



SIXTH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

**PARLIAMENTARY
DEBATES
(HANSARD)**

**FIRST SESSION
WEDNESDAY 08 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
Hon. Charles Gaëtan Xavier-Luc Duval, GCSK	Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism and External Communications
Hon. Showkutally Soodhun, GCSK	Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Housing and Lands
Hon. Ivan Leslie Collendavelloo, GCSK	Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Energy and Public Utilities
Hon. Seetanah Lutchmeenaraidoo, GCSK	Minister of Finance and Economic Development
Hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth	Minister of Technology, Communication and Innovation
Hon. Yogida Sawmynaden	Minister of Youth and Sports
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Dr. the Hon. Mohammad Anwar Husnoo	Minister of Local Government
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Hon. Marie Joseph Noël Etienne Ghislain Sinatambou	Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade
Hon. Ravi Yerrigadoo	Attorney General
Hon. Mahen Kumar Seeruttun	Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security
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Hon. Mrs Marie-Aurore Marie-Joyce Perraud	Minister of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare
Hon. Sudarshan Bhadain	Minister of Financial Services, Good Governance and Institutional Reforms
Hon. Soomilduth Bholah	Minister of Business, Enterprise and Cooperatives
Hon. Mrs Fazila Jeewa-Daureeawoo	Minister of Social Security, National Solidarity and Reform

Institutions

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

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MAURITIUS

Sixth National Assembly

FIRST SESSION

Debate No. 18 of 2015

Sitting of 08 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

SUGAR INDUSTRY – SUSTAINABILITY MEASURES

The Leader of the Opposition (Mr P. Bérenger) (*by Private Notice*) asked the Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security whether, in regard to the sugar industry, he will state –

- (a) the number of employees, planters and *metayers* thereof, respectively –
 - (i) in 2005, and
 - (ii) as at to date;
- (b) the impact thereon to date and in the near future of the fall in the price of sugar;
- (c) if Government is proposing to introduce amendments to the Sugar Insurance Fund Act to allow the payment of the one-off compensation referred to in the last Budget Speech, and
- (d) the other measures that Government is proposing to take to support the sugar industry for the sustainability and survival thereof.

Mr Seeruttun: Madam Speaker, as the House is aware, the sugar sector has had to face numerous challenges since 2006 following the decision of the European Union to review its sugar regime which resulted in the drop in the price of sugar on the European market by 36% fully effective as from 2009.

The Cotonou Agreement was, thereafter, challenged at the level of the World Trade Organisation which eventually led to the termination in 2009 of the sugar protocol which had, for decades, ensured that sugar produced by ACP countries had access on the European market quota free and at a guaranteed price. In 2017, the internal sugar quota for the EU market will be abolished completely, that is, much earlier than the date expected by us, that is, 2020. The most serious effect for our sugar industry is the wide fluctuation in sugar prices. In fact, the sugar price obtained in 2014 is Rs12,400 per tonne compared to the year 2013 price of Rs15,830. This is impacting negatively on the international competitiveness of our sugar industry.

The Government, over the years, has taken measures to address the problems faced by the sugar industry, namely -

- the Action Plan 1985 – 1990;
- the promulgation of the Sugar Industry Efficiency Act in 1988;

- the democratisation of the milling sector;
- the centralisation of the sugar factories;
- the adoption of the Sugar Sector Strategic Plan 2001 – 2005, and
- the implementation of the Multi Annual Adaptation Strategy 2006 – 2015

I wish to remind the House that back in the year 2001, the then Government, fully conscious of the threats and challenges facing the Sugar Industry, decided that a Sugar Sector Strategic Plan be elaborated after consultation with all stakeholders.

The sugar industry was facing serious difficulties and needed a major urgent rethinking. The erosion of preferential access on our traditional export markets for sugar and the challenges imposed by the trade liberalisation process call for immediate action. The long-term viability of our sugar industry depended on its ability to cut down its cost of production and ensure a selling price for our sugar that would enable it to compete with the least developed country suppliers.

The reform process implied more centralisation, cost reduction, enhanced productivity, manpower rightsizing, an optimal use of cane sugar resources, well-planned diversification activities, improvement of value added, and the creation of new opportunities.

The targets set for the 2001-2005 periods a certain number of targets had to be attained, namely -

- (i) ensure that export market commitments are fulfilled;
- (ii) reduce cost of production;
- (iii) reduce number of sugar factories from 14 to ideally 7 or 8. Reduce sugar losses at harvest time and in factory processing to a strict minimum;
- (iv) generate as much electricity from renewable sources, in particular bagasse;
- (v) create the enabling environment for dynamic and efficient field operations, and
- (vi) effect a substantial reduction of the labour force through socially feasible Voluntary Retirement Schemes and adapt, wherever applicable, relevant labour and pension laws.

The Multi Annual Adaptation Strategy Plan 2006-2015 was devised along components and sub-components destined to respond to the then new market environment and address the constraints of the sugar industry. The objectives of the MAAS included -

- (i) cost reduction;
- (ii) additional revenue;

- (iii) optimal use of by-products;
- (iv) pro-poor dimension, and
- (v) debt-alleviation

A special project in the Field Operations Regrouping and Irrigation Project commonly known as FORIP, aimed at the preparation and replanting of an area of 12,000 hectares belonging to small and medium planters. As at now, some 9,000 hectares have been covered at a total cost of Rs2.6 billion. The project purports to increase productivity by 20% and reduce cost by 30%. A provision of more than Rs600 m. has been made in the two present budgets to continue the project.

Madam Speaker, with regard to part (a) of the question, the information is as follows

—

		2005	2015
			Should be around
(i)	No. of Employees	13,803	8,000
(ii)	Planters	26,257	14,662
(iii)	<i>Métayers</i>	630	260

As regards part (b), the impact resulting from the fall in the price of sugar is as follows -

- (i) the extent of land harvested has decreased from 67,404 hectares in 2005 to 49,791 hectares in 2014;
- (ii) sugar production has decreased from 521,541 tonnes to 401,146 tonnes of sugar;
- (iii) the profit margin has decreased for all stakeholders, particularly the small planters, and
- (iv) an increasing number of small planters are moving out of sugar cane cultivation.

It is foreseen that if no remedial measures are taken at the appropriate time, especially in the wake of the complete abolition of sugar quota in 2017, more planters may move out of the sugar cultivation and this may further impact on the viability and feasibility of the sugar industry. This is why Government has commissioned a study to address these issues. The draft report from the Consultant, Landell Mills Consulting, has been received, and the recommendations are being currently examined.

As regards part (c) of the question, necessary amendments will be brought to the Sugar Insurance Fund Act to allow for the payment of the one-off compensation, as announced in the Budget Speech 2015.

As regards part (d) of the question, with a view to facing the new challenges lying ahead in the sugar sector, Government, as I have mentioned earlier, has commissioned a study on the Economic, Social and Environmental Impact on Mauritius of the Abolition of Internal Quotas of sugar in the European Union market.

A draft report has been submitted by the Consultants Landell Mills Consulting Ltd who has proposed the following measures which are being analysed and which will be implemented after consultations with all stakeholders.

The measures recommended by this report refer to -

- the preservation of land under cane cultivation in difficult areas, a measure which was recommended in the MAAS but was never implemented;
- reform of institutions to lower the charge (CESS) on industry proceeds and grant greater freedom in sales and marketing.
- alignment of terms of employment with those in other sectors of the Mauritian economy;
- a more attractive payment for bagasse and cane biomass;
- a mandatory blending of ethanol and gasoline with a premium for ethanol;
- a higher contribution by distiller-bottlers for potable alcohol used for the home market;
- taxing fossil fuels and transferring the proceeds to foster biomass energy;
- introducing a custom duty on imports of raw materials for refining to ensure that the producer community derives benefits from the sale of sugar on the domestic market, and
- the use of reserves of the producers accumulated at the Sugar Insurance Fund to allow the industry, at least for a certain number of years, to attain its viability price while the above-mentioned measures are implemented.

Mr Bérenger: Madam Speaker, I am sure everybody will agree that the figures, in terms of numbers of employees, planters and *métayers* provided, are nothing less than absolutely dramatic. The hon. Minister said that Government has received a draft report from a consultant. I am sure he is aware of the Sugar Insurance Fund Board actuarial review - latest - of October 2014. Will he agree with me that what the actuarial review is, in fact,

saying is that the very survival of the sugar industry is in danger, threatened? Can I, Madam Speaker, with your permission, quote two paragraphs under the subtitle ‘key findings’ –

“The sugar price is predicted to fall even further from the 2013 level whilst production costs are steadily increasing. This will have direct consequences on the profitability and hence sustainability of the industry. There is a lot of uncertainty, in terms of the industry outlook for the immediate future. This is mainly due to the fall in the sugar price and rising costs of production. The impact on planters/producers is expected to be significant. In addition, there is significant uncertainty on the impact of the removal of the European Union quotas will have post 2017.”

Will, therefore, the hon. Minister agree with me that these are diplomatic words from actuaries, but that, in fact, they are pointing out that the survival, *la survie même de l'industrie sucrière est en question?*

Mr Seeruttun: Madam Speaker, the hon. Leader of the Opposition is right in saying that the survival of the industry is at stake. That is why the Government is taking all measures to ensure that everything is done to, at least, keep on with that industry and ensure that all the stakeholders involved in that industry keep on having a living from that industry. It is not a surprise that we embarked into a major reform in the early 2000 so as to ensure that we could for that particular difficult phase move on and that is why we have diversified in that industry. We have moved from the sugar industry to a cane industry; probably, we will move again to a biomass industry now.

We are now producing beyond sugar energy, and research has been undertaken to see if we can also have value added product like bio plastics, and other varieties of cane that can be produced through research that could be high in fibre to produce cane that could produce more energy generated product, and also, as I said, bio plastics. Beyond that, we have also seen how we can move closer to our consumers and that is why the Mauritius Sugar Syndicate has had, in the past few years, an agreement with a German firm Sudzucker, whereby they would market the sugar and export sugar through that firm. That contract is ending in October this year and new contracts have been already signed with three suppliers in Europe, one French supplier Crystal Co. and two British firms so that we could get closer to the customers and have a premium price on the sugar that we are exporting. So, these measures are being taken to ensure that we can mitigate that reduction in the price of sugar

but, at the same time, we have to reduce the cost of production and these measures that have been proposed in that report by Landell Mills Consulting, go in line with the philosophy of the Government to ensure that the industry could thrive through the difficult times.

Mr Bérenger: Can I ask the hon. Minister, being given the seriousness of the situation, whether his Ministry, with the people concerned, have tried to project future production of sugar, what it will be in the very few years ahead?

Mr Seeruttun: Madam Speaker, if we look at the production for the year 2014 the production of sugar roams around 400,000 tonnes of sugar with the surface area covered about nearly 50,000 hectares for the future. If we are to keep on with that industry, we believe that we have to stabilise the production around that figure of 400,000 tonnes of sugar and for us to be able to produce that amount of sugar, we need to have that level of land under cane cultivation. So, one of the aims of the Government is to ensure that the number of people moving out of cane cultivation should be avoided so that we could continue with that level of land under cane cultivation to be able to produce that amount of sugar production. If I may add, we need that particular critical mass to be able to allow the industry to survive.

Mr Bérenger: As far as ethanol is concerned - the country had several Governments, the country has got tremendous time - being given the urgency of the situation, do we take it that this new Government is going to move? We have wasted so much time that the private sector is producing with its money ethanol for export, and we are not using ethanol on the local market. Do I take it that the new Government will move full steam ahead in the case of ethanol and use ethanol on the local market?

Mr Seeruttun: Madam Speaker, it is true to say that the project has been long overdue because there was a pilot project that was initiated by the last Government, but it seems that - I do not know for what reason - it remained at the level of a pilot project beside the fact that it was very conclusive. Therefore, at the level of my Ministry, I have already asked to reactualise that project. I had discussions with Omnicane which is the sole producer of ethanol locally, and they are quite willing to supply the ethanol to have that blend of ethanol and gasoline for our vehicles here. That would be something that we will give the utmost attention to ensure that it goes ahead.

Mr Bérenger: In the short-term, in fact, in this financial year, I heard the hon. Minister say, as the hon. Minister of Finance has said in the Budget Speech, that there would be a one-off support, subsidy, compensation to everyone in the sugar industry. I am sure he is aware that the Sugar Insurance Fund Board Actuarial Review dated October 2014, in fact, recommended two things and over two years - not one year, not a one-off - special financial

assistance, but also a premium waiver, that those in the industry, everybody concerned, should have a premium waiver with two measures over two years - not one year - worth for crop 2014, Rs225 m. of premium waiver; Rs833 m. of special assistance, that is, slightly more than Rs1 billion but, also crop 2015, Rs220 m. for premium waiver and Rs820 m. for special assistance, that is, for the second year slightly more than Rs1 billion of special assistance over two years.

Now, has the previous Government decided to throw those recommendations out - they decided to go to a one-off over one year and only no premium waiver? Has the new Government discussed that? Has the hon. Minister discussed that with the new Minister of Finance, with the Rt. hon. Prime Minister, Sir Anerood Jugnauth, and is there going to be change in that refusal of the previous Government to go by what the actuarial review recommended?

Mr Seeruttun: Madam Speaker, actually we have taken note of the recommendation of that Actuarial Report, where they did indeed mentioned compensation over two years of Rs2,000 per tonne of sugar and about the waiving of the premium to be paid to the Sugar Insurance Fund Board. We have, in the Budget Speech, announced that the cash compensation to be paid to the growers would be to the tune Rs2,000 to all sugar planters, but a special effort is being made to small planters producing up to 60 tonnes of sugar. They are going to get an additional compensation of Rs1,400 per tonne of sugar produced. This is an effort which is being made to support those small planters that are the most vulnerable and are touched by the effect of the reduction in the sugar price.

As regard to the two-year issue, it is, in fact, mentioned in the report, but it is also said that if it is not an event year - if we know now that 2014 has been a non-event year, it is within the possibility of the Fund Board to pay for that compensation. In that report, the actuarial recommendation is that it should be over two years, but with the qualification that if it is not an event year. Therefore, next year, when we come to it we will probably look at it.

As to the waiver, of course, the Government is all for to consider that and at the level of the Ministry, we are working together with the Ministry of Finance to see ways and means how to apply that recommendation.

Mr Bérenger: I am, of course, all in favour of an additional compensation being paid to the small producers, the small planters additionally, but that additional sum will it come from the Sugar Insurance Fund Board because that was not recommended by the actuarial review or will it come out of the Consolidated Fund?

Mr Seeruttun: Madam Speaker, as it is today, when the hon. Minister of Finance and Economic Development announced in his Budget Speech that special effort is going to be made to the small planters to grant them Rs3,400 per tonne of sugar produced, it is mentioned that it is going to come from the Sugar Insurance Fund Board fund, that is, from that particular fund and we have had discussions with the people from the Sugar Insurance Fund Board to explain the reasoning behind granting that additional compensation and so far they are all aware of the reason why we have made that special effort to support the small planters and I think that's going to be the way.

Mr Bérenger: Can I ask, being given the urgency of the situation whether the hon. Minister has had consultations since the last elections with all the stakeholders, including the planters, the *métayers*, the employees and the big planters also, whether he has had consultations with all the stakeholders explaining the situation and looking ahead and whether proposals have been made, if yes, if they are being considered for financial schemes to get the planters directly, financially involved in not only the survival but in the financial progress of the different estates at estate level?

Mr Seeruttun: Madam Speaker, ever since I took office, I have been meeting all the stakeholders of my Ministry, particularly those of the sugar industry. I have met the small planters communities; I have met the different institutions that work for the industry; I have met the members of the MSPA and only last week, I have met again the Director of the MSPA and explained to him the reason with regard to the compensation being paid to the small planters and we are, of course, like it is mentioned in the report of the consultant, Landell Mills, streams of revenue are also being looked at to ensure that they are prepared to face the difficulties that are looking ahead in that industry.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Bhagwan!

Mr Bhagwan: Madam Speaker, I will just follow up on the question raised by the hon. Leader of the Opposition. *L'abandon des terres de la part des petits planteurs, ça continue à une vitesse vertigineuse.* The figures speak for themselves. The hon. Minister has made mention of the FORIP project. What is being done at least to re-actualise this project, at least to make it more attractive to the small planters, even having meetings with all the stakeholders, as pointed out by the hon. Leader of the Opposition, at least to see to it that this reduction in the cultivation process by the small planters at least be curtailed, that is, to give them more incentives?

Mr Seeruttun: Madame la présidente, effectivement ce projet FORIP qui date de 2007, et à ce jour on a dépensé R 2.7 milliards dans ce projet pour réaménager les terres et on

a touché à presque 9000 hectares de terre sous cannes. L'objectif était d'améliorer la productivité, le rendement, par 20% et de baisser le coût de production par 30%. Mais, en 2015, il y a encore un certain nombre de superficies à couvrir parce que l'objectif était d'atteindre 12,000 hectares et donc on va continuer. Mais j'ai aussi demandé au niveau du ministère et du MCIA en particulier de travailler et de faire une analyse de voir si effectivement l'objectif est atteint en ce qui concerne la baisse du coût de production de ceux déjà touchés par ce réaménagement de leur terre, de leur champ et est-ce qu'il y a aussi une augmentation de la productivité en terme de rendement.

Madam Speaker: Last question, hon. Leader of the Opposition!

(Interruptions)

Mr Bérenger: *Madame la présidente, en fait il n'y a rien de moins qu'une menace de mort qui plane sur la tête de l'industrie.* We have heard that a Consultant report is being examined but will not - being given the dramatic situation we are in, all of us, the whole country, that, in fact, after that Consultancy Report has been absorbed, what we should do, all of us together and all the stakeholders, is to come with a Master Plan pour *la survie de l'industrie sucrière.*

Mr Seeruttun: Madam Speaker, I am very aware of the situation and I am very glad that the hon. Leader of the Opposition has come up with that PNQ today to make the public aware of where we are today. We need a national effort to ensure that the industry could survive and still be one of the major industries in this country.

Madam Speaker: Time is over!

MOTION

SUSPENSION OF S.O. 10 (2)

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

Question put and agreed to.

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.

(12.04 p.m.)

Mr B. Jahangeer (Third Member for Rivière des Anguilles & Souillac): Madam Speaker, allow me to congratulate the hon. Minister of Finance and Economic Development, Mr Seetannah Lutchmeenaraidoo and his team for a well-engineered Budget. Madam Speaker, many of my hon. colleagues have already enumerated the merits of this Budget. It has all the elements for a long-awaited economic boom. Madam Speaker, this Government's development goal is to enhance the quality of living of Mauritians and to create a resilient economy that will buffer the impact of external economic shock on our population.

Madam Speaker, practically all sectors are being taken care of in this Budget. Even new ones are being created, like ocean economy, with SME sector being the backbone of economic development.

Madam Speaker, now I would like to address three issues of the Budget that I feel can be enhanced -

First issue: the unemployment problem.

Though the Budget caters for job creation through the implementation of some megaprojects, this solution is not going to happen now, because any project, it takes time, minimum 6 to 8 months. You have 2 to 3 months for choosing a consultancy firm, 2 to 3 months for tendering and by the time you award, it will almost be 10 months. This means, this year, we will not be able to start providing employment. For sure, the Government alone will not be able to absorb all the jobless and this is a major issue. I am sure all hon. Members of this House experience the same problem of having their mandates knocking at their door for a job daily.

Madam Speaker, the unemployed have waited long. There is no doubt the megaproject will create thousands of jobs. I can explain. Unfortunately, hon. Reza Uteem is

not here, I would have explained to him how this would create thousands of jobs. Right now, we need a short-term policy.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Order!

Mr Jahangeer: We need a short term policy right now.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Order! Order, please!

Mr Jahangeer: Madam Speaker, there is an interim solution to our predicament, but it is a pragmatic one, that is, seeking a gateway to the GCC countries to access the job opportunities there. Countries like Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, United Arab Emirates, but this is a temporary solution. I am not talking about...

(Interruptions)

I kindly request the Rt. hon. Prime Minister and the hon. Minister of Finance...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Mohamed, please!

Mr Jahangeer: ...to walk down the memory lane in the 80s when the level of employment was high; many people went to the Middle East to work and send money back home and that money was well spent. People were queuing up in front of Sir Gaëtan Duval's office here in this building. I was one of them - at that time, he was Deputy Prime Minister - to go to the Middle East. This process did help to alleviate the unemployment burden. If it worked before, it will work again as there is no recession in these countries.

Madam Speaker, I suggest that the Rt. hon. Prime Minister set up a special committee under the aegis of hon. Soodhun and the Deputy Prime Minister, hon. Xavier Duval and other hon. MPs to visit those countries and assess the real potential for employment there.

(Interruptions)

I said 'other'!

Madam Speaker: Hon. Shakeel Mohamed, please do not interrupt!

Mr Jahangeer: Madam Speaker, on the Internet you can see thousands of job opportunities. If you click on 'Jobs Abu Dhabi', 'Jobs Dubai ', there are thousands of jobs. Make no mistake! As an individual, it is very rare to access to these jobs.

(Interruptions)

You need the Government's approved manpower agencies. Then it will happen! Madam Speaker, it is noteworthy that, according to a World Bank report, such migration contributed to 6% India's GDP in 2013, that is, overseas remittance was around 70 billion US dollars and

the second country was China with 60 billion US dollars. We do not want to reach that amount. We only need decent jobs for our people right now.

Madam Speaker, therefore, I humbly request the Rt. hon. Prime Minister and the hon. Minister of Finance not to ignore this proposal for a short-term policy to our problem. We have wasted billions of rupees in the drain; what is it to give a fair trial for unemployment solution by spending only a few thousands rupees on such road show.

Madam Speaker, I will now, with your permission, address the second suggestion. We appreciate the concept of creation of smart cities. It is a big and fantastic project, but, in reality, it will not serve its purpose unless we come with proper legislation. For the sake of explanation, let us say I take a fictitious conglomerate Omni power. Omni power has an in-house construction company, a mechanical and electrical engineering company, then when it will be time to start the project it will be a circle within the circle because the concept of SME will be defeated if the contract is awarded only in-house. So, Madam Speaker, to get things right we need to come up with some legislation that construction permits for such projects will be given if and only if, 70% to 80% of manpower to be deployed should be local and subcontracting will be through open tendering and not restrictive ones, then SMEs will benefit.

Madam Speaker, last but not least, on the greener and sustainable aspect of our Budget, the hon. Vice Prime Minister, Minister of Energy and Public Utilities already defined his water and energy policy be it a long or short term policy. There is nothing to be added except, in my opinion, I fail to understand the logic behind the St Louis Power Station for a 4 X15 MW because we wonder why 15 MW engine. Since the country is walking on a tight rope, why not go for a bigger capacity like 20 MW to 30 MW? The country needs power now and the project - for some hon. Members who are not aware of the project - it is to dismantle an existing building, and build a new one, and then make space for four engines to be sheltered in that building. This is a new power station; therefore, we can still go for higher capacity thus saving money in the long-run with a higher return on investment ratio and cater for the next ten years. Thus, I kindly request the hon. Minister of Finance and hon. Vice Prime Minister, Minister of Energy and Public Utilities to give more force to this issue.

Madam Speaker our hon. Members of the House will remember that, by shifting from incandescent lamps to eco lamps, the CEB campaign save approximately 10 MW on energy consumption. Now, I suggest we do the same but using led lamps which consume one third less than eco lamps. However, the disadvantage is that led lamps are still expensive and eco lamps are not really eco-friendly as they contain a high level of mercury. Such a national

campaign, according to calculation, will save approximately another 5 MW and that is a lot of money we are talking about.

Madam Speaker, this Budget designed by hon. Vishnu Lutchmeenaraidoo is set to materialise the vision of our Rt. hon. Prime Minister. Madam Speaker, some have already started to talk about *l'après* SAJ, but let me reassure them they will be no *l'après* SAJ. There will be simply Jugnauth through his son, the hon. Minister Pravind Jugnauth, who will perpetuate social justice and economic development.

Thank you Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Mrs Jeewa-Daureeawoo

(12.15 p.m.)

The Minister of Social Security, National Solidarity and Reform Institutions (Mrs F. Jeewa-Daureeawoo): Madam Speaker, let me right from the outset congratulate hon. Jahangeer for his maiden speech on the Budget. Allow me also, Madam Speaker, as the tradition is, to join the other orators on this side of the House to congratulate very warmly the hon. Minister of Finance and Economic Development for his, what adjective can I use if not excellent, excellent Budget he has presented before this august Assembly.

You will agree with me that his speech has given new hopes to the whole population. There is sense of feel good factor prevailing all over the island and the Budget proposals reflect the sincerity, attention, care and, if I may say, seriousness of this present Government. The measures announced clearly indicate that the Government, unlike the previous one, has, at heart, the long-term interests of the population at large. We all know that the previous Government was not doing well at all. There was a feeling of *laissez faire, laissez-aller*, so we have dared to be different. Election is over. We have won. Now, it is time to move ahead and to move ahead in the right direction. Indeed, the Budget is a harmonious blend of social justice, equity, transparency, meritocracy and good governance in the management of public affairs while, at the same time, encouraging people to discipline themselves. This is, therefore, perfectly in line with the new ideals of a good and caring Government. It is above all a Budget that paves the way to the future.

Let me remind ourselves that our future depends on what we do as a nation today. We are here; our aim is to govern for the people, with the people and in the best interest of the people. The Government has obtained a very clear and overwhelming mandate to set the country right, to set it on the path of sustained growth when we consider in what mess, economic and otherwise, the outgoing Labour Government has left the country.

The country is headed by a solid political leader, the Rt. hon. Prime Minister. This is the whole change, Madam Speaker. This is the message, not the literature. This is the personality, humble, down to earth, simple, the background, the longstanding experience, the test the Rt. hon. Prime Minister has undergone after so many years which make the difference. We are all so proud, on this side, that hon. Sir Anerood Jugnauth is our Prime Minister.

Madam Speaker, we fully agree that the Opposition Members need not agree to all the measures proposed in the Budget of the new Government. I have listened carefully to all the intervenors, on the other side of the House, but one thing I don't understand, they want us to change the whole thing in four months. How do we do this? We are not miracle makers. It has only been four months since we took office. They have to understand that everything cannot be done at one go. We have five years ahead. I will humbly advise the Opposition Members to be patient.

What is the philosophy behind the first Budget? This Budget, therefore, is not a mere exercise of matching revenue and expenditure. It clearly reflects the top priorities of the whole population. It shows the willpower and determination of the present Government. Opposition needs to understand that we have to, first of all, come up with practical solution to re-establish confidence in the population, redress our economy and the situation at large, lay foundation of a sustainable society, social justice, restore transparency and fairness, boost up the economic development of the country, restore discipline in the nation inasmuch as nothing is free in this world. We have to toil, work hard to earn a decent living and above all we have to provide more resources to those who need them more. This Budget, therefore, is not a mere exercise of matching revenue and expenditure.

Now, as Minister responsible for the welfare state, I must pay tribute to the hon. Minister of Finance and Economic Development for the trust he placed in the social security to help the most vulnerable of our society and for the resources he has put at our disposal. The hon. Minister says, I quote –

“Madam Speaker, earlier in the speech I spoke on the necessity to place sharing at the centre of our development agenda. We cannot maintain social peace without a policy of sharing and caring, and without social peace, no sustainable economic progress is possible.”

The budgetary provision for the Ministry of Social Security has been increased from Rs14.7 billion for the financial year of 2014 to Rs8.8 billion for period January 2015 to June 2015 and finally Rs18.7 billion for period July 2015 to June 2016. This represents a yearly increase of 27%. Why? Because we want to ensure a fair distribution of income and provide social protection to the less fortunate.

On this side of the House, the Rt. hon. Prime Minister and his able team have come a long way towards protecting the vulnerable and lifting the less fortunate. Let me here refer to one example relating to the welfare aspect. The considerable increase in the pension rate speaks for itself. *Peut-on dire le contraire?* We have to admit, whether we like it or not, that this new Government *a à coeur les intérêts du peuple et surtout ceux au bas de l'échelle*. A policy for sharing is crucial to maintain social peace without which no sustainable progress is possible. There is no doubt that the Budget promotes social justice.

During the electoral campaign, we realised that the amount of pension that was given at that time to the old age, disabled orphans and widows were not sufficient to make both ends meet. These categories of people were facing a lot of difficulty to live their daily life. With a view to redress the matter and to ensure that the people do not suffer any more, it was proposed in the electoral manifesto to review the basic retirement pension to Rs5,000. Following the historic decision of the people to entrust the Government to our team, the week following the swearing-in post of all Ministers, the pension rates were reviewed accordingly. Not only was the basic pension for those between 60 and less than 90 years increased to 5,000, but also sufficient increases were brought to other categories of basic retirement pension and same was extended to widows, orphans and invalid pension. The increase was also extended to allowances paid such as carer's allowance and child allowance. For example, those aged between 90 to 99 years old are now receiving a monthly old age pension of Rs15,000 instead of Rs10,789 and the centenarians are now obtaining Rs20,000 instead of Rs12,300. The increase ranges from 20% to 63%.

To further show the commitment of this Government to redress the gross disparity in income and support to the most vulnerable, the increase applied in the month of December 2014 itself. Special arrangements were made to effect the payment of the increased pension to all beneficiaries before the end of December 2014. For the whole Republic of Mauritius, 234,043 beneficiaries were concerned and had their monthly income changed as from last December. Some Rs2.5 billion was paid in December 2014 representing the pension at the new rates and the bonus month.

Madam Speaker, in the Budget 2015-2019, the Government has once again confirmed its commitment towards improving the well-being of the elderly and to combat loneliness in old age. Projects like recreation centres are commendable endeavour to show that we value our elders and care for their well-being. These projects not only provide our elderly and persons with disabilities with residential facilities in a hotel set up at a very highly subsidised rate, but it also gives them opportunities to socialise among friends and revitalise themselves. There is no doubt that this Government is putting emphasis on what is important for Mauritius, that is, the people. Government has provided funds for the setting-up of a fourth recreation centre for the elderly in the south of Riambel. The Ministry of Social Security will double its efforts to make this project realisable in the scheduled time frame.

Moreover, in order to prevent the same association or group of senior citizens from benefiting from a stay in the three present recreation centres, the Ministry is working on a centralised booking system to provide all our senior citizens an opportunity to enjoy a stay at one of the recreation centres. The protection and security of our elders is high on the agenda of the Ministry of Social Security. Hence, provisions have been made in the new Budget to help charitable institutions equip themselves with CCTV cameras.

On behalf of the elders, I wish to thank the hon. Minister of Finance for giving consideration to their well-being and security. Disabilities and dependencies in old age are common and Government has to reduce the burden of people caring for those persons. The Ministry of Social Security will, therefore, come up with a project “*service de proximité*” to deserving elderly persons and persons with disabilities and those living alone so as to provide them with special support care, such as the service of trained carers, occupational therapists and psychologists.

Madam Speaker, at present domiciliary visits are carried out for the elderly, above 75 years, with severe disabilities, disabled children below 18 years and those who are 90 years old or above. The Ministry wants to bridge the gap between 18 and 74 and to extend the service to the neediest people with severe disabilities. As such, Government is extending monthly domiciliary medical visit to any severely disabled person irrespective of age, requiring 24-hour attention and care. Strict eligibility criteria will be therefore established. The expected number of cases in 2015 is 500 and strict criteria will be observed for the age group 18 to 74 years.

Madam Speaker, as a responsible Government, we have to fulfil our obligation to our people and the international community with regard to the issue of disability. Mauritius has signed and ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. This has to

be translated into reality and the provisions of the Convention have been reflected in our programmes and policies. In this respect, Madam Speaker, a Disability Bill will shortly be introduced in the National Assembly. The overall objective of the Bill is to promote and protect the rights of persons with disabilities and to eliminate discriminations against them. The Bill will also provide for the establishment of a One Stop Shop. The National Disability Authority will bring under its umbrella the different existing institutions that are providing services to persons with disabilities in a dispersed manner. The One Stop Shop is expected to deliver more cost-effective and customer friendly services to persons with disabilities while avoiding duplication and dispersal of resources.

Madam Speaker, the probation and after-care service of the Ministry of Social Security was established in 1947. Its vision is to contribute in the promotion of a safe and functional society and its mission includes the effective rehabilitation and reintegration of offenders, the prevention of criminal behaviour and helping to foster family and community harmony. The probation and after-care service will play a major role in the implementation of several measures announced in the Budget. Madam Speaker, the new Prison Bill is expected to bring about important reforms in the management, detention and rehabilitation of prisoners. The probation service will be very much involved as it is expected that more prisoners will be offered the opportunity to be rehabilitated in the open through their release on parole.

Government is conscious of the problem of domestic violence and in the fight against this social ill, the involvement of many stakeholders is warranted. The probation service will be called upon to continue to provide its services in this domain. The probation service is already involved in the submission of social enquiry reports to court cases of domestic violence and in ensuring that perpetrators of domestic violence comply with the conditions attached to the protection order.

Madam Speaker, in line with the pledge of the Government to govern for the people and with the people, Government is coming up with a host of measures to enlist the participation of young entrepreneurs in the creation of wealth for the economy. Experience has shown that young entrepreneurs who have the zeal, talent and know-how to engage in a particular line of business on their own are often faced with hardship at the stage of setting up their business. The One Stop Shop approach is a salutary initiative of Government to alleviate hardship in this regard. The approach caters for a comprehensive package in the facilitation process which includes the provisions of seed capital, from the SME Bank, a One-Stop Shop

under one roof for information, delivery of permits and licenses aimed at promoting the emergence of an entrepreneurship culture among young people.

On the social front, there is also need to instil a culture of social entrepreneurship in the NGOs. Conscious of such an imperative, the Ministry of Social Security, National Solidarity and Reform Institutions is promoting social entrepreneurship amongst NGOs with a view to enable NGOs to attain the sustainability goals and economically empower their beneficiaries.

Mauritius being a Welfare State, the protection of the poor, needy and vulnerable groups remains mainly the responsibility of a caring Government. However, the Government is also conscious of the fact that the NGOs are key partners with which it can team up a strong partnership for the achievement of its social objectives.

The Ministry of Social Security is implementing initiatives so as to build a strong NGO community. One such project is the recognition of prior learning in the field of social work aimed at the professionalization of the social services sector. There is need to professionalise and upgrade the quality of services being offered by NGOs and the recognition of prior learning is therefore a crucial step in that regard. The RPL will enable social workers at grassroots level to have the experience recognised by obtaining qualifications, enhance their employability, pursue lifelong learning and boost their self-esteem and self-confidence.

Madam Speaker, to conclude, let me say that, on this side of the House, we mean business. We will attend to the needs of the population unlike the previous Government who has allowed opportunities to be wasted over nine years. The Budget contains all the determination and willpower of this Government. I have no doubt that the Budget proposal will indeed improve the life of the people. Indeed, the credo of the new Government is to serve the people to the best of our abilities and not to serve ourselves, not like the old regime. We are sincere in our words. We will work under the very able leadership of the Rt. hon. Sir Anerood Jugnauth to realise our aims. I seize this opportunity to thank the hon. Minister of Finance and Economic Development for his excellent Budget and I believe that the whole nation also thanks him.

Thank you, Madam!

Madam Speaker: Hon. Toussaint!

(12.35 p.m.)

Mr S. Toussaint (Second Member for Curepipe & Midlands): Thank you, Madam Speaker. Let me first of all congratulate the hon. Minister of Finance for his smart Budget as well as the Rt. hon. Prime Minister, Sir Anerood Jugnauth for his smart vision!

(Interruptions)

A smart Prime Minister! Le titre, Madame la présidente, c'est 'At The Crossroad'. Quand quelqu'un arrive à une croisée de chemins, il a quelques options; à droite, à gauche, retourner sur ses pas ou bien avancer. Il est déplorable de dire et de noter que les membres de l'Opposition ont choisi de retourner sur leurs pas tandis que nous, nous avons décidé d'avancer avec un Premier ministre comme Sir Anerood Jugnauth qui a le gouvernail bien entre ses mains. Les discours et les critiques de certains membres de l'Opposition - je dis bien, certains membres de l'Opposition - ressemblent à un vieux disque de gramophone, Madame la présidente.

(Interruptions)

Mais oui ! Nepli éna gramophone aster, nous servi Blu-ray !

(Interruptions)

Enfin, on les comprend. On essaye de comprendre tout au moins. Hier j'ai écouté avec beaucoup de plaisir mon ami l'honorable Lepoigneur et je comprends, quel poigne!

(Interruptions)

Exactement!

(Interruptions)

Quand il a dit c'est de la jalousie, je suis d'accord avec lui ! Je vais avancer encore un peu plus loin, '*leker fer mal*', '*leker kassé*', Madame la présidente. Que voulez-vous ? C'est la vie !

(Interruptions)

Leker saigné! Nous sommes là, 'lepep' nous a envoyé, ici, Madame la présidente, pour nettoyer ce pays, pour sauver la population. Nous allons faire notre travail envers et contre tous. Ce matin même, en venant, ici, au Parlement, j'ai rencontré un vieux monsieur - enn grand dimoune - il travaille comme *cleaner* pas loin de la municipalité de Curepipe. Donc, il s'est avancé vers moi pour me dire - et me serrer la main - '*zott pe fer bon travay. Dir Sir Anerood zott pe fer bon travay*'.

(Interruptions)

Pé nettoyer! C'est ça le sentiment de la population aujourd'hui. Il n'y a pas de masque qui est tombée, il n'y a pas d'euphorie qui est terminée. Ce n'est pas ça. La population est satisfaite de notre travail, Madame la présidente.

(Interruptions)

Plus que 80 %. Merci, hon. Seeruttun!

Aussi, les gens que je rencontre à la Cité Malherbes – et où j'habite - m'ont rappelé, encore une fois, ce que j'avais dit dans mon discours, que Sir Anerood, à l'époque, dans les années 80, avait apporté 'coltar, tapis velours' dans la Cité Malherbes. Parce qu'il n'y avait que des coraux et les taxis ne voulaient pas entrer ! On devait prendre les mariés par les bras et les emmener plus loin 'pou rentre dan taxi pou alle l'eglise'. C'est à la suite d'un *site visit* que les travaux ont démarré, 'coltar, tapis velours dans Cité Malherbes'. Et aussi la connection à la CWA, car il n'y avait qu'une fontaine. Les gens me rappellent cela encore - je vois l'honorable Gayan qui acquiesce. C'est un Curepien et il sait de quoi je parle. Aujourd'hui, les gens de la Cité Malherbes me disent : "*Sir Anerood ine donne nou 6m³ de l'eau cadeau. Li ti donn nou robinet et aujourd'hui il nous donne 6 m³ de l'eau cadeau !*" Merci, encore une fois.

Le combat contre la pauvreté, Madame la présidente, est pour moi quelque chose de très importante, étant issu moi-même d'une famille pauvre. Durant ma carrière de professeur, j'ai rencontré beaucoup de misère, beaucoup de pauvreté et beaucoup de souffrance. J'approuve et j'applaudis les mesures de ce budget qui vont nous aider à combattre le problème de la pauvreté. Et là, j'inviterais certains membres de l'Opposition - malheureusement l'honorable Uteem n'est pas là, lui-même il avait parlé de ça - à venir avec moi à la Cité Anouska. N'est-ce pas mes chers amis, 16^{ème} Mille! *Et alle dire sa bane dimoune-là* que vous êtes contre ce que le gouvernement est en train de faire, que le gouvernement va trouver un parrainage pour aider la Cité Anouska - venez avec moi pour leur dire ça dans leurs yeux et vous allez voir ce qui va vous arriver - ainsi que les différentes régions ici nommées. On ne fait pas de la politique sur la misère des gens. On ne peut pas. Et moi, je parle ici de quelque chose que je connais personnellement. Le parrainage, peu importe etc. *at the end of the day, nou inn réussi soulage la misère dimoune. That's all! C'est tout!*

Je vais avancer certains points qui m'interpellent personnellement. Malheureusement je n'aurais pas, en 15 minutes, le temps de parcourir le tout - l'honorable Jhugroo me regarde déjà avec de gros yeux. Alors je vais que citer: notre planète est en détresse. Donc, tout ce qui concerne l'environnement, et je cite l'honorable ministre des Finances : 'Notre planète est en détresse'. Ce ne sont pas de vains mots, Madame la présidente. Moi-même dans ma carrière

de professeur, j'ai tout le temps conscientisé mes élèves par rapport à tout ce qui touche à l'environnement - voilà que le ministre Dayal me regarde avec un joli sourire, il sait de quoi je parle puisque j'ai été dans le passé l'enseignant de sa fille.

Je cite, Madame la présidente –

“We should not underestimate the urgency for exceptional measures worldwide to save our planet.”

Nous n'avons qu'une seule planète. Et que faisons-nous pour la garder en état, pour l'aider à respirer ? Voilà, les mesures sont dedans ! Aller le lire, s'il vous plaît ! Faites votre *homework*, s'il vous plaît !

Bannir le plastique, bravo ! Magnifique ! Je félicite nos frères de Rodrigues qui ont déjà une avance sur nous sur ce dossier. Merci, mes frères ! C'est une mesure, parce que je ne sais pas si parfois certaines personnes réalisent, quand nous sommes dans nos belles voitures et nos limousines à vitres teintées, nous ne voyons pas la saleté dehors. Il faut aller marcher. Il faut aller regarder la quantité de plastique qui sont devenus, allons dire, une décoration naturelle de notre île Maurice. Ce n'est pas possible. Cela ne peut plus continuer. C'est une décision très, très forte et ce n'est qu'un *leadership* fort de Sir Anerood Jugnauth qui a pu prendre une telle décision.

Non à la nation 'zougadère' ! Encore une fois une décision très, très forte. Oui, à une nation d'entrepreneurs, Madame la présidente. Arrêtez 'gratte gratter' ! Allez travailler, s'il vous plaît ! Et je vois le ministre des Finances qui fait son entrée, tout sourire. Alors, merci pour cela, l'honorable ministre des Finances.

Il y a toutes sortes de débats dessus, conscientiser, etc. Ce n'est pas possible, il fallait que cela s'arrête. Il y a des gens qui parlent à la radio, etc. Non, il ne fallait pas retirer, il fallait conscientiser. *Hé ou la, ou trouve diable refuse camphre ou ?* Ce n'est pas possible, Madame la présidente. Il fallait une décision très, très forte et très solide. Arrêtez avec ces jeux du hasard ! Arrêtez, 'nation zougadère' ! Mais par contre, nous avons toute une série de mesures qui vont encourager l'entrepreneuriat, qui vont encourager les mauriciens à aller créer leurs propres petits *business*. Et c'est cela qui nous mènera vers une deuxième miracle économique. *Nu pas deuxième république nu.*

C'est un deuxième miracle économique que le peuple attend. C'est cela qui apportera le bonheur et la joie dans le cœur des mauriciens, Madame la présidente. J'avais aussi, dans mon discours, parlé de la souffrance des artistes ces dernières années parce que rien n'avait

été fait et là je suis très content et soulagé que nous ayons plusieurs mesures qui concernent les artistes. Je dois saluer au passage l'excellent travail de l'honorable ministre des Arts et de la Culture. C'est un travail extraordinaire qu'il est en train de faire. Par exemple, à la page 36, paragraphe 222 -

'All Smart Cities will be required to invest in dedicated space for the development of arts and culture'.

Mais si on réfléchit à cela, quelle énorme possibilité pour nos artistes mauriciens. Plusieurs ont déjà pris contact avec moi pour me dire : Chapeau ! Nous sommes sur la bonne voie. Encore une fois, je remercie le ministre des finances d'avoir écouté ces propositions.

Je profite de l'occasion pour faire un petit appel aux ministres concernés, il y en a plusieurs qui sont concernés. C'est par rapport à l'Hôtel de Ville de Curepipe, si on pourrait ensemble trouver une solution pour redonner à l'Hôtel de Ville de Curepipe sa brillance d'antan. Donc, j'espère que très bientôt on pourra travailler ensemble sur ce dossier.

Madame la présidente, c'est un budget qui va apporter de la dignité. Il n'y a rien de plus important pour une personne que d'avoir sa dignité. C'est un budget rempli de mesures comme je viens de dire : « Arrêter avec *nation zougadère!* » L'emploi, la sécurité et le côté artistique, c'est tout cela qui va donner aux Mauriciens leur dignité. Ce ne sont certainement pas les macaronis du Parti Travailleiste à la veille des élections municipales 2012 qui allaient donner de la dignité aux Mauriciens. Surement pas! C'est un gouvernement sérieux avec un *leadership* fort, avec des idées, avec une vision, c'est tout cela, Madame la présidente, qui nous donnera une dignité. C'est cela que la population attend ; c'est cela que la population espère et, comme je l'ai dit au commencement de mon discours, c'est cela que nous entendons tout autour de nous.

Nous avons plusieurs autres mesures dans ce budget et je fais référence à l'honorable Gobin qui, dans son discours, avait dit qu'il fallait l'étudier ce document, qu'il fallait prendre la peine de regarder et d'étudier, et peut-être aussi qu'il fallait prendre la peine de comprendre un peu - je ne sais pas si certains ont compris ou pas. Il fallait prendre la peine de comprendre et non critiquer pour critiquer, ce n'est pas cela le but.

Madame la présidente, je vais terminer ici, avant de recevoir un papier, je termine mon discours ici. J'ai essayé d'être court et mon message à la population c'est de nous faire confiance. Ils nous ont donné un mandat net et clair pour diriger ce pays pendant cinq ans et je demande à la population de nous faire confiance. Nous sommes en de très bonnes mains,

nous avons comme j'ai dit un *smart Prime Minister* avec des *smart leaders* et un *smart Minister of Finance*. Donc, faites-nous confiance, nous emmènerons ce navire à bon port, Madame la présidente.

Au matin du 12 décembre, après les résultats, le coq a chanté, Madame la présidente, un nouveau soleil s'est levé, *carré carré*, sur ce pays, Madame la présidente.

Merci beaucoup.

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

At 12.53 p.m., the sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 2.31 p.m. with Madam Speaker in the Chair.

Mr K. Ramano (Third Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes): Madam Speaker, it is my sacred duty to comment on the Budget in my capacity as Member of the Opposition in as objective and constructive a manner as possible.

Notwithstanding that this Budget is a significant improvement over what we have been hearing over the last decade, there are nonetheless some missed opportunities. I am not going to do opposition just for the sake of opposition. An Opposition being the alternative Government, it is imperative that when commenting on a measure or policy to bear in mind the necessity to be scientific and critical in a thoroughly credible manner cannot be minimised. No sensible Member of this House has the right to say things that may jeopardise future development nor do we become complacent as to become loyal. We are the watchdog albeit not with many teeth. We have to do justice to our electorate, to the nation and to ourselves. We have to be honest to ourselves so that, at least, readers read and appreciate our contribution on debates on the Budget. We can no longer in a modern democracy paint a glowing picture when we are in Government and a dark picture of the same budgetary measures often wrapped in a gift box of a different colour. It is with this brief introduction that I propose to share my views on the budgetary debate.

Like it or not, practically all the political parties espouse similar economic policies. We have little choices in view of globalisation, regional integration, scarce economic resources within our narrow resource base and welfare system. We are in the same boat. We are all in agreement, for instance, of the need to develop tourism, protect the environment, correct the deficit in infrastructure or strengthen the welfare system. The differences often lay in the priorities; the degree of importance attached to projects, policies and measures, the clarity of vision, the blend in the economic recipe and the timely response to global and domestic changes, ethical transgression and good governance. The perception of

responsibility and democratic principle versus the urge towards authoritarianism. Sometimes, out of sheer political consideration, we may also shy away from good long term measures that unfortunately may be politically unpopular in the short run.

Madam Speaker, the famous statement of Lord Acton: 'Power corrupts, absolute power corrupts absolutely' - we have lived this experience in a recent past and we should be on guard that similar experiences are not duplicated. The temptations to ignore basic principles of equity and fairness when a party has a huge majority and is intoxicated with the power of sheer numbers in the Assembly often blind those wielding the sceptre of power with arrogance. It is always a wise approach, therefore, to temper our decisions and daily practice with humility, tolerance and fairness. I shall come back on this point as I comment on the budgetary measures.

The hon. Minister of Finance and Economic Development has admittedly quite skillfully presented a blend combining welfare measures and development policies while ensuring a manageable deficit. For a long time, we have not seen such a general feel good factor and satisfaction in the days following the Budget. The hon. Finance Minister deserves all the praise and congratulations for this achievement because it creates a conducive climate for development to progress rapidly. Good for our country for a start, but this does not suffice.

The last five years have seen an annual growth of 3.5%, significantly below potential growth while unemployment hovered nearer to 8% most of the time. For 2015, we expect 4.1% albeit higher than the 3.5% of 2014. While this looks like an improvement, actually it is not. If we look at growth rates after each election, the feel good factor that accompanied each elected Government had led to an increase in growth rate of, at least, 1%. In 2005, growth rate went up to 3.1% against expected growth rate of only 1% while in 2010 it rose to 3.1% to 4.2%. So, an improvement of only 0.6% is an underestimate and below the trend. The least we could expect should have been, in all logic, 4.5%. At the rate of 4.1% it is unlikely there will be any serious inroads in the unemployment rate.

I did not emphasise, Madam Speaker, the plight of those unemployed, especially women, youth and graduates, who had looked with great expectations to the arrival of a new Government to address their problems. I see very little signs in the immediate term for the Government in drastically reducing the misery of the unemployed. After almost a decade of high unemployment, the population legitimately aspired to better prospects for a job, and I urge the Government to address this issue as a matter of priority. There are immense opportunities for Government to undertake basic infrastructural works, protect the

environment and address the frequent problems our citizens face during spells of adverse weather conditions. By raising the capital expenditure slightly and with proper planning through competitive bidding, there was opportunity to kill three birds with one stone; create jobs, address environmental problems at local level and improve the quality of life.

Linked to high unemployment is the issue of poverty. It is true poverty is a relative term and the degree of poverty may not be as pronounced in other countries. Even so there are families and children who do not have a full belly every evening and remain undernourished for a long period of their life, and therefore, easily vulnerable to diseases and socially undesirable activities. This is a cost to society and a shame to the nation. A job is a best vehicle to alleviate poverty. The GINI coefficient keeps widening. At this rate, we will be creating new problems of rising income inequality unless we address the problems from its root causes.

A first approach, Madam Speaker, is to get updated data, and I urge the hon. Minister of Finance to explore the possibility of ensuring the proper collection of data to help address this problem if our goal is for a fairer and more equitable society. I believe Statistics Mauritius should be strengthened both in terms of human and financial resources to provide essential data for analytical and policy formulation whereas in the past Statistics Mauritius used to gather data on the basis of quintiles, deciles and percentiles income distribution and provide a basic analysis. This exercise is no longer carried out, or at least not published regularly and publicised.

The other exercise which this country requires is an Essential Needs Approach in terms of basic access to facilities of common usage like water, housing, education, electricity, sewerage, health care including dental care, food, clothing, household capital goods like a fridge, radio, television for access to knowledge and information, connectivity to telephone and Internet, ownership of mobile phone or even toilet facilities. Successive Governments have done their part. However, it is time to do it in a more comprehensive framework, polishing where deemed fit because in the long run it becomes less costly to Government by ensuring access to these facilities to every citizens.

Some of these goods may appear luxury goods, but in view of the changes in the social and economic landscape, our social interaction has changed dramatically. We do not talk as our ancestors used to do. We have less social visits. The nature of our work and the availability of time have altered drastically. We therefore have to facilitate social interaction through technological changes so that we do not isolate ourselves or lose touch with family

values and ties. It is equally important to take productivity and the need to bring down long-term cost. This is why access is critical in a modern society to foster inclusion.

Security of travelling people is another aspect to take into account. Many countries update regularly data on essential needs, which is also an essential input to calculate the Human Development Index and the Human Happiness Index. More importantly, for any enlightened Government which claim to call itself a caring Government and, Madam Speaker, all the political parties in this House which at one time or the other, have called themselves a caring Government, making life of our citizens a prerequisite in the broad development sense. Just identifying pockets of poverty and giving a list of 38, be it only indicative, 38 poor or destitute households in an appendix to the budget is too facile an approach. We, as Mauritians - I am not saying just the Government in place but all the hon. Members in this august House - we should join hands in hands to eradicate the problem of poverty for it touches all of us closely. We have one advantage. We are a small country in terms of landed area and population size. This problem should not, therefore, be insurmountable.

Madam Speaker, during the tenure of the hon. Minister of Finance in the 1980s, the savings rate rose steadily and anchored quite close to 30%. This high savings rate in turn generated very high investment. It is common knowledge that since savings are usually equal to investment, Mauritius was able to generate high injections in the economy, prerequisite for sustained high economic growth which the country expectedly achieved during the second half of the 1980s. The beauty of the success story during the 1980s was that investment was domestically driven with low reliance on Foreign Direct Investment. In the present situation, savings continue to be low, slightly above 10%, visibly insufficient to match the investment needed to generate sustained high growth and absorbed the cumulative high unemployment.

Unless, we attain annual 6% growth rate, unemployment will remain chronically high and manpower resources will stay idle, in turn adversely affecting growth. Last year, we achieved a savings rate of only 10.7 % while investment was only 21% of GDP. Mauritius has to depend on external sources to meet the balance of 10.3%. In this Budget notwithstanding an improvement, I am sad to note that the problem of savings and investment is not being addressed with sufficient ambitious zeal. Here was an opportunity for the hon. Minister of Finance to go with a big bang approach, address simultaneously the problems of growth, investment, employment and savings. Thousands of people have built expectations on the hon. Minister to come with a set of comprehensive measures, given his past records, to boost savings. People expected incentive measures in the form of exemptions or higher

returns. Very little, if at all, appear in the Budget. Talking of a second economic miracle is more likely to be an illusion with such low savings and investment rate.

While the marketing skills of the hon. Minister of Finance keep us in admiration, I sincerely believe we require, in the interest of the nation, to be honest with ourselves. First, there is an overdependence of Government to rely on the private sector with regard to investment.

Concerning the smart cities, the hon. Minister announced and gave the impression that they are public projects when they are not. The second weakness, which is one reason to be sceptical with regard to growth and investment, is that some of the Smart Cities are already in progress and have had little impact on growth or employment, partly because they are not sizeable. They are not as new as we are led to believe nor are they Government-sponsored project. The Rs120 billion rupees mentioned span over the life of the projects and this is not clearly spelt out to gauge the full impact on growth and employment in 2015. I concede it will have a positive impact on construction - which must be noted, is already showing positive - after showing negative growth for four years in a row.

As regards the SME projects, the intentions are good. At the same time, successive Governments came and announced positive measures for SMEs.

The Minister himself recognised that access to credit facilities, which the commercial banks claim has exceeded the limit agreed, this was clearly insufficient. Something went wrong in the estimates computation and forecasts. The creation of the SME bank will be a big step in this direction. My fear or incomprehension about this bank is how the Bank of Mauritius will treat the SME bank. There are serious rules, procedures and concepts like level playing field to be addressed, liquidity or performing loans. Recent experiences in the past like the Cooperative Bank, or more recently the failure of Bramer Bank for reasons of liquidity has to be clearly spelt out, failing which we will kill the project in its embryo.

While I agree we cannot explain everything in the Budget Speech, I would like to be enlightened how non-performing loans would be addressed, whether Government will provide collateral and how will the performance of the applicant SME be monitored and corrected, where it is deemed necessary. My other observation is that we may not be fully addressing the SME sector the more so as we are relying on this sector to generate both growth and employment. It is not known, for instance, in what specific areas the SME industrial projects would take place. Is there not the need for a Master Plan with indicative feasibilities to guide potential SMEs entrepreneurs or are we leaving SME entrepreneurs in a thick jungle to grope in the dark? If we want to support them and encourage them to export,

should we not be concerned about scale economies, competitiveness of the product and similar related issues? The Budget document asks pertinent questions in paragraph 29 and in paragraph 31 recognise that policies have been ‘piecemeal fragmented’ and expectedly ‘outcomes have been far below expectations’. Taking into account that a significant proportion - not all – of SMEs entrepreneurs are those who have struggled to obtain a job in the Civil Service or in large enterprises and failed to make it, or drop out from schools, we may continue asking the question whether we should not have gone much further that ‘the coherent strategy’ of the ‘one-stop shop’. The 10 measures announced as well as commitment of Government to the SME development are welcome. It would be wise if a strong monitoring, evaluation and research unit is set up to supplement the one-stop shop. Too often we have no learning curve. We allow a situation to rot. We do not carry economic intelligence exercises and we do not come with regular reports to analyse changes. My proposal to the Minister is –

- to supplement the SME project with a Master Plan to act as a guide to the nation and potential entrepreneurs;
- modernise the SMEs as in advanced countries so that they remain competitive through efficient delivery, accessibility to latest technology (already implicit in the one-stop shop), and above all ethical behaviour in terms of honesty, compliance with environmental and quality norms, good governance, and timely delivery, and
- the close follow-up of the SMEs through a proper surveillance to assist the entrepreneur and help Government with regular reports on SME intelligence through the Monitoring, Evaluation and Research Unit.

Madam Speaker, it is comforting that the tourism sector is picking up, although we are still far from attaining its full potential. Increasing the Budget is good initiative, but we require cost-effectiveness and impact analysis to see how every rupee of taxpayer’s money is spent. It is not clear if such exercises are carried out, and if they are, whether the MTPA has the proper methodology to conduct such analysis. Therefore, the restructuring of the MTPA is seen as a positive move in terms of reinforcing institutional capacity building, and hopefully a proper cost-effective analysis is included as part of the restructuring exercise.

Madam Speaker, the need for a more liberal approach was long overdue, and this present policy announced is consistent with countries where tourism represents a mainstay of

the economy. I also rejoiced to learn that both Austrian Airlines and Lufthansa will operate again by the last quarter of 2015. The diversification strategy towards the East starts to bear fruit, but needs deepening. We should not wait until a crisis appears to start thinking. It is time start thinking of becoming a lead tourism destination through an extension of our network. Both the Japanese and South Korean markets need to be explored now. Many actors may dismiss the idea as utopian. Yet who would have believed in the Chinese or Russian market a decade ago. It is vital that we explore all potential avenues and have a coherent policy to give the right signals to potential operators and the business community at large. We must be clear, for instance, if we are giving permits to new applications or not, and spell out the conditions and reasons. This is essential to enable the business community and divert their energy and resources in other potential development areas. We do not do the country any good by being ambiguous or coming with conflicting assessment. Certainty is vital in decision-making.

Over the last few years, it would appear we drew our lessons, but took actions a little belatedly. Better late than not all! The main errors that we keep repeating, Madam Speaker, are the absence of in-depth market intelligence and proper monitoring and evaluation on a continuous basis using quantitative methods. An intelligence unit was set up by hon. Bodha when he was Minister of Tourism, but unfortunately, later this was abolished by his successor. We can no longer manage sectors on mere sweet talks, though necessary, but not sufficient. Mauritius needs to carry regular analysis and forecasts on a country basis to see how sensitive the market is to changes in specific variables like price, income, cultural attraction, the distance factor and similar variables. The strategic paper presented by the Minister of Tourism speaks on such terms. In the past, such exercises were carried out by consultants, often financed by UNDP or the World Bank.

It is time, Madam Speaker, build the expertise. For these reasons the MTPA has to build a strong data bank on a country-to-country basis with data on all variables including seasonal airfares from each generating point and the price of jet fuel. There is some evidence that Mauritius often on periodic intervals out-prices itself either through prices of its hotels or its airfares. Then, operators start crying wolf and then ensured warfare between airlines and hotel operators. The all-inclusive package has to be seriously looked into if we want full integration of the sector, fair distribution of the benefits and the proliferation of SMEs clustering around the tourism activities. Finally, both the environment and sex exploitation have to be watched closely.

Madam Speaker, I wish just to raise some passing remarks on the Bramer Bank and BAI issue. This is a source of great concern, and there seems general convergence that some actions were deemed necessary to ensure stability and good governance in the system. We support the Government in its crusade against malpractice or deviations from international norms of banking ethics. Yet what puzzles me is that Mauritius is reputed for its institutional capacity building, and despite earlier Ponzi schemes and embezzlement of funds, our institutions did not see abnormal signs. Were the writings on the walls? Have our institutions risen to the circumstances in taking preventive measures before the situation started rotting? There are already casualties, as the demise of the 68-year old saver testifies. The FSC should have monitored the insurance issue and, in particular, examined the several adverts relating to the insurance policies.

We are a Financial Sector which accounts for double-digit share of GDP, with equally impressive growth potential. We can imagine the signals this conveys to the international actors. It is imperative that a full-fledged enquiry be set up. The FSC, too often, gives the impression of waking up from slumber. Mauritius needs a more dynamic approach to preserve its assets.

Madame la présidente, permettez-moi, ici, d'aborder quelques aspects du budget, notamment en ce qui concerne le secteur de l'immobilier. Ceux qui sont concernés par le secteur de l'immobilier, les mauriciens consommateurs en général, les promoteurs, les institutions créancières ne souhaitent qu'une chose, la stabilité en matière fiscale. Nous savons tous combien cela pèse lourd dans les *feasibility plans* ou les budgets familiaux des acheteurs potentiels ou des familles en général.

De 2006 à ce jour, les différents budgets ont apporté des régimes différents. Prenons le cas des *first-time buyers*, ceux qui achètent pour la première fois. Le régime des *first-time buyers* a été aboli en 2006 et les frais d'enregistrement ramenés à un taux uniforme de 5 %. Il faut le dire, le Budget de 2006 demeure le Budget le plus difficile pour la classe moyenne.

Le régime des *first-time buyers* a permis à un nombre important de mauriciens d'avoir accès à la terre ou à un logement. En 2010, le régime fut introduit et en 2012 le plafond fut rehaussé à R 1 million pour les terrains vagues et R 4 millions pour les immeubles bâtis ou les appartements. J'accueille, bien sûr, favorablement le rehaussement du plafond pour les terrains vagues à R 1.5 millions, alors que le plafond pour les appartements et les immeubles bâtis restent malheureusement échangé à R 4 millions.

Madame la présidente, une contrainte de taille demeure que les acheteurs doivent subir une injustice de taille qui est le prix de vente. Je m'explique. Tous ceux qui achètent

pour la première fois ne pourront bénéficier de l'exemption de *first-time buyers* si le prix du terrain vague dépasse R 1.5 millions ou R 4 millions pour les immeubles ou les appartements. Il aurait été plus juste de mettre un bénéfice d'exemption de *Registration Duty* de, par exemple, R 75,000 pour les terrains vagues et de R 200,000 pour les maisons et ce quel que soit le prix de vente. Vous conviendrez que quelqu'un qui achète une portion de terrain à un R 1,510,000 ne pourra pas bénéficier de l'exemption parce que son prix dépasse le plafond par R 10,000 seulement et il payera les frais d'enregistrement pour R 1,510,000 pour la totalité et ça c'est vraiment injuste.

Madame la présidente, on tente d'encourager le secteur de l'immobilier. C'est un sentiment partagé que bon nombre de secteurs bénéficient de l'effet domino quand la situation s'améliore dans le secteur de l'immobilier. Le ministre lui-même a été à la base du concept de Société Civile Immobilière d'Attribution qui était à la base de plusieurs projets immobiliers dans les années 80, 90 et 2000. Ce concept a été rendu très contraignant en 2013, au point que les transactions sont aujourd'hui taxées au *full price*, bien que les projets immobiliers, les complexes immobiliers ont atteint seulement, par exemple, le niveau de soubassement. On ne taxe plus selon le progrès des travaux mais bien à la valeur d'un appartement fini. Cela est assez dur pour les acheteurs potentiels ou même pour les promoteurs. Cela est injuste et décourageant. Le ministre attache une importance particulière à l'investissement et la consommation comme il est mentionné dans le préambule du budget. Mais il faut reconnaître que cela ne pourra se faire aussi longtemps que les concepts qui ont été à la base du boom de l'immobilier ne sont pas réactualisés.

Madame la présidente, je souhaite saluer les annonces faites quant à la possibilité de déduire des impôts les intérêts payés, des dettes contractées par les *first-time buyers* et ce pendant toute la durée de la dette. Lors de la présentation du Budget précédent, l'annonce a été faite de la baisse du quantum requis de 10 % à 5% comme dépôt des emprunteurs. Il est quand même regrettable de constater que, depuis l'annonce qui a été faite lors du dernier Budget, très peu de mauriciens ont pu bénéficier d'un tel régime en raison tout simplement d'une politique contradictoire du Gouverneur de la Banque de Maurice. Les banques commerciales, malgré les mesures annoncées dans le Budget, ont été ainsi contraintes à exiger un dépôt des plus contraignants des emprunteurs en raison des restrictions imposées par la Banque de Maurice. Il est souhaitable qu'en matière d'emprunt et des charges bancaires qu'il y ait une politique cohérente entre le ministère des Finances et la Banque de Maurice.

Madame la présidente, un des calvaires des familles mauriciennes est l'endettement des familles. Bien sûr, je salue l'annonce du ministre en ce qui concerne la baisse des taux d'intérêt dans la vente à tempérament de 19 à 12 % et des pénalités de 5 à 2 %. Dans cette même optique, je souhaite, ici, suggérer à ce que le *Mauritius Credit Information Bureau (MCIB)* puisse couvrir non seulement les banques commerciales et les autres institutions créancières mais aussi les commerces pratiquants la vente à tempérament. C'est un fait connu des autorités que le *hire purchase*, la vente à tempérament est la composante majeure de l'endettement des familles. Une telle couverture constituerait non seulement une protection des institutions créancières mais surtout assurer une responsabilisation des familles. Il est vrai que cela nécessiterait des mesures additionnelles quant à la dissémination des informations, mais la famille se trouvera à coup sûr mieux protégée.

Madame la présidente, dans les *Financial Stability Reports* successifs de la Banque de Maurice, sous le titre *Household Sector Credit*, l'endettement des ménages est un sujet de préoccupation d'une année à une autre. Rien que pour la consommation, l'augmentation a été de 17 %. Idem pour les crédits pour les besoins résidentiels. L'endettement des ménages représente aujourd'hui plus d'un quart, plus de 25 % du crédit total du secteur privé. Cela reflète ma préoccupation de l'endettement des ménages. Il est un fait que le crédit alloué aux ménages a augmenté de 20 % comme un pourcentage de notre GDP.

Madame la présidente, je ne peux que me réjouir face à la reconnaissance ou l'aveu que l'île Maurice est devenue une nation *zougadère*. Des mesures concrètes ont été annoncées, abolition des publicités relatives aux jeux, non émission de permis pendant une période de cinq ans, les cartes à gratter sont bannies, une augmentation des taxes et une relocalisation des maisons de jeux. J'ai personnellement posé pas mal de questions relatives aux jeux lors du mandat précédent. Mais il était quand même paradoxal qu'on trouvait inacceptable les publicités des boissons alcoolisées alors qu'on trouvait toujours des justifications pour les publicités *zougadère*. On avait annoncé un *High-Powered Committee*, présidé par l'ancien Premier ministre sur tout l'aspect de jeux, de relocalisation, etc. mais jusqu'à présent aucun rapport n'a été soumis.

Les mesures annoncées dans le Budget sont correctes mais je considère que tout cet arsenal aura une portée limitative sans une responsabilisation des mauriciens en général et des opérateurs. C'est dans ce sens que je préconise, Madame la présidente, un *Gaming Responsibility Act* comme cela existe dans de nombreux pays. Ce *Gaming Responsibility Act* est essentiel et cela préconise, entre autres, des règles strictes quant à la limite des paris, la limite des crédits qui sont offertes par des maisons de jeux, le bannissement de certains

joueurs invétérés dans des *gaming houses*, le *self-exclusion* des joueurs comme mesure de réhabilitation sont autant de mesures qu'on peut prévoir dans cette loi. Rien n'est inventé, c'est une loi qui existe déjà dans bon nombre de pays. Il est temps de légiférer pour protéger les mauriciens de leur vulnérabilité aux jeux.

Il appartient au gouvernement de venir de l'avant avec une étude approfondie avec un échantillonnage honnête de la population et d'analyser les retombées du jeu sur l'endettement des familles et ces répercussions sur la famille et la société. À ce jour, il n'existe aucune étude à cet effet. Cette mentalité *zougadère* ne disparaîtra pas avec une simple limitation du nombre de jeux car ces joueurs trouveront toujours des moyens à satisfaire leurs vices.

En ce qui concerne la relocalisation des maisons de jeu, Madame la présidente, dans un délai de trois ans, cela est louable et ambitieux. Toutefois, il faut reconnaître que rien n'a été prévu à cet effet dans le présent budget et nous connaissons tous l'état financier précaire des collectivités locales. Que cette mesure ne se limite pas seulement aux *gaming houses*, mais aussi aux détenteurs de permis de *totalisers* car il est un fait que le nombre de points de vente du loto, par exemple, a été multiplié par 10 ces dernières années.

Madame la présidente, à la section 52 du budget, mention est faite de la restructuration des concepts d'IRS et de RES.

Le *Scheme IRS* fut introduit par le gouvernement MSM/MMM en vue d'attirer plus de FDI au pays. À ce jour, 10 projets ont été approuvés et deux projets ont été complétés, six projets sont en cours et six projets sont en phase de lancement. Depuis le lancement des projets IRS en 2005, les projets IRS et RES ont rapporté R 40 milliards à l'État avec 1,423 unités vendues. Les projets IRS ont été une composante sociale bénéfique à la communauté locale. Chaque projet IRS a une composante sociale obligatoire à être améliorée, bien sûr. Valeur du jour, un total de R 85 millions ont été investies dans les projets sociaux. Les revenus du gouvernement en termes de *registration duty* et de *land transfer tax* avoisinent les R 4.4 milliards.

À ce jour, les projets IRS et RES représentent 1% du GDP et environ 24% de FDI pour la période 2005 à 2013.

Les projets RES, Madame la présidente, introduit en 2007 a pour mérite d'avoir ouvert le marché de l'immobilier aux petits propriétaires fonciers. 19 projets ont été complétés et 25 sont en cours. Même si on est aujourd'hui réfractaires aux *gated communities*, il faut aujourd'hui se rendre à l'évidence qu'il existe bel et bien des *gated communities* des simples morcellements dédiés aux mauriciens où bon nombres d'honorables parlementaires des deux côtés de la Chambre sont propriétaires.

L'idée c'est d'avoir un cadre de vie assurée par le syndic que malheureusement les collectivités locales ne peuvent assurer et d'assurer un minimum respect du *law and order* qui est aujourd'hui un véritable défi pour tout un chacun.

La question d'intégration se posera toujours. Il appartient au Syndic des lieux d'assurer une démocratisation des services par l'embauche des habitants de la région et aussi d'encouragement à la participation de vie de village avoisinant.

Madame la présidente, à mon humble avis, sous l'*Investment Promotion Act* et le *Business Facilitation Act*, le problème se trouve ailleurs.

Je veux parler ici des *occupational permits* sous les catégories des *investors*, *self-employed*, *professional* et les retraités. Nous savons tous les abus qu'il y a eu dans le passé en ce qui concerne l'octroi des *occupational permits*. Le *Business Facilitation Act* prévoit qu'après une période de trois ans, après avoir respecté des conditions de *turnover*, *d'annual income*, de transfert de R 40,000 dollars pour les retraités et d'un salaire minimum respectivement pour les quatre catégories mentionnées, ces personnes ont droit de faire une application de *Permanent Residence Permit* de 10 ans. Ce même permis donne la possibilité d'acquérir un bien immobilier. En 2012, la loi fut amendée pour permettre l'acquisition d'un appartement des immeubles ayant plus de deux étages pour une résidence personnelle.

À la base des réponses fournies lors du mandat précédent, il est tout à fait justifié de remettre en cause certaines applications des plus de 11,000 *occupation permits* qui ont été délivrés par le gouvernement jusqu'à présent, y compris le gouvernement précédent. Desquelles applications on dénote des retraités âgés de 31 ans seulement, un salaire minimum de R 30 000 ou encore *occupational permits* octroyés à des gérants de restaurants ou de tours opérateurs et qui sont aujourd'hui détenteurs de ces fameux *occupational permits*. De ce nombre, il existe bel et bien ceux qui ont décroché le *jackpot* ont eu leur *permanent residence permit* leur donnant droit à l'acquisition d'un bien immobilier à Maurice. Un investissement de 500,000 dollars dans un projet IRS ou RES donne droit automatiquement au *permanent residence permit*.

L'affaire était tellement sensible et juteuse que l'octroi du permis fut référé aux bons soins du Bureau du Premier ministre par la BOI. Je parle de l'ancien Premier ministre.

Madame la présidente, je souhaite ici aborder quelques problèmes spécifiques relatifs à ma circonscription et je termine là-dessus. La circonscription de Belle Rose/Quatre Bornes m'a donné son plébiscite à deux reprises face à l'Alliance Travailleuse/PMSD/MSM en 2010 et face à l'Alliance MSM/ML/PMSD en 2014. Pour ces deux échéances, les alliances respectives ont remporté les élections générales avec une majorité confortable. Mais

l'électorat de Quatre Bornes a renouvelé sa confiance en moi. Je suis, bien sûr, éternellement reconnaissant envers cet électorat qui m'a plébiscité et ce quel que soit sa classe sociale, quel que soit sa partisanerie politique, son déterminisme ethnique ou religieux. Avec cette même dévotion et humilité, je souhaite aborder quelques problèmes pressants de ma circonscription.

La ville de Quatre Bornes a grand besoin d'une politique d'urbanisme. Elle connaît des développements conséquents que ce soit à Ébène ou à l'autre extrémité à Palma. Quatre Bornes émerge comme une ville avant-gardiste. Mais on doit reconnaître le désordre qui existe et qui relève de la responsabilité de différentes autorités à commencer par la Mairie de Quatre Bornes et le gouvernement à travers ses différents ministères.

La règle de base du respect des zones de délimitation est bafouée, comme cela existe en bon nombres de villes et villages du pays. On arrive difficilement aujourd'hui à faire la différence entre les zones résidentielles, commerciales ou industrielles. Les zones résidentielles sont sauvagement converties en bureau ou autres commerces tout en faisant fi de la quiétude des habitants.

Madame la présidente, c'est un fait connu que le problème de trafic dans le centre-ville de Quatre Bornes et des régions avoisinantes est révoltant. Aujourd'hui, on ne trouve pas mieux que d'augmenter le nombre de *traffic lights* alors que ce qui est nécessaire pour la ville de Quatre Bornes, c'est un programme d'ensemble de trafic pour la ville de Quatre Bornes dans son ensemble.

Il est plus qu'urgent qu'on vienne de l'avant avec un transport intra urbain desservant les différents quartiers de la ville.

Madame la présidente, la ville de Quatre Bornes a connu un développement sans précédent en matière de constructions immobilières. Il est évident aujourd'hui que les infrastructures pour les *sewerages*, l'eau, électricité et le trafic routier subissent des pressions énormes en raison de la construction en hauteur ou le nombre de personnes au mètre carré a sensiblement augmenté.

Pour finir, Madame la présidente, je laisse la construction du nouveau marché aux bons soins des deux ministres de la circonscription et que ce projet ne restera pas au stade d'une dotation budgétaire.

Sur ce, Madame la présidente, je vous remercie.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Gungah!

(3.15 p.m.)

The Minister of Industry, Commerce and Consumer Protection (Mr A. Gungah):

Madame la présidente, je voudrais, dès le départ, féliciter mon collègue, le ministre des finances et du développement économique pour la présentation du budget qui a été très bien accueilli par la majorité de la population dans le monde des affaires.

Après la victoire historique de l'Alliance Lepep aux dernières élections générales, la présentation du premier budget a été une autre étape historique. Un budget puissant qui marque un changement de direction sociale, avec des mesures qui préconisent à la fois la sérénité parmi la population et l'espoir d'une ère pour une nouvelle Ile Maurice.

C'est un budget à visage humain, qui marque une autre étape pour construire une nation plus équitable, plus juste. Ce gouvernement, sous le *leadership* éclairé de Sir Anerood Jugnauth, a mis le cap vers le second miracle économique, tout en apportant une forte dose de mesures pour ramener la justice sociale. L'histoire retiendra que ce sont les deux mêmes personnes, en l'occurrence Sir Anerood Jugnauth et Vishnu Lutchmeenaraidoo, qui ont fait le premier miracle économique et ils sont de retour pour le deuxième.

Madam Speaker, what this country needed was the creation of a feel-good factor - and it has been well said by hon. Ramano, the feel-good factor is here. It is the basic element needed to boost an economy. It is renewed optimism for a brighter future.

I must say that all stakeholders have supported this Budget. They recognise that we are shaping a new economy for greater prosperity, social justice and equity within a framework of good governance and economic transparency.

There is no doubt that the hon. Minister of Finance and Economic Development has it right and has created the right environment to attract FDI and private sector investment. These are *sine qua non* ingredients to face the challenges of the new global economic situation.

Madame la présidente, le pays a besoin d'un nouveau départ. On se souvient de 1982, quand le pays était à genoux. Il fallait prendre des décisions courageuses et audacieuses. Très peu d'institutions internationales et le pays, avaient misé sur notre réussite, but we did it Madam Speaker and I am sure, under the leadership of Sir Anerood Jugnauth, we will do it again.

Il nous faut une autre Ile Maurice où chaque mauricien sera au centre du progrès. On ne peut parler de pays moderne tout en oubliant ceux qui y contribuent. It is another step in the realisation of the Mauritian Dream - un rêve adapté aux réalités sociales de notre nation.

Madam Speaker, the population was at the crossroads in December 2014. Our nation had the choice between the Labour Party/MMM alliance and l'Alliance Lepep. Our people needed change. Though some, on the other side, were talking about 'nettoyer le pays', we all know the situation that prevailed with the Government under the leadership of the previous Prime Minister, it would have been the same politic of favoritism, nepotism and passe-droit.

They had proposed a chemistry formula which did not respond to the aspirations of the people. For them, it was only a matter of power. *L'un des deux avait comme seule ambition de remplir son coffre.* Our country did not need that sharing of power; instead our people need the sharing of national wealth.

Madam Speaker, this Budget defines clearly our economic strategy. The Government is taking bold and courageous measures to fight unemployment, social injustice and, at same time, promoting investment to revitalize the economic sectors. We did take the difficult path, but we are convinced in what we are doing for our country.

We want a country where unemployment recedes, poverty disappears and social inequality is no longer a threat to social cohesion.

Allow me Madam Speaker, to comment briefly on some of the main measures announced in this Budget.

For years, we have been talking of mismatch between our qualified youth and the needs of the labour market. There was no career guidance for our young generation, and the mismatch becomes inevitable. *Il nous fallait rectifier le tir.*

This Budget has made provisions for an amount of two hundred and forty million rupees (Rs240 m.) to ensure that our *gradués chômeurs* be provided the necessary training to enhance the skills and aptitude to become employable.

Madam Speaker, le secteur de PME a toujours été considéré comme le parent pauvre. Ce gouvernement a démontré sa ferme volonté de relancer ce secteur qui est vu comme étant un pilier important de l'économie. C'est un créneau porteur d'avenir pour nos jeunes pour devenir des entrepreneurs. Dans ce contexte, le gouvernement a fait provision d'un fonds de 10 milliards de roupies pour innover et revigorer ce secteur.

Our objective is to make the SME sector one of the driving forces for job creation and we are sure that we will succeed where others have failed.

La jeunesse mauricienne a des opportunités avec le changement du pouvoir politique. Nous sommes conscients que les jeunes attendent beaucoup de nous. Ils sont les plus touchés par le chômage. Nombreux attendent d'être employés dans le service gouvernemental. Il faut

être réaliste et raisonnable. C'est pour cette raison que ce gouvernement mise beaucoup pour que nos jeunes d'aujourd'hui deviennent des entrepreneurs de demain.

Nous n'abdiquons pas de nos responsabilités. Nous sommes des facilitateurs pour la création d'emplois. C'est pour cela qu'un investissement massif a été alloué à l'entrepreneuriat. Nous avons des jeunes qui ont l'envie, l'enthousiasme, la conviction et le talent pour réussir. Le gouvernement met toutes les facilités pour alléger les procédures afin de bâtir une nation d'entrepreneurs.

Madame la Présidente, comme l'a affirmé le ministre des Finances, Maurice sera un vaste chantier de développement. Ce n'est pas qu'un slogan. Ce sera bientôt une réalité avec la création des *smart cities*.

Infrastructural development will be one key measure to move to a higher phase of growth and improve other economic fundamentals. The thirteen-mega projects, of a magnitude never implemented before, will go a long way to revitalise and modernise the economic and social landscape of Mauritius.

Everyone will agree that investment to the tune of Rs120 billion will not only rejuvenate the construction sector, but will have multiplier effects on the economy.

These mega projects rest on the model of a strong public and private partnership. It is in line with Government vision to enlist participation of all stakeholders in the developmental process.

Madame la Présidente, ce budget est une capsule de réveil pour le pays. On a malheureusement vécu une période sombre avec l'augmentation des fléaux sociaux.

On sait tous que le pays a été sous l'emprise néfaste de la corruption et l'absence totale de la bonne gouvernance sous le régime travailliste. Les effets combinés de tous ces maux ont contribué à l'appauvrissement de la société et la perte de confiance dans le pays.

Pas plus tard que la semaine dernière, le rapport de la commission d'enquête Parry a démontré la mafia qui opère dans les activités des courses hippiques. Sous le règne de Navin Ramgoolam, l'Ile Maurice était devenue une *nation zougadère*. Le gouvernement ne pouvait rester insensible aux dégâts causés par le gambling. Il nous fallait arrêter ce fléau qui gangrène notre société. Comme un gouvernement responsable, c'est un devoir de rétablir les valeurs humaines et sociales dans notre pays. Et je dois ici saluer le courage de l'honorable Premier ministre et aussi bien du ministre des Finances pour les mesures prises pour combattre ce fléau. Nous ne pouvons tolérer le fait que des millions de roupies soient dépensés par des pères et des mères de familles dans tous types de jeu alors que des enfants doivent en souffrir.

Alliance Lepep has been elected by *lepep*, for *lepep*.

Nous avons pris des engagements. Nous les respecterons. Parole donnée, parole sacrée. Ce Budget devient un testament de notre engagement envers la nation.

Madam Speaker, nation building implies that no one is left outside the stream of economic and social development process. Economic development and prosperity should be socially inclusive. Measures including the mega projects and the transformation of Mauritius into a regional hub will have positive spill over effects on the population as a whole.

Madam Speaker, the Marshall Plan to combat poverty and redistribute wealth constitutes another breakthrough measure to unite our people through social stability. The increase in old-age pension and other financial provisions for widows, orphans and disabled persons has been a revolutionary measure. It is often said that the yardstick to measure the real GDP of a nation is to see how the most vulnerable group of our society is being treated. This Government is a pro-poor Government and will ensure that the national cake is not shared among a few privileged only but is distributed equally to one and all. The construction of 1,700 housing units is another important measure to alleviate the sufferings of those who are within the *poches de pauvreté*.

Madam Speaker, consumer protection is another main concern of the Government. Consumers have been facing high interest rates on hire purchase. A large majority of our households are trapped in this system and they find it difficult to make both ends meet at the end of each month.

Dans ce souci, de soulager la population, le gouvernement a ainsi revu l'Annual Percentage Rate à la baisse de 19% à 12% et le penalty rate sur le late payment de 5% à 2% annuellement. Ces mesures permettront à la fois d'augmenter le pouvoir d'achat et de soulager le fardeau de l'endettement de chaque famille mauricienne.

At the level of my Ministry we are aware that there are some unscrupulous traders who are trying to "*arnaquer les consommateurs*". Inspections are being conducted in various trade premises. We will not tolerate any abuse, Madam Speaker.

Government is committed to promote competition as it is in the interest of both consumers and traders. Il y a eu des chasses-gardées dans le passé. On parle même de cartel. Et en conséquence, ce sont les consommateurs qui en paient les frais.

C'est inacceptable que certains abusent de leur position pour contrôler le marché. Je cite comme exemple le commerce du bétail et de la viande que ce soit du bœuf ou du mouton. Pendant la période des fêtes religieuses et de fin d'année, le prix de la viande prend l'ascenseur. Un comité technique a été mis sur pied pour revoir toutes les procédures

d'importation et de vente. Nous prendrons les mesures qui s'imposent afin que le prix soit revu à la baisse, non seulement pour les fêtes, mais sur le long terme. Le gouvernement donnera toutes les facilités aux opérateurs, qui respectent les procédures, afin qu'il y ait plus de compétition.

Dans ce même contexte, mon ministère revoit le système actuel en place concernant l'importation et l'exportation. Des comités techniques ont été mis sur pied pour revoir certaines clauses légales entourant notamment l'importation et la vente de véhicule second main et l'organisation des foires dans le pays. Des "regulations" sur ces deux aspects doivent être revus.

Madam Speaker, let me now come to the measures relating to bunkering. The vision to transform Port Louis from a destination port to a regional hub is a clear indication of the foresightedness of this Government.

Indeed, maritime traffic in the Indian Ocean is growing steadily. This trend is driven by increasing trade between the emerging economies of Asia and Africa/South America. It is estimated that the size of the bunker market in the region is about one million metric tons. Mauritius has a share of 30% only but has the potential to expand this share based on the market trend. It is estimated to increase around 3 million metric tons in five years' time.

Madam Speaker, this Government is looking beyond the horizon and we aspire to grow as a leading regional petroleum hub.

Statistics have revealed that annually some 35,000 vessels pass off the shores of Mauritius on their trips between Asia, South Africa and South America. Out of these only about 3500 stop over at Port-Louis Harbour to have recourse to maritime services including bunkering.

With the enhancement of bunkering in Port-Louis, it is expected that the number of vessels entering the harbour will increase exponentially. The benefits to be derived by Mauritius are many folds. Besides the bunkering activity, other related maritime activities such as changing of crew, water supply and ship handling will also take place.

There exists a unique window of opportunity for the country. The time is exceptionally opportune for the development of bunker business in Port Louis.

Madam Speaker, the current shortage of tankage for petroleum products is constraining any possibility of growth of any significance. The present 186,000 metric tons tankage must be doubled, at the least. With a view to moving fast in the bunkering business, the advent of floating storage as a temporary arrangement is a serious option. This will in turn

trigger investments in onshore storage tanks to eventually put the business on a fully sustainable and durable basis.

The elaboration of a strategic approach is auspicious for positioning of Mauritius as a regional hub in petroleum trading. It will establish a strong new pillar in the economy that would service the region. The position of the country will be reinforced as an air and maritime hub, and generate related activities towards provision of goods and services.

In this context, a consortium comprising Vivo Energy, Total Mauritius, Engen Petroleum and Indian Oil will construct new storage tanks of 25000 metric ton. A joint venture, the Mer Rouge Oil Storage Terminal (MOST) which represents the four companies has been set up, for the implementation of the project. I had meetings with the representatives of the consortium and requested them to expedite the project. As at date, the consortium has submitted an EIA application to the Ministry of Environment, Sustainable Development and Disaster and Beach Management.

After this step, the construction work of the storage facilities will start. I am informed by the Ministry of Environment, Sustainable Development and Disaster and Beach Management that it is considering the project on a fast track basis.

Madam Speaker, Government has a clear mandate to get rid of malpractices and to restore good governance. We took a bold decision, in the interest of the nation, to terminate the long-term contract with Betamax Ltd for the transportation of petroleum products to Mauritius. The STC paid Betamax an average rate of 31 US dollar per ton since 2011. As a transitory measure, the STC at present contracts spot voyage charters through an open bidding process. To date, better freight rates have been obtained for all the spot vessels than with Betamax's tanker. My Ministry, after negotiation, is paying less than the amount paid to Betamax. Up to now, we are paying an average of 23.4 USD per ton. Any future contract of affreightment shall be allocated after full and transparent tender procedures. The STC has already initiated action to launch the bid.

Madam Speaker, let me come now to trade facilitation to improve the business climate in the country. All related institutions and agencies are called upon to work in close collaboration for further streamlining trade procedures, accelerating trade facilitation and improving ease of doing business. My Ministry will coordinate efforts at all levels for a concerted action to ensure that trade occurs in the best possible manner with the least cost and time to the benefit of one and all. We will ensure that non-tariff measures enforced in the country are only for reasons of strategy, security, sensitivity and environment and do not become unnecessary barriers to trade. My Ministry will soon amend the regulations to

remove 10 items from the list of controlled goods and four items from the list of prohibited goods.

This is in line with the Government strategy to streamline procedures and processes for ease of doing business and trade facilitation. Moreover, in line with the e-Government strategy, my Ministry is embarking on the Single Window Project where there will be a single submission of application by the traders to enhance trade efficiency and competitiveness. Trader will be able to make online application for import and export permits. It will reduce time for approval of such permits and enable operators to track progress of the status of their applications. Trade will be more efficient with the reduction of time and accelerate the process of trade liberalisation and eliminate non-tariff barriers.

Madame la présidente, je vais maintenant aborder le secteur industriel qui constitue l'épine dorsale de notre économie, parmi les autres secteurs majeurs.

Avec tous les dangers qui nous guettent, si on reste les bras croisés, l'industrie manufacturière va à sa fin. Rien n'a été fait ces dernières années, pas une idée innovatrice. Nous piétons alors que les autres pays producteurs avancent dans un contexte où la main-d'œuvre et les coûts de production sont plus avantageux. Notre secteur est caractérisé par une diversification inadéquate des produits et des marchés.

Tout le monde reconnaît l'importance d'un nouveau dynamisme dans ce secteur, pour la création d'emplois et soutenir l'économie dans son ensemble. Il faut des moyens innovants pour que le secteur manufacturier aborde l'avenir avec davantage de résilience et de compétitivité.

Madame la présidente, je voudrais faire ressortir ici que le secteur manufacturier n'a pas pu prendre l'envol nécessaire pour soutenir la croissance économique.

Le secteur manufacturier comprend actuellement 117,000 employés qui contribuent à 16,6% du GDP. Toutefois, la croissance moyenne pour ces quatre dernières années était très basse.

L'essoufflement du secteur textile au cours des dernières années doit être une préoccupation majeure. En fait, la croissance de ce secteur qui se chiffrait à 2,6% en 2013 est retombée à 1,5% en 2014.

Madam Speaker, it is important to give a new impetus to the manufacturing sector which I am confident will continue to be the main engine of growth, exports and employment creation for many years to come.

Here, I have in mind that the manufacturing sector, which will be driven on innovation, fashion, creativity and high-end technology. *L'innovation est un tremplin nécessaire pour le développement d'un 'Smart Innovation-led manufacturing sector'*.

There is no doubt that innovation confers value addition and expands profit margin. The provision of Rs125 m. for a National Innovation Programme will foster a new culture of research and development and promote creation of innovative products and services. I am confident that with the array of measures provided in this Budget, we will be able to look at the future with renewed optimism.

We will focus on attracting foreign investors who can bring with them new technology, innovative practices as well as new products and markets. The region remains a new frontier and we will capitalise on the buoyancy in Africa. FDI will be crucial for the growth of the sector.

Madam Speaker, a successful investment promotion strategy requires much groundwork in the targeted countries. It is only then that we can better identify potential investors, sensitise them on opportunities in Mauritius and plan effectively investment promotion campaigns.

In this context, the posting of eight trade and investment managers in strategic countries will be necessary to carry out much needed groundwork.

Madam Speaker, the Africa Strategy in the budget is opportune to leverage on new opportunities in Africa. The Mauritius Africa Fund, extension of the Freight Rebate Scheme and the setting up of a regional shipping line will be critical measures to expand regional trade.

Toutefois, Madame la présidente, je dois affirmer que ces dernières années Entreprise Mauritius a failli dans sa tâche. Je me pose la question à quoi servaient ces voyages aux frais des contribuables. *This company must be more result-oriented. It is public funding.*

Entreprise Mauritius a un rôle important à jouer pour vendre le produit mauricien. Et de ce fait, un *Export Development Plan* a été établi pour la période 2015-2016.

Ce plan comprend des activités pour créer un nouveau dynamisme à la diversification des marchés. Dans ce contexte, nous sommes en train d'élaborer un programme avec des événements phares pour consolider et diversifier l'exportation en Europe, en Afrique et d'autres pays.

Le gouvernement a la volonté de soutenir l'effort de nos entreprises. Ainsi, une somme de R135 millions a été allouée à Entreprise Mauritius. Le ministère veillera à ce que ce fonds soit utilisé judicieusement.

Madame la présidente, la stratégie à la promotion de l'exportation sera remodelée pour permettre une cohérence effective parmi les différents secteurs du pays. C'est dans ce contexte que nous soutenons fermement l'élaboration d'un National Export Strategy (NES). Ce sera un plan d'action pour les cinq ans à venir qui permettra un développement pour différents secteurs d'exportation. L'objectif est de créer une synergie entre les partenaires du secteur pour mieux affronter les demandes du marché international.

Madam Speaker, a smart and innovation industrial sector is not possible if our products are not innovative with original designs and if they cannot compete in niche markets.

The Fashion and Design Institute which is now under the aegis of my Ministry will have a revamped role in enhancing skills in the area of fashion and design. Tout comme Enterprise Mauritius, cette organisation est restée inactive depuis quelques temps malgré le fait que le Fashion and Design Institute a un très gros potentiel. Il nous faut faire de cette institution une référence de renommée internationale et que Maurice soit reconnue dans le secteur de la mode et du design. Nous établissons une nouvelle stratégie pour le Fashion and Design Institute qui travaillera de concert avec Enterprise Mauritius, la MEXA et les autres stakeholders au niveau national et international.

Madame la présidente, Maurice a des talents et le potentiel qui demandent à mettre à jour.

Avant de conclure Madame la Présidente, c'est un fait indéniable qu'il y a un *feel-good factor* dans le pays. Le peuple voit l'avenir plus sereinement et la jeunesse porte un espoir en nous. Nous avons tous un devoir envers nos mandants et le peuple dans son ensemble. Que ce soit le gouvernement mais aussi les membres de l'opposition.

Nous avons un choix, et comme je l'ai dit plus haut dans mon discours, nous étions à la croisée des chemins. Nous avons choisi une route qui n'est pas obligatoirement la plus facile, mais elle nous mènera vers le développement économique et social qu'il nous faut. C'est un choix courageux et audacieux que le gouvernement a fait. Les annonces ont été faites, le travail a déjà commencé. Après un an, les médias, le peuple, la société civile pourront nous juger.

Après les neuf dernières années sous le règne de l'Etat Travailleiste, le peuple s'est tourné vers Anerood Jugnauth car tout le monde sait «*sa ki li dir, li fer*».

Madame la présidente, 2015 restera une année mémorable pour l'île Maurice. 2015 est l'année d'un cheminement vers un nouveau destin pour le pays.

Ever since taking over the reins of power in December 2014, this Government has already taken several measures to fulfil its promise. This budget is another milestone to pave the way towards the construction of a modern, prosperous and more equitable Mauritius.

The Budget 2015-2016 is a bid to bring to reality the vision of our leader, Sir Anerood Jugnauth, the Rt. hon. Prime Minister to create a second “*miracle économique*”. During the electoral campaign, the Rt. hon. Prime Minister travelled far and wide over the island. He constantly interacted with the people at large in order to get the pulse of the development requirements, the people aspirations and governance challenge. Today this Government is working towards living up the promises and assurances given in the manifesto. The measures are effectively meant to alleviate the sufferings of the poor.

Madame la présidente, je voudrais terminer avec cette citation, *I quote –*

“Miracles start to happen when you give as much energy to your dreams as you do to your fears.”

This budget is the stepping stone to achieve the second economic miracle. This Government under the humble guidance of Sir Anerood Jugnauth will continue on the path of development without fear or favour. All our energy will be directed in fulfilling this dream.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Mrs Boygah!

(3.47 p.m.)

Mrs D. Boygah (Second Member for Vieux Grand Port & Rose Belle): Thank you, Madam Speaker. In fact, today I prepared my speech for this budget, but just before lunch, I got a mail and I am very much in a fix either I read the budget speech I prepared or I read what I have in mind. First thing I did, I run to the Chief Whip and asked: “Can you, please, give me five minutes more in my speech so that I can express myself to this august Assembly”. And he did, indeed, Madam. Thank you, hon. Chief Whip.

In fact, Madam Speaker, I got a mail from a friend, and the mail reads as follows. I quote –

“It is a very great day for you dear. You will stand in the Parliament to read your speech on the national Budget. Remember the day you were deprived to be seated on the seat as the first lady of District Council North and prohibited

to read your first speech to the local assembly. We are all with you, but a little sad as we are not in the Local Government Amendment Bill. When will our dream come true? How much and how long we will have to fight more? You are our voice. Good luck. *Bisou.*

Rita”

She is a good friend of mine and she is a village councillor, Madam Speaker. As you can see, in this Council we have not only one, not only two, but many members of the local authority who are today in this august Assembly, be it the village council, the district council, the municipal council - city council.

Myself and my friend, hon. Rughoobur, are the byproducts of village council, Madam Speaker. We have been fighting since quite long and, unfortunately, in 2005, when we were supposed to get a ticket for the general election, after hard work, years of fidelity with the Labour Party, we did not get our tickets. And what did we do? I think we just ended our MBA exams, and what we decided in 2005 was to start from scratch, to start from the bottom of the ladder of the political era. Me and my friend, hon Sudesh Rughoobur, formed a party at the village council level. We said: “Why not? We can do it together Sudesh! Why not?” In 2005, I remember very well, I just delivered my baby – three weeks baby - and I had a CS. Hon Rughoobur can confirm this. I could not even walk. I was just holding my belly like...

(Interruptions)

I was just holding my stomach and walking and hon. Rughoobur and all my friends were very much worried. Fortunately, Madam, we won 12-0 in Rivière du Rempart, our village. It was after 23 years that we took the village from another party, another regime. After that, I got the privilege, with the help of my friends, to be in the District Council and to be among 36 members. We were only two ladies. Two ladies sitting in the District Council. And with two ladies at that very much time, I presented myself, I did the campaigning, and I was elected among the 36 members sitting out there as Vice-Chairperson of District Council North.

2007 came. I served the District Council North, I served my village. Unfortunately, when it came to be nominated as the Chairperson of District Council North, I never got the chance. I was always told by my leader: “*To tour pou vini, attan. Attan to tour pou vini.*” Because it was a male domain politics which has and has always been in the local authorities, especially in district councils. 2010 came, and I did my campaigning, canvassing with Ministers, with all authorities, with the Prime Minister himself. I begged him, Madam

Speaker. He did not want to nominate me to stand for the election. He never gave any sign. I did my campaigning, and I was elected as the first lady of District Council North.

Unfortunately, Madam Speaker! I want this National Assembly to know how women have to fight, how we have to pave our way with hard work to reach where we are today.

(Interruptions)

It was in the Labour Party. In the Labour Party, Madam Speaker, if you are a *poupée*, you will have your chance. But if you are not *poupée* and you do not *tousse salie*, you do not have your chance.

Only half an hour, Madam Speaker, after my election...

(Interruptions)

You have to be *ram ke goolam* or to be a *lèche-botte*.

Half an hour after my election, I got a call from a lady Minister - *avec tout le zèle qu'elle a* - who told me: "*To faire la honte à la femme et à dire pou fini toi*". You know does it mean, Madam? Just being elected as a first lady of District Council North, being menaced by another Minister woman. Today, when you look on the other side, there is not even one woman! Madam Speaker, *péché paye lors la terre*.

There is one thing that I want to tell you. Standing here would not have been possible at all without the blessing of hon. Pravind Jugnauth, Leader of the MSM, without the blessing and guidance of Sir Anerood Jugnauth who has always given the chance to women. If we are here women sitting on this side and no women on the other side, you can imagine, Madam. We do not have to do any dirty work, we do not have to *tousse salie*. You are the example, Madam Speaker, to be the first lady Speaker of this National Assembly. And I recommend on behalf to all my friends, Rita, whoever she is, be it a district councillor, be it a village councillor, though in the Local Government Act to our good friend, hon. Dr. Husnoo, that there is no provision for women; we have a quota, but we do not have any provision for women to be nominated – I repeat nominated – either as a District Chairperson or a Vice-Chairperson. I will make a request to the hon. Minister. In the years to come, do not forget women, please make an amendment so that women have a place in district councils and municipalities.

Madam Speaker, it is an immense to address to you my views on the first National Budget of this present Government. I need not come to praise the Budget, which has already been acclaimed and appreciated by the whole population.

Laissez-moi vous dire haut et fort ma fierté, Madame la présidente, de faire partie de cette superbe équipe gouvernementale, dirigée d'une main de maître par l'honorable Sir Anerood Jugnauth, majestueux et impérial.

Madame la présidente, je faillirais à mon devoir si je ne faisais pas mention de l'homme qui a orchestré admirablement ce budget ; un budget qui transcende le plus simple cadre budgétaire et qui donne de l'espoir et fait revivre un peuple désespéré et sans repères. Je nomme l'unique et le plus grand ministre des Finances que l'île Maurice ait connu : l'honorable Vishnu Lutchmeenaraidoo. Du fond de moi-même, permettez-moi de vous saluer : - il n'est pas là - Chef, chapeau !

Madame la présidente, le 10 décembre dernier a marqué un tournant décisif et salutaire dans la destinée de notre pays. Le peuple admirable, pas que de nom, comme le fait croire l'autre côté, a démontré une maturité et une intelligence hors pair en plébiscitant dans sa sagesse *l'alliance Lelep* ; une alliance par le peuple, pour le peuple. D'une pierre deux coups, Madame la présidente, car en premier lieu il s'est débarrassé des dinosaures de notre paysage politique tout en instaurant un Sir Anerood Jugnauth revigoré comme Premier ministre. Et deuxièmement, les rois autoproclamés de quatre points cardinaux (le nord, le sud, l'est et l'ouest) furent envoyés dans un placard, bon pour les oubliettes. Les lions, requins et autres sirènes furent ramenés à leur juste proportion bien que quelques vautours rodent encore, ils sont toujours à l'affût des moindres morceaux de chair putréfiée pour se faire quelque calories. Les réactions de l'Opposition à la saga BAI/Bramer Bank en témoigne. J'y reviendrai, Madame.

Madame la présidente, ce gouvernement n'a pas tardé à se mettre au travail. Dès son installation au pouvoir, ce gouvernement réalisa certaines de ses promesses électorales, telles que l'augmentation des pensions de nos aînés, veuves, orphelins, handicapés et autres bénéficiaires des prestations sociales. Le *feel good factor*, Madame la présidente, est une condition *sine qua non* pour la réalisation d'un deuxième miracle économique. Ce sentiment de bien-être fut renforcé par le discours-programme qui tracera le *Road Map* pour une projection de cinq ans avec, comme ultime but, un deuxième miracle économique.

Madame la présidente, les sceptiques et mal pensants furent ramenés à la cruelle réalité. Ils sont *off* pour de bon - regarder de l'autre côté ! L'Opposition fut prise de court ; les partis, jadis perçus comme étant puissants, firent face à une crise sans précédent. Les démissions de ses dirigeants, non des moindres, se succédèrent à une vitesse vertigineuse, et elles ne sont pas prêtes à s'arrêter. Le point zéro, Madame la présidente, n'est pas loin pour un certain jadis grand parti, militant que de nom. L'autre ex-grand parti est dans le flou total.

Il a un rapporteur comme pseudo-*leader*, Madame la présidente, lui-même battu à plate couture aurait du mal à justifier les frasques de son *leader*, en congé politique indéfini. Ceux qui veulent abandonner le Titanic rouge ne trouve preneur dans aucun autre parti politique. Certains attendent avec appréhension le département des officiers de la CCID, car ils n'ont pu prendre le vol du 11 décembre, car celui-ci était rempli de valises, de coffres, et peut-être même des ATM. En plus, ils n'ont pas pu, eux, se procurer de Rolls ou de villas à Londres ou des appartements ou gondoles à Venise. Passons, laissons-les à leurs moutons, Madame la présidente.

(*Interruptions*)

Madame la présidente, j'ai été écœurée de voir les nombreux problèmes de ma circonscription numéro 11. En tant que PPS, j'ai fait un état des lieux et je le dit à haute voix, l'ancien gouvernement, à travers son Roi du Sud, a complètement failli en tant que représentant de cette circonscription - 27 ans, Madame la présidente. 27 ans de députation ! Madame la présidente, pas un seul projet digne de ce nom, peu ou presque pas de microprojets. Prenons l'exemple du Stade de Rose Belle construit du temps de l'honorable Pravind Jugnauth, qui n'a toujours pas de vestiaires 20 ans après ! Le marché de Rose Belle...

(*Interruptions*)

a un parking indigne de ce nom. Les infrastructures embellissant les sites côtiers datant de l'ère MSM/MMM sont dans un piteux état. Les rues, ruelles, drains, nécessitent une urgente attention. Les poches de pauvreté abondent. Je me demande comment cet ex-ministre qui aspire au *leadership* de son parti ait pu laisser pourrir une telle situation. Est-ce un acte délibéré ? - Ou occupé avec des macaronis à Curepipe, je m'interroge. A Deux Bras, New Grove, Madame la présidente, j'ai rencontré les proches d'un patient qui, après son dialyse, a dû être porté cent mètres jusqu'à son domicile, car l'ambulancier ne pouvait aller plus loin à cause du piteux état de la ruelle ! Une légitime demande pour une réparation est restée lettre morte pendant plus de 10 ans ! Madame la présidente, ce patient est décédé depuis et la ruelle toujours pas réparée ! 27 ans de députation du Roi du Sud, 10 ans de demande, la ruelle est toujours dans le même piteux état.

Madame la présidente, les fléaux tels que la drogue et l'alcoolisme sont en nette progression, surtout faute de loisir. Le chômage fait rage. Et dire que le projet *Business Park* de Rose Belle, Madame la présidente, fut mis au frigo et torpillé parce qu'il fut initié par l'honorable Pravind Jugnauth, *leader* du MSM.

(*Interruptions*)

Quel cynisme ! Ils ont ainsi privé des milliers de jeunes d'un emploi, passeport pour vivre décemment et dans la dignité. Ce projet inclus dans le présent Budget, rebaptisé technopole est en chantier, avec une possibilité d'emploi pour 20,000 jeunes.

Madame la présidente, un drame s'est abattu sur la famille Purmasing de Rose Belle dans ma circonscription. Une étudiante, Keshnee, à la fleur de l'âge, a perdu la vie en tombant d'un autobus. Un décès dans de telles circonstances est affligeant. Madame la présidente, je tiens à présenter mes sympathies les plus vives à cette famille. Je salue au passage, le ministre, l'honorable Bodha qui est venu avec des mesures appropriées pour prévenir d'autres cas semblables à Keshnee à l'avenir.

Dans un autre ordre d'idées, Madame la présidente, je tiens à dire, haut et fort, mon étonnement sur le retard à résoudre l'affaire du gaz lacrymogène lancé vers des femmes, enfants, handicapés lors de la dernière campagne électorale. Ce n'est qu'à la suite d'une question parlementaire de l'honorable Jhugroo que le dossier fut dépoussiéré et remis sur table, avec l'arrestation de deux agents connus du parti travailliste. Les cris pour que justice soit faite se font entendre de plus en plus. Le commanditaire de cet ignoble acte doit être démasqué. Qu'il soit Roi ou Prince, il doit payer afin de décourager les futures pyromanes de notre démocratie de récidiver. Le respect pour l'adversaire doit être maintenu, car les actes similaires sont contraires à l'esprit qui anime une campagne électorale dans notre île Maurice, havre de paix.

Madame la présidente, le budget 2015/2016 a pris de court les observateurs politiques, les experts en matière économique et surtout l'Opposition. Le *Leader* de l'Opposition - qui n'est pas là, sauvé ! - de par sa déclaration première, donnant l'impression de n'avoir rien compris et patauge toujours dans des contradictions. Tantôt ce Budget s'inspire du MMM, donc positif, tantôt ce Budget est du bluff. Alors ! A l'entendre, on constate que l'honorable Paul Bérenger ne changera point. Depuis 1983, Madame la présidente, il trouve à redire sur tous les budgets, sauf, bien entendu, un ou deux qu'il a présentés en tant que ministre des Finances.

Madame la présidente, nous proposons une révolution, dira l'honorable ministre Lutchmeenaraidoo, un budget innovateur, sortant des sentiers battus dans sa forme et dans son contenu. Même le ton était novateur. Coup de maître pour un maître de bons coups ! Le gouvernement voit sa côte grimper de 52 % à 83.8 %. La confiance est là, Madame la présidente. Une première étape est franchie.

Madame la présidente, ce budget se démarqua du traditionnel grand oral de mots et de chiffres. Ce budget jette en effet les jalons pour une vraie révolution, une projection dans le

futur avec une croissance inimaginable à 5.7%. Des mesures jamais évoquées avant, jamais effleurées même pas par les experts en la matière. Je dois dire que j'étais étonnée par la réaction de l'honorable Ameer Meea, hier, qui disait que ce budget est un budget insolent.

En tant que femme et mère, je salue les mesures annoncées en faveur des démunis, des femmes, des enfants et de la famille.

Madame la présidente,

- (i) le Plan Marshall est une approche révolutionnaire pour éradiquer la pauvreté dans la famille où les femmes et les enfants sont les victimes premières ;
- (ii) l'augmentation, Madame la présidente, par 50% ...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Order !

Mrs Boygah:... du staff de la CDU;

- (iii) l'embauche de six psychologues pour s'occuper des femmes et des enfants en détresse ;
- (iv) les initiatives pour les entrepreneurs, femmes comprises, pour des emprunts sans garantie bancaire;
- (v) la SME Bank, et
- (vi) doubler les fonds pour initiatives prises pour le support des femmes et des enfants en détresse.

Ce budget, Madame la présidente, projette notre petite Ile Maurice dans le future grâce à un chapelet de mesures, mais surtout grâce à un optimisme frisant la démesure pour les petites pensées, les passésistes, les *have been*. L'honorable Sir Anerood Jugnauth et l'honorable Vishnu Lutchmeenaraidoo ne sont pas nés de la dernière pluie. Madame la présidente, toutes nos promesses seront tenues en temps et lieu. Toutes les conditions sont réunies pour projeter notre pays vers un lendemain meilleur où –

- les richesses abonderont;
- les emplois peineront à trouver preneurs;
- nos enfants d'outre-mer reviendront à leur famille et à leur patrie;
- l'argent du peuple ne se retrouvera pas dans des coffres ou des valises;
- le soleil de l'espoir brillera comme la flamme olympique;
- la nourriture, empreinte de pesticides/fertilisants laissera la place au Bio;
- les *Smart Cities* émergeront du sol rural et urbain;

- les *flyovers* rivaliseront en hauteur avec les technopoles nouvellement construits;
- les maisons de jeu laisseront la place pour les entrepreneurs des microprojets financés par la nouvelle SME Bank, et
- Roches Noires sera célèbre plus pour son *Smart City* qu'autre chose, un certain campement, par exemple.

Madame la présidente, notre pays fut frappé comme un séisme de magnitude 9 sur l'échelle Richter vendredi dernier. La révocation de la licence de la *Bramer Banking Corporation* entraîna dans son sillage un effondrement du groupe *British American Investment*. Une arnaque de l'ampleur jamais imaginée fut mise à jour. Un *pyramid Ponzi Scheme* impliquant plus de R 25 milliards fut évoqué qui connaît ni communauté, ni race, Madame la présidente.

The writing was on the wall, Madam Speaker.

L'éternel *Leader* de l'opposition en a fait mention dans cette même Assemblée. Mais grâce à un lien incestueux entre le pouvoir d'alors de l'ex-Premier ministre, Navin Ramgoolam, la Banque de Maurice du Gouverneur Bheenick et le clan Rawat/Beebeejaun, cette situation malsaine fut laissée perdurer jusqu'à son éclatement vendredi dernier.

Madame la présidente, ce gouvernement a promis de mettre de l'ordre là où il le faut. Nous avons agi dans l'intérêt supérieur du pays. Certains essaient de tirer un capital politique. Les mêmes qui ont parlé de *pyramid Ponzi Scheme* ou qui ont soulevé le seuil de 10% d'investissement maximal, pour remettre en question le financement de la BAI pour les autres filières du conglomérat Rawat parlent aujourd'hui de *mishandlement* et de *holdup* de l'État.

Mais ce gouvernement, Madame la présidente, a su éviter une crise sociale annoncée, en agissant très vite ce weekend dernier. The culprits will have to face the consequences. The various institutions concerned are fully committed to bring light to all the malpractices.

Madame la présidente, vu le nombre grandissant des scandales qui sont déterrés presque au quotidien, je propose qu'une unité soit mise sur pied pour s'occuper de ces scandales. Cette unité siègerait sur une base permanente et se composerait des représentants de toutes les institutions concernées telles que la Police, l'ICAC, l'ADSU, CCID, FSC, FIU, Bank of Mauritius et les autres. Cette unité serait placée sous la responsabilité du ministre de la bonne gouvernance. Trop de temps et de ressources humaines sont engagés dans cette 'opération nettoyage' - qui ne termine pas ici - le nombre des scandales dépassant de loin

notre imagination, Madame la présidente. Cette unité travaillerait dans une sérénité, loin des feux des projecteurs et je suis convaincue du bien-fondé de cette unité.

Madam Speaker, this Budget paves the way for a bright future. We have a clear overview of Mauritius of tomorrow. Let those who want to dwell in the past spend their time in devising winning formalised, concocting dirty alliances, staging back stabbing so as to grasp power.

Madame la présidente, le futur se construit aujourd'hui. Prions tous ensemble pour que la vision de ce gouvernement aboutisse pour le bien de nos générations à venir où il ferait bon de vivre, où Sir Anerood Jugnauth entrera dans l'histoire et sa présence planera éternellement sur notre île, telle que la statue du Christ a Corcovado qui elle, veille sur la ville de Rio de Janeiro.

Before taking my seat, Madam Speaker, I do hope that my views are nothing, but a truth and a reality that this governing team will materialise without any doubt and beyond dispute, the ultimate goal, *le deuxième miracle économique*.

What the Rt. hon. Sir Anerood Jugnauth has done once, the Rt. hon. Sir Anerood Jugnauth can do it and will do it twice.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

(4.16 p.m.)

Mr J. Leopold (Second Member for Rodrigues): Madam Speaker, I have been listening to the Budget speech of the hon. Minister of Finance and the people of Rodrigues had followed his speech. I am glad to tell you, Madam Speaker, that the overall feeling of the people of Rodrigues is positive towards this Budget. The people of Rodrigues feel that the Central Government understands that we have the same needs as the main island, Mauritius. The people of Rodrigues Island know and understand that for Rodrigues to be sustainable in development, we need to have sufficient manpower, adequate infrastructure and appropriate support. We have a population of about 40,000 inhabitants, but our needs are the same as that of the main island Mauritius, that is, we need proper road, modern hospital, good airport, good seaport, adequate water supply, proper housing, adequate schools and colleges, good telecommunication services and so on, just the same as the main island.

In this Budget, Madam Speaker, the Rodriguan people feel that the Central Government is listening to them. The Rodriguan people are so grateful to the Rt. hon. Prime Minister and his Minister of Finance for having been very considerate to Rodrigues in this Budget. The hon. Minister of Finance is right in stating that this Government owes the

Rodriguan people that consideration. The Rodriguan people, especially the young ones, are starting to ask questions on how come we are in the same Republic, but Rodrigues has such a delay in development compared to Mauritius. Now this Budget is giving our young people hope and they are waiting to see how all those measures announced be implemented. In addition, it is the responsibility of the people of Rodrigues as well, by their hard work to make maximum use of all the supports and opportunities that the Central Government is giving us and at the end it's the Rodriguan people themselves who need to be responsible for its future and well-being.

The Rodriguan people do immensely appreciate the visit of the hon. Minister of Finance to Rodrigues prior to the preparation of his Budget. He has been able to see and hear the great concern of our young people during a meeting with them, and to see as well what are the elements needed to help Rodrigues to take the right track from the crossroad.

The people of Rodrigues especially the young are well aware of the social economic situation of Rodrigues. They are aware that Rodrigues has so often been forgotten and neglected that is why there is such a huge gap in term of development between Rodrigues and Mauritius. They often ask this question: how come we are in the same Republic but Rodrigues has a lower living standard compared to the main island Mauritius? If we compare the gross national product of Rodrigues to Mauritius, Rodrigues will be classified as poor but still we are in the same Republic. If we look at the average income of the inhabitants of Mauritius per year per head, we will see that Mauritius is doing a lot better compared to its neighbours of the Indian Ocean.

This Budget is an acknowledgement by the hon. Minister of Finance of the specificities of Rodrigues; he took time to consult the people of Rodrigues and the regional Government prior.

Madam Speaker, with the acquisition of a new vessel in replacement of the Mauritius Pride, the extension of the airport, the installation of the undersea fibre-optic cable linking Rodrigues to Mauritius and the rest of the world, the setting of SME ICT, the SME Agro Industrial Park, the development of the seaport, placement scheme to our young graduates, the purchase of our agricultural products at guaranteed prices and the development to palliate acute shortage of fresh water in Rodrigues - all those measures announced by the hon. Minister of Finance will help us to bridge the economic gap between Mauritius and Rodrigues, therefore enhancing equality, social justice, democracy by redistribution of wealth to the less fortunate, and to become more productive.

With those positive measures which we are so long waiting for, this will eliminate the prejudice of a very few stating that Rodrigues is a financial burden to the Republic of Mauritius but we all know with the extension of the Exclusive Economic Zone to Rodrigues and the importance of the strategic position of Rodrigues in the Indian Ocean this is not the case. Rodrigues is indeed an asset to the Republic of Mauritius.

The people of Rodrigues Island share the same hope and dream of our nation, we want to reclaim our future and make it brighter. We are hopeful that this national Government can work hand-in-hand with the Rodrigues Regional Assembly to design and implement a positive plan to build a strong and prosperous economy for the island of Rodrigues.

We appreciate that, through this Budget, the Government of Mauritius and its Minister of Finance have given such consideration so as to bridge that gap of inequality which exists between Mauritius and Rodrigues Island. Addressing inequalities; income inequality in particular, as it has a statistically significant impact on economic growth, therefore it is of paramount importance to the success and sustainability of the growth of the economy of Rodrigues.

Countries that promote equal opportunity for all from an early age are those that will grow and prosper.

Rodrigues had not been forgotten in the national plan this time. We cannot miss the plane, we have missed too many already. We can no longer afford to wait for the next one. Rodrigues can no longer wait to be connected to the rest of the world. We can no longer afford to have only one ship, as our sole maritime connection to the rest of the world, which supplies us with basic commodities. We can no longer afford to have a small plane as our sole aerial connection to the rest of the world. We can no longer afford not to be connected to the fibre optic cable that is only miles from our island and most of all we can no longer afford to put back the development of our domestic water production.

I am convinced that the hon. Minister of Finance has taken swift decisions on those issues so as to support the Rodrigues Regional Assembly's effort to rejuvenate our local economy and to create jobs and chances for everyone who makes the effort. Substantial upgrade to our port and airport, high-capacity broadband connection and investment to increase our water storage capacity will go a long way in helping boosting Rodrigues economy and reduce unemployment rate in Rodrigues. We firmly believe that it will be much better if the people of Rodrigues get a fair shot to live to their God's give potential, like every citizen of our beloved nation.

As I have stated in my very first address to the august Assembly, the Rodrigues Regional Assembly, in its 2015 Budget, is finding ways to encourage young people to continue the Rodriguan entrepreneurship spirit by providing appropriate environment and opportunities for the growth of small and medium size businesses. The measures taken by the Minister of Finance in putting Rs10 billion in this sector will propel Rodrigues further in its endeavour in creating jobs and food security for the people of Rodrigues and why not for the whole nation.

Development in the sector of agriculture and fishing will take a new dimension, this Budget is supporting the two sectors tremendously by ensuring guaranteed market on the five agricultural products namely *le gingembre, l'ail, l'haricot rouge, l'oignon et le safran*. On the announcement of these measures, the Agricultural Marketing Board is collaborating with the Rodrigues Trading and Marketing Company Ltd. for that matter.

As an autonomous island, we have proved to ourselves that we are able to take measures to improve quality of life and preserve nature. Rodrigues has been cited as an example in many places of the world for the decision taken by the Rodrigues Regional Assembly in banning plastic carrier bags; now the main island is following the same example. France, Canada and some States of the United States of America are taking measures to cancel plastic bags by 2016. That is what autonomy is all about, it is to show what we can decide for ourselves what is right for the people of Rodrigues.

We have also an octopus close season that has proven to be very beneficial to our fishes and the regeneration of our lagoon – it has been proven by evidence that we are yielding more fishes inside our lagoon with the decision of octopus closing.

There is also the plan for segregation of waste and turning waste to energy in the view of closing the only existing landfill in Rodrigues.

With all these efforts, we have a Minority Leader in Rodrigues, who, ignorant as he is, is saying that those decisions taken are taking Rodrigues 50 years backyard. Madam Speaker, 50 years ago there were no electricity in Rodrigues, no television broadcast, no telephone. How dare he come to say that Rodrigues is going backward. This person has no vision. He is not thinking of keeping the island liveable for our future generation and our fore children. I wonder why he is doing politics – is it to serve himself? Is Mauritius going backward by banning carrier plastic bags?

Madam Speaker, all those measures taken for the future generation and for Rodrigues small island, but we want to show to the rest of the world what good governance is all about. We do not want any bad publicity to our small island. As you may know, there was an ex-

Chief Commissioner of Rodrigues who was sentenced three months of imprisonment for bad governance while he was in office. This is very bad publicity for the island of Rodrigues and the people of Rodrigues have kicked him out as he is setting a bad example for the island.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Member please refrain from making comments on people who are not in this House and cannot then rebut your argument.

Mr Leopold: Madam Speaker, I am glad that the hon. Minister of Finance and Economic Development has given due consideration in his Budget for the improvement of health services. For the people of the Republic of Mauritius to have a high quality of life, we need to have an adequate health services. The primary health care service will need to be improved, curative care need to be properly managed, the Ministry of Social Security, National Solidarity and Reform Institutions and the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life need to be more collaborative to look after people who suffer from mental illness, and with the growing trend of ageing population, a holistic approach is needed to look after the elderly and the most vulnerable.

It is good that the hon. Minister of Health and Quality of Life, at the very start, is finding ways to reduce pressure on the hospital and to reduce waiting times.

With the prevalence of chronic illnesses, namely diabetes and with an ageing population, much effort is needed to prevent those people from going to hospital so as not to put extra pressure on the hospital. It is good that the Community Health Centres are open out of hours so as to reduce influx of patients to hospital. However, we need to review our community services, more community nurses need to be recruited to manage chronic illnesses in ambulatory services so as to prevent complication and unnecessary admission to hospital.

The roles of community nurses are to manage ambulatory health services. With an ageing population, it is important that we have enough community nurses to look after our elderly at home. We need these specialised nurses to manage the medication of the elderly and to take care of their problems and that will prevent them from going to hospital. The service of community nurses need to be made available on a 24-hour basis.

The nursing and residential home services need to be regulated properly and standardised.

With the computerisation of the health service, the e-Health, the quality of services will improve. The management of stock of consumables and medications will be made easy by the computerisation of hospitals. The loss of blood results, other medical tests and delay in diagnosis will be no longer a problem. But it has to be done properly with, for example,

unique patient number, that will allow healthcare professionals to access the file of patients while attending any public health services, that will prevent duplication of treatment, eliminate excessive waste of medications in hospitals and proper management of patients' illnesses.

To my opinion, there has been a lot of investment in the healthcare service, but to optimise healthcare service a hospital economist is of great importance.

Much emphasis is needed to train doctors in scarcity areas. It is unacceptable that at the time I am speaking, there is only one gynaecologist posted on the island of Rodrigues who goes there on a monthly basis. This is not fair for the Rodriguan women and it is not safe as well. The issue needs to be addressed in the short-term and in the long-term. I make an appeal to the hon. Minister of Health and Quality of Life to look into the matter urgently.

Talking about social care and wellbeing of our citizen, Mauritius has recently recruited six child psychologists. There is an increasing need for these professionals in Rodrigues as well and it would be very much appreciated if the hon. Minister concerned could look into the matter as we do not have any child psychologist in Rodrigues.

In relation to the direct flight to Rodrigues from Reunion Island, the Rodrigues Regional Government is starting working on it so as to be fully prepared. The Rodrigues Regional Government has already met the travel operators so as to work together to ensure quality services and explore opportunities that it will bring.

The direct flight will bring along new job opportunities and small businesses to our young people.

The twice weekly flight will also give added value to our local products and this comes right as we are now in a position to ensure the quality, standard and prevention of counterfeiting to our local projects by our label of certification "*Rodrigues Naturellement*" - this will be on all local products, which pass quality control test.

The Rodrigues Regional Assembly has recruited a consultant in this line to update the existing study on tourism sector so as to set up new strategies.

With the provision of the SME Park announced by the hon. Minister of Finance and Economic Development in his Budget Speech, the Rodrigues Regional Assembly is wasting no time in working with "*le centre national des arts et metiers*" so as to be ready to optimise ways of transforming local products, especially in the field of charcuterie.

On page 21 of the manifesto of the last regional election - *Organisation du Peuple de Rodrigues intitulé - Espoir et Libération* – on a fait mention d'un plan d'action pour tirer

Rodrigues de l'urgence économique par la création d'un Economic and Infrastructural Fund.

This present Budget is answering to this quest, Madam Speaker.

This Budget, Madam Speaker, will bring a meaningful change to the economy of Rodrigues, to the wellbeing of the Rodriguan people and the whole Republic of Mauritius.

I thank you, Madam Speaker, for your attention.

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

At 4.34 p.m. the sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 5.07 p.m with the Deputy Speaker in Chair.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Mrs Perraud!

The Minister of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare (Mrs A. Perraud): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I wish to congratulate my colleague hon. Vishnu Lutchmeenaraidoo, Minister of Finance and Economic Development for a commendable budget which brings forth innovative, social and economic measures geared at boosting investment, job creation, protection and empowerment of vulnerable groups and mitigating adverse impacts of climate change. The hon. Minister has come up with bold and innovative measures including a “No tax budget” against the backdrop of a weak global economy.

I also wish to thank the hon. Minister of Finance on behalf of children, women and families in Mauritius for having spared them a thought in his budget. The measures he advocates reflect the vision of the Rt. hon. Prime Minister and the Government which are in line with the pre-electoral Manifesto of *L'Alliance Lelep* and the Government Programme 2015-2019.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, our children are the citizens of tomorrow. As Minister responsible for children, I am most delighted to note that the Budget 2015-2016 reaffirms the commitment of this Government to uphold the principles advocated under the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

With family values falling apart along with an increase in divorce rates, violence and dysfunctional families in Mauritius, many parents are shirking from their responsibilities to look after, cherish and educate their children. As a result, the emotional and psychological needs of these children are not being met. Thus, the number of children at risk and removed from their parents and placed in Residential Care Institutions or Foster Care has increased.

M. le président, être à la tête du ministère de l'égalité du genre, du développement de l'enfant et du bien-être de la famille est un honneur mais surtout une très grande responsabilité que j'assume avec beaucoup d'humilité et un sens de devoir. C'est un des

ministères par excellence qui s'occupe de l'être humain, de la société. Un ministère qui est une vitrine du gouvernement puisqu'il s'agit, M. le président, des enfants, des femmes, de l'égalité entre hommes et femmes de la famille. Pas de gouvernement sans le peuple. Pas de peuple sans les familles. Pas de famille sans les membres qui la composent: femme, homme, enfant.

M. le président, on reconnaît le progrès, le développement, le modernisme, l'humanisme d'un gouvernement dans sa façon de traiter et sa capacité de s'occuper des plus faibles et des plus vulnérables de la société. Ce gouvernement, le « *gouvernement lepep* » dans ce budget démontre sa volonté, sa détermination de mettre au centre l'être humain et surtout ceux qui en ont le plus besoin. Les enfants, M. le président, la situation des enfants à Maurice nous interpelle, m'interpelle. Il ne se passe pas une semaine sans que nous entendions, nous lisions dans les journaux un cas d'abus et de maltraitance sur les enfants. Aucun cas n'est banal. Aucun cas ne peut être traité comme un fait divers. Il faut prendre le taureau par les cornes. Je tiens à remercier l'honorable ministre des finances qui a su être à l'écoute. Il a été attentif et sensible face à la souffrance et la détresse de nos enfants; les petits mauriciens innocents victimes d'adultes irresponsables.

In 2014, there has been an increase in the reporting of cases of children victims of violence to the Child Development Unit (CDU). Some 5,900 such cases, including cases of abuse and neglect were reported to the six CDU outstations across the island, out of which 445 were cases of sexual abuse.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I welcome the increase in the number of technical staff of the CDU by over 50 %, this, I would say, is a long-awaited measure, not to say one which was long overdue. In the year 2000, a Consultant, namely Dr. Terrence Murphy, even proposed that 40 Child Welfare Officers carry out child protection services for our children in distress.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is good to know that the normal case load of a FWPO (Family Welfare Protection Officer) of the CDU should have been at most six cases per day and this excludes doing field visits in respect of court appearances, home visits, attending hospitals and emergency support. The case load of CDU is from 2010 to February 2015, some 15,000 live cases are being handled by only 15 FWPOs, so much that the ratio of staff per case is 1:1000. As regards psychologists, the normal case load should have been five cases per day excluding field visits. Psychological interventions comprise clinical interview, assessment, evaluation, forensic evaluation and counselling for both minors and their parents and siblings where available. As it is right now, the psychologist is being forced to attend to,

at least, 12 cases per day catering for both new and old cases, leave apart the need to move where emergency cases arise.

It is to be noted that, in his report, in year 2000, Dr. Terrence Murphy who undertook a study in this particular area of child protection, did state the need to have some 40 officers to undertake child protection interventions at outstations level.

At present, there are 557 children placed under court orders in 21 shelters out of which five shelters fall under the purview of my Ministry. I have taken cognizance of the Audit Report on the management of Shelters.

All States have the duty to investigate and to intervene in cases where a child has been harmed, or where there is a reasonable belief that a child is being harmed. The problems of abused and neglected children often throw up issues where psychologists are called upon to address.

Psychologists, as an important part of the team of professionals who intervene with child protection, are indeed positioned to contribute significantly to decision-making in child protection matters. These professionals from the CDU are often required to provide the courts with evaluations which are relevant to child protection issues and child custody.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is worth noting the fact that both the psychological evaluation report and the psychologist testimony as expert witness in these cases have a great impact upon court decisions as far as a child's security and welfare are concerned.

Psychological intervention is also requested by the DPP in investigation issues pertaining to children. Such interventions require CDU psychologists to attend cases at court as expert witnesses. These professionals have to be physically present in court till deliberation of cases and their termination. At present, we have only six psychologists posted at the CDU to cater for six outstations, 21 residential institutions, foster care department, child-mentoring programme and cases referred by family court and the DPP. These officers are also on call during weekends and after normal working hours in order to attend to cases of emergency.

Thus, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the availability of more psychologists to handle and provide timely professional support to children victims of violence is particularly welcome.

The provision of funds for the recruitment of some 14 FWPOs for the CDU shall no doubt relieve the pressure endured by existing skeleton staff and improve the response time and quality of intervention in the best interest of children.

M. le président, beaucoup d'allégations de mauvaise gérance, de maltraitance, d'exploitation sont faites à l'encontre des *shelters*. Ici-même dans cette Chambre, beaucoup

de questions parlementaires ont été posées sur les *shelters*. Ces accusations sont persistantes, et je dois avouer que je ne suis pas satisfaite de la façon dont les choses se passent dans ces *places of safety*. Je suis convaincue que seulement un *Fact-Finding Committee* peut jeter la lumière sur les allégations qui sont faites. Un *Fact-Finding Committee* peut nous éclairer si vraiment, pour mieux contrôler les enfants, on les dope avec du Valium; si pour les punir on leur rase la tête; si lorsqu'on ne peut plus les contrôler on les envoie à l'hôpital Brown Sequard ou au RYC.

Oui, M. le président, on ne peut pas prendre ces allégations à la légère ; on ne peut pas faire la sourde oreille. C'est notre devoir d'agir, de protéger ces enfants innocents qui nous sont confiés, c'est notre devoir de faire de ces *places of safety* des havres de paix, une passerelle de bonheur, de joie, et un lieu sûr. Pour certains, c'est le seul endroit qu'ils connaissent, où ils vivent toute leur enfance. M. le président, je suis allé visiter ces *shelters*, et je peux vous dire que le regard, le sourire ou l'absence de sourire de ces enfants restent dans votre mémoire à jamais. M. le président, motivée d'un sens de devoir et de responsabilité envers ces enfants, j'ai demandé qu'un *Fact-Finding Committee* soit institué.

My Ministry, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, also has, within its mandate, over and above the responsibility to ensure the protection and the promotion of child's rights, the holistic development of young children in the cohort of three months to three years.

It is a fact that most of the information learnt by human beings occurs between birth and the age of three. Although adults play a huge part in early childhood development, the most important way children develop is interaction with other children. Children develop close relationships with the children they spend a lot of time with.

As such, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, investing in Child Day Care Centre catering for cohort three months to three years is investing in the future, most probably leading to savings in the health, education and social sectors.

M. le président, nous savons tous que l'ancien ministre des Finances, l'honorable Xavier-Luc Duval, avait à cœur le projet de crèches, et à quel point il a donné tout son soutien à la mise sur pied des crèches de qualité, avec un environnement propice au développement et à l'éveil des enfants.

I am, therefore, pleased, and I welcome the financial assistance scheme for upgrading the level of services provided by crèches, especially in deprived areas in this current Budget. Actually, there are 358 Child Day Care Centres, out of which only 88 are duly registered.

This will make for consistent professional development of child carers as well as the development of safe child-friendly environment.

Furthermore, an Inspectorate for the proper monitoring and supervision of Child Day Care Centres operating island-wide is essential if we want to maximise on security and full development of children under their care. The provision for Enforcement Officers for this particular purpose to my Ministry is highly acclaimed and we are thankful for that.

This measure will perhaps also contribute to more women taking up employment outside their homes.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, Mauritius presented its 3rd, 4th and 5th Combined Periodic Report on the Convention on the Rights of the Child at the 68th session of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child in January 2015 in Geneva. My Ministry in collaboration with various stakeholders shall endeavour to implement the recommendations of the CRC Committee of Experts.

The Committee has strongly recommended the urgent adoption of a Children's Act to consolidate the legislation covering all aspects of children's rights.

The Children's Bill is expected to incorporate the spirit of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and include all the main principles and obligations under the CRC. The Bill is in its finalisation stage.

Finally, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the House that an Inter-ministerial Committee is being set up to work on a comprehensive Policy and Strategic Plan on children. This Committee will also serve as a body to ensure thorough implementation of the recommendation of the Concluding Observation of the UN Committee of the CRC. Such a mechanism shall ensure early identification of duplication of intervention at the level of various stakeholders, gaps in the chain of protection and welfare services, as well as missing links in the support system available for children. Such an exercise by hon. colleagues in other ministries and myself shall, Mr Deputy Speaker, allow for greater efficiency and effectiveness as well as good governance in service delivery in general.

Mr Deputy Speaker, domestic violence remains a serious social problem affecting mostly women. For the year 2014, 1,680 new cases of domestic violence have been reported to my ministry.

To combat the social problem, my Ministry is implementing several projects and programmes involving the community because we strongly believe that a common understanding of the causes of domestic violence can help communities develop more effective responses to the violence. Being given that this Government has acknowledged that domestic violence is a national problem, a National Coalition against Domestic Violence Committee has been set up under the Prime Minister's Office. I sincerely believe that this

will create a synergy among stakeholders to strive to put an end to this *fléau*. In addition, my Ministry is reinforcing the protection from domestic violence framework with a view to further assist survivors of domestic violence.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the need for balancing work and family life is essential. In this respect, my Ministry is coming up with a balancing work and family life programme to enable policymakers to identify practical measures and develop guidelines for the creation of a family friendly work environment.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, there are some key measures in the Budget which will positively impact upon women empowerment and gender equality. For instance, the issue of unemployment has, in the last few years, been more blatant amongst the female population. Statistics for 2013 revealed that, out of 17,600 unemployed persons in the 16-24 age-brackets, 9,600 were women compared to only 8,000 men.

It, therefore, goes without saying that the decision of the Minister of Finance to invest massively in employment creation will be able to bring significant relief to the unemployed. Similarly, we need to applaud other measures which are directly linked to employment, namely the up-skilling of young unemployed graduates. It was high time that the issue of mismatch of qualifications and labour market be effectively dealt with.

Allow me, at this point in time, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, to inform the House that at the level of my Ministry, we are also reorienting our training policies to meet the changing employment related needs of young girls and women. For too long, courses being offered in Women Centres have remained stereotypical and my predecessors have not been able to prepare unemployed women for the labour market. Today, academic qualifications only do not suffice to access jobs. Job seekers have to be smart, assertive and confident. With this in mind, I have decided to introduce, during the course of the year, soft skills training for young girls and women, such as leadership, self-assertiveness, and communication skills, amongst others.

When we refer to unemployment, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we cannot afford to ignore the gender implications of unemployment and it is important to highlight as we invest in training and job creation that we should encourage young women to maximise on all the opportunities wherever possible.

Twenty years back, Ms Gertrude Mongella, the UN Assistant Secretary-General and Secretary at the World Women Beijing Conference in 1995 stated that, and I quote –

“Poverty has a woman’s face”.

Unfortunately, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this statement still holds good today. However, as we look forward to the forthcoming Women's Summit in September 2015, we shall be able to deal with the issue of feminisation of poverty from the Marshall's Plan perspective.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, my Ministry shall shortly be setting up Social Action Committees at the level of its 15 Women Centres wherein, the private sector and NGOs will be sensitised on women's empowerment and gender equality issues. These Committees will offer strategic platforms to stakeholders to identify factors which undermine women's full empowerment. The issue of feminisation of poverty will, undoubtedly, be one area of intervention for these Social Action Committees. This, in turn, will ultimately enable stakeholders to formulate poverty alleviation projects for funding by the private sector.

Innovative measures in the Budget which are associated with the environment are to be equally acknowledged. I wish, in particular, to refer to the banning of the use of plastic bags. Doing away with plastic bags not only contributes to the safeguarding of our environment, but it will also open up new avenues for our women entrepreneurs to engage in green projects. Women can now engage in bag production using diverse materials such as jute and cloth. We should be able to support women entrepreneurs to "go green" by also using recycled paper for bag production, marketing and sales.

The setting up of the SME Bank will boost the spirit of entrepreneurship among the Mauritian population, particularly women and youth. Potential and existing women entrepreneurs will benefit from the facilities and support of the new SME Bank, and the "One-Stop Shop" which will be managed by SMEDA.

Allow me, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, to express my appreciation to the Minister of Finance for the very laudable initiative in his Budget Speech regarding the water sector. He rightly pointed out that water is a human right. The decision to allocate six cubic metres of water per family free of charge and an 'envelope' of Rs3.5 billion to the Water Sector for enhanced distribution networks of water has, indeed, been well received by the population at large. By virtue of their gender roles, women are definitely the ones who will be most relieved.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the family is a universal institution of society but never has the existence of the family unit in Mauritius been threatened as it is now. Major challenges faced by the family today are the result of the rapid social and economic development in society and the world of labour, for example -

- ageing of our population and the ensuing need for more elderly care;

- increasing participation of women in the world of work, and
- shift from extended to nuclear families, resulting in the need for ancillary support for childcare.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, on-going global economic and social changes are exerting a lot of stress on family life. The budgetary measure announced by the hon. Minister of Finance and Economic Development on '*nation zougadère*', will bring great relief to vulnerable families, and reduce the urge for breadwinners not to spend their hard-earned recklessly. This tendency has been impacting negatively on family units and is one of the factors contributing to domestic violence and family breakdown.

The different measures announced have, no doubt, taken into consideration the different perspectives and facets of the external environment; physical, socio-economic and welfare systems so as to provide support to the family. I am confident that all the measures announced in the 2015-2016 Budget will definitely pave the way for strengthening family ties and providing a better environment all-round for a prosperous population. The provision for protecting consumers regarding hire purchase is commendable. The decrease of the interest rate from 19% to 12% will have a significant impact on the Household Budget.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, strengthening the unity of the family and enhancing the capacities of family members are crucial for the well-being of the nation. The Empowering Families Programme will provide support to families who may be at risk because of social, psychological and financial stress. It will also aim at preventing further family breakdown and will provide families with opportunities to become positive role models.

The budgetary measure regarding low cost housing is a major step forward, particularly for vulnerable families, women victims of domestic violence and single mothers amongst others who will be able to benefit from basic facilities which will cater for children as well.

The concept of "*parrainage*" deserves to be acclaimed due to its twin-track approach. Engaging the private sector to work towards poverty alleviation enables it to contribute to social inclusion. On the other hand, communities in deprived regions will become empowered and feel better in terms of jobs, infrastructure development and/or upgrading of the environment.

The increase in the allocation of funds from Rs17 m. to Rs34 m. to support children and women in distress, will encourage NGOs to come forward with more projects to alleviate their hardship.

Furthermore, the decision to review the CSR system is welcomed. Companies would now be in a better position to allocate the 2% of CSR funds to a wider range of beneficiaries. A greater number of small NGOs and community-based organisations dealing with distressed women and children may take advantage of the funding to implement their projects or embark upon new projects.

As Minister responsible for the promotion of gender equality, child development and family welfare, I shall ensure that all measures are taken for the promotion of a more stable and cohesive society. In line with our commitments to reinforce the well-being of women, children and families, policies and programmes will be reinforced and implemented through a multi-dimensional and multi-agency approach.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister of Finance and Economic Development has indeed been sensitive to the needs, concerns and aspirations of the nation. He has responded positively to the expectations of the population.

The budgetary measures for period 2015-2016 have also articulated the philosophy of “sharing” well, thus ensuring that all segments of our society experience the “feel good factor”.

More broadly, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, and to paraphrase Joseph Stiglitz, Nobel laureate in Economics, I quote -

“Growing social inequalities are largely a result of policies – of what we do and don’t do. Every aspect of our economic, legal, and social frameworks helps shape our inequality [or equality for that matter]: from our education system and how we finance it, to our health system, tax laws, and regulations governing bankruptcy, corporate governance, the functioning of our financial system...”

In virtually every domain, the last Government took decisions which have helped to enrich people at the top at the expense of the rest of the population. I am now confident that, with the strong measures contained in this Budget, Mauritius is set on a path leading to growth, investment and sharing, and with everybody on-board the country will achieve a second economic miracle in the years to come.

Je tiens aussi à remercier, M. le président, le ministre des finances d’avoir fait provision dans les dotations budgétaires pour un bâtiment abritant tous les départements du ministère. Je pense que c’est important que les officiers du ministère travaillent dans un cadre

agréable, accueillant et propre. Comme expliqué plus tôt, ces officiers travaillent souvent dans des conditions difficiles et avec des personnes difficiles. M. le président, avec ce gouvernement, avec ce budget, le ton est donné. Au niveau de mon ministère, nous l'avons bel et bien compris. Il y a beaucoup à faire et nous sommes prêts à relever le défi. Si en décembre dernier, on disait « *virer mam* », aujourd'hui nous disons « *travaille mam*. »

M. le président, le PMSD, mon parti auquel je suis fière et honorée de m'associer, célèbre cette année ses 60 ans d'existence. Six longues décennies au service de la nation mauricienne. Depuis sa création, M. le président, le PMSD n'a jamais été dévié de ces principes idéologiques et encore moins de ces philosophies politiques. Nous avons toujours été constants et nous en serons ainsi dans nos démarches citoyennes. À savoir œuvrer résolument vers une société mauricienne plus unie, plus égale et plus prospère. Notre arme politique qui transgresse tous les clivages communaux est fondamentalement conçue rien que pour servir, servir, et servir, dans l'unité tout en privilégiant les grandes valeurs démocratiques. Le peuple ne se souviendra pas du PMSD comme étant des démagogues, des assoiffés du pouvoir qui ont tergiversé pour finalement mener tout un électorat au gouffre. M. le président, le peuple retiendra du PMSD comme un des vecteurs du développement économique comme un véritable garant de la démocratie, de l'unité nationale, de la stabilité et de la justice sociale.

M. le président, pour nous, la vérité, la loyauté et la confiance sont des éléments clés dans toutes nos relations politiques envers nos partenaires dans le gouvernement du jour et du passé. Le *Leader*, l'honorable Xavier-Luc Duval nous a inculqué ces valeurs qui sont d'ailleurs à la base de la réussite de tout gouvernement. M. le président, la vérité finit toujours par triompher. Rappelez-vous de tout ce qui a été dit sur le PMSD dans un passé pas trop lointain que nous sommes un *ti-parti*, des béquilles, *nou pas vaut plus que 2%*. Comme on dit en créole « *crache en l'air tombe lors nené*. » Aujourd'hui, ensemble avec le MSM et le Mouvement Libérateur, le PMSD fait partie de ce gouvernement, plébiscité par le peuple. Si l'Alliance Lepep est élu pour gouverner, l'opposition elle a le devoir d'être des chiens de garde pour, par exemple, veiller à ce que les mesures budgétaires soient mises en pratique.

M. le président, pour que ces mesures budgétaires se traduisent dans la réalité, pour que le peuple en sorte gagnant, il doit pouvoir compter sur ses parlementaires de deux côtés de la chambre. Il nous faut être tous des patriotes et des politiciens responsables. Comme l'a si bien dit le grand argentier, « nous sommes à la croisée des chemins et un grand défi nous attend ». Faire partie de l'opposition ne veut pas dire s'y opposer systématiquement, mettre des bâtons dans les roues, attaquer rien que pour le plaisir de critiquer ou de nuire.

Heureusement, nous avons devant nous une opposition intéressante, disparate, désunie, tâtonnante, mais intéressante. Parce que certains dans l'opposition reconnaissent qu'ils n'ont pas pris les bonnes décisions, qu'ils n'ont pas fait le bon choix politique, qui n'ont pas toujours choisi le peuple avant tout et ils ont fait leur *mea culpa*. D'autres, des jeunes politiciens refusent d'être des *yes men*, d'être la voix de leur maître et prennent une voie différente, se démarquent, s'affirment et s'affranchissent.

Monsieur le président, ne dit-on pas avec raison:

«On reconnaît la grandeur d'un homme dans sa capacité de reconnaître ses erreurs».

Malheureusement certes il y a ceux qui sont toujours à la vieille école et qui font leur show.

Monsieur le président, à chaque fois qu'un membre de l'Opposition sera tenté de nous dire au MSM ou au PMSD que nous étions en alliance avec le Parti Travailleiste et que nous sommes aussi responsables ; il faudrait vite, immédiatement lui rafraîchir la mémoire et lui rappeler que nous, nous avons eu la sagesse, l'intelligence mais surtout le courage de démissionner, de quitter le pouvoir ...

(Interruptions)

parce que nous avons des valeurs, nous avons à cœur l'intérêt du peuple alors qu'eux, ils ont accourus dans les bras du Parti Travailleiste et ont tout fait pour concrétiser une alliance jusqu'à y laisser des plumes. Monsieur le président, de quels droits nous critiquent-ils? Ils n'ont aucun droit moral de le faire. Le 10 décembre dernier les mauriciens, comme un seul peuple uni, ont voté massivement l'Alliance Lepep. La nation mauricienne, dans son ensemble, a rejeté une politique qui prône l'arrogance, le noubanisme, l'hypocrisie, la malhonnêteté intellectuelle, l'accaparement des biens de l'État parmi tant d'autres.

Monsieur le président, il est clair que le peuple mauricien a porté son choix sur une alliance qui travaille dans l'intérêt du peuple, une alliance composée d'hommes et de femmes qui se mettent au service du peuple, des patriotes. Nous, l'Alliance Lepep, nous avons une grande responsabilité parce que l'île Maurice a placé sa confiance en nous. L'île Maurice nous a choisi nous et c'est à nous d'honorer cette confiance.

Monsieur le président, il faut reconnaître les mérites des mesures budgétaires préconisées par le ministre des Finances. Ce budget démontre cette volonté inébranlable du gouvernement *Lepep* de conduire son peuple vers un avenir plus prometteur et plus sécurisant bien que les séquelles des crises financières internationales sont toujours palpables sur les

grandes puissances économiques mondiales. La panoplie de mesures y contenant est courageuse, audacieuse et avant-gardiste. Il va sans dire que ce Budget a été concocté par un gouvernement responsable.

Merci à tous pour votre attention.

(5.51 p.m.)

Mr D. Ramful (Third Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, there was a time in this country where our economy grew at a rapid pace. That was a time when we had a relatively well-developed human capital, we had full employment and we had, what I will call, a sufficient, and an adequate increase of wealth that was good for the country. This was possible because it was an era when Mauritius had achieved considerable success in the exporting manufactured products. It had at that time built up a significant base of export related skills and there were, at that time, reliable institutions far ahead of the neighbouring African countries.

It had moved from a heavy dependence on foreign firms in the EPZ sector to a position where the majority of exports now come from domestically owned companies. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, over time as wages have risen, exporters have managed to substantially upgrade the quality of their products, some have built up their own design and marketing capabilities. These were impressive achievements of those times. At that time, I remember in Mahebourg where I grew up and lived, there was a well-known textile factory, it was called 'l'usine Grove' and that factory, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, was employing thousands of workers from and around Mahebourg. At that time, my father owned a shop and, at that time, the people, in that village, had the money to buy provisions for the whole month. At that time Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, villagers were saving each and every single cent that they were investing in the future of their children. That was the time when Mauritius was shining and we, the young generation today, have to be proud for the hard work; we have to be proud for all the sacrifices that have been done by our parents. Then came the time when, unfortunately Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we missed the boat. Our export-oriented economy was unfortunately too heavily dependent on a range of export products that were relatively narrow. 80% of our manufactured exports came from one product group which was textile. When, at that time, Singapore and later on Malaysia took advantage of the semi-conductor assembly boom which drove the growth of the economy and led to a variety of related electronic and electrical exports; we, in Mauritius, remained stagnant knowing full well that the Multi-Fibre Agreement and the EU market preferences were set to disappear which happened eventually.

Some survivors in the textile industry have courageously taken bold decisions and have geared the industry and their people towards high quality products and they are now performing well. That textile factory in Mahebourg, however, has closed down. The villagers, who once had the means to purchase goods for the whole month, now cannot even afford to buy basic commodities for the day. People, instead of saving, are trying their luck at the bookmakers in the hope that lady luck will strike and will make them happy for the weekend. Instead of generating a culture of hardworking and productivity, the inhabitants have inadvertently been submerged in that culture of *zougadère*. It is a pity when we look at the youth, when we look at the young from my Constituency. They are struggling night and day to find a decent job and it is also alarming to see the number of drug addicts in my Constituency. This is why I welcome some of the measures proposed in this Budget to promote greater equity and social justice, for example, the Marshall Plan against poverty, the building of the low-cost housings, the reduction on the payment of interest on hire purchase and more importantly, the measures proposed for reversing this culture of '*Nation Zougadère*' which is haunting our society.

On the issue of promotion of investment and creation of employment, once again, I do welcome the proposals for the creation of the 13 mega projects as well as the measures taken for boosting up the SME sector. Those measures, certainly, are relevant to face the challenges that our society would be facing in the near future, but are we doing enough to set the scene for the second economic miracle? That is my question. We should, in my humble opinion, be careful not to limit the concept of smart cities to yet another real estate development like the IRS and the RES just designed for the further enrichment of a few landholders. Nor should we limit this concept to the parcelling of agricultural land into villas designed for foreigners with the only benefit of increasing FDI for a short-term.

The smartness in the project lies in the nature of the activities that those cities are going to attract. The whole concept of building smart cities and technopoles is based on high technology and innovation. It is those smart activities that would generate wealth and create employment and we have to ensure that it provides larger social and economic benefit to the population in general.

For the population at large to reap the benefit of those smart cities, we have to help our SMEs, to equip them with the required technology and knowledge for them to participate and reap the benefits of these projects. We also need, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, to work on the skills requirement for jobs that would eventually be created and, therefore, provide for the adequate education and training of the jobseekers. So, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we need to

know, at the end of the day, what definition do we attach to this concept of a Smart City, because if we limit it to a mere project of real estate development then we are moving in the wrong direction. Instead of creating a *miracle économique*, we will be creating a *mirage économique*.

Île Maurice, nation d'entrepreneurs; this ambitious goal of this Government making the SME sector the backbone of our economy is to be welcomed. Entrepreneurship is *le fil conducteur* which has brought economic success elsewhere around the world and although I have to say that successive Governments have always been protective to the SME sectors, this Budget, however - when I read it - provides for a one-stop shop approach rather than a piecemeal and fragmented approach. Fiscal incentives are also being proposed to alleviate the financial burden of the SMEs, but we have to ensure that these financial incentives will benefit the SMEs and that the SMEs would use those financial incentives in a judicious manner.

The real problem, however, with the SME sector, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is that it is not so much about financing than it is about making the SMEs more productive and finding the proper market for them to exhaust their products. This is the real problem. We have to categorise those SMEs into two categories and this would depend on the nature of their activities. There are those SMEs operating on the domestic market and there are those SMEs that are export-oriented.

The problem that is being faced by those trading in the domestic market is that there is, what we call, no level playing field between the local products and those that are imported. The elimination of tariffs and the lack of control on the quality of imported goods have created a situation where, unfortunately, our SMEs are struggling against the increase of dumping practices from countries like China. I read an interview by the hon. Minister of Business, Enterprise and Cooperatives where he rightly said:

“C’est écœurant qu’il y ait, par exemple, des tubes de terres de sept couleurs fabriqués en Chine, qui sont vendus ici dans nos marchés.”

Alternatively, we might even see dodos being fabricated in China and available in the local market here.

I, therefore, welcome the hon. Minister of Finance and Economic Development who has also taken a wise decision to set up an Interministerial Committee to look into the issue of

tariff protection and dumping practices, and I do hope sincerely that we do come with adequate measures as soon as possible to protect those SMEs who are trading locally.

For those SMEs that are export-oriented - in fact, I have to say it frankly that I was surprised to hear from the hon. Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade, during his intervention, when he said that under the AGOA, the African Growth and Opportunity Act, there exists about 7,000 products that can be exported, but 90% of our exportations are only in clothing. This has to be imparted to the SMEs and we have also to revisit, in my humble opinion, the role of the SMEDA, get the right personnel and give the right finance to make this institution more aggressive. There is the Enterprise Mauritius which is also a very important institution which, in my humble view, can play a pivotal role for the SMEs to explore new international markets. That institution as well has to be empowered with the right personnel and sufficient finance so that it may carry out an aggressive campaign for the SMEs on the international market. Productivity and innovation, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is yet another important factor that should be encouraged. SMEs should be equipped with the latest technology and software to remain competitive. They should also be encouraged to invest in research and development.

Last, I will come to training and human resource development. When we look at the youth, no one can honestly tell what he or she will be doing one decade or two after leaving school. We must each develop through life, adapting to changes in the job market and the new opportunities that will come up. Whichever field we are in or the job that we do, we must, as Mauritians, aim to gain expertise and achieve mastery. Singapore, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, when they came out of the financial crisis in 2009-2010; they aimed at raising productivity, quality jobs and higher incomes. The way they achieved those goals was through deepening skills and expertise and innovating to create more value. The Government there had skills and development as the backbone of their economy. They have progressively built up a first-class system of continuing education and training, not only for the young, but also for the adults. In this year's Budget 2015, the Singaporeans are talking now about 'skills future' which is a new phase of development in their people. They are adapting their education system to reflect the changes in the global economy in order to gain expertise and achieve mastery.

In Mauritius the problem is not so much about reskilling employed workers because we do have the Levy Grant System which is managed by the HRDC and is financed, not by Government, but by the private sector which is dealing with reskilling of employed workers. Although I should say here that there are a few, very few who abuse the system to make

money without giving proper training to their workers and there is a need there to empower the relevant institutions like the HRDC or the MQA to constantly monitor the training courses. The problem, however, is more for those young job seekers who lack training and skills and this is where there is need to be a proper mechanism or a platform between the relevant institutions in the education sector and industries so that there is constant reviewing of the curriculum which should reflect the demand of the industry. It is this interaction between the education sector and the industries that will eventually solve the problem of mismatch. Otherwise, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I do welcome the measures that have been taken regarding the financial incentives given to the 3,000 *gradués chômeurs* as well as the use of the three campuses in related technical fields that would reflect the demand of the industry.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the plea I am making, therefore, to the hon. Minister Finance, to this Government, to the Rt. hon. Prime Minister is that we have to ensure that these projects that have been proposed in the budget are adequately driven. We have to make sure that these projects are eventually implemented in the proper way so that the whole society and the whole population reap the benefits of those projects. This is a plea. I have heard the hon. Minister Finance in an announcement to the press saying that he has put under his Ministry, committees that would monitor, that would overview the implementation of these projects.

Now, I would have very happily ended my speech all fair and square, but for the remarks made on the last occasion by the First Member for Mahebourg and Plaine Magnien, hon. Hurreeram, when he made a remark about my *bilan* at the HRDC. I am not going to stoop so low so as to use the precious time of this august Assembly to make unfounded or baseless allegations against any Member of this august Assembly. I am going to refer the hon. Member to my achievement as Chairman at the HRDC for three years and these projects - I am going to table them - I have to point out, were proposed and implemented with zero budget from Government.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: No cross-talking, please!

Mr Ramful: I am thankful and I do wish good luck to the present Government and I hope that the projects would be implemented and Mauritius will come out happy.

Thank you.

(6.15 p.m.)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Abbas Mamode!

Mr S. Abbas Mamode (Fourth Member for Port Louis Maritime and Port Louis East): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, for giving me way. All have already been said by my hon. colleagues; so do not worry hon. Chief Whip, I will not be that long.

This National Assembly has witnessed the seriousness and will to work of this Government. This budget supports working families. It is on the side of aspiration. This budget is to bring a resilient economy. This budget rewards works. If you are a maker, a doer or a hard worker, you will see this budget is for you. We choose the future. We choose economic security. We choose creation of jobs. We choose responsibility. We choose, in fact, the whole nation, *le peuple*.

L'exercice du budget n'est pas un simple exercice de mathématique gros *zéro manze ti zéro*. Il y a toute une philosophie derrière, le pays d'abord *réziltat lor réziltat*. Certains au sein de l'opposition ne semblent rien comprendre. Je dis bien certains parce que l'honorable Ramful, même s'il a été critique, il a été positif dans bien des cas.

(Interruptions)

Ce budget donne la chance au pays de se redresser et de voir l'avenir avec sérénité et non comme certains dans l'opposition qui regardent toujours dans le rétroviseur, une approche rétro en contraste avec le gouvernement qui pense au modernisme. Un budget préparé en accord avec le peuple qui a soif de justice sociale, de la méritocratie et de la bonne gouvernance. Donc, le grand argentier a tout fait pour satisfaire l'aspiration de ce peuple qui a su prendre la bonne décision un 10 décembre 2014. La philosophie de ce budget nous permet un choix réfléchi : la sauvegarde de l'emploi, la création de l'emploi, le combat contre la pauvreté, le combat contre la fraude et la corruption.

Sous le leadership du Premier ministre, Sir Anerood Jugnauth, et de l'honorable Xavier-Luc Duval, *Deputy Prime Minister*, de l'honorable Showkutally Soodhun et l'honorable Ivan Collendavelloo, vice-Premiers ministres, le pays est assuré d'une croissance économique soutenue et durable. Le peuple sentira venir avec nous le deuxième miracle économique, et les générations futures diront : "*This is a caring Government*". Quand l'honorable Ramful a pris comme exemple une usine dans sa localité, je suis sûr et certain que c'était l'honorable Sir Anerood Jugnauth qui était Premier ministre.

Surely this Budget gives ample opportunities to the population who has been greatly in need of further economic outlet to have a better standard of living. The water sector is the backbone of a healthy and wealthy society, and that is why the Government is investing

massively in this sector. 24-hour water to every family is achievable with proper monitoring supervision, and active participation of the public is of paramount importance in terms of informing about leakage, wastage. And for that, it will necessary to set up area advisory groups to provide information so that immediate action can be taken.

L'opposition amoindrie repose ses arguments sur la perception alors que nous, au gouvernement, mettons l'emphase sur la réalisation. Pas de bla-bla-bla, bien plus d'actions, quand le peuple veut voir et non entendre ! Ce peuple est vraiment admirable, car il a su faire le bon choix lors des dernières élections. Maintenant il nous incombe de ne pas le trahir, car pour la trahison on a un prix à payer.

L'île Maurice a besoin de *build up* ses compétences, et il nous faut revoir notre système éducatif. Et avec un budget de R 14 milliards, on peut aspirer à avoir une éducation de qualité supérieure et moderne, afin de pouvoir faire face aux défis qui guettent le monde en mutation permanente.

Nos jeunes doivent se retrouver dans ce concept de globalisation. Un gradué par famille c'est bien, mais un gradué qui trouve de l'emploi c'est mieux ! Certainement pour ce budget a pris cela en considération. Le monde du travail connaît un profond changement. Il faudra apprendre, à savoir, à s'adapter aux nouvelles permutations mondiales. Pour cela, la formation continue est une condition *sine qua non*. Les vraies institutions éducatives sont appelées à revoir leur cursus scolaire afin de répondre à l'attente de la population, et ce budget doit permettre l'émergence des institutions fiables et crédibles et non des universités bidons, et non de *family business*.

Before ending, I would like to say a few words concerning the National Development Unit. As everybody is aware, the NDU is under the responsibility of the Prime Minister's Office. Unfortunately, last year, during the electoral campaign, many works were carried out out of the budget of the National Development Unit, and today we are compelled to pay for these tasks. *Bribe électoral!* Even with this, we know the result. Nevertheless, we, at the National Development Unit, will do our utmost to satisfy our mandate.

Deux mots, M. le président, concernant Agalega. Concernant mon collègue, le député de l'opposition, l'honorable Aadil Ameer Meea, si vous parcourez le discours du budget, vous verrez que R 750 m. will be invested in the construction of a new airstrip and new jetty facilities.

(Interruptions)

C'est faux, M. le président, de dire que no contact was made. In fact, during the first days, we did contact people from Agalega; working session already made - published in the

press - and with my colleague, the Minister, we already set up the Board, and Agaleans are on board.

(Interruptions)

It is in our constituency, hon. Ameer Meea.

Pour conclure, M. le président, je demanderai à nous tous ici, députés de l'opposition ou au sein du gouvernement, de se serrer les coudes afin que le *feel good factor* du budget se traduise par le *feel good realisation*, et avec résultat lors résultat, pour un avenir meilleur. *Coq pou santer, soleil pour lever, carré carré nou pou amene sa pays-là vers un avenir meilleur.*

Merci.

At this stage, Madam Speaker took the Chair.

(6.25 p.m.)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Mrs Selvon!

Mrs D. Selvon (Second Member for GRNW & Port Louis): Madam Speaker, we, as the Government majority, are proposing a Budget that aims to create the conditions for the yearly national economic growth to exceed 5%, so as to trigger a new economic miracle, as happened during the mandates of Sir Anerood Jugnauth from the early 1980s.

There is only one way of obtaining such a result: improving radically the way the country does business through its entrepreneurs; big, medium and small. In two words, this is called business facilitation. In parallel, the Budget reinforces two other policy objectives, the first of which started to be applied from the first week we came to power after being announced during our victorious electoral campaign.

The first of those objectives was to get rid of poverty. The second major objective was to introduce transparency in governance following a total absence of such transparency. To name just a few, such areas as allocation of contracts, and in appointments, nominations and promotions in the public and parastatal sectors from 2005 to the last day in power of the last Government.

I wish now to complete the essential national objectives with a fourth one to propose the two items be symbolically introduced in the Budget to, amongst other things, demonstrate that our islands of the Chagos and Tromelin belong to Mauritius as per international law established by the United Nations just as they were included in the Constitution of Mauritius by Sir Anerood Jugnauth from the 1980s. This would be yet another bold statement of our legitimate and legal claim of sovereignty.

Avant de continuer, je vais répondre à certains détracteurs, visiblement des antipatriotes sinon des esprits chagrins et des ignares, qui m'ont pris à partie parce que j'avais consacré mon discours résumant les débats sur le discours-programme à un item d'actualité et d'intérêt national de ce discours-programme, soit la revendication mauricienne sur les Chagos. J'ai d'ailleurs eu raison de soulever la question de Chagos et de demander au gouvernement de mobiliser toute la population car quelques jours après il y a eu le jugement du Tribunal international du droit de la mer qui nous donne beaucoup d'espoir aujourd'hui et aussi la décision de Sir Anerood Jugnauth, comme faisant écho à mon appel de constituer un comité interparlementaire, l'Opposition incluse.

Je déplore également la mentalité bon marché, pour dire le moins, de certains commentateurs qui ont trouvé que les députés ne doivent pas poser de questions sur nos îles volées des Chagos et de Tromelin et de poser plutôt leurs questions sur leur circonscription. Faisant fi du fait qu'un député représente toute la population autant qu'il ou elle représente une circonscription. Il fut un temps jadis où pareille ignorance n'était pas étalée dans la presse mauricienne qui était d'un autre niveau. Les journalistes savent-ils que certains officiels venus de France dans les années 70 manœuvraient pour détacher Rodrigues de Maurice pour rattacher cette île à la France ? Ou bien savent-ils que selon *l'Encyclopaedia Britannica* de 1910, et je cite –

“Amsterdam and Saint Paul uninhabited islands in the South Indian Ocean, included in an official list of the dependencies of Mauritius, drawn up in 1880 were in 1893 annexed by France.”

Pouvons-nous alors accepter que nos anciens colonisateurs continuent à nous voler des parties de notre territoire et que nous suivons le conseil de certains journalistes antipatriotiques et de politiciens à l'esprit tordu en nous taisant sur ces actes illégaux contre l'intérêt national ? Et que je me taise comme le veulent certains journalistes et politiciens, alors qu'il y a une importante population Chagossienne parmi mes mandants dans la circonscription numéro 1 ?

Je reviens au budget. Il faudrait que cessent les critiques qui affirment que nous, Mauriciens, serions incapables de réaliser les croissances de plus de 5 % dans un avenir pas trop lointain. D'abord puisque l'économie repose avant tout sur un élément intangible ou plutôt un sentiment, soit la confiance. Il ne faudrait pas, tant au gouvernement que dans les

partis de l'Opposition, parler et agir de manière à saper ce sentiment parmi les investisseurs. Il est bien connu que la parole suffit pour détruire la confiance.

Heureusement, Madame la présidente, que le Budget a été dans l'ensemble bien accueilli par l'opinion dans le milieu des affaires. Cependant je ne peux pas revenir, ici, sur toutes les nombreuses mesures budgétaires parce que mon discours est axé plutôt sur les perspectives d'un miracle économique que ce Budget offre à notre pays. Il me suffit de rappeler que, dès la prise du pouvoir, nous avons commencé à attaquer la pauvreté en augmentant les pensions pour plus de 240,000 de nos citoyens. Ce qui a porté le budget social de la nation à R 27,5 milliards en tête de la liste des dépenses budgétaires.

En ce qui concerne mon propos aujourd'hui sur l'effet potentiel du budget sur la croissance économique par le biais de la confiance qu'il a créée parmi les investisseurs, je cite, ici, certaines des réactions.

I quote now the Joint Economic Council which held a press conference on Monday night of 23 March after the Budget 2015-2016 Speech. Director Mr Raj Makoon said, among other things, –

“This is a courageous Budget that promotes private investment. It is through these private investments that the country will achieve a rate of 5.3% growth in Gross Domestic Product (GDP), and thus create jobs for young people in particular. The incentives to Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) are a good thing, but they also need technical support. It is important to achieve a growth of 5.3%. There is an incentive for private sector investment. There are efforts on the water supply as well as the marine and digital connectivity.”

De son côté M. Jocelyn Kwok, le *Chief Executive* de l'AHRIM, Association des Etablissements Hôteliers et Restaurateurs de l'île Maurice a déclaré au quotidien 'Le Mauricien' du 24 mars, et je cite –

« Un budget pro-investissement et pro-emploi.

L'AHRIM accueille de manière positive ce budget très pro-investissement et pro-emploi. Il a le mérite d'être clair dans ses intentions de dynamiser les opérateurs économique et de construire la croissance positive avec les ingrédients classiques d'une économie axée sur la relance. Il y a aussi un recentrage très fort sur nos ressources principales que sont notre capital

humain et nos compétences, autant dans l'île Rodrigues ou ailleurs. Pour le secteur du tourisme, nous constatons une intention renouvelée d'ouvrir davantage notre ciel à d'autres lignes aériennes et, surtout, la mise à disposition de moyens substantiellement plus élevés en faveur de la *MTPA* et de la promotion de la destination. »

Par ailleurs, lors d'une récente réunion des secteurs - public et privé, présidée par M. Gaëtan Siew le budget a été favorablement accueilli selon la presse quotidienne en date du 07 avril.

Il nous faut être honnête lorsqu'on parle du système de développement. De tout temps en cours de son histoire, l'économie mauricienne a reposé sur des formes relevant du capitalisme dont le mercantilisme depuis les Hollandais, puis le développement du capitalisme agro-industriel. Aujourd'hui, nous vivons à l'ère du libéralisme une autre forme de capitalisme mais Maurice reste un de ces pays tels certains pays nordiques, où il y a une dose extraordinaire de socialisme. Ce qui nous permet de combattre les excès de ce mode de développement. Cela a été reconnu par le prix Nobel de l'économie, l'Américain Joseph Stiglitz, dans un article publié dans 'The Guardian' en Grande-Bretagne et d'autres publications internationales prestigieuses, un article intitulé '*The Mauritius economic miracle, or how to make a big success of a small economy.*' Stiglitz a même invité les États-Unis à apprendre certaines choses du modèle mauricien, ce qui fait que les critères actuels contre le budget et qui, volontairement ou involontairement, tendent à détruire la confiance des investisseurs dans le potentiel d'un nouveau miracle économique sont tout à fait déplacés. Le présent budget, rédigé dans un langage plus clair et plus simple qu'auparavant, a été interprété à tort comme un budget manquant de sens, de direction alors qu'il est en rupture avec le passé récent et rejoint les budgets Jugnauth/Lutchmeenaraidoo du miracle économique des années 80 dans sa philosophie, ses objectifs et la facilitation extraordinaire du business en donnant un formidable coup de fouet aux affaires et à l'entreprenariat au niveau des grands, petits et moyens entrepreneurs. En fait, les nombreux projets gouvernementaux comme ceux concernant le logement, le business en général, les cybercités, les smart cities et autres ont le potentiel de ne mener vers une croissance supérieure à 5 %, pourvu que l'on ait le niveau de confiance nécessaire au niveau des investisseurs.

Madame la présidente, je voudrais, ici, faire appel non seulement à l'Opposition, aux syndicalistes et aux mauriciens en général, mais aussi à tous les membres de l'Assemblée Nationale de tout mettre en œuvre pour que les objectifs de ce budget soient atteints en s'abstenant des déclarations qui pourraient saper la confiance des investisseurs dans la

capacité de notre pays à sortir de l'ornière où nous sont placés les multiples déficits accumulés de manière irresponsable, sous l'ancien gouvernement.

Madame la présidente, je voudrais profiter de l'occasion également pour demander aussi que chacun de nous fasse l'effort considérable, nécessaire pour renfoncer une unité nationale menacée par des dérapages qui ne pourraient que nuire aux chances du pays de redresser son économie. Ainsi nous devons renforcer la lutte contre les fléaux du communalisme, du népotisme et de la corruption ainsi que celui représenté par des violations de l'*Equal Opportunities Act*. Il ne se passe pas de semaines que je ne reçois des plaintes du public sur ces sujets tant dans ma circonscription que dans d'autres régions du pays, des plaintes.

Pour conclure, Madame la présidente, je voudrais encore une fois attirer l'attention sur la situation dans ma circonscription Grande Rivière Nord-Ouest/Port Louis Ouest, No.1, je souhaite que ce budget ne tarde pas à financer et à mener à l'exécution rapide des projets contre la pauvreté que nous avons annoncés successivement durant la campagne électorale, dans le discours programme et dans le discours du budget. L'attente est grande dans la population face à ces promesses en particulier en ce qui concerne le *Marshall Plan* contre la pauvreté. Je suis d'accord avec le ministre des finances lorsqu'il parle des dangers à l'instabilité du pays, que pose la très grande misère qui existe dans le pays et qui n'a fait qu'augmenter sous l'ancien régime. Il nous faudrait peut-être créer une commission parlementaire spéciale ou un observatoire de la pauvreté pour faire du *monitoring* constant et rigoureusement scientifique de la misère à travers le pays. Cela aiderait sans aucun doute le ministère de l'Intégration Sociale et toutes les parties concernées par le combat contre la pauvreté, y compris le secteur privé, dont le ministre des finances attend beaucoup en termes de *Corporate Social Responsibility*.

Enfin, je tiens à remercier tous les membres de la Chambre pour l'attention portée à mon discours.

Merci.

Madam Speaker: Hon. François!

(6.40 p.m.)

Mr J. F. François (First Member for Rodrigues): Madam Speaker, I stand up today to respond to Budget Speech 2015/2016, with a deep sense of political, moral responsibility as an elected Member from Rodrigues.

This is just after the ordeal of banking and near fiscal collapse of crisis, which could have been a social disaster for the country, as the nation witnessed during holy Friday last. This is a time-bomb situation for many who are shaky about their dreams that might not come true. This unpredictable circumstance reveals that life is full of surprises, both positive and disastrous.

Madam Speaker, being neither an economist nor an accountant, I am looking at the present situation as an ordinary people out there, asking how our banks are being capitalised, managed and supervised today. People want to know how economic and fiscal consolidation can harness local and international trust, credibility and confidence for both our private and public finances.

Madam Speaker, coming to the Budget, I will be very short and brief as it is an acceptable and a very good budget for our country, which is bound to foster economic prosperity for one and all along a safe journey. Before going further different questions need firstly to be asked –

- (i) What are the general feelings of our nation today?
- (ii) What are the ultimate goals and benchmarks of Government?
- (iii) How mindful is our society for the future?
- (iv) What is the real estate of our current financial sector status today?
- (v) Could one afford to let our Republic fail today?
- (vi) What are the critical issues and risks facing our economy based on local and global forecasts and scenarios?

These are the very basic and simple questions which require our good sense of commitment in responding to what people want to see happening sustainably for the future of our country.

Madam Speaker, this can only be materialised through fiscal, monetary discipline, good governance and hard work for the prosperity of the nation. A few weeks ago, I was watching on MBC/TV a programme on the life of Sir Anerood Jugnauth. In its last part, Sir Anerood Jugnauth's inspiration and dedication to the nation was to encourage the nation towards hard work, discipline and unity. This is the way forward.

Madam Speaker, in the same line, this Budget reminds us that we are at the crossroad while we charter the right path towards the future through new approaches and paradigm shift.

The hon. Minister of Finance has adopted responsibly an economic model that foster economic growth, create jobs, lowering unemployment, reducing poverty and, importantly, gathering momentum leading towards a higher standard of living for our people.

This is the very first Budget of this Government along a long journey for an action plan for the nation by getting the basic rights.

Madam Speaker, I will qualify this present Budget as *un budget d'orientation économique et sociale vers un nouvel cap de notre société*. It is a very simple economic model of socialisation for economic and social prosperity. Madam Speaker, allow me to go through a few selective sectors.

Public Sector Reforms

The drive towards more effectiveness, the revolutionary towards a New Public Management Culture, Policy and Governance must be given higher priority for public sector. The installation of a Civil Service College will surely substantiate this endeavour. However, what will be the modalities for civil servants of the Regional Assembly Establishment from Rodrigues? How will they benefit from this College? Madam Speaker, from a practical insight, Government must simply simplify everyday life for public service users, entrepreneurs and people at large. What are required today are simple rules, less bureaucracy and more active use of ICT, making digital technology more pervasive in the public service, for example, a new culture of email as an official document.

When I listen to private radios in the morning, for example, in programmes like '*Xplik Ou Cas*', my first reaction is: why people have to ring radios to resolve certain problems which require the intervention of public officers. It is quite clear that there is a problem or a puzzle missing somewhere. Shall Government create a new entity? What I call a Public Relation Unit (PRU) centralised under the aegis of PMO as it is the case for NDU, with hotlines to listen to daily public queries. It is clear that we, as politicians, also have a great responsibility to remain connected - this is important this word - to the population and resolve their problems. That is our main responsibility.

Smart Cities

With the adoption of the concept of Smart Cities, Madam Speaker, Government must reconcile our development plans. It is imperative that new National Development Plan will have to provide strategic guidance plans that are to be developed and integrated combining the Public Sector Investment Plan (PSIP), a National Investment Strategy, a National

Physical and Local Area Plans as Mauritius - I say Rodrigues also - we have lagged behind, in terms, of planning strategies.

I welcome the coming into force of a new planning policy guidelines and a review of a National Development Strategy both for Mauritius and Rodrigues.

Madam Speaker, Smart Cities, we have to foster a new development model of urbanisation of our rural areas while providing efficient civic infrastructure and associate services.

Madam Speaker, the vision '*de faire de la Republique une nation entrepreneurs*' requires a further step and that is to make entrepreneurship studies mandatory in our schools curriculum as from early childhood up to university level. Let us follow successful models from countries like Canada, Québec. This is perfectly working there.

Coming to environmental sustainability Madam Speaker, Mauritius will embrace the footsteps of Rodrigues by banning the use of plastic bags which will pioneer sustainable development and develop a new model of our citizen responsibility towards our fragile society.

Madam Speaker, a healthy nation requires that our consumers need to put quality food in their mouth. We are all well aware of the danger of commercial food such as, what I call, '*poule synthetic*' légumes remplis des produits chimiques, sans aucun goût Madame la présidente. Je soutiens cette nouvelle culture de produits bio de mon ami l'hon. Seeruttun et c'est cela l'avenir. C'est là que Rodrigues peut devenir ce grenier avec ses produits de qualité. Aussi là je fais un appel à la population de Rodrigues, elle doit être plus productive en créant cette économie agricole. A Rodrigues l'honorable Soodhun encourage la population à produire et consommer local, des produits bio c'est vrai! '*Nou poule qui faire l'exercise*' - parce qu'ils marchent nos poulets! Les légumes plantés en utilisant des compostes 100% bio. Peut-être je fais un appel aussi – il faut être plus sévère concernant les lois et les règlements. On ne peut pas laisser la population continuer à manger ces poulets aux hormones ou les légumes remplis de produits chimiques car le taux de cancer et d'autres maladies nous interpellent tous.

Madam Speaker, energy policy, the hon. Collendavelloo is right by promoting the vision of a sustainable society through renewable electricity production strategy and I will add that one sector of our economy which consumes a lot of energy is the transportation sector both public and private. Our country must commit itself by taking an immense stride to achieve energy independence by combining unconventional renewable energy sources such as wind, solar with others and, in that case, together with what I call a new traffic

management strategy so that our country can cut down cost on fuel consumption both public and private.

SMEs, Madam Speaker, I welcome the measures for a one-stop shop for entrepreneurs together with the setting up of a new SME bank and this is interesting the principle behind the announced Central Government guarantee undertaken for new SMEs. It entails that the Central Government will provide a surety for someone else's payment commitment.

This is fantastic. However, it incurs a financial risk for the Central Government but what else can one ask more about a caring and handholding Government. In Rodrigues, this bank, Madam Speaker, will clear a lot of obstacles to get access to finance for potential entrepreneurs in the field of agriculture, fisheries, tourism and others. However, the issue of MCIB (Mauritius Credit Information Bureau) for those entrepreneurs who have not been successful in the past remains a problem and my question is: how will that be considered within the new SME bank?

Madam Speaker, the tourism industry goes beyond the traditional sand, sun and sea, rather necessary investments to be engaged we will have to consider the cultural aspects as well. As raised by hon. Baboo, cultural tourism is a new pillar of our tourism industry. Rodrigues, in that sense, is a plus value to Mauritius.

Madam Speaker, housing and NEF – (National Empowerment Fund). I totally agree with my good friend hon. Roopun that the National Empowerment Fund needs to be redressed. This applies to the local branch in Rodrigues as well. The delays in the distribution of schools and construction materials to beneficiaries is an actual point of concern. Madam Speaker, in addition I have to plead also for those people in Rodrigues living in what we call Vieux Cité complètement délabrée et invivable dans certains cas. That Government through NEF and the Regional Assembly has a matter of urgency and security to look into rebuilding new social housing units for those concerned inhabitants in *Cité Patate, Cité Papayes, Cité Rivière Cocos, Terre Rouge and others. C'est invivable.*

Madam Speaker, let me come to Rodrigues. Je dis toujours ici –

*'Rodrigues mon île bien-aimé, que j'aime très bien, que j'aime tant,
Rodrigues qui est debout et qui est en marche aujourd'hui vers son destin'.*

Within this Budget itself, one can observe the progress being made. Rodrigues is mentioned at a much earlier position in the Budget Speech for the first time of our budget history.

(Interruptions)

This is well appreciated by the people of Rodrigues. I remember looking at the face of a hon. Member here when the hon. Minister of Finance said –

“I now move to Rodrigues...”

This psychological reaction was –

“Is that all for the national budget measures!” as we are moving to Rodrigues.

This is a meaningful change; a great signal, *reconnaissance* to Rodrigues and it’s a huge step forward. This is encouraging for Rodrigues as the hon. Minister of Finance, with the blessing of Sir Anerood Jugnauth, has inspired us that the courage and vision of our founding father has always dreamed of a prosperous Rodrigues as this is being materialised actually.

I remember the heartfelt words of a great Rodriguan patriot, my neighbour, late Antoine Perrine who taught me the fundamental philosophy of our local politics and he said, I quote –

‘Rodrigues can go far and do things differently but what is required is enough support from Central Government and the will of our people to understand and adhere to the political vision of OPR party in organising the people and Rodrigues itself’.

Madam Speaker, today, we are witnessing the good will of Government be it central or local in providing Rodrigues with the means for making things happened and become reality. The guaranteed purchase of local production of planters from Rodrigues by the Agricultural Marketing Board as announced by the hon. Minister of Finance is an encouragement to boost our high production strategy. Our agricultural sector with the budget provision will graduate from subsistence agriculture to employment and job opportunities for a new entrepreneurship culture with added value change. Rodrigues has to think big, produce more with value processing and avoiding disadvantages of small-scale production. Madam Speaker, I also call our fellows in diverse sectors of our economy in Mauritius to extend their support to Rodrigues in the process of a new paradigm shift.

Yesterday itself, I was quite surprised to have the accolade of two Rodriguans ladies, during lunch time who are on placement for capacity building with Mrs Jaqueline Dalais to improve their knowledge in catering services and for economic empowerment. This is great.

All those companies like Food and Allied, and others who have understood and have voluntarily embarked in this endeavour I thank them on behalf of the people of Rodrigues for their support. Madam Speaker, this is the kind of corporation that Rodrigues requires beyond simply budgetary monetary value.

I believe that Rodrigues will become an example to follow and will be a landmark reference to many fronts in the future.

The hon. Minister of Finance and Economic Development has already started materialising this vision, when he refers, in paragraph 118, of the Budget Speech, and I quote

-

“On our last mission to Rodrigues, I was impressed by the decision of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly to ban plastic bags.”

This is our vision for creating the concept - this is a new concept - of eco-entrepreneurship in Rodrigues by bridging the gap between environment and businesses while generating green jobs.

Madam Speaker, the vision to build a stronger Rodrigues by addressing major outstanding infrastructural needs while creating more jobs and pushing our youth towards excellence, is our utmost priorities.

Rodrigues deviendra aussi un chantier de développement sans précédent, and the physical infrastructural development forms part of the growth strategy and social development of Rodrigues, mainly roads, ICT, undersea fibre-optic cable, port, airport, construction industry and the water sector. Plaine Corail Airport, through the connectivity vision of the Regional Assembly, will undergo further extension for the economic development of Rodrigues for bigger planes and international flights.

Madam Speaker, I have to point out here that negative and demagogical comments, as always from the degrading Opposition side in Rodrigues, shall be set aside or simply ignored, as rightly pointed out by hon. Leopold.

Madam Speaker, you will recall the shameful attitude of previous local politicians from Rodrigues who, during Budget negotiation with Central Government used ‘*chantage*’ as a negotiation tool instead of a more humane partnership approach ...

(Interruptions)

Hon. Soodhun is quite right! I will come to that later on when I will talk about NDU.

(Interruptions)

...instead of a more humane partnership approach to earmark funds for Rodrigues development projects. This is not the case with the OPR Party today.

Fortunately, the people of Rodrigues do not want our autonomous island to be committing political suicide with these kinds of irresponsible politicians.

That is why, during the elections in December last, there was an unprecedented massive victory of OPR in Rodrigues and OPR will govern Rodrigues for many more years to come.

Madam Speaker, Rodrigues is mentioned in the National Economic and Social Council Report as the least developed region of our Republic and that is absolutely correct.

However, Madam Speaker, the Rodriguan population at large is very happy about the stand of the Central Government today to ensure that the development of Rodrigues keeps pace with that of Mauritius, as mentioned in paragraph 141 of the Budget Speech.

Madam Speaker, being myself *'enn politicien lor terrain'*, I have seen and interacted with fishermen, planters, entrepreneurs and people from all walks of life around Rodrigues.

The youth of Rodrigues also welcome the Budget in favour of Rodrigues, especially with regards to ICT/BPO activities, Placement Scheme for Rodriguan graduates and definitely the major projects such as airport development and optical fibres that concern them, as announced in the speech. There is a feel-good factor and confidence in this endeavour to move Rodrigues forward.

However, Rodrigues requires additional human resources in various fields such as social workers, where, I believe, more STM shall be recruited to help the Regional Assembly.

The hon. Minister of Finance and Economic Development is right also in saying that there is a great scope in Rodrigues for rapid progress in diverse economic sectors. This is what OPR party has always voiced out, but what were required are the means to achieve them and we are having the means. We have been having it and we are having more means, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, a last point, coming to climate change effects, Government, through the National Development Unit, is committed to implementing mitigating flooding measures.

In Rodrigues, it concerns mainly our flooded *'Raider or fords'*, there are about 20 of them around the islands, which during heavy rains or cyclone, deprive villagers of access to these flood prone areas.

It is worth to put on record that with my nomination as PPS, for the first time Rodrigues will benefit from NDU funds to implement, at least, four drains projects in Rodrigues by April 2016...

(Interruptions)

to mitigate flooding risks *et pour soulager la population de Rodrigues*. In addition, a Rodrigues version of CAB office to extend community services will be set up shortly which will also be used as my office in Rodrigues.

Madam Speaker, however, yesterday a political detractor in Rodrigues, during a press conference, argued that he is against the installation of a CAB office in Rodrigues, with necessary officers, as this will cause confusion to the autonomous status of Rodrigues.

Madam Speaker, a CAB office, tailored to the Rodrigues specificities without infringing the autonomous status of Rodrigues, is most welcome. People of Rodrigues want to see development happening in their interest and they have nothing to do with demagogical comments.

A CAB office, with the presence of additional human resources such as a project manager, engineer and other persons, will be a plus for Rodrigues, given that there is a considerable shortage of professionals in Rodrigues to implement and monitor civil works.

As a result thereof, everyone knows how much delays are caused to some projects execution.

Madam Speaker, I am thankful to the hon. Prime Minister who agreed with the forward-looking steps for the development of Rodrigues through NDU.

Let me reassure the House and reiterate that Rodrigues needs honest and serious politicians, not those who have very poor records of bad governance and have been even found guilty by the Court of Justice, with a charge of three months' imprisonment despite there is an appeal.

Madam Speaker, National Development Unit will play a major role in implementing the various proposed land drainage works long awaited in Rodrigues.

The population of Rodrigues is happy that their *radier* or low cross drains will be constructed shortly. And, that is what matters!

If you go and ask the people of the villages of Camp du Roi, Jardin Mamzelle, St. François and all around the island, they will tell you that OPR Party promised them to resolve their flooding problems and we will do it, Madam Speaker.

I reiterate, Madam Speaker, that the NDU will, in any case or at any moment, under the guidance of the hon. Prime Minister and myself as PPS, interfering with the autonomous status of Rodrigues, being myself an autonomist and a great defender of that cause.

NDU will certainly give due consideration to the views of the Regional Assembly as is actually being done. The Regional Assembly is not an agent for NDU, but they will work as partners in implementing projects for Rodrigues.

Under the blessing of the hon. Prime Minister, NDU in partnership with the Rodrigues Regional Assembly Executive Council, will do whatever is possible to implement these projects.

Madam Speaker, to conclude on Rodrigues, this Budget provides for Rs2.4 billion for RRA without including centrally and other ministries managed funds to the tune of another Rs1.5 billion for the next financial year. Thus the provision for Rodrigues is around Rs3.9 billion and I thank the Rt. hon. Prime Minister for that.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Do not interrupt him, please!

Mr François: Madam Speaker, a last word on *nation zougadère* before concluding. A mindful and peaceful society like ours requires for a conscious choice to be made by all of us. Our society has to be free from social polluters like '*carte la gratelle et jeux du hasard.*'

One cannot be oblivious to the fact that there is a poor segment of our population who are below the poverty line and who dream to become millionaires overnight through '*la gratelle*' but not through hard work and empowerment.

In Rodrigues, we feel that '*une mentalité 'zougadère' est en train de détruire certaines valeurs culturelles de la société Rodriguaise, dont nombreux O.N.G. et même mon parti politique l'OPR, nous avons toujours dit non à ces pollutions sociales.*' I conclude by saying that we are at the crossroad, as our country requires more investment, more job creation, more opportunities for our people and more growth. Growth is the imperative leitmotiv of our nation. Madam Speaker, there is a good call for this budget, but I shall also join my predecessors to commend the Bill to the House and I thank you for your attention and your time.

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

Mr Armance rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

Debate adjourned accordingly.

ADJOURNMENT

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, I beg to move that this Assembly do now adjourn to Thursday 09 April 2015 at 11.30 a.m.

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

Question put and agreed to.

Madam Speaker: The House stands adjourned.

At 7.08 p.m. the Assembly was, on its rising, adjourned to Thursday 09 April 2015 at 11.30 a.m.