



**SIXTH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**PARLIAMENTARY**

**DEBATES**

**(HANSARD)**

**FIRST SESSION**

**THURSDAY 02 APRIL 2015**

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Hon. Sir Anerood Jugnauth, GCSK, KCMG, QC	Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs, Minister for Rodrigues and National Development Unit
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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
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Dr. the Hon. Mohammad Anwar Husnoo	Minister of Local Government
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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**

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**FIRST SESSION**

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**Debate No. 16 of 2015**

**Sitting of 02 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

### SCHOOL BUSES – ACCIDENTS

**The Leader of the Opposition (Mr P. Bérenger)** (*by Private Notice*) asked the Minister of Public Infrastructure and Land Transport whether, in regard to the school buses, he will state the number thereof involved in accidents since 2013 to date, on a yearly basis, indicating –

- (a) the number of cases of injuries sustained in the course thereof and regarding the recent accident in which student K. P. was killed, indicate –
  - (i) if the school bus driver was arrested and the bus examined, and
  - (ii) at the material time, regarding the said bus –
    - A. if any conductor was on duty;
    - B. the number of students who were present therein, and
    - C. whether the doors were secured, and
- (b) the number of school buses presently in operation, indicating the number thereof which are over 16 years old.

**Mr Bodha:** Madam Speaker, I wish to thank the hon. Leader of the Opposition for having put this question which is of a national utmost importance. I think that today we have a system which is not safe and which is not accountable and time has come to review the whole system. There has been a very sad tragedy. One tragedy is more than what we should have and I have personally presented our sympathy to the parents. We need today - it is more than compelling - to find a solution to this national issue which is costing Government Rs800 m. per year. The public transport system costs Rs1.2 billion and for the students, it is Rs800 m.

Madam Speaker, regarding part (a) of the question, I am informed that, at to date, a total number of nine accidents involving school buses have been reported to the Police and eight students have been injured in these accidents as detailed hereunder -

<u>Year</u>	<u>No. of Accidents</u>	<u>No. of Injuries</u>
2013	6	6
2014	2	2
2015	1	1 fatal

Madam Speaker, regarding part (a) (i) of the question, I am informed by the Police that on Monday 23 March at 16.40 hours, Mr V. S., driver of the bus involved in the accident in which student K. P. sustained serious injuries, gave a statement at the Rose Belle Police Station. That is the statement of the driver. He reported that, on the same day, at 15.00 hours he was performing a trip and conveying students of Hindu Girls and Dunputh Lallah Colleges from Curepipe to their place of residence in the south. On reaching the vicinity of Patisserie Sylvestre at Union Park, he was informed by some of students in the bus that one student has jumped from the bus through the rear emergency door some 500 metres behind and which he did not notice. That was his report.

I am further informed that the victim was taken by volunteers to Jawaharlal Nehru Hospital for treatment. As regards the driver of the bus, an alcohol test was carried out and was found to be negative. On the same day, his statement of defence was recorded in the presence of his lawyer and was released on parole. Subsequently, on 25 March 2015, a provisional complaint of “Involuntary wounds and blows by imprudence” was lodged against the driver before the District Magistrate of Grand Port Court and he was released on bail upon furnishing a surety of Rs5000 and a recognizance of Rs50,000.

On 31 March 2015, the driver was arrested anew - that was after the death of the student - and brought before the District Magistrate of Grand Port Court on a provisional complaint of “involuntary homicide” and he has been released on bail upon furnishing a surety of Rs20,000 and his first provisional was consequently struck out. The bus was examined by both the Police and the Officers of the National Transport Authority. I am informed that there were 73 passengers (60 sitting and 13 standing) on the bus and there was no conductor on duty at the material time.

Madam Speaker, as regards part (a) (ii) of the question, I am informed that an investigation is going on by the Police. However, according to reports from the Police, it has been found that the security system was out of order. The investigation is being carried out to know how the accident occurred.

Madam Speaker, I wish to inform the House that soon after the accident, a committee was set up at the level of my Ministry to look into the immediate measures that could be taken to address the safety issues related to school buses.

According to current legislation, the authorised number of students on board school buses is as follows -

- (i) three students are allowed to occupy seats providing for a seating capacity of two passengers, that is 3 out of 2, and

(ii) four students are allowed to occupy seats providing for a seating capacity of three.

In view thereof, buses were allowed to transport up to 80 students. However, in May 2013, the National Transport Authority decided to limit the number of students in school buses to a maximum of 75. The number was inserted on the Certificate of Fitness of each bus with a view to ensuring that the insurance policy covered all 75 students.

With a view to reinforcing the security measures on board school buses, my Ministry has now decided that henceforth all buses providing school services will convey students strictly as per the authorised seating capacity of the buses and no more. To that effect, the provisions of the Road Traffic Regulations of 1954 will be accordingly amended. The committee has also recommended that henceforth the presence of a conductor will be mandatory in all buses.

Furthermore, the legislation now in force requires that the emergency doors of all motor buses will be equipped with an audible alarm system connected to the driver's cabin in order to warn the driver in case the door is not properly closed. New buses licensed as from August 2010 have been fitted with the alarm system. The committee has recommended that this alarm system will be fitted to all buses used in the public transport.

To ensure compliance with the provisions of the law relating to transport of students, the NTA and the Police will step up enforcement and take such action as may be necessary in the event any bus owner or bus crew is found to contravene any of these provisions.

Madam Speaker, besides legal enforcement measures, working sessions will be held with the Ministry of Education and Human Resources, Tertiary Education and Scientific Research – I have talked to my colleague - and School Managers to discuss all possible measures to ensure that students travel to and from school in the most convenient and safe manner. Possibility to have school officials appointed to maintain order among students when boarding buses and to ensure that there is no overloading will be considered. In fact, we are thinking of one person dedicated by the PTA to see to it that all the students take the buses properly and in proper conditions before leaving the school premises because the children are under the responsibility of the schools and the institutions whilst they have not yet boarded the buses.

I have also decided, Madam Speaker, that a dedicated unit of the NTA will, henceforth, deal with this transport of students' problem. Today, Madam Speaker, we do not know how many buses went to the schools, how many drivers were there, how many conductors were there, how many students were there in each bus and yet, we are paying at the end of the month. So, we have decided that, henceforth, each bus will have to send back

to the NTA, on a daily basis, the number, the name of the driver, the name of the conductor, the number of students carried out so that we will have a daily record of the number of buses and who is travelling from one place to the other.

The second thing is that we are working with the institutions or the schools so that dedicated persons who will help the students board the buses will also have a record of which bus, which conductor, which driver and the number of students travelling in that bus. Then, we can have checks and balances as to the number of students travelling in each bus and under whose responsibility the students were.

In a wider perspective, to review school bus services, my Ministry proposes to come up with proposals to have a completely dedicated fleet which will be limited to transport of students. These buses will be equipped with video cameras to monitor the whole operation while students are being transported because there is a huge problem of discipline aboard the buses. In fact, it is a problem involving the institutions, the authorities, the parents and the students themselves. And I must say, Madam Speaker, that I have gone through what is being done elsewhere and I have read about the Canadian system. Buses are designed in Canada for the transport of children because they are considered to be vulnerable and they have to be transported in the best and the safest manners and there are a number of regulations which have been imposed. The driver, in fact, has the authority of the teacher in the bus, by law. So, there should be a sense of responsibility at all levels. A safe and secure transportation will also be applied with combined efforts of educational institutions, bus operators, students and parents.

Madam Speaker, the number of buses over the age of 16 - today, we have 10% of our fleet, that is, about 200 buses which are above 16 years old and we still do not have the breakdown of the number of buses over 16 which are used every day. But if we were to say that 10% of the buses are over 16, it would mean that every day, in the morning, 450 buses are used for students and almost 600 buses are used in the afternoon. As you know, some students are brought in by their parents and they leave by the school bus. I would presume that out of the 189 buses which are over 16 years old, about 10% is being used every day. So, that would mean that it would be about 20 buses. Many of them are NTC buses, in fact. These buses, I have been told, are being dedicated for schoolchildren, that is, they are being used for the transport of children in the morning and in the afternoon and the drivers also have just that responsibility. But as we are going to renew the fleet of the CNT soon, we will scrap this at the level of the CNT, but we are going to see to it that no bus over 16 years are being used for the schoolchildren.

**Mr Bérenger:** Madam Speaker, if I can start with the last part of my question, but before that, you will allow me to renew the expression of our sympathy to the family concerned. So, we do not have a figure of how many buses above 16 years old are used to convey students to and from schools. We do not have that figure?

**Mr Bodha:** That's what I am saying. We do not have the number of buses over 16, we do not have the number of actual buses on a daily basis and we do not have the number of actual students. Now, we are putting a system which will give us a record on a daily basis at the NTA, of the number of buses, what are the buses, who are the conductors and who are the drivers. This will allow us to know what are the buses that are involved in the morning which are over 16 years. Madam Speaker, we have 15 days - because tomorrow is the Easter holidays - to come up with a new system with emergency measures which will come into force at the next semester.

**Mr Bérenger:** I am sure the hon. Minister will remember - he was in the Opposition then with us - that at one time, the Ministry and the CNT reserved the buses that were no longer allowed to travel on normal route with normal passengers for students' transport. All the old buses that were no longer allowed to take passengers, we managed to stop that. But now, is the Minister telling us that it is only now that he knows that these buses, more than 16 years old, are being given in priority to convey students?

**Mr Bodha:** No, no. There are a few buses which are dedicated for the school transport and they are over 16 years. But most of the other students, in fact, take the dedicated buses or normal buses.

**Mr Bérenger:** I put my question again. How many buses conveying students are over 16 years old?

**Mr Bodha:** We do not have the exact figure and what we can say is about 10%. We have about 10% of 200; that would be about 20 buses. Most of them are CNT buses. But what I have asked them is to see to it that the buses are in good condition. Up and until, in a few months, we are going to have new buses at the CNT and this system will be scrapped totally.

**Mr Bérenger:** If we can move on, Madam Speaker, to the accident itself. In the report which this driver gave - from what I understand, on the same day, immediately after the accident - is he arguing that he did not hear? Because my information is from the moment that young girl fell off the bus, all the students were shouting and making noises. He did not stop until I don't know how many bus stops later on. Is he arguing that he did not know that that child fell off the bus?

**Mr Bodha:** The hon. Leader of the Opposition is right! This is what the driver reported. But I have talked to a number of people and there is a report also about the volunteer who took the poor student to the hospital and he said that he was driving behind and the door opened and the student fell. The driver himself is saying that he was informed 500 meters ahead. So, in fact, that is his version. But the Police have recorded the other version and I personally think what must have happened is that, at one point in time, the bus must have stopped, some of the students must have alighted and the door was not securely closed and the driver must have just sped without seeing what was happening behind. The door opened and the girl fell down. Because from my information, she fell at the back and the injuries sustained were the injuries at the back of the head.

**Mr Bérenger:** Then, we have at least the Police have taken statements from the witness that helped that poor girl. Have statements been taken from the students who have been witnesses to that?

**Mr Bodha:** I have no such information, but the Police are carrying out their investigation. We have the report of what the volunteer who took the student to hospital said. As regards the students, the investigation is still on and I think that the Police will question some of the students and see what was their version of what happened.

**Mr Bérenger:** From what I understand, Madam, he drove to the Police Station. Can I know what happened to the students who were on board? He drove to the Police Station, gave a statement, from what I understand, that he only realised that there was trouble and yet he put in his statement - from what the Minister has said - that she jumped.

**Mr Bodha:** Yes!

**Mr Bérenger:** But can I know the Police taking a statement from somebody like that, what was the action that the Police took immediately? Did they arrest the driver? Did they go on the spot immediately? What happened?

**Mr Bodha:** The information I have is that the Police recorded the statement and he was brought to Court the day after and there was a first provisional charge on the day after. It was when the student passed away that he was rearrested with a provisional charge of involuntary homicide and that was on 31 March.

**Mr Bérenger:** That is not my point. My point is: a very serious accident like that occurred; we are told that the driver drove to the Police Station. What happened to all those students who were on the bus? Secondly, when he made that kind of statement, what did the Police do? Did they arrest him? Did they go on the spot immediately? What did they do?

**Mr Bodha:** From the information I have, the Police went on the spot and examined the vehicle. That is where they found out that the security system was not in order. As regards the students from the bus station, I have no information about what happened. I believe that buses which must have come after must have found a solution to this so that they could reach their home.

**Mr Bérenger:** Is the Minister telling us, Madam, that this examination by these policemen immediately after it was reported is the only examination to which the bus was subjected?

**Mr Bodha:** There was an examination which was subjected by the NTA, but that was two days later and I do not agree at all with what was recorded because that was two days after. So, I think that I would go by the report of the Police which said that the security system was out of order.

As regards the Police, I have been told that his defence was recorded in presence of his lawyer. So, that was the day after. The report of the NTA says that the emergency door was found to be locked and those devices were working, that was two days later. In my humble opinion, I would rather go with the report of the Police.

**Mr Bérenger:** Is the Minister telling us that it is only with the death of that student that he realises now, if I understood him rightly, that it is not mandatory for huge school buses with 70 students on-board to have an attendant whereas regulations already provide that small school vans have to have an attendant? Well, if that has gone on for so long, who is going to be taken to task?

**Mr Bodha:** What has happened so far, there was a law, but it was not respected. That is, what I am saying is that the NTA now will have a dedicated unit just to cater for the transport of students with a record on a daily basis as to the number of vehicles, the name of the driver, the conductor and the number of students who are being transported from one place to the other. That will be counterchecked by a dedicated person at the level of the institution. That is how, I think, we could be able to control it. In the meantime, I think, we are going to reduce the number of students travelling by the bus and we are also coming with a total overhaul of the system which is costing us Rs800 m. with 80 students travelling every day in all buses, with all drivers and that is totally a system which cannot continue.

**Mr Bérenger:** Again, that is not my point! My point is, when replying I think I heard the Minister - if I heard wrongly, correct me - say that it is now that it is going to be made mandatory that a conductor has to be on the bus. This is what I heard. Is that so? Whereas, as

I said, in vans for years now, after pressure from us, it is in the regulations that it is mandatory to have an attendant.

**Mr Bodha:** The law is there, the law has not been respected.

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Mahomed!

**Mr Mahomed:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I would like to suggest two issues since the Minister said that there is going to be a total review of the whole system which I think is high time. First of all, there is a problem about attitude on behalf of the bus conductors. They believe that the students are benefiting from a free transportation, free trip, and that they adopt a carefree attitude on one hand when, in fact, it is the taxpayers' money. The second point is that there is a mismatch between the morning bus and the afternoon bus because of students going to private tuition...

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Mahomed, can you come with your question? We have got a time constraint!

**Mr Mahomed:** Can the hon. Minister assure the House that these two issues will be taken on board in the review?

**Mr Bodha:** All the issues will be taken on board. I think that we should put our heads together and I am very open to the suggestions from both sides of the House and from the other stakeholders. Because if we do not have the collaboration of all the stakeholders, the parents, the institutions, the NTA, the bus owners, bus drivers and conductors, we will not be able to have a sound and safe accountable system. I am very open to all the suggestions because I think we all agree that this system has to change. We cannot have 150,000 people travelling every day and spending Rs800 m. not having a system where we feel at home as parents that our children are being transported in the right manner.

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Ameer Meea, you have got a question?

**Mr Ameer Meea:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. In his reply, the hon. Minister stated that a sum of Rs800 m. is being disbursed to bus companies for payment of free transport. But is the hon. Minister aware that the Director of Audit has severely criticised the payment mechanism to bus owners for free transport? Therefore, can I ask the hon. Minister if he is considering to review the payment modality to private and public bus companies so that it is more effective and transparent?

**Mr Bodha:** We have been asking questions on the system. I asked, as Leader of the Opposition, the question in those days; it cost only Rs600 m.

I think the hon. Member is totally right. We have to see to it that every cent which is being spent is spent properly in the safety of our children, because when we go on what is

being done elsewhere - it is clear that what has happened was a tragedy, and what is happening every day should not happen and should not continue to happen.

**Mr Bhagwan:** Can I know from the hon. Minister whether he has gone into the files? This is not the first case of such type of accident occurring where schoolchildren are being severely injured following the misconduct, I can say, of the bus conductors/drivers. So, can the hon. Minister have a review of all the pending cases and the case which has occurred? I know one case in my Constituency of a girl in Canot Village who suffered an accident - a girl of Aleemiah College - and the parents are having a lot of difficulties. Even the Police report has not yet been finalised up to now, and there is connivance with the bus company, at least, to know the truth. Can I ask the hon. Minister to have a dedicated desk at his Ministry to go into past accidents and review case-by-case, and to see where actions have not been taken and also help the poor families whose children have suffered severe injuries?

**Mr Bodha:** Madam Speaker, I can assure the hon. Member that this will be done.

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Leader of the Opposition, can I know whether you have many more questions? Because I have got a long list of people who want to ask questions on this issue. Do you have many more questions? We have got five minutes.

**Mr Berenger:** No, I have one last.

**Madam Speaker:** One last! So, I can ask hon. Uteem to put his question then.

**Mr Uteem:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. The hon. Minister mentioned that the emergency door was working properly according to one report, and not working properly according to the Police. But doesn't the hon. Minister agree that emergency doors should be used only in emergencies and not every day by passengers, and that proper legislation should be introduced to see to it that any misuse of an emergency door should be punishable?

**Mr Bodha:** The hon. Member is right, Madam Speaker. That is why we are coming with the semi-low floor buses. We are going to impose them on the companies and on the private owners as well. Because there, the exit from the bus is in the middle and the emergency door can be used exceptionally in cases of emergency.

**Mr Jhugroo:** Is the hon. Minister aware that, despite several requests from many school rectors to the bus companies because they have got above 100 students, they get only one bus? And in this bus, you have got more than 120 students every afternoon. So, will the hon. Minister consider to ask to these bus companies to review the number of buses provided to these secondary schools?

**Mr Bodha:** It is clear, Madam Speaker, that when we will reduce the authorised number of students, we'll need some more buses. But I think that the whole system has to be

accountable. As I said, today we don't know in the morning what buses were used, who were the drivers, who were the contractors, who were the students and how many travelled. And yet we are going to make the payment. If it is Rs800 m. per year, it means that it is about Rs2 m. a day.

**Mr Ganoo:** Can the hon. Minister confirm whether the driver, when his attention was drawn to the fact that the girl had, unfortunately, fallen off the door whilst driving the bus, said that he would not stop because this is not his problem - *pas mo problème ça?* Can the hon. Minister also explain to the House why was this bus not secured on the same day, which allowed the repairs to be effected when it was inspected two days afterwards? Why was this driver released? Because in such a state, the state of health of the victim is monitored, and unless she is out of danger the suspect is always detained by the Police until the victim is completely out of danger, which was not the case in this precise matter.

**Mr Bodha:** It was not the case, Madam Speaker. This is right. The driver did not stop; he continued. His version is saying that the students told him that somebody had fallen 500 metres behind. This is exactly what happened. As regards the security system, the Police made an examination of the security system of the vehicle and found out that it was out of order. The NTA did an examination two days later and it was in order. That's why I said that we have two reports. But I would believe that the report of the Police is what actually was the state of affairs.

**Ms Sewocksingh:** Is the hon. Minister aware that, apart from students, these school buses sometimes pick up members of the public? And also, sometimes not only girls or boys; there is a mixture. Both girls and boys are in the same bus, and sometimes there are more than 80 to 90 students in one bus with only a bus driver. Can the hon. Minister inform us if he is aware that there are not only girls or boys, but also members of the public in the buses?

**Mr Bodha:** Madam Speaker, we have dedicated buses going to each institution. But then, you have a number of students who travel with the normal buses. So, I don't know whether the hon. Member is relating to dedicated buses or to the normal bus system where you have the students and you have the other passengers. But, anyway, I am going to look into the matter.

**Mr Bérenger:** I am sure the hon. Minister will agree with me that it is also very sad that it took this death for the whole thing to be reviewed and an emergency committee to be set up and so on. I congratulate him for that. The family is in despair. They feel that there has been complicity between the Police, the driver and maybe other people in the CNT. They do not know what is happening. So, can I request from the hon. Minister that both the

Ministry and the Police – not the people involved in the incident – should keep that family informed as the inquiry progresses?

**Mr Bodha:** Well, as it happens, it's sad. My secretary is, in fact, the aunty of the girl who passed away. So, I have been talking to the parents regularly. I talked to the mother and, of course, the feeling of the parents is that something like this should not happen again. That is why I said that this was a very important question of national interest, and I think that we have to find a solution. We'll find some urgent solutions for the next 15 days and then come up with a whole overhauling of the system.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**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.*

(12.17 p.m.)

### STATEMENT BY MINISTER

#### CEB - GENERATORS

**The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Energy and Public Utilities (Mr I. Collendavelloo):** Madam Speaker, I would like, with your permission, to make a statement to clarify a specific issue raised yesterday in relation to a supplementary question to the PNQ.

The hon. Leader of the Opposition referred to a previous statement in the House mentioning that there is an allowance of 60 MW for scheduled maintenance, which has now been reduced to 30 MW.

I have checked the records, and I have noted that it was my predecessor who mentioned this figure of 60 MW in reply to a PNQ on 22 November 2013.

In my reply yesterday, I stated that the CEB is now providing for 30 MW of scheduled maintenance for the year 2015-2016 during the crop season, when CEB units are usually on maintenance.

I am informed that the CEB has revised its maintenance allowance to 30 MW on the basis of the recommendations of the World Bank draft report submitted in January 2015.

The World Bank has carried out a historical analysis of CEB's past maintenance schedules during the crop season when all the power-generating plants of the Independent Power Producers are fully operational.

The unit sizes of CEB generating sets are 10, 15, 20 and 30 MW. This allows flexibility to optimise on maintenance during the period 2015-2016.

On the basis of its analysis, the World Bank has concluded that during the crop season the CEB can safely allow for 30 MW by optimising its maintenance schedule.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

(12.20 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.*

**Mrs J. Monty (Third Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue):**  
Madame la présidente, permettez-moi tout d'abord de présenter comme il se doit, selon la tradition, mes vives félicitations à l'honorable ministre des Finances et du Développement Économique pour le budget présenté cette fois de façon plus accessible. Madame la présidente, mes félicitations et mon appréciation dépassent largement cet aspect de tradition et vient dire bravo au ministre des Finances qui, par son brillant exposé, a été une fois de plus égale à lui-même. Bravo encore, pour le contenu de son discours qui éclaire nettement son souci de redonner souffle à une économie et une croissance essoufflée à évacuer toute forme de stagnation, et à redonner espoir et dignité à une population, hélas, trop longtemps bernée et trahie dans sa confiance.

Ce budget, qualifié de novateur, entraîne dans son sillage non seulement des mesures phares, mais traduit de manière implicite un souci marqué de remettre ce peuple debout, de le prendre en charge, et d'enlever la crasse dans tous les secteurs de ce pays qui a, hélas, sournoisement glissé dans les pans de la corruption et sombré si profondément dans les plis du mensonge et de la honte à son sommet le plus haut.

Madame la présidente, ce budget vient, comme il a été si bien qualifié, à la croisée des chemins, où les avenues du progrès et du redressement sont clairement dessinés. Madame la présidente, nos secteurs piliers de notre économie sont à la croisée des chemins, comme l'illustre et le dit si bien le fascicule présenté par l'honorable ministre lors de la présentation du budget : *'Mauritius at the Crossroad'*.

En effet, Madame la présidente, nos secteurs phares ont atteint un stade d'essoufflement et, pour le relancer, ce budget est axé sur quatre objectifs majeurs, notamment, orienter l'économie vers l'investissement et l'emploi, assurer un développement durable pour tous, atteindre une plus grande équité en ayant la justice pour tous, et aussi promouvoir la transparence et la bonne gouvernance dans la gestion des affaires publiques. Ces objectifs visés, Madame la présidente, sont en ligne avec nos engagements et nos promesses faites durant la campagne électorale, et pour laquelle nous avons été élus massivement sans conteste.

*L'alliance Lelep* poursuit sur sa lancée en inscrivant le social au cœur de ses actions politiques. Permettez, Madame la présidente, que je parcoure les mesures phares. Au niveau de l'infrastructure, décongestionner les centres névralgiques afin de permettre la fluidité au niveau de la circulation est une mission que le gouvernement tient à cœur. Dans cette optique, un *fly over* sera érigé à la rue De Caen pour réduire le trafic entrant et sortant de Port Louis. Un futur projet grandement novateur pour décongestionner la capitale, sera l'utilisation de *ferry-boat* entre Pointe aux Sables et Port Louis et Baie du Tombeau.

Madame la présidente, un autre volet du projet de décongestion sera le pont reliant Coromandel et l'autoroute, et ce n'est pas pour rien que le grand argentier parle de Maurice comme étant un vaste chantier à en devenir. Quel soulagement, Madame la présidente, pour tous les usagers de la route, habitués de prendre leur mal en patience et pour qui la route est une source de stress, avant même d'atteindre leur lieu de travail et de commencer leur journée. Ce sont là des mesures que la population va attendre avec impatience. Moins de bouchons, réalité à en devenir.

Autres secteurs à faire ressortir, Madame la présidente, demeure celui de l'eau et de l'énergie. Outre les 6 m<sup>3</sup> d'eau gratuitement à chaque famille, le peuple est encouragé à faire

l'utilisation des énergies renouvelables, laquelle démarche sera récompensée par la déduction au niveau des impôts.

Madame la présidente, le gouvernement est venu prouver, contre toute spéculation, qu'il n'est pas de celui qui prend de la main gauche ce qu'il donne de la main droite. La mauvaise foi de certains avait commencé à gagner les esprits. Il y avait quand même une crainte que la taxe soit augmentée après l'offre généreuse et immédiate aux aînés juste après les résultats des élections. Mais cela n'a pas été le cas.

Autres secteurs, Madame la présidente, sur lesquels j'aimerais parler c'est l'éducation et j'avais fait mention dans mon *maiden speech* de mon engagement professionnel dans ce domaine. Mais avant de parler du secondaire, j'aimerais souligner la décentralisation des centres de formation, à l'instar d'une école polytechnique qui proposera des cours en *Middle Management*, en Technologies, de l'Information et de la Communication. Comment passer sous silence, Madame la présidente, celle de Montagne Blanche qui offrira la formation liée à l'hôtellerie et au tourisme, ou alors celle de Pamplemousses offrant la formation médicale et qui serait loin des universités champignons conçus pour servir des intérêts personnels, tels que le D. Y. Patil et autre *EIILM University*.

Madame la présidente, les diplômés chômeurs dont la formation ne correspond pas aux demandes du marché de l'emploi, suivront un *crash course* fait sur mesure, et l'État contribua jusqu'à R 80,000 par année par étudiant. Telles sont, Madame la présidente, mes impressions dégageant de ce budget et dont la particularité couvre 18 mois avec les dépenses prévues à R 154,3 milliards, et les revenus de R 131,2 milliards menant à un déficit égal à 3,6 % du PIB, comparé à 3,2 % en 2014. Pour que les rêves et les projets se réalisent, Madame la présidente, en général, la population est invitée à travailler ensemble. Il lui est donc offert une incitation de taille, pas de hausse fiscale ni de nouvelles taxes et moins d'occasion à gratter les cartes ou se laisser tenter par les jeux du hasard.

I would like, Madam Speaker, to comment on the major educational project identified in the Budget and, of course, I am referring to the nine-year schooling project. The nine-year schooling project is a unique opportunity to address the weaknesses of teaching and learning in our present educational system and, for this Government, its people remain *au centre de ses préoccupations*. So is its youth. Such is our will to target quality education in Mauritius and outer islands. First of all, there have been criticisms about the lack of details provided in the Budget on this reform, but, Madam Speaker, it is not the role of the hon. Minister of Finance to give technical details about this project. This is the responsibility of the hon. Minister of Education and Human Resources, Tertiary

Education and Scientific Research, and I am but more than optimistic that the hon. Minister will come to this House and give adequate information once the orientations and principles of this reform are set before it is implemented.

At this stage, I would like to point out that the debate on this major structural reform, with a significant pedagogical implication started at the end of the 80s, but this Government, Madam Speaker, has the will and capacity to implement it now. This reform should allow us to obtain three different types of results. We should be able to reduce the considerable pressure that the actual system exerts on all actors of our education and, in particular, on our children. It should provide us with the opportunity to shift our focus from road learning to creativity - meaningful learning and critical thinking. In this sense, we will align ourselves on the philosophical principals underpinning education systems of developed countries.

More importantly, Madam Speaker, it should help us to rethink the relationship between primary and secondary education and also the pre-primary. I am aware that this is a major project which will involve careful planning, identification of adequate technical and human resources necessary for its implementation, but I am confident, Madam Speaker that the hon. Minister of Education and Human Resources, Tertiary Education and Scientific Research will leave no stone unturned in order to achieve the aims set.

I would, however, recommend a careful monitoring of the project during the first years of its implementation phase. This should allow us to identify the potential problems and weaknesses which could be addressed at the early phase of the nine-year schooling project. I would also humbly propose that the monitoring be carried out by educationists who are not necessarily part of the Ministry. I would also like to comment, Madam Speaker, on the Marshall Plan against poverty.

In the same line of thought, I wish to congratulate the hon. Minister for translating his vision and the vision of this Government to revisit the structure and application of the CSR system so as to make it more effective. I would like to comment on the Marshall Plan against poverty, but I would like, first of all, to congratulate both the hon. Prime Minister and the hon. Minister of Education and Human Resources, Tertiary Education and Scientific Research for this bold initiative. I agree with the Minister of Finance and Economic Development that the Government needed to be bold in order to state plainly that the plight of vulnerable families has been getting worse in recent years and to adopt a more direct approach to extend support to the very poor families living in identified *poches de pauvreté*.

*J'ai été heureuse d'apprendre, Madame la présidente, les différentes actions identifiées pour combattre la pauvreté, ensuring that all children attend school and develop*

their full talents creating sports and leisure facilities. I would also like to stress the importance of revisiting existing services offered to the public with the fight against poverty, for example, in youth centres offering leisure facilities, we will have to train the staff to step into their new roles.

However, I firmly believe in the paramount implication of the role of both formal and informal education and what they have to play to strengthen pre-primary educational facilities in those *poches de pauvreté*. This will be a great step, Madam Speaker. We should measure the true value and importance of the role that pre-primary education can play in reducing educational failures.

Another aspect not to be neglected remains technical education. As for non-formal education, sensitisation campaigns, fight against all identified evils of our society like alcoholism and drugs, will need rethinking. However, the best tool any Government has to combat poverty is education and in the same line of thought, I would like to congratulate the hon. Minister of Finance and Economic Development for translating this vision of the Government in proposing to revisit the structure and application of the CSR companies which are now invited to invest wholly in a chosen poor region and for this, again, I congratulate the hon. Minister of Finance and Economic Development.

C'est une brillante idée, Madame la présidente, et une décision fort louable que de vouloir changer la face d'une nation dans ce qui constitue la triste réalité de nos propres concitoyens. On n'a qu'à imaginer les cités phares qui naîtront des gouffres de pauvreté où la misère et la pauvreté se côtoient quotidiennement et amèrement et à faire pâlir les plus audacieux des gouvernements. Ce n'est nullement, Madame la présidente, une volonté de jeter ses responsabilités dans un secteur privé, mais au contraire, d'inviter ce secteur privé à ne pas se disperser, mais à vraiment contribuer à apporter un réel changement soutenu et visible en remettant debout nos propres citoyens. De plus, ce n'est pas comme l'a dit un membre de l'opposition, une liste exhaustive des poches de pauvreté, mais comme on l'a cru mais un échantillon de poches, hélas trop nombreuses à énumérer.

Ce gouvernement, Madame la présidente, fait appel à ces *best brains*, car la perte des talents appauvrit un pays. Cependant, la pratique non-méritocratique à des postes clés est un étendard de vérité qui a repoussé bien des concitoyens préférant évoluer sous d'autres cieux. Certes, les propositions salariales doivent être alléchantes pour pouvoir attirer nos cerveaux. Mais un autre aspect serait les liens familiaux irremplaçables qui pourraient les tenter surtout si la taxe ne sera pas payable sur une période de dix ans.

*The Police Academy, Madam Speaker, is a laudable initiative* qui vise à faire de nos soldats de l'ordre et des femmes formées, capables de servir ce pays de façon plus civilisée.

Le secteur de l'agro-alimentaire, Madame la présidente, est un autre aspect ayant retenu mon attention. Madame la présidente, l'ambitieux projet de se lancer dans la culture des produits bio, certes, est un projet des plus attrayants représentant un moyen d'offrir un produit par lequel des fertilisants et des pesticides chimiques sont prescrits et à sortir de la culture traditionnelle. Mais cette nouvelle culture requiert une expertise extrêmement bien rodée, une mesure qui certes créera deux catégories de consommateurs : ceux ayant un meilleur pouvoir d'achat et ceux ne pouvant s'en procurer. Mais il n'en demeure pas moins que le souci de préserver la santé pousserait des consommateurs à vouloir s'en procurer quel qu'en soit le prix. Mais soyons réalistes et armons-nous de patience, car le chemin sera sûrement long. Donc, osons rêver et attendons!

Madame la présidente, puisqu'on parle des produits alimentaires, permettez que, par ricochet, je me tourne vers le projet de bannir les sacs en plastique que je trouve courageux. N'empêche que je ne puis m'empêcher de mentionner que ce qu'on appelle communément sacs en plastique sont devenus comme notre pavillon national.

*Mauritian people are easily recognised even at marketplaces abroad with their sacs en plastique and it will take time to get rid of these. Alternatives may be found as nos sacs en papier actuellement sur le marché se défoncent à vue d'œil et on se demande comment disposer de la saleté après que nous, Mauriciens, ayant été habitués maintenant - disciplinés que nous sommes - à disposer des restes dans nos fameux grands sacs en plastique noir.*

Before concluding, Madam Speaker, I wish to precise that this Budget highlights the leadership of all the Leaders of this Government and I wish to quote John W. Work's definition which qualifies effective leaders as those individuals who in their inimitable ways, I quote –

“Inspire confidence, undermine despair, fight fear, initiate positive and productive actions, define the goals and paint brighter tomorrows.”

My plea, Madam Speaker, if we have listened to the words, let us not lose the music that underlies the measures taken to allow the country to breathe, its people to sigh and to better live under the sun of prosperity and hope.

My appeal to all hon. Members of this House will be to remain in togetherness so as to unfold a new page of our history, heal the nation's wounds and make our people fully adhere to our programme *de redressement*. Let us bring this consumer and 'zougadère' tendency in our people to turn into one nation *responsable dans son comportement citoyen*,

*familial et dans sa contribution économique et aussi, dans son comportement social, dans sa marche vers une société plus juste où le soleil de cette île ne sera pas seulement un atout touristique à vendre, mais où chaque Mauricien se sentira partie prenante d'une île Maurice debout ayant retrouvé ses marques et sa dignité.*

Let us look around, Madam Speaker! This Government is special with the best team ever. I should also say, this House is special and if honesty and dedication remain our keys on both sides of the House, our country will be blessed in the realisation of the financial programme set by our *Grand Argentier* to whom I wish many other brilliant budgets. May God bless the Rt. hon. Prime Minister, the Deputy Prime Minister, the two other Vice-Prime Ministers, the Leader of the MSM and my wishes extend to the hon. Leader of the Opposition and to each and every Member of this august Assembly. May God bless us all in our mission! Long live this Government!

On these words, Madam Speaker, I wish to leave the floor and thank you for your attention.

(12.39 p.m.)

**The Minister of Youth and Sports (Mr Y. Sawmynaden):** Madame la présidente, je voudrais tout d'abord féliciter l'honorable ministre des Finances et du Développement Économique pour la présentation d'un budget intitulé, à juste titre, «*At the Crossroad*».

Nous nous trouvons effectivement à un carrefour après le bilan décevant, pour ne pas dire catastrophique du précédent régime; il faut aujourd'hui avancer vers une nouvelle ère de développement.

L'honorable Vishnu Lutchmeenaraidoo sait comment démarrer une économie, il l'a fait en 1983 toujours dans le sillage d'une politique de petits copains et de gaspillage menée par les travaillistes.

Aujourd'hui, en 2015, il convient de rappeler que ce budget a été préparé dans un contexte de conditions économiques mondiales difficiles et avec des incertitudes locales, notamment -

- un investissement étranger direct faible ;
- un taux de chômage galopant ;
- une dette publique à son plus haut niveau, et
- un déficit budgétaire représentant plus de 50% du PIB

De par ce contexte, le gouvernement nouvellement élu de '*l'Alliance Lepep*' n'avait d'autre choix que de prendre le taureau par les cornes pour redresser l'économie et mettre tout en place pour réaliser un deuxième miracle économique, comme promis par le père du premier miracle économique, Sir Anerood Jugnauth.

Nous avons là un budget bien équilibré, bien conçu où il y a un parfait mélange de mesures sociales et économiques. Un mélange déjà salué par la population car plus de 80% - 83% plus précisément - de la population parlent d'un *feel-good factor*! Les mesures annoncées vont certainement fournir la base pour atteindre le taux de croissance ciblée de 5,3% pour 2015-2016.

Hélas, les oiseaux de mauvais augure ont déjà commencé à chanter. Exemple: la mauvaise foi des membres de l'opposition qui qualifient ce budget de décousu. Il est facile de critiquer le grand argentier mais je tiens à rappeler à l'honorable *Leader* de l'opposition les éloges faites à Vishnu Lutchmeenaraidoo lors de son adhésion au MMM. Mais aussi ces paroles à l'encontre du MSM après la cassure du *Remake*, selon ses dires: « *sa ti parti 3.5%, si au moins zot ti pe tombe dans caro cannes, zot ti pou ena cannes pou manzé mais zot pe alle dans désert*».

Et, aujourd'hui, tel Dubaï qui a émergé d'un désert, *l'Alliance Lepep* est au gouvernement grâce au mandat obtenu auprès du peuple et telle une bénédiction du ciel, le désert s'est transformé en de vertes pâtures grâce à la pluviométrie régulière.

*(Interruptions)*

D'ailleurs, on en sait plus désormais sur les vraies raisons de la cassure du *Remake* et qui en est le principal responsable. Cela n'a jamais été à cause de la place de l'honorable Reza Uteem sur un éventuel *front bench* car l'honorable Pravind Jugnauth n'a jamais été cet assoiffé du pouvoir et se sent le devoir de servir comme l'a si bien inculqué Sir Anerood Jugnauth, je suis sûr que cela le portera toujours plus haut.

Ce n'est pas non plus à cause de la manière dont le *leader* du MSM, l'honorable Pravind Jugnauth, se défendait dans le procès Medpoint. D'ailleurs, sans vouloir commenter une affaire en Cour, nous voyons bien que cette affaire suit son cours *without any delaying tactics* et que bientôt toute la vérité triomphera.

Non, Madame la présidente, la véritable raison de la cassure, nous le savons depuis ce matin, avec les confessions sur les ondes radio, de l'honorable Alan Ganoo.

*(Interruptions)*

Aussi, un des porte-paroles du Parti travailliste a eu le culot de dire publiquement que ce gouvernement a sous-traité les problèmes des pauvres à des entreprises privées à travers la réorganisation du CSR.

Je voudrai citer Abraham Lincoln –

« *Better to remain silent and be thought a fool than to speak out and remove all doubts* ».

Madame la présidente, je félicite l'honorable ministre des finances pour son initiative de travailler avec tous les secteurs et tous les mauriciens de bonne volonté afin de pouvoir transformer et créer une Ile Maurice où il fait bon vivre.

Pour atteindre cet objectif, nous avons besoin de la contribution de tous, un vrai travail d'équipe, de vrais patriotes.

Ce alors que nos adversaires proposaient, eux, un vrai massacre de l'avenir avec un requin et un lion au commande d'une Rolls Royce, avec une sirène comme dame de compagnie, un vrai cirque.

Cette Opposition choisit d'oublier la série de mesures annoncées dans le budget pour l'indépendance de la famille et le bien-être des enfants, pour la formation et le placement des jeunes et les projets de logements. En l'absence de tout argument valable, elle a délibérément gardé le silence sur ces mesures de manière de créer une fausse impression dans le public. *That's what we call cheap politics!*

Madame la présidente, la population en a assez de cette politique bon marché. Je ne peux m'empêcher de penser aujourd'hui aux attaques de l'Alliance PTR/MMM contre l'Alliance Lepep lorsque nous avons proposé l'augmentation de la pension de vieillesse à R 5,000. L'Alliance Lepep a non seulement donné au troisième âge mais a aussi augmenté la pension de ceux ayant plus de 89 ans et pour nos centenaires, sans oublier l'augmentation de la pension pour les veuves et les orphelins sans augmenter la taxe.

Madame la présidente, le peuple le décrit comme un magicien. Il n'est pas David Copperfield mais bien un grand économiste, humble et humain avec le cœur sur la main. Il l'a déjà fait 25 ans auparavant ce miracle; il le refera en duo avec Sir Anerood Jugnauth et tout le gouvernement. L'honorable Vishnu Lutchmeenaraidoo est tout le contraire du *shadow Minister of Finance* de l'Alliance PTR/MMM, Rama Sithanen, qui à la place du cœur a un ordinateur et qui à la place des mots, jonglait avec des formules savantes dont cette ultime équation  $40+40$  est égale à une raclée aux élections, malgré le contexte difficile et l'héritage laissé par le précédent gouvernement, en présentant un *no-tax budget*.

Madame la Présidente, en outre, en vue de relever les défis et l'équité sociale de la création d'emplois, l'honorable ministre des finances et du développement économique a annoncé une série de mesures visant à promouvoir le grand potentiel de notre secteur des PME locales pour stimuler la croissance économique.

D'autre part, les mesures fiscales appropriées ont été prises par le gouvernement nouvellement élu pour rendre la nation plus prospère et habiliter les gens à améliorer leur qualité de vie grâce à un travail acharné au lieu de devenir accro aux jeux du hasard.

Nous voulons une jeunesse entreprenante, responsable et saine et non une jeunesse de *zougadères*, chômeurs avec des diplômes marron. L'honorable Vishnu Lutchmeenaraidoo a fait ressortir que nos grand-parents et nos parents nous ont appris que c'est par le travail et le sacrifice que la réussite est belle et honorable et non en grattant des cartes, et non aussi à l'exemple d'une sirène grattant le dos d'un lion pour se payer un château de cartes à Venise. Espérons qu'à son retour au pays, elle n'aille pas s'offrir toutes les pirogues de la régata de Mahebourg vu son talent à véhiculer en gondole en Italie.

Madame la présidente, ce type de jeu du hasard est un fléau social qui est devenu endémique dans tout le pays. Il était donc de notre devoir en tant que gouvernement responsable de lutter contre cette plaie purulente dans notre société en prenant des décisions courageuses.

Je dois dire que c'est avec beaucoup de soulagement que la population a salué l'annonce de l'interdiction de la publicité sur les jeux, en particulier les fameuses cartes à gratter. *Let's go back to work, no more scratching!*

Madame la présidente, l'heure est à la reconstruction et au changement de mentalité. C'est un véritable coup de balai que ce gouvernement doit passer et nous avons déjà commencé ! J'écoutais hier l'intervention de l'honorable Franco Quirin, député de l'Opposition. Il regrettait que ce budget ne fasse point mention de provisions pour le combat contre la drogue. Je l'en remercie de se sentir concerné en vrai patriote. Mais je lui dirais que là-aussi l'honorable Vishnu Lutchmeenaraidoo a innové car, en moins d'une heure et trente minutes, il ne pouvait pas lister toutes les mesures de ce gouvernement.

Je suis persuadé que sous la houlette de Sir Anerood Jugnauth, le combat contre les barons de la drogue sera mené de manière ferme. Nous ne nous défilons pas devant nos responsabilités, nous les assumons et nous tiendrons parole car elle est sacrée. *We mean business, don't you doubt about that!*

Madame la présidente, je suis reconnaissant à l'honorable ministre des finances et du développement économique pour avoir accordé une augmentation significative dans le budget de mon ministère en dépit des contraintes économiques.

L'accent, cette année, sera sans aucun doute sur la préparation des équipes nationales participant aux Jeux des Iles à La Réunion en août. Une ligne budgétaire spéciale a été élaborée à cet effet. Un comité technique a été mis en place pour suivre des programmes de formation de nos équipes nationales afin de s'assurer de la bonne marche de la préparation.

L'introduction d'une ligue de football professionnel à l'île Maurice a généré 300 emplois directs et il faut savoir que les joueurs sont aujourd'hui rémunérés sur une base mensuelle. Jouer au foot est désormais une profession, un métier et le gouvernement ne pouvait pas rester à l'écart de ce projet national qui crée des emplois et qui voit aussi nos meilleurs talents évoluer à l'étranger depuis peu.

Madame la présidente, afin d'augmenter le niveau et la qualité des joueurs et de contribuer aux performances de l'équipe nationale, des mesures importantes seront prises.

Nous donnerons la priorité à la participation des jeunes avec un accent sur les zones défavorisées de manière à promouvoir le football au niveau de la base (*grassroot level*). Ainsi, toute la structure du football des jeunes sera remaniée avec l'aide du nouveau DTN, Didier Six. Un entraîneur qui apporte déjà un nouveau souffle, car vous l'aurez remarqué, notre sélection nationale ne perd plus et marque surtout des buts, chose compliquée auparavant et malgré notre classement dans les bas-fonds du tableau de la FIFA, 190 sur 209, les équipes figurant parmi les 100 premiers ne nous font plus peur!

De plus, beaucoup d'investissement sera fait pour le développement du sport à la base et au niveau communautaire. Mais comme vous le savez, l'argent, il n'y en a jamais assez, cependant avec la volonté, nous pouvons accomplir des miracles. Nous relançons aussi les centres de formation de volley-ball, de basket-ball et d'autres disciplines.

En outre, il est nécessaire de créer une bonne liaison entre les établissements primaires et secondaires en mettant l'athlète au centre de tout développement sportif.

Par exemple, un médaillé d'or aux Jeux Olympiques va maintenant être récompensé par un prix en argent de R 2,1 millions. Nous avons également augmenté le montant des prix en espèces en faveur des médaillés pour les Jeux Paralympiques ainsi que pour les Jeux des Iles de l'Océan Indien.

Madame la présidente, mon ministère, conscient des lacunes et des anomalies du *Sports Act*, a invité les fédérations sportives à soumettre leurs points de vue et des propositions d'amendements. A cet effet, j'ai aussi invité l'honorable Franco Quirin à nous faire parvenir ses propositions. Je viendrai sous peu avec la version amendée de la loi sur le sport pour fournir un cadre juridique en vue de mieux encadrer les organisations sportives.

J'ai maintenant le plaisir de commenter sur l'impact positif du budget sur nos jeunes qui constituent une force dynamique à compter avec l'harmonie sociale et le développement national.

Investir dans le développement de la jeunesse revient à construire un avenir meilleur pour le pays. Les jeunes sont doués avec de la passion et la créativité qui, lorsqu'ils sont bien dirigés peuvent contribuer efficacement à la croissance économique, alors que l'ancien régime se contentait de dire à nos jeunes d'aller voir ailleurs.

Madame la présidente, Les jeunes sont des vecteurs du changement et cela a été illustré lors des récentes élections générales lorsque l'ancien gouvernement a été renversé par une majorité de nos jeunes qui ont adhéré au slogan *Viré Mam*. Mon ministère continuera de soutenir nos jeunes à travers un large éventail de programmes pour leur croissance personnelle et la participation effective dans le processus du développement pour la transformation sociale.

Madame la présidente, je vais maintenant énumérer les différents projets et programmes qui seront effectués dans nos centres de jeunesse. Comme la société mauricienne a subi de profonds changements dans les domaines socio-économiques, les complexités de la vie moderne ont conduit à un changement dans les besoins et les aspirations des jeunes.

Afin de répondre à ces changements, mon ministère, en collaboration avec le ministère de l'Éducation et celui des Administrations Régionales vont mettre à la disposition des mauriciens toutes les infrastructures sportives existantes dans les écoles publiques, car après les heures de cours et pendant les vacances scolaires, ces infrastructures demeurent fermées et non utilisées. Nous voulons avoir une utilisation intelligente et optimale de ce qui existe déjà au lieu d'investir de grosses sommes d'argent dans des projets pour ces mêmes infrastructures.

Madame la présidente, la section de la jeunesse sera remaniée. Des unités spécialisées avec des responsabilités bien définies seront créées dans le domaine de l'entrepreneuriat, de la vie familiale et du *career guidance*, entre autres.

Mon ministère réexaminera le fonctionnement de ses centres de jeunesse pour s'assurer qu'ils continuent de répondre aux aspirations des jeunes à travers la fourniture de loisirs, la formation et les activités d'intérêt aux jeunes.

Ainsi, le centre de jeunesse deviendra une plate-forme, un espace physique et psychologique pour les jeunes de se rencontrer, échanger des idées et expériences. Pour ce faire, je relance les comités consultatifs de jeunes qui seront responsables de la gestion des centres. Ce comité sera composé de représentants des clubs de jeunes et des organisations de jeunesse de la région, y compris des forces vives.

Madame la Présidente, vous le savez la plupart des jeunes sont libres dans l'après-midi et le week-end. A cet effet, mon ministère a déjà commencé à revoir les heures de fonctionnement des centres de jeunesse pour s'assurer que des activités structurées bénéficient de tous les équipements nécessaires.

En vue de promouvoir une culture de bénévolat chez les jeunes, mon ministère mettra en place un système national de jeunes bénévoles. Vous conviendrez que le volontariat peut transformer le rythme et la nature du développement. Il reste un moyen efficace pour engager la population active dans la lutte contre les problèmes sociaux.

Fini la culture *macarena et touss sali*; bienvenue aux valeurs du civisme.

Afin de résoudre les problèmes que rencontrent les jeunes dans cette société en mutation rapide et aussi là où les besoins des jeunes sont dynamiques, mon ministère viendra avec un programme national de conseils pour les jeunes. L'objectif est de fournir aux jeunes des informations et un soutien pour les aider à aborder les épreuves de la vie.

Je vais conclure, *Madame la présidente*, en disant que ce budget a ouvert de nouvelles voies propices à l'émancipation des jeunes et la construction d'une nation plus saine. En cela, une mesure fort symbolique, l'interdiction des sacs en plastique, prouve que ce gouvernement a aussi la fibre écologique.

Alors, mobilisons nos efforts et saisissons cette formidable opportunité pour transformer le pays, et demain nous pourrons tous dire « *Mission accomplie Mam!!* »

Merci.

(12. 55 p.m.)

**Mr T. Henry (Fourth Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien):** Madame la présidente, je voudrais tout d'abord féliciter le ministre des Finances, l'honorable Vishnu Lutchmeenaraidoo pour le budget 2015-2016.

C'est un budget qui fait l'unanimité dans toute la population. C'est un budget axé sur le social. Il a un impact direct sur la population, quelle que soit la sociale. C'est surtout un budget qui répond aux attentes du peuple, ce qui est normal venant d'une alliance qui a été élue par le peuple et pour le peuple.

Nous prouvons ainsi que nous tenons nos promesses, comme nous l'avons fait dès les premiers jours où le gouvernement a pris ses fonctions avec notamment la hausse de la pension de vieillesse et la suspension du permis à points, des mesures qui ont considérablement allégé le fardeau qui pesait sur un grand nombre de nos compatriotes.

Madame la présidente, je ne vais pas m'étendre sur toutes les mesures qui ont été annoncées par le ministre des Finances, mais je souhaiterais m'exprimer sur certaines d'entre elles.

Ces mesures ont un impact très positif sur –

- Les personnes les plus vulnérables ;
- Les habitants de ma circonscription, numéro 12, Mahebourg/Plaine Magnien

car nous savons tous qu'il y a un gros problème de chômage qui touche cette circonscription et nous connaissons les fléaux sociaux dont ses habitants sont victimes. C'est pour cette raison que j'accueille avec enthousiasme les mesures suivantes –

- Le Plan Marshall pour la lutte contre la pauvreté.
- La création d'une cybercité à Rose Belle et le projet d'*Airport City* à Plaine Magnien.
- Toutes les mesures pour redynamiser les PME qui sont très nombreuses dans ma circonscription.
- Enfin, toutes les mesures pour le secteur touristique qui a une bonne assise à Mahebourg et dans ses environs.

Madame la présidente, en ce qu'il s'agit du Plan Marshall contre la pauvreté, j'accueille favorablement le principe de parrainage qui a pour but d'améliorer les conditions de logement, de rehausser le niveau de l'emploi, d'éliminer les fléaux sociaux, d'améliorer la

qualité de la vie et d'assurer que tous les enfants soient scolarisés et puissent développer leurs talents en leur donnant notamment accès aux loisirs et aux sports.

Tout cela, Madame la présidente, doit cependant passer nécessairement par une restructuration urgente de la *National Empowerment Foundation*, car cet organisme avait démarré sur les chapeaux de roues avec notre Premier Adjoint, alors ministre de l'Intégration Sociale, mais il a perdu toute son efficacité après le départ de l'honorable Xavier-Luc Duval. Il faut maintenant le remettre en état de marche car il sera le fer-de-lance de l'application du Plan Marshall.

Il y a surtout une mesure dont la NEF est directement responsable, celle qui prévoit un repas pour chaque enfant dans le besoin qui va à l'école. Il y a, à ce niveau, un problème d'implémentation. Chacun sait qu'un enfant qui a le ventre vide ne peut suivre une scolarité normale. J'aimerais attirer l'attention du ministre de tutelle car c'est un problème qui ne touche pas uniquement ma circonscription mais le pays tout entier.

Une autre problématique qui touche le pays tout entier, Madame la présidente, c'est le logement social. J'avais fait ressortir lors de mon intervention sur le Discours Programme le fait que le barème d'éligibilité pour l'acquisition d'une maison NHDC devait être revu à la hausse car chacun sait que le coût de la vie a considérablement augmenté depuis l'application de ce plan de logement. Et je suis heureux de constater que le Vice-Premier ministre et ministre du logement, mon ami l'honorable Soodhun, a décidé de revoir ce barème à la hausse.

*(Interruptions)*

Ce sera un grand soulagement pour un grand nombre de familles dans le besoin qui veulent faire l'acquisition d'une maison. Comme le logement est un facteur essentiel de développement social, l'emploi est lui aussi un élément fondamental qui amène le progrès économique et social dans les familles.

À ce titre, Madame la présidente, j'accueille avec beaucoup d'enthousiasme la création de cinq technopoles dans le pays dont une à Rose Belle ainsi que le projet *d'Airport City* à Plaine Magnien. Ces deux projets permettront à un grand nombre de jeunes diplômés, souvent issus de familles modestes, qui ont fait des sacrifices pour l'éducation de leurs enfants, de trouver un emploi qui soit à la hauteur de leur aspiration. Tout comme le projet *d'Airport City* à Plaine Magnien qui donnera un *boost* magistral au développement de toute la localité avec non seulement la création d'emplois pour les habitants mais la possibilité d'entrer de plain-pied dans une nouvelle phase de développement à long terme. D'ailleurs, le

nouveau visage du sud-est permettra aux PME de participer, elles aussi, pleinement à cet essor.

Madame la présidente, déjà avec les facilités offertes par l'ancien ministre des finances, l'honorable Xavier-Luc Duval, les PME avaient, à leur disposition, tout un éventail de facilités. Aujourd'hui, les mesures introduites par l'honorable Lutchmeenaraidoo leur permettront d'approfondir leur expansion. J'aimerais suggérer, à ce stade, que tous ces développements de taille qui modifieront la configuration non seulement de ma circonscription mais aussi celles des autres régions où vont se développer les *Smart Cities*, permettront la participation des PME qui ont souvent de grandes compétences mais qui n'ont pas le loisir d'apporter leur contribution. Plus spécifiquement, les PME doivent pouvoir décrocher des contrats intéressants dans cette vague de développement qui va toucher le pays et qui va créer ce deuxième boom économique en ayant elles aussi leur part du gâteau.

Enfin, Madame la présidente, le dernier point sur lequel j'aimerais m'exprimer est le tourisme, le pilier de notre économie. Ce secteur, sous l'impulsion du *Deputy Prime Minister*, l'honorable Xavier-Luc Duval, est déjà en train de connaître un nouveau souffle. On le voit déjà à travers le pourcentage des arrivées touristiques...

*(Interruptions)*

... qui ont provoqué l'enthousiasme dans ce secteur. Je voudrais remercier ici le ministre des Finances qui a considérablement augmenté le budget de la *MTPA*. Cela permettra à la *MTPA* de s'aventurer sur de nouvelles avenues de promotion tout en consolidant notre place sur les marchés existants. La restructuration de la *MTPA* et de la *Tourism Authority* aura pour objectif de standardiser le niveau des services offerts par les différents prestataires de services dans l'industrie touristique.

Nous accueillons aussi très favorablement l'arrivée de nouvelles compagnies aériennes. Ce qui va booster les chiffres du tourisme. Avec les arrivées touristiques à la hausse, il ne faudra pas cependant négliger l'aspect environnemental et je vois avec satisfaction que le budget 2015-2016 a fait provision pour un programme d'embellissement des plages et des sites touristiques car nous sommes tous attachés à un environnement propre et attrayant aussi bien que pour les loisirs des touristes que pour le bien-être des mauriciens.

Pour conclure, Madame la présidente, je n'ai aucun doute que ce budget nous amènera vers le deuxième boom économique car l'équipe dirigeante de ce gouvernement menée par le Premier ministre, Sir Anerood Jugnauth, n'a qu'un seul souci, c'est le bien-être de la population. Malgré la mauvaise foi de certains membres de l'Opposition qui ne croient pas à notre ministre des Finances, certains membres de l'Opposition ne croient pas en ce

budget, ils préfèrent faire confiance à des grands calculateurs, des grands manipulateurs, des grands prévisionnistes qui n'avaient pas pu prédire les résultats des dernières élections sans se douter qu'ils allaient en fait s'écraser dans le mur. Heureusement que le peuple ne leur a pas fait confiance. C'est grâce à cela, qu'aujourd'hui, le gouvernement de l'Alliance *Lepep* est au pouvoir et je suis sûr et certain qu'on a beaucoup de belles années devant nous.

Merci, Madame la présidente.

**Madam Speaker:** I suspend the sitting for one and a half hours for lunch.

*At 1.03 p.m. the sitting was suspended.*

*On resuming at 2.38 p.m. with Madam Speaker in the Chair.*

**Dr. Z. Joomaye (Second Member for Rivière des Anguilles & Souillac):** Thank you, Madam Speaker. The first Budget of a newly elected Government is the occasion to give the economic and social directions which it intends to give to the country. In general, it should be in line with an electoral programme for which the population had expressed its votes. This Government has been entrusted with a clear majority. This clear majority has been given because the population wanted a drastic change - starting from the highest level of the State - in the economic policy which people of our country is expecting to lead to an improvement of their daily life.

A lot has been promised in the Government Programme the title of which was 'Achieving Meaningful Change'. Indeed, we agree with the main points in the new Government Programme even if we qualified it as a *déclaration de bonnes intentions*. We know that translating electoral promises into concrete action is not an easy matter apart from a few spectacular measures which we have seen and which we have fully supported, one of which has been the increase in old age pension. But, on the overall, cosmetic measures cannot bring meaningful change. Only corrective measures can; corrective measures which would have changed the economic direction taken from 2005 to 2010, and somehow continued until 2014. An ultra-liberal trend is harmful to the working class deprived of social justice, and constantly increasing the gap between the rich and the poor; a cold-blooded technocratic approach dealing with figures instead of thinking at the level of the individual.

This Budget was the occasion to give a new breath to our economy with a new Minister and a new style. Instead, we were served with a holistic approach, with loads of wishful thinking in view of creating a temporary feel-good factor, which in no case will help to attain the main objectives defined in this Budget.

Any Government would want to steer the economy towards a path of high investment and full employment. Who would not want to secure long term sustainable development for all and achieve greater equity? Who would not want social justice for everyone? And more than a policy guidance, it is the duty of any Government to promote transparency and good governance in the management of public affairs. We share the same views, the same objectives, as these are an *émanation*. Yes, Madam Speaker, *une émanation de la Commission économique du MMM*, at that time chaired by the present hon. Minister of Finance. But we find the measures announced insufficient and not daring enough to really reboot our economy.

Madam Speaker, it is good and even very good that we make our country become *un vaste chantier de développement*. However, a substantial part of our development cannot be based only on real estate speculation. In the last three words, Madam Speaker, there is one very dangerous, 'speculation', which can lead to the collapse of an economy and the bankruptcy of a State. We can all recall the subprime crisis in the United States. Allowing and promoting the creation of wealth on paper or in manipulated financial forecast can jeopardise the future of all actors. We wish all the megaprojects announced - some of which freshly removed from the freezer - success. But should it go wrong? Should the speculation fail?

We will see blue chips become insolvent, our banks being weakened, and instead of creating jobs we will see the contrary.

My colleague and friend, hon. Uteem, rightly mentioned the CentrePoint and Meritt Elipsis projects. We do not want any more of these. After all, even our blue chips are only SMEs in the global financial world. It is the duty of the regulator to prevent them from crossing the line of cautiousness, in terms of business risk-taking. Considering the list of smart cities projects, we fail to understand, Madam Speaker, how this Government is not favouring the concentration of productive assets in the hands of a few. We usually say that '*quand la construction va, tout va*'. But our local contractors and builders have a different opinion. The feeling is that it goes better for some foreign companies who are usually well-known to pay little regard to the rights of their workers.

Madam Speaker, the social review in this Budget is very poor, inadequate and disappointing. A lot more could have been done as far as health and social security is concerned. In the health sector, the change in Government would have been a great occasion to lay the foundation of a well-thought restructuration of our health system, be it public or private, moving from an industrially inspired quantity-based delivery of service towards a

patient-centred, more humanised and caring approach. The quality of service and the level of care in our public hospitals can only be enhanced if the conditions of work of the healthcare professionals of all categories are improved. We will not put the blame on the present Government for this state of the situation. I would only say that this should change. As the hon. Minister of Health constantly repeats: Government is Government. And in this case, as well, it can decide.

The high load of work and the pressure generated by more than 25,000 patients walking daily in our public health sector compromises the quality of care. The minimum accepted time spent by a healthcare professional with one patient is insufficient. This gives rise to communication problems, resulting in situations of conflict, and greatly contributes in the increased number of cases of alleged medical negligence. There is an urgent need to decentralise the delivery of service from our regional hospitals. The opening of the Mediclinics on a 24-hour basis would only be of little help, as our compatriots are more desirous of personalised care.

The biggest contribution to the decongestion of our hospitals would be the implementation of the family doctor system mentioned in the Government Programme but not catered for in the Budget. This would also bring a solution to the unemployment problem faced by some 400 young medical practitioners.

Announcing the recruitment of 100 doctors is good, but not enough to really improve the level of care in the public sector. In the medical field, Madam Speaker, to reduce backlogs and waiting lists, public/private partnership should be contemplated. Our medical infrastructure definitely needs upgrading and we welcome the construction of a new ENT Hospital.

Madam Speaker, all the hon. Members present constantly face situations with their *mandants* where pension for invalidity has been refused or has been discontinued. Even if in a few cases, the demand does not seem to be really genuine, nevertheless, sometimes it is a real need and the reasons for which pension has been stopped are not clear. It is, therefore, very important to have uniform criteria for allocation of pension in order to avoid all subjective bias, which might be prejudicial to the one in need. Same would apply to the physically and mentally handicapped.

Madam Speaker, I will not end without saying a few words about my Constituency, Rivière des Anguilles and Souillac, well-known to the hon. Minister of Finance as well. Water supply problem concerns the whole southern region of Mauritius. It is with regret that I noted that no financing will be made available for the construction of the Rivière des

Anguilles dam. I am sure that the hon. Minister is aware about the recent flood that, once again, affected L'Escalier, La Flora, Bois Cheri and Grand Bois. The construction of drains already planned but long overdue is still pending. I am hereby making a special appeal to the hon. Minister of Finance to release funds for this project, thus preventing any forthcoming sad event. Our Constituency, Madam Speaker, *est l'enfant pauvre du sud*; the two sitting Members on the Government side have not been nominated Minister or PPS. We have a high rate of unemployment, very poor infrastructure, no industrial or touristic activity. The once flourishing tea sector is in a dire state. I can recall during the electoral campaign of 2010, standing by me as candidate of the MMM was the present hon. Minister of Finance. We held a meeting with the *métayers* of the tea industry and, at that time, he promised to subsidise each kilo of leaves produced if he would become Minister of Finance – he now is! These *métayers* always think of 'Vishnu' as a man of word. I am fully confident that he will not deceive them.

To conclude, Madam Speaker, I will only remind the House that this Opposition that we are, will continue to raise issues of public interest. We will carry on with constructive criticisms; we will not indulge in cheap politics or in character assassination. It is in this spirit that we say that this Budget has not met the expectation of the business community and the whole nation.

Madam Speaker, I have done.

(2.53 p.m.)

**The Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade (Mr. E. Sinatambou):** Madam Speaker, I would first like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to my colleague and wise senior, the hon. Minister of Finance and Economic Development, for drawing up what is an excellent Blueprint which puts Mauritius on the right track for economic recovery. I add my voice to all those, who, before me, have congratulated him for his *avant-garde* vision and learned craftsmanship here. I would like to request the hon. Members on the other side of this House to refrain from going on with their doomsday scenario. Let's look at what is good for this country! Let's look at what we have to do to get it right on track. I believe that this is what this august Assembly should be doing. To the detractors, who, for petty politicking, have qualified the Budget as a bluff or have given it the so many unfair negative connotations, I would say that, what is no bluff is their sterile legacy and their obsolescence. I say with no fear, Madam, that the Budget which the hon.

Minister has presented, is an Action Plan to repair the economy of Mauritius and place it towards sustainable growth.

That Budget, Madam Speaker, has, in my respectful submission, captured the key issues, which will enable us, as a nation, to continue along a trajectory that will harvest the true potential of Mauritius. It is in my view, and I believe in the view of most well intended Mauritians, a Budget which cares for our people, and here, I will simply say that it epitomises the wise words of Mahatma Gandhi who said, and I quote –

“A nation’s greatness is measured by how it treats its weakest members”.

Madam Speaker, I pause here for a minute, just to highlight what I consider to be unfair comments made by Members on the other side of this House, and here, I must unfortunately start with the First Member for Port Louis South and Port Louis Central, hon. Uteem, who I note, not later than yesterday, alleged that I was not here, ‘busy tracing millionaires’.

Now, let me say to this House that I have, in the course of the last three months, had two missions abroad. The first one in January and in that respect I will later be responding to a criticism of the hon. Leader of the Opposition and the second one, last week, where I was attending the Heads of State and Heads of Government Summit to the COMESA and where I had the difficult task of replacing the Rt. hon. Prime Minister – someone who cannot be replaced in my mind. What we were doing there, we were speaking about the inclusiveness and sustainability of an industrialisation policy for eastern and southern Africa. Not busy tracing millionaires as stated in a negative and derogatory manner!

*(Interruptions)*

Well, what I said was an answer to a question – this is the knack of this Opposition. It was an answer to a question. If a journalist asks you, Madam, when we say in the Government Programme that our diplomacy is going to be an economic diplomacy with a focus on our people, how do you expect that to happen? Is it going to happen with them in power? Certainly not! It is only going to happen when we get the right investors with the right investment capacity, who come into this country to do what is required to get it back on track. But going so far as to say that I was busy tracing millionaires is wrong, while, in fact, this country is being commended abroad for even its help in solving the piracy problem of Africa.

Even in that respect, Mauritius is being commended and they try to find something negative and that is what has to stop. They have to look at the future of our country with a bigger picture in a bigger manner and not simply by making accusations right, left and centre

as quickly and as early as they can, especially when this could have as a result – how do I say - depressing people! What they do sometimes *peut être si déprimant pour le reste de la population*. On the contrary, we need to bring enthusiasm; we need to bring keenness to this population, because we have nearly 8% of unemployment, because we have nearly USD8 billion of public debt. We have to do what is needed for that and this is what precisely this Budget is about.

Madame la présidente, le Budget 2015-2016 est résolument axé sur la relance de l'économie de notre pays et le redressement des finances publiques. Le gouvernement s'est donné les moyens dans ce budget pour atteindre ses objectifs et retrouver l'équilibre budgétaire. La relance, ce n'est pas une obsession, c'est une obligation, *and this is what this Budget has set out to do*. Ce Budget, Madame la présidente, nous engage tous à accomplir tous les efforts nécessaires pour créer de la richesse et des emplois et faire bénéficier les Mauriciens d'un modèle social enviable. Loin d'être une liste de vœux pieux, il s'agit d'un exercice budgétaire qui est empreint de rigueur et d'espoir comme en témoignent les nombreux engagements qu'il comprend. Nous mesurons pleinement l'ampleur de ses engagements et nous les tiendrons. Ce Budget améliorera certainement la vie de l'ensemble des Mauriciens et des générations futures.

Let me here pause for a second, Madam Speaker, to now respond to what I had said earlier, because apparently the hon. Leader of the Opposition did, in one of his interventions in the House, criticise the importance that this country is giving to its foreign policy on Africa, I quote -

“Also on Africa, Madam Speaker, I join with those who have criticised the fact that we are supposed to give Africa *toute sa place dans notre stratégie, alors qu'en fait nous ne sommes tout simplement pas sérieux. Nous, je dis le gouvernement précédent, et so far this present Government also.*»

I beg to differ, Madam Speaker. Why I beg to differ is because the complaint which the hon. Leader of the Opposition was making was about the absence of a Minister at the African Union Summit from 24 to 31 January of this year. Then, it is my duty to inform this House that the African Union itself had asked Mauritius to be part of an African Union ministerial delegation going to Washington from 19 to 25 January to lobby the United States of America for the renewal of the Africa Growth and Opportunity Act. I won't say we were lucky, but I think I can say that it is to the great satisfaction of the African Union that the two words which were used by the Americans to encapsulate the results of our lobbying mission for the renewal of AGOA, as it is known were that the renewal was -

- (a) Inevitable, and
- (b) imminent.

I don't think we could have done better in the course of that mission.

Furthermore, after that, we had the Government Programme being read by the President of the Republic and I believe that, having done our part of our task, having discharged our responsibility towards the Union from the 19 to 25 January, I believe and I am convinced that this Government was very right that all its Ministers should be here in Mauritius when, after doing our share for the African Union, the Government Programme 2015-2019 was being read for the first time in our country. And, in any event, we were represented there in Africa, if that is unknown to the other side of the House. So much, therefore, for our insistence that this Government has been devising what it believes to be a strong African strategy and it will continue to do so. May I just add that in the event - because as opposed to some, we will never claim to be perfect - that anyone on the other side of the House has any proposal or any bright idea to offer to this side of the House as to our strategies whether it be in foreign policy matters or on the Africa strategy as such, he or she will be most welcome to discuss them with this side of the House and I can assure them that my Ministry will listen and, if convinced, will act accordingly.

But coming back to the Budget, Madam Speaker, I will, with your permission, brief the House on the trajectory which my Ministry intends to take to deliver on the promises that this Budget holds for the nation. In order to make a real difference in the life of each and every Mauritian, my Ministry is committed to the pursuit of a foreign policy that meets the aspirations of our people for a just, peaceful and prosperous Mauritius which makes them proud. Driven by national interest and key deliverables, our foreign policy will be aligned with the object and purpose of the Budget 2015 as well as its implementation. In fact, as a nation at the crossroad, the central theme of the Budget, we can no longer afford to remain inward looking. On the very contrary, if we believe, as I do, that we will have "*un second miracle économique*", it will demand more effective partnerships that are growth inducing.

Allow me, here, Madam Speaker, to refer to paragraphs 137 to 140 of the Budget Speech which lays emphasis on 'Opening Mauritius to the World'. Such an opening will be crucial to ensure a sustained growth path for our economy. An important component of Opening Mauritius to the World will be the further consolidation of our partnership with the rest of Africa for mutual benefit. I cannot over emphasise the importance of developing a

strong partnership with Africa or the significant role that such a partnership would play in our future development.

Suffice it to say that, to respond to hon. Uteem's averment that there is no clear foreign policy as regards Africa, I shall say that my Ministry will encourage the pursuit of a forceful policy, not only to take advantage of the rising prospects in Africa, but also to contribute to the development of the continent. And, here, I shall refer to the Mauritius-Africa Fund and state that this fund will be a key factor in ensuring the concretisation of such partnerships and a case in point is the establishment of special economic zones between countries from the African continent and Mauritius.

Already, I am pleased to inform the House that three sister countries have expressed interest in working with Mauritius regarding the establishment and development of those special economic zones. These are respectively Madagascar, Ghana and Senegal. But I can assure the House that this list is in no way exhaustive as we are and will be pursuing other avenues.

Madam Speaker, let me now turn to our appurtenance to the two regional economic blocks which are the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa and the Southern African Development Community. Indeed, it is the policy of Government that those two economic blocks are going to be two important instruments that will help us expand our footprint in Africa. Just to give some quick figures, Madam Speaker, the COMESA and SADC economic blocks put together provide a combined market of some 529 million inhabitants with an overall Gross Domestic Product of 624 billion US dollars. If Mauritius could manage to tap just 1% of that market, 99% we leave to everyone else, we could be bringing in this country 6.24 billion US dollars per year and if it is in this context that the hon. First Member for Port Louis South and Port Louis Central said that I was busy chasing millions, I will say yes. I believe this could be the most patriotic thing to do if it is to get intra trade, intra COMESA trade or intra SADC trade for this country. To give you an example, Madam Speaker, because I thought figures by themselves would mean nothing, but what is important to know is that if we just take the SADC - if we only take the Southern African Development Community - we went to the statistics and what we found out is that the share of Mauritius in the export of goods to SADC is only 0.14% of what the SADC countries import every year. So, yes, with no apology to anyone, in this context, the hon. Minister of Foreign Affairs, with the blessing of the Rt. hon. Prime Minister, is and will be chasing millions. I believe this is what this country requires. It also needs to be stated here, Madam Speaker, that although SADC and COMESA remain high on our agenda, this country

has now been discussing a third agreement which is the setting up of a tripartite free trade area. What is going to be this tripartite free trade area, Madam Speaker? It is now a free trade area which is going to encompass the SADC countries, the COMESA countries and the countries of the East African Community. Why? It is because, put together, the 26 Member States of this tripartite free trade area will amount to 600 million people with a total GDP in excess of one trillion dollars. This is the type of market which will be opened and I believe it is the duty of everyone - not just the Ministry, not just the Government, but of every single person - in this country to create, to help create the right atmosphere, to help create the right circumstances for this country to remain in a position where it can tap those markets.

One of the other things I can say about my visit to Ethiopia in the last few days is how Mauritius was commended. You know, I was quite surprised that they are all aware of the demise of the Labour Party/MMM coalition which was sure that they would win 60-nil. They all cited us as being an exemplary instance of rule of law, of good governance and of how our democracy works well, especially in the light of the victory of this Government. So, let criticisms be levelled when they are constructive. You know just that they are true, do not make them right! Something may be wrong, but the way you actually say it, may be wrong. Something may be wrong, the criticisms you make about it may be right, but if you use it in the wrong manner, that cannot be right. That has been my consistent complaint about the other side of the House. Let us rather make this country not only get out of the turmoil which others have brought it into, but let us also make it flourish; we need to have a big good front to show to the rest of the world. We are commended in Africa. We are commended by other countries outside Africa on other continents. Let us not get smeared by base accusations, if not baseless. Let us try to make sure that our country stands the test to which it is being confronted at the moment.

Madam Speaker, the Budget 2015 has set the tone for the empowerment of our people through the construct of '*Ile Maurice Nation d'Entrepreneurs*'. That is why I believe that it is wrong to just stick to one side of the proposals and say that "this is speculation, real property, a subprime problem." Let us rather look at this concept of '*Ile Maurice Nation d'Entrepreneurs*'.

The setting up of this one stop shop for the SME sector, the fast tracking of administrative procedures, the creation of an SME bank, the provision of seed capital without personal guarantees, the multiplication of SME parks, the exemption of SMEs from corporation tax for the first eight years of existence are evidence enough of no stone being left unturned to channel our youth towards business and wealth creation. This is something

which should be congratulated. Rs10 billion of which the first Rs2 billion are in this Budget should be applauded because this is probably the one and only way to actually wipe up our unemployment problem. For this, the hon. Minister of Finance and Economic Development should be commended.

Linked to this SME project, as I will call it, and to this notion of '*Ile Maurice Nation d'Entrepreneurs*', what the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade will do is to continue to strive to find market openings for those entrepreneurs. Not only for the big boys, but for those SMEs who, we believe, should be helped and we are equally taking steps to facilitate trade for them.

I recall having said earlier how Government had decided, during the month of February or March, to send our letter of acceptance of what is called the WTO Protocol amending the Marrakesh Agreement. What was this? It was our letter of acceptance regarding the World Trade Organisation Trade Facilitation Agreement. What has been happening is that the world as regards trade in goods, has now known the quasi-abolition of tariff barriers. So, taxes, duties, excise, all these are being gradually abolished. In Mauritius, for example, we have now abolished nearly 95% of such taxes and duties, but what remain are what we call non-tariff barriers and those non-tariff barriers can be even more damning for entrepreneurs than tariff barriers.

One quick example is that, when you sign the World Trade Organisation Trade Facilitation Agreement, it may be agreed that it will take five days to clear a container from Customs. Now, if we do that, but another country in Africa takes 42 days, what happens to your perishable goods? So, the world is trying to align the rules and regulations regarding non-tariff barriers. We are abolishing them slowly but surely. What has to be known is that we are only the fourth country in the world to have ratified this WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement, the first three ones being Hong Kong, Singapore and the United States. But why is it important? Because of the African Growth and Opportunity Act. If the biggest economy in the world, with 16 trillion dollars of GDP, has actually ratified the protocol, it was the view of Government that since we are trying to send our products in the United States under AGOA, it is evident that we should adopt the same rules of clearance. And what needs to be known here, Madam Speaker - and I think maybe some hon. Members might not perhaps be aware of that - is that 90% of our exports to the United States under AGOA for the last 14 years have been textile and textile only. And why is that not right? It is because AGOA actually provided Mauritius and the whole of the African continent the possibility of

exporting more than 6,200 products. I tried to get a list, but it is a 120 pages list and 90% of our exports to the USA have been confined to textile and apparel. So, indeed, I think we should all be chasing millions, if that is the complaint on the other side of the House.

*(Interruptions)*

Yes, but getting them in the right way is what this Government is about.

As regards this trade facilitation process for the *Ile Maurice Nation d'Entrepreneurs Project*, we are persuaded of the need to streamline Customs procedures in order to facilitate trade across borders through, indeed, as I said, the elimination of unnecessary regulations which had no value but rather constitute a disproportionate burden, especially for small and medium-sized enterprises.

Here, I can also, as a matter of policy, disclose to the House another step which Government has taken and which is in line with the philosophy of our Budget. Indeed, Madam Speaker, we are at the moment looking ahead to the early operationalisation of something called TOAM. TOAM is a Trade Obstacles Alert Mechanism. If we want our SMEs to be in a position to export, it has been felt that Mauritius should be at the *avant-garde* of alert mechanisms regarding trade obstacles, and it is in this respect that this mechanism has been devised with the assistance of the International Trade Centre. It is an online platform which will favour the exchange of information between commercial operators and public institutions with a view to identifying and eliminating trade obstacles as they arise, whether at the time of importation or at the time of exportation.

This is part of the policies of Government in foreign affairs. I say this and stress on this, because I did see from the intervention of the first Member for Port Louis South and Port Louis Central that he claimed that there was no clear policy statement for several Ministries and it seems to me that he also meant about my Ministry. So, I want to reassure him that a lot is being done, part of which is being unfolded before this House today.

Now, let me come to the bilateral relations with our development partners. I think everyone who is sensible and who is fair, will accept that one of the prime objectives of this Budget is to steer our economy towards an investment and an employment path. In keeping with such a mandate, my Ministry will seek to devise the right policy orientation to ensure that we strengthen our foothold on the global export market and secure the necessary support at international level. This is where engaging in a constructive manner with our bilateral partners will, therefore, remain a priority of this country's diplomatic agenda and this with a

view to enlisting the support of our development partners and other friendly countries for all areas outlined in this Budget.

I could go on here. We have India, China, a number of European countries, a number of economic blocks, the European Union and the United States. There is so much to say, but maybe I should say one word in particular to a promise made and a promise kept. Here, I refer to the decision taken this year to open an Embassy, our first Embassy in the Gulf region, that is, in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, as the Rt. hon. Prime Minister had pledged. This Embassy will, in addition to facilitating the annual Holy Hajj pilgrimage for many of our brothers and sisters, allow us to open a new and meaningful chapter in our bilateral relationships with this important country in the Middle East and I believe that it will be the start of fruitful relations with the Gulf region. Maybe here, I shall say, although I have not delved into our relationship with our bilateral partners and other development partners because I would take two hours and we could write a book, that there is so much that can be done and there is so much, with the stewardship of the Rt. hon. Prime Minister, which will be done.

But I should perhaps say just a few words about the trade and investment managers announced in the Budget, leaving aside our relationship with our bilateral and multilateral partners. Indeed, as regards the trade and investment managers, I believe that our country should welcome the decision taken by Government to appoint eight trade and investment managers in the strategic cities mentioned in the Budget, that is, Beijing, Geneva, Pretoria, London, Moscow, Mumbai, New York and Paris.

To us, on this side of the House, Madam Speaker, this is a natural follow-up to our conscious decision to empower the nation through the rise of a class of entrepreneurs. We see those commercial *attachés* as a natural extension of our diplomatic efforts to extend our frontiers and access various parts of the world.

I must now say something very quickly, Madam Speaker, about services. All this time, we have spoken about diplomatic relations and we have spoken about foreign policy as regards trade in goods. But I think, we must realise that we have limitations as regards trade in goods which are amplified by the exiguity of our domestic market which is itself limited by the concept of economies of scale.

Therefore, Government believes that it is very important for Mauritius to strengthen the services sector. Madam Speaker, we may, in this respect, have remained insensitive to the

continuous upsurge of global imports and exports of trade in services. Just to give you an example, for the year 2013, the global imports and exports of trade in services totalled 8.6 trillion US Dollars. Out of 8.6 trillion US Dollars, 4.4 trillion US Dollars were for exports of services and 4.2 trillion US Dollars were for imports of services. But there is no agreement regulating services in the world to this day and this is why Government has given its green light for Mauritius to participate in ongoing plurilateral discussions on trade in services taking place in Geneva. Here, I think the other side of the House should be blamed because these negotiations known as TISA (Trade in Services Agreement) have been ongoing since March 2013 and as at February 2015, the 24 WTO members negotiating with TISA had held 10 rounds of negotiations. Mauritius was out of it because they were busy *cozer cozer* from 2013 and during 2014...

*(Interruptions)*

Yes! And we were out of it! You realise we failed! We could not access a market of 4.2 trillion US Dollars...

*(Interruptions)*

We could not access a market of 4.4 trillion US Dollars of trade in services because they were busy *cozer cozer* and had closed down Parliament!

*(Interruptions)*

To say the least!

*(Interruptions)*

**Madam Speaker:** Order!

**Mr Sinatambou:** The last thing I will say before concluding, Madam Speaker, is how Mauritius is recognised as a champion of rule of law, human rights, democracy, social justice, transparency and good governance. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade will pursue the advocacy efforts of this country in those fields which is why I need to bring to the attention of the House the signature on 17 March, that is, nearly two weeks only now, of the United Nations Convention on Transparency in Treaty-based Investor-State Arbitration also known as the Mauritius Convention on Transparency. I believe this country should take pride in Mauritius having been the first country to sign that UN Convention, demonstrating the commitment of this Government to upholding principles of transparency and good governance and to enhancing our visibility as a regional centre of excellence for arbitration.

This House must know that this is the only instance where a United Nations Convention specifically bears the name of Mauritius. By entering into the annals of UN

history, the Mauritius Convention will outlive us all, but will certainly give greater visibility to our appurtenance to the United Nations family...

*(Interruptions)*

To conclude, Madam Speaker, I will simply say that the work of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade is a long haul to achieve the foreign policy objectives of our country within the vision of a prosperous and sustainable Mauritius fully integrated in a globalised and equitable world. Under the leadership of the Rt. hon. Prime Minister, my Ministry will gear itself, building both on its established networks and by seeking out new ones in order to strategise on the potential sources required to succeed in our endeavour to obtain a second economic miracle of Mauritius. Our sense of purpose will pervade our actions and will be more focused on tangible outcomes and benefits.

To conclude, Madam Speaker, I can only say that Budget 2015 is good for Mauritius. This is why I and I believe everyone should stand up at some stage and commend it to our nation.

Thank you, Madam.

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Dr. Husnoo!

(3.35 p.m.)

**The Minister of Local Government (Dr. A. Husnoo):** Madam Speaker, to start with, if you would allow me to say a few words on the speech of my colleague and good friend, hon. Dr. Joomaye. In the section about health service, I think, I am in a better position to talk about the health service - I mean, no disregard to him - because I have been in the service in both the private and public sectors. So, I think I can talk a bit about the service. I joined the service in 1982 so that I have a bit of experience in the service as well.

To come and criticise the public sector, I think, was a bit unfair. I remember when I came in 1982 how the service was and in what way the service has improved. When he came and talked about the public sector, I think that was a bit unfair again. He was criticising the Minister of Health. Why? Because in the last three months that he has been here, he is going to take only hundred doctors. He should have taken 400 doctors. But we have been here only for three months! He was talking about the ENT Hospital. Good! But the Minister has come with the opening of a hospital for cancer treatment as well. The Minister has come with the decentralisation of the ophthalmology service, in fact, in his constituency, in Souillac, if I understand well. Maybe he forgot to mention about it! That too in the last three months! A new hospital is going to be built at the ENT, a new cancer hospital, decentralisation of the

ophthalmology service, hundred doctors are going to be taken, for three months I don't think we can...

*(Interruptions)*

Yes, not to mention the methadone treatment as well. I don't think we should be too unfair to the health service! Then he talked about the Mediclinic. He said that he would prefer better personal care. We all like to have better personal care. But because of that, we should not blame the Mediclinic. The Mediclinic opening 24 hours is providing a good care to the whole population. I mean tell me in which country in the world where we can get 24 hours a day personal care. Does it exist in UK? Does it exist in France? Does it exist in the USA? Not in one country in the world!

*(Interruptions)*

Exactly! To say that we should provide personal care, I think we have to be reasonable a bit as well. These were the one or two things that I wanted to mention, I do not want to go into more details, but what I want to say is that we have to be a bit fair, in the last three months, I think the Ministry of Health has done quite a bit and I think we have to agree to that.

Now, if you will allow me, Madam, to come to my speech. Allow me, Madam Speaker, from the very onset to congratulate my colleague, the Minister of Finance and Economic Development who has presented a Budget that will gear the economy to a new path of prosperity, modernity and greater social justice.

Madam Speaker, the essence of a modern and equitable society has already been highlighted in the Government Programme for 2015-2019 where we have outlined our vision to shift the country to its next level of development and where every citizen can enjoy the fruits of economic progress and aspire for brighter future.

This Budget is, in fact, part of a bold and sound strategy to prepare the country to move into the next phase of its development. It aims, among others, at making the country's economy more globally competitive, improving the quality of education and health services, as well as providing better infrastructure, promoting ICT development and sustaining sound environmental development.

Madam Speaker, the massive investment proposed in some of the key sectors, namely Social Security (over Rs18 billion), Education (over Rs14 billion), Health (Rs10 billion) and Public Infrastructure (over Rs3 billion), is a clear indication of this Government's commitment to shift from the lethargy of the previous Government in order to prepare the country to face the various challenges lying ahead.

In fact, one of the trademarks of this Government is that we dare to take bold decisions and stand up to the challenges as we are confident that, with our principle of good governance and our dynamic team, we shall successfully reach our targets and objectives. Our achievements over the 100 days since we are in power are references of our seriousness and the capacity to deliver.

Madam Speaker, Mauritius cannot sit back and hope for miracles. We just cannot do that. Failure to act now will have profound negative consequences in the coming years. Hence, the propriety of presenting such a Budget, aiming amongst others of instilling confidence in the private sector by creating a conducive environment for investment and revamping the economy.

In this Budget, the Minister of Finance and Economic Development has rightly pointed out that Mauritius is at a crossroad, and has set four objectives which we need to aim at to gear the country on the right path ahead, that is, high investment and high employment, long-term sustainable development, greater equity and social justice, and transparency and good governance in the management of public affairs.

Madam Speaker, during the debates on the Government Programme, I talked about two main issues which were at the heart of the Government policy, namely fighting poverty and fighting corruption. The Minister of Finance and Economic Development has now come up with a Marshall Plan to fight poverty, with a massive budget for the Ministry of Social Security, National Solidarity and Reform Institutions, confirm the construction of 1,700 houses and 436 service plots, identify a minimum - I say a minimum - of 38 pockets of poverty which would be taken care of by the National Empowerment Foundation and the CSR.

Madam Speaker, as you are aware, the economy has been stagnating with an average growth of 3% of the last decade.

Our traditional sectors are experiencing low growth rate, low investment and low employment creation, bordering even on a negative job creation. I would like to highlight a couple of measures mentioned in this Budget, which we, on this side the House, are confident will give a solid boost to the economy.

Firstly, the vast infrastructural development through the 13 mega projects, namely the Omnicane Airport City, the St Felix Village Project, the Medine Integrated Park, the Roches Noires, the Azuri and the Terra Project, the Highlands City, the Riche Terre Project and not to forget the five Technopoles.

Madam Speaker, as mentioned by the Minister of Finance and Economic Development, six of these projects are almost ready for implementation. These projects will involve 7,000 acres of land and will mobilise about Rs120 billion of private and foreign direct investment. Just imagine, Madam Speaker, the boost that this will give to the construction industry and job creation opportunities.

The local authorities concerned will have a very crucial role to play in the materialisation of this project, and they will not only have to ensure that all the necessary permits required from their end are given in a timely manner, but also acting as a facilitator at their level to make the project a success.

Secondly, Madam Speaker, one of the *mesures phares* in this Budget is to transform the country into a land of entrepreneurs. In fact, with this Budget, we are ensuring that we walk the talk. We, on this side of the House, are confident that with the plethora of measures enunciated for the SMEs, we are going to make the slogan "*Ile Maurice, nation d'entrepreneurs*" a reality.

Among the numerous measures announced to boost the SME sector is the SME bank that will be created with an injection of Rs10 billion over the next five years. A number of actions will be taken to improve the ease of starting a business. A one-stop shop will give all the necessary support, financing and information, as well as the delivery of permits and licences. The number of permits and licences will be reduced to a minimum.

Moreover, SMEs registered under this scheme will be exempted from the payment of corporate tax for a period of eight years, Madam Speaker. In the same vein, it is worth pointing out the scheme of the Government to tailor-made crash course at the University of Mauritius for 3,000 *gradués chômeurs*. This course will cost an average of Rs80,000 per student per year. This measure will no doubt provide an opportunity for the youth to be better equipped to find a job on the market, or to build on the training and experience gathered to start a project if they really want.

Thirdly, the project for transforming the Port Louis harbour into a regional hub.

Madam Speaker, with the gradual relocation of the administrative activities to the Highlands City, Port Louis will have to reinvent, to transform itself into a dynamic regional port and become a key contributor to the economic development of this country. That's why this transformation of Port Louis harbour from a destination port to a regional hub has all its importance. Port Louis will develop into a hub for bunkering, both offshore and onshore - and that has already started - seafood, transshipment, cruise and petroleum service and the development of the container terminal.

To ensure the successful development of these projects, the Government is coming with a fast track committee, which will steamroll any impediment that may hinder their smooth implementation.

I believe that, with the will of the Government and the active participation of the private sector and/or foreign investors, there will be a major transformation of the whole island in the years to come.

It goes without saying that the Ministry of Local Government, through the local authorities, will also have to play a major part in this transformation process. With all the changes being envisaged in the economic landscape of the country, the local authorities will also have to revisit their way of doing things.

The administrative bottlenecks at the level of the local authorities would have to be eliminated, and they will have to develop and adopt a fast track mechanism and a quick way of doing business. This is very important because investors are not going to waste their time waiting for ages to get a permit, Madam Speaker. The whole system of issuing permits and licences would need to be revisited for the rapid determination of all applications in a harmonised manner.

Moreover, work is ongoing to enhance the portal of the local authorities for the e-payment facilities to become a reality at the earliest. The existing IT infrastructure of the local authorities is being enhanced for online submission of applications for Building and Land Use Permit, and the determination thereof will be communicated to the applicants via email as well. The objective of these initiatives is to improve the proximity of the local authorities to the citizens and to provide a more efficient service to the public.

Madam Speaker, the local authorities will have to be more efficient. We cannot continue as it used to be. We all have at heart the development of our country and all the 12 local authorities will need to endeavour to improve on the manner of doing business.

If we want the country to progress or rather to catch up what we did not manage to achieve in the last 10 years, it cannot be business as usual. I am sure that, with the support and collaboration of one and all at the level of the Local Authorities, all the impediments to progress will be removed and we will contribute in the making of this new Mauritius.

On a different level, Madam, we are all aware of the negative impact of gambling on the household budget. If a handful of people has become millionaire by chance, the majority has lost and continue to lose a sizeable portion of their monthly income. We are totally supportive of the Government's intention and the measures announced to control gambling and betting in Mauritius, more particularly, the ones pertaining to the total ban on

advertisement and the substantial increase in the gaming licence fee and betting tax. The relocation of the gambling houses from the city centres to other designated areas will, no doubt, help in preventing people becoming addicted to gaming.

Madam Speaker, as I have mentioned previously, the problem of hawkers is a major social and economic problem. I repeat, we have to solve it in a humane way, taking into account the interests of everybody concerned; the shop owners, the market traders, the hawkers and the public at large. As mentioned in paragraph 152 of the Budget Speech, the implementation of the project for the reconstruction of a Hawkers Centre at La Gare du Nord will start this year. My colleague, the Minister of Public Infrastructure and Land Transport and I, are working on the project and I am confident that the actual work will start very soon.

Madam Speaker, I would also like to emphasise the particular attention that Government is paying to the Mauritius Fire and Rescue Service, which is called upon to play a more active role in the forefront of today's society in building safer, stronger and more resilient communities, through a better emphasis on prevention, education and emergency preparedness. Madam Speaker, in fact, we saw the Fire Service in action in the recent flood and I think we all commend their action.

With the changing global weather pattern, the country may have to face more violent cyclones, flash flood, etc. It is a fact that we will have to live with. The Mauritius Fire and Rescue Service should therefore be adequately prepared to stand up to the challenging rescue operations as a result of these climatic changes.

My Ministry will support the Mauritius Fire and Rescue Service in its endeavour to have the required manpower, physical infrastructure and access to modern firefighting methodologies. The improvement of the Mauritius Fire and Rescue Service forms part of a strategic vision and direction of Government to make Mauritius a modern and highly developed nation. The underpinning objective of this vision is the improvement of the quality of life and standard of living of all of our citizens, similar to that of developed societies of the world.

In this context, with a view to enhancing the rescue capabilities of the Mauritius Fire and Rescue Service, the construction of three new fire stations are programmed in the years to come.

Moreover, the feasibility study for the reconstruction of the Port Louis Fire Station is in the pipeline. We are all aware of the poor state of the current building and the potential threats and hazards to both its occupants and firefighters. The building has, in fact, been

found to be unsafe for its users and beyond economic repairs. A comprehensive plan for the complete reconstruction of the building is thus being envisaged.

Further, funds have been earmarked for the acquisition of firefighting and rescue equipment to the tune of Rs40 m. for the period January-June 2015 and Rs42 m. for the financial year 2015-2006. The equipment to be acquired include, amongst others, semiurban vehicles, water tankers, fire hydrants, etc.

Moreover, to help improve other firefighting capabilities and other emergency actions, 165 new firefighters will be recruited this year. As such, we will improve the fire and other emergency coverage ratio and also equip our firefighters to better perform their duties towards our local communities.

Madam Speaker, we, as a caring Government, will act on all our commitments taken vis-a-vis the population. My Ministry will provide the Mauritius Fire and Rescue Services all the assistance it will require to achieve its mission.

To conclude, Madam Speaker, as my colleague, the hon. Minister of Finance and Economic Development has said in his speech, it cannot be business as usual; there should be a major paradigmshift. With the support of the whole Mauritian people, I think we can take up these economic and development challenges and build up a prosperous Mauritius for the benefit of one and all.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

(3.55 p.m.)

**The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Energy and Public Utilities (Mr I. Collendavelloo):** Madam Speaker, the issues and challenges of my Ministry are such that I will be devoting the whole of my speech to the energy and water sector. However much, I would have liked to delve into other issues, more specially, the Constituency that I represent, No.19. I shall unfortunately not have the time to go into it; I will try.

The last two PNQs of the hon. Leader of the Opposition have, and indeed, the PNQs which he asked from my predecessor indicate one thing, that energy is a matter of national interest and what has emerged is that it is a non partisan issue, except for variations of policies; but, it shows that the nation is at one on that considerably important subject which is called energy and water. When the Rt. hon. Prime Minister - on the day following the elections - told me that he wanted me to look after the energy sector, I said there must be something wrong with him, but then, I did not think for very long, and I accepted it as a challenge in a field in which I hold no expertise and do not profess to be able to compare with

people like hon. Jahangeer, but yet, that gives me the bird's eye view, the eagle view of the matter, and probably an objectivity, which others would not have had because of their speciality in this subject. I have talked very often with hon. Jahangeer and I can see how dangerous it can be to have a specialist dealing with policy matters, in matters of his speciality, doctors at the Ministry of Health or Engineers in Public Infrastructure, etc.

*(Interruptions)*

Because for the Attorney General, the Constitution has obliged him to be the Legal Advisor of Government.

Now, the first matter which we have to deal with is the fear that we may not be able to meet the demand for electricity. Time and time again, that has been the overall consideration. The Leader of the Opposition is right when he says this; I am not too sure, what CEB is telling us, whether this is right, but we have got to be cautious. And what I have said is that, although I am not overtly optimistic, I am not a doomsday scenario person.

Let us see the main issues. First of all, we have St. Louis. At St. Louis, there has been a redevelopment plan by CEB about five years ago to install 60 additional MW. We have peak demands of about 450 MW, so, 60 MW is very well towards meeting a sufficiency. I have said in my PNQ why, up to now, St. Louis is not starting and just now I have phoned people to know what has happened at the level of the Independent Review Panel because I told CEB: you have got to inform them that now we are going on a new tender and apparently, even this is meeting some obstacles. I am going to review this immediately after my speech, to know what has happened and why anything has happened. We need St. Louis; there is no doubt about it.

Second, CT Power, let us be clear on one issue! CT Power is one thing, coal is another thing. The only thing that has happened on CT Power is that Government has refused to sign an implementation agreement which would, in effect, guarantee the obligations of CEB. Why? Because CT Power could not establish its financial capabilities to our satisfaction! I have discussed this with the hon. Minister of Finance and Economic Development, we were of the same view and we have said, we are not going to sign the implementation agreement. That is contractual, that is legal. I am not concerned, and we are not concerned with allegations of fraud, corruption, environmental issues and neighbourhood issues; these have not been relevant consideration in the making of our decision. This has got to be made clear because CT Power was unable to satisfy us of the financial capabilities of that component.

Thirdly, we have Beau Champ. Beau Champ came to expiry and it came up for renegotiations. If we had not been successful on Beau Champ, then I would have been extremely worried and not simply worried, but we have been successful. We know that now there is a Power Purchase Agreement for 22 MW. So, we are on - what the hon. Leader of the Opposition calls - the tightrope. It is never comfortable to be on a tightrope, because you need something to balance yourself, and it is that balancing exercise which we all in Government will need to do with the help of all political parties.

*(Interruptions)*

Yes, he is on the tightrope. Yes. But then the problem is that he has got no balance to hold, that is the problem.

So, it is 22 MW up to 2018 so that, for the moment, we can say that we are comfortable and that we should not have fear of any blackout rolling or otherwise; rolling blackouts, that is, one day in Port Louis, one day in Curepipe, etc.

I am convinced of CEB's arguments and of their facts and figures. I am waiting for the final World Bank Report on that issue and I shall be asking Government whether it agrees to make it public so that it may become the subject of debates, if need be, in the press and even in the Assembly if that is the wish of the House so that we know what the future holds for us.

Whether Beau Champ CT Power, St. Louis, etc., there is no doubt that by 2018 we will need additional capacity. Experts tell me it is 100 MW; I don't have any reason to doubt them. Of course, I can say 2018 is behind me, let me not bother about 2018, but, of course, we need to bother about 2018. I have a lot of respect for my predecessor, not only as a person, as a Minister as well, but I think he failed when he did not, because of political pressures.

It is astounding that the energy sector had been turned into a political and even racial issue by the previous Government. Pressures were brought to bear on my predecessor and you can see it when reading through the files that there was pressure from above not to do this, not to do that, because the Prime Minister had to make an incendiary speech wherever - and it was based only on the colour of the skin. That was amazing and the result is that now we are faced with the lack of proper planning and this is what we have got to make up for.

What is our policy, now? Let us try and see what is the policy at the Ministry! CT Power has traumatised public opinion. Public opinion is that coal is a nasty, dirty thing which is going to invade our house, but that was a consequence of the issue in CT Power. Because CT Power could not convince anyone of their financial standing or of their source of funds or

who they were and what they were, they became branched on that debate, issues relating to the environment.

Today, coal can be zero CO<sub>2</sub> emission. This is what people tell me, and I have been told today, the German Ambassador came to talk to me with offer of technical assistance as well as financial assistance in Germany. I hope that our Ambassador in Germany will be proactive on that issue and will be able to bridge the gap between Germany and Germany is ahead of all the world on that issue and that is from where we have got to tap resources; these advanced countries would know what to do and we will be able to do a lot about this. When I hear no to coal, it is as if I hear people saying no to alcohol.

*(Interruptions)*

We should not be extremists. Of course, we can't have coal burning itself into our houses, but we need to see what other fields can be envisaged. The one that has impressed me - and I am going to put up a special cell, I have asked somebody who knows about it to be my special adviser on this. It is liquefied natural gas which one can obtain from Mozambique, but it is costly to transport and we need harbour facilities. The question will be financial more than anything else. We shall see whether we can come with the plan on LNG because this can be obtained from Mozambique. And, again, our Ambassador in Mozambique can be extremely helpful on that matter. We shall need to see whether our exclusive economic zone does not contain liquefied natural gas. There have been researchers and I am sure that the people who have the data on this matter know where to look for in order to see whether we have LNG. If we have, then it is bonanza for us. Apart from that, we have solar energy, we have wind energy.

Today, solar and wind energy is far advanced in this field. I know, I meet lots of resistance when I talk about it, as if it is romance and poetry, but just go to Reunion anytime you want. See what Reunion has done in the field of wind turbines and solar energy. Alright, you will tell me they have got France! Then, go to the Seychelles! They don't have France. See what they have done in the field of solar energy. It is feasible. There was the will because we have Plaine Sophie which was initiated under the previous Government. It has not yet started, but there have been issues on the felling of trees, etc. I gave the answer to a PQ two weeks or one week ago. And then, we have got Plaine des Roches, a small wind farm which is going to give us some 9 MW. I hear people say: "Oh no, wind turbines, they make noise. We don't know what to do with them and then they produce little electricity", but it is the addition of little by little that makes us become energy sufficient. There is the solar PV farm at Bambous; the Seetaram one. There is an issue of surplus land which has been used by

them. My very good and efficient friend of the Ministry of Housing and Lands is looking into it, but apart from that, technically it is sound. It is a German project. I have met these German people. They appear to me to be sound people and it is, in fact, working. The only thing is the contractual price which was imposed on CEB. CEB is paying Rs6.11 and this we know why they have got that good price. What can we do? Contractually that is the price!

*(Interruptions)*

Now, what are we going to do? Very soon, we are going to issue invitations for expressions of interest for all promoters who are interested to implement projects using solar, wind, biomass and waste. I shall come to these later.

Projects are piling up on my desk and I have said: "Instead of that, we need to invite all people, make a public invitation and then we set up a special cell with my advisers and with CEB to see which projects we are going to take on the first call". I have seen interesting projects. For example, planting bamboo in Madagascar, converting them into pellets and bringing them to Mauritius to fire our turbines. That is South-South Corporation at the same time. Madagascar will give us as much land as we want for this and bamboo grows in Madagascar, the Malagasy know how to do this and we will just need to have the adequate machinery to convert into pellets and then we will send them here and we can try and do this. A very good business as well! If you see paragraph 120 of the Budget Speech, it says -

"To encourage households to have their own solar energy unit, I am allowing the total investment in such equipment to be deductible from chargeable income."

Let us say it clearly! If Government does not give incentives, people will not do it. Rooftop solar PV is a solution. Not necessarily to be sold back to CEB, but, of course, this is possible but then it means CEB re-inventing its grid, having a smart grid to be able to accommodate this additional one. CEB will have to do it. CEB cannot continue to be just classical and there is going to be a new Board with a new General Manager with specific instructions as a matter of policy to look at the possibilities of modernising its structures and its grid; the same will apply for the CWA, much more. CEB has got a good infrastructure, but they have got to use it.

First of all, the first reason why we have got to do that is the environment. It is by no coincidence that energy has been placed by the hon. Minister of Finance in that chapter dealing with environment. Environment and energy go together. My colleague, hon. Dayal and myself, we work hand in hand and we have got to progress. In December this year, there

is going to be a United Nations Conference in Paris. My colleague, hon. Dayal, will go there. I hope he takes me there as well.

*(Interruptions)*

But it is something that concerns his Ministry and mine as well; energy and the environment together. COP 21! And we want Mauritius to head the Small Island Developing States.

*(Interruptions)*

I think Sir Anerood Jugnauth was Prime Minister when the SIDS came in 2003. We took the lead and then we lost that lead because when there was an international conference in Samoa, the previous Prime Minister is not interested in going to Samoa. he took his plane to London. He sent his *porte-parole* to go to Samoa and the poor *porte-parole* did not understand a thing about what it was all about. He went practically alone. We lost the lead and Samoa took the lead. Now, I went to Paris and I tried to snatch that lead from Samoa. I think, I have been able to do this.

*(Interruptions)*

Hold on! Hold on! Now, with the cyclone in Vanuatu, Vanuatu has attracted a lot of international sympathy and probably Vanuatu will be in the driving scene because the Europeans will want to show what they are doing for Vanuatu which has been devastated by a cyclone where everything can be built and it has become an experimental station.

Secondly, we have to reduce our dependence on fossil fuels and thirdly, energy will be the principal tool for development. Therefore, we have the three issues: environment, reduction on imports and thirdly, our economic development. Therefore, if we fail on the energy front, there is a risk that we fail on the development front. How do we do it? The hon. Minister of Finance has announced it, at paragraph 119, that there will be the creation of a Mauritius Renewable Energy Agency (MARENA). Why MARENA? It is because there is IRENA which is the United Nations arm of renewable energy. IRENA is already committed to work for us. They came in December, but it was General Election period. They could not do much work. They will be coming back. There is a formidable person who is at the head of IRENA. He has promised us all the technical, legal, logistical advice which we require because we must promote the use of renewable energy. That is not enough to produce energy.

If we produce energy and then we waste it, then the overall effect is negative. This is why we need to have an Energy-Efficiency Programme. I have discussed with Mr Raj Makoond of the JEC, with the *Agence Française de Développement*, with the French Ambassador, they are all involved and we are all involved in the *Programme National*

*d'Efficacité Energétique (PNEE)*. Now, they have started with public building. This is with the support of *Agence Française de Développement* and the European Union. What we will do is to carry out energy audits in 100 energy intensive enterprises. I have seen the films of what they do. They visit the factories and they pinpoint, they say: 'This is where you are wasting energy and this is what you have to do at very little cost'.

Major Government buildings have already been surveyed and we need to refurbish the 7 most energy inefficient buildings, Madam Speaker; the amount of energy which is being lost through energy inefficiency and which we could save. I know there is the project of Sotravac to use sea water for air-conditioning. The file, I understand, must be worked out, the contractual matters must be worked out, but it may also lead to reduce consumption of these Government buildings from 44 MW to 4 MW. That is what the promoters say. I am not sure I can count on what they say. We will need awareness campaigns, labels on refrigerators, etc. Therefore, there is not only a lot of hard work to be put in the energy sector, but also goodwill.

The water sector is also a difficult one. In order to achieve our promise for 24-hour clean drinkable water, *de l'eau potable*, we need to replace our pipelines. We need to put new service reservoirs which we are going to do at Cluny, Balisson, Rivière Dragon, Alma and Riche en Eau. They will service these reservoirs and we will replace 200 kilometers of pipelines between 2015-2019. Bagatelle Dam will mobilise about 60,000 cubic meters of water and the lower parts of Plaines Wilhems and Port Louis will, I hope, with the rehabilitation of the Pailles Treatment Plant, improve the supply of water to these areas.

Concerning the Rivière des Anguilles Dam and the treatment plant, this will give 40,000 cubic meters of water resources to improve water supply in the south and Le Morne up to Tamarin. I was rather disappointed to hear and to read what my very good friend, hon. Uteem, had to say on Rivière des Anguilles. Let us not forget what I have said in answer to a Parliamentary Question. There was a consultancy firm which did the designs of Bagatelle Dam. They failed miserably and it has cost us a lot of money. Now, they are discussing a way out of the settlement. My good friend, the Attorney General, is looking after this and I am assisting him in the little way that I can. These were the appointed consultants for Rivière des Anguilles. The Government - and I believe rightly so - at the time said: "No, we can't have you again", and that caused us a setback. That does not mean that Rivière des Anguilles has been abandoned. My learned friend, hon. Uteem, is an extremely right guy. MPs from the south, hon. Maneesh Gobin will be happy to learn that no provision is made for the actual

construction of Rivière des Anguilles Dam until after 2016. Of course, when he said that, the term ‘actual’ is whispered so that you believe, when you hear him, that we will not do Rivière des Anguilles Dam. Hon. Maneesh Gobin will be happy to learn that no provision is made for the actual construction of Rivière des Anguilles Dam until after 2016. Technically, that is absolutely correct. But then he adds: “Because this Government has chosen not to go ahead with the construction of the Rivière des Anguilles Dam in the south.”

Let us look at the facts in the Budget. To do Rivière des Anguilles Dam, we have, now, to start the commissioning. Let me go through the list. We need to request the proposals for the appointment of a consultant and the reservoir is expected to be operational in 2018. My good friend contradicts himself. Let me say that it is perhaps through a misreading or like me, he fell asleep when...

*(Interruptions)*

...this part was being dealt with. He cannot say there is no plan for the actual construction until after 2016 and then say Government has abandoned the project. That is not possible. This is what I read. I was not sure I had heard correctly.

*(Interruptions)*

I am sorry! I took Hansard, because as you say, I was not sure I had heard correctly. This is why I asked a copy of my learned friend’s speech, because this Government has chosen not to go ahead with the construction of the Rivière des Anguilles Dam in the south, whatever it may be, let me reassure my good friend.

*(Interruptions)*

I am sure that is what you meant. Within the 18 months, we are not going to start Rivière des Anguilles Dam. Why?

We have the same thing for what he says on La Ferme. Again, the same language! La Ferme is a reservoir which dates back to 1914. None of us, not even you thought of at that time. It is old; it has got to be rehabilitated. But what is the problem? The problem is that there are a number of squatters and some private land which are there. Those who have been involved in Constituency No. 14 know it better than I do. I have read it from the file. Mr Aimée did a big political thing about it. I must say, in all fairness, to hon. Ganoo, he did not do this. I am not going to involve you in this matter, of course, Madam. He tried to bring about, in his usual way, conciliation on this matter and I rely on him to...

*(Interruptions)*

But Aimée came and said: “Oh, no!” with his communal language and the project halted. But what is going to happen if that dam breaks. So, now, I have taken a plan, I have put the Ministry of Housing and Lands, the National Empowerment Foundation and we have earmarked a plot of land in Beaux Songes. We are going to try and do something of good grade for the squatters, this time a smart village. If I can manage this, I will be extremely happy to have done something positive for my country and that is what we need to achieve and then rehabilitate La Ferme.

We have already got the prequalification and bid documents ready. That was under the old regime, under my predecessor, I am not taking any credit for this...

*(Interruptions)*

... and all this will be – La Nicolière, Constance, Piton du Milieu and then Pailles treatment plant. This is costing Rs735 m. and it will be completed this month, I mean, in April. We still have got the whole month of April to go and we hope that we will eliminate all the problems of water supply in the area.

Regarding wastewater - I am going to go a bit fast as my time will be running out very soon - provision of Rs1 billion for the completion of the Plaines Wilhems Sewerage Project and the Pailles-Guibies Project. Certain regions which have been raised in certain parliamentary questions, for example, the Albion area which has been raised twice by hon. Bhagwan and which my learned friend hon. Lepoigneur also raised with me in a sort of common partnership between the MMM and *l'Alliance Lepep* for this...

*(Interruptions)*

Yes, but *l'Alliance Lepep*!

I have gone there myself to see whether there was no exaggeration on the part of hon. Bhagwan which he is prone to do...

*(Interruptions)*

... but I went there and he did not exaggerate, on the contrary, he understated the problem...

*(Interruptions)*

The problem is acute. I have asked the Wastewater Management Authority that they must do something, at least, pumping of the wastewater for the moment as an alleviation. We have also got the Verger Bissambur which is high on my preoccupations.

The problem of wastewater is that this has been a sort of deep bucket. The cost overruns are impossible to calculate. We don't know how much money has been wasted in wastewater...

*(Interruptions)*

... down the drain! So, Government has decided, on my suggestion, that we have to make a complete audit, technical, management and financial in order to know what has happened. How come billions - we are talking of billions of rupees - have been lost without anything to explain it! So, I hope that this audit will help to improve future project planning, monitoring and implementation. Let me say that we should not jump to the conclusion that this is through fraud and corruption, it could be through gross mismanagement. There is no contract management unit. This is...

*(Interruptions)*

... common practice. Yes, it was a common practice of the last Government. I cannot imagine how people who have the Mauritian nationality, who are born in Mauritius and whose children are to live in Mauritius, can have mortgaged the future of next generations on wastage!

*(Interruptions)*

Yes, wastewater! That is a crime!

*(Interruptions)*

Lastly, what I am going to do is to make operational the Utility Regulatory Authority. We cannot continue to have the CEB being the producer, the transmitter, the seller, the invoicer and the contractor and itself doing with everything on electricity. There must be...

*(Interruptions)*

Yes, it is like Dufry, everybody does...

*(Interruptions)*

Yes, with the *socioculturel* also having an influence on that! We cannot continue like this. We need a regulatory authority. At that time, my predecessor invited for people to express their interest to be the General Manager of that Authority. There was one who was selected, who appears on paper to be excellent, a foreigner. Then, of course, everyone wanted to put his political nominee there. There it was! It came to a standstill.

Let me come to nominations. I hear lots of people talking of nominees, political nominees. What political nominees? We are putting competent people who are close to us and this is what I am doing at the CEB, the CWA and Wastewater. What do you want me to

do? I go to the Labour Party Constituency of Belle Rive and choose somebody to put on the CWA!

*(Interruptions)*

Or do I want to put somebody who shares my vision and my policy to implement this?

*(Interruptions)*

When we compare with what was being done then...

*(Interruptions)*

Alright, let me just forget about that issue because I...

*(Interruptions)*

I promised to be non-polemical. But let me finish with a note of polemic!

I heard hon. Quirin and hon. Uteem. Let us be clear on what the MMM wants! Hon. Lutchmeenaraidoo, the Minister of Finance...

*(Interruptions)*

He was leading the economic package of the Remake! Sir Anerood Jugnauth and hon. Bérenger had agreed that hon. Lutchmeenaraidoo was going to be the one to be the driving force. It is not strange that his Budget should resemble what the MMM and the MSM had agreed when they were working together to implement the plan!

*(Interruptions)*

And we retained what is good! When I hear hon. Quirin, I hear exactly that same language with, of course, a few criticisms. I applauded him because his speech was MMM. But when I hear hon. Uteem, I am sure he does it unconsciously...

*(Interruptions)*

... and I commend him to a re-reading of his speech and I commend a re-reading of his speech to all Members of this House. You know what? This is Labour Party talk!

*(Interruptions)*

I can hear...

*(Interruptions)*

**Madam Speaker:** Order! Order, please! Order!

*(Interruptions)*

Order!

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Collendavelloo:** Of course!

*(Interruptions)*

Of course, there is a...

*(Interruptions)*

... dose of exaggeration in what I say!

*(Interruptions)*

But, all told, we have a remarkable situation in these two speeches which we have heard from two Members coming from the same party! I will be waiting impatiently for the speech of the hon. Leader of the Opposition to see where he positions himself. Is it as certain people pretend that the MMM/Labour Party alliance is not dead?

*(Interruptions)*

Is it as we have heard yesterday on the radio that with the Labour Party of Dr. Boolell, we can talk and with the Labour Party of Dr. Ramgoolam we cannot talk? Is there something afoot? We shall have to be very clear on that because we owe it to our people to speak *carré carré* with them.

*(Interruptions)*

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

*At 4.36 p.m. the sitting was suspended.*

*On resuming at 5.10 p.m. with the Deputy Speaker in the Chair.*

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. Hurreeram!

**Mr M. Hurreeram (First Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien):** Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Allow me, first of all, to congratulate the Rt. hon. Prime Minister, Sir Anerood Jugnauth, hon. Vishnu Lutchmeenaraidoo, Minister of Finance and Economic Development, and the Government for a Budget that is paving the road to the Mauritius 2015.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, most people in life fail not because they aim too high and miss but because they aim too low and hit. This Government has, indeed, aimed very high in its ambition to build a better Mauritius. This is what the Opposition is failing to understand. We have also taken note of the comments of the Opposition, which glorify nothing else but their ignorance. It shows that they are failing to see the bigger picture that this Budget projects. On the other hand, all professionals, economists, technocrats and even, with all due respect, the hard to please trade unionists, have shown their appreciation. Only the Leader of the Opposition has voiced trivial remarks in his usual attempt to create buzz. What did he

say about this Budget? *Un budget décousu!* What did he have to say regarding last year's Budget? *Un budget décevant!* The same charade year in, year out! We can even foretell what his comment would be for the next Budget. Fortunately, we know that no one takes him seriously; not even in his own Party nowadays.

Let me refresh the memory of the hon. Members. In 1982, during his first Budget as Minister of Finance, when the country was *au bord de la banqueroute* left by Parti travailliste, hon. Bérenger gifted Rs57 m. taxpayers' money *aux barons sucriers*. Why? His justification was that only the private sector would bring economic growth. Well, this Budget is appealing to the private sector ...

*(Interruptions)*

I know it hurts! So, hon. Members better listen!

This Budget is appealing to the private sector for its provision to alleviate poverty by adopting an integrated and holistic approach in a systematic and controlled manner, and with a proper monitoring of the CSR from the private sector is in itself un *projet d'envergure*. But, now, hon. Bérenger finds that we are relying too much on the private sector for its contribution to the needy people. What he fails to understand again is that we want to create a new corporate culture where companies are not only profit geared, but also socially geared. You imagine the plight, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, of the employees whose companies are making significant impact on the life of the socially and fortunate countrymen.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, on the other hand, we have a leader in waiting and being a *porte-parole*, reminding us here of the very famous Iznogoud who wants to be *calife à la place du calife* of his very tiny Party that is now the type of thing that no one wants to touch even from far with a stick. We will not linger on his nonsensical comment. Maybe, he was busy distributing macaroni. Just because he is only a *porte-parole*, he had to make some nasty comments. I ask myself if only he had time to even read the Budget, leave alone understanding it.

At the same time, the four survivors, through their *chef*, admitted their hope in our Budget and this Government. Could it be otherwise when they are so used to the inaction of their own former Government? Most of whom sitting here were part of that Government, even if some now pretend to be political virgins. They have become something that no one will touch even with a stick. One has been Chairman of HRDC with *zéro bilan*, and using HRDC as a political tool to secure election ticket, if I may say, while the other heading '*Maurice Ile Durable*' that has been a total waste of public funds. Once again, *zéro bilan*. Could there be better examples of nepotism? Anyway, *dan dizef poule pas capav gagne ti*

*canard*. They sit here, representing the *culture Parti Travailliste*. The population should beware: 'The fruit never falls far from the tree'. To quote hon. Bérenger: '*La honte lor zot!*'

Today, with this Budget, the Government is starting a completely new era where hard work and competencies will be valued. Our youth will be allowed to dream and, as Government, we will make sure we give them the necessary means, ranging from world class education to access to finance to realise those dreams. It is in this line that we are creating an SME Bank that will be a one-stop shop for entrepreneurs. We now note with horror, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the *modus operandi* of the SMEDA under the Labour Government. It has failed our entrepreneurs. Any project that did not entail manufacturing of pickles and *macramé* were discredited. How could we then expect innovative products and services? No wonder, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the label 'Made in Moris' never reached the height it belongs to. How many fathers and mothers have lost their jobs due to the incompetence of the previous Government in protecting our enterprises! They were then brainwashed that they could hit the jackpot by scratching here and there, becoming overnight millionaires.

We all know who actually hit the jackpot at the expense of these desperate parents! There is nothing more heart-breaking, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, than to see the jobless father having to send his kid to school without food, after giving in to the temptation and spend his last rupee on scratch cards. Like it has been clearly mentioned in the Budget that '*nation zougader*' is based on the illusion that life is a jackpot, when the real jackpot lies in our creativity, our productivity and ability to embrace innovation.

This Government, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, firmly believes in the *savoir-faire* of its citizens and encourages innovative business plans. We also know that the bank red taping clip that rings our entrepreneurs, the new SME Bank will remove all bureaucratic hurdles and give easy access to worthy projects and allow the budding businesses to take off with the appropriate guidance and framework. These businesses are what will give jobs to the current unemployed and support economic growth. This Budget has, again, shown that this Government is very much anchored in the 21st century. The concept of Smart Cities, as elaborated in the Budget, is truly ground-breaking in terms of vision and development. In my maiden speech, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I did put forward the concept of *Ile Maurice 2.0* and the Smart Cities. This shows that this team is on the same wavelength and has a common vision for the future of this country.

The Smart Cities are going to reshape the economy and social outlook of the country for decades to come. For those who are clueless and think that the Smart Cities are going to be just a bunch of buildings built without any plan, they cannot be further from the truth.

Each Smart City will have some specific objectives; if one city would be geared towards technology, another could be geared towards financial services. Another example is the Airport City that has an ambitious objective to transform Mauritius in a regional transport hub. Each facility in the city will be set in a specific order to allow optimum efficiency. Some cities that require to work according to international time zones will have different energy requirements, therefore smart grids have to be set up. The Smart Cities will incorporate enhancement, such as smart transportation and real-time information, both vertical and horizontal integrations of technology aimed at maximum efficiency. The momentum gathered by the Smart Cities will stimulate the countrywide awakening. These are the changes that will make our country attractive to international investors again. It will redefine Mauritius and will again be the Star and Key of the Indian Ocean. This employment rich mega project will require polyvalent, creative and productive manpower, thereby creating thousands of jobs at different levels of the ladder for our young people. I am delighted to note that one of those cities will be in Constituency No.12, the 'Airport City' when we know in the past, under the Labour Government, this Constituency has not been given the means required to keep pace with the development, despite all the efforts put in by my colleagues, hon. Henry and hon. Jhugroo.

With this Government, and *les projets d'envergure* in the Constituency, we look forward to drastically decrease the rate of unemployment and, at the same time, decrease the rate of alcoholism as a direct result of unemployment. Furthermore, to ensure our youth are ready to embrace those new avenues and careers that the proposed Smart Cities will offer, we can only congratulate the laudable effort of the Government to cover the costs of the fees of conversion courses.

It would be intellectually dishonest to claim that we would be trying to transform a doctor into an engineer, as hon. Uteem mentioned in his speech. But we certainly mean tailor-made courses in the field of high job prospect. For instance, an accountant may require specific IT skills to be able to work with specific software or a doctor can be trained to work into a new biomedical industry. So, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, much has already been said about this Budget. I will not take much time of the House to repeat the same arguments, but we will all agree here that the road to make it the second economic boom is well underway. *L'Alliance Lepep* had made electoral promises during the campaign which the other side of the House said could not be achieved. We have kept our word and, within hundred days, those promises were fulfilled. We have proven them wrong and those who have said that this ambitious Budget is not achievable, we will prove them wrong once again. Under the able

leadership of the Rt. hon. Prime Minister, Sir Anerood Jugnauth, this Government will leave no stone unturned to make this lovely island the Tiger of the Indian Ocean, once again.

Thank you for your attention.

(5.28 p.m.)

**Mr S. Ramkaun (Third Member for Pamplemousses & Triolet):** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, let me also, first of all, congratulate the Minister of Finance and Economic Development, hon. Lutchmeenaraidoo, for his Budget Speech. I must say that he has not lost his socialist and human touch in this exercise. He showed his *grandeur d'âme* and I am proud to be one of this team of *L'Alliance Lepep*'.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I must say that this Budget has been made, taking into consideration the priorities and concerns, as voiced out by all stakeholders, and without forgetting our electorate who has given us and this Government a clear mandate. This Budget, presented by the Government, considers the numerous challenges that we are facing, and which have never been considered by the previous Government. The task of the Government to put the country back on rail is not an easy one.

First of all, we have to tackle all the drawbacks that the country has suffered during the last nine years of the Labour Party and Navinchandra Ramgoolam's administration, and to come forward with such a budget, not a *trompe d'œil*, as per belief of certain on the other side of the House, can only be achieved by great leaders who think wisely as has been doing this majority.

*Hon. Seetannah Lutchmeenaraidoo has shown qu'il n'a rien perdu de sa verve, dans son enthousiasme et de sa sincérité. En un peu plus de 90 minutes, il a fait la leçon à ceux qui devaient parler à longueur de journée pour ainsi dire rendant l'exercice de la présentation du budget ennuyant. En peu de temps, l'honorable Seetannah Lutchmeenaraidoo a démontré qu'il demeure le faiseur de miracle. En lui donnant le temps voulu et sous la direction de Sir Anerood Jugnauth, le pays est entre de bonnes mains.*

Coming to the Budget itself, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am sure that there are many positive measures which would enlighten the everyday life of our countrymen. Allow me, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, to enumerate some of the measures as stated by the hon. Minister of Finance and Economic Development. The no tax budget is indeed, I would say, another landmark of the hon. Minister of Finance and Economic Development. With this Budget, *Mauritius est en passe de devenir un vaste chantier avec des projets infrastructurels d'envergure. Ce qui laisse à préjuger que l'industrie de la construction connaîtra un nouvel essor.*

The hon. Minister of Finance and Economic Development, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, has clearly stated that *la création de la richesse passe résolument par l'investissement*. So, we have to highly invest to get high employment. *D'où certains secteurs sont appelés à connaître une transformation radicale*. The idea to unlock the 13 employment-rich mega projects spread across the country, as recently mentioned by my colleague, hon. Hurreeram, will surely decrease unemployment. More so, with the public-private partnership, eight projects of the Smart City concept will bring about a total revolution in the way of living, working and playing of our people.

Some hon. Members on the other side do not believe in the Smart City concept because most probably they have not understood this concept. For the information of those hon. Members, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the concept of Smart Cities seems to rotate around six main arenas based on their regional competitiveness: smart mobility, smart economy,...

*(Interruptions)*

...smart environment, smart living, smart people and smart governance. Its role involves greater emphasis on ICT technologies rather than digital or intelligent city. A Smart City seems to pioneer innovative measures to achieve a city with low carbon use and high quality of life, high economic value, wire network, technical energy systems and maintain low fossil value use which all reach beyond provisional environmental targets. No doubt, there will be a complete change in the lifestyle of our people.

M. le président, l'idée de faire de notre secteur portuaire un centre régional par excellence ne peut venir que d'un gouvernement qui a une vision claire et tournée vers le progrès de son peuple, ce qui avait défaut chez l'ancien gouvernement.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I must say that the country will be indebted to the hon. Minister of Finance and Economic Development to give a new dimension to the Small and Medium Enterprises sector. It is rightly said –

*« Inciter cet engouement à la nation de devenir une nation d'entrepreneurs ».*

The setting up of an SME bank will stimulate this sector with new perspectives. I am sure that it is one of the most prolific sectors.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this nation needs incentives, confidence and sincerity from the political deciders to reach heights. I still remember, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that it was, in fact, *ce duo de choc composé de Sir Anerood Jugnauth et de l'honorable Seetannah Lutchmeenaraidoo qui avait donné vie à la nation mauricienne alors que d'autres voulaient*

*marcher sur les cadavres des Mauriciens pour arriver à leurs fins machiavéliques sur le plan politique.* I must say that *la remède de cheval* which the hon. Minister of Finance and Economic Development has adopted is to tackle *le dossier d'un jeu de hasard* which has been highly appreciated by the majority of the population.

Il n'est pas un secret pour personne que le jeu du hasard introduit à Maurice durant ces dernières années ont fait plus de mal aux foyers mauriciens. La population s'est appauvrie davantage. The hon. Minister of Finance and Economic Development has chosen the righteous way to instil to the population *le sens de la responsabilité envers soi-même et envers sa famille.* This is one of the highlights of the mission statement of this Government.

Everyone here, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, will agree with me that during those last nine years, *les mauriciens avaient perdu le sens de responsabilité* and I am convinced that with the measures which the Government wants to introduce *pour appliquer un frein à ce fléau du jeu du hasard qui ronge notre société* will show a positive side of the nation. However, I would like to stress on a critical point which concerns illegal betting. It is obvious that with the rise in tax on betting, *il y a une crainte que des bookmakers clandestins ne font surface surtout dans les régions rurales.* *Ce dont je demande à la police des jeux d'être sur leur garde et je demanderai aussi au public en général de ne pas tomber dans ce piège et ainsi donner plus d'ampleur à ce fléau rendant toute bonne action du gouvernement de débarrasser le pays, inexistante.*

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we are all aware of the fiasco *de la politique du logement* of the former Government. I am among one of those deeply concerned of the housing problem which is actually facing the Mauritians in my Constituency. As a *politicien de proximité*, I am deeply sad to say that sometimes when confronted with the *doléances* of my mandates, in Constituency No. 5, Pamplémousses/Triolet, namely Cité Mère Theresa, Cité Longère, etc., that I realise of the failure of the former Government so far as the problem of housing is concerned.

*(Interruptions)*

*"Lion pane faire narien. So base Roches Noires!"*

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, *je ne vais pas être un optimiste démesuré*, but I must say that with the measures announced in the Budget, there is hope that much will be done *pour tirer les plus démunis de ce trou dans lequel l'ancien gouvernement les avait mis.*

As far as the measures which will be introduced for grant of slab are concerned, they will be highly beneficial for low-income earners. This is, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, one of the qualities of a caring Government which has as priorities the fate of the people.

As far as recruitment in the public sector is concerned, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this Government, under the leadership of Sir Anerood Jugnauth, has struck very fast. *Déjà, il y a 600 nouveaux recrues au sein de la force policière ; une académie de police est in the pipeline pour avoir un meilleur effectif de la police. Notons aussi, que ce caring Government ne veut pas être une nation malade. D'où il compte investir dans la santé publique avec le recrutement d'une centaine de médecins et plus de 1,400 professionnels pour pallier un manque dans ce secteur.*

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am optimistic that once *le gouvernement a redressé la barre et qu'on ait atteint notre vitesse de croisière comme cela a été le cas dans les années 80, notre pays vivra une deuxième ère d'une rare gaieté, de confiance et de sincérité dans l'effort avec le tandem Sir Anerood Jugnauth/Seetanah Lutchmeenaraidoo.*

I have always had in mind that *on prend l'exemple du passé pour vivre le présent tout en construisant l'avenir.* I am sure, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that this Government, through this budget, has left no stone unturned *dans ce contexte difficile pour redorer le blason des dirigeants politiques en qui la population avait perdu confiance. Suite à ce qu'elle a vécu en termes de 'coze-cozé', de trahison, de coups de couteau dans le dos ou encore d'une tentative de suicide bidon que pour bernier la population.*

I am again thankful to the Rt. hon. Prime Minister and hon. Minister of Finance for providing in this budget amounts of Rs543 m. for January-June 2015 and Rs945 m. for 2015-2016 for capital projects for the National Development Unit and also, Rs268 m. for January-June 2015 and Rs600 m. for 2015-2016 budget through the Build Mauritius Fund for land drainage project for the National Development Unit for the 20 Constituencies.

This Government means business and it will be ensured that all the projects be designed, planned and executed in a professional manner. Consultants, professional engineers, planners, supervisors are to ensure proper conceptual design, structural design and management of projects, including quality workmanship during execution of all projects where taxpayers' money is involved. Cost overruns, as observed in those projects being undertaken by the previous Government, shall have to be ruled out and minimised to limits as stipulated in the bid documents. Any defects like those settlements at Pailles Link Road and Terre Rouge-Verdun Road executed by the previous Government will not be there.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, to conclude, I will try to be short, *laissant derrière moi le goût amer, le cauchemar vécu par la population lors de ces neuf derniers mois et qu'on aurait pu vivre si les résultats des dernières élections étaient autrement. Heureusement que le*

*peuple de Maurice a voté intelligemment et il mérite amplement un budget digne de la confiance qu'il a placé en nous, l'Alliance Lepep.*

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, *nous sommes là non pas pour faire de la politique mais pour montrer à ce peuple que nous sommes là pour diriger le pays vers un meilleur avenir et que notre mission commence par ce budget.*

I, therefore, commend the Bill to the House. Thank you for your attention.

**Mr Rutnah:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I move that the debate be now adjourned.

**Mr Hurreeram rose and seconded.**

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Debate adjourned accordingly.*

### ADJOURNMENT

**The Prime Minister:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I beg to move that this Assembly do now adjourn to Tuesday 07 April 2015 at 11.30 a.m.

**The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Housing & Lands (Mr S. Soodhun) rose and seconded.**

*Question put and agreed to.*

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

### MATTER RAISED

(5.37 p.m.)

#### CUREPIPE - EUROPA BUILDING

**Mrs M. Sewocksingh (Third Member for Curepipe and Midlands):** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, may I know from the hon. Minister of Local Government if he can inform the House about a building in the town Curepipe known as 'Europa' which was, a long time, a hotel; if there are any actions or measures taken as this building is a ruin and it is attracting illicit activities? It is also an eyesore and it seems to be a public danger? May we know if any actions or measures are being taken?

Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

**The Minister of Local Government (Dr. A. Husnoo):** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I will look into the problem and I will come back to the hon. Member. Thank you.

*At 5.40 p.m. the Assembly was, on its rising, adjourned to Tuesday 07 April 2015 at 11.30 a.m.*