



**SEVENTH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**PARLIAMENTARY**

**DEBATES**

**(HANSARD)**

**(UNREVISED)**

**FIRST SESSION**

**MONDAY 16 MARCH 2020**

**CONTENTS**

**PAPERS LAID**

**QUESTION (*Oral*)**

**MOTIONS**

**ADJOURNMENT**

## THE CABINET

**(Formed by Hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth)**

Hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth	Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity
Hon. Ivan Leslie Collendavelloo, GCSK, SC	Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Energy and Public Utilities
Hon. Mrs Leela Devi Dookun-Luchoomun, GCSK	Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology
Dr. the Hon. Mohammad Anwar Husnoo	Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management
Hon. Alan Ganoo	Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail
Dr. the Hon. Renganaden Padayachy	Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development
Hon. Nandcoomar Bodha, GCSK	Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade
Hon. Louis Steven Obeegadoo	Minister of Housing and Land Use Planning
Hon. Mrs Fazila Jeewa-Daureeawoo, GCSK	Minister of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity
Hon. Soomilduth Bholah	Minister of Industrial Development, SMEs and Cooperatives
Hon. Kavydass Ramano	Minister of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change
Hon. Mahen Kumar Seeruttun	Minister of Financial Services and Good Governance
Hon. Georges Pierre Lesjongard	Minister of Tourism
Hon. Maneesh Gobin	Attorney General, Minister of Agro-Industry

	and Food Security
Hon. Yogida Sawmynaden	Minister of Commerce and Consumer Protection
Hon. Jean Christophe Stephan Toussaint	Minister of Youth Empowerment, Sports and Recreation
Hon. Mahendranuth Sharma Hurreeram	Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development
Hon. Darsanand Balgobin	Minister of Information Technology, Communication and Innovation
Hon. Soodesh Satkam Callichurn	Minister of Labour, Human Resource Development and Training
Dr. the Hon. Kailesh Kumar Singh Jagutpal	Minister of Health and Wellness
Hon. Sudheer Maudhoo	Minister of Blue Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries and Shipping
Hon. Mrs Kalpana Devi Koonjoo-Shah	Minister of Gender Equality and Family Welfare
Hon. Avinash Teeluck	Minister of Arts and Cultural Heritage
Hon. Teeruthraj Hurdoyal	Minister of Public Service, Administrative and Institutional Reforms

**PRINCIPAL OFFICERS AND OFFICIALS**

Mr Speaker	Hon. Sooroojdev Phokeer, GOSK
Deputy Speaker	Hon. Mohammad Zahid Nazurally
Deputy Chairperson of Committees	Hon. Sanjit Kumar Nuckcheddy
Clerk of the National Assembly	Lotun, Mrs Bibi Safeena
Deputy Clerk	Ramchurn, Ms Urmeelah Devi
Clerk Assistant	Gopall, Mr Navin
Clerk Assistant	Seetul, Ms Darshinee
Hansard Editor	Jankee, Mrs Chitra
Serjeant-at-Arms	Pannoo, Mr Vinod

**MAURITIUS**

**Seventh National Assembly**

-----

**FIRST SESSION**

-----

**Debate No. 08 of 2020**

**Sitting of Monday 16 March 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 Land Transport and Light Rail**

The Road Traffic (Bus Fares) (Amendment) Regulations 2020. (Government Notice No. 42 of 2020)

**B. Attorney General  
Ministry of Agro- Industry and Food Security**

The Legal Aid and Legal Assistance (Fees) (Amendment) Rules 2020. (Government Notice No. 45 of 2020)

**C. Ministry of Commerce and Consumer Protection**

The Rodrigues Consumer Protection (Control of Price of Taxable and Non-taxable Goods) (Amendment No. 6) Regulations 2020. (Government Notice No. 44 of 2020)

**D. Ministry of National Infrastructure and Community Development**

The Annual Report 2017/18 of the Construction Industry Development Board.  
(In Original)

**E. Ministry of Blue Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries and Shipping**

The Fisheries and Marine Resources (Fishing of Sea Cucumbers) (Amendment) Regulations 2020. (Government Notice No. 43 of 2020)

**F. Ministry of Arts and Cultural Heritage**

The Annual Report of the Chinese Speaking Union for the Financial Year July 2017 to June 2018.

**ORAL ANSWER TO QUESTION****COVID-19 PANDEMIC – NEGATIVE ECONOMIC IMPACT**

**The Leader of the Opposition (Dr. A. Boolell)** (*by Private Notice*) asked the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development whether, in regard to the economic measures recently announced by Government to help enterprises face the negative economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, he will state –

- (a) the source and amount of financing in respect of each of the main measures of the “*Plan de Soutien*”, indicating the amount of savings realised in the 2019-2020 recurrent budget for the financing thereof, and
- (b) Government plans to fund –
  - (i) an expansion of emergency healthcare services and facilities to cope with the contagion, and
  - (ii) direct financial assistance to retrenched employees and families most affected by economic hardships.

**Dr. Padayachy:** M. le président, avant de répondre à la question, permettez-moi de situer le contexte international de cette crise à la fois sanitaire et économique.

Depuis le début de cette année, nous sommes confrontés à une urgence sanitaire provoquée par la propagation du Covid-19 qui aura des conséquences profondes sur l'économie.

Nous faisons face à un double choc, d'une part de l'offre et, d'autre part, un choc de la demande. Aucun pays ne sera épargné.

A travers le monde, les banques centrales interviennent pour préserver la stabilité financière et soutenir l'économie.

Depuis le début du mois de mars, la FED est intervenue à deux reprises et a ramené ce dimanche le taux directeur à 0% afin de rassurer les acteurs économiques et les marchés financiers.

L'abaissement des taux, permet de baisser le coût du crédit, et ainsi de stimuler l'économie lors d'une crise classique.

Mais cette crise est tout, sauf classique. Elle est inédite, car le modèle économique que nous avons connu et construit depuis des décennies est menacé.

La globalisation, comme nous l'avons connu, est en quarantaine.

L'économie globale est en quarantaine.

L'OCDE, M. le président, prévoit un impact négatif sur la croissance économique allant de 0,5% à 1,5%.

L'ancien chef économiste du FMI, Kenneth Rogoff, va encore plus loin, et il évoque la possibilité d'une nouvelle récession mondiale, qui pourrait être très différente de celles apparues dans le passé car c'est l'offre et la demande qui sont touchées par cette crise.

Au niveau local, nos estimations nous donnent, dès maintenant, un impact négatif de 1%. Mais c'est dynamique, cette crise est dynamique et cet impacte peut aller jusqu'à 6,5% sur la croissance économique de Maurice.

Nous constatons que cette crise est devenue systémique, nécessitant des mesures exceptionnelles et immédiates.

M. le président, le plan de soutien que j'ai présenté vendredi dernier, a pour objectif principal de venir en aide aux opérateurs dans diverses filiales, incluant les PME, en vue de minimiser l'impact économique négatif du COVID-19.

Concernant la partie (a) de la question, le « Plan de Soutien » intervient à deux niveaux : d'une part, un appui au niveau macroéconomique et d'autre part un appui sectoriel.

Le plan de soutien mobilisera un montant total de R 9 milliards, soit R 8 milliards provenant des institutions publiques, principalement de la Banque de Maurice et de la *State Investment Corporation*.

Les R 1 milliard restant proviendront du *Consolidated Fund* par une réallocation des fonds.

(i) Au niveau de la Banque de Maurice -

- Il y aura un montant de R 5 milliards qui sera contrôlé par un comité technique d'allocation des fonds et qui sera déployé à travers les banques commerciales, c'est le *dual control*.  
Le taux d'intérêt est fixé à 2,5%, incluant un moratoire de six mois sur le remboursement du capital et des intérêts.

Ces prêts serviront à subvenir aux besoins de trésorerie et de fonds de roulement des opérateurs touchés par les effets

économiques du COVID-19 dans les divers secteurs de l'économie, incluant les PME.

- En sus de ce montant de R 5 milliards, l'autorité monétaire a réduit le *cash reserve ratio* de 9% à 8%, soit une baisse de 1%. Cette baisse va libérer des fonds à hauteur de R 4,3 milliards. Ces R 4,3 milliards seront crédités sur un compte spécial à la Banque de Maurice pour financer les divers secteurs économiques touchés par cette crise sanitaire.
- (ii) La Banque de Maurice lancera le *2020 Savings Bond* à l'intention des particuliers et des organisations non-gouvernementales à vocation non-lucrative. Ces obligations sont assorties d'un taux d'intérêt annuel de 2,5% payable chaque semestre.

Les *Saving Bonds* auront une maturité de deux ans et seront émis jusqu'à ce que le montant de R 5 milliards soit entièrement atteint.

- (iii) Au niveau de la *SIC*, il y aura la *SIC Equity Participation Scheme*. Ce plan aidera les entreprises à surmonter leurs difficultés financières. Un montant de R 2,7 milliards sera mobilisé par le biais d'émission de *redeemable preference shares* (des actions privilégiées rachetables).

De cette somme de R 2,7 milliards, un montant de R 2,3 milliards sera alloué au *Equity Participation Scheme* de la *SIC*, et une somme de R 400 millions au *Investment Support Programme (ISP)*.

Sous le programme *ISP*, les plans suivants seront mis en œuvre pour aider les entreprises les plus vulnérables, en particulier, encore une fois, les PME. Cela pour moderniser leurs outils de production et financer leurs besoins en fonds de roulement.

- Au sujet du *Enterprise Modernisation Scheme (EMS)*, le taux d'intérêts passe de 3,5% à 2,5%;
- Le taux d'intérêt sous le *SME Factoring Scheme* et sous le *LEMS* passe de 3,9% à 2,5%, et
- La *SIC* opère le *SME Equity Fund* et le taux de rendement minimal requis sera réduit de 6% à 3%.

- (iv) Pour la *DBM*, il y aura un *Revolving Credit Fund* de R 200 millions pour soulager les problèmes de trésorerie des micro-entreprises dont le chiffre d'affaires ne dépasse pas les R 10 millions.

Cette facilité sera disponible jusqu'au 31 décembre 2020. Les avances, dans le cadre de cette facilité, seront exonérées d'intérêt si les remboursements sont effectués dans un délai de neuf mois.

De plus, les entreprises affectées par cette crise sanitaire, auront droit à une double déduction fiscale sur les investissements consentis sur les équipements. Il est estimé que cette mesure coûtera à l'Etat la somme de R 30 millions.

M. le président, je vais maintenant aborder les interventions sectorielles préconisées dans le "Plan de Soutien".

- (i) Au niveau du secteur touristique, il y aura la suspension du *Passenger Fee* sur les billets d'avion jusqu'au 31 juillet 2020. Cette mesure coûtera à l'Etat R 60 millions;
- (ii) A la MDFP, à l'aéroport, l'entreprise va proposer une remise de 15% sur tous les achats par les touristes jusqu'au 31 juillet. Le *Customs Tariff Act and Excise Act* seront amendés pour permettre l'achat de trois litres de spiritueux au lieu de deux. Ces deux mesures coûteront à la MDFP un montant de R 50 millions;
- (iii) Le *Environment Protection Fee* de 0,85% qui frappe le chiffre d'affaires des hôtels sera suspendu jusqu'au 31 juillet 2020. Cette mesure coûtera R 60 millions;
- (iv) Le *Training Levy* applicable aux opérateurs du secteur du tourisme sera réduit de 1% à 0,5% pour la période du 01 avril au 30 juin 2020. Cette mesure coûtera R 50 millions au *HRDC*, et
- (v) *Air Mauritius* va poursuivre sa stratégie de tarifs promotionnels pour attirer les touristes. Ces remises sur les tarifs vont jusqu'à 50%. Les estimations sur cette mesure est de R 300 millions.

Les hôtels feront également des efforts de leur côté. Ils proposeront des remises de 15% à 35% destinées aux touristes.

Au niveau du secteur manufacturier et commercial, le ‘‘Plan de Soutien’’ comprend les mesures suivantes –

- (i) Suspension des frais portuaires imposés par la *MPA* et la *CHCL* pour toutes les exportations. Cette mesure coûtera R 200 millions à la *MPA* et la *CHCL*;
- (ii) Il y aura l’extension du *Freight Rebate Scheme* sur les exportations vers l’Afrique du Sud et Tamatave. Cette mesure coûtera à l’Etat R 50 millions;
- (iii) Il y aura aussi l’extension du *Speed to Market Scheme* pour les exportations vers l’Afrique du Sud, le Japon, l’Australie, le Canada et le Moyen-Orient. Cette mesure coûtera à l’Etat R 100 millions.

Sur le plan de la production agricole, une somme de R 100 millions sera allouée pour encourager la production vivrière locale.

M. le président, en ce qui concerne les sommes disponibles pour l’année financière 2019-2020, il y a eu un montant voté de R 121 milliards et nous disposons de R 40 milliards jusqu’à la fin de l’année financière.

Au cas où ce montant ne serait pas suffisant, nous pouvons avoir recours à l’*Estimates of Supplementary Expenditure (L’ESE)*, selon les dispositions de la Constitution. Cela a été utilisé régulièrement dans le passé sous différents régimes.

Concernant la partie b (i) de la question, une somme de R 208 millions a été allouée pour l’expansion du plan d’urgence en réponse à cette crise sanitaire.

Pour la partie b (ii), nous avons un fonds de R 450 millions dans le *Workfare Programme* qui pourront servir à soutenir les employés qui se retrouveront en chômage technique.

Voilà, M. le président.

**Dr. Boolell:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the matter is too grave for the hon. Minister to give replies which are not relevant to the circumstances which are prevailing in this country. Is the

hon. Minister aware that we have to make sure that we keep afloat businesses and safeguard employment? Can I ask the hon. Minister whether there is a substantial package which will be disbursed to ensure that we keep people's employment, that we have the required amount to make sure that we can buy other equipment that is needed for hospitals, the more so in the light of setting up Intensive Care Units?

**Dr. Padayachy:** M. le président, j'aimerais avoir une précision sur les questions, parce que s'il me pose la question concernant l'impact économique, je répète, M. le président, c'est R 9 milliards qu'on a mobilisé en fonds. Mais à ce montant, il faudra ajouter les R 8,5 milliards que l'État a déjà mobilisées dans le cadre de notre programme électoral. Nous avons mis sur la table R 8,5 milliards à travers la hausse de la pension, à travers la hausse du salaire minimum, à travers la hausse des aides pour les plus vulnérables, cela pour soutenir la demande. Maintenant, nous sommes en train de travailler pour soutenir l'offre, c'est ça l'économie, d'un côté on soutient la demande et de l'autre côté, on soutient l'offre. Voilà ce que j'ai à dire concernant la première question mais je n'ai pas de précision concernant la deuxième.

**Dr. Boolell:** Mr Speaker, Sir, there is more than a supply/ demand shock in this country and can I impress upon him, the warning issued by IMF in April 2019, that, *gouverner c'est prévoir*, and you know what was said about the availability of fiscal space to cope with any sudden and unexpected shocks to the economy. Am I to understand that Government has been able only to disburse Rs1 billion from Consolidated Fund? Is that the contribution of Government?

**Dr. Padayachy:** Je répète ma réponse. Je pense que l'honorable Leader de l'opposition n'a pas bien compris ce que je viens de dire. Première chose, on a soutenu la demande qui est partie intégrante de n'importe quelle économie. C'est très technique, mais c'est comme ça. Deuxième chose, on soutient l'offre maintenant, qu'on mette R 1 milliard et que les institutions publiques mettent R8 milliards, c'est ça le but. A nous d'être innovants pour pouvoir aider l'économie en général. Le but ce n'est pas de mettre R 10 milliards et de ne pas avoir de contrôle sur ce qui se passe, notre but c'est de pouvoir contrôler les finances publiques, c'est ça l'intention de notre ministère et de ce gouvernement.

**Dr. Boolell:** If the hon. Minister wants to know how to exercise control over public expenditure, I would ask him to refer to the report submitted by the Director of Audit over the largesse of this Government and instead of creating fiscal space, to come to the rescue of

those who are likely to lose jobs. Government is doing nothing except to release Rs1 billion and this is from the Consolidated Fund and I ask the hon. Minister, will he be able to give us the breakdown as to this amount of money?

**Dr. Padayachy:** M. le président, bien sûr, je peux déposer sur la table le *breakdown* ...

*(Interruptions)*

Oui, on va déposer, ce n'est pas un souci. Vous n'avez pas besoin de crier, l'honorable. J'entends très, très bien. Okay !

Donc, M. le président, j'aimerais de nouveau expliquer : on a posé R9 milliards pour l'offre, on a posé R 8,5 milliards pour la demande. Je viens de dire, on a R 500 millions qui sont disponibles dans un fonds concernant le chômage technique. S'il y a besoin, j'ai expliqué aussi que nous pouvons aller sur l'*ESC* à n'importe quel moment pour avoir des fonds supplémentaires. C'est ça être dynamique, c'est ça être proactif. Nous l'avons été depuis le début, nous travaillons jour et nuit pour mettre en place ce genre de mesure. Nous avons été assez innovants. Je suis heureux d'entendre le *Leader* de l'opposition dire qu'on est en train d'être efficace sur l'utilisation des fonds publics parce que, nous, on a mis R 1 milliard et les institutions publiques ont mis R 8 milliards pour soutenir l'économie à Maurice comme ça se fait à travers le monde. Voilà, M. le président, ma réponse.

**Dr. Boolell:** Mr Speaker, Sir, again, I would remind the hon. Minister to read copiously the report submitted by the Director of Audit. Can I impress upon him that this contagion, there is an impending contagion and it is bound to come and we have to act fast, is he aware that this will have an impact upon the economy for at least one and a half years? Can I ask the hon. Minister, and whether he will be able to disclose and give us the relevant information as to the substantial amount of money that is required to address this problem? At least, he needs to give us some figures !

**Dr. Padayachy:** M. le président, j'ai répondu plusieurs fois à cette question. Je ne vais pas de nouveau répéter la même réponse, je vais simplement dire quelque chose concernant l'audit parce qu'il vient de poser pour la deuxième fois la même question et cela n'a rien à voir avec *the PNQ*, mais je vais répondre. Nous, on a été proactif, on a déjà mis en place un comité pour travailler, c'est au niveau de notre ministère. Mais de plus, nous l'avons déjà annoncé que nous allons baisser les coûts opérationnels, les dépenses opérationnelles, de 10 %. C'est cela, avoir une gestion dynamique et efficace des dépenses publiques et surtout en

période de crise, une crise inédite. Nous devons être encore plus efficaces dans nos dépenses.

**Dr. Boolell:** Let me come to specific now. Can the hon. Minister inform the House in relation to his "*Plan de Soutien*", whether there will be direct assistance to retrenched employees? What is Government proposing in this regard, a direct assistance?

**Dr. Padayachy:** Je répète encore une fois ma réponse, M. le président, parce que je pense que le Leader de l'opposition n'est pas au courant de la loi. On a fait des amendements concernant le *Workers' Rights Act* et il y a une provision concernant le *Workfare Programme*, dedans il y a un fonds de R 450 millions, on utilisera ce fonds pour venir en aide aux personnes touchées par le chômage technique. Voilà !

**Dr. Boolell:** Is the hon. Minister aware that Workfare Programme exists in many countries? Let me take the case of Singapore, which has given cash payout to every worker and to every citizen in its country and similarly it applies to Hong Kong, whereas in Mauritius - can I ask the hon. Minister to give a firm commitment that, in relation to retrenched workers, that money cash-out will be given to those workers to sustain them throughout the contagion effect?

**Dr. Padayachy:** M. le président, j'aimerais que le *Leader* de l'opposition mette de l'ordre dans sa tête.

*(Interruptions)*

Un moment, il nous dit qu'il nous faut faire des économies, qu'il nous faut regarder par rapport à l'audit, qu'il nous faut regarder les différentes mesures qu'on est en train de mettre en place et de l'autre côté il nous dit de distribuer à tout le monde de l'argent comme ça se fait à Hong Kong. Nous, notre philosophie, M. le président, c'est d'aider les plus vulnérables. Notre philosophie, encore une fois, ce n'est pas de donner à tout le monde, et en particulier comme ça a été le cas dans le passé, au plus aisés dans notre pays. Nous, notre philosophie, c'est d'aider les plus vulnérables.

*(Interruptions)*

Nous, nous l'avons fait. Nous avons mis, encore une fois, R 8,5 milliards sur la table pour les plus vulnérables pour soutenir la demande ; c'est ça notre réponse.

**Dr. Boolell:** Is the hon. Minister aware, Mr Speaker, Sir, as a result of debt, depreciation of the rupee, low savings and no investment, today the rupee has shrunk and what was one rupee today has shrunk to 25 cents largely due to this Government?

**Dr. Padayachy:** Encore une fois, M. le président, c'est très technique mais je vais expliquer au *Leader* de l'opposition. L'inflation est à son plus bas historique à 0,5 % , ça a été ré-estimé à 0,8 %. Ce qui se passe, vous avez un excès de Forex/liquidités sur les marchés et cela crée de la pression sur la roupie. Ce qu'il appelle la dépréciation, c'est simplement le rééquilibrage de la valeur de la roupie, mais malheureusement il faut qu'il regarde, nous n'avons pas une situation comme en 2008. En 2008, allez voir la valeur de la roupie à l'époque, aller voir le taux d'inflation. A l'époque, c'était une politique délibérée de dépréciation de la roupie parce qu'on voulait créer de l'inflation, parce que l'inflation c'est le mal, l'inflation c'est la taxe sur les pauvres. Aujourd'hui, à l'heure où je vous parle, nous avons un taux d'inflation de 0,5% à 0,8%. Les estimations pour l'année sont de 1 % à 1,5 %. Donc, M. le président, nous avons de la marge ; ce n'est pas moi, ce n'est pas le gouvernement qui est en train de déprécier la roupie - la banque centrale ne déprécie pas la roupie, c'est l'offre et la demande, M. le président, en fonction de l'offre et de la demande, quand il n'y a pas de demande pour un produit, les prix baissent tout simplement. C'est ça qui est assez technique, je pense, pour le Leader de l'opposition et qu'il n'arrive pas trop à comprendre.

**Dr. Boolell:** The hon. Minister of Finance is in a state of shock. Let me remind him! Let me come to SIC! If there was money around and SIC had a lot of reserve, would SIC go for redeemable preference shares and we know what this means. Redeemable preference shares means taking a loan and that's what it means, it is a debt and I ask you: If there was money and SIC had reserve, why is it that SIC needs to have recourse to redeemable preference shares?

**Dr. Padayachy:** M. le président, je vais être assez clair parce que là-dessus je pense que de nouveau le Leader de l'opposition n'arrive pas à discerner la technicité de certaines choses. Jamais cela sera considéré comme de la dette, M. le président. Ce sont des actions; nous pouvons le faire avec n'importe quelle entreprise. C'est ça les techniques innovantes. Il nous parle de fonds. La *SIC* a pour mission d'investir pour soutenir l'économie. C'est ça la mission de la *SIC*. La *SIC* n'a pas pour mission d'avoir des fonds et de les mettre sur un compte en banque pour avoir des taux d'intérêt. Non! La *SIC* a pour mission d'investir dans

les secteurs, dans les entreprises pour soutenir l'activité économique. C'est ça la fonction de la SIC et c'est ce qu'ils font. Donc, à travers les différentes mesures qu'ils proposent et c'est ça qui est innovant, c'est ça l'économie, c'est ça le monde financier, c'est ce qui se passe à travers le monde. Donc, on n'est pas revenu en arrière. J'ai parlé de la quarantaine de la globalisation. J'espère que le Leader de l'opposition n'est pas en train de nous préconiser la quarantaine ou le recul, et qu'on se retrouve en l'an 1800, où toutes ces mesures peut-être n'existaient pas. On est dans une économie dynamique. Le marché financier innove. Les instruments financiers innovent. C'est ça qu'on appelle un monde financier économique et c'est ça qu'on appelle l'économie d'aujourd'hui.

**Dr. Boolell:** Can I ask the hon. Minister since he is sure, he has the acumen in technicity of the financial sector, I will ask him a very basic question which any lay person would ask: who are the target investors in respect to SIC? Where is SIC going to get the money in respect of redeemable preference share? Tell us whether they are going to raise money on the domestic or external market! Tell us! Is he going to get the money from the Exim Bank of India? Please Minister, tell us, give us firm replies! That's what I need.

**Dr. Padayachy:** M. le président, on l'a annoncé vendredi. Cela était en préparation pendant une semaine. Nous sommes en train de travailler, comme je vous ai dit, jour et nuit. On a des demandes. On va analyser et on va voir. La préférence sera donnée à des opérateurs, à des investisseurs locaux.

**Dr. Boolell:** This is a colourable device, Mr Speaker, Sir, to avoid inclusion in public sector debt because SIC is State-owned, this is a fact. Let me ask the hon. Minister, with respect to facilities which are going to be extended to entrepreneurs, can I impress upon him to do what all countries are doing to extend loan at zero interest - this is what is being done elsewhere - if you are really caring.

**Dr. Padayachy:** M. le président, l'honorable Leader de l'opposition devrait vérifier ces pays où ces *loans* sont à 0%. Dans ces pays, les taux d'intérêts, les taux *repo* de la banque centrale sont déjà à 0%. Ici, à Maurice, le *repo rate* est à 2,85%. On est en train de donner des *loans* à 2,5%. Donc, en dessous de ce *repo rate*. Donc, financer ce genre de mesure représente un coût supplémentaire. D'un côté, on nous demande d'être efficace et d'être efficace dans la gestion des finances publiques, et de l'autre côté, on est en train de proposer des mesures qui vont coûter encore plus à l'État. Donc, M. le président, de ce côté, nous avons un gouvernement responsable qui est en train d'agir avec proactivité, qui est en

train d'agir pour garder un dynamisme au niveau de l'économie. Nous faisons, au fur et à mesure, des propositions pour soutenir notre économie. Nous voyons bien, je l'ai dit dans ma réponse, qu'en deux semaines au niveau des États-Unis, la banque centrale, la FED, aux États-Unis en deux semaines a baissé par deux fois son taux directeur pour le ramener à 0%, c'est qu'ils savent, eux-aussi, qu'il faut réagir avec prudence mais aussi qu'il faut être dynamique dans la réponse ; cela ne s'est jamais vu. En deux semaines, ils ont réagi pour ramener le taux repo à 0%. Nous, de notre côté, on a annoncé vendredi notre plan de soutien. Nous allons continuer de suivre l'évolution de la crise, de cette crise sanitaire qui est en train de provoquer une crise systémique au niveau mondial. Nous allons suivre cette crise sur les mois, sur les semaines, tous les jours on est en train de suivre cette crise et s'il faut ajouter des mesures comme le préconise le Leader de l'opposition, nous, on ne va pas venir avec des idées toutes faites ; nous, nous travaillons pour venir avec des mesures innovantes qui coûteront le moins cher à l'État, donc à la population.

**Dr. Boolell:** *Innovantes* he said, Mr Speaker, Sir? Can I inform him, and I am sure he is aware, that thanks to the politics of continuity, today there is a public debt which is so huge, budget deficit which is so huge that we are going to be clobbered by IMF. What you have done, there is no buoyancy in the economy, no revenue, tax revenue has dropped by more than 6.5% and there is no money in the kitty so much so that ....

**Mr Speaker:** Your question, please!

**Dr. Boolell:** So much so that this Government, and I ask the Minister whether this Government is going to turn towards India and seek support from the Exim Bank of India to ensure that we'll be able to weather the storm, irrespective of debt diplomacy, we have no trust and ask him whether this is one of the things to be considered?

**Dr. Padayachy:** M. le président, je suis désolé mais je dois à chaque fois revenir sur la réponse que j'ai fait concernant la *PNQ*. J'avais dit précédemment que nous sommes en train de travailler pour réduire nos dépenses. Nous travaillons, nous l'avons annoncé que nous allons baisser nos dépenses de fonctionnement de 10%. Nous l'avons annoncé et nous allons le faire. Ce gouvernement est responsable au sujet de la dette. M. le président, notre philosophie c'est de transformer notre dette en dette locale parce que ce qui est important c'est de ne pas avoir trop – je dis bien le mot 'trop' de dette externe. Nous, à notre niveau, nous n'avons pas emprunté pour financer le plan de soutien. Cela a été fait dans le passé. Nous, nous n'avons pas emprunté pour financer dès maintenant le plan de soutien. Je le redis

nous venons avec des mesures comme cela se fait à travers le monde pour soutenir l'offre mais avec des mesures innovantes. Au sujet de la demande, nous avons une politique qui est ciblée vers les plus vulnérables. Notre politique concernant l'augmentation de la pension c'est pour aider les plus vulnérables. C'est pour cela que nous avons augmenté cette pension et cela représente en tout, avec toutes les autres mesures concernant le salaire minimum, le *Negative Income Tax* et autres, R 8,5 milliards. C'est la réponse concernant la politique de la demande et nous, nous continuons avec cette politique. Nous l'avions fait avant la crise et nous continuerons avec cette politique, mais, en même temps, nous allons baisser les dépenses de fonctionnement, les dépenses qu'on juge inefficaces. C'est pour cela qu'on va travailler de concert avec l'Audit qui a préparé un rapport et on va travailler avec l'Audit pour essayer de venir avec des mesures concrètes qui seront annoncées dans le prochain budget.

**Mr Speaker:** Last question!

**Dr. Boolell:** Mr Speaker, Sir, is the hon. Minister aware that this Government is so hard up that it had no choice but to have recourse to the Bank of Mauritius? And, as of now, we don't even know where those Rs18 billion are, whether Government is going to try to have some interest on this amount. At least, the nation has a right to be told where is this money. Let me come back to another issue. As far as the workers are concerned, these Rs500 m. would not even last for three months and Government, therefore, has no money available to come to the rescue of the workers.

**Dr. Padayachy:** M. le président, le Leader de l'opposition a dit que ces mesures vont durer pendant trois mois mais j'espère que cette crise va durer au plus trois mois, parce que plus de trois mois, le monde - encore une fois, là, c'est pas une crise systémique, on ne sait pas où on ira. Donc, pour revenir à ce que disait le Leader de l'opposition, il a posé tellement de questions que là, j'essaie de retrouver la question qu'il m'a posée. C'est simplement, encore une fois, une gestion dynamique. L'économie n'est pas statique, l'économie est dynamique. Nous devons prendre des mesures pour soutenir la demande. Nous avons pris des mesures pour soutenir l'offre. Et quand on parle du passé, j'aimerais souligner quelque chose ici, M. le président. On est en train de dire qu'il n'y a pas de *buoyancy*, que l'économie va mal, que tous les chiffres économiques sont dans le rouge. Mais je soutiendrai. Je vais revenir sur quelque chose. En 2013, au moment où il n'y avait pas de crise, au moment où il avait une reprise au niveau international, au moment où on n'avait pas de crise sanitaire, au

moment où tout le monde consommait et allait très bien, à Maurice, on avait eu le pire taux de croissance économique. A Maurice, sur cette période, on parlait de *jobless growth*, M. le président. On parlait de croissance économique qui ne créait pas d'emploi à cette époque.

Nous, ici, sous le *Primeministership* de l'honorable Pravind Kumar Jugnauth, on a changé de paradigme, on a changé cette philosophie. On a adopté une philosophie qui était tournée vers les plus vulnérables pour soutenir l'économie et ainsi nous avons eu une croissance équilibrée qui diminuait le taux de chômage et qui ne créait pas de l'inflation. Le leader de l'opposition est en train de nous dire que le taux d'endettement est à son niveau le plus élevé. Je soulignerai au Leader de l'opposition que, à travers le monde, ils sont en train de suspendre toutes les limites au niveau du déficit et au niveau de la dette publique parce que, encore une fois, ils ne savent pas, ils n'ont pas de visibilité sur ce qui va se passer sur cette crise; ils ne savent pas quel va être l'impact réel de cette crise sur l'économie globale et donc l'économie nationale.

M. le président, l'économie, encore une fois est dynamique. L'économie demande du sang-froid, demande du travail et demande une réflexion. C'est ce qu'on fait, nous, de ce côté de la Chambre.

**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.*

(12.15 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 Bodha!

**The Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade (Mr N. Bodha):** Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

I had planned to start on a political note, but I think I will have to end up on a political note because this unforeseeable crisis of the coronavirus has put us in a situation today where, I would say, for all of us, for the hon. Prime Minister, for the Government, for the Opposition, for the people of Mauritius, these are very testing times.

M. le président, il semblerait que tous les débats aujourd’hui sont quelque peu faussés. C’est vrai que nous avons un programme établi sur cinq ans, mais la visibilité actuelle, elle est limitée. Nous avons un programme ambitieux, un programme généreux, un programme qui relève d’une vision de société, avec un leadership, avec des principes de gouvernance, mais la question c’est comment gérer les mois et, je pense aussi, peut-être l’année qui vient.

Mauritius has always had the preparedness in some cases. For example, we have a protocol for cyclones. So, we know what to do in class I, class II, class III and class IV. When it comes to preparedness to such a crisis like this one, which is crisis as regards to health facilities, which is also a crisis which is financial, economic and a major social problem when we see what is happening in Europe, often, in the morning, when we are going to put on the TV, we are asking ourselves what are we going to see happening in Europe, in the United

States and Mauritius. This crisis will test our social fabric. It will test our capacity to answer economically, financially, socially, what could be the consequences.

But, first of all, Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to say that we have around 190 nations in the world. The crisis, the virus has spread over 150 countries. We are left with only 50. Out of the 50, I think there are some States where we can challenge statistics for a number of reasons - I am not going to say what are these reasons. If we say that about half of these countries have credible statistics or which we can rely on and which have been tested by the World Health Organisation, then Mauritius would be amongst the 20 countries left in the world where the virus is not here. Is this a major achievement? Is it a blessing? Is it a warning? These are the questions that we have to ask today. We are among the very rare nations in the world where the virus is not present. It is already in the Indian Ocean, in Mayotte, in Seychelles, in Reunion Island, and the Prime Minister, today, took the bold decision to stop flights. We have 60 flights from Reunion Island per week. We have stopped the entry of residents from the European Union, from Reunion Island, just like we did it for China, South Korea and Italy in the past. The way this virus is spreading, when we see the figures in Europe, in Italy, in Spain, in France and all the questions that are being asked, it was a very important decision for us and the Prime Minister took it. We had a committee with everybody. It was a bold decision that the Prime Minister took because I think our ambition is that the virus never enters Mauritius. This is our ambition and we should do everything for this not to happen. The second thing is: if ever it happens, what do we do? And this is where we have the preparedness with regard to our health facilities, with regard to all the setup that we have put.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we have the Chinese model to prevent the virus from spreading, we have the UK model where they are saying, let the virus come in and people would develop their own immune system, we have the model of Italy, which has the highest elderly population in Europe, a bit like ours, and then we have the case in France. And there is one thing that we are seeing today: the problem arises when the system is overstretched, when we don't have enough beds, when we don't have enough ventilators, when we don't have enough staff to take care of people and we have to choose whom to take care of. In the beginning, in places like Italy, we were told that you stay personal confinement, self-confinement, you call a number and you say what are your symptoms and some facilities will come to you. They will tell you what to do. But today, it has blown out of proportion. They cannot withstand the

number of cases. So, the first ambition of Mauritius is that the virus never enters this island. The second one is that it does not spread throughout the island.

If we see the system that the Chinese have adopted, when it came to Wuhan, 11 million, they locked down Wuhan. A few days later, they locked down the province of Hubei and a week later they locked Mainland China. We have to have our emergency plans, we have to have our facilities and see to it that this is a national urgency and it requires national solidarity.

First of all, it requires the discipline of self-confinement and self-hygiene. It requires the solidarity at the level of everybody, and when it comes to the economy and the economic activity, my colleague, the hon. Minister of Finance, the Prime Minister and everybody have been working to set up a system so that the economy remains dynamic and we don't suffer too much from the consequences. If the situation gets worse, we have had a committee which has been meeting under the chairmanship of the hon. Prime Minister regularly and we have taken decisions. We have been taking decisions since the end of January. That is why today we can say that what Mauritius has done to weather the storm over the last three months have given excellent results and we are one of the rare States in the world where the virus is not here. I would like, here, to commend the staff of the Ministry of Health for the excellent work which has been done, because if we take Mauritius, we handle four million people in a year at the airport. In the last three months, we have handled about one million; do the tests, do all that we have done, all the quarantine measures that we have taken. Everything has worked well and our system has not been overstretched. All the staff has done a wonderful job.

We have taken bold measures and now we should be able to have the preparedness to see to it that if ever there is the virus, it does not spread. Bold measures will have to be taken and I am convinced that the hon. Prime Minister will do so. It is also a time where solidarity also means absence of fake news, solidarity also means not to create a psychosis just to create a psychosis; solidarity means that we are in a small island of 60 km by 40 km, one of the highest densities in the world, 1.4 million. Solidarity means that the Press has a role to play, the radios have a role to play, the Leader of the Opposition has a role to play, we have a role to play, all of us together, because if you see the pictures of Wuhan, the pictures today of Madrid, we do not want this to happen in Mauritius. That is why decisions have to be taken, have been taken and will be taken. *Il faut absolument que nous puissions gérer la situation*

*sociale*. We know how Mauritians are. Mauritians, when they don't feel well, they go to the dispensary in the morning, they see a doctor, take the medicine. They don't feel well in the afternoon, they go to the hospital, throw away the medicine, see another doctor. Can we imagine what can happen? A number of people will be overstretched and we will not have the facilities to be able to handle all these cases.

*I wanted to start with it, c'est un combat national, c'est un combat de prévention pour empêcher que le virus ne se propage. C'est un combat de responsabilité à tous les niveaux ; au niveau de la société civile, au niveau des responsables du gouvernement, de l'opposition et de tout le monde. Donc, c'est un combat national et nous allons intensifier la campagne ; la campagne au niveau des écoles, la campagne dans les compagnies, la campagne à tous les niveaux, pour que les Mauriciens se comportent comme cela se doit et que nous puissions traverser cette phase qui s'annonce difficile, sans visibilité.*

We do not know what is going to happen to France. We don't know whether the second leg of the Municipal elections in France is going to be held or not. We do not know when the football teams are going to start to play again. We don't know what is going to happen to the championships. We don't know what is going to happen to people with regard to their 'work from home'; the committee where my colleague, the hon. Minister of Finance is working. We have to adapt to this virus, taking into consideration the Mauritian specificity because Mauritians have certain ways of behaviour, and we should be able to see to it that we handle the situation as it has to be handled.

Mr Speaker, Sir, when the virus was announced, we had 40 people in Wuhan, the epicenter of the virus, and there was a lot of panic. They wanted to come over. Some took flights, came over and, in the end, we were left with 20. We contacted each of them, and I must here thank the Quai d'Orsay in Paris, thank the Chinese authorities in Beijing for the airlifting of Mauritians. We were on the second plane which left Wuhan, Mr Speaker, Sir. The second plane which left Wuhan with foreigners was the plane which carried the Mauritians and they took them to the South of France where they were in quarantine, and they came over here. Since then, we have been assisting and facilitating those who want to come over from Mainland China. We have been doing so and we have about 50 people who wanted to come over from Mainland China and who have come to Mauritius where they feel that it is safe haven, *lakaz mama*. This is what has happened with China. But what is going to happen now? The schools and Universities are closed in Europe. We are going to have

hundreds of Mauritians who are studying who want to come back, and with all the restrictions that now we have put, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs will facilitate their return to Mauritius to see to it that they can reach safely Mauritius. But my colleague will confirm that the Mauritians coming back home from Europe will have to go on quarantine for 14 days because of the situation prevailing in Europe.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we have students in France, we have students in UK, we have students in Europe, we have also students in Malaysia, and this is the protocol that we are going to observe.

Mr Speaker, Sir, when we see the world today, as it is, a very troubled world, and a lot depends on the capacity of each nation to respond to unforeseeable circumstances and unforeseeable events, as we say in Creole '*tire kanet dan zouet*', Mauritius should know how now to be able to go beyond this crisis. It is only then that we can implement our Presidential Address and all that we want to do to make Mauritius a better place to live.

So, in this world, as it is today, we have to see to it that the national interest is the overriding principle. It is overriding principle of responsibility and overriding principle of national interest. And here, again, when I listen to the Prime Minister, I listen to the Minister of Finance, there is an exercise. You have a balancing exercise between what can be done as regards Government funds and what should be done for the future. I am sure that the hon. Minister of Finance will present a Budget, and if within the three months, the measures that are being taken now will have been implemented, then the budget will come. If we need additional measures, I am sure that the Prime Minister will see to it that we have additional measures.

But our national interest today, Mr Speaker, Sir, is going to be the key pillar of our policy. It is going to be also the key pillar of our foreign policy. As regards our foreign policy, I think that Mauritius can be a model, can be a beacon of democracy, of *vivre ensemble*, but also a model of governance and a model where we can show the world that we can be a place where we can have a political dialogue for conflicts over the world. We were at the Summit of the AU in Addis Ababa with the Prime Minister, where the Agenda was 'Silencing the Guns', that is, silencing the conflicts in Africa and where, in fact, we are seen as a land of peace, prosperity and development. Later, I will have a few words about our Africa Agenda.

What I would like to say, Mr Speaker, Sir, is that today, can little Mauritius speak with a strong voice on the African continent, on the European continent? We also know that in the past, we often said that the sugar protocol was made for Mauritius; we often said that the Lomé Convention was made for Mauritius. And we did, in fact, take all the advantages of the sugar protocol and the Lomé Convention. We also were the only country - I think one or two - to have the accompanying measures for the sugar reform as from 2006, which the Prime Minister and myself, and the Minister who came after, negotiated over years; we got 16 billion.

Mr Speaker, Sir, let me now come to what we inherited in 2014, very briefly, because the 2020 Programme rests on two pillars: what we inherited in 2014 and what we built in 2019. I am not going deep into what we inherited in 2014. I would like just to say that the first Budget which was presented in 2014 did not allow for any project of the NDU for one year, because the NDU had a deficit of Rs1 billion, and the first year...

*(Interruptions)*

I am refreshing your memory. The first year, the money went only for the payment of the deficit. And today, how many, I don't know, 1,200 projects?

**Mr Speaker:** Address the Chair, please!

**Mr Bodha:** We have 1,200 projects in the NDU of 2020. First year, Rs1 billion. MBC was in a deficit of Rs1 billion. I am going to take only two examples, Mr Speaker, Sir. What have we done? *On a fait de Maurice un chantier national. On a transformé l'Ile Maurice de manière gigantesque.* We are builders. *Et on dit souvent, au niveau du MSM, c'est unir pour bâtir ; nous sommes les bâtisseurs.*

We will build and we have built, and we spent billions to build the Mauritius of today. We can see the dynamic projects going on. And Mauritius is going to be transformed again and again and again. So, it was five years of hard work; it was five years of resilience; it was five years of leadership.

We said workers first; minimum wage, the portable gratuity. We said our elderly first; pensions, health care. We said our youth first, with the games where we did so well. And my friend rightly pointed out something. In the liberal system, you have the investment, the production, the profit, and part of it goes to the workers. But we have put the workers at the centre of the system, with direct income support. This is unique. *En France, on appelle cela*

*le RMI, mais le RMI est payé aux familles les plus vulnérables.* We gave direct income support to the workers. This is unique.

When we introduced the minimum wage, everybody said that many people are going to lose their jobs and many companies said we would not be able to pay, but we came with the support, and now with the portable gratuity system. I would like to say that in 2002 - I think my colleague was the Minister of Education - we attended a meeting chaired by hon. Paul Bérenger as Deputy Prime Minister on the portable gratuity, in 2002. This was one of the pillars of the MMM.

*(Interruptions)*

Yes, it was on the textile sector. Then, we had a meeting to see how this can be done and it took so many years, and it took this Government to be able to do it. And then, you know what happened? In 2004, with the departure of the Hong Kong investors, we laid down about 10,000 to 15,000 workers. And the Labour Party, they were very brilliant in criticising us on this during the campaign. 10,000 to 15,000 people lost all the money they had contributed over 10, 15 years in all those factories, even more. So, this is a major political achievement, it is a major achievement for the workers, Mr Speaker, Sir.

We were in the middle-income trap for how many years? Last time, I remember I started my speech by saying that we are in a middle-income trap, and the question is whether we will get out of it. The middle-income trap has been with us for the last 15 years. We want to get out of it. It is only this Government which is going to achieve it so that we become a high-income State in the years to come. It is coming because we need another 500 Dollars. This is going to be a major achievement because not many countries have graduated from the middle-income trap into a high-income economy. You have South Korea, you have Singapore, you have Taiwan, but many have stayed in the middle-income trap for years, Mr Speaker, Sir. And with the middle-income trap, what is going to happen? *Le revers de la médaille*. You are not going to have concessionary finance; you are not going to have grants. But I think that our policy will be to see to it that we have a special and differential treatment as a Small Island Developing State.

We should be able to have access to concessionary finance, for example, for climate change, because the finance is available. So, we have to be very ingenious, we have to be very sharp to come up with projects where we can have this concessionary finance and grants in Mauritius.

Mr Speaker, Sir, so, we have to be innovative. We have to be able to monitor all the funds available for a country like Mauritius. We have to prepare the projects professionally so that we can have the money from the funds. Often, what happens? The funds are in Brussels, they are in London, they are everywhere and they never trickle down to the people who need it. We have so many reforms like the Banana reform in the Caribbean; the Banana reform went bust, the money stayed in Brussels and never came to those who really needed it.

I would like to say that during these five years, we have achieved a lot. But what we achieved was achieved also during the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Independence. It was the bonding of a nation. And we said that our best thing was *le vivre ensemble*, that we have achieved something fantastic to have a same vision, to have a same future and to share that future. There was a report, a poll, I do not know how credible it is, but one of the questions was: 'Are you proud to be a Mauritian?' And, today, I think in an overwhelming manner, Mauritians can say that we are proud to be Mauritians. Just ask the students. I am sure that a student leaving France today in an Air Mauritius plane, when he gets in the plane, he feels so relieved, *mo pe ale lakaz, lakaz mama*. This is the bonding of a nation and this is where our strength is, that is, we can speak as a nation, we can be a model as a nation, and we can live and share a dream as a nation.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to say a few words on these achievements; we have also had a lot of battles and one has been in the financial services section. We had the latest FATF report, putting Mauritius on a list, but I would like to say something; that a lot has been done and we want Mauritius to be a jurisdiction of repute. A lot has been done, I know that my colleague is doing all that can be done. In all the fora, we are presenting the case of Mauritius, that we have voted the legislations, we have set up the institutions, we have developed the capacity, and we really want to show that Mauritius is a jurisdiction of repute. We had a meeting with the Prime Minister and all the different institutions and I am convinced that by the end of this year, we will have been able to achieve all that has to be done in most of the criteria so that we are seen as being compliant with the best criteria that are needed to be a jurisdiction of repute. But the most important thing, Mr Speaker, Sir, is that we have criteria which are based on the international level. Today, you have criteria of the OECD, you have criteria of the European Union, you have the criteria as regards the member States, then you have the FATF, then you have ESAAMLG. But what we should fight for - and we are going to do it - to have internationally acclaimed criteria maybe by an

institution at the United Nations so that when you are compliant in New York, you are compliant in the whole world and you can do the business that you want to do.

On this front, I would like to say two things. Mr Speaker, Sir, the German Development Fund of about USD100 m. is the funding from German banks for projects to countries, developing economies. That Fund is based in Mauritius, and they acknowledge Mauritius as a jurisdiction of repute. The second thing, the other day, my colleague and myself, Minister Ramano, we went to a Climate Change Access Funds of the Commonwealth, that Fund also is based in Mauritius. And do you know, Mr Speaker, Sir, that all the companies based in our financial sector, their transactions are estimated at around USD60 billion? The transactions at the International Financial Centre of Mauritius by all the companies based here are estimated at 65 billion. But do you know what are the assets of all these companies? Above USD600 billion! All the companies based here, they do transactions for USD60 billion, and their assets, when they put them together, it is USD600 billion, which means that we are doing well. We have to do well. And we have to do well in Africa; we have to channel the funding from countries like China, India, Europe, into Africa. And when the Comoros had a meeting in Paris for the Donors' meeting for their development for the next 10 years, Mr Speaker, Sir, USD2 billion were pledged. And when I met the President of Comoros, I said: "Why don't you channel this money whenever you get it through the International Financial Services of Mauritius?" So, that is an area where we need to do well and better. But we have to speak in a national voice, we have to be patriotic because the reputation of our International Financial Centre is at stake, and this is an appeal I am making. Because we are doing everything to see to it that we are compliant as a jurisdiction of repute.

Mr Speaker, Sir, let me say a few words on our Africa Strategy. Mr Speaker, Sir, in 1980, our exports to Africa were Rs15 m. Our exports to Africa, in the 80s were Rs15 m. In 2020, our exports are Rs15 billion. And still we have room for amazing possibilities, and the strategy of Mauritius to have specific economic zones in Western Africa, in Kenya, in Mozambique and in Tanzania, this strategy, we have to pursue it. We have to have the set-up, the synergy between our local private sector, between our SMEs and between our banks. SBM just bought a bank in Kenya, Mr Speaker, Sir, which has 80 branches throughout Kenya. Just bought it! And what I have proposed is that in the special economic zones, we should have one small cluster for financial services because we have the accountants, we have financial consultants. All these people can have a *pied-à-terre*, a Head Office in those special economic zones so that we are present in Africa, because Africa is 1.5 billion

customers. We are going to have 300 million middle class consumers, Mr Speaker, Sir, and that is a huge market.

The other day, the High Commissioner from Maputo came and we had a meeting, and my colleague from the Ministry of Agro-Industry and my colleague from the SMEs were here. He said that they have an association of 5,000 women who have facilities from a bank; they are hawkers in Maputo. They want to come and source their products from Mauritius. If they buy Rs1,000 of products per day, it is Rs5 m. per day, over a year, it is Rs1.8 billion. We just have to take the products from Mauritius, warehouse them in Maputo, and we are working with the Minister, we are working with the banks, and we are working with the private sector because the SMEs in Mauritius can provide. You have so many articles of common use that we can extend to the African market. That is our future; it is how we handle our Africa Strategy. The Prime Minister - we were in Addis Ababa - met about 20 Heads of States, Heads of Governments because we want to feel close. It is such a pity that President Ramaphosa could not come here. He was coming with five Ministers to make our ties even closer with Southern Africa and South Africa and the SADC. Hopefully, he will come.

So, our future is in Africa; our future for investment, job creation, for services, for market, and we are tightening, making closer our cultural links with the intercultural museum, Mr Speaker, Sir. Last year, we received three Heads of State. Hopefully, we will receive some more this year and, with the intercultural museum, we have the possibility to make stronger our cultural links. I went to Bagamoyo, a place where slaves, in fact, boarded the ship to come to Zanzibar, from where they were sent to America and even to Mauritius, and we still have a number of documents there, a number of artefacts which we can bring to Mauritius and bring to our museum. In fact, they have requested us to come forward and to do the archiving and the research because at that time, in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Century, Bagamoyo was in the Parish of Reunion Island and many of those documents are in French. So, they want the Mauritians to come over, take those documents, interpret them and use them for our museum. But these cultural bonds need to be tightened even more, and I think that we should work on it; the Minister of Arts and Culture, the Prime Minister. We should get closer, a bit like in India –

- we are close to the political leadership;
- we are close to the Ministers;

- we are close to the business people;
- we are close to the people, and
- we have a number of exchanges.

We have cultural exchanges, economic exchanges, political exchanges and, today, the Prime Minister can take his phone and talk to Prime Minister Modi, who is a good friend of President Trump.

So, it shows what can be done. What can be done is we need to be close to Africa; when I see the way President Kenyatta welcomes the Prime Minister, when I see the way the Ministers come here and they feel we should make this bond closer. I would like to sum up this Africa Strategy in one sentence which I liked in Addis Ababa. It said –

“I am not born in Africa, but Africa is born in me.”

Africa is born in us, and it’s up to us to be able to see to it that we get closer to that continent because it is our future.

Let me, before ending, Mr Speaker, take the political bit. I will address three issues –

- (i) the legitimacy of the Government;
- (ii) the Electoral Reform, and
- (iii) the financing of political parties.

You know, there are only two cases in history where we had a three-cornered fight. That was in 1976 and that was in 2019. Let me give you the results of 1976. In 1976, the MMM got 40.9% of the vote and got 34 elected Members. The Labour Party, Independence Party, got 38% of the vote and they got 28 candidates elected, and the PMSD got 16% of the vote and they got 8 candidates, and we know what happened. So, the Labour Party, with 38% of the votes, ruled the country from 1976 to 1982. *Le PMSD est parti après.*

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** No exchange of views!

*(Interruptions)*

Address the Chair!

**Mr Bodha:** We are not going to fight for 1% or not. The question is: when you have a three-cornered fight with 40% of the votes; this is what happens in Britain. This happens in

every Westminster State. The first-past-the-post, the winner is the winner and he becomes the Prime Minister.

Now, let me tell you what happened in 2019. The MSM got 38% of the votes and 42 elected Members. The Labour Party got 32% of the votes and got only 17 elected Members. Why? Because in the rural areas, in the 10 constituencies, the MSM did better. This is the truth. In the past, it was different, and the MMM got 20% of the votes and they got only 8. So, the pattern is more or less the same when you have a three-cornered fight. It will always be the same because when you have a three-cornered fight, that is the problem. Somebody, who is voting, chooses between nine candidates. When you have two blocs, either you vote for one or you vote for the other, and when you vote for the one, you are giving the other one plus one. So, you are giving an advantage, but, in a case of three-cornered fight, the plotting pattern is totally different and when you see the results, the way the results are done, you can find it. You can see what happens.

So, this was a three-cornered fight. I have explained how it was in 1976. It's the same in 2019. We won the election on two basis. There was a *bilan* and there was a Prime Minister. That is what we did. This is what we achieved. So, there is no illegitimacy or whatever, Mr Speaker, Sir. It's the people's wish. The people wanted to give us a majority, they have given us a majority and we will deliver on that majority.

Now, let us come to the Electoral Reform. The Labour Party will never vote a reform unless they are driving the reform. They will never accept this unless they drive the reform themselves and get the political mileage.

The PMSD will never vote a reform until we don't find something else to replace the Best Loser, but the Best Loser as it is, we cannot replace it. So, they will never vote a reform.

But the MMM, we have been together, having a reform and, last time, I spoke, hon. Uteem spoke after me and hon. Bérenger spoke after. At one point, I even heard that we are so close. Let me explain. The only contention is about how we allocate the PR seats. There are two methods. One method is the Sachs method, where the loser gets more than the majority party, and in the other system, the one we are saying, is that the party which has won would have its majority enhanced. But then we came with an idea that it will be neither enhanced nor reduced. The majority would remain the same because we would have corrected it with the PR System; the Best Loser System, which is now being chosen by the leader.

But for the advancement of democracy, when we see that we have been fighting for so many, many years, when the MMM said “*ce qui peut plus, peut moins*”, I really wish that, during this Presidential Address mandate, this country has a political reform *digne de ce nom*. You had the Electoral Reform. We had the representation of women. We see what has happened. So, we are so close. We need to have this reform and I know that the Prime Minister has the political will. We have the political will; we should sit down together and see to it that we have a system which is a beacon, a model for the world.

Let me now come to the financing of political parties. In my constituency, during that last election, I had 40 *baz que j’ai alimentés pendant trois semaines*.

*(Interruptions)*

*40! 2,000 par jour.*

So, my colleagues and myself, we all had to take loans and see how to manage. Can we continue like this? Last time, why didn’t we have this financing of political parties? Why?

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Order, please!

**Mr Bodha:** Why did we have this issue and why didn’t we vote the financing of political parties? Because the MMM said there should be public funding and we said ‘let us start with private funding’. But it’s high time that we have a system which is transparent, where money is not the issue in an election, and I think this will also help us for our image as an international financial centre. It’s high time that we do away with the system of *baz*, that we can have accountable expenses and that we have a system where money is not key to the election. I am making another appeal again to all of us during this mandate. I know the Prime Minister has the political will - we have it also - to see to it that it happens during this Presidential Address mandate, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker, Sir, our resolve, our capacity to deliver depends on leadership, on hard work and commitment. We have a mandate of five years, we have the resolve and even now, with this unexpected, unforeseeable crisis of international magnitude, we have been able to keep calm, we have been able to save our country from being attacked by the virus, we have been able to come with a package to see to it that the business community and the workers are safe. We have the resolve, we have the leadership with the Prime Minister, with the

Deputy Prime Minister, and the new team which has come, they will come with enthusiasm, with vision and they will help us make it happen.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to say a few words on this occasion. Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

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

*At 1.02 p.m., the sitting was suspended.*

*On resuming at 2.34 p.m. with Mr Speaker in the Chair.*

**Mr Speaker:** Hon. Shakeel Mohamed!

**Mr S. Mohamed (First Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East):** Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. From the very moment that we started debates on the Government Programme, all of us, I am sure have been, for different reasons, getting ready to place forward their arguments and to explain why they believe, on that side of the House, that the Government Programme is a fantastic one and it is the only and the best one that could exist for the country.

On this side of the House, we were getting ready to explain why we are of the view that this Government cannot be believed because they suffer from one important illness, if I may call it that way during at this time and age, that of not having spoken the truth to the people for the past five years on the previous Government Programme. So, all of us, Mr Speaker, Sir, were getting ready and preparing our interventions, but now I myself, I have been sharing this with people close to me. I find it difficult to embark upon this Government Programme debate as I would have liked to, as I would have loved because the background is of utmost importance. As I am speaking to you today, I have just had a look quickly at the updates on the coronavirus, COVID-19 Statistics and as we speak today, a minute ago there were 171,044 cases worldwide, 6,526 deaths, 77,791 have recovered from this infection, 86,727 active cases remain and as hon. Bodha rightly put it, 158 countries have seen the infection caused ravage within their midst and the actual figures I have been looking at a few seconds ago also show me something else. It shows me that countries like Reunion Island have had two new cases this morning. It shows me that there are new cases in India. There are over 70 new cases in Indonesia. So, not only is the European Union touched by this virus, but countries outside the European Union clearly gradually are getting infected and us in

Mauritius, the feeling I have when I walk in public and when I hear people is that we are waiting for it to come because there is this feeling outside that it is inevitable. It is going to touch us if it has not already.

In Singapore, at some stage of this disaster, there were the confusion as to whether people who were suffering from dengue were, in fact, really suffering from dengue, but finally it was found out that it was not dengue but it was COVID-19. What happened in Singapore, Mr Speaker, Sir, was that there was an adjustment made to the verification method, the testing method that brought out the truth and it is always in a situation like this, good to do all that one can do in order to know exactly what we are facing.

So, in light of all those facts and figures, it is quite normal that you see people in Mauritius rushing to the supermarkets and trying to buy basic commodities because they are afraid. Is it not human after all for us to want to preserve our lives and that of our loved ones? We rush to the supermarkets, we rush to the shops, we buy out because we are scared, we are afraid because we do not have visibility, we do not know what is in store for us tomorrow, we do not know. I have come to this Assembly today with one thing in mind, I want it to be understood clearly that we cannot score political points on issues such as the coronavirus attack and that does not only go for the Opposition but it also goes for Government.

This morning, when the hon. Leader of the Opposition was putting questions that are simply a reflection of what others outside want to know, the people, those who are afraid, those were legitimate questions. If he has been stern, if he has been firm, it is because people are concerned out there and he has only been expressing the concerns of the people, our people, our brothers and sisters, outside this august Assembly.

The hon. Minister of Finance thought it fit to score political points. I leave it to his conscience. The hon. Minister of Finance thought it fit in this day and age, at this moment of crisis to refer to 2008 and how he is doing a better job. I leave it to his conscience. At this time of grave danger that faces us, Mr Speaker, Sir, I am not concerned about what happened 10 years ago or 5 years ago, I am concerned about what is going to happen to us from now on and what is happening to our brothers and sisters all over the world. There are Mauritians who live outside Mauritius, what is happening to them? There are Mauritians, our friends, our families, our kin living in other countries in Europe, in Asia, in other continents far away from their loved ones, what is happening to them; this is my concern, just as it is the concern of those listening to us. If the hon. Minister of Finance thought it fit today to try to score

political points, it was cheap on his part. I did not want to come here prepared, in any way, to criticise Government about the past, but he has opened the door. I will try to limit myself, but it is my duty to rebut whatever he said, but I will try not to go as low as he has gone because the citizens out there have better things to do than to listen to what he has tried to do today. The citizens out there would like to know one thing, how many beds have we got in our health institutions that really could take care of Mauritians if we are slammed by this virus. How many ventilators do we have because, at the end of the day, what is of utmost importance is that those who will get violently attacked and who will be touched by this virus will need to have ventilators in order to be placed on artificial respiration? That is a fact. Are we ready? I heard hon. Xavier-Luc Duval speaking in a Press conference recently, saying that we have only 50 ventilators in Mauritius. If that is the case, Mr Speaker, Sir, then we have a serious problem facing us. 50 ventilators! Imagine 5% of our population getting infected, and even, 1% requiring ventilators! We don't have enough beds, we don't have enough ventilators, we don't have the health facilities to take care of our population, and then, no wonder people are afraid.

I expected the hon. Minister of Health, in his Press conferences, that are welcome, to come and tell us, just as it is done in Singapore, as it is done in the United Kingdom, as it is done in France, as it is done in other developed States to tell the people the truth and not to hide behind some closed doors and give only information that you want to give. Tell them, be transparent. Is this not what the World Health Organisation (WHO) has recommended we do? Yes, it is! Tell us! How many beds do you have available? How many ventilators do you have available? How many dedicated hospitals have you got, pertaining to people who could be slammed to the ground by Coronavirus? How many people have you trained, what are the facts, what are the figures? What about the testing that has been carried out in Mauritius? Have those tests been validated? No, they have not been validated. I have enquired myself and the tests have not been validated by any authority, as it should be validated. Why? And why does the hon. Minister of Health keep quiet about that?

*(Interruptions)*

I am not giving way. I am not giving way because Standing Orders say I should give way, and I am not giving way.

*(Interruptions)*

I am not giving way.

**Mr Speaker:** Is it a Point of explanation or a Point of order?

**Dr. Jagutpal:** A Point of order.

**Mr Mohamed:** Which Point of order? Which one?

**Mr Speaker:** There is a Point of order.

**Dr. Jagutpal:** The hon. Member is misleading the House. The tests that have been done are validated.

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Mohamed:** He does not know the difference.

**Mr Speaker:** No, that is a Point of explanation. You can raise that at a later stage.

**Dr. Jagutpal:** Because the hon. Member is misleading the House.

**Mr Mohamed:** You see, that's the problem, the hon. Minister does not even know the difference between a Point of order and a Point of explanation.

*(Interruptions)*

I am only repeating what Mr Speaker said.

*(Interruptions)*

They still don't know. I have enquired. As I have said - since he tried to interrupt my line of thought and he did manage to - I went to the Mauritius Ports Authority because I wanted to find out about that vessel, that had parked, and coming with 1,200 passengers on-board. I wanted to find out whether anyone of those passengers has been tested for Coronavirus, because I have read the Press, and the Press has said they have been tested and they have been found 'clean'. Reunion Island refused to receive this vessel, Madagascar refused to receive this vessel. The newspapers in Mauritius based themselves on reports emanating from the office of the hon. Minister of Health to say that they have been tested and have been found to be 'clean', 'Coronavirus clean'. There is nothing more dirty than lies. None of them have been blood tested for Coronavirus or tested in another way.

**Mr Speaker:** Hon. Shakeel Mohamed, you stated the word ‘lies’, which is unparliamentary. Please, withdraw it.

**Mr Mohamed:** I did not say that anyone has lied, I said the Ministry has. That’s allowed. I never said someone has, I said the Ministry has. And I am very careful on that.

**Mr Speaker:** So, what applies for an individual also applies to the group....

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Mohamed:** Do you know what, Mr Speaker, if it pleases you for me to withdraw it, I’ll withdraw it, and I’ll say it again and I’ll withdraw it, if that pleases you. I will not get into a battle of words with you. It is wrong and untrue. Is that better?

**Mr Speaker:** Please! Don’t comment on the Chair, please!

**Mr Mohamed:** I am not commenting, I am only seeking your great advice. I am saying whatever the Ministry of Health has been saying, ‘supposedly’ that they are ‘Coronavirus free’ is wrong and it is totally untrue and unfounded, and I’ll explain why. Because I, myself, have enquired personally with the officers of the Ministry of Health: Has anyone of those persons been tested with any kit of any form for Coronavirus, for COVID-19? The 1,200 passengers have they been tested before being allowed to descend and come on *le territoire mauricien, et la réponse, M. le président, a été très simple: non*. They simply have been tested to find out whether they have a fever and since they did not have a fever they were allowed to disembark. That is the truth.

So, when you have a country like Reunion Island refusing them to disembark because of the risk associated, the risk is enough – simple RiskMetrics. If the hon. Minister or this Government knows what it means a RiskMetrics, how does one draw one out and understand what are the factors that could cause risk, what are the factors that can be implemented in order to reduce risk, would have indicated to him that, if Reunion Island has decided not to allow this vessel to come in and anyone to disembark, if Madagascar has not allowed this vessel to come in and anyone to disembark, why is it that Mauritius has, without carrying out a single test specifically to find out whether that person carries the infection COVID-19? He just was pointed out with a ‘gun’ and this is what was reported to me, and I am reporting it to this Assembly, *pas un seul des 1,200 passagers de ce paquebot n’a été testé*, be it with a

swap or with a blood test! No, none of them! And anyone could have simply taken some Doliprane one hour before arriving, and then, you go and test them. For God's sake!

That is what I am saying is risk assessment, know how to run a country. So, what are we going to say, therefore, if nothing happens and we don't get anyone here? We'll all be the happier but it indicates to us, Mr Speaker, Sir, that this is a Government that only is running the affairs of this country on the chance that we do not all get destroyed, on the chance that nothing goes wrong. What is the explanation of the hon. Minister of Health? Why is it that other jurisdictions did not allow them to come in, we allowed them to come in? And the same thing is happening. I asked people at the Mauritius Ports Authority who work there. They have told me that when they are told not to wear masks, they are told not to wear gloves because the management of the Mauritius Ports Authority says if you keep on wearing this, people will start panicking and people will start believing, we'll have a problem, do not wear masks, do not wear gloves. Those are the directives that the employees of the Mauritius Ports Authority are receiving.

Passengers from the airport supposedly going on quarantine, surely I was wondering and this is a simple question which has been asked. You have people who are going to quarantine. Some of them could be infected. So, simply on fever, you are sending them to quarantine and those who don't have fever, you are letting them in. I myself, hon. Ameer Meea, we were allowed in, sought it on my forehead, but we were not asked whether we should be tested, we have come from the United Kingdom. No. Can you imagine if I am to start coughing how everyone would run! But then again I would like to have an explanation and yes, Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister should give an explanation. Yes, he needs to raise a point of explanation and he has to explain the people of Mauritius *pourquoi est-ce que* those passengers on-board, the 1,200, were not tested. Why is it that in Japan when people had a problem on the *paquebot*, they were not allowed to disembark until every single one of them was tested? Why is it in Japan when before it was even declared a pandemic by the World Health Organisation? At the time, when the hon. Leader of the Opposition came with his first question and hon. Dr. Rawoo gloatingly was trying to teach hon. Dr. Boolell about what exactly is the virus and how it can contaminate and he was even saying that you are a doctor, you should know better. What arrogance! And at that time, they were beating upon their chest so happy that when hon. Dr. Boolell referred to it as a pandemic, they all laughed. Even the hon. Minister of Health grimed. Even hon. Dr. Rawoo laughed, made fun of it and today the world is in turmoil. My God! So, can you imagine?

And then you want to know what the response of this Government is? I have looked at the Cabinet decisions of 13 March 2020. And I looked at the sectoral measures that are taken, Cabinet decisions, with all those good friends and hon. Ministers who are in Cabinet. Let's see what exactly they have decided to do. The passenger fee on air ticket would be suspended for tourists from Reunion Island. Why does one suspend passenger fee on air ticket? Why? In order to encourage them to come! So, the response of this Government on 13 March, on the very next day of our independence was to come up with such an intelligent measure, let's encourage people from Reunion Island to come to Mauritius, bring down the passenger fee air ticket suspended for tourists from Reunion Island, Australia and South Africa and all three Reunion Island they have infected people there, Australia infected people there, South Africa infected people there and their intelligent reaction was what? Come to us, come home, let us come and welcome you open arms, let us have a little kiss, let us take you in our arms, come to Mauritius, we'll make it easier and cheaper for you to come, come along! That was their intelligent reaction.

*(Interruptions)*

Please let me get to that, Sir, let me get to the whisky part!

Actually, I have a little story, Mr Speaker, Sir, that since there is a lack of hand sanitizers on the market, that the Government came up with a very intelligent measure. It is unfortunate that the hon. Minister of Finance is not here because I hear that basically he was of a paramount role in that measure. He ensured something about whisky, the bottles. So, instead of two bottles, you could buy three bottles. Is it? I wonder what it was for. I mean, why do you make it easier for tourists to buy alcohol to come in or Mauritians or 6 bottles of wine, why? Is it to kill the virus or is it to wash your hands with the whisky, with the alcohol because there is no hand sanitizer or is it to encourage tourists to come to Mauritius because Mauritius is a shopping destination where you come to the duty-free and it is easier and cheaper to buy alcohol than any other destination. That was what they had in mind. I hope nothing else and if this is what they had in mind, do you find this a Government that has got the credibility, the ability and the knowledge *de gérer une crise de cette proportion*, to allow tourists to come more from Reunion Island, make it cheaper, allow them to come and buy whisky even more! This is their reaction.

And, oh my God, page 2, paragraph 1.4 of the Decisions of Cabinet and I am sure the hon. Minister Callichurn would be interested to know.

**Mr Speaker:** Address the Chair, hon. Member!

**Mr Mohamed:** I am addressing you. I am saying I am sure hon. Minister Callichurn would be interested to know. I can look at him, he is a nice man, I can look at him. And he is a good friend on top of it, let's not forget that.

Air Mauritius would pursue its promotional strategy to attract tourists. On 13 March – you know, Mr Speaker, Sir, on the day before the 12, if my memory serves me correctly, was the day and the date where the World Health Organisation had declared officially that Covid 19 was a pandemic. So, the next day, bright idea on the part of Government, it is a pandemic, outside there is a pandemic, the world, the planet is suffering, we are the only few countries – hon. Bodha said - where we don't have the problem. So, let us have this brilliant idea, promotional fare strategy to attract tourists from Reunion Island, from UK, from South Africa and Australia. Not only are we going to make it cheaper in terms of passenger fee, but we are going to make it even cheaper and easier for them to come to our territory by reducing airfares to Reunion Island, reduced by 50%, while the others reduced for 40%. Hotel rates would have discounts. They think that this is helping the tourist sector. We'll give them discounts. Let's bring in infected people, stay in but you will pay cheaper because you are infected. Is that it? Port charges imposed by the Mauritius Ports Authority and Cargo Handling Corporation would be waived for all exports up to 31 December 2020. The problem that the hon. Minister of Finance fails to understand and he has every time been saying it is a technical issue, but I will tell him all the technical issues. He has got a technical problem. And his technical problem is as follows: You cannot compare what is happening today with what happened in 2008. In 2008, we had to face a different type of economic crisis that had to do with commodities, oil, global financial crisis, credit crunch. We are talking about a lack of finance on the markets. That was the big problem of 2008.

Government stepped in and ensured there was no loss of employment, that he does not say. How is it that there was a global financial crisis in 2008? We came up with new legislation that was not loved by anyone but had to do it in order to save jobs. It was done. It was not popular but when Government can take decisions that are not popular this is a measure of their courage. This is how you measure courage. We saved the jobs. We created new jobs. But here the problem is, and I was talking to some friends in the industry, let us look at all the small-scale enterprises - the SMEs, *les marchands ambulants*, those practising in the informal sector. They have to buy little goods from China, they work. Today they have

a big problem, they cannot find goods from China. They are indebted and they are not within the big boys club that is being protected by the hon. Minister of Finance. That club of Business Mauritius. That club - those little people working on the streets everywhere, those traders who are not *un fardeau* upon Government because they take care of their own; they trade and they lead a very difficult job.

*Tous ces petits commerçants* who sell little biscuits for children, sweets, drinks, who have their own little vans distributing everywhere in all the *tabagies* around Mauritius, who are selling in the little markets, who have to buy raw materials from China in order to manufacture - those people, the Minister of Finance has found nothing in order for those people not to avoid driving straight into the wall. He has no solution for them. He has proposed nothing for them. The hon. Minister of Finance talks about port charges imposed by Mauritius Ports Authority to be waived on exports. How do you manufacture if you have a supply-side disruption? How do you manufacture anything if you have a supply-side problem; if you cannot find simple things like buttons, simple things like materials, simple things like little raw materials required in order to produce anything. The textile industry is in dire straits because it imports most of its raw materials required from China. It needs to have alternative markets. What is this Government doing in order to help the textile industry, the export-oriented industry? The other small-scale enterprises - what is he doing in order to help them find alternative sources of supply? Nothing! So, when I hear the hon. Minister of Finance saying that he...

*(Interruptions)*

Normally, you block it first and then you wipe.

**Mr Speaker:** Address the Chair.

**Mr Mohamed:** No, no. Normally, Mr Speaker, I invite you to tell him that he should and not afterwards because you are closer. You have got the issue...

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Go ahead. Continue. This is not part of the debate.

**Mr Mohamed:** For how long more, are we going to be able to sit? When I look at :

‘La boutique du Mauritius Duty Free Paradise à l’aéroport va proposer une remise de 15% sur tous les achats par les touristes jusqu’au 30 juin 2020.’

Is this one of the great solutions proposed to the coronavirus problem? I mean when I compare this to what is being proposed by other Governments and other jurisdictions. I was talking to someone in France - the Government has decided

that most people now are going to be indoors, work from home. This Government says: they are going to start encouraging a policy of working from home. Are they serious? How are they going to start that right now? It is not within our culture to work from home. In the midst of this crisis, now, we are going to start this whole thing about working from home. In France, the Government has come forward and said that 50% of the time that someone works will now be on *chômage technique* in France and the Government will pay and compensate half of the salary of that employee. It's going to cost a lot of money to the coffers of the State but they will still put the money in because they want to ensure that, from the moment when coronavirus is no longer a threat that it does not take time in order to stand up again and be strong to run this new wave of opportunity that is going to come. But, here, what are we proposing to employees? What are we proposing? At least, we have to be able to prepare. The hon. Minister of Finance says: 'we are going to propose to them what is available in the Workfare Programme Fund. The Workfare Programme Fund, something else which is very economical about and does not say, was set by the Labour Party in 2008. It was hon. Minister Bunwaree then in 2008. The Workfare Programme Fund did not exist before. Why is it that he does not, at least, acknowledge that this was something that was good too. Today, he says he is going to use that Workfare Programme Fund set up by the Labour Party that he is so good at criticising and this is going to help the workers. But no, what he does not say is that he is setting aside only less than Rs500 m. for the workers but he is giving *les patrons* Rs9 billion. That is the facility that he is offering to the *patronat*. Rs9 billion for *le patronat* and that also, God knows how it is going to be disbursed, no transparency and then only Rs400 m. for the workers, peanuts. Take that and go if at all. Then again, which section of the law is the hon. Minister of Labour going to rely upon in order to give this money out? A section of the law that says that he has the total discretion to decide how it's given out that we are not in any way able to question that discretion neither does he have an oversight committee in order to see to it that it is disbursed properly *aux méritants*. This is a section of the law that did not exist in 2008. This is a section of the law that was introduced last year. Yes, that I admit; I confess. In the old days when we were in power, money could not be distributed by the Minister willily it had to be done according to strict parameters, but, with the new law, the Minister has the power to do it and we cannot in any way question that. So, that is great governance actually.

Now, I have also heard the hon. Minister of Finance take the opportunity of explaining all the great deeds that he is doing but I read a report by Baker McKenzie on the

Impact of COVID-19 on KEY AFRICAN SECTORS because this is what we want to know. How is it going to affect us not only the health distraught that we are going to find ourselves into because of the mismanagement of this whole affair and then the only thing that the Government will be able to do is what? We all pray that we don't have a case in Mauritius. We all pray that. Then the Government is going to say we don't have a case in Mauritius but we are the ones who manage not to bring a case into Mauritius. This is what they are going to say. If there is no case in Mauritius and it is in the interest of one and all because this virus does not choose - at least, there is one good thing about it, it does not choose political colour. It does not choose age. It does not choose social background. It does not discriminate as this Government does. But if we don't have it then they will say we don't have it because we did it, we sorted it out. But if it comes down to Mauritius, they will not plead guilty; they will say: it is not our fault it is the pandemic.

At this moment as I am speaking to you, Mr Speaker, Sir, they are hiding behind the fact that there is this corona virus problem worldwide to explain the difficulties our country is facing economically. If it is so, how come before the coronavirus outbreak our country is already indebted? Wasn't it already indebted to almost 65% du PIB? Is it more?

*(Interruptions)*

70%! It is increasing. But for the hon. Minister of Finance, inflation is low. The prices of commodities are low on the world market, that is not a problem for him. He thinks that it has no effect on the fact that inflation is low. The fact that inflation is low for the hon. Minister of Finance it is all his doing, his Government's doing. The fact that hon. Bodha believes that soon we need only 500 USD in order to be in one of the richest countries, high income earning countries, but what he does not tell you, how is it distributed that wealth. Then the hon. Minister of Finance will say: well, at least, we have put in another Rs8 billion because of pension etc. We are talking about exceptional situation that requires exceptional courage and measures that this Government has not shown. It fails to understand the urgency.

When I was reading the report of Baker McKenzie on the impact of COVID-19 on Key African Sectors, the hon. Minister of Finance has not even touched on a very important sector. Fair enough! It is not his Ministry; it is that of his colleague, the Minister of Financial Services. How many mergers and acquisitions being done on the African continent will, because of COVID-19, be delayed or annulled? How many mergers and acquisitions in Africa, over the next few years, are being hampered by this COVID-19? Why do I say, it is

important because a lot of mergers and acquisitions is dealt with from Mauritius. I read here

–

“Capital Raising and IPOs

African issuers have been waiting several years for an improvement to political and economic instability in Africa before going ahead with any planned capital raising.”

Will this not have an impact on capital raising and IPOs? What about the impact?

“Global financial institutions are currently assessing the impact of COVID-19 and reacting to its economic impact, (...).”

How are they to adjust to a new and unprecedented circumstance brought about by the virus? Are any of our companies insured against COVID-19 impacts? The answer is ‘no’. What about infrastructure? China had started the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). The Chinese policy banks loan 19 billion dollars to energy and infrastructural projects in region for 2014 to 2017 and almost half of which was in 2017. The effects of Coronavirus have already impacted activity around Chinese Belt and Road Initiative, a multi-billion dollar plan to link Asia, Europe and Africa. So, what about trade? COVID-19 is expected to impact on China’s global trade activity for several months. Not now, it is not going to get better in two weeks’ time. Several months! What is the hon. Minister of Finance proposing through the Economic Development Board, through the friends he has in Business Mauritius? What are they proposing? What are the alternative sources of supply to the Mauritian market? What is he proposing apart from all those technical difficulties or issues that he cannot comment upon for technical reasons? What about energy and mining? How many operations are carried out through the Financial Services Sector in Mauritius for energy and mining in Africa from China and other Asian countries? Will this not be affected? And if this is going to be affected, how many funds will not be created? How many funds in Africa will not see the light of day? Will this not have an impact on our Financial Services Sector? Those are issues which I do not blame the Government for, but which I humbly implore the Government to look into. Not because we have to score political points, because it concerns the survival of the country.

So, yes, when the hon. Leader of the Opposition suggested, last week, that we have to work together in order to find solutions. Working together does not mean just dismissing our ideas as though they are worth nothing. Working together means having the resolve to do it

properly, arm's length respect for each other's ideas because this is the time for us to be able to put our political egos aside and stop hiding behind facts of 2008, 2001 or God knows when. Hon. Bodha going as back as 1976! How did that really help people of today, in 2020, facing the Coronavirus situation, when they are to really find out what happened in 1976, what was the number of seats and the percentage figure of the Labour Party? I do not know. This is not really what people want today. People want you to protect them, protect their children. Even those who are not in Mauritius, protect them, help them, not only in words but in action. Show that you have the ventilators that our country does not have. How many is the hon. Minister of Health going to import? When are they going to get to Mauritius? How long is it going to take to get to Mauritius? What are the procurement measures? Is he going to use emergency procurement? Is he not? What are those details that he is not giving us? Why is he not giving us those details? Is it because we do not have and he is just simply relying on the possibility that it does not come to Mauritius? Is that it?

In actual fact, Mr Speaker, Sir, I was listening to hon. Bodha, hon. Obeegadoo and hon. Hurreeram even though I was not in Mauritius for a while. I had to make the effort to listen to them because it does take an effort sometimes to listen to them. Hon. Obeegadoo was someone who really surprised me during his allocution. This was the same gentleman who today states that he is very proud to have made his choice albeit he can choose whoever he wants to be with. He was so quick to criticise the MMM for being so long in the opposition. Someone who fails to understand that our system of Government not only includes the Opposition but also Government, he basically puts forward that being in the opposition is, in fact, not interesting and he is not interested in that. And what I understand is that through the negotiations that he has embarked upon, prior to the elections of 2014, he has made a good negotiation. So, it is no longer a question of what do you believe in. It is no longer that. He puts himself on the moral high ground of supposedly doing politics differently and trying to dictate to others what is right and what is wrong and how he knows best and everyone else is wrong. He is very good at that, at giving lessons, *le donneur de leçon*. He is that very same person who met me and told me that soon we are going to be candidates together with the Labour Party. A few weeks or days before the elections, so, finally, he had a very good deal there.

*(Interruptions)*

No, fair enough! Pardon the pun, but I choose where to come. But then, again, it does not mean because we do not come on the same side that we are enemies. No, it does not mean

that. It means that we do not share certain ideals, but it means that we can still be friends with different ideals and working together. But what I do condemn, not the hon. Prime Minister, he is the leader of a party, of the MSM, he believes in his ideals, a party that was created many, many years ago. Fair enough! But what I find wrong is that someone who was with the party for many, many years, who puts himself on this moral high ground to give lessons to others, who has criticised the actual hon. Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Education for her Education Plan, who has been so critical about her Education Plan, today sitting in a Minister's position and forgets about his criticisms about that Education Plan and puts it aside because to him what is important? What he believes in as a cause? No. What is more important to him is to be in power and not to make the bad negotiations of the PMSD.

Because he said the PMSD did not know on which side to be and he wrongly chose. That is how you judge someone's character. Was the cause important to hon. Obeegadoo? No! Was what you believed is important? No! Because if it was what you believed in that was important, he would have stood up against the education reform of hon. Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun and of this Government ever since the previous mandate. Why is he all of a sudden silent about it? Why? And hon. Ganoo who has been in the Opposition a long time - we have been in the Opposition and I have been in Government, he has been in the Opposition. But the one thing about hon. Ganoo I respect is that we have always had a good working relationship. No matter where we have been, on each side of the Chamber, we have had a good working relationship.

Hon. Ganoo has gone as far as to say in a radio interview that I should be very careful because I have supposedly said that he has blood on his hands about the Metro Express accident, when I never even opened my mouth on that day. I know where you got the information from. Some people who are not used to hearing things in Parliament because they are so new here. Some people who do not know how to decipher who says and who does not, and give you wrong information. And here, he went on to say on radio and, obviously, on Waza FM which is one of the 'loudspeakers', if I may use that word, the 'loudspeakers' of Government.

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Only one time!

**Mr Mohamed:** The other 'loudspeaker', the other additional one. And he went to say that I should be careful, because, in other words, I was making allusion to blood on my

hands. You see, let me say it publicly, I have respect for hon. Ganoo. I will not lay the blame at his feet. He was wrongly inspired and I thank him for having apologised to me. He has not done it in public, but he has done it in private. But I should say *à son honneur, peut-être qu'il n'a pas pu le faire en public, mais* I say it publicly he has apologised.

*(Interruptions)*

I rung you because I thought that it was right for me to tell you that and not go and fight with you otherwise. And he was honest enough to apologise and I thank him for that and it was big even.

*(Interruptions)*

Yes. And he called me back which is as gentleman should do things. But, what I find really sad is that today you have Members of this Government – I remember hon. Ganoo talking in Press conferences, hon. Mrs Tania Diolle sitting next to him and saying about *le Metro Express* that there needed to be transparency.

*(Interruptions)*

Yes. You recall, Mr Speaker, Sir, my good friend, hon. Ganoo can very well say he still says that, so much the better. But he can say as much as he wishes, but there still isn't. Because let us remember what was in the Government Programme of 2014. What was in that Programme? In that Government Programme of 2015 actually, there was one line in there, 'freedom of information, access to information', the great policy of this Government for five years was to what? Ensure that there was access to information, freedom of information.

*(Interruptions)*

Very good! And that reminds me of what happened recently in France. You see the Greeks - I will not be what hon. Mrs Tania Diolle has done as to bring in Ryhana within this august Assembly, forgive me, I shall not be as contemporary as she is - the Greeks have got two words for the concept of time: It is *chronos* which is very simple, *chromos*, and then, there is something else, another word for time which is called *kairos*. *Kairos* as opposed to *chronos*. *Chronos* is the chronological element of time, whereas *kairos* is about the opportune time. That is the difference.

You see, each and every time, this Government, since December 2014 and in 2015 until today, has been in power, hon. Ganoo was sitting there. Each time this Government said: 'Well, you know, you were in power, you were in power, you were in power, you were

in power’, at some point in time, hon. Ganoo got so fed up that he said: ‘Come on, you can’t keep on using the same excuses. You can’t keep on using the same excuses because you are in power now.’ And he was right when he said that. Hon. Ganoo was right because they are in power, it is for them to act and to stop looking into the rear-view mirror and keep on saying: ‘Oh well, you did this, you did this, you did this!’ Kairos, the opportune moment, time is now, it is for you to do it. Stop telling us: ‘You were in power, you should have done it’. What are you doing? You are in power; the freedom of information is for this Government to do, not for us. We are away from power, we are far from power, we will not be in power. So, please!

**Mr Ganoo:** I would just remind you that the Labour Party had also promised a Freedom of Information Act in its manifesto and, in fact, the then Prime Minister, Dr. Navin Ramgoolam, said he had changed his mind because when he listened to what Tony Blair had said at one time about this Bill.

**Mr Mohamed:** Very good! So, is he, therefore, telling us that the Leader of the Labour Party is still right? So, what is he saying?

*(Interruptions)*

I am not giving way anymore. So, what is he saying? Oh, well, because the Leader of the Labour Party said that, therefore, we are right. Is this your excuse? You are using Dr. Navin Ramgoolam, Leader of the Labour Party, because he changed his mind. You believed, therefore, that this is an excuse for you not to come up with it. The Leader of the Labour Party said that at a point in time, that’s why I meant I am not talking about chronos, I am talking about kairos. Some people don’t understand between ‘kairos’ and ‘kas ros’. Kairos, what does it mean?

When President Macron was visting recently a hospital in France and met a specialist doctor about the COVID-19, he said to that doctor, he is there, he is going to give support. And that doctor turned to him and held his hand, shook his hand and did not let go of his hand and said: ‘Listen, give all the support you can to the Minister of Health. Give more than you can because we have done as much as we can, we can’t do more than that. *Le corps médical a donné tout ce qu’il peut*, you have to do it.’

The doctor said for one whole year there has been a lot of dilly-dallying and not really doing what has to be done. Then, finally, *Président* Macron was answered. The doctor

said: ‘No, no, kairos. Stop looking at what was done in the past. You are in power today, what are you doing?’

So, the hon. Minister of Finance is so good at saying what happened in 2008. How does that help someone who is facing COVID-19? Maybe, already in our midst, and I hope it’s not, or may be coming soon. What does that really help? This is the same hon. Minister of Finance who went on the radio station, after the victory of 2019, who said, when he was asked about the indebtedness, *la dette de l’économie mauricienne*, you know what his answer was? Figures are not important, it’s a state of mind that’s important. He said that figures are not important, ‘*Les chiffres important peu*’. He said that word for word: ‘*Les chiffres important peu*’. An hon. Minister of Finance telling you that the rate of indebtedness, in those days was what, 65, today it’s 70. From what his understanding about the world order, it could even be a 100%. Who cares? Because we are having COVID-19 right now. *Les chiffres important peu*. But when he has to talk about inflation, then *les chiffres comptent*. Whenever it suits him, then it is important to him. But what he fails to tell us is that the situation we are facing is very serious. Why I believe we cannot believe this Government and we have no confidence in this Government. Clearly, people are traumatised on the other side of the House. They say we are traumatised. They are traumatised and I’ll explain why they are traumatised. Every single Member of this Government, as though like parrot-like, has come up with a speech.

**Mr Speaker:** This is unparliamentary. ‘Parrot-like’ is unparliamentary!

**Mr Mohamed:** Parrot-like?

**Mr Speaker:** Please, withdraw it!

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Mohamed:** Alright, they have...

*(Interruptions)*

Oh my God! Mr Speaker, Sir, if it pleases you, they have repeated it without understanding why they are repeating it.

*(Interruptions)*

It would be worse that one.

*(Interruptions)*

So, they have repeated it, repeated, repeated, repeated like some sort of discourse that was basically...

*(Interruptions)*

That is the best word! That is experience talking there! The automatic loudspeaker! And we have varieties of loudspeakers nowadays. So, they repeated it. What is it? 'We won the election. It is anti-democratic on their part to challenge the elections.' So, the Representation of the People Act, they include clauses how to challenge elections, but for them, we cannot use sections of the Representation of the People Act because it is undemocratic. I do not understand the logic.

So, the lawmakers say that the sections of the law contain measures and clauses to challenge an election, but they say we should not do it because it is undemocratic. So, we are following what the law says which was democratically voted in Parliament but following a democratically voted law in Parliament and its provisions is undemocratic. That is the new world order *version Alliance Morisien*.

Then, what is important as well is that they keep on saying: "Oh well, you know, they are really affected, or afflicted by the fact that they hold only less than 37% of *les suffrages exprimés*". Hon. Bodha, a Senior Member of this august Assembly, of the MSM...

**Mr Speaker:** Address the Chair!

**Mr Mohamed:** ... has taken so much time in explaining the mathematical reason as to why having less than 37% is not a problem. But let me simplify it, do they have less than 37%? Yes or no? Yes, they do. They have less than 37%. I do not say that; the statistics of the Electoral Commissioner's Office say that. So they pump away and say that the Office of the Electoral Commissioner, supposedly, we do not have respect for him, supposedly, because we challenge an election, we do not have respect for him. You see, where is the logic? Where is the logic? If we go before a Court of law and we challenge an election, this means we have a total disrespect to him. It does not make sense. Where is the logic in there? So, that is why I said, I will not use the unparliamentary word, but this is what is being done. And then, they go on to say: "Oh well, you know, some of them went as far as to criticise the Labour Party Leader saying that he should resign, that he has lost two elections". You know what, if they

are so not bothered about having only 37%, the fact remains is the majority of Mauritius voted against this Government. But our electoral system is such that they are in power and we are not. We are the ones who chose an electoral system and we live by it. But let me say something else, when I was in my constituency, during the elections, the Returning Officer called me - morning, first ballot, the thousand ballot boxes, hon. Ameer Meea was there - and told me one thing, he said to me: 'We are having a problem tallying the number of votes. And I said: "Well, I do not understand". He said: "You are ahead". So, I said: "That is good news. That is not a problem. I do not find a problem there, keep me ahead". And then, he said: "No, we are having a problem. When we are inputting it into the computer system, it is coming out less". That is what the Returning Officer said to me.

*(Interruptions)*

That was the computer that you provided to them! That was the computer that you provided!

*(Interruptions)*

Oh, not the Electoral Commissioner's Office!

*(Interruptions)*

Oh, yes, SIL! And he said to me: 'We are going to try again; even for Dr. Husnoo, even when his figures were being put in, they were coming out less. Not only for me, so please, let us be very careful about that. So, maybe that could give some ideas to Dr. Husnoo.

**Mr Speaker:** Address the Chair, please!

**Mr Mohamed:** Yes, I am addressing you. That could give some ideas to him, Sir.

*(Interruptions)*

Come on, he has got a thick skin. What I am talking about here is the following, is that he said because each and every time there were problems with the input in the computer system, he had taken the decision as Returning Officer, not to use the computer system and to go manual. That was what happened. So, you see, there have been comments here about them having won the elections. Fair enough! But the very simple solution to all this, I agree with the hon. Prime Minister that a country cannot constantly be under the sword of Damocles as to the Opposition challenging the legitimacy of Government. You cannot constantly have the Opposition challenging the legitimacy of Government and have it for a long time, because

that undermines governance and Government. You cannot have that. Yes, it is important for you to have political stability. Yes, it is important for the world outside to see that we have a Government that is no longer being challenged. Yes, it is important. The solution is very simple. Ask the hon. Deputy Prime Minister to stop his delaying tactics; ask the Government and the Members that are concerned by the electoral petitions to bring in a joint motion in Supreme Court that the cases be heard within a strict calendar, this year itself, and it is over all done and dusted. That is the solution. If you have got nothing to hide, go forward, but do not come up with lame excuses like the hon. Deputy Prime Minister: ‘I suppose, well, I will not accept service because it was done in Parliament and this and the other.’ Those are lame excuses for someone who does not want to face reality!

**Mr Speaker:** Hon. Member, can you resume your seat?

**Mr Mohamed:** Yes, please, I am.

**Mr Speaker:** This is a right for a Member of Parliament to raise a complaint, okay. You cannot question that. This is his right. Continue with your debate!

**Mr Mohamed:** I do not question his right to raise any point he wishes, just like he cannot question my right to believe that his excuse is lame; simple. I am not questioning his right to come up with a motion in Parliament and he cannot question my right to believe that those are excuses of a lame nature. That is what I am saying. So, yes, this country deserves that we no longer have this challenge going on. Let the Courts decide. If the Courts are to decide that this is it, we are wrong, we are wrong. We will have to keep quiet and accept that we have been wrong all along and that’s it. Whereas if they are right, they are right, but, at least, for the public at large, for the international community, they will see that this Government is no longer being challenged or this Government is no longer in office, either or. But the fact remains, we cannot continue having a system of this nation continue, protract it, whereby we continue challenging it and then the process takes a year, two years, three years. Let us look at other countries where you have Supreme Court intervening, Courts pertaining to electoral issues, within weeks it is decided. Within weeks! But, in Mauritius, the trend is what? It takes years. So, in African countries that we supposedly tell them to look at us as examples, they are going faster than we are. So, please, you know, we have the solution. We do not necessarily have to have this argument about who is right and who is wrong.

At the end of the day, we do not necessarily have to be right or wrong. It could be that we are half right and we half wrong, that is possible. And if that is possible, let the Court decide and off with it. Now, if the Deputy Prime Minister happens to lose his seat, he loses his seat. That does not matter. Government has to go on. Now, we will feel sad for him, we will give a cocktail of *départ* or whatever, but I do not know what they do some time, they give a gold watch and thank you very much for your contribution, but that is all. But let us get on with it. So, at the end of the day, let me try to say one thing. The hon. Prime Minister has said let us reduce 10% *de dépenses courantes*. He said that he is going to cancel *les festivités pour l'indépendance* in order to reduce cost. Cut cost, fair enough! Why didn't he reduce the activity of all those women for the International Women's Day at Swami Vivekananda? Because there, political speeches could be made. How much did that cost? And then, they are going to say: "Well, it is not politically correct because it was for women". Oh yes, it was for women. Fair enough! But how much did it cost? If the whole idea is to reduce cost, fair enough, tell me. I have in my hand here, a Government of Mauritius e-Procurement issue.

You know what it was? It was for a turntable. Hon. Dr. Husnoo maybe is aware of that, the turntable ladder for the Mauritius Fire and Rescue Services. There was only one bidder. It was in order to renovate and maintain a vehicle that was more than 30 years old.

*(Interruptions)*

No, no! Water would be good, but anyway. So, the thing is, money that was put aside for that particular project was – maybe, friends of Government, backbenchers are not aware. I would hope that you are not aware because I cannot, Mr Speaker, Sir, put them in the list of people who are aware, but keep quiet, you see, the guilty knowledge part. I cannot put them in that part. I just hope that some of you do not have that guilty knowledge. Now, that you have that knowledge, because I am going to share it with you, it is that Rs25,405,200, that was the one bidder for maintaining that particular fire engine with a turntable ladder, and it is only when it came to the Press, and it was leaked to the Press, this information. I must admit, I, myself leaked it.

*(Interruptions)*

And why, because I had been informed that the hon. Minister Husnoo was made aware - obviously I know he is aware, I am just pretending I hope he is aware. I am just being nice to

him. I know he is aware. He was made aware, but said he couldn't do anything. But when I leaked it to the Press, knowing that he said he couldn't do anything, and the reason why I found this so shocking when the hon. Prime Minister said he wants to save 10%, etc. I find this is a *leurre*, a sham because here, you buy a new lorry, today, in the United Kingdom, a 30-metre turntable ladder electronic new vehicle, it costs you 500,000 pounds. Now, today! Today, it costs you 500,000 pounds, but the people in charge here were ready to give this contract to one company for Rs25,400,000 to maintain and repair a 30-year old vehicle. And when I leaked it, all of a sudden, the contract was not allocated. What is the reason? Not because it was a waste of public funds, but because the bidder did not comply to all conditions. Bizarre! One bidder, his bid was accepted, his bid was opened, was evaluated, everything was opened, the Chairperson saw it, but when it was leaked to the Press, oh, let's be careful now. Scandal, another one starting! And all of a sudden, for the bizarre, nonsensical reason, thank God, at least, this money for the taxpayers has not been wasted.

So, when you look at the Director of Audit's report, this has nothing to do with Coronavirus. When you look at the Director of Audit's report, for example, the Ministry of Education was criticised, when it talks about *rien que les dépenses* for Phase 1 and Phase 2 – Rs356 m.; Rs164 m. for the Phase 2 of the e-education project; bad due diligence, failure to ensure that there is value for money. What about *la douane*? I am reading in the Press here, in *l'Express* –

*“Le manque de coordination et d’inspection au port décrié.”*

*“En 2017, la douane avait annoncé son projet d’installer des caméras de surveillance. Mais en 2018, le National Maritime and Harbour Security Committee lui a demandé de collaborer avec la Mauritius Ports Authority et la CHCL. Sauf que la CHCL a fait fi des instructions et a modernisé son système de surveillance sans la collaboration de la douane. Sauf qu’en novembre 2019, les caméras n’avaient pas encore été installées...”. Etc, etc.*

The Ministry of Youth and Sports has been criticised –

*“...le rapport se montre très sévère concernant les dépenses de R 183,91 millions budgétées durant l’année financière 2018-2019 à cet effet.”*

*Deux fédérations sportives* receiving the sum of Rs3.74 m. and one of them has never been able to even produce receipts for the expenditure of Rs1.74 m. Rs328.6 m. – Ministry of Information Technology, Communication and Innovation. I see my friend, the hon. Minister who was then Minister of TIC in those days, being criticised for Rs328.6 m., *entre autres*; that's one of them.

And what about *l'Intégration sociale*? "*Logement aux pauvres, promesses non tenue* ». What about *le service de la santé*, same problem, criticised! Left, right and centre in the Audit Report and the Prime Minister tells us that we have to believe him that he has run the country properly. Hon. Obeegadoo comes forward and tells us: look at the number of houses. I listened to his speech very carefully. He said between 2014-2019, some 1,900 housing units were built. Okay! But when I looked at the speech of his colleague - hon. Aadir Ameer Meea constantly put questions, in the previous mandate, to hon. Mahen Jhugroo. And he said, on 02 April 2019, 2,588 houses are being built. The new Minister says 1,900, the former Minister says 2,588 and he had also added last year, *il a aussi rappelé que* there will be 6,680 that will be built in one year. Yes, before the end of the mandate, 6,680 houses will be built.

So, this is the new Members of Parliament on the other side of the House. I am addressing myself to you, Mr Speaker, but through you to them. This is not your fault. This is not the fault of the new Members of Parliament sitting here, it becomes their fault when they close their eyes to the obvious. It becomes their responsibility where they pretend that they did not hear. It becomes their fault and they can be having a finger pointed at them for a wrongdoing. Now that they know, reading at that Audit's Report, and if they pretend that they still form part of a Government that has a perfect management of the economy, then, they are wrong. This Audit's Report has been circulated *en long et en large*. I have not seen a single Member on the other side who did not form part of their Government, standing up with courage and to say that they do not agree with what was done. They don't have the courage to do that. I remember the days when I was a backbencher in a Government led by Dr. Navin Ramgoolam, I did not hesitate to criticise the Government I belong to. I never hesitated to criticise the Prime Minister, Dr. Ramgoolam, even though I was a backbencher with him. I did so!

Today, we live in a world where everything has to go as this Government wants, because if you criticise this Government, it means you are wrong and you are no longer a patriot.

The freedom to think independently has disappeared. I do not like being tied down. I like thinking on my feet and expressing my views, pleases it to some or maybe it can displease others. We say it *dans le respect de la chose*.

What I wish when I see the youth in this Parliament, on all sides of the House, is to, at least, tell the people that there is hope for tomorrow. Not everything has to be surrounded by what does one man, the hon. Prime Minister, Pravind Kumar Jugnauth. In all their speeches, everything: “thank God, we have the champion”, “Thank God! Pravind Kumar Jugnauth”. Without him, nothing happens, as though he is the only one there...

*(Interruptions)*

I have never done that. I don't do that and I speak for me.

*(Interruptions)*

You see! Let's listen.

**Mr Speaker:** Order please! Order please!

**Mr Mohamed:** Listen! I have never, in my speeches and even I must say that remarks have been made to me by some why is it that in my speeches they do not contain some *mots de félicitation pour le leader*. It has been made to me.

*(Interruptions)*

Because I don't, whereas you see, let me be very clear. You see, 52 years after independence, we are facing a viral problem of dangerous nature.

*(Interruptions)*

That's a very intelligent remark. That's so intelligent. You are shining there.

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Order, please!

**Mr Mohamed:** *Emtel p done moi to raport twa. Ki fer ine met twa dehors.* So, as I am saying...

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Order, please!

**Mr Mohamed:** *Pa per, ine met twa dehor pu fraude.*

Anyway, so what I am saying is very simple. We have to at least ensure that we have in this House debates, debates on ideas that we are not restricted in our ability to express ourselves and simply follow whatever one person wants. That's what I am saying. Is that so difficult and if you believe I am wrong okay, fair enough, continue what you all do. Fair enough.

But what I am trying to say is be independent in your manner of thinking and think that you do not owe allegiance to anyone else but the people of this country. So, as it stands right now, 52 years after independence, what do we do? You have a country that is indebted, that you have no fiscal space to even come, you cannot even help enterprises as you should, as you could because *gouverner c'est prévoir* and you did not *prévoir, rien n'a été prévu*. So, today we are in a situation where for the first time now, now we are going to find land *aster pu ale fer sillons pu ale planter la*. Now you are going to find land, now you are going to have digging, now you are going to plant. When are you going to get the crop? Now you are going to start giving facilities to industries to manufacture when our economy is only having foreign direct investment mainly for what? For building of PDS and nothing else, as Sir Anerood Jugnauth used to say it, simply on what? On *béton* and nothing else! The manufacturing sector is dead. So, please, I don't find a programme that is worth writing home about here. I find a situation whereby we need to work together and I honestly believe that the decision of the hon. Prime Minister to stop this movement of people from Europe is well taken. I would have wished that it had been taken a week earlier. My call to the Prime Minister is that schools also need to be closed. We can't take risks. We need to do that because we can't take risks with the lives of our children, that universities also have to be closed, big gatherings, we have to avoid. It is not when we have one case that we start doing it because then it will be too late. So, please, in the interest of the nation, my plea to the hon. Prime Minister since everything obviously goes through him is to put aside any differences

that we may have but please in the name of our nation and the children of this country, let us protect what is already protected and ensure that no harm comes to anyone.

Thank you very much.

**Mr Speaker:** Hon. Minister Gobin!

(3.55 p.m.)

**The Attorney General, Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security (Mr M. Gobin):** Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I have been listening very carefully to hon. Mohamed. I was listening so carefully that I had to go back to the Standing Orders and refresh my memory. I had read the Standing Orders before on the rules of debate and I thank him for having invited all hon. Members to participate in the debate but I went back to the Standing Orders because I checked again. There were no rules for gesticulations, I could not find, and it has been almost an hour, more of gesticulations, as usual I would say, because I was here before in the previous session and I am back again in this session and it's always just about gesticulations. To say basically, yes, if I'll have to borrow the term of my colleague here, it's just acting to say what? To convey what? What is the message conveyed? First is that he was being so patriotic that he was so worried about the population of this country in the face of Covid-19, he was so worried about the citizens, he was so worried about the distributors and the manufacturers and those who were distributing goods in a *tabagie* he was so worried about that but he didn't say that he was so worried about the citizens of this country that he chose in the face of such a crisis, he chose to go and watch football match at Anfield.

*(Interruptions)*

When we were working day and night, Saturday, Sunday, every day and I have to say all the meetings of the Inter-Ministerial Committee were attended by the high representative of the WHO here. When we were working night and day, he chose to go to Anfield and the direct result was that Liverpool started to lose matches.

*(Interruptions)*

Now that he is back from Anfield trip, he starts to give us lessons of patriotism. He is the last person, not in this country, the last person on this planet to give this Government lessons of patriotism.

I had not planned to start my speech like this, but after having heard, not heard, after having seen the gesticulations, I have to because hon. Mohamed is being today the mouthpiece of the unreturned leader of the Labour party to claim that schools should be shut, universities should be closed. In all the countries where schools, universities and educational institutions are closed, in all those countries Covid-19 is present. We do not have a single case as at today of Covid-19. Why should schools and universities be closed? Just because the unreturned Leader of the Labour party says so? That same unreturned Labour party Leader claimed more than 9 days earlier, publicly creating panic in this country saying that Covid-19 was present here in this country when until today we still do not have a single case. They want to create panic. This is why they are claiming that schools should be closed, that we hear such speeches as we have just heard now. They want to create a panic when, in fact, it is the duty of every citizen of this country to come together to work in the face of a crisis which is unprecedented, not only for this country but for any other country on this planet. We do not know what comes tomorrow; we do not know what will be there next month.

This is labour patriotism, Mr Speaker, Sir, and this is what we have and they claim that they are better at managing a crisis! I will give you, Mr Speaker, Sir, examples of crisis which have been managed by the Labour party. In 1996, when there were riots at Pailles, in 1999 when there were riots in this country, in 2013 when there was flooding where hon. Mohamed's own car was caught in the flooding, how were those crisis situations handled by the Labour party? How was Labour patriotism then? They have the cheek to give us lessons of patriotism. They are the last persons not in this country, on this planet to give us again I repeat it lessons of patriotism.

When I think about it, why is it that hon. Mohamed started off by criticising my colleague, the hon. Minister of Health, why did he do so? Why of all on the subject matter, he started to criticise frontally hon. Dr. Kailesh Jagutpal?

He can defend himself, but I speak on behalf of Government and I should say so. Hon. Shakeel Mohamed chose to have a frontal attack on hon. Minister Jagutpal and his officers at the Ministry of Health. Do you know why, because he was applauded this morning for doing

a good job from the start of this crisis until today, and I say it again, the Ministry of Health deserves to be congratulated.

*(Interruptions)*

They cannot stand that we are doing a good job. They cannot. This is why they chose to attack a Minister of Health who is doing a good job, I say it again, where his officers are doing a good job and I once again congratulate the whole Ministry. And what is paradoxical in the speech of hon. Mohamed, one of the so many paradoxical examples I am going to give now, is that, he had stated earlier, that the Ministry had lied, and then upon your intervention he said, no, the Ministry had given unfounded, incorrect information and he had enquired. And from whom did he enquire? It is already in Hansard now, hon. Shakeel Mohamed. You have enquired from the officers of the Ministry of Health itself. You said so and I was here. So, which part of the Ministry lies and which part of the Ministry gives correct information? So, now, we have investigators who are going to tell us whether the Ministry is doing its job correctly. All the protocols adopted by the Ministry of Health in the face of this crisis, Mr Speaker, Sir, have been validated by the WHO, *point à la ligne!*

*(Interruptions)*

No matter what hon. Shakeel Mohamed says, the protocols ...

**Mr Speaker:** Order, please! You are not the 'loudspeaker'!

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Gobin:** Let me say it again, all the protocols of the Ministry of Health on COVID-19 have been validated by the WHO. This is the type of Opposition that we have. Even in the face of a national crisis, they will start to play politicking, cheap politics and they will say, I am not saying so to score political points when, in fact, this is exactly what they want to do. When they say 'A', they mean 'B'. They say they don't want to score political points, but this is exactly what they want. In a situation like COVID-19, a situation of national crisis, this is the cheap politics that they play. I would take this opportunity to invite all citizens once again, we should stand together in the face of a crisis like this. It is not only the responsibility of the hon. Minister of Finance or the hon. Minister of Health, it is the responsibility of every citizen. We do not know where we will be, we do not know where this world will be, what will be the state of the economy and we have to take all precautions

at all levels, whether at home, at school or in Parliament. It is not the time to play cheap politics; we have to face a crisis situation for many more days and perhaps many more weeks to come.

Mr Speaker, talking about what the Opposition is trying to do in this country, creating panic and then casting doubt on legitimacy of Government also on the other. That was started way back when the electoral petitions were entered. Hon. Obeegadoo mentioned it last time we met for the last sitting, but hon. Obeegadoo perhaps did not have sufficient time to go into detail. I remember hon. Obeegadoo stating that the hon. Members of the Opposition are quick to enjoy the privileges of being in the Assembly, to enjoy the privileges of being an elected Member, elected in that very same November 2019 Elections, yet, they will say ‘*élections truquées*’, they will say that for Government the elections were not free and fair, but for them, the same elections were free and fair. Hon. Obeegadoo did not give examples, I will give examples. How quick they are to enjoy the privileges of being an elected Member and this is good for the population to know. I will say so, who were the first ones in this House to purchase duty-free cars?

*(Interruptions)*

Who were the first ones to purchase duty-free cars, which is a privilege? There is nothing sinister in buying a duty-free car when you are an elected Member; it has been so for a number of years. There is nothing sinister. But who were the first ones? From there!

*(Interruptions)*

*Donner!*

**Mr Speaker:** Order!

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Gobin:** *Si to capave to donner, to ena couraz to donner! Moi mo pou donner la! Moi mo pou donner enn ti moment.*

**Mr Speaker:** No exchange of views!

**Mr Gobin:** This kind of gesticulation impresses nobody. In December, Mr Speaker, half of the Opposition had already purchased...

*(Interruptions)*

Some were a bit late, they caught up quickly in January 2020. But the Labour Party ones, the top four from the Labour Party, December 2019, *meme pas enn mois après* – this is good for the people to know there. And when you read the independent Press, they are the first to single out the personalised number plates that some of my colleagues have...

*(Interruptions)*

*Kott to ousi inn gagn cado!*

**Mr Speaker:** No exchange of views !

**Mr Gobin:** When it should be said - maybe, his constituents who live not very far from here in the district of Port Louis, should, once in a while, be allowed, Mr Speaker, to come into this ‘garage’, which is a restricted area unfortunately. They should come here, for example, now, at this time, to see how many personalised number plates are on the Opposition’s cars. How did they get that?

*(Interruptions)*

Were these not privileges allocated out of being an elected Member? All the cars are there now to be seen by one and all. They enjoy the privileges, but they claim the elections were not free and fair!

*(Interruptions)*

...ça, il faut le faire! Et ça, il n’y a que les membres de l’autre côté !

I said there is nothing sinister in purchasing a duty-free car having a personalised number plate, but then, don’t come to say...

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Order! Hon. Members, order please!

**Mr Gobin:** We had the decency to listen and watch quietly your gesticulations, hon. Mohamed. Learn to be quiet and listen.

*(Interruptions)*

Ah! It is my turn to gesticulate now. Look at me! You should learn to keep quiet. *Chacun son tour*. You had your turn, you had your time...

*(Interruptions)*

I have just started, there are many more to come. You talk about ‘*kairos*’...

*(Interruptions)*

I will talk about Roches Noires!

*(Interruptions)*

*Pas ‘kairos’, c’est ‘kass ross’,* Mr Speaker. They want to give us lessons on running Government. The hon. Member said that he did not hesitate to criticise his leader when he was a backbencher.

*(Interruptions)*

You were a backbencher in 2005. You had taken over Government from the former MSM/MMM. In 2005, the Audit Report was criticising a previous Government, not your Government. You never criticise your own leader, you are mouthpiece today, and I say it again, you are his mouthpiece of the unreturned Labour Party leader here. This is not...

*(Interruptions)*

Let me not come to your days when you were in the MSM...

*(Interruptions)*

Ah! That Labour Party and this Labour Party is a world of difference.

**Mr Speaker:** Come back to the debate, please!

**Mr Gobin:** Yes, let me come back to the debate and let me address you.

I wanted to show by just these two examples how we have the demagogical once again Opposition over there, and having the cheek to give us some lessons, criticising on one hand the free and fair elections, but yet enjoying the privileges of being a returned candidate in that elections of November 2019. We believe that the Judiciary will give its verdict at the appropriate time. I will, therefore, not go into the details of those Election Petitions, contrary to what hon. Mohamed said earlier. Giving examples of what a Returning Officer had told him in his specific constituency, knowing full well that there are petitions going on now in Court.

(Interruptions)

**Mr Speaker:** Hon. Mohamed!

**Mr Gobin:** I do not propose to go into the details of the Petitions, Mr Speaker, although I also have plenty of information to give, but I believe that once a case is in Court, the proper forum to thrash out issues should be in Court.

The Opposition has also criticised, Mr Speaker, Sir. I have read that in the Press. I think that comes from the Leader of the MMM, at some point, I quote him –

*“Le MSM se bat pour sa survie.”*

It was in the days when the Government Programme had just been read and there was one day when there were some, I should say, disorder in the House and disciplinary measures were taken by yourself, Mr Speaker, Sir, but never mind whether it was said ‘*le MSM se bat pour sa survie*’ or not, I am coming to the elections held in November 2019.

Whether you call it 37%, whether you want to call it 38%, we won fair and square and we won in each and every constituency where we have elected Members. *Il y a eu* – I put it as *certain accidents de parcours* in some constituencies, otherwise we would have won more than that. The system in Mauritius is that you win in a constituency and then collectively you form a Government. Statistics and figures, you can make them say whatever you want. You can call it 37%, what is clear is that we won in the constituencies and we make a majority collectively in this House. One may choose to look at 37%. I choose to look at something else. I choose to look at the phenomenon, in our electoral jargon called ‘*pa tir caution*’. There is a jargon in this country ‘*sa, li pa inn tir caution sa*’. Recently, we had the example of ‘*pa tir caution*’ in the by-election which saw the election of hon. Dr. Boolell in Quatre Bornes, where the PMSD candidate did not score the minimum of 10%, which led to the revival of this jargon ‘*candidat pa inn tir caution*’. That was for the by-election. But we have seen a major party scoring less than the 10% in this election in November 2019. Yet, they cast doubt on our election. Let me give examples!

I start, obviously, with my own constituency. Once again, I believe hon. Mrs Koonjoo-Shah and hon. Dhaliah join me once again to thank the electors of my constituency for having bestowed upon us the responsibility of representing them. We will, of course, all three of us, live up to the expectation, but let me give you one very interesting detail of those

results in No. 7. Do you know, Mr Speaker, Sir, that all three candidates of the MMM, all three, scored less than 10% in No. 7. All of them! I could not believe my eyes on the day of the results. I said let's party for today. I will check the official statistics tomorrow with the Electoral Commissioner. When I woke up the next day, the first thing I checked was the official statistics from the Electoral Commissioner. It confirmed all three of them less than 10% *'pa inn tir caution dans numéro 7'*.

Then, I started to find out whether this was the case in other constituencies as well. I said let's go to my neighbour in Constituency No. 6. Over there, well, they did a little bit better. However, I found out that an independent candidate had scored more votes than the MMM candidate called Mr Beejan. An independent candidate scored more votes than MMM candidate Beejan in Constituency No. 6. I moved to No. 9.

*(Interruptions)*

I moved to No. 9, Mr Speaker, Sir. I said maybe in such a constituency where the MMM party had solid *'ancrage'* at some point, I could not believe - *enn moment ti ena dauphin laba* - there was an MMM candidate, Mr Poonith in No. 9, you will confirm my colleague, less than 10%. In No. 15, I said let's go to see in the towns. Why am I only looking at villages? I am not saying that in No. 15 they scored less than 10%, they did score more. However, when I looked at all the scores in No. 15, *et surtout numéro 15*, Mr Speaker, Sir, you know very well the situation over there. In No. 15, it is less than 20% votes in that constituency for a party like the MMM! I am not talking about the national score; I am talking of constituency statistics. I moved next to No. 16.

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Order, please!

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Gobin:** *Gagn dimal!*

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Hon. Uteem!

**Mr Gobin:** *Gagn dimal!*

(Interruptions)

**Mr Speaker:** Hon. Uteem! Order, please!

**Mr Gobin:** Je ne vais pas dire que l'honorable membre est décevant. Moi, je ne vais pas dire qu'il est décevant. Non, non !

(Interruptions)

**Mr Speaker:** Hon. Uteem! It is not in order to interrupt a Member when he speaks!

**Mr Gobin:** I moved to another constituency in the urban area on No. 16 and for that I have to congratulate the party because they scored a very good score. The first Member was hon. Bérenger in No. 16. I said: 'well, hats off, good job, well done!' But then, Mr Speaker, Sir, how can you be first returned Member and then your second candidate at some point perhaps deputy leader or who was even announced to be Deputy Prime Minister, he is No. 7 on the list of candidates? How does this happen? This is the fate of the major political parties.

Now, on the criticism of free and fair or questioning the legitimacy of this Government, I fail to understand from where they get these arguments. And when I do some more thinking about where does it come from this idea of challenging the legitimacy of Government, then I read and I understood, I read the Press Conference as published in the Press of a former Attorney General of this country by the name of Mr Yatin Varma. He is a former Attorney General himself, a former elected Member of this House from Constituency No. 12. And it was so interesting to read that he stated, in no uncertain terms, *que les pétitions électorales ont été logées pour la survie politique de Navin Ramgoolam*. This is coming from the former Attorney General of that same Navin Ramgoolam who says '*les pétitions électorales ont été logées pour la survie politique de Navin Ramgoolam*'.

Now, the Members of the Opposition want us to pay heed to their comments, to their gesticulations! Mr Speaker, Sir, I believe we have many, many challenges ahead of us on which we should concentrate our efforts as a nation, as a Government. The results speak for themselves. The people have spoken, the people have given yet another time for another mandate, have placed their trust in the hands of hon. Pravind Jugnauth and this Government.

(Interruptions)

And we will indeed live up to the expectation although I should say there are unexpected events like Covid-19. No one on this earth predicted that we would face such a situation, but we will live up, we will come together as a nation. This is the Mauritian DNA. We know how to come together as a nation in times of national crisis and we will once again face it. When we look at the Government Programme, Mr Speaker, Sir, it reminds me once again what hon. Bodha said earlier today. We should take it in the context of where we were in 2014 and where we are now, that is, what was the situation of the economy with the failures of so many institutions when we took over in 2014-2015. Hon. Bodha mentioned only the MBC and the NDU. We should not forget the situation of the Development Bank of Mauritius (DBM) which was an institution supposed to help the SMEs, the productive sector. That DBM, itself, was about to be shut down. We should not forget other institutions like the SIT in what dire situation they were in 2014. Even a waterpark which was supposed to be a place for leisure had to be closed down when they were managing the affairs of this country; the Mauritius Post and Cooperative Bank Ltd, even the casino; this is the only country where the casinos make losses. Hon. Ramful was saying that there is the mark of the Labour Party on the major decisions in this country, major steps like *l'éducation gratuite, le transport gratuit*, yes, fair enough. There is the mark of the then Labour Party, but there is the mark of the Labour Party also on the DBM, on the SIT, on the MPCB, on the MBC, on the casino and so on. This is the mark of the Labour Party. There is the mark of the Labour Party in places like Roches Noires. There is the mark of the Labour Party - many, many other examples abound. Why am I saying so? It is because we had to reverse all these situations when you took office in December 2014. We have done it. If I have to take an example which is visible to the naked eye, it is the water park once again. It is back in operation. That same waterpark, which they had closed down, is today in full operation. The DBM has published its accounts. Every single institution which they had taken near-bankruptcy situation is afloat again. This is why in this Government Programme 2020-2024, we say we build on the achievements we have made and we take the country further. We build on what we have already achieved. This is a pillar on which the Government Programme 2020-2024 is based. *C'est la continuité dans l'effort, dans la discipline* because when hon. Pravind Jugnauth is in charge there are two certainties: it is discipline and hard work.

The other pillar is the philosophy of this Government; it is that we leave no one behind. We do not concentrate on only one sector and leave others behind. And when I heard earlier when my colleague, the hon. Minister of Finance was being criticised, once again, by

hon. Mohamed, saying that we are going to help some privileged few with the *plan de soutien*. I believe he must have been confused with the days when the stimulus package was paid out lavishly to one, Mr Jean Suzanne; to a former Member of this House, hon. Mardemootoo. What had happened to the money dished out lavishly to these? They were part of the club of selected few, the privileged few.

*(Interruptions)*

This is a club of '*dilapidos*', yes, as the hon. Prime Minister says.

And I remember when I once met an inhabitant who lives just on the border with Poste Lafayette, because Poste Lafayette falls to be in Constituency No. 9 and that my Constituency ends with Roches Noire. This is why I know Roches Noires very well and then you have Poste Lafayette. An inhabitant over there said one day - and that happened around the time of the stimulus package. He said: 'I could not understand why that costal road which leads to Poste Lafayette and then goes on to Roches Noires, it was tarred overnight. That road, Mr Speaker, is a coastal road. I am sure many of us have - in the days you had to get a truck to drive on that road such was the state of the coastal road to go to Poste Lafayette-Roches Noires. It was in a dilapidated state, potholes everywhere. That road was tarred overnight all of a sudden without any warning sign or without any signboard from the NDU or the RDA or whatnot. Why? And then much later they came to know because that night there was an Aston Martin driving over there. For that Aston Martin to drive you had to get the road tarred because the Aston Martin would not be able to go in that dilapidated coastal road. *Il faut de la classe pour faire ça, M. le président*. That was the stimulus package - to get Rolex watches and Aston Martins towards Poste Lafayette and Roches Noires. This is yet another example of the mark of the Labour Party which hon. Ramful was mentioning earlier in his speech. This is not what this country deserves. This country deserves much better. This country deserves hard work and discipline.

Coming to discipline, we heard some Members of the Opposition claiming that their right to speak has been taken away, unjustifiably, unlawfully. They have a right to speak in this House.

You have a right to speak if you respect the discipline of the House. If you do not respect the decorum and the discipline of this House, then, you do not have the right to be here. You have to go out, take some fresh air and then come back another day. You have a right to be heard to speak in accordance with the Standing Orders and Rules of this House.

When I say ‘we’, I say collectively; this House has never snatched, taken away the right of anybody. If you choose to disrespect the Standing Orders, if you choose to disrespect the Rules of the House, you have taken your right yourself. You forfeit it. If you forfeit your right, you have no claim to say, you have no ground to stand on to say that your right to speak has been taken away. Or you choose not to come, that is another one. If Parliament is sitting and you choose out of your own volition - so, I am not going: *‘Mo pou caper zordi mo pa pour alle classe’*. It is like that student who says: *‘Non, non, mo pa pou alle classe zordi.’*

And then he says later: *‘Be mo pas ti la sa jour la, mone rate leçon’*. You choose not to go to class and then you say: ‘I have to be taught that again.’ What is this? A lack of discipline on your part! If you do not attend out of your own free will, you cannot claim that your right to speak in this House has been taken away. This is what the people out there should know. If those Members who do not come to attend the Parliamentary sitting, forfeit their right for that sitting, this is on the issue of discipline at work.

I am mindful of the time. Coming to the sector of agriculture, once again, with COVID-19, Mr Speaker, Sir, we face very trying times. We do not know what the future holds for us, but *notre salut sera dans notre solidarité en tant que citoyen de ce pays*. It will serve no purpose to play the blame game. We should be prepared as a nation. We have been in our comfort zones in this country and the comfort zone has been consumerism. Whenever something is missing on the supermarket shelves, we say: let us import. Whenever there are very bad climatic conditions, let us open the doors for importation. What do you do then when you face a situation like today? We don’t even know from where to import. The exporting countries are themselves facing situations where they can no longer supply. What do we do? I have read an article in the Guardian this morning. It says –

“If you feel that the world is coming to an end, don’t grab a supermarket caddy, grab a shovel and go to your garden and plant something you can eat.”

Don’t fight with fisticuffs blows for toilet paper like we have seen in, I think, Australia. These are examples of consumerism, is that when you face a crisis, you rush to the supermarket. From where does the supermarket get the products? We are facing trying times and we should come together. Simple solutions are in our backyard. Simple solutions are in our maybe larger surface areas where we can go back to our fields. I am confident we will come together as a nation and we will produce sufficiently and, of course, *de meilleure qualité* for our population. That being in the immediate future, but in the longer term,

agricultural sector, of course, faces challenges, but there is continuation in the work which has been started by *mon illustre prédécesseur, l'honorable Seeruttun*.

We should change our outlook. We cannot look at a sector by looking at the past, by looking at the mirror, but we should ask hard questions. We should – there is in the jargon – review the mathematics. We review the formula. What is the cost of our production and what are the prices on the market? Who has done that? Who has reviewed the mathematical equations and the economics for the sugar sector? Who has done that? It has been, over a number of years, a firefighting situation. For the first time, Government has engaged with the World Bank to review indeed and I like to use this formula again. We have to review the mathematics otherwise we will continue to do the firefighting. That is for the sugar sector, and for the non-sugar sector it is the same. Can we continue with the same method of production for crops? We cannot. We have to review the economic model and that for the non-sugar crop sector we are doing with the *Banque Africaine de Développement*.

For the tea sector, some years back, the tea sector reminds me of what my former colleague in Cabinet, hon. Jhugroo, was telling me. The tea sector, a few years back, was in ICU, intensive care, almost dead. There is a rejuvenation process which has taken place. You now see the Mauritian tea in duty free shops.

The Mauritian tea is being labeled and branded as one of the best quality tea and compared even to the tea of some places in India or Sri Lanka. The tea sector, here again, we have to review the economic model and that one we are doing with the experts of the FAO. These reports are not to be expected by next year or three or four years later. These reports are expected this year, Mr Speaker, Sir, and we are going to review the economic model and the whole of the agricultural sector. We are going to inject the necessary funds for a boom. Economists tend to think that agriculture cannot be a driver of growth, I humbly beg to differ. Agriculture can be and should be a driver of growth.

Innovative concepts like the vertical farming will become a reality. The way we cultivate our crops will change. Bio-farming is not only a slogan it is today a reality although I pause to say we are in a transition process. You do not change from pesticides to bio-farming overnight. It takes time, the soil needs to adapt but the process has started. With cooperating countries not only in the region, *la Commission de l'Océan Indien*, but with other countries we will make it. We will live up to the expectation. I believe, like we have shown

in the previous mandate under the able leadership of our Prime Minister, that we will live up to expectation despite the challenge, especially the COVID-19 that we are facing.

The Mauritian DNA, as I was mentioning earlier, Mr Speaker, Sir, is that we can, in this country, change the paradigm when we put our efforts collectively. When this country was being branded as being an overcrowded barracoon, we have shown that collectively we can change the paradigm. We can change. When we are faced with threats, we change the paradigm and transform a threat into an opportunity. We have changed the mindset, we do not look at ourselves as being a small island, we look at ourselves as being an ocean State. Our territory goes far beyond our landmass. I believe we have the necessary DNA to transform threats into opportunities. We will do it and we will do it collectively as a nation.

Before I resume my seat, Mr Speaker, Sir, I realise that I have not congratulated you for your election. So, let me, before resuming my seat, congratulate all the hon. Members, on all sides, for their election in the free and fair elections which were held in November, 2019 and I also congratulate you and the Deputy Speaker for your elections to the High Office of Speaker and Deputy Speaker.

I thank you very much.

**Mr Speaker:** Dr. the hon. Minister Husnoo!

(4.40 p.m.)

**The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management (Dr. A. Husnoo):** Mr Speaker, Sir, first, I would like to present my apologies for not being able to attend Parliament on January 24 for the President's Address as I was overseas regarding a health issue. But I am sorry to hear that the Opposition was absent for the President's Address. The reason, according to them, is that the Government is supposed to be illegal because of some supposedly illegal problems, electoral irregularities. What have we not heard from the Opposition? Since they have lost the elections, what have we not heard from them?

We have been told that the Electoral Officer, who was going from door to door in the community to register the voters, did not register those who support the Opposition. I wonder how can an Electoral Officer know which house is going to vote for the Government, which is not going to vote for the Government? That is the kind of argument we have been hearing

recently from the Opposition. And, would the Electoral Commissioner condone certain things if it had happened? I don't think so.

Recently, I have been even told as well they were going to object to the election because about 500 or 600 electors' name was not on the voting register. Good! But, what I find a bit surprising, Mr Speaker, Sir, in my constituency, Constituency No. 3, at around 5 p.m., there was a disturbance by some Members of the Opposition.

*(Interruptions)*

There was disturbance by some Members of the Opposition. Yes, I remember very well.

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Order there!

*(Interruptions)*

Order! Have the courage to listen to debates!

**Dr. Husnoo:** *Exactement!* You have the decency at least. Have the decency; when you talked, we listened to you. You have the decency to listen. You should be ashamed of yourself.

**Mr Speaker:** Have the courage to listen, please!

**Dr. Husnoo:** You should be ashamed of yourself. Have the decency to listen; we listened to you when you talked.

**Mr Juman:** Shame!

**Mr Speaker:** Hon. Minister, could you resume your seat!

Hon. Member, please withdraw the word 'shame', it is unparliamentary. Please!

*(Interruptions)*

You withdraw! Hon. Member, withdraw the word!

**Mr Juman:** If it is your wish, I withdraw. *Be dir li dessan lors simin laba !*

**Mr Speaker:** Carry on!

**Dr. Husnoo:** Well, I'll answer to that later on. These people, they came around 5 o'clock with some of their friends, some of their agents who were high on drugs, whose eyes were almost closed, who had slurred speech, who would not even talk, started...

*(Interruptions)*

Yes, I was there, you were not there. I was there.

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** No exchange of views, please! Hon. Minister, address the Chair!

**Dr. Husnoo:** And they created trouble.

**Mr Speaker:** Address the Chair!

**Dr. Husnoo:** This prevented about 300 people in my constituency from voting from 5 to 6. Now, did anybody protest against that? Are they going to make any case against that?

*(Interruptions)*

Are they going to make any case? You are protesting everywhere. 600 people have not voted.

*(Interruptions)*

Good! But *environ* 300 people did not vote there, because of the disturbance they created.

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Resume your seat! Hon. Member, you are going too far! This is debate in the House! You have to have the courage to listen! Go ahead!

**Dr. Husnoo:** Now, you talk about Government Programme. When you were talking about all sorts – never mind!

Mr Speaker, Sir, what I am trying to tell you, to show the double standards, the hypocrisy, *la démagogie*, in some places, yes, but when in that Constituency No. 3, 300 people could not vote, nobody wants to make ....

*(Interruptions)*

It just shows your hypocrisy. Whether I am going to be elected or not, it shows your hypocrisy. You should have the courage to get, at least, your constituents to vote, the 300 people. You did not do it.

**Mr Speaker:** Address the Chair, please!

**Dr. Husnoo:** And now, they are going to go to the Supreme Court.

Next, the Fourth Member of Constituency No. 3 publicly stated that a person came and handed over to him a ballot paper, but, subsequently, the same Member, he suffered from

a sudden amnesia. He forgot the name, the face of the guy who gave him the ballot paper. He forgot the name of the agent who gave it to him. It shows what kind of people we are dealing with, Mr Speaker. They have selective amnesia when they want it. And now, they have the right to come and make comments in this House.

There is another thing as well. Recently, when the Prime Minister said he is going to schedule the meeting in about 10 days' time, they were complaining. 10 days' time, they would not have time to ask questions. But when the Parliament was closed in 2014 for nine months, 270 days, nobody asked any question, nobody said anything about it.

*(Interruptions)*

You don't know what you are talking about.

*(Interruptions)*

Now, they are coming with all sorts of things.

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Order!

**Dr. Husnoo:** Now, they are talking about the Electoral Commission. The Electoral Commission in Mauritius has a good reputation. The Electoral Commissioner has a very good reputation internationally. But these people for their own petty-mindedness, they have to blame anybody, be it the Electoral Commissioner, the Electoral Commission. Never mind, if it destroys the reputation of the country, to them to hell with it, so that they can make a point. That is the kind of people they are, that is how patriotic they are.

*(Interruptions)*

*To tou sel ki kompran anglais!*

Now, the First Member of Constituency No. 3 has said about the tests that we are using for COVID-19. He just mentioned it, it is not validated. When the Minister is trying to answer him, he did not give way. I think he should have the decency to give him way because I am sure the Minister would have put things in order to explain to him. Because these tests that we do here, the PCR tests are validated internationally.

*(Interruptions)*

*Mais qui mais non!* What validation?

*(Interruptions)*

I am telling you what you have said, what the Minister was trying to defend.

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Order now!

**Dr. Husnoo:** I am telling you the PCR tests that we use are validated.

*(Interruptions)*

Never mind! You are the only one who understands. And now, he came and said that the vessels that came into Port Louis, 1,200 personnes just had their temperature taken. No test was done on them; he is so upset with them. You name me one country where people do not have symptoms, have their PCR done.

*(Interruptions)*

Rubbish! Because these people were in contact...

**Mr Speaker:** Hon. Minister, withdraw that word 'rubbish', please!

**Dr. Husnoo:** Okay, Mr Speaker, Sir. I withdraw it because he is talking nonsense, Mr Speaker, Sir.

**Mr Speaker:** Even the word 'nonsense'.

**Dr. Husnoo:** Okay.

**Mr Speaker:** I remember having let it go, but this time withdraw the word.

**Dr. Husnoo:** Okay. I remove the word 'nonsense', Mr Speaker, Sir.

When somebody is symptomatic, you do the PCR, if not, you don't do the test. Be it in Japan, Japan did the tests because people were infected; they had temperature on that ship. That's why it was done. You don't come and pretend. Never mind!

Mr Speaker, Sir, you know, some people are not happy.

*(Interruptions)*

Never mind!

Mr Speaker, Sir, we are dealing with an epidemic now, not then. We are dealing with the epidemic now. About 150 countries, out of 196, are already affected.

But, in Mauritius, we repeat it, it has been repeated, it has been said by the Prime Minister this morning, we do not have one case of COVID-19 yet.

*(Interruptions)*

*To konné sa mais zamai - to ti p dire partout ki ena COVID-19 a Maurice!*

**Mr Speaker:** No exchange of views!

**Dr. Husnoo:** No COVID-19 so far. What is going to happen? Okay one week, we do not know. But, since the beginning of this problem, in January, this Government has been meeting regularly under the Primeministership trying to see how we are going to tackle this problem. People come and say “Oh, you have to close everything”, and from the beginning. You have to close everything; you have to close the port, you have to close the airport, you have to close the schools, you have to close the universities. No. We did not have any case. The Government is coming with a graduated response according to the situation as it is in Mauritius, not because somebody else is doing in other country, we have to do the same. No, because they have their own problem, they have so many infected cases over there, and we do not have to do whatever exactly they are doing. We do according to the situation that we have in Mauritius. That is what this Government has been doing, Mr Speaker. We are going gradually. The Prime Minister had been chairing the meeting to take stock of the situation and to see what measures we have to take and how we are going to plan for the future. As you know now, different measures have been taken and here again, like the previous Members, I am going to thank the Ministry of Health and the staff of the Ministry of Health for the good work they have done.

Somebody was talking about the port and the airport; they do not know what is happening. The work they have been doing at the port and the airport, it is not just because of COVID-19 or because of the previous problems that we have had, be it chikungunya, be it malaria, be it dengue. It is this staff, of the Ministry of Health, who has been doing such a good job at the port of entry, be it at port and airport. We have control there. We have opened the quarantine places because there are different types of cases. We have to know what type of cases we are going to put in quarantine and what type we are going to put in isolation. There is a difference, but, unfortunately, some people do not understand. This Government knows what it is doing. We know what we are doing. We have been managing this problem for the last kind of two months.

The Prime Minister chaired another meeting this morning where people from different countries, which have a lot of infection, are prevented from coming to Mauritius. We had to take the step now this morning. We didn't take it before because before it was not warranted so that's why we have to go and check. The situation is evolving day by day. That is why we

are going according to this approach, and if tomorrow, God forbid, suppose we have a case of COVID-19 in Mauritius, we have to take further action, we are going to take it because it's not just something we have done and that's it. This High Powered Committee is meeting regularly to assess the situation and we just can't do like what other countries have just done.

Here, I would like, Mr Speaker, to have a word for the population. We have been having campaigns about different things. Now, the stage of the epidemic as it is; in Mauritius, there are two main things we have to do. Firstly, it's about proper personal hygiene. What do I mean by that? Proper hand washing and be careful not to touch other people. Secondly, it is what we call social distancing. These are the measures that the Government has been taking. These are the measures we take at this level of the epidemic and that's what is being done in the different countries all over the world, these two measures. If the situation warrants, then we are going to take other measures as well. This Government is aware of these; we are taking all the measures that need to be taken.

Well, Mr Speaker, Sir, if you would allow me now, I am just going to take a few words about my Ministry. I don't have much time I have been told but, the advent of the Metro Express and the manner in which it has transformed our transport landscape is a testimony to the vision of this Government. Such leapfrogging of our public infrastructure for an innovative Mauritius can only be possible because of the determination and the dedication of a responsible leader. I'll say it again. An inter-ministerial committee has been set up under my chairmanship for the implementation of the urban terminal project at Port Louis, Rose-Hill, Quatre Bornes, Vacoas and Curepipe. Very soon, we will be launching the request for proposal for these projects. Without any doubt, Mr Speaker, Sir, the urban terminals together with the Metro Express project will transform the urban landscape along the corridor from Port Louis to Curepipe. These terminals will integrate major facilities namely parking, food court, commercial space, dedicated hawkers, secured control area space, especially at Victoria and Immigration Square; modern bus and taxi stands. For Victoria and Immigration Stations, there will be an overhead pedestrian crossing linking the urban terminal with the Metro Express Terminal. Small and Medium Enterprises will be given strategic, modern, and secured areas to work where there will be thousands of commuters transiting daily. No doubt, Mr Speaker, Sir, that these projects will pave the way for new falls of economic development. This is only the beginning because, as we know, as the Metro Express progress to the different parts of the island, these urban terminals will develop as well.

The Local Government, Mr Speaker, Sir, is also attaching a special importance to the promoting of the quality of life of our citizens be it in terms of environmental cleanliness or health of our citizens.

As you are aware, Mr Speaker, Sir, Mauritius is suffering from an epidemic not pandemic, epidemic of non-communicable disease. 22% of the population suffer from diabetes, 19% are pre-diabetic and about 28% are hypertensive and the most common cause of death in Mauritius is from cardiovascular disease but only 22% of the population undertake regular physical activities. This Government plans to encourage the population to do more regular exercises and is aiming to increase the practice of physical exercise rate to 35% within the next five years.

As you are aware, a couple of years ago, the Prime Minister launched the National Sport and Physical Activity Policy 2018-2028. In line with this Government Policy, the local authorities will provide more sport amenities, for example, mini soccer pitches, futsal, football playgrounds, health track and Multi Use Games Areas (MUGA) are being constructed in various localities around the island.

About a month ago, I had discussions with the local authorities on the holding of inter-regional sport competition. The response has been spontaneous and the local authorities have shown keen interest, and quick means have already been identified. We hope that this initiative will not only promote the practice of physical activities but will also revive the regionalisation of sport in Mauritius which we really need. In this connection, my Ministry along with the local authorities will work closely with the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Youth and Sports. This is a continuation of what I started when I was in the Ministry of Health for the last three years, that is, to encourage the people to undertake more exercises and to develop a culture of physical activities from the youngest age to the most senior citizen.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to emphasise on another very important initiative that my Ministry is undertaking, that is, transforming our councils into innovative councils. In line with the initiative of the Central Government to modernise the public sector through e-Government, the Ministry of Local Government has embarked on an array of digitalisation and technological innovation. An I-Council pilot project was set up at the District Council of Moka with a view to enhancing management efficiency, effectiveness and to improve service delivery.

The I-Council project comprises of the use of global positioning system and geographical information system and a tailor-made Council Project Management Software Designing House.

An integrated reporting system is presently being developed to bring all information on a single platform with a view to introducing business intelligence in the council. Business intelligence in Local Authorities will bring about a paradigm shift in council management and take the Local Government in Mauritius to the next level where cloud computing, mobile technology, smart senses, location to stock detection and system integration in short, what I call, Local Government 4.0 will become a reality.

During this mandate, the I-Council project will be extended to all the Local Authorities and allow the citizens to further benefit access of Local Authorities services by integrating all the above system. Consideration will also be given to integrating the same to the Citizen Support Portals.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am going to talk about something which is more topical these days. Mauritius being a Small Island Developing State is very vulnerable to severe cyclones, torrential rains, flash floods, landslides as well as man-induced disasters. According to World Risk Report 2019, Mauritius has now become the 47<sup>th</sup> country on the Disaster Risk Index, as compared to 2018 ranking whereby we were at the 16<sup>th</sup> position in terms of disaster risk and the 10<sup>th</sup> most exposed to natural hazards.

Conscious of this new reality, the hon. Prime Minister has established a dedicated unit responsible for disaster and risk management and which has been entrusted within my portfolio. This clearly demonstrates this Government's endeavour to make our country safer and more resilient. The Government Programme 2020-2024 enunciates a series of measures aiming to mitigate risks from climate changes. In light of the impact of climate change, this Government is now shifting from managing disasters to managing and reducing disaster risks in line with a Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Management.

The National Disaster Risk Reduction Management Centre which now operates under the purview of my Ministry, coordinates with all stakeholders to ensure that risk reduction and preparedness planning is included at all level, namely at national, Municipal, District Council and community level.

In crisis situation, depending on the extent, magnitude and severity of the threat, the multi-agency National Emergency Operating Command is activated to coordinate and monitor preparedness, response, relief and recovery activity associated with the events. In line with this project, the Government is setting up two other projects, the Disaster Information Management System, and the National Multi Hazard Emergency Alert System.

The National Multi Hazard Emergency Alert System is a project that will cover Mauritius, Rodrigues, Agaléga and St. Brandon and will allow instantaneous and bulk dissemination of warning and alerts to a maximum number of people and stakeholders within an acceptable time frame. The system will be able to broadcast warning and alerting messages through a number of communication channels which may include –

- mobile and landlines;
- television and radio;
- internet;
- mobile application website;
- email;
- social media (Facebook and Twitter);
- public broadcasting system;
- digital display board, and
- cell broadcast.

It will also cater for people with vulnerabilities, elderly and people with disabilities and also for tourists as well. The contract has already been awarded since November 2019 and the system is expected to go live in May 2020.

Before I take my seat, I think, I must talk about the Port Louis theatre, the Plaza theatre and the Municipal Town Hall of Curepipe. As we know, these three landmark sites were neglected and have been left in abandoned state for years.

Now, the Port Louis Municipal theatre Phase 1 has been completed and Phase 2 is underway and we plan for the theatre to be fully operational by 2021-2022.

As regards the Plaza building, Phases 1 and 2 of Plaza Theatre Project have already been completed. The Municipal Council has launched the tender for Phase 3, that is, renovation of the Plaza theatre itself in 2019 and work is scheduled to start by May 2020 and will be completed by January 2022. As regards the Municipal Town Hall of Curepipe, the renovation of the Town Hall started in 2019 and works are expected to be completed by mid-2020.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as far as the Local Government sector is concerned, many projects are in the pipeline. The Local Government sector landscape is being transformed with technological means to provide services to our public residing in urban and rural areas.

From the ease of doing business to setting up of the I-Council, the new urban terminals and the improvement in disaster management, the Local Authority is reinventing itself to provide better services to the community.

I am confident, Mr Speaker, Sir, that these transformational development which has started in December 2014, through 2019 will continue in this mandate, that is, 2019-2024 and will be further consolidated in our next mandate from 2024 to 2029.

Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

**Mr Speaker:** Hon. Members, I now suspend the sitting for some 30 minutes.

*At 5.08 p.m., the sitting was suspended.*

*On resuming at 5.52 p.m. with Mr Speaker in the Chair.*

**Mr Speaker:** Hon. Xavier-Luc Duval!

(5.52 p.m.)

**Mr X. L. Duval (Third Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes):** Mr Speaker, Sir, thank you. Mr Speaker, Sir, as I speak, it is cyclone class II in the country. Maybe we will go to cyclone class III, I don't know, but that is the weather. There should be no doubt in the minds of my colleagues here, in Parliament, in the minds of our countrymen that this

country will face a class IV cyclone. I am not talking about the weather. I am talking about the economy, I am talking about health and I am talking about social situation.

I must apologise before starting, Mr Speaker, Sir. I have been on and off in Parliament. I injured my back and that is the reason why I have been absent, but I thought it should be important that I take part in this debate.

I say a few words first on the Government Programme, then I'll come to the state of the economy. I think that is important, coming to the Coronavirus cyclone, if you wish. A few words on the Director of Audit and then I will come mainly on the Coronavirus and why I think, Mr Speaker, Sir, that we have gone a wrong way, we have taken the wrong policies and why I am not at all happy with what this Government is trying to do as far as Coronavirus is concerned. Excuse me, my computer has frozen; here we are. And then, I'll say a few words, Mr Speaker, Sir, on Rodrigues.

So far as the Government Programme is concerned, now every Government that is returned to power knows that it has to avoid the second mandate trap. The second mandate trap is what? You have run out of steam, you have run out of ideas and, in fact, you present some sort of Programme just for the sake of it, and this is what happened, we have had produced to us, presented to us, read by the President. I am sorry to say, but their Programme *bousse trou, ene program san ame*, Mr Speaker, Sir. The Programme is already totally out of date with the Coronavirus, but even before that, this Programme is not what this country needs to inspire it, now we are in 2020, to inspire this country to greater heights over the next five years.

So, the Government has fallen into what is known as a second mandate trap, presenting to this country a Programme with nothing inspiring, no new ideas and just showing that the Government is running out of steam. Now, this Programme, Mr Speaker, Sir, so full of generalities, as if for the last five years, the Ministers, the Government has not been doing anything to understand, at least, if not tackle the real problems affecting this country.

Let us take the economy firstly, Mr Speaker, Sir. On manufacturing - the previous Minister wasn't returned to Parliament, he is gone, Mr Gungah. What does the Programme say on manufacturing? We know that exports have been falling year in, year out for the last five years. Export is the way obviously with tourism. I am talking about goods. The export is

the way that this country earns its living by earning its foreign currency. There have been numerous factory closures; I'll come back to that in a moment maybe. Now, what does the Government say in its plan for the future? This is the line that I have taken from the Government Programme –

“Government is devising a strategic plan for manufacturing”.

This is all that it tells us -

“Government is devising a strategic plan for manufacturing”.

When we know that a manufacturing sector, especially textile is in dire straits. I will go a bit further on sugar; the previous Minister is going to speak after me. Now, what does the Government say on sugar? Since a few years, the price of sugar has been *en détresse*, has been falling and falling. The selling price of sugar is not nearly enough to cover the cost of production as the cost of production stands without a bagasse policy, etc.

Now, what does the Government Programme tell us about sugar? They have been sleeping on the file for three or four years and the Government says a new reform package will be proposed. That is what it says on sugar - a new reform package will be proposed. What it is? I suppose the World Bank is still working on it. So, the Government does not work on its report, the Government doesn't know what to do. So, for manufacturing, we are going to devise a strategic plan. For sugar, we will propose a new reform package, and that is what it says.

On tourism, Mr Speaker, Sir, something I know quite well, again, I'll come back to the economy in a few paragraphs. On tourism – now, the Minister is an engineer. So, what is proposed for tourism? We are going to re-engineer the tourism industry. That is all that it is said on the tourism industry. We are going to re-engineer the tourism industry. That may be okay for a car. I am not sure I understand what is meant for the tourism industry, but, perhaps, the Minister will tell us later on. He is new, I wish him good luck. We can't continue like this, Mr Speaker, Sir, with such generalities. But there is more serious. The ex-Minister of Health is here, he is being transferred to a lesser Ministry, the Ministry of Local Government. But still, what does this Programme say on diabetes?

We are probably the worst affected country in the world or amongst the top in terms of prevalence of diabetes. If you go to hospital, I went to Victoria Hospital a few weeks ago,

the number of people who have lost a leg awaiting to lose another leg, a limb or some sort, have lost toes, it is horrible. You will be horrified. I'll take you there if you wish, Mr Speaker, Sir. You will be horrified to see the human pain associated with diabetes in Mauritius. And what does the Government Programme say? See, I will get more excited when I'll talk about social issues. What does the Government Programme say? Government Programme says that's all, national policy will be stepped up. What national policy it is? We don't know. It will be stepped up. That is all it says.

And then, we go, Mr Speaker, Sir, to another one of my priorities in life, it is to fight against gender violence. I have never let my actions fall in that respect or fail in that respect, Mr Speaker, Sir. And what does the Government Programme say on gender violence, where we have seen a number of women last year who have died in atrocious conditions? One being drowned in a barrel of water, the other one being killed as her children are in the Police Station and so on and so forth. And all these women had already reported cases at the Police, except for the one case in Roche Bois, as I remember. She was just suffering and she never reported the case to the Police, that lady in Roche Bois, and she still died, and the others all died, and so many thousands, maybe tens of thousands more women are suffering every day. What does the Government Programme say? After five years in Government, after we have had a Vice-Prime Minister as Minister responsible for that file, what does the Government Programme say?

It says a new strategy by a Committee chaired by the Prime Minister will eliminate now gender violence. That's all it says. So, Mr Speaker, Sir, I won't go too long on this, but I am saying that it is a missed opportunity, this Government Programme. The country faces huge challenges, be it social, be it equal opportunities, be it drugs, be it the economy, be it what you like. And this Programme is not even worth the paper it is written on, unfortunately, and that is the truth as I see it.

There is even more, Mr Speaker, Sir. This programme talks - I mean, as if we are completely misunderstanding the situation - about passing an Offshore Petroleum Bill. Mr Speaker, Sir, the price of petrol for a number of years now has been so low that anyone will tell the Government that no one in the world is going to be interested in foraging and drilling for oil in our waters, because simply it is not economic. Why bother with putting an Offshore Petroleum Bill after five years anyway of waiting of the last Government? So, what we can say, this Programme is a list of generalities and it says more about what the Government has

not done over the last five years than it says about the intentions for the future. It tells you quite clearly that the last Government left undone the things that it ought to have done - is it Macbeth? - and has done what it ought not to have done then we can come to, I think it is Macbeth. And that is, Mr Speaker, Sir, my view.

Before finishing, I will talk about the Civil Service. We have the Minister for a Civil Service here. The Ministry of the Civil Service is the most important Ministry in the Government, Mr Speaker, Sir, because with 50,000 or so Civil Servants are pervasive in the work that they do, in the way that they apply Government policies, in the way that they carry out their work, cut *gaspiyage*, etc.

But if you look at the state of our Civil Service today, you will be shocked at the state of the Civil Service, the training, the preparedness, the equipment, half equipment, just one more two things coming from the Director of Audit Report. The National Empowerment Foundation manages 12,000 files or tries to manage 12,000 files for its clients - you can say the poor - manually. 12,000 files manually. I don't know it's probably a fire hazard. This is the state of the National Empowerment Foundation.

The Ministry of Housing, in the Director of Audit's Report, has taken 60 months or so to do things that it ought by law to have done in two weeks. This is the state of the Civil Service. Now, gentlemen Ministers, you have got to get your Ministries to work properly, administration is important, carrying out your Government work is important. When you look at the Report of the Director of Audit, what a horrible document, Mr Speaker, Sir! Firstly, it is 80% a repetition of last year, 80% of it, meaning two things –

1. No one has cared despite all the *fla-fla* to sort out the problems that were identified by the previous Director of Audit,
2. It is time also for me, for the Director of Audit to be more innovative in the things that he looks for. He cannot keep repeating every year what has been said previously.

So, there are two things. One, it is undoubted that there has been no change. In fact, there has been change, there has been deterioration in the way that Ministries are run, in the way that the law is respected, people are flouting their procurement laws, etc, and that is *impunément* without any action being taken. And the second, I think there is also a message for the Director of Audit that we expect year on for him to also innovate. We are talking about innovation; perhaps the Ministry of Innovation can have a word. We need to innovate also in terms of what we report. So, this Civil Service 4.0, it's a big joke. *Le talon d'Achille*

*du service civil, M. le président*, is the inability to manage IT, the inability to manage computers, inability to view the latest – I don't know if the Chief Whip will agree with me - inability to manage simple tasks to be done on computers. And this is why every time you ask them what is the problem, the standard answer is: 'We lack staff'. They don't lack staff. We don't have staff, that is not true. There are loads of people working, loads of people have been recruited. They are just very badly managed as far as human resources are managed, but anyway.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I can go on what is missing on road traffic, I can go on and on. I am not going to go on. Mr Speaker, Sir, perhaps if I come quickly to the economy, and I want just to give some figures out on some of the sectors, a little bit repetitive, I am sorry about this. I talked about textiles and manufacturing and I mentioned just now that year in, year out, we are having fall in exports. Exports are what we sell, we get money in return, we pay our bills, we pay our staff and the country enjoys the prosperity. Obviously, we have two types of exports, one of goods and then of services; services are tourism, that is what we are talking about. I need to talk about goods firstly.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Minister of Finance before is going on and on about 2013, the rate of growth, it was fairly low, the growth is not the only thing. If he wanted to take the performance of the previous Government, well, he should take the last year 2014, perhaps we can give you - and the elections were in December. So, we can give you then an idea, don't take selectively one figure from 2013 and come and big *fla-fla*. I didn't have a chance to respond to him, I respond to him now.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in 2014 - I will take some more figures in 2014 later on - Exports were Rs81 billion in that money, that time, forgetting inflation. In 2018, last full year, that we have the figures, anyway, Rs67 billion. So, can you imagine how our exports are falling? I would take tourism in a moment too. Can you imagine how the current account with exports falling, our imports, our appetite getting ever so big, bigger and bigger because we want to encourage consumption and we know that 70% of every rupee that the Mauritians spend, they spend on imports. So, the import bill is going huge amounts, the exports are shrinking and the Government does nothing. That is shocking.

Now, tourism has been faced last year with a double warning, Mr Speaker, Sir. Firstly, the fall in the number of tourists, I talked about the number of tourist by air. I created the *croisière*. So, don't come to talk to me about the *croisière*. The quay is called Christian

Decotter and it's for a reason that it is called Christian Decotter, we created that, but the impact is much less than tourists arriving by air to do 11 days *en moyenne* in Mauritius, whereas tourists coming by sea stay maybe one night. So, cruise ships, they stay maybe one night. Tourism for the first time, maybe 40 years, I don't know, tourism numbers arrival fell when there has been no crisis, not one crisis on the horizon, tourism numbers fell by 2%. And what is worst also, Mr Speaker, Sir, is that in some months, not every month, thanks God, not only did the numbers fall, but the spending fell per tourist.

Meaning that a large number of months last year, not only did we get less tourists but these same tourists were of less quality if you want, less rich if you want and spent less even. So, the numbers fell and the quality of tourists also fell and that is what is a doubly whamy and that is why we need to be very careful. It is not just a question of numbers. It is also a question of how much they spend and the two fall together and the spending falls more than the numbers, it means you have a big problem. And that is what happened last year and this is what we are being faced. And this is why I say, Mr Speaker, Sir, that it is not a question of blaming the MTPA.

There are four things that you need to know about tourism. Social integration, finance and a lot of things you need to be able to understand. I am a simple guy and tourism you need to know four things and that's all you need to know –

- (i) attractiveness;
- (ii) accessibility;
- (iii) promotion, and
- (iv) sustainability.

Four things that you need to know. Not more. Attractiveness, it is the product that you are selling. If you don't get the product right, you will never get the tourists. I'll take a simple example, Mr Speaker, Sir. Johannesburg and Cape Town and if you had the chance, you would not have the chance. I think we are giving 40% discount, you may wish to go to coronavirus in Johannesburg or Cape Town, but if you had a chance, normal times, you would always go to Cape Town for your holiday. Why? Because the product is far better than the product in Johannesburg or even Durban! So, the product is important. When people are talking about coming to Mauritius, they will compare us to Reunion next door. It is not

doing so badly. Seychelles, fantastic products! To Maldives, to other places in the West Indies! So, the product is important and the product has been deteriorating. The place is dirty, night life is virtually nil and so on and so forth, the product has been deteriorating and the product has not been prepared to deal with climate change. It is raining every day. The priority, if I may suggest humbly, to the Minister of Tourism, we need to have activities in this country when it is raining. The weather has to be conquered. Dubai has a ski slope, we need to have museums, we need to have so many things that people can do indoors when the weather is not nice because it seems to me that we are here and there has been climate change, any way affecting the tourism industry. Attractiveness, accessibility, this is, of course, we all know, we all talk about it, this is the ships coming, *croisières* and, of course, mainly it is air access. And that has to be sorted with the Minister of Tourism, he has to put his foot on the table and bang the table when there is no air access and people cannot come because someone wants to protect Air Mauritius or someone wants to buy two more planes for Air Mauritius. That is the second thing, accessibility.

The third thing is promotion, how we are promoting and asking people to come to Mauritius. Mr Speaker, Sir, all these things, the human resources, staffing these positions. I am not here just to criticise, but we must have some respect and put people with knowledge whether it is at the MTPA or whether it is at the Tourism industry. We must have some respect for the 125,000 people that depend directly and indirectly on tourism. We must have some respect for them. We just can't appoint any person who has no experience at all and put him in charge because maybe they happen to be your friend or your agent or whatever it is. There must be some respect for the people.

Last, of course, is sustainability, how are we dealing with climate change again but in the way that we are protecting our beaches which are fast eroding and these must be avoided. So, Mr Speaker, Sir, let's see what the Minister of Tourism will say later on but there are structural issues to be dealt with not just *des problèmes conjoncturels* to do with MTPA, etc, not doing proper promotion.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I will come now to offshore. Sheltered from all these issues, problems we have had so long, for so long has been the offshore. Thousands of young people, of all communities really working well, really doing well, you will be surprised at their technical abilities, you will be surprised at how they sell our country, you will be surprised how they do so well. You go to Cyber City today, you will be surprised, you will be

astonished just to look at how the global business sector has what it has achieved, and there have been two things.

Firstly we bartered away the double taxation agreement. It has been bartered. That is the word against some grants for the Metro Express, etc. History will tell us whether the barter was worth it or not. We bartered away Agalega too by name into a military base. That is what Agalega all but in name it is a military base. That was bartered away also.

Now, the offshore is a goose, of course, that lays a golden egg and the egg is, in that case, really golden. It is, I believe now, facing trouble ahead, probably deep trouble ahead with what happened with the country being placed on the grey list of the financial action task force. Now, the Minister will go back to 2008. It is astonishing how five years after, in a second mandate, the Government still finds reason to blame its predecessors going back to 2008. So, I am not going to go into this, what happened from 2015 onwards. I am just going to say, Mr Speaker, Sir, that being placed on the FATF grey list is a dangerous new phenomena for the offshore. It is not easy to get off the grey list. Trinidad and Tobago were placed on the grey list - I am sure the Minister will know - in November 2017. It took two full years for Trinidad and Tobago to come off the grey list. I hope that we come off the grey list quickly, but it can take two years. It can take longer because the reasons why we have been placed on the grey list, that is the important issue. We have not been placed on the grey list because of some fiscal issues. We had to increase taxes; we have to do this and that. We have to take some sort of tax action. We haven't been placed on the grey list because our laws were not adequate. No! We have been placed on the grey list because we have been unable to implement our own laws in terms of supervision and that is subjective. You like it or not whether I think you are effective in your supervision or not effective in your supervision is totally subjective. We have been placed there because of failures at the Bank of Mauritius, at the FSC, at the FIU, at ICAC all singly or combined because we have been unable to take action against people *qui ont fauté* because we have, over the last five years, not shown that our supervision is effective. And whatever happens in this country, don't think that is all hidden. Now, we have just made appointments at the State Bank of Mauritius, Holdings. I am not going to make particular comments on the person or the persons, but is this really the best that the country can offer? We have the best to manage the biggest bank and you think that sort of information goes to FATF with all the rumours that will surround it, whether this will do us any good or whether this will not do us a lot of harm.

So, Mr Speaker, Sir, we are on the grey list because of issues to do with supervision and how the Government is going to deal with that and convince FATF that we are now worthy of coming off the grey list, I would like to hear perhaps the Minister after because there are issues concerning people whom we appoint to these posts. The Bank of Mauritius (BoM) has already been appointed. We know what happened during the last five years. The Bank of Mauritius was an agent of Government.

Now, with the Government even, in the Alvaro Sobrinho case, attending meeting of the FSC without having sworn on a Saturday to give Mr Alvaro his permit back.

Now, what do we have therefore? We have to show that we are appointing the right people and that we are disengaging from interference in the affairs of these institutions. We remember, one of my own PNQs concerned a fax that had been received at the Ministry of Financial Services sent by the FSC to ask the Minister's advice on reissuing the permit to Alvaro. These issues, Mr Speaker, non-interference, complete independence, the right people and the right attitude and the right competence in these - whether quickly we can do so. Let's all hope that we can do so quickly enough; that we come off the grey list. The Minister has said by December. Let's say by December, this year 2020, we will see, like the projection of growth, whether this changes by the minute, whether in his speech after me, he will stick to his commitment to get us off the grey list by December because the implications are huge. EU will take action or not on the fact that we are on the grey list and things may get bad because people will simply go elsewhere; clean people will go elsewhere. Those who are not clean will be happy to come here by definition if we are on a grey list. So, we need to be very careful. As I mentioned for the people working in the tourism industry for which I had the greatest respect, I have as much, if not as much, respect for the huge number of professionals working in our global business sector and we owe them as a Parliament and the Government owes them a better future than is being promised by the FATF grey list.

Mr Speaker, the Ministry of Finance is back. As I mentioned in his absence 2013, he seems to have taken a liking to that year because growth was 3.2%. He forgot, in fact, that he was not last year in Government. Last year was 2014 and last year, we achieve 3.7% growth, much better and as I said it's not the only thing to look at. Do you know that public debt had reached 67% here - in fact, I can prove it quite easily? When we left Government in 2014 - not only did we leave billions of rupees in the so-called special accounts that have all disappeared now; because now we are indebted and we don't have special funds like we had

at the time - growth was very nice 3.7%, more than last year which was 3.6%. It had recently been brought down although the previous Minister of Finance had said 4.1%, in fact, 3.6% by Statistics Mauritius. Public debt was 60%, Mr Speaker. 60%, I didn't borrow. I didn't beg or borrow to spend. No, no, no. We spent what we earned. Public debt was 60%, just a little bit higher than 60%. That is the situation that we left in 2014 to come to the situation that we are at this stage.

Private investment was more 14.5% than now. 14.2% in 2018. I can take so many figures but I don't want to bore the House, Mr Speaker, Sir. But I can talk at any time. If someone wants to take me on any time, we can talk about the performance. Any time we can show that we left this country in a decent state, *comme un bon père de famille* and it is no longer the situation.

Let's take just one figure, Mr Speaker, Sir, foreign direct investment. Let me take the case of a family - father, child, etc. they are all working. They have some land, they have some houses; they are working. They earn money. Suddenly, they are redundant, they are out of work. Nothing to do, what do they do? They start selling the lands, Mr Speaker. They start selling their houses because there is nothing else to sell. The exports are not selling. Tourism is going down. Offshore is being threatened. So, what do we do? We sell the land. This is what a family does. *Ils vendent les bijoux de famille*, they sell the land and what is Mauritius doing, Mr Speaker? Let me take FDI (Foreign Direct Investment) Rs18 billion in 2014. Rs17 billion in 2018, so it has gone down and the figure for 2019 will shock you, not in the amount which is reasonable but, in the composition, 90% nearly of the FDI is on real estate. FDI is Foreign Direct Investment. Foreign Direct Investment in real estate means we are selling our country to foreigners - 89% to be précised of the FDI in 2019, for the 9 months that has been published by the Bank of Mauritius is real estate activities.

If I go to 2014 again, only 33%, same Bank of Mauritius. There was some selling. We introduced. I myself introduced. At the time 2000, God knows. Foreigners are coming to Mauritius but not on this scale. Now, there is nothing but and when we talk about FDI, let's say FDI compares to investment in general, it is also a window where you can look into the future. If you can see no investment in manufacturing, Mr Speaker, what does it mean? If there is no future in manufacturing, nobody is coming from overseas to invest in manufacturing in Mauritius. When you look at the FDI and you see there is nothing in tourism, doesn't that tell you something? Where are the people queuing up to do the hotels?

Not in 2019, anyway none. And so, when you look at FDI and this Government should take FDI as writing on the wall. This is the future. The future for which according to the *Alliance Morisien* is real estate continue selling. Like the family, a whole family is redundant, nothing to do, what do we do? We have to sell the house. We sell the house; we sell one property, two properties; we sell the house. That is what the Government is doing with the country, Mr Speaker.

And, of course, this idea that Metro Express was going to jumpstart the economy, that we are going to have a huge boom because of the Metro Express. Let's see who has bothered to look at Statistics Mauritius, the latest estimates for growth in 2019 and its Governor Basant Rai was quite right. He wrote a long article some time ago to show that Metro Express will have no effect on growth; in fact, growth in 2019, 3.6% less than growth in the previous year under the same Government. So, that hasn't worked. The policy of borrowing, giving contracts abroad, workers abroad, all the materials from abroad, nothing is left for Mauritius. Your money comes in, all goes out and growth has faulted, has slowed in last year, especially in the last six months of last year and that is when the Metro Express was in full swing trying to reach the deadline.

So, Mr Speaker, the policy of Government: borrow, beg, barter and spend. Borrow from overseas in the lines of credit; lines of credit which every Minister of Finance that I have known has refused. The Government with open arms welcomes the lines of credit mainly from India - lines of credit, bartering the DTA and the so-called - the everything but by name military base at Agaléga, have been bartered for grants and loans at cheap rates, Mr Speaker. Begging also, I am sure. We have had so many grants for here, there and everywhere. I am sure you must have asked for them at least. And this has been accompanied, Mr Speaker, Sir, by what? *Gaspillage sans limite!* That stadium! Where is the hon. Minister of Sports? He answered, I think, two PNQs on that stadium, Mr Speaker, Sir. You have to create a breakwater in the port. You don't do the breakwater in the port which would have protected our economy and our port and made us, maybe into a regional hub. You don't do that. What you do is to put Rs5 billion in a Sports Centre that has only been used once, not even fully because it was not ready, for the *Jeux des Iles* and then you closed it down. And the concerts are done in the parking, *s'il vous plait*, the concerts are not in the stadium, the concerts are in the parking. You force everyone to do it there because you refuse permits everywhere else. This is the stadium. The stadium, everyone would tell you

that it costs about 5% of the cost of such infrastructure as maintenance if you maintain it properly. 5% of Rs5 billion, Rs250 m. it should cost the taxpayer, us, just to maintain this huge, white elephant that nobody wants to see, nobody wants to use and that is the situation.

We have done these unnecessary roads where I live in Anse la Raie. Rs200 m. splashed out on a road. We know why it was constructed, but it was splashed out. Rs600 m. splashed out on a road going into the airport that nobody needed either and so on and so forth, Mr Speaker, Sir. It is too long. The internet cable at Rodrigues, when we left Government, it was going to cost Rs600 m., it ended up costing Rs1.8 billion because the contract which was given was not good enough. It had to be more expensive. So, that is why when we look at things, we see that the public debt has gone over the roof. The statutory limit is 65%, it should come down, I think, in one year to 60%. It will never do, of course. 65% is the statutory limit.

Now, the Director of Audit tells you black on white that it has breached the statutory limit. Government has breached illegally itself, its own statutory limit. It is now 65.3%, ignoring the fact that money has been, can I say plundered from the Bank of Mauritius Rs18 billion worth, Rs7 billion to pay the loan and Rs11 billion to pay pensions etc because money was short at the end of the year. Now, if you add that Rs7 billion to the public debt, if you add the Rs4.5 billion - that public utilities have been forced to buy securities from Government - if you add these two together, your public debt becomes 67.3%, Mr Speaker, Sir. And the problem with the Special Reserve Fund (SRF) - I see the Minister of Finance getting excited, that's good because he was at the Bank of Mauritius - is that the big majority of it comes from revaluation reserves. And you know, Mr Speaker, Sir, which company was choosing revaluation reserves to show up his profits? It is the British American Insurance. That is the best example I can give you.

Now, the Special Reserve Fund is largely made up, the big majority, of paper profits coming from revaluation. What does it mean? The Bank of Mauritius, of course, has its foreign assets; it has dollars, euros, gold and all that. If the rupee is lucky enough to depreciate at the end of the year, the Special Reserve Fund *prend l'ascenseur*, the Special Reserve Fund shoots up and you get billions in the Special Reserve Fund. The law used to say that you cannot use it except in very exceptional circumstances. Of course, the law was changed. I don't think the law was changed properly, I still think it is illegal, but still the law was changed to allow the Special Reserve Fund which ought not to be used by anyone except

for very special circumstances to be used to pay Government debt. But I ask you a simple question, Mr Speaker, Sir, that happens, that bounty comes when the rupee depreciates. Everybody will understand that when your foreign assets appreciate, you make paper profits. What happens tomorrow when the rupee appreciates? If it appreciates, the paper profits are gone. You end up with a big hole at the Bank of Mauritius. Tomorrow, if we are lucky enough, lucky for the population because it is better off if the rupee appreciates. As a nation, we will be richer, but the Bank of Mauritius will be bankrupt because that money that had arisen from depreciation of the rupee has been spent and any appreciation will cause a hole. It could be an enormous hole in the Bank of Mauritius. That is what this Government has done, Mr Speaker, Sir. They are only too happy when the rupee continues to depreciate. Only too happy because VAT goes up, because VAT is charged of the port and is charged on the rupee equivalent and the Special Reserve Fund continues to increase. I won't put it past this Government to plunder the Special Reserve Fund again as the rupee depreciates. I don't believe this issue that the hon. Minister of Finance was saying that it is not the Bank of Mauritius deliberately depreciate it. This is a small country, we know that the Bank of Mauritius is doing everything possible to depreciate the rupee which has already depreciated 3% in the election and they want it to depreciate another 3%. And the bounty will come in the Special Reserve Fund.

So, Mr Speaker, Sir, we have a big problem at the Bank of Mauritius. Of course, we know the electoral gifts. We went to the trouble of telling the population in the manifesto of the *l'Alliance Nationale* how we would pay for what we had offered. *L'Alliance Morisien* never did and today Rs2.8 billion comes out monthly to pay pensions etc and I am sure the hon. Minister of Finance does not know where to get that money because simply it has not been prepared. The Government has not prepared. *L'Alliance Morisien* never prepared. It used to be Rs1.8 billion, it is now Rs2.8 billion. Rs1 billion per month additional comes out. Of course, then you need to take the Special Reserve Fund.

I will try and go a bit quicker, Mr Speaker, Sir. The debt servicing last year was Rs28 billion, just debt servicing from the Director of Audit Report. That is equivalent to the whole budget of the Ministry of Health, equivalent to the whole budget of the Ministry of Education. Just one thing - I see the Deputy Prime Minister is here - we had promised, in our Manifesto, a substantial drop in the price of electricity because over the years of the drop in fuel prices, CEB has been making indecent profits on the heads of every Mauritian family and on the heads of every small company in Mauritius. And that money ought to have been

returned to the customer and we had said we would return it by reducing electricity bill by 20% for every household and every SME. The same thing we would do for gas because STC has *carrément* also been plundering the consumer by excessive subsidies taken and never spent on the consumer.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am going to come now to coronavirus if I may. Coronavirus, Mr Speaker, Sir, I have never, I think, in my life, heard such confusion, such contradiction. Never! It is something so important. You fear that the Government is sort of muddling through, everyday it is a different thing. One day it is announced, on Friday we announced that Air Mauritius, for instance, would give 40% discount to anyone willing to catch coronavirus in Great Britain. 40% discount for any tourist coming from South Africa and so on. This morning Air Mauritius cancelled everything because the population was so wild against Air Mauritius. Just check on Facebook and social media that Air Mauritius, I presume, by its own accord, disregarded Government's instructions and cancelled those stupid discounts that were going to be given. That is a Government that is going to handle the crisis!

Mr Speaker, Sir, let's take some of these issues. The Government announced coronavirus 10% redemption across the board. They even spare the Ministry of Health, 10% reduction across the board. Of course, it has got nothing to do with coronavirus, more to do with the state of the economy - 10% reduction. What would that do?

The Ministry of Finance, himself, gave us the figure this morning Rs121 billion is the Government expenditure every year excluding, of course, Rs28 billion of debt servicing. So, it's, in fact, more than that. But anyway, let's take Rs121 billion x 10% : Rs12 billion less circulating in the economy. No country in the world has suggested that it should cut its Government expenditure in the wake of the coronavirus because that is not the thing to do. Your demand is going to disappear as far as foreigners are concerned. Exports are going to be upset. Tourism is going to be nil even the offshore and, in that situation, someone is crazy enough to cut Government expenditure by 10% when what you need is maintain or increase your expenditure. This is what people are doing: maintain or increase your expenditure to sustain economy not to sustain business profits but mainly to sustain employment. It's crazy politics, crazy financing. That's one thing.

And then, the next day, a few days, the Minister of Finance gives a press conference, *très bien c'est très bien* etc. He does not mention the 10% except when he gets a question. He

goes on this time to talk about some sort of stimulus package. So, we are putting the brakes and the accelerator at the same time we don't want the car to spin. Of course, the car will spin. Can't apply the hand brake and then press the accelerator at the same time and not expect your car to spin and this is what's going to happen? The economy will spin out of control and, so far as capital spending is concerned, the Minister said: no, no, it's just recurrent spending that we are going to cut off. Of course, you are going to cut just the recurrent spending as you have not been able to spend the capital budget. How much capital budget has been spent so far Minister? I will tell you how much to, 33% of the year's capital budget only has been spent so far by all the Ministers. 33% - where are you going to cut from that? You are not able to spend it anyway. You will not be able to spend it. So, you are putting a huge brake. No capital spending, the Government performance is way under budget and someone clever decided that we cut recurrent expenditure as well. Bravo. Let's see what happens.

Now, Mr Speaker, Sir, the Ministry of Finance *explique: oui, on a augmenté la demande patati patata* but you have paid Rs8.5 billion to pensioners for what? For them to spend no, or for them to save? Make up your mind. You want them to spend the Rs8.5 billion you gave them or you want them to save? You cannot have something *et le contraire en même temps*. Here we have given Rs8.5 billion, according to his figures, hon. Minister's figures, to pensioners etc. *Ça c'est la demande qui augmente* but, at the same time, you tell them: 'look, come and save the money at the Bank of Mauritius. Is the Government sycophantic? Probably. Come and save the money at the Bank of Mauritius. We are going to give you 2.5% if you save the money. Of course, it's good politics. Ah, we care for the old age etc, but it does not make economic sense. Again, Rs8.5 billion hand brake give me the money I'll save it at the Bank of Mauritius and I'll give you better interest for it. It's a crazy world, Mr Speaker, Sir.

So, that's why I am totally confused, psychedelic, what is happening. But, Mr Speaker, what are our priorities? Two priorities. Only two priorities. Every country has only two priorities. One overarching priority is to save lives, that is, there is no cost to that. You lose a mother, a father, an uncle or a child and this is done at national scale. You know how horrendous this is. So, everybody says I don't care about the economy, I don't care about public finances. I want to protect my population. That is the first thing and the second thing is: safeguarding jobs and I'll come to both with your permission, Mr Speaker. Now, let's talk about the announcement of the Minister of Finance on Friday. He has found that it's a good

idea for Mauritians to go to Great Britain and for British to come to Mauritius and we will give them 40% discount but he didn't listen to the press conference of Boris Johnson on the Thursday, *la veille*. Let take the others maybe, he couldn't imagine France etc. Maybe he couldn't although he could. He didn't listen to Boris Johnson *la veille*, Boris Johnson said: 'there are probably 5,000 to 10,000 cases of coronavirus in my country.' That is what he said. He did not? I can reproduce.

Now, you are a Minister of Finance, you listen to a press conference where the Prime Minister of UK tells you that 10,000 cases in UK and the next day, you propose a discount for the British people to come to Mauritius and for Mauritians to go there to catch coronavirus. Come on my friend, this is not serious. This is not serious. I can anytime. This is not serious. South Africa is in lockdown and there has been no announcement from the Minister of Finance that he has cancelled the 40% discount for South Africans to come to Mauritius. I know from Air Mauritius that they have *honter, ine gayne honter ine bizin cancel*; had to cancel all these stupid discounts that were given. *Ine gayne honter Air Mauritius, ine gayne zourer ine gayne honter* - sorry about it. Right. He hasn't this morning told us that he has cancelled that but he has. At least, it has been cancelled by Air Mauritius. And also, Mr Speaker, MDFP (Mauritius Duty Free Paradise), it's a real paradise. Now we are going to encourage tourism now from the region. We are going to give them an extra bottle of whisky. If you come from Reunion Island for a weekend, in a couple, you can buy 12 bottles of wine bring it to your hotel, drink all day long and you leave. You come on Friday, you get drunk all day long and you leave on Monday. You don't have to buy any drink from the hotel because you are buying everything from duty free. 12 bottles of wine for every couple that comes to Mauritius even for a weekend - this is the brilliant idea that has come through the Minister of Finance. It may help the sales of MDFP but, Mr Speaker, Sir, we live in Africa region, we are a member of SADC, COMESA all this and what is Africa? Not be pejorative - what is Africa? Statistics in Africa are the worst in the world. Just look for any statistics you want in Africa. It is the worst in the world. You don't get statistics and, I'll come to cases in Mauritius in a moment, we don't know the real state of coronavirus in Africa. We don't know and that is why we should also close our borders regrettably from our brothers and sisters in Africa because we cannot rely on their figures. We cannot maybe rely; we will see it later on the Mauritian figures. We cannot rely on their figures, Mr Speaker. And, therefore, this is the issue. We need also not to put at risk not because we want to sell an extra bottle of whisky or two bottles of wine additionally per tourist that we are going to let

tourists come in. Where is our sense of proportion and anyway these people would not come because there are travel advisories everywhere. Countries do not want their citizens to travel so we have to close our borders now, even more. We cannot stop where we are now, we need to protect our population that is the major, the only concern as far as I am concerned, Mr Speaker.

You cannot have this stupid policy for closing borders for some, giving discounts for others, buying duty-free as if all they want to come to Mauritius, pay their tickets and buy a bottle of wine. This is what tourism has come to now in Mauritius. Come to Mauritius, buy a cheap bottle of wine, this should be the promotion of MTPA now. Let's have it on CNN, come to Mauritius, you'll get discount wine!

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** No crosstalking, please! No crosstalking!

**Mr X. L. Duval:** We are going to bankrupt our country. My friend, you are going to bankrupt our country.

**Mr Speaker:** Order, please!

**Mr X. L. Duval:** I have put it on record.

**Mr Speaker:** Hon. Minister, address the Chair!

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr X. L. Duval:** You are the one who is going to bankrupt our country. *Marker garder*, you will bankrupt this country!

**Mr Speaker:** Hon. Member!

**Mr X. L. Duval:** Anyway! I listened with some admiration to what hon. Bodha has said because...

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** No crosstalking, please!

**Mr X. L. Duval:** Mr Speaker, it's time for you to shout.

**Mr Speaker:** Hon. Member, continue!

**Mr X. L. Duval:** Yes, thank you, I will continue. The rudeness of the Minister of Finance ...

*(Interruptions)*

Now, let me tell you, Mr Speaker, I have a lot of respect for what hon. Bodha has said. I don't agree all the time, many times I have not agreed, but he gave the impression, to me, that he wanted Mauritius to be isolated from all these horrible viruses everywhere. Let me take a simple example, Mr Speaker. You live in London today, you live in France, wherever. You want to avoid the virus, what do you do? You isolate yourself in the house, your children come and drop your shopping on the front door and you stay inside, you watch the TV. You isolate yourself. What applies to a family, to a person, applies to a country, an island like Mauritius. We have been blessed because we are an island and because we can isolate, we have to take that chance that golden geography has offered us and isolate this country as much as we can. Otherwise, the population will not pardon this Government, Mr Speaker, if the virus comes. And my friend, hon. Bobby Hurreeram, how childish - he is not here - his Press conference was. I mean, he is a Minister now, so, he should act like a Minister, not make a childish Press conference.

Now, a last thing, Mr Speaker, with this debate about whether we are testing properly or not, I have spoken to two doctors and one of them is willing to speak to the Minister of Health. And this girl told me: "Xavier, I phoned the Ministry of Health twice to tell them that there are people in such and such hotel, showing signs of the virus, they say, okay...."

*(Interruptions)*

I will do so happily. Please, don't challenge me! I will happily give you the name of the doctor because that's what you have been trying to do.

*(Interruptions)*

No! Why give now? I will give it. And this girl, this doctor...

*(Interruptions)*

Don't you want to know what the doctor said?

**Mr Speaker:** Hon. Member, address the Chair.

*(Interruptions)*

Address the Chair! Address the Chair! Address the Chair!

**Mr X. L. Duval:** I am addressing you, Mr Speaker, what else am I doing? Now, this doctor told me that she called twice to the Ministry of Health and they came twice, but never did they do the swab test of the throat. Never! Never did they do that!

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Order!

**Mr X. L. Duval:** And you know what she told me, she said: “I lost five hours with the Ministry of Health. I am not going to phone them again. I see something. Just too bad, because they are worthless.” This is what she said. We have to take our responsibility at the Ministry of Health. I will give you another example as I am on this subject. I spoke to some undertakers - okay, it is not a good word, ‘undertakers’. They are terrified if tomorrow they come across a case of Coronavirus. What will they do? How will they bathe, how will they do whatever with the body? They wrote twice or three times and contacted the Ministry of Health for guidance as to what to do, and no answer from the Ministry of Health! No answer from the Ministry of Health! So, let’s not be as if self-congratulatory, unless you are telling me that I am lying to this House. Let’s not be self-congratulatory we have not found any case. It means that we are one of the luckiest countries in the world despite receiving tens of thousands of tourists, not one of them carried the virus. Whereas Rwanda, Uganda, all those countries who get a trickle of foreign visitors have all detected.

*(Interruptions)*

Okay, I take your word for it. But listen also to what the Opposition is saying in terms of what needs to be done to...

*(Interruptions)*

Sorry? Fake? Like you look in my eyes and you say it’s a fake, okay, it’s a fake. I know that you know exactly what it is. It’s a fake?

Now, I am telling you this is what it is. I don’t want to alarm anyone. I am here to tell you what I have heard. And to also tell you that both things that I have said are verifiable. It

is up to you, whether the Minister calls me later or he does not call me, that is his call now, his decision now.

*(Interruptions)*

The Deputy Prime Minister is so arrogant. Why is the Deputy Prime Minister so arrogant?

**Mr Speaker:** Order, please! Order!

**Mr X. L. Duval:** At least, he should allow a recount in Rose Hill, then he could be arrogant!

**Mr Speaker:** Minister of Finance! Order please!

**Mr X. L. Duval:** He is trying to stop a recount in Rose Hill and he is being so arrogant today with us now, doing his best to stop a recount in Rose Hill like his life is dependent on it.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the next thing is safeguarding employment, safeguarding life. Mr Speaker, Sir, I have not heard a word from the Minister of Finance or from the Prime Minister as to whether this programme, the Rs9 billion that is being lent, etc. invested in companies, is going to tie to any conditions, apart from repayment in 6 months. The tying to conditions must be that anybody who benefits from these amounts from the taxpayers basically, because everything comes back to the taxpayers, should give an undertaking that it is going to maintain employment. That is the point of the Stimulus Package. The point of the Stimulus Package should be and should only be the main point of the Stimulus Package, should be to force, to encourage companies that benefit from these amounts to maintain the employment. This is what we did in 2008. You have to have that condition otherwise it is useless, Mr Speaker.

Now, the Workfare Programme! What is the maximum salary that is dealt with in the Workfare Programme? Rs18,000! Everybody above Rs18,000 will lose and will lose tremendously if they have to go on the Workfare Programme. *Toute la classe moyenne perdra* with this Workfare Programme. You get 90% first 3 months of Rs18,000, and then, you will get 60% for the next 3 months, and then, 30% of Rs18,000. So, if any Minister finds himself on Workfare Programme, he is not going to get Rs250,000. He will get only Rs18,000, 90% of that even.

So, if you are *la classe moyenne*, if you have a house, if you have a loan, if you have anything else, bye-bye to all this because - and I will come to that in a moment, support to individuals - you are not going to be able to pay for all this, because the Government has not thought it important to help you in that respect, to tie the conditions of the Stimulus Package to maintaining employment. The Workfare Programme is not meant for all who are going to go through, and I will explain why. Because what do people want to do in this situation? They want either support to pay the wages - and I explained why - or they want to be able to temporarily lay off the workers. No hotel, no tour operator in Mauritius, no manufacturing industry wants to put people *sur le pavé*, make them redundant. Nobody wants to do that. Most people are attached to their employees.

But the solution is what? What the Government says you don't like, you have problem, throw them out and let them come on the workfare? The Workfare Programme only handles redundancies, when people are put out of work. That is the Workfare Programme. It doesn't deal with people who are temporarily laid off, it doesn't deal with people who are faced with *chômage technique*, it doesn't do that. It only helps when you have lost your job. So, what is the Government saying? You have a problem, you cannot face the situation, throw your people out. Let them come to us. We will give them workfare. What the Government should be doing and what was done with the stimulus package of 2008 is for a job in work and in training at the same time with Government paying half, say of the wage bill. What happens? You work for two days or three days? You train for two or three days, okay, I understand there is problem with the virus, some sort of fine-tuning has to be done, but in 2008, this is what we did. We said to people we will pay part of your wage bill and in that time that we are paying for them, you send them to training paid for by Government, that worked. You don't throw people out. They work for two days, they go to training and they come back and that works. Unemployment did not shoot up.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I'll tell you this thing. I know, the Minister of Finance knows that projections for unemployment with only 50% reduction in tourism, reduction in manufacturing, etc., projections that have been given to the Ministry of Finance, he is not going to say anything this time. It is that we will reach at least 80,000 unemployed with 50% drop in tourism and tourism will drop more than 50%. So, we are going to face a huge unemployment coming ahead and I am saying let's give all this money but let's tie it to conditions of maintaining employment. It's not too late, obviously a question of ego, why

did the opposition say this *patati patata*, but it's not too late and we can still tie and give that sort of condition and give also a support for wages programme which is tied to training.

Virus comes, virus doesn't come, the economy is going to flounder. Jobs will be lost and what we must do, as politicians, to protect employment otherwise social ills, people will suffer like never before and I will come to this, Mr Speaker, Sir, what about health for individuals? If I lose my job, okay I get a bit from the Workfare Programme if I am under 18,000. I will probably get a bit from it, but who is going to pay my mortgage? Has the Government had a thought for people who cannot pay, for instance, the banks who are making billions of rupees of profits? Has the Government even thought of helping the people, the 80,000 that will inevitably become unemployed as we are going? How are they going to pay their bank loans? How are they going to meet their commitments? There should be, Mr Speaker, Sir, a package to help people who lose their jobs, at least, a moratorium on repaying home loans. Doesn't that make sense what I am saying or does it not make sense? It makes sense. You all know that it makes. So, why don't you do it? It has to be done. We must put people first and we must help individuals who are going to face difficulties and, Mr Speaker, Sir, last thing on that issue, sick pay, now at the moment what is going to happen? Let's imagine the virus comes, people will self-confine, self-isolate, one person gets it in one family, the whole family will self-isolate. Imagine the number of people on sick pay. Who is going to pay the sick pay? The enterprise will pay the sick pay. 15 days in a year but if you have half of your employees on sick pay, are you going to survive?

In the UK, it's the UK Government that is paying the sick pay for coronavirus cases. If you want to self-isolate which is encouraged by Boris Johnson, Government will pay your sick pay. In Mauritius, there will be no encouragement to isolate because nobody is going to pay your sick pay. And after the 15 days, you go back to work or you get no pay. And it will be many cases more than 15 days because the incubation period is 15 days. God knows how long the thing lasts in your body. So, Mr Speaker, Sir, just have a thought for the individuals. People are going to suffer. It is only a thought for those people who are going to be sick, how we can prevent their suffering, not just business. Bottles of whisky at the Airport are not going to solve this issue. The Minister of Finance has not thought it out properly. Let him go back and think about it.

So, Mr Speaker, Sir, I have said what I had to say on the virus. I have one bit to say. Communication, Mr Speaker, Sir, from the Ministry of Health! If you look at the website of

the Ministry of Health, why I look at that website, I don't know, I am the only person, I think who has stupidity to look at the website of the Ministry of Health. The last posting was on 04 March, we are 16 March, 12 days ago and here we are congratulating the Minister of Health. 12 days ago, since then he hasn't bothered to update us about what is happening but we need to know what is happening, we need to know what is being done because the whole point of closing our borders and all that, is to try and delay the arrival of coronavirus in Mauritius. Every country is trying to delay the arrival of the peak. We are still trying to delay the arrival of the virus, but if in the meantime, you waste that time, then it is a complete waste of time and you endanger the population. So, the Minister of Health needs to communicate, he is a politician, he must communicate, tell us what is the state of his preparations. I am telling you today that we have 40 to 50 ventilators in our public hospitals, because 80% of people who catch the virus are mild, 15% of people who catch the virus are hospitalised in normal hospital wards, 5% of the people need respirators, they get pneumonia, etc. So, are we saying that the 40 or 50 respirators in the public service are enough? If so, we will say so or if you have ordered, tell us when they are going to come because I am worried, I am genuinely worried what have you done all these weeks, what have you ordered. I tried to buy one of these, infrared thermometers. I got the last one apparently from the chemist shop. Have you ordered more? Every office will need one in the morning just, okay, it's not perfect, but just at least to check. We will have to have one in the National Assembly soon, I don't know if we can meet in such proximity next time, we will see. But, Mr Speaker, Sir, we need to know what is the state of the preparations of the Ministry of Health, how many ICU beds we have, is he increasing them, we saw China build hospitals overnight, okay we are not China, have we even asked help from China? Now that the virus there is nearly over, the epidemic, have we asked help? We need respirators, we need more beds in the ICU, we need to be prepared. I am not saying we are not prepared, I sincerely I don't know because when I look at the website of the Ministry of Health, I see it is a fortnight ago or so that it was updated. When I look at the statements made by the Ministry of Health, I see none and I am worried that my country is not doing enough, that our Government is not doing enough to protect us in this country and so the communication is important.

Now, you see every Government has surrounded itself by a *comité d'experts*. Has this been done here? Can we know from the Minister of Health? Has he, at some point in time, made a statement telling us? Who is advising him? Has he regrouped around him *des éminents spécialistes Mauriciens* to help him or not. Mr Speaker, Sir, this is the issue that we

need to - and we know that there is a huge percentage of people with diabetes in Mauritius. So, we are extremely at risk of complications if the virus comes to Mauritius.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I will finish by talking quickly about Rodrigues. I have every right to talk about Rodrigues, not only as a Member of Parliament for the Republic but also because we are very present even electorally in Rodrigues.

There has been, we know, Rodriguans who come to Mauritius. They come to Mauritius and they live in the worst conditions without electricity, without water, without drinking water. They live in the worst conditions. And they leave there, why? Because life is unbearable there, otherwise, you would not leave your country, your island to come here. That is why they leave. There is abuse of power by the ruling elite. It is a micro society there. So, only people who know people are helped. That is also a state of affairs. Agriculture and farming is in a terrible situation. Why? Because there is no water and how can you encourage a population to go into agriculture and farming when there is no water? So, that is on its knees. Only a fraction of the land that was being farmed in 2014 and cultivated in 2014 is still cultivated today. About a third only has survived the drought and the lack of water. That is the situation in Rodrigues. Poverty is at the highest rate for Mauritius Republic and tourism is stagnant, around 24,000 tourists per annum, *s'il vous plaît*. Because time is of the essence, I will only talk about education.

Mr Speaker, Sir, every Mauritian knows that education is of prime importance to every family who wants to grow out of poverty. Education! Okay, I will congratulate the Vice-Prime Minister to have been decorated, but, please, I won't congratulate them for what is happening in Rodrigues. Because there, it is a disaster and education is a national concern, not a regional concern. What has happened there in education? And Mr Speaker, Sir, I will let Statistics Mauritius talk and not me because if you cannot deal with education, you are ruining the future of that country. You are producing people at the age of 20 without education, they will be working for the next 45 years with that same low level of education.

Mr Speaker, Sir, SC pass rates, 75% of the people who took the last SC exams failed to get the 5 credits. Do you know what that means in numbers, Mr Speaker, Sir? 815 people took the exams, 815 souls, young children took the exams and only 115 of them made it to HSC. 700 of them did not make it to HSC. That is the situation in Rodrigues. If you don't believe me, check your own figures. 700 people out of 814 to be exact did not get the 5

credits to take them to a higher path. They are finished *dan caro canne*, thanks to what the Minister did. *Dan caro canne*. 5 credits!

(Interruptions)

It is the truth, you have to face the truth. Get out from your cloud, face the truth.

Now, Mr Speaker, Sir, the SC pass rate, the pass rate of senior is the lowest in a decade. When we left, in 2011, it was 79%. In 2014, it was 73% pass senior Cambridge in Rodrigues. Do you know what this so called wonderful Government has done - I am being ironic by the way - in Rodrigues? The last pass rate in 2019 has *dégringolé* from 79% to 57% only passing in Rodrigues. If you don't take care of education, as a Government, you are a *faillie* because you are mortgaging 45 years onwards.

And therefore, Mr Speaker, same thing for HSC –

- 2011 – 82%;
- 2014 – 69%, and
- 2018 – 64%.

So, I am saying don't close your eyes to what is happening in Rodrigues. If you don't care about education, if you don't care about agriculture, about fisheries, if you don't care about the terrible squatting that is happening, at least, care about the future of our Republic, care about the future of Rodrigues and put some time and effort in education because you cannot continue and this is a trend. This is not just this year, last year was also as bad. So, it is an appeal that I am making. Take care, *prend compte*.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I will finish by saying that all I have said, of course, is in the context of the contesting by the *Alliance Nationale* of the electoral results. As you know we have two levels of contesting. One is the famous recount and I mentioned I don't know why the Deputy Prime Minister is so excited, so motivated to stop the recount. Because if I was in his shoes, I would be so happy to have the recount to prove that I have been elected. He must surely feel very uncertain, very unstable, very unsure of himself. So, that is going to all these trouble even getting the Leader of the Opposition, etc. sent out of the House, named, because he is upset about a recount that he should be happy. He should be the first person as Deputy Prime

Minister of this country to want to show to the population that he had been elected properly. That is the first thing. And secondly, of course, with all the abuses, we want to declare the whole election null and void.

And I will end my speech, Mr Speaker, to remind you and the House of a famous saying by a famous communist dictator and this is what the famous communist dictator said and I quote verbatim, translated. He said –

“Those who vote decide nothing. Those who count the vote decide everything.”

And then, you will understand ...

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Order please! Order please! Order! Order please!

**Mr X. L. Duval:** Mr Speaker, this man was called Joseph Stalin. He knew.

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Order please! Order!

**Mr X. L. Duval:** He knew a lot about election rigging and it may be why they don't want a recount because it is those who counted, not those who voted that decided the last election.

Thank you, Mr Speaker.

**Mr Speaker:** Hon. Minister Seeruttun!

(07.19 p.m.)

**The Minister of Financial Services and Good Governance (Mr M. Seeruttun):**  
 Merci, M. le président. M. le président, j'interviens à un moment où pratiquement le monde entier est à l'arrêt à cause d'un virus. Fin décembre, une personne dans une ville lointaine de Chine est infectée d'un virus et, en moins de trois mois, plus de 150 pays sont infectés. Plus de 170,000 personnes, aujourd'hui, sont touchées par ce virus dans tous les cinq continents du monde. Plus de 6,000 décès. La situation est compliquée ; la situation est grave.

J'attendais, aujourd'hui, ici, dans cette auguste Assemblée qu'on aurait eu des discours patriotiques, des discours, des deux côtés de la Chambre, qui montrent une certaine solidarité, et un discours qui rassure la population. Malheureusement, ça n'a pas été le cas en écoutant les deux membres de l'opposition.

On a eu, plus tôt, l'honorable Shakeel Mohamed qui a parlé pendant presque 90 minutes, toujours avec son style théâtral, comme l'a si bien dit mon collègue, l'honorable Gobin. Au final, qu'est-ce qu'il a dit ? Personne n'a compris.

*(Interruptions)*

J'attendais mieux du Leader du PMSD, l'honorable Duval - ce qu'il a dit. D'ailleurs, ce qu'ils ont dit depuis le début, comme-ci à Maurice on est déjà infecté par le virus, et je crois que l'honorable Leader de l'opposition lui aussi avait fait mention qu'on avait déjà le virus à Maurice. Son Leader, Navin Ramgoolam, avait aussi parlé que le virus est déjà à Maurice. Et là, on vient d'entendre l'honorable Duval parler d'un cas qui lui a été référé, et il a choisi aujourd'hui pour faire mention de ce cas-là au ministre, ici. S'il était vraiment une personne responsable, vraiment patriotique, qui voulait agir pour vraiment solutionner ce problème, il aurait pu bien appeler le ministre tout de suite. Pourquoi choisir ?

**Mr X. L. Duval:** If the hon. Minister can give way. I just explained that following the speech of the Minister - I was here - I called two of my friend doctors and I was told just now. Thank you for giving way.

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Order, please! Order!

*(Interruptions)*

This is not a point of order; this is a point of personal explanation.

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Seeruttun:** M. le président, je vous disais que si aujourd'hui on est parmi ...

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Continue hon. Minister!

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Seeruttun:** Je disais, M. le président, que si aujourd'hui l'île Maurice est parmi la trentaine de pays qui sont à l'abri de ce virus à ce jour, c'est parce que dès le départ, du moment que l'alerte a été donnée par l'OMS, le protocole a été déclenché, la surveillance était déjà mise en place et il y a eu un suivi individuel de toutes les personnes qui sont entrées sur notre territoire. Le risque est élevé, mais si on est à l'instant encore à l'abri, c'est parce que justement il y a eu un travail de contrôle, une surveillance assidue qui est en place.

Lorsque j'entends les remarques des membres de l'opposition, ça ne fait pas honneur à toutes ces personnes qui travaillent nuit et jour pour assurer notre bien-être, notre protection.

*(Interruptions)*

A écouter ce que l'honorable Duval vient de dire, tout ce qu'on a fait jusqu'à maintenant n'était pas bon, on a failli à notre responsabilité. Tous les experts, d'ailleurs ce comité qui est en train de se réunir presque quotidiennement pour suivre la situation, il y a le représentant de l'OMS, et tout le long il a validé tout ce qu'on est en train de faire. La situation est telle que ça évolue de jour en jour, M. le président.

On a voulu gérer ce problème avec tout le sérieux qu'il faut. Je me souviens au moment qu'on devait commencer à chercher d'autres centres de refuge et on avait identifié le centre de refuge de Quatre Sœurs qui était apte pour recevoir les personnes qu'on allait mettre en quarantaine, on avait laissé ça à l'équipe médicale, avec le ministre, d'aller expliquer bien en avance aux habitants de la région, parce qu'il fallait avoir une session d'explication. On n'a pas voulu faire de la politique avec, mais il y a eu des gens qui ont monté la tête de certains habitants pour créer un désordre, afin qu'on ne puisse pas expliquer aux habitants de la région.

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Order!

**Mr Seeruttun:** Allez voir ! Il y a des membres de l'opposition qui ont été voir ces personnes-là.

*(Interruptions)*

Allez voir ! Allez vérifier ! Le leader de l'opposition peut témoigner. Ils ont été.

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** No crosstalking!

**Mr Seeruttun:** Voilà le comportement de certaines personnes de l'opposition qui veulent à tout prix créer une psychose dans ce pays, le doute dans la manière que la chose doit être gérée. C'est malheureux, parce que lorsqu'on voit ce qui se passe ailleurs, dans d'autres pays, M. le président, il y a une toute autre approche, parce que ça dépasse la politique aujourd'hui. La situation, comme je l'ai dit, est compliquée. Il n'y a aucune visibilité comment ça va évoluer et quelle va être la durée non plus. On ne connaît pas. Bien sûr, il y a l'incertitude, et quand il y a l'incertitude, ça fait peur, mais avoir des gens qui viennent ajouter à cela ce doute, créer cette psychose, je ne crois pas que c'est patriotique, M. le président.

Nous sommes une petite île. On a fait face à d'autres types de catastrophes dans le passé. Ce qui nous a fait nous remettre sur nos pieds rapidement, c'était cette solidarité, cet esprit de famille qu'on a dans ce pays, et c'est ça que j'attendais aujourd'hui, qu'on ait un seul message à tous les Mauriciens. On veut et on prie qu'on n'ait pas des cas pareils chez nous. Mais le risque est élevé, et on est en train de prendre des décisions qu'il faut. Ce matin même il y a eu des décisions majeures. Nous sommes tous concernés.

Donc, nous vivons une situation exceptionnelle et, comme je l'ai dit, on n'a aucune visibilité et les choses évoluent à chaque instant. A l'heure où je vous parle, le nombre de cas infectés augmente à chaque instant.

Aujourd'hui, toutes les grandes puissances du monde sont infectées et elles sont impuissantes devant une telle situation. Pourtant, pas mal de grands pays ont fait mention de Maurice comme étant un des pays où c'est encore, comment dire, en sécurité, un pays *safe*. Or, ici, à les écouter, rien ne va, le problème est déjà là et on ne fait rien. Et ce sont des gens pareils qui voulaient diriger ce pays-là ? La raison pour laquelle, le 7 novembre, le peuple a rejeté cette équipe-là, M. le président. C'est parce qu'ils n'ont jamais pu gérer les crises dans le passé.

*(Interruptions)*

M. le président, le ministre des Finances est venu avec un plan de soutien la semaine dernière et il a annoncé 27 mesures pour soutenir l'économie, en mettant l'accent sur des secteurs qui sont les plus exposés, tels que le secteur manufacturier, le secteur de l'agro-

industrie, le secteur de la santé, avec l'objectif de sauvegarder l'emploi, d'assurer la continuité des affaires et aussi éviter le problème de trésorerie de ces entreprises. Neuf milliards de roupies allouées pour ce plan. Tout ce que j'ai entendu aujourd'hui des membres de l'opposition, c'est l'affaire de bouteilles de whisky. Alors, de ces 27 mesures annoncées, la seule chose qui les attire, c'est la bouteille de whisky.

Enfin, M. le président, il y a eu aussi, ces derniers temps, de fausses nouvelles qui circulent, des *fake news*. Pas plus tard que ce weekend, il y a eu une nouvelle que les écoles vont être fermées à partir d'aujourd'hui, lundi. On a eu une autre nouvelle concernant un cas dans une clinique qui est touché par le virus. Donc, voilà un peu dans quel contexte on est en train de vivre la situation, et il y a des gens qui alimentent ce genre de nouvelles...

*(Interruptions)*

Tout à l'heure on va en parler, monsieur de l'opposition. L'ancien leader de l'opposition, l'honorable Duval, parlait des pays comme le Rwanda, l'Uganda, qui ont des cas. La seule différence entre ces pays et nous, honorable Duval c'est que nous, depuis le début, comme je l'ai dit tout à l'heure, avons mis en place la surveillance, le contrôle, qu'ils n'ont pas fait. C'est la raison pour laquelle que, eux, ils ont eu des cas. Donc, venir faire des déclarations ici et nous comparer n'est pas, je le dis encore une fois, responsable comme un membre qui représente la population.

On va vivre des moments difficiles parce que, comme je l'ai dit, on ne connaît pas la durée de ce problème. Ça risque d'être pour un certain nombre de mois, que nous ne souhaitons pas, mais il faut être préparé pour faire face à la situation. Le ministre des Finances est venu avec son plan de soutien et, bien sûr, on verra comment les choses avancent, et s'il y a besoin d'intervenir encore, c'est sûr qu'on va le faire.

J'ai entendu parler de ce *stimulus package* de 2008. Je ne voulais pas parler de cela, mais parce qu'ils ont fait référence à ça, M. le président. Qui ne se souvient pas de monsieur Ram Mardemootoo, de Jean Suzanne ?

L'idée justement était pour sauvegarder l'emploi. Est-ce que cela a été fait ? Qu'est-ce qu'ils ont fait avec l'argent ? Et là on parle de centaines de millions de roupies données à des gens proches du gouvernement d'alors. Alors, on n'est pas ce gouvernement qui était là en 2008. L'objectif de ce plan c'est de sauvegarder l'emploi, d'assurer la continuité des entreprises et d'assurer qu'il n'y a pas un problème de trésorerie.

M. le président, je salue tout l'effort du ministre et son équipe et il faut encore les encourager, parce que les semaines et les mois à venir vont être difficiles pour eux. Ils ont besoin de notre encouragement. J'espère que nous allons tous ensemble montrer notre solidarité envers eux et les encourager pour qu'ils puissent protéger notre population. Bien sûr, toute l'économie est touchée par ça ; le secteur manufacturier, le secteur financier, le secteur de l'agro-industrie. Et aujourd'hui, le travail a déjà commencé pour s'assurer que toutes les mesures qu'il faut entreprendre doivent être entreprises pour pouvoir faire face à la situation.

Ce n'est pas un secret. L'économie mondiale va être au ralenti. Pas plus tard que la semaine dernière, la réserve fédérale a injecté 1.5 trilliard de dollars pour essayer de *boost* le système financier aux États-Unis. Mais ce n'est pas suffisant d'après les informations. La Chine probablement, une fois qu'ils passent le cap, ils vont investir massivement. Donc, on s'attend à ce qu'on va passer par une période difficile, mais on doit être aussi prêt pour pouvoir se relever le plus vite possible. Et comme je l'ai dit plus tôt, on a connu des cas difficiles dans le passé avec des cyclones, mais on s'est relevé rapidement parce qu'il y a toujours eu cette solidarité parmi les Mauriciens et on espère que ça va être le cas encore une fois cette fois-ci.

Plus tôt, l'honorable Mohamed a avancé que les passagers du paquebot qui a accosté n'ont pas été testés. Ce n'est pas vrai du tout. Ils ont été testés et le seul moyen de tester, c'est prendre la température. Oui!

*(Interruptions)*

Non ! Ecoutez !

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Address the Chair, please!

**Mr Seeruttun:** Encore une fois, on suit les avis des experts, les conseils des gens qui s'y connaissent. Il n'est pas docteur, lui. On peut croire qu'on connaît tout, mais non. Donc, l'honorable Docteur Jagutpal, le ministre de la Santé, m'a confirmé. Aujourd'hui, avec quelqu'un qui est infecté, il y a bien sûr cette période d'incubation de 14 jours. Vous faites n'importe quel genre de test, il y a le risque toujours. Donc, le seul test qu'on peut faire, c'est justement prendre la température. Mais il faut aussi savoir qu'avant que le paquebot accoste notre île, il y a une liste de tous les passagers qui se trouvent à bord qui est envoyée bien en

avance, avec l'historique d'où ils viennent, dans quel pays ils ont séjourné avant d'embarquer sur le bateau. M. le président, chaque pays est en train de vivre cette situation d'après les spécificités, d'après les conditions qui existent dans chacun de ces pays. Et nous, nous sommes en train de le faire au mieux, et comme je l'ai dit, encore une fois en suivant les procédures et les protocoles établis en conformité avec les *guidelines* de l'OMS.

Des fois, je me demande est-ce que c'est ça qu'ils veulent ? Qu'on ait un cas à Maurice pour dire : 'Ah, on avait raison' ? Cela me fait penser au projet Métro. Depuis le début du projet, il ne souhaitait qu'une chose, qu'on n'arrive pas à implémenter le projet. Toutes sortes de ...

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Order!

**Mr Seeruttun:** M. le président, ils sont venus avec toutes sortes de moyens pour pouvoir empêcher que le projet arrive à bout, et on l'a fait. Le métro est une réalité à Maurice. Une fois que le métro était en marche, ils cherchaient toutes sortes de choses pour faire croire que ce n'est pas un moyen de transport qui est fiable. Prendre des photos quand il y a des gouttelettes, ça aussi c'est un problème. Et ils attendaient qu'il y ait un malheur. Quand il y a eu l'accident, il y a un mort, ils sont tous descendus ce soir-là pour aller inciter les gens ...

*(Interruptions)*

Inciter les gens ! Inciter les gens, je maintiens!

*(Interruptions)*

*Granted !* De par son discours que j'ai écouté, il a été quand même plus rassurant. Mais les autres, juste pour inciter les gens à faire du désordre. Voilà, c'est malheureux, un décès, mais quelqu'un qui était sous l'influence de l'alcool, malheureusement, sans permis de conduire, sans déclaration, sans assurance. Ce que j'ai voulu dire, M. le président, c'est qu'ils attendent qu'il y ait un malheur pour avoir l'occasion d'avoir une plateforme pour se mettre en avant et pour dire qu'ils ont raison. Voilà un peu quel genre d'opposition qu'on a aujourd'hui, M. le président. Ça fait peur, M. le président, lorsqu'on voit des gens pareils, pour leur propre survie politique, agir de la sorte et sont prêts à mettre ce pays à feu et à sang.

Nous sommes aujourd'hui, ici, un gouvernement responsable, avec à la tête un Premier ministre qui a eu le soutien de toute une population pour diriger ce pays pour les prochaines cinq années à venir. Quand j'entends toute cette affaire de pétition électorale, un gouvernement avec tel pourcentage de vote. Regardez, ici, M. le président, on a les représentants de toutes les circonscriptions de l'île sauf de deux circonscriptions. Sur 21 circonscriptions, il y a les représentants de 19 circonscriptions qui sont de ce côté de la Chambre, M. le président. Ils disent qu'on ne représente pas la population. On a 65% de députés ici. On a un système électoral qui est basé sur le système britannique. Et il y a une lutte à trois.

Le Premier ministre Cameron, en 2010 : 35% de vote. Est-ce qu'on a entendu quelqu'un en Angleterre demander...

*(Interruptions)*

Même chose, en 2015, autour de 36%. Et là, en 2019, Boris Johnson : 45%.

A l'annonce des résultats le 8 novembre, le leader du MMM avait accepté les résultats. Mais, il suffit que le Docteur Ramgoolam vienne dire qu'il n'est pas d'accord, et voilà, lui aussi, il n'est pas d'accord. On connaît le Parti travailliste. En 1991, lorsqu'ils ont perdu les élections, qu'est-ce qu'il avait dit : 'C'était perplexe'. Encore une fois, il a fait une pétition que la Cour a mise de côté. En 2000, élection *mardaye*, encore une fois, un mauvais perdant. Et voilà, encore une fois, ils ne sont pas d'accord.

Je me souviens, M. le président, les élections de 2005, j'étais candidat dans la circonscription numéro 11, avec comme colistier notre Premier ministre ; l'adversaire était le leader l'opposition. Le jour du *counting*, M. le président - il vient reconnaître cela après, je dois dire - les conditions dans lesquelles le *counting* était en train d'être fait, étaient inacceptables.

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Order! Order!

**Mr Seeruttun :** Tous nos *counting agents*, qui étaient dans des classes où on faisait le *counting* ont dû quitter le lieu. On ne pouvait assurer leur sécurité. On nous a demandé de partir. Il y avait une foule hostile dans la cour. Résultat : l'honorable Pravind Jugnauth perd par 38 voix. Il y avait des gens qui étaient là-bas, des officiels qui ont dit après qu'il y a eu des bulletins qui étaient valides où il y avait une croix à côté de sa candidature, mais pour

invalider ces bulletins, ils ont mis une quatrième croix. Il y eu des gens qui sont venus me dire qu'il y a eu...

*(Interruptions)*

L'honorable leader de l'opposition...

**Mr Speaker:** Order! Order!

**Mr Seeruttun:** Enfin, on était ensemble en 2010, on a partagé...

*(Interruptions)*

C'est une vérité.

Mais, je sais à l'époque, quelques jours après les élections, beaucoup de personnes ont été voir l'honorable Pravind Jugnauth pour lui dire de faire une pétition, d'aller contester cette élection, de faire *recount* le même jour. Vous savez quoi, M. le président ? Il a dit : 'Non. J'accepte ce résultat. Je fais confiance à la Commission.' C'est cela que je dis, il y a une différence entre un leader et un mauvais perdant.

Donc, aujourd'hui, ils sont en train de contester cette élection, ils ont le droit bien sûr. Mais le *Deputy Prime Minister*, lui aussi, il a ses droits. Alors, quand lui, il sait utiliser les provisions de la loi, alors, là, dans son cas, ce n'est pas possible, il ne faut pas. Alors, qu'est-ce que c'est que ça ? Quand c'est pour vous c'est bon, quand c'est pour lui...

*(Interruptions)*

C'est décevant.

M. le président, le 7 novembre, la population a fait son choix, et le choix était facile. Elle avait à faire un choix entre une personne crédible, une personne avec des principes, une personne travailleuse, sérieux, discipliné, qui quand il vous dit quelque chose, il s'engage et le fait. De l'autre côté, il y avait une personne qui est, je dois dire, prête à tout pour amadouer, pour charmer les gens, et dès qu'il remporte une élection, il oublie tous ses engagements.

*(Interruptions)*

Il revient au galop. En 1995, il avait promis 15% d'augmentation aux fonctionnaires. Il gagne les élections, après il oublie complètement les fonctionnaires. En 2005, '*100 jours mo pou sange zot la vie*', '*Putting People First*'. Qu'est-ce qu'il a fait ? Il y a eu le *NRPT*, taxer les intérêts sur l'épargne, les petits planteurs qu'il défend becs et ongles.

Quand ils sont au pouvoir, ils enlèvent ce privilège de *duty free*. Le traitement...

(Interruptions)

Ça aussi. Les enfants d'école, un pain. Les subsides sur les *fees* des examens *SC* et *HSC*. Ils venaient avec des expressions gonflantes comme *bumper crop*, *early shoots*, *early harvest*, mais au final, ils tiraient dans les poches des pauvres pour donner à des gens comme Ram Mardemootoo et Jean Suzanne. C'est Robin des Bois à l'inverse. Et encore une fois en 2019, il vient avec des promesses; la pension qu'il trouvait difficile, impossible même à R 5,000 ; maintenant tout d'un coup ils vont donner R 10,000. Le prix de gaz - R 150 qu'il avait promis?

Laissez-moi vous dire, M. le président, en 2004, la bonbonne de gaz de 12 kg était à R 214 et ils étaient au pouvoir de 2005 à 2014. En presque 10 ans, il y a eu trois augmentations du prix du gaz. Passer de R 214 à R 330. Nous sommes venus et en moins de 5 ans, c'est passé de R 330 à R 210. C'est maintenant qu'il trouve que les gens utilisent le gaz et je vais baisser la bonbonne à R 150 et baisser le prix de l'électricité aussi, mais les gens ne sont pas dupes, M. le président. Ils ont rejeté, parce qu'ils ne croient plus dans le leader du Parti travailliste et aujourd'hui, il n'est même plus un député. Comme l'a si bien dit, M. Varma, il cherche par tous les moyens d'avoir un rôle avec cette pétition électorale.

Donc, les résultats sont clairs et nets. Nous avons aujourd'hui un gouvernement ; un gouvernement qui est là pour travailler pour le peuple, comme on l'a fait de 2014 à 2019. À écouter l'honorable Duval, c'est comme si on n'a rien fait depuis qu'on est au pouvoir en 2014. Moi, je dirai d'aller demander à ces 280,000 bénéficiaires de pensions et des assistances financières des orphelins ; d'aller demander aux pêcheurs; d'aller demander aux planteurs. R 5.9 milliards ont été décaissées pendant ces 5 années pour soutenir les petits planteurs de canne à sucre.

La dernière fois, l'honorable Ramful parlait de bagasse. Et vous là ! Depuis l'introduction du *Bagasse Transfer Fund* dans les années 1990, introduit à l'époque quand Sir Anerood Jugnauth était Premier ministre, c'était à R 100 pour la bagasse par tonne de sucre. C'est rester pareil jusqu'à 2015. Nous avons augmenté cela jusqu'à R 2,500 par tonne de sucre pour la bagasse, et il vient dire qu'on n'a rien fait.

Je vais parler des athlètes retraités qui n'avaient rien et pourtant aujourd'hui - je vois l'honorable Foo Kune avec un sourire comme bénéficiaire de cette décision. Mais, ce que je veux dire et je peux dire aussi ce que ce gouvernement a fait pendant la période 2014 à 2019

en terme de réalisations. Il n'y a pas un gouvernement dans le passé qui a fait autant dans la même période.

Aujourd'hui, dans notre programme 2020-2024, on va *build up* sur ce qu'on a accompli. Il y a des secteurs prioritaires, dont l'environnement, et on a dit aussi que le secteur économique aura un rôle moteur dans tout ce qu'on va faire pour les prochaines années à venir.

Je voudrais toucher à mon secteur –

- un secteur qui aujourd'hui contribue plus de 11% au PIB;
- un secteur qui emploie 13,500 jeunes, surtout professionnels;
- un secteur qui peut faire encore plus.

Il y a eu un *blue print* qui est sorti l'année dernière dans ce secteur et il y a un plan de 10 ans avec l'objectif de doubler la contribution du secteur au PIB. C'est un secteur où le *global business* est important. C'est vrai. Là, on joue à l'échelle globale et il y a des normes à respecter. Il y a des standards qui sont en conformité avec. Je ne voulais pas aller sur ce qui s'est passé en 2008 avec l'affaire *FATF*. L'honorable Duval était ministre des Finances en 2011-2012.

*(Interruptions)*

Si, si.

*(Interruptions)*

Et il y avait la présidence d'*ESAAMLG*, et c'est là où il y a eu une révision dans les normes, dans les recommandations de *FATF*. Et il y avait des mesures à prendre, des décisions à prendre, des législations à faire passer pour se mettre en conformité avec des recommandations de *FATF*. Aujourd'hui, il parle avec passion du secteur, mais qu'a-t-il fait, M. le président, entre 2011 et 2014 comme ministre des Finances? Rien.

En 2016, je dois ajouter - parce que lui, il parle de ce secteur comme un secteur qui est important - effectivement c'est un secteur important. Il y avait un ministère dédié à ce secteur en 2000-2005, un ministère des Services financiers. Qu'est-ce qui s'est passé en 2005, après les élections? Il n'y avait plus ce ministère, il a été démantelé, ça a été ramené au ministère des Finances comme un petit département. Pendant 10 ans, c'est resté comme ça. Voilà quelle importance il donnait à ce secteur, M. le président. Depuis 2016, on a commencé à

mettre en place certaines mesures et il y a eu ce qu'on appelle le *Mutual Evaluation Report* qui est sorti, un travail qui avait commencé à partir de 2016. Ils ont fait des *site visits* à Maurice en 2017 et le rapport est sorti en 2018. Quand c'est sorti, sur les 40 recommandations, il n'y avait que 14 sur lesquelles Maurice était en conformité, et c'est ce qu'on appelle les *immediate outcomes*. Il y a 11 et Maurice était sur tous les 11 *immediate outcomes*, soit *rated*, comme on dit, *low* ou *moderate low*.

Entre 2018 et 2019, on a amendé et on a passé de nouvelles législations autour de 25 amendements qu'on a faits pour se mettre en conformité avec ces différents standards. Quand le rapport est sorti, on est sorti de 14 - les recommandations ont été en conformité - pour passer à 35 sur les 40 en une année. Cela démontre l'engagement et l'effort de ce gouvernement de pouvoir satisfaire les conditions et les standards de *FATF*. Il a raison de dire qu'aujourd'hui l'évaluation faite est une évaluation qui est subjective. En sus des 40 recommandations de *FATF*, on nous évalue aussi sur 58 recommandations pour voir l'efficacité de toutes ces mesures, de toutes ces législations qu'on a en place. Et aujourd'hui, après une année, sur les 58 recommandations, on est en conformité sur 53, et je dois dire que les cinq recommandations qu'ils ont trouvées qu'on n'a pas assez progressé en termes d'efficacité, comme il a si bien dit, c'est une question subjective parce que certaines personnes - ce sont des experts qui ont vu notre rapport - ont trouvé qu'on a fait suffisamment de progrès. Pas plus tard, un représentant du FMI qui a évalué le rapport qu'on avait soumis, a dit qu'il était choqué de voir qu'on a prouvé qu'on n'a pas fait assez de progrès sur ces cinq recommandations qu'ils ont mis sur le Plan d'Action. Aujourd'hui, on est appelé à continuer à démontrer le progrès qu'on est à faire sur les cinq recommandations restantes. Le travail continu encore et, pour nous, on peut faire tout ce qui est possible pour pouvoir satisfaire les conditions pour être en dehors de ce qu'on appelle cette catégorie de pays où on est sous ce qu'on appelle *enhanced monitoring*. Pour montrer le sérieux, il y a un comité qui est présidé par le Premier ministre lui-même, avec plusieurs collègues ministres, pour s'assurer que toutes les actions, toutes les mesures qu'il faut prendre sont prises comme il se doit. Il y a un comité qui se réunit toutes les semaines et on est en train de, comme on dit, suivre les travaux qui doivent être faits pour s'assurer qu'on arrive à satisfaire toutes les conditions demandées. Donc, si pour moi je veux le plus tôt possible qu'on sorte de la situation où on est aujourd'hui...

(Interruptions)

Oui, j'ai entendu dans une des conférences du Leader du MMM que notre attitude, c'est une attitude enfantine. Je crois que lorsqu'on joue avec les enfants ou les petits-enfants, on finit par devenir enfantin soi-même.

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Order!

**Mr Seeruttun :** A entendre et écouter des gens qui ne savent rien de ce qui se passe et venir faire des remarques pareilles, c'est inacceptable, M. le président.

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Order, please!

**Mr Seeruttun:** J'ai été là, il n'y a pas longtemps, M. le président.

**Mr Speaker:** Order, hon. Uteem!

**Mr Seeruttun:** M. le président, il y a deux semaines de cela, on a signé un *MoU* avec la *Standard Chartered Bank* pour venir avec ce qu'on appelle un *Sustainable Finance Framework* en ligne avec la politique du gouvernement de protéger l'environnement et de soutenir les projets qui va dans le sens de protéger l'environnement. Le président de la *Standard Chartered Bank* était à Maurice. À l'écouter, les termes qu'il a utilisés pour qualifier notre juridiction, avec son *Chief Executive Officer* de la *Standard Chartered Bank* qui n'est pas un Mauricien non plus, à les écouter parler de Maurice, de sa réputation comme une juridiction de réputation, propre, et qu'on fait tout pour garder et sauvegarder cette réputation, je me demande : mais qui a besoin des ennemis lorsqu'on a des gens à Maurice même ? Alors, c'est un secteur qui est important pour moi. Nous sommes en train de travailler avec l'industrie, et ensemble nous allons démontrer qu'on est capable de répondre à l'appel. Si ce qu'on a fait dans une année - là aussi, je dois dire, M. le président, d'après les *guidelines* de l'*ESAAMLG* et de *FATF*, lorsqu'un pays est appelé à implémenter les observations faites dans un *Mutual Evaluation Report*, ils ont cinq ans pour compléter cet exercice.

Deux premières années pour être comme si sur les *technical compliances* et les trois prochaines années pour démontrer l'efficacité de toutes ces mesures mises en place. Et pour nous, sur une année, on est sorti de 14 recommandations pour passer à 35, mais on avait

encore une année pour terminer en ce qui concerne les *technical compliances* et trois années pour pouvoir démontrer l'efficacité de ces différentes mesures qu'on a mises en place. On est quand même une juridiction importante. Comme je l'ai dit, sur 58 recommandations, il nous reste cinq pour démontrer le progrès, et on va le faire. Nous nous sommes engagés à mettre en place toutes ces mesures dans l'*Action Plan* et j'espère que le plus tôt on arrive à le démontrer. On aura l'occasion dans les mois qui viennent à soumettre nos rapports pour démontrer nos progrès et on verra comment on va être évalué. Pour moi, cela reste un secteur qui va contribuer beaucoup pour le pays. On a une feuille de route comme je dis, le *blue print*, et déjà, il y a plusieurs comités qui travaillent sur les six impératifs qu'on a identifiés, et vous allez voir comment on va progresser d'une année à l'autre, M. le président.

Je crois que mon temps est épuisé. Je ne vais pas aller encore plus loin, mais je tiens à rassurer la population que le gouvernement, dans son ensemble, est derrière le Premier ministre pour faire ce qu'il faut pour continuer à améliorer la qualité de vie, le bien-être de la population et honorer les engagements qu'on a pris lors de notre campagne électorale de 2019.

Merci, M. le président.

**Mr Speaker:** Hon. Minister Lesjongard!

(8.25 p.m.)

**The Minister of Tourism (Mr G. Lesjongard):** Mr Speaker, Sir, I move that the debate be now adjourned.

**The Deputy Prime Minister 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 20 March 2020 at 3.00 p.m.

**The Deputy Prime Minister rose and seconded.**

*Question put and agreed to.*

**Mr Speaker:** The House stands adjourned.

**MATTERS RAISED**

**Mr Speaker:** Hon. Bhagwan!

(8.25 p.m.)

**MORCELLEMENT MONTREAL, COROMANDEL &  
SPLENDID VIEW, ALBION – FLOODING**

**Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière):** Thank you, Mr Speaker. I would like to draw the attention of the Minister responsible for NDU and Land Drainage concerning flooding at Morcellement Montreal, Coromandel. You must surely have read in the Press about the hardship caused to the inhabitants there and also at Splendid View, Albion and Mont Roches area.

I am appealing to the hon. Minister to see with the officers of the NDU and the Land Drainage - from what I understand, all the preliminaries have been done and it is at implementation stage - that these works are given priority following the hardship caused to the inhabitants during the last week's heavy rain.

Thank you.

**The Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development (Mr M. S. Hurreeram):** Mr Speaker, Sir, the Land Drainage Authority is working on a Master Plan and once the Plan is ready, the NDU will implement it.

Thank you.

**Mr Speaker:** Hon. Abbas Mamode !

(8.27 p.m.)

**MRS M.C.K.I. BANGARD – OPERATION FUND - INDIA**

**Mr S. Abbas Mamode (Second Member for Port Louis Maritime and Port Louis East):** Merci, M. le président. Je vais m'adresser au ministre de la Santé. C'est une requête émanant d'un de mes mandants à Roche Bois. Il s'agit de Madame Marie Claire Katty Isabelle Bangard. J'ai une lettre de la part de la dame qui me donne l'autorisation d'évoquer son cas au Parlement.

La dame est présentement en Inde en train de subir une opération. Le gouvernement, dans son programme, avait promis d'augmenter le seuil de R 500,000 à R 1 million.

Malheureusement, la somme de R 500,000 est dépassée, donc, je demanderai au ministre de voir si on peut aider à avoir une somme additionnelle pour la dite dame.

Je vous remercie.

**The Minister of Health and Wellness (Dr. K. Jagutpal):** Mr Speaker, Sir, the criteria set for overseas treatment is very clear. In this case, I have to see whether this patient has already received prior facilities and the amount of money in the past. So now, we have to see what is the amount of money remaining. In that case, we can always accommodate for that. So, I will have to see the case, and then, I can come up with it.

Thank you.

**Mr Speaker:** Hon. Mrs Luchmun Roy!

#### CONSTITUENCY NO. 4 - DRAINS

**Mrs S. Luchmun Roy (Second Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue):** Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. I wish to raise a matter with regard to my Constituency, No. 4, addressed to the Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development, hon. Hurreeram.

Following the heavy rainfall in the Constituency, we have regions like Morcellement Tara, Boule Auguste, Morcellement Happy Valley, Le Cornu, Ste Croix which are regularly affected by *des accumulations d'eau*, as we say it, thus causing inconvenience to the inhabitants.

Kindly note that the three MPs, hon. Mrs Joanne Tour, hon. Minister Lesjongard and myself, we did a site visit there and I would request the hon. Minister to look into the matter urgently.

Thank you.

**The Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development (Mr M. S. Hurreeram):** I thank my hon. colleague for having given me advanced notice of this question. The NDU has already worked on this project. We have a report from the Consultant. Their project is evaluated at about Rs150 m. It consists of 4 kilometres of drain that need to be built in that region. A bid has been launched already, which we have received and it is under evaluation stage. It will be allocated very soon. Thank you.

**Mr Speaker:** Hon. Mr Juman!

### **DENGUE CONFIRMED CASES - COVID-19 TESTS**

**Mr E. Juman (Fourth Member for Port Louis Maritime and Port Louis East):**

Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. My request is addressed to the Minister of Health and Wellness. I am sure that the hon. Minister must have heard about the shared clinical and laboratory features of the Dengue and COVID-19, as mentioned in the Singaporean Lancet Report. I don't want to be alarming, but being given that there have been several confirmed cases of Dengue in Mauritius, and increasing nowadays, I would humbly request the hon. Minister to consider doing COVID-19 tests on the confirmed patients and their closest surroundings so as to be on the safer side and to ensure the safety of our population.

One more request regarding COVID-19, Mr Speaker, Sir. I suggest to the hon. Minister, as we heard, doctors and nurses are not allowed for leave, if he can consider for employing new doctors who are unemployed, maybe temporarily and if he can also requisition...

*(Interruptions)*

It is a request. Requisition for retired...

**Mr Speaker:** I think you made your point.

**Mr Juman:** Retired doctors or medical staff to join the team to help. Thank you.

**Mr Speaker:** Hon. Minister!

**The Minister of Health and Wellness (Dr. K. Jagutpal):** Mr Speaker, Sir, I have to make it clear that dengue is a mosquito-borne disease and coronavirus is not. For dengue, before you have to do a rapid test. There is a difference between the rapid test done in Mauritius and the one that was done in Singapore. In Singapore, they have done a rapid test for dengue and it has come up to be positive. When they confirmed it with the PCR test, then the PCR test came positive for coronavirus. So, in Mauritius, we are one of the rare countries that once we confirm the test by PCR for dengue, we repeatedly do the test because at first it will be a large titer but gradually once the disease starts getting over, it keeps on decreasing.

The WHO has no recommendation to do coronavirus tests for dengue patients because they are two separate. We are talking of two different things. It is only a few cases that

happen in Singapore and we have no recommendation to do coronavirus tests for patients suffering from dengue. That has to be clear.

The second question was whether we are going to employ doctors. We have the Social Security that employs doctors on contracts. We are going to utilise those doctors because already what I know – my colleague will confirm it – that we have more than 100 doctors employed for the Social Security Services. In case need be, we are going to take these doctors to work in our service.

Thank you.

(8.33 p.m.)

#### **SALAMUTH KHAN CHADY STREET, ROCHES BRUNES - FLOODING**

**Mr D. Nagalingum (Second Member for Stanley & Rose Hill):** Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. I would like to bring to the attention of the House, particularly to the hon. Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management to a problem regarding flooding and water accumulation at Salamuth Khan Chady Street at Roches Brunès.

My request comes from the inhabitants of Salamuth Khan Chady Street where our attention has been drawn that during rainy season, there is a land drainage problem due to the slope at a low ground. Mostly all the rainy and muddy water accumulates there. Absorption pit has been done some 20 years back, but it is not functioning at all due to some construction and walls that have been erected at the vicinity from Plaisance.

I shall appreciate if the hon. Minister can see with the municipality and the NDU to find a quick solution to this disastrous situation. I shall lay a copy of the petition for the Minister.

**The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management (Dr. A. Husnoo):** I am going to discuss it with the Mayor at Beau Bassin/Rose Hill.

**Mr Speaker:** Hon. Mrs Mayotte!

(8.34 p.m.)

### COVID-19 – ARTISTS – *PLAN DE SOUTIEN*

**Mrs S. Mayotte (Second Member for Savanne & Black River):** Merci, M. le président. Je voudrais m'adresser au ministre des Finances, l'honorable Renganaden Padayachy et revenir sur les mesures prises pour faire face aux effets économiques dus au COVID-19.

Des mesures ont été prises, bien sûr, pour venir en aide aux entreprises qui seront touchées par cette crise épidémiologique. Ma requête vient de la part de la communauté des animateurs, musiciens et artistes qui évoluent dans les hôtels à travers l'île et ils seront définitivement les premiers qui seront atteints. Donc, M. le ministre, ces animateurs hôteliers seront invités définitivement à rester chez eux pendant cette période de crise épidémiologique. Donc, quand on parle des mesures économiques, est-ce que cela s'adresse aussi à cette communauté d'artistes.

Merci M. le président.

**The Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development (Dr. R. Padayachy):** M. le président, je remercie l'honorable Mme Mayotte pour la question. Les mesures de soutien, le plan de soutien sont nos trois armes : éviter de faire défaut, éviter de faire faillite et surtout éviter de licencier. Donc, bien sûr que nous allons regarder chaque cas et bien sûr que nous allons prendre en considération les personnes qui travaillent dans le secteur touristique.

**Mr Speaker:** Hon. David!

(8.36 p.m.)

### CITÉ RICHELIEU – FOOTBALL GROUND - UPGRADING

**Mr F. David (First Member for GRNW & Port Louis West):** Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. My request is addressed to the hon. Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development. It concerns Constituency No. 1, more precisely, Cité Richelieu where there is an ongoing project since almost two years for the upgrading of the football playground.

As far as I am informed, this project was awarded by the NDU in 2018 and was supposed to be delivered in October 2019. I have been there several times and can see hardly any progress. I know the hon. Minister is reviewing the way contracts from the NDU are

being awarded and projects followed up. May I kindly ask him for the benefit of the inhabitants of Richelieu whether he can share information to explain the reason behind this delay and whether he can share as well the updated planning for the project to be completed?

Thank you.

**The Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development (Mr M. Hurreeram):** Mr Speaker, Sir, first of all, I would like to thank my hon. colleague, the PPS Ms Dorine Chukowry, for providing me with the information.

*(Interruptions)*

They might laugh, but that's true. Thank you to provide me with the information. The hon. Member is wrong. The contract was, in fact, awarded in January 2019 and was supposed to be completed in September 2019. There has been some delay because it was a marshy land and the contractor had to do some additional works and the weather as it has been since November, there has been some rain, so, yes the work has taken some delay and will be completed in April 2020 and it is wrong to say also that there is no work because 85% has been completed as the PPS has informed me. So, in four weeks' time, the work will be completed.

Thank you.

**Mr Speaker:** Hon. Mrs Tour!

(8.38 p.m.)

### **ALLÉE PERE LAVAL, STE CROIX - FLOODING**

**Mrs S. Tour (Third Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue):** Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. I would like to raise an issue with regard to my constituency No. 4, addressed to the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Energy and Public Utilities, hon. Collendavelloo.

Whenever it rains, the manhole along Allée Père Laval in Ste Croix starts overflowing. This leads not only to flooding of the streets, but houses being flooded with sewage.

We have the same problem that occurs in Vallée des Prêtres. I would like to press on the Minister to kindly look into the matter so that we find a solution to this problem promptly.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Energy and Public Utilities (Mr I. Collendavello):** Hon. Lesjongard was the first one to speak to me about this, after which hon. Mrs Luchmun Roy and hon. Mrs Tour did visit me in my office to talk about this issue. I have discussed the matter with the Wastewater Management Authority. They are looking into it. It is more complex than this, as I explained to my colleagues, but we will try to find a quick solution.

**Mr Speaker:** Hon. Quirin!

(8.39 p.m.)

#### **TERRY EMMANUEL LOUISE – MEDICAL ASSISTANCE**

**Mr F. Quirin (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière):** Merci, M. le président. Ma requête ce soir s'adresse au ministre de la Santé, l'honorable Dr. Jagutpal et concerne le cas du jeune Therry Emmanuel Louise de Chébel, âgé de 13 ans et qui doit au plus vite subir une transplantation du cœur, pour être plus précis, il a besoin d'un nouveau cœur pour survivre.

M. le président, depuis une semaine déjà, Therry Louise est au Gleneagles Global Health City de Chennai en Inde en compagnie de ses parents et le traitement a déjà commencé. Donc, si un donneur est trouvé, la transplantation pourra se faire et cela coûtera moins, sinon il faudra procéder autrement en pratiquant un *healthy healing session*, c'est le terme médical utilisé dont le coût avoisinera les cinq millions.

A ce jour, le gouvernement n'a contribué que R 500,000 alors que la subvention pour les traitements médicaux à l'étranger est passée de R 800,000 à R 1 million. De ce fait, je fais un pressant appel à l'honorable ministre et au gouvernement afin que les R 500,000 additionnelles puissent être déboursées dans le plus bref délai.

Je vous remercie.

**The Minister of Health and Wellness (Dr. K. Jagutpal):** Mr Speaker, Sir, I have taken note of this issue. So far we have all the requirements, all the papers, obviously, the payment will be done.

**Mr Speaker:** Hon. Armance!

(8.40 p.m.)

#### **CASSIS, BAIN DES DAMES & LES SALINES - TRANSPORT**

**Mr P. Armance (Third Member for GRNW & Port Louis West):** Merci, M. le président. Ma requête ce soir va au ministre du Transport encore une fois concernant le service de transport dans la région de Cassis, Bain des Dames et Les Salines. On a un service de transport irrégulier le matin dans l'heure de pointe de 6.30 à 7.00. Or, les bus sont supposés passer toutes les 30 minutes. C'est irrégulier et les après-midis à partir de 16.00. Donc, je demanderai au ministre, à qui j'ai remis une copie de la lettre, de bien vouloir regarder ce dossier.

Merci.

**The Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail (Mr A. Ganoo):** I thank the hon. Member for having drawn my attention to this problem, Mr Speaker, Sir.

He has a few minutes ago, in fact, given me notice of the point he intended to raise. I will certainly contact the RLTA and see to it that the needful is done.

(8.41 p.m.)

**Mr Speaker:** Hon. Nuckcheddy!

#### **CONSTITUENCY NO. 9 - VILLAGES - ROAD TARRING**

**Mr S. K. Nuckcheddy (Third Member for Flacq & Bon Accueil):** Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

My request is addressed to the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Energy and Public Utilities concerning the main roads in various villages of my Constituency, No.9. Villages like Brisée Verdière, Bon Accueil, Lalmatie, Saint Julien, Grande Retraite, Petite Retraite, Laventure. Trenches had been made to receive water pipes in these regions so that water can be made available on a 24/7 basis. However, pressure tests and all other tests are yet to be

completed though the pipes have already been laid since a year now. Consequently, the above-mentioned roads, which are very much utilised, cannot be reinstated and this is causing a lot of inconvenience, damages to cars and road safety problems.

I will thus request the Deputy Prime Minister if he can look into this matter and also if he can ask the Central Water Authority that full road resurfacing be done after completion of the works.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Energy and Public Utilities (Mr I. Collendavelloo):** Can the hon. Gentleman grace me with the favour of advanced notice of his intervention? I have, therefore, looked into it. The answer is very long so I will not take the time of the House. I will come with a statement, but, in a nutshell, there have been issues; the work has been done; the pipe laying but, of course, the house connection and in fact, your intervention gave all the answers. So, you have enlightened your constituents on this matter, but I will come with a statement.

(8.43 p.m.)

**Mr Speaker:** Hon. Gungapersad!

#### **CAMP CAROL, GRAND BAY - SEWAGE SYSTEM**

**Mr M. Gungapersad (Second Member for Grand Baie & Poudre d'Or):** Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

My request is addressed to the hon. Deputy Prime Minister Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Energy and Public Utilities on behalf of my constituents, especially those of Camp Carol in Grand Bay.

I wish to solicit his attention regarding the sewage system. The last time we had heavy rainfall, the situation turned nightmarish in Camp Carol because the sewage overflowed and its content created a real havoc in the region because the sewage pump could not operate efficiently. The residents of Camp Carol could not move along the inundated and filthy narrow streets. Besides, the foul smell from the overflowing sewage pesters the life of the inhabitants of Camp Carol each time it rains heavily.

Will the hon. Minister ensure that the capacity of the sewage pump be reviewed so that it operates effectively even on rainy days?

Thank you.

**The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Energy and Public Utilities (Mr I. Collendavelloo):** I would, of course, have been able to give a fuller reply if I had known about this. What I can say is that, right now, we are starting the Grand Bay project with Japanese assistance under the funds of JICA, Mr Speaker, Sir.

With regard to the particular pump problem, I am sure that the authority is aware and is looking into it, but I shall give further information to the hon. gentleman as soon as I obtain it.

(8.45 p.m.)

**Mr Speaker:** Hon. Doolub!

**FRANCE BOYER DE LA GIRODAY SSS, PLAINE MAGNIEN  
- FOOTBALL PLAYGROUND - ACCESS**

**Mr R. Doolub (Third Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien):** Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

My request is addressed to the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology, hon. Leela Devi Dookun-Luchoomun.

It concerns a football playground connected to France Boyer de la Giroday SSS in Plaine Magnien. We would appreciate if ever access could be given to the inhabitants of the region so that they can practise sports and, the more so, there is an access to the playground which is not connected to the school.

Thank you.

**The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology (Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun):** I would like to thank the hon. Member for having raised this issue.

I would like to inform the Member and the House that my Ministry already has a policy to give access to all the football grounds and playgrounds in the primary and secondary schools to people in the region.

However, they should be registered clubs and associations and the application has to be made as the level of the Zonal Directorate and in this particular case, in zone III.

(8.46 p.m.)

**Mr Speaker:** Hon. Uteem!

**ABDUL HAMID GOLAM MOHAMED ISSAC COLLEGE - INCIDENT**

**Mr R. Uteem (Second Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central):**

Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Le problème que je voudrai soulever concerne le ministère de l'éducation et les élèves du collège Abdul Hamid Golam Mohamed ISSAC qui ont été victimes de malaise mercredi le 04 mars.

Ayant parlé aux élèves et à leurs parents, depuis 10 heures du matin, ils avaient déjà signalé à la rectrice qu'il y avait une odeur de pétrole mais on n'a rien fait et c'est à partir de midi que les enfants ont commencé à s'évanouir. SAMU a été mandé sur place. Les ambulances ont fait le va-et-vient mais quand même il y a des enfants qui n'ont été évacués qu'à deux heures de l'après-midi. Donc, deux semaines plus tard, on ne sait toujours pas l'origine de ce malaise. On pointe du doigt les travaux qui ont été effectués à G.M.D. ATCHIA. Mais moi, je voudrai que le ministre fasse une enquête approfondie dessus, situe les responsabilités et surtout s'engage à ce qu'un tel incident ne se reproduise plus au collège ISSAC ou autre collège.

**The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology (Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun):** Mr Speaker, Sir, this issue was raised and, in fact, the Ministry is aware of that particular incident.

It is true to say that there were certain repairs, I think, at G.M.D. Atchia due to some leakage problem and this did cause some problems to students at Colline Monneron. But the necessary has been done and we have taken the decision, as it was the case earlier as well, not to have any repair works being done at the time the school is on.

(8.47 p.m.)

**Mr Speaker:** Hon. Ms Anquetil!

**SIVANANDA AVENUE, FLOREAL - METRO EXPRESS PROJECT  
- LAND EXPROPRIATION**

**Ms S. Anquetil (Fourth Member for Vacoas & Floreal):** Je vous remercie M. le président.

Je voudrai interpeller le ministre du logement et des terres sur les cas d'expropriation à l'avenue Sivananda à Floréal pour les besoins du projet de métro express.

Certaines de ces victimes sont des veuves, d'autres des pensionnaires qui ont investi toutes leurs économies dans l'achat d'une maison pour une retraite paisible. Parmi il y a aussi un jeune qui va perdre son business et sa maison. Ces victimes, qui ne sont pas contre ce projet national, déplorent le manque de communication avec les autorités. Ils attendent d'avoir une rencontre avec le ministre de tutelle.

J'espère que le ministre sera d'accord pour un exercice de dialogue direct avec les habitants. Ils souhaitent des négociations justes et correctes.

Merci, M. le président.

**The Minister of Housing and Land Use Planning (Mr S. Obegadoo):** Mr Speaker, I hear what the hon. Member is stating. We all know that State land is being used for the implementation of the Metro project along Sivananda Avenue.

As far as I am aware, there is a comprehensive communication campaign vis-à-vis each and every one of the citizens, families concerned but if the hon. Member would wish to bring to my attention to specific cases, I shall be very happy to look further into the matter.

(8.49 p.m.)

**Mr Speaker:** Hon. Ameer Meea!

### CONSTITUENCY NUMBER THREE - ROAD REPAIRS

**Mr A. Ameer Meea (Third Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East):**  
Yes.

M. le président, le problème que je vais soulever, aujourd'hui je l'adresse au Vice-Premier ministre et ministre des Administrations régionales. Au fait, c'est un problème récurrent. A chaque grosse pluie qu'on a surtout dans la capitale, il y a beaucoup de nids-de-poule, des trous sur nos routes. C'est assez compréhensible mais quand même ce qui n'est pas compréhensible ces nids-de-poule demeurent pendant des semaines ou bien des mois sur nos routes, et cela cause beaucoup d'inconvénients aux automobilistes et au public en général. Là, je parle précisément de la circonscription numéro trois. Je vais vous donner une liste qui n'est pas exhaustive *just a short list of roads where urgent works need to be done* - rue Ail Doré, rue Magon, rue Paul et Virgine à Plaine Verte, et à Roches Bois la rue

l'Abattoir, Despeyroux et Paul et Virginie à Cité Roches Bois mais aussi les rues Delhi et Etienne Pellereau.

As I said, Mr Speaker, Sir, this causes me much inconvenience because sometimes there may be breakdown to motorcycles and motor vehicles. What I am proposing to the hon. Minister tonight is to set up a special team, a squad at the Municipality of Port Louis so as to look into this issue in a timely manner in order to remedy the situation. Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

**The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government, Disaster and Risk Management (Dr. A. Husnoo):** Mr Speaker, Sir, I know there is a team that looks after this kind of problems, but I will talk to them again to have a look at it.

**Mr Speaker:** Hon. Ittoo!

(8.51 p.m.)

#### **LA MARIE – BUS STOP**

**Mr A. Ittoo (Third Member for Vacoas & Floreal):** Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. I would like to draw the attention of the Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail, hon. Alan Ganoo, with regard to difficulties faced by the inhabitants of La Marie, more precisely from junction of La Marie and La Brasserie Road towards Grand Bassin, the region of Morcellement Pousson; where it is required to have a bus stop and delocalise the terminus to a more appropriate place. There is actually a problem where the buses cause some problems on the road and I would request the hon. Minister to kindly have a helping hand. Thank you.

**The Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail (Mr A. Ganoo):** I thank the hon. Member, Mr Speaker, Sir. I will certainly look into the matter and contact the NTA and the TMRSU, I suppose, and we will together look into this problem and find a solution.

(8.52 p.m.)

#### **TOUKOOR ROAD, HIGHLANDS – RESURFACING AND ASPHALTING**

**Mr K. Lobine (First Member for La Caverne & Phoenix):** Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. My request is addressed to the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management. It concerns a road in Highlands, in Constituency No. 15, Toukoor Road, which is in a very deplorable state. I will table photos that I have taken with regard to this particular road. The inhabitants are facing serious inconvenience

using this road and, this morning I have got information that same has been budgeted by the Municipal Council to do resurfacing and asphaltting of this road.

Could the hon. Vice-Prime Minister use his good office so that same is done in a very timely manner?

**The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management (Dr. A. Husnoo):** I will pass on the message to the Mayor, Mr Speaker, Sir.

**Mr Speaker:** Hon. Osman Mahomed!

(8.53 p.m.)

### CONSTITUENCY NO. 2 – LARVICIDING & FOGGING EXERCISE

**Mr Osman Mahomed (First Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central):** Thank you. The issue I would like to raise tonight is addressed to the hon. Minister of Health and Wellness and it has to do with the increasing number of dengue fever contamination in the region of Port Louis and the accompanying larviciding and fogging exercise that is being conducted. My proposition has to do with the enhancement of the value of this exercise.

Now, because of the rainy days, there are two things that are going to happen: accumulation of water in several places on roof tops, *un nid-de-poule* and *pochette d'eau*. And even on public reservoirs in Constituency No. 2, at Crimea Street, there is a lot of accumulation of water. The second thing is grasses will grow tall very fast on State land, on private land and in abandoned backyards of people. So, my suggestion to the hon. Minister tonight is to have a multipronged approach to this situation which will entail roping in perhaps the Municipal Council of Port Louis to cut the grass in all public places, the *Police de l'Environnement* to act on to owners of properties who are not taking care of their own backyards and probably the Ministry of Housing and Lands for State land, all this driven by the Ministry of Health and Wellness. So, we need an aggressive issue because several parts in my Constituency, be it in Tranquebar, in Vallée Pitot, in Ward IV and in Plaine Verte, that part that is densely populated will be affected by this problem. So, this is my request.

**Mr Speaker:** Raise your issue!

**Mr Osman Mahomed:** My request is the multipronged approach to this problem. Thank you.

**The Minister of Health and Wellness (Dr. K. Jagutpal):** Mr Speaker, Sir, in regard to the rainy season, the Ministry of Health has already conducted, with all stakeholders, a meeting, giving them all the instructions required, especially where we have water accumulation, bushes and all that. Now, the region of Vallée Pitot, Tranquebar are all under surveillance, fogging, larviciding and also surveillance being done regularly. But I will take note and I will again inform the different authorities to conduct the proper exercise and whatever has to be done. Thank you.

**Mr Speaker:** Adjournment time is over!

*At 8.56 p.m., the Assembly was, on its rising, adjourned to Friday 20 March 2020 at 3.00 p.m.*