



SIXTH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

PARLIAMENTARY

DEBATES

(HANSARD)

FIRST SESSION

WEDNESDAY 01 APRIL 2015

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Members

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

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

Institutions

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

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MAURITIUS

Sixth National Assembly

FIRST SESSION

Debate No. 15 of 2015

Sitting of 01 April 2015

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

The National Anthem was played

(Madam Speaker in the Chair)

ORAL ANSWER TO QUESTION

CEB - GENERATORS - TENDER

The Leader of the Opposition (Mr P. Bérenger) (*by Private Notice*) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to electricity, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information -

- (a) in respect of the procurement of four 15 MW generators, from the -
 - (i) Central Procurement Board, why it cancelled the tender therefor;
 - (ii) Independent Review Panel, where matters stand regarding the appeal lodged in relation thereto;
- (b) from the Central Electricity Board -
 - (i) where matters stand regarding the case lodged before the Supreme Court in relation to the tender for the procurement of 15 MW generators;
 - (ii) if fresh tenders will be launched for the procurement of 15 MW generators;
 - (iii) if the World Bank report on the capacity expansion plan based on updated economic conditions will be made public, and
 - (iv) the measures being taken to prevent rolling black-outs as from end 2015.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Energy and Public Utilities (Mr I. Collendavelloo): Madam Speaker, in August 2011, the CEB started the process for the redevelopment of the St. Louis power station. In August 2012, CEB made an application for an EIA licence which was granted in August 2013. In September 2013, CEB decided to procure 4 diesel generators of 15 MW each. Mott Mac Donald was reappointed in connection with the preparation of the tender documents. I use the term ‘reappointment’ because Mott Mac Donald had been the original Consultant on that matter. The document was floated in February 2014. By 27 March 2014, ten expressions of interest were received. On 15 April 2014, the Central Procurement Board informed CEB that five potential bidders had been selected. This was approved by the African Development Bank which had agreed to finance the project. On 24 June 2014, the Central Electricity Board (CEB) invited bids from five prequalified bidders approved by the Central Procurement Board (CPB) and the African Development Bank, with expected commissioning of the engines by early 2016.

- By the closing date of 25 September 2014, only one bidder, Burmeister and Wain Scandinavian Contractor (BWSC), submitted its bid. On 14 October 2014, the loan agreement was signed for an amount of Rs3.5 billion.

- With regard to part (a)(i) of the question, on 20 November 2014, the Central Procurement Board informed CEB that the only bid received, that is, from BWSC, was substantially non responsive and that it was not in a position to approve any award of the contract.
- On 25 November 2014, in line with section 39 (1)(a) of the Public Procurement Act, the CEB informed BWSC of the cancellation of the procurement exercise.
- On 01 December 2014, BWSC challenged the decision of the CEB and on 04 December 2014, the CEB informed the bidder that the challenge could not be entertained as the exercise had already been cancelled.

As regards part (a)(ii) of the question, I am informed that on 15 December 2014, BWSC filed a review with the Independent Review Panel (IRP). The IRP held five hearings on this case and the parties filed their submissions on 13 March 2015. The determination of the IRP has not yet been received.

With regard to part (b)(i) of the question, I am informed by the CEB that it is not aware of any matter before the Supreme Court regarding that project, neither is my Ministry aware of any case before the Supreme Court.

With reference to part (b)(ii), the CEB has updated its supply-demand balance taking into account the short term expected demand of electricity. The CEB has already approved the extension of the Power Purchase Agreement for the 22MW plant with Consolidated Energy Ltd (Beau Champ) from July 2015 up to 2018 at the purchase price of Rs2.95 per Kwh for 160 Gwh annually.

The African Development Bank also reviewed the bid received from BWSC as well as the Bid Evaluation Report from CPB and has recommended that fresh bids be invited with revised specifications.

According to the CEB -

- (i) with this extension, the electricity demand can be met until mid 2017 with the existing plants of the CEB and the Independent Power Producers and a well planned maintenance programme.
- (ii) accordingly CEB is renewing the bid document for a 60 MW at St Louis Power Station as recommended by African Development Bank. I must add that I had considered acting under Section 21 of the Public Procurement Act,

i.e Emergency Procurement but, on further consideration, and for the sake of transparency, I have now discarded this possibility.

With the revised bid technical specifications, it is expected that more competitive bidding will take place. This meets the concurrence of the African Development Bank. It is expected that the bids will be floated by June 2015 with the approval of CPB and African Development Bank. The plant is expected to be operational in the second quarter of 2017.

As regard part (b) (iii), in January 2015, the World Bank submitted a draft report on “assessment of electricity demand and generation expansion plan over the period 2015 - I am sorry, it must be a mistake. I will correct that later. I will supplement it.

The draft report confirms that to meet the short-term generation gap, an extension of the CEL contract - yes, I am sorry; it is 2015 to 2022 - is required together with the commissioning of St Louis Power Station in 2017. The report also highlighted that the CEB should optimise on maintenance schedules of its existing power plants.

In my reply to the last PNQ on this matter, I informed the House that the final report of the World Bank Consultant was expected by end of March. However, the Consultant has had to take into consideration the Government decision regarding the CT Power project and had to review its recommendation for the period 2018-2022.

We are pressing the World Bank to submit the final report within the shortest delay.

On receipt of the report, I will consult Government as to whether the report can be made public.

With regard to part (b) (iv), the CEB has updated its supply-demand balance and confirms to me that it will manage the supply without deficit and optimise on its maintenance schedules, voltage management of existing power plants.

As regards part (b)(iv), CEB is of the view that all measures are being taken to avoid any black out.

Mr Bérenger: I had asked whether we can have the reasons why the Central Procurement Board threw out the tender and all I have heard is that the Central Procurement Board has said that the only bid received was substantially non-responsive. Now there is a Government that wants to have good governance all over the place; my information was that there was a change in the specifications after the tender had come out, tailor-made - not everybody, but some people in the Central Electricity Board - to suit the purposes of those people and *favoriser* a given contractor. Has there been a Police enquiry on this matter?

Mr Collendavelloo: No, there has been no police enquiry on this matter. There has been no complaint of any fraud on this matter. My utmost preoccupation is to get on with the job, that is, to try and ensure the procurement of these generators as quickly as possible. Now, with regard to the decision of the CPB, they found that it was substantially non-responsive. CEB was not necessarily of this view. The matter appears to be a little bit more complex than this. There seems that, at the level of the CPB, there were, in fact, two conflicting reports with regard to what should be done. But whatever it is, the best course of action is to ask for fresh tender including the reason which the hon. Leader of Opposition has mentioned, that is, it could have been tailor-made to suit a particular tenderer; we don't want to get bogged down in that sort of situation.

Mr Bérenger: But still, CEB has led us to trouble in the past and now I hear the new Minister being very optimistic on the basis of what the CEB says. Can I ask, therefore, in a tight situation like that, where we are given all sorts of guarantees by the CEB, what changes are going to take place at the CEB? Who is chairing the Board of the CEB now? Who is the General Manager and will he be replaced?

Mr Collendavelloo: As at to date, the Senior Chief Executive of the Ministry is chairing the Board and the General Manager of the CEB has been asked to step down and to be the officer-in-charge. I intend to make recommendations for a new Chairman and a new General Manager. A communiqué will be issued as soon as this is finalised which could be done in the next two or three days.

Mr Bérenger: As far as the Independent Review Panel is concerned, I heard the hon. Vice-Prime Minister say: "the determination of the Independent Review Panel has not yet been received". Well, am I right in saying that, in the meantime, the Independent Review Panel has been replaced by a new lot and that, therefore, they will have to start all over again and can we have an indication how long this will take?

Mr Collendavelloo: What I have said in my reply is the official stand, that is, the findings have not been received and that is strictly speaking accurate. However, what I am informed is that the IRP had almost finished the recommendations, but a new panel was brought in and technically they should, I suppose, start again. But we don't need to do this because we are cancelling the whole process, calling for new tenders. The exercise has been started. Let us be optimistic about it!

Mr Bérenger: Although we have got an official reply first corrected by the hon. Vice-Minister straightaway five minutes later! So, in fact, as the hon. Vice-Prime Minister is saying, the Independent Review Panel is off the mark, out of the picture for the moment. If I

can move on, I am sure the hon. Vice-Prime Minister will agree with me, we have two problems; one, urgent four times 15MW power plants that must come into operation as soon as possible and then in longer term as from 2017-18, we have the need for a 100/200 MW based load supply. I have heard that, unfortunately, the report that was supposed to be ready by the end of March is being finalised by the World Bank. But, in the meantime, in the Public Sector Investment Programme, amongst the projects in the pipeline is listed, I quote –

“Power generation projects including fossil-based power plants of total capacity over 100 MW”.

Can I know which is which pending the World Bank report because the hon. Vice Prime Minister has been very optimistic concerning renewal energy. Very optimistic! Now, after we have done away with the CT power, there is reference in the public sector investment programme of, as I said, the 100 MW fossil based power plants. So, can we know which is which?

Mr Collendavelloo: There are two issues. First of all, there is CT Power. CT Power is one thing. We took the decision that we took on the basis of the financial capabilities of CT Power. The second issue is coal. We never said that we are going to dump all the coal power plants in Mauritius and just use wind and sun. We will need to use coal for some time and there are clean coal power plants which are possible. The World Bank is going to assist us and we are going to expect the report any time. I speak in presence of an ex-Minister of Energy who knows the situation with regard to these fossil plants. We are not going to do away with coal. Of course, we are going to put added emphasis on renewable energies and we are trying to start the projects as soon as possible.

Mr Bérenger: Coming to the last part of my question which is the disturbing part of my Private Notice Question, I believe the risk is very real that we have not a general blackout, but rolling blackouts, cuts here and there all over the place. As from the end of this year, the CEB is being, according to me, over optimistic. I know that the hon. Minister himself - the new Minister - in *‘Le Mauricien’* of 22 December, said –

“Le risque de blackout existe”.

And now that this 4 x 15, the former Government was relying all out on this 4 x 15, therefore, 60 MW. Two of those four engines were supposed to come into operation in November 2015. 2017 is mentioned now and we say that it will be probably later on. Can I ask the hon. Vice-Prime Minister whether they have the figures for the peak demands in the

country since the beginning of the year – he is the Minister since the last general elections - and at that point in time what was the effective capacity of the CEB, that is, keeping out the possible breakdown, the classical way of working effective capacity, that is, taking out the biggest plan, taking out what is required to be taken out for maintenance purposes and providing for a 10% spin-off safety margin? Does he have the figure, therefore, for the peak since the beginning of the year and what was the CEB effective capacity at that point in time?

Mr Collendavelloo: First of all, I have the figures planned for the year 2015 and then I shall come to what has happened during the year. Globally, CEB has a capacity of 395 MW. Then, the IPPs have 197 MW which makes us a total of 592 MW. We have got to discount breakdowns that gave us 37, the schedule maintenance which is 30 so that the effective capacity is 525 with a peak power forecast February 2015 - that is what we are dealing now - 463. Now, when we add the 10% spinning reserve that brings us to 509 with an excessive capacity margin in terms of percentage of 3% - those are the figures given to me by CEB - it would appear that the technical units of my Ministry are not in strong disagreement with these figures which have to be worked out. I am given a note to say that we have, in fact, witnessed a slight reduction in demand and that CEB intends to optimise maintenance. Of course, with the new team that comes in, we shall try and review that situation.

Mr Bérenger: Good luck! Can I point out to the hon. Vice-Prime Minister that even on figures which have just been quoted CEB is fiddling? We used to provide 60 MW for maintenance, now they have *grignoté*, in your figures it is 40 MW.

(Interruptions)

30! Even less! It used to be 60 MW. They have *grignoté*! So, can I ask the hon. Vice-Prime Minister to be very careful? In fact, according to my figures, peak demand, effective capacity, when you deduct all that, we were 10 MW close to danger point. Will he agree with me and that, therefore, there is no room to be over optimistic and as the CEB has said: there is no problem? Will he agree with me that *le risque est très réel* ?

Mr Collendavelloo: I understand that the 30 MW issue is World Bank forecast.

(Interruptions)

I agree that we should not be overtly optimistic, but there is no room for doomsday catastrophic images in our mind. I am extremely concerned about this situation and although I am not overtly optimistic, this is a file that has been on my mind ever since I took office, and we hope that with the new tender process, we will be able to look at it optimistically.

Mr Bérenger: All for optimism was the fact that the previous Government expected Médine to keep on providing 11 MW during crop time for the most difficult period of the year. In the reply to my former PNQ and today I have heard no reference to that, although the 60 MW has been postponed, is that now no longer on?

Mr Collendavelloo: Not at all! You will recall that I did give the figure to the House. I did give for 2015 the figure of 197 subtotal IPP. Of course, I can give the precise figures. That includes Médine: 11 MW, consolidated that is Beau Champ for 22 MW, then we have FUEL: 20, Belle Vue: 46, CTDS: 30, the other one 65 and we go on like that.

(Interruptions)

But Médine is mentioned in my paper, 11 MW as from July 2015. I skipped that in order not to swamp the House with figures.

Mr Bérenger: Can I ask the hon. Vice-Prime Minister whether he is aware that, in fact, we are *sur la corde raide* already? Already 35 years old engines that are a danger to the employees, to the workers, that are a nuisance to the people around the power stations concerned, to the point that environment has asked that these engines be not operated after a given hour at night, it is going beyond that. So, now we are postponing, decommissioning of these 35 years old engines, because we are *sur la corde raide*, and at the same time, we are putting people's lives and health in danger and, at the same time, we are using gas turbines in an exaggerated manner, because they are very, very expensive. So, when a statement comes can we have some clarification on that aspect of the problem also?

Mr Collendavelloo: I think I better say that I will come back with a statement on that issue. I am given a paper which states that the old engines are being operated at reduced capacity, but I would like to have the opportunity of well looking into it and come with a statement on that matter.

Mr Mahomed: Madam Speaker, is the rope going to be even tighter with the forthcoming announced smart cities, some of which appeared to be shovel ready going by press reviews? This is on the one hand. The more specific question will be: does the latest supply and demand analysis of the balance of the CEB cater for these smart cities? What are the energy efficiency measures for the country being envisaged at the level of the Ministry also?

Mr Collendavelloo: We have three questions. Let me see if I have got them right. First of all, tight rope. I am not going to put the country on a tight rope. I hate tight rope

walking. I walk neither in the dark nor on a tight rope, and the House can be assured that this is my immediate preoccupation. We have the situation that we have, and this is a matter of fact of which there is nothing much we can do except to take remedial measures.

With regard to the smart cities, we hope - and that is my programme - that emphasis will be put on sun top photovoltaic. If these are off-grid photovoltaic units, it means that these cells will not be a burden on the grid of the CEB. Of course, that is more complex than this, because we have to upgrade the grid as the grid is a dumb grid and is not a smart grid. All this has got to be done. We will be embarking on this matter. Can I say that - I think I have already said that in the House - I benefit from the very valuable assistance of Prof. de Rosnay who has agreed to come back to help us. He is an extremely good intellectual. We also benefit from the assistance of certain international experts, and we hope to be able to put something together. I hope I have not missed any part of the hon. Member's question.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Bhagwan!

Mr Bhagwan: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The Minister has just stated the situation at Saint Louis Power Station, as also pointed out by the hon. Leader of the Opposition. We all know that the 20 MW engines at Saint Louis, *Pielstick engines*, are running illegally in terms of age. This is a fact. But can the Minister enquire about the situation at Fort George? In the recent past, there have been cracks on the engines at Fort George; the Sulzer engines. Can the hon. Minister at least inform the country and the population, while preparing the overall situation of these engines, the situation concerning the power plants at Fort George in order to reassure the population?

Mr Collendavelloo: I am sure that the hon. Member will have no objection to coming with a substantive question on the Fort George issue. I shall then dig in my files to come forward with a good answer; certainly a better answer that I could give now.

Madam Speaker: Yes, hon. Ganoo!

Mr Ganoo: Has the hon. Minister given thought to the possibility that the bidder, that is, BWSC, might have recourse to the Supreme Court to seek redress if they consider that injustice has been meted out to them, especially as there is information going around that there is a Bid Re-evaluation Committee which was set up and which recommended that the bidder be convened for clarification and negotiation, if need, be and so on?

Mr Collendavelloo: Let me start with the last part. There was a second report at the level of the Central Procurement Board of which we were not aware, which apparently surfaced during the proceedings before the IRP. That second report recommended that discussions be held to discuss the shortcomings of the bid more or less. This clearly did not

find favour with the CPB - neither the old CPB nor the new CPB - for some reason better known to them. If BWSC is to go to the Supreme Court, that is not going to stop us, unless we get an injunction, from opening new bids. If we get an injunction, I always can fall back on emergency procedures, which I don't want to use if at all possible.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Leader of the Opposition, your last question.

Mr Bérenger: Yes, my last question. I think we can agree to disagree on our assessment of how serious, how big the risk of rolling blackouts; not all blackouts are. I have my own assessment, the CEB, overoptimistic as usual, and clearly the new Minister is making his own assessment. But is he aware that, unfortunately, for South Africa, for our brothers and sisters, it is already a fact that rolling black-outs have been on for months now because of lack of long-term and medium-term planning? *Et ça nous pend au bout du nez.* Therefore, will the hon. Minister agree with me that there is no room to panic, but no room for complacency as well?

Mr Collendavelloo: As has happened on several occasions, in fact, we are in agreement. This is not time for complacency. I agree with this. There is no disagreement at all as to the attitude which we should take. We must be vigilant, we must be careful, and we must do the utmost that we can to avoid even rolling blackouts. But, what can I do? What can we do with the existing situation? We have got to try and work as fast as possible, which is what I am trying to do.

Madam Speaker: Time is over!

MOTION

SUSPENSION OF S.O. 10 (2)

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, 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.

(12.10 p.m.)

PUBLIC BILLS

Second Reading

THE APPROPRIATION (2015) BILL

(NO. III of 2015)

&

THE APPROPRIATION (2015-2016) BILL**(NO. IV of 2015)**

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on the Second Reading of the Appropriation (2015) Bill (No. III of 2015) and the Appropriation (2015-2016) Bill (No. IV of 2015).

Question again proposed.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Aliphon!

Mr A. Aliphon (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière): *Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, c'est avec une grande fierté que je m'adresse à cette Chambre aujourd'hui. Avant tout, je tiens, au nom de ma famille, de mes mandants de la circonscription numéro 20 et en mon nom, féliciter le Premier ministre, le ministre des Finances, de même que mes collègues de la majorité d'avoir pourvu à l'île Maurice un budget qui nous met sur les rails du deuxième miracle économique. Ce budget que chaque Mauricien déjà qualifie de budget populaire, novateur et incitatif cadre avec l'île Maurice en devenir et qui souhaite rattraper le temps perdu.*

*Madam Speaker, quand nous passons en revue les différentes mesures prises par le ministre des Finances, nous pouvons constater qu'aucun secteur n'a été oublié, passant par la nation d'entrepreneurs, par la diaspora mauricienne, par le développement du port, les PME, les TIC, l'environnement, de même que la belle Ile Rodrigues, sans oublier le dossier du 9-year Schooling pour l'éducation. Finalement, avec ce budget, le gouvernement nous permet de grandir. Nous arrêterons d'être des *job seekers* et deviendrons des *job providers*.*

Quelles sont ces mesures phares pour venir mettre l'économie sur les rails ? Elles sont nombreuses. Ne pas reconnaître ce budget comme un bon budget, comme le prétend l'opposition, tient d'une dose de mauvaise foi, quand nous savons que pratiquement depuis deux ans notre économie était au point mort avec un Parlement fermé pour cause de négociation. L'île Maurice marchait à tâtons entre les épisodes des '*on and off*'. Nous avons connu un budget poussant les Mauriciens à vouloir partir sous d'autres cieux, et combien de nos jeunes sont partis soi-disant temporairement, mais ne sont jamais revenus. La cause reste la déception devant un ancien gouvernement qui a toujours pensé avant tout à leurs proches et aux petits copains, aidé en cela par cette opposition présente aujourd'hui dans l'hémicycle.

Aster zot pe rod casse paker !

Ceci m'amène à exprimer ma déception face à cette opposition qui voulait, il n'y a même pas quatre mois, convaincre la population mauricienne de voter pour leur *team* ; encore plus montait ma préoccupation au changement de ton juste après, pour entendre dire maintenant par l'opposition que l'ancien gouvernement ne valait pas la peine. Mais, hélas, hier on a vu le contraire, ils ont fait un *walk-over* ensemble, main dans la main...

(Interruptions)

Pire encore ! Pire encore, entendre l'Opposition critiquer ce budget me gêne énormément et quand quelquefois l'Opposition vient dire '*ça ti dan nou plan avant*', je leur dis simplement la bonne parole à la mauricienne : '*Ki alle la chasse perdi so place!*'. Mais aussi je veux leur demander une chose, ont-ils réfléchi à ce qu'ils disent, car si c'est vrai qu'ils retrouvent ce qu'ils ont déjà pensé dans ce budget, donc, ce budget devrait être très bon et non critiquable. Un point c'est tout.

C'est preuve que cette Opposition n'a jamais eu une vision pour une île Maurice moderne, et fort heureusement que la population ne leur a pas fait confiance et le *lepep Moris* mérite ce budget, ce *no-tax Budget*. Ce qui me pousse à demander à l'Opposition de '*asizer vinn apran leçon are nou*'.

Tous les économistes sont unanimes à reconnaître que c'est un budget de relance, laissant la place à des méga projets pour remettre l'économie sur les rails : les 13 Smart Villes, un nouveau port, sans compter avec les hôtels et les PME ; le recrutement de 100 médecins et 1,400 membres du personnel pour la santé. Nous avançons à coup sûr vers le 2^{ème} miracle économique.

Pour atteindre ce but, bien sûr que le gouvernement compte sur tous les mauriciens, car ce n'est qu'ensemble *ki nou pou capav guet divan ek avancer*.

Madame la présidente, qu'avons-nous de bon dans ce budget? Ce budget nous montre que nous avons affaire à un *caring Government* qui pense avant tout à sa population. Comment, vous me demanderez? Après avoir en moins de 100 jours rejeter le projet *CT Power*, mis de l'ordre dans les terres de l'État, dans des routes, ce gouvernement nous propose déjà des solutions durables, et là, je fais un pressant appel aux ménages d'investir dans la production d'énergie renouvelable pour leur propre consommation, d'utiliser les kits photovoltaïques et batteries pour stocker du courant car tout est déductible de leurs revenus imposables.

Madame la présidente, imaginez-vous, par famille, avoir 6 mètres cubes d'eau gratos, ça représente - viser un peu! - une semaine d'eau pour une famille de quatre personnes. Nous savons qu'une famille de quatre personnes par mois utiliserait environ 30 fûts bleus

ordinaires, que nous connaissons tous. Chaque famille mauricienne aura plus ou moins 7 fûts d'eau gratuits. *Ek budget là pas bon!* Baisse sur les fers de construction; achat d'un terrain pour une première fois qui est exempté de droit d'enregistrement ; seuil d'impôt sur le *lump sum* à la hausse et baisse des intérêts sur les *hire purchase*. *Li pas bon même budget là!*

Quid des mesures concernant le logement ! 1,000 logements sociaux pour les familles à moins de R 10,000 par mois ; les maisons seront revues, agrandies, passant de 39 mètres à 50 mètres carrés. Construction de 700 maisons en plus par NEF. Pour une dalle, le coût du don revu à la hausse, Madame la présidente! Pour couler une dalle - sans jeu de mots - ça coûtera moins cher ce don-là. Là aussi c'est revu à la hausse par ce gouvernement. La liste restante est encore longue, mais je ne peux que dire ceci: qui dit mieux! Comment pouvez-vous, après tout cela, Messieurs de l'opposition, dire que nous, Membres de la majorité, *nou tape la table juste pou faire plaisir* ? Pour une fois, acceptez que vous êtes dépassés en idées novatrices. Soyez donc beaux joueurs.

Madame la présidente, un mot sur la notion des interdits; les *zougader*, les sacs en plastique, les courses. Il était temps que quelqu'un vienne mettre de l'ordre dans ce secteur et c'est certainement avec un ouf de soulagement que beaucoup de familles accueillent cette décision de bannir les cartes à gratter. Certaines familles, j'ose espérer, auront à la place des cartes à gratter, du pain à se mettre sous la dent. Et là, je dis au ministre des Finances, malgré les pressions de tenir bon car il pourra compter sur moi pour le soutenir. Cependant, M. le ministre, permettez-moi de faire un appel. Je voudrais être le porte-parole de ma circonscription, le No. 20, et étendre cela aux autres circonscriptions de l'île, qu'il demande à la Banque de Maurice *to look into the matter* et d'intervenir auprès de toutes les banques de l'île, pour assurer un meilleur service, surtout rapide, concernant *lepep* en général. Ceux-là même qui font tourner les commerces en faisant des retraits ou versements chaque jour aux guichets des banques. C'est une honte de voir notre île Maurice, que nous voulons moderne, de longues files d'attente de 30 à 40 minutes par personne avant de pouvoir disposer de leur argent ! Et quid du temps perdu par ces '*ti-dimounes*', et surtout pour moi! La solution est simple : une augmentation de guichets et j'en serais heureux. Et cela soulagera les clients tout en offrant de nouveaux *jobs* aux Mauriciens. Nous serons tous heureux.

Madame la présidente, je me réjouis davantage qu'à partir de janvier 2016, nous accueillerons pour une île Maurice que nous voulons écolo, le *Green-In Attitude* et que le terme '*sacked plastic*' deviendra une réalité, et que pour le bonheur de tout un chacun, nous userons d'une alternative bio avec brio.

Madame la présidente, pour terminer, je voudrais féliciter l'équipe mise en place pour donner à l'île Maurice ce budget que tout un chacun qualifie de grandiose, sauf l'opposition. Et comme tout un chacun qui veut d'une belle île Maurice, je dis ceci aux Mauriciens: avec ce gouvernement nous sommes en route pour un deuxième miracle économique.

Merci, Madame la présidente.

(12.19 p.m.)

Mr F. Quirin (Fourth Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière): Madame la présidente, je ne perdrais pas mon temps ni celui de la Chambre pour répondre à l'honorable Alipho car d'ailleurs il n'en vaut pas la peine.

Madame la présidente, la montagne a finalement accouché d'une souris. Cette expression résume, à mon avis, dans une très large mesure le budget que vient de présenter le ministre des Finances de l'Alliance Lepep. En fait, le mot '*lepep*' n'est qu'un leurre. La population qui s'attendait à un budget qui allait soulager ses souffrances tout en bénéficiant d'un pouvoir d'achat plus conséquent, mais il n'en fut rien. Et l'espoir de tout un peuple s'est vite transformé en désillusion.

Madame la présidente, après l'euphorie des effets d'annonce lors de la présentation du budget, nous constatons jour après jour à quel point ce présent budget ne répond pas aux attentes des '*ti-dimounes*' en particulier. Le ministre des Finances, Madame la présidente, s'est félicité d'avoir fait un *no-tax Budget*, mais nous savons tous que tel n'est pas le cas. D'ailleurs, l'économiste Pierre Dinan a même qualifié cette démarche de l'honorable ministre des Finances de petite ruse, comme une manière de dire qu'il n'y a pas de taxe additionnelle. Pour soutenir mes propos je citerai, par exemple, la surtaxe de R 4 sur les carburants. La décision du ministre des Finances de conserver cette taxe est inappropriée dans un contexte économique difficile, où le pouvoir d'achat des Mauriciens s'amenuise. Encore une fois, ce sont les consommateurs qui en font les frais.

Madame la présidente, ce qui était annoncé comme un budget qui devait jeter les bases d'un second miracle économique, s'est révélé en fin de compte un mirage économique. La dépréciation de la roupie, dont n'a pipé mot le ministre des Finances dans son discours, entraînera, à coup sûr, une augmentation des prix des denrées alimentaires importées, de même que ceux des médicaments. Cela a tout l'effet d'une bombe à retardement car j'ai bien peur qu'une grande partie des R 5,000, accordées à nos aînés, finisse dans les caisses des pharmacies.

Madame la présidente, le *feel good factor* est déjà chose du passé. Désormais, le citoyen Mauricien *est back to reality* car le budget 2015-2016 ne traite pas des problèmes

fondamentaux de la société qui touchent particulièrement les jeunes et les démunis. Rien sur la question du VIH/Sida, de même que sur le combat contre la prolifération de la drogue et ses conséquences sur notre société ! Ce gouvernement démontre que c'est le cadet de ses soucis.

Tous les travailleurs sociaux à Maurice vous diront leur grande déception devant le peu de détermination affichée par ce gouvernement sur ces deux dossiers. Rien n'a été annoncé dans le budget pour combattre d'une manière plus efficace et efficiente ces deux fléaux qui, comme nous le savons tous, font beaucoup de ravages dans notre société. Le souhait des travailleurs sociaux est la construction d'un hôpital spécialisé pour le VIH, cela afin d'offrir un meilleur traitement aux patients atteints par ce virus mais aussi pour un traitement psychosocial.

Madame la présidente, le Premier ministre a affirmé, à maintes reprises, qu'il fera du combat contre la drogue son cheval de bataille. Or, pas un mot à ce sujet dans le budget, excepté une annonce sur l'augmentation de l'enveloppe accordée à la force policière. Et là aussi on aurait aimé savoir quel montant du budget de la police sera consacré à un combat plus rigoureux et efficace contre le trafic de la drogue et aussi quels seront les outils qui seront utilisés.

Madame la présidente, ceux qui sont sur le terrain savent à quel point le fléau de la drogue gagne en ampleur de jour en jour à Maurice. Les jeunes d'ailleurs sont nombreux à tomber dans les filets des trafiquants de la mort. Si nous ne menons pas un combat acharné et sans relâche au quotidien contre ce fléau, on risque de voir notre société sombrer dans l'abîme.

Madame la présidente, si d'un côté ce gouvernement veut combattre la '*nation zougadère*' - avec raison d'ailleurs - d'un autre côté, il laisse l'impression de ne pas avoir les solutions pour empêcher que notre paradis ne devienne un enfer.

Madame la présidente, au sujet du *law and order*, je note avec satisfaction que l'honorable ministre des Finances ait fait mention de la création d'une *Police Academy*. De même, l'annonce du recrutement de 600 policiers est un point positif également. Toutefois, le gouvernement doit veiller à ce que le recrutement se fasse dans la transparence et la méritocratie.

L'académie de police, une fois mise en place, devra assurer une formation tous azimuts de nos futurs policiers. Il est souhaitable que la force policière dans son ensemble reçoive un entraînement physique continu. Notre police ne doit pas être la risée de la population. Au contraire, la population devrait être fière de sa force policière. Et pour cela,

il faut que le gouvernement accorde toute son attention à ce secteur afin que nous ayons une police formée à la meilleure école, efficace et surtout en bonne santé et ce n'est qu'à cette condition que l'uniforme forcera à nouveau le respect.

Madame la présidente, je voudrais, à nouveau, attiré l'attention du gouvernement sur le problème des enfants de rue. C'est, à mon avis, une autre bombe à retardement qu'il faut désamorcer au plus vite. Je crains fort que les chiffres ne soient bien plus importants que ceux qui nous sont fournis officiellement.

Nous constatons que dans de nombreux quartiers, dans les villes comme dans les villages, il y a une recrudescence de ce problème. J'espère que la ministre responsable de ce secteur accorde une attention particulière à cette question et que les fonds nécessaires soient attribués, malgré le fait que rien n'est mentionné dans les dotations budgétaires.

Aujourd'hui, Madame la présidente, nombre de nos jeunes sont en perdition, sans repère, sans guide et surtout sans avenir. Face à une société qui évolue de plus en plus vers le matérialisme, on laisse, trop souvent, les oubliés du développement et ceux qui ne peuvent suivre le rythme infernal, au bord de la route. Demain, ces oubliés peuvent devenir des problèmes réels pour notre société qui seront difficiles à tacler. Déjà que nous faisons face actuellement à une recrudescence de toutes sortes de violence dans le pays. Si nous n'attaquons pas ce problème à la racine, l'arbre qui poussera de travers viendra nous rappeler combien nous avons échoué dans notre tâche à offrir une société plus juste et équitable à nos enfants.

Madame la présidente, la république de Maurice compte 229 poches de pauvreté selon les chiffres officiels. Le budget ne fait mention que de 38 qui ont été identifiées et auxquelles une attention spéciale sera accordée. Et quid des quelques 200 restantes? Seront-elles laissées à leur propre sort? Ne court-on pas le risque de voir ces poches délaissées dans ce présent budget s'appauvrir davantage? L'idéal est que le gouvernement considère ces poches de pauvreté d'un même œil et les aident tous à sortir du gouffre de la misère, *slowly but surely* ! À ce sujet également le gouvernement démontre qu'il est en manque d'inspiration et n'a pas de solution pour s'attaquer aux problèmes de notre société. Le ministre des Finances a semble-t-il trouvé une formule magique: celle de laisser le secteur privé faire le travail à la place du gouvernement. N'est-ce pas, Madame la présidente, une façon pour ce gouvernement d'abdiquer devant ses responsabilités?

L'autre formule magique du ministre des Finances est les *Smart Cities* qui paraissent innovants sur papier, et même exaltants pour le secteur de la construction. Mais à qui

profitera vraiment ce supposé boom? Aux travailleurs ou à ceux qui vont faire de la spéculation foncière? Aux pauvres ou aux riches?

Madame la présidente, permettez-moi de dire un mot sur la taxe de 10 sous qui a été enlevée sur le coût d'un SMS. C'est ce qu'on appelle un coup d'épée dans l'eau. Faites un tour sur les réseaux sociaux et vous verrez à quel point les jeunes se moquent de cette mesure. D'autant que cette baisse est insignifiante. Aujourd'hui, les jeunes communiquent par textes gratuitement à travers des applications comme *Viber*, *Tango* et *Whatsapp*.

Avec le développement annoncé dans le domaine de la technologie informatique, avec les 350 *Wi-Fi spots* que le gouvernement compte introduire à travers le pays, le traditionnel SMS deviendra obsolète. Il est souhaitable que le ministre des Finances fasse un effort supplémentaire pour revoir à la baisse le coût des SMS. Tout comme il est souhaitable de baisser le coût de la connexion à l'Internet. D'autant plus que le gouvernement a évoqué son intention de former des jeunes pour un deuxième cyber village et faire de Maurice une Cyber île.

Madame la présidente, il est regrettable que le Budget 2015/2016 n'ait fait mention que brièvement des administrations régionales. Le MMM prône depuis des lustres une meilleure démocratisation et un *empowerment* des conseils de districts et des municipalités. La municipalisation des villages est un sujet qui n'a pas été évoqué, alors que le pays doit prendre cette voie, pour que villes et villages soient sur le même pied d'égalité.

Nous ne pouvons souhaiter que les amendements qui seront apportés au *Local Government Act* fassent place à une plus grande démocratie régionale et non pas des amendements cosmétiques taillés sur mesure pour le gouvernement en place.

Madame la présidente, je vais à présent évoquer les mesures ayant trait à la jeunesse et au sport. Mais que suis-je en train de dire, Madame la présidente? Elles sont quasiment absentes dans ce présent budget. Ces mesures sont tellement infimes que la section *Youth and Sports* a dû être rattachée à *Leisure, Arts and Culture*. Du jamais vu! La communauté sportive est restée sur sa faim comme d'habitude. Le football est la seule discipline qui a été prise en considération.

On se vantera certainement de l'autre côté de la Chambre que 60 millions de roupies sont consacrées aux Jeux des Iles. C'est, certes, le cas, mais nous savons tous qu'une grande partie de cet argent sera consacrée aux frais de participation du Club Maurice aux Jeux des Iles. Quand le ministre des Sports aura déduit les frais des billets d'avion, les frais de participation, les frais d'hébergement et les *per diem* aux quelque 300 personnes du Club Maurice, il ne restera pas grand-chose pour peaufiner la préparation de nos athlètes.

Madame la présidente, là où le bât blesse, est que les mesures annoncées n'accordent aucune importance aux disciplines sportives. La seule mesure avec laquelle le ministre des Finances est venu de l'avant est les 26 millions de roupies pour soutenir le projet de football professionnel.

D'abord, je voudrais attirer l'attention de la Chambre que le football professionnel n'est plus au stade de projet à Maurice.

Le football professionnel est aujourd'hui une réalité et cela depuis six mois à travers une compagnie privée qui organise et finance les équipes de cette ligue. Le gouvernement vient annoncer qu'il mettra de l'argent dans ce qu'il appelle ce «projet» sans donner aucune indication comment cette somme sera distribuée. Est-ce que ces R 26 millions iront aux dix clubs de la ligue professionnelle ou dans les caisses de cette compagnie privée? Ne serait-il pas plus judicieux, Madame la présidente, que le gouvernement investisse une partie de cette somme dans la formation des jeunes footballeurs par le biais des écoles de foot? Je ne cesserai de dire à quel point c'est regrettable que ce gouvernement n'ait pensé qu'au football et le ministre des Sports malheureusement donne nettement cette impression depuis qu'il a pris ses fonctions. Priorité au football, mais les autres doivent patienter. Quel signal le gouvernement envoie-t-il à ces sportifs qui ne pratiquent pas le football?

Il est clair que ce gouvernement n'a pas de politique définie en matière de sport encore moins de plan d'action pour relancer le sport, qui se trouve au plus bas niveau. Le football est certes le sport roi, je le concède, Madame la présidente, mais ces dernières années Maurice a brillé sur la scène internationale dans d'autres sports, dans d'autres disciplines comme la boxe, le kick-boxing, le judo pour ne citer qu'eux.

Il suffit de lire d'ailleurs la réaction des dirigeants des fédérations dans les journaux pour comprendre à quel point la communauté sportive se sente lésée, mise à l'écart. Je regrette l'absence d'une politique gouvernementale pour encourager les nouvelles disciplines mais cela ne m'étonne pas, car le gouvernement mise tout ou presque sur le football. Rien non plus, sur une politique de formation à tous les niveaux. Une formation structurée et professionnelle, nous le savons tous, est le seul moyen qui nous permettra de sortir la tête de l'eau et nous positionner dans le futur sur la scène internationale.

Nos héros d'hier et nos champions de demain sont aussi oubliés, Madame la présidente. Pas un mot sur les bourses de haut niveau, les bourses d'études et, surtout, l'après-carrière des sportifs de haut niveau. L'État est en train de créer deux catégories de

sportifs. Mais je dois préciser, je ne suis pas contre le fait de donner les moyens adéquats au football pour réussir. J'aimerais bien que la professionnalisation réussisse et que notre sport roi redevienne une fierté locale comme jadis, mais je plaide pour ces milliers de licenciés qui ont choisi de pratiquer un autre sport et que le gouvernement choisit de laisser sur la touche. Pratiquement aucun projet infrastructurel pour la jeunesse n'a été annoncé et nous constatons que ce sont les mêmes projets qui reviennent sur le tapis. Il suffit d'ailleurs de consulter les *Estimates* pour s'en rendre compte.

Je souhaite vivement, Madame la présidente, que le gouvernement rectifie le tir. Le plus tôt sera le mieux, afin de donner confiance à ces nombreux jeunes qui ne demandent qu'une chose: qu'on leur donne les moyens de pratiquer le sport qu'ils aiment et pour qu'ils puissent en retour donner le meilleur d'eux-mêmes et faire honneur à la nation. De grâce donc, cessez cette politique de deux poids, deux mesures!

J'espère que l'abolition des *guidelines* par rapport aux CSR va bénéficier aux clubs ainsi qu'aux fédérations sportives car la communauté sportive a constamment tiré la sonnette d'alarme ces derniers temps concernant le manque de moyens financiers, indispensable au bon fonctionnement des différentes structures.

Madame la présidente, lors de mon intervention récemment sur le Programme Gouvernemental 2015-2019, j'avais énuméré toute une série de mesures susceptibles de redorer le blason de notre sport. Je ne vais certainement pas me répéter mais je compte sur le gouvernement, en particulier l'honorable ministre des sports pour y porter une attention particulière.

Madame la présidente, en ce qui concerne ma circonscription, nombreux sont les projets qui sont restés au stade de projet comme celui de décongestionner le centre-ville de Beau Bassin à partir de la rue Vandermeersch jusqu'à Coromandel. Il y a aussi l'aménagement d'un terrain de football à Canot, la construction d'un nouveau marché à Beau Bassin, la construction d'une médi-clinique à Petite Rivière, l'aménagement d'une gare routière à Mont Roches ainsi que la construction de drains dans différentes régions telles que Coromandel, Belle Etoile, Vuillemin, Mare Gravier, Albion entre autres.

Je fais donc un pressant appel au ministre des infrastructures publiques et au PPS de la région de bien vouloir considérer mes requêtes pour le bien-être des habitants de ces localités.

Madame la présidente, je souhaite vivement que ce gouvernement rectifie le tir vis-à-vis du social, de la jeunesse et des démunis. Le pays n'a pas besoin d'être réinventé. Il a

besoin d'hommes de vision pour dessiner l'île Maurice de demain et sans que qui que ce soit ne soit laissé aux bords de la route lorsque passe le train du développement, social et économique. Je vous remercie.

(12.39 p.m.)

The Minister of Health and Quality of Life (Mr A. Gayan): Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, it is with a deep sense of pride and satisfaction that I rise to speak on the Budget which the hon. Minister of Finance and Economic Development, my good friend, hon. Seetannah Lutchmeenaraidoo has presented to the House and to the nation on 23 March 2015. I say a deep sense of satisfaction because it reminds me of the days of 1983 when Sir Anerood Jugnauth, after the famous first 60-0 of 1982, went to the elections in 1983 and became Prime Minister again; hon. Seetannah Lutchmeenaraidoo became the Minister of Finance, and I was the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Tourism. In 1983 - the hon. Leader of the Opposition is not here - he was beaten by me in Constituency No. 18 and he came in as a best loser in 1983. Since then he changed Constituency to move to another one. In 2014 at the last elections the ML, the *Muvman Liberator*, had just been formed. My friend, hon. Collendavelloo, and I decided that we had to show the courage that we had to stand in Constituencies numbers 19 and 20. These were the citadels of the MMM.

(Interruptions)

Imprenable! When I went the first time and there was no...

(Interruptions)

What I am going to say is going to hurt...

(Interruptions)

What I am going to say is going to hurt and it will hurt.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Silence! Order!

(Interruptions)

Mr Gayan: It will hurt. We upset...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Members would you allow the hon. Minister to continue with his speech, please! He listened carefully when others were intervening so it is his turn now to intervene. Thank you.

Mr Gayan: And, if we had another week, Madam Speaker, hon. Bhagwan would not be here. The hon. Leader of the Opposition would not be here. One more week, because the 60-0...

(Interruptions)

Let me not speak about Farida. We will come to Farida later on...

(Interruptions)

Ale guete Farida!

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Order, please! Order!

(Interruptions)

Mr Gayan: I will come to that, but let me say that this is a great Budget and I congratulate the hon. Minister of Finance and Economic Development for having presented this Budget.

Madam Speaker, let me address the issue that had just been raised by hon. Bhagwan. In PQs, in the media, at ICAC, at the Equal Opportunities Commission, the issue of the appointment of the Executive Director of the Trust Fund for Specialised Care has been given a treatment as though it is the number one issue in this country. Let me say that it is not the first time that Statutory Bodies have people appointed by the Minister and by Cabinet. In fact, the hon. Leader of the Opposition will have to bear political responsibility for his words when he spoke: "*Ar sa madame là*" as though she was a *marchand cotomili*. He forgot to mention that she is a qualified Barrister, somebody who has been the legal adviser to a Commercial Bank.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Order, I said!

(Interruptions)

Order! I am on my feet!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Members, order, please! Hon. Members, you are here as hon. Members! Hon. Members, I am on my feet!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Rutnah, please! I am on my feet!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Members, I appeal to you all, when you were intervening, the hon. Minister listened in silence. Would you, please, allow him to continue in silence!

(Interruptions)

I have to draw your attention that you are here as hon. Members, so please behave as such. Thank you.

Mr Gayan: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, I was saying that the Executive Director of the Trust Fund is a qualified Barrister. She has experience as a Manager.

(Interruptions)

She has been...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Would you continue! Hon. Members, would you continue! Hon. Uteem, please! When I am on my feet, I wish to have some silence in the House.

(Interruptions)

The hon. Minister listened when you were intervening. Would you, please, allow him to intervene without interruptions! Thank you.

Mr Gayan: Madam Speaker, when questions were asked in this House about that appointment, hon. Shakeel Mohamed - it must be mentioned that it is for the first time in the history of Independent Mauritius, a non-Hindu is sitting as Leader of the Labour Party in this House - attacked Vijaya Sumputh. The hon. Member attacked her and this is going to be something that not only in this House, but out there in the public, we are going to make use of to show how much...

(Interruptions)

Not only do they hate...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Order!

(Interruptions)

Order again, please! If you continue, I will have to interrupt the sitting!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Members, are you going to continue to interrupt!

(Interruptions)

If you continue to interrupt, I will have to suspend the sitting!

Mr Gayan: Madam Speaker, I was saying that there were not only PQs, but for the last four weeks, in 'Week-End' newspaper - the Director of 'Week-End' is Mr Jacques Rivet and it is published by 'Le Mauricien' also - week after week, there has been constant harassment on this appointment. Photographs of that lady have been published and all sorts of comments have been made. I am referring to 'Week-End' of Sunday, 22 March -

"Des nominations de plus en plus scandaleuses".

What is scandalous about that appointment? What is so scandalous? Hon. Uteem, we all know what he said about our colleague, hon. Ms Jadoo-Jaunbocus, in the last elections. We know what the hon. Leader of the Opposition said about women, about hon. Mrs Boygah.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Order! Silence and order, please!

Mr Gayan: Shame on you! Shame on you! What they said about women and it is no surprise, Madam Speaker, there is no woman elected on that side.

(Interruptions)

No woman! Not a single one!

(Interruptions)

Because you have been ill-treating women!

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Order!

Mr Gayan: Madam Speaker, let me also say that this attack on Vijaya Sumputh has been orchestrated. Hon. Bhagwan was filling his car at a petrol station in Reduit, he was talking to people and said that he was going to bring down that woman. He went to Grand Bassin and when one goes to Grand Bassin for Mahashivratri...

(Interruptions)

When one goes to Ganga Talao, one goes with a pure heart...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Bhagwan, please!

Mr Gayan: And he said there, at Grand Bassin, that he was going to destroy Vijaya Sumputh.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: You will have the opportunity to reply!

(Interruptions)

Mr Gayan: Shame! What you said!

(Interruptions)

And all those...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Members, are you going to continue to interrupt!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Members, I will have to suspend the sitting!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Bhagwan, please! I appeal to all of you. Have some order in the House!

Mr Gayan: I was saying, Madam Speaker, when we go to Ganga Talao, to Grand Bassin, we go with a pure heart. You will recall, Madam Speaker, and everybody on this side of the House will recall that when we go to Pari Talao, we do not go there to pray and not for the destruction of people. Hon. Bhagwan - I have witnesses - said at Grand Bassin that he was going to ask questions to destroy Vijaya Sumputh.

(Interruptions)

I have witnesses and we all saw *viré mam*.

(Interruptions)

In the clip '*viré mam*'...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Members, once more I would like to ask you to allow the hon. Minister to continue. If there are things which are not in order, I will intervene for sure. Hon. Bhagwan, you will have the opportunity, when you intervene, to reply back to him.

Mr Bhagwan: On a point, I don't mind when the hon. Minister is stating my name. I go to Pari Talao every day, every week. I don't have any lesson to take from him.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Okay, hon. Bhagwan!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Bhagwan, please! You will intervene when you have got a point of order!

Mr Gayan: Madam Speaker, what the hon. member said about Mangal Mahadev; Mangal Mahadev is going to attack him. He is going to attack him!

(Interruptions)

But anyway, I was saying, Madam Speaker...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Jhugroo! Hon Jhugroo, can you, please, remain silent!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Gayan, I think you dwelt plentifully on this issue; can we, now, pass on to another issue.

Mr Gayan: Madam Speaker, I am afraid that I will have to dwell slightly more on this because not only has it been in the press and I mentioned about this Week-End edition –

“des nominations de plus en plus scandaleuses”.

But I leave it to the appreciation of the House, the manner in which the press has been hammering and battering someone for four weeks. What is the newsworthiness of this? I can understand one week, I can understand two weeks, four weeks. I hope ‘Week-End’ will publish whatever I am saying in this House, and I hope they do it faithfully because we believe in freedom of the press. I for one, as barrister, have defended anybody, and I will continue to defend anybody who is unjustly attacked. But never has there been such persecution of one person by the media for such a long period of time. Never! And I think it is important that we mention it in this House. I will say it for anybody; not only because she happens to be the Executive Director of the Trust Fund.

(Interruptions)

Let me say, Madam Speaker, that in ‘L’Express’ of yesterday there was an article on the front page -

« (...) l’EOC - *Equal Opportunities Commission* - ouvre trois enquêtes sur Gayan »

And then they go on to speak about –

« Y a-t-il eu discrimination politique dans le recrutement, le 13 février, de Vijaya Sumputh comme directrice exécutive du *Trust Fund* (...) D’où sa décision d’ouvrir trois enquêtes sur le ministre de la Santé Anil Gayan. »

Madam Speaker, I am going to table in the House the letter I received from the Equal Opportunities Commission. I am going to read it so that everybody knows. It is dated 30 March, and I checked with my secretary before coming to the House at 11.25 a.m. whether there had been another communication from the Equal Opportunities Commission. This is what the letter says, and I quote –

“Honourable Minister,

1. Following an article written by you under the title ‘Down and Up’ and published in ‘*L’Express*’ newspaper of 10 March 2014, this Commission

opened an investigation into the allegations made therein purporting to say that Senior Citizens Associations from Constituency No. 16 are granted a more favourable treatment than other Senior Citizens Associations from other constituencies.

2. Prior to completing the aforesaid investigation, this Commission would like to hear you in connection with the above subject matter.
3. You are therefore kindly requested to be and appear before this Commission on Friday 03 April 2015 – that is on Friday next – at 2 p.m.”

There is no mention at all of anything regarding Vijaya Sumputh or anything about the Trust Fund. I table this, Madam Speaker.

This shows the persecution that is going on against somebody. This is an institution. And what does the article also say? I wrote immediately yesterday to ‘*L’Express*’. I was hoping that ‘*L’Express*’ was going to give me the same spot in the newspaper today. They put it in page 3, and I did say that there had been nothing about an investigation concerning matters other than an article which I had published in March 2014. And it is only now that Mr Brian Glover, the Chairperson of the Commission, decides to start an investigation. Not only that, Madam Speaker. Just to show the kind of persecution that is going on, the kind of injustice that is going on! Mr Brian Glover, yesterday, on Radio One, said that not only did he have evidence, but he said that if that article which I had written is not evidence of false and malicious denunciation in writing, what is it? He is not only the investigator; he has become the prosecutor...

Madam Speaker: Hon. Gayan!

Mr Gayan: Yes.

Madam Speaker: According to the Standing Orders, you cannot attack somebody who is not present in this House. I am just drawing your attention to this.

Mr Gayan: I am just saying because I have been the subject of comments in the press without any justification. The press has been hammering, and there is systematically in ‘Week-End,’ under the signature of Josie Lebrasse, who writes les “*Faits et Effets*”. It seems that the hon. Leader of the Opposition *fait quelque chose samedi et elle sent les effets dimanche*.

(Interruptions)

Kot sa fer sa ? Well ! But, anyway, Madam Speaker, I think I have made my point. I have made my point that both the Labour Party and the *porte-parole* of the Labour Party - I do not know what *parole il porte*, but anyway these are matters that will be part of the campaign in No. 11, in No. 12 and all over the country. This kind of injustice should not be tolerated. This is assassination by the media; this is something that we have to stop.

Madam Speaker, the only problem that is scandalous is that there was no advertising of that particular post.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Order, please! Order! Hon. Bhagwan, please no cross- talking!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Bhagwan, no cross-talking please!

(Interruptions)

Mr Gayan: Madam Speaker, the press...

Madam Speaker: Hon. Rutnah!

(Interruptions)

Mr Gayan: Alan Ganoo knows Gooljaury and Soornack! Madam Speaker, if I may; I am on my feet, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, the other point that the Equal Opportunities Commission mentioned about starting an enquiry was...

(Interruptions)

I had said, in reply to a question on this issue...

Madam Speaker: Hon. Gayan, I am sorry! I have to refer you to the Standing Orders, section 40(5), wherein you cannot attack anybody who is not present in the House, and secondly, you cannot talk about somebody who is the president of a Commission.

Mr Gayan: I bow to your ruling, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, I was saying that, in one of the replies that I gave, I said 'Government is Government and Government decides', just like you said that the Chair decides when it comes to maintaining order in the House. When I said this, that was the eureka moment of the whole world, of the media, as though it was the first time that they

were hearing that Government is here to govern! As you always ask the question, the question is: whether the ayes have it or the noes have it. But that is democracy! We have been elected to be the Government and to govern! The whole media, 'Week-End', 'L'Express, Weekly'! It's the first time they hear that Government is here to govern. The first time! It is amazing! Sometimes I wonder about the level of intelligence of the journalists who write these things. What is so objectionable about this? But they made it an issue! Everything becomes an issue! I think we need to call the bluff of all those people who write anything or say anything. The time will come when we will deal with these issues on occasion arising.

But, let me say also, Madam Speaker, that we have in our country a system of statutory corporations. The statutory corporations exist and have existed for many years. In England, therefore, the QuANGOs, the quasi-autonomous non-governmental organisations, are set up to do what was being done in the public sector by the public service. They are there to make governance more efficient and this is why they exist and this is why accountability remains with the Minister, but the execution is given to a statutory corporation. Yesterday, the hon. Minister of Financial Services, Good Governance and Institutional Reforms spoke about this; I don't need to go about the governance. We are here for five years; people will judge us in five years.

(Interruptions)

The people will judge and the people will judge them also!

(Interruptions)

And this is why...

(Interruptions)

This is why, Madam Speaker...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Minister Gayan, can I ask you for how long you have to go?

Mr Gayan: I have quite a bit to go.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Then, it's better for us to break for lunch. We will break for one and a half hours for lunch.

At 1.01 p.m. the sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 2.36 p.m. with Madam Speaker in the Chair.

Madam Speaker: Yes, hon. Gayan!

Mr Gayan: Madam Speaker, I was saying before we broke up for lunch that the nature of democracy in this country is that the Opposition has its say and the Government has its way. That has always been the case and that is going to continue to be the case.

Let me say a word on meritocracy. It is being assumed that unless you advertise, you cannot have meritocracy. Let me take an example, we advertise for the post of Director-General of the MBC. All the applicants apply and among them there is Mr Dan Callikan who, because he was there, happens to be more qualified and is more knowledgeable and the panel selects him as the number one recruit. Do we, as a Government, take him? Do we? Do we take Mr Dan Callikan? So, when we talk of advertising and meritocracy, everything is relative. We have to see the people who are best suited to implement the programme of the Government and to implement whatever Government decides. So, I am saying this because some people are trying to act like virgin prostitutes. I am sorry to use that expression, but we are not...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Excuse me, hon. Minister! What you have just said, you have to withdraw because this is unparliamentary!

Mr Gayan: I withdraw! I withdraw!

(Interruptions)

I withdraw!

(Interruptions)

I withdraw!

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker, let me say what I have said, that the Budget is a great Budget. It addresses all the issues that are going to enable Mauritius to make that qualitative jump to get to the second economic miracle. I think this is what the Budget is all about and it is our duty, as elected Members in this House, to say loudly and clearly that we are all behind this Budget and we should congratulate not only the Minister, but also the Prime Minister for his vision and for his leadership.

Madam Speaker, I must say that there is one word that sums up and permeates the Budget and that is the word of fairness, and sharing. If you go to page 1 of the Budget, I think the word sharing appears five times on one page. I think this is the very essence of the Budget that has been presented.

With regard to my Ministry, the Health Sector, the hon. Minister of Finance has stated as follows at page 26 of the Budget—

“Madam Speaker, on healthcare our policy is to improve quality and delivery, reduce waiting time, and keep up with latest medical technologies while promoting greater efficiency.”

I think we are already in the process of implementing these policies in order to reduce waiting time. At paragraph 160, and I quote –

“To reduce long queues and backlog for surgery in hospitals, we are recruiting one hundred doctors on a full time basis and other specialists on a sessional basis.”

Since I am taking the floor on this issue, Madam Speaker, let me say that the Ministry is prepared to put at the disposal of the public all the facilities and all the staff required to ensure that they get the best available treatment for their health, and also that they get the quality of life that they need within the earliest possible time frame.

It is forgotten at times that if somebody has to wait a long time to have an operation it is the quality of life of that person that is undermined. It is for that reason that I have impressed upon all my staff that there should be as little time as possible before somebody gets an appointment for an operation. That is as far as the Ministry is concerned. But as far as the public is concerned, they also have an obligation to ensure that whatever facilities and appointments are given, they do respect those appointments. Unfortunately, I have tried to obtain from my officers information about the number of planned surgeries which were cancelled in the months of January and February 2015. You will be surprised to hear, Madam Speaker, that the total of cancelled operations is 548 for the months of January and February. The main reasons for cancellation are: the patients are unfit; patients did not attend; patients are not keen and, repeatedly, this is the reason that is being given: patient uncooperative. So, my appeal to the public is that when an operation is cancelled, it means that others, who could have been operated, have to wait even longer. These people have their quality of life which is damaged.

So, it is important that when we speak about health - I am sure that lots of our colleagues in this House get representations from their *mandants* that they are waiting for operations. But, very often, there are valid reasons for the wait. So, what instruction I have given is that, if there is a waiting list, the waiting list has to be complied with. No one should jump the list unless it is an emergency. If it is an emergency, of course, the doctors will ensure that everybody who is in that situation gets the treatment at that point in time. Otherwise, the whole process will become unmanageable. So, this is why I appeal to the public as well that if there is an operation planned, they need to ensure that they are in the condition to be operated. I hope that this message goes out and that we do not, not only have

longer waiting lists, but also we have resources that are not being optimised. This is why I thought that I must bring this to the attention of the House so that we all know what difficulties are faced in this Ministry.

I am also grateful to the hon. Minister of Finance for having provided Rs9.7 billion in this Budget for the health sector. We are also in the process of implementing new projects like the new Cancer Centre, the e-Health Project and the construction of a new state-of-the-art ENT Hospital.

I wish to say a few words about the ENT Hospital. There was at a time the possibility of shifting the ENT Hospital to some other spot, but it appears that this is going to be very difficult. So, the decision has been taken to construct the ENT Hospital in the same place, but making sure that there is no damage to the environment and, as far as possible, and the necessity of preserving the original structure of the place because it is part of the *patrimoine* and we are not going to destroy *le patrimoine*. As far as possible, *le patrimoine* will be preserved. The ENT Hospital will be constructed on that very site. We are proposing to do that as fast as possible. I am sure that the MPI and the other Ministries involved will be doing whatever they need to do in order to see that the project is fully implemented.

There are some other things that I would like to say about the budget and the projects with regard to the health sector. When I joined the Ministry of Health, I must confess I did not know much about it. But I have been trying to learn very fast. Somebody even told me: “You are going to the Ministry of Hell”. I must say that it is a difficult Ministry; it is a large Ministry, but we are trying to ensure that whatever we do is in the best interest of the people.

You are aware, Madam Speaker, that there was a long list for cataract operations. So, we have opened, in Souillac, a new unit that is looking after the people, not only in the South, but it seems that they can cater also for more people from Moka Eye Hospital. They are also thinking of increasing the workload at Souillac so that, eventually, we will come to a no waiting list at all for eye operations.

The other thing that I would like to say is that we have a big issue on overseas treatment. I am sure there are lots of Members in this House who have this problem of people coming to them to see whether they can get funds to be operated overseas. Now, there are certain areas where inevitably some patients will have to go overseas. There are protocols in place which ensure that those who are in need of treatment overseas will go to have their operation overseas. But we have also noticed that very often, we could arrange for specialists to come, let's say, from Reunion, from India to operate on more people here and to optimise the resources that we have. For the Government, it might be easier to get a specialist to come

and operate on ten people in Mauritius rather than sending one person overseas. The patients would be in surroundings that they are used to and it is only going to be better for their recovery. So, we are also looking into this aspect of ensuring that whatever services can be provided locally, we are going to see what can be done in this regard. The House is also aware that on Medi-clinics, we are operating a 24-hour service. Of course, there are some teething problems, but, eventually, I think the people are very happy with the service. It cuts down on lots of unnecessary expenses and with regard to transport, especially at night.

There is one very big problem with regard to the health sector; it is the disposal of hazardous medical waste. This is something that we need, as a Government, to look into very carefully with my colleague, the hon. Minister of Environment because medical hazardous waste is a source of great nuisance. Everybody knows that in Port Louis itself, at Jeetoo Hospital, there is an incinerator which is a source of nuisance. So, we are looking into that aspect as well to see how the problem can be alleviated by a new technology that can look into the disposal of medical waste. Because medical waste cannot be disposed of like any other domestic waste, it has to be disposed of in a very scientific way so that it does not create any other problems.

Madam Speaker, we are also reorganising SAMU and the Accident and Emergency Department. Since SAMU was created in 1997, they have been intervening in lots of emergency situations. There is also the possibility of getting the SAMU to work together with the A and E in a regional hospital so that when SAMU is not being called on, it can also be of help and assistance in the A and E Department of each hospital.

Unfortunately, in Mauritius, diabetes still continues to be a major problem. The prevalence of diabetes and pre-diabetes is very high. I do not want to get into the technical issues of this, but, once again, I have to appeal to the population that they have to be looking after their health. There should be no excess in anything that they consume and they should ensure that they have a healthy way of living.

At times people are not very conscious of their risk factors, so this is why we have the NCD department in the Ministry for the National Prevention Programme and attempts are being made and, in fact, programmes are in place to sensitise people for diabetes as well as counselling and education on risk factors. There is also screening for cervical cancer, for sexually active women aged between 30 to 60 years but I hope that, by the time we come to the end of the five years, this screening of cervical cancer should be extended to teenagers as well because this is, at least, one cancer that is preventable. If it is tackled at a good moment, it is likely to be a source of great progress for the country in the health sector. Breast cancer

unfortunately is increasing and there is screening that is being done but here again there is a programme ongoing which helps women to go for their screening so that if it is detected in time, something can be done about it.

Madam Speaker, we all know recently the co-pilot of the Germanwings plane who, because of psychological problems, crashed the aircraft killing in the process 150 people on board. I recently attended a conference in Geneva on the global action against dementia. With an ageing population, this is going to be a time bomb for us and, according to the estimates, dementia is going to triple within the next 20 to 30 years and dementia is for life long treatment. So, we have really to do something about this dementia issue unless ...

(Interruptions)

So we need to have a national strategy to deal with the early screening of mental disease and mental health. We have to do this in order not to stigmatise people.

Unfortunately, one of the issues with mental health is that if somebody is suffering from a mental health problem and you ask the person to go and see a psychologist or a psychiatrist; it is a problem. Everybody around him will say: No. That is not a case of mental illness. But we must educate people to tell them - yes you must go. Maybe you have no problem but, at least, you have an assessment of the psychological level of the person so that we don't get into the kind of this co-pilot crashing the plane. I am not saying that our pilots...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Jhugroo please!

Mr Gayan: We are working, Madam Speaker, on a national strategic plan on awareness, prevention, risk reduction, diagnosis and rapid response, but for this we also need to build capacity. We want to project Mauritius as a centre of excellence for medical care but for this to happen we need to build the capacity required so that we really offer the best medical services available anywhere in the world. We have young doctors and in the Budget we will be recruiting one hundred medical officers and I'm going to impress upon them that they need to be trained and to specialise in those scarcity areas where we do lack the expertise. We have general practitioners but we need to have specialists in the high-tech areas where medicine is going to move in the future. We cannot lag behind because, if we lag behind, we will never be able to realise the vision that we have of Mauritius, of making it a centre of excellence for tertiary education and also for specialised medical care.

So, all these things are ongoing Madam Speaker. There are lots of other things but I don't want to take too much time of the House. When I met the Director General of the

World Health Organisation Madam Speaker, there was one question that she asked me which really floored me and the question was –

“Do you have universal free medical services in Mauritius?”

I said yes.

“Is that service available to all foreigners?”

I had no immediate answer but when I came back I started to enquire about all those foreign workers whether they are given free medical service in a system which is designed to cater for our people. I have spoken to my colleague the hon. Minister of Labour to see whether those people, who are recruiting workers from overseas, include the medical condition of all workers, first of all and secondly, whether they have an insurance policy to provide for any medical treatment they may require when they come. Otherwise, our resources will be used to service foreigners. I am not speaking of an emergency situation. Of course, any foreigner, in an emergency, will be entitled to medical treatment, but in normal circumstances we should have a system. If I were to travel to Reunion tomorrow I will need a medical insurance, otherwise, I don't get access to that country. So, we also need to be careful. That is why I was saying that she seems to know more about what is happening in this country. Of course, she is in that position but it is important that we also remember that nothing is free in life. Everything is paid for and our vision is to have the best medical treatment that we can have for our people. For that to happen there should be cooperation from everybody and in particular, as I mentioned before, those people who are programmed for operations they must ensure that they are fit for operations and not have operations postponed.

Madam Speaker, let me conclude by saying that this Budget is a budget that is going to ensure the second economic miracle. We are going to fight poverty and this Budget bears the imprint of not only the hon. Minister of Finance but also the Rt. hon. Prime Minister. Since everybody has been quoting from learned authors: Shakespeare and Rousseau, let me also say something about this for both the Rt. hon. Prime Minister and the hon. Minister of Finance –

“Some are born great, some achieve greatness, and some have greatness thrust upon them”.

In our case greatness has been achieved by the hon. Minister of Finance and the Rt. hon. Prime Minister.

I thank you.

(3.01 p.m.)

Mr A. Wong Yen Cheong (Fourth Member for GRNW and Port Louis West):

Madam Speaker, it is indeed a great privilege for me to add my voice to those who preceded me in supporting the National Budget of the *Alliance Lepep* Government led by the Rt. hon. Prime Minister - Sir Anerood Jugnauth.

I am proud today to share my appreciation on the Budget 2015/2016. Madam Speaker, I promised to be short, concise and have all my Parliamentary friends present to be here to listen to me.

I strongly congratulate my colleague, hon. Lutchmeenaraidoo Minister of Finance and Economic Development for presenting to the Mauritian population a Budget which is undoubtedly the most suited in the present context. It is the outcome of a shared vision, mission and direction as well as compassion for our people. The deep and sincere concern of this Government for the population at large is very much reflected in these various economic and social measures which have been announced. The hon. Minister of Finance, through his budget, has on one hand laid the foundation for a near doubling of the GDP growth to 5.7% for 2016/2017. On the other hand, the Budget has been acclaimed by the people as one that meets the needs and aspiration. Therefore, the presentation of the no-tax Budget is no less than a major feat in the actual global context characterised by a general slowdown by the world economy.

Madam Speaker, I must say that I am sad to note that, although this budget is well set to achieve the *deuxième miracle économique*, but some – I would say some - on the other side of the House no less than the hon. Leader of the Opposition and some other Opposition Members have chosen to make comments that are mere rhetoric. What are Members of the Opposition saying, I prefer not to come back on this because we all heard. No, Madam Speaker, each and every measure of this Budget has been thoroughly worked out by the Minister of Finance and Economic Development who has set a realistic and achievable smart goals. This Government has not and will not engage in demagogical promises which cannot be honoured because this Government *a été largement plébiscité par le peuple pour travailler pour le peuple et avec le peuple*.

C'est vrai nous avons tous ici, ou presque tous, fait partie à un moment ou une autre d'une alliance avec les différents partenaires dans ce Parlement. Aussi vrai que le PMSD a fait partie du précédent gouvernement et dans les différentes alliances dans le passé. Mais nous estimons qu'un parti qui se retrouve en alliance ce n'est pas de son devoir d'aller surveiller son partenaire. Il faut qu'il y ait une confiance mutuelle. C'est pour cela je pense

que c'était le travail de l'opposition quand le précédent gouvernement arrivait à faire du travail qui n'était pas correct.

Aujourd'hui, nous sommes fiers de faire partie de cette alliance avec un respect mutuel sous le leadership de Sir Anerood Jugnauth. Tout aussi vrai que nous pensons que c'est le rôle de l'opposition de faire un travail constructif et de veiller à ce que le gouvernement travail en toute honnêteté pour le progrès du pays. Nous savons très bien que face au précédent gouvernement il n'y avait pas d'opposition. Je préfère m'abstenir de commentaires. Cependant, l'opposition ne veut pas dire s'opposer absolument à tout. L'opposition a le devoir de faire des propositions constructives pour aider le pays à avancer. C'est d'ailleurs ce que préconise le modèle westminsterien dont nous nous inspirons. De plus, ne dit-on pas que pour une bonne démocratie, il faut une bonne opposition? Je souhaite vraiment voir cette coopération de l'opposition. Donnons l'exemple à ces jeunes qui étaient là aujourd'hui - ils sont partis - du Lycée La Bourdonnais.

(Interruptions)

Bien sûr, nous donnerons l'exemple.

Madam Speaker: Order, please!

Mr Wong Yen Cheong: Donnons l'exemple à ces jeunes qui sont là aujourd'hui et qui éprouvent l'envie de nous remplacer dans cette auguste Assemblée à l'avenir.

Tout comme l'exemple dont ma colistière a mentionné dans son discours, une campagne exemplaire que nous avons fait avec les adversaires. Nous avons aujourd'hui un gouvernement qui a le courage, à travers le budget ambitieux présenté par mon collègue, l'honorable Lutchmeenaraidoo, de construire pour l'avenir. Prenons l'exemple des temples d'Angkor, des pyramides d'Égypte, de Machu Picchu, de Rome, les œuvres de ceux qui ont gravé l'histoire, qui ont posé les premières pierres sans pour autant en voir la concrétisation. Ce sont des peuples qui ont osé œuvrer pour le futur. C'est aussi ce que j'avais dit lors de mon intervention sur le discours programme du gouvernement de l'Alliance Lepep. Les semences que nous mettrons en terre aujourd'hui ne seront pas pour nos assiettes, mais celle des futures générations. Il revient donc à chacun d'apprécier les projets pharaoniques dont les bases sont jetées par ce présent budget.

Madam Speaker, I fully agree with my colleague to make Mauritius *un vaste chantier de développement* with measures regarding investment and economic development. This will create space for a higher growth path by unlocking major infrastructure projects as it would make optimum use of resources, create employment and give a boost to our construction sector.

Je voudrais, par ailleurs, Madame la présidente, souligner mon appréciation concernant les améliorations dans ma circonscription, Grand Rivière Nord-Ouest/Port Louis Ouest qui sera témoin. Et pour cela, je tiens à remercier le ministre des Finances qui a su écouter avec attention mes propositions. Il les a prises en considération et dans peu de temps la Circonscription No. 1, comme les autres régions du pays, aura un nouveau visage.

Le Budget 2015-2016 est intitulé '*At The Crossroad*' et cela me ramène à un endroit particulier; notamment la jonction de Grande Rivière Nord-Ouest en direction de Pointe aux Sables et La Tour Koenig. Tous les jours, ceux qui passent par cet endroit éprouvent toutes les peines du monde pour rallier la capitale le matin et vice versa l'après-midi. C'est donc avec un immense plaisir et un soulagement que nous accueillons l'ambitieux projet de développement maritime permettant de faire le trajet entre Pointe aux Sables et Port Louis en bateau. Le projet d'extension de la zone portuaire de Pointe aux Sables à Baie du Tombeau va aussi transformer toute cette région. Les habitants de la Circonscription No. 1 seront aussi comblés en termes de projets routiers, de fourniture d'eau, de gestion d'eaux usées, du projet de Marina, entre autres. Ces projets et ce vaste chantier bénéficieront aux habitants de la circonscription, à tout le pays en entier et au secteur touristique.

Madam Speaker, I will now comment on a few bold measures announced in the Budget; the boosting of growth in the SME sector will help transform the economy. The sector has, in fact, been given a new position by providing a quantum leap for this sector in terms of tax incentives, funding through a dedicated SME bank and operating space, thus paving the way forward from red tape to red carpets.

Madam Speaker, the Budget also consolidates the social package with a comprehensive set of measures such as –

- (i) job creation to tackle unemployment;
- (ii) a Marshall Plan to combat poverty;
- (iii) a substantial increase in social benefits;
- (iv) several incentives in respect of housing for low and middle income groups;
- (v) a review of CSR Scheme to render it more effective with a special focus on an indicative list of 38 pockets of poverty;
- (vi) a higher access to water and affordability thereof;
- (vii) a significant review from 19% to 12% of the interest rate in connection with hire purchase;
- (viii) recruitment of 100 medical doctors and other specialists;

- (ix) setting up of an Independent Police Complaints Commission to be presided over by a former judge of the Supreme Court to ensure that the fundamental human rights are respected;
- (x) increase in the budgetary allocation to Rs7.9 billion for the Police department to restore law and order situation.

As I said during my speech on the Government Programme, the future generation should be proud of us and the legacy that we will leave for them. Thus, as announced by the hon. Minister of Finance and Economic Development, we are unlocking 13 employment-rich megaprojects, 8 of which will be designed on the Smart Cities concept and also five techno poles.

Madam Speaker, I will now move to the proposed measures for my Ministry that will enable the Civil Service to at least meet, not to say exceed, the expectation of the population. As executive arm of Government, the Civil Service has proved to be effective in implementing Government policies with even limited resources. It is an undeniable fact that the Civil Service will continue to remain Government's most trusted partner in the socio-economic transformation of the country.

Madam Speaker, this is why reforms in the Civil Service are inescapable, to be able to face the challenges and turbulences in the global competitive environment.

I am glad to see, in line with this Government's 2015-2019, Civil Service modernisation through the use of Information and Communication Technology, (ICT) has been given high importance. We have to take maximum advantage of the power of technology and embrace e-Government. There is no other choice if we want to keep pace with the global trend.

Adoption of e-Government initiatives across the Civil Service is important in promoting inclusion and participatory development and resonates with citizen demands for increased transparency and accountability in public service delivery. It is also instrumental in streamlining operation through better communication and coordination within and across Ministries and Departments, private sector and the public. In short, e-Government is the most effective tool to promote sustainable growth and good governance.

Madam Speaker, as part of this reforms initiative, my Ministry in collaboration with the Ministry of Technology, Communication and Innovation, has a very important role to play to encourage all public sector organisations to harness ICT in their operation. To set the right example, my Ministry is driving a major e-Government initiative, namely, the Human

Resource Management Information System, known as the HRMIS Project which will, indeed, bring a revolution in the management of human resource across the Civil Service. The HRMIS, Madam Speaker, is a priority project of my Ministry which involves a lot of process re-engineering in the management of human resources, ranging from recruitment to retirement. It will be a valuable tool to assist in strategic human resource planning and management. The direct benefits of HRMIS will –

- provide accurate, timely, relevant, user-friendly and complete information will definitely address administrative delays and inefficiency.
- it will reduce paper work to a large extent.
- relieve senior officials from routine tasks and avoid duplication of works;
- enable a judicious use of human and financial resources;
- improve the communication line both intra and inter- Ministries/Departments;
- create a synergy between the Human Resource and Finance Division of Ministries/Departments resulting in timely payments of allowances to public officers, thus reducing considerably the processing time from several days to a few minutes;
- side by side, employees will be empowered to access the basic details and communicate online with the HR Division through a “self-service” application, reducing considerably the need for them to call personally on the HR or Finance Divisions for trivial matters.

Madam Speaker, in addition, my Ministry is coming up with series of bold measures to enable the Civil Service to leap forward and enhance its capacity to better respond to the needs and aspirations of stakeholders and the citizens. Here I would like to mention two such measures.

First, my Ministry is coming up with the much-awaited Public Sector Re-engineering Bureau, as an executive arm of the Reform Steering Council, to effectively drive reforms and ensure the full implementation of reform initiatives across the Civil Service. This Unit will indeed be “*la cheville ouvrière*” to carve out the sectorial reforms required and work together with the line Ministries to attain the desired objectives.

Second, as already announced, the Public Service Bill will also become a reality in the coming months. This legislation will be a major breakthrough for the Public Service and will enable amongst others to –

- establish an apolitical and performance-oriented Public Service that is efficient, effective and economical in serving the Government of the day and the citizens;
- uphold the essential qualities and values of the Public Service;
- define the roles, powers and responsibilities of Ministers, Supervising Officers and Advisers for more accountability.

Quality Management Initiatives

In addition to the above, my Ministry will continue to sustain its efforts towards instilling a quality culture across the Civil Service through the continued implementation of the following initiatives –

- (a) ISO Certification
- (b) Counter Service and Customer Care
- (c) Public Service Excellence Award to recognise and reward excellence

Madam Speaker, all these reform strategies will be void if people do not reform their own attitude and mind-set. However, we should every that the most difficult reform and change to bring is attitude, as it is often said “old habits die hard”. I personally believe that we can capitalise on incremental positive behavioural change by moving out from the comfort zone, “thinking out of the box”, and shifting from business as usual to business as unusual.

Madam Speaker, we have to reckon the fact that there is a problem of attitude and mind-set in certain areas which need to be addressed as a matter of priority. I am very much pleased to note that no less than the Rt. hon. Prime Minister himself has said in very clear terms the need for a change in the mind-set at the level of the population. This will, no doubt, take some time, but I am confident that this change of mind-set will take place and contribute to the success of the reforms that we have already announced.

Madam Speaker, Human Resource Development Strategy. Let me now elaborate on our HRD Strategy. With the advent of major government projects such as Human Resource Management Information System and Performance Management System, a broader dimension and orientation will be given to the training functions to render it more demand-driven, performance-based and reform-oriented in the Civil Service.

Madam Speaker, the Civil Service College, the long-awaited project, will set the foundation and framework for the institutional support towards capacity building through

lifelong learning, training in ICT, e-learning and also multi-skilling. The College will also help to systematically expand training and development efforts across all levels of the Civil Service and also for the various sectors, including State-owned enterprises and parastatals.

Madam Speaker, Ministries and Departments must make a maximum use of online courses through the LMS. The development of e-learning courses in the public sector will complement traditional face-to-face training, with a number of outstanding advantages for public institutions and public officers, including reduced costs, paperless training, increased retention and application to the job and self-responsibility.

Madam Speaker, Training Needs Assessment will be a critical activity and will serve as a diagnostic tool to determining what training needs to take place. Therefore, it is important to train and to develop public officers who will be called upon to carry out Training Needs Assessment at their respective Ministries/Departments. TNA will provide training management with basic skills and tools to identify performance gaps and plug them with the knowledge, skills and abilities needed by the organisations, improve productivity and provide quality services.

Madam Speaker, I will personally ensure that our public officers are provided with the “state-of-the-art” environment conducive to their safety, health, welfare and well-being. In this context, the Occupational Safety and Health Management System will be implemented in a phased manner to create safer, healthier workplace for public officers. In parallel, to strike the right work balance, my Ministry, through the Public Officers Welfare Council, will introduce new leisure activities for the welfare of public officers and their families. If it is often said that happy bees make more honey, I will go a bit further to make the honey sweeter.

Madam Speaker, the greatest difficulty that we are all facing is that, although the Public Service is doing a good job, the results are not always tangible and, therefore, go unnoticed. I will propose a Monitoring and Evaluation Framework customised to fit in the needs of the Public Service in order to assess the social impact and effectiveness of our reform strategies. Monitoring and evaluation will also help to bring about a positive attitude and mind-set, improving performance at our officers and enhance the perception of the Public Service in the eyes of both citizens and non-citizens of the country. Let me here quote Peter Drucker, the Management icon, who said –

“What cannot be measured cannot be managed and what cannot be managed cannot be measured”.

Madam Speaker, this Budget lays the foundation for a more equitable and better Mauritius. Everything will come at the appropriate time. Let's not forget that this Government has obtained a clear mandate of five years. The people of this country will see the change.

Before concluding, I would like to seize this opportunity to pay tribute to the good work being done by the vast majority of the public officers all across the Civil Service who are working diligently and honestly.

Madam Speaker, once again, I congratulate my colleague, hon. Vishnu Lutchmeenaraidoo, Minister Finance and Economic Development, as well as his whole Budget team, and I wish to put on record their support to help me to build a better nation through the Civil Service.

With these words, I thank you, Madam Speaker.

(3.22 p.m)

Mr T. Benydin (First Member for La Caverne & Phoenix): *Madam Speaker,* permettez-moi tout d'abord de remercier et de féliciter l'honorable ministre des Finances pour les mesures magistrales énoncées dans son discours du budget pour l'exercice 2015-2016. Nous sommes pour autant heureux de constater et de témoigner que 25 ans après, notre ministre des Finances, l'honorable Vishnu Lutchmeenaraidoo, n'a pas changé d'un iota. S'il était là, j'allais lui dire "*You are constant as the northern star, and you are also a man of all seasons*", et que sa volonté et son optimisme béat sont parmi les caractéristiques qui l'ont inspiré et encouragé à présenter, au nom du gouvernement, un budget de relance qui inspire confiance, et qui s'inscrit dans les orientations du discours-programme et les promesses faites à la population par le biais du manifeste électoral de L'Alliance LEPEP.

Madam Speaker, avec les consultations qui ont précédé la présentation de ce budget, le ministre des Finances a aussi, avec la bénédiction de notre Premier ministre et les *Leaders* de l'Alliance LEPEP, fait triompher la démocratie participative et surtout le dialogue social, tant souhaité et voulu par les partenaires sociaux, les syndicats et les organisations de notre société civile. Ainsi, le '*feel good factor*' de notre gouvernement se consolide de jour en jour et est devenu maintenant le '*feel better factor*' avec les mesures sociales et surtout avec les 13 méga projets et le démarrage d'un vaste chantier ; la création des 8 *smart cities*. La promotion des petites et moyennes entreprises et la nouvelle structure du développement économique et social qui permettront, dans une grande mesure, à propulser et générer des nouveaux emplois pour les jeunes et ceux et celles en quête d'un travail durable, décent et digne.

Madam Speaker, si avant la présentation du budget, un sondage de 85% de la population était favorable de l'action du gouvernement, il est un fait indéniable que maintenant avec la présentation du budget, le nombre de satisfaits a davantage augmenté. Bravo au Premier Ministre, au ministre des Finances et à notre équipe gouvernementale !

La décision courageuse de gouvernement d'initier un Plan Marshall contre la pauvreté est très salubre. Cela permettra au gouvernement d'adopter une nouvelle approche pour l'accroissement de l'aide et soutien aux plus démunis et aux familles les plus pauvres et vulnérables de notre société et ceux qui vivent dans les cités et dans des conditions déplorables. A cet effet, il faut souligner les mesures courageuses pour la provision des fonds au ministère du Logement pour la construction de 1,000 logements sociaux aux familles dont les revenus mensuels sont moins de R 10,000 ainsi bien que les fonds relatifs à la construction de 700 *housing units* pour les familles les plus vulnérables sous l'égide du *National Empowerment Foundation*.

Madam Speaker, housing is one of the basic and fundamental human rights and a socio-economic right offering protection and providing security to the citizens. It is, therefore, imperative that while taking care of social housing for the have-nots, provision of housing should be accompanied by basic living needs such as safe drinking water, good sanitation, accessible roads and drainage facilities.

Une autre décision révolutionnaire pour venir en aide aux groupes vulnérables concerne ce droit fondamental de la distribution d'eau gratuite à chaque famille de l'ordre de six mètres cubes par mois.

Water is the lifeblood of every human being. This provision, therefore, constitutes a major breakthrough in the promotion of the Welfare State and an equitable society and in essence, a pro-poor and inclusive development strategy for the Republic of Mauritius.

Madam Speaker, les entreprises du secteur privé ont aussi un rôle important à jouer dans le combat contre la pauvreté. Elles ne peuvent se contenter de leurs profits et miroiter leurs chiffres d'affaires et d'offrir des salaires faméaux aux chefs et patrons seulement. Le secteur privé a donc une responsabilité d'aider le gouvernement à améliorer le quotidien et la qualité de vie des groupes défavorisés et vulnérables, d'où la nécessité de revoir le fonctionnement du *CSR* (Responsabilité Sociale des Entreprises). Cependant, laisser seule aux entreprises la responsabilité de gérer et d'octroyer l'assistance financière aux ONG, selon leurs propres critères, pourrait entraîner des difficultés et contraintes à long terme. Donc, il

nous faut avoir un système efficace de '*monitoring*' afin d'éviter des exclusions et de veiller à ce que le parrainage par le privé se passe dans les meilleures conditions et selon la politique du gouvernement pour éradiquer la pauvreté et l'exclusion sociale.

Bravo aussi au ministre des Finances pour cette courageuse décision d'exercer un contrôle strict sur les jeux du hasard et de faire disparaître les cartes à gratter, qui, au lieu d'enrichir, entraîne beaucoup de nos citoyens vers un endettement conséquent car il est évident qu'il y a toujours plus de perdants que de gagnants.

Madam Speaker, under the previous Government, growth and development have been impeded by a number of factors, namely, inappropriate policies and strategies leading to no significant and sustainable improvement in living standards of people. In this context, Government's strategy to facilitate business and boost up investment with the expectation of a growth rate exceeding 5% is most welcome and a laudable effort to meet the challenging objectives of full employment. Even Statistics Mauritius – today I have read in the newspaper – forecasts already a growth rate of 4.1% for this year and to this end we cannot understand the pessimistic position of the Opposition regarding improvement in our growth rate.

We have reasons to be more confident now that high investments, in particular the 13 Mega projects with the eight smart cities will boost up public infrastructure development and will generate thousands of jobs in the country.

Madam Speaker, it goes without saying that "an appropriate Wage Policy" is an essential component of a favourable investment climate and that an active labour market policy will help to curb down unemployment and all forms of disguised employment, including casualisation and precarious forms of labour.

Our National Employment Policy should, therefore, focus essentially on reviewing at regular intervals remuneration and conditions of service together with a better scheme for the allocation of pension benefits to workers, especially those working in the private sector.

Madam Speaker, "Labour is not a commodity". This is spelt out clearly in unequivocal terms by the International Labour Office (ILO). In this context, Government's decision to amend and revisit the two labour laws is commendable and will, no doubt, instill a new era of industrial relations, both in the private and public sectors, with decent working conditions and salaries, which will contribute to make work and labour sustainable. We also acclaim Government's policy to reject in all its forms job discrimination, and to promote

transparency in job recruitment with the sacrosanct principles of meritocracy and good governance.

In the context of the proposed Wage Policy, appropriate measures should therefore be undertaken to sustain and support *le pouvoir d'achat des bas salaires, d'où la nécessité grandissante d'introduire le salaire minimum dans le pays.*

Nous sommes confiants que dans le contexte des mesures du budget, le gouvernement réalisera une gouvernance économique efficace et responsable et qui place l'emploi au cœur du développement économique et social. Egalement, les entreprises doivent éviter d'avoir recours aux licenciements abusifs et d'éliminer les écarts des salaires entre hommes et femmes.

Madam Speaker, it is very reassuring that the budget focusses on essential factors, namely –

- Reinforcement of social security and social protection measures to eliminate poverty and focusing on targeted vulnerable groups - with a lion's share of a total provision of Rs 27.5 billion for social security expenditure
- Strengthening the regulatory environment of the financial sector to attract international asset and activate promotion campaigns, especially Global Business activities in Africa with the creation of the Financial Services Promotion Agency;
- the setting up of a National Ocean Council to implement the Ocean Economy Project;
- improvement of the quality of education from pre-primary to tertiary levels, revamping of the vocational training with the provision of Rs14.7 billion to the Ministry of Education;
- reinforcement of law and order with the recruitment of 600 additional Police Officers and the setting up of a Police Academy to promote efficient training capacity;
- as pointed out by the Minister of Civil Service and Administrative Reforms, hon. Wong Yen Cheong, reforms of the public sector, in particular, the launching of the Civil Service College which will inevitably contribute towards providing a world-class service to the nation, and

- the setting up of a Legacy Sovereign Fund to ensure accountability and transparency in public sector bodies like the SIC, Casino de Maurice, etc. is indeed a step forward to ensure and guarantee good governance and best practices.

Madam Speaker, such measures contained in the Budget, will serve as a more effective instrument of resource allocation to ensure not just a progression of GDP growth, but also to meet the achievement of important social objectives, such as employment creation, poverty elimination, promotion of quality education, training and skills, housing facilities, food security, especially bio farming, green energy and environment protection, amongst others.

Madam Speaker, as concluding remarks, I make bold to say that in essence, this is a mega - what we call in the Creole language - this is a *mari* Budget, a smart Budget worked out by a smart Government for the economic and social well-being and interests of the citizens of Mauritius. It is also said, and I quote –

“No man is an island.”

And that -

“No island is a world in itself.”

But with the serious commitment of our Government, under the able leadership of Sir Anerood Jugnauth, Mauritius can be qualified as being “a world in itself.”

At the crossroad, in this context, we have to look forward in the right direction and, in this regard, I can only wish Godspeed for the successful implementation of the budgetary measures for 2015-2016 and, above all, I am sure we are going to realise the second economic miracle.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Lesjongard!

(3.36 p.m.)

Mr G. Lesjongard (Second Member for Savanne & Black River): Merci, Madame la présidente. Madame la présidente, merci de me donner l’occasion d’intervenir sur le premier budget de l’Alliance *Lepep*, budget présenté par l’honorable ministre des Finances le 23 mars et budget qui a pour titre « *At the Crossroad* ». Etre à la croisée des chemins, en d’autres mots, nous sommes arrivés à un carrefour et la question qui est posée est : quelle direction prendre, aller tout droit, revenir sur ses pas ou changer de direction ? De toute façon, Madame la présidente, dans n’importe quelle direction que nous allons, le temps nous

dira si cela a été une bonne ou une mauvaise direction. La question que je me suis posée et en préparant mon discours c'était de savoir quel langage adopter et le choix a été comme toujours très clair ; un langage de vérité. Langage que j'ai toujours pratiqué durant ces 15 dernières années dans cette auguste Assemblée. Depuis 2005, j'ai été très critique à l'égard des budgets présentés par le régime du docteur Navin Ramgoolam. Que ces budgets furent présentés par l'honorable docteur Sithanen, l'honorable Xavier-Luc Duval ou l'honorable Pravind Jugnauth, j'ai émis des critiques. Tout le temps c'était des critiques bien fondées et constructives, et je ne vais pas déroger de ce principe aujourd'hui. Je qualifierais ce budget comme un budget qui a du bon mais aussi du moins bon.

Commençons par le moins bon!

(Interruptions)

Ce budget, Madame la présidente, ne rassure pas totalement la population sur certains sujets préoccupants tels que le pouvoir d'achat ou la création d'emplois. Mais, par contre - et là c'est du bon - il allège la souffrance des familles en interdisant certains jeux du hasard et il en était temps, Madame la présidente. Par contre, dans la lutte contre la pauvreté, le ministre joue le rôle de Ponce Pilate. Il donne l'impression que l'État se décharge dans la lutte contre la pauvreté et ce n'est pas une bonne chose, Madame la présidente.

At paragraph 7, under the title 'Economic Review', the Minister of Finance shares with us some of the key figures in his Budget, and I quote –

“In 2014, the unemployment rate stood at 7.8 per cent, with a high concentration of jobless among our youths and women.”

He also states that –

“And the current account showed a deficit of Rs39.6 billion, representing 10.3 per cent of GDP.”

And a budget deficit of 3.2 per cent and he expects that growth for 2015-2016 will be of the order of 5.3 per cent! And for 2016 and 2017, it will be of the order of 5.7 per cent. But he is very silent on the inflation rate and on the unemployment rate. Having shared these figures with us, he then states that we are at the crossroad and warns the population that if Government adopts a no policy change or a business as usual approach, we face a bleak future.

With regard to social justice, he confirms what everybody has been saying under the Labour Party regime, that is, the rich are becoming richer and the poor are becoming poorer and it is high time that we redress this situation. He, therefore, Madam Speaker, sets the four major objectives of the actual Government, that is, high investment leading to high

employment; long term sustainable development; greater social justice, and transparency and good governance.

I shall dwell now with the issues of high investment leading to high employment, long term sustainable development and greater social justice. He states that in order to achieve the above, he is proposing the implementation of 13 mega projects, projects which are qualified as employment-rich and will lead to the creation of 'Smart Cities'. To implement the 13 projects, he says that we will require Rs120 billions of investment and some 7,000 *arpents* of land. I believe some of which is going to be prime agricultural land.

If you would allow me, Madam Speaker, I would again repeat what I said under the Labour Party regime when I intervened on the Budget that was presented by Rama Sithanen in 2007. I am repeating myself because I do not want the same mistakes to happen again. Although I support this type of development, I feel that we should be very cautious.

J'avais interrogé le ministre à l'époque sur la qualité d'investissement qu'il comptait attirer. Et, par la suite, nous avons eu les fameux projets Jin Fei, Neo Town et d'autres. Si on parle de la qualité d'investissement que le pays a besoin, il ne faut pas non plus négliger la qualité de cet investissement. L'exemple est très simple et je prendrais l'être humain comme l'exemple. Ce n'est non seulement la quantité qu'une personne consomme, mais aussi la qualité qu'il consomme qui a une incidence directe sur sa santé et son espérance de vie. On a fait cette bêtise dans le passé et nous payons le prix aujourd'hui. Nous avons souillé la beauté de notre pays dans plusieurs endroits avec des développements sauvages, ne respectant pas les normes de construction. Ce qu'il faudrait aujourd'hui dans cette croissance basée sur le développement des 13 *Smart Cities*, c'est d'éviter de faire les mêmes bêtises. Il faut donner plus d'attention à la durabilité de notre environnement et c'est cela qui va renforcer cette croissance. Je pense qu'une croissance trop rapide ne peut qu'être provisoire et elle est basée que sur des expédients condamnables. Ces expédients sont principalement: trop de subventions de l'État, une indifférence à l'égard de la protection de notre environnement et une répartition injuste des dépenses publiques. Nous avons connu cela sous l'ère Ramgoolam. Il y a ceux qui croient qu'un pays peut réussir avec une croissance qui n'est pas soutenue. Moi je suis de ceux qui croient qu'une croissance doit être soutenue.

Le précédent régime nous a montré à quel point un gouvernement pouvait gaspiller l'argent public. Hier, on a entendu le ministre Collendavelloo répondre à des questions concernant des projets du *wastewater*. Il faut qu'on arrête cela car c'est l'argent du peuple et dire que nous avons voulu cautionner cela. Madame la présidente, ...

(Interruptions)

Je plaide coupable.

(Interruptions)

Nous devons tous, de ce côté de la Chambre mais aussi certains de l'autre côté de la Chambre, plaider coupables. Ni le MSM, ni le PMSD ne peuvent se dédouaner de la notion de responsabilité collégiale. Nous avons aussi vu, Madame la présidente, à quel degré on a pu faire du tort à notre environnement en construisant sur des cours d'eau, en déviant nos rivières, en faisant certaines de nos régions un amas de béton et en donnant à des petits copains la gestion des îlots à des fins commerciales. Aujourd'hui plus que jamais nous sommes conscients à quel point il faut protéger notre environnement. Je souhaiterais moi que le développement de ces *Smart Cities* se fasse à travers un vrai cahier de charges et pas au détriment de notre environnement.

Nous sommes tous conscients du changement climatique. Les inondations qui frappent souvent notre île nous interpellent. Nous avons récemment été témoins de ces inondations dans le sud de l'île. Le ministre Dayal était venu. Le développement dans cette région a eu une incidence directe sur les habitants. Alors, je souhaiterais, encore une fois, que tout développement qui va se faire dans ce pays prenne en considération la protection de notre environnement. Il faudrait aussi que les *jobs* qui vont être créés pour la construction de ces *Smart Cities* ne soient pas réservés qu'aux étrangers. Il faudrait mettre un peu d'ordre dans ces compagnies de construction qui ne recrutent que des travailleurs étrangers. Un des actifs les plus importants en matière de développement est le capital humain. Et le Premier ministre actuel le sait très bien car il a toujours mis le mauricien au centre de tout développement. Le principal actif de la plupart des pauvres, c'est le capital humain. C'est pourquoi je crois fermement en cette nation mauricienne. C'est une nation de bâtisseurs. Nos ancêtres dans le passé nos enfants aujourd'hui! Faisons leur confiance et donnons-leur les outils nécessaires afin qu'ils puissent bâtir l'île Maurice de demain. Cette jeunesse vous a fait confiance en décembre et il ne faut pas la laisser tomber. En investissant dans le capital humain on redresse l'inégalité et ce faisant on réduit la pauvreté. Alors il est temps de prouver que tous nos enfants auront une éducation de qualité, qu'ils soient scolarisés à Quatre Bornes, à Briqueterie, à Rose Hill, à Baie du Cap. Disons non à toute forme de favoritisme, de copinage ou de népotisme.

The Minister should be very careful when he defines those 13 projects. Especially when he states that the Smart Cities will be designed to be environment friendly, will generate its own resources in terms of energy and water; will provide for state of the art connectivity; will provide smart transportation and reduce traffic congestion.

I would wish to comment on one of these projects which is found in Constituency No.14. This project has been there for quite some time. One can go and check the website: www.montroze.com. It has nothing to do with a smart city in its initial concept. It is defined as an IRS project with 34 villages, 48 apartments, tourist residence of 60 units and a shopping area. They are still looking for investors for the project although they have all the required permits.

Il serait méchant de ma part de dire qu'ils sont en train de chercher des investisseurs avec une torche. Et comme je ne suis pas méchant, je dirais que de nos jours, il n'est pas facile de trouver des investisseurs.

It is for this reason, Madam Speaker, that I would like the Minister, when he sums up, to let us have more information on the six projects, which are ready for implementation.

Let me say a few words on the SME sector. I welcome the creation of an SME bank, but I would wish to know what will happen to the DBM. Concerning the measures for the SME sector, I would wait for the implementation of those measures and then make comments. The reason is that year in and year out, we hear of measures for the SME sector, but when it comes to implementation, our entrepreneurs face a lot of difficulties. I would also want to see the one-stop-shop in action. I think it is a big mistake to let SMEDA manage the one-stop shop. They do not have the capacity to do so and on top of that, asking them to collect trade fees on behalf of local authorities will be another burden for them. I wonder who made that proposal.

As far as transforming Port Louis harbour from a port destination to a regional hub, I sincerely believe that this is achievable. But here again, we should be careful. I wish that the Master Plan which is under preparation by the Mauritius Ports Authority be made public, so that, all stakeholders, including the civil society, be allowed to have a look and make comments.

Concerning the restructuring of IRS and RES, I do not know what Government has in mind, but let me draw the attention of the Government to a situation which I believe is unacceptable. Government, in this Budget, has taken the decision to ban publicity on gaming. I am not saying that Government should ban publicity related to IRS and RES, but Government should exercise control on the contents of publicity related to IRS or RES. For example, again in Constituency No. 14, next to Ruisseau Créole, a promoter is advertising for the sale of Villas under an RES project to foreigners and he has put, in big letters or figures, the price of those Villas, 483,000 euros. And next to that billboard, there is a place called Camp Lacolle.

(Interruptions)

This is serious! The place is called Camp Lacolle. Those families do not have water. We should not allow such things to happen; that is, having on a billboard the sale of a villa at 483,000 Euros and next to that billboard, families without water supply.

This does not send that image of Mauritius '*c'est un plaisir*' to tourists visiting our country. Concerning the Agro-Industry and Fishing, I would just comment and say that I was surprised yesterday to hear from the hon. Minister responsible for Agro-Industry that almost 10,000 hectares of land have been abandoned by our small planters. I think one of the solutions is, in the present Budget, that is, bio-farming. It can be a solution, but, I think, it will require a lot of subsidies at the beginning. I have also been hearing about agri-solar farms for quite some years now. This is another solution, that is, in addition to bio-farming, the farmer is producing electricity, but there are no incentives in that direction in the Budget.

The Minister responsible for energy is present. Let me make a few comments with regard to the energy, water and wastewater sector.

I will comment, first, on the electricity sector. This budget has not addressed such a vital sector of the economy and any developing nation builds its economy on a sound energy policy. Energy is vital and cannot be dissociated with GDP growth. If, as the hon. Minister of Finance says, we are at the crossroad, then the energy sector is also at the crossroad. There are two important issues, one related to our electricity production and the other to our environment. By putting aside the LRT project, we will definitely maintain our reliance on petroleum products for quite some time. Hence, it is more than required to abate our carbon dioxide emissions.

We are today at one kilogram of carbon dioxide per kilowatt hour generated with a mix of energy comprising of 40% coal, 40% fuel oil, 15% bagasse, 4% hydro and 1% solar or renewable energy. The long-term energy strategy that was laid down by the previous Government targeted renewable energy to 35% in 2025. Today, we are at 20% renewable energy out of which 19 is hydro and bagasse. In other words, renewable energy, that is solar and wind energy is only 1%, that is, from 2007 to 2015, we have achieved only 1% of renewable energy related to solar or wind energy. At this pace, we will require 150 years to reach 35% of renewable energy related to solar and wind. How are we going to realise the ambition of a Smart Mauritius with such figures? This shows a clear failure of our energy strategy. This budget must make allowance for a clear energy strategy. Intentions and goals in the mind should be translated into clear mission and vision, then, proper strategy worked out to elaborate solid plans with realistic implemented schedules. It seems that Government has

once again obliterated the opportunity to redress the situation in the energy sector. The situation of *'laissez-faire'* is continuing without a driver in the seat. I think the hon. Minister replied to a question by the hon. Leader of the Opposition today morning and I have put in my speech that there is no Chairperson, no General Manager at the Central Electricity Board for the time being. But I need to congratulate the hon. Minister for the bold decision to abort the CT Power Project.

(Interruptions)

I said the CT Power Project. From the very beginning, I had said that I am against the project because it was an unsolicited project. We have wasted nine years for a single project and during those nine years, we have been unable to tackle the energy problems in our country correctly. This should never happen again. Therefore, time has come to ask the CEB to update its integrated plan 2013 to 2022.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Henry, please!

Mr Lesjongard: We have to define our target for the future generation mix in light of current world trends and best practices. We heard about LNG and the pre-feasibility study was tabled by the former Minister. The question today is: what next? We also heard about studies on geothermal energy. Again, no outcome! The National Energy Commission produced the report. The *Collectif l'énergie* submitted a report to the Minister. Again, what next? There is also the project of 4x15 MW at St. Louis Power Station. We have also heard recently of a project at Fort George. If I may say, in that sector, we are in total darkness.

With regard to renewable energy, apart from investment in renewable energy system to be deductible...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Jahangeer! Please, don't interrupt!

Mr Lesjongard: ...from chargeable income. What incentives are there in this Budget? Small planters and SIPPs have remained *aux oubliettes*.

Do we think that CEB alone can achieve 35% renewable energy? No, Madam Speaker. We have to move fast. The Utility Regulatory Authority is still not operational. This Budget fails to redress some of the pertinent issues I have raised in the energy sector.

The MID Unit has been dissolved. What about the MID vision today? Where is the MID Fund? Where is the CEB contributing annually Rs300 m.? Renewable energy has been shifted from the Ministry of Energy and Public Utilities to the Ministry of Environment,

Sustainable Development and Disaster and Beach Management. What is the rationale behind that?

I wish to refer here to the speech I made in 2008 when the then Government introduced the MID concept; *et c'est toujours d'actualité. J'avais dit à l'époque: c'est un vaste chantier.* The concept should not be linked only to energy problems. *C'est un modèle de vie. C'est de faire les Mauriciens vivre et mettre en pratique ce modèle de vie.* It is also about creating jobs for the people of our country; new types of jobs. We have known the blue-collar jobs, then the white-collar jobs. Now, it is time for the green-collar jobs, for the people of all walks of life.

I said that seven years ago, and I am saying it again. *Notre vision de ce concept de l'île Maurice Durable est limité, et c'est ça le problème.* When I say it is about creating jobs, it is about creating jobs such as Environmental Consultants, Biological System Engineer, Environmental Engineer, Green Building Architects, Solar Energy Engineers, Wind Energy Engineers, and Ecology Educators. Not only for professionals, but also for manual jobs such as Organic Farmers, Eco-Technology Workers, Eco-Electricians, Eco-Plumbers, Eco-Construction Workers. We are far away from that. We have wasted a lot of time, Madam Speaker. We should not...

(Interruptions)

That's why I am saying time has proved me right, Madam Speaker. On est passé complètement à côté de la plaque. Maintenant, Monsieur le Premier ministre, la balle est dans votre camp. Allons voir ce que ce nouveau gouvernement va réaliser dans quelque temps.

(Interruptions)

Grid for smart cities has been announced in the Budget. One of the mandatory conditions is that they will produce their own electricity. Then, if this is the case, Government should come forward with a new strategy for the energy sector. Wastewater projects! Year in, year out, I have raised the issue of cost overrun on wastewater projects. Yesterday, we heard the hon. Minister. I think it is high time. There is a report, I brought the report, and I am going to give it to the hon. Minister. That report dates back to 2011. It is a very clear report. It states that from 2008 until today all of the projects that have been executed by the Wastewater Management Authority have had cost overrun; all of the projects, Madam Speaker.

With regard to the water sector, one cannot talk of the water sector without talking of the Bagatelle Dam and the implementation of that dam which is costing the Mauritian people a lot of money.

Let me come to '*Nation Zougadère*'. I definitely welcome these measures. It was high time that we do away with those gambling activities, and I believe that the lobby must have been very strong. I do understand that, as it involves a lot of money. But I need to congratulate Government for those decisions. Now, I wish to see the implementation of those decisions.

Concerning horseracing, I put a question yesterday but, unfortunately, the hon. Prime Minister could not reply to that question. I believe that we should implement the recommendations of that Commission of Enquiry before the start *de la saison hippique* in our country. Players are waiting...

(Interruptions)

It is difficult, but it is not impossible. If we really want, like we say, *mettre de l'ordre dans cette mafia*, we should start now and not wait.

Madam Speaker, with regard to allocation of State land, I am happy that decisions are now being taken. Greater transparency should be there in the allocation of State land. But, like we say, the proof of the pudding is in the eating. We need to see, because we heard of people leaving this country with suitcases full of money after having sold land that belong to the people of this country.

I will end up, Madam Speaker, with regard to the housing sector and the Marshall Plan against poverty. There are some measures with regard to the housing sector which I think everybody welcomes, that is, the increase with regard to the casting of slabs, construction materials. But, with regard to the construction of houses in the various regions of this country, I think we should be able to build more houses for those families who are in urgent need of a house.

Concerning the Marshall Plan against poverty, I do not think Government should remove all the guidelines - I think the previous orator said that - with regard to the CSR. As a Government, you cannot put everything on the shoulders of the private sector. This decision was not there in the Government Programme 2015-2019. I am, therefore, urging Government to review that decision. True it is that we need the private sector, but Government should keep control on what the private sector does. It has been proven that, with regard to poverty alleviation, we require not only the private sector, but the private sector, Government and other stakeholders like NGOs in those various regions.

Madam Speaker, I will end up here. I have made my comments the way I usually do. Donnons le temps au temps. Donnons la chance à ce nouveau gouvernement. Il y a beaucoup de bonnes intentions dans le discours, mais le temps nous dira si on a pu implémenter ce qui a

été prévu dans le budget. C'est toujours comme ça. La population attend toujours ceux qui gouvernent au tournant et le tournant viendra. A ce moment-là on saura si au carrefour ou si à la croisée des routes, vous avez pris le bon chemin.

Merci, Madame la présidente.

(4.14 p.m)

Mr S. Bholah (Second Member for Montagne Blanche & GRSE): Madam Speaker, our visionary Budget is meant to bring us through the 21st century with a bang. Each and every citizen of this nation is now committed to an economy that rewards hard work, generates rising income and allows everyone to share in the prosperity of a growing Mauritius.

As a great patriot, Sir Anerood Jugnauth, irrespective of his age, has stood up to save our country. We are shocked by every day's saga of corruptions that are being revealed. During the last decade, when people had no food at home, their dues were being shared through some golden handshakes, among a few friends.

Madam Speaker, the people are the Government and the Rt. hon. Prime Minister has said it so well on the occasion of his 85th birthday, and I quote: "The people are the Government, they have sovereign power". And they made the right choice some three months ago and we shall live up to the expectations. I can say with confidence, that we have at present the best Government.

Thanks to Sir Anerood Jugnauth and his team, 'a feel good factor' reigns in the country right now. *Les Mauriciens ont retrouvé le sourire.* The frustrations that Mauritians were living in during the last decade have dissipated.

This Budget is all set to help working families feeling more secure. Those who want to upgrade their skills can follow necessary courses, and hence, compete for higher-paid jobs. Bold actions and strategies will be taken to give a serious boost to the SME sector. Our local entrepreneur is embarking on a revolutionary journey. Entrepreneurship has now to evolve from a niche mind-set into a powerful, mainstream movement. We invite our people to share their business innovation because we are ready to talk business

Madam Speaker, let me now come to the SME sector and the measures which have been announced in the Budget Speech. In the course of the electoral campaign, we had made it clear that our intention was to make the SME sector the backbone of the economy and to use it as an engine of growth.

In the Government Programme this pledge was renewed and we even committed ourselves to allocate Rs10 billion to the sector over the next five years. The Budget Speech now is testimony that it was not mere rhetoric but sincere commitment.

Let me make it clear to the House. Seeking to improve the competitiveness of SMEs is not only about understanding problems confronting businesses in the sector, it is also about a better understanding of how to overcome these barriers. This is why we maintain that we have made the correct diagnosis and applied the appropriate remedies.

Madam Speaker, it is in the face of this ordeal that many potential and budding entrepreneurs give up after having tried hard to set up their own enterprise. I have heard and read multiple comments following the Budget Speech, that: “We do not have an entrepreneurial culture”. Therefore, this being the case, we are bound to fail and it implies that one of the pillars of the Budget was frail and fragile and would never yield the expected results.

Academics, consultants and other self-appointed gurus are very fond of this kind of argumentation. It makes the headlines and gives them some unexpected visibility. However, let me take a trip down memory lane, and if we can scan the literature available we would find the same rhetoric popping up time and again. When we moved from an agricultural economy into an industrial one, did we have an industrial culture?

When we created the free zone, was our labour prepared for this adventure? Were our investors geared towards becoming industrialists and, today, we pride in calling them ‘captains of the industry’. The same story goes for the move from an industrial economy to a service economy and eventually to a knowledge economy.

However, despite all odds we have navigated the rough seas and today we are cited as an example around the world. This momentous change was brought about by the duo of Sir Anerood Jugnauth and Vishnu Lutchmeenaraidoo. Today we have the same team, but with a more sophisticated vision, a committed Government and a *‘lepep admirab’*. Together, I am convinced that we will succeed.

Madam Speaker, we know that there is a lot of compliance burden confronting the SMEs. Hence, we are simplifying the business information process by lessening the current onerous regulations, reducing the plethora of licences and by providing mentorship.

It is common knowledge that our local entrepreneurs face all sorts of problems in their daily activities and these include, amongst others, a poor understanding of tax, VAT, national insurance and bookkeeping, as well as difficulties in obtaining capital and the absence of a guaranteed income. They constantly have to battle against unfair bureaucratic, financial and

administrative burdens. It very often looks like an obstacle course, and coming out of it successfully is not given to anybody and if ever he comes out then he must be congratulated as a 'commando entrepreneur'. Very often, they also point to the shortage of working capital as the prime cause of business failure. Lack of adequate start-up funds has a knock on effect restricting development and growth by reducing funds available for activities such as advertising, publicity and acquisition of suitable premises. They also face issues such as the low level of demand for their products and services as well as the nature of marketplace competition. Many nascent entrepreneurs also express concern about difficulties in identifying and contacting potential customers.

Madam Speaker, a major boost that we are giving to young entrepreneurs is the possibility for them to obtain a loan from the SME bank without personal guarantee. In the past, entrepreneurs have repeatedly drawn attention that their projects are stalled or squarely failed just because commercial banks or other financing institutions did not trust them. We, as a Government, would like to demonstrate our act of faith towards young entrepreneurs. We are aware that some might fail but they will learn from their mistakes, while others have been hesitant. We have taken the bold leap ahead. The Budget 2015 is restoring the link between hard work and opportunity.

Madam Speaker, we have adopted a bottom-up approach and listen to their sad plight and predicament. What have we done? We are creating an SME bank. We acknowledged that this is not the easiest route, but we are confident that the creation of such an institution would be beneficial not only to the SME community but to the economy as a whole. An SME bank would specialise in creating the right financial instruments and schemes to meet the demands of the SME community. It will give us the possibility for adopting novel approaches to meet unexpected challenges. In addition, the SMEs will not have to compete with larger corporation to ensure funding. The larger corporations have better credit rating vis-à-vis commercial banks and they have preferential treatment. In the case of an SME bank that form of discrimination would not arise. I would say that it is a manna falling from heaven for the SMEs.

As regards the working capital requirements, we have teamed up with the State Bank of Mauritius and they will assist young entrepreneurs with some special packages.

Creation of one Stop Shop

Madam Speaker, one of the most acute problems faced by entrepreneurs in general, and SMEs in particular, is in respect of licences and clearances. A number of permits,

licences or clearances required to set up a business or even to run and then later expand, is mind blowing. It is a big deterrent.

If we really want to create that “*nation d’entrepreneurs*”, we have no other solutions to take the bull by the horn and address this thorny issue. This problem is not new and may attempts have been made in the past to solve it or at least to minimise its effect. However, we have met with luke warm success not to say total failure in certain situations. I must point out that no one considers that he is to be blamed because where an institution regulates, it does so in the interest of the public. But over the years, the pile of regulations compounded from all institutions, have made it impossible to do business.

Madam Speaker, we believe in the SME-friendliness. The SMEDA is expected to play a major role in technical assistance and mentorship. SMEDA will have to work more efficiently in order to reduce the failure rate of business in Mauritius and equip businesses with the correct tools to grow. We have decided to use a big bang approach and extend the mandate of SMEDA so that it will henceforth operate as a One Stop Shop. It will act as a single window for all licences, permits and other clearances for entrepreneurs.

SMEDA will assist as a single window and use a fast track mechanism to obtain approval for all licences. I am also pleased to inform the House that consultations are being held with the Mauritius Post Ltd. so that their network of 113 Post Offices could be used for the collection of dues to be paid by any entrepreneur to SMEDA which will then transmit to the regulatory authorities.

In addition to the issue of licences and other clearances, SMEs have to travel through a labyrinth of institutions to obtain Business Development Services. This is a huge hurdle which they have to overcome.

The One Stop Shop will house under one single roof all Business Development Services which an entrepreneur requires.

We are adopting a model which does not exist anywhere else and we are confident it will be a huge success. The challenge is huge. The task is gigantic. I am fully aware of the implications because work has already started and progress is underway. However, we are bound to succeed for one single reason. There is total commitment in all respect to adhere to the decision of Government and to make it happen.

Cancellation of 32 licences and simplification of 38 others

Madam Speaker, in addition to the One Stop Shop, we have also decided to relieve the burden of the business community by removing or simplifying around 70 permits or

clearances. In this context, 32 permits will be cancelled and 38 others will be simplified. This adds to our efforts and commitment to ease the task of the business community.

Increasing the VAT Threshold

Madam Speaker, as I pointed out earlier, the SME community has a poor understanding of the tax administration and the VAT. Very often, they find themselves entangled in the process of registration and failure on their part result in payment of penalties. Many efforts have been done to ease their burden and we have now gone one step further. We have raised the threshold for VAT registration from a turnover of Rs4 m. annually to Rs6 m. annually. This measure will remove most SMEs outside the bracket of those compelled to be VAT registered.

In addition to the increase of the VAT Registration Threshold, a major policy decision is the 8-year tax holiday for enterprises that register with the One Stop Shop. A similar measure was introduced in the 1980's and the results were beyond expectation in terms of investment. Today, this measure is being tailor-made for SMEs and we expect that they will realise how far Government is willing to go to facilitate their activities.

Industrial Parks

Madam Speaker, acquisition or accessing suitable premises for SMEs to carry out their activities is not within the reach of most micro and small enterprises. Many micro and small enterprises attempt to conduct businesses on their own premises at home. This results in multiple problems for themselves and their neighbours. At times, it ends in tense relationship with their environment. In addition, they have to go through a lengthy process of obtaining permits from the local authorities and other licensing institutions. Government is fully aware of these issues and we have taken the bold decision of providing for seven additional industrial parks adding up to the three already constructed.

However, we are not going around in a haphazard way. Once we assumed office, we decided to have a Master Plan for the development of industrial parks around the country. The Master Plan is almost ready and once it is approved, industrial parks will be constructed in accordance with the demand for space by the SMEs. We are also considering the possibility of using part of the land available for the creation of site and services units.

Madam Speaker, insofar as the handicraft sector is concerned, one important measure has been proposed. In fact, one of the major problems faced by our local artisans is the lack of visibility and access to market to showcase their products. In this budget, provision is being made for the Tourism Act to be amended so that all the tourist shops where destination products are sold, 20% of the space is reserved for products manufactured locally. There are

many such boutiques around the country. We have already inventoried the places where these boutiques are situated and amendments to the law will be proposed in the Finance Bill. We hope this will provide sufficient space for the local artisans to prosper.

In addition, we are looking into all MoUs we have with friendly countries such as India, Pakistan and others and we want to use the facilities provided to us to bring master craftsmen who may improve the skills of our local artisans to open new avenues for them in terms of quality and new lines of products.

Madam Speaker, my Ministry is not only about enterprise, but its mandate, as its name indicates, is about business as well. In this context, we are thinking seriously about measures to boost businesses in general in Mauritius.

Last year, we organised, for the first time, the National Inclusive Business Award. It was a success, but we could not canvass as much participation as a Ministry would have wished. I have this year requested that we start the process earlier and work hard to secure the participation of as many businesses and enterprises as possible. However, I propose to set up at the level of my Ministry an Inclusive Business Unit. I am pleased to inform the House that an amount of Rs5 m. has been included in the budget for the organisation of the award and the setting up of this unit. We have also been promised the required human resources to man the unit. In fact, inclusiveness is the participation of one and all in the development of the country. Government is making considerable efforts in transforming the mindset of entrepreneurs by encouraging enterprises in adopting the inclusive business model so that they can diversify, transform and grow their businesses in a sustainable manner.

Participation in International Fairs SME Refund Scheme

From 2012 to 2014, 318 enterprises have benefitted from the SMEs Refund Scheme for participation in International Export Promotion Events. As from this year, the scheme will be manned by SMEDA and an amount of Rs40 m. has been included in the budget.

Madam Speaker, I have elaborated on the various measures we have proposed in the budget. These measures are there for the taking. It is now up to the entrepreneurs to use them. Some of the sceptics will argue that there have always been an array of measures for enterprises and what is new.

I must concede that what they say is somewhat true. But the difference is in the approach. We have held various sessions with the entrepreneurs and the most critical assessment of Government policy comes from SMEs themselves.

Over the last 20 years, it is estimate that there have been approximately 100 initiatives to support the improved competitiveness of SMEs, yet the take up rate has been low. Even

support programmes such as training and business health checks have rarely achieved more than a ten per cent take-up and often it is much less. According to the entrepreneurs, the main reasons for low take-up rates include:

1. support providers do not understand the needs of owner managers' businesses and therefore offer standardised support measures;
2. SMEs are sceptical of solutions based on large firm practices which are delivered through top-down support programmes, and
3. the largely standardised top-down support may be administratively convenient but fail to recognise the heterogeneity of small firms.

The limitations of policy provision and delivery are not necessarily an indication of a lack of demand for assistance. We have used a bottom-up approach and concentrated our efforts on providing measures that target SMEs, recognise their needs and limitations that they face. The measures we have proposed are not magic formulae that will solve all problems. We will have teething problems on our journey to success but we are willing to take up the challenge and solve the problems as they arise.

Madam Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to clarify an issue regarding the coexistence of the SME bank and the DBM. My friends on the other side of the House, hon. Uteem and also hon. Lesjongard have today requested that I clarify the matter because of the confusion.

Madam Speaker, there is nothing in the Government Programme nor in the Budget Speech which indicates that the DBM is going to close. The DBM, like every organisation, will have to reinvent itself in the new economic landscape that we are creating. Whether the DBM will continue to exist or not is a major policy decision but, as previously stated, I personally believe that the existence of one does not exclude the existence of the other. I also understand that the DBM has some Rs20 billion of assets of which Rs4 billion are account receivable. Besides that they have four subsidiaries and I will not step into the shoes of the Board or the chairman but they have to find ways and means in this competitive financial world to keep this organisation on a going concern basis.

(Interruptions)

The Cooperative Sector

Madam Speaker, I shall now come to the cooperative sector. The cooperative sector is playing an important role in the economy to sustain employment, food production and

democratisation of the economy. The movement is more than hundred years old and has admirably shown its resilience over time. Moreover, cooperatives build triple bottom-line sustainability as they enhance social, economic and environmental development.

Sectors Serviced by Cooperatives

Today, more than 30 different socio-economic activities are serviced by cooperatives. Cooperatives in Mauritius and Rodrigues consist of some 95,000 members grouped in some 1,050 cooperative societies with a turnover of around Rs5.5 billion. The main economic activities undertaken by cooperative societies are production and marketing of sugarcane, potatoes cultivation, onions, fresh vegetables, livestock, fish, bus owners, consumer stores, handicraft, credit and savings.

Madam Speaker, the Cooperative Business Model has been found to provide a supportive environment for women and youngsters new to business as it gives them confidence and is capable of harnessing the skills and resources. It is also important to note that the movement has an important role in ensuring food security at the national level. Our Minister of Finance has both and it is a blessing for our small country.

With rapid globalisation and the changes in the socio-economic environment, cooperatives have to operate in a very competitive context and have to face various challenges. The cooperative movement has stood up to this challenge and embarked on the path of economic transition towards becoming 'cooperative entrepreneurs'.

Madam Speaker, easy access to finance has for long been a major problem faced by the cooperative sector as well. Cooperatives being a component of SME will now benefit from the wide array of measures recently announced. The SME bank will indeed act as a catalyst for the development of the cooperative entrepreneurs.

The Sugarcane Cooperatives

Madam Speaker, the small planters' community has suffered real hardship in the past 10 years. It is only through their hard labour and painful efforts, grim energy, but resolute courage that some have been able to survive. The cooperative sector is regrouping some 155 cooperative credit societies who are cultivating some 5600 hectares of land and producing some 350,000 tonnes of sugarcane. It is worth mentioning that over 50% of the sugar planters are from cooperatives. The reform in the sugar sector characterised by the drastic fall in the price of sugar has affected our sugar planters. The fall in the price of sugar from Rs17,500 to Rs12,400 has a major impact on the small planters who are struggling with the ups and downs of erratic economic situations.

Under the budgetary measures 2015-2016, Government has shown its great care and concern for the sugar cane planters' community. Thus, necessary provision has been made so that small sugar planters producing up to 60 tonnes of sugar will be given a one-off compensation of Rs3400 per tonne of sugar for crop year 2014 while the remaining categories will receive Rs2000 per tonne from the Sugar Insurance Fund Board (SIFB).

Madam Speaker, all the necessary support will be provided for the cooperative societies to grow their business and increase their revenue. The extent of market avenues will be expanded to provide a platform for the cooperative societies to sell their products. Under the Cooperative Improvement Programme, the information, education and communication campaign will be further strengthened to encourage newcomers in the cooperative societies and to consolidate the existing ones. Tailor-made courses will be dispensed to cooperative members in order to upgrade and add value to their products so as to fetch a higher price on the market. Specific training on good governance, packaging, computing and online submission of accounts would be encouraged to keep abreast with current and recent development.

Madam Speaker, animal breeders grouped in cooperatives are breeding cows, pigs, poultry etc. They have been facing soaring cost of production as the percentage of the total cost for animal feed had greatly increased, particularly following the closure of the Richelieu Livestock Feed Factory. Madam Speaker, this Government has taken two bold steps to alleviate the burden of all breeders –

- (i) the DBM will waive all interests and penalties on loans of up to Rs100,000 to planters, fishermen and breeders. However, this will be subject to the condition of paying back their outstanding capital amount within a period of 90 days.

Madam Speaker, with my coming into office and following meetings and site visits I had with the federations in the cooperative sector, I had the opportunity to listen to the plight of many farmers. Moreover, cooperative federations also met the hon. Minister of Finance who has addressed several issues. The big farmers regrouped in the cooperative societies and federations had made several representations in the past to successive Ministers, but all the time, I must say that their grievances fell into deaf ears.

Madam Speaker, it is this Government that finally took the bold decision, which was not easy, but still we did it, to waive arrears of interests and penalties on loans advanced under the Pig Sector Restructuring Programme to the pig farmers. Madam Speaker, this

Government has at heart the fate of the farmers and we want to improve the farmers' livelihood in a changing world. The subsidy provided for animal feed is doubled from Rs2 to Rs4 per kilo. Madam Speaker, if everyone is moving forward together then success takes care of itself.

According to the Food and Agricultural Organisation of the United Nations, aquaculture is probably the fastest growing food producing sector and now accounts for nearly 50 per cent of the world food fish. Mauritius therefore cannot stay behind. Fishermen grouped in cooperative societies will be encouraged to embark on aquaculture projects to sustain a living through partnership with large operators.

Bio Farming

Madam Speaker, for many years we have heard that pesticides, insecticides, fungicides and other chemicals are adversely impacting on our health, but so far, we have not witnessed any bold measures. The cry of today is that our mother Earth is being exploited and polluted with agro chemicals and pesticides. It is high time for us to revisit the agricultural practices which ensure sustainability. Moreover, it is known that the food we consume has an impact on our health. Indeed the bio cultivation facility will encourage cooperative planters to rethink their way of cultivation and adapt practices which are bio friendly.

The cooperatives have been *avant-gardistes* and we are proud to say that concerning this problem, cooperatives have already embarked into bio fertiliser project joint ventures. The project, put up in collaboration with India, was launched in early February, 2015 by the Rt. hon. Prime Minister and is expected to grow with the announcement of the focus on bio-production.

Madam Speaker, where there is no vision, there is no hope. But this Government has both vision and hope. Like a soldier, we fight long and hard for a cause. We want to have a healthier population. Thus, this Government took the initiative of providing assistance towards the promotion of organic agriculture with the introduction of a "Bio Farming Development Certificate".

It is known to everybody that the cooperative sector is traditionally enshrined in primary sectors. This new certificate which includes a package of incentives amongst which an 8-year tax holiday and exemption from various taxes and duties on importation of bio food inputs acts like a light in the tunnel. This will be a priority sector under the SME Scheme. The facilities provided under bio production will also encourage cooperative planters to align their cultivation towards sustainable agricultural practices.

Madam Speaker, the journey of a thousand miles begins with one step. Economic transition, renovation and revamping is a long journey for cooperatives. The cooperative sector regroups some 2,500 vegetable planters, grouped in 64 Agricultural Marketing Cooperative Societies, catering for 70% of our local fresh vegetables. These cooperatives are willing to adopt sustainable agricultural practices, new production techniques and adopt hygienic sale of market produce.

Madam Speaker, the Fair Trade certified label requires the use of practices that promote soil conservation, water conservation, reforestation, species diversity and environmental education. The standards also promote organic practices by prohibiting genetically modified organisms and certain agrochemicals. Fair trade offers small producers and workers a better deal and improves the terms of trade. It guarantees a minimum price which covers the cost of sustainable production and a fair trade premium to be used for economic, environmental and social development.

Today, the sugar sector is facing major problems especially with the reform in the sector and the decrease in the price of sugar. It is, therefore, imperative that we exploit the opportunities provided under fair trade so that we can ensure the sustainability of the sector. More cooperative societies will be fair trade certified and the products will be diversified.

Madam Speaker, we are largely dependent on imported goods and this trend should stop to protect our local jobs and to keep our foreign currency in the country. We are convinced that the initiatives in the Budget may help entrepreneurs to foray into new segments.

Madam Speaker, because of time constraint again, I will have to curtail my intervention. I will just end up by talking on technology. Not all new businesses innovate and invest in high-tech though it is of vital importance in a company. It plays an outsized role in job creation. High-tech and ICT firm formations are becoming increasingly geographically dispersed. It's a secret to none that technological advancement enables the production of high-tech goods and services on a wider basis. High-tech companies around the world, innovate, improve operations and deliver value. Remember when you invest in technology, you keep up with industry changes; make full use of technology transfer opportunities and also explore various funding options.

With this, I end up my address.

Thank you.

Madam Speaker: I suspend the sitting for half an hour.

At 4.44 p.m. the sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 5.19 p.m with Madam Speaker in the Chair.

Mr G. Oree (Second Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue): Madam Speaker, I feel honoured to address this House for the first time in the presence of so many hon. Members and particularly the super calibre politician, the Rt. hon. Prime Minister, Sir Anerood Jugnauth.

Frankly speaking, I wanted to start my speech with a song because hon. Roopun told me that the former Minister of Arts and Culture did that. But, I am not doing it simply because the song would be *Soldat Lalit Militant* and the hon. Leader of the Opposition is not here. I would also like to speak in front of hon. Uteem who did some comments about Bollywood films. I would advise him to watch a Hollywood film ‘Doomsday 2012’ - Apocalypse now.

(Interruptions)

So, I will take it again, I would advise hon. Uteem to watch this film ‘Doomsday 2012’, Apocalypse now. On that particular film we learn who is the real leader. In fact, everybody was rushing towards the giant, but the president died with his people in this planet. A real leader is the first one to come and the last one to go. A real leader sacrifices himself for others and does not sacrifice others for himself alone. The real leader is not on the other side, but sitting on this side.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker, I am sure that we all agree that our country has been blessed by the visit of his Excellency ‘Narendra Modi Ji’ on the occasion of our national day. During his short visit he displaced and taught us so many lessons of friendship, love, respect, simplicity and how politicians should be down-to-earth despite being in power. For me the lesson is clear, before being a good politician or even a Prime Minister, one should become a good human being. The priority should always be to uplift the lower class. Power without grace is a curse and this budget does exactly this. People should always be at the centre of any Government action. Madam Speaker, we all know how water is vital for performing rituals in all communities, religions, places of worship and above all for each and every household and an individual in our society. I must salute the initiative which this Government has taken for offering a certain level of water free of charge to household. Monetarily this is insignificant, but it is a great step toward eradicating absolute poverty especially for those who don’t have the means. One can live without food, but not without water, water is life.

Madam Speaker, now allow me to speak about the adverse consequences of betting and gaming in our society. All religions condemn gambling, but I would like to depict an example from 'Mahabarata'. We all know that dice playing was the root cause of the battle. It lasted for 18 days in which 1.5 million warriors lost lives and only 12 survived. Lord Krishna who is in fact the reincarnation of Lord Vishnu guided Arjuna how to win the battle and to overcome all obstacles. Today the hon. Minister of Finance - allow me to say hon. Vishnu - is guiding us to clean up this social ill from our country.

(Interruptions)

Our forefathers came as slaves and indentured labourers and transformed this barren land into a paradise with their blood and sweat and they have always taught us only hard work will bring progress. Madam Speaker, we are here to be called a '*nation travayer*' and not a '*nation zougader*'. The probability of winning in betting and gaming is very minimum compared to losing. Logically the winners are always the organisers; unfortunately the most deprived ones are most tempted for making easy money and eventually end up with losing everything. This causes frustration and leads them to get involved in illegal activities. The increase in gambling activities over the past years was, in my opinion, intentional. The population was encouraged to live in dreams and illusions rather than struggling hard to progress in life. It was a deliberate move to opiate the mass so that they may replete their coffers secretly. Madam Speaker, though the hon. Finance Minister has taken the step to go forward with a high investment budget to steer the economy which will generate employment, still the deprived ones are not left neglected. He has set up a Marshall plan against poverty, this indicates a firm intention and dedication of this Government to uplift the poor and vulnerable ones. The most encouraging factor is that the Rt. hon. Prime Minister himself is involved and giving his full support and collaboration.

With a population of only 1.2 million and being the most economically developed country in Africa; this island can surely erase poverty. With this Government gearing towards the concept of fairness, equity and social justice, I firmly believe that poverty will no longer exist in the immediate future.

Madam Speaker, since years many businesses have been making supernormal profits through credit transactions. According to surveys and reports, the majority of household are indebted in this country. By reducing the rate of interest, this Government is providing relief to middle and lower classes and thus this budget reinforces consumer protection.

Madam Speaker, poor people do not pay much direct tax like income tax, but they greatly suffer from indirect taxes like VAT. By reducing VAT on certain services the burden of low income earners will surely be reduced - example on 'SMS'.

Madam Speaker, the introduction of the SME bank will act like a breath of oxygen for people who are willing to start their own businesses. Very often we find people who are unemployed or want to start a business, but have insufficient fund or no capital at all. The setting up of this bank will certainly fill up the gap, thus giving equal opportunities to everyone who wants to become an entrepreneur. This will certainly empower people to promote self-employability. Thousands of people with low academic qualifications, who cannot obtain a job in the public sector or elsewhere would, without any doubt, benefit from this situation which is going to be a one-stop shop. Fishermen and small planters would equally benefit from the above measures. Madam Speaker, this budget is further strengthening our Welfare State. As from now there are several Medi-Clinics and area health centres which are operational on a non-stop basis, people whether they are poor or rich would be benefiting from high quality health services free.

Madam Speaker, I would like to stress on the social security facilities being extended by this Government. In my constituency the region like Roche Bois, Ste Croix, Cité La Cure which are termed as '*régions défavorisées*' these people genuinely need social aid and decent accommodation. I am delighted by the measures taken in this budget, particularly, to make Social Security the prime concern. The cases of squatting and flood victims in my Constituency would certainly be reduced. Generally this Government has kept up the promise of relieving poor people, reducing costs of living as far as possible and increasing the standard of living for the low income earners. The budget devoted to social security is the largest one. By spending so much we are translating into reality our commitment to cater for the poorest and the most vulnerable groups of our society.

Madam Speaker, this is my maiden speech. I wish to share my personal experiences and opinion on current events and issues. I must say that I am deeply impressed and totally convinced that our country's destiny is in good hands. Allow me to express my heartfelt congratulations to all the members of this august Assembly and specially to the Rt. hon. Prime Minister under whose inspiration and guidance, the hon. Minister of Finance has done a remarkable job by putting people at the very centre of development and, frankly speaking, I also appreciate the Members of the other side who have the courage to stay here and to listen to us even though they are not speaking today. I hope the sun will shine afterwards.

Madam Speaker, let me tell you sincerely what my son told me during the last election campaign when I had to prepare a budget to finance expenses. He told me –

« *Papa prend ène loan ta, après to pa pu coquin même !* »

This is the common perception of our youth on politicians, in general, as they believe that politicians join politics mainly to fill up their safe. How can I deny him after what has been found and portrayed widely at Riverwalk recently? Madam Speaker allow me to refer to the Veda which states that –

“One cannot become happy if one intends to become rich overnight by adopting any means, one obtains happiness only through hard labour and just means. Money obtained through immoral and improper means will destroy the entire family with one’s health and wealth. Wealth obtained through improper means will stay for ten years and as from the eleventh year onwards, the entire family is set on the path of ruins and destruction.”

Madam Speaker, are we not witnessing this above quote from the Veda right now in this country?

Now, Madam Speaker, I wish to seize this opportunity to speak about the Constituency No. 4, where we have witnessed so many dramas and swapping of elected candidates, Executive Members and political nominees from one Party to another. I am proud to tell you that despite all these swapping, it is only in Constituency No. 4 that all the three candidates of *L’Alliance Lepep* got elected with flying colours in Port Louis and set the trend of victory for other constituencies in rural areas.

Madam Speaker, I was shocked to witness how in this 21st century, people are still in extreme poverty, deprived from the basic needs of life. For example, the condition of living of squatters at Cité la Cure is beyond imagination and, if this condition persists, it can give rise to social explosion. Part of this Constituency consists of several mountain ranges and is thus prone to natural calamities such as landslide and flooding.

I must tell you, Madam Speaker, my heartbeat increases whenever it rains these days. The situation becomes chaotic the next day at the Police Station and Social Security Office namely at Astor Court, because of the uncontrollable so-called *sinistrés*. These *sinistrés* are deliberately women and children, for reasons we all know very well. Can we continue tolerating this situation, Madam Speaker? Can we accept our Police Officers and Civil Servants to be aggressed verbally and physically when they are on duty? Many of them are traumatised and want to be transferred. There is an atmosphere of insecurity that always prevails at the Social Security Office. Gatherings are even being held in front of the

Government House nowadays. I must admit that there are also genuine cases which deserve the support of our Government.

Why victims should further be victimised with unnecessary bureaucratic procedures if *lepep* is at the centre of every Government action? Why officers cannot go directly to victim, not with vouchers, but with basic needs which can help solving the problem of abuses. Madam Speaker, I must admit that in most cases vouchers are being given without any visit or crosschecking by any Police Officers. Most of our Police Stations are understaffed and there is a lack of logistic and other facilities to react promptly. How can only eight officers conduct surveys for 500 victims at a time? I strongly believe that we must be proactive and need to have a special squad to tackle such cases.

Madam Speaker, are our Police Officers fully trained for flood management? Why our Special Mobile Force Officers are often immobile at Vacoas Headquarters? I think an urgent restructuration programme should be implemented and the Disaster Management Team must be empowered, accordingly. We cannot allow a new case of death due to floods. Here, I must say I welcome the decision taken by the hon. Minister of Environment, Sustainable Development and Disaster and Beach Management to effectively manage flood in Port Louis recently. We cannot wait for things to happen, but we must make things happen at the right time. According to me, in-depth surveys must be carried out by competent bodies in flood prone areas. Actually, there is no proper maintenance of drains and dredging of rivers. Very often, the Local Government is incapable to do the job as it should be. Most of the so-called drains are only one or two feet deep whereas floodwater rises to metres.

Madam Speaker, cases of thefts are so common that they are not considered to be a serious offence any more in Mauritius, particularly in my Constituency, namely at Terre Rouge, Ste Croix and Roche Bois. Distribution of methadone has not been properly regulated and drug addicts openly move in the vicinity of Abercrombie Police Station and often assault passers-by. Many cases of robbery are purposely not reported because the victims often do not recover what they have lost and, on the other hand, reported cases take too long to reach a verdict. Moreover, the culprit very often receive VIP treatment in prison and often in certain Police Stations, habitual criminals are friendlier with Police Officers than with common people.

Police Officers who are supposed to be responsible to maintain law and order are themselves insecure. Most Police Officers hide their outfits after their working hours so as to be safer at bus stations and crowded area. I think our Police Officers must be treated with due respect and dignity, but, at the same time, I condemn without reserve any form of brutality by

them. I strongly believe it is time to bring a meaningful change in our entire Police Department and I must say that the Abercrombie Police Force is at times unable to cope with the ever increasing number of cases. A new Police Force should be constructed in either Cité La Cure or Vallée des Prêtres.

The Immigration Square is a very common place where we witness all sorts of illegal activities and sometimes violence. The bus shelters and main roads have been transformed as a marketplace, thus leaving the Central market deserted. Hawkers and '*taxi marrons*' have their own codes of conduct who are, in fact, more powerful than patent holders.

Madam Speaker, please allow me to speak a little about the actual situation in our schools. After working as an educator for 23 years in Private Secondary School, I must say that there are serious issues in regard to degradation of moral values and increasing indiscipline at bus stops, inside the bus and in the school also. So much so that, last year, the Ministry of Education and Human Resources conducted a survey on colleges and schools willing to get Police assistance, but there was no follow-up.

Our country is heading towards an ageing population and with only 13,000 children being admitted in Standard I this year, as opposed to a normal intake of 25,000 over the previous years, it is clear that many Private Secondary Schools may cease operation in the coming years. I strongly request the hon. Minister of Education and Human Resources to compensate stakeholders fairly and to redeploy redundant staff accordingly.

Finally, I would like to draw your attention that there are around 20,000 voters in Constituency Nos. 1, 2 and 3, but my Constituency which is geographically larger has 49,000 voters. Therefore, I think the electoral boundaries need to be reviewed for a fairer representation.

To conclude, Madam Speaker, I must say that this Budget is a historic one since it lays the foundation to transform our country and to stimulate the economy as a whole. At the same time, it contains measures to alleviate the poor and to bring sunshine and comfort in the life of the underprivileged. Being a teacher in economics, I must say that this is a rather difficult task, but I must salute the courage of the hon. Minister of Finance and Economic Development for having taken the risk. He has been able to strike the balance between economic development and social justice. I should also express my sincere apology to anyone who may have felt offended and hurt by my comments as this has never been my intention.

Madam Speaker, I wanted to be sincere to myself and spilt out whatever I had in my heart. Before shifting to my last words, sincerely, I want to say that the situation in our universities is very bad. So much so that parents with daughters don't want to send them to

universities. Nobody cares! If you want to experience it, just go at University of Mauritius. On the left-hand side you have the Open University which has a main gate but, on the right-hand side, the University of Mauritius is gateless. You can come from any side or you can come at any time. So, why every time it is ‘*après la mort la tisane*’?

Allow me to quote this saying of Mahatma Gandhi, because each time having seen them on the other side either looking down or laughing, but let me tell them, when we close our eyes, we better concentrate.

“First they ignore you, then they laugh at you and then, you succeed.”

Madam Speaker, one day I hope to hear this from my son -

« *Papa, pas tous politiciens qui travay pou rempli zot poches, encore ena politiciens honnête dans sa pays la couma Sir Anerood Jugnauth. Suive so pas.* »

Thank you.

(5.42 p.m.)

The Minister of Social Integration and Economic Empowerment (Mr P. Roopun): Madam Speaker, allow me, at the very outset, to congratulate hon. Oree for his maiden speech. I am told that he is an accomplished Ramayan chanter and I am sure that one of these days we will be able to discover his singing talent in some other quarters.

Let me join in with the other orators to applaud and congratulate the Rt. hon. Prime Minister and the hon. Minister of Finance and Economic Development for this very first Budget of *l'Alliance Lepep*.

I shall not delve lengthily on each and every aspect of this Budget nor unnecessarily repeat what the previous orators have already highlighted.

In a nutshell, I wish to emphasise, however, that in this budget there has been, as promised, no additional burden on the country in terms of taxes. We have also not only maintained all support which were already being provided to the common people, but we have supplemented these by yet a few others. Just to take a few examples, the six cubic meters of free water every month, decrease in interest rates for purchases under hire-purchase schemes, the setting up of SMEs parks, SMEs banks.

We all know that a budget is much more than an accounting exercise and, here, we have got a budget the main philosophy of which is to forge a large consensus around the Government programme. I have no doubt that this has now been achieved as we have now the support of all economic and social actors and we are now on the right track in developing a new economic order that will set the pace for a more compassionate, inclusive and fairer society which will ultimately culminate into a second economic miracle.

I must say that since we assumed office some 100 days ago, we have been able to create new hope and renewed confidence amongst the population generally. It was, however, vital that this wave of confidence and this feel good factor transcend all sectors of the Mauritian society. There is now a general adherence by Mauritians from all social and economic backgrounds, there is a general feeling that the interests and aspirations of everyone have been taken care of and nobody has been side-lined.

Madam Speaker, it was crucial to create this climate that everyone is being taken on board. As we know, in certain quarters, more especially within the business community and the private sector, after the surprise of the result of the December election, there were some apprehensions. It was feared that in the quest to counterbalance for the additional pressure on the Exchequer caused by the increase in social allocations and the salary compensation some major fiscal adjustments were inevitable.

This fear about the state of our public finance was further exacerbated by the sheer number of skeletons which were found in the cupboards of the various Ministries in this short span of time.

Just to take the case, Madam Speaker, of the outgoing Minister of Public infrastructure will be quite revealing. Minister Bachoo was not only one of the Vice-Prime Ministers, but he was also the most experienced Member of the then Cabinet, considered to be the most performing and whom the previous Prime Minister has more than one occasion publicly congratulated. You have just to take, for example, the Audit Report of 2013 to know the *frasques* of hon. Bachoo. I quote -

“Over the past years, NDU has undertaken more projects than were initially planned in the budget, but the financing requirements were not duly assessed. In many occasions, the NDU did not comply with the provisions of the Public Procurement Act and the Public Procurement Regulations.”

Out of 49 projects, Madam Speaker, 17 contracts amounting to not less than Rs 284.8 m. were allocated without any tendering exercise. The NDU has incurred total expenditure of some Rs1.71 billion.

A budget of Rs225 m. approved for the Land Drainage Watershed Management Programme ended with an amount of Rs1.16 billion being spent which represents an overrun exceeding 400% and we all realise in what state the NDU was left after the passage of the previous Government.

This gives us an idea of how money has been squandered if we add up this with the Bagatelle Dam saga where there has been an increase in the initial cost by Rs1.71 billion representing 58% of variation.

The Ring Road saga where a road which leads to nowhere and never used has collapsed while the amount spent thereon initially estimated at Rs950 m. reached Rs1.4 billion.

(Interruptions)

Last but not least, we have inherited the Verdun-Terre Rouge project. Not only did the project show a cost overrun of some 43% jumping from Rs2.3 billion to reach about Rs4 billion, it has yet to be determined whether remedial works can be undertaken to render it safe and what will be the cost implication and whether this project is altogether affordable.

This is only one Ministry, but we know the situation elsewhere; at the MBC, for example, with accumulated debts reaching Rs1 billion, the scandalous payment of Rs5 m. only to the former Director General on his leaving on a ground of conscience, as he put it. The Betamax jackpot was, for the last years, a sum of Rs1 m. every day being encashed.

In this context, we cannot make abstraction to the 76 overseas trips of the former Prime Minister which has cost Rs200 m. of public funds. On some occasions, for one single day spent abroad over Rs1 m. have been spent.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Jhugroo, please!

Mr Roopun: This gives us an insight of public money which has been squandered or lavishly spent without any benefit for the country. In the same vein, while referring to the millions found in the coffers of the previous Prime Minister, Sir Anerood Jugnauth talked about “*100 jours pour le voleur et un jour pour le maître.*” We all know what we found in one day, but it is most unfortunate that even the best inquiring team in the world will not be able to give us a fair estimate of the *frasques* of this *voleur* for all those days that run from 2005 to 2014.

Madam Speaker, we don't know yet what other scandals will be unearthed in days to come. Only yesterday, we heard hon. Collendavelloo talking about the case of the Wastewater Management Authority. We also heard about this ‘ghost committee’, ‘*la démocratisation de l'économie*’ where we had Rs2.2 m. spent.

(Interruptions)

All these which I have just stated are in the public domain, but it was important for us to highlight these because there were certain Members in this House who were utterly surprised that we are spending less on a few items, but we could not do otherwise. We are

bound to come with a responsible and balanced budget. I must say that we have a mandate to clear up wherever there were abuses. We have faith that the population knows that whatever we have done in this budget is yet the beginning of a long period which will eventually lead us to a renewed economic miracle.

Allow me, Madam Speaker, to now come on certain issues pertaining to my Ministry, especially on two aspects which have lately been subject to much debate. As we all know, Mauritius is among the few countries where we have a dedicated Ministry working towards the upliftment of the poor and the vulnerable.

The role of my Ministry is to coordinate Government policies and activities of all national agencies engaged in poverty alleviation and designed to ensure implementation of all such Government policies.

I wish to point out that the fight against poverty is not the sole responsibility of this Ministry. This scourge is multidimensional and involves different Ministries. I am happy that all relevant ministries are fully aware of this and give their support in that sense.

This Ministry, as we all know, was created in 2010 and was headed by the actual Deputy Prime Minister, hon. Xavier-Luc Duval. I must say that, at that time, it was a driving force towards the fight against poverty. In fact, all programmes presently in place had been designed during that initial period. It is unfortunate, however, that, in 2011, when my predecessor took office, he took a backseat and there was no more coordination among the various ministries and no follow up regarding implementation of the previous Government programmes and the Ministry ultimately fell into oblivion.

I wish to emphasise that my intention is again to make the Ministry of Social Integration and Economic Empowerment the focal point of all activities related to poverty alleviation. Since I assumed office, I have enlisted the support not only of NGOs and partners of the private sector, but also had intensive consultation with several of my colleagues, including the Minister of Education, insofar as students who failed CPE but are not following pre-vocational courses designed for them. I also had brainstorming sessions with the Minister of Social Security in regard to the harmonisation of the Social Register of Mauritius and also regarding best ways to come in support of victims of flooding. I had consultations with all Private Parliamentary Secretaries with a view to enlist their support for a more concerted action on the ground.

Similarly, I visited various pockets of poverty. Only, last week-end, I was in the south along with MPs of the region to take stock of the situation on ground and to consider the best ways to proceed further.

Insofar as CSR guidelines are concerned, Madam Speaker, I must highlight that the CSR Committee, falls under the aegis of the Ministry of Finance. It has been decided to remove guidelines, but the reason behind it is not to give freehand to all CSR Companies, but designed to remove various administrative hurdles which were causing lot of difficulties for effective intervention on the ground.

I must say that I have myself received representations from various quarters regarding the need to review CSR guidelines and we wish that the elimination of all red tapes and administrative hurdles will enable CSR companies to operate in a more serene atmosphere. The fact that we are eliminating guidelines should not be read in isolation. We have under paragraph 175 of the Budget the philosophy under which the CSR Fund has been created and it is under this philosophy that we should now view the elimination of the CSR guidelines as mentioned under paragraph 180. Needless to say that philosophy is deeper and stronger than guidelines and we have trust that the CSR companies will have a meaningful partnership with the Ministry in the fight against poverty. I, personally, have no doubt that they will act responsibly and within the parameters of paragraph 175. It goes without saying, however, that we will have a close follow-up of the situation as they unfold and adjustment, if any, will be done if the need is felt.

Another issue which has raised lots of controversies is the concept of “*parrainage*” which the Government wants to promote. Up till now, funding of actions on the ground has been on a project based basis and each year both CSR Companies and NGOs had invariably to apply to the CSR Committee for their projects to be approved. There has been no integrated approach regarding the fight against poverty. Upon assuming office, I discussed lengthily with various stakeholders and advocated a more integrated approach whereby my Ministry together with CSR companies, NGOs and the beneficiaries themselves work together and conduct a socio-economic survey to determine in each pocket of poverty what are the different fields of interventions. We will endeavour to develop a medium and long-term partnership so that our interventions are result-oriented instead of being project-oriented.

Government’s approach to the adoption of pockets of poverty by private companies under CSR is, in fact, a very daring and courageous initiative. Demagogy apart, Government

is more concerned in creating the right synergy and appropriate landscape for a better future and lead the country on the high-income path by mainstreaming the vulnerable citizens. In this respect, the House may take cognizance of the budget outlays of various Ministries namely Social Integration, Social Security, Gender Equality, Housing and Lands. We have got also a long list of various programmes under those various Ministries which, unfortunately, I won't be able to highlight here. I am sure that hon. Members during the Committee of Supply will be able to seek clarification on them and find out what is being spent on poverty alleviation by different Ministries. I must add it is utter bad faith to just come with a particular programme and say that we are just privatising the combat against poverty. We know that. Every Government, even before 2010, has through various Ministries been doing a lot for the poor. On one particular programme which we want to conduct differently, there is a fuss, but we are fully aware that poverty alleviation is and has always been dealt with by various Ministries, even more specifically in terms of amount by the Ministry of Social Security.

I would therefore wish to reassure that it is fallacious to interpret that Government has the intention to outsource its commitments on the fight against poverty or to privatise poverty eradication. I consider that selective amnesia has gained ground since the introduction of the concept of "*parrainage*". Hon. Uteem was talking about the 38 pockets of poverty. I think that hon. Manish Gobin explained it in a few words. It has never been the contention of this Ministry or this Government that we have got only 38 pockets of poverty. In fact, these 38 pockets of poverty come out of a long list which my Ministry forwarded to the Ministry of Finance in the context of the Budget. And out of this list, the Minister of Finance took an indicative list of 38 pockets of poverty where there will be a new approach which is the approach of the '*parrainage*'. All other programmes which have existed, be it in my Ministry or in other Ministries, are being implemented. Funds are available and there is no reason to doubt one second that we are just outsourcing our fight against poverty.

I wish to repeat, for the information of hon. Uteem, that we should have a long-term vision about poverty alleviation. Poverty alleviation is not a combat which we can win in a span of one or two years. It is a long process. It needs a continued approach. What we want is to give a certain *appartenance* of these programmes. This concept of '*parrainage*' will help us to be more effective on the ground. We are going to have a company with the support of a few NGOs doing the work on the ground, knowing exactly what should be done and accompanying the work over the period of a few years and we will be able to know whether it

is effective, what remedial and corrective action should be undertaken so that we can deliver. We are trying it on 38 pockets and I am sure that if this gives results, in years to come, we will try to adopt this same policy for other regions.

I must say that this is not something new. This integrated approach existed before when we had the programme for the eradication of absolute poverty. A committee comprising of NGOs and social workers meeting regularly and monitoring the situation on the ground and taking corrective measures. This is what we want to bring again.

Madam Speaker, poverty being complex and multi-faceted, its eradication cannot be done overnight. We are, therefore, bound to bring meaningful changes in the mindset and our poor people who, I am sure, realise that they will also be engaged in this fight and this will eventually lead to their empowerment and ultimate integration in the mainstream strategy.

Insofar as the NEF is concerned, Madam Speaker, as stated in my intervention during the vote of thanks on the Presidential Address, I highlighted that the restructure of the National Empowerment Foundation is one of the top priorities of my Ministry. I must add that I was personally appalled by the situation I saw at the NEF and there was total lack of leadership. We are taking measures to redress the situation as early as possible. Several misgivings have been noted when I took over and various authorities have been requested to carry out inquiries. I must say that since public funds are involved, those who have faulted should be held to account. The Public Sector Efficiency Bureau has already started a pre-audit exercise and we hope to have recommendations which will help us to reorganise more effectively the NEF. Just to cite an example of the state of affairs at the NEF, the House may wish to note that the NEF, which is a registered company, has not published its Annual Report since 2010. I consider it to be a very serious matter and we are taking appropriate actions against all those who are responsible for such misgivings.

As my Ministry will be in the forefront of the fight against poverty, I am setting up a Poverty Observatory at the level of my Ministry to create a permanent and independent platform for all relevant stakeholders to sustainably address the issue of poverty in all its forms. It will also act as an advocacy group in the fight against poverty and create linkages with the SADC Regional Poverty Observatory for sharing of information and best practices. The Poverty Observatory will also conduct regular surveys and publish relevant reports on poverty. I am expecting that the Observatory will be operational by July 2015.

With a view to ensuring maximum outreach for deserving vulnerable families, my Ministry has, in consultation with the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development and the Ministry of Social Security, National Solidarity and Reform Institutions, decided that only

eligible beneficiaries registered under the SRM will henceforth benefit from NEF Schemes and also under the '*parrainage*' concept. This will also enable my Ministry to have a national database of vulnerable households living below the poverty threshold. This measure will also instill a fair and transparent process and at the same time ensure judicious use of public funds as well as an effective tool to measure poverty cycle.

A Monitoring and Evaluation Unit will also be set up at my Ministry. Only yesterday, hon. Jhugroo, during a parliamentary question, raised this issue and I must say that henceforth, whatever programme is being done at the level of the NEF will be monitored closely by my Ministry. I must say that insofar as the Training and Placement Programme run by the NEF is concerned, I noted with dismay that previously, training and placement was not specifically meant for our poor *clientèle* below the poverty threshold. There was no follow-up undertaken to ascertain that the most deserving vulnerable are really empowered for a better economic livelihood. This status quo has been challenged and henceforth, the Training and Placement Programme will focus on NEF beneficiaries as elaborated at paragraph 60 of the Budget Speech for those academic qualifications which are meaningful in terms of training and placement and also for those who have failed the CPE and have got some problems insofar as their academic performance is concerned.

I wish to conclude, Madam, by stating that vulnerable families may rest assured of the unflinching support of Government to respond to their plight. I wish to announce that very shortly a helpdesk will become operational at the level of my Ministry for registration of complaints and prompt intervention and equally help CSR companies willing to intervene and join hands in our fight against poverty.

With these few words, Madam, I wish to thank each and every one for their attention.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Baboo!

(6.12 p.m.)

The Minister of Arts and Culture (Mr S. Baboo): Madam Speaker, allow me to congratulate the hon. Minister of Finance and Economic Development firstly for the brilliant presentation of the first Budget of the new Government covering two different financial years and secondly, for shifting the complex Programme-Based Budgeting to a simpler approach which is the Performance-Based Budgeting; a budget that also bears of the imprints of our Rt. hon. Prime Minister, Sir Anerood Jugnauth. He has made sure that the voice of all colleagues Ministers and all those who massively rallied to his call for a modern and clean Mauritius are echoed in this Government Budget for achieving meaningful change. It is indeed the first time in the history of Mauritius that a 'feel good factor' started right from the first day of the

new Government. We are also proud that the concerns of the Deputy Prime Minister, hon. Xavier-Luc Duval, regarding social inclusion have been taken on Board.

Donc, Madame la présidente, les années changent, mais fort heureusement, ne se ressemblent pas car nous avons proposé à la population un budget qui fait la part belle à la justice sociale et le développement dans l'égalité, tout en consolidant les fondamentaux de notre économie. D'ailleurs, l'accueil chaleureux fait à ce budget par toute la population, dans son ensemble, en dit long sur sa portée.

This Budget is not just another lacklustre and monotonous accounting exercise focusing on deficits and ways to plug them; rather this is a Budget that speaks the language of the common man and addresses his concerns. It is a Budget for the people. This is why we did not introduce any tax for the common man. We have made sure that they are better off at the end of the day. As we want to ensure that they have more disposable income, we have taxed those businesses that defeated this very purpose and ultimately plagued our society: the '*nation zougadère*'.

This budget reflects our sincere sense of commitment and patriotism as well as our determination to translate the Government Programme into concrete actions. The strategic objectives of this Government are to provide a quality service to the population, development of infrastructure, good governance, promotion of the creative industries, reform in the education sector, housing, ICT development, cultural tourism, agricultural reforms and nation building.

We are in the 15th year of this century. We have to face a lot of new challenges. The world economy is not growing as predicted and developing countries are in the grip of uncertainties. There is, therefore, a pressing need for a radical change in attitudes and mindsets. We need innovative ideas and a willingness to shake up bad habits of the past in order to live up to the challenges of the third millennium.

Madam Speaker, this Government has the mettle to change the situation. We have a new breed of politicians leading the country, ready to quench the thirst of the population. And this is reflected in the Budget which highlights the importance of making strategic choices on revenue mobilisation and spending while maintaining the macroeconomic balance to enable sustainable growth, job creation and the alleviation of poverty. It is a fact that macroeconomic stability will enable the Government to strike a proper balance between development initiatives and a social cohesion.

This Budget recognises the dignity of the people and its philosophy is to place the individual at the forefront of the development. Therefore, a people-centric approach to

development has been adopted to stimulate sustainable change: we have listened to people, considered their needs and aspirations, chalked out a work plan together and we are constructing their future.

Madam Speaker, as promised in our electoral manifesto, we are tackling the setback faced by unemployed graduates as a result of the mismatch between their training and job market requirements. The only realistic way to bridge this gap is through further skill development in line with market realities. Government has thus made a budgetary provision of Rs80,000 per graduate in order to enable them to enhance their skills and become ready for employment possibilities.

Madam Speaker, the Budget provides for another essential dimension of human development, the preservation and promotion of arts and culture.

Today, it is acknowledged that the creative industries represent an important economic pillar with the potential for creating jobs and giving a boost to artistic creativity.

Our pluricultural environment and heritage are the keys to unleashing our imagination and creative abilities. It is essential today to encourage creativity and innovation in pursuit of equitable, sustainable growth and development.

Culture is a driver and enabler of sustainable human development as it is led by the growth of the creative economy supported by the creative industries. Madam Speaker, according to the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development Report of 2013, I quote –

“The creative economy is not only one of the most rapidly growing sectors of the world economy, but also a highly transformative one in terms of income generation, job creation and export earnings”.

Madam Speaker, hence investing in culture and the creative sector as a locomotive of social development can lead to the overall well-being of the population. Human creativity and innovation are the true wealth of a nation today. This Government is committed to strengthening the business and managerial skills of cultural actors for inclusive social development. The participatory approaches and active involvement of artists, creators and performers in policy making process will definitely enhance the quality of life of all partners.

Madam Speaker, our heritage industry will be given a new dimension in symbiosis with the growing tourism industry. Monuments and museums are being increasingly recognised in the world as important sources of income. They have an active role to play in the economic development of a country. The Budget has provided adequate funds for the restoration and maintenance of our national heritage sites. Our museums will be given a new orientation and

will be made more attractive. The potentials of our two world heritage sites will be optimised. The Boards of both institutions will be called upon to come up with a realistic plan of action on how to bring tourists and Mauritians to the sites. While it is essential that our people must know their history, it is equally important to showcase this to our foreign visitors.

The diversity, plurality and vitality of cultural expressions in Mauritius are a direct blessing from the Almighty. The pride of our nation lies in artistic and cultural development and the ability to harness our heritage for the welfare of the people.

I would like to extend once more, my heartfelt thanks to the Deputy Prime Minister, hon. X. L. Duval, for his commitment to ensuring that the Ministry of Tourism works in tandem with my Ministry to kick-start cultural tourism. To that end, he has agreed, amongst others, to the creation of an *espace artistique* at La Citadelle. The project will contribute to the conservation, promotion and protection of this National Heritage while, at the same time, creating avenues for employment of artists and opportunities for cultural entrepreneur. The potentialities flowing from the conversion of *La Citadelle* into an *espace artistique* are enormous. Our artists and performers will be given the opportunity to display their talents daily adding to their sources of income. Tourists and Mauritians will be given the opportunity to appreciate the Mauritian genius. Organised tours and visits will be arranged every day. We have to cultivate a longer term interest in arts and make maximum use of existing infrastructures while bringing the arts to the people.

Madam Speaker, entrepreneurial skills development is essential in the promotion of the creative industry. It will be based on the following -

- Strengthening the role of artists, creators and performers through awareness raising, training and specialisation.
- Developing entrepreneurial capabilities by imparting a better understanding of the creative industries.
- Sharing of experiences and knowledge networks and partnership.
- Providing technical tools to function in the industry.
- Elaborating of business plans.
- Negotiating skills with banks and sponsors.
- Developing of a market strategy.

Our artists, performers and creators will, therefore, be empowered to lead their enterprise to a successful destination - the consumers of Cultural Goods and Services. In this respect the Budget provides for the setting up of a special desk by the SME bank to assist

local artists, sculptors, musicians and creators to modernise and expand their business. My Ministry will work in close collaboration with the Ministry of Business Enterprise and Cooperatives and SMEDA to fast-track the processing of application from artists and cultural entrepreneurs.

Madam Speaker, both our tangible and intangible heritage can become income generating elements. Having at heart the preservation of cultural memories, we have submitted the nomination dossier of Bhojpuri Folk Songs of Mauritius to UNESCO for its inscription on the UNESCO Representative List of Intangible cultural heritage of humanity. This follows the inscription of the Mauritian *Sega typik* of the UNESCO list recently. Preparatory works will now start for the Nomination Dossier of *Sega Tambour* of Rodrigues and *Sega Chagos*. The National Archives will continue with the digitalisation process of records to make it accessible to national as well as international users. This budget has made provisions for the next phase of the project, that is, the digitalisation of all the archives related to indentured labourers.

My Ministry, in collaboration with the Nelson Mandela Centre for African Culture, is providing services so that Mauritians of African origins can trace back their genealogy. These services are already available on the website of the Centre. Research is ongoing to further enhance these services.

Let me also announce that this year we are celebrating the 200th anniversary of this official setting up of the National Archives. A set of activities will be organised at both national and international level to celebrate the bicentenary. I propose to lead a delegation to UNESCO in Paris in May to mark the event. In this context, UNESCO has agreed to host at its seat an exhibition on our Archives.

Madam Speaker, it is said that culture is the soft power of a nation. It is indeed an important element in building relations between countries. My Ministry will further enrich the practice of cultural diplomacy. In this vein, we will shortly sign an agreement with the Government of Turkey for the promotion of cultural ties that dates as far back as the 18th century. The Turkish National Television will be shortly in Mauritius, to shoot a documentary film on the cultural and historical links between our two countries. This will serve as a tool to promote Mauritius as a tourist destination which is perfectly in line with the concept of cultural tourism. Let me also point out that Turkey has more than 1,000 heritage sites. My Ministry will also seize this opportunity to seek the assistance of the Turkish Government in the area of heritage protection and promotion. In the same line, the programme for cultural corporation signed between Mauritius and India during the visit of

Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Mauritius, will further enhance the cultural ties between our two countries. The same principles are applicable between Mauritius and other friendly countries such as China, Senegal, Mozambique, Madagascar, Seychelles, Egypt amongst others.

The programme for cultural cooperation includes exchanges of Cultural troupes of performing arts, training facilities in fields such as: Archives preservation and management, museography, drama and theatre, sharing of knowledge so the exchange of experts and technicians in various artistic and cultural fields.

Madam Speaker, the renovated Serge Constantin Theatre was reopened on Friday 27 March to mark the World Theatre Day. It will be the only operational theatre pending the renovation of the Plaza Theatre and Port Louis Theatre. It is worth mentioning that the Serge Constantin Theatre, is the first theatre in Mauritius to be equipped with a KNX Modular bus control system. That is, a remote control system for motorised barrel structures. It is also equipped with a totally modern system energy efficient which is both ozone and eco-friendly. This theatre has also been provided with modern state-of-the-art equipment, such as motorised curtains, new light design to meet the needs and requirement of our performers. All this has been done with a view to managing the theatre in a more professional way and to improving the quality of shows and events that will be organised both by my Ministry and users of this facility.

My Ministry will set up a monthly programme free of charge for the public in the various arts and culture sector over and above programmes by private institutions and artists. Our objectives are to bring people back to the theatre and to provide a platform to artists to display their talents. The Copyright Act makes provision for the setting up of the Mauritius Right Management Society. I have already set up the Board of the Right Management Society which will ensure that the rights of our artists are properly managed. Madam Speaker, accessibility to cultural infrastructures has to be fluid. The cost of using these facilities is sometimes prohibitive. To address this issue the *stade musical* is making its way. I have no doubt about it. The population will have the opportunity to attend concerts by local and international artists at reduced cost.

Madam Speaker, the setting up of a National Centre for Performing Arts will provide capacity building to our artists and creators, hence, enabling them to obtain a livelihood through their arts. They will obtain –

- (i) adequate training and capacity in business networking, arts and financial management and contract negotiation;

- (ii) training on marketing strategies and the cultural value chain in the music industry to ensure that they are not exploited by producers and middlemen.

This measure will give hopes to our creators and performers. We will leave no stone unturned to make things happen for the benefit of our artists.

In this respect, a one day workshop is being scheduled with stakeholders in the artistic and cultural fields in the coming days. Thereafter, a strategic plan on the creative industries including new measures announced in the Budget will be prepared. We have to cultivate a longer term interest in arts and make maximum use of existing infrastructures while bringing the arts to the people.

Madam Speaker, the artistic development of a nation brings in its wake refinement in the appreciation of arts in general. Creativity and innovation are nurtured. The National Art Gallery will position itself to enlist the full participation of the community of artists and sensitise the population on the balming effect of a work of art.

Madam Speaker, a thing of beauty is a joy forever. Madam Speaker, we need to acknowledge that this Budget has made provisions to cater for measures as announced in the President's Speech and the Budget Speech. No section of the population has been left out and due consideration has been given to our artists and creators.

I wish to highlight that arts and culture are integral parts of our life and they cannot be dissociated. Having understood the centrality of arts in our daily life, our commitment to human dignity will definitely pave the way for a colourful life. This can only be achieved by placing arts and culture at the mainstream of the society. This is not only the guarantee of our future; in fact, this is the only future.

Madame la présidente, je souscris entièrement à l'observation pertinente de mon collègue, le ministre des finances, qui disait, je cite –

« Un pays sans culture est un pays sans âme. »

Et pour conclure dans cette même logique, je me permets de postuler que les générations futures vont regarder l'heure sur la pendule des arts et de la culture.

Merci, Madame la présidente.

(Interruptions)

Mrs Monty: Madam Speaker, I move that the debate be now adjourned.

Mr Lepoigneur rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

Debate adjourned accordingly.

ADJOURNMENT

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, I beg to move that this Assembly do now adjourn to Thursday 02 April 2015 at 11.30 a.m.

The Deputy Prime Minister rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

Madam Speaker: The House stands adjourned.

MATTERS RAISED

(6.34 p.m.)

PETITE RIVIÈRE GOVT SCHOOL – 10-YEAR STUDENT – ALLEGED SEXUAL ABUSE

Mr A. Aliphon (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière): Madame la présidente, si vous me permettez, j'aurais souhaité que Madame la ministre de l'Éducation éclaire la Chambre si elle en a la possibilité, bien sûr, sur le cas de viol d'une élève de dix ans à Petite Rivière dans la circonscription No. 20, avec toutes sortes de nouvelles : parents en colère, mouvements de révolte, *cover-up*, etc. Depuis hier, la presse en parle. Nous savons que la fille de dix ans aurait été violée par le jardinier de l'école contre paiement.

Merci, Madame la présidente.

The Minister of Education and Human Resources, Tertiary Education and Scientific Research (Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun): Madam Speaker, with your permission, I would like to address the House and inform the House on the issues related to this particular case.

Madam Speaker, with regard to this case of alleged sexual abuse on a Standard VI pupil aged 10, at Petite Rivière Government School by a person reported to be a close relative to the child. This person had been enlisted by the PTA of the school as gardener on a part-time basis during the third term in 2014.

My Ministry had taken cognizance of a school report on Monday 30 March 2015 relating to this case of sexual abuse which was reported to have taken place on Tuesday 24 March outside the school premises. According to the same report, the accused person had, on 24 March, sought permission from the school to collect the child on the ground that there would be a religious ceremony at the pupil's place. The Headmaster allowed the child to

leave the school after having registered the pupil's name in the movement book as the person had, according to the school, previously picked up the pupil from the school on behalf of her parents on 15 October 2013, on 02 June 2014 and on 20 August 2014.

With regard to the release of the pupil on 24 March 2015, the parents were not consulted as opposed to the previous three cases.

On Thursday 26 March 2015, the class teacher noticed the sum of Rs200 with the pupil and informed the parent and it was only then that the parents came to know that the relative who picked the child had given her the sum of money and the parents informed the school that, in fact, there was no religious ceremony held at their place on 24 March.

On Friday 27 March, Police had called at the school to inquire into the matter. According to the Police report dated 01 April 2015, the accused had apparently picked up the child from school at about 11.15 on 24 March and allegedly abused her sexually in a nearby sugarcane field. The accused was arrested on 26 March and remanded to Police cell. The child was also examined by the Police Medical Unit on 27 March in presence of her mother and officer of the CDU and Police inquiry is still on.

Madam Speaker, on Monday 30 March, the Headmaster of the school informed the Zone Directorate of the incident. The incident had been reported to the CDU of Bambous as well. It has been reported that on the same day, a group of parents who expressed their strong concern about the incident, had gathered at the school for a meeting with the Headmaster. Hon. Guy Lepoigneur, MP, also called at the school to meet the Headmaster and addressed the group of parents.

The Zonal Directorate had delegated officers of the school inspectorate: a School Inspector, a Senior Inspector and the Principal School Inspector on 30 March to inquire into the matter. The school has also sought the consent of the parents for the child to be seen by an Educational Psychologist of the Ministry.

Madam Speaker, I am advised that the Headmaster of the school met the group of parents on 30 March and a special meeting of the PTA was convened by the Headmaster for Tuesday 31 March at 13.00 hours on that matter. In his report to the Zone dated 30 March 2015, the Headmaster had informed the Zonal Directorate of that Special PTA Meeting.

However, it is viewed with concern that the Zone did not delegate any representative to the PTA Meeting and the Zone had issued instructions to the Headmaster to the effect that this case should not be raised at any PTA Meeting for the sake of confidentiality and welfare of the child.

Madam Speaker, in view of the seriousness of the case, I have ordered that explanations be sought from the Zone Director and the Inspectorate as to why no representative of the zonal directorate was delegated to the special PTA meeting and secondly, why instructions were issued to the Head Master for the matter not to be raised although taking into consideration that confidentiality should have been taken into consideration. Explanations will also be sought from the school as to why no parental consent was sought prior to release of the child on that day unlike the previous occasions when the parents were contacted and why a substantial delay was noted in reporting the matter to the zone and to the Ministry.

Madam Speaker, as stated earlier, enquiry is on at the level of the Police and CDU. Moreover, I have ordered a full-fledged enquiry on the matter and also on the circumstances that led to the release from school of the child on that day. The enquiry team will also be called upon to situate responsibilities and recommend disciplinary actions to be taken against officers in case they have failed in their duties. In the meantime, instructions are being issued to schools for a more rigorous control on release of pupils and to ensure that parental consent is sought and obtained in each case prior to release. I wish to reassure the House that the matter is being followed up very closely at the level of my Ministry and actions will be taken very promptly.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Rughoobur!

FOND DU SAC – MARKET - CONSTRUCTION

Mr S. Rughoobur (Second Member for Grand' Baie & Poudre d'Or): Thank you, Madam Speaker, for taking briefly the time of the House. I have a request for my Constituency. Actually, since several years, there has been a request - and this request is being addressed to the Rt. hon. Prime Minister as Minister for the National Development Unit - for the construction of a covered market at Fond du Sac and I would request the Rt. hon. Prime Minister to, please, look into the issue because – you know - *c'est comme un bazar flottant* when you have got heavy rainfall there. This new market fair would, I am sure, help those inhabitants, in surroundings areas as well whether it is Vale, Petit Raffray and other. So, I make a humble request to the Rt. hon. Prime Minister to, please, look into this issue.

Thank you.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, I must inform the House that NDU right now is heavily indebted. I don't know after payment of debt what amount will remain for other projects in the different Constituencies. In any case, if it is possible, we will look into this and if the means are there, we will do the needful.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Ameer Meea!

CANAL ANGLAIS - REPAIRS

Mr A. Ameer Meea (Second Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East): Yes, Madam Speaker, thank you. My subject matter relates to the NDU which falls under the purview of the Prime Minister's Office and it relates to the Canal Anglais.

I recently put a question to this House relating to the Canal Anglais, but due to time constraint, we could not debate the question in the House, but I have got the written answer whereby the NDU was instructed to carry out a survey to the state of the Canal Anglais. With recent heavy rainfall, what has happened; there have been so many cracks in the walls of the Canal Anglais which has been built since very long ago and which was last time rehabilitated in the years 2000 and 2005. And these cracks have resulted in leakage and, therefore, overflowing into the houses of inhabitants on the uphill of Military Road in my Constituency. Also, the Municipality of Port Louis currently looked into the maintenance, into the cleaning of the canal, but they don't have the budget to carry out extensive work to the canal. Therefore, I request the Rt. hon. Prime Minister to urgently look into the matter and request NDU to take immediate action.

Thank you.

The Prime Minister: Well, the answer will be the same. If the budget permits, then we will do the needful. We will make Canal Anglais become Canal Français.

At 6.45 p.m. the Assembly was, on its rising, adjourned to Thursday 02 April 2015 at 11.30 a.m.