! If you look at construction, I have to be fair, there has been an increase maybe because of the public infrastructure projects but after that we don't know what will happen. When the money that they have taken on loan is finished, we don't know what will happen to the public investment programme.

(Interruptions)

When we look at accommodation, well I have already said it: 0%. Well, I have talked about the export-oriented enterprise which is -4.5%. If we look at these sectors. This is why I am concerned about the tourism sector and the financial services sector because they both form part of the tertiary sector and this is the only sector which is contributing to the economy because if we look at the primary sectors like agriculture: in 2018, the real growth rate was -1.1%. The secondary sector is +2.8% but there was a decrease. The only sector that is keeping head above water is the tertiary sector: +4%. I am talking of percentage. I am relying on figures from the Statistics Mauritius, 4% for the tertiary sector. The tourism and financial services form part of the tertiary sector. This is how we are dealing with the challenges in those two sectors.

So, this is why, Mr Speaker, I am really concerned about the economy. Let me, before I conclude, try to tackle two issues raised by the hon. Minister of Finance during his speech. He has talked about *la théorie du ruissellement* - trickle-down theory. According to him, previous Governments, including the Labour Government, have been adopting that theory and, in so doing, they have contributed to the increase of the gini coefficient. This is what he basically said. Let me remind him, the creation of the Welfare State, that pension that you use to play with before the election just to attract votes...

(Interruptions)

The free education for all, free health services for all, free transport for the elderly and students, creation of the Mauritius Housing Corporation - people tend to forget - building houses for the poor. Creation of the Ministry of Social Integration bears the footprint of the Labour Party. Let me remind him and he is talking about the trickle-down theory that we follow that theory.

The second issue that he raised was about inflation. He said that the inflation rate is apparently historically low. However, he failed to mention about the depreciation of the rupee vis-à-vis the dollar. I think hon. Duval said it.

Mr Speaker, when you look at the historical chart the 01 January 2015, one US dollar was equivalent to Rs31.6. Today, I have just checked on the internet, one dollar is equivalent to Rs37. So, I think he has to bear in mind the depreciation of the rupee when talking about inflation. We don't have to go far; when we go in a supermarket we will see how the prices have increased.

Mr Speaker, before I finish, well, with regard to my Constituency, I think hon. Duval has very correctly highlighted a few projects about my Constituency, Mahébourg/Plaine Magnien which I approve. I am not going to repeat what he said. We had for the last five years one Minister. Today, we have two Ministers. I only hope for the betterment of my Constituency and I wish them good luck and I'm finished.

Thanking you, Mr Speaker.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Doolub!

Mr Doolub: Mr Speaker, Sir, I move that the debate be now adjourned.

Mrs Tour rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

Debate adjourned accordingly.

ADJOURNMENT

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I beg to move that this Assembly do now adjourn to Friday 28 February 2020 at 3.00 p.m.

The Deputy Prime Minister rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

Mr Speaker: The House stands adjourned.

Adjournment matters! Hon. Members, I have a list of 15 Members. The rule is that there is no question at adjournment time. It's all raising issues, single issues. So, be brief and give time to all Members to address the House. Thank you. Hon. Uteem!

(8.06 p.m.)

MATTERS RAISED

JEUX DES JEUNES ELITES – INJURED BOXER

Mr R. Uteem (Second Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central): M. le Président, j'aimerais soulever le cas d'un boxeur de ma circonscription qui est le champion dans la catégorie de plus de 75 kilos lors des dernier Jeux des Jeunes Elites. A la suite de sa belle prestation, ce jeune boxeur a bénéficié d'un stage de formation à Nantes. Malheureusement pour lui, lorsqu'il était en stage de formation, il s'est blessé au pouce. De retour à Maurice, je ne sais pas pour quelle raison, on l'a informé qu'il ne pouvait pas avoir l'intervention chirurgicale faite dans un hôpital, dans un établissement public. Donc, maintenant il doit le faire dans une clinique privée. Le problème qui se pose c'est qui doit assumer le coût de cette intervention chirurgicale vu que ce jeune boxeur prometteur vient d'une région défavorisée de Tranquebar et qu'il s'est blessé lors d'un stage de formation sponsorisée par le Ministère de la jeunesse et des sports. J'en ai parlé avec le Ministre concerné et j'espère que le Ministre va porter une attention particulière à ce cas et, en cas de nécessité, de fournir le financement nécessaire pour que ce jeune boxeur prometteur puisse à nouveau boxer.

The Minister of Youth Empowerment, Sports and Recreation (Mr S. Toussaint): M. le président, je remercie l'honorable Membre de m'avoir informé de ce problème au préalable. Donc, je vais m'occuper de ce dossier et faire de sorte à ce que notre boxeur soit soigné au plus vite.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Bhagwan!

(8.07 p.m.)

AML UNION - PRESIDENT - SUSPENSION

Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière): Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to raise an issue and draw the attention of the Prime Minister concerning the President of the AML Union, Mr Sunassee. He has been suspended since last year. We are nearly reaching one year. He went to the Supreme Court, he won his case. I raised the issue last time and hon. Collendavelloo did reply. He is still suspended and the case is dragging on, there have been four times hearings and they have changed many of the particulars. Can I appeal to the hon. Prime Minister, at least, to see with the administration of the AML that - a

President of the Union - either the case is terminated, the issues are cleared and that the AML Management cannot continue to drag on specially being given that he is the President of the AML Staff Association?

The Prime Minister: Well, I will look into the matter, but if the case is before the Court, of course, we will not be able to interfere.

(Interruptions)

It is not.

(Interruptions)

Well, if he has won, then I will ask AML to see what is the way forward with regard to that person.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Ameer Meea!

(8.09 p.m.)

JARDIN COCO & ST FRANÇOIS XAVIER GARDEN – DRUG TRAFFICKERS

Mr A. Ameer Meea (Third Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East):

Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. The issue I am raising tonight is addressed to the Minister of Local Government. Cela a trait aux deux jardins de la circonscription numéro trois, le jardin Coco qui se trouve à la croisée des Rues Yoloff et Edgar Laurent et le jardin qui se trouve à la rue St François Xavier. C'est le même problème, le problème d'insécurité, fréquenté par des individus très louches qui se donnent au trafic de drogue. A la rue St François Xavier, il n'y a pas de gardien, le jardin est mal entretenu et les équipements pour les enfants sont dans un piteux état. Donc, les habitants font un appel au ministre pour que, du moins pour le jardin Coco, si des caméras peuvent être installés pour que la police peut y voir tout ce qui se passe là-bas. Pour le jardin de la rue de St François Xavier, s'il peut instruire la municipalité de Port Louis pour y remédier. Merci, M. le président.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government, Disaster and Risk Management (Dr. A. Husnoo): Mr Speaker, Sir, as far as the works that need to be done in the gardens, I will pass on the message to the Municipality of Port Louis. But as far as the camera is concerned, I have to discuss with them whether it is the Municipality that looks after that or the different sectors that look after it.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Quirin!

(8.10 p.m.)

TRAFFIC LIGHTS - BEAU BASSIN

Mr F. Quirin (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière): M. le président, ma requête ce soir s'adresse à nouveau à honorable ministre du Transport, Alan Ganoo, et concerne les feux de signalisation se trouvant à côté de la station de police, la place des taxis, dans le centre de Beau Bassin.

M. le président, les conducteurs qui empruntent la route principale à Beau Bassin vers Coromandel en passant devant la place des taxis et dans le sens inverse sont incapables de distinguer si les feux permettant aux piétons de traverser la route, sont au rouge ou au vert. Impossible ! Donc, c'est un stress pour tous les conducteurs y compris moi-même qui emprunte cette route pratiquement tous les jours. Je demanderai à l'honorable ministre de faire remplacer ces feux impérativement par d'autres similaires à ceux se trouvant près de Tangs Way qui fonctionne très bien. Donc, je compte sur l'honorable ministre pour faire le nécessaire afin d'éviter que survienne un autre grave accident. Merci.

The Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail (Mr A. Ganoo): I have taken good note, Mr Speaker, Sir and I will do the needful.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Nagalingum!

(8.11 p.m.)

QEC & SSS EBENE - PEDESTRIAN CROSSING & FOOTPATH

Mr D. Nagalingum (Second Member for Stanley & Rose Hill): Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. My request is addressed to the Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail. The hon. Minister must surely be aware that the school children attending both the QEC and the SSS Ebène at Rose Hill are facing serious security problem with the introduction of the Light Rail Transit System. There is no pedestrian crossing, no footpath. If I can ask the hon. Minister to see with those concerned RDA, NDU, and if he can look into the matter urgently for security reasons for those institutions and the public at large?

The Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail (Mr A. Ganoo): Thank you, hon. Member. Mr Speaker, Sir, I have taken good note of the remarks he has made and I will transmit the message to the organisation concerned and the stakeholders.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Ms Foo Kune!

(8.12 p.m.)

BEAU BASSIN – POLICE PATROL

Ms K. Foo Kune (Second Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière): Merci, M. le président. J'aimerais attirer l'attention de l'honorable Premier ministre par rapport au nombre considérable de cas rapportés au Police Western Division de *larceny* dans le centre de Beau Bassin depuis novembre 2019 qui se chiffre avec une moyenne de 18 cas par mois et qui inclut en moyenne quatre cas par mois de *larceny with violence*. Je demande à ce que des mesures appropriées puissent être prises pour accroître la sécurité des habitants de Beau Bassin avec sans doute plus de patrouilles de police et à des fréquences plus régulières afin de décourager ces cas de *larceny* et que cela ne se reproduise pas. Merci.

The Prime Minister: Well, I will check on the information that has been given to the House by the hon. Member.

(8.13 p.m.)

CASSIS CHURCH – GARBAGE DUMPS

Mr P. Armance (Third Member for GRNW & Port Louis West): Merci, M. le président. Ma requête ce soir s'adresse au vice-Premier ministre, ministre des Collectivités locales concernant les dépôts d'ordures qui se trouvent à côté de l'église de Cassis. Donc, c'est une situation qui dure depuis pas mal d'années et j'ai effectué une visite là-bas hier, j'ai une photo que je vais lui remettre. Malgré que le ramassage se fasse sur une base régulière par la municipalité de Port Louis, c'est toujours un entrepôt d'ordures. Donc, s'il peut voir que la situation s'améliorer, mais cela s'aggrave de jour en jour. Merci.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government, Disaster and Risk Management (Dr. A. Husnoo): I will pass on the message to the Municipality of Port Louis.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Lobine!

(8.14 p.m.)

NEHRU LANE & SAYED HOSSEN AVENUE, PHOENIX – WASTEWATER PROJECT

Mr K. Lobine (First Member for La Caverne & Phoenix): Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. My request is to the hon. Deputy Prime Minister. Mr Speaker, Sir, there is a serious issue of health and safety with regard to an ongoing wastewater project at Nehru Lane and

Sayed Hossen Avenue at Phoenix. There is a picture that I took this morning and I am tabling same.

Can the hon. Deputy Prime Minister use his good office to request the Wastewater Management Authority to kindly supervise this area where the works are being carried out, especially this road is being used by students going to school and it is not properly fenced and that might cause accidents to the students especially at night?

The Deputy Prime Minister: Well, first of all, I must place on record my appreciation of hon. Lobine for having given me good prior warning of the matter he was going to raise. The advantage is that I am in a position, of course, to enlighten him and to enlighten the House on the matter.

Mr Speaker, Sir, very long time ago, more than hundred years ago, sewer pipes were laid and from Mangalkhan and from St Paul, they joined together in the vicinity of Nehru Lane. Of course, today Mangalkhan is no longer what it was a century ago. Things changed, the way of life has changed and last year, there was an overflow which was an emergency situation. So, after that overflow, it was decided to replace the old clay pipes. There were two 200 mm diameter clay pipes, they were in parallel and they were replaced by one 400 mm pipe. After the contract was awarded, we needed to wait about three months to get all the materials on the site and 100 metres have already been laid and 650 metres are yet to be laid. An excavation was made and the problem which hon. Lobine has raised is that there has been a backflow within the excavation site and that is what we see on the photograph. This problem, the works have been completed on Friday and now they are observing to see what is the situation before the restoration of the road.

Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

(8.17 p.m)

MUNICIPALITIES & DISTRICT COUNCILS - CLERICAL OFFICERS - PROMOTION

Mr S. Abbas Mamode (Second Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East): Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. My issue is addressed to the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government, Disaster and Risk Management and it concerns Clerical Officers.

While those at the Public Service Commission have already been promoted to Management Support Officer (MSO), those at the Local Government, be it at Municipalities or District Councils, a few are still Clerical Officers. So, I would humbly ask the Vice-Prime Minister to look into the matter. I am made to understand that they have written a letter to him. So, please, see if they also can be promoted to Management Support Officer. There are a few left.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government, Disaster and Risk Management (Dr. A. Husnoo): Mr Speaker, Sir, I have received that letter. The issue has been going on for many years. We'll have to look into it.

Mr Speaker: Hon. David!

(8.18 p.m.)

BONNEFIN ROAD, PAILLES - FLOODING

Mr F. David (First Member for GRNW & Port Louis West): Merci, M. le président. Ma requête s'adresse à l'honorable ministre des Infrastructures nationales et du développement communautaire. Elle concerne la circonscription No. 1, région de Pailles, localité de Bonnefin. J'avais refait ce point lors de mon *maiden speech*.

Tout en haut de la route de Bonnefin, à l'intersection du *Signal Mountain Road*, se trouvent des maisons en contrebas d'un terrain en pente qui fait face à la montagne. Alors, il existe un canal. Celui-ci est limité dans son efficacité parce qu'il est encombré et vu la topographie du terrain, de l'eau de pluie continue de s'écouler vers ces maisons entraînant de la boue, des débris et des roches. Certaines de ces maisons sont fissurées et je crains un glissement de terrain.

Puis-je suggérer humblement au ministre et aux autorités concernées, la mise en place d'un *retention wall* et d'un *cross drain* pour ramener l'eau de pluie dans le canal. Je me tiens évidemment à la disposition du ministre, de la NDU et de la *Land Drainage Authority*, y compris pour les accompagner sur site.

Merci.

The Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development (Mr M. Hurreeram): Mr Speaker, Sir, the Land Drainage Authority and the NDU are already aware of this project. There are a series of works that have been done around this region and we are

looking into it. The PPS has been on site at least five times last week to look into the matter, but this is a matter of priority. Once the LDA...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Quiet! Quiet!

(Interruptions)

Mr Hurreeram: Five times, yes. And once the LDA is ready with the plan, we will implement. It is not about just building a retention wall. I don't think the hon. Member is an expert in drainage matter. Let the expert do the recommendation and then we will implement.

Thank you.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Assirvaden!

SAYED HOSSSEN STREET, CLAIRFONDS, VACOAS – WASTEWATER PROJECT

Mr P. Assirvaden (Second Member for La Caverne & Phoenix): Merci, M. le président. Ma requête est dans la même direction que l'honorable Lobine. Elle est adressée au *Deputy Prime Minister*, l'honorable Collendavelloo. Elle concerne la région de Clairfonds, Avenue Sayed Hossen à Vacoas où des travaux sont en cours que je salue, des travaux vraiment *long overdue* qui sont en train d'être faits dans la région tout à côté de la mosquée de Phoenix.

La *Wastewater Management* a donné un contrat à la compagnie Sotravic qui, malheureusement, prend un contrat de cette envergure avec les équipements avariés, des tuyaux percés qui causent pas mal d'inconvénients aux habitants d'Avenue Sayed Hossen à côté de la Mosquée, le chemin qui mène vers l'école.

Donc, je demanderai au ministre s'il peut voir avec le *Wastewater Management* avec la compagnie Sotravic si on peut faire quelque chose pour soulager ces habitants.

Merci.

The Deputy Prime Minister: It is exactly what hon. Lobine raised, but it is...

(Interruptions)

Please!

Mr Speaker: Mais écoutez!

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Prime Minister: Please! You intervened; when I talk, you don't want me to talk?

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: You raise an issue, you don't listen!

The Deputy Prime Minister: Well, all right.

Mr Speaker: So, we move to the next. Hon. Gungapersad!

(8.21 p.m.)

2019 SC EXAMINATION - HINDUISM - GRADE THRESHOLD

Dr. M. Gungapersad (Second Member for Grand' Baie & Poudre d'Or): Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. My request is addressed to the hon. Minister of Education regarding the grade threshold, especially in Hinduism.

In fact, many Educators, students, parents and trade unionists are distressed by the serious discrepancy in grade threshold for the 2019 School Certificate examination. They have written letters to the Ministry of Education and MES seeking clarification why someone even with 60% in Hinduism has got 7 and not a Credit. I would request the Minister of Education to clarify us about it.

Thank you.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government, Disaster and Risk Management (Dr. A. Husnoo): I will pass on the message to the Minister of Education.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Juman!

(8.22 p.m.)

VALLÉE DES PRETRES & ROUTE MILITAIRE JUNCTIONS – TRAFFIC CONGESTION

Mr E. Juman (Fourth Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East): Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. My request is addressed to the hon. Prime Minister.

There is heavy traffic congestion at the Vallée des Prêtres first and Pamplemousses, the next Route Militaire junctions in my constituency. This is a source of major disturbance, Mr Speaker, Sir. There are frequent accidents there.

I have written to the Commissioner of Police on 20 January to seek his assistance, but I have not received any reply so far. I would, therefore, request the hon. Prime Minister if he can kindly use his Office to talk to the CP for Police assistance and if we can find a durable solution for the problem there.

The Prime Minister: Well, Mr Speaker, Sir, this shows that the standard of living of Mauritians are increasing and that there are more vehicles on the road. Obviously, there is more traffic and there is traffic congestion, but, on the other hand, I think that is also the purpose of having the Metro Express in order to have a more modern system of public transport, but, of course, I will look into this issue at Route Militaire. I will look into it and see what are the measures that can be taken in order to alleviate the traffic problem.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Ms Anquetil!

FLOREAL - METRO EXPRESS PROJECT - POLICING

Ms S. Anquetil (Fourth Member for Vacoas & Floreal): Je vous remercie, M. le président. Ma requête s'adresse au Premier ministre.

Dans le cadre du projet Metro Express, la rue Sivananda à Curepipe est fermée et depuis cette fermeture de route, la circulation dans les rues résidentielles comme Jurry Lane, Dunputh Lane et Rivière Sèche à Floréal présentent un grand danger.

Je sollicite l'intervention du Premier ministre pour une présence policière renforcée dans cette région.

Je vous remercie, M. le président.

The Prime Minister: As far as I know, we have taken the necessary measures with the Police to see to it that there is, of course, effective policing in those areas, but, of course, we cannot put so many Policemen everywhere, but I will see to it if there is any room for increasing probably Police personnel, but in the Committee that I am chairing also and together with my colleagues, the Minister of Housing and Land Use Planning and the Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail, we have addressed this issue.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Osman Mahomed!

(8.25 p.m.)

DR. MAHMOODKHAN HYDERKHAN MEDICLINIC & TRANQUEBAR COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTRE – AIR CONDITIONING

Mr Osman Mahomed (First Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central): Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. The issue I would like to raise tonight concerns the air conditioning system in medical centres in my constituency and it is addressed to the hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

We are talking about Dr. Mahmoodkhan Hyderkhan Mediclinic at Plaine Verte and the Tranquebar Community Health Centre. The air conditioning system at both places is faulty and in Dr. Mahmoodkhan Hyderkhan Mediclinic, the matter is made worse because there is no cross ventilation in the building and non-functioning air conditioning system causes a lot of inconvenience to patients and to staff, whereas at Tranquebar Community Health Centre, it is faulty in essential places like the pharmacy which I am given to understand – I am not an expert – could put the medicines there at stake and it has been faulty for the last two years.

So, my request to the hon. Minister, is to kindly look into the matter and have the system expeditiously repaired at the earliest.

Thank you.

The Minister of Health and Wellness (Dr. K. Jagutpal): Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir, I am very much aware of the situation of those Community Health Centres. The air conditioner is already under process, the procurement is on. So, I'll be expecting the reparation to be done in the coming weeks.

Thank you.

At 8.26 p.m., the Assembly was, on its rising, adjourned to Friday 28 February 2020 at 3.00 p.m.